



STUDENTS' ABILITY, PROBLEMS AND CAUSES OF PROBLEM IN WRITING EXPLANATION TEXT AT THE FIRST GRADE OF SMAN 1 BATUSANGKAR

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Abstrak

Teks explanation adalah salah satu teks yang wajib dipelajari oleh siswa di SMA. Teks ini penting untuk dipelajari karena dapat melatih cara berfikir siswa menjadi lebih scientifik dan akademik. Akan tetapi, berdasarkan data awal yang dilakukan di SMAN 1 Batusangkar, 64% dari mereka tidak bisa menulis teks explanation. Ada beberapa faktor penyebab hal tersebut terjadi. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan kemampuan, masalah serta penyebab masalah yang dialami siswa dalam menulis teks explanation. Penelitian menggunakan deskriptif-qualitatif. Subjek dalam penelitian ini adalah semua siswa kelas X SMAN 1 Batusangkar yang terdiri dari 70 siswa. Instrumen yang digunakan sebagai alat pengumpulan data dalam penelitian ini adalah berupa data kuantitatif dan data kualitatif. Data kuantitatif diperoleh dari tes menulis yang dilaksanakan di kelas. Sedangkan, data kualitatif diperoleh dari wawancara yang dilakukan terhadap 70 orang siswa tersebut. Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa kemampuan dan masalah yang dihadapi siswa dalam menulis teks explanation, dapat digolongkan dalam beberapa kriteria yaitu pola teks, konteks bahasa, ejaan kata dan sintaksis bahasa. Dari kriteria tersebut, hasil rata-rata kemampuan siswa dapat digolongkan bagus. Nilai rata-rata siswa dalam menulis teks explanation adalah 67,74. Namun, sebagian dari mereka masih menemukan masalah terutama dalam konteks bahasa khususnya tata bahasa. Temuan juga menunjukkan bahwa penyebab kesulitan tersebut adalah pengaruh bahasa pertama, bahasa sasaran yang begitu sulit, dan kurangnya pengetahuan siswa tentang komponen dalam menulis teks explanation.

Kata Kunci: Kemampuan, Masalah, Penyebab Masalah dan Teks Explanation

Abstract

Explanation text is an important text that should be learned by senior high school students. By learning this text, it may train the students to think scientifically and academically. However, based on preliminary data conducted in SMAN 1 Batusangkar, 60% of them could not write the explanation text. It may caused by some factors. This research was aimed to describe the students' ability, problems and the causes of the problems in writing explanation text. The design of research was descriptive. The subject of the research was the students at the first

grade of SMAN 1 Batusangkar which consisted of 70 students. Instruments used to collect the data were quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative data were gotten from writing test. Then, interview was used to get qualitative data. From the result of the research, it was found that the students' ability and problems in writing explanation text could be categorized into three: generic structure, textual language, spelling and syntactic language. Based on those criteria, the students' ability in writing explanation text was good (67.74). However, the students still found some problems especially related textual language (grammar). Moreover, this research also found that some factors which caused the students' problems in writing explanation text. They were interference of first language, complexity of target language and lack of knowledge about writing components.

Keywords: *Ability, Problems, Causes of Problem and Explanation Text*

A. INTRODUCTION

Writing is an important English skill that has to be mastered by students besides listening, speaking and reading. This skill is important not only in university level but also in school level for example in senior high school. Through writing, the students may share their feeling, thought, and emotion into written form. In expressing their feeling, they can communicate their ideas to others through writing. Next, through writing the students will be free to write what they feel and think about something. Therefore, they need to master writing skill. Even though the students understand about the language most of them face some problems in delivering the ideas effectively (Adas & Bakir, 2013).

To master writing skill, the students should know and understand about writing aspects. One of these aspects is writing. Writing requires the students to have sufficient knowledge related to topic discussed. Then, the students have to understand about syntax and grammar in English writing. Next, writing also requires the students to have enough vocabulary in order to deliver the ideas with correct words in

appropriate context. Besides, in writing, the students should know the pattern of the text, a different text has different pattern on it. In short, writing skill requires many aspects that have to be mastered by the students in order to produce a good text.

In curriculum 2013 for senior high school in writing, one of text that should be learned by the students is explanation text. Through explanation text, the students may think academically and scientifically. It is supported by (Ting, Campbell, Law, & Poh, 2013) who believe that explanation text is one of academic genres and important for students to learn. It is not only requires the students to understand about technical discourse but also requires the students to have the arts disciplines, even subjects like history involve textual features of causal explanations similar to science.

Based on some research that had been conducted by some researchers only a few of them tried to analyze about students' writing explanation text. In fact, this kind of text is important to be explored in order to know about students' ability to write non-fiction

paragraphs. It may also use to train the students to think scientifically and academically. Through this text, the students may enlarge their knowledge about specific topic and try to find many sources to add their ideas and also explore what they had have already known about that topic.

Moreover, according to researcher's previous interview to five students and writing task about explanation text at the first grade of SMAN 1 Batusangkar academic year 2014/2015, it indicated that 64% of them could not write explanation text. Those students had some problems in writing explanation text. First, they did not know what they will write because they did not have any ideas about the topic. In other words, the students seem do not have any references to write about topic discussed. Then, the students did not have enough vocabulary to write. Even though they know about the process or the reason why something happen, it seems that they did not know how to write it down by using English. Next, the students seem did not know how to use correct word in appropriate context. One of the examples is rainbow is creation occurs after rain. From this example, it indicates that students in senior high school seem difficult to choose appropriate word in particular context. From the example above, it is inappropriate to put creation, it is better to replace it with the word phenomenon. Because of this case, it is important to know how far the students are able to write in order to know their problems and cause of the problems. By

analyzing it, it is expected to explore students' ability to write scientific paragraphs especially explanation text.

According to Derewianka (1991: 65), the explanation text can be constructed by two main parts. First is statement that consist of the phenomenon which representing the purpose of the text. A sequence of events is the next part of explanation text. These paragraphs include some events in chronological order. Moreover, an explanation text should be end up with a conclusion. As (Explanations, 2012) explains the generic structure of explanation text consists of the main pattern. This text should start with the introduction. Second, logical sequence of stages: developing causal relationships as well as sequential ones. Then, conclusion is the last component that should be inserted in explanation text. It can tie up the explanation.

Furthermore, in order to assess students' writing explanation text, Knapp & Watkins (2005:145-149) propose some criteria. These criteria are based on the appropriate generic structural and grammatical features. The criteria are, first, genre-based criteria deal with the generic structure of the text. Then, textual language criteria deal with the way that the text is held together, the way that sentences are structured and how sentence work with one and another. These criteria cover some aspects for example the use of simple, compound and complex sentences correctly. Syntactical language criteria are the next criteria to assess students' writing explanation text. It deals with the internal structure

of the sentences are used. It covers the following criteria such as prepositions used appropriately and with some variety; articles used correctly in every instance and the use simple and complex punctuation correctly. Last is spelling. Spelling means the way that individual words are spelt. In other words, the judges also pay attention to the way of the students write the word whether it is correct or not.

Then, there are several factors affected students' difficulties or problems in writing. The first one is interference of first language is the rules of students' first language in writing. According to Dulay in Bhela (1999: 22) interference is the automatic transfer, due to habit, of the surface structure into the surface structure of the target language. The second factor is the complexity of the target language. English as the students' target language is different from their native or their first language. Some students think English is the complicated language that should be understood by them. English structure is completely different. It is difficult for students to transfer their native or first language to English. Lack of knowledge about the writing components is the last causes of the students' problems in writing. Since English is not a language that they used in their daily life, the students do not have enough knowledge about it. It is difficult for the students to share their feeling and their ideas in English writing. They do not know well about the components that should exist in their writing. In short, it may cause students' problems or causes of the problem in their writing.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This was a descriptive research. The purpose of this research is to gain information about phenomenon in order to describe and also analyze the existed condition in the field. Manen (1990: 189) states descriptive research is used to obtain information concerning the current status of the phenomena to describe and analyze 'what exists' with respect to variable or condition in situation. The population of this research was all of the students at the first grade in SMAN 1 Batusangkar academic year 2015/2016. In this research, proportional random sampling had been used. For the purpose of the research, the sample of population had been selected so that any individual has an equal probability of being selected from the population. It means that, the population (250 students) had been randomly selected as representative in order to get the data. Then, in order to obtain the valid result, 10 students as representative in every class (7 classes) had been selected. It indicates that, all of students at the first grade of SMAN 1 Batusangkar were asked to write an explanation text, 70 texts written by 10 students in every class were analyzed as the representative of the research in order to know their ability and problems in writing explanation text. Then, after doing the test, the students were asked several questions in order to know about the causes of the problem that they faced in writing explanation text.

C. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

1. Students' Ability in Writing Explanation Text

Students' ability in writing explanation text was analyzed based on indicators proposed by Knapp and Watkinson (2005:145-149). Four criteria were included. They were generic structure, textual language, spelling and syntactical language. Having applied these criteria in assessing the students' writing, overall the students had good ability in writing explanation with the average score 67.74.

First criteria are generic structure. The students' ability in writing explanation text related to generic structure was analyzed based on the generic structure applied by the students in writing explanation text. A

number of aspects would be analyzed to determine the students' ability. The first aspect is the way of writing introduction containing the name of the topic discussed. This aspect is used; to answer the question of *what*, *who*, and *where*, to classify, as well as to describe the phenomenon or concept in relation to other things. The second one is the way of writing sequence of stages (explaining about *why* or *how* in chronological order). The third one is conclusion that includes giving brief description or evaluation. Using the three aspects, overall, the students' ability in writing explanation text was categorized into good with the average score 67.62. The students' ability in generic structure can be drawn in this following table:

Table 1: The students' ability in writing explanation text related to generic structure

Criteria	Number of the students	Percentage
Very good	14	20%
Good	30	42.86%
Fair	2	2.86%
Poor	19	27.14%
Very poor	5	7.14%
Total	70	100%

The table above shows that around 20% of students' writing could be categorized into very good category in writing explanation text related to generic structure criteria. It indicates that 14 from 70 students were understand and able to apply the pattern without finding the difficulties. Then, there were 30 students (42.86%) were good in constructing an explanation text based on the generic structure. However, there were some of the

patterns written by the students that need to be replaced and added in order to produce the better one. Next, there were 2 students (2.86%) could be categorized into fair category for their writing. These students faced some difficulties but not too crucial. They could accomplish the text even though there were still need some improvements. Then, there were 25 students who could be categorized into poor and very poor writing related to

generic structure criteria. Some of them seemed do not understand about the pattern of explanation text. Therefore, these students constructed different kind of text. Besides, there was a pattern which was not included in students' writing. Most of those writings did not include the introduction and conclusion in their writing. In short, it could be seen that those students had problems in organizing the ideas or applying the generic structure of explanation text.

Then, the ability of the students in writing explanation text related to textual language was analyzed based on the use of simple, complex or compound sentence and also grammar. Based on the students' writing, the students' ability in these criteria was categorized into fair with mean score 63.83. The number of student in each level can be shown in the following table:

Table 2: The students' ability in writing explanation text related to textual language

Criteria	Number of the students	Percentage
Very good	13	18.57%
Good	37	52.86%
Fair	2	2.86%
Poor	4	5.71%
Very poor	14	20%
Total	70	100%

The table draws the ability of the students related to textual language. The ability of the students was different. Around 13 students (18.57%) were very good related to textual language. It means that, they did not have many problems in writing explanation text related to simple sentence, compound sentence and complex sentences and choice of tense. On the other hand, there were 18 students (2 students could be categorized into fair, 4 students (5.71%) were poor and 14 students from 70 could be categorized into very poor. It means that, they still faced some problems in accomplishing this test. Most of the problems found in arranging the good words (tenses).

Next, the way of students spell the word may detect their ability or understanding related to topic discussed. Spelling also influences the students' writing quality especially in writing explanation text. As stated by Starkey (2004; 48), if the writers are demanded not to take misspelling in their writing, it contributes the quality of the writing. Based on the students' writing, overall, the students' ability in spelling was categorized into very good with average score 84.72. From 70 students wrote an explanation text, it was found that the ability of 45 students (64.28%) was very good, 31.43 % (22 students) was good, no student was fair, 1 student (1.43%) was poor and 2 students was very poor, in spelling.

The last criteria are syntactical language. Syntactical language deals with the internal structure of the sentences that includes article, preposition and punctuation. Based on

these aspects, the students' ability was fair with mean score 63.93. The students' ability in writing explanation text related to syntactical language could be drawn in the following:

Table 3: The students' ability in writing explanation text related to syntactical language

Criteria	Number of the students	Percentage
Very good	9	12.86%
Good	38	54.28%
Fair	2	2.86%
Poor	13	18.57%
Very poor	8	11.43%
Total	70	100%

The table above describes there were 9 students got very good score in writing explanation text related to syntactical language criteria. These students had already made all essential elements in their writing such as article, preposition and punctuation. They put all elements appropriately and correctly. On the other hand, there were 8 students who got very poor score in those criteria (11.43%). It means that, some of the students still have problems in writing explanation text related to syntactical language. It indicates that they did not understand about how to use the article, punctuation and preposition correctly in a text.

2. Students' Problems in Writing Explanation Text

From the result of the students' writing, the students had some problems in writing explanation text. Those problems can be categorized into several criteria. The first one is dealing with generic structure. The student's

problems related to this criteria were incomplete generic structure, combining introduction and sequence of stages, combining of sequence of stages and conclusion and combining introduction and conclusion. Then, related to textual language. Most of students' had problems in simple sentence, compound sentence, complex sentence and the choice of tense. Next, dealing with spelling, the students' had problems in spelling the words related to topic discussed. Last, in syntactical language criteria. The students' problems were the use of article, preposition and punctuation.

First, related to generic structure criteria, the students had some problems. They wrote incomplete generic structure, combined introduction and sequence of stages, combined sequence of stages and conclusion and combined introduction and conclusion in one paragraph. It was proven by the data that students did mistakes 9.13% from 1062 errors.

The next problem that the students faced in writing explanation text was the use of simple/compound/complex and the choice of tense (textual language). The students did errors 42.66% (453) from 1062 total of errors. Most of students had problem in tenses used. It was difficult for them to differentiate simple present tense and past tense in explanation text context and also the use of passive voice in their writing explanation text.

Spelling was the next problem faced by the students in writing explanation text. Based on the data that the researcher found in students writing test, students had very good ability in spelling. However, there was few students' still had problem in spelling. It can be seen by the data that students did mistakes 6.12% from 1062 errors.

The last problem faced by students in writing explanation texts was dealing with syntactical language criteria. Most of the students had problem in punctuation. It was hard for them to differentiate the use of full stop and comma and some of them did not use these two essential elements of writing in their writing. From 1062 total of errors done by the student, there were 447 errors found in syntactical language criteria.

3.The Causes of the Problem

There were three indicators used to explore the causes of the students' problems in writing explanation text. Those indicators were interference of first language, the complexity of the target language, and lack of knowledge about writing components.

The first indicator was interference of first language. Interference of first language was one of aspects causes the students' problems in writing explanation text. Based on the result of interview, there were 59 students said that they made a draft in Indonesian before transferring into English language. It was easy for them to construct an explanation text. Consequently, they wrote similar structure of the sentences between English and Indonesian. Therefore, the most noticeable aspect due to the students' first language was grammatical interference than followed by orthographic, lexical and phonological. So, interference of first language was one of causes of the students' problems in writing explanation text. As stated by Grenville (2002: 84), interference of first language causes the students' difficulties or problems in writing.

Complexity of target language was the second indicator caused students' problems in writing explanation text. Based on the interview done to 70 students, there were 60 students said that they had problems in writing explanation text because they didn't know the complex rules of English. English and the first language of the students' are totally different, so it was hard for them to understand about English rules it may be caused the difficulties of the students in writing explanation text. It is supported by Liu (2001:36), the students get difficulty in writing because they use different forms from first language and the second language in delivering their ideas,

feelings or messages so they need to considerable amount of time to be able to master the target language well. They need to know the rules of the second language.

From the explanation above, it could be said the cause of the students' problems in writing explanation text was the complexity of the target language. Due to the complexity of English, it was difficult for them to accomplish their task related to English language especially English writing.

The third indicator caused students' problem in writing explanation text was lack of knowledge about writing components. Some components of writing that need to be mastered were generic structure, grammar, spelling and punctuation. Without knowing those components, it is difficult for students to construct good explanation text. Based on result of interview that had been done to 70 students, there were 30 students said that they didn't know about the components of writing explanation text well. Therefore, they had some problems in writing explanation text. As (Saadiyah, 2009:23) states that if the students has lack knowledge about the components of writing, they may not express ideas and provide information well to the readers. In short, the students faced some problems in writing explanation text because they didn't know the components of explanation text well.

Based on the discussion above, it could be stated that the causes of the students' problems in writing explanation text at the first grade of

SMA 1 Batusangkar were interference of first language, the complexity of the target language, and lack of knowledge about writing components.

D. CONCLUSION

Having analyzed the data, the ability of the students in writing explanation text in the first grade of SMAN 1 Batusangkar was good. Based on the four criteria used; generic structure, textual language, spelling and syntactical language, the students' ability in writing explanation was good at spelling and generic structure. Meanwhile, for the other two criteria; textual language and syntactical language, their ability was categorized into fair category.

Furthermore, referring to the four criteria determined in writing a good explanation text, there were a number of problems faced by the students. First, dealing with generic structure, the students had a number of problems. They were incomplete generic structure, combining introduction and sequence of stages, combining sequence of stages and conclusion, combining introduction and conclusion into one paragraph. Next, the students also had problems in textual language that covered the use of simple sentences, compound sentences, complex sentences and tenses. Then, the use of article, preposition and punctuation were the other problems faced by the students related to syntactical language Last, spelling was another problem faced by the students in writing explanation text.

Last, the students' problems in writing explanation text were caused by several factors. They were interference of first language, complexity of target language and lack of knowledge about writing components.

E. SUGGESTION

Based on the findings and conclusions of the previous discussion, the researcher would like to give some suggestion. First, since not all of the students are able to produce a good explanation text, for those who get lower scores, they should learn more about the concept as well as the procedures of writing a good explanation. Second, since in writing explanation text, some students write their first draft in their first language before writing it in English that contributes to interference of their first language on their writing, it is suggested that they should write it directly in English instead of writing the first draft in their first language so that the interference of the first language can be minimized. Then, since some of the students get the lower in writing explanation text, it is suggested for the teacher to provide more variation models so that the students can understand it more easily. Last, for the teacher, it is also suggested to use more interesting strategies in teaching explanation text so that the students not only get motivated to learn it but also help them in writing a good explanation text.

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