Problems in Writing Explanation Text Faced by Third Grade Students of SMAN 1 Barabai

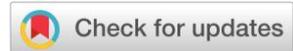Assifa Yasmin Amini[1]

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ABSTRACT

Writing is one of the skills that must be mastered in learning English. The students are likely having difficulty in writing explanation text. Explanation text is important to explore in order to know student's ability to write nonfictional paragraph. Related to this matter, the purpose of this research is to analyze and describe the students' problems in writing explanation text at SMAN 1 Barabai in third grade. This research is conducted by using questionnaire for students, interview for the teacher and document analysis from student's explanation text writing as supporting instrument to collect data. The results for questionnaire and documents that researcher collected is the researcher found the students have linguistic problem and cognitive problem. Align with another research that explained students' difficulties in writing explanation text, the results were students' difficulties in Grammar, Vocabulary, Mechanic, Organization, and Idea or Content. Therefore, the researcher suggests the students need to develop their vocabulary and literacy in order to develop their ability in writing English.

1. Introduction

The subject of this research was the students who already learned Explanation Text at SMAN 1 Barabai third semester of Academic Year 2021/2022. Therefore, students in 2 (two) classrooms which consisted of 23-30 students taken as the sample by using purposive sampling method.

The purpose of this research is to analyze and describe the students' problems in writing explanation text at SMAN 1 Barabai in third grade. This research is conducted by using questionnaire for students, interview for the teacher and document analysis from student's explanation text writing as supporting instrument to collect data.

The data of the research are in the form students' questionnaire result on explanation text written, interview, document analysis, and interview to the teacher. The researcher got the conclusion about students' problem in writing explaining text in the academic year of 2021/2022. The results for questionnaire and documents that researcher collected is the researcher found the students have linguistic problem and cognitive problem. Align with another research that explained students' difficulties in writing explanation text, the results were students' difficulties in Grammar, Vocabulary, Mechanic, Organization, and Idea or Content. Therefore, the researcher suggests the students need to develop their vocabulary and literacy in order to develop their ability in writing English (Aini, 2021).

In delving into the linguistic and cognitive challenges faced by students in writing explanation texts, it was observed that these hurdles manifested in various aspects of their composition. Linguistic problems were evident in students' struggle with grammar and vocabulary, hindering their ability to express ideas cohesively. Common issues included grammatical errors and limited vocabulary usage, which impacted the overall clarity and coherence of their written explanations (Palupi & Subiyantoro, 2020; Rahman & Weda, 2019; Indarwati et al., 2023; Sukmawaty et al., 2022).

On the cognitive front, students grappled with challenges related to organizing their thoughts and structuring content effectively (Saori et al., 2023; Wright et al., 2020). Mechanic issues, such as punctuation and formatting, also played a role in impeding the flow of their explanation texts. The identified problems align with broader research findings indicating that students often encounter difficulties in these key areas when tasked with writing explanation texts.

To address these challenges, the research suggests a targeted intervention to enhance students' vocabulary and literacy skills (Hariati, 2020; Hanafiah et al., 2022; Hasnia et al., 2022; Prihandoko et al., 2022). By fostering a deeper understanding of grammar rules and promoting the use of a more extensive vocabulary, students can elevate the quality of their written expression. Additionally, explicit instruction on organizing ideas and improving mechanical aspects, such as punctuation, can contribute to more polished and well-structured explanation texts. Overall, these recommendations aim to empower students to overcome linguistic and cognitive obstacles, fostering improved proficiency in English writing.

2. Methodology

This research used the qualitative approach because in this researcher describes the problem of the students' writing. According to Potter (2013) a qualitative approach is general way of thinking about conducting qualitative research. In this research, the writer used descriptive method and purposive sampling because this research was aimed to find problem in writing explanation text. The subject of research was 2 (two) class that consisted of 23-30 students who already learn explanation text. This research conducted by using questionnaire for students, interview for teacher and document analysis from student's explanation text writing to collect data. Fraenkel and Wallen (1990, p. 112) stated that the device (such as a pencil, and- paper test, a questionnaire, or a rating scale) the researcher uses to collect data is called an instrument.

2.1. Questionnaire

There are two kinds of questionnaire, they are open question and close question. Furthermore, in this research, the researcher used the close-ended question to the students. The answer to close question has been established by the researcher. In this case, instruct the respondents to answer by selecting their answer.

In this research the questionnaire constructed the problem in writing explanation text and divided into three types of problem: psychological problem, linguistic problem and cognitive problem, the type of problem is separated into different indicator.

2.2. Interview

Interview is the way to get supporting data through face-to-face conversation between an interview and interviewee. Mack et al., (2012) stated that the interview is a technique designed to elicit a vivid picture of participant's perspective on the research topic.

The researcher interviewed the teacher to obtain the data about the students' problem in writing explanation text. In addition, this interview was aimed to make sure about the result of the research and to get more data related to this research.

2.3. Documents Analysis

Document is official paper giving information, evidence. To ensure a holistic understanding about the required research material, the researcher took document from the school. In this research, the researcher uses document analysis, questionnaire for students to collect data, interview for the teacher and document analysis from students' assignment.

The students answer an enclosed, questionnaire contains positive and negative statements. The researcher explained the purposed of the research. Finally, the research used interview and document analysis to make the data more complete (Sugiyono, 2021).

In this research the researcher uses questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis as the triangulation strategy. Moreover, the substance of questionnaire and interview as the instruments were consulted with the experts to get its validity.

3. Result and Discussion

The researcher displayed data from several instruments like questionnaire, interview, and document analysis. For questionnaire, the researcher collected it from the students where they were responsible to answer 15 questions in the aim to check their problem in writing explanation text. Those questions were mentioned below:

> *Apakah anda mengalami kesulitan dalam penggunaan grammar dalam penulisan explanation text? 37 students answer "often".*

Apakah anda mengalami kesulitan dalam penggunaan struktur explanation text? 31 students answer "sometimes".

Apakah anda mengalami kesulitan dalam mendapatkan ide dalam menulis explanation text? 37 answer "sometimes".

Apakah anda mengalami kesulitan dalam memahami explanation text? 42 students answer "sometimes".

Apakah anda merasa tidak memiliki motivasi untuk menulis dalam bahasa Inggris? 38 students answer "sometimes".

Apakah anda merasa tidak memiliki cukup referensi atau pengetahuan untuk menulis explanation text? 28 students answer "often".

Apakah anda suka menulis dalam bahasa Inggris? 33 students answer "often".

Apakah anda sering menulis dalam bahasa Inggris? 29 students answer "sometimes".

Apakah anda sering membuat kesalahan dalam menggunakan tanda baca dalam menulis explanation text? 34 students answer "often".

Apakah anda sering membuat kesalahan dalam pengejaan kata dalam menulis explanation text? 46 students answer "often".

Apakah anda suka berlatih menulis dalam bahasa Inggris? 37 students "often".

Apakah anda mengalami kesulitan dalam menemukan kata dan kalimat yang tepat untuk menulis explanation text? 43 students answer "often".

Apakah anda mengalami kesulitan dalam mengekspresikan ide ke dalam tulisan explanation text? 29 students answer "often".

Apakah anda merasa sulit berkonsentrasi dalam menulis explanation text? 29 students answer "sometimes".

Apakah anda membuat kesalahan dalam penggunaan struktur explanation text? 37 students answer "often".

Those questions were shared to 2 classes of students' in SMAN 1 Barabai who had learned to write explanation text in the previous semester where each class is consisted of 23 to 30 students. The results were found as much as 57 students who answered those questions. And then, the researcher intended to summarize the data above.

From the first question to the fifth question, the students argues that they have difficulties in using grammar while writing explanation text. It can be seen from the data below.

Data 1

"I have issues in using grammar while writing explanation text. Also, I have no idea what I am going to write and how to write well because I confuse how to apply the structure."

Next, the researcher explained the sixth question to tenth question. Most of students feel that they sometimes did not have any references or knowledges in writing explanation text. It is showed from students' response below.

Data 2

"I don't have enough knowledge to write and I am scared that I will make errors in writing explanation text."

Last, the researcher explained the eleventh question to fifteenth question. From those questions, the researcher found the students had difficulties in choosing words or even sentences then arranging them into paragraph of the explanation text, expressing idea into the written text of explanation text, and the students sometimes did wrong in using structures of explanation text.

Data 3

"I have the words on my brain but I don't know how to pour it on writing. I also can't arrange the structure in correct order."

As we know that explanation text consists of general structure like title, opening, sequencing, conclusion and visual.

The researcher interviewed the teacher to obtain the data about the students' problem in writing explanation text. In addition, this interview was aimed to make sure about the result of the research and to get more data related to this research. The researcher asked four questions as follows:

What are the problems that students face in writing?

Are the students motivated in writing? How did you know?

How are the students' abilities in using grammar, punctuation, and sentences of structure in explanation text?

Are the students having problems with limited ideas, comprehension, and understanding in writing explanation text?

The teacher's answers were summarized by the researcher in this sub-discussion. First, the teacher argued that the half of students did not have enough knowledge related to their literatures so that they were difficult to get reference in aim to make explanation text. It because that explanation text needs many references as supports to develop from one paragraph the other paragraph.

Second, the teacher argued that half students did not be motivated in learning English writing. Most of them liked to be motivated in learning English conversation such speaking or listening. They also had difficulties in finding idea about what they would write on because of minimum literacy. It could be seen from their daily activity in classroom while learning English subject.

Third, it was related to how students' abilities in using grammar, punctuation, and sentences of structure in explanation text. The teacher said that only a few of students had good abilities in their writing. But it needed helped to begin the opening of sentence and the structure although they had learnt about explanation text previously. And then, the students' punctuation was good enough, but they had the problem with grammar and text or sentence structures, which must be helped and must be corrected in the writing process. Lastly, the students were more understood if they had finished it with team works than individual work.

The last question of interview was related to the problems with students' limited ideas, comprehension and understanding in writing explanation text. The teacher said that was right because the explanation text was the newest material for the students.

The result of the result was the students had difficulties in using grammar, not enough in having references or knowledges, making mistake in using punctuation marks, words spelling, finding words or even the correct sentences in arranging paragraphs, expressing idea, and making mistakes in using the structures while writing explanation text.

The students had difficulties in using grammar, not enough in having references or knowledges, making mistake in using punctuation marks, words spelling, finding words or even the correct sentences in arranging paragraphs, expressing idea, and making mistakes in using the structures while writing explanation text. So, in this sub-discussion, the researcher gave analysis and explanation from the text had written by the students were related to explanation text. Thus, this result is in line with the several studies that showed the same results that the students mostly have problem in writing explanation text related to generic structure and language feature of the text, difficulties applying grammar and vocabulary, using appropriate punctuation and capitalization.

There were 57 students who wrote the explanation text with different theme. The teacher provided six different themes like How a Kite Flies, Cycle of a Butterfly, How does Rain Fall, Cycle of a Frog, How do Volcanoes Erupt, and Dry Water. Most of students chose the topic of How a Kite Flies and Cycle of Butterfly.

3.1. Students had difficulties in grammar-Linguistic

English can be confusing for the students that used as a second language or foreign language. For some countries, like Indonesia, English is as their foreign language where the first language is Indonesian, and the second language is ethnical languages depending the regional. Some elementary schools were not taught English as their main subject. In addition, Indonesian's first language has many differences with English as foreign language in its grammar. In Indonesian, there is no any tenses like in English used, where it has many tenses like simple present tense, simple past tense, simple future tense, present or past continuous tense, etc.

In writing explanation text, the students must have responsibilities in understanding the use of simple present tense. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, the simple present tense form of the verb in a sentence is defined as the tense that is used to refer to events, actions, and conditions that are happening all the time. The verb used in this tense is also known as verb one. In Indonesian, the models of verbs are similar, which is not differences while doing something in present, past, or future. This can be reason why the students mostly chose that they had difficulties in grammar particularly in writing explanation text.

3.2. Students did not have enough references or knowledges-Cognitive

In writing, the students should have many references and knowledges in supporting every detail in their writing particularly the explanation text. Explanation text is a non-fiction text which describes about a process, for example, the water cycle, how bees make honey or how a car is made. They are related to the scientific process. It also can include of academic writing. That can be the reason why the students should need many references or knowledge to arrange their explanation text.

Those references can be found in many sources like books, or internet where in it, the students are able to find articles or journals that they needs related to the theme of explanation text they wrote. Most of students might be difficult to find the references to develop their knowledge that related to the theme they wrote. In this case, the teacher is expected to help them so that they would be easy in searching for references in completing their writing of explanation text.

3.3. Students made mistakes in using punctuation marks-Linguistic

The prevalence of punctuation errors among high school students underscores the importance of addressing these issues early on in their academic journey. Extraneous apostrophes, a common mistake, often occur when students struggle to discern between possessive forms and contractions. By providing targeted lessons and exercises focusing on apostrophe usage, educators can empower students to navigate these nuances more effectively.

Similarly, issues such as unnecessary quotation marks and misplacement can be attributed to a lack of understanding of their specific roles in written communication. Encouraging students to grasp the distinction between direct speech, quotations, and emphasis can significantly reduce these errors. Hands-on activities, like proofreading exercises and collaborative discussions, can reinforce the correct application of quotation marks.

Missing and misused commas represent another area of concern. In the realm of written expression, commas play a crucial role in guiding the reader and clarifying the structure of sentences. Educators can address this by emphasizing the rules governing comma usage, including the avoidance of both missing commas and the overuse of commas. Practical exercises, sentence construction activities, and peer editing sessions can aid in honing these essential skills.

The differentiation between "it's" and "its," commonly confused by students, necessitates targeted instruction on contractions and possessive pronouns. Engaging lessons that involve real-world examples and relatable scenarios can assist students in internalizing and applying this grammatical concept correctly.

Beyond these specific challenges, educators can broaden their focus to encompass the intricacies of punctuation, including the controversial Oxford comma, the distinctions between hyphens and dashes, and the appropriate use of semi-colons versus colons. Thorough explanations, interactive exercises, and illustrative examples can demystify these concepts, enabling students to navigate punctuation nuances with confidence.

By addressing these punctuation challenges systematically, educators contribute not only to improved grammatical proficiency but also to enhanced overall writing skills. The mastery of punctuation marks ensures that

students can convey their ideas clearly and effectively, fostering a strong foundation for future academic and professional success.

3.4. Students make mistake in using word spellings-Linguistic

In Indonesia, making mistake in using word spelling while writing text is not the newest issue. It almost happened year-to-year. There are several reasons why students make spelling errors. In writing, the most errors were occurred in alphabet structures. This cannot be ignored by the teacher because it is very crucial. In other hands, alphabet structures' errors play a crucial role in misspelling words.

To solve this problem, the teacher should help students to review their final works of writing. The review can be done by marking the errors word spelling and asking the students to check the dictionary so that they will know about the correct alphabet spelling. This way is also expected to help students in improving their spelling.

3.5. Students had difficulties in choosing words or the correct sentences in arranging paragraphs-Linguistic

This is the difficulties of building English sentences in writing. To this case, the researcher intended to take example of study in 2015 that was written by Eisa. The study aimed to investigate the problems of writing correct English sentences as for the Sudanese students of secondary schools. Then, he found that the most of the Sudanese students at secondary school were not acquainted with parts of speech. Secondly, the periods allocated for writing skills were extremely rare. Thirdly was related to the teacher as encouragement for students concerning writing skills were entirely rare. Fourth, there was a complete absence in teaching lessons of English structure. Lastly was related to the students who made mistakes in writing skills because they were not discussed in the presence of students.

That study might be possible to be occurred in this research. Not only that, but its result can also be the comparison to this study because the teacher is expected to help students in solving their problem particularly in writing explanation text.

3.6. Students had difficulties in expressing idea-Cognitive

Idea is a thought or collection of thoughts that generate in the mind. An idea is usually generated with intent but can also be created unintentionally. After checking the questionnaire, most of students chose to agree to this statement. It means that they had difficulties in deciding what they should wrote for their explanation text. To solve this problem, the researcher advice that the students need to do more exercise particularly in writing explanation text.

Furthermore, cultivating a habit of brainstorming and critical thinking can significantly enhance one's ability to generate ideas. Engaging in activities that stimulate creativity, such as reading diverse literature, participating in group discussions, or exploring different perspectives, can broaden the mental horizons and contribute to a richer pool of ideas. Encouraging students to explore various topics and encouraging curiosity can also play a pivotal role in idea generation.

In addition to exercises in writing explanation texts, fostering a supportive learning environment can empower students to share their thoughts freely and without fear of judgment. Collaborative projects, peer reviews, and constructive feedback mechanisms can create a conducive atmosphere for idea exchange. Furthermore, providing guidance on effective research methods and encouraging students to draw inspiration from real-life scenarios can instill a sense of relevance and authenticity in their writing, thereby enhancing the quality of their ideas.

Moreover, technology can be harnessed as a valuable tool in idea generation. Online platforms, forums, and multimedia resources can expose students to a vast array of information, sparking inspiration and creativity. Virtual collaborations and discussions can connect students with diverse perspectives, promoting a more holistic understanding of the subject matter and aiding in the development of well-rounded ideas.

Ultimately, the process of idea generation is dynamic and multifaceted. By incorporating diverse approaches, exercises, and resources, educators can equip students with the skills needed to overcome the challenges associated with formulating ideas, ensuring a more confident and capable generation of writers.

3.7. Students made mistake in using the structures while writing-Linguistic

This has relationship with the general structure use in explanation text. The researcher found that from several result of students' writing explanation text. Some of students made incorrect structures particularly in the opening that was mentioned as follows:

Data 4

"Butterflies are one of the winged insects that can fly."

In making correction about the opening above, the researcher explained the structures of explanation text. Explanation text has structure that should be followed while writing it. The first structure is title. It is needed to tell the reader what the text about. The title of explanation text usually appears in many terms that mention about the actions until the question like "how" and what". That question will be answered in the text.

The second structure is opening that contains of the purpose of the text. It means that the writer intends to tell valid information and it is related to some facts to the readers. That would be better if the writer put the previous research like articles or journal to strengthen the explanation text.

The third structure is sequencing that contains of more accurate information related to the discussion in explanation text. The sequential explanation must contain series of events, actions, causes or the process of a phenomenon. Events that occurred were also written down in order of time or cause.

The last structure is conclusion that contains of all explanation have been written previously. The conclusion is given at the end of the explanation text as the impression that the writing made is valid.

4. Conclusion

This research was aimed to find out students' problem in writing explanation text at SMAN 1 Barabai in third grade. Based on data analysis, the students had difficulties in using grammar, in having enough references or knowledges, making mistake in using punctuation marks, words spelling, finding words or even the correct sentences in arranging paragraph and making mistakes in using the structures while writing explanation text.

The results for questionnaire and documents that researcher collected is the researcher found the students have linguistic problem in writing explanation text such as had difficulties in using grammar, making mistake in using punctuation marks, words spelling, finding words or even the correct sentences in arranging paragraphs and making mistakes in using the structures while writing explanation text. The students also have cognitive problem such as not enough in having references or knowledges and expressing idea in writing explanation text.

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