THE GRADE XII STUDENTS' ABILITY IN WRITING AN EXPLANATION TEXT AS FOUND AT SMA N 1 KECAMATAN PAYAKUMBUH

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Abstract

The ability to write an explanation text is the ability that must be acquired by grade XII students in senior high school that is stated in KTSP (School-based curriculum). The research was a descriptive quantitave research entitled "The Grade XII Students' Ability in Writing an Explanation text as Found at SMA N 1 Kecamatan Payakumbuh. It was aimed at analyzing the grade XII students' ability in writing an explanation text viewed from the generic structure and the language features. The population of the research was the grade XII students in SMA N 1 Kecamatan Payakumbuh, and the sample was 20 students of XII IPA 2 class. The students were asked to write an explanation text and their writings were analysed using the scoring rubric of the explanation text that consisting of two aspects, generic structure and language features. Based on the findings, four students were at the excellent level, seven students were at the very good level, five students were at the good level, four students were at the fair level, and there was no students in the poor level. Overall, the grade XII students' ability in writing an explanation text as found at SMA N 1 Kecamatan Payakumbuh was at the good level.

Key words: Grade XII students, ability, writing, explanation text.

A. INTRODUCTION

Writing should be mastered by students. Through writing, the students can express their thoughts and ideas. According to Kirzner and Mandell (2014) writing can be defined as activities of sharing ideas, opinions and arguments to other people through a paragraph, an essay, or a journal. Furthermore, they state that writing is a combination of process and product. Elbow (as cited in Brown 2001) also says that writing is a two-step process. The first process is figuring out the meaning and the second process is putting the meaning into language. Brown (2001) states that written products are often the result of thinking, drafting and revising procedures that require specialized skills.

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Harmer (2007) argues that writing is process. It has some stages that a writer goes through in order to produce something in its written final form. The process has four main elements. The first element is planning. Experienced writers plan what they are going to write. Before starting to write or type, try and decide what they are going to say. For some writers, this may involve making detailed notes. When planning, writers have to think about three main issues. In the first place, they have to consider the purpose of their writing since this will influence (amongst other things) not only the type of text they wish to produce, but also the language they use, and the information they choose to include.

Secondly, experienced writers think of the audience they are writing for, since this will influence not only the shape of the writing (how it is laid out, how the paragraphs are structured, etc.), but also the choice of language whether, for example, it is formal or informal in tone. Thirdly, writers have to consider the content structure of the piece - that is, how best to sequence the facts, ideas, or arguments which they have decided to include.

The second element is drafting. We can refer to the first version of a piece of writing as a draft. This first "go" at a text is often done on the assumption that it will be amended later. As the writing process proceeds into editing, a number of drafts may be produced on the way to the final version.

Editing (reflecting and revising) is the next element. Once writers have produced a draft, they usually create it through what they have written to see where it works and where it doesn't. Perhaps the order of the information is not clear. Perhaps the way something is written is ambiguous or confusing. They may then move paragraphs around or write a new introduction. They may use a different form of words for a particular sentence. More skilled writers tend to look at issues of general meaning and overall structure before concentrating on detailed features such as individual words and grammatical accuracy. The latter two are, of course, important and are often dealt with later in the process. Reflecting and revising are often helped by other readers (or editors) who comment and make suggestions.

According to Ngabut (as cited in Sari, 2013), there are four common problems in writing such as content, organizing, vocabulary and grammar. Meanwhile Bahri and Sugeng (2008) explain that the two common problems which students face in writing are vocabulary and grammar.Seyabi (2014) states that for school students, results showed that deciding how to start the essay/ paragraph is their biggest problem.

In every act of writing, texts are involved. Hyland (2003, p.:4) argues that "texts are often regarded as a series of appropriate grammatical structures, and so instruction may employ "slot and filler" frameworks in which sentences with different meanings can be generated by varying the words in the slots." There are various types of English texts such as descriptive, narrative, report, recount, procedure, exposition, hortatory, explanation, etc.

Curriculum 2013 has been implemented in SMA N 1 Kecamatan Payakumbuh for grade X and grade XI, but for grade XII, KTSP is still used. In KTSP (2006), writing an explanation text is one of a skill that a grade XII

student needs to be mastered.Although writing an explanation text is a skill that students need to be acquired, students feel that writing an explanation is difficult because the text is scientific and it use the technical form of verbs that the students are not accustomed to use.

An explanation is a type of text that give explanation about how a phenomenon or why something in the world happens. An explanation text is more about action rather than things. Technical and scientific forms are involved in explanation text.Knapp and Watkins (2005) said that an explanation text has two mains orientation: to explain why and to explain how. According to Xueqian (2008), an explanation text is aimed at explaining how and why something works in a particular way and why something happen.

Refnaldi (2010) says that explanation genre has the function as a factual text to explain the processes in the evolution of natural phenomena. In addition, explanations are more about processes and things. An explanation text is often found in science and social studies. The process of explaining is used to logically sequence the way and that we and our environment physically function, as well as understanding and interpreting why cultural and intellectual ideas and concepts prevail. An explanation text provides the learners an understanding about the world and how it operates. There are three main orientations of an explanation text: explain how, explain why and explain how and why.

Barwick (1999) states that it is important for students to strive to become critical writers who understand why one way of expressing something is better than another. They will need to focus on use of appropriate vocabulary for the purpose and audience, graphics that add to the understanding of the text, structure, and well organised use of only the necessary information.

Several studies have been conducted in relation with explanation text. Mayasari (2014) has conducted a study through analysing students' ability in writing an explanation text at SMA N 1 Pariaman. The researcher analysed the students' ability in writing an explanation text viewed from vocabulary, mechanic and grammar. Furthermore, Desitawardani (2014) conducted the same research about students' ability in writing an explanation text, but she analysed the students' ability viewed from content, organizations, language use, vocabulary and mechanics. Both of the research uses the general scoring rubric which can be used to score all genres of texts.

Although there are a lot of researchers who have conducted the research previously, this research is different because the researcher investigated the students' ability in writing an explanation text viewed from generic structures and language features. It is known from the interview with the teacher that students think that explanation texts are complicated because they have to read before they write since the text is a scientific text written by providing facts. The students are not interested in learning the explanation text if the teacher does not use media to help them building their background information.

In addition, the explanation text written by the students is scored by the teacher without telling them in which part they are lack about, whether in

generic structures or the language features of the text. Meanwhile the students have to know in which part they are lack about in writing an explanation text.

The purpose of conducting this research was to obtain information about the students' ability in writing explanation text viewed from generic structure and language feature.The result of this research will be able to inform teachers about students' ability in understanding generic structure and language features, and which aspects they are still lack of, whether it is in generic structure or language features.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This research was a descriptive quantitative research because the research was designed to analyse the students' ability in writing an explanation text. According to Gay (2012), quantitative research was the collection and analysis of numerical data to describe, explains, predict, or control phenomena of interest. This research was designed to analyse the grade XII students' ability in writing an explanation text viewed from generic structures and language features. The population of the research was the grade XII students at SMA N 1 Kecamatan Payakumbuh, and the sample was chosen by cluster random sampling. The research used writing test and picture series as the instrument to obtain the data. The students were asked to chose one of the topics provided to write and their ability in writing explanation text were analysed by using the scoring rubric of explanation text that contains of two aspects, generic structure and language features.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION
1. Research Finding

The data of the research were obtained from the students' writing test given to grade XII students of SMA N 1 Kecamatan Payakumbuh. The instrument used to obtain the data about students' ability in writing explanation text was the writing test and picture series. The whole respondents for the research were 20 students. There were 3 topics that the students were asked to choose.

Table 5. Topics of Explanation text

No	Topics	Number of Students
1	The Lifecycle of Butterflies	8
2	The Lifecycle of Frog	3
3	The water cycle	9
	Total	20

The students' score in writing explanation essay were obtained after analysing their writing using the scoring rubric of explanation text, and the scores from the two scorers are combined. Therefore the score could be categorized as excellent, very good, good, fair, and poor.

After scoring the students' writing and combining scores from both scorers, the final score of student is obtained. Then the students' scores are categorized into five levels which are excellent, very good, good, fair, and poor. As the result, there are four students in excellent level (student 1, student 11,

student 12, and student 16). There are seven students in very good level (student 13, student 20, student 5, student 17, student 2, student 19 and student 14). There are 5 students in good level (student 6, student 4, student 10, student 9 and student 8). In fair level, there are four students (student 3, student 15, student 18, student 7). Meanwhile there is no student in poor level.

Table 6. Students' scores in writing explanation text

Students	Scorer 1		Scorer 2		Final Score
	Generic Structures	Language Features	Generic Structures	Language Features	
1	20	18	19	18	89
2	17	16	19	13	75
3	9	12	11	13	53
4	13	15	15	13	66
5	14	18	15	18	77
6	13	15	18	13	69
7	10	11	8	13	50
8	11	13	12	13	58
9	12	17	12	13	64
10	12	14	14	15	65
11	18	19	20	18	89
12	20	18	19	17	87
13	15	17	17	18	79
14	20	13	18	15	78
15	11	11	12	11	53
16	18	19	17	19	86
17	16	16	19	14	77
18	9	13	10	12	52
19	19	14	17	14	75
20	19	15	17	16	79
	307	304	309	296	1414
Total of final scores					1414
Mean score					70.7**(good)**

So The findings of the research are:
   a. The grade XII students' ability at SMA N 1 KecamatanPayakumbuh viewed from generic structure was in very good level with the mean score 71.42 (in range of 1-100).
   b. The grade XII students' ability viewed from language features at SMA N 1 KecamatanPayakumbuh was in very good level with the mean score 71.42 (in range score of 1-100)

c. The grade XII students' ability viewed from generic structure and language features was in good level with the mean score 70.7 (in the range 0f 1-100)

2. Discussion

Student 1 wrote the text in the correct form of the generic structure of explanation text and language features, but the student needs to add more information and concluding statement. Furthermore, the language features were used correctly but still needs to pay more attention on singular and plural subject. Next, student 2 wrote the text in a complete generic structure but the writer needed to pay more attention in the language features of explanation text, and the writer also needs to build more background information in building explanation text.

Student 3's ability in writing explanation text viewed from generic structure needed improvement on providing sufficient information and the writer needed to state the concluding statement. In addition, the writer's ability in using the language features of explanation text was not good enough because the use of many inappropriate words related to the topic, and the use of adverbial time and places, the use of complex noun and nominalization needed to be increased in the next writing. Then, student 4's ability in writing needed improvement. The text was only in one paragraph so some information was missing. It did not include sufficient information, yet it could be understood. Because of the lack of information, adverbial time and places were not stated in the events. Complex noun group were sometimes used in building the text.

Student 5's has written the explanation text based on the generic structure and language features of explanation text but still needs some improvements in the use of language features of explanation text.Student 6 needed improvement on sequencing the events, providing sufficient information about the phenomena, and the concluding statement. Meanwhile from the language features aspect, the student needed to use simple present tense and passive voice consistently. The use of conjunctions and adverbial time and places should be increased to add more information for the text.

Student 7's ability in writing explanation text was still low, the generic structure was not complete and the uses of language features were still far from enough. The writer needed to provide sufficient information to explain the processes of water cycle. Also, the writer needed to pay attention to each sentence that was constructed so that it could be understood by the readers.The ability of student 8 in writing explanation text was in good level viewed from generic structure and language features. The student 8 needed to improve the text whether it was the generic structure or language features. The writer should pay attention to the aspects of generic structure and language features of explanation text.

Student 9 needed improvement in the generic structure because it did not contain the complete elements of the generic structure of explanation text, and many aspects of language features of explanation text needed to improve such

as the use of passive voice, technical words and adverbial time and phrases. Student 10 needs to improve the text by providing sufficient information to explain each event and the student needed to pay attention to the language features of the text.Student 11's writing is in excellent level viewed from generic structures and the language features but the student sometimes used the verb that did not suitable with the context of explanation text.

Student 12 wrote the explanation text in the correct generic structures but needs to improve on the concluding statement and the student needs to be aware about the verb based on the context of the topic written. The student also needs to use more complex noun and technical words.Student 13's ability in writing explanation text viewed from generic structure and language features were very good but the student needed to add more information related to the topic and wrote the concluding statement to end the text. In addition, the student needs to use conjunctions to link events, and use action verb consistently to explain the process.

The explanation text written by student 14 was in very good level because it has fulfilled the aspects of generic structures and language features of explanation text, yet it still needs some improvement on some aspects such as the need to write concluding statement, to include more information, to use technical words, complex noun group and nominalization, and to use conjunctions to link events. Student 15's ability in writing explanation text needed lots improvement in generic structures and language features because of the lack of some aspects that was missed by the writer to be stated.the student has to be more aware about the language features of explanation text.

The explanation text written by student 16 was has fulfilled the criteria of an explanation text viewed from generic structure and language features. What the writer needed to improve was to include more information to support each event, to write a clear concluding statement and to use conjunctions for connecting the events. In addition, the writer also needed to use more complex noun and technical words. Next, the explanation text written by student 17 was very good but the text has to contain more information to prove the writer's knowledge of the topic, the use of simple present tense, passive voice and action verb should be increased, and the writer should add adverbial time and place for the events.Student 18's ability in building the text based on the element of generic structures need improvements. There was no opening statement or general statement written, and the writer directly explained the events. The events were sequenced in correct sequence but the writer did not provide sufficient information to prove her knowledge of the topic. The writer also did not state concluding statement that was the main element of generic structures in explanation text.

Student 19's ability in writing explanation text viewed from generic structure and language features was written based on the elements of generic structure and language features in explanation text but the writer needs some improvement because the text did not contain sufficient information about where and when. The writer needed to pay attention about the use of conjunctions, passive voice and action verb.Last, the explanation text written

by student 20 was good but the student needed to add more information to support each event, to write a concluding statement properly, to use more complex noun and nominalization, to use verb and pay attention to the context.

After analysing the students' score, it is found that the grade XII students' ability in writing an explanation text is in the good level with the mean score 70.7. In addition, XII IPA 2 is dominated by the students in very good level. It is proved from the data obtained that from 20 students, four students are in excellent level, seven students are in very good level, five students are in good level and four students are in fair level. The complete description can be seen in table 8 below.

Table 8. Percentage of students' ability in writing an explanation text

Number of Students	Level of Ability	Percentage
4	Excellent	20%
7	Very good	35%
5	Good	25%
4	Fair	20%
0	Poor	0%

The mistakes that most student made in writing explanation text viewed from generic structure aspect were the lack of information in writing the text, the students did not use how or why as the title, the students mostly forgot to include the concluding statement. Meanwhile from the language features aspect, the students rarely use passive voice, the students use the verbs that did not suitable with the context, then the students also sometimes did not use scientific or technical words to explain the phenomena.

D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings of the research, it can be concluded that the grade XII students' ability in writing an explanation text at SMA N 1 Kecamatan Payakumbuh was in the *good* level. The problems that were mostly found in generic structure were the lack of information, then most of the students did not state the concluding statement, and they did not use how and why as the title because they directly used the topic as the title. In addition, the problems in analysing the language features were the use of complex noun, the use of inappropriate verbs, and when they used the passive voice, they did not construct the passive voice grammatically correct.

Thus, the researcher suggests some suggestions toward the English teacher to obtain a better result in learning and teaching explanation text. The teacher should build the background knowledge of the students related to the topic of the texts before they start writing. In addition, the teacher needs to teach more about constructing a sentence so the students can construct a sentence grammatically correct because there were many students whose sentences were still grammatically incorrect. Then, the teacher should pay more attention to the use of complex noun, nominalization, and technical words related to the topic.

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