Students' Performance in Writing English Exposition Text of the Eleventh Graders of SMAN 13 Jakarta

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Abstract

This article analyzed the understanding of eleventh graders' students at SMAN 13 Jakarta regarding the exposition text. The purpose of this paper was to find out to what extent the comprehension of eleventh graders of students of exposition text through the levels in the Blake Education rubric. The analysis table developed by Blake Education (1998) was used for the essay text analysis process. From the four main indicators studied, the results of this study indicated that (1) the average student was already at level 2, which could be categorized as an understanding of the exposition text; (2) although the average in both the Natural Sciences Program and Social Sciences Program was at level 2, the data showed that the students of Natural Science Program understood the exposition text better than the students of Social Science Program did. This paper also provided evidence regarding the difficulties of students in writing exposition texts. These findings showed that the ability of students to write exposition texts was in the middle or average level.

Keywords: Exposition text, writing performance, Blake Education rubric

INTRODUCTION

As one of the most important skills in this globalization era, writing skills, as stated in National Writing Project and Nagin (2006), play important roles in supporting a person's achievement in various aspects of life. For instance, in educational areas, writing skills can be major criteria towards a better academic position and greater educational success. There may be students with a high degree of knowledge, and they may know the answer to a question in a test, but conversely obtain a low mark from that test because they cannot express their knowledge due to their writing weakness (Hosseini et al. 2013). Weigle (2002) states that writing skills are not a skill to master only by the educated but also by all people from various backgrounds of global society. There are some reasons regarding the urgency of mastering writing skills, among which are to enable people to share their insight and views. The ability to write in English, especially, is considered as a pre-request to master other language skills and for any subject of study (Al-Shourafa, 2012; Hosseini et al., 2013).

Despite its prominence, however, many Indonesian schools lack its concern for language skills (Alwasilah, 2001; Aydin, 2010; Williams, 2005). Students' learning still rarely emphasizes the importance of writing activities which causes students meet little opportunity to write. Writing skills can be a powerful tool

to support student success, both in learning activities or in student life in general (National Writing Project and Nagin, 2006). Al-Kataybeh and Al-Shourafa (2011) mention that the growing importance of English as an international language is observed in all countries in the world, among which was Jordan where the government recognized the growing importance of teaching English, so it is taught in all stages as a basic subject from kindergarten to university level, which is similar to the case in Indonesia.

Writing is a comprehensive ability involving grammar, vocabulary, conception, rhetoric, and other parts of the language (Zhang & Chen, 1989) which can facilitate students' learning, career, and daily communication. Bello (1997) states that writing enhances language acquisition as learners experiment with words, sentences, and other elements of writing to communicate their idea effectively and to reinforce the grammar and vocabulary they are learning in class. It can be concluded that if someone cannot write well, they would have difficulty communicating with others which also affects the ability to learn the other sciences and their career in the future.

As an effort to improve the quality of education, including language teaching and learning, since 2013, the Government of the Republic of Indonesia through the Ministry of Education and Culture has implemented a new curriculum called Curriculum 2013. Related to English language learning, the approach used is a genre-based approach in which the students are directed to be better at mastering all aspects of language skills, specifically writing, by actively getting involved in capturing and composing meaning based on various types of texts. In general, the types of texts taught in Indonesian schools, especially in junior high schools and senior high schools are recount, descriptive, report, narrative, procedure, exposition, discussion, explanation, and news items (Emilia, 2011). Learning activities are carried out through four stages, namely building knowledge/context, analyzing models, conducting guided training, and conducting independent performance (Emilia, 2011). After reading descriptive text, for instance, students are expected to be able to write a descriptive text.

As individuals enter adulthood, high school students should be equipped with the ability to convey ideas logically. Reasoning implies that in conveying ideas, students can use their common sense so that statements made are logical and acceptable to others (Badudu and Zain, 1994; KBBI V, 2016). Therefore, students are expected to become active citizens in developing democratic behavior, one of which can be formed through the delivery of opinions or ideas that are responsible in society. Based on the syllabus of English learning for High School in 2013, one type of text that requires students to practice doing so is exposition text. Exposition, which is usually categorized as argumentative texts, is a text that offers evaluative-critical kind of idea (Emilia, 2011) that enables students to practice expressing arguments toward an issue and giving reasons for justification (See Alwasilah and Alwasilah, 2005; Kinneavy and Warriner, 1998; Tompkins, 2008). In everyday life, exposition texts are usually found in essays, editorials, political debates, or comments (Emilia, 2011). As people are given more freedom to show their opinions and arguments, learning to write an exposition text will enable students to write a comprehensive argument about a topic or an issue and persuade the readers to support their opinion. In the classroom context, exposition text can bridge students to have the skills to convey ideas logically which then help them develop their academic competence (Bizzell in Emilia, 2005).

Numbers of research have been conducted in writing performance and in exposition text, especially in analytical or hortatory exposition text. A study conducted by Nurjanah (2018) investigated the difficulties of XI IPA 2 students of SMA N 3 Bengkulu Tengah in writing an analytical exposition text which revealed that students have difficulties in writing the argument and in using the language feature. Those difficulties were caused by students' weakness in constructing simple present tense and passive sentences, developing ideas, and translating paragraphs from the Indonesian language into English form. Wulandari (2011) and Rosmeri (2014) researched on the students' ability in constructing ideas in analytical exposition texts which found that the students had difficulties in constructing an idea. Different from these, Pambudi (2013) looked at the students' ability in using grammar and found 342 grammatical errors in the students' paragraphs. Besides, there is Hilmi (2013) who looked at the students' ability in using the passive sentence in analytical exposition texts, the result of which revealed that there were 86.25% students with difficulties in using a passive sentence. It is important to find out the students' difficulties in search of the suitable ways to improve students' ability to write an argument on a topic correctly and appropriately. Moreover, the errors can reflect the students' difficulties and become feedback for themselves. Another study conducted by Muslimin and Ichsaniati (2016) measured the students' ability in writing English exposition text: descriptive study at the

second grade of senior high school of Hangtuah 3 Mataram in the academic year 2015/2016. The result scores showed that students' ability in writing English exposition text was categorized as good, represented by 20 students or 67% out of total population. In addition, eight students were classified into very good because their score was higher than 79. It showed that those 26% students have a good skill in writing exposition text including mastery in grammar, vocabulary, and creating an exposition text. Lastly, there were two students or 7% who were classified as fairly good because their score was higher than 52.

Based on the above explanation, the writer is interested in finding out what the level of high school students' performance in writing English exposition text. It is hoped that through this research, a general picture (profile) of high school students' English writing skills can be obtained and used as further reference for organizing English language teaching and learning development programs, particularly concerning the skills of exposition text writing in English. This study was built upon Nurjanah (2018) that focused on finding out students' difficulties in writing an analytical exposition text in terms of the generic structure and the language feature.

RESEARCH METHOD

Survey method and content analysis were chosen as the research design, involving eleventh grade of senior high school students in the Natural Sciences Program (*IPA*) and Social Sciences Program (*IPS*) in SMAN 13 Jakarta, based on the consideration that they have obtained exposition text material as required in the curriculum. In addition, the eleventh grade is usually not yet oriented by the school to activities that are materially deepening to cope with the national exam. The data from the survey are collected relatively limited to describe relatively large numbers of cases (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2007; Sevilla et al, 1993). More data on the exposition texts were obtained by collecting students' writings on exposition text based on ten given topics. The data were qualitatively analyzed involving several steps, namely, transcribe the text, analyze the data using Exposition Skills Checklist Rubric from Blake Education (which includes purpose, structure, text organization, and language features), tabulate the data into the table analysis, and explain the findings in detailed comprehension in the discussion section.

The table analysis below allows the researchers to measure the exposition text return by the students to know what the student's performance level in writing English exposition text is. The scale consisted of three items level codes, namely 1 = consistently evident, 2 = Sometimes evident, and 3 = Not evident.

Table 1. Exposition Skills Checklist Rubric (*Blake Education*)

Name :	
Class :	**LEVEL**
PURPOSE	
Understands and focuses on the purpose of an exposition.	
STRUCTURE	
Clearly states a problem in the introduction.	
Writes a strong statement of position.	
Supports the opening statement with background information.	
Formulates an argument, selecting facts to support and elaborate a point of view.	
Uses a variety of strategies to persuade the audience and reinforce the position.	
Identifies different forms of persuasive writing.	
TEXT ORGANISATION	
Understands the function of each stage.	
Develops a well-sequenced plan.	
Organizes each point and its elaboration into appropriate paragraphs.	
Sequences points from most effective to least effective.	
Can locate and research relevant information.	

Is able to detect contradictory evidence.	
LANGUAGE FEATURES	
Is aware of the needs of the audience.	
Uses connectives and conjunctions to link ideas, contrast concepts, sequence thoughts and connect cause and effect.	
Differentiates between fact and opinion.	
Uses emotive words.	
Uses degree of certainty of modality in words selected.	
Uses abstract and technical words appropriately.	
Uses reported speech to refer to expert comments and research.	
Writes in the present tense and changes to past or future when appropriate.	
Uses nominalization to write with authority in passive voice.	
LEVEL CODES 1 Consistently evident 2 Sometimes evident 3 Not evident	

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Results

The table below illustrates the results on the eleventh grader students' performance in writing English exposition text. The findings of the study revealed that the performance level of Natural Sciences Program *(IPA)* and Social Sciences Program *(IPS)* students was predominant by level 2. In alignment with the point of view of the rubric, the Natural Sciences Program *(IPA)* students were better at understanding and producing acceptable English exposition texts compare to those of the Social Sciences Program *(IPS)*. Although there was a difference in the total number of students in each class (26 students were in the Natural Sciences Program *(IPA)* while 33 students were in the Social Sciences Program *(IPS)*), the table of analysis shows that the number of the Natural Sciences Program *(IPA)* students who were in level 1 was higher than that of in the Social Sciences Program *(IPS)*.

Table 2. Table Analysis of Students' Performance Level (Natural Sciences Program – *IPA*)

NO	INDICATOR	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3
	Purpose			
1	Understands and focuses on the purpose of an exposition.	38,46%	53,84%	7,69%
	Structure			
2	Clearly states a problem in the introduction.	50%	34,6%	15,38%
3	Writes a strong statement of position.	23,07%	53,84%	23,07%
4	Supports the opening statement with background information.	46,15%	50%	3,84%
5	Formulates an argument, selecting facts to support and elaborate a point of view.	23,07%	69,23%	7,69%
6	Uses a variety of strategies to persuade the audience and reinforce the position.	42,30%	50%	7,69%
7	Identifies different forms of persuasive writing.	0%	26%	0%
	Text Organisation			
8	Understands the function of each stage.	3,84%	92,30%	3,84%
9	Develops a well-sequenced plan.	26,92%	69,23%	3,84%

10	Organizes each point and its elaboration into appropriate paragraphs.	26,92%	61,53%	11,53%
11	Sequences points from most effective to least effective.	19,23%	57,69%	23,07%
12	Can locate and research relevant information.	23,07%	57,69%	3,84%
13	Is able to detect contradictory evidence.	7,69%	26,92%	65,38%
Language Features				
14	Is aware of the needs of the audience.	42,30%	46,15%	11,53%
15	Uses connectives and conjunctions to link ideas, contrast concepts, sequence thoughts and connect cause and effect.	23,07%	76,92%	0
16	Differentiates between fact and opinion.	38,46%	50%	11,53%
17	Uses emotive words.	11,53%	88,46%	0%
18	Uses degree of certainty of modality in words selected.	0%	100%	0%
19	Uses abstract and technical words appropriately.	3,84%	80,76%	15,38%
20	Uses reported speech to refer to expert comments and research.	11,53%	50%	38,46%
21	Writes in the present tense and changes to past or future when appropriate.	3,84%	84,61%	11,53%
22	Uses nominalization to write with authority in passive voice.	3,84%	84,61%	11,53%

Table 3. Table Analysis of Students' Performance Level (Social Sciences Program – *IPS*)

NO	INDICATOR	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3
Purpose				
1	Understands and focuses on the purpose of an exposition.	9,09%	57,57%	33,33%
Structure				
2	Clearly states a problem in the introduction.	21,21%	60,60%	18,18%
3	Writes a strong statement of position.	3,03%	63,63%	33,33%
4	Supports the opening statement with background information.	9,09%	72,72%	18,18%
5	Formulates an argument, selecting facts to support and elaborate a point of view.	0%	84,84%	15,15%
6	Uses a variety of strategies to persuade the audience and reinforce the position.	0%	54,54%	45,45%
7	Identifies different forms of persuasive writing.	0%	9,09%	90,90%
Text Organisation				
8	Understands the function of each stage.	6,06%	78,78%	15,15%
9	Develops a well-sequenced plan.	3,03%	81,81%	15,15%
10	Organizes each point and its elaboration into appropriate paragraphs.	3,03%	72,72%	24,24%
11	Sequences points from most effective to least effective.	0%	78,78%	21,21%
12	Can locate and research relevant information.	3,03%	69,69%	27,27%
13	Is able to detect contradictory evidence.	3,03%	84,84%	12,12%
Language Features				

14	Is aware of the needs of the audience.	3,03%	72,72%	24,24%
15	Uses connectives and conjunctions to link ideas, contrast concepts, sequence thoughts and connect cause and effect.	3,03%	84,84%	12,12%
16	Differentiates between fact and opinion.	0%	69,69%	30,30%
17	Uses emotive words.	3,03%	54,54%	42,42%
18	Uses degree of certainty of modality in words selected.	6,06%	48,48%	45,45%
19	Uses abstract and technical words appropriately.	3,03%	63,63%	33,33%
20	Uses reported speech to refer to expert comments and research.	0%	21,21%	78,78%
21	Writes in the present tense and changes to past or future when appropriate.	39,39%	60,60%	0%
22	Uses nominalization to write with authority in passive voice.	6,06%	39,39%	54,54%

B. Discussion

English writing exposition text was observed by using the instrument developed by Blake Education that denotes the component of assessment – purpose, structure, text organization and language features. By this rubric, 22 indicators could clearly explain the understanding of the students toward English writing exposition text. Related to the purpose of exposition text, the study found that 54% students in Natural Sciences Program were in the level 2, while 58% of students in the Social Sciences Program were in the level 2. The students of the Natural sciences program placed on level 1 covered a total of 38,46% while that of the Social sciences program covered only 9%. It is inversely proportional with level 3 on both classes. There were fewer students in the Natural Sciences Program who were in level 3 (8%) than they were in the Social Sciences Program (33%). It can be concluded that although there were still two people could not understand and focus on the purpose of understanding an exposition text, students in the Natural Sciences Program were better than that of in Social Sciences Program.

For the second component, students had no serious problem in stating the problem clearly in the introduction. They also could write a strong statement of position and support the opening statement with background information. Some Social Sciences Program *(IPS)* students found it hard to formulate an argument or select facts to support and elaborate a point of view, use a variety of strategies to persuade the audience and reinforcement the position, also identify different forms of persuasive writing, which was shown that none of those in the level 1 could meet the indicators. Similarly, none of the students in Natural Sciences Program *(IPA)* were able to identify different forms of persuasive writing. Their understanding on the purpose of exposition text reflected basic level of understanding to develop their thoughts and information related to the main idea.

For the structure of the exposition text, the study found that more than 70% students in the Natural Sciences Program were in the level 2 and 1 while the number of students in the Social Sciences Program reaching the same levels was lower. The indicators that represented the students' understanding on the structure of exposition text were the ability to clearly state a problem in the introduction, write a strong statement position, support the opening statement with background information, formulate an argument and select facts to support and elaborate a point of view, use a variety of strategies to persuade the audience and reinforce the position, and identify different forms of persuasive writing. Those indicators reflect their ability to think critically, to explain more about their knowledge related to the fact and opinion. On top of that, none of the students in the Social Sciences Program properly showed ability to formulate an argument and select facts to support and elaborate a point of view, use a variety of strategies to persuade the audience and reinforce the position and identifies different forms of persuasive writing, structure of the exposition text. Nevertheless, most of them were in level 2, which could be categorized as enough understanding related to proper structure of exposition text.

Meanwhile, in terms of text organization, students from both programs did not have any serious problem. The indicators that represent the students' understanding in text organization of exposition text were the ability to understand the function of each stage, develop a well-sequenced plan, organize each point and its elaboration into appropriate paragraphs, sequence points from most effective to least effective, can locate and research relevant information, and detect contradictory evidence. The study found that students from both programs were mostly in the level 2. Most of them can understand the function of each stage, develop a well-sequenced plan, organize each point and elaborate in appropriate paragraphs, understand how to sequence points from most effective to least effective, locate and research relevant information, and detect contradictory evidence. It can be concluded that most of them stated proper understanding related to the text organization. In the Natural Sciences Program, only 4% students did not understand the function of each stage, how to develop a well-sequenced plan, and how to locate and research relevant information related to the exposition text. It was inversely proportional with the Social Sciences Program, showing 12% of students unable to detect contradictory evidence, organize each point and its elaboration into appropriate paragraphs, and locate and research relevant information.

For the last content of the assessment, the indicators that represented the students' understanding on the language features of exposition text were the awareness of the needs of the audience, the ability to use connectives and conjunctions to link ideas, contrast concepts, sequence thoughts and connect cause and effect, to differentiate between fact and opinion, to appropriately use emotive words, degree of certainty of modality in words selected, abstract and technical words, reported speech to refer to expert comments and research, and nominalization to with authority in passive voice, and to write in the present tense and change to past or future when appropriate. The result showed that there were still a lot of students who did not understand how to differentiate between fact and opinion, and appropriately use emotive words, degree of certainty of modality in words selected, abstract and technical words, reported speech to refer to expert comments and research, and nominalization to write with authority in passive voice. Although the study found that students in both programs were mostly in the level 2, students in the Natural Science Program did slightly make better performance. There were fewer students in the Natural Sciences Program (38%) who could not use reported speech to refer to expert comments and research, compared to that of in the Social Sciences Program (79%). The study also found that no students in the Natural Sciences Program truly understand the degree of the use of certainty of reality in words selected. On the other hand, in the Social Sciences Program, no students could really differentiate between fact and opinion and use reported speech to refer to expert comments and research.

The result of this study is in a similar vein with Nurjanah's (2018) study that analyzed the difficulties in writing an analytical exposition text in the eleventh grade of SMAN 3 Bengkulu. She revealed that the students had the same difficulties in writing the argument and in using the language feature. Those difficulties were caused by students' weakness in constructing simple present tense, constructing a passive sentence, and developing the idea, and by students' translating paragraphs from the Indonesian language into English form. This all can be a really serious problem when they are trying to write another exposition text, because their lack of understanding on the meaning and the rules of writing exposition text will hamper their ability to convey information appropriately and precisely. How can they persuade the readers if they do not understand how to differentiate between fact and opinion and use the modals and the tenses as a basic correctly, for example? The fact that the eleventh-grade students of SMAN 13 Jakarta are in level 2 shows that they mostly understand what an exposition text is and how to write one, but they are still confused or uncertain in a few parts.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

It can be summarized that the students can produce acceptable exposition text since they are categorized in the level 2 or the average level, although the Natural Sciences Program *(IPA)* students show better understanding than the Social Sciences Program *(IPS)* students do.

According to the literature and the findings of the study, the researcher suggests that the English teachers in school give more attention to the students' writing skills and opportunities to write similar text to make sure that the students understand the subject matter. Familiarizing the students with the texts with a good structure can potentially enhance students' ability to communicate and express their thoughts or ideas. A

proper instruction, a clear task, and a continuous monitoring are also needed to encourage students to get involved with the discussion of the topic or material and build their critical thinking related to the essay of exposition text that they write. Further research is also encouraged to give more attention and more accurate result involving larger number of participants so that the result can picture a broader population.

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