

Students' Problems in Writing Exposition Texts: *Structure, Function, and Effectiveness*

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Abstract—Writing skill is one of the core competencies for students to succeed in academic. However, students often face many difficulties when conveying their ideas through writing. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to identify students' problems in writing exposition texts based on three indicators; 1) the structure of the text, 2) the function of syntax, and 3) the effectiveness of the text. The method used in this study was descriptive qualitative research. Data were collected from 30 exposition texts written by high school students. The findings of this study reveal that the errors made by the students were categorized high. Incorrect sentences found as much as 65% or 149 of 231 sentences in the texts. It indicates that students require practicing more to enhance their writing skills.

Keywords: *exposition texts, problems, writing*

I. INTRODUCTION

The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) mentions that the literacy culture of Indonesian society in 2018 become the six-worst from the 79 countries that researched. In fact, students are only accustomed to recording the material taught according to what the teacher is teaching or not the outcome of the understanding. This is what makes students less creative and lazy to think. It is necessary to update efforts in education to form businesses and processes where students are more involved.

That means the writing habits of Indonesian students are still low. However, writing skills belong to everyone who has attended school. People who loved to write in the early days tend to be a good writer in the future, while those who failed to learn to write in the early years of school will be struggling in the following years (Puranik & Lonigan, 2014). It because writing skill is considered to be the most complex language skills, such as a complex structure and can only be learned by developing the ability to manipulate grammar.

The writing tradition is currently declined because of the rapid development of technology, especially the existence of electronic devices. In fact, writing activities have many benefits because they produce a wide variety of skills such as critical thinking, improve memory capacity, and motor skills. Moreover, it also helps to improve knowledge, expanding ideas, and enrich the reasons (Miller, Scott, & McTigue, 2016).

Students usually record any material that taught in accordance with what is conveyed by the teacher or not as the result of their understanding. Pelger and Nilsson (2015)

explained that appropriate content goals and writing strategies can facilitate students' conceptual changes successfully and permanently. Students must be given broad opportunities in developing their activities and creativity.

Yet the challenges ahead, every individual is required to be able to write better to achieve academic and career success. One of the text models that is suitable for teaching students to be critical-creative personalities is exposition text. This text contains the opinion of someone who needs to be criticized by the supporting arguments (Ardiasri, Priyatni, & Andajani, 2017). Teng and Zhang (2017) revealed that teachers can associate the task of writing exposition text with students' daily interests to bring more fun to improve students' abilities. Not just getting new knowledge and insights, but to drive a change in attitude or approval of the statements in the text.

Mackenzie, Scull, and Bowles (2015) explain that the knowledge about writing contributes to the creation and production of complex texts and areas that need focused interventions that are very relevant in helping students develop writing skills. This study aims to explore the difficulties faced by students through indicators created. These indicators are in the form of proper text structure, syntactic functions, and the effectiveness of texts. This research is expected to increase the attention of students' writing skills so that it becomes a skill.

Writing not only requires cognitive and metacognitive involvement but also demands motivational control to maintain student's exposure in learning to write (Teng & Zhang, 2015). In addition, writing requires the ability to synchronize all aspects, both spelling, grammar, topic writing, and choice of words. Students' understanding of writing will develop when students go through the whole series in composing text. The more often students do the process of writing, so there is often a learning process. Through writing activities, students can influence others so as to make changes in the reader's life to a positive change.

When teaching writing, teachers must pay attention to students and observe how they organize the ideas and arrange them in a text (McCarthy & Mkhize, 2013). According to Semi (2009), there are three stages of writing. First, the pre-writing stage by setting topics, setting goals, gathering supporting information, and designing writing. Second, the writing phase is focused on the main ideas of writing, concentration on the purpose of writing,

concentration on the criteria of prospective readers, and concentration on publishing criteria. Third, the post-writing stage is in the form of editing and writing a finished manuscript.

Wing Jan (2009) states that the purpose of the text is to shape the structure and features of language that underlies the essential components of writing so that it can be embedded since the beginning of schooling. One of the texts that can improve students' abilities is the exposition text. The word of "exposition" comes from a Latin meaning to inform, expound, describe, or explain. Exposition is a description that attempts to explain something, written in a paragraph with the intention of notifying, exposing, parsing, and explaining something to the reader. The goal is for readers to get information and knowledge with clarity. In addition, the exposition texts attempt to reveal ideas or propose something based on a strong argument. The text is different from a discussion text that contains two sides of the argument; the exposition text contains only one side of the argument: a supportive side or a side reject.

This text becomes a text that describes a certain fact or event, containing thoughts or opinions to expand people's insights or knowledge. According to Mahsun (2014), the exposition text explains of a matter in which there is an author's argument. The opinion is important in the text of the exposition. The function of the exposition text is to propose, disclose personal opinions and present some knowledge. In this regard, the text structure of the exposition is threefold, namely (1) the thesis contains an introduction to the issue and position of the opinion of the author, (2) the argument contains an opinion that supports the thesis and contains factual information evidence or explanation, and (3) the conclusion contains a reaffirmation of the thesis which was delivered at the start.

According to Manaf (2009), sentence elements are an important consideration when writing a text. Complete or incomplete elements of a sentence become the reference. Students are required to express ideas at the sentence level clearly and in a consistent sequence using standard patterns (Teng & Zhang, 2015). These elements are subject and predicate. Based on the completeness of the elements, sentences can be grouped into two; first, major sentences are complete sentences of the syntactic function elements. At least in the major sentences contain elements of the subject and predicate. Second, minor sentences are sentences whose syntactic functions are incomplete. Syntactic functions that might not be mentioned might be subjects, predicates or both.

It is important to pay attention to the effectiveness of the sentence to ensure the text's goals and objectives can be achieved. An effective sentence must have the ability to reproduce ideas within the listener or reader mindset and it should be the same with the speaker or writer thinks (Keraf, 1989). According to Semi (2009), the effectiveness of the text can be seen by the capacity to be able to influence, leave an impression, and publish a taste in reading. The sentence in the text must be straightforward and smooth with the right choice of words and bring influence to the

reader or listener. There are two indicators of the effectiveness of the text in this study, namely the waste of words and the accuracy of word selection.

II. METHOD

The method used in this study was descriptive qualitative research. Data were collected from 30 exposition texts written by high school students.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that the errors made by the students were categorized high. Incorrect sentences found as much as 65% or 149 of 231 sentences in the texts. Exposition text as a text laden with information should be a concern. Exposition texts can increase knowledge and teach how to express opinions in providing information on a phenomenon. In essence, students must understand where and how to start essays. However, there is an obstacle found in students especially when expressing their ideas in written form. Students do not understand where to start and how to start writing. In addition, the nature of the exposition text is still not fully understood by students.

The following paragraph will discuss three elements related to the results of research. *First*, the structure of the text. Exposition text has three structures, namely (1) thesis, (2) argumentation, and (3) reaffirming opinion. Based on the findings, the researchers found incomplete text structures of 27% or 8 out of 30 texts. The unfulfilled structure that is often found in the conclusion or reaffirmation. This can be seen in the following student text sample.

TABLE I. STUDENT TEXT SAMPLE

Schematic Structure	Text Exposition
Thesis	Indonesia is currently facing a variety of serious environmental problems. The major environmental issues are flooding, landslides, fires, and deforestation.
Argumentation	The experts concluded that the problem was caused by the behavior of humans who do not pay attention to environmental sustainability. Supposedly human behavior can create a nature/environment to be healthy, clean, peaceful and comfortable.
Conclusion/Reaffirming opinion	For example, in Jakarta, the main cause of the flooding is to ignore the function of water catchment areas and waste disposal in the river/ waste.

As Table I shows, the results of writing show that the text made by students does not fit into the structure of the exposition text. Students failed to formulate the correct reaffirmation in the third paragraph. Reaffirmation becomes a reinforcement of the opinion that has been supported by the facts in the arguments section. In addition, the reaffirmation contains recommendations or suggestions to the issues raised. Students should recount or provide solutions to environmental problems in accordance with the written theme. One of the major improvements can be seen in the following paragraphs.

The problem is very serious if not acted upon. Governments and communities must cooperate in overcoming this. One effort to do is to clean the drains that were clogged and make the water infiltration.

Second, the syntactic function. In sentence construction, the role of syntactic functions is to fill the sections with certain forms of language. Syntactical functions are subject (S), predicate (P), object (O), complement (Pel), and description (Ket). Based on the research findings, from the aspect of syntactic function elements by 15% or 22 out of 149 errors in mandatory sentence elements. These elements with details, namely (a) sentences that do not have a subject, (b) sentences that do not have a predicate, and (c) sentences that do not have a subject and predicate. One of them can be seen in the following sentence

(1) Fire, deforestation

Sentence (1) is difficult to understand because the element that contains the subject is not mentioned. That's implicated the meaning of the sentence to be unclear. In a sentence, not all syntactic functions must exist. At the very least, the sentence must contain elements of subject and predicate. Sentences that are sufficient elements must be understood easily and precisely. Sentence (1) can be corrected by adding a predicate adding *resulted* in the sentence (2).

(2) The fire resulted in the forest becoming bald.

Third, Effectiveness Text. Based on the results of the study, the low effectiveness of texts by 85% or 127 of 149 errors. The effectiveness is seen from two aspects, namely waste and inaccurate choice of words. According to Manaf (2009), sentence elements are redundant if they do not have meaning or function. Besides, words that have similar meanings cause wastefulness. The wastefulness of the sentence elements that mostly occur in this research is in the form of predicates, plural markers, and overlapping time. One of them can be seen in the following sentence.

(3) bad habits of this community make the community itself felt the impact.

Sentence (3) is an example of an incorrect sentence because of the use of overlapping plural markers. Sentence (3) contains two words: *community* and *itself*. The use of the word at once for the same purpose is wasteful. In addition, the waste of the sentence results in convoluted sentence structure so that the sentence becomes difficult to understand. Wastefulness is important to note so that sentence errors can be avoided. Then, the sentence becomes easily understood and avoids ambiguity. In the exposition text, students still find waste in writing a sentence. As a result, the sentence becomes difficult to understand by the reader or listener. Sentence (3) can be corrected by eliminating one of the words such as sentence (4).

(4) These bad habits make people feel the impact.

The accuracy of the choice of words are the form of ideas that comes from the imagination of the listener or reader. The right word concept becomes a word that

contains a concept or understanding that accurately describes the ideas expressed by the speaker or writer so that the sentence becomes easily understood. One of them can be seen in the following sentence.

(5) So when heavy rain falls then the city will be flooded (20.6)

Sentence (5) *So when heavy rain falls then the city will be flooded* is incorrect because it contains words that are not conceptually correct, seen on word *fall*. *Rain* is water points that fall from the air because of the cooling process. The word *fall* after the phrase *heavy rains* was considered inappropriate. That is because the rain has shown the water falling from the sky. Sentence (5) can be corrected by eliminating descending words like sentence (6).

(6) When heavy rains, then the city will be flooded.

The accuracy of the usage context should also be considered to be correct. The precise usage context is related to the word according to the situation the sentence is deposited. The choice of words must be adjusted to who to talk to, where, when, what the problem is, how the situation, and what the media are. Supposedly, the choice of words in the official situation differs from the choice of word in casual situation talks. Therefore, the word choice in terms of its usage context should be noted in order not to be a mistake from the author or speakers to the reader or listener. In the text of the exposition students still found inappropriate words such as the use of the word not raw that is not contained in the guidelines. One of the inaccuracy of the context can be seen in the following sentence.

(9) Some Indonesians reveal that forests in Indonesia are no longer sustainable as they used to be.

Sentence (9) some Indonesians reveal that forests in Indonesia, this is no longer sustainable as it used to be inappropriate because of the use of words that do not conform to the context of the situation, namely sustainable. In sentence (9), one communicates to an unknown general person who is highly educated or low, but the author uses a technical word, namely sustainable. The word is commonly used by biologists or highly-skilled people. If the word is addressed to the general person it will be difficult to understand. Therefore, sentence (9) can be corrected by replacing the word *lestari*, such as sentence (10).

(10) Some Indonesians reveal that forests in Indonesia are no longer preserved as before.

In addition, precision value of importance is noted for the sentence to be correct. The exact value of taste is related to the word that has the smoothness and politeness that corresponds to the social value of the people's culture. Incorrect sentences in terms of the accuracy of the taste value can be seen in quotations "one of the problems that are popular in Indonesia is flooding."

Based on the above quotation, the word famous in the sentence is not correct. The word has a taste value that does not match the public politeness. It should be, the choice of

words according to a sense of expressed according to the habit or speech so that the information received by the reader or listener becomes subtle. In addition, the word has the effects in addition to the dictionary or its main definition limitation.

Formulated research suggestions in the form of input for the parties in the effort to reduce the occurrence of Indonesian mistakes. The advice in this study is aimed at teachers of Indonesian language subjects, students, and other researchers.

First, for the teachers of Indonesian language, is expected to pay attention and give the practice of writing good and correct sentences to students because there are still many errors, namely (1) not found mandatory elements or lack of mandatory elements, (2) Found overlapping the use of predicate, conjunctive, plural marker, and time, (3) imprecision of choice of words in terms of exact concept, precise value of taste, and proper context of use, as well as (4) inaccuracy of the use of spelling in terms of letter usage Wording, and the use of punctuation. Therefore, the teacher must emphasize that the student is able to write by not violating the provisions of the indicator.

Secondly, for students, it is expected to be more active in studying and practicing good and correct sentences. When writing text, students can pay attention to the elements that must exist in a sentence, waste the elements of the sentence, choice of words, and spelling. It aims to make writing easy to understand and not the difference of interpretation between writers and readers.

Thirdly, for other researchers, it is advisable to review sentences with different indicators. In this study, the indicators are examined in the form of syntactic function, waste of sentences, word choice, and spelling. The objectives of other researchers use different indicators to develop the sentence study.

IV. CONCLUSION

Students' understanding of how to create will be developed by students who succeed in overcoming everything in the text. Student problems in writing must be recognized early on by the teacher. The students' full attention through the whole learning process becomes the

foundation that will last a long time on students. Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded about the difficulty of students in writing exposition texts of high school students who meet the qualifications. A key is that students can learn to write exercises and motivation. The more often students do the writing process, the more often the learning process occurs.

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