



ENGLISH DEPARTMENT STUDENTS' ABILITY IN WRITING NEWS ITEM TEXT AT STKIP YDB LUBUK ALUNG

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to examine the ability of English Department students in writing news item texts, particularly in terms of generic structures—namely the newsworthy event, background events, and language features—at STKIP YDB Lubuk Alung. The population of this research comprised all English Department students, with the sample selected through a total sampling technique. Data were collected using a writing test. The findings indicate that the students' writing ability in terms of generic structure was categorized as good, with an average score of 79.90%. In contrast, their ability in applying language features was classified as very good, with an average score of 81.40%. The overall mean score of students' writing ability in producing news item texts was 80.63%, which falls into the very good category. Further analysis shows that 7 students achieved scores ranging from 81–100 (very good), while 8 students obtained scores between 66–80 (good). In conclusion, the students demonstrated stronger performance in the use of language features compared to their mastery of generic structures in writing news item texts.

Keywords:

Writing Ability, News Item Text

A. INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of language skills that is used for indirect communication. The ability to communicate clearly in writing will help reader to get the information while the reader can't meet the author directly. It is another way to improve and share some ideas to other people when you can't meet face to face. Writing makes their thought more communicative to other as well as themselves while can't meet directly. Beside it, by writing we can accostum our mind to develop the ideas in sequencing. Writing skills can help the students to become a good writer.

Richard and Renandya (2002: 303) say that the students must plan and organize as well as possible for the spelling, word choice and punctuation to make a good writing. Writing skills also give the special instruction in spelling, handwriting, and key boarding. Beside that, writing skills can build the fluency and confidence for students and provide the variety of strategy and opportunity to apply it. In writing skills, the students are expected to understand the instruction involving grammar, usage, paragraph composition, and sentence structure.

In addition, Flachmann (2011:1) states that writing is the process of explaining what a words, an object, and or an idea is. A good definition focuses on what is special about a word, object, or idea and what sets it apart from similar words, objects, or ideas. Brown (2001: 334) describes writing is a complex process and sometimes used as a production mode of learning, reinforcing or testing grammatical concept. It means that writing is used to measure students' grammatical ability. Writing as a process of putting idea down on paper to transform thoughts into words, to sharp main ideas, and to give structure and coherence organization into the writing.

Writing skill in academic context is the ability of students to generate, organize, and present ideas logically and coherently in written form, using appropriate vocabulary, grammar, and structure to meet academic standards. It involves not only expressing thoughts clearly but also demonstrating critical thinking, argumentation, and adherence to conventions of academic writing such as citation, cohesion, and clarity. Writing skill is the ability to express ideas, thoughts, and information effectively in written form by generating, organizing, and developing them into clear, cohesive, and meaningful texts.

Writing is a productive language skill and a process of expressing ideas, thoughts, and feelings through written symbols. It involves several stages, such as generating and organizing ideas, drafting, revising, and editing, in order to produce coherent and meaningful texts. As a form of communication, writing enables individuals to share information and interact with others, even without direct or face-to-face contact.

Teaching writing is an essential part of academic literacy, where students learn not only how to express ideas effectively but also how to meet the expectations of particular academic disciplines. Teaching writing at the university level is a process of guiding students to develop academic literacy by helping them express ideas clearly, organize information logically, and use appropriate language conventions. It emphasizes both the process of writing (planning, drafting, revising, editing) and the final product, while fostering critical thinking and discipline-specific communication skills.

Sudarwati & Grace (2007:154) state that a news item text is used to report one or more newsworthy events by focusing on the important aspects of the event and providing background information. A news item text is a factual piece of writing that reports on newsworthy or significant events of the day. Its purpose is to inform the public objectively by presenting the main event, providing background details, and including relevant sources. The text is written clearly, concisely, and focuses on events considered important, unusual, or of public interest.

A news item text is a type of factual writing that informs readers or listeners about important, noteworthy, or unusual events that have occurred. Its main purpose is to report the news in a clear, objective, and concise way so that people can understand what happened, who was involved, when and where it happened, and why it is important. A news item text is a type of factual writing designed to inform the public about newsworthy events in a clear, objective, and structured way.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This research employed a descriptive design, as it sought to examine and portray the students' ability in writing news item texts at STKIP YDB Lubuk Alung. According to Gay and Airasian (2000:275), descriptive research is intended to present facts and characteristics of a particular subject objectively and accurately. The purpose of this study was to provide a clear description of the students' competence in producing news item texts. Given the relatively small population, the researcher utilized a total sampling technique by including all members of the population as the research sample. Sugiyono (2012:124) defines total sampling as a technique in which the entire population is selected as the sample. The primary instrument for data collection in this study was a writing test.

Gay and Airasian (2000:145) define an instrument as a tool used to collect data. Similarly, Brown (2004:3) explains that a test is a method of measuring a student's ability, knowledge, or performance within a particular domain. In this study, a writing test was administered by providing students with a topic and asking them to compose a news item text. The topic selected reflected a current issue in Indonesia at the time of the research. Students were instructed to complete the task individually within 90

minutes. Upon completion, the texts were submitted and assessed by the English teacher at the school. The scores obtained from this process were then analyzed to evaluate the students' ability in writing news item texts.

C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The students demonstrated varying levels of ability in writing news item texts, particularly in terms of generic structures and language features. Regarding generic structures, the texts consisted of three main components: the newsworthy event, background event, and source. The data revealed that the overall quality of students' writing was categorized as good to very good. Specifically, six students produced texts of very good quality, while nine students achieved a good level of performance.

Second, the students' ability in applying language features was also examined. The aspects assessed included the use of verbs, adverbs of place and time, and past tense. The data indicated that several students performed at a good level, while others achieved a very good level. Specifically, five students demonstrated good mastery of language features, and ten students achieved very good mastery. The overall results, combining both generic structures and language features, revealed that seven students obtained scores within the 81–100 range (very good), while eight students fell within the 66–80 range (good). In conclusion, the majority of students' ability in writing news item texts, when viewed from both generic structures and language features, was categorized as good, with fewer students reaching the very good category.

Table 1. Students' Ability in Writing News Item Text

Writing News Item	Students' Acceptable	Qualities
Generic structures	79.90%	Good
Language features	81.40%	Very good
Average of students' ability	80.63%	Very good

Based on Table 2, the students' ability in applying generic structures was categorized as good, with a percentage of 79.90%. Meanwhile, 81.40% of the students successfully employed appropriate language features, indicating a very good level of performance. The findings further revealed that the English Department students' ability in writing news item texts, in terms of generic structure—comprising newsworthy event, background event, and source—was generally good. In contrast,

their ability in using language features, including verbs, adverbs of place and time, and past tense, was classified as very good. Most students were able to incorporate all components of the generic structure in their writing, although a few made errors, particularly in the source section. Similarly, their use of language features was largely very good, though some students continued to face difficulties in both generic structures and language features.

Based on the test results, the percentage of students' mastery of generic structures in writing news item texts reached 79.90%, which placed their performance in the good category. This was evident from the quality of the students' written texts. As illustrated in the example above, the news item texts were generally classified as good, as they presented factual information in a simple manner. From these findings, it can be concluded that the students' overall ability in writing news item texts was very good. Specifically, their ability in constructing the generic structures of news item texts was considered good, indicating that while most students consistently demonstrated competence in applying generic structures, their overall writing ability in news item texts could still be categorized as very good.

The findings of this research revealed that the students' ability in writing news item texts was generally categorized as good to very good. This was evident from the mean score of 79.9% in generic structures and 81.40% in language features. These results indicate that the students were able to construct news item texts by appropriately applying both the structural and linguistic elements required in this type of writing.

In terms of generic structures, the students successfully included the main components, namely the newsworthy event, background event, and source. Most students were able to present events in a logical order and provide sufficient background information. However, several students still experienced difficulties in constructing the "source" part of the text, which occasionally led to incomplete or unclear reporting. This finding suggests that while the students had a general understanding of the structure of news item texts, further guidance is needed to strengthen their ability to incorporate sources accurately and effectively.

With regard to language features, the students demonstrated a higher level of mastery compared to generic structures. The use of verbs, adverbs of place and time, and past tense was generally accurate and consistent, which contributed to the clarity and readability of their texts. The data showed that 10 students reached the very good category, while only 5 were in the good category for language features. This indicates that the majority of students were capable of applying the appropriate linguistic forms required in news writing.

The distribution of scores further confirmed these findings, with seven students achieving the very good category overall, while eight students were categorized as good.

These results are consistent with previous studies highlighting that students often perform better in language features than in organizing ideas through generic structures. One possible explanation is that language features, particularly the use of tense and verbs, are frequently emphasized in classroom instruction, whereas structuring information into newsworthy events, background events, and sources requires higher-order thinking and a deeper understanding of journalistic writing conventions.

In summary, the students demonstrated a commendable ability in writing news item texts, with stronger performance in language features than in generic structures. However, the challenges identified—especially in constructing the source component and achieving consistency—indicate the need for more targeted teaching strategies. Teachers should provide more opportunities for students to practice structuring news texts, to analyze authentic models of news reports, and to engage in peer-review activities to develop greater awareness of both structural and linguistic aspects of news item writing.

D. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the research, it can be concluded that the students' ability in writing news item texts was generally classified into good and very good categories. The analysis of the students' performance showed that their mean score for generic structures reached 79.9%, which indicated a good level of achievement. Meanwhile, their mean score for language features was 81.40%, which demonstrated a very good level of mastery. These results suggest that, overall, the students were able to construct news item texts effectively by applying the essential components of both generic structures—namely the newsworthy event, background event, and source—and language features such as verbs, adverbs of place and time, and past tense.

Furthermore, the detailed distribution of scores revealed that seven students achieved the very good category, while eight students were categorized as good. This indicates that although the majority of students were able to meet the expected standards, their levels of proficiency varied. Most students succeeded in applying the structures and features of news item texts accurately, though a few still faced difficulties, particularly in the use of sources within the generic structure and in maintaining consistency across language features.

In general, the findings highlight that the English Department students at STKIP YDB Lubuk Alung possess a solid ability in writing news item texts. While their skills can still be further improved, especially in terms of accuracy and consistency, their overall performance reflects a commendable level of competence. These results also imply that with continuous practice, exposure to authentic models of news texts, and constructive feedback from instructors, the students have the potential to enhance their writing ability to an even higher level.

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