



Eleventh Grade Students' Ability in Writing Formal Invitation Letter at SMA N 10 Medan

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this research is to describe the eleventh grade students' writing ability and difficulties in writing formal invitation letter at SMA N 10. This study used a mixed method in which the researcher used both quantitative and qualitative methods to interpret and describe the phenomena in the data. Data collected through written tests and interview. The written test results were analyzed following the writing components from Brown (2004) which consist of content, organization, grammatical, vocabulary and mechanic. Then interviews were conducted with students regarding students' difficulties in writing according to difficulties in psychological, linguistic (grammatical and vocabulary), and cognitive (content, organization, and mechanics). The population of this study was eleventh grade students. The sample of this study were XI IPA 1 which consisted of 33 students. The research findings show several things. The first point is that the average student score in writing formal invitation letters is 76.34 which is classified in the good level. The component that students wrote best was content with an average of 3.2. Then the lowest component written by students was organization with an average of 2.7. Therefore, students' ability to write formal invitation letters is classified at the good level. Following the results of the written test analysis, from interview with students, it was found that students experienced difficulties in writing. Students experienced difficulties in writing in accordance with psychological, linguistic (grammar and vocabulary) and cognitive (content, organization and mechanics) aspects.

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INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the productive abilities that should be learned when learning a language. It is because writing skill is important in enhancing communicative competency when learning a language. Harmer (2004:31) stated writing is a way of creating language and expressing ideas, feelings, and opinions. Nunan (2003) also stated writing is a process of thinking to develop ideas, thinking about how to represent ideas in effective writing, and clearly arranging the ideas into statements and paragraphs. Writing is an activity in which people use their ideas and thoughts to express themselves through writing on paper or other materials. But developing strong writing abilities is challenging. To write well, students need to comprehend the components of writing. According to Jacob (2004), there are five general components of writing: content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. To summarize, writing components play the most important function when creating good writing.

Invitation letter is one of the text that was taught in senior high school. Ali in Faramarzi (2015) stated that an invitation is a commemorative social activity with the function of cordially and politely informing and requesting the presence or participation of a person(s) to some event, gathering, celebration, etc., or to do something. The purpose of writing an invitation letter determines the type of letter. For instance, formal letter could be used to invite coworkers or clients to a company event or to a crucial meeting. These are formal letters that fall within the category of business invitation letters.

Eleventh grade students in SMA N 10 still have mistaken in writing formal invitation letters. In writing an invitation letter, they have difficulty in adjusting the content of the invitation letter with the right structure, especially in making a formal invitation letter. The researcher also discussed with the teacher who teaches in the eleventh grade of SMA N 10 and said that students are not used to writing in English. Students are still unsure of the characteristics of invitation letters. The teacher said that students have difficulty writing freely due to limited knowledge, especially in grammar and vocabulary, so they feel unable and lazy to express the ideas they have in written form.

METHOD

This research used mixed method research design. Creswell (2007) defines mixed methods research collects, analyzes, and combines quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or series of studies. This method is used in combination with the goal of providing a deeper knowledge of the challenges and research problems than if it were used either separately or individually. The researcher concentrated on eleventh grade students in SMA N 10 Medan. This research focused on students' ability and difficulties in writing

formal invitation letter. The data obtained from class XI IPA 1 which consist of 33 students. The data was obtained through a written test and interview. Students were asked to write a formal invitation letter with topics related to meetings, seminars, interviews and graduation in school related events. Then the analysis is carried out focusing on the writing components which consist of content, organization, grammar, vocabulary and mechanics. Apart from that, interviews were also conducted with students regarding their difficulties in writing formal invitation letters. The results were analyzed according to writing difficulties, namely psychological, language use and cognitive.

FINDINGS

Students' Ability in Writing Formal Invitation Letter

The result of this study showed the students' ability in writing formal invitation letter. The result of the students writing test determine the category of students descriptive writing abilities which might be categorized into 4 categories, namely excellent, good, adequate and poor. By distributing the writing test, the researcher found that from the result of students' writing ability in formal invitation letter presented in table below.

Table 4.1 Students' Ability in Writing Formal Invitation Letter

No	Classification	Score	Frequencies	Percentages
1.	Excellent	86 – 100	10	30%
2.	Good	71 – 85	9	27%
3.	Adequate	56 – 70	11	33%
4.	Poor	≤ 55	3	10%
Total		100	33	100%

From the known findings that have been analyzed by researchers, 10 students or 30% of the data received a very good category in the formal invitation letter made with a score range between 86-100. Followed by 9 students or 27% of the data who received a good category in the formal invitation letter made with a score range between 71-85. Then there were 11 students or 33% who fell into the sufficient category with a score range of 56-70. And finally there were 3 students or 10% of the data in the poor category, they got a score ≤ 55.

Table 4.2 Students Score in Central Tendency

Total Score	Mean	Mode	Median	Classification
2.519,36	76,34	75	75	Good

After assessing the students' writing results and adding up all the scores obtained, the researcher calculated the mean, median and mode results to understand the

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students' scores better. From all the students' scores, it was found that the total was 2,519.36. The total score is then divided by the amount of data obtained, namely 33, to find the mean value of students' ability to write formal invitation letters. The mean result of the score is 76.34, which is included in the good category. Which means that eleventh grade students' ability in writing formal invitation letters can be categorized as good. Then the researchers found the mode of student scores, namely 75, with 5 students getting the scores and the median of all scores was 75.

Students' Difficulties in Writing Formal Invitation Letter

From the results of interviews conducted with students, several things were found that students had difficulty with. The first is psychological difficulties, students have lack of confidence, fear and anxiety before writing. Some students, particularly those writing in English texts, feel incapable of writing because they lack confidence and doubt about the writing they will perform.

The second difficulties are language use which include grammar and vocabulary. Grammar was among the most difficult things to accomplish. Students lack the necessary information to determine if the grammar they produce is appropriate or not. The students claimed that their inability to comprehend grammar and how to construct proper sentences was the main cause of their issues. Students struggled to find the appropriate words to use in a formal invitation letter. The word is already familiar to students in Indonesian, but translating it into English can be challenging.

The third difficulties include content, organization and mechanic. In content, students did fairly well of developing the text and coming up with ideas for formal invitation letters. Students clarified that while they stick to present topics, it was tough for them to create ideas in detail. For organization many students are still unable to include the header, salutation, body of the letter, conclusion, and signature in their formal invitation letter. Despite not knowing the correct format for a formal invitation letter, some students followed to examples that already existed. Students stated they did not find the mechanic to be particularly difficult. On the other hand, some children difficulty with spelling because they don't think the words they write are accurate.

Based on the findings obtained from 33 students, 10 students were at the excellent level, 9 students were at the good level, 11 students were at the adequate level, and 3 students were at the poor level. After the researchers analyzed the 5 writing component indicators, namely content, organization, grammar, vocabulary and mechanics, it showed that the overall average score per indicator, the highest average score obtained by students was on content. In writing content, students write quite well about the topic and its development in detail. Meanwhile, the lowest average score obtained by students was in the organization. When writing an organization, students still have errors in organizing the appropriate structure of formal invitation letter.

In psychological difficulties, students feel afraid and anxious before writing because they have little understanding regarding writing English texts and there are also students who lack motivation because they prefer speaking when learning English. Then in linguistic difficulties, students do not understand the appropriate grammar for formal invitation letters and do not know about tenses. In a similar way, vocabulary where students have little

knowledge regarding vocabulary and they find it difficult to find the right words in English. Then in cognitive difficulties, in terms of content, students find it a little difficult to develop their writing but they follow the topic given. In organizations, students find it difficult because they are not familiar with how to write formal letters, therefore they follow existing examples. In mechanics, students have difficulty with spelling because they are not sure about the appropriate words, as well as with punctuation where they are unsure whether it is correct and in capitalization they do not feel too difficult.

CONCLUSION

The eleventh grade students at SMA N 10 Medan had different abilities in writing formal invitation letter, but if the students' overall final scores were accumulated and then averaged, the students' abilities in writing formal invitation letters could categorize as good with an average score of 76.34.

Following that, in writing formal invitation letter, students face difficulties in writing accordance with psychological, linguistic and cognitive difficulties. In psychological difficulties, students feel afraid and anxious before writing and also lack motivation. Then in linguistic difficulties, students do not understand the appropriate grammar for formal invitation letters and do not know about tenses. Vocabulary also where students have little knowledge regarding vocabulary. Then in cognitive difficulties, in content, students find it a little difficult to develop their writing. In organization, students find it difficult because they are not familiar with how to write formal letters. In mechanics, students have difficulty with spelling, as well as with punctuation meanwhile in capitalization they do not feel too difficult.

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