

**A STUDY ON THE ABILITY IN WRITING FORMAL
INVITATION LETTER BY THE SECOND YEAR STUDENTS
OF SMA NEGERI 2 TEBING TINGGI**

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Abstract: *This descriptive research aimed to find out the ability level of the second-year students of SMA Negeri 2 Tebing Tinggi in writing a formal invitation letter. The subjects of this study were the second-year students of SMA Negeri 2 Tebing Tinggi who were selected by using the cluster random sampling technique. 25 students employed in this study used the Writing Test. The results of the data analysis showed that the mean score of the students' ability in writing a formal invitation letter was 67.48. It can be stated that the ability of the second-year students of SMA Negeri 2 Tebing Tinggi in writing a formal invitation letter was adequate category level. Based on the result of the students' ability in each writing aspect, the lowest score was in the mechanics' aspect and the highest score is in the organization aspect.*

Key Words: *Study, Writing Ability, Formal Invitation Letter*

SEBUAH KAJIAN TENTANG KEMAMPUAN MENULIS SURAT UNDANGAN RESMI OLEH SISWA TAHUN KEDUA SMA NEGERI 2 TEBING TINGGI

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Abstrak: Penelitian deskriptif ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui kemampuan siswa tahun kedua SMA Negeri 2 Tebing Tinggi dalam menulis surat undangan resmi. Subjek penelitian ini adalah siswa tahun kedua SMA Negeri 2 Tebing Tinggi yang terpilih dengan menggunakan teknik sampel acak kelompok. 25 Siswa yang dipekerjakan dalam penelitian ini menggunakan tes tertulis. Hasil analisis data menunjukkan bahwa nilai rata-rata kemampuan siswa dalam menulis surat undangan resmi adalah 67.48. Ini dapat disimpulkan bahwa kemampuan siswa tahun kedua SMA Negeri 2 Tebing Tinggi dikategorikan memadai. Berdasarkan hasil dari kemampuan siswa dalam setiap aspek menulis, nilai yang paling rendah yaitu mekanika penulisan dan nilai yang paling tinggi yaitu struktur.

Kata Kunci: Penelitian, Kemampuan Menulis, Surat Undangan Resmi

INTRODUCTION

Mastering English writing skills is a priority for many second languages or foreign language learners. The writing ability is assessed by the ability to interact in daily activities. According to Ken (2009), writing is a language skill and it is the process of expressing thoughts, feelings, and arguments in the form of sentences. This ability is used to communicate with each other in writing. Writing is essential to our personal experience and social identity, and our ability to regulate it is frequently used to criticize us. Furthermore, Harmer (2007) found that writing is a fundamental language skill, as important as speaking, listening, and reading. The students must be able to write letters, written reports, and advertisements, increasingly writing using electronic media. In short, the majority of our documents are written down. Furthermore, Nunan (2003) defines writing as "the process of committing words or ideas to any form, whether hieroglyphics etched onto parchment or an e-mail message entered into a machine."

Based on the Curriculum of 2013 in Senior High School, the students can communicate in English both orally and in writing. After learning the theory, the students are expected to be able to produce correctly even text, essays, or paragraphs. The ability of writing is taught to Indonesian students through the use of genre-based texts. In SMA Negeri 2 Tebing Tinggi, one of the texts taught is the formal invitation letter in the second year. Cullen (2005) defines a formal invitation letter as "a letter that is usually written for the business field, the institution, or a formal forum. In short, the students should be able to write a formal invitation letter.

The researcher is interested in conducting this research for several reasons. The first reason is that a formal invitation letter is useful for life. It can be used for writing official letters in the form of formal invitations when entering the workforce. The second reason is that second-year students have already taught and studied a formal invitation letter in the second-year class. Unfortunately, there are many students not interested in writing about anything, even though that is about their life. The third reason, a formal invitation letter is very important for everyone when he wants to invite people to attend an official forum. Based on that explanation, the researcher is interested to conduct this research which aims to assess the students' writing ability entitled "A Study on the Ability in Writing Formal Invitation Letter by the Second Year Students of SMA Negeri 2 Tebing Tinggi".

RESEARCH METHODS

The nature of this research was descriptive research. This research is only one variable which is students' ability to write a formal invitation letter. According to Williams (2007), descriptive research is the most common strategy for assessing a current condition of affairs. Furthermore, according to Gay (2000), descriptive research entails gathering data or answering questions about the research's current situation. A descriptive research project's goal is to characterize a scenario and its characteristics (Nassaji, 2015). Quite simply, this research aimed to know about the ability in writing a formal invitation letter by the second-year students of SMA

Negeri 2 Tebing Tinggi, and the result of the data analysis is described descriptively in this research.

When collecting the data, the researchers used writing a formal invitation letter as a tool for this study to provide students with a test. It will be gained by giving a test as the instrument. The purpose of this research is to find the answer to the research question about the ability of students in writing a formal invitation letter to the second-year students of SMA Negeri 2 Tebing Tinggi. In addition, the students have 60 minutes to finish the test. They expected to write a good formal invitation letter according to the right forms of each aspect of writing. Furthermore, the population in this research is the second-year students of SMA Negeri 2 Tebing Tinggi. The total number that students are 181 students which are divided into six classes.

Table 1. The Distribution of Population

No.	Class	Population
1	XI Science 1	25
2	XI Science 2	25
3	XI Science 3	25
4	XI Social 1	34
5	XI Social 2	31
6	XI Social 3	34
	Total	181 Students

The researchers took the sample by using a cluster random sampling technique. According to Sugiyono (2012), cluster sampling is a sampling method that uses different groups within a population as samples. He also explained that cluster random is the selection of groups or subject clusters rather than individuals. In other words, the total population in this research is divided into groups (clusters) from which a random sample is chosen. By using a lottery, the researchers wrote the names of classes (XI Science 1, 2, 3 and XI Science 1, 2, 3) on a piece of paper and placed them in boxes. The researchers then shook them and chose one of them to be the sample in this research. Finally, the researcher got XI Science 3 as the sample in this research.

After the researcher collected data from the students' answers, the researcher asked the raters for analyzing the students' answers. The raters analyzed the students' answers based on the scoring rubric by Brown (2010) to know the ability of students in writing a formal invitation letter. Scoring will be done by three raters.

Table 2. The Rubric Score for Analyzing the Students' Answer

Aspect	Score	The Performance Description	Weighting
Content (C)	4	The topic is complete and clear. The details are also related to the topic.	3x
	3	The topic is complete and clear, but the details are almost related to the topic.	
	2	The topic is clear and complete, but the details are not related to the topic.	
	1	The topic is not clear, and the details are not related to the topic.	
Organization (O)	4	Show all of the invitation's components.	2x
	3	It does not display one part of the text. For example, there is no date. Therefore, the readers have not received the complete information from the text.	
	2	The idea is focused based on the topic of the invitation, but it does not display two or three parts of the text. Therefore, the readers get confused about the invitation.	
	1	It does not display the three parts of the text. Therefore, the invitation is hard to understand for readers.	
Grammar (G)	4	There are very few grammatical or agreement errors.	2x
	3	There are a few grammatical or agreement errors, but they do not affect the meaning.	
	2	There are some grammatical or agreement errors.	
	1	Grammatical or agreement errors are common.	
Vocabulary (V)	4	Effective choice of words and word forms.	1.5x
	3	There are a few misuses of vocabulary and word forms, but they do not change the meaning.	
	2	Limited range of confusing words and word forms.	
	1	Very limited vocabulary, word forms, and not understandable.	
Mechanics (M)	4	It uses correct spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.	1.5x
	3	It has occasional errors in spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.	
	2	It has frequent errors in spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.	
	1	It is dominated by errors in spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.	

$$\text{Score} = \frac{3(C) + 2(O) + 2(G) + 1.5(V) + 1.5(M)}{40} \times 100$$

After the researcher got the overall score of the students' answers from each rater, the researcher calculated the overall score of the students' answers by using the formula as follows:

$$RS = \frac{\text{rater 1} + \text{rater 2} + \text{rater 3}}{3}$$

In describing the students' ability to write a formal invitation letter, the researcher needs to find out the mean of data. The mean is the average of the data. It is calculated by using this formula:

$$M = \frac{\sum x}{N}$$

Notes:

M: Mean score of the test

$\sum x$: Total score of students

N: Number of the students that participated in the test

(Adopted from Gay, 2011)

Furthermore, the researcher used this formula to find out the percentage of the ability of students in writing a formal invitation letter, as follows:

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100$$

Notes:

P: The Percentage

F: The Frequency (the total number of each aspect)

N: Number of the students

(Adopted from Sudijono, 2010)

In this research, the ability of students in writing a formal invitation letter will be classified into this category:

Table 3. The Classification of the Students' Score

No	The Test Scores	The Ability Level
1.	91-100	Excellent
2.	71-90	Good
3.	31-70	Adequate
4.	11-30	Fair
5.	1-10	Unacceptable

(Adopted from Brown,
2010)

FINDINGS

After data were analyzed by the researcher, the result shows that the ability of students in writing a formal invitation letter is at an *adequate* category level, with a range score of 31-70. The percentage of the ability of students in writing a formal invitation letter can be seen in the following table:

Table 4. The Percentage of Students' Ability Level in Writing Formal Invitation Letter

No	Classification		F	P
	Score	Category		
1	91 – 100	Excellent	0	0%
2	71 – 90	Good	4	16%
3	31 – 70	Adequate	21	84%
4	11 – 30	Fair	0	0%
5	1 – 10	Unacceptable	0	0%
Total			25	100%

The table presents that most of the students (84%) are at an *adequate* level. From 25 students, 21 students are at an *adequate* category level and 4 students are at a *good* category level for their ability to write a formal invitation letter. None of the students are at the *excellent*, *fair*, and *unacceptable* category ability level. Then, the students' mean score in the *adequate* category level of ability is 67.48 with a score range of 57 -70. It can be concluded that in general, the students can write a formal invitation letter, but they are still lacking and need to improve their ability.

Table 5. The Percentage of Students' Ability Level in Terms of Content

No	Classification		F	P
	Score	Category		
1	91 – 100	Excellent	0	0%
2	71 – 90	Good	21	84%
3	31 – 70	Adequate	4	16%
4	11 – 30	Fair	0	0%
5	1 – 10	Unacceptable	0	0%
Total			25	100%

The table presents the ability of students in terms of content. From the table, it can be known that most students (84%) are at a *good* category level. From 25 students, 21 students (84%) are at a *good* category level, and 4 students (16%) are at an *adequate* category level. There is no student (0%) at the excellent, fair, and unacceptable category ability level. Besides, the average score achieved by the students in terms of content is 72.32, which is in the range of 71-90. It means that generally, the students' ability content is *good* category level. The lowest score in terms of content is 50, whereas the highest score is 75. In short, the student's ability in writing a formal invitation letter in the content aspect is at a *good* category ability level.

Table 6. The Percentage of Students' Ability Level in Terms of Organization

No	Classification		F	P
	Score	Category		
1	91 – 100	Excellent	9	36%
2	71 – 90	Good	16	64%
3	31 – 70	Adequate	0	0%
4	11 – 30	Fair	0	0%
5	1 – 10	Unacceptable	0	0%
Total			25	100%

The table presents the ability of students in terms of organization. From the table, it can be known that most students (64%) are at a *good* category level. From 25 students, 16 students (64%) are at a *good* category level. On an *excellent* category level, there are 9 students (36%). There is no student (0%) at the *adequate*, *fair*, and *unacceptable* category ability level. Besides, the average score achieved by students in terms of the organization is 83.29, which is in the range of 71 – 90. It means that generally, the student's ability in the organization is *good* category level. The lowest score in the organization is 75 while the highest score is 91.62. In short, the student's ability in writing a formal invitation letter in the organization aspect is at a *good* category level.

Table 7. The Percentage of Students' Ability Level in Terms of Grammar

No	Classification		F	P
	Score	Category		
1	91 – 100	Excellent	0	0%
2	71 – 90	Good	6	24%
3	31 – 70	Adequate	19	76%
4	11 – 30	Fair	0	0%
5	1 – 10	Unacceptable	0	0%
Total			25	100%

The table presents the ability of students in terms of grammar. From the table, it can be known that most students (76%) are at an *adequate* category level. From 25 students, 19 students (76%) are at an *adequate* category level. On a *good* category level, there are 6 students (24%). There is no student (0%) at the *excellent*, *fair*, and *unacceptable* category levels. Besides, the average score achieved by the students in terms of grammar is 60.29, which is in the range of 31 – 70. It means that generally, the student's ability in grammar is *adequate* category level. The lowest score in grammar is 50 while the highest score is 83.25. In short, the ability of students in writing a formal invitation letter in the grammar aspect is an *adequate* category level. Finally, the result of the ability of students in terms of grammar shows that students need to improve their skills because some of the students have grammatical problems in writing a formal invitation letter.

Table 8. The Percentage of Students' Ability Level in Terms of Vocabulary

No	Classification		F	P
	Score	Category		
1	91 – 100	Excellent	0	0%
2	71 – 90	Good	1	4%
3	31 – 70	Adequate	24	96%
4	11 – 30	Fair	0	0%
5	1 – 10	Unacceptable	0	0%
Total			25	100%

The table shows the ability of students in terms of vocabulary. It can be seen that most students (96%) are at an *adequate* category level. From 25 students, 24 students (96%) are at an *adequate* category level. On a *good* category level, there is only one student (4%). There is no student (0%) at the *excellent*, *fair*, and *unacceptable* category levels. Besides, the average score achieved by the students in terms of vocabulary is 59.3,

which is in the range of 31 – 70. It means that generally, the student's ability in the vocabulary aspect is *adequate* category level. The lowest score in the terms of vocabulary is 50, whereas the highest score is 66.6. In short, the ability of students in writing a formal invitation letter in vocabulary aspect is an *adequate* category level. The result of the ability of students in terms of vocabulary shows that the students need to improve their vocabulary.

Table 9. The Percentage of Students` Ability Level in Terms of Mechanics

No	Classification		F	P
	Score	Category		
1	91 – 100	Excellent	0	0%
2	71 – 90	Good	0	0%
3	31 – 70	Adequate	25	25%
4	11 – 30	Fair	0	0%
5	1 – 10	Unacceptable	0	0%
Total			25	100%

The table presents the ability of students in terms of mechanics. It can be seen that all of the students (100%) are at an *adequate* category level. From 25 students, 25 students (100%) are in the *adequate* category level. There is no student (0%) who belongs to the *excellent*, *good*, *fair*, and *unacceptable* category ability level. Then, the average score achieved by the students in the terms of mechanics is 52.98, which is in the range of 31 – 70. It means that generally, the ability of students in mechanics is *adequate* category level. The lowest score in mechanics is 50, whereas the highest score is 66.6. In short, the ability of students in writing a formal invitation letter in the mechanics aspect is at an *adequate* category level. The result of the ability of students in the terms of mechanics shows that students need to improve their understanding of mechanics in writing. Probably, most of the students did not take attention to the use of punctuation, spelling, and capitalization.

DISCUSSIONS

The researcher tried to find out the answer to the question related to the ability of students in writing a formal invitation letter to the second-year students of SMA Negeri 2 Tebing Tinggi. In this research, the researcher found that the ability of students in writing a formal invitation letter reached the mean score of 67.48. Therefore, it is classified into adequate category levels of ability. It was also found that the highest score achieved by students is in the organization aspect with a mean score of 83.29. While the lowest one is in the mechanics with a mean score of 52.65.

The results of this research are almost similar to the Sisilia Agil research, which conducted a study entitled “An Analysis of Students’ Ability in Writing Business Letter at the First Semester of the Eleventh Grade of SMK Al-Huda Jati Agung Lampung Selatan in the Academic Year of 2016/2017”. The most common score classification for students' topic abilities was revealed to be a very poor score classification at 34.3% in this research. Moreover, the researcher found the problems that students faced were in the mechanic’s aspect, with 57.1% of them having punctuation problems. Whereas in this study, the ability of students level is at an adequate level.

Furthermore, when compared to the research of Mulyani entitled “An

Analysis of Students' Ability in Writing Business Letter at the Second Semester at the Eleventh Grade of SMKN 1 Malang in 2010 Academic Year", then these both studies have the similar issues faced by students such as in the grammar, mechanics, and vocabulary aspect. On the other side, this study has a different category of ability levels that the percentage of the students is 42,5% get low scores. Whereas in this study the students' ability level is at an adequate level.

Moreover, the results of this study are also similar to the research of Novi Cahyaningrum, who conducted a study entitled "An Analysis of Students' Difficulties in Writing Personal Letter for the Twelfth Grade at MA-ALMANAR Bener Kecamatan Tengaran Kabupaten Semarang in 2021 Academic Year". In this study, the researcher found the difficulties faced by the students including ideas, vocabulary, mechanics, and personal letter structure. In specific, mechanics is a major challenge that students encounter while writing personal letters 100% of students have problems with mechanics writing. In addition, 75% of students have difficulty with grammar, and 30% of students have difficulty writing part of a personal letter. Whereas in this study the students are at the adequate level that the students have difficulties in the aspects of grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics.

In this research, the students are still lacking in each aspect of writing a formal invitation letter, especially in grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. It seems that the students have problems with writing skills, especially grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. Some students were struggling to develop their topic, especially using their own words. Then, most students could not be able in the mechanics' aspect, and their grammatical words are not well. It is probably because the students rarely practice writing and reading the academic and scientific material.

In specific, the students have problems with grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics aspect. In the grammar aspect, the student's ability level was at an adequate level, but most of the students were still confused in writing due to the lack of grammar ability. The examples of the students' problems in grammar aspect: "...for discussed...", "...to attending...", "We waiting". Besides, the ability of students in the terms of vocabulary was at an adequate category level, but most students were still confused in choosing the suitable words for inviting everyone to come to a formal agenda. Furthermore, the students still have some errors in writing words, for example: "farawall agenda", "libarary", "inaguration", etc. Furthermore, the ability of students in terms of mechanics aspect was at an adequate category level, but most students were still confused when using the right forms of punctuation and capital letter. The students still have some errors when using capital letters in sentences, for example: "...the Representative...", "...From each class...", etc.

It is necessary to deepen more about grammar and mechanics aspect that is considered the most difficult aspect for the students. According to Gerot and Wignell (1994), grammar is the theory of how language is constructed and functions. This part is dedicated to the study of grammatical form and syntactic patterns. Although some students have been good at grammar, the aim of writing a formal invitation letter is to invite someone to go to a formal agenda by paying attention to language features which is the weakness of the students. To write a better formal invitation letter in the future, the students need to improve their ability for each aspect in which they are still lacking.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

After conducting this research entitled *A Study on the Ability in Writing Formal Invitation Letter by the Second Year Students of SMA Negeri 2 Tebing Tinggi*, the researcher can make some conclusions. Based on the result findings, among 25 students, 4 students (16%) are in the good category ability level and 21 students (84%) are at adequate ability level. There is no student in the excellent, average, and poor category ability level. Hence, most of the students are in an adequate category level of ability with a mean score of 67.48.

In terms of writing the formal invitation letter aspects, the results are different for each aspect. The mean score that the students obtained in the organization aspect are 83.29. It is the highest score among all formal invitation letter aspects that were used to assess the students' formal invitation letter ability. Besides that, the lowest score is in the mechanic's aspect with a mean score of 52.65. The students were struggling to make a good sentence and did not support their writing of a formal invitation letter with correct punctuation in each sentence.

Although most students were able to make a good formal invitation letter, the mean score is in an adequate category level of ability in the range of 55 – 70. It is not a satisfactory result since the formal invitation letter is important for the students considering that in senior high school being able to make a good formal invitation letter is needed. The students need more training to improve their ability in writing a formal invitation letter, particularly in grammar and mechanics aspects.

In short, this research reveals that the students have an adequate category level of ability in writing a formal invitation letter. The students were able to write a formal invitation letter based on the material given. Based on the researcher's experience in conducting this research, students are lacking in grammar and mechanics aspect because they wrote a formal invitation letter with unclear punctuation and not used in right grammatical words.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions, the researcher would like to give some recommendations.

Firstly, the researcher recommends for the other research focus more on efforts to increase students' grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics in writing a formal invitation letter, based on the results of current research which show grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics as the lowest score.

Secondly, the researcher also recommends the further researcher use of other research designs such as experimental research of classroom action research which may get the different achievements for the level of students' writing formal invitation letter skills, based on the students' current abilities.

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