



Analysis of Students' Writing Skill in Writing Invitation Letters at the Eleventh Grade of SMK N 2 Padang

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ABSTRACT

Writing skill is an essential functional English competence for Vocational High School (SMK) students to support academic communication and prepare for workplace demands. However, eleventh-grade students at SMK N 2 Padang still face obstacles in writing invitation letters. Therefore, this research aimed to analyze the level of students' writing skills in composing invitation letters and identify their specific difficulties. Employing a descriptive quantitative approach, this research investigated a representative sample of 31 students from Class XI PMS 1, selected via cluster random sampling from a population of 93 students. Data were collected through a 60-minute written assessment and evaluated across five standard dimensions using Brown's (2019) analytic scoring framework. The findings indicated that the overall writing skill fell into the Very Good category, with a combined mean score of 75.4. Among individual components, grammar was the lowest-performing aspect with a mean score of 2.58 (Fair). In conclusion, while most students constructed clear content and structure, grammar accuracy and vocabulary variation remain their primary challenges.

Keywords: Writing skill, Invitation letter

INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the essential skills in learning English at Vocational High Schools (SMK). This skill not only enables students to express ideas, information, and opinions in written form but also prepares them for the demands of the workplace, where clear and professional written communication is crucial in the SMK context (Graham, 2018; Hyland, 2019). The English curriculum in Vocational High Schools, based on the guidelines of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemdikbud Ristek), emphasizes functional language skills. One of these functional texts is the invitation letter or invitation card, which is designed to invite someone to attend a particular event or activity.

Mastering writing skills remains a significant challenge for many students. Based on preliminary observations in Class XI of SMK N 2 Padang, students still encounter several difficulties in writing invitation letters. First, they have limited vocabulary and weak grammar, making it difficult to construct clear and effective sentences. Second, students experience difficulty in fully understanding the generic structure of the text, such as clearly stating the purpose, time, place, invitees, and polite closing. Third, students struggle to distinguish between formal and informal invitations, which affects language formality and tone.

Based on these problems, this research was conducted to analyze and describe the level of students' writing skills in composing invitation letters across five writing aspects content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics and to identify the specific difficulties faced by the eleventh-grade students at SMK N 2 Padang.

METODE

This research employed a descriptive quantitative design to analyze and describe the students' writing skills in a natural context without manipulating variables (Sugiyono, 2019). The population comprised all eleventh-grade marketing students at SMK N 2 Padang across three classes (PMS 1, PMS 2, and PMS 3) with a total of 93 students. Using cluster random sampling (Kumar, 2019), Class XI PMS 1 consisting of 31 students was selected as the research sample.

Data were collected through a 60-minute written test where students were asked to write an informal invitation letter based on chosen topics (e.g., birthday party, reunion, dinner party) using their own language while following the proper generic structure. The collected writing products were evaluated using Brown's (2019) analytic scoring rubric across five dimensions: content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics (each scored 1–4). Data were analyzed by calculating individual final percentage scores, component mean scores, and classifying them into skill categories (Excellent: 81–100, Very Good: 66–80, Good: 56–65, Poor: 41–55, Very Poor: <40).

Findings and Discussion

Table 1. Overall Category of Students' Writing Skill

No	Category	Score Range	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1	Excellent	81-100	10	32.2 %
2	Very good	66-80	15	48.3 %
3	Good	56-65	2	6.5 %
4	Poor	41-55	4	13.0 %
5	Very poor	<40	0	0 %
Total			31	100%

As shown in Table 1, the overall writing skill of eleventh-grade students was categorized as Very Good with a combined mean score of 75.4. A major proportion of students (80.5%) achieved scores within the Excellent and Very Good categories.

Table 2. Summary of Mean Scores Across Writing Components

No	Category	Mean score	Interpretation
1	Content	3.48	Excellent Good Fair Poor
2	Organization	3.45	
3	Vocabulary	2.80	
4	Grammar	2.58	
5	Mechanic	2.70	



The detailed component analysis reveals that content (mean = 3.48) and organization (mean = 3.45) were the strongest aspects. Students demonstrated high capability in conveying essential details (event date, place, time) and arranging the letter in a logical generic structure (salutation, body, closing). Vocabulary (mean = 2.80) and mechanics (mean = 2.70) were adequate, though word choice repetition and minor punctuation mistakes occurred.

Conversely, grammar was identified as the weakest component with a mean score of 2.58 (Fair). Students frequently made errors in subject-verb agreement, tenses, article usage, and sentence structure. These findings align with Hyland (2019), who noted that second language writers often struggle with grammatical precision even when text structure and communicative intention are clear.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The writing skill of eleventh-grade students at SMK N 2 Padang in writing invitation letters is categorized as Very Good, supported by an overall mean score of 75.4. Students demonstrate strong capabilities in organizing content and generic structure. However, grammar accuracy remains their primary difficulty, followed by vocabulary variation.

Based on these conclusions, English teachers are suggested to provide targeted guidance and explicit practice focusing on grammatical accuracy and vocabulary enrichment in functional writing. Students should practice writing functional texts regularly to build sentence-level accuracy. Future researchers are encouraged to explore innovative instructional strategies or interventions to address grammatical difficulties in vocational student writing.

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