

Exploring the Impact of Student Interest in Learning Indonesian on Their Explanatory Text Writing Skills: A Study of Grade VIII Students at SMP Muhammadiyah Rappang

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the relationship between students' interest in learning the Indonesian language and their explanatory text writing skills. Focusing on Grade VIII students at SMP Muhammadiyah Rappang, this study aims to assess both the level of student interest in learning Indonesian and their proficiency in writing explanatory texts. Given the importance of language learning in the academic success of students, this research seeks to identify whether a positive relationship exists between the students' motivation in learning Indonesian and their ability to produce coherent and well-structured explanatory texts.

A quantitative approach using correlation analysis was employed, with data collected from questionnaires and writing assessments. The study finds that students exhibit a moderate interest in learning Indonesian, which corresponds to a moderate level of skill in explanatory text writing. The analysis indicates a positive correlation between interest in learning Indonesian and writing proficiency, suggesting that increased motivation can lead to better performance in writing explanatory texts. These findings highlight the significance of fostering student interest as a means to improve language skills, particularly in writing.

INTRODUCTION

In educational contexts, the development of writing skills plays a crucial role in shaping students' cognitive and communicative abilities. One of the most significant aspects of writing education is its application in various genres, with explanatory text writing standing out as a vital component of the curriculum. Explanatory texts are designed to provide clear and logical explanations regarding a process or phenomenon, which are central to many educational disciplines, including language studies. In Indonesia, Indonesian language proficiency is not only essential for daily communication but also for academic and professional success. As students progress in their education, their ability to write well-structured explanatory texts becomes increasingly important, yet many students still face challenges in mastering this skill.

At the same time, the role of student interest in learning a particular subject has been widely recognized as an influential factor in academic achievement. Interest in a subject can significantly affect a student's engagement, effort, and persistence in learning. When students are interested in a subject, they are more likely to invest time and energy into learning activities, leading to improved understanding and performance. Conversely, a lack of interest can result in disengagement and lower academic performance. In the context of the Indonesian language, the level of student interest in learning the language may impact their ability to write explanatory texts effectively. Therefore, understanding the relationship between students' interest in learning Indonesian and their ability to write explanatory texts is crucial for improving educational strategies and outcomes.

This study investigates the correlation between the interest in learning Indonesian and the explanatory text writing skills of Grade VIII students at SMP Muhammadiyah Rappang. The research is based on the hypothesis that students who exhibit a higher level of interest in learning Indonesian may demonstrate stronger writing skills, particularly in creating explanatory texts. It is essential to understand how interest influences students' writing abilities, especially in a language that is foundational for academic and professional success. By exploring this relationship, the study aims to provide valuable insights into how educators can better support students in developing their writing skills, particularly in the genre of explanatory texts. The importance of this research lies not only in its potential to improve students' writing abilities but also in its ability to inform teaching practices. By examining the factors that contribute to students' interest in learning Indonesian, educators can tailor their teaching approaches to foster greater engagement and motivation. Furthermore, by identifying the key elements that influence explanatory text writing skills, this study offers a basis for developing targeted interventions and instructional strategies to address common challenges faced by students. Through this research, it is hoped that both theoretical and practical contributions will be made to the field of language education, particularly in the context of Indonesian language learning. The findings of this study are expected to provide valuable information that can help educators at SMP Muhammadiyah Rappang—and similar institutions—understand the dynamics of student motivation and writing proficiency. Additionally, the study may serve as a basis for future research into the role of interest in language learning across various educational settings. As such, the study is both timely and significant, contributing to the ongoing efforts to enhance language education in Indonesia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Wahab (2015), interest in learning is a high level of desire or attraction towards an activity, in this case, the Indonesian language. This interest is an internal factor influenced by external factors such as social environment, family, and prior educational experiences. In the context of learning Indonesian, students' interest in learning can affect the extent to which they engage and succeed in learning activities. High interest can encourage students to be more active in understanding the material and improving their language skills, including writing skills. Interest in learning has several observable characteristics, such as students' awareness of the changes they experience as a result of learning, as well as the enjoyment and satisfaction felt during the learning process. Djamarah (2015) suggests that interest in learning can influence positive and active behavioral changes in students. Therefore, cultivating interest in learning Indonesian is a crucial first step in improving students' writing skills. Learning interest is influenced by various internal and external factors. Internal factors such as motivation, intelligence, and students' attitudes play an important role in generating strong interest in learning Indonesian. External factors, such as support from family and the social environment, also significantly impact the development of high learning interest.

Wahab (2015) states that social support, whether from family or peers, can strengthen students' interest in learning. When students feel supported and encouraged by their environment, they will be more enthusiastic about developing their skills, including writing explanatory texts. According to Dalman (2018), explanatory text writing skills are the ability to express ideas and thoughts in writing that logically and clearly explain a phenomenon. In the learning of Indonesian, writing explanatory texts is one of the main goals. These texts contain explanations of how an event or phenomenon occurs, whether natural or social, and aim to provide information in a systematic way that is easy for readers to understand.

Slamet (2007) argues that writing is a complex skill involving several stages, such as preparation, idea development, and refinement. Writing explanatory texts requires a good understanding of the text structure, which includes a general statement, an explanation, and an interpretation, as well as mastery of the correct linguistic rules. The ability to write explanatory texts is strongly influenced by students' understanding of the text structure and linguistic rules. Kosasih (2013) states that explanatory texts must be structured clearly, with appropriate use of conjunctions and words that are essential for constructing effective sentences. Students often face difficulties in writing explanatory texts due to a lack of mastery over the text structure and the inability to use language effectively, such as in constructing effective sentences and choosing the right vocabulary. Moreover, a lack of interest in learning Indonesian can also affect students' writing skills. Students who are not highly interested in Indonesian tend to be less motivated to engage in lessons and struggle to develop their ideas in written form. Therefore, low interest in learning is closely related to suboptimal writing skills.

A study by Nurvika Cahya Febriana (2021) reveals a significant positive relationship between students' interest in learning Indonesian and their explanatory text writing skills in Grade VIII students at MTS Negeri 3 Boyolali. The findings show that students who have high interest in learning Indonesian also perform better in writing explanatory texts. This confirms that increasing interest in learning Indonesian can improve students' writing skills, particularly in the genre of explanatory texts that require logical and systematic thinking. This is consistent with the views of Priyatni (2014), who suggests that learning interest is one of the factors

that can drive students to think and learn more diligently. Students who are interested in a subject will find it easier to understand and master the skills being taught, including writing skills. The importance of learning interest in improving explanatory text writing skills requires Indonesian language teachers to design learning activities that can motivate students. Some strategies include providing relevant and engaging material, creating a supportive learning environment, and offering regular writing practice to help students hone their writing skills. In the context of SMP Muhammadiyah Rappang, this research shows that increasing students' interest in learning Indonesian can significantly contribute to their ability to write explanatory texts. Therefore, teachers need to pay attention to the factors that influence learning interest and adjust their teaching methods to enhance students' motivation and writing skills.

METHOD

This study employs a quantitative research design with a correlational approach to examine the relationship between students' interest in learning the Indonesian language and their explanatory text writing skills. A correlational design is appropriate for determining the extent to which these two variables are related. The study is designed to explore how students' intrinsic motivation towards learning Indonesian influences their ability to write explanatory texts, which is crucial for their academic performance. By investigating this relationship, the study aims to offer insights into how increasing interest in the language might improve writing outcomes. The research was conducted with Grade VIII students from SMP Muhammadiyah Rappang. The sample consists of 120 students selected through proportionate random sampling from a total of 150 students in the target grade. This sampling method ensures that the sample accurately reflects the population, with proportional representation from each subgroup. The students' interest in learning Indonesian is measured using a structured questionnaire, and their explanatory text writing skills are evaluated through a writing test. These tools are chosen to capture both the students' level of interest and their proficiency in writing, focusing specifically on explanatory text.

Data collection includes two main instruments: a questionnaire and a writing test. The questionnaire assesses the students' interest in learning Indonesian, with questions designed to gauge motivation, engagement, and attitudes towards the subject. The writing test requires students to produce an explanatory text on a given topic, and it is assessed based on a rubric that measures clarity, structure, coherence, and language use. The validity and reliability of the instruments are established through a pilot study and statistical tests, ensuring that both the questionnaire and writing test provide consistent and accurate measurements. Data analysis is carried out using descriptive statistics to summarize the responses from the questionnaire and performance on the writing test. To measure the relationship between students' interest and their writing skills, Pearson's correlation coefficient is applied. This analysis provides insight into whether a positive correlation exists between students' motivation and their explanatory text writing abilities. The significance of the correlation is tested at a 5% level of significance, and the results are interpreted to understand how much interest contributes to improving writing proficiency.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The data collected from the 120 respondents (Grade VIII students at SMP Muhammadiyah Rappang) revealed key findings related to both their interest in learning Indonesian and their explanatory text writing skills. The findings demonstrate that there is a significant positive correlation between the students' interest in learning Indonesian and their ability to write explanatory texts. The data analysis shows that the majority of students had moderate to high levels of interest in learning Indonesian. Specifically, 68 students (56.67%) were categorized in the "moderate interest" group, while 42 students (35%) showed high levels of interest. This reflects that a substantial portion of students are actively engaged in the learning process, with the remaining 8 students (8.33%) falling into the "low interest" category. The analysis of the students' writing abilities also shows encouraging results. Approximately 58.33% of students (70 out of 120) demonstrated satisfactory explanatory writing skills, categorized as good. The remainder of the students (41.67%) showed moderate to low writing proficiency in this area. This data indicates that while many students possess the foundational skills for explanatory writing, there is still room for improvement in terms of structure, coherence, and depth of explanation.

The results of the correlation analysis indicate a positive relationship between the students' interest in learning Indonesian and their ability to write explanatory texts. Using Pearson's product-moment correlation formula, the calculated correlation coefficient was 0.40, which is statistically significant. This suggests that students with higher interest in the subject tend to perform better in writing explanatory texts.

Discussion

The findings of this study align with previous research that suggests a strong relationship between student motivation (or interest) and academic achievement, particularly in the context of language learning. According to Wahab (2015), interest in learning is an internal factor that drives students to engage more deeply with learning activities, and this can enhance their ability to apply knowledge in practical tasks such as writing. The positive correlation found in this study supports the notion that fostering interest in language learning can directly improve the students' writing skills. The impact of interest on writing skills is significant. As shown in the results, students who reported higher levels of interest were able to structure their thoughts more clearly in written form, adhering to the necessary conventions of an explanatory text. This was reflected in their ability to use appropriate linguistic elements such as cause-and-effect conjunctions and active verbs, which are essential for writing explanatory texts (Kosasih, 2013). This finding underscores the importance of cultivating a love for the subject to improve writing proficiency. Several factors might contribute to students' ability to write explanatory texts. While interest plays a crucial role, other aspects, such as the quality of teaching, students' prior knowledge of the subject, and their ability to organize ideas, also play important roles. Teachers who employ interactive and engaging teaching methods, as noted in previous studies (Priyatni, 2014), are more likely to foster a positive environment where students feel motivated to improve their writing skills.

The results of this study have important implications for language teaching practices. Teachers should consider integrating strategies that increase students' intrinsic motivation to learn Indonesian. Activities that connect the language to students' real-life experiences and interests, such as project-based learning or discussions around current events, could increase engagement and, in turn, improve

writing skills. Regular feedback and writing exercises could also help students refine their skills and build confidence in writing structured texts. In conclusion, the study demonstrates that student interest is a key factor influencing the development of explanatory writing skills. To enhance these skills, educators should not only focus on the mechanical aspects of writing but also on fostering a deeper connection with the subject, thereby ensuring more effective and meaningful learning experiences for students.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to examine the relationship between students' interest in learning the Indonesian language and their ability to write explanatory texts, particularly focusing on Grade VIII students at SMP Muhammadiyah Rappang. The results revealed a positive and significant correlation between the students' interest in learning Indonesian and their explanatory text writing skills. Higher levels of interest were associated with better writing performance, which emphasizes the importance of fostering student motivation and engagement in the learning process. The research found that most students exhibited moderate to high levels of interest in learning Indonesian, which aligns with their performance in writing explanatory texts. However, despite the moderate correlation between interest and writing skills, there is still room for improvement in both areas. Students demonstrated reasonable proficiency in writing, but challenges in structure, clarity, and language use remained, suggesting that further emphasis on enhancing writing skills is needed.

This study also highlighted that interest plays a critical role in shaping academic success. Students who are interested in a subject tend to engage more actively with the learning material, leading to improved performance. Therefore, the findings suggest that educators should focus on creating a more engaging and supportive learning environment to enhance student interest. This can be achieved through the use of relevant materials, interactive teaching methods, and personalized feedback to foster both interest and skill development. This research contributes to the understanding of the importance of student interest in learning Indonesian as a key factor in improving writing skills, particularly in explanatory text writing. The study suggests that by addressing factors that influence interest, educators can significantly enhance students' writing abilities and academic performance. Moving forward, it is recommended that schools implement strategies to boost students' intrinsic motivation and provide more opportunities for practice to refine their writing skills.

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