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**Organisational and grammatical features of explanations written by Biology
undergraduates**

Dr Ting Su Hie

*Centre for Language Studies
Universiti Malaysia Sarawak
94300 Kota Samarahan
Sarawak*

Tel: +60-82-581748

Fax: +60-82-581781

shting@cls.unimas.my

Florence Tee Pei Feng

*Centre for English Language
School of Arts and Social Sciences
KDU College Penang
32 Jalan Anson
10400 Pulau Pinang
Tel: 012-4097440
pfttee@kdupg.edu.my*

The study examines the organisational and grammatical features of explanations written by Biology undergraduates at a tertiary institution. The explanation of a molecular biology technique was analysed in terms of the organisational structure of the text and two linguistic features relevant to explanations, namely, use of present tense and sequence connectors. The 40 explanation texts selected for analysis were produced by two cohorts of Year 3 undergraduates in a Biotechnology degree programme at a Malaysian tertiary institution: the cohort who learnt Science and Mathematics in Bahasa Melayu in Form 6; and the cohort who learnt these subjects in English. The results showed that about two-thirds of the verbs in the explanation texts were written in the present tense but there was inappropriate and perhaps inadvertent use of other tenses. It was also found that sequence connectors were not fully utilised to show the steps in the application of the molecular biology technique. Although all the texts analysed provided information about the technique, some did not show the organisational structure considered effective for explanations. The findings suggest that the explicit teaching of selected grammatical features significant to types of texts (e.g. explanation, argument) using whole texts as context would help students in producing better texts.