

IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENTS' DIFFICULTY IN WRITING EXPOSITORY ESSAY

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi kesulitan mahasiswa Program Studi Bahasa Inggris dalam menulis esai ekspositori dan bagaimana mahasiswa mengatasi kesulitan tersebut.. Apakah kesulitan yang terjadi dapat diselesaikan oleh mahasiswa atau tidak. Subjek penelitian ini adalah 8 mahasiswa Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian studi kasus dengan menerapkan pendekatan kualitatif. Instrumen yang digunakan untuk mengumpulkan data adalah tes dan wawancara. Hasil analisis data menunjukkan bahwa siswa kesulitan dalam menghasilkan ide, elemen tata bahasa kosakata seperti tenses, penyesuaian subjek-verba, ejaan, dan struktur kalimat saat menulis dalam bahasa Inggris. Untuk mengatasi kesulitan tersebut, siswa menjelajahi internet untuk mencari referensi lainnya, Grammarly untuk memperbaiki kesalahan tata bahasa, dan kamus elektronik untuk menerjemahkan istilah bahasa Indonesia ke bahasa Inggris. Ini menyiratkan bahwa siswa perlu belajar untuk memilih bahasa yang sesuai untuk subjek tulisan mereka.

Kata kunci: Menulis, Kesulitan, Esai Ekspositori

ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify English Education Study Program students' writing problems and how they solve them in expository essays. Whether the problems that occurred may the students solve or not. The subjects of this research were 8 students of English Education Study Program. The research was a case study approach by applied qualitative. The instruments used to collect the data were tests and interviews. The result of data analysis showed that students struggle with generating ideas, vocabulary grammatical elements such as tenses, subject-verb agreement, spelling, and sentence structure while writing in English. To overcome those problems, students browsed on the internet to find other references, Grammarly to correct grammatical errors, and an electronic dictionary to translate Indonesian terms into English Terms. This implies that the students need to work on selecting the appropriate language for the subject of their writing.

Keywords: Writing, Difficulty, The Expository Essay

INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the four basic skills which is very important in teaching-learning activities. It is more complicated and often seems to be the most difficult skill. The parts of writing which make it complicated and hard are proper vocabulary, sentence structure or grammar, and punctuation not forgetting the organization of the text. When writing the students express knowledge to inform the readers. It is also a process of sharing idea,

feeling, and thought in written form by giving more attention to the use of language as correctly as possible. That is why writing can be a rich and productive experience.

The expository essay is a genre of essay that requires the student to investigate an idea, evaluate evidence, expound on the idea, and set forth an argument concerning that idea in a clear and concise manner. This can be accomplished through comparison and contrast, definition, example, the analysis of cause and effect, etc. Expository essay uses simple present tense as the language feature which gives rules in writing it.

Students are often asked to write expository essays for various college-level courses, including English, history, and the social sciences. The expository essay is often used on exams or as a form of evaluation because it lends itself to a style that does not necessarily require deep levels of research (Cooper 2021). For example, expository essays are often written in response to a prompt that asks students to analyze a written work, describes a process, explain, or expose a topic. The researchers choose an expository essay as the object of the research. However, it is already taught for university students to write an expository essay.

METHOD

The researchers used a qualitative design with a case study approach. In conducting this research, researchers took the fifth semester as the population, and the researchers used convenient sampling to take 8 students as the sample under these conditions:

1. Students who had a writing course in the fourth semester
2. Students who experienced writing an expository essay
3. Students who want to be a participant

In getting the students as the participants, the researchers confirmed who would be the target population that would help the research by asking some random students around the campus by the condition, then decided the place could go to speak to these people in a convenient way. Lastly, the researchers asked people that are willing to participate and gave the survey to them.

The researchers used two kinds of instruments, test and interview. The point of giving a test was in order to find information regarding the student's ability in writing an

expository essay. The interview contained three questions which are semi-structured interviews so that the researchers can ask more questions when it is necessary to gain more data from the interviewee.

The researchers collected the data by using test and interview. The test data from the test are the main data of this research while the interview data are the support data. The researchers gave the test to the participant by handing them papers and demanded them to finish the test within 30 minutes then the researcher used a semi-structured interview in this study. The researchers interviewed the participant after having the test one by one, individually. The Duration of the interview is 5- 10 minutes. Then, the researcher used a recorder in documenting the conversation during the interview and then transcript the recording.

For the essay test, the students chose one of five topics given by the researcher. The students wrote about that topic. The scoring system for this test was adapted from Weigle (2002:116) as follows:

Table 3.1
The Scoring System of Writing

91-100	71-80	51-70	Less than 50
Excellent to Very good	Good to Average	Fair to Poor	Very poor
Fluent expression • Idea clearly stated/supported • Succinct • Well organized • Logical sequencing • Cohesive	Somewhat choppy • loosely organized but main ideas stand out • limited support • logical but incomplete sequencing	Non-Fluent • Ideas confused or disconnected • Lacks logical sequencing and development	Does not communicate • No organization • Or not enough to evaluate

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

FINDINGS

The test was given by the researchers to find out the students' skill in writing expository essay. There were five topics that researchers provided for the students, and the students chose only one topic to be written down. The results of the students test in writing expository essay are presented in the following table;

Table 4.1
The Students' Score of Essay Test

No.	Students	Scores
1	Student 1	65
2	Student 2	85
3	Student 3	60
4	Student 4	70
5	Student 5	65
6	Student 6	60
7	Student 7	55
8	Student 8	65

In classifying the score of the test given, the researchers used the measurement of students' achievement as follows:

Table. 4.2
Percentage of Students' Achievement in Essay Test

No.	Classifications	Range Scores	Frequencies	Percentages (%)
1.	Excellent	91 – 100	0	0
2.	Very Good	81 – 90	1	12,5
3.	Good	71 – 80	0	0
4.	Fair	61 – 70	4	50
5.	Poor	51 – 60	3	37.5
6.	Very Poor	Less than 50	0	0

Based on the table above, the researchers considered that most students' achievement in writing an expository essay is fair because there are 4 or 50% of students got scores of 61-70 on the essay test. Then, there are 3 students who categorized as poor and 1 student is in a very good level.

Having known the students' achievement in writing an expository essay, the researchers then presented the common difficulties faced by the students. Firstly, all of the students state that **lack of vocabulary** becomes their obstacle when writing an expository essay. None of them neglect this issue by seeing their responses. Here are some responses that clearly stated their difficulty with vocabulary.

I think my vocabulary is lack and do not know what should I write (Student1)

When I want to write something, I start to think with Indonesian language when I try to do English it's difficult to find Indonesian sentence in my head it's difficult because first I am lack of vocabulary (Students 4)

In addition to the above challenge, some students found it difficult in *elaborating their idea* due to the fact that they do not fully understand the topic given and how to organize their essays. Here are their responses:

I do not know what should I write and I am still confused with the structure of writing expository essay (Student 1)

When I write the expository essay, I have to think what I want to write. Like, in the paragraph one I know what to write then I lost the idea for the next paragraph. (Student 2)

The students' responses showed that organizing the idea in writing an expository essay is still the main problem that every student experienced. There are also a few students who struggled in writing essays *due to some mechanics of writing*. Here are their statements;

I have some problem with my grammar, when I do my writing I always take time in checking whether my grammar is right or not. (Student 2)

I am lack of vocabulary and I am afraid of making mistake with the grammar. (Students 6)

DISCUSSION

The researchers concentrated on three categories of students' essay writing challenges based on the research findings above. This study was crucial because it allowed the researchers to talk about how students struggle to write essays due to linguistic and cognitive issues. Additionally, this research focused on how students assist themselves when they faced difficulties in writing essays.

Based on the findings of this study, vocabulary problem is the reason of students' difficulty in writing an essay. That is in line with the previous study conducted by Yulansary (2019) suggesting that students had difficulties in organization of ideas and in grammar, vocabulary, using transition signals, and mechanics.

Every day, both within and outside of the classroom, vocabulary value is highlighted. The high achievers in the classroom have the most extensive vocabulary. Vocabulary, according to several academics, is one of the most crucial—if not the most crucial—aspects of learning a foreign language, and foreign language curriculum must take this into account. According to Wilkins (1972), "There is not much benefit in being able to

generate grammatical sentences if one does not have the vocabulary needed to explain what one wishes to say." While very little can be said without grammar, nothing can be said without vocabulary.

In addition, the interview result showed that the researchers found that some students felt afraid of writing an essay when they got a difficult essay topic. It happened because they thought that the vocabulary encountered and used will be difficult if the topic is difficult. Second language writers should typically write about what they are given and not on the subjects they want (Byrne, 1991, as cited in Dabbagh, 2017). Furthermore, it is in line with what is argued by Ozturk and Cecen (2007). They asserted that students who feel afraid in writing are students who are not satisfied with the results of their writing due to fear of experiencing errors. It also happens because of the limited knowledge of the second language, which makes their fear factor in expressing what they think.

Furthermore, the students revealed difficulties in finding and developing the main idea and felt difficulty in delivering their ideas into writing. It happened because of their low capacity to choose the specific main idea that would be delivered into an essay. It can be concluded that the theory of Byrne (1993) was appropriate to the real condition of fifth-semester English Education Study Program students who felt difficulty in writing an essay, especially with cognitive problems. Mention what Bryne argues. To overcome this problem, students preferred to use the internet browser in searching the idea or to gain references in order to support their writing.

Due to the variety of tenses, which make it challenging for students to write essays, the findings revealed that many students still neglected to utilize appropriate tenses while writing essays. Even though they had the basic subject for their essay writing, they continued to state that they struggled with selecting the appropriate tenses to depict events and construct proper sentences. Regarding this issue, students must learn and comprehend the purposes of each tense. People may grasp what writers intend by understanding tenses. According to Masruddin (2019), having a solid grasp of grammar would make it easier for people to understand what others are saying or writing.

From the four types of sentences used in writing an essay, a compound-complex sentence makes students felt challenging to apply in essay writing. It happened because students think they rarely use a compound-complex sentence in their daily life. Students more often use simple sentences, compound sentences, and complex sentences.

Regarding the approaches taken by the students to address their issues, the findings of this study demonstrated that searching the internet is one of the solutions to this issue. They found it useful to use Google to arrange their thoughts, and the majority of students use Grammarly and the electronic dictionary when writing essays. If they do not know the words to write with, they claim that using an electronic dictionary is a simple fix. This occurs when students consistently convert Indonesian terms into English before using Grammarly to correct their punctuation and grammatical errors. However, some students choose to use their notebooks to recollect their language and punctuation skills and also ask for friends' help.

According to Fahmi and Rachmijati (2021), Grammarly can provide very useful writing feedback and advice. Grammarly can correct passive voice and handle traditional word choice mistakes. It can also help with inconsistencies like switching from e-mail to email. It can even aid in the refinement of slang or formality level. This is especially helpful when writing for a wide range of readers, from businessmen to friends and family. It will also examine the vocabulary carefully and suggest the best word to avoid having writing grammar problems because it will assist in locating the correct one.

Ghufron and Rosyida (2018) add that the software has been shown to be more effective in reducing errors in vocabulary usage (diction), language use (grammar), and writing mechanics (spelling and punctuation). It is less effective in improving the content and organization of students' EFL writing. This study may provide EFL/ESL teachers with an alternative assessment for students' writing that promotes an autonomous learning environment.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this research is students found difficulties in writing expository essay. The students were struggle with generating idea, lack of vocabulary, grammatical elements such tenses, subject-verb agreement, spelling, and sentence structure while writing in English. To overcome those difficulties, the students browsed on the internet to find other references, used Grammarly to correct the grammatical order, and used an electronic dictionary to translate. This implies that the students need to work on selecting language that is appropriate for the subject of their writing.

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