



Assessment of Students' Writing Acquisition

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ABSTRACT (10 PT)

Writing is one of the essential language skills to be mastered by students to communicate appropriately in written forms. Nowadays, writing is becoming a vital skill for modern communication as an increasing number of people communicate in written forms using various communication technology. This study was conducted to analyse students' writing abilities. An ex post facto research design was conducted to collect the data required for this study. A writing assessment was administered to the selected samples, and the data were analysed descriptively. This study found that students writing skills was at a sufficient level. It means several students are still experiencing difficulty in writing. Therefore, this study implied that students' writing skills should continually develop to a higher level of acquisition.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Language is the most significant possession of human beings. It is a means for human beings to communicate to convey their ideas, information, and feelings. Therefore, language has a vital role in everyday life in various interactions. The movement of development in a particular area is much influenced by the extent of their language mastery for communicating their desire, need, and feeling to other people and society. People use a language with different aims.

Meanwhile, children often use language for their amusement. They chat to themselves; they recite something for fun. We increasingly use language to get a message to someone else. We use language to communicate ideas, feelings, and thoughts (Mantra et al., 2021).

English is an essential language in the world because English is used as one of the international languages (Widiastuti, 2018). Besides that, English is also spoken worldwide as an instructional language of scientific study, economy and business, technology information, politics and others. In Indonesia, English is the first foreign language taught as a compulsory subject in school, from junior high school until university. Even nowadays, English is taught formally starting from the fourth grade of elementary school (Mantra et al., 2022). One of the considerations of teaching English in schools throughout Indonesia is that; it is spoken as a means of international communication. In this global era, English's role is getting more critical in developing knowledge, science and technology, politics, art and culture (Widiastuti et al., 2021).

A new movement in language teaching often begins with the reaction of the old one. Presently, the method recommended in teaching English in Indonesia is a communicative method with the mastery of four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). In the communicative method, the aims of teaching English are oral and written communication (Astawa et al., 2019). Writing is unique. It has unique aspects that are not common to other skills. Writing is far more than a way of recording language through visible marks. Writing requires active involvement; it does more than just happen. It involves intense participation, engagement, and even immersion in the process, both solitary and collaborative, conscious and subconscious and physical and mental. Writing is a lonely act because the audience is not physically present. Furthermore, the writer must possess a clear sense of cultural and

technical writing expectations of English so there is no miscommunication regarding the intended message (Handayani & Widiastuti, 2019).

Writing is a complex activity. The complexity of writing can be seen from psychological, linguistic, and cognitive factors. From a psychological aspect, writing is a solitary act without an audience present (Khusniyah, 2019). From a linguistic factor, writing must be constructed more carefully, concisely, and coherently to ensure the meaning is clear. From a cognitive perspective, writing is usually learned through formal instruction rather than through natural acquisition. It takes time to read, think, talk, write and rewrite. Moreover, its process requires the students to open their minds and be willing to explore feeling and ideas (Toba et al., 2019). Furthermore, writing is a complicated activity that requires intense concentration. (Uysal & Sidekli, 2020)

On the other hand, writing and speaking are similar in many aspects. Both spoken and written use language symbols to express feelings and need. They were also writing and speaking using the same rule of semantics and syntax. More a change in the tone of voice in speaking is similar to a change of punctuation marks in writing (Cahyani et al., 2018). Furthermore, speaking and writing are communicative acts that depend upon awareness of social relationships and expectations. The speaker or writer needs to determine how the simple or complex, formal or informal statement should be. Further, the audience's attitude, feelings, and knowledge about a subject must be considered as statements are developed (Widiastuti et al., 2020).

Besides similarities, writing and speaking are different in some aspects. When students talk, they say their words and sentences once; they cannot go back and change what their listeners have already heard, but when they write something, they have plenty of time and changes to work on their words before their readers see that writing. On the other hand, the students can not observe their readers' reactions. Therefore, students must write clearly and better than speaking.

Writing is an essential form of communication. Through writing, we express our feeling, hope, dream, and joys, as well as our fear, anger, and frustration. Good writing is critical in conveying a message. Specific words are needed and combined to create sentences to convey ideas so that the listener and reader will understand. In conclusion, based on the information above, writing is very complex, unique, and challenging. Because of the complexity and difficulty of writing as a source of investigation, the researcher narrows this research. The research is done only to analyse the students' text-writing ability.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The present study made use of ex-post facto. Ex-post facto research is a method of teasing out possible antecedents of events that have happened and cannot, therefore, be engineered or manipulated by the investigator. Ex-post facto research is a method that can also be used instead of an experiment to control or manipulate the dependent variable. Ex-post facto research is appropriately used when the study explores the relationship between simple cause and effect. Scientific research must be conducted on a specific population and sample.

In collecting data, the researcher needs to choose the participants and should have decided what type of participants the researcher needed to be used. The researcher thought limiting the population and sample was necessary by considering procedures and techniques. Furthermore, the determination of population and sample is discussed as follows. The researcher must take sampling decisions early in the overall planning of the research. Therefore, the researcher needs to obtain data from a smaller group of the population to gain the study's sample.

Moreover, the population is all individuals of interest to the researcher. The population is all members of any well-defined class of people, events, or objects. Thus, the researcher should know the population first before the researcher decides the samples. The sample is part of the population which is taken of the small group that is reachable of being observed in a small amount. Thus, in the present study, the fourth-semester students of the EFL population consisted of 3 classes with a total of 80 students. In general, the population was regarded to have rather heterogeneous characteristics regarding some traits, such as socioeconomic, background, age, intelligence, learning motivation, aptitude and attitude towards English.

All population members have an equal chance of being selected as the samples. To determine the samples, the researcher used a random sampling technique. In sample random sampling, each member of the population under study has an equal chance of being selected, and the probability of a member being selected is unaffected by the selection of other members. The method involves selecting at random from a list of the population the required number of subjects for the samples.

The samples had been chosen by using a random sampling technique with a lottery system of the population. They were carefully selected because sampling is essential to the data collection. 50 % of the students were selected as the sample who were randomly selected. Therefore, the samples of this study were 40 students altogether, and they were regarded as representative enough as the samples of the present research.



The research instrument is a significant factor in researching because it is vital to get the data. The instrument was used to collect the data to get more accurate, complete, and systematic data. In order to get worthwhile and representative findings, the research instruments should be validly and reliably constructed. The instruments of this present study are in the form of essay tests. The preparation and construction of valid and reliable research instruments was an essential step of any scientific study. As a research instrument, the test should be valid and reliable so that it could be used together with valid and reliable data. In the essay test, the researcher prepared a practical test to be developed into a descriptive text. The samples had to write a descriptive text based on the test given.

The researcher used the scoring rubric to assess the student's writing abilities. The present study's data will be gathered by administering the research instrument to the samples. Collecting the data was done by giving the research instrument to the samples. The sample was given thirty minutes to do the test. In taking the test, the researcher told the samples to construct their text by themselves, they were not allowed to cheat on the other samples.

After the research instrument was administered, the samples' descriptive texts were scored using a scoring rubric. The total scores indicating the achievement of the samples in descriptive text writing ability would be considered the data for the research. Data analysis is the process of ordering, organising, and thinking about the data that have been collected. After the data were collected in the form of scores resulting from the essay task, the obtained data should analyse.

3. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The data for the present study were collected as raw scores showing the achievement of descriptive text through essay tasks. They were analysed using a norm-reference measure of five common values, showing excellent, good, sufficient, insufficient and poor achievement of descriptive text. In order to answer the research problem, the data were gathered in the form of an essay test. This present study used an ex-post facto research design.

The present study's findings were converted scores based on a norm-reference measure of five common values about the achievement of writing ability which had been assessed through essay tasks. The data were analysed using a norm-reference measure of the five common values. The data showed that 5.00% of samples under study attained excellent achievement; 20.00% of the samples, good achievement; 47.50% of the samples, sufficient achievement; 20.00% of the samples, insufficient achievement; and 7.50% of the samples, poor achievement of descriptive text writing ability.

If sufficient achievement was used as the minimum achievement, 72.50% of the samples were successful, and 27.50% were unsuccessful in writing a descriptive text assessed through an essay task. In this study, the descriptive text was scored using five criteria: format, punctuation and mechanics, content, organisation, and grammar and sentence structure. Based on the data collection in this study, most of the samples wrote the text in a suitable format, writing a descriptive text.

The samples' texts contained a title on top of the text. Most of them put the titles right in the centre. However, a few samples were found that positioned the title in the incorrect order. The title was placed on the left side but it nearly came to the centre. Most of the samples' texts for the first sentence were intended; nevertheless, a few of them were not. For instance, for a few samples, they aligned the first line or sentence with other sentences on the left margin; thus, no indented line was found. There were no margins on both sides found for all of the samples, which made their texts not look excellent and untidy.

The texts the samples composed could have been tidier because some corrections were found while making a text. In terms of punctuation and mechanics, most of the samples wrote a descriptive text that ended with a period at the end of every sentence. However, a few samples needed to place the period in the correct order; moreover, the samples also forgot to complete the sentence with a period. The complete sentence needed to be logically understood or made sense because they cut the period in the wrong position.

Most samples were not able to use capital letters correctly. Among those samples, they capitalised all the letters in every word in a simple sentence. Commas and other punctuations were used correctly; nevertheless, the samples did not place the comma before the conjunction "and". In that context, "and" was one of the conjunctions that connected two independent clauses. In addition, most of the sample spellings were difficult, and then the students made some common mistakes in spelling some words.

The current research used an ex post facto research design to determine the level of achievement in the writing test where the present research was undertaken. The data obtained were analysed using norm reference measurement with five common values: excellent, good, sufficient, insufficient and poor. Based on the data analysed, it was indicated that the samples achieved a successful achievement. There were 72.50% of the samples

under study were categorised as successful. Meanwhile, 27.50% of students were unsuccessful in writing ability through essay tasks.

This meant that some samples still found that writing was quite difficult. It implies that students need more practice in English to develop their writing skills. The researcher realised that some factors could affect the student's ability to learn English. These factors include students' condition and the situation when they learnt English in or outside the school. Some students believe that learning English is more complicated than any other subject, so it impacts the situation when they answer the test. Besides their knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, their motivation to learn English still needs to improve.

Writing is a significant part of good communication from an organisation or individual. Having good writing skills helps listeners to communicate messages clearly and easily compared to face-to-face or by telephone. By writing, people can communicate their ideas through blogs and minimise errors when writing spelling or grammar. In the context of the scope of writing has two objectives, namely to channel information and clarify the intentions of the mind between the writer and reader (Joanna Pawliczak, 2015). Students use writing to record or record, convince, report, notify, and influence. The intent and purpose of writing can be achieved well by someone who can arrange ideas, thoughts, and arguments and express them clearly. This clarity depends on reasoning, organisation, language, spelling, and punctuation (Mantra & Widiastuti, 2019).

Writing is the representation of language in a textual medium through signs or symbols. Essentially, writing expresses ideas, thoughts, and feelings to others in written symbols. Therefore, writing ability is the ability to express ideas, thoughts, and feelings in written language. It is distinguished from illustration, such as drawing and painting. It is a productive skill that needs creativity from its writer to deliver the idea in form of writing (Khusniyah, 2019). Every writer has a purpose based on the content of the writing text. The purposes have to do with goals that are often referred to as aims of writing or writing intentions because writing is used for various purposes. It is produced in many different forms.

Before the students have to write, they should be able to listen, speak, and read. Writing skill differs from other skills like speaking and listening. The trends in teaching writing in ESL and other foreign languages are integrated with teaching other skills, mainly listening and speaking. For example, when students are asked by their teachers to write about a particular topic, they may collect information from various sources, including the internet. They use listening, speaking, and reading skills when collecting information. Therefore, nobody can master this ability quickly and directly. Writing is not a natural skill. Writing belongs to a productive skill rather than a perceptive one. It produces a message to communicate. Writing is a process in which we write and is often heavily influenced by the constraints of genres, and then these elements have to be presented in learning activities. However, writing is not only about accuracy. It is also about communicating a message successfully to other people. Moreover, one of the functions of writing is communication.

4. CONCLUSION

Writing is a developmental process. With teachers' guidance, students try to express their views or ideas in the best writing. Teachers must provide students with the space to make their own meanings in a positive and cooperative environment. Writing is generally the most difficult of the four skills. Therefore, it takes work for the teacher to teach writing to the students. As we know, the teaching and learning process in Indonesia is commonly still using the traditional method, so the students' achievement is still below the successful standard. This study found that students still found difficulty in writing. It can be seen from the results of this study that students' ability was still low. Therefore, this study suggests that teachers should focus more on teaching writing intensively.

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