

STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES IN WRITING EFL

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Abstract

Teaching writing in foreign language has been an interesting topic for researchers. There are many theories and perspective about teaching writing. The main objective of this research is focused on finding out student's difficulties in writing English. This study used case study with qualitative design. About 30 students are purposively selected as the respondents of the research. The data in this gained through single data collection method was questionnaire. This questionnaire contains 15 closed items and one open ended item. The result indicates students had a significant problem in writing English. The findings revealed that the most significant problems are because of their lack of vocabulary mastery and language used. They assumed that they had limited knowledge in constructing sentence grammatically and also their lack of vocabulary mastery made them felt confused in choosing the word. Besides, they also had problem in spelling. They often left hesitant in writing English word and assumed their spelling is not good enough.

Keywords: *EFL Writing difficulties, Writing,*

INTRODUCTION

Brown (2003) defines that teaching is guiding and facilitating learning, enabling the learner to learn, setting the conditions for learning. In teaching process there are some activities, one of which is teacher who should prepare or arrange everything necessary for learning. When we learn the language, we need four skills for completing communication. The four skill are listening, speaking, reading and writing. Usually in learn, listen is first, then speak, read and finally to write.

According to Hadley (1993), writing requires composing, which implies the ability either to tell or retell pieces of information in the form of narrative or description, or to transform information into new texts as in expository or argumentative writing. Writing is a complicated process which involves a number of cognitive and metacognitive activities, for instance, brainstorming, planning, outlining, organizing, drafting and revising. Cognitive aspects of writing have received a particular attention, as investigators have attempted to understand the thought process underlying the compositionsof students (Flower & Hayes, 1981).

According to Byrne (1995, cited in Mundriah and Parmawati, 2016) there are three factors which influence writing process, they are: (1) psychology problem, a lecturer is expected to be able to write his/her own without the possibility of interaction or feedback, and itself makes the act of writing difficulties; (2) linguistics problem, a lecturer must keep the communication through his/her own efforts and to ensure, both through his/her choice of sentences structure and by the way his/her sentences are linked together and sequenced, that the text he/ she writes or produces can be interpreted on its own; (3) cognitive problem, a lecturer has to master the

written form of the language and to learn certain structures which are important for effective communication in writing.

Furthermore, Harmer (2004) defines that writing is frequently useful as preparation for some other activity, in particular when students write sentences as a preamble to discussion activities. In preparation writing, this gives students time to think up ideas rather than having to come up with instant fluent opinions, something that many, especially at lower levels, find difficult and awkward. Writing is also used in questionnaire-type activities, groups of students may be asked to design a questionnaire. Writing is used to help students perform a different kind activity (in this case speaking and listening). Thus, writing skill becomes crucial in teaching and learning English. It is supported by Carter, et al (2002, cited in Apsari, 2017) that writing is important for career and personal life because others will judge our thinking ability according to what we write and how we write it.

However, Indonesian students as English foreign language learners have some difficulties to master English. For senior high school learners, they have to master all of language skills, writing skill also includes in these skills. However, learners usually have some problems when they try to construct a sentence, a paragraph or a text. Some problem could be found in writing text, the students who rarely write in English always face some difficulties when their teacher asked them to write down their ideas, thoughts or experience. In curriculum 2013, students have to master several kinds of genre. Sometimes it makes students feel difficult to express their ideas when they try to write, because every genre has a specific purpose, specific language feature and generic structure. Thus, the problems in writing text usually faced by writers or foreign language learners. Before they want to share their thought, ideas or experiences they have to understand the main purpose of the text.

In this research concerned to input on exploring of some difficulties that the students usually face in writing EFL. Expected of this research is mainly focused on finding out students difficulties in writing.

METHOD

In this research is qualitative research design. According to Creswell (2012), research is a process of steps used to collect and analyze information to increase our understanding of a topic or issue. To collect data, the writer use questionnaires as the instrument of this research. The population of this research is students of SMK KB Pusdikpal Cimahi in academic years 2017/2018. Tavakoli (2012) says that sample is the smaller group which is a portion of a population. Sample of this study was the eleventh grade of engineering light vehicle department. The sample of this research consists of 30 students. 29 male students and 1 female students. This class was chosen because students' motivation in learning writing was categorized as low. The researches used case study since it can maintain 'deeper' understanding of social phenomena that is teaching program (Silverman, 2005; 10 as cited in Apsari & Yana, 2015).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

After collecting the data by using questionnaire, the researcher counted and categorized students' responses. There are 30 respondents completed and returned the questionnaire. Overall, the findings indicated that students' problem usually occurred when they were writing. The question on questionnaire based on our observed in SMK KB Puskikpal. The data collect after finished teaching learning process. The researcher found the result and formulate questionnaire based on organization, vocabulary, and language use. Each aspect in writing was divided into 15 statement.

Table 1. Data analysis related to organization

No.	Statement	Yes	No
		(percentage %)	
1.	I don't rarely understand about generic structure, so I rarely pay attention during writing the text	48.65	51.35
2.	I feel the ideas that I shared not clear and well organized	35.14	64.86
3.	The ideas that I shared is hard to understand	18.92	81.08
4.	Each paragraph was not coherent	18.92	81.08
5.	I rarely pay attention to the sequence of the sentence in each paragraph	29.73	70.72
Average		30.27	69.73

Table 2. Data analysis related to vocabulary

No.	Statement	Yes	No
		(percentage %)	
1.	I often did some mistakes in choosing the word	94.59	5.41
2.	I got difficulties in expressing the ideas because lack of vocabulary	64.86	35.14
3.	I often repeat a word writing paragraph	70.27	29.73
4.	I always use the simple words in writing the paragraph	97.30	2.70
5.	I feel, I always need dictionary when writing in English	62.16	37.84
Average		77.84	22.16

Table 3. Data analysis related to language use

No.	Statement	Yes	No
		(percentage %)	
1.	I always face difficulties in making a good and correct sentence because of the lack of ability in grammar.	78.38	21.62
2.	I don't pay attention of the using connectors in writing	21.62	78.38
3.	I often did some mistake in using action verb in past form	48.65	51.35
4.	I seldom pay attention to the aspect of grammar	45.95	54.05
5.	I always faced problem in tense that will be used	29.73	70.27
Average		44.86	55.14

Discussion

According to the data, based on data analysis related to organization (Table 1) almost half respondents (448.65%) felt don't really understand about generic structure. Approximately one-thirds of participants (35.14%) felt their ideas are not clear and well organized. Just a small number of the participants (18.92%) felt their ideas are hard to understand and each paragraph was not coherent. Only 29.73% participants who rarely pay attention to the sequence of the sentence in each paragraph.

One average only 30.27 participants who got difficulties in organizing their text and the majority of respondents had problem because of their limited of knowledge about generic structure. In writing a genre, writers should pay attention to the purpose and the generic structure of the text.

Based on the analysis data related of vocabulary (Table 2) shows that the lack of vocabulary becomes the most of difficulties in writing process. 94.59% of participants did some mistake in choosing the word. Approximately two-thirds of participants (64.86%) got difficulties in expressing the ideas because lack of vocabulary. 70.27% of respondents often repeat a word in paragraph. The majority of respondents (97.30%) felt that they always use the simple words in writing the paragraph. Most of respondents 62.12% also needed to look up their dictionary when writing in English.

Thus on average 77.84% of respondents got difficulties in writing because of their lack of vocabulary. It related to the writers vocabulary mastery. The words that the writers choose should appropriate and have suitable meaning, but most of the participant feel hesitate in choosing the words.

Based on the analysis data related of language use (Table 3), the majority of respondents (78.38%) felt that they always face difficulties in making a good and correct sentence because of the lack of ability in grammar. Only small number of the participants (21.62%) do not to pay attention to the using connectors during writing. Almost a half of participants (48.65%) often did some mistake in using action verb in past form. 45.95% of participants seldom pay attention to the aspect of grammar. Only 29.37% of participants always faced problem in tense that will be used.

It can be concluded that the most of participants problem is in constructing a good sentence, because they felt they had lack of ability in using grammar. On average only 44.86% of students had problems related to grammar using. It concerns to the grammatical rule that should be used by the writers to make a good composition, such as agreements, tense, number, word order or function, articles, pronouns, preposition, etc..

CONCLUSION

In this study has explored the student difficulties in writing EFL. The result of this study indicate that students lack of vocabulary mastery and grammar become the most difficult problem during the writing process. The findings indicate 77.84% of respondents got difficulties in writing because of their lack of vocabulary. They face problem during generating ideas, the weakness of vocabulary mastery made them felt confused to share their ideas. They also felt hesitate in choosing the word and they need to look up their dictionaries when they are writing in english.

Moreover, based on the data collecting, the majority of participants (75.68%) said that usually face some difficulties when constructing sentence, because of their lack of ability using in grammar. Grammar becomes a significant problem for the respondents. They also felt confused in using past verb. In addition, some of them left confused when made the sequence of the sentence in each paragraph. In addition, the majority of respondents (78.38%) often did some mistakes in writing word in English. Most of them (64.86%) also felt that their spelling is not good enough. In writing, they had problem in spelling. It as because they often left hesitant in writing English word and assumed their spelling is not good enough.

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