

An Analysis of EFL Students' Writing ability to Enhance Their Micro and Macro Writing Skill

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ABSTRACT

Assessing is a process of giving score and evaluation of students' learning achievement to provide the opportunity to plan further learning improvement to attain the learning standard determined by the curriculum. This study dealt with analyzing students' writing ability to enhance their micro and macro writing. An ex-post facto research design was employed to establish reliable findings. The research instrument that was used to collect the data was in the form of a productive test. Students were assigned to construct a descriptive paragraph consisting of at least seven sentences. The result of this study showed that: there were 5% of students who achieved an excellent score in writing a descriptive paragraph, 37.5% of students attained good achievement, 30% of students attained sufficient achievement, 17.5% students obtained insufficient achievement, 10% students were in poor achievement. This finding suggests that there still many students found difficulty in writing unified and coherent paragraphs.

Keywords: Analysis, Writing, Enhance, Assessment

INTRODUCTION

In the Indonesian school curriculum, the teaching of writing should cover a number of competencies that students have to learn comprehensively. Students are encouraged to learn several genres in writing, namely: procedure, descriptive, recount, narrative, report, news item, analytical exposition, hortatory exposition, spoof, explanation, discussion, review, and short functional text. Unfortunately, in teaching writing, most teachers tend to ask their students to write properly. Students are asked to write based on model texts, but they are not given knowledge of punctuation, grammar, cohesion devices, coherence, and so on. In short, most English teachers now get students to write without explaining all of them first (Mantra, & Kumara, 2018). As such, some students may experience difficulty in constructing texts appropriately. Moreover, Brown (2004) states that teachers must teach and assess students' micro and macro writing skills.

Micro skills apply more appropriately to imitative and intensive types of writing performance in which they tend to describe the mechanics of writing and at the level of the word, such as cohesive devices, past verb, etc. On the other hand, the macro skill covered wider areas of writing, such as the form and the communicative purpose of a written text, main idea and supporting idea, the literal and implied meaning writing, etc. thus, it is not only about a word but

it is about the whole written text (Mantra, Kumara, 2018). Both these skills should be comprehensively mastered by the students to independently capable of writing a good text in English.

More specifically, Brown (2004) describes that micro-skills covers ((1) produce graphemes and orthographic patterns of English, (2) produce writing at an efficient rate of speed to suit the purpose, (3) produce an acceptable core of words and use appropriate word, (3) order patterns, (4) use acceptable grammatical systems (e.g., tense, agreement, pluralization), patterns, and rules, (5) express a particular meaning in different grammatical forms, (6) use cohesive devices in written discourse. On the hand, macro skills covers (1) use the rhetorical forms and conventions of written discourse, (2) appropriately accomplish the communicative functions of writing, texts according to form and purpose, (3) convey links and connections between events, and communicative, such relations as main idea, supporting idea, new information, given information, generalization, and exemplification, (4) distinguish between literal and implied meanings of writing, (5) correctly convey culturally specific references in the context of the written text, (6) develop and use a battery of writing strategies, such as accurately assessing audience's interpretation, using prewriting devices, writing with fluency in the first drafts, using paraphrases and synonyms, soliciting peer and instructor feedback, and using feedback for revising and editing.

Most students consider writing is difficult, especially when it comes to writing in a foreign language (Asrobi, & Prasetyaningrum, 2017). The writing of the first language is complicated by the addition of new resources and norms. Learning the structural elements of language, the conventions of new rhetoric and perhaps even the use of new writing do not replace in foreign language writing, but they are added to what is already known about writing from students' mother tongue. More specifically, writing a foreign language is the ability to use its structure, lexical items, and conventional representations in ordinary fact writing. Writing is not done separately; instead, skills are practiced in an interdependent way (Dhanya, & Alamelu, 2019). This means writing activities include dictation or note-taking; it will also involve reading comprehension. Because of its complexity, writing must be practiced regularly and done step by step (Nguyen, 2016).

Because of the differences between the first languages of foreign languages, especially English, Indonesian students often find problems in writing using English. That is because writing requires more consideration than the other three skills because of the different rules in how to order words into understandable sentences. In teaching writing, the teacher must give students clear guidelines on how to plan and construct phrases, clauses, and sentences correctly and grammatically. Then, students must also master a number of learning concepts such as rules for building paragraphs, namely unity, and coherence (Fook, & Sindhu, 2010).

In making good paragraph writing, it takes a long step from compilation to production of a piece of writing. In addition to the long steps taken by the students, the writers in the case the students must also have creative ideas and expressions to make good paragraphs. It also needs to combine special words to make sentences and arrange them into paragraphs to convey the message to the reader. According to Brown (2004), writing is a combination of process and product. The process refers to actions when students gather ideas and make them until the text can be presented to the reader. Teaching to write to students is not an easy job. Many aspects must be considered in writing (Fook, & Sindhu, 2010). They not only write, but they must write

according to correct grammar, written discourse conventions, that is, punctuation, capital letters, indentations, etc. These small aspects or micro-skills are sometimes protected by both teachers and students. Teachers mostly tend to teach macro writing skills without considering micro-skills. Thus, from now on, teachers must also teach micro writing skills as well as macro skills.

Moovers, In the teaching and learning process, especially in writing, the teacher needs to assess students' abilities and their understanding in writing. In assessing, teachers usually assess students subjectively without using assessment procedures (Javed, Juan, & Nazli, 2013). So, it shows subjective results. The teachers just explain the material and then give them topics. In addition, the teacher asks students to make paragraphs in accordance with the given topic. This makes the teachers do not know the improvement of their students, especially the ability of students in writing. Assessment is one aspect of teaching-learning process which is intended to measure students' learning achievement and to promote learning (Widiastuti, 2017; Widiastuti, 2018)

Assessing is a process for gathering information about students' abilities in writing skills. The purpose of the assessment is to find out the extent of students' abilities in writing skills and to find out students' strengths and weaknesses (Masrul, 2015; Zaim, & Moria, 2017). Especially in the teaching and learning process, assessment is very important to know student achievement. Based on in-depth interviews with English teachers, English teachers usually teach descriptive paragraphs by first explaining the material and giving examples of descriptive paragraphs. Assessment is then very much similar to what has done during the learning process. Next, to assess students, the test that the teacher gives is the construction of paragraphs, paragraphs consisting of several sentences focused on one topic. The instruments used by teachers to assess students' writing especially paragraph writing are generally still conventional, the teacher tells students what to write and how to write it. As a result, teachers are advised to become more active, creative and innovative in assessing their students. especially in assessing writing (Natalia, Asib, & Kristina, 2018). Therefore, teachers need to provide new instruments to meet the level of students' writing ability so that they can measure their writing skills objectively.

Therefore, this study may provide a clearer result than the assessment normally conducted by the teacher currently teaching in the school where the present study is conducted. The present assessment was conducted to assess students' writing skills to figure out the extent of students' micro and macro writing skills in the hope of having a clear description of students' writing abilities. Students are asked to write paragraphs based on the selection of topics. Students must write at least seven sentences to make a unified and coherent paragraph in strictly limited frame of time.

METHODS

Research is a way of finding answers to questions used to discover new information or prove scientific theories. This research dealt with assessing students' writing ability. The researcher made use of an Ex Post Facto Research Design. This type of research design is a systematic empirical inquiry in which the research does not have direct control or manipulation of the independent variable because their manifestation has already been taken place. The designation of ex post facto indicates that ex post facto research is conducted after variation in

the variable of interest has already been determined in the natural course of events. The ex post facto design is used for measuring and compatible to use in assessing students' writing skills.

An ex post facto research is a method that can also be used instead of an experiment, to test hypotheses about cause and effect in the situations where it is unethical to control or manipulate the dependent variable. Ex post facto research is particularly appropriate when simple cause and effect relationships are being explored. An ex post facto study or non-experimental study is a specific investigation in which the researcher has no possibility to directly control and manipulate; the researcher investigates variables through giving certain treatments or randomly creating a certain condition. In ex post facto research, the researcher takes the effect and examines the data retrospectively to establish causes, relationships or associations, and meanings.

The present study used the ex post facto research design because writing ability as the research variable has already taken place prior to the understanding of this study. Students in this study have learned writing skills, and they have attended different tests to assess their ability in writing. Although there are many disadvantages of ex post facto design, it nevertheless is frequently the only method by which educational researches can obtain necessary information about characteristics of defined groups of the students or information needed for the intelligent formulation of programs. The researcher cannot manipulate the data of the study because the researcher does not have direct control of the independent variable. The collected data is comprehensively analyzed and descriptively presented to establish valid and reliable findings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The present study used an ex post facto research design deals with an analysis of EFL students' writing ability to enhance their micro and macro writing skill. The research has conducted a group of students who were chosen through random sampling with a lottery system. The purpose of the study was to analyze students' writing ability to enhance their micro and macro writing skill.

In collecting the data, the researcher chose 40 samples from the population, 350 students. The data required for the present study were collected by administering a valid and reliable research instrument. The students were instructed to write a descriptive paragraph that consisted of 6 to 12 sentences based on the selection of topics. The paragraph was scored by using the scoring rubric which was based on five criteria: format, punctuation and mechanic, content, organization, grammar and sentence structure.

The result of data analysis was conducted by using a norm-referenced measurement of the five standard values to reveal the students' writing ability. The findings showed that there were 5% of the samples who achieved an excellent score in writing a descriptive paragraph; 37.5% samples, good achievement; 30% samples, sufficient achievement; 17.5% samples, insufficient achievement; 10% samples, poor achievement. Based on the percentage above, there were 75% of the samples who were successful and the others 25% were unsuccessful in writing.

The result of the present study showed that in terms of the format of the paragraph, most of the samples were able to write a paragraph using the correct format. They can write a paragraph with an appropriate title. Their works are also tidy. However, some of the students' paragraphs were not written by paying attention to the margin. In terms of punctuation and

mechanics, most of the samples could use period and comma correctly besides some samples were not able to use capital letters correctly and write a paragraph with correct spelling.

In conclusion, the result of the present study showed that there were 75% samples of the study were successful in writing. However, there were 25% samples of the study was still unsuccessful in writing. It also showed that the instrument is used to measure the students' writing was an effective instrument to assess the students' writing ability.

In the teaching-learning process, knowing the students' characteristics is very important, thus, in doing an assessment teacher can choose a suitable test that can motivate students to study. Suitable assessment to the level of the students becomes some help words to guide students in writing. In addition, it will be very important to find a good strategy which can help students pay attention to format, punctuation and mechanic, content, organization, grammar and sentence structure during writing. Assessment is ideally conducted as an ongoing process that encompasses a much writer domain. In addition, preparing the task design, clear instruction and the scoring rubric are becoming the important thing of assessment (Widiastuti, 2017).

In designing the writing test, teachers must consider the purpose of the test and the level of the students, it is important to encourage students to write a meaningful paragraph. The Test of writing should involve at least two basic components: one or more writing task, or instructions that tell test students what to write, and a means of evaluating or scoring rubrics. The teacher should assess all the aspects and skills involved in writing covering micro and macro writing skills. In this case, students' writing should comply with characteristics of a good paragraph and interesting to read where the readers can get some beneficial information from reading it and encourage readers to find more related information.

CONCLUSION

The discussion throughout this present investigation is concerned with assessing students' writing skills. A productive test was utilized to assess students' writing skills. The results of the data analysis showed that 70% of the test takers were successful in writing and the others showed that 30% of the test takers were failed in writing due to being poor in grammar and vocabulary. In a broad sense, students in this study were mostly able to write paragraph even though some of them still failed in using grammar correctly. As a result of this present study, it can be considered that students' writing skill was still in a sufficient level. Based on the findings, this study suggests that English teachers should be more active, creative and innovative in teaching writing. In order to be an active, creative and innovative teacher, the English teacher needs to do preparation before teaching and learning process.

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