

STUDENTS' WRITING PROFICIENCY BASED ON THE DISCOURSE EVALUATION

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Abstract

This study applied discourse approach as to evaluate students' writing proficiency into six criteria. The criteria was also the instrument of this research that was carried out through qualitative design. Every criteria has specific findings. The first finding is the students' ability to develop the content in which they could develop the main topic writing into micro topic for every paragraph. The next finding is in the organization and cohesion criteria in which students got a little obstacle to connect the micro topics for every paragraph. The obstacle refers to the mastery of the conjunction application. In the criteria of the range, most students used general or daily vocabulary. It indicated that they were lack of specific vocabulary and idiom knowledge. In the register criteria, students could propose understandable writing objectives, but it was lack of communicative sense. In the target reader criteria, students could give good impression for the writing format in which it was caused they tended to write paragraphs in appropriate length. In the last or sixth criteria which is accuracy of language, the accuracy was average. It means the writing quality was not excellent, but it was understandable. The main conclusion was that the dominant cause factor that influenced the students' writing proficiency was the background linguistic skill especially the grammar and vocabulary mastery.

Keywords: Students, Writing, Proficiency, Discourse, Evaluation

INTRODUCTION

Writing proficiency is one of four fundamental language skills that need serious attention. The writing skill reflects other micro skills such as the vocabulary, tense, punctuation, gerund, and other related skills and knowledge. It is why writing needs serious attention through both classroom and non classroom learning and training.

Writing study and skill need more serious attention and practice for second language learners. It happens naturally because the position of the second language reflects some difference with the learners' mother and first language. (Zhou, 2015) strengthened the approach of mental cognitive for writing study to second language learners in China. It revealed that writing should be learned. The key point was that writing in the second language was not about natural skills. Meanwhile, (Emilia & Fuad Abdul Hamied, 2015) found the writing skill depicts the control of structure and linguistic feature. In addition, in a deep study, (Shabani, Tahriri, & Ardebili, 2016) found that the writing competence of first and second language did not give large effect to the writing skill in foreign language. The position of

writing skill could be described as the result of learning and training. It cannot be gained in short time. It also means it needs process and steps of learning program moreover in non mother and first language. The practice also requires high and careful program for second language learners.

The study to gain writing skill for second language learners needs serious development because it was the complicated skill. (Lu, Li, & Li, 2015) proved the effectiveness of the Automated Writing Evaluation to develop EFL learners' writing skill. Then, (Arifani, 2016) found the Team-Based Discovery Learning improved students' ability in generating the research topic. The proper choice of the method or instrument determined the possibility of the proper expectation. Researchers should be creative and follow the new development in the writing study before deciding the writing topic especially in the second language whose orientation to improve the skill. On the other hand, (Noriega, 2016) reported the successfulness of the mobile learning to improve writing in ESL. (Dj & Sukarnianti, 2015) applied the hypnoteaching strategy to improve students' writing ability successfully. The creativity of the researchers influences the learners' writing skill improvement. It means writing learning strategy always develops continuously.

The improvement of writing skill gives positive effect to other linguistic skill and knowledge automatically. (Mugableh & Khreisat, 2019) found the writing skills improved five writing sub-skills including organization, content, mechanism, grammar, and vocabulary. (Promnont & Rattanaovich, 2015) found the positive correlation between the improvement of the reading and creative writing abilities. On the other study, (He, 2016) revealed the fact that English writing was an indispensable skill for vocational and technical colleges in China. The writing skill especially for high educated learners or workers is very essential. We cannot separated it with the necessary of written text for any professional and pedagogical occasion. The high writing skill of English was very beneficial for other work or study field.

Related with the background of the writing skill and study, in this study, researchers applied the concept of diagnosis and evaluation of (Thornbury, 2005) to evaluate students' writing proficiency. (Thornbury, 2005, p. 153) proposed the discourse concept of diagnosis and evaluation of written text which comprise content, organization and cohesion, range, register, target reader, and accuracy of language. The problem of this research was "how is the students' writing ability based on six criteria of the diagnosis and evaluation?".

METHODOLOGY

This research applied qualitative design. This research represented the personal perspective (Yin, 2011). The object was twelve essays that were taken from the sixth semester of undergraduate students of English department of STKIP PGRI Pacitan in the 2019. They were taken by using purposive sampling. The data was collected through examining. The instrument was the diagnosis and evaluation of written text which comprise content, organization and cohesion, range, register, target reader, and accuracy of language (Thornbury, 2005). In the last, they were analyzed by following the criteria of completeness and empirical accuracy (Yin, 2011, p. 207).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings were divided into six criteria according to the diagnosis and evaluation criteria of (Thornbury, 2005). The criteria comprise content, organization and cohesion, range, register, target reader, and accuracy of language. They were identified and analyzed through holistic method.

In the term of content, students' text had fulfilled the criteria of good information presentation. The information followed the researchers' instruction. The strength of this finding was the real idealism without cheating from other sources. The lack was that the content was seemed to be monotonous. The content of the text represented the students' creativity to develop the macro topic into micro topic. They could develop the main idea into smaller materials in which it was still in the similar boarder. Every paragraph contains idea which must be different with other paragraph, but they were still related with the main topic. Students could place the appropriate position of every idea. It was not found the miss order of placing the idea.

In the term of organization and cohesion, students got problem in connecting the sentences inside a paragraph. The connection of idea among paragraph was good enough, but the coherence inside the paragraph represented a little mistake. The position of some sentences was unstructured. Some students placed the opening sentence in the middle of the paragraph. Meanwhile, some of them placed the main idea as a closing sentence in a paragraph. It indicated that they were less focused on the paragraph, but gave more attention to the coherence among paragraphs. The misplaced ideas in a paragraph actually did not give fatal impact in the finding, but it gave inappropriate order of sentence. Every paragraph was still meaningful, but it requires readers to spend more time to understand the content or information.

In the scope of range, students applied general vocabulary and appropriate grammar rule. There was no specific vocabulary applied in the texts. It represented the students' characteristic of study as English teacher candidates. They tended to master the general vocabulary for daily and study usage rather than the specific vocabulary. In the text, it did not disturb the information. The text was still understandable. The lack was that it did not give high impression of scientific. It could be a new suggestion for the English lecturers and students to increase their competence of mastering specific vocabulary especially for publication. The use of idiom was also very minimum in their texts. On the other hand, the positive side of the condition was that the text could be understood by all level of readers even by non academic practitioners.

In the scope of register, students were not able enough to determine the text type orientation. In this case, the researchers gave the full authority to students to determine their genre intentionally. Researchers just gave the clue of the main purpose of the text. Students were identified not to give attention to their genre. They just focused on dividing and delivering their ideas in the text. It could be the material of evaluation to emphasize the knowledge of genre or text types. It could be expected to give assistance to students to arrange their ideas in writing.

In the target reader scope, students could gain the readers' mind and expectation. Their text was understandable enough. The flow of information was easy to be recognized although

the order of ideas was imperfect. They tended to place themselves in the equal level with the readers. The tendency of the text purpose was to explain the ideas of the future prospect. The most visible value was the appropriate length of paragraph which gave good impression of text convenient. The lack was that there was no effort to persuade or at least give strong argumentation. It gave readers authority to believe or not with the text information. So, they did not try to force their voice of idea.

In the last scope of accuracy of language, the text was not excellent, but it was understandable. The average quality of grammar use supported the accuracy of information. It was actually the basic condition in the linguistic study that grammar build meaning in text and communication. The evaluation material was that the grammar competence needs to be prepared before asking students to writer scientific paper. The grammar mastery is one of the skill basic modal for writers to create comprehensive and understandable text.

CONCLUSIONS

The main conclusions of this research concerned on the linguistic and vocabulary background, and general knowledge as the second conclusion. The basic of linguistic proficiency influences the result o writing quality. It was actually a special problem and issue because it would be difficult to prepare the basic linguistic competence in a short time before taking the writing test. The vocabulary for specific purpose needs to be prepared before writing the text. The general knowledge which was related with the writing topic needs to be increased. The main problem was the limitation of time for the preparation.

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