

AN ANALYSIS ON STUDENTS' WRITING PROBLEMS IN ACADEMIC WRITING CLASS OF ENGLISH DEPARTMENT STKIP PGRI TULUNGAGUNG IN ACADEMIC YEAR 2017/2018

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Abstract

English has an important role in international daily life as tool communication. As the foreign language, students do not usually use English in their daily activities. So it makes the students have problems faced in each skill. In university especially English Department, Academic Writing course is required to be taken by students. In this research, the researcher wants to analyse the problems and the sources in the Academic Writing class. The research method used is qualitative research method. The samples are 23 students in the fourth semester. The research instruments used in this research are test and interview. Based on the research findings of 23 students who submitted the Argumentative text, there were 95 mistakes. The most mistakes in grammatical problems there were 23 mistakes (24.21%), and in problems of sentence structure there were 21 mistakes (22.10%). From 23 students who interviewed by the researcher, the most sources of the problem when they wrote an essay were; 20 students have problems on the nature of the writing process, and 21 students have problem because of inadequate time.

Keywords: *Academic Writing, Writing Problems, the Sources of Writing Problems*

Background

English has the important role in international daily life as tool communication. In Speaking, we use it for communication such as in international business, international conferences, etc. In writing, we learn to write something important such as international business and as we know some books in the world like journal, thesis, magazine, novel written in English. It proves English is an important tool to communicate. In all education degrees in Indonesia, English is mostly taught from kindergarten until university. As the foreign language, students do not usually use English in their daily activities. For example, writing is

most difficult to learn. In composing paragraph it does not only need a lot of vocabularies but also correct grammar indeed in writing's rules itself. Moreover, composing a paragraph takes a lot of time. Harmer states (2004:31) "Writing is often not time-bound in the way conversation is. When writing, students frequently have more time to think that they do in oral activities. They can go through what they know in their minds, and even consult dictionaries, grammar books or other reference material to help them." In university especially English Department, Academic Writing course is required to be taken by students. In Academic Writing, the students have to produce some writing

products like opinion essay, argumentative essay, and the research paper. In this course, the students have the opportunity to explore their opinion in writing with choosing a topic. According to Anne (2009:2) "In an academic writing assignment, you will start by asking a good question, then find and analyze answers to it, and choose your own best answer(s) to discuss in your paper."

In this research, the researcher wants to analyze the problems and the sources in the Academic Writing class. By analyzing the problems, the researcher will be able to identify which part of writing that needs more attention. Therefore, the researcher wants to analyze students' writing problems in Academic Writing class of English Department STKIP PGRI Tulungagung in academic year 2017/2018.

Statement of Problem

Based on the background of the study above, the researcher is interested to find out the answers to these questions:

1. What kind of problems are faced by students in writing at Academic Writing class of English Department STKIP PGRI Tulungagung in academic year 2017/2018?
2. What are the sources of problems faced by students in writing at Academic Writing class of English Department STKIP PGRI Tulungagung in academic year 2017/2018?

Review Literature

1. Academic Writing

According to Whitaker (2009) stated that academic writing course is the course that should be taken by university students. In academic writing class, the lecture will give some assignment such as making the essay, paper, research paper, argumentative essay, analysis essay, and

informative essay. In this class, students are free to choose a topic to express their own idea on the paper.

In the academic writing assignment, the students will be asking a question, find the answer, then analyze the answer. In the assignment to make a paper/essay, it will tell about student opinion and analyze the answer with logic and evidence. So, the goal is for showing that the students understand and can think critically about the topic.

2. Writing Problems

Hedge (cited in Alfaki, 2015:44) stated that "Learners' writing problems because so as the writer to compensate the absence of the prosodic features in writing, he/ she has to write with a high degree of organization, careful choice of vocabulary and using complex grammatical devices". So, writing problems which the students face mostly are:

a. Grammatical Problems

Students have a plenty of problems in their effort to write in the second language. Especially in grammar and structure of writing tasks. It is for like the connection word by word, the complete sentence, how to writing into a paragraph.

b. Problems of sentences structure

Kharma (cited by Alfaki, 2015:45) states that those students who have the problem of writing good sentences structures are unable to produce longer sentences requiring subordination and coordination.

c. Problems of word choice

A good writing or composition should consist of an appropriate and varied range of vocabularies used along with proper grammar and varied range of sentence structures (Norish, 1983, cited by Alfaki 2015:45).

d. Cognitive problems

These problems include problems of punctuation, capitalization, spelling, content, and organization.

3. Causes of Learners' Problems in Writing (The Sources of Problems)

According to Alfaki (2015:46), there are causes of learners' problems in writing as follow:

a. The Nature of Writing Process

Writing activity does not come naturally but rather gained through continues effort and much practice, it becomes a complex skill (Grebe and Kaplan, 1996:6). According to the statement above, Norish (cited by Alfaki, 2015:46) adding the statement that in the written medium, information has transmit without any aid from sources other than the language itself. It seems to follow from this that more attention is needed be paid to the language as a code in short of the grammatical and lexical system that is the case with speech. As native, the writing skill is the difficult skill for students because students must balance multiple issues such as content, organization, purpose, audience, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling, and mechanics (Abu cited by Alfaki, 2015:46).

b. Lack of Learners' Motivation

Davies (cited by Alfaki 2015:47) thinks that the students will encourage writing if writing activity motivates them and keep them interested. The desire on the part of the writer to communicate something is very important because it is much more difficult for students to write something they have no interest in (Leki in Alfaki, 2015:47).

c. Inadequate Time

Raimes (in Alfaki, 2015:47) thinks that time is an important element in writing process and an element that distinguished writing from speaking. Time also be a key factor in producing text with full of control over organization and coherence. In addition, many students and teachers feel that writing under time pressure is a very unnatural situation and perhaps cannot lead them to produce compositions that are

truly representative of their capabilities (Kroll in Alfaki, 2015:47).

d. Lack of Practice

Writing is essentially a creative process and good writers must learn to communicate their ideas clearly to an unseen audience. This takes a lot of practice (Davies in Alfaki, 2015:48). The best way to learn any skill, the students must practice it.

e. Teachers' Feedback

Teachers' feedback can be effective if the teachers responding students writing as readers rather than judges and evaluators (Zames in Alfaki, 2015:48). Bryne (in Alfakali, 2015:48) also adding a statement that, if the teachers truly became a reader, they should look at what they actually succeeded in doing.

Research Methods

An analysis of writing problems is considered as qualitative research. In this research, the researcher use case study and employe descriptive analysis to deliver the result of this research. This was conducted to uncover the research problem which is to analyze students' writing problems in Academic Writing in an Argumentative essay (this essay was taught in Academic Writing class in English Department STKIP PGRI Tulungagung 2017-2018). The subject in this research is the fourth semester of the English Department at STKIP PGRI Tulungagung 2017-2018. The fourth semester has one class, which there are 23 students and the writer took all of the students in the class to conduct the research.

According to Licoln and Guban (in Sugiyono, 2015:221) stated that the instrument of choice in the naturalistic inquiry is the human. We shall see that other forms of the instrument may be used in later phases of the inquiry, but if the human is the initial and continuing mainstay. So it means the instrument

research is the researcher herself. Meanwhile, the secondary instruments from this research are the result of a test in an argumentative essay and interview transcript.

Data collecting method conducted by the researcher as follow:

1. Test

The researcher gave a test for the fourth semester to make argumentative essays on the different topic.

2. Interview

It means with the interview the researcher will gather descriptive data in all of these situations in own word and can develop how subject interpret some piece of the word.

Based on the types of triangulation the researcher conducts with methods triangulation because in this research using two methods to collect the data. The first method gave attest to make argumentative essay and the second method taken the interview. The result of the data that the researcher gave attest to know the most problems those students faced in writing. A second instrument, the interview scripts and written done into the description. The transcript of the interview, the researcher can find the possible cause of the students' writing problem.

Findings and Discussion

Findings

In doing analysis data, the writer used some steps by Miles and Huberman (1984):

A. Data reduction

From 23 students who submit the Argumentative text, there were 95 mistakes. In grammatical problems there were 23 mistakes (24.21%), in problems of sentence structure there were 21 mistakes (22.10%), in problems of word choice

there were 17 mistakes (17.89%), in spelling problems there were 16 mistakes (16.84%), in punctuation problems there were 7 mistakes (7.36%), in capitalization problems there were 7 mistakes (7.36%), and in problems organization there were 4 mistakes (4.21%).

From 23 students who interviewed by the researcher, there were the sources of the problem when they wrote, in the nature of writing process there were 20 students, the lack learners' motivation there were 10 students, inadequate time there were 21 students, and in the lack of practice there were 21 students.

B. Data display

1. Writing problems

• Grammatical problems

From 95 mistakes that the researcher found, there were 23 mistakes in grammatical problems. For example:

✓ **Should people** get married under the age of eighteen, **should they** wait until they are more mature enough for marriage. (**The Students Result Test**)

✓ **People should not** get married under the age of eighteen; **they should** wait until they are mature enough for marriage. (**The Correct Form**)

From 23 mistakes that the researcher found, almost all of them make mistakes in connection word by word, the complete sentences, and verb agreements.

• Problems of Sentences Structure

From 95 mistakes that the researcher found, there were 21 mistakes in problems of sentences structure. For example:

✓ **Married** is the best moment to **combine** two different person. (**The Students Result Test**)

✓ **Marriage** is the best moment **for the couple who in love to live together.** (**THE CORRECT FORM**)

From 21 mistakes that the researcher found, almost all of them make

mistakes in incorrect and fragment sentence, and run-on sentence.

- Problems of Word Choice

From 95 mistakes that the researcher found, there were 17 mistakes in problems of word choice. For example:

- ✓ It is people responsibility to not **incure their own and others poeple life. (The Students Result Test)**
- ✓ It is people responsibility to not **make their own life and another in danger. (The Correct Form)**

From 17 mistakes that the researcher found, almost all of them make mistakes when they not using the appropriate word in appropriate place.

- Cognitive Problems: Spelling Problems

From 95 mistakes that the researcher found, there were 16 mistakes in the cognitive problem (spelling problems). For example:

- ✓ This action actually will do more harm **father** than saving these young couple since teenagers or children who just stepped into a teenage hood still have this natural **instict** to be free and play around, lack of judgment, and still emotionally unstable, **(The Students Result Test)**
- ✓ This action actually will do more harm **rather** than be saving these young couples since teenagers or children who just stepped into a teenage hood still have this natural **instinct** to be free and play around, lack of judgment, and still have unstable emotionally. **(The Correct Form)**

From 16 mistakes that the researcher found, almost all of them make mistakes when spelling the word in a wrong way.

- Cognitive Problems: Capitalization

From 95 mistake that the researcher found, there were 7 mistakes in the cognitive problem (capitalization). For example:

- ✓ Using cellphone while driving (Title)
- ✓ Using Cellphone While Driving (Title)

From 7 mistakes that the researcher found, almost all of them make mistakes when capitalizing the word.

- Cognitive Problems: Punctuation

From 95 mistakes that the researcher found, there were 4 mistakes in the cognitive problem (problem organization). For example:

- ✓ Financial problems, and miscarriages are all the effects of early marriage.
- ✓ Financial problems and miscarriages are all the effects of early marriage.

From 7 mistakes that the researcher found, they make mistakes when the should finish the sentence in a paragraph with a dot (.), they use a comma (,) or they finished without dot (.)

- Cognitive Problems: Problem Organization

From 95 mistakes that the researcher found, there were 4 mistakes in the cognitive problem (problem organization). For example:

- ✓ The first young marry distanced from **for nicution**, but young married are very prone to disease once the uterus (cervical cacer). **(There is One Sentence in One Paragraph)**
- ✓ The first, married in young age can restrain from fornication but it can make problems especially in healthy (cervical cancer). **(There is One Sentence in One Paragraph)**

From 4 mistakes that the researcher found, two of them just write one sentence in one

paragraph, in the other one, there is no title and conclusion.

2. Causes of Learners' Problems in Writing (The Sources of Problems)

From 23 students who interviewed by the researcher, there were the sources of the problem when they wrote, in the nature of writing process there are 20 students, the lack learners' motivation there are 10 students, inadequate time there are 21 students, and in the lack of practice, there are 21 students.

C. Verification/Conclusion Drawing

1. Writing problems

The data that the researcher collect was valid. Because there were problems that she found while data reduction and from data display. There were problems that students faced when writing Argumentative text such as grammatical problems, problems of sentence structure, problems of word choice, and in cognitive problems.

2. Causes of Learners' Problems in Writing (The Sources of Problems)

The data that the researcher collect was valid. Because there were problems that she found while data reduction and from data display. There are the source problems that students faced when writing Argumentative text such as the nature of the writing process, lack learners' motivation, inadequate time, and the lack of practice.

Discussion

1. Writing Problems

a. Grammatical Problems

Students have plenty of problems in their effort to write in the second language. Especially in grammar and structure of writing tasks. It was for like the connection word by word, the complete sentences, how to writing into a paragraph. the researcher found that mostly the students used the inappropriate grammar

such as the wrong verb tense, singular plural, and adjective clause. This statement proved with the result of this research that showed grammatical problems has 23 mistakes (24.21%).

b. Problems of sentences structure

Khurma (cited by Alfaki, 2015:45) states that those students who have the problem of writing good sentences structures are unable to produce longer sentences requiring subordination and coordination. This statement proved with the result of this research that showed problems of sentences structure has 21 mistakes (22.10%). The major source of the problems of sentences structure was they translate word by word and mother tongue. English is the second language for these students. Therefore, when they will write their opinion, the first thing they do translate from Indonesia language to the English language without a care about the meaning of the word itself, incorrect and fragments sentences.

c. Problems of word choice

A good writing or composition should consist of an appropriate and varied range of vocabularies used along with proper grammar and varied range of sentence structures (Norish, 1983, cited by Alfaki 2015:45). This statement proved with the result of this research that showed that problems of word choice have 17 (17.89%). The source of problems of word choice is when they write down their opinion, they write word for word without a care about the appropriate place of the grammar and the verb.

d. Punctuation

Carrol and Wilson (in Alfaki 2015:45) state that students' writing encounter punctuation problems as there are no universal rules of punctuation. But, there 7 mistakes that the researcher has found in this research. When they should finish the sentence in the paragraph with the dot (.), they use comma (,) or they finished without dot (.)

e. Capitalization problems

For sentences initials, the beginning of paragraph, beginning of important of word, in topic, etc. It is important to use capital letters (Kroll cited by Alfaki 2015:45). However many learners have problems with capitalization. They wrote sentences with capitalization when they should in write in a normal case. The researcher found 7 mistakes made by the students.

f. Spelling problems\

Gowere (in Alfaki 2015:45) states that due to the influence of other languages, variant pronunciations and other historical reasons, the English spelling system which has become inconsistent is complex for students. This statement was proven by the result of this research that shows spelling problems has 16 mistakes (16.84%). The source of spelling problems was they lack vocabularies.

g. Organization problem

Learners have problems in the structuring of paragraph, topic, development of a paragraph, structuring the whole discourse and a theme in a discourse (Kharma in Alfaki, 2015:46). The result showed that there were 4 mistakes that the students make. Two of them just wrote one sentence in one paragraph, the other one they wrote an essay without title and conclusion.

2. The Sources of Writing Problems

Norish (cited by Alfaki, 2015:46 state that in the written medium, information has to be transmitting without any aid from sources other than the language itself. It seems to follow from this, that more attention is needed to be paid to the language as a code in short of the grammatical and lexical system that is the case with speech. As native, the writing skill is the difficult skill for students because students must balance multiple issues such as content, organization, purpose, audience, vocabulary,

punctuation, spelling, and mechanics (Abu cited by Alfaki, 2015:46). This statement has proved that there were 20 students who said the sources of writing problems was in the nature of writing. They claimed that they have difficulties with grammar and vocabularies. They also claimed that they rather use Google translate than dictionary offline to write down their opinion. So, sometimes what they write it made grammar problems. When the researcher asked about the grammar of using Google translate, mostly their answer was, of course, it will make grammar problems, but they will edit with the grammar they have known.

The desire on the part of the writer to communicate something is very important because it is much more difficult for students to write something they have no interest in (Leki in Alfaki, 2015:47). This statement has proved by 10 students who said that the sources of writing problems were they sometimes lazy to write their idea. Because they need more, time to imagine what they want to write. After they wrote then submitted their lecture gives them some feedback to revise their essay. It made them lazy to write again, in the end, they searched in the Google and copied it or sometimes they just copied their friend essay. The researcher found many students just copying their friend essay.

In addition, many students and teachers feel that writing under time pressure is a very unnatural situation and perhaps cannot lead them to produce compositions that are truly representative of their capabilities (Kroll in Alfaki, 2015:47). This statement has proved by 21 students who said the source of writing problems were inadequate time. They stated that do not have plenty of time to edit their essay. Moreover, they need to arrange the paragraph with appropriate grammatical.

Writing is essentially a creative process and good writers must learn to communicate their ideas clearly to an unseen audience. This takes a lot of practice (Davies in Alfaki, 2015:48). The best way to learn any skill, the students must practice it. This statement has proved with 21 students who said that they need more practice to write an essay. Especially they have an obstacle in grammar and vocabularies. Before they wrote their opinion, they scared that they cannot write sentences inappropriate.

Conclusion

Based on the data in the previous chapter, the writer would like to draw a the conclusion that the students of the Academic Writing class still made many mistakes in the Argumentative text. From 23 students who submitted the Argumentative text, there were 95 mistakes. In grammatical problems there were 23 mistakes (24.21%), in problems of sentence structure there were 21 mistakes (22.10%), in problems of word choice there were 17 mistakes (17.89%), in spelling problems there were 16 mistakes (16.84%), in punctuation problems there were 7 mistakes (7.36%), in capitalization problems there were 7 mistakes (7.36%), and in problems organization there were 4 mistakes (4.21%).

From 23 students who interviewed by the researcher, there were the sources of the problem when they wrote an essay; 20 students have problems on the nature of the writing process, 10 students have problem because of the lack of motivation, 21 students have problem because of inadequate time, and 21 students also have problems because of lack of practice.

Based on the results of the findings, the writer proposes some suggestion as follows:

1. For the lecturer

The result of this research will use for the lecturer who teaches Academic Writing in university to decrease the mistake of the students' writing problem by knowing what kind problems and the sources the students faced.

2. For future researcher

The result of the study will give information for another researcher who conducts the further study which focused on an analysis of students' writing problems in the Academic Writing class.

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