THE ENGLISH WRITING COMPETENCE OF THE STUDENTS OF INDONESIAN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

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Abstract

This study attempts to find out the English Writing Competence of the Students of Indonesian Senior High School, highlights the problems, finds out the cause and provides some suggestions to overcome the problems. For attaining this purpose, three questions were raised and the answers were provided and discussed. To find out the objectives of this study, the researcher collected the data through a writing test. The participants were the First Senior High school students in SMA1 and SMA3. The result of this study showed that learners' English writing Competence was encountered problems in many categories. The problems were mostly in grammar such as tenses, articles, singular and plural, verbs, prepositions, and spelling. Moreover, the learners face some difficulties in the punctuation and capitalization. Most of these errors were encountered as a result of the mother tongue influence.

1.1 Background of the Study

Students start having English lessons at primary school, Junior and Senior High Schools and Universities. The Primary School students study English for six years
and the Junior High School students study English for three years. It means that every graduate of Junior High School has studied English for nine years. The main focus of teaching and learning process in Junior High School is to develop the students' ability in communicating, to give knowledge about the language both spoken and written, and to increase students' awareness about how important the English to be learnt.

In learning English, there are four language skills; listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Listening and speaking are oral mode of skills and reading and writing are written mode of skills. Listening and reading are receptive skills while speaking and writing are productive skills.

Writing especially in the English writing competence of the students of Indonesian Senior High School" is chosen as the topic in this thesis since it has not got a maximum portion in learning activity in which the research held. Writing itself is a communicative, productive, and expressive activity by using written material as its medium. The activity is meant to deliver a message from writer to the reader. In writing activity, a student should be able to utilize graphology, grammatical structure, and vocabulary. Jarvis (2000) emphasizes that many students do not enjoy writing because they feel that if they cannot do it correctly at the first time then they will never get it. Besides that,

since the subject of the research is still in senior high school, so the researcher considers writing in English will make the students easier in writing the paragraph.

On this occasion, the analysis of students' writing in English seems as an interesting thing. The analysis is based on the sentences made by the first senior high school students. The result gained from the research will be used to know the lacks which occur in teaching writing such as: a material given to the students, the teachers who teach, the teaching method, the students themselves, and others supporting things related to the activity. The analysis is focused on the errors of the use of simple sentence made by the students of SMA.

The researcher is interested in writing this topic because it might be useful for both the teachers and the students who are learning English, especially in finding a way on how to make writing easier, more interesting, challenging, and less boring.

1.2. **Problem Statement**

There is a weakness in the writing skills of the first year secondary stage students. They often get low scores on their writing tasks. Consequently, they develop a negative attitude towards writing. The problem of the study was stated in the following questions:

a. what errors are commonly made by the first year students of SMA1 and SMA3?
b. What problems are experienced by the first year students of SMA1 and SMA3?
c. To what extent is the writing competence of the first year students of SMA1 and SMA3?

1.3 The Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are:

a. To find out the errors made by the first year students of SMA.
b. To find out the problems experienced by the first year students.
c. To find out the writing competence of the first year students of SMA1 and SMA3.

1.4 Scope of the Study

It is necessary to limit the topic of the study in order to avoid the misinterpretation in this research, so the researcher limits the study as follows:

a. The research is focused on the error analysis of the use of simple sentence made by the first year students.

b. The research also describes the failure of the students in writing a report paragraph using simple sentence.

c. The research focuses on the P.W. activities in developing the writing skills and students' attitudes towards writing.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The result of the research gives information on students' writing difficulties in English as they shift from Junior School with literacy skills in a local language and step into senior school where they start learning literacy skills in English. This information would help teachers as well as curriculum specialists in devising the best practices and materials for the effective teaching of writing of English at Senior High schools and others. Furthermore, the information will add the knowledge about the difficulties of reading and writing connected with teaching and learning of English.

2.1 Teaching the Aspects of effective writing

We teach children how to read books but not how to read their own writing, unless we show children how to read their own writing, their work will not improve." Donald Graves, (1994). *A Fresh Look at Writing*

2.2 PROCESS WRITING APPROACH

Heald-Taylor (1986) describes the process method in the following way:
"Process Writing is an approach which encourages ESL youngsters to communicate their own written messages while simultaneously developing their literacy skills in speaking and reading rather than delaying involvement in the writing process, as advocated in the past, until students have perfected their abilities in handwriting, reading, phonetics, spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

2.3 Types of Feedback

There is no single way for providing feedback on writing, nor is the teacher the only source of it. Feedback, therefore, falls into different types according to who gives it and how. Conferencing, peer feedback, and teacher written comments constitute the most common feedback types cited in many researchers' works (e.g. Zamel(1985); Ferris(2003); Hyland(2003); Harmer(2004).

2.4 Responding to Errors

A number of L2 writing research studies have seen quite a wide range of features in students' L2 written texts that teachers respond to, such as students' ideas, rhetoric organization, grammar, word choices, spelling, and punctuation (Conrad & Goldstein, 1999; Ferris, 1995, 1997;Ferris, Pezone, Tade & Tinki, 1997; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994; Reid, 1994; Saito, 1994). What attracts researchers most is the teachers' response to students' errors. The strategies that the teachers take in whether to respond to errors are seen as an issue of pedagogical controversy. Truscott (1996) argued that correcting errors in L2 students' writing is not beneficial, and even counterproductive, to students' writing development.

On the other hand, Ferris (2002, 2003) and Goldstein (2001, 2005) provided evidence to support error correction. They demonstrate the value of "judicious, purposeful" error correction and the principles in implementing such correction.

Although researchers found it difficult to show that teachers' Error correction actually improved L2 students' writing (Fazio, 2001; Kepner, 1991), a great deal of error correction research has focused on error correction techniques (Ferris, Chaney, Komura, Roberts & McKee, 2000; Ferris & Helt, 2000). Two major techniques have been identified: direct and indirect error feedback. Direct error feedback (overt correction) involves the provision of the correct forms or structures (Hendrickson, 1980). Indirect error feedback, by simply underlining the errors, identifies student errors without giving the correct forms or structures. Among these two methods, indirect error feedback is considered to bring more benefits to students' long-term writing development than direct error feedback through ''increased student engagement and attention to forms and problems'' (Ferris, 2003, p. 52). However, direct feedback may be appropriate for beginner students and when the errors are "untreatable", which are errors that students are not able to self-correct, such as syntax and vocabulary errors (Ferris, 2002, 2003).

2.5 Result and Discussion

140 students who learn English as a foreign language, who study in two of the First Senior High School, were chosen. as the subjects for this study. They were asked to write about two different topics and answer a writing test. The written data were analyzed by the researcher in terms of identifying and classifying of the grammatical errors which were found in spelling, singular and plural, tenses, prepositions, articles, verbs, capitalization and punctuation. A total of 1654 grammatical errors were found.

Conclusion

This study shows the writing errors that are committed by Indonesian students in the First Senior High School. This study shows that the weakest area in writing English by Indonesian learners of English as a foreign language

was in the grammatical aspects. Learners have difficulties in dealing with the grammar of the target language (English).

Many mistakes have been committed by the participants in prepositions as a result of the slight difference between the two languages. The difference of the number of prepositions and the different usage of them were the only cause behind that.

It is found out that the mother tongue effects negatively the learners' acquisition of the foreign language. The study found out that the mother tongue effects on different aspects of acquiring the grammar of the foreign language. Both languages have tenses but the absence of some tenses in Indonesian does not help flu students to master the tenses of English. For example; the perfect tense is found in English but it does not exist in Indonesian. Therefore, the learners face difficulties in using this tense and usually make errors in using it.

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