

A Study on College Students' Writing Competence

Meilina Haris Mayekti
Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama of Purwokerto
Meilina.haris@gmail.com

Abstract

This research attempts to find out the writing competence of college students, detect the cause of the problems and propose some suggestion to deal with the problem. The population of this research is the second Semester students of English Education Department UNU Purwokerto. Since the number of population is less than 100 students the writer took them all as sample. It means that the number of sample is the same as the number of the population that is 39 students. The method of this research was descriptive. This research was conducted on May 2018. The instrument used in this research is a test. The computation of the data to find out writing competence uses percentage formula. After the data has been analysed, the data showed that the writing competence is 62.64%, it means that the writing competence of the second semester students of English Education Department UNU Purwokerto is good. The most problems of the students are grammatical. Those are the pattern of tenses, addition, and misformation.

Key words: writing, competence, descriptive, college students, grammatical problems

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INTRODUCTION

English is an International language which is taught as a foreign language in Indonesia. It is used for communication in many sectors such as economy, politic, and education. Bernard said that one of the principles used of language is communicative meaning, but it is also establish and to maintain social relationship (1998: 3). According to the file kept by English department of IKIP Semarang, out of 140 candidates who sat in for the entrance test to enter the department in 1997 only 10 students got marks above the passing grade, or only

about 70% of the whole number of candidates. In addition, most SMA graduates are still very poor in their reading comprehension, since the can not usually read or understand articles in English dailis, magazines, which has mostly been overlooked in our schools (1992: 3). From the xplanation above, especially in two last lines that competence in writing is mostly been overlooked in learning process. Actually writing competence is very important in learning English in the globalization era. The competence of English, especially

writing is needed to communicate with other people or society.

According to Ramelan, the more cultivated and more technologically advanced man, the more use he will make of the written language. It means that writing plays a very important role in a modern city. It can even be said that it is indispensable for advancement of human civilization (1992: 13).

In the modern world, written language serves a range of function in everyday life, namely for action (e.g. public sign on roads and stations), for information (e.g. newspaper, magazines, etc), and for entertainment (e.g. film subtitles, poetry and drama, etc) (Halliday, 1985: 40-41).

It is clear that writing skill can not be ignored and it is needed in this modern life (Kurnia, 2000: 2). By writing someone can express his ideas, feeling and thought. So someone can make paper, letter, formal and non formal report. Fluently if she or he has good writing competence, writing makes his thought more communicative to other as well as themselves.

Considering to that fact, it is important to guide students in writing to make them able to write. It is important for teacher to give more modest way to teach writing. Teacher also has to know the students problem in writing by

knowing their problem teacher is easy to create teaching activity.

Writing learning in English Education Department UNU Purwokerto has problem, there are some problems in writing such as grammar, spelling, and formation of writing. In principle, to write means to produce or reproduce written messages (Bram, 1995: 7). By writing human being can express their ideas, thought on feeling or another expression. Wisnubroto (1993: 7) stated that although people have advantages of having the competence, they should not be tired and bored to practice and practice. To develop their writing competence, it can be done through practice which can make them become more profesional. It means that they can practice writing well. Tarigan said that writing skill is one of important aspects in communication process. The progress of a country and a nation can be measured from the progress of its written communication. We measure whether its written communication is advanced or not by looking at the quality and quantity of the publishing there (1986: 20).

The purpose of the research are to find out the writing competence of college students, detect the cause of the problems and propose some suggestion to deal with the problem.

Writing a process

Halliday as written by Nunan, said that “speaking is less structured or complex than writing” (1991: 85). In fact the competence of writing is more complex than speaking because to be a good writer, someone should master grammar, diction, spelling etc. Bell and Burnaby in Nunan (1986: 45) point out that writing is extremely complex cognitive activity which requires the writer to demonstrate control of several variables at once, at the sentence level these include control of content, format, sentence, structure, vocabulary, pronunciation, spelling and letter formation. So writing competence needs a long process. Nunan said that competent writers do not produce final best at their first attempt, but that writing is long and painful process in which the final text emerges through successive drafts (1991:87)

Kinds of mistake in writing

According to Bram (1995: 25-33) in his book entitled “Write Well Improving Writing Skills” there are common place weaknesses at the sentence level which most (beginning) writers should overcome.

Sentence fragment

A sentence fragment is similar to a phrase or a dependent clause. A fragment can not be function, not stand alone as a

simple sentence. A sentence fragment does not have any of following : subject, finite verb, subject and finite verb or main or independent clause, for example, *went to the beach* (there is no subject), *forgotten the problem* (there is no finite), *In the zoo to see the birds* (there is no subject and finite), and *When we started climbing* (there is no main or independent clause).

Comma splice

A comma splice is a compound sentence that is wrongfully connected. It is joined or “spliced” by a comma. One of the English sentence rules state that a comma to form compound sentences must not join two or more single sentences. Such sentences are grammatically unacceptable, they are referred to as comma splice, for example, *We practice writing every week, we want to write better* and *Dinda is an attractive girl, I am interested in her*.

Run-on /focused sentence

Another common problem that most beginning writers face is the run-on or focused sentences. Similar to the comma splice the run on sentence does not tell the readers where a sentence starts or ends. As a result, the readers will probably spend too much time trying to figure out the intended message in the writing, for example, *The sunshine brightly the day is wonderful*. It should be

The sun shine brightly. The day is wonderful.

Dangling modifiers

Conciseness is one important principle in effective writing. Using a few words as possible, the writer attempts to put forward as many ideas as possible. To be economical, the writer must not sacrifice the clarity of the message to be expressed in the sentence. The dangling modifier (DM) is a reduce clause that does not have the same subject can be transformed to a reduce clause. Some grammarians also use the term's verbal construction to refer to the dangling modifier. The dangling modifier may cause unclear, trance or illogical meanings, for example, *Entering the crowded reading room, her bag dropped on the floor* (DM). It should go *Entering the crowded reading room, she dropped her bag into the floor* (Bram: 25-33)

Error Analyses

According to Tarigan (1995) the aims of error analysis are to decide the order of the object and the stressed subject, make plan coming exercises and remedial teaching, and to select the possible items test for the students.

Learner to target languages sometimes are afraid making mistakes or error in the language learning process in this important from the teacher or the target language to analyse carefully the mistakes

a learner made in the process of constructing a new system of all problems or error made by learner should be analyse accurately to find out the problem solving of the study of the error is called "error analysis". Error analysis is useful for both teacher and learner of target language. It shows some problems and countered by the learners. It all so gives further information to teacher about the process of acquiring of foreign language.

Error analysis to noticeable deviation from the adults grammar of native speaker, reflecting the inter language competence of the learners (Subiyakto, Nababan : 1993). According to Tarigan (1995 : 85) there are two types of error namely interlingua error and intralingua error.

Interlingua error are error that caused by the interference of mother tongue (L1) to target language (L2). They are also known as the contractive analysis concept or dependent errors. They deal with the negative interference between L1 and L2 including phonology, morphology, syntax, vocabulary and structure.

Intralingua errors are error that caused by students difficulties in learning target language itself. There is no interference of mother tongue and target language so they are called L1 independent errors. The causes of these errors are over generalization misplacing

the grammatical rule of target language, for example, *He always go to school at seven o'clock (wrong)*, He always goes to school at seven o'clock (right); ignore of the rule restriction, application of rule to the inappropriate context, for example, *We go to the supermarket last night. (wrong)*, *We went to the supermarket last night. (right)*; and false concept hypothesis in correct insight on the differences in the target language itself. Those errors involve error in the production of verbs group, error in the question.

The steps of error analysis are done through some steps, namely collecting data, identifying and classifying errors, make the errors and sequence, explaining the errors, predicting difficult items, and correcting the errors (Tarigan, 1995).

METHOD

In this research the writer uses descriptive method. (Hornby 1989: 18) notes that descriptive is describing how language is actually used without giving rules for how it ought to be used. So a descriptive study here means trying to study or know to analyse by examining language parts to the students.

The research was carried out at University Nahdlatul Ulama of Purwokerto to the second semester students. In this case the writer uses a test to measure the writing competence of

Students. The first step that is doing the writer after collecting the data is giving score to respondents. Before explaining the score, the writer wants to mention the kinds of test, there are three variations test that are used by writer. After collecting the data the writer analyses the data using percentage of descriptive analysed in giving test score.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

After collecting the data and analysis, the writer would like to present result of research.

Students Individual Competence

The writer calculates the percentage of respondent competence by using a percentage the respondent (N).

Frequency Distribution

The computation of frequency distribution of student writing competence is as follows:

- a. The range of students writing competence is the highest score = 82 and the lows = 36, the range is 46.
- b. The number of class interval by using the formula:
k: $1 + 3.3 \log n$
k: $1 + 3.3 \log 39$
k: 6.3
k: number of class interval
The result is 6.3, so the number of class interval 156
- c. The length of class interval by using formula:

$P = \text{range} / \text{number of class interval}$

$$P = \frac{46}{6.3} = 7.30$$

In this case the length of class interval used is 7.

- d. Making the table of frequency distribution of student writing competence

Table 1. The frequency distribution of writing competence

No	Class Interval	F	X	FX
1	77 – 84	4	80.5	322
2	69 – 76	9	72.5	652.5
3	61 – 68	12	64.5	774
4	53 – 60	7	56.5	395
5	45 – 52	2	48.5	97
6	36 – 44	5	40.5	202.5
				$\Sigma 2443$

The mean of students' competence

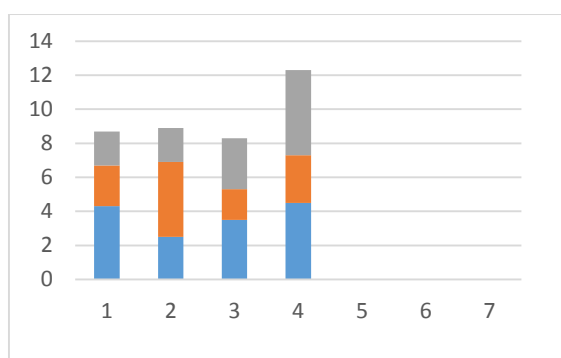
The mean of the students' competence score is obtained by using the formula as follows:

$$M = P = \frac{\Sigma FX}{N}$$

$$M = 2443 / 39$$

$$M = 62.64$$

The table of histogram



The table of polygon

Class Interval	X	f
36 – 44	40.5	5
45 – 52	48.5	2
53 – 60	56.5	7

61 – 68	64.6	11
69 – 70	72.5	9
77 - 84	80.5	4

Classical Competence

After knowing the mean score of student competence, the writer calculates the percentage score of classical competence by using their formula, as follows:

$$P = m / n \times 100\%$$

$$P = 62.64 / 100 \times 100\%$$

$$P = 0. 62.64 \times 100\%$$

$$P = 62.64\%$$

Table 2. Percentage of the student's problems

No	The category of problem	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Vocabulary	10	25.64
2	Structure	8	20.51
3	Spelling	12	30.76
4	Diction	5	12.82
5	Punctuation	4	10.26

30.76% of the respondents have spelling problems.

After knowing the test result of student writing competence of the second semester students of English Department Education academic year 2017/2018, the student's competence is categorized well.

There are common mistakes that done by students. To make it clear, the writer analysed the errors. The writer would like to mention the kind of errors or mistakes that was done by students follows:

Grammatical fact

The rote level of grammatical mistake is fair. Most of them have got two

scores in grammar, most of them made mistake in grammar. Such as tenses the pattern of sentence or the correct grammatical, so they make mistake in writing composition.

Punctuation

In scoring, many students got 3 in doing writing composition and punctuation is one of common mistakes made by the students for example: Capital letter.

As we know that punctuations includes comma (,), full stop (.), capital letter, question mark (?), semi colon (;), exclamation mark (!). The students who make mistakes in punctuation are hotly in part II where students are asked to complete the punctuation of a paragraph. It can be seen on appendix I clearly. In writing composition wrong punctuation that is made by students is capital letter to make clearly some typical error can be seen as follows:

No	Wrong punctuation	Correct Punctuation
1	on 12 October	On 12 October
2	the tragedy	The tragedy
3	in Bali	In Bali

From the example above, that the name of city must be capital latter in the first alphabet. The first alphabet of the first word must use capital letter. The name of the month must use capital letter on the first alphabet.

Spelling

The common score of the students are 3 in spelling. Most of the students make few mistakes in spelling. They are some mistakes in using spelling. Some examples of mistakes are:

No	Wrong Spelling	Correct Spelling
1	Bom	Bomb
2	Accourding	According
3	Kind of the building	Kind of building

From the example above it can be said that wrong spelling that the students do is the similar pronunciation. The students seldom remember common words.

Diction

The students think that some words have some meanings. But the actualities do not, so they choose that word. In fact that word is not suitable, because of that most of the students have got two till the score in diction, and the most mistakes which are mode by the students as in table below:

Wrong Diction	Correct Diction
In Sunday	On Sunday
Much people	A lot of people

After knowing that the students make mistakes in using suitable word, the writer will analysed the mistake. The students should know that the suitable preposition use in the date followed by name of month and the home of day is on not in.

The Sentence fragment

In writing sentence some students lack of subject predicate or object. It

means that their sentences are incomplete, for example:

No	Wrong Sentence	Correct Sentence
1	Happen on October 2005	The tragedy happened on October 2005
2	Exactly on day Saturday	The tragedy happened exactly on Saturday

As we know that a sentence must be complete and there are subject, verb, and object, sometimes it is added by complement in writing sentence the students should have correct and complete sentence.

Concord

In concord, most students got two till three. It is caused by there locking know dice of grammar. They do not know the canges of the word, the relation between subject and predicate and some for example:

Wrong Concord	Correct Concord
Thousand victim	Thousand victims
Indonesia person	Indonesian people
This get on Sunday	This, I get on Sunday

Really writing composition must have concord or agreement between subject and verb or the other. There are some mistakes about writing composition analysis especially about concord. The students should make sure they use correct form of nouns must change form of nouns in plural.

The run of fused sentence

Some students make run on sentence their writing. The run on sentence made by students are as follows:

No	Wrong sentence	Correct Sentence
1	This tragedy take place in Bali of twelve October	This tragedy on 12 October in Bali
2	Victim bomb Bali is load bombing be 100	There were 100 persons in bomb Bali tragedy

Article

Few students made mistakes in article. Most of them get high score, but there are few students who pay attention to the article, so they still made mistakes especially the article a and the.

No	Wrong article	Correct Article
1	In Bali happen bomb Bali	A tragedy happened in Bali
2	Influence of tragedy	The influence of tragedy

Few the discussion above, we know that the student problems in writing are grammatical; where the students are still confused or they still mode mistake in the grammar, punctuation; where the student regard it as something which is easy, so they are not careful. In writing composition wrong which are mode by students are capital letters; spellings, in writing composition, the students often misspell because some word have some pronunciation but different spelling; diction, the students is not correct in choosing the word; the sentence fragment, there are some statement or sentence which cannot be understand and something there is no subject, verb, or subject verb; concord, something the

students write the sentence that are not suitable with subject, whereas verb of sentence must be suitable of subject; the run-on / fused sentence. Common problem is the run-on sentence. Many students make mistake about it; and article, the students should use article in the singular, countable noun but the students do not use the article.

It occurred not only because of the students' were not succeed in following the order of writing process but also because of less effort. They rarely practice writing and a good text in and out classroom. They already know the rules of writing but still unable to apply it. Those problems make their writing skill is still weak.

CONCLUSION

Having finished discussing the subject concerning the writing competence, in this chapter the writer draws some conclusion in the hope that the reader of this article can clearly obtain more knowledge about the writing competence. The data analysis shows that the classical competence of writing competence of the second semester students of English Education Department academic year 2017/2018 is 62,64% is in good level or category.

In general, there are some common problems faced by the students in writing composition, those are: grammar,

punctuation, spelling, diction, concord, run-on, sentence fragment and articles. Based on error analysis it reveals that the common problems of the students are over generalization (56,40%), ignore of rule restriction (3,60%), and false concept hypothesized (33,58%).

The result of the research has deal with the students' skill of writing. First, these findings imply the teachers should use an effective strategy in teaching writing in order to get good results for the students. Second, the topic which close to the students writing. Third, students who get weak and poor category implies that their writing are not good, because their difficult to develop and organize the idea well. Fourth, the teacher must be give the students chance to practice their writing skill.

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