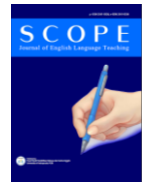




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Research Article

English Writing Skill of Informatics Engineering Students

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KEYWORDS

writing skill;
informatics students;
Hughes' theory.

ABSTRACT

This descriptive qualitative study was conducted in order to analyze the English writing skill of Informatics Engineering students where the respondents contributed are the first semester students of Informatics Engineering, University of Indraprasta PGRI. Data collected through writing test given to the students, in which students were required to write a recount text. The analysis was conducted according to Hughes Scoring theory of Writing skill. The study findings and result show that the writing skill score of Informatics students is quite low, where there were only 10 or 40% of 25 students got higher score than 67, the median score of Hughes writing scoring that determine the low-high score. In the other hand, there were 15 or 60% students got lower score. It means that there are more students with low score than the high one, so it can be concluded that the writing skill of Informatics Engineering students is classified as low category.

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INTRODUCTION

English course in Informatics Engineering Program is classified as general subject, which shares only 2 credit courses per semester. This subject goal is targeted on students' mastery of basic English skill, especially writing and reading. These skills are emphasized more than the rest two skills in order to prepare the students to be able to receipt any written information by having reading skill, and then use it in any computer-based activities that requires writing text ability (Irlanda, M.M, et al 2017). As a lecturer teaching this subject for more than a decade, it is always interesting to find out the students' level of writing as well as having a thought on their difficulties while learning this skill because it is acknowledged widely that among the four skills of English learning, writings is considered as the most

difficult, especially when it comes to academic writings (Fareed et al., 2016, Mailia, 2017).

The needs of proficiency in writing are essential for both higher education and the work life after they graduate (Sajid & Siddiqui, 2015), hence, one of best indicator of a student's performance in course work during their first year of college is their ability to write an extensive text (Batalla, & De Vera, 2019, Geiser & Studley, 2001). Furthermore, improvements in analytical and informative writing skills are regarded as a reliable measure of the value that higher education should provide (Benjamin & Chun, 2003).

Moreover, Harmer (2007: 134) makes a number of claims regarding the necessity of teaching writing to students. The first argument is reinforcement: students will benefit much from having the language written down. Development of language comes in second. The act of writing itself is what

aids pupils in their learning process. Writing is suitable for learners who require time to develop language, (Durga & Rao, 2018) which brings us to our third reason: learning style. It's also a really contemplative exercise. The final justification is that pupils need to learn how to write as one of their skills. Writing letters, compiling written reports, responding to advertisements, and other creative written texts are skills that students must possess (Senel, 2018)

Unfortunately, as proven on some studies, writing is not an easy task, even it is considered to be the hardest skill to master. This statement is also supported by Iftanti (2016), whose study results on a conclusion that this difficulty of writing is more likely as oral culture is more rooted than writing one in Indonesian perspective. Furthermore Kellog (2008) once stated that contrary to the acquisition of speaking, writing coherent, effective texts requires a prolonged and challenging cognitive development process. In addition many EFL students find that learning to write is a difficult challenge since they are not sufficiently vulnerable outside of the classroom to the real language. Previous research has shown that low motivation, language deficiencies, and a lack of writing experience can all contribute to EFL students' writing difficulties (Ying, 2018; Yundayani, 2018; Zhang, 2018).

Despite the difficulties they might face, students find it's challenging to write in English as a foreign language (Batalla & De Vera, 2019, Gibbons 2002:25). These challenges mainly address three typical issues. The first issue is to procedure and organization, which includes idea organization, phrase structure selection, and sentence linking and sequencing. The second issue is language use, which has to do with the application of specific structures or technical abilities. The third issue is one of content. The issue at hand concerns what should be written down. This issue requires the instructor to choose the procedures, resources, and strategies carefully for the writing class (Harmer in Sa'adah, A.R., 2020).

Writing well requires students' capacity to think, recall, and apply language, which makes it a significant cognitive task (Alodwan & Ibnian, 2014). It necessitates the quick recall of topic-specific domain knowledge from long-term memory (Kellogg, 2001,). In addition, Brown (1987:87) stated that, when writing, students should concentrate on the following skills: coming up with ideas; organizing them coherently; using discourse markers and rhetorical conventions to incorporate ideas into written text; revising text for clarity; editing for proper grammar; and producing the finished product.

One of the most crucial parts of teaching language is writing, as it allows students to express their thoughts and ideas on paper and share them with others (Brown, 1987:232). This indicates that writing is the act of communicating ideas through written language or putting thoughts into words.

The definition above might be expressed as follows: a writer (the person who delivers messages) writes a written text (a message), and a reader (the person who receives messages) reads the written text (Inayah, N and Nanda, R. P. (2016). Everyone possesses the ability to write. As long as there is a strong desire to be able to write, we can begin at any moment. In the meantime, writing is an exploratory activity, according to Studova and friends (2000:6), and the outline can be changed as the work is produced and put together to account for new points or shift emphasis. Robert (1990:1), however, asserts that writing offers a reasonably permanent means of preserving knowledge, opinions, sentiments, disputes, justifications, ideas, and so forth.

Related to the process of gaining writing skills, Henry (2000) highlighted some steps, called Micro-writing Process, a series of micro abilities enables a writer to produce well-written, error-free work. The writer must: (1) use the script, spelling, and punctuation appropriately as part of the micro-skills process. (2). Use the appropriate language to indicate the correct case, gender, and tense. (3). Make appropriate use of key elements to help the reader understand the writer's point of view, such as the subject, verb, and object. (4). Make the text cohesive so that the reader can grasp it with ease. (5). Organize each speech component correctly. (6). Make appropriate use of the terminology and words. (7). Adjust the writing style to the needs of the readership. (8). Make the main points clear.

There is a difference between writing for writing and writing for learning, according to Harmer (2007:112). Writing-for-learning serves as a practice tool or aide-memoire to assist pupils in working with the language they have been studying. These kinds of writing assignments are meant to provide students with reinforcement. Writing-for-writing, on the other hand, aims to improve students' writing abilities. Put another way, the major goal of these kinds of exercises is to help students improve their writing skills, regardless of the genre. There is no denying that writing has become a common place aspect of peoples' daily lives (Rao, 2017). Writing, in whatever format, works well for communicating ideas. Examples of this include straightforward signage at retail establishments and printed materials like newspapers and magazines. Literary works like poems, novels, and short stories, as well as academic and scientific materials like books, journals, and encyclopedias, demonstrate how important writing is to daily life in a variety of ways. Imagine how difficult it must be for people to perform their tasks without writing (Mulyadi et al, 2020).

There are various kind of texts that can be used for testing students writing skill, one of them is recount text. Recount text is a piece of text which retells past events orderly and has a purpose to describe what have already happened (Anderson in Harris et al, 2014) Likewise, recount text is

used for retelling the events happened on the past to inform or entertain about what and when it happened, as stated by Knapp & Watkins (2005). In this study, recount text is chosen as the test instrument since this kind of text apparently quite familiar to the students where they are expected to write their personal experience.

Before writing a recount text, students must be familiar with the general structure and linguistic elements of the texts. According to Sapkota (2012:45), a recount text is arranged as follows: an introduction, a sequence of events, and occasionally an assessment or reorientation at the conclusion of the text. Recount texts typically start with an introduction to set the scene and provide background information that will help readers grasp the next section of the story. Furthermore, according to Barwick (1999:6), there are some language peculiarities in recount texts. They are proper nouns and pronouns used to identify persons, animals, or objects. The words are then produced in the past tense to retell past events. To express their emotions, writers might utilize a variety of action verbs and adjectives. In addition, adverbs and adverbial phrases should be used to sequence events in time and denote location..

METHOD

This research uses descriptive method since it is a qualitative one. While the sample is taken from 25 students of Informatics Engineering Program, University of Indraprasta PGRI. Data analyzing technique is quite simple, since it doesn't require various statistic formulation. It only uses percentage calculation to analyze students writing skill according to Hughes theory (2003), as well as determining the low and high score in accordance to mean or median for each writing component.

In collecting data, the writer also conducted following procedures:

1. Observation

One way to get data is by observation, which involves looking into the actual process of teaching English writing.

2. Writing Test

Students were given writing tests (writing recount text) to classify their level of proficiency. Here is the scoring system suggested by Hughes (2003):

Content mastery	: 13-30
Organization mastery	: 07-20
Vocabulary mastery	: 07-20
Grammar mastery	: 05-25
<u>Mechanics mastery</u>	<u>: 02-05</u>
Total	: 34-100
Median score	: 67

Explanation:

C = Content; means extent, relevance, subject knowledge, the substance of writing, the idea expressed.

O = Organization; means the organization of the content includes the coherence, fluency, clarity, and logical sequencing.

V = Vocabulary shows the vocabulary richness, the choice of words, appropriate register, idioms, lexical choice.

G = Grammar; includes Language use accuracy, grammatical tenses, use of articles, word order, countable versus uncountable nouns, prepositions, sentence constructions.

M = Mechanics; the use of graphic convention of the language such as punctuation, spelling appropriateness, and capitalizing.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following table shows the result of students writing test.

Table1 Students' English Writing Scores at Informatics Engineering Program.

No	Respondent	TOTAL SCORE
1	Student 1	72
2	Student 2	54
3	Student 3	72
4	Student 4	45
5	Student 5	45
6	Student 6	74
7	Student 7	78
8	Student 8	75
9	Student 9	77
10	Student 10	80
11	Student 11	56
12	Student 12	59
13	Student 13	45
14	Student 14	52
15	Student 15	50
16	Student 16	67
17	Student 17	68
18	Student 18	46
19	Student 19	82
20	Student 20	60
21	Student 21	52
22	Student 22	60
23	Student 23	41
24	Student 24	48
25	Student 25	50
TOTAL		1508
Mean		60.32

Table 2 Informatics Students' Scores of English Writing Skill by Percentage

Total Students' responses			
≤ 67	Percentage	≥ 67	Percentage
15	60 %	10	40%

The results shown that 10 of 25 students scores more than 67 (median score of Hughes Scoring Components Range, that determine the low and high score), while 15 of them scores less than 67. As a percentage, it may be stated that students with high writing proficiency score 40%, whereas students with low writing proficiency score 60%. The percentage implies that there are more students with less writing skill than those with good writing skill. Furthermore, the mean score of 25 students (60.32) is lower than the median score expected (67). Hence, in general, we can say students writing skill can be classified as low level.

Meanwhile, the score of each writing components based on Hughes scoring can be seen on the following table:

Table 3 Students' Score in Writing Components:

Students	C	O	V	G	M
S1	20	13	17	18	4
S2	14	10	13	13	4
S3	18	14	18	18	4
S4	15	8	10	10	2
S5	14	10	10	9	2
S6	20	13	17	19	5
S7	22	17	16	18	5
S8	21	15	16	19	4
S9	24	16	16	17	4
S10	22	17	18	18	5
S11	15	15	10	12	4
S12	16	16	12	13	2
S13	10	12	10	11	2
S14	16	12	12	12	2
S15	14	12	12	12	2
S16	18	14	10	14	4
S17	20	14	12	20	5
S18	14	10	10	17	5
S19	22	20	18	17	5
S20	16	12	14	14	4
S21	15	12	10	13	2
S22	17	13	12	14	4
S23	14	8	8	9	2
S24	15	10	10	10	3
S25	15	12	12	9	3
Mean	17.08	12.52	12.92	14.24	3.52

In this study, the writers tried to analyze the students' achievement for each component contributing to Hughes writing scoring theory (2003). Table 3 shows the scores that students got from each component. The first factor is Content, the summary of total score from 25 students reached to 427, with mean score is 17.08. This score can be classified as low, since the range of the score is 13-30. The lack of original idea and irrelevance concept contributed to this low achievement, where the writers found most of the text are written in almost identical pattern. As can be seen on Table 2, there are only four students got high score on Content point (student 7, 9, 10, and 19) where the scores are more than 21.5, in which the latest number mentioned is the median of Content score range.

Meanwhile, for Organization Score, the summary of 25 students score resulted to 313 in total, and mean score is 12.52. This result implied students writing skill from the Organization Score point is quite low. This statement then supported by the fact that only 11 of 25 (students 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 16, 17, 19, 22) or less than half students got higher score than the median score of Organization Score range (13.5). the incoherency can be found in most of students writing.

The low score also can be seen on Vocabulary Score, where students resulted 323 in total and 12.92 for mean score. This score does not surpass the median of vocabulary score range (13.5). In addition, as can be seen on Table 3, there are 16 out of 25 students, or 64% of them got lower score than median. This percentage implies that there are more students with lack of vocabulary mastery than those with good vocabulary mastery.

The same situation was found on Grammar Scoring. The total scores collected by 25 students for this component is 356, while mean score is 14.24. This score is slightly under the median of grammar score range (15). Furthermore, as written on the table, there are only 10 students or 40%, or less than a half of them gained higher score than median. The main reason for this low achievement is simply because of students' incompetency of grammar, especially past tense, which is used mainly in the recount text they were required to write. The use of inappropriate verb form such as combining to be along with past verb was identified in most of their writings.

Surprisingly, contrary to the previous components, the mechanical scores show different situation. The total scores gained by the 25 students is 88, and the mean is 3.52, while the median of this latest component is 3.5. In addition, there are 15 or 60 % of students got higher score than median. The writer found several errors on punctuation or spelling at students writing, but the number of errors can be considered as minor.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and result, we can assume that the writing skills of informatics students is low to average and there are various factor leads to this situation. As mentioned before, the respondents involved in this study is the first semester students of Informatics Engineering Program who haven't learnt English intensively, since English is a mandatory course that they have to take, whether they like it or not. In the other words, most of students have less interest on English. The lack of vocabularies, less understanding of grammar, and inability to express the idea into writing text are common difficulties faced by the students. As previously mentioned by Hasan et al (2021) in his recent studies, this is a challenging state for the lectures of EFL/ESL learners, for they need to find the effective as

well as interesting way of teaching, so the students' motivation to learn English will be improved.

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