

STUDY ON THE ABILITY OF STUDENTS IN WRITING NARRATIVE ESSAY

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This study aims to find out the ability of the students in writing a narrative essay and to find out their difficulties in writing it. The students under concern were the second-semester students of academic year 2016 taking the English 2 subject at STIKOM Bali Dual-Degree Program. This study used the theory of Writing particularly Narrative Writing, and theory of English Grammar. The theory of Writing was used to measure the students' ability in making a narrative writing. The theory of English Grammar was used to measure their ability in using the grammar. The result of this study showed that the highest score and also the lowest score of the students' narrative writing were in the part of idea of the content. The proficient category was in the part of vocabulary and mechanic, but some of them also need to improve their vocabulary or the varied wording. There were some difficulties faced by the students in writing narrative essay. The first one was in focusing to the idea of the writing, the use of the varied words, and the use of the correct grammar. Then it can be concluded that they need to improve their focus on the idea and in terms of the details, words, and the most important one is in using the correct grammar.

Keywords: *narrative writing, ability, difficulty*

I. INTRODUCTION

According to Heaton (1991), Writing skill is complex and difficult to teach. Therefore, the lecturers have to ask the students to do more exercises in order to improve their ability in writing". Almost all students including the students in university found that is difficult to make writing in English language. English language is different from Indonesian language in terms of verb, noun, and phrase. In learning this language, the learners usually face some problems, for example in using the correct tense, and verb. According to Shaw (1986, p.110), "**Tense** shows the time of the action or state being expressed by a verb".

This study was focused on the difficulties of the students in writing paragraph using English language, particularly in a narrative writing. Narrative writing is actually telling a story. The writing must be detailed in actions. Emphasizing the events of the story is very important and usually it is written in past tenses. The students' score in narrative writing was low.

Based on the above phenomenon, this study was focused on the analysis of the students' ability in writing a narrative essay and to know their difficulty.

II. MATERIALS AND METHOD

2.1 Writing

Writing is the highest and the most difficult skill among the other three skills such as speaking, reading, and listening. According to Heaton (1991) states that writing skill is complex and difficult to teach. Therefore, the lecturers have to ask the students to do more exercises in order to improve their ability in writing. Raimes in Yusdi (1983) states that writing helps students to learn for some reasons: writing reinforces grammatical structures, idioms, and vocabularies; when the students write, they also have chance to be adventurous with the language, to go beyond what they have just learned to say; when the students write, they necessarily become very involved with the new language.

Writing is the expression of language in the form of letters, symbols, or words. The primary purpose of writing is communication. For the academic writing, it requires conscious effort and much practice in composing, developing, and analyzing ideas. The writing of the students in a second language is also faced with social and cognitive challenges related to second language acquisition. Keene (1992:2-3) write why we should bother with writing and purposes for writing

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as follows:

1. Writing is a way of thinking and learning. Writing gives unique opportunities of explore ideas and enquire information. By writing, we come to know subjects well and make them our own.
2. Writing is a way of discovering. The act of writing allows us to make unexpected connections among ideas and language.
3. Writing creates reading, writing creates permanent, visible record of our ideas for others to read and ponder. Writing is powerful means of communication for reading information and shapes human thought.
4. Writing ability is needed by educated people. Our skill writing is often considered to reflect our level of education.

Purpose for writing:

- a. To express yourself
- b. To provide information for your reader
- c. To persuade your reader
- d. To create a literary work

Narration is a basic writing strategy for presenting an action. Narrative is telling story. The purpose of narration is to amuse or entertain the readers with actual or imaginary experiences. Difference ways, novel; fairy tales, short stories and myth are narratives because they are concerned with talking about the event. Narrative paragraphs are the easiest of all to organize; in fact, they tend to organize themselves. The process of narrative stories is sequential. This is organized by time, one event in the story, one step in the process that happened after the other. The writer of narration tells a story he writes about an incident or a series of incidents in which action dominates. In this study, the theory from Cohen (1994) was used to analyze the students' narrative writing. According to Cohen (1994), there are five aspects of writing: content (main ideas stated clearly and accurately, opinion very clear), Organization (coherent and logical), vocabulary (choices of words, use of idioms, and word forms), grammar (control of structure, mechanic (mastery of spelling and punctuation).

2.2 English Grammar

According to Quirk (1985: 37-47), "Grammar is a complex system, the parts of which cannot be properly explained in abstraction from the whole. In this sense, all parts of grammar are mutually defining, and there is no simple linear path we can take in explaining one part in terms of another". He also stated that "It is usually assumed that the sentence is the highest-ranking unit of grammar, and hence that the purpose of a grammatical description of English is to define, by means of whatever descriptive apparatus may be necessary (rules, categories, etc.), what counts as a grammatical sentence in English. To give a realistic presentation of English grammar, we, therefore, have to abandon neat boundaries, and to accept that grammar is a linguistic 'core', round which other aspects of linguistic organization and usage are integrated. Our intention, therefore, is to take a broad interpretation of grammar, which impinge on the discussion of grammatical rules and categories".

One of the important aspects in the process of learning the second language is the mastery of grammar. Particularly, in this study, the students have to learn when to use regular and irregular verbs, tenses, and 'to be' in forming the English passive voice.

2.2.1 English Verb

According to Eckersley (1960: 143), "Though it is possible to have a sentence without a verb (if our definition of a sentence is wide enough), it is true that, in the great majority of sentences, the verb is the word that plays the most important part. It is primarily the 'action' word in a sentence; the term 'action' embracing not only the meaning 'doing an action' but also 'having an action done to a person or thing', nor must it excludes the absence of action, the idea of 'being in a state of rest'. This conception is expressed, more or less in the traditional definitions of a verb".

He also states: "A verb is a word for saying something about some person or thing. Verbs have certain features that are not shared by the other parts of speech. They have forms that indicate the time of an action (present, past or future). They can indicate the duration, completeness or incompleteness of an action. They can show whether a person or thing is doing or receiving an action.

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Apart from that, they can even express, in certain cases, the emotional attitude of the speaker towards the action. Apart from that, they indicate gender, comparison or case”.

2.2.2 Finite or non-finites

According to Eckersley (1960: 143), “The verb forms that can form the predicate by themselves are finite verbs; the ones that cannot are non-finite verbs”. He mentioned that the non-finites are the infinitives (e.g. to speak, to write, to do, to have spoken, to have written, to have been, etc.) the present participles and gerunds, (e.g. writing, speaking, being), and the past participles (written, spoken, been). All other parts of verbs are finite. Most English verbs have four inflectional forms, e.g. walk- walks – walked- walking. Some have five, e.g. give – gives – gave, given – giving. No verb has more than five except *be* (be, am, is, are, being, been, was, were). Some have only three e.g. put – puts – putting; *can* has only two *can* – *could* and *must* has no other forms. There are three fundamental forms (the ‘principle parts’), they are the infinitive or present simple tense, the simple past tense, and the past participle. From these the other forms of the verb can be made. The past participle is used with various parts of the verb *to be* to form the *passive voice*, and with the verb *have* to form the *perfect tense*.

2.2.3 Regular and Irregular Verb

According to Eckersley (1960: 144), “All English verbs belong to one or two conjugations; they are either Regular or Irregular verb”. He also stated that regular verbs are those that form their past tense and past participle by adding *-ed* to the present tense and this ending is pronounced [t] if the root of the verb ends in a voiceless consonant sound other than [t].

On the other hand, irregular verbs form their past tense and past participle generally by a change of vowel, e.g. give – gave – given. Here, some spelling changes should be noted in the formation of past tense, present participle (and gerund).

- Verbs ending in *e* add *d* only for their past tense, e.g. dance – danced, love – loved. This *e* is omitted before *-ing* in the present participle and gerund, e.g. dancing, loving, etc.
- Verbs that end in *-ie* change this to *-y* before *-ing*: so *to die* has the present participle *dying*.
- Verbs that end in *y* preceded by a consonant change the *y* to *i* before *-ed*, e.g. marry – married.
- The final consonant letter is doubled before *-ed* and *-ing* if the consonant is single, preceded by a single vowel letter, and if the verb is monosyllable or stressed on the last syllable, e.g. fit – fitted; control – controlled. Verbs ending in *-l* double the final consonant even when the last syllable is not stressed, e.g. *travel* – *travelled*.
- The form *to singe* (to burn slightly) is singeing, compared to singing (from the verb *to sing*).

2.2.4 Transitive and Intransitive Verb

According to Eckersley (1960: 154), “An action expressed by a verb may pass over from a subject to an object. For example, in the sentence ‘I hit the ball’, the action of ‘hitting’ is not confined to the doer only, but goes over from I to the ball. When the action is expressed by the verb *goes* from a subject to an object, that verb is called a Transitive verb”.

In the sentences: *The sun rose*; *the child cried*; *a leaf fell*, the actions do not go beyond the persons or objects performing them. These verbs, as used in these sentences, have no objects. They are Intransitive verbs.

The only object that an intransitive verb can have is a cognate object, i.e. an object already implied more or less in the verb itself. Quite often, the same verb may be used transitively or intransitively. The following table is the example of Intransitive and Transitive taken from the book *A Comprehensive of English Grammar* (1960: 154).

2.3 Research Method

2.3.1 Research Design

Since this study is to identify and analyze the problem on the students’ assignment, it is then recognized as an experimental study. This study will apply the quantitative and qualitative methods. Bogdan and Taylor (Moleong, 2007:3) mention that qualitative methodology is a research procedure

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that produces descriptive oral or written data from the people and from the attitude of the person who is observed.

In this study, the quantitative method will be used to analyze the error on the students' assignment in form of table. The qualitative method was used to give the description from the table of the students' error.

2.3.2 Time and Place of the Research

This research will take place in Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Komputer (STIKOM) Bali at Jalan Raya Puputan Renon No. 86 Denpasar, Bali. STIKOM Bali is the first computer institution in Denpasar. It was built in 2002 and has strong commitment to provide high qualified teaching and learning program. This study took about 4 months and the output is expected mastering English particularly in narrative writing.

2.3.3 Data Source

Data source is the subject from which the data is taken. The data source in this study is a primary data, which directly obtained as the result of the test in writing given to the semester 2 students, intake 2016 in Dual Degree Program STIKOM Bali. The total student in this class is 16 students. The reason for choosing this class is because they have learned English 2 and writing including a narrative writing in this semester. They have to master English language since all materials are in English, moreover, they have to answer the entire test including Final Examination test in English. They have to be able to write in proper English language. But, the fact is although they have already learned it, almost all of them got bad marks on the narrative writing task. Therefore, their writings were chosen to be analyzed.

2.3.4 Technique of Collecting Data

Technique of collecting data plays an important role in this study. To get the data of this study, the writing test was applied as the instrument. The students had been given a writing test. The topic of their writing is their experience. They were given 60 minutes to write a narrative paragraph. All of the students' writings were collected by the lecturer as the document of the study to be analyzed.

2.3.5 Technique of Analyzing Data

In analyzing the data, a descriptive qualitative analysis technique was used. The procedures are as follows:

- a) Collecting data
The result of the students' writing text was taken by the writer as the data to be analyzed.
- b) Analyzing the difficulties of the students in writing narrative essay.
- c) The students' narrative writing was analyzed to find the characteristic of identification to find out their ability in writing a narrative paragraph.
- d) Identifying the students' problem
The writer identified the students' writing result to be able to find their problem.
- e) Making summary

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Data of this research is the students' writings from their assignment. In this task, the students were asked to make a writing which consists of few paragraphs. They were asked to write a narrative writing. The topic was about telling a story or the students' experience. They were given one and half hours to make the writing. The number of students in the Dual Degree Program in Batch ten is only fourteen students. All students' writings were used as the data to be analyzed in this research. Aspects of moral value, content, organization, grammar, and vocabulary in narrative writing were analyzed.

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Table 5.1 Rubric for Narrative Writing

	Advanced-4	Proficient-3	Needs Improvement-2	Not Yet-1
Ideas	The narrative shows an unforgettable experience. The details make the story truly memorable	The writer shows an interesting experience. Details help create the interest.	The writer tells about an interesting experience. More details are needed.	The writer needs to focus on one experience. Some details do not relate to the story.
Organization	Paper has excellent structure and is well organized.	Paper has structure and organization though lacks unity because of occasional confusing details.	Paper has some structure evident but at times is hard follow or is not well organized.	Paper's structure is greatly lacking, interfering with reader's ability to understand piece.
Vocabulary	Paper uses rich and sophisticated word choice and varied language throughout.	Paper uses good word choice and some varied wording.	Paper has simplistic word choice and some words are at times repetitive.	Paper has too simplistic word choice and is to far repetitive.
Grammar	Grammar are correct	Few minor error in grammar	Several error in grammar	Some errors confuse the reader.
Mechanic	Free from spelling error	Few minor error in punctuation and spelling	Several error in punctuation and spelling	Some error of punctuation and spelling confuse the reader.

Table 5.2 Idea

Data	Advanced-4	Proficient-3	Needs Improvement-2	Not Yet-1
1				√
2				√
3	√			
4		√		
5				√
6	√			
7	√			
8				√
9		√		
10				√
11				√
12				√
13	√			
14		√		

The above table is describing the students' ability in writing the narrative essay particularly in their idea or content. There can be seen that the ability of the students in making up the idea of the

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content in narrative writing needs to be improved. There are 50% students got score 1 and the category is 'not yet', it is meant that the students need to focus on one experience and some details do not relate to the story. Most of them were confuse in making the details of their main idea. Therefore, sometimes in the middle of the writing they lost the focus. There are also 28.57% students got score 4 (advanced), 21,43% students got score 3 (proficient), but there is no students got score 2 with the category 'need improvement'.

Table 5.3 Organization

Data	Advanced-4	Proficient-3	Needs Improvement-2	Not Yet-1
1			√	
2		√		
3		√		
4			√	
5			√	
6	√			
7	√			
8			√	
9	√			
10			√	
11		√		
12		√		
13		√		
14		√		

The above table is describing the students' ability in writing the narrative essay particularly in their organization. There can be seen that the ability of the students in organizing the narrative writing needs to be improved since there was only 21.42% students got score 4 or advanced. The category of 'proficient' was 42.86%. It seems that the writing has structure and organization though lacks unity because of the occasional confusing details. The other category was category of 'needs improvement' with 35.71%, it showed that the writing has some structure evident but at times is hard to follow or is not well organized. Anyway, there is no one got score 1 for the category 'not yet'.

Table 5.4 Grammar

Data	Advanced-4	Proficient-3	Needs Improvement-2	Not Yet-1
1		√		
2		√		
3		√		
4			√	
5			√	
6		√		
7		√		
8			√	
9		√		
10			√	
11			√	
12			√	
13		√		
14		√		

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The above table is describing the students' ability in writing the narrative essay particularly in their vocabulary. There can be seen that the ability of the students in using the vocabularies in their narrative writing needs to be improved since there was no students got score 4 with the category of advanced. There was also no students got score 1 with the category 'not yet'. Therefore, there were only two categories that fulfilled by the students. There was category of proficient with 57.14% and category of needs improvement with 42.86%. Then can be concluded that the writing uses good word choice and some varied wording, but some writings used simple words and repetitive.

Table 5.5 Vocabulary

Data	Advanced-4	Proficient-3	Needs Improvement-2	Not Yet-1
1		√		
2		√		
3			√	
4				√
5				√
6		√		
7		√		
8			√	
9			√	
10				√
11			√	
12		√		
13		√		
14		√		

The above table is describing the students' ability in writing the narrative essay particularly in their grammar. There can be seen that the students have serious problems in narrative writing since there was no students got score 4 with category advanced. The highest score was in the category of 'proficient' with 50% where there was little minor error in grammar. The second category was the category of 'needs improvement' with 28.57%, and the last category was the category of 'not yet' with 21.43%.

Table 5.6 Mechanic

Data	Advanced-4	Proficient-3	Needs Improvement-2	Not Yet-1
1		√		
2	√			
3		√		
4			√	
5		√		
6	√			
7		√		
8			√	
9		√		
10			√	
11		√		
12		√		
13	√			
14		√		

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The above table is describing the students' ability in writing the narrative essay particularly in spelling and punctuation. There can be seen that the ability of the students in writing the words were proficient. The percentage of this category was 57.14%. It showed that there was minor error in punctuation and spelling. There were two categories have similar percentage, they were 'advanced' category and category of 'needs improvement' with 21.43%.

Based on the above tables regarding to the score categories, many students got the highest and also the lowest scores in part of the idea. Many students were advanced in showing their unforgettable experience, and the details make the story truly memorable. Unfortunately, in the part of the idea, there were also some students got the category of 'not yet' which is meant that they have to learn more to focus on one experience and make the details connect with the main idea. The most proficient part in writing narrative essay was in the use of word or vocabulary and also on the mechanic. While at the same time, the category that needs to be improved was vocabulary. In terms of grammar, no one of the students got the highest score or advanced category.

Regarding to those results, it seems that the students difficulties were in focusing on the idea that they have been chosen, and in using the proper and varied vocabularies. From their writing, almost all students use simple words, and sometimes repetitive. Therefore, they have to practice more in using varied words it is possible to do if they like to read a lot. In part of the idea, they have to exercise to focus on the main idea and try to give the supporting details based on the main idea. Moreover, since there is no students got the highest score in grammar, it seems that confuse when they wrote a long writing and forgot the tenses.

IV. CONCLUSION

In conformity with the aims of this study, there are two problems already discussed. The first problem is to know the ability of the students in writing a narrative essay, and the second problem is to find out their difficulty.

Based on the result, it was found that the students were advanced but all at once some of them also have problems in focusing the idea of their narrative writing into the details. It was also found that some of the students were proficient but some of them also need to improve their ability in using the correct or the proper words or their vocabularies in their narrative writing. Besides that, they were also proficient in minimizing the error in spelling and punctuation.

It can be seen that the biggest difficult things in writing the narratives writing was how to focus in one idea or experience and keep the details support the idea. In part of using the proper and varied words, their ability needs to be improved to advance their narrative writing. Moreover, their grammar also need to be improved since there was no one of them got the highest score or advance category.

In this case, exercises are very much needed since writing skill is an integral part of language learning. The more they take exercises in using different types of tenses in writing, the more they get familiar with those tenses and the better they can manage their sentences properly. Furthermore, by giving them motivation in learning the L2 which is different from their L1, it is hoped that they will be able to increase their ability particularly in mastering the present tenses.

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