Students’ Perceptions toward Their Writing in EFL Setting: A Study at SMA YKBBB Leles Garut

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Abstract
The study concerned with writing subject. Writing subject, at any level of education, is considered as more complicated than the other language skills—listening, speaking, and reading. Due to this problem, the purposes of the study investigated the students’ perceptions toward their writing ability in classroom setting and determined the students’ difficulties factors in learning writing. The study employed qualitative research design and gathered data by ways of classroom observations and questionnaire. The results of the study were that the respondents had good perceptions. They gave positive and negative statements toward the English writing subject. Their negative perceptions were related to the difficulties of English writing process. Meanwhile, the positive perceptions they were related to the enrichment of the knowledge when they strove to write English. The study also found that most respondents stated that they had difficulties in writing English. These difficulties were mainly caused by their limitation of English grammar and less of English vocabulary. Besides that, the less of practice to write became a prime reason why they got low achievement of English writing.

Key Words: Perception, Writing, EFL

INTRODUCTION
Writing is expected as being the last language skill to be acquired. From this fact, writing skill needs a process or practicing due to related skills that should be previously recognized. Being aware of writing is a complex process, the curriculum makers who have formulated it suggesting gradual steps of teaching in line with certain technique design and method. Some English teachers have tried to apply such technique design and method. However, in general, the students perceive writing as difficult and boring subject.

Therefore, the main problems of this investigation can be identified as follows: (1) What are the students’ perceptions toward learning their writing ability in classroom setting?; (2). What difficulty factors do the students find in learning writing? Based on these problems, the purposes of the study are to describe the students’ perceptions toward their writing ability in classroom setting and to determine the difficulty factors of students in learning writing. The results of this study are expected as one of the methods for increasing the students’ motivation in learning English especially in writing subject.
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

There is an opinion that writing is the most sophisticated skill of all language skills (e.g. listening, speaking, and reading). This subject involves some students’ abilities on language elements, such as structure, spelling, vocabulary, and words choice. Consequently to the writing activities, the students still find more difficulties in writing composition too. Therefore, this part will focus on several terms particularly the term writing problems and the concept in arranging good writing in relation to the students and also for their own perceptions. Moreover, it describes the view of the process of teaching and learning the writing subject.

The Nature of Writing

In this case, Brown (1994:322) said that writing is a way to end up thinking something we could not have started our thinking. Writing is a transaction with words whereby we free ourselves from what our presently think, feel, and perceive. Writing has been characterized as written thinking. Students should be encouraged to express their ideas, experiences, thoughts, and feeling. In most academic settings where students are learning to write, the educational systems assume that students will learn to compose with the ability to transform information in written form. In fact, writing is based on principles of composition rather than on grammatical structures. The process of composition deals with grammar problems that are related to writing. The most important in writing are grammar and mechanics. The students must be able to know all about grammatical skill. Somehow, these matters above could make the students more reluctantly to learn it.

Writing is also a way of learning. The students should learn the written form and how to organize the ideas, so they can understand what they are going to write sentences. On the other hands, writing skill needs collaboration of English component skills, such as grammar and vocabulary. People need to master most of language component in order to be able to write well. When the writing ability is acquired, people will communicate their feeling in the written form. As stated by Penny in his book entitled “A Course in Language Teaching” (1996:173):

In principle the purpose of writing is the expression of ideas and conveying of a message to the reader, so the ideas themselves should arguably be seen as the most important aspect of writing, the writer also need to pay some attention to formal aspects such as neat handwriting, correct spelling and punctuation as well as acceptable grammar and careful selection of vocabulary.

The writing process has been analyzed in many different ways that can be defined as writing component. These components will impact the quality of the writing itself. There are five general components in writing namely: Content (the substance of the writing, the idea expressed), Form (the organization of the content), Grammar (the employment of grammatical forms and syntactic patterns), Style (the choice of structures and lexical items to give a particular
tone to the writing), Mechanics (the use of the graphic conventions of the language).

Teaching and Learning Writing

There are some process approaches that can be used by English teacher in teaching writing. They are: focus on the process of writing that leads to the final written product, help the students writes to understand their own composing process, give the students time to write and rewrite, let students discover what they want to say as they write, give students feedback throughout the composing, encourage feedback both from the instructor and peers.

Furthermore, the writing skills are challenging, requiring mastery not only of grammatical and rhetorical devices but also of conceptual and judgment elements. The following analysis attempts to group the many and varied skills necessary for writing good composition into four main areas: Grammatical skills (the ability to write correct sentences), Stylistic skills (the ability to manipulate sentences and use the language effectively), Mechanical skills (the ability to use correctly those conventions peculiar to the written language - e.g. punctuation and spelling), Judgment skill (the ability to write in an appropriate manner for a particular purpose with a particular audience in mind, together with an ability to select, organize and order relevant information).

Many students still have difficulties in learning writing, especially for the beginner. The common difficulties, among others: The students are difficult to find some ideas and source of inspiration. It is perhaps caused by their powerless of reading. Then, the students get difficulties to definite the themes. Moreover, the students can’t begin to write or make headline and they have difficulty to arrange an outline and how to develop this outline. The other problems, more practically, are: the words choice or using of diction, using punctuation, the students are frightened to use a wrong grammar.

Besides, most of students have the difficulties to start their writing activities. Sometimes the task creates problems; sometimes a student is not having a good day and sometimes a student is just overwhelmed by situations that extent beyond the writing task. Grabe & Kaplan (1996:276) have the useful devices in this situation: spend more time collecting ideas, encourage other forms of expression, combine writers into pairs, provide more directions, try transcribing ideas or copying information.

In addition, if we can apply those suggestions above in the classroom, the students’ difficulties in writing will decrease at all. Also, they will have motivation to make writing task or activities. Moreover, the teachers will have solution to help the students in increasing their ability in writing.

The Teaching and Learning Writing Perceptions

In the case of students’ perceptions about learning writing which should be recognized by the teachers, cover several problems: (1) Less-skilled writers (students) produce much less elaborated or abstract set of pre-writing notes; (2). Less-skilled writers primarily concern themselves with generating content during
composing, rather than considering goal, plans, and problems; (3) Less-skilled writers do not make use of main ideas as guides for planning and integrating information. In order to simplify the retrieval procedures it appears that begging writers rely on few specific strategies: (1) They consider the topic of the assignment and task themselves what they know; (2) They consider the genre of the assignment and task themselves what they know; (3) They read what they have just written and use this to generate additional information. These strategies work well for writing about personal experiences or feelings, and writing for telling narratives. It hopefully can decrease the students’ difficulty to learn writing.

Leki (1992 in Quirk, 1998) addresses a number of areas which help define the good learner. The first, learners need to have positive approach. It means that they should believe that they will be successful in their writing developments. Also, they want to practice and recognize that writing development is a gradual process which requires much hard work. Second, learners need appropriate skills in order to carry out writing assignment. They need ability to have an appropriate level of control over vocabulary and their rhetorical structures of the language. Also, they need adequate reading skills as well in order to read what they write. Third, learners need some set of workable learning strategies for planning appropriate goals, for working with words and language structures, for developing information, and for evaluating their writing and comparing it to other writing. Forth, learners need to be motivated whether the motivation comes from a desire to develop better communication skills or from extrinsic case.

METHODOLOGY

The study used descriptive method that collected data in order to test assumptions or to answer questions concerning the purposes of the study. This study used questionnaire in collecting data that consisted of closed questions to investigate students’ responses dealt with their perceptions in learning writing. The subjects of this study were the students of class XII IPA 1 at SMA YKBBB LELES GARUT. The total of the subjects were 39 students. Since the subjects were large in number, the study took some of them as a representative sample. The sample was 15 students through random selection. About the procedure of data collection, questionnaire was given to know the students’ perceptions in relating to writing subject. Then, the students’ responses toward the statements attached in the questionnaires. Then, they were collected, calculated, and analyzed.

In analyzing data, the writer employed qualitative data as well as quantitative data. The form referred to interpretation of the students’ responses on questionnaires statement. And then, the later concerned with the calculation of frequency and percentage the result. In detail the technique of data analysis was as follows: Analyzing the result or the students’ responses, explaining the various responses from the subject of research, classifying the students’ responses categorizes, counting the number and percentage of responses, grouping and inserting the students’ responses to the tables, giving the interpretation.
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This part describes the data findings and its interpretation to find out the result of the study as a whole. This part is a main part of the paper because it determines the writer to get the main purposes of the study that is to interpret the data gathered. The purposes of this research are to describe the students’ perceptions toward learning writing in classroom setting and to determine the students’ difficulties factors in learning writing. After conducting the research and collecting data, it’s needed to present the data findings. Based on the research conducted, the writer obtained the data which is described by the following table. To count the percentage and mean, the writer uses the formulas, as cited in (Arikunto, 1998), as follows:

The percentage formula:

\[ P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100\% \]

Note: \( P \) = Percentage  
\( F \) = the frequency on the respondent answers  
\( N \) = the total number of respondents

The mean formula:

\[ M = \frac{\sum x}{N} \]

Note: \( M \) = Mean  
\( \sum x \) = the total number of answer  
\( N \) = the total number of item

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Respondents’ Statements</th>
<th>Respondents’ Agreements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Menulis merupakan bagian tersulit dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris dibandingkan dengan keterampilan lainnya seperti mendengar, berbicara, dan membaca.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Menulis adalah pembelajaran yang membosankan.</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Ketika menulis kita seringkali menemukan kesulitan dalam pemilihan dan penggunaan kosa kata.</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Memulai menulis sebuah karangan lebih sulit daripada menyelisikannya.</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Kurangnya penguasaan kosakata Bahasa Inggris merupakan salah satu faktor penghambat dalam proses menulis.</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Teori menulis sebaiknya disertai dengan prakteknya.</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Menulis sebagai kegiatan atau tugas yang menyenangkan karena bisa mengungkapkan ide dan pengalaman diri sendiri.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Kuantitas membaca akan berpengaruh terhadap kualitas menulis seseorang.</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The table shows that most of respondents agree to the statement given that the average is 10,3 or 68,67% and the rest of them in average 4,7 or 31,33% give disagreement to the statement given. Before going through to the next discussion, it’s really important to state the categorization of students’ perceptions. The categories of perceptions based on what the writer has gained from the research. For this purpose the categorization is modified in line with the needs of the scaling, the perception interval arranged into the following:

- Very bad perception (< 20)
- Bad perception (21-40)
- Adequate good perception (41-60)
- Good perception (61-80)
- Very good perception (81-100)

After determining the categorization of perception, the writer describes the perception that expressed by the respondents as follows. The students’ perceptions:

1. Item no. 1: Menulis merupakan bagian tersulit dalam pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris dibandingkan dengan keterampilan lainnya seperti mendengar, berbicara dan membaca. The table data describes that 10 respondents or 66,7% states that writing is one of the most difficult subject from learning English and rest of respondents or 33,3% disagree with the statement given;

2. Item no. 2: Menulis adalah pembelajaran yang membosankan. The table data show that 6 respondents or 40% agree to the statement given and rest of them or 9 respondents (60%) disagree to the statement given;

3. Item no. 3: Ketika menulis kita seringkali menemukan kesulitan dalam pemilihan dan penggunaan kosa kata. The data show that all of the respondents or 100% agree that they find difficulties in words choosing when they try to write English;

4. Item no. 4: Memulai menulis sebuah karangan lebih sulit dari pada menyelesaikannya. The result describes that 8 (53,3%) believe that begin to write is more difficult than finish it and rest of them disagree to the statement given;

5. Item no. 5: Kurangnya penguasaan kosakata Bahasa Inggris merupakan salah satu faktor penghambat dalam proses menulis. The result describes that 14 respondents or 93,3% agree with the statement given and rest of them or 1 respondent or 6,7% disagree to the statement given;
6. Item no. 6: *Teori menulis sebaiknya disertai dengan prakteknya*. The data show that almost all of respondents (86.7%) agree that writing is not only the theory but also should be followed by its practice;

7. Item no. 7: *Menulis sebagai kegiatan atau tugas yang menyenangkan karena bisa mengungkapkan ide dan pengalaman diri sendiri*. The data show that 8 or 53.3% respondents state that they disagree to the statement given, in contrary, they feel glad with the writing subject because it can express their ideas and experiences;

8. Item no. 8: *Kuantitas membaca akan berpengaruh terhadap kualitas menulis sesorang*. The table data describe that almost all respondents or 60% agree that the reading quantity influences towards someone else writing;

9. Item no. 9: *Kurangnya pemahaman tata bahasa bahasa Inggris membuat anda malas untuk menulis*. The statement is given to know the effect of less understanding of English grammar to their writing process. The data show that 13 (86.7%) respondents that the less understanding of English grammar make them lazy or reluctant to write;

10. Item no. 10: *Kurangnya pengetahuan merupakan salah satu faktor penghambat dalam proses menulis Bahasa Inggris*. The statement is given to know what the effect of lacking knowledge to their writing process. The data show that 8 (53.3%) respondents agree to the statement given.

In relation to the data gained, the data findings show that most of the respondents agree to the statements given that 10,3 or 68.67% and rest of them in average 4,7 or 31.33% give disagreement to the statements given. It means that the respondents have good perceptions toward statements given both its positive and negative statements given related the English writing subject. On the other hands, the respondents state that they have difficulties in writing English. These difficulties are mainly caused by their limitation of English grammar and less of English vocabulary. Besides that, their less of practice to write becomes a prime reason why they get low achievement of English writing.

In striving to encounter these problems, the English teachers should be more creative in solving the students’ problems in writing English. It can be done by treating the students, probably, communicative technique in teaching writing to the students. Further, the students should be enforced by the teachers to do a lot of writing practices. Consequently, by doing a lot of practices, the students will have a better achievement in writing English (Nunan, 2000).

**CONCLUSION**

The study finds that the respondents have good perceptions toward the statements that the writer has given. They give positive and negative statements toward the English writing subject. Their negative perceptions are related to the difficulties of English writing process. Meanwhile, the positive perceptions they are related to the enrichment of the knowledge when they strive to write English. The study also finds that most respondents state that they have difficulties in writing English. These difficulties are mainly caused by their limitation of English grammar and less of English vocabulary. Besides, the less of
practice to write becomes a prime reason why they get low achievement of English writing.

Based on the result of investigation, the writer offers her suggestions, among others: to increase the students’ motivation in learning English writing, the students should increase their English grammar and its vocabulary. Also, provide enough time to do a lot of practices to write English. Moreover, the English teacher should be more creative in teaching writing to the students that they should be given more chance to practice writing English.

REFERENCES


