STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS OF THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT AT MUHAMMADIYAH SIDRAP UNIVERSITY

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Abstract
This study aims to determine students' writing skills by using a test instrument, a descriptive text writing test on students' writing skills. This study uses quantitative research with a descriptive quantitative design. The target population in this study was the English Department of Muhammadiyah Sidrap University. The researchers used cluster sampling to select a representative sample and represent the population. Thus, the researchers took one class as a sample to analyze. The sample was the third semester, which consisted of 35 students. In the writing test, the researchers found that out of 35 students in the third semester of the English Department of Sidrap Muhammadiyah University, no student was categorized as good, twenty-nine students were classified as fair, and six were classified as poor.
Keywords: Students, writing skill, descriptive text.

Abstrak
Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui keterampilan menulis siswa dengan menggunakan instrumen tes berupa tes menulis teks deskriptif tentang keterampilan menulis siswa. Penelitian ini menggunakan penelitian kuantitatif dengan desain deskriptif kuantitatif. Populasi sasaran dalam penelitian ini adalah Jurusan Bahasa Inggris Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidrap. Peneliti menggunakan cluster sampling untuk memilih sampel yang representatif dan mewakili populasi. Dengan demikian, peneliti mengambil satu kelas sebagai sampel untuk dianalisis. Sampel penelitian ini adalah mahasiswa semester tiga yang terdiri dari 35 mahasiswa. Dalam tes tertulis, peneliti menemukan bahwa dari 35 mahasiswa semester tiga Jurusan Bahasa Inggris Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidrap, tidak ada mahasiswa yang dikategorikan baik, dua puluh sembilan mahasiswa tergolong cukup, dan enam mahasiswa tergolong kurang baik.
Kata-kata kunci: Siswa, keterampilan menulis, teks deskriptif.

INTRODUCTION

Written language is more widely used today than spoken language. This is evident in many things that individuals do regularly in this world. Most individuals prefer to communicate with each other and carry out their tasks more efficiently and effectively through written language. For example, text messages and emails are more effective than talking on the phone or in person because they can save time, energy and space. In addition, written communication tends to be more durable. This implies that Written language has the potential to be much more precise than verbal communication. Written language requires special competence because it is both a language product and a communication medium. Writing skills

become essential for creating written content. Therefore, people must become proficient in writing clearly and interacting effectively with others.

Writing is a skill that everyone must have to be able to write and communicate. In the university context, writing is a crucial skill as it is one of the four essential skills students need to master well. However, acquiring this skill takes a lot of work. This assertion follows that *Richard and Renadya (2002)* state that learning to write in a second or foreign language is the most challenging skill for beginners. The challenge lies in developing and organizing ideas and turning these concepts into understandable language. This difficulty will be more evident if they become more proficient in the language. In addition, some weak writing sub-skills also contribute to the difficulty.

According to *Spratt et.al (2005)*, some of the sub-skills are related to the precision or use of the right form of language. Correct grammar, spelling, letter formation, legibility, punctuation, word selection, sentence construction, and paragraph usage are important components of writing. Because these sub-skills are so complex, they cause problems for students taking writing classes.

Based on the above statement, it is clear that writing is not easy to master. The following reasons also support it. First, writing skills are placed last after the three skills: listening, speaking, and reading. Second, writing is essential for students to communicate daily, such as writing letters, stories, and short messages. Although students are already familiar with writing, many key points make writing more challenging than assumed. For example, when students are asked to write a short story, they are expected to consider at least content, organization, vocabulary, punctuation, and grammar. This requires them to study these skills more deeply before formulating their writing.

Learning to write is not easy for students, but they must master this skill well to achieve their future goals. Based on the above problems, this study aims to determine the writing skills of students of the English Department at Muhammadiyah Sidrap University. A research question guided this study; "What are the writing skills of students in the English Department of Muhammadiyah Sidrap University?"

THEORETICAL BASIS
Definition of Writing Skill

Several experts variously state the definition of writing. According to Rivers (1981), writing is the successive expression of new ideas or the transmission of new information. In addition, Brown (2001)asserts that writing is a form of thinking. He also says that writing can be planned and given an unlimited number of revisions before publication. According to Elbow in Brown (2001), writing is a two-step process. Figuring out meaning is the first process, and the second is putting meaning into language.

Another definition of writing skills is also defined by Sakkir (2016). Sakkir (2016) states that writing produces or reproduces spoken messages into written language. It involves organizing, formulating, and developing ideas on paper so readers can follow the writer's message. In addition, writing skills require accurate and precise grammar, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and vocabulary. Students know how to write good content into ideas supported with relevant supporting sentences. With this skill, students can improve their grammar by using correct tenses, adjectives, articles, and noun phrases. Based on the definition above, it summarized that the ability acquired and applied based on one's knowledge is writing skill. These skills are used effectively in writing.

Writing Process

The writing process is carried out through several stages. Students perform certain activities to build their writing at each stage. In addition, according to Richard and Renadya (2002), the writing process includes planning, drafting, revising, and editing. In the planning stage, students are encouraged to write.

Drafting begins when the pencil hits the paper and sentences begin to be composed. It includes freewriting, reading what has been written, and deciding what to do next.

Revising occurs when a writer rereads a draft for ideas. Concerns about content and structure are taken care of during the revising stage, and peer readers are often used to help with this.

Editing focuses on grammar, usage, and mechanics. Self-editing and the help of an outside editor are common. After editing, students rewrite and proofread to check for copying errors. The students, in the editing stage, are engaged in tidying up their texts as they prepare the final draft for evaluation by the teachers.

Components of Writing

According to Brown (2010), writing has five analytic components, having five components in writing. The categories for writing components are Content, Logical development of ideas, Mechanics, Grammar and Style and quality of expression.

The writing component is the process used by the writer to produce the product. Although the sophistication of the activities the writer performs at each point in the process varies with the student's age and experience, the process's components remain the same.

RESEARCH METHOD

The design in this research is a Quantitative research method which was a Descriptive Quantitative design. The researchers want to find the students' writing skills in the English department at Muhammadiyah Sidrap University.

The variable is students' writing skills. The writing skill is the students' achievement in writing the descriptive text.

The research takes place at Muhammadiyah Sidrap University, Maccorawalie, Kec. Panca Rijang, Sulawesi Selatan. The research had been done since November 26th, 2022 until the data were fully collected. The students of the English Education Study Program of Muhammadiyah Sidrap University are the population in this research. There are four classes in the English study program year intake 2022. Each class consists of 35 students, a total population of 140 students. The researchers take a sample with a cluster random sampling technique. The total sample was 35 students in the third semester as a sample for the research.

In this research, the researchers used the instrument as a tool to collect the data. In this research, the researchers used a writing test. The researchers conducting research uses data collection techniques. In this study, the researchers gave a written test to the respondents by writing descriptive text.

The researchers used a scoring rubric of writing by Brown & Abeywickrama (2010) to get the data on students' writing skills. Then, the writing test measurement was done by following the criteria of the writing test score from Brown (2010) adapted by Muhammadiyah Sidrap University.

DISCUSSION
Students' Writing Skill

To collect the data, the researchers conducted a test. The test given was writing descriptive text. Through descriptive analysis, the researchers tried to describe the result of the students' writing skills test given to the English Department's third semester at Muhammadiyah University. The result of the student's writing skill test was based on criteria that were an indicator of

their writing skill. The complete calculation can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Criteria Writing Skill of the Students

No	Range	Criteria	Frequency	Percentage
1	91 – 100	Excellent	0	0%
2	76 – 90	Good	0	0%
3	61 – 75	Fair	29	83%
4	51 – 60	Poor	6	17%
5	Less than 50	Very Poor	0	0%
Total			35	100%

Mean Score of Students' Writing Skill

According to the data, the researchers used the criteria of writing skill which includes very poor, poor, fair, good and excellent to determine students' writing skills. The researchers discovered that, from 35 students enrolled in the English Department at Muhammadiyah Sidrap University for the third semester, 0 students (0%) were rated as excellent, 0 student (0%) as good, 29 students (83%) as fair, 6 students (17%) as poor, and 0 students (0%) as very poor. The mean score data can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. The Mean Score Writing Skill of the Students

VAR00002		
N	Valid	35
	Missing	0
Mean		65.74
Median		67.00
Mode		67
Sum		2301

The mean explains the students' average score in writing descriptive text. The score 65.74, it was analyzed based on the criteria of writing skill as mentioned in chapter 3. The students' writing skill is on the fair criteria. This means, the students need more improve their writing skills.

The findings section shows that third-semester students of the English Department of Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidrap experience the good, fair and poor categories. As the researchers explained in chapter 3, writing skills are divided into five categories: Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor and Very Poor. The research findings show that the fair category is the category most experienced by students in writing, with a score of 61-80, with a mean score of 65.74.

In the fair category, the score range is 61-75. They are in the middle position in writing. They are in the middle position of the writing skills category. From the calculation and analysis results, no student was categorized as excellent and good, twenty-nine students were classified as fair with a score range of 61-75, six students were classified as poor with a score range of 51-60, and none were categorized as very poor. Overall, writing is considered an important skill in the learning process.

However, the fact cannot be denied that the writing ability of third-semester students of the English Department of Muhammadiyah Sidrap University is still low. This can be seen from the students' writing scores which show that no one student is categorized as good. In addition, many factors affect students' writing ability, and one of the factors is the feeling of fear when students have to write in the learning class.

CLOSING

Students' writing skills, it can be concluded that out of 35 students, students' writing skills are at the fair criteria. Their writing skills in the third semester at the English Department of Muhammadiyah Sidrap University are still low. So, this study already tells us that lecturers, parents, seniors, and friends, need to get good and relax when we need to write something and not lose our focus for small reasons.

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