



THE CORRELATION BETWEEN STUDENTS' LEARNING EFFORTS AND THEIR ENGLISH WRITING ABILITY

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Abstract: *The objective of the study was to determine the correlation between students' learning efforts and their English writing ability.*

The study used a correlational study. The participants of the study were 82 students of MTs. Madinatun Najah Rengat. The data were collected using questionnaire, observation and test. The data was analyzed using serial statistics correlation. Based on the data processing, the students' learning efforts were categorized low and the students' writing ability was categorized very low. The research finding showed that there was a very high significant correlation between students' learning efforts and their English Writing ability.

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INTRODUCTION

English is a language which is used as international communication. In relation to that fact, English is very important to be learned by whomever. English also one of the foreign languages which are taught at most institutions of education in Indonesia. It begins from the lowest level to the highest level, such as in kindergarten, elementary school, junior high school, senior high school and university. So, English is our necessity in international communication, in line with Samovar and Porter (1995:151) "English is the primary language for many of us", and Brown (1994:122) "English is increasingly being used as a tool for interaction among non-native speakers. Well over one half of the one billion English speakers of the world learned English is a second (or foreign) language".

Based on the statements above, it is clear that English has important roles as one of international communication media that was not only as tool of communication for each school in countries in the world, but also as tool of communication in politics, economy, education, etc.

As we know that English is an international language which must be learned by the people who want to get the success in their life. If we want to master English, we must know and understand about the four skills in English, which are: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Four skills of English have components which give many effects to the ability in English, one of the components of four skills of English is grammar or structure. Debata (2013) said "to speak in a clearer and more effective manner we have to study grammar". Grammar can give many effects in using English, grammar must be

understood in mastering English. The four skills of English are not be mastered without ability in grammar.

In adequate grammar understanding will cause misunderstanding and errors. The errors can make big problem in writing. According to Janed Lane and Ellen Lange (1993:XI) "some errors are much more serious than others and can seriously affect the readers' ability to understand the content of a piece of writing". So, not only in speaking and reading but also in writing and listening, grammar has important rules. In writing, the writers much write precisely to make the readers understand what they wrote, if the writers do not have good grammar ability, they will not write well, their grammar will make their language errors and their errors language will make the readers misunderstanding on the writers mind. That was why English grammar must be learned and mastered.

For successful communication, the writers much write correctly about what they want. To write correctly, our attitudes in written language, we must know and understand about grammar. Grammar was needed in written language especially in academic and professional world. So, grammar was very important in English and must be learned by the students.

Many students think grammar was difficult to learn, because of the difficulties of English, the students should have some efforts or activities which can be done to learn English. Hornby (2000; 423) says that the efforts is the physical or mental that we need to do something. Some efforts which can be done by the students in learning English are; listen the teacher explanations when teacher explain to the materials, look at the object, read the books, write or make summary about the materials, remember or memorize the important part about the materials, and practice at school or at home.

MTs. Madinatun Najah Rengat was one of schools in Indragiri Hulu regency. MTs. Madinatun Najah Rengat has 15 classes consist of more than 500 students. The students of MTs. Madinatun Najah Rengat have been studying English for three semesters. This case, found at curriculum of MTs. Madinatun Najah Rengat.

Pertaining to preliminary research, even though the students have been studying English starting from kindergarten to junior high school, but most of the students still have problem in English especially in grammar. The students of MTs. Madinatun Najah Rengat have studied English grammar in the first, second and three semester, but they still make errors in using it. They cannot write properly. That problem can be based on the background of English knowledge of the students or the difficulties of that lesson, especially grammar. Even though they have been studying english, but their ability and mastery seems far from the target of the curriculum which expect the students are able to express the meaning in writing for interaction with the circle of living.

Objectives and Research Question: The objective of this study was to find out the correlation between students' learning efforts and their English writng ability.

Hypothesis: Ha: There was a significant correlation between students' learning efforts and their English writing ability. Ho: There was no significant correlation between students' learning efforts and their English writing ability

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Learning Efforts

A learning activity can be said to be efficient if the desired learning achievement can be achieved with minimal effort. Muhibbin (2006:134) said that effort is everything that is used to get satisfactory learning outcomes such as energy and thoughts, time, learning equipment, and other things that are relevant to learning activities. We need

energy, thoughts, time, learning tools in listening to teacher explanations, paying attention or looking at the blackboard, reading books, writing or summarizing learning materials, remembering or memorizing, and practicing learning materials at school or at home. Activities in learning will make changes in students. If students make maximum efforts or study hard, it will affect their ability to learn.

According to Syaiful (2002:13) learning is a series of activities or mental and physical activities to get changes in behavior as a result of experience and interaction with the environment that has a relationship with cognitive, affective and psychomotor. He explained that some activities in learning are listening, watching, writing, reading, thinking, and practicing.

1. Listening

Listening is one of the learning activities. When the teacher explains or explains about a subject matter, each student must listen to what the teacher says. Students must be good listeners in order to concentrate in the learning process.

2. Watching

To look is to direct one's eyes to an object. The activity of seeing is closely related to the eye, because the eye has an important role in seeing. Without eyes we cannot see anything. In education, viewing activities are included in learning activities. In the classroom, students look at the writing on the blackboard written by the teacher, it will give an impression and then it will be stored in the brain.

3. Writing

Writing is an activity that cannot be separated from learning activities. Writing activities are often used in traditional learning. Even though at one time a student had to listen to an explanation from a teacher, he could not ignore that writing was an important activity. Each student has his own way of writing material and in choosing the important parts in a lesson. Every student has a certain way of taking notes. Likewise in choosing learning points that are considered important. Taking notes or summarizing can help students remember or repeat the subject matter. We can make a summary from a book, article, research result or from the teacher's explanation.

4. Reading

Reading activity is the most activity that we have to do in learning at school or in college. What is meant by reading here is not only reading books, but also reading magazines, newspapers, journals, research results, notes on learning outcomes and other things related to learning needs. If learning is something we do to gain knowledge, then reading is a way to get that knowledge. To gain knowledge we have to read more. Reading is synonymous with seeking knowledge in order to be smart, and ignoring this reading activity is foolishness.

5. Thinking

Remembering is a psychological ability to learn, store, and remember things. Remembering or memorizing is one of the learning activities. Remembering is entering learning material in memory so that it can be brought back.

6. Practicing

Learning while acting is a learning concept that requires a unified effort to get impressions by doing. Learning by doing in this case includes practice. Exercise is a good way to strengthen memory. For example, a student who studies mathematical formulas or grammar formulas in English, it is likely that these formulas will be easily forgotten if they are not supported by practice. By doing a lot of practice, the impressions received will be more functional. Therefore, practice or practice can support learning optimally.

2. Writing

2.1. Writing Definition

Writing is some activities to produce a written text. It starts from preparing thinking and planning. Anne (2006:7) "Writing is producing visual symbols for the reader" and "writing is a skill that integrates knowledge and skill, it is an action which contains language, thoughts, experience, feelings, emotions, mechanical actions and different strategies." And Bowker (2007: 2) "Writing is a skill that is required in many contexts throughout life."

Based on the definitions above, it conclude that writing is some knowledgeable activities which produce visual symbols which contains language, thoughts, experience, feelings, emotions, mechanical and actions that is required in many contexts of life.

2.2. Components of Writing

Kathalen and Kenji 1996 state that the ability to write involves at least six component skills. They are:

1. Grammatical ability. This is the ability to write English in grammatically correct sentences.
2. Lexical ability. The ability to choose words that are correct and used appropriately.
3. Mechanical ability. The ability to correctly use punctuation, spelling, capitalization, etc.
4. Stylistic skills. The ability to use sentences and paragraphs appropriately.
5. Organizational skills. The ability to organize written work according to the conventions of English, including the order and selection of material.
6. Judgements of appropriacy. The ability to make judgements about what appropriate depending on the task, the purpose of the writing, and the audience.

2.3. Types of Writing Task

Kathalen and Kenji 1996 also state that there are five types of writing task, They are:

1. Gap Filling
The testees are presented with a passage with blanks, and they fill in the blanks. This is a mixture of both reading and writing skills.
2. Form Completion
The testees are asked to fill out a form like an application.
3. Making Corrections
The testees are presented with a short piece of writing which has provided grammar, punctuation and spelling errors, and they are asked to correct the errors.
4. Letter Writing
The testees are instructed to respond, information given in chart or graph form that is to be summarized in the testees' letter, pictures or drawings that give information about a situation. The testees are expected to write a letter about, etc.
5. Essay Writing
Essay writing is probably one of the more common writing tasks, but it should be used carefully. The testees are asked to write an essay of topic given or write their own essay. It is the best test of the students' writing ability.

2.4. Writing Process

Donald Graves in Johnson (2008:179) states that there are five steps process writing approach:

- a. Prewriting.

The goal in prewriting is to generate ideas. Listing, brainstorming, outlining, silent thinking, conversation with a neighbor, or power writing are all ways to generate ideas. What writers do before writing is just as important as what happens during the writing process.

b. Drafting.

Drafting is the writer's first attempt to capture ideas on paper. Quantity here is valued over quality. If done correctly, the draft is a rambling, disconnected accumulation of ideas. Most of the writing activities in the classroom involve just these first two steps. Only those drafts that students feel are interesting or of value should be taken to the next step.

c. Revising.

This is the heart of the writing process. Here a piece is revised and reshaped many times. Not every draft should be taken to this stage. Students are given a choice as to which of these drafts they want to take to the revision step. Generally, students find only one in five drafts worthy of investing the mental and emotional energy necessary to revise and create a finished product. The rest of the story drafts can be kept in a file folder as a junkyard for other writing ideas or included in a portfolio to document students' writing journeys.

d. Editing.

This is the stage where grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors are corrected. Editing involves going back over the writing and making changes to its organization, style, grammatical and lexical correctness, and appropriateness. At the editing stage students fix grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors. Two important points to reinforce at this stage: First, continue to reinforce the idea that good writing is not writing without errors. Good writing is having good ideas and then communicating them. Grammar, spelling, and punctuation are used to help students communicate their ideas. Second, let your students know that all writers need and use editors.

e. Publishing and sharing.

This is where students' writing is shared with an audience. Writing becomes real and alive at this point. Publishing or sharing refers to any situation where students get eyeballs or ears on their writing. Publishing can involve putting together class books, collections of writing, school or class newspapers, school or class magazines, or displaying short samples of writing in the hall or out in the community. Writing experiences become even more powerful by having students read their work out loud in small groups, to another classmate, or in a large group setting.

RESEARCH METHOD

The method of this study was correlational study. It was one of methods that correlate between one variable to other variables for the purpose of describing existing condition and the result of the correlation between variables. Husein (2009) says that the correlational study is the research which is made for determining a correlation level of different variables in a population. Fox (1969) in Husein (2007) says that the different characteristic is the efforts (activities) for determine correlation and not only description.

The correlational study is designed and applied in order to match the two variables which discussed on this research, therefore this method was used in this research. There were two kinds of data collected in this research, students' efforts was ordinal and students' ability was interval. Therefore, the data analyzed using serial correlation formula.

The subject of this study was the second year students of MTs. Madinatun Najah Rengat. The subject was two classes consist of 82 students.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study used questionnaire, test and observation to collect the data. The questionnaire was to present all the data needed about the students' efforts in learning English.

The findings of students' efforts in learning English were:

1. Most of the students listen to the explanations when learning English.
2. Most of the students look at the object or white board when learning English.
3. Only few students read English books.
4. Only half students write summary of English materials.
5. Only few students remember or memorize the English materials.
6. Only few students practice the materials of English at school or at home.

The students' efforts in learning English were divided in to five categories. They are very high, high, middle, low and very low.

Table 1. Frequency of Students' English Learning Efforts based on Questionnaire.

Classification	Score	Frequency	Percentage
Very High	90 – 100	-	-
High	80 – 89	9	10.98 %
Middle	70 – 79	23	28.05 %
Low	60 – 69	38	46.38 %
Very Low	0 – 59	12	14.63 %
Total		82	100%

The score range indicated that the students' efforts in learning English was identified "low". This conclusion was supported by the result of the writer's observation.

Table 2. Frequency of Students' English Learning Efforts based on Observation

Classification	Score	Frequency	Percentage
Very High	90 – 100	-	-
High	80 – 89	5	6.1 %
Middle	70 – 79	14	17.1 %
Low	60 – 69	38	46.3 %
Very Low	0 – 59	25	30.5 %
Total		82	100%

Table 3. Students Efforts and Writing Score

No	Students' Writing Ability Score			
	Students' Efforts in Learning English			
	High	Middle	Low	Very Low
1	90	73	57	43
2	87	67	53	30
3	87	67	53	20
4	87	67	50	20
5	83	67	50	13
6	80	63	50	13
7	80	63	47	13
8	80	63	47	10

9	80	60	47	10
10		60	47	10
11		60	47	10
12		60	43	10
13		57	43	
14		57	43	
15		57	40	
16		53	40	
17		53	40	
18		53	40	
19		53	40	
20		53	40	
21		50	37	
22		50	33	
23		50	33	
24			33	
25			30	
26			30	
27			30	
28			30	
29			30	
30			30	
31			30	
32			27	
33			27	
34			27	
35			27	
36			23	
37			20	
38			13	
Total	754	1356	1427	202
N	9	23	38	12
Prop	0.110	0.280	0.460	0.150
Mean	83.4	58.9	37.5	16.8

Discussion

The result of serial formula was 0.972 and substituted in to “r” chotomisation, the result was 0.906. Then consulted the result at factor correlation table, the correction factor of r_{ch} 0.906 was 1.012. In order coefficient r_{ch} equivalent with “r” product moment, so r_{ch} was multiplied with the result of the factor correction, was that 1.012. The result was 0.917. Consulted with significant level of product moment table. It was 80.

From the “r” product moment table with $df = 80$ is found r_{table} in level significant 5% = 0.217 and in level 0.2831 significant 1 % = 0.283. $r_{ch} = 0.917$ is bigger than r_{table} (0.217 a). H_a was accepted and H_o was refused. It means there was a significant correlation between students’ learning efforts and their writing ability. The result of data analyze was 0.917, it means the correlation category was very high. Hartono (2004) says that 0.900 – 1.000 means very high correlation.

CONCLUSIONS

The research finding showed that the students' learning efforts were categorized low. 46.3% students have low efforts. The students' writing ability was categorized very low. The result of the data analysis showed that there is a significant correlation between students' learning efforts and their English writing ability and the correlation category was very high.

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