

## Improving the Students' Skill in Writing English Abstract through the Directed Writing Activity (DWA)

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**Abstract:** Every year, most of the fifth-semester students in the Accounting Department, State Polytechnic of Malang always had a problem in writing English abstracts. This study was intended to improve students' skill in writing English abstracts through the Directed Writing Activity (DWA). This research is a collaborative classroom action research. The data were collected through students' portfolios, questionnaires on the students' responses, and the observation sheet on the teacher's performance. The assessment was done by evaluating the students' portfolios, the students' responses on the DWA implementation in their classroom, and the observation on the teacher's performance. After evaluating all the data, it can be concluded that the DWA was successfully done in class 3A, semester 5, the Accounting Department, State Polytechnic of Malang.

**Key Words:** skill in writing, english abstract, directed writing activity

**Abstrak:** Sebagian besar mahasiswa semester 5 Jurusan Akuntansi, Politeknik Negeri Malang bermasalah dengan penulisan abstrak Inggris setiap tahunnya. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan kemampuan mahasiswa menulis abstrak Inggris melalui *Directed Writing Activity* (DWA). Penelitian ini merupakan *collaborative classroom action research*. Data dikumpulkan dari portofolio siswa, kuesioner tanggapan siswa, dan lembar observasi kinerja dosen. Penilaian dilakukan dengan mengevaluasi portofolio siswa, tanggapan siswa tentang pelaksanaan DWA di kelas, dan pengamatan kinerja guru. Simpulannya adalah bahwa DWA berhasil dilakukan di kelas 3A, semester 5, Jurusan Akuntansi, Politeknik Negeri Malang.

**Kata kunci:** kemampuan menulis, abstrak inggris, *directed writing activity*

In the Accounting Department, State Polytechnic of Malang, the fifth-semester students have to write English abstracts as a partial requirement of their final reports/ thesis. Buku *Buku Pedoman Akademik* (2010:72) writes that an abstract contains brief statements and very important points of a final report/thesis. It covers the background of the report, purpose of the research, problem statement, procedure, method, result, conclusion/suggestions. *Buku Pedoman Akademik* (2010:10) writes that in the Accounting Department, State Polytechnic of Malang, abstracts have to be written by the fifth-semester students as one of the requirements to get academic degree called Mid-level Manager (A.Md) for the three-year programme or *Sarjana Sains Terapan* (SST) for the four-year programme. Hipp and Zoltan (2005:1) state that abstracts are important parts of academic assignments, most often reports and re-

search papers. Kilborn (1998:1-2) states that an effective abstract must use one or more well-developed paragraphs that are unified, coherent, concise, and able to stand alone. It must also have introduction, body/content, and conclusion structure.

Hipp and Zoltan (2005:4) state that an abstract commonly covers background, purpose and focus, methods, results (also called findings), conclusions, recommendation. Kies (1995,1-2) states that abstracts are very common in academic writing, and they have a fairly standard form. In general, abstracts inform the readers of the following six bits of information. First is purpose. It is related to what the author's reason for writing is and what is the author's main idea is. Second is scope. It is related to what the author's focus in this piece is and where the author concentrates his/her attention. Third is method. It is about what kind of evidence the author

provides and how the author tries to convince the reader of the validity of his/her main idea. Fourth is results. It is about what the consequences of the problem or issue that the author is discussing are. Fifth is recommendation. It is about what solutions the author presents to the reader to resolve the problem or issue in the piece are and whether the author recommends actions or changes in his/her piece. Sixth is conclusions. It is related to whether the author describes a 'cause and effect' relationship or explain the origins of this issue or problem and what conclusions the author draws from his/her study of the issue or problem. *Tim Revisi* (2010) states that an abstract contains background, problems studied, method, findings, conclusion/suggestion.

### METHODS

Before the DWA was implemented in the classroom, a preliminary test was given to the students. The aims of giving the test were to know the students' real problems and their basic competence in writing English abstract. The test was given in the form of writing English abstracts. The result of the preliminary test was used as one of considerations to decide whether the DWA was successfully implemented. The DWA implementation was divided into pre-writing, drafting phase, revising phase, and editing phase.

In the pre-writing phase, the teacher/researcher provided the students with research reports. They had to get the important points of the report. The important points were obtained by answering the questions provided by the teacher/researcher. The answers were used to compose their abstracts in the drafting phase. The teacher/researcher helped them by giving a number of questions related to the important points. The teacher/researcher should make sure that the students' answers were correct. Wrong answers would certainly lead the students to unorganized abstracts. Correct answers would lead the students to good abstracts. If it would not, at least it was close to them.

The classroom was divided into small groups consisting of three-four members. The aim of dividing the classroom into groups was to make sure that the aspects the students wrote were right. In the drafting phase, the students had to use the answers they got in the pre-writing phase to write abstracts. The teacher/researcher gave the abstract model to the students first. The teacher/researcher also explained about what the students might and might not write in their

abstracts. In this phase, the students might make a lot of mistakes on the contents, organizations, language uses, and mechanics. The teacher/researcher had to check and gave comments on the students' works. The works were returned to the students in the next meeting. The teacher/researcher should record the result of the students' works. The teacher/researcher should check the students' works carefully because the students would use the teacher's/researcher's comments to improve their works. To get more trustable result, the collaborator's assistance was really needed in this phase. The first rater's scoring was combined with the second rater's. The teacher/researcher should walk around the classroom to observe the students. The students were allowed to ask the teacher questions related to their works or the points of the report.

The classroom was divided into small groups consisting of three-four members. The teacher/researcher gave the students' works back. In groups, the students discussed the mistakes and the teacher's comments on their works and how to improve them. They did that in groups. They had to re-write their works based on the teacher's/researcher's comments. The teacher/researcher should walk around the classroom to observe the students. The students were allowed to ask the teacher questions. It was important to tell the students that this was the last opportunity for them to improve their works. The teacher/researcher should record the result of the students' works. The students' works were collected and checked by the teacher/researcher. This was the end of the DWA process. The teacher should have a complete and detailed record on the students' works so that a comprehensive result would be achieved.

After the editing phase was done, the evaluation on all students' works was started. The evaluation was done on the result of preliminary study, drafting, revising, editing, students' questionnaires, and the teacher's observation sheet. If the result of the whole evaluation met the criteria of success, the process of implementing the DWA was stopped. If the result has not met the criteria of success, the next cycle should be conducted.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the research were collected from the result of the preliminary study, the drafting phase,

revising phase and editing phase, students' questionnaires, and the teacher's observation.

### **The Preliminary Study**

Based on the evaluation of the students' works in preliminary test, it was found that the students' mean scores on the content were 2.30. The students' mean scores on the organization were 2.35. The students' mean scores on language use were 2.05 and their mean scores on the writing mechanics were 2.55. The students' mean scores on all aspects was 2.25. Obtained scores on all aspects were 9.3. The weighting of all aspects were 23. Formulated by using:  $\text{obtained score} \times (\text{total weighting} + \text{maximum score}/4) \times 100$ , it was found that the final score was 51.09. It was equal to C (fair). Seen from the above result, it showed that language use was at the lowest point and writing mechanics was at the highest. In the students' questionnaires, they stated that language use was the hardest part in writing English abstracts. The score above indicated that fact.

### **The Drafting Phase**

Based on the evaluation of the students' works in drafting phase, it was found that the students' mean scores on the content were 2.15. The students' mean scores on the organization were 2.30. The students' mean scores on language use were 2.20 and their mean scores on the writing mechanics were 2.60. The students' mean scores on all aspects was 2.31. Obtained scores were 9.25. The weighting of all aspects were 23. Formulated by using:  $\text{obtained score} \times (\text{total weighting} + \text{maximum score}/4) \times 100$ , it was found that the final score was 54.35. It was equal to C (fair). There was a decrease on the mean of content (0.3 point). The students did not make significant improvement in this phase. It should be understood because it was the first phase of the process approach.

### **The Revising Phase**

Based on the evaluation of the students' works in the revising phase, it was found that the students' mean scores on the content were 2.7. The students' mean scores on the organization were 2.68. The students' mean scores on language use were 2.18 and their mean scores on the writing mechanics were

2.70. The students' mean scores on all aspects was 2.31. Obtained scores were 9.80. The weighting of all aspects were 24. Formulated by using:  $\text{obtained score} \times (\text{total weighting} + \text{maximum score}/4) \times 100$ , it was found that the final score was 58.80. It was equal to C (fair). The students made a significant improvement in this phase (5.62 points).

### **The Editing Phase**

Based on the evaluation of the students' works in editing phase, it was found that the students' mean scores on the content were 2.5. The students' mean scores on the organization were 2.60. The students' mean scores on language use were 2.70 and their mean scores on the writing mechanics were 2.90. The students' mean scores on all aspects was 2.68. Obtained scores were 10.70. The weighting of all aspects were 25. Formulated by using:  $\text{total score} \times (\text{total weighting} + \text{maximum score}/4) \times 100$ , it was found that the final score was 64.2. It was equal to C+ (fair). From the revising phase to the editing phase, the students made a significant improvement in this phase ( $64.2 - 58.8 = 5.4$ ).

### **Students Responses on the DWA Implementation**

Based on the questionnaires that were given to the students, it showed that 4 students gave an EXCELLENT responses, 1 student gave VERY GOOD response, 8 students gave GOOD responses, and 9 students gave FAIR responses. Seen from the result of the questionnaires, it can be concluded that all students gave positive responses to the DWA implementation. Whether the students were more motivated after they were treated with the DWA was not observed.

### **Teacher's Performance**

Table 1 was the result of the observation on the teacher's performance. Seen from Table 1, it can be concluded that the teacher/researcher has done his part well. There was nothing wrong with his performance. In other words, the students' weakness in writing English abstract was not influenced by external factors. Table 2 was shown the result of the students' achievement in all phases.

**Table 1. The Result of The Observation on The Teacher's Performance**

No.	Questions	4	3	2	1
1	Teaching preparation		v		
2	Lesson plan		v		
3	Language use		v		
4	Use of materials		v		
5	The way to deliver the materials		v		
6	Voice	v			
7	Dressing	v			
8	Body language		v		
9	Communication with students	v			
10	Time management		v		
11	Classroom management		v		
12	Closing		v		
		12	27		
Result= obtained score/maximum score x 100%		39/48 x 100% = 81.25 %			
		Category = Very Good			

4 = very well done; 3 = well done; 2 = fairly done; 1=poorly done

**Table 2. The Result of the Students' Achievement in All Phases**

	Preliminary Test	Drafting Phase	Revising Phase	Editing Phase
Content	60	53.75	56.25	60
Organization	62.5	57.5	58.75	65
Language Use	46.25	52.5	50	55
Mechanics	57.5	62.5	60	67.5

## CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

### Conclusions

There are several conclusions we can draw from the research. It was true that the students of class 3A, semester five, the Accounting Department, State Polytechnic of Malang still had problems in writing English' abstracts. Students' weakness in writing English abstract was not influenced by external factors. The DWA implementation could improve the students' skill in writing English abstracts. The indicator was that 82% of the students could improve their abstracts. It was above the expected achievement because the criteria of success was that 80% of the students could write better English abstracts. Seen from the result of the observation, the teacher's performance was not the cause of the students' problem. All students agreed that the DWA helped them improve their skill in writing English abstracts. The DWA would be helpful for the teacher/researcher to overcome the same problem in the future.

### Suggestions

#### *Teacher/Researcher*

It is expected that the DWA can help the teacher/researcher improve his teaching. The next expect-

ation is that the DWA can help the teacher/researcher improve the students' skill in writing English abstract in the future. In the future, time should be managed better so that the research can be conducted better. The students' works should be recorded well so that the teacher/researcher can use them easily any time. The teaching-learning schedule should not have been disturbed by the research being conducted. Process approach is better used in teaching writing. It is true that process approach will give more works to the teacher but it will give better achievements to the students because students will be more familiar with writing good abstracts. Students should be involved in improving their works so that they will know how to make them better.

#### *Accounting Department-State Polytechnic of Malang*

It is expected that English teachers who teach in semester 5 use the DWA to improve the students' skill in writing English abstracts. The DWA is worth trying to overcome the students' problem in writing English abstracts. Improving students' writing skill as well as their speaking skill will give them more benefit in the job market. Giving frequent writing assignments to the students will improve their writing skill as well as their speaking skill. Implementing the DWA as a teaching strategy will contribute something

useful for the Accounting Department, State Polytechnic of Malang because it will help any English teachers who teach in semester 5 improve the students' skill in writing English abstracts.

#### ***Other Researchers***

Since writing is the hardest aspect among the other English skills, it is suggested that another research on wider writing aspects should be conducted so that students will get more benefits in writing. Other researchers should conduct Classroom Action Researches in more higher educational institutions because writing problems are not only found in junior high schools and senior high schools. Many students of higher education also have problems in writing. The steps, the materials, and the way to implement the DWA in higher educations should not be the same as the ones implemented in junior high schools or senior high schools because the students' characteristics are not the same or the English competence is

not the same, either. Choosing the suitable materials and suitable steps will determine the success of the DWA implementation.

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