STUDENTS' PROBLEMS AND NEEDS: FACTORS IN DEVELOPING ESSAY WRITING TEACHING MATERIALS AT ENGLISH DEPARTMENT OF UNP

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Abstract

This article presents a part of a study conducted to develop teaching material for Essay Writing Course on Process Genre-Based Approach. The result described here is the students' problems and needs in writing an essay text. It was a descriptive study to see students' problems and needs in writing an essay text. The data were taken from the questionnaire. The questionnaires were distributed to the students who have taken Essay Writing Course. It was found that the problems were in pre-writing activities; the level was high, whilst writing activities; the level was average, post-writing activities; the level was high, and in aspect of grammar and mechanics; the level was high. In addition, students'need in writing text was high. It was represented from the input, kinds of texts, kinds of topics, and kinds of exercises.

Key words: Students' problems, Students' need, Teaching material development, and Essay writing course.

1. Introduction

Essay writing course is a compulsory course which is offered to second semester students at English department of UNP. This is a pre-requisite compulsory subject which trains the students to meet several competencies of writing such as generating the ideas, organizing ideas, developing the supporting details to make a good text. To achieve those competencies takes many supporting factors in teaching and learning process; one of them is a good teaching material.

However, the teaching material used in Essay writing course has some limitations. First, the lecturers somehow still use conventional and sometimes substitute materials from some writing books such as from Essay writing, written by Refnaldi (2010), College Writing written by Elizabeth Clonger (2012), and Engaging Writing by marry Fitzpatrick (2011). Second, some writing materials are not based their writing contents on the syllabus of writing because the materials presented there are based on the theoretical application only. These do not lead to the process of writing themselves. Gebhrd (1996:33) says, the teacher cannot teach the students to write by looking only at what they have written. The teacher must also understand how it is being come into and why it assumed the form it did. The teacher has to do some hard things, examine the intangible process rather than easy thing and evaluate the tangible product. It means that the teaching material should facilitate the demand of the syllabus and the process of writing itself. As a result, the teaching materials do not give impact on the students' writing results. It can be seen that most of the students fail on this subject and most of them retake it again in the next semester.

Therefore, it is necessary to seek for the solution of this problem. A research and development study is done to find out the students problems and needstoward teaching materials used in Essay Writing course.

2. Review of Related Literature

a) Essay Writing course

Essay Writing Course is a compulsory subject which has to be taken by the English Department students of Padang State University. This subject is the continuation of Paragraph Writing Course which takes the basis on the development of paragraph writing to essay writing of various types of genres. In the process of writing essay, students learn how to communicate their ideas to their readers. Nunan (1999:13) says that writing is the process of expressing the ideas from writer to readers. This activity is called as productive skill because it alerts the students to create what is in their minds.

Oshima and Hogue (1991:9) define writing as a skill which people can write about their daily activities. It can be said that writing helps them to tell their life, hobby, like and dislike. Moreover, writing is also called as a process. This idea is supported by Boardman (2002: 14). He explains that writing as a process in which it can continue, think and organize the ideas from the writer. To fulfill the process of writing itself the writer can start from assuming, organizing, reassuming, sorting ideas into a good essay.

Sakolik in Linse (2009:64), however, defines in different ideas. He says that writing is a combination of process and product. In writing, the result of the process is product. It means that to get the product, the writer should follow the process of writing. The process itself will determine the result of the writing where

the writer has gone through the processes of writing which is started from selecting the topic, outlining, drafting, editing, and getting the final product of writing. An essay which has gone through these stages will follow the same thing again by considering the aspect of grammar, vocabularies, coherence and cohesion.

b) Genre Based Approach Process Orientation

Genre BasedApproach process is the process of writing which is based on the types of essays (genres). In writing kind of essays or genres of essays, it is necessary to follow the process or stages of writing. The combination between text types or genre and the process of writing is called as Process Genre Based Approach. According to Badgar and White (2000:157), process genre based approach is the combination between writer's thought and the development of the writing itself. In this kind of approach, the writer acts as the master of language and context. The aspect of language is determined by grammatical features of the texts and the aspect of context is determined by the social function of the text.

Process genre based approach focuses on how the students are able to write an essay by following the procedure of writing and also considering the type of essay that they are doing (the product). Furthermore, Yan (2005:1) explains six stages of writing by using process genre based approach orientation. They are: (1). introducing, (2). modeling, (3). planning, (4) brainstorming, (5) independent construction of the text, and (6) revising.

c) Teaching Materials

Teaching materials are all materials which are used by teachers and students to ease teaching and learning process, to develop knowledge and learning experience. Teaching materials can be in form of text books, workbooks, recordings, CD Room, Videos, newspapers, or any kinds of materials which present or inform the target language (Tomlison, 1998:2). He also explains that general teaching materials include knowledge, skills and attitudes which students have to master to perform some basic competencies.

Grave (2000:150)also explains teaching materials development is a procedure where teachers, instructors, create units and lessons to the general and specific learning outcomes.

d) The Principles of Teaching Materials Development

Nunan (1988:1-24) explains there are some principles to consider to do teaching materials development.

1) The materials should be related to the curriculum
2) The materials should be authentic
3) The materials should stimulate the interactions
4) The materials should give an experience to the language learners to the formal aspect of the language
5) The materials should stimulate and support the students learning skills
6) The materials should support the students to apply their skills out of the class

Tomlinson (2008:7-21) also supports Nunan's idea. He suggests fifteen points of developing teaching materials in language classroom. Some of them are:

1. The materials should give impact toward teaching and learning process
2. The materials should ease the learners.
3. The materials should develop students' self-confidence.
4. The materials should consider about students learning styles.
5. The materials should allow the silent period in the beginning of the lesson.
6. The materials should maximize students learning attitudes such as: intellectual, esthetic and emotional.
7. The materials should provide the learning outcomes or feedbacks.

From those two opinions, it can be concluded that in developing teaching materials, the teachers should consider some important factors such as: the relation between the materials and the curriculum, the authenticity of the materials, the impacts of the materials, the exercises and the opportunities to use the target language.

3. Method

The study took place in English Department of Padang State University in Essay Writing class. For this study, a total of 162 students participated in the research and development design. The researcher took the data from two kinds of instruments: questioner and document analysis. The questioners were given to the lectures who taught Essay Writing class and to the students who were taking this subject. The objectives of using the questioner was to find out the problems of the students in using essay writing teaching materialsand to find out students needs toward teaching materials in essay writing class.

4. Discussion
a) Problems faced by the English students in Essay Writing Course
   From the questionnaires, there were four items of problems faced by students in Essay Writing Course. They were: (1) Pre-Writing, (2) Whilst-Writing, (3) Post-Writing, and (4) Grammar and Mechanics.

   1. Problems in Pre-Writing Activity
      Problems faced by the students in Pre-Writing Activitycould be seen in the table below. The items were written in Indonesia

No	Kegiatan Pra-Menulis (Pre-writing activities)	HTP	KK	S	SS	Jmlh	Skor	TK
1	Menghubungkan antara satu gagasan dengan gagasan lainnya	2	62	76	22	162	2.73	tinggi
2	Merumuskan kalimat topik/kalimat tesis atau yang sejenisnya	6	50	82	14	152	2.68	tinggi
3	Mengidentifikasi struktur generik dari teks yang akan ditulis	12	51	65	26	154	2.68	tinggi
4	Memilih topik yang tepat	4	46	71	21	142	2.77	tinggi
5	Mengembangkan ragangan (outline)	5	60	69	18	152	2.66	tinggi
6	Mengidentifikasi fitur-fitur leksikogramatika teks	30	85	33	4	152	2.07	sedang
7	Menemukan sumber informasi yang sesuai	7	48	75	22	152	2.74	tinggi
8	Melakukan aktivitas pemetaan gagasan	14	87	44	7	152	2.29	sedang
9	Menyusun gagasan	3	57	77	15	152	2.68	tinggi
10	Menemukan gagasan	2	58	84	8	152	2.64	tinggi
11	Melakukan aktivitas umbar gagas	28	85	34	4	151	2.09	Sedang
	Rata-rata						2.55	Tinggi

      From the table above, it could be seen that the students' problems in pre-writing activities was high with 2.55 average score. From eleven items of questions, there were eight items considered as the most difficult problems. They were: relating one idea to other ideas (2.73), relating topic sentence to supporting details (2.68), identifying generic structure (2.68), selecting the topic (2.77), making outline (2.66), organizing ideas (2.68), finding main idea (2.64), and finding appropriate ideas (2.74).

   2. Problems in Whilst-Writing Activities
      Problems faced by the students in Whilst-Writing activities could be seen in the table below. The items were written in Indonesia

No	Kegiatan Kala-Menulis	HTP	KK	S	SS	Jmlh	skor	TK
1	Mengembangkan gagasan utama	2	47	88	24	161	2.83	Tinggi
2	Mengembangkan paragraf pengantar	12	52	75	2	141	2.18	Sedang
3	Mengembangkan kalimat topik/kalimat tesis	4	36	90	21	151	2.85	tinggi
4	Mengembangkan gagasan-gagasan pendukung setiap paragraf isi	4	45	86	17	152	2.56	Tinggi
5	Merumuskan suatu ringkasan di dalam paragraf simpulan	8	67	60	16	151	2.47	sedang
6	Mengembangkan kalimat simpulan untuk setiap paragraf isi	7	75	62	8	152	2.50	Sedang
7	Mengemukakan hubungan sebab akibat di dalam paragraf isi	8	67	70	7	152	2.58	Tinggi
8	Mengelompokkan hal-hal yang sejenis di dalam paragraf isi	13	78	55	8	142	2.62	Tinggi
9	Mengemukakan masalah dan solusi masalah di dalam paragraf isi	8	51	84	9	152	2.40	Sedang
10	Mengemukakan suatu prediksi di dalam paragraf simpulan	11	75	58	7	151	2.31	Sedang
11	Mengemukakan suatu perbandingan di dalam paragraf isi	13	81	54	4	153	2.55	Tinggi
12	Mengemukakan contoh yang relevan di dalam paragraf isi	10	59	73	10	152	2.61	Tinggi
13	Mengemukakan suatu pendapat di dalam paragraf simpulan	10	54	73	15	152	2.59	Tinggi
14	Mengemukakan suatu saran di dalam paragraf simpulan	12	52	68	16	148	2.39	Sedang
15	Mengemukakan suatu proses terjadinya sesuatu	14	71	63	5	153	2.64	Tinggi
16	Mengemukakan argumen setuju atau tidak setuju dan didukung oleh alasan yang kuat	9	52	76	15	152	2.55	Sedang
17	Mengemukakan suatu prosedur	8	80	50	4	142	2.41	Sedang
18	Mengemukakan pengalaman di dalam paragraf isi	23	60	69	10	162	2.83	Tinggi
	Rata- rata						2.38	Sedang

      The problems faced by the students in whilst-writing activities were stated in eighteen questions. The level of difficulty was average (2.38). From eighteen questions, ten questions were categorized as high. They were: developing main ideas (2.83), developing thesis statement (2.85), developing supporting detail in every paragraph (2.56), using cause and effect pattern in body paragraph (2.58), using problem-solving pattern in body paragraph (2.62), using comparison-contrast pattern (2.55), using example pattern (2.61), using process pattern (2.64), and using narration pattern (2.83).

3. Problems in Post-Writing Activities

Problems faced by the students in Post-Writing activities could be seen in the table below. The items were written in Indonesia

No	Kegiatan Pasca Menulis	HTP	KK	S	SS	Jmlh	skor	TK
1	Melakukan koreksi terhadap kesalahan-kesalahan gramatika	7	46	74	36	163	2.85	Tinggi
2	Memperkuat hubungan antara satu gagasan dengan gagasan lainnya	3	76	58	16	154	2.56	Tinggi
3	Memperkuat kepaduan antar gagasan di dalam satu paragraph	5	63	77	5	150	2.55	Tinggi
4	Mengidentifikasi gagasan pendukung yang tidak relevan	9	75	61	8	153	2.44	Sedang
5	Mengubah kalimat-kalimat dengan moda lisan ke dalam moda tulisan	7	71	62	13	153	2.53	Tinggi
6	Menambahkan gagasan-gagasan pendukung baru	7	59	62	12	140	2.56	Tinggi
	Rata-rata						2.58	Tinggi

Students' difficulty in post-writing was classified as high (2.58). There was only one item which was categorized as average (2.44): identifying irrelevant supporting details.

4. Problems in Grammar and mechanics

Problems faced by the students in grammar and mechanics could be seen in the table below. The items were written in Indonesia

No	Gramatika dan Mekanisme Penulisan	HTP	KK	S	SS	Jmlh	Skor	TK
1	Memproduksi kalimat-kalimat gramatikal	5	69	67	11	152	2.55	Tinggi
2	Menggunakan Tenses secara tepat	3	68	71	11	153	2.59	Tinggi
3	Memproduksi kalimat-kalimat yang jelas dan bermakna	2	54	80	15	151	2.72	Tinggi
4	Menggunakan tanda baca secara tepat	9	53	72	18	152	2.65	Tinggi
5	Menggunakan kelas kata (part of speech) dengan tepat	7	51	74	20	152	2.70	Tinggi
6	Menggunakan kata atau frasa secara tepat	9	61	70	12	152	2.56	Tinggi
7	Menggunakan piranti-piranti kohesi	17	78	39	19	153	2.39	Sedang
	Rata-rata						2.59	Tinggi

In the aspect of grammar and mechanics, students found it was difficult to make their essay grammatically correct and follow the rule of mechanics such as spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. Using cohesive devises was the item which the students thought to be in moderate level of difficulty.

b) Students' Need to Essay Writing Teaching Materials

From the questionnaires, there were four items of students needs in Essay Writing Course. They were: (1) input, (2) kinds of texts, (3) kinds of topics, and (4) kinds of exercises.

1) Input

The table below showed the information needed by the students during the essay writing process. The items were written in Indonesia

C	Jenis Informasi	TP	KP	P	SP	Jmlh	skor	Rata-rata
1	Penjelasan tentang kalimat tesis (thesis statement) atau yang sejenisnya	2	24	96	30	152	3.01	Tinggi
2	Penjelasan tentang punctuation yang tepat di dalam sebuah teks	4	21	102	25	152	2.97	Tinggi
3	Penjelasan tentang kalimat topik	4	17	99	32	152	3.05	Tinggi
4	Penjelasan tentang struktur generik sebuah teks	2	27	93	29	151	2.99	Tinggi
5	Penjelasan tentang strategi pengembangan paragraf isi	3	27	82	40	152	3.05	Tinggi
6	Penjelasan tentang penggunaan kata/frase transisi yang tepat	3	28	94	27	152	2.95	Tinggi
7	Penjelasan fitur-fitur leksikogramatika sebuah teks	9	35	71	28	143	2.83	Tinggi
8	Penjelasan tentang strategi pengembangan paragraph pengantar	5	37	78	32	152	2.90	Tinggi
9	Penjelasan strategi pengembangan paragraph simpulan	1	36	88	25	150	2.91	Tinggi
10	Penjelasan tentang penggunaan outlining		34	91	27	152	2.95	Tinggi
11	Penjelasan penggunaan brainstorming di dalam kegiatan pra-menulis	10	35	79	28	152	2.82	Tinggi
12	Penjelasan tentang penggunaan mind-mapping di dalam kegiatan pra-menulis	9	38	90	15	152	2.73	Tinggi
13	Penjelasan tentang kaitan sebuah teks dengan teks lainnya	5	36	96	14	151	2.79	Tinggi
14	Penjelasan tentang penggunaan cubing di dalam kegiatan pra-menulis	15	51	77	9	152	2.53	Tinggi
15	Penjelasan penggunaan free writing di dalam kegiatan pra-menulis	8	34	90	21	153	2.81	Tinggi
16	Penjelasan fungsi sosial sebuah teks	10	46	68	18	142	2.66	Tinggi
17	Penjelasan audiens sebuah teks	9	49	77	17	152	2.67	Tinggi
	Rata-rata						2.86	Tinggi

From the table above, it could be seen that students' need was high in the average score 2.86. Eight items of questions were classified in a high level. They were: explanation about thesis statement (3.01), explanation about punctuation (2.97), explanation about topic (3.01), explanation about generic structure of the text (2.99), explanation about strategies in developing body paragraph (3.05), explanation about transitions (2.95), explanation about strategies in developing introduction paragraph (2.90), and explanation about making outlining (2.95)

2) Kinds of texts

The table below showed kinds of texts needed by the students during the essay writing process. The items were written in Indonesia

No	Jenis Teks	TP	KP	P	SP	Jmlh	skor	TK
1	Pemecahan masalah	8	24	99	21	152	2.88	Tinggi
2	Prosedur (Procedure)	4	19	111	19	153	2.95	Tinggi
3	Eksplanasi (Explanation)	1	9	116	24	150	3.09	Tinggi
4	Sebab Akibat (Cause and Effect)	2	6	117	27	152	3.11	Tinggi
5	Eksposisi Persuasif	2	13	113	26	144	3.27	Tinggi
6	Eksposisi Analitis	3	14	107	18	142	2.99	Tinggi
7	Deskripsi (Descriptive text)	1	18	102	41	162	3.13	Tinggi
8	Perbandingan	3	25	101	23	152	2.95	Tinggi
9	Laporan informasi	8	31	84	19	142	2.80	Tinggi
10	Klasifikasi	7	36	92	13	148	2.75	Tinggi
11	Narasi (Narrative text)	4	11	108	30	153	3.07	Tinggi
12	Pengalaman masa lalu	4	21	108	29	162	3.00	Tinggi
13	Review	3	16	93	40	152	3.12	Tinggi
	Rata-rata						3.01	Tinggi

It could be seen that all items are in high level of necessity. It meant that students needed to know all types of essays. However, persuasive essay was considered to be the highest one, with 3.27 score.

3) Kinds of Topics

The table below showed kinds of topics needed by the students during the essay writing process. The items were written in Indonesia

No	Tema/Topik	HTP	KK	S	SS	Jmlh	skor	TK
1	Teknologi Pendidikan (Educational technology)	12	74	53	13	152	2.44	sedang
2	Pendidikan Tinggi (Higher education)	7	66	61	18	152	2.59	tinggi
3	Polusi (Pollution)	18	67	63	14	162	2.45	sedang
4	Budaya Akademik (Academic culture)	17	75	51	9	152	2.34	sedang
5	Pariwisata (Tourism)	26	69	50	7	152	2.25	sedang
6	Bencana Alam (Natural disaster)	21	67	53	11	152	2.36	sedang
7	Peristiwa masa lalu (Past events)	14	39	74	28	155	2.75	tinggi
8	Aborsi (Abortion)	55	64	27	6	152	1.89	sedang
9	Sejarah Lokal (Local history)	39	73	35	5	152	2.04	sedang
10	Tanaman (Plants)	32	73	42	5	152	2.13	sedang
11	Waktu Senggang (Leisure time)	22	68	63	9	162	2.36	sedang
12	Pemilihan Umum (General election)	32	65	45	10	152	2.22	sedang
13	Olah Raga (Sports)	33	65	45	9	152	2.20	sedang
14	Hewan Piaraan (Pets)	27	66	52	7	152	2.26	sedang
15	Hiburan	9	52	67	14	142	2.61	tinggi
	Rata-rata						2.33	sedang

From the table above, it could be seen that students' necessity of the variation of the topic during the essay writing class is average (2.33). However, there were three kinds of topics which were in high level of necessity; higher education (2.59), past events (2.75) and entertainment (2.61). The other twelve topics were in average category.

4) Kinds of Exercises

The table below showed kinds of exercises needed by the students during the essay writing process. The items were written in Indonesia

No	Jenis Latihan	HTP	KK	S	SS	Jmlh	skor	TK
1	Berlatih mengidentifikasi bagian teks, seperti kalimat topik, seses, pendahuluan, kesimpulan, transisi	4	41	91	15	151	2.77	Tinggi
2	Berlatih mengembangkan kalimat tesis (thesis statement) atau yang sejenisnya	4	43	93	19	155	2.85	Tinggi
3	Mengembangkan paragraph pengantar dengan menggunakan berbagai metode pengembangan	3	54	81	14	152	2.70	Tinggi
4	Berlatih mengembangkan sebuah teks secara sendiri-sendiri, berpasangan, berkelompok, atau bersama-sama	1	34	95	22	152	2.91	Tinggi
5	Mengembangkan paragraf-paragraf isi dengan menggunakan	4	59	76	13	152	2.64	Tinggi

	metode pengembangan yang beragam							
6	Berlatih mengembangkan pola-pola retorik khusus (naratif, deskripsi, argument, dll)	6	47	85	14	152	2.70	Tinggi
7	Mengidentifikasi struktur generik dari sebuah teks	2	55	85	11	153	2.69	Tinggi
8	Menganalisis pola dan fitur bahasa sebuah teks	4	48	77	12	141	2.69	Tinggi
9	Melakukan brainstorming untuk membangkitkan gagasan	10	52	75	15	152	2.63	Tinggi
10	Mengkonstruksi kalimat sederhana dan kompleks	4	56	83	14	157	2.68	Tinggi
11	Melakukan mind-mapping di dalam kegiatan pra-menulis	7	64	73	8	152	2.54	Tinggi
12	Mengembangkan paragaf kesimpulan dengan menggunakan metode pengembangan yang beragam	5	88	67	12	172	2.30	Sedang
13	Mengidentifikasi tujuan dan penggunaan teks	7	85	72	7	171	2.46	Sedang
14	Berlatih mengubah kalimat dengan moda lisan menjadi kalimat dengan moda tulisan	7	75	58	12	152	2.49	Sedang
15	Mengekstraksi informasi dari sebuah teks	6	59	77	10	152	2.60	Tinggi
16	Menyusun kembali teks atau kalimat	5	50	72	15	142	2.68	Tinggi
17	Menggabungkan kalimat-kalimat tunggal menjadi kalimat kompleks	8	59	71	13	151	2.59	Tinggi
18	Membandingkan teks-teks dengan tujuan, struktur, dan audiens yang berbeda	5	72	65	10	152	2.53	Tinggi
19	Melengkapi teks yang belum selesai	2	52	77	11	142	2.68	Tinggi
20	Merevisi draf berdasarkan komentar dari orang lain	6	41	71	37	155	2.90	Tinggi
21	Membuat draf sebuah teks berdasarkan hasil dari kegiatan pra-menulis	3	56	64	29	152	2.78	Tinggi
22	Berlatih mentransfer informasi bentuk diagram, gambar, Grafik, dll kedalam bentuk tulisan	15	77	52	8	152	2.33	Sedang
23	Menciptakan teks berdasarkan informasi visual	9	74	57	12	152	2.47	Sedang
24	Menghasilkan daftar kata yang digunakan untuk menulis	13	71	54	14	152	2.45	Sedang
	Rata-rata						2.64	Tinggi

From the table above, the students' necessity toward the kinds of exercises in essay writing course is high (2.64). It could be seen from twenty four items of questions, there were fourteen items were in high level. Those exercises were practicing identifying part of essay such as: topic sentence, thesis statement, introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion. Then, students also needed to practice developing essay in pair, in group. They needed to apply some strategies in brainstorming the ideas such as mind mapping, out lining and extracting the ideas.

In the aspect of grammar, the students needed to practice how to make a simple sentence into a compound one, to construct simple sentence into complex sentence, to analyze form and language features.

5. Conclusion

The result showed that there was a gap between teaching materials of essay writing course and the students' problems and needs. The gap is in term of kinds of information provided to the students, kinds of texts taught to the students, kinds of topics given to the students, and kinds of exercises of given to the students. To conclude, the syllabus and teaching materials should be in accordance with what the students' need, the objectives of the institution, and the stakeholders' need.

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