



A needs analysis in improving writing class activities in EFL classroom context

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ABSTRACT

The study was intended to assess the existing writing activities conducted in 2013 curriculum setting. Specifically, it also identified the students' needs in writing skill activity in terms of learning difficulties in writing activity, students' preferred materials and activities, and students' responses to teacher's performance in writing activities. It aims to see the gap results in desired result and current performance and finding out the ways to fill the gap. The questionnaire on need analysis was administrated to 20 students of class XI IPA 2 of SMAN 3 Kendari, South East Sulawesi. There are some major findings on the study, they are (1) students need a more detailed explanation about writing process, such as explanation on how to begin a writing, find ideas to be written, organize paragraph in a logical order, evaluate and revise the writing, (2) students need various topics of writing (3) students need more attractive learning activities, such as they can put in individual work, pair work and group work, and the last (4) students need the teacher to provide appropriate feedback on their writing.

Keywords: Need analysis, Writing skill, 2013 curriculum



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INTRODUCTION

English is one of the compulsory subjects for EFL students in Indonesia, they are expected to become competent language users in order to compete with the global world, especially in communicating between countries, cultures and social life. One of the emphasis in mastering English is the ability of learners to express ideas and thoughts widely in written English. Having an effective writing skill is essential for those who learn English include in EFL context (Harmer, 2004). It is hoped that the learners will be able to develop their writing capacity effectively so that they can also contribute to the direction and dissemination of written information.

Even though English is a compulsory subject and studied in a period of years, their ability to write appropriately is relatively still low. Nunan (2002) even revealed that the process that occurs in English writing activities is a complex process that involves the writer's thinking ability, and a realization of experience and knowledge into effective writing, so it is not surprising that writing skills are usually the last to be mastered by a language learner. It is proven from the facts of their poor writing qualities and most of the teachers have quite difficult experience in ensuring that students are able to write well. A study conducted by Ngoc (2021) found some problems that are often faced by students when writing are limitations of vocabulary and confusion on grammar, so that more time must be prepared by the teacher to only discuss these basic things. The reality in turns blocked the effectiveness of learning to be realized. Another most troubling issue is their ability in writing is very less since the students are less motivated to learn to write, thus it results there are many mistakes appeared in their writing, such as lack in expressing clear ideas, lack in paragraph organization, a lot of grammatical errors, spelling, punctuation etc.

The main problem in writing in English seems to occur at SMAN 3 Kendari. SMAN 3 Kendari the is one of the state schools in Kendari, South East Sulawesi, which have standardized as one of national standard schools. SMAN 3 Kendari divides into three main majors, namely IPA, IPS and Kebahasaan for second and third grade. English is one of the subject taught in this institution and the researcher was teaching English there for third grade, IPA major. Most of the students are considered to have beginner level of English. Most of them have moderate mark in English in the speaking, reading

and listening skill. However, based on the researcher experience teaching them the most difficult problem for them is writing skill. Most of them believe writing needs a lot of thinking process and it can't be done in one-step thing. It leads them to become passive learner in the writing activities; they experienced no success in writing and therefore lose motivation to write.

The defined problems at the school attracts the researcher attention to conduct a mini-need analysis to see their basic perceptions about their ability in writing, the preferred materials and writing activities and what problems they encounter. Needs analysis is a preliminary process of preparation for teaching a course, the content of which is an effort to assess and identify the learning needs of students. Its analysis can cover questions on the current language skills of students as the initial, the obstacles faced in their learning experience and what English will be used in real situations. Need analysis can provide important information about the components that must be considered before beginning a material in class, especially in teaching English writing skill. Richards (2001) mentioned number of different purposes of need analysis, and one is to see the effectiveness of the existing program, to find if there is need deficiency, measuring the mismatch between reality and expectation. In addition, Rahman (2015) postulates that need analysis covers some techniques to collect the importance data, such as interview, questionnaire, observations and assessment on some aspects like the preparation/syllabus, the materials, method and evaluation.

It is essential to do a research on what problems faced by the students and offers a solution to those problems on writing activities. Since in recent years, the influences of humanistic and communicative approach have been spreaded out, learner-centered teaching is the most emphasis program. It is the curriculum that must be based on what are needed by the students and what is their feeling in particular activities. Furthermore, in order to meet those needs teacher has an important role. Finally, as the teacher, we need to make sure that the students' needs are being fulfilled, there is no gap between what they are expected to achieved and what services offered by the curriculum to satisfy the needs. As had been stated by Hutchinson & Waters (1987) that understanding the students' reason of learning English, the teacher can maximally adjust the language learning activities centered on meeting those classified needs.

There is the necessity to improve the current performance of the students in writing skills, so they can gain the desired results of the curriculum. With the current trend on learner-centered in language teaching, the teacher is required to tryout, evaluate, and adapt their teaching methodology especially for writing skill. Alqunayeer and Zamir (2016) evaluated Brown's curriculum approach (2005) and concluded that the ever-changing times must be followed by adjustments to the curriculum of a country, so that needs analysis should always be a periodic activity carried out in an effort to prepare reliable capacity of students in line with the demands of the era. Through need analysis, it is hoped to provide information for the teacher that will be empowered to be more prepare with new development in English language teaching.

The purpose of the research is to assess the needs of students in writing skill activity in terms of learning difficulties in writing activity, students' preferred materials and activities, and students' responses to teacher's performance in writing activities. It aims to see the gaps between desired result and current performance and finding out the ways to fill the gap. The gap generally refers to performance that does not meet the expected standard result of curriculum. This analysis also can be used to improve the current performance of both the students and the teacher.

METHOD RESEARCH

The questionnaire intends to collect the data on students' needs on writing skill activity, the researcher administered a questionnaire to the students of class XII IPA2 SMAN 3 Kendari. The questions were organized into the following sections.

1. The students' general perception about writing skill and the usefulness of writing
2. The problems encountered by the students in writing activities for both writing process difficulties and mechanical writing difficulties.
3. The students preferred materials and activities in writing activity
4. The students' responses toward teacher's performance in the classroom.

The questionnaire was piloted and revised before it was distributed, there were three students (relevant to the context) involved in this pilot study that have the same level of English proficiency to the students in the real study. First, they were asked to fulfill the questionnaire and then they answered

some questions. Based on the result of pilot study, the researcher made some revisions for some questions such as some questions are ambiguous; there are unnecessary question, some unknown vocabularies, etc. This pilot study is used to see the visibility of the study whether it is possible to conduct the real study or not.

After revising the questionnaire, the researcher administered the questionnaire in the real study. Firstly, the researcher informed that the researcher would like to provide a questionnaire to them; they were required to respond to the questions related to their experience in writing activities. Then, the researcher told them the purpose of the questionnaire and the researcher instructed them to respond to the question by explaining each question one by one first. The researcher explained some vocabularies that may unfamiliar for them. They answered each question together. At the first time, some students looked little confused, so the researcher explained in detail all information there. Finally, when it has been administered, the researcher make an analysis on the responses.

PRODUCT

A report was produced that describe the students' responses to the questionnaire, the problem encountered when administering it and in the final section, there are some recommendation related to the issue.

PILOT STUDY ANALYSIS

The pilot study was conducted before applying the real study. It is useful to look at the effectiveness of any given questions, whether they suited to the information will be known, to see the students' reactions to each question, to look at the suitability of the question with the condition of the student, to look at questions that are biased, and others. The test was given to three students, who have equal English proficiency with the actual objects in this study. They were asked to answer all the questions by providing information about the purpose and what information is to be obtained from the questionnaire. After the questionnaire were answered, Appendix 1 was given to see the correlation of each question to the purpose of the study. As the result, this pilot study shows there are some questions do not match to the purpose of the study.

First, respondent A said some questions are necessary, while some are not, he mentioned question Part B No. 3, and 7 are quite same, question Part C no 1, and 3 are same. He also said that he had trouble-answering question Part B No.5, it is about writing "difficulties on having sense of audience. Additionally, he told that there are some bias questions, such as question Part B No.4 and 8 and he didn't like to answer question Part D. There were also some unknown vocabularies for him such as moderate, decisions, audience, and shopping list. However, mostly he said the rests of the question are suitable to the purpose of the questionnaire.

Second, respondent B argued fifty students is maximal number of respondents of a questionnaire, and it can be administered by mail, self-administered and group. Unfortunately, she pointed out some unnecessary questions, such as question Part B No.10. It is about marking some aspects of writing which is considered the most important in a composition. Another question Part B No.4 is considered as bias one, question Part A No. 2 is assumed as prestige question, which students are likely to give good impression of themselves. She also mentioned that there is no instruction for question Part C and Part D. Furthermore, she was also problematic on some unknown words, such as peer, logical, originality, etc. Yet even so, those weaknesses she claimed all questions are quite clearly stated.

Third, the last respondent in pilot study, respondent C showed almost equal results to the previous respondents. She commented that interview is useful to be carried out before designing a questionnaire, she said all the questions were really necessary to the purpose, there is no need to add others questions, a question should be made more specific and closely related to personal experience, etc. Nevertheless, she said that she did not know question Part B No.9 (producing unity and coherence in ideas), question Part C No. 5 (free writing vs. guided writing), question Part B No.10 (marking writing components). She also added that words like neat, guided, and peer may not familiar to her, and she mentioned question Part A No.2 contains a prestige question.

Finally, based on the results shown above in the pilot study, the researcher made some decisions on the questionnaire. First, there are several questions that must be revised and needed more explanation, such as question Part B (4, 5, 8 and 9), Part C (1, 3 and 5). Those questions might be

necessary to be restructured or if not, we need to explain it before students answering it. Second, some questions will be deleted, for instance question Part B No.10 (mechanical difficulties), question is not likely to be noticed by the three students, they were simply providing a rank to every aspects of writing randomly without thinking and pay attention to compatibility with the reality. THE RESEARCHER think this question does not meet the goal of the study, where the purpose of this questionnaire is to find students' difficulty in writing and students' preferred activities, not their perceptions about what aspect considered the most important to be mastered than the others, since all those aspects are clearly important and have same usefulness to be mastered. Additionally, other questions are likely to be eliminated; it is the question Part D. The three respondents seemed dishonest in answering this section, because it is concerning on teacher's performance. They pointed out very good judgment to the teacher, which may be due to personal factors of fear to the teacher's response. After thinking conductively, these questions may be not good to be asked and it might be necessary to conduct direct observation in order to answer them. It is better to restructure the question to the other forms, such as asking them to express what are they expected the teacher to do in the classroom, it is quite useful to be asked. Third, some words are not too familiar for them, for instance audience, they may be confused with this word relates to writing. They may find the word is different from what they had known before (audience in a stage or in a film), and found no correlation between this word and the writing activity. Then, others unknown vocabularies are peer, logical, originality, moderate, decisions, etc. Those words are needed to be explained in detail when students are answering the questions. In short, the revision of those questions found in the pilot study would be useful for the real study.

However, there are many things encountered in this study. The process of making a questionnaire that should really adjust to the needs of students, finding out what the problems faced by students, wording each question to be logic and easy to be understood, avoid questions that can be confusing the respondent or bias. Those problems can be slightly resolved with a pilot study that conducted before the real study, its results from piloting is used to revise each question in the questionnaire.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Questions Analysis

General Statements

1. Do you like writing?

Answer	Frequency (N=20)	%
a. Yes	14	70
b. No	6	30

The positive response in the question is 70 % of students like writing, while 30% shows negative response.

2. Do you think you are a good writer?

Answer	Frequency (N=20)	%
a. Yes	5	25
b. No	15	75

3. How important writing skills in the success of your course?

Answer	Frequency (N=20)	%
a. High	7	35
b. Moderate	12	60
c. Low	1	5

4. How important writing skill to success in your field after graduated?

Answer	Frequency (N=20)	%
a. High	9	45
b. Moderate	10	50
c. Low	1	5

Writing Difficulties

No	Questions	Frequency							
		Always		Often		Sometimes		Never	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Have difficulty making decisions on choosing a topic	8	40	5	25	7	35	0	0
2	Have difficulty on how to begin	4	20	9	45	7	35	0	0
3	Have difficulty in finding ideas to be written	7	35	2	10	11	55	0	0
4	Have difficulty developing and organizing ideas	9	45	4	20	5	25	2	10
5	Lack sense of audience	10	50	3	15	6	30	1	5
6	Lack of organizing paragraph in logical order	7	35	6	30	7	35	0	0
7	Making unnecessary repetition of information	9	45	5	25	5	25	1	5
8	Have difficulty evaluating and revising your writing	7	35	4	20	7	35	2	10

Mechanical Writing Difficulties

No	Questions	Frequency							
		Always		Often		Sometimes		Never	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Using appropriate vocabulary	7	35	6	30	6	30	1	5
2	Making good sentence structure	6	30	9	45	5	25	0	0
3	Ordering the words in sentence carefully	7	35	5	25	8	40	0	0
4	Writing good spelling and punctuation	6	30	6	30	7	35	1	5
5	Expressing each sentence clearly	8	40	7	35	5	25	0	0
6	Producing paragraph in logical order	9	45	8	40	3	15	0	0
7	Using words effectively	8	40	5	25	7	35	0	0
8	Matching words, phrases, and pronouns	9	45	2	10	7	35	0	0
9	Producing unity and coherence in ideas	10	50	6	30	3	15	0	0

Preferred Writing Material and Activities

1. What topic of writing do you like?

Answer	Frequency (N=20)	%
a. Shopping List	1	5
b. Letters	4	20
c. Essays	4	20
d. Report	5	25
e. Novel	6	30
f. Other		

2. What type of writing medium do you like?

Answer	Frequency (N=20)	%
a. Pen and paper	9	45
b. Computer word files	8	40
c. Live chat	3	15

3. What types of writing do you like?

Answer	Frequency (N=20)	%
a. Describing people, place and thing	2	10
b. Narrative event	8	40
c. Explaining a topic step by step	3	15
d. Cause and effect	5	25
e. Arguing and persuading	2	10

Answer	Frequency (N=20)	%
f. Other		

4. In choosing a topic, which one do you prefer?

Answer	Frequency (N=20)	%
a. Teacher provides a topic	1	5
b. You choose a topic by your own	12	60
c. The topic is chosen by all students in the classroom	7	35
d. Other		

5. I more enjoy

Answer	Frequency (N=20)	%
a. Free writing	14	70
b. Guided writing	6	30

6. What writing activities do you like best?

Answer	Frequency (N=20)	%
a. Individual work	7	35
b. Pair work	6	30
c. Group work	7	35

7. What kind of correction that you find useful?

Answer	Frequency (N=20)	%
a. Teacher's correction	13	65
b. Peer's correction	7	35

8. How much time you do you need to complete your writing?

The answer to this question are varied, some only need 30 minutes for completion, and other need more than it, they need 2-3 hours to complete their writing.

Teacher's Performance

No	Questions	Frequency (N=20)					
		Very Useful		Useful		Not Useful	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Provides brief explanation on topic to be written	11	55	9	45	0	0
2	Explains the way to produce good sentence structure	12	60	8	40	0	0
3	Explains the way to produce text organization in logical order	12	60	8	40	0	0
4	Explains some aspects of writing	10	50	10	50	0	0
5	Performs the role of an audience	9	45	10	50	1	10
6	Explains new grammar points before practicing them	11	55	9	45	0	0
7	Corrects my mistakes of grammar	12	60	7	35	1	10
8	Corrects my mistakes of mechanical aspect of writing	10	50	10	50	0	0

No	Questions	Frequency (N=20)					
		Very Useful		Useful		Not Useful	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
9	Uses symbol on a piece of homework to show where things have gone wrong	7	35	11	55	2	10

STUDENTS' NEEDS

Based on those data above, they indicate students need some components in the teaching of English, especially in the writing skill. Those needs are listed below:

Need 1 : A more detailed explanation about writing process, such as explanation on how to begin a writing, find ideas to be written, organize paragraph in a logical order, evaluate and revise the writing.

Need 2 : Students need various topics of writing.

Need 3 : Students need more attractive learning activities, such as they can put in individual work, pair work and group work.

Need 4 : Students need the teacher to provide appropriate feedback on their writing.

DISCUSSION

The spreading of English is inevitable both globally and pedagogically. Globally, English as language of wider communication has demanded everyone to master it, since virtually all of the components of life is transferred in English, we are witnessing the technology, information, economic, cultural, travel, etc use English as the medium. The most profitable is that it can connect the two speakers in cross communication who have different languages. It is the role of English as the *lingua franca*. Harmer (2004) defined a *lingua franca* used internationally as medium of communication between people of different languages, who may not share the same mother tongue or they used it as second language. Furthermore, pedagogically, many people in the world learn English; it is included as compulsory subject in educational system, so does in Indonesia. Each level of education is required to teach it in school, starting from primary school to college level.

Senior high school for example, English is taught two times a week for each grade, it is about 180 minutes a week. In spite of the fact that it is taught since one grade, or even since in primary school, mostly third grade students of SMAN 3 Kendari have poor English proficiency. Basic competency expected by 2013 curriculum is that students can master the four language skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing. The latter is considered the most difficult skill to be achieved. For this skill, students are expected to express a wide variety of meanings and steps in the development of rhetoric in the form of written texts, such as narrative, explanation, discussion, etc with an emphasis on the characteristics of a variety of written language. In accord with the researcher personal experience teaching at SMAN 3 Kendari, the researcher found their ability in writing is still low. Therefore, the researcher made the questionnaire to see the problems and to know what is students' desire for their writing materials and activities in the future.

After conducting a study with the questionnaire, the researcher found that student's perception toward the importance of writing skill both for the success of the course and for the success after graduated is varied, some argue writing skill is really needed to be mastered, some are not. Those who argue negatively toward writing skill may be caused by the inability to produce a good piece of writing or lack in following the writing activities in the classroom. Based on the researcher personal observation while the researcher was teaching them, they looked unmotivated in the instructional writing activities, they spend much time only for deciding a topic, lots of thinking to begin, using rigid grammar, lack in using wide range of vocabulary and so on. This field reality is confirmed by the responses in the questionnaire. For example, Part B, 40 % of students always find difficulty in making decision to choose a topic, 35 % of students are difficult in finding ideas to be written, 65% are lack sense of audience, 45 % are always making unnecessary repetition of information, 35% always lack of using appropriate vocabulary, 45 % are difficult in producing paragraph in logical order, etc. The two realities prove that students have problems in writing activities. The questionnaire showed that student' needs are not being met during the process of teaching writing in the classroom and those needs are divided into some sort.

First, students need briefer explanation about process of writing included how to choose a topic, make planning on the topic, produce good sentence structure, develop paragraph, express ideas to be

written clearly, etc. Before starting the lesson, it is useful to decide exactly how the learning environments set up and structured. The teacher should set the goals first, find materials to be delivered and finally implement those materials in order to achieve the stated objectives (Nunan in Reid 1993, p.73). Reid (1993) next recommended four broad categories of curriculum for writing to be applied; they are the language-based curriculum, the pattern model curriculum, the process-based curriculum or combination of the three. For example, when we want to focus on grammatical patterns of a composition, we can use the language-based curriculum, since it concerns more on accuracy and correctness to use specific grammatical items, we provide material about subject-verb agreement, conjunction, tenses, etc. The pattern model-based curriculum stresses on the communicative side of a composition related to its situation and function, how the writing can communicatively convey its meaning to the audience. In addition, the process-based curriculum more emphasis on process of communication and negotiation, it is about fluency and other option is we can combine the three curriculum types in the writing process.

Second, students need various writing topics. Question Part C No. 1 shows range choice of the students about topic of writing. 5 % of the respondent chose to write shopping list, 20% prefer writing letters, 20 % chose essays, 25% for report text and the maximum is 30% for novels. Those topics can be used alternately in each meeting. In addition, the teacher can make good methodology, the teacher can decide innovation choosing the topic, or it can be based on students' interest, since about 60% of the respondents want the teacher let them to work on their respective topic. We can obtain information on their interest from class discussion, and questionnaire, for example, when we ask them to produce descriptive writing about "describing the best place they want to visit", we can first attract their attention by giving a picture of some places of tourist destination, and then describe it clearly. Next, we can ask them to list some beautiful places they like and finally choose the best one. In short, the researcher think by providing them opportunity to make decision on the topic, they will feel more convenient and they can be more responsible in their own writing.

Third, teacher must create attractive learning activities and prepare what direction will be given to the students. A lot of writing activities can much useful to avoid students feel bored in the constant activities. We can let them to do in their own; sometimes we can put them in pair or form them in a group. Raimes (1983) argued that pair work and group work could be beneficial if we consider some important components such as personalities, abilities and preferences of the students. She also suggested training some students to be a group leader, to manage the other members. They can share and help each other whatever the topic given, because they share similar interest. In addition to issues related to language proficiency and learning objectives especially for writing skill, those encouraging activities at the same time can maintain motivation of students in the learning process.

Next, students need the teacher to provide appropriate feedback on their writing. Providing feedback will be very useful for students to know what has gone well, and what the errors contained in their writing. The result indicates 65 % of respondents find it useful to get correction from the teacher than their peer. Additionally, about 60 % said it is very useful for them to get grammatical correction, and 50 % mechanical aspects of writing. In giving feedback, we are not only showing his/her mistakes, they may easily be discouraged to fix those wrong things. Rather we need to adopt a positive attitude to students' writing and acknowledge their progress. Raimes (1993: p.10) said the discovery of new ideas, new sentences and new words can be triggered by the provision of sufficient time and appropriate feedback from the teacher. Teacher acts as an assessor, offering feedback on performance, provide grade, say things have been done well or bad. Furthermore, most common way of correcting students' work is return it to students with great deal of underlining, cross out, question mark and occasional tick. Another way we can do such a correction when students are doing their job. We can approach them and ask what they are writing, ask the meaning of certain words or sentences and we can directly provide advice and revision of their paper before writing the final draft. However, sometimes we delivered our response in the written comment after returning their works. In providing this written comment, there are some procedures, reading it first, providing a praise of what has been done well, then looking for things needs to be developed further, the suggestion must be specific and clear as well. In short, the teacher must be responsible to provide appropriate feedback for students' writing, in order that they will motivate and encourage more to revise their writing.

To sum up, those writing needs require proper treatments in order to achive curriculum requirements. The ability to write as one whose language skills are emphasized, requiring innovation

from teachers to make learning as a fun, solving a variety of difficulties in writing activities and perform a good provider of feedback. In addition, a detailed explanation of the important aspects of writing are necessary to be provided, and finally when the student has been able to produce a piece of writing, the teacher must be able to provide useful feedback. Giving feedback on the writing tasks demands special care. Teachers should respond positively and encouragingly to the content of what students have written. When correcting, teacher should choose what and how much to correct based on what students need in their studies. Finally, teacher is the important figure to make sure that students' needs are being met when the learning activities is conducted.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research conducted there are some major findings on the study, they are (1) students need a more detailed explanation about writing process, such as explanation on how to begin a writing, find ideas to be written, organize paragraph in a logical order, evaluate and revise the writing, (2) students need various topics of writing (3) students need more attractive learning activities, such as they can put in individual work, pair work and group work, and the last (4) students need the teacher to provide appropriate feedback on their writing.

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