



STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD ENGLISH WRITING ACTIVITIES AT SMP NEGERI 29 MEDAN

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to analyze the students' attitudes toward English writing activities. The method of this study was descriptive qualitative by conducting the in-depth interview and questionnaire sheets. The data of this study were transcription of the students' attitudes toward English writing activities especially in recount text topic. Moreover, the data sources were 31 students at grade 8 of SMP Negeri 29 Medan. The results showed that the dominant components of students' attitudes in English writing activities was affective component (60,75%), followed by conative component (58,06%) and cognitive component (54,8%) which could be interpreted that the students had positive attitude regarding to the writing of recount text. It was reflected from three components.

For cognitive component, the students believed that their writing skills will be better after studying the material despite the many difficulties encountered when writing recount text. For affective component, the students felt happy, interested and really enjoyed the lesson. And for conative component, the students were able to pay attention during teacher explained about material, asked questions about material that has been understood and always discussed it with friends. So that, this indicated that their overall attitude was positive.

Keywords:

Attitude, Affective Component, Writing Activities, Recount Text, Descriptive Qualitative Method

INTRODUCTION

In learning English, students are required to master four language skills, there are listening, speaking, reading and writing. However, one of the language skills that encourage students to be more productive and creative is writing skills. Writing is one way of providing variety in classroom procedure. Writing skills can be a benchmark for English language skills. It helped the students to hone their understanding of vocabulary, structure and complement other language skills.

Writing as a productive skill is considered more difficult because the process involved thinking skills and the rules are more stringent. Everything that is shared has certainly gone

through a process of being thought carefully until it is processed as well as possible. In writing activities, a student needs to express her ideas, experiences, thoughts, and feelings in a paper. In addition, writing must also be supported by adequate language components such as grammar and vocabulary (Harmer, 2003: 255).

In the Indonesian context where English is taught as a foreign language, students learn to write only for exam purposes and to get good scores. Therefore, it is not uncommon for students to feel dissatisfied with the writing activities. This is influenced by their respective attitudes.

Attitude is one of the success factors in writing learning. It played a key role in students' achievement. It included students' beliefs, feelings and behavior. According to Baker (1992, p.12) Attitudes can be divided into three main components. They are cognitive, affective and conative. Cognitive refers to the beliefs or thoughts. Affective refers to the feelings. And Conative refers to the behaviors or experiences. However, we cannot see an attitude as we can see a speed of train, because attitudes are in people's heads and can only be inferred from their responses.

The attitude toward writing is very important because it will influence their performance of a lesson. However, not all students have the same attitudes of their views in writing even though they receive the same information or instructions from the teacher. This condition is one of the caused of the low achievement obtained by students in writing because the attitudes of students toward writing can reflect their effort to achieve the target.

In the teaching writing, it is essential for the teacher to recognized their students' attitudes as it can help them predicted what factors might affect the students reflecting such attitude both positives or negatives during writing activities. Therefore, the teacher should found the best strategy to solve any problems that students faced during writing learning to achieve the target achievement.

Ideally, students should have a positive attitude towards writing as it can help them achieve better writing achievement. However, based on fact students' attitudes towards written tasks are artificial without a reasonable goal. This is due to writing activities in schools are taught through intense instructing. So that, writing activities become more teacher-centered in which the teachers take control of the class rather than giving opportunity for the students to explore the ideas and creativity by themselves. Whereas writing ability and academic success are closely related because writing attitudes can predict writing achievement.

The preliminary data for this study is based on an interview with the students of grade 8 in SMPN 29 Medan. They showed the attitude that they have a desire to learn. Many of them want to improve their writing and read and write more vocabulary. But, actually they do not know the context of writing. On the other hand, they have million thoughts and feelings to be written, however, they cannot write it because they do not know how about organizing their ideas and knowledge of language components such as vocabulary and grammar itself. Most of them claimed that they like the way the teacher teaches them, but they are not given opportunity to learn more about writing. Besides that, they feel not compelled to follow this lesson because they are not given the opportunity to expressing ideas and combine sentences.

From the previous study, some researchers discuss about students' attitudes in writing. One of them is about students' attitudes toward learning English by Susanti, et.al (2019). The researchers stated that how the attitude displayed by students will determine the behavior, actions, and involvement of students in the learning process, so that it lead to the level of student understanding or student success in mastering the material. The results showed that the students reflected positive attitudes toward learning English, because the English teacher knew the factors affect students' positive attitudes so that he could apply the best strategy to maintain this condition.

Based on the background above, this study focused on analyzing students' attitudes toward English writing activities. This study is hoped to contribute to our knowledge in the field of students' attitudes and provided understanding to English teachers about the important things that must be considered to increase students' achievement in learning English, especially in writing subjects.

METHOD

This study applied the descriptive qualitative which it is concerned with developing explanations of social phenomena. The use of this research method can help researcher to obtain information directly from those who involved in the phenomenon to be studied. It helped the researcher to find more details information on the students' attitude with their responses to the statement from questionnaire and interview. The data of this study were the transcription of students' attitude in English writing activities especially in recount text topic. Moreover, the sources of the data in this study were 31 students at grade 8 of SMP Negeri 29 Medan. This study used in-depth interview and questionnaires as the techniques

of collecting data. Moreover, the technique of analyzing data used stage proposed by Donald Ary (2010, p.481) they are; organizing and familiarizing, coding and reducing, and interpreting and representing.

RESULTS

1. Dominant component of Attitudes toward English Writing Activities

Students' components of attitudes are categorized into three, namely cognitive component, affective component and conative component.

- a. For cognitive, the aspects used to understand the students' attitudes toward English writing activities which measured by perceived usefulness showed that the majority of the respondents had positive attitude. According to the questionnaire data, 54,8% of respondents showed their beliefs about the knowledge they gained.
- b. For affective, the aspects used to understand the students' attitudes toward English writing activities which measured by self confidence, anxiety and enjoyment showed the majority of the respondents had good desires to learn writing recount text. Most of the respondents liked, enjoyed, and excited to learn. In line of this, many respondents showed their positive attitude on the affective component (60,75%).
- c. For conative, the aspects used to understand the students' attitudes toward English writing activities which measured by intrinsic motivation. The finding showed that the majority of the respondents had positive attitude to learn writing recount text. According to the questionnaire data, 58,06% of respondents had interested and desire to learn.

2. Students' Attitude toward English Writing Activities

Students' Attitude toward English writing activities was how students' responds toward writing activity. Based on the findings in each components showed that the majority of the respondents had positive attitude to learn writing recount text. This is inseparable from the measurable reactions to the attitude object that would create positive or negative attitudes towards the writing activities.

For cognitive which measured by perceived usefulness showed students' attitude was positive although the respondents overall had difficulty in learning and many of them also rely on translation applications in every assignment. But they have a great desire to be able to understood the material well. So that, teacher should change the teaching style by

providing more different classroom atmosphere to the students. So that, they have positive attitude and finally they will be motivated to learning writing.

For affective which measured by self-confidence, anxiety, enjoyment showed the students' attitude was positive. Most of the respondents liked, enjoyed, and excited to learn. Because how the teacher teach may determine the students' responses toward the writing activities. It relates to Gardner (2007) who stated that positive attitudes toward the learning situation would likely produce greater enjoyment in the lesson, desire to learn and effort expended in learning writing.

For conative which measured by intrinsic motivation showed the students' attitude was positive. They had interested and desire to learn. It is because the teaching style and classroom management created by the teacher have a big role in influencing students' views on the recount text writing material and it may influence them to pay attention during learning, finally influence how students act or behave in class.

DISCUSSIONS

Based on the result of data analysis, it can be shown that the majority of the respondents had positive attitude. Then, the students reflected three components in which the affective component dominates over the others with the percentage affective (60,75%), conative (58,06%) and cognitive (54,8%). Furthermore, the following is outlined discussion on each component of attitude.

First, the analysis of cognitive component indicated a positive attitude. Students' cognitive abilities are measured through the perceived usefulness. According to the questionnaire data, 54,8% of respondents showed their beliefs about the knowledge they gained and strengthened by their statements through interviews. Most students cooperated in completing the English writing assignment, but do not fully understand it yet. Therefore, students should do independent learning to deepen their understanding and the teacher also should design a new teaching style that can improve students' capabilities in writing.

Second, the analysis of affective component showed percentage 60,75% that indicating a positive attitude. Students' affective abilities are measured through the self confidence, anxiety and enjoyment. Based on finding, the respondent mentioned that they felt able in writing recount text well. Then, researcher found that the students felt happy, interested and really enjoyed the lesson. In addition, the way the teacher taught is also good so that it attracted students to learn more about writing. It is related to the previous study

conducted by Ruth Beyt, et.al (2005) that kind of pedagogy and students' preferences are influenced by learning environment. It means that, how the teacher teach may determine the students' responses in their interested in learning.

Third, the analysis of conative component showed percentage 58,06% that indicating a positive attitude without any doubt. Students' conative abilities are measured through the intrinsic motivation. Based on the finding the respondent mentioned that the students were able to pay attention during teacher explained about material, asked questions about material that has not been understood and always discussed it with friends. They showed a great desire to be able to learn this writing skill better. This is related to the theory of behavioral aspect of attitude that students' preferences will affect to behavioral intentions towards the object and finally lead to positive attitude (Kara, 2009)

From the explanation of each component, so that the analysis of students' attitude toward English writing activities showed a positive attitude even though their understanding of material is not very good but they always try to work on and follow the teacher's directions. Many of them also rely on translation applications in every assignment. But they have a great desire to be able to mastered English with encouragement from the teacher who made them interested. Then the positive attitude of students towards learning English especially in improving writing skill can be caused by several things. One of which is the initial perception of students when they see learning. In addition, other aspects that are suspected to have a positive influence are the content learning material, varied and preferred learning methods by students, the way in which learning materials are delivered by teacher, and the use of interesting methods and even requires coercion. These things will directly or indirectly affect students' attitude toward English writing activities. Then, from vocabulary mastery, if students lack of vocabulary, they will have difficulty in writing, especially if it is combined with grammar mastery. Thus, the teacher's mastery in teaching methods becomes very important in building positive attitudes of students toward English writing activities. It is related to the previous studies conducted by Munica Ismiatul Hidayah (2019) stated that individuals with positive attitudes usually progress more rapidly in foreign language. So that, when students' attitudes grows stronger then writing skill is also getting better.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of the study, the component which dominant was affective component with percentage 60,75%. It means that students really enjoyed the lesson. Then followed by conative (58,06%) and cognitive (54,8%). Moreover, based on the results of the study, the students' attitude was positive although the characteristics of respondents overall used Indonesian as communication in learning. Many of them also rely on translation applications in every assignment. But they have a great desire to be able to master English with encouragement from the teacher who made them interested.

The findings were reflected from three aspects; Cognitively, the students believed that their writing skills will be better after studying the material despite the many difficulties encountered when writing recount text. Affectively, the students felt happy, interested and really enjoyed the lesson. In addition to the material which is quite easy to understand, the way the teacher taught is also cool so that it attracted students to learn more about writing. Then, conatively, the students were able to pay attention during teacher explained about material, asked questions about material that has not been understood and always discussed it with friends. It can motivate students to deepen understanding in writing. This indicated that their overall attitude towards English writing activities was positive.

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