



Education Quarterly Reviews

Wardhana, D. E., & Hindarto, K. S. (2022). Problems in Writing a Qualified Journal Article Publishing an Article in a Reputable International Journal: What Makes it a Mission Impossible? (Especially at the Result and Discussion). *Education Quarterly Reviews*, 5(2), 35-39.

ISSN 2621-5799

DOI: 10.31014/aior.1993.05.02.465

The online version of this article can be found at:
<https://www.asianinstituteofresearch.org/>

Published by:
The Asian Institute of Research

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Problems in Writing a Qualified Journal Article Publishing an Article in a Reputable International Journal: What Makes it a Mission Impossible? (Especially at the Result and Discussion)

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Abstract

In developing countries, the quality of the publication in reputable international journals is continuously being improved. However, many writers struggle to be able to write a qualified article for such journal. Based on the observation and interview, it was found out that though the writers already knew about the rhetorical structures in the finding and discussion section, still their articles were not considered eligible to be published. The objective of this paper was to discuss the problems faced by writers in writing an article to be published in a reputable international journal. The data was gathered using a questionnaire given to students studying in the graduate school in University of Bengkulu majoring in Language Education. The findings reveal that the writing problems are related to the four aspects of behavior suggested by Adnan (2017) : 1) lecturers' behavior in the thesis consultation, 2) behavior aspect outside the learning, 3) cognitive aspect, and 4) psychomotor aspect. A number of recommendations have been made regarding these findings: A continuous and proper training on formal writing genre should be started from middle school. In the university, students should be widely exposed to the scientific articles published in reputable international journals, especially in subjects like Academic Writing and English Language.

Keywords: Graduate Students, Reputable International Journal, Writing Problems

1. Introduction

Writing an article for a reputable journal is a challenging task even for graduate students. The Result and Discussion section seem to be the very difficult part to write especially for graduate students of Language Education Department, both English Language Education and Indonesian Language Department in University of Bengkulu. Their articles are often rejected by editors of a journal since they have not met the required standard for academic writing. Arsyad (2014) states that most of students' writing in Discussion section is not in the form of argumentative writing. Moreover, Wardhana (2016) says the articles are often written not in complete Swales' steps; only steps 1, 2, and 5 are applied. Therefore, readers' understanding of the articles may be disrupted. Readers may not be able to find clear and complete information concerning the result of the research, previous research applied and the recommendation for the application of the research result. In other words, the

information presented by the writer is incomplete (Iqnatius, 1999). In addition, articles written by those graduate students are lack of rhetorical construction of academic writing.

Based on the fact, it is more likely that the quality of education may be affected. 80% of those graduate students of Indonesian Language Department are mostly in-service teachers of elementary and primary school, even some of them are lecturers teaching in private universities in Bengkulu. In addition, it was found out from the tracer study Indonesia (2016) that 50% graduates of this department became teachers of various levels of education all over Indonesia. It is a general understanding that teachers are important element in education. Improving teachers' quality means improving the quality of education as well (Farhani, 2015). One way to improve teachers' quality is to require them to write an article to be published in a journal prior to their thesis exam. It is assumed that if they write their article by employing the right ways in writing an article for journal publication, they will write their thesis draft in a similar way. In order for the students to be able to write a good article, this particular research study attempts to find out and describe problems faced by graduate students of English and Indonesian Department in writing an article to be published in a reputable international journal, specifically in the Result and Discussion section.

The importance of language in acquiring academic writing skills is similar to the area of writing tests (Weigle, 2002). Therefore, the ability to write in Writing Learn Language (WLL) perspective is focused on the examining the rules of writing which are developed in second language learning (L2) competence with the priority of L2 as a part of writing in L2. Meanwhile, the master program in Education field expects its graduate to be junior researchers. Based on this fact, it is a general rule that a researcher should also serve as an author for journal publication reporting the research result he/she has conducted. Hence, it is an urgent need for a researcher to be able to write a qualified article to be published in a reputable journal. When the problems in writing the articles have been identified, the writers may then anticipate them by using the appropriate strategies.

This study was also conducted as a way to support the Vision and Mission of the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, University of Bengkulu as a world class Faculty (Bengkulu, 2013). One of the first steps to achieve this is to improve the quality of articles written by the academicians. The increase of the citation index of the academicians is also encouraged through the publication of the graduates internationally.

2. Methods

This is a descriptive qualitative study which describes various problems faced by graduate students of English and Indonesian Language Department, University of Bengkulu in writing an article to be published in an international journal. The study involved six graduate students from English and Indonesian Language Department. Characteristics of the subjects are able to manage and develop research results that are beneficial to society and scientific development, and get national and international.

2.1. Data Collection Technique

The data was collected by using interview questions which were developed based on four aspects of behavior in writing suggested by Adnan (2017). They are: 1) lecturers' behavior during the thesis consultation, 2) behavior aspect outside the learning, 3) cognitive aspect, and 4) psychomotor aspect. There were 20 questions served as a guide in digging information concerning the problems faced by the respondents. The interview was conducted either directly using the interview questions, or indirectly during the consultation hours. The data was gathered during the teaching and learning process, the consultation hours, and during the discussion with colleagues. The data was then compared to the data gathered from the descriptive and reflective field notes.

2.2. Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis involved representing the data into descriptive form and counting the data quantitatively to get the pattern of the problems faced by the respondents. This pattern was then validated by comparing it to the respondents' writing and by discussing it with other colleagues.

3. Procedures of the Research

A participatory and non-participatory interview guide was employed to answer the research question. This study followed these procedures:

- (a) Designing an interview guide as the instrument to find out the problems faced by the students
- (b) Practical and pragmatic try out to the instrument
- (c) Developing the specification of the instrument and specific indicators to formulate the data material
- (d) Validating the pragmatic data of the problems faced by the students
- (e) Validating the instrument using expert validation
- (f) Taking descriptive and reflective notes
- (g) Analyzing the descriptive and reflective notes
- (h) Writing research result

4. Results and Discussion

Results of the study are discussed in four aspects based on the aspects of behavior in writing suggested by Adnan (2017). They are 1) lecturers' behavior in the thesis consultation, 2) behavior aspect outside the learning, 3) cognitive aspect, and 4) psychomotor aspect.

4.1. Lecturers' behavior during the thesis consultation

The thesis consultation activities are divided into two main activities. The first is the activities during the course in Academic Writing (2 credit semester) at English and Indonesian Language Department, and the second is the activities of the writing consultation outside the classroom (through email or one-on-one consultation). Based on the data analysis, it can be said that lecturers' behavior during the consultation affects the students' activities when they are writing an article. Articles being written by the students are 100% taken from their thesis report. Thesis report is one of the requirements to get the master title.

Lecturers' behavior during thesis writing consultation is already good and appreciated, and they act as the supervisor for the article writing as well. The lecturers are those who have been certified and who have experience in writing articles. Averagely, they write two articles in each academic semester; one for a conference proceeding and the other for a journal. However, the experience of the supervisor is not appreciated well by the advisee. There is a tendency for the students to ignore the supervisor notes. They also prefer to copy the style of their former cohort who have been succeeded in publishing their writing in local journals.

During the consultation hours, even on the learning hours, advice from the supervisors are not really well listened by the advisee. This phenomenon applies since the students still depend on the style of writing shown by the the supervisor. Based on the observation, there are still some of the supervisors who do not follow the guidelines in writing articles for an international journal. Therefore, it is a need to build cooperation between the Department Association and the journal editors in order to set the agreement regarding the standard or guidelines for article writing. Another urgent matter which needs to be taken into account is the government intervention, in this case the Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education. The ministry should give more attention to the improvement of the quality of articles. A rule concerning the external reviewer of research should also be considered since one of the output of granted research is the lecturer to publish an article in a journal. It is expected that the more qualified a supervisor is, the more qualified the articles being supervised.

In addition, the system applied in the university does not give wide appreciation to the lecturers who have well supervised their students in writing the article. Another problem is the time limitation. It is of a general understanding that there is only little time in finishing an article as the requirement to graduate. Most students are still allowed to have their exam two days prior to their judgement registration. It means that they have only two days to write their articles. It does not give the lecturers adequate time to supervise the article writing. As the result, the supervisors will sign the approval of the article without thoroughly reading or checking the draft of the article.

Based on the discussion with the lecturers, it can be said that the lecturers act as supervisors are exhausted in checking sentence by sentence on the students' article. It happens because the students only copy and paste the sentences directly from their thesis report. They seem to be unaware of the theories and rules in writing an article (JJ Eko, 2017). They could not be care less in revising their articles and providing non-academic reasons for why they do not do so.

4.2. Behavior aspect outside the learning

This aspect should be followed up with a system applicable in the faculty and in the university. The data about problems faced by the graduate students of English and Indonesian Department create a certain pattern. The pattern means that the students face quite similar problems. The description gathered from the observation and interview shows that both the surrounding environment at campus and at work is not conducive yet. It means that they do not have 'the power' to write and to publish their article since they are doing it merely for the fulfillment of the graduation requirements. Meanwhile at work, they write an article just for their need to be promoted. Publication has not been oriented to the real meaning of a publication.

4.3. Cognitive Aspect

This aspect very dominantly affects the students' skill in writing since writing is the most difficult skill to be acquired by most of the students. Students are more likely to be affected to express themselves orally. Therefore, when they are required to represent their ideas in written form, there is a tendency that they use the oral version of texts into the written form. Based on the data analysis, all subjects of this research have good cognitive competence or good IQ. However, this cognitive competence is not getting higher, if not to say degrading, since the academic atmosphere does not fully encourage it. Another data to support the cognitive aspect is the data from their Aptitude Test which shows that the students have good aptitude.

From the data gathered during the learning process in the Academic Writing class, which is designed institutionally to provide students with the ability to write academic articles, shows that students are able to follow the class activities satisfyingly and understand the materials well. Even they are equipped with the material from the (Swales, 1990) book and (Arsyad, 2001). However, the students are failed to produce acceptable research reports and the discussion was not written completely as well.

4.4. Psychomotoric and affective aspect

Psychomotor aspect and subjects' behavior in writing an article become dominantly represented on the article written by the subjects. There is an assumption that it is affected by the local and national culture which results into local and national wisdom. This aspect refers to the oral habit or culture which is rooted in the subjects themselves.

Based on the result of data analysis, this aspect inhibits the subjects' ability to read and write research-based articles, either in English or in Indonesian language. It is a need to change the oral habit into a writing habit in order to be able to share ideas and research report nationally and even internationally. Subjects' oral habit also discourages themselves to achieve the wide chance of being able to publish an article. Meanwhile, to be able to publish the article, Indonesian research should master the academic writing skill and be able to transform the rhetorical structure of Indonesian language into rhetorical structure of English language.

The habit of writing argumentative articles with expected academic indicators should be encouraged since the students write their final report or research report. Lecturers' supervision and good academic atmosphere are also needed in order to achieve the expectation. In order the lecturers to be able to supervise the students, a wide opportunities and good competency in writing qualified articles are needed as well. The same thing is done by Latief (2014).

5. Conclusion

Identifying the problems in writing a qualified article is specifically urgent so that the students may be aware of their own problems in writing an article for either accredited journal or international journal. Publishing is important since it gives the students the chance to contribute to the development of body of knowledge nationally and internationally. By publishing, an author has helped the society to improve life quality through reading recent research findings or reviews. It may also help introducing Indonesia widely to the international academic society.

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