



The Correlation Between Self-Directed Learning and Students' Academic Writing Skills Undergraduate Program of English Education

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Abstract: Success in academic writing cannot be separated from students' level of self-directed learning. Therefore, this study aims to measure the correlation between self-directed learning levels and academic writing. This study used the quantitative method and inferential analysis in Pearson Products Moment SPSS 25 version to identify and clarify the hypothesis and the correlation between self-directed learning level and academic writing. The participants of this study were 25 students 9th semester who had taken the proposal exam at the English Language Education University of Mataram. To collect the data, the researcher used distributed SRSSDL questionnaire and a test. The finding of this study indicates that most students experienced a high level of self-directed learning and academic writing in percentage 32.00 %, followed by 68.00% of moderate one. The correlation between the two variables is statistically significant at the .01 level. Pearson's coefficient value is .801, which shows a very strong correlation between the level of self-directed learning and academic writing. Therefore, the Null Hypothesis (Ho) is rejected and the Alternative Hypothesis (Ha) is accepted because the significance value is $2 \geq$ (more than) α . It means that there is a significant correlation between two variables, that is, self-directed learning level and academic writing.

Keywords: self-directed learning (SDL), University of Mataram, Academic Writing.

Abstrak: Keberhasilan dalam menulis akademik tidak lepas dari tingkat self-directed learning siswa. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengukur korelasi antara tingkat self-directed learning dan akademik menulis. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kuantitatif dan analisis inferensial dalam Pearson Products Moment SPSS versi 25 untuk mengidentifikasi dan mengklarifikasi hipotesis dan korelasi antara tingkat self-directed learning dan akademik menulis. Partisipan penelitian ini adalah 25 mahasiswa semester 9 yang telah mengikuti ujian proposal di program studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris Universitas Mataram. Untuk mengumpulkan data, peneliti menggunakan kuesioner RSSSDL yang dibagikan dan tes. Temuan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa sebagian besar siswa mengalami self-directed learning dan academic writing tingkat tinggi dengan prosentase 32,00%, diikuti 68,00% sedang. Korelasi antara kedua variabel secara statistik signifikan pada tingkat 0,01. Nilai koefisien Pearson adalah 0,801, yang menunjukkan korelasi yang sangat kuat antara tingkat self-directed learning dan akademik menulis. Dengan demikian Hipotesis Nol (Ho) ditolak dan Hipotesis Alternatif (Ha) diterima karena nilai signifikansinya $2 \geq$ (lebih dari) α . Artinya ada hubungan yang signifikan antara dua variabel, yaitu tingkat pembelajaran mandiri dan penulisan akademik.

Kata kunci: Kata kunci: self-directed learning (SDL), Universitas Mataram, Penulisan Akademik.

Introduction

English has become one of the most important subjects to learn, particularly in Indonesia (Novianti, 2016). How students are taught and learn in the classroom has an impact on their ability to communicate in English. Students participate in class learning with various learning processes when learning English at a higher level, such as at the University of Mataram (Baru, et al., 2020). The student center is one of them, and it requires students to become learning centers. Students' readiness to prepare themselves to learn in class is critical to increasing the learning process's success (Ramdani, et al., 2021). Learning opportunities are nearly limitless in today's fast-paced world (Rizanti & Jufri, 2023). A sense of duty and clear initiative on the part of the learner are required to leverage the tools available and cope with the fast-paced environment (Sukardi, 2023). That is why the concept of self-directed learning is so important (Ramdani, et al., 2023).

Self-directed learning, known as SDL, is a critical issue that can help students develop the insights they need to succeed in learning academic writing. Claro & Loeb (2019) stated that SDL could increase students' success in each discipline, especially writing skills, so SDL has a crucial role in writing classes. Knowles (1975) stated that SDL is a phase in which people identify their learning requirements, determine their learning objectives, decide on human resources and their mentality to learn, choose and apply effective learning strategies and assess the outcome of their study with or without the assistance of others.

At the University of Mataram, particularly in the Department of Teacher Training and Education, students majoring in English education receive a four semester writing course to train and improve their writing skills. After completing all these courses, the students have to write a research report as their thesis. It must be done in the last semester as the final result of their writing practice. In addition, it is one of the obligations of every student in pursuing undergraduate education to obtain a bachelor's degree.

Thesis writing is a type of academic writing that takes place in an academic context, and academic writing is a type of writing used in high school and college classes. In addition, the writer should be careful to use complete sentences and arrange them in a certain way. Murray (2011) stated that a thesis is a larger project that requires the students to conduct more independent study and to have more self motivation than students have ever done before. In addition, to conduct a literature review, the ability to critically elaborate on sources or references is needed to obtain

satisfactory academic writing results. Therefore, students should strive to maintain an acceptable standard of academic writing, especially at the higher education level (Pineteh, 2012). Additionally, this thesis needs to be done because writing in an academic context is indicated as an activity that has a high complexity (Lea & Stierer, 2013). Even writers need to pay attention to challenging aspects of writing, such as planning before starting to write, compiling ideas into written form, evaluating what has been written and revising what has been evaluated (Zimmerman & Reisberg, 1997). From these problems, the application of learning strategies carried out by students will assist their learning and improve their performance through instruction (Chamot, 2004). Previous research has shown that many of the processes involved in writing and the strategies used are seen as self-directed learning strategies (Oxford, 2017). Therefore, learners need to pay attention to the strategies used to improve their writing performance and meet the demands and characteristics of writing assignments.

As previously mentioned, self-directed learning is believed to be able to help students cultivate their writing process, so they can perform better. Self-directed learning is essential for students to apply in academic writing learning. Hardianti (2013) stated that self-directed learning is an effective way of learning for students because learning in college requires students to direct themselves. Ramdhani (2019) stated that the application of self-directed learning is relatively effective in improving students' academic writing skills. According to Wiley (1983), each person has a different level of self-directed learning because the personality of each is also different. Students in higher levels of self-directed learning are assumed to solve the obstacles in learning. Thus, students and lecturers need to understand the level of self-directed learning in the learning process. Students who are more self-directed in their learning can maximize their goals and learning needs, especially in academic writing.

Writing seems to be the most challenging activity to learn and students will also find difficulties and problems in the process. Furthermore, writing is one of the productive skills that acquire learners to learn rather than be taught because learners must use and construct the components of writing on their own. In addition, Writing is categorized as a productive skill and it is one of the skills that are difficult to master (Mustika et al., 2020). Besides that, students also have no idea to complete a thesis because, strangely, they have written a big project like a thesis since Covid19 existed. Online learning makes students study independently to complete their writing projects. This makes it more difficult for students to understand

feedback from lectures who have different perceptions between lectures and students (Suliandari et al., 2022). So it has a significant impact on the learning process, especially in writing. Thus, students need a little more time to complete their thesis. When gathering information and references or sources, students independently select the best one to support their essay or paper. In this case, students must include the ability to determine which references will be helpful for their writing (Fadda, 2012). Writing is perceived as a challenging and demanding task to be completed as a productive skill that sits atop the pyramid of language skills; those who make learners must control and recheck their writing progress to fulfill learning demands. It shows that writing is not a simple activity (Stiawan et al., 2017). Therefore, writing requires much practice independently to enhance and develop their writing skills. Based on the description above, the researcher is interested in knowing the correlation between self-directed learning and academic writing for undergraduate students in English Education.

Research Method

In this study, the researcher used a descriptive study with a quantitative method. According to Creswell (2014), quantitative research is a method to explore the relationship between variables to test the objective theory. These variables can be measured using tools, resulting in numerical data that can be checked using statistical techniques. In this study, the researcher used a quantitative ex post facto design. Creswell (2014) stated that ex post facto design is a non-experimental quantitative study in which the researcher investigates two or more groups that have occurred. The population of this study was the ninth semesters' students' university of Mataram. The research sample is a purposive sampling technique to identify 9th semester students' abilities in academic writing at the English Department University of Mataram.

The researcher chose this technique because this study had specific criteria to obtain an objective sample. The researcher took 25 students as a sample. The instrument of this research is a close-ended questionnaire (SRSSDL) by Williamson (2007) and test. SRSSDL questionnaire was used to determine the level of students' self-directed learning. Meanwhile, students' thesis proposals are used to evaluate academic writing skills.

To collect the data, the researcher distributed the SRSSDL questionnaire via Google form for 9th-semester students who had already taken the proposal exam. Therefore, to collect the data on students' academic writing, the researcher asked 9th-semester

students who had already passed the proposal exam to submit their thesis proposal as academic writing, then the researcher analyzed it using the Writing Rubric by Brown (2004). After collecting the data, the researcher described and calculated it through SPSS 25 version

Finding and Discussion

This study aims to measure the significant correlation between self-learning level and academic writing. To answer the first research questions, the researcher use online questionnaire. The results of student contribution where presented in Figure 1:

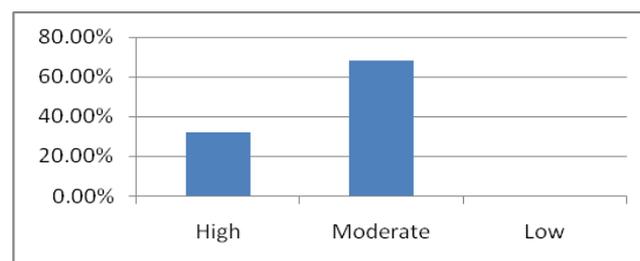


Figure 1. Students' Self-directed Learning Percentages

Based on Figure 1. shows that 8 or 32.00 % of students obtained the high score as the scores were higher than 140. The students with high SDL scores are thought to have adequate independence in their learning process. They are also thought to be capable of identifying their weaknesses and strengths to achieve their learning objectives. The second level is the moderate level; most students were categorized in the moderate level category, 17 or 68.00%, because the score was higher than 90. Students with a moderate SDL level have the same independence rank in the learning process. Some aspects of the learning process should be identified and evaluated for improvement. They also require the assistance of a lecturer in developing or implementing better learning strategies. Meanwhile, there is no student demonstrates a low level of self-directed learning. The Level in Each Component of Self-directed Learning where presented in Figure 2:

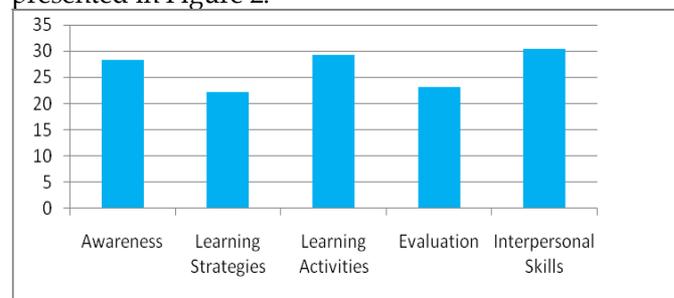


Figure 2. The Level in Each Component of Self-directed Learning

Based on Figure 2, most students seem to have good interpersonal skills, with an average score of 30.36 points, followed by learning activities, with an average score of 29.2 points, and awareness, with an average score of 28.32 then evaluation, with an average score of 23.16 points. Additionally, the component in SDL with the lowest score range of the five components is the learning strategy, with 22.24 points. For the dependent variable, the researcher obtained students' academic writing from the background of the thesis proposal. The researcher analyzed five variables needed in academic writing: a comprehensive introduction, a paragraph of content, a refutation, and a conclusion (Brown, 2004). Total Score in Each Component of Writings Rubric where presented in Figure 3:

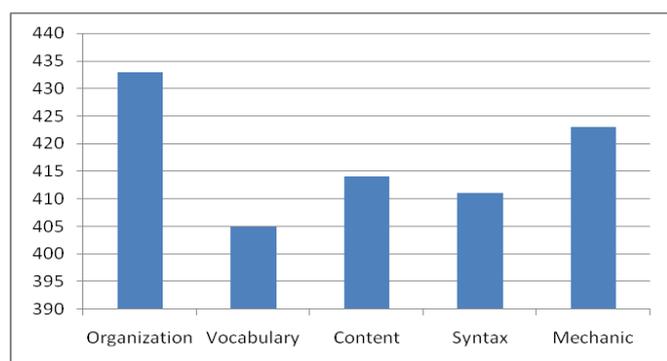


Figure 3. Total Score in Each Component of Writings Rubric

Figure 3. shows that students are dominant in the organizational component, this can be seen from the highest total score, which is 433, followed by mechanic variable 423, content with a total of 414, syntax 411 and the last component which is the lowest of the five components vocabulary 405. Students with high component scores can provide excellent introductions to paragraphs of contents, reputations, logical order of ideas, and conclusions. Content addresses and evidence are also thoroughly developed although some of them do not provide complete evidence to support their ideas, the ideas themselves can be understood by the reader. To find out the correlation between students' self-directed learning level and academic writing, the researcher analyzed the data using Product Moment SPSS25 Version. The results of the correlation analysis where explained in Table 1.

Table 1. Self-directed Learning and Academic Writing skills Result Correlations.

Correlations		SDL	WRITING
SDL	Pearson Correlation	1	.801**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	4021.040	905.920
	Covariance	167.543	37.747
	N	25	25
WRITING	Pearson Correlation	.801**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	905.920	318.160
	Covariance	37.747	13.257
	N	25	25

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation between the level of self-directed learning and academic writing is shown in Table 1. The standard level of significance in Product Moment by Pearson is .05. Significant correlation at level 01 (2-tailed) is written at the bottom of the Correlation table. It indicates that the Pearson correlation coefficient $r = .801$ with $N = 25$ is more than 0.05 and is statistically significant at the .01 level ($p = .000$). Therefore, the correlation can be said to be very strong because the value is .801. Pearson correlation coefficient, whose value is in the range between .800-.000. As a result, there is a correlation between self-directed learning and academic writing skills. So, the null hypothesis that "there is no significant correlation of self-directed learning and students' academic writing" is rejected.

Based on the findings, there are three levels of self-directed student learning. Those are high-level self-directed learning, moderate-level self directed-learning, and low-level self directed-learning. In the 9th semester students there are 17 students, or 68% of students, indicated the level of "moderate self-directed learning," and the rest got the level of "high self-directed learning." 32% of students, or eight students, are indicated to be at the level of "high self-directed learning. Based on the SRSSDL questionnaire findings for the self-directed learning component, students with a high level of SDL scored higher in interpersonal skills than the other components, with an average of 30.36. Their high response supports that they need to learn from the interactions they do, both from social interactions and technology, to help them develop their insights for further learning. In addition, based on their responses in the area of interpersonal skills, students find it easier to share the knowledge they have in written communication.

Writing is not only a tool to measure the success of a goal in learning but also an activity that can help develop students' knowledge (Holding, et al., 2021). This allows them to learn new information from various sources such as the internet, books, journals, etc. Meanwhile, writing has become one of the productive skills that make students learn rather than be taught because students have to use and construct their components in writing. In obtaining information and references or sources, students independently choose the appropriate ones to support their essays or papers. In this case, students must include the ability to decide which references will be helpful for their writing (Fadda, 2012). As a result, they find it easier to develop logical ideas and evidence.

According to Muray (2011), thesis writing is a part of academic writing that requires more independent study, practice, and self-motivation to complete a writing project. In addition, students should strive to maintain high standards of academic writing because writing has become one of the productive skills that direct to practice actively rather than being taught. After all, writing skills only partially rely on pure knowledge, including other skills. They are skills that are not taught but need practicing (Sribagus, 2018). In line with the results of this study, students with high scores on the organizational component can provide an excellent introduction to paragraphs, reputation, logical ideas, conclusions, syntax, and vocabulary. From that, students need to improve their self-directed learning skills in interpersonal skills and awareness components. This component has provided evidence that students have succeeded in the written communication; this is evidenced by the results of the questionnaire findings with high student answers so that students are aware of directing their learning process and obtaining satisfactory writing results.

After conducting the correlation test, the researcher found a significant correlation between self-directed learning and academic writing. Students with high levels of self-directed learning got high scores in writing thesis proposals, and most students with moderate levels were almost at high levels, as stated by Ching (2002) statement confirming that self-directed learning strategies are indicated to have a positive reciprocal relationship with student's knowledge related to academic writing. Students who prefer to direct themselves in their interpersonal activities, while students who do not apply self-directed learning in learning activities are implied by Savitri (2021), the level of students' self-directed learning is reflected in their SDL activities. Therefore, they are expected to be able to take the initiative in identifying their learning needs.

Academic writing requires students to review the literature (Boscolo, et al., 2007). In addition, in conducting a literature review, the ability to critically elaborate on sources or references is needed to support their academic writing, which is sourced from journal articles, student papers, reviews, and books, because writing in an academic context is indicated as an activity with high complexity. (Bruning, et. al, 2013). Therefore, students must try hard in independent study to complete various academic writing tasks. It is closely related to critical thinking because it refers to a series of claims by writing academics essential to practice critical thinking.

According to Fisher (2013), the stronger a students' critical thinking capacity, the more likely they are to be able to generate academic writing. As a result, critical thinking skills are considered while establishing a self-directed learning process (Hendrickson, 2007). In self-directed learning, students are expected to be able to search for knowledge using their ways and cognitive skills. In this case, critical thinking is crucial for students to express critical thinking abilities by objectively analyzing their ideas and reviewing the entire writing process. In line with the researchers found, most of students with high self-directed learning levels could identify and assess areas of strength and weakness in their writing, so that all processes in writing will always be followed by self-directed learning.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the SRSSDL questionnaire to determine students' SDL levels and academic writing scores, the results of the two variables were then analyzed using Pearson Products Moment SPSS 25 version. The researcher found that the correlation between students' self-directed learning and academic writing levels was statistically significant at the .01 level ($p=.000$), which also showed a powerful correlation. So that can be drawn with the Null Hypothesis (H_0) rejected and the Alternative Hypothesis (H_a) accepted. Therefore, there is a significant correlation between self-directed learning and academic writing.

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