

**UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD ENGLISH
WRITING AT ENGLISH STUDY PROGRAM IN JAMBI UNIVERSITY**

SINTHYA PRALINDA, M.Pd
REKO HARY PUTRA, M.Pd

**ENGLISH STUDY PROGRAM
LANGUAGE AND ART DEPARTMENT
FACULTY OF TEACHER TRAINING AND EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF JAMBI
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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to investigate the undergraduate students' attitudes toward English writing in the English Study Program at Jambi University. This research was quantitative research with a survey approach through a questionnaire. The sample of this research was 43 third-semester students of Regular (classes A and B) chosen by using a total sampling technique. The data in this research were obtained through 18 questions of the questionnaire adopted from Ansarimoghaddam & Tan's research (2014).

The finding showed that undergraduate students' attitudes toward English writing at the English Study Program in Jambi University are positive in the three components of attitudes (cognitive, affective, and behavior). From the all components, the average total mean distribution was 2.6137. Whereas from each component, like in cognitive aspects, the average of students' responses was 2.5514. This aspect is defined as how capable someone is of the activity. Next, in the affective aspect, the average of students' responses for this aspect was 2.6163. This aspect is defined as how the activities in English writing make the students feel. Last, in behavior aspects, the average of students' responses was 2.6733. This aspect is defined as when the students need to determine how they should behave toward a certain thing, in this case English writing. It also talks about their experience with this thing.

Keywords: attitudes, writing

Introduction

Language is a complex system of communication. It is divided into two kinds, spoken and written. According to Nunan (199, p.23), spoken language consists of short and fragmentary utterances in a range of pronunciation, while the written text is characterized by well-formed sentences that are integrated into highly structured paragraphs. In written text, this means students will learn about writing and focus on everything about writing.

Writing is one of four skills in English learning. According to Coulmas (2003), writing is a system of recording language by means of visible marks through words with the result such as a text, or a particular form such as a script and letter. Whereas according to Akkaya and Kirmiz (2010, p. 4742), writing is the expression of feelings, thoughts, desires, and plans on paper. Writing represents some processes so most people assume it is 'difficult' (Emig, 1977). In fact, most students get many problems when writing in English. It must happen because they do not know how to organize their ideas because it is a new experience for them. In addition, there are also other problems for the students for example: they do have any ideas to be a topic to write, and there is a tendency for them to write in English like in the Indonesian version.

In the case of non-English speaking countries, Indonesian students have few opportunities to use the foreign language in their society. As a result, many problems occur when students study in a university where the medium of instruction is a foreign language like English (Al-Khasawneh, 2010). Here, the problems will impact the students' attitudes.

While talking about attitude, according to Azwar (1995) attitude is the evaluation or reaction of feeling. In attitude, there are three components, they are: affective, cognitive, and behavioral. Attitude in learning is considered a change in the affective, cognitive, and behavioral of students' personalities. Here, there are some factors that influence the students' attitude toward writing, such as environment, teacher's role, and motivation.

Additionally, based on the researcher's experience when she was in writing class, she found herself and some friends had difficulties. In those situations, the attitudes were in various forms. Some students did not do their assignments and most students just copied some writing or text from the internet and then pasted it for their writing class fulfillment.

Method

The design used in this research was quantitative research with a survey approach. According to Creswell (2012), quantitative research is collecting numeric data from a large number of people using instruments with preset questions and responses. Survey research designs are processes in quantitative research that are used to investigate the population in order to describe the attitudes, opinions, behaviors, or characteristics. This research focused on investigating undergraduate students' attitudes toward English writing essays, so a survey was the best way for the researcher to describe it.

Population

The population of this research was the third-semester students of regular classes at the English Department in the academic year 2015/2016. The total number of the students was 43 students.

Sample

In this research, the researcher took the sample from the population by using a total sampling technique since the number of students was less than 100, so there were 43 students chosen as the samples.

Instrument of the Research

According to Creswell (2012), research instruments are tools for measuring, observing, or documenting quantitative data. Researchers identify these instruments before they collect data, and they may include a test, a questionnaire, an observational checklist, and an assessment instrument. In this research, the researcher used a questionnaire as the instrument. The questionnaires were used to obtain information about the students' attitudes toward English writing.

Questionnaire

A Questionnaire is a form used in a survey design that participants in a study complete and return to the researcher. There are two kinds of questionnaires; namely, closed-ended and open-ended (Creswell, 2012). In this research, the researcher used a close-ended questionnaire which consisted of 18 statements to respondents to be fulfilled by them in 20 minutes. The use of a closed questionnaire is to make the students easy to answer. The questionnaire was adopted from Ansarimoghaddam & Tan's research (2014).

Questionnaire Specification

The questionnaire consisted of 18 items which were divided into 6 items about cognitive, 6 items about affective, and 6 items about behavior.

Table 3.2 Questionnaire Specification

No	Kinds of Attitude	Number of Statements
1.	Cognitive	1,2,3,4,5,6
2	Affective	7,8,9,10,11,12
3	Behavior	13,14,15,16,17,18

Reliability of the Questionnaire

According to Creswell (2012), reliability is an examination used to know the stability or the consistency of the responses. In this research, the researcher tried out the questionnaire to get the reliability of each item of the questionnaire. Hence, in analyzing the data, the researcher used the SPSS software program. In addition, below are the classifications of reliability coefficient level (Louis & Keith, 2007).

>0,90	: very highly reliable
0,80 – 0,90	: Highly reliable
0,70 - 0,79	: Reliable
0,60 - 0,69	: marginally/minimally reliable
<0,60	: unacceptably low reliability

Where the items of the research are reliable if r alpha is positive and r alpha is $> r$ table, whereas if r alpha is negative and r alpha is $< r$ table, it means that the items are not reliable.

Trying Out of the Questionnaire

The researcher started conducting this research by trying out the questionnaire to class H of the third semester of Regular Mandiri program students at English Study Program in the academic year 2015/2016 which consisted of 20 students. The participants in this pilot had the same characteristics as those who became participants in this research because it was based on the syllabus too, the students this semester had learned to write essays, so they had enough experience in writing essays. After that, the researcher analyzed the data from the trying out.

Data Collection Procedure

There were some steps of data collection:

1. Asking for the permission

In this step, the researcher asked permission from the English Department's chairperson and also some lecturers by giving a formal letter for doing this research.

2. Sending an invitation letter and an informed consent form

In this step, the researcher gave the invitation letter and the informed consent form to ensure the students be the participants in this research, in addition, in this step the researcher explained briefly about this research to make them understand and get a general understanding about the research and the questionnaire that was distributed.

3. Administreting the questionnaire

Here, the researcher collected the data of participants by distributing the questionnaires. The researcher distributed the questionnaires to students that had been ready and agreed to participate in this research. The researcher provided 20 minutes as the time to answer the questionnaire. After that time, the researcher collected the questionnaires to be analyzed.

Technique of Data Analysis

There were some steps in analyzing the data of this research. First, the researcher gave a questionnaire to the participants belonging to the sample. Second, the researcher gave about 20 minutes to the participants to answer the questionnaire and they answered the questions based on their experiences. Finally, after the data of the questionnaire were collected, the researcher measured the mean and percentages of the data and those were analyzed descriptively to make the conclusion. The scores were obtained from the result of each item score in each statement, while the data that were gathered by using a questionnaire were scored based on a Likert scale such as 4. Strongly Agree (SA); 3. Agree (A); 2. Disagree (D); 1. Strongly Disagree (SD). The researcher will use the SPSS program to analyze the data.

Discussion

The discussion on attitude in language learning has been going on for several years. The relation between motivation and attitudes is considered a priority in language learning research. A positive attitude toward language learning can increase the students' mood to learn the language. On the other hand, a negative attitude in language learning will make the students feel lazy to learn the language.

Writing is a language skill that is very important to academic success. Since it is an active, productive skill, students learning to write in a foreign language face multiple challenges (Erkan & Saban, 2011). In fact, according to Jahin and Idrees (as cited in Ghobadiradat et al, 2013), writing is a difficult skill for both native and non-native speakers in the same way. The complexity of writing in a foreign language as a task tends to increase anxiety levels in students who are taking writing courses. This anxiety can often lead to discouragement and may result in negative attitudes towards writing (Gere, 1987).

By this means, the study focused on investigating the students' attitude toward English writing essays at the English Study Program, at Jambi University. According to the result of the study, the average of students' response towards it is 2.6137. It is greater than 2, which indicates disagree, but it is less than 3, which indicates agree. This mean value suggests that the student's attitude is somewhere between disagree, which implies a negative attitude, and agree, which implies a positive attitude. However, the score is not exactly in the middle, but closer to 3 which indicates a positive attitude. Therefore it can be concluded that the overall students' attitude is positive; however, most of them also disagree in some cases.

There were three components of attitudes introduced in this research; they are cognitive, affective, and behavioral. In cognitive aspects, the attitude in writing an essay in English is defined as how capable someone is of the activity. When someone is able to do something, they may have a positive feeling toward the subject and the other way around. In this research, the average of students' responses to this aspect is 2.5514. This score is between 2 (disagree/negative) and 3 (agree/positive), however, it is closer to positive. Therefore in general the students' responses to this component of attitude are positive.

In cognitive sections, the students believe that it is easy for them to pour down their ideas in English writing. This result is related to the study by Ansarimoghaddam and Tan (2014), which carried the same result for their samples. Furthermore in their study, the students find it difficult to write down their ideas clearly in English. However, this is not the case for our study where the students

have a positive thought about their own ability to generate ideas on a certain topic in English. And then in this study found that the students stated writing in English is easy. This is inconsistent with the third statement in this section (C3), where the students found writing a good essay in English difficult. This result is in contrast with the finding of Ansarimoghaddam and Tan, where their participants said that writing a good essay in English is easy and they did not find that writing in English is difficult. However for the statement "English writing is more complicated than writing in my first language", the result of both, this study and Ansarimoghaddam and Tan's, come to an agreement where the students agreed that writing in their first language is easier than writing in English.

In the affective aspect, the attitude is defined as how the activities in English writing make the students feel. If someone is feeling good about something, it encourages them to know more about it. In the present research, students' responses to this component of attitude were also positive. It is shown by the average of students' responses for this aspect is 2.6163. This score is between 2 (disagree/negative) and 3 (agree/positive), however, it is closer to positive.

For affective sections, students in this study disagreed that expressing ideas through English writing is a waste of time. This result is negatively correlated with the research finding by Ansarimoghaddam and Tan, which implies that their participants had problems elaborating their ideas through writing in English. Furthermore, both studies found that the students enjoy writing in English. And then the students in this study claimed that they were not good English writers. This result is in contrast with the findings of Ansarimoghaddam and Tan. Afterward, the findings of both types of research for the rest of the statement in affective aspects are corresponding to each other. The result of the study found that the students like to see their thoughts written on paper in English. They also found that English writing is fun. Moreover, they enjoy discussing their writing with others.

The last component of attitude is behavior. In this section, the students need to determine how they should behave toward a certain thing, in this case, English writing. It also talks about their experience with this thing. It is shown by the average of students' responses for this aspect is 2.6733. This score is between 2 (disagree/negative) and 3 (agree/positive), however, it is closer to positive. It suggested that the majority of the respondents of this study agreed that they have positive feelings when they should write something in English.

Most of the result in the behavior section is in line with the result of Ansarimoghaddam and Tan. In the first statement, the students are eager to write down their ideas in English. After that, the students expressed that they like to write their ideas down in English. For statement B5 in this section, the respondents expressed that others had enjoyed what they wrote in English. Statement B4 also showed that most of the participants liked their friends read their writing in English. A possible reason could be that they were eager to have others' comments as a resource to improve their own writing. However, for statement B2, there is a difference in results for both studies, where the students in this study disagreed that their minds go blank when writing in English. It means that the students seem to have plenty amount of ideas for writing in English. It is also supported in the last statement in this section, where the students expressed that they would rather write their ideas down than just say them.

The result of the study shows that most third-semester students in the English Study Program at Jambi University have a positive point of view towards English writing. Whether it is on their beliefs, their feelings, or their responses about English writing. This is contradicted by the result study found by Ismail, Hussin, and Darus (2012) entitled, “*ESL Students' Attitude, Learning Problems, and Needs for Online Writing at MARA University of Technology*”. In their samples, most students have negative attitudes toward writing as they would delay the writing process. In this sample, the students seem to enjoy writing in English and they are looking forward to writing down their ideas.

To conclude, the results of this study suggest that there are no significant variation exists in relation to students' attitudes toward writing English. Most of the students' answers fall in the category “agree” and there are only a few statements where their answers belong to the category “disagree”. In general, students' attitudes towards English writing essays were positive.

Conclusion

From the result of this research, it can be concluded that undergraduate students' attitudes toward English writing at the English Study Program at Jambi University are positive in the three components of attitudes (cognitive, affective, and behavioral). In cognitive aspects, the average of students' responses was 2.5514. This aspect is defined as how capable someone is of the activity. Next, in the affective aspect, the average of students' responses for this aspect was 2.6163. This aspect is defined as how the activities in English writing make the students feel. Last, in behavior aspects, the average of students' responses was 2.6733. This aspect is defined as when the students need to determine how they should behave toward a certain thing, in this case, English writing. It also talks about their experience with this thing.

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