

## A CHALLENGE TASK FOR TEACHERS IN TEACHING ACADEMIC ESSAYS FOR POLYTECHNIC STUDENTS DURING THE PANDEMIC BY USING CALL

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### Abstract

*A myriad research has demonstrated the use of CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) as an approach to teaching English as foreign language (EFL). The little research on this topic of interest has been undertaken in the Indonesian higher education context. Particularly, the use of teaching aids, such as: digital tool, as practicing and examining students' writing remains under-explored in this educational setting. With these in mind, this research presents an empirical study that looks into to what extent the deployment of a digital tool mediates multimodal learning tasks in the EFL classroom. The study specifically examines challenges and benefits to develop students' writing and reading competences. The study also looks at the roles of teacher and students in the entire learning process. The role of English teachers plays very important to give guidance to students to the tasks. A total of 80 polytechnic students volunteered to participate the study. Individually, they were assigned to perform a series of tasks, including (1) connecting to website, (2) reading articles and instruction in, and (3) writing essays. Drawing on these data, the present chapter reports on four major findings, that is: (1) drafting a strategies for writing essay creation, (2) framing the use of language in composing, (3) discussing the result essay creation and improvement, and (4) positioning roles of teachers and students in the entire learning process*

**Keywords:** *writing competence, CALL, EFL*

### Introduction

English teaching at higher educational institutions has many significant changes and developments. It means that the traditional teaching methods have slowly been left recently. The development of technology has influenced the learning-teaching process. Especially, during the pandemic happening since March 2020, the classroom activity changes into home activity. Teachers are not able to monitor students' activity while they are doing their tasks at home. The technology has replaced it. The computer has helped both teachers and students complete their duties. The development of technology gives both advantages and disadvantages to both teachers and students. For EFL teachers, one of the good influences is that computers may decrease their burden in preparing the teaching aids by using the computer. Meanwhile, one of the

disadvantages is that the EFL teachers must adapt and learn more about the computer skills. For students, one of advantages is that students can complete their tasks quickly in a short time. Meanwhile, one of the disadvantages is that computers make students lazy, but that is the fact life nowadays.

Talking about competences in a language, a very old theory of language education comes from Dudley-Evans in 1989. They say that for mastering good English, someone must have learnt four (4) competencies, namely (1) listening, (2) speaking, (3) reading, and (4) writing. Teachers are obliged to teach those competencies to EFL students. So by mastering all competencies, EFL students are able to communicate in English well. Uma and Ponnambala (2001) support this theory and they say that four skills will

determine the students' communicative competence.

For some EFL students, writing is considered as a very hard job (Iftanti, 2016). They prefer to learn speaking lessons. For them, speaking lessons are fun because they can express themselves directly and they can make the responses immediately. Writing lessons are also harder for students of engineering because they are used to practicing the practical work in the workshops. This happens because this competence needs some aspects, such as: structures, grammars, vocabularies, and writing styles. This fact is supported by Dudely-Evans (1989) who states that writing is considered the most difficult skills because EFL learners need some knowledge and practices to be perfect. Besides structures and grammar, it also needs the proper choice of words or diction, cohesion and coherence. This will take time for EFL students to master the writing skill.

Mostly in higher institution, making essay is one of the ways to evaluate students' mastery of English. This statement is in line with Richard and Renandya (2002) saying that writing is the most difficult skill for second and foreign language learners. Academic writing is very fundamental skill for many college students (West, et al, 2019). This skill provides the opportunity to demonstrate all the knowledge that has been learned.

During the pandemic since 2020, teachers and students are not able to attend the class. Therefore, teachers must find the way to train students' skills, especially in writing essay. Since English has been becoming very important tool to communicate with other people from other countries to do business, education, promote and many things, this subject

must be given regularly to the students. So in this matter, educational goals must match with the needs what the world wants. In order to compete, Indonesian students should be able to perform well in both national and international level. In academic level, EFL students must be able to represent themselves in international articles or journals.

### ***Theoretical Study***

In higher educational institution, especially in State Polytechnic of Jakarta, English subject is just allocated only 3 (three) or 4 (four) hours per week. English teachers must work very hard to achieve the goal of the subject every semester. This will not be very easy for them. So they must be tactful to teach 4 (four) competencies every semester. By using CALL, teachers have been assisted. It means that the teaching-learning process is going more smoothly and teachers will accomplish their duties faster, more easily and significantly. By giving more guidance and practices to the students, they are able to make essay writing well, and apply technical effective writing. Moreover, this may increase the lecturers' and students' ability in IT and they can implement it well.

Writing skill is sometimes ignored by some EFL teachers because it is considered to waste time. In fact, this skill represents the ability of EFL learners to combine all skills studied. Therefore, the teaching of this skill must be interesting. So the students will be encouraged to learn writing more often. The teaching of writing must be matched and appropriate with the students' ability by considering some components, such as: the duration of learning this language, vocabularies, language styles (Hoch, 2002).

Besides those things above-mentioned, nowadays and especially during

pandemic, EFL students are encouraged to learn independently. They should learn something by themselves. Because studying time at campus is not enough to learn. They need additional time to enrich their knowledge. To overcome this problem, they must learn by themselves. By considering these aspects, the use of CALL will help students to learn writing more effectively. This will overcome students' problems in writing. In this case teachers of English just act as the facilitators. But they are also acting as role model (Miarso, 2004:8).

EFL teachers must be skillful with CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning). According to Beatty (2003), CALL can be implemented in classrooms or out of the classroom. It gives opportunity for students to be autonomous learners. This may also help teachers train their students. Moreover, computers have significant contributions and lead to better teaching (Hagen, 1993:21). However, it is significant that a teacher is more than just a facilitator of knowledge. A teacher can also act as a guide, mentor and inspiration. A role of a teacher cannot be replaced by technology. Therefore, a teacher must be skillful to utilize computer as a teaching aid.

To develop and assist the teaching process in Politeknik Negeri Jakarta, the use of CALL is one of the ways to overcome students' problems in writing. Furthermore, the students will learn to write academic essay in fun way and assists them to write better. It is hoped that their score of English will be improved too.

### **Methodology of The Study**

This small investigation was conducted in the study program of Industrial Electronics of Electronic and Electrical Department. I

chose my own students because I have been teaching in this department since 1998. So it is easier for me to conduct the research. Based on my investigation so far, students of engineering (especially in polytechnic) are reluctant to do the writing tasks because this is the most difficult skill.

This research was conducted during pandemic in 2020 through online teaching-learning process (through gmeet or zoom meeting). As information, online teaching-learning process took three-hour study per meeting. According to polytechnic curriculum, an hour study means 50 minutes. It was completed in 3 (three) months with the procedures of (1) giving guidance and theory, (2) giving tasks to students, and (3) implementation of the writing. The procedure started by guiding the students to write good academic essay. I gave some theories of how to write introductory paragraph (which contains hook, and thesis statement), main paragraphs and closing paragraph (this was conducted in 4 meetings). In introductory paragraph, hook and thesis statement play important role to make the essay go smoothly. Hook is a group of words which can attract readers' attention. When we start the essay with those interesting hooks, this signals to the readers to keep reading till they find they answers (Davis, 2019). It can be in a question form, a quote, a fact, a statistic, et cetera. Meanwhile, a thesis statement is a single sentence which contains keywords and can be elaborated into some paragraphs in main paragraphs. This sentence summarizes your topic. For example: *Peanut butter and jelly sandwiches are the best sandwiches because they are versatile, easy to make and taste good.* So in this thesis statement, there key words: versatile, easy to make, taste good. Those can be elaborated into

three paragraphs as the content of an essay.

After that, I offered some topics (such as: *What I can contribute to the community during pandemic; The Advantages and Disadvantages of Technology; Online Classes: A solution or a problem; Students as a part of community in combating Corona Virus*) and let students choose one of them. During this stage, students were given opportunity to surf in internet to find any important source or data to support their writing. This was going to be autonomous tasks. I was helping them how to develop the topic and narrow it down, so they can make each paragraph well and effective. This activity was conducted in four meetings (one month).

After that, the following month I was asking students to revise their writings. In doing this, I was conducting this research during class hour (3-learning-hour) and students were doing the task independently after class hour. By giving this opportunity, students were free and happy to accomplish their tasks.

In practice, students made the essay after teacher had finished explaining the instruction, the prompts, and the procedures. They made the writing in a few hours and they were able to revise the writing if they made mistakes. Teacher will see the revision easily how many times the students make the revision. After teacher saw all the revision, teacher would make comments and score of the essay.

### **Discussions and Result**

In teaching and learning processes, EFL learners have different abilities in mastering writing skill. This is due to the fact that different learners have different capabilities as well as incapability in learning a foreign language. According to River (1981), many students who had

studied English for about six or more years are still unable to express themselves in a clear, correct and comprehensible manner in target language. I think I partly agree with this opinion since I myself find some of my students fail to express their feelings using English. However, this opinion can be argued that by guiding students little by little, they are able to write what they think. Using the procedures above-mentioned, my students who involved in the research showed great enthusiasm to do my instructions.

In guiding students to make introductory paragraph, I explained that hooks were functioned as attracting readers' attention. When making the hook, students were having fun and they came up with great ideas, such as:

- *Online classes are cheaper and more effective than in-person college class;*
- *What is the difference between successful learners and unsuccessful learners?;*
- *Becoming a youtuber is more interesting than becoming an employee;*
- *Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world;*
- *My boyfriend is a rat;*
- *Pandemic gives us advantages and disadvantages.*

Those hooks were elaborated into some sentences using connecting words. When students finished making their hooks, the guidance moved to make thesis statements. Based on the topics given, students made some thesis statements as follows:

- *Campuses must provide educational resources for low income students during the*

- pandemic;*
- *All Indonesian citizens must get vaccinated in order to get herd community;*
  - *Reading develops critical mind;*
  - *The internet helps people very much to do their job;*
  - *The life of students has changed greatly during pandemic.*

The result of the students' writing exercises satisfied me very much because they can write it well and they had many new vocabularies. They could easily open up their online dictionaries anytime but they are strongly banned to copy paste someone's essay. Students are given warnings about plagiarism beforehand. In academic world, being honest is very important.

By doing this, students feel no burden to do writing exercises and their critical thought would expand greatly. The students have confidence to express themselves by writing what they feel. Moreover, they have more new vocabularies to enrich their library of mind and this will make them easy to read, to listen, and to speak.

### **Conclusion**

There are so many ways to teach essay writing. The teacher will not lose the time to train students' writing skills. By using CALL, it will ease both teachers and students to check their writing. The result also amazed and satisfied both teachers and students because both of them have benefits. Both teacher and students can save time and students can practice more often and will improve their writing skill.

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