

An Analysis of the Students' Competence in Writing Abstract

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Abstract. Writing plays an essential role in the development of students' ability to disseminate their ideas or research findings. Students need to write research reports as one of the requirements to achieve a bachelor degree. It means that writing enables students to write academic papers from which they report their findings to the examiners' board. Students are expected to know some techniques of writing that help them write a good research report. One of the important elements of writing research is an abstract that enables students to describe the whole content of the research in brief. It is necessary to investigate students' competence in writing a good abstract because not only does it function as a summary of research consisting of an introduction, method, finding, and conclusion, but it also functions as a key to arouse the readers' attention. The objective of the research is to describe the students' competence in writing an intelligible research abstract. Data was collected through the 27 students' abstracts of the research report at the English Language Education Department of the Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang. The results of the research indicate that the student's competence in writing a research abstract was good. The students' competence in writing their ideas in the abstract was good, and their ability to write a good topic sentence was good. The findings were strengthened by the computation of five aspects of writing proficiency that showed 25.8 for content value, 16.7 for organization, 16.6 for vocabulary, 17.1 for language use, and 3.8 for mechanics value.

Keywords: analysis, students, competence, writing, abstract

Introduction

Writing plays an important role in the dissemination of research findings that benefit many people (Wahab et al., 2023). Writing ability involves the competence to organize graphics such as letters, vocabulary, and sentences applied in written communication that enable readers to know information (Prasasti et al., 2022). It can be categorized into productive ability in language learning (Fattahi & Nushi, 2021). Writing ability is an important competence in the 21st century (Leggette et al., 2013). It can be regarded as an essential skill (Saleh & Muhayyang, 2021) because it is used extensively in university and in the workplace. It enables students to express their ideas and to communicate (Purba et al., 2021) well with lecturers, managers, colleagues, and with many other people. In a university, most academic communication is done in writing such as proposals, memos, reports, applications, questionnaires, and e-mails. Moreover, The activity of writing research report articles is not the same as regular writing.(Suryani et al., 2014). The academic life requires writing skills, and the ability to write helps students develop their written communication. Therefore, students who know how to write well are able to describe their ideas effectively.

Writing skills enable students to develop their ability to write research abstract. Students need to write an abstract to publish their research findings in academic journals. An informative abstract consists of five aspects: 1) introduction that explains the research; 2) purposes which describe the main objectives of the research; 3) method which covers the procedures of doing research. This point tells about the procedure of doing an investigation and explains the instruments to collect data; 4) product or result that describes research findings after analysing obtained data; 5) conclusion covering a summary of the results of the research data analysis. (Putra, 2023).

The Improvement of Writing Skills

Students need to improve their writing skills that enable them to explain their opinion through effective written communication (Kencana & Fauzia, 2022). Writing requires students to describe their ideas into intelligible sentences. However, many students thought that writing is a difficult ability in language learning (Fitriani et al., 2021). As a result, students need to enhance their competence in writing texts to express their ideas (Argondizzo et al., 2020). Writing plays a decisive role in classroom activities. Students need to learn the writing process to improve their writing skills (Hussain, 2017). Students who are good at writing have many strategies to write their ideas. Moreover, writing skills help students to disseminate their research findings. Therefore, students are expected to know how to write their ideas or research findings in such a way that can be beneficial to others.

Students need to promote their writing ability because it is required to write a research report. Writing is a basic ability that requires a good knowledge and enables students to organize their ideas. Writing is considered a critical thinking process, and it supports active learning. Writing activity involves knowledge of language use, vocabulary, grammar, mechanics etc. (Aguion et al., 2021). In other words, university students will achieve a bachelor degree if they undertake research and write their findings. They have to know some techniques to write a good research report. For doing so, it is not as easy as it sounds because not only does it need techniques, but

also ideas and experiences. Many students fail to write good research finding not because they know nothing about the techniques of writing but because they are lack of both ideas and experience. Writing activities allow students to develop new ideas that people benefit from them. They are able to enrich students' experience in writing a good research report. For this reason, students are expected to promote their writing competence. Students' writing skills can be developed through the use of intercultural-based textbooks (Amalia et al., 2021).

The Role of Abstract in Writing

Students should know that the abstract is the important parts of a research report. An abstract plays a decisive role in writing a research article. It consists of summary of research findings that give readers brief information about the research. An informative abstract portrays in brief what research is about and its findings. Abstracts are a concise resume of the investigation report containing between 250 and 300 words. It contains research problems, objectives, methods, results, and conclusions written in paragraph form. It helps readers understand the outline of the scientific writing easily. It is an important part of research that students write when they finish writing their research. Students need to develop composition skills to write thesis abstracts that encompass cohesion and coherence (Otta et al., 2022). A successful abstract helps readers to get complete information quickly about research findings without wasting time. As a result, students have to learn how to write a good abstract because. It enhances students' skills as writers to describe their ideas briefly from which the readers get new information easily.

Writing an intelligible abstract is essential for students because it helps them to disseminate their ideas to other people. However, many students find it difficult. Even many errors are often found in the students' writing in the form of standard words, affixations, and effective sentences (Bustomi & Afriani, 2020). Consequently, they ignore it as an important component of research findings. This happens, because students write their abstract after they finish writing their research report.

English is increasingly being used in language education. Among the types of academic writing, abstracts are an important communication tool for students to disseminate their research results. Abstracts can be categorized into writing needed to publish scientific work (Dudnik & Putilovskaya, 2020). Students' knowledge of writing abstracts helps them improve their writing skills. However, some students find it difficult (Kanoksilapatham, 2013). An abstract is very important for students to know because it consists of the main ideas of research findings. It also becomes a guideline for readers who want to read and understand the result of a research.

An Abstract has become an important part of the research (Ghasempour & Farnia, 2017), and it is a useful tool for obtaining information through the activity of writing scientific papers. It can be defined as a concise and accurate document prepared by the author for publication in a scientific journal. Currently, many research articles are equipped with informative abstracts. Previous studies of the abstract cover many fields of studies like linguistic. Accordingly, students are expected to know how to write an informative abstract for their research report. Knowing the strategy to write an effective abstract helps students succeed in communicating their research findings to the readers. As an important part of the research, an abstract is able to attract the

readers' interest to read the whole text. An effective abstract is able to arouse the readers' curiosity and allow them to feel enthusiastic in reading the whole text.

An abstract can be defined as an essential part of a research report informing what researchers have already done, and it concisely consists of objectives, research methodology, findings, and conclusions. Abstract is a summary of a descriptive research report, and its purpose is to provide readers with brief research findings. It is a short document. An interesting abstract contains characteristics such as accurate, independent, concise, specific, non-evaluative, coherent, and easy to read. It consists of five parts, namely, background, objectives, methods (Kuhi & Soltani, 2021), results, and conclusions. Thus, it can be seen that an abstract as part of a scientific work has a structure that contains five elements.

As mentioned above, previous studies analysed writing skills and writing an abstract. Many authors described the strategy to improve students' writing skills and explained some elements of an abstract that students should know. They stated that students were expected to promote their writing ability and improved their knowledge about an abstract. However, they did not mention how to analyse of the students' ability to write an abstract. Therefore, to investigate the students' ability to write an informative abstract is essential. It is because studies on analysis of the students' skills at writing research abstract are still lacking.

This research has been undertaken based on three problems namely, (1) how is the students' ability to write a research abstract? (2) How is the students' competence in writing the components of ESL composition that consists of five elements, such as, content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics?

The research is designed, first, to describe the students' competence in writing an informative abstract based on their research report. Second, to reveal the students' competence in writing the components of ESL composition that contains five parts of the writing.

Method

The research used descriptive method which includes collecting and analyzing data. The study was conducted at the English Department of University of Muhammadiyah Malang, East Java. The study involved quantitative method to identify the students' ability to write a thesis abstract. The population of the research was students of English Department who took thesis examination at the University of Muhammadiyah Malang. The sample of this research was 27 students, and most of them were in their last year of study. It is selected by using purposive sampling technique

The study used a documentation test as the instrument. Data of this study was in the form of students' thesis abstract which consisted of not more than 300 words. Data collected were analyzed through the rubric of ESL composition guideline by (Hartfiel et al., 1985). This rubric has five categories of assessment of different writing quality with a 100 scale. They are mechanics (5 points), language use (25 scores), vocabulary (20 scores), organization (20 scores), and content (30 scores). Each component has a different way of scoring with a description attached to each category. The scoring rubric is very important to assess the students' composition, and its main objective is for performance evaluation (Setyowati et al., 2020).

To ensure the validity, the researcher involved two raters to assess students' thesis abstracts, and the total scores were divided by two as a mean score. The program

of SPSS was applied to calculate collected data. The results of data calculations are presented in the form of a pie chart. The calculation process is intended to describe the students' ability to write abstract thesis. The findings obtained were used to draw the conclusion of the study.

Findings and Discussion

In this study, researcher examined the students' ability to write an informative thesis abstract. This study applied the Harfiel's *Profile of ESL Composition* (1985) to analyze the students' thesis abstract. The guideline consisted of five aspects of writing namely, a) content, which its scores ranged from 13 to 30; b) organization, the scores ranged from 7 to 20; c) vocabulary, the scores ranged from 7 to 20; d) language usage, the scores ranged from 5 to 25; and e) mechanics, which its scores ranged from 2 to 5. Students' score of the five compositions indicates their level. Each aspect of composition has different scores. Table 1 shows the scores and levels the five compositions.

Table 1 The Scores and Levels of The ESL Compositions Profile.

Aspects of Composition	Score	Level
Content	30 - 27	Excellent
	26 - 22	Good
	21 - 17	Fair
	16 - 13	Poor
Organization	20 - 18	Excellent
	17 - 14	Good
	13 - 10	Fair
	9 - 7	Poor
Vocabulary	20 - 18	Excellent
	17 - 14	Good
	13 - 10	Fair
	9 - 7	Poor
Language Use	25 - 22	Excellent
	21 - 18	Good
	17 - 11	Fair
	10 - 5	Poor
Mechanics	5	Excellent
	4	Good
	3	Fair
	2	Poor

Source: Learning ESL Composition by Hartfiel et al.

As mentioned before, this study investigated 27 students' thesis abstracts. To know their writing abstract ability, the researcher computed the total means of the two raters and divided it by two. Furthermore, the computation result determined the students' skills at writing an informative abstract. After finding the mean, the researcher categorized the result of computation into the categories of the writing ability level of the ESL composition rubric developed by Harfiel et al. (1985). Based on the result of the computation of the aspect of content, the total score 463. Because the sample of the study consists of 27 students' abstracts, the average (463/27) is 17.15.

Then, it can be decided that the students' ability to write an informative abstract on the aspect of content is good.

The result of the computation of the organization aspect shows that the total mean is 453. Because the sample of the study consists of 27 students' abstracts, the average ($453/27$) is equal to 16.777. Then, it can be inferred that the ability of students to write an abstract on the aspect of organization is good.

The result of computation based on the aspect of vocabulary shows that the total mean is 449. The sample of the research is 27 students' abstracts, and the average ($449/27$) is 16.629. Therefore, it can be inferred that the ability of students to write an abstract on the aspect of vocabulary can be categorized as good.

Moreover, the computation of the aspect of language use shows that the total mean is 463. The total sample is 27 students' abstracts, and the average ($463/27$) is 17.148. Therefore, it can be said that the ability of students to write an abstract on the aspect of language use is fair.

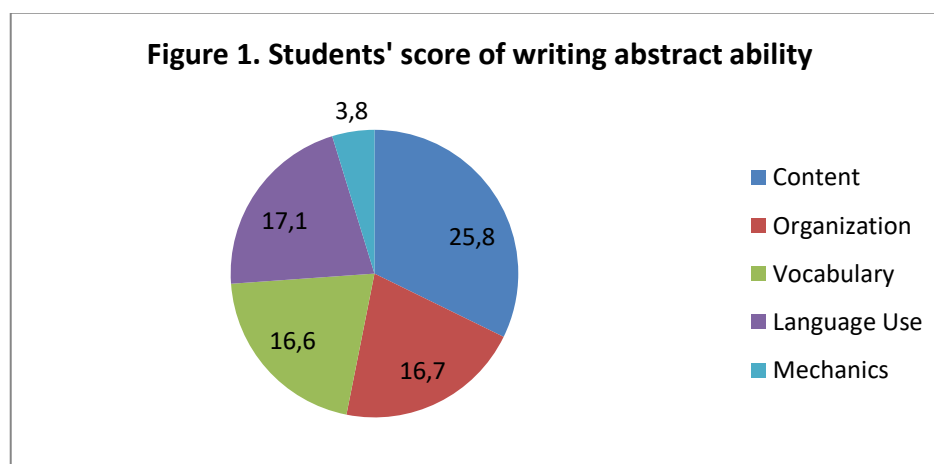
The computation of the aspect of mechanics indicates that the total mean is 103.5. The total sample is 27 students' abstracts, and the average ($103.5/27$) is 3.833. Consequently, it can be concluded that the students' ability to write an abstract on the aspects of mechanics is fair.

The total score of the students' ability to write the five ESL Composition can be seen in table 2 below.

Table 2 Students' scores of the computation

ASPECTS	MEAN	AVERAGE	LEVEL
Content	697	$697/27 = 25.8$	good
Organization	453	$453/27 = 16.7$	good
Vocabulary	449	$449/27 = 16.6$	good
Language Use	463	$463/27 = 17.1$	fair
Mechanics	103.5	$103.5/27 = 3.8$	fair

On the basis of the computation result, it is concluded that the students' competence in writing an informative abstract is good. It can be supported that from the five components of composition namely, content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics, they are good categories, except the aspects of language use and mechanics are fair. Figure 1 shows the result of the five compositions analysis.



Based on the figure 1 above, it can be described that the students' ability to write an informative abstract on the aspects of language use as well as mechanics is fair. However, their writing on the aspects of content, organization, and vocabulary can be categorized as good. For this reason, the students' ability to write an abstract can be inferred as good.

On the basis of the research results, the investigation answers the research questions namely, how the students' ability to write a research abstract is, and how the students' competence in writing the five components of ESL composition, such as, content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics is? The data obtained consists of 27 students' abstracts, and it supports the findings.

The result of this research is consistent with the study of Putra (2023) and Prasasti et al., (2022). In their research, students' abstracts contain five aspects. They are introduction, objective, method, product, and summary. Then, students' writing ability can be promoted by using Instagram in teaching and learning activities, and it enables students to promote their ideas and produce explanatory texts. Even though the research is consistent with the studies of Putra (2023) and Prasasti et al., (2022), it is slightly different from their studies. The research analyses the students' ability to write an informative thesis abstract that involves five ESL composition profiles by Hartifiel et al., (1985). They are content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics.

The novelty of the research is that this study uses the five ESL composition profiles by Hartifiel et al., (1985) to analyse students' thesis abstracts. In the process of analysis, the abstract is regarded as a document that is scored based on the five elements of the ESL composition profile such as content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. The result of the computation of the five elements shows the students' skills in writing abstract.

As mentioned above, the score of the students' ability to write an abstract on the aspect of content is that the student's ability to write their ideas in an abstract is good. This fact can be bolstered by the result of content aspect computation that totals 25.8. It means that their ability to write their ideas in an abstract is good. In this study, the researcher takes the aspect of content as the basis of analysis of the students' competence in writing their ideas in an intelligible abstract because the aspect of content is the fundamental instrument to recognize the students' ability to describe their opinion. It can be explained that if the students have much information or ideas, they can construct their ideas on a piece of paper i.e., abstracts. On the other hand, they can express nothing when they have no ideas or have less information. On the basis of the analysis, it is inferred that the ability of students to write their ideas on an abstract is good.

Based on the computation of the students' ability to write an abstract on the aspect of organization, the students' ability to write a good topic sentence in an abstract is good. This fact can be proved that the result of organization aspect computation is 16.7. According to the Harfiel's ESL Composition Profile (1985), score of 16 on the aspect of organization can be categorized from good to average. It means that their ability to write a good topic sentence in an abstract is good. In this research, the researcher takes the aspect of organization as the reason of analysis of the students' competence in writing a topic sentence because it is the fundamental tool to describe

the students' ability to organize their ideas. It can be illustrated that if the students master the technique of formulating a topic sentence, they can start their topic sentence with an interesting statement on a paragraph of abstracts. In contrast, they can start writing a topic sentence with a boring statement in a paragraph of abstract when they know less technique of writing. Therefore, the students' ability to write a topic sentence in an abstract is good.

Then, the abstract acts as a time-saver by informing the readers what the abstract is about, and it enables readers to know if the text needs further reading. Therefore, abstract has become media to master and manage news because it is the first part of a research report to be read. A research abstract is an important part of academic research because it attracts readers' attention. It plays a decisive role in reading research report because it helps readers to select information contained in the text of the article. Through the abstract, the readers obtain a comprehensive information about the article.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the students' ability to write an informative abstract can be categorized into good. This category is strengthened by the data analysis. From the five components of composition namely, content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics, only the components of language use and mechanics are in the category of fair. On the other hand, the rest aspects are in the category of good. Moreover, the students' ability to write their ideas in an abstract is good. This is supported by the result of the computation on the aspect of content that is 25.8. In this research, the aspect of content can be considered the basis of analysis of the students' skills at writing their ideas in an abstract because it is the fundamental instrument to know the students' ability to elucidate their ideas. Furthermore, the students' competence in writing a purposeful topic sentence is good. This category relies on the calculation of the data from which the value of the aspect of organization is 16.7. According to the Harfiel's *ESL Composition Profile* (1985), the score of 16 on the aspect of organization is categorized from good to average. Accordingly, it can be stated that the students' competence in writing a good composition on an abstract is good.

Based on the conclusion above, it can be recommended that writing instructors need to promote their students' motivation in writing skills. For doing so, they have to improve their teaching technique in order that they are capable of increasing their students' motivation from which they are able to enhance their students' writing achievement. They have also to select the materials which should be suitable for the level of the students. Suitable materials enable students to improve their writing ability. Furthermore, other researchers can improve this study to make it more significant because the data of this study is limited that is 27 students' abstracts. It is suggested that researchers increase the data by engaging many students' abstract to analyse.

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