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Students' ability in writing annotated bibliography: Teaching critical writing

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ABSTRACT

Annotated bibliographies are used in various situations. Annotated bibliography is a short-annotated list of sources that summarizes, evaluates, and states source relevance. The ability to write annotated bibliography shows one's ability to find the right information for writing research article. This paper aims to see how the ability of second year students majoring in English is in making annotated bibliography. This research is qualitative research using data obtained from 42 students who assigned on writing annotated bibliography. Data were explained descriptively from the score mean and percentage using Turnitin then scaled them using 4-scale Linkert Scale. Results showed that of five variables, quality of sources, annotations content, overall quality were good, while accuracy and annotations structure variables were adequate. For Turnitin check, 69.05% showed good and very good quality, while only 9.52% of them showed poor quality. Finally, it is indicated that most of the second-year subjects consider as having good standard abilities categorized in writing annotated bibliography.

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1. Introduction

Research that discusses critical approaches or critical thinking skills has been carried out and covers various areas of disciplines, one of which is language (Siegel & Fernandez, 1996; Canagarajah, 1999; Fairclough, 2001; Norton & Toohey, 2004). To illustrate the general characteristics of this domain, Luke (2000) and Fairclough (2001) mention that anything that is considered critical lately tends to show how people use texts and discourses to construct and negotiate identities, power and

capital. In fact, the critical approach has a more comprehensive view of language. In addition, Luke (2000) also mentions that language is not just a means of expression or communication, but a constructing practice, constructed by the way language learners understand themselves, their social environment, their history and their possibilities for the future. The issue of critical thinking is very challenging and trendy for academics, including actors and observers of linguistic education, mainly due to the awareness of the importance of language in the era of globalization and modernization (Crystal, 2003). On the other hand, some research findings on critical thinking skills acquired by EFL students seem unsatisfactory. Stapleton (2002) claims that Asian EFL students lack critical thinking and voice or individual opinion. Meanwhile, Atac (2015) supports this statement by stating that students' critical thinking and writing skills are quite low. This problem shows that critical pedagogy is needed in EFL writing class. Therefore, other studies related to the ability to write critically are needed. Canagarajah (1999) and Norton & Toohey (2004) define critical thinking as an ability to examine and test propositions offered to find out whether they are in accordance with reality or not. Critical thinking involves reading and writing critically, while critical writing means to present written conclusions in a clear and reasoned way in order to persuade others with the proposed facts and information.

Writing is a complex productive skill that has many essential elements to understand, teach, and learn (Dragomir & Niculescu, 2020). Writing is an important part of communication because it is another form of communication which conveys a message to the readers (Rao & Durga, 2018; Sulistiyo, 2016; Peterson, 2003). Writing skills are not only needed while still in teaching and learning activities, but these skills are also very important in the world of work (Silalahi, 2017). Writing skills include all knowledge and abilities related to expressing ideas through written words (Elbow, 1998). The ability to clearly communicate ideas through writing is in high demand by entrepreneurs in any industry. Well-written documents, emails, and posts can persuade customers to buy a product or convince investors to partner with a company. In academia, good writing skills will be able to convey a new idea or research that can be used as a reference and reference for other research and new policy making (Norris, 2016). Technical knowledge of writing conventions, style guides, and formatting for different situations is also part of writing skills. According to Klein (1999), writing is the ability to use words, numbers, and symbols to express ideas which can then be communicated to others. Writing is not only about conveying content but also about self-representation. Writing is more than just making our thoughts and ideas visible (Ghaith, 2002). Nystrand (1998), states that writing is a matter of elaborating a text according to what the writer reasonably assumes that the reader knows and expects. And the reading process is a matter of predicting the text according to the reader's assumptions about the author's purpose.

An annotation is a brief summary and evaluation of the source. It is a short and clear-cut sharp report of the information contained in the source study. On the other hand, a bibliography is a list of sources related to some topic (Showkat & Parveen, 2017). A bibliography differs from a reference in the sense that the latter includes only the sources cited in the research whereas the sources listed in the bibliography may not be included in the research but are related to the research topic (Showkat & Parveen, 2017; Gall et al., 1996). An annotated bibliography is simply a list of sources related to some topic, where each citation is followed by a brief description of the source (The University of Melbourne, n.d.). Containing complete citation information and mostly paragraphs about the source, we can say that an annotated bibliography is basically an alphabetical list of research sources on a

particular topic (The University of Melbourne, n.d). Writing an annotated bibliography is excellent preparation for a research project because it allows the writer to gather useful sources and draw information supporting the idea that is intended to develop into an academic paper (Sangamitra & Hameed, 2016). In addition, it helps one to formulate a thesis prior to write a manuscript. Writing an annotated bibliography can help you get a good perspective on what is being said about the topic (Keillor & Bethel University Library, 2016; Norris, 2016). By reading and responding to various sources on a topic, one will begin to see what the issues are, and what people are arguing about, and then develop own point of view.

However, prior to field observations and interviews to university students majoring English, researchers found a phenomenon which indicates students' difficulties in citing and finding the appropriate references used for their research paper. Accordingly, the researchers decided to conduct a study that aims to find out the students ability in writing annotated bibliography. Although this study purposely stated its aims, there were limitations used in it, such as the number of subjects, the scope of population, as well as the data used to calculate. Thus, there is possibility that the result of this study may differ once the excluded limitations were added.

Critical Writing

Critical writing is part of developing one's academic voice in one's subject area as a result of an ongoing process of reflection, research, note-taking, reading, and writing (Norton & Toohey, 2004). Critical writing is an important part of both academics and students because, it requires someone (writer) to set definite goals that answer predetermined questions (Atac, 2015). Considering the previously set-up questions, the writer needs to present evidence so that the reader believes the contents of the writing and to make their writing arto credible and valid. In addition, previous studies also support that elaboration in writing are utmost important in writing (Sangamitra & Hameed, 2016; Norris, 2016) since it provide the basis that strengthens the writer's opinion in presenting the evidence (University of Hul, 2021). Furthermore, writing critically means providing strong arguments that can support the content (Atac, 2015; Luke, 2000). There are several characteristics that indicate the form of the critical writing, namely: a clear refusal and confidence to accept conclusions from other writers without evaluating the arguments and evidence they provide; a balanced presentation of the reasons why conclusions from other authors are acceptable or may need to be treated with caution; a clear presentation of own evidence and arguments, leading to conclusions; and an acknowledgment of limitations in the evidence, arguments and conclusions made (University of Leicester, 2009).

Teaching Writing

Writing is a complex cognitive activity that requires a person to show control of variables simultaneously (Elbow, 1998; Harmer, 2004). Writing is an important part of language skills; hence, good writing skills are necessary for students to fulfill their educational requirements (Sulistiyo & Haswindy, 2018). Writing skills are special abilities because they help someone to gather their thoughts into words in a meaningful form and mentally interact with the message (Brown, 2011) There are many opinions on defining writing (Sangamitra & Hameed, 2016; Saed & AL-Omari, 2014; Brown,

2011; Harmer, 2004; Elbow, 1998), yet all of them state something in common which is writing is an integral part of a larger activity where the focus is on other things such as language training, acting, or speaking. An ability to write helps someone to collect ideas, data, as well as information, and then unify them together into a whole new perception that conveys information intended to deliver (Brown, 2011). On the other hand, writing is a representation of language in the media textual through the use of a set of signs or symbols.

Despite many opinions on how difficult writing is, according to Elbow (1998), it requires the ability to create words and ideas out of you, but also requires the ability to critique them to describe which ones to use. Therefore, it can be understood that the notion of writing is a process of finding ideas, thinking about how to express them, and organizing them into statements and paragraphs that aim to communicate something with others indirectly, a student gets an effort to express his thoughts through language in written form (Sangamitra & Hameed, 2016; Saed & AL-Omari, 2014; Onozawa, 2010). In EFL, writing skills are regarded as very important skills since arto since those skills help strengthen vocabulary, grammar, thinking, planning, editing, revision, and other elements (Saed and Al-Omari, 2014).

According to Cheung (2016), writing can also be interpreted as an act of interaction that is presented (by the author) in written form and can be read by others (readers). Teaching writing is a process of interaction between students and teachers in the classroom that produces a product in the form of writing. The main goal of teaching writing is to achieve linguistic, communicative, and cultural competence (Malyuga et al., 2016). A piece of writing can convey the intended information and establish successful communication with the reader. In learning to write, the goal that is often made by the teacher is to train students in expressing ideas according to a specified theme or topic. Writing here is not just to express ideas creatively but also to show the accuracy of the information contained in the writing.

Writing Annotated Bibliographies

An annotated bibliography is a form of a brief description of research on a particular topic where each section of the source information is accompanied by a citation followed by a short paragraph (The University of Melbourne, n.d.). An annotated bibliography is a list of citations, which can include books, journal articles, and documents. Each citation is usually followed by a very short description of the text and more importantly, a critical evaluation (Gall et al., 1996). An annotated bibliography commonly consists of a 100-200 words summary that describes the contents of the writings of the person to be quoted (Showkat & Parveen, 2017). The purpose of an annotated bibliography is to highlight the importance, accuracy, and credibility of each cited source (Keillor & Bethel University Library, 2016). An annotated bibliography can be assigned to the task of informing the reader about the ability of a person (the author) to select sources relevant to the topic (Showkat & Parveen, 2017). In the ability to write in EFL, writing an annotated bibliography can be one of the skills that are needed. This is because the ability to write annotated bibliography provides an opportunity for EFL students to hone their reading skills and draw conclusions and write them down in the form of a brief explanation of the material read (Sangamitra & Hameed, 2016; Hasan & Akhand, 2011).

2. Method

This study was qualitative research using a descriptive approach to explain the results of data processing. The analyzed data was obtained from the task of writing annotated bibliographies in their writing class. Data were collected from 42 third year students majoring in English education at the Universitas Negeri Surabaya who programmed writing courses 3 who served as the subjects of this study while the assignment task of these students served as the objects that were studied. These students were asked to write annotated bibliographies after lecturer explained how to make bibliographies and references which later became the object analyzed in this study. They were given a week to find the appropriate sources, and wrote the summaries of each found reference. The highlight on writing annotated bibliography is on subjects' abilities in paraphrasing ideas found in the references read. To measure the students' ability in writing annotated bibliography, there were five indicators used, namely: quality of sources, accuracy, annotation content, annotation structure, and writing quality (overall quality) (see Table 1). Each indicators had score ranges which were used to measure the quality of the task. Total score was later grouped into 4 categories and was calculated its mean (see Table 2). In addition to scoring the annotated bibliography using the rubric set, the data were checked using Turnitin in order to see their plagiarism and grammatical correctness (see Table 3).

Table 1. Rubric for Annotated Bibliography

Indicators	Scores Range			
	16-20	11-15	6-10	0-5
Quality of Sources	All sources demonstrate careful consideration of validity and sources do not repeat same information	Several sources are credible but others are not current or have questionable validity	Sources meet guidelines for types selected but there is no consideration of validity	Sources do not meet guidelines for types of sources used
Accuracy	Includes the complete and accurate bibliographic citation for each source and is organized according to citation method used	Makes 3-5 errors on citations.	Makes 6-10 errors on citations.	Makes more than 10 errors on citations.
Annotations Content	Summaries are accurate, evaluation addresses validity of source and usefulness for assignment is included for every source	One component of the annotation is missing or very limited in several citations	One component of the annotation is missing in many citations	Little or no information specific to the source is included
Annotations Structure	Well-written, unique to the source, avoids vague statements. Appropriate length.	Well written but contain some generic statements OR not appropriate length.	Poorly written, many generic statements, too short	Annotations are missing or are not coherent.
Overall Quality	Bibliography could be used to generate a comprehensive research paper with excellent sources.	Bibliography provides sources to create a paper on the topic but is missing some key information	Sources miss key topics required by presentation assignment	Sources used would not create an informative paper

Table 2. Scaling score of the annotated bibliography

Scale	Category
16-20	Excellent
11-15	Good
6-10	Adequate
0-5	Poor

Table 3. Turnitin Scoring scale

Category	Range of Percentage
Very good	0 – 10 %
Good	11 – 20 %
Moderate	21 – 30 %
Poor	< 31 %

3. Results and discussion

3.1 Result

From the analysis, it was found that the average score of the students indicate the good and adequate categories (*see Table 4*). The result shows that of the five indicators, three of them show good category (quality of sources, annotations content, and overall quality) while the remaining two (accuracy and annotations structure) show adequate result. These mean that although the subjects did not show excellent quality for their ability in writing annotated bibliography, yet they were provably to be able to write it appropriately which is proved by none of them showed poor ability in writing annotated bibliography according to the rubric (*see Table 1*).

Table 4. Students' Annotated Bibliography Skill

Indicators	Score Mean	Category
Quality of Sources	11.83	Good
Accuracy	10.90	Adequate
Annotations Content	11.05	Good
Annotations Structure	10.97	Adequate
Overall Quality	12.02	Good

Moreover, as presented in Figure 1, from the result of Turnitin testing, the results show that of the 42 subjects, most of the subjects had good abilities (40.48%) in writing annotated bibliography. This number was followed those who had very good ability (28.57%) in writing annotated bibliography. Meanwhile, the analysis shows that 21.43% of subjects were able to write annotated bibliography moderately. The remaining (9.52%) show poor ability in writing annotated bibliography. These results indicate that after programming 2 writing courses, most subjects are able to write annotated bibliography well. Although there are some who need to improve their ability in terms of doing paraphrasing while writing the summary.

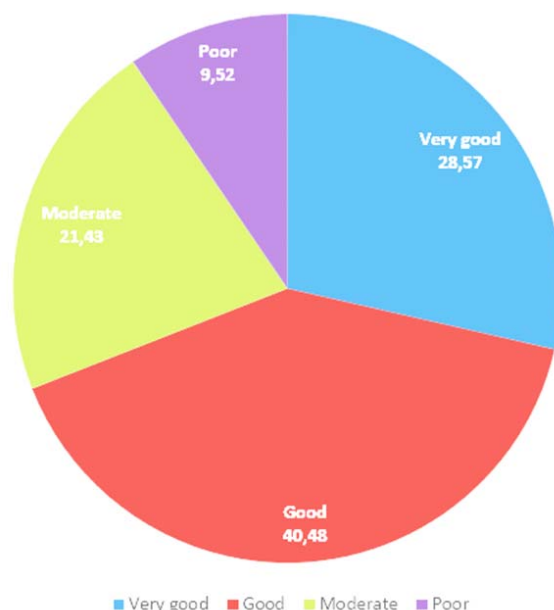


Figure 1. Evaluation percentage

3.2. Discussion

Writing is one of the language skills that have an important role in contributing to human work. There are various types of news, information, and the development of knowledge that we can know through writing (Sangamitra & Hameed, 2016). In terms of academic goals, Dyan (2010) states five pedagogical objectives of writing in English, namely: as an introduction and practice of writing forms that provide different learning styles and needs; as a written work that serves as evidence of one's thoughts; as exposure to a foreign language; as a variation in class activities; and as a form to test language skills formally and informally. As part of advanced education, university requires its students to be able to produce research articles as part of academic requirements. These requirements force the students to learn how to write not only based on their individual opinion but also to provide theoretical grounds from previous research or studies. In order to write good research paper which not only describe one's ide but also convey facts and theories from previous studies, an ability to write annotated bibliography is necessary. This idea is supported by Klimova (2012), Nasser (2016), and Norris (2016) who agree that writing research article requires the writers to gather ideas from theories, hypotheses, as well as opinion of others in the similar lines of thoughts in order to create theoretical framework. As above mentioned, prior to conduct this study, field observation and interviews to random university students were carried out. The prior data found that most interviewees agreed that writing theoretical grounds is difficult because it asks the writer to gather correct information from many research articles and books which serve as the basis for their writing. Consequently, they required to have ability in finding and selecting the correct references and bibliographies to support their point of views.

Accordingly, in this study, the ability in writing annotated bibliography serves as an indicator to determine the students' skill in critical writing because writing annotated bibliography shows their ability to select correct sources, read the content critically in order to summarize it, and connect its conclusion with the topic given (University of Lancaster, n.d). From the analysis of the data collected, it was found that objects analyzed showed the good and adequate category referring to the rubric set. The indicators that used to evaluate the objects consisted of quality of sources, accuracy, annotations content, annotations structure, and overall quality. Of the five indicators, three of them (quality of sources, annotations content, and overall quality) showed good category while the other two (accuracy and annotations structure) show adequate category. These results mean that of the objects analyzed (annotated bibliography writings) done by the subjects (42 third-year students majoring English) considered as acceptable and the subjects showed good ability in processing the sources obtained. Furthermore, using another evaluation standard (Turnitin test), the result showed that of 42 subjects, 40.48% have the good abilities in writing annotated bibliography.

According to Turnitin standard analysis, these students were able to write with only 11-19% Turnitin score meaning that their writings passed the minimum standards for plagiarism and grammatical errors for academic writing. While those in "very good" and "moderate" categories were around 28.57% and 21.43%. Although both categories were lower than in "good category", they indicate the appropriate ability in writing annotated bibliography in general. This condition proves that most of subjects were able to show their ability in writing academically because only 9.52% of the subjects had poor ability in writing annotated bibliography. The occurrence of both moderate ability and poor ability (despite its low percentage), indicates that there is a fact that critical writing becomes one of the most difficult ability for learners especially. It was proved by the result of these study which despite its acceptable result (in both good and adequate category), none of the indicators showed the excellent result and very good category in Turnitin test, meaning that they found that summarizing and concluding notions obtained from sources were not a simple task, because they need to gather the ideas then paraphrase them in order to avoid the plagiarism. In addition, the ability in constructing sentences and creating coherence and cohesion of sentences is another hindrance for them.

4. Conclusion

From the discussion, it can be concluded that writing annotated bibliography becomes one of skills that was successfully developed by subjects after they finished programming 2 writing courses. The analysis shows the average score obtained were in good (for three indicators) and adequate (two indicators). Three of them showing good category were quality of sources, annotations content, and overall quality, while the remaining two that show adequate category were accuracy and annotations structure. It means that subjects were provably to be able to write annotated bibliography despite fail to achieve excellent or good category for all indicators set. Moreover, from the result of Turnitin testing, it shows that more than half subjects in this (69.05%) were able to write annotated bibliography well proved by their Turnitin score were in the range of 0-20% (or considered acceptable for academic publication). Meanwhile, 21.43% subjects were in the level of moderate meaning that their

ability in writing annotated bibliography need to be improved because their Turnitin score were in the range of 21-30% or considered unacceptable and need to be revised for standard academic manuscript. Although, in general, level of writing annotated bibliography considered good and acceptable, there are some (9.52%) who were poor in writing annotated bibliography meaning that their ability to summarize, paraphrase, and construct sentences were still low and need to be further improved.

5. Implication, Limitation, and Recommendation

The results of this study further can serve as a basis to evaluate teaching process in writing skill courses because from the results it can be seen that despite its overall goodness, there are some students who still find difficulties in writing annotated bibliography. This condition can highly probably affect their ability in writing academic manuscript. In addition, the results can be a reference to teach academic manuscripts in language classes (especially) and any other higher education program (generally).

Although this study has good implication for the better of teaching language classes and academic writing classes, there are limitations that occur in this study which may actually affect the final result of this study, including: the number of subjects, population, excluded variables such as background of subjects, grammatical incorrectness, theme used, and instruments used. Thus, it is recommended to conduct another study related to this issue by addressing the limitations of this study for example by adding more subjects, population, objects analyzed, etc so that the further results can support the results found in this study.

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