



EFL Students' Memory Strategies in Writing Essay

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine the application of EFL students' memory strategies when writing essays. This study uses qualitative methods to collect data through reflection as a research instrument. The results of the study revealed that students used different memory strategies to help make it easier for them to write essays. The memory strategy that many students use when writing reads the references related to the essay topic they are going to write. Having many references makes it easier for students to develop their ideas, student writing is more varied, and it is easier for students to write essays. Memory strategy has an influence on students' essay writing.

Keywords: *Essay writing; memory strategy; writing essay.*

INTRODUCTION

Memory strategy, as one of the most effective strategies in the process of learning vocabulary words, is a very powerful mental tool. Including activities to remember and retrieve new information such as acronyms, words, pictures etc. helps learners to relate second language items to new ones. Oxford (1990: 38) states that the mind can store about 100 trillion pieces of information, but only part of its usable potential except memory strategies comes to the aid of the learner. He divides memory strategies into four categories, all of which have different techniques making mental connections, reviewing well, and employing action (Oxford, 1990). Using memory strategies helps learn new word items and remember them in the long term. Hertzog, Price, & Dunlosky, 2012 research on strategy memory found that participants used a variety of strategies to encode and retrieve information in and from memory.

English as Foreign Language (EFL) Writing is one of the most difficult skills for students. This is in line with Richard and Renandya (2002: 303) stating that writing is the most difficult skill for second and foreign language learners. They claim that writing not only generates and organizes our minds ideas, but also translates these ideas into readable text. Students' difficulties in writing English can be influenced by a lack of vocabulary, lack of knowledge of grammar, and lack of written practice and ideas. Other difficulties can also be influenced by differences in language structure, ways of expressing thoughts, writing styles, and various cultural factors that greatly affect the writing of foreign language learners. This is supported by Sulasti (2003), the



problems they face the most are about how to write, what to write, and lack of vocabulary and inability to structure.

Writing is a complex process that supports students to explore their minds. In writing essays students practice writing which only involves the production of the material studied to learn to write spelling conventions, punctuation marks, and grammatical agreements. Hadifield(1992) noted the difficulties for students in learning the skills of writing. Firstly, writers cannot be used with readers, secondly students who suffer from linguistic difficulties in the language used in speaking are not the same writing, and thirdly EFL students who did not know the discourse of patterns attached to certain types of writing had more clarity. Important is very important in essay writing, it is related to the ability to arrange ideas on paper.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses qualitative research. The main reason for descriptive research in qualitative research begins with the 'what' or 'how' questions. Qualitative research aims to explain phenomena in depth through in-depth data collection. This study uses a qualitative design because this design is a phenomenon in the observation of components such as humanism or the individual and human behavior is the answer to awareness which is all concerned with the substance of the meaning of it. Creswell (1998) states that qualitative research is a process of inquiry based on different and methodological traditions to explore social or human problems. So, this study will ask students to describe how they apply memory strategies in writing.

Data analysis was carried out by looking at the data collected through the reflection results given to students and interviews to clarify the reflection data. In analyzing the data, the steps proposed by Creswell were used, namely: (1) collecting data, (2) preparing data for analysis, (3) reading data, and (4) coding data (Sukmahidayanti, 2015). The following will describe how the process of analyzing the data obtained through reflection will explain the questions used in the Google form. After the researcher makes a question, the researcher will make a question on the Google form, then share the Google form link to the WhatsApp group, wait for reflection for about a week, the researcher will make a transcript based on the reflection's answer. In analyzing the reflection transcripts, researchers used coding. After that, the researcher will encode the data, so that the researcher can find out how students apply memory strategies in writing essays. To clarify the data, the researcher conducted interviews via WhatsApp, the researcher conducted interviews for approximately 3 days, then combined the results of reflection and interviews so that the research data was more varied, making it easier for researchers to analyze the data.

After scanning the data, researchers develop categories and color codes that are used to identify the data more accurately. Roulston (2014) explains that open coding is the process of associating conceptual labels with parts of the transcript that convey ideas about topic features. . Researchers apply open coding to focus transcripts on several groups according to various relevant reflection questions. It also requires creating initial categories and themes from the data through constant comparisons between each participant and across participants, which helps to define the categories in each case and to identify similarities and differences across cases.



RESULTS

In this section, the researcher will explain the research findings to apply memory strategies when writing essays during the English learning process. The data is taken from qualitative services using the student reflection method to find and find out how to apply strategic memory in the classroom. This section will also explain student answers from the results of student reflection during the learning process in class when writing essays. Researchers have categorized students' answers from reflection questions into several strategies. Reflection shows that various memory strategies such as strategies to improve mental connection, applying image and sounds, employing actions and reviewing well are used by students when writing essays. From the reflection results it was found that students were more dominant in using the strategy of creating mental linkages.

Strategies That Students Use to Make it Easier to Write Essays

1. Creating Mental Linkages

Learning strategies by writing short essays provide benefits or good influence for students. This can be seen from the answers of students' reflections. Some students answered about what they got from using the strategy of how to create mental relationships through writing essays.

Three of them stated that:

“My strategy is usually to think of an interesting idea to finish an essay....”S1

Another said:

“Usually I will write a list of the main points in the topic. Write keywords like when I want to make a 4-paragraph essay, I will make a list of the main points or the gist of each paragraph...”S6

My strategy is to understand more deeply the topic of the essay to be written. With it, it is easier for us to write down the issues in an essay. S4

From the students' answers above, it can be concluded that their strategy. It can be seen from the students' answers above, the strategy they use when writing essays is creating mental images. Like writing interesting ideas and also writing keywords. Then the results of reflections from several other students also used the strategy of creating mental images such as increasing reading material or reading references that would broaden horizons and increase vocabulary. They say:

“Read more references. Because reading more references will certainly add new vocabulary and master's ideas”S2

“Increase reading of books or journals because it can be a source of reference in writing so that the essays we make are more reliable” s3

Another said:

“The most important strategy that I do in writing essays is to read references related to the topic that I will write.” S7

“Looking for references makes it easier for me to develop my ideas” s8

“I'm looking for articles similar to the topic I'm going to write” s10



2. Applying Images and Sound

On the results of student reflection, other students also had different answer, the strategies in writing essays they used were slightly different from the others. This can be seen from the students' answers who said that:

"During the consultation, I recorded what the lecturer gave me directions to remember the lecturer's directions and listened again when revising" S1

"To remember what my teacher said, I recorded it and listened to it again" S5

From the results of the students' answers above, it can be concluded that the strategy they use is different from the others, by using Applying Images and Sound it will provide its own advantages for students, namely by recording what the teacher or lecturer says they can repeat the recording without any words or sentences missing. Not only that, some students also use the strategy of applying pictures and also prefer silence.

One of student say:

"When writing I always like silence so I can focus more when writing" s9

From the results of student reflection (S9) the strategies used when writing essays to produce completing essays are more comfortable with a quiet atmosphere so that they are more focused, this is included in the strategies of Applying Images and Sound.

3. Applying Action

Several other students also had different answers regarding the strategies they used when writing essays. It can be seen in the quote below:

"I often consult with lecturers" S1

"When consulting with the lecturer, the lecturer will provide input on my writing" S3

Another said:

"I have consulted writing with lecturers and friends" S4

"There are several lecturers when giving essay assignments, they always ask for consultation, so I continue to do consultations" S10

"Discuss my writing with close friends because it is more convenient to ask questions" S2

From the results of student answers above, it can be concluded that students prefer to use action or face-to-face in other words prefer to use consulting strategies, both with lecturers and friends, from the reflection of their answers they think that consulting strategies will make them a little more comfortable. In this case, the strategy they use in writing essays is employing action, in addition to listening to direct input from friends or lecturers, it is also clear and will make them more free to ask about what they consult.

Some students also said:

"I always have discuss ions with my friends and I have also consulted with lecturers about essays" S5

"I will discuss my writing with friends or lecturers" S9

4. Reviewing Well



From students' answers through reflection, it was found that some students said that the strategy they used in writing reflection was also slightly different from others, namely by reviewing writing. They say that:

"I will review my bones. Is there a writing that is not right or there is an idea that is not right as well. Can add new ideas" S1

"I will do a re-review to see if the sentences I use are correct and also to see if there are any typos" S6

"I review articles over and over again because sometimes there are spelling mistakes in writing." S7

Another said:

"Usually to review my writing, I use the Grammarly application to see the grammar of my writing. Sometimes I "S2"

From the students' answers, it can be concluded that some students prefer how to review when writing essays, that way they will easily find errors in their writing so that reviewing will correct the location of errors in their essays. With the strategy of reviewing or revising repeatedly students are able to correct words and also add sentences that need to be added.

Several other students said:

"When writing while doing repeated revisions, such as correcting words and adding references" S3

"I will revise my writing to produce the appropriate writing" S5

"I will revise over and over again until my writing gets better" S8

Another stated:

"And I will revise my writing because I think revising the essay is important to reduce errors" S9

"When writing essays, I will always revise my writing to get better writing". S10

"After that I will correct my writing according to the direction of the lecturer" S4

DISCUSSION

This section presents a discussion of the research results. This study analyzes how to apply memory strategies when students write essays. There are several memory strategies that students use when writing essays, they make mental connections, apply images and sounds, review well, and use actions. Based on several questions that guide reflection, have continuity with each other to direct students in compiling their reflection answers. From the results of the reflection, several phenomena were found, ranging from students' difficulties when writing, the strategies used by students when writing, to the effects of the strategies used by students when writing essays. When writing essays there are several components that must be present but from the results of student reflection it was found that when writing essays students had difficulties in terms of ideas, vocabulary, grammar, focus and reference. Whereas in writing an essay, a writer must understand the things that must be in writing. Furthermore to overcome problems when writing essays students use memory strategies to help them.



The results of this study have shown that strategies in writing essays are needed to make it easier for students to write essays. These strategies have proven to have a fairly good influence on students. This is supported by several research results, one of which is In line with Uusen (2009) who said that writing is a way of expressing ideas in written form using letters, words, art or media, and requires a mental process to express. These ideas accordingly, it is also necessary to share the writing with others. In the results of this study, it has also been proven that students use different strategies for each student in writing essays, such as some students using only the strategy of writing keywords or the main idea, recording or taking notes, discussing, reviewing and using pictures.

The result of student reflection, most students use strategies of creating mental linkages when writing essays. Students use these strategies because these strategies are fundamental in strategies memory. Thus, when writing essays students prefer to use memory strategies to create mental linkages. When writing essays to make it easier for them to write essays in terms of adding new vocabulary, arranging sentences, and making it easier to develop ideas. The use of memory strategies is based on cognitive control processes that regulate memory function by selecting, combining, and organizing information during coding to enhance memory formation. Blumenfeld & Ranganath (2007) the memory strategy used in writing is to create mental connections, in the form of placing new words in a context, reviewing structure. This they get by reading a lot of references. Thus, there are various variations of memory strategies that students use when writing essays and more students tend to use strategies to create mental linkages. This is because when writing essays students will look for many references related to the essay topic. Furthermore, students can compose varied and quality sentences by reading many articles and journals for references related to the topic of student essays, which will be more varied and of high quality because they can provide contradictory evidence from previous findings. This is in accordance with the research of D'Alessio, Avolio, & Charles (2019) which states that students are able to objectively analyze and evaluate problems well, critical thinking skills will greatly support their academic performance when writing. Students focus more on presenting their arguments critically. In addition, with students practicing and applying various learning strategies in writing essays, students can also improve and develop writing over time. In addition, it was found that students who use memory strategies by reading a lot of references will make students more familiar with the topic to be written so that students find it easier to write essays.

In addition, students use applying action strategies such as discussing with friends when writing. During discussions students will match their understanding of the topic with friends'. This can also help students when writing essays. When the discussion occurs the process of transferring ideas or information. According to Surya & Nuraini (2017) by communicating, students can improve vocabulary, develop speaking skills, write ideas systematic, and have better learning abilities. In line with that, students are also given the opportunity to express their ideas to solve problems through debating, writing, and painting pictures and graphics Halimah & Rahmi (2020). According to Krashen (1981:12) for communication and also important for the acquisition process. That is, in the language learning process, it is very dependent on vocabulary learning. When writing an essay, word and sentence structure is very important so that the



writing can be understood by the reader. When writing with friends, this falls into the category of a good rewriting strategy. So that students can know how to write an essay. This is also done in terms of writing so that what is conveyed by the author is biased directly to the reader. Furthermore, students need guidance from the lecturer in the essay writing process. This is included in the strategy review well. Treviño (2008) believes that being involved in reviewing the work of other authors is fundamental to any academic role. Reviews are very helpful in essay writing. Conducting regular reviews helps ensure that academics are aware of the latest ideas in their own field of study.

CONCLUSION

This study is intended to investigate how to apply memory strategies when writing essays. This finding revealed that using strategies memories when writing essays, students used different strategies to make it easier for them to write. The use of strategies and memories not only helps students in developing ideas but also terms of grammar. From the results of the regulation, it was stated that students mostly used creating mental linkages strategies when writing essays. Some other students used strategies apply images and sound, reviewing well and employing actions. In addition, students said that the use of strategies when writing can link ideas with references that have been read related to the essay topic so that their writing is more varied.

Limitation in completing the results of the study, the researcher found an obstacle during data collection, namely the researcher only used reflective journals in collecting the data. Researchers should add interviews with students to get more details about their experiences of applying memories strategies when writing essays. This is because students are still confused about answering questions from reflection, for example some students answer questions, but the answers are not related to the question and the answers are very short. It would be better if the researcher explained how to answer reflectively first. So that students can provide reliable answers from journal reflections.

Finally, the researcher did not carry out direct learning activities so that the information obtained only referred to reflective journals, which means that in this study only information was obtained from students' answers through reflection. Meanwhile, the researcher did not directly observe students' activities in applying memory strategies when writing essays. In future research, it is hoped that several stronger or different research methods can be applied that can more effectively overcome the limitations of the research above.

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