

**English Language Education Department Students' Perception on the Use of an
Essay-based Assessment**

A Skripsi

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Abstract

Assessment is related to measuring students' knowledge about the materials which have been taught. Essay is one kind of assessments which is often used in English language Education Department of one private university in Yogyakarta. This research is conducted to find out the students' perception on essay as a tool to evaluate their learning process, the benefits of essay-based assessment, and problems faced by the students in creating essay. This research used a descriptive qualitative research design and an interview was used as the data collection method. The researcher interviewed four students batch 2015 from different classes at English Language Education Department of one private university in Yogyakarta. The result showed that there are three perception on the use of essay as assessment to evaluate learning process. Students considered that essays are challenging, effective to evaluate writing skill and effective to evaluate students' understanding on the subject. There were seven benefits of essay as assessment. The benefits were improving vocabulary, improving grammatical skill, improving writing skill, increasing critical thinking, improving knowledge, fostering interest in reading, and becoming more motivated to learn. In addition, there were five problems of essay assessment. The problems were word choices problem, limitation of words, hard to find reference, demand to master material, and challenge to make a good quality essay. In conclusion, essay is an effective tool to evaluate students' knowledge, although, the students feel that essay is challenging because the benefits of essay are more than the problems faced by the students.

Keywords: assessment, essay writing, academic writing

Background of the Study

Assessment is important to measure the students' knowledge about the materials which have been taught by the teachers. Shaaban (2001) argued that by giving an assessment to the students, the teachers can make a decision about the students' knowledge and achievement of the subject. Fletcher, Meyer, Anderson, Johnston and Rees (2012) emphasized that the aim of an assessment is to inform teacher about students learning, development of learning, teachers' quality on

teaching, and the quality of the program used. Therefore, through assessment, the teachers can find out the students' knowledge and achievement.

Essay is one forms of assessment. According to Brown (2003), the forms of assessment to assess students' knowledge are open ended, close-ended, multiple choice question, role play, matching, storytelling, short answer, picture cued, and reordering words. Dikli (2003) remarked that essay-based assignments have flexible questions and they can assess students' learning in higher skill. The Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics (2002) defined essay as "students' writing task about topic that has been developed" (p. 240). In conclusion, essay is an assessment of the students' writing which is used by the teachers to examine the students' knowledge.

Essay is rarely researched at English Language Education, despite it being the most used assessment in some courses. Essay is an individual assessment which is often used by the lecturers to assess students' knowledge. It means that the students are asked to explain, to describe, and to give reason using their own words. Therefore, the teachers give great score for essay. However, based on the researcher experience, essay needs a lot of time to make, because the students can add references from books or journal. Sometimes, the students need to interview a willing participant in order to get more information. It makes some students dislike making essay. When the teachers asked the students to make essay, they told about the material taught by the teachers.

The researcher examines students' perception on the essay as assessment in relation with their understanding to the whole materials. Specifically, the researcher explores the benefits, problems, and the use of essay as an assessment tool to evaluate learning process based on the students' perception.

Methodology

To get in-depth result, the researcher decided to adopt descriptive qualitative research design. Merriam (1998) explained that descriptive means that the findings or the data gathered of the research is rich. Creswell (2012) explained that qualitative research is the exploration of problems by observation or interview to get deeper information from participants. The researcher used qualitative research, because the researcher can get information clearly from the data given by the participants.

This research was conducted at English Language Education Department of one university in Yogyakarta. There were four students who became the participants in this research. The students batch 2015 had enough experiences in making essay as assessment and the students batch 2015 was the last batch who were still active in teaching and learning process.

Finding and Discussion

Students' Perception on the Use Essay as Assessment to evaluate Learning

Process

The researcher analyzes the participants' opinion regarding the students' perception on the use of essay as a tool to evaluate learning process. Based on the

data obtained, there were three opinion based on the students' perception of it. The findings are discussed below.

Challenging. The perception student on essay-based assessment is challenging. The students felt that they found challenge when they write an essay. But overall, essay helped them to identify their writing skill.

Effective to evaluate writing skill. The students' perception on the use essay is assessment to evaluate learning process is effective to evaluate students' writing skill. Essay is one of the tool to see knowledge and skills especially in writing skill. In the other words, essay is one of the tool to practice for students in deepening their writing skill. In making a good essay, the students should really be careful on the grammar to make the reader easier to understand what the students convey. The impact on writing an essay makes students can evaluate their own skill and knowledge and also they can improve and deepen their writing skill.

Effective to evaluate students' understanding on the subject. Essay assessment involved students on reading many references which is related to the topic of essay. The students should read a lot references or material that has been taught by the teacher. That makes the students' understanding improve. In the other words, essay helped students to master the material. Essay is used by the teacher to help students improves their understanding of the material. Essay involves students on developing material in order to make them bring out their knowledge in to written

form. In conclusion, based on the students' statements above, essay is challenging but it is effective to evaluate learning process. Therefore, essay-based assessment is an effective tool to evaluate learning process, because it assesses what they have learned.

The Benefits of Essay as Assessment

The researcher analyzed the participants' opinion regarding the benefits of essay-based assessment. Based on the data obtained, there were eight benefits of essay-based assessment. The findings are discussed below.

Improving vocabulary. Essay can help the students to improve their vocabulary mastery. At least, the students needed to look for for new vocabulary in order to make them easier to deliver their idea into text. Essay improves the students' vocabulary.

Improving grammatical skill. Essay improves their grammatical knowledge. The use of grammar is very important to make reader understand the text. The students should really be careful of the use of grammatical features to make the text clear. In the other words, the grammatical on writing an essay should be clear. Based on the all statements above, making an essay helps the students to improve their grammatical skill. Since essay as assessment is an academic writing, it helps the students to learn more about grammar.

Improving writing skill. Essay informed the students their writing skill. The students can indentify by self their skill on writing whether their writing skill is

improved or not. Essay made them recognize their skill on writing. The students are often write essay. That is why they can train their writing skill. In making an essay, the students should read the material in order to make good essay. Therefore, essay is help students in training their writing skill and makes them reading. Making essay as often as possible can help them in improving their writing skill.

Increasing critical thinking. Looking for information by reading many references helps the students to improve their understanding. By reading many references, the students' critical thinking also improve, because they need to think whether the information in the references can be used in their essay or not. The students' critical thinking increases when doing essay-based assessment. It influences their way of thinking to produce good essay-based assessment and also their speed of thinking. Writing essay in some subject makes students' get used to think more critical. In other words, essay-based assessment improves and trains the students' critical thinking.

Improving knowledge. Since in creating essay-based assessment the students need to learn many theories and read many references. Knowing many theories means that the knowledge will be improved. When the students make essay-based assessment, they should read the material again or many references in order to be able to make good essay-based assessment. Therefore, essay-based assessment improves the students' knowledge. Rereading the material does not only help the students to know the theories better, but it also helps them to memorize the material.

Getting students' accustomed to read. One of the benefits of essay was getting students' accustomed to read. The students who are read journal article for the first time is confusing. After read a lot journal article, they can get used to read and easily understand the content of journal.

Becoming more motivated to learn. Becoming more motivated to learn was one of the benefits of essay. The process of writing essay encourages them to learn more in order to be able to make a good essay. The students learn to gain the information needed for essay.

The Problems of Essay as an Assessment Tool

The researcher analyzed the participants' opinion regarding the problems of essay-based assessment. There are seven problems of essay-based assessment. The findings are discussed below.

Vocabulary problems. There were two kinds of vocabulary problem. The vocabulary problems were not enough vocabulary and word choices problem. The findings are discussed below.

Not enough vocabulary. The student feels that there is no improvement of their vocabulary mastery. The cause is the students often use same word to write an essay. Lack of vocabulary made students really need to think more critic to deliver their idea clearly in order for the reader understand what is conveyed by the students. The students are lack of vocabulary mastery which made them get problem in

creating essay. The students' interest in reading is lack. It causes their problem on writing. Especially their vocabulary mastery is lack. Lack of word mastery makes students difficult to process their ideas.

Word choices problem. The vocabulary in English is rich. Sometimes, the students feel confused in using the word. The words used in essay is formal, it makes them should be careful of using the words. The students use commonly use word to discovered synonym in essay. The use of informal English language is cannot use in academic writing such as essay.

Limitation of words. It was often difficult for the students to control the idea which must be written in introduction. They often wrote the discussion on the introduction section. Limitation of words makes the students feel under pressure when they make essay-based assessment. There are some rules given by the lecturer in creating essay-based assessment. One of them is the limitation of words. The limitation of words in essay-based assessment makes the students feel under pressure.

Difficulty to find references. Hard to find the reference became the problem of essay-based assessment. The difficulty to find the appropriate reference with the topic on essay is the students' problem.

Challenge to make a good quality essay. It becomes a problem, because sometimes the students are lack of knowledge. Essay must be useful to improve knowledge. It means that a good essay contains of knowledge. Creating an essay which full of knowledge becomes one of the problems faced by the students. The

students need to make clear essay-based assessment to make the teacher give judgment about their understanding. Therefore, the students at English Language Education Department in a private university in Yogyakarta said that making essay which full of knowledge is one of their problems when they make a essay-based assessment.

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