

Writing Essay Smoothly by Using IELTS Strategies

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Abstract. The ability to write an English essay at the level of university must be referred to international standard criteria markings, one of which is IELTS (International English Language Testing System). This research aims at initiating and proposing solution to enhance students' essay writing smoothly that fit the standard criteria by using IELTS strategies. This research is conducted in one class in the second semester, with the number of students are twenty four, academic year 2022-2023 of the English Department, Universitas Negeri Medan, in their Intermediate English Writing Class. The methodology used is R & D Research Design with the preliminary data obtained by using interview, observation and data exam papers. The methods are started by interviewing the class in order to find out the problems they face in writing essays, followed by observations during the process of their spontaneous essay writings and finally performing the IELTS strategies to see the improvements before and after having those strategies. The primary data are all students' essay writings either spontaneous (controlled) writings, or free (uncontrolled) ones. The results show there are steady improvements to the students' essay writings when they are performed with IELTS strategies frequently. These strategies lead to the ability to write essays smoothly and easily.

Keywords: IELTS strategies, Essay writings, Smoothly, Standard criteria marking.

1 Introduction

English as one of the international languages has been an essential skill that should be owned by students in higher education. Some reasons for this statement are, 1) as an additional skill needed to be able to work in foreign companies; 2) to continue our study abroad; as, 3) to enlarge our horizon especially to global education; as well as 4. being able to conduct college assignments, such as academic essay, thesis proposal or even finally to write the thesis. Izzan and Mahfuddin. (2007:1). In other words, someone who can perform English well in written or spoken ways will be indicated as a more competence one.

There are four language skills offered in English, namely speaking, listening, reading and writing. Among them, writing is regarded as the most difficult one to acquire. McLean.(2012). Many students in university level still cannot perform it well. Some factors for these are because there are no enough practices to write, no given feedback, no theoretical guidance given, no criteria markings that the students can not value their own writings etc. The lack of these factors can affect the students to produce a good and acceptable piece of writing.

Even though many researches have been done on students' writing ability, it seems the improvement of it is still minor and it has not been as a habit for them to write essay. So, that

is why the researcher would like to investigate some other factors that students cannot achieve the level of good essay writing as being established in many standard writing tests, such as TOEFL, TOEIC, IBT, IELTS etc.

This study is aimed at initiating and introducing the students with some strategies on how to write the essay easier and smoothly. Since the students' ability to write essay of English department of second semester in universitas negeri Medan is still low, it is suggested to study and use what we call the IELTS strategies that cover metacognition strategies, the organization of a good essay, patterns of essay, how to write a good thesis statement, and so on, that can train the students to model and familiarize them to write a good essay. According to the researcher's assumption, the students have got good ideas enough, or in other words, the students have actually got many ideas to write; it is proven by some brainstorming held during the research and they can be active to in proposing their ideas to some topics under discussion. Some relevant studies used to support this one were taken from Dirgeyasa. I.W (2016); Dirgeyasa I.W. (2014). This research analyzed how to improve the students' writing skill achievement through error analysis and also through genre based approach. According to the researcher's point of view, this researches still have not covered all the writing techniques or strategies in order to be able to write essay writing fluently yet. Another relevant one is taken from T.M. Duong (2022) that explained providing written corrective feedback in IELTS writing task 2 is very important and needed. But unfortunately the research is only limited to the giving feedback to the students, while writing strategies is also very important as well.

2 Method

This research was implemented by using Research & Development (R & D) design in English and literature department of Universitas Negeri Medan, in the second semester of even academic year 2022-2023, with the number of students were twenty four in their *Intermediate Writing Class*. The research was conducted in seven times of meetings in classroom. The method was started firstly by having in-depth interview in order to obtain data on how were the writing learning materials and the processes done in their former *General Writing class*. It was done because intermediate writing subject was a series or a prerequisite writing classes, means it was continued since general writing in the first semester, intermediate one in the second semester and finally advanced writing class in the third semester.

After obtaining the data from in-depth interview, then it was continued by instructing the students to write their own free essay writing with a topic '*My tree of life.*' The reason for giving this instruction was in order to obtain the preliminary data of their essay writing ability, such as the use of good coherence and cohesion, range of vocabulary, lexicogrammar, etc, as mentioned in the standard marking criteria in writing. There was a feedback given towards their first essay writing. The method was then continued by implementing the IELTS strategies, that includes metacognition strategies, such as planning, drafting, giving feedback, the essay organization, kinds of essay, how to write a good thesis statement, refute the arguments, coherence and cohesion, lexicogrammar etc. Then they were exposed to the IELTS standard writing criteria for task 1 and task 2. These essay writing practices were done for three times for task one and three times for task two, either done on the spot or face to face in classroom or by submitting their essay writings through digital system on google classroom. All the data were collected and marked by using IELTS criteria marking and then were documented.

3 Result and Discussion

Table 1. Preliminary Data Questions from in-depth Interview

| | Questions |
|----|---|
| 1. | Have you ever known the IELTS strategies ? |
| 2. | Have you ever introduced to the IELTS standard criteria marking systems? |
| 3. | During your <i>General Writing Class</i> , were there some feedback and correction given either from the lecturer or from peer feedback ? |
| 4. | Were some writing theories given during the former writing class ? |
| 5. | Were there some controlled situation given such as no plagiarism, no taking notes, or no source copying by the lecturer ? |

Table 2. Preliminary Data Answers from in-depth Interview

| | Answers |
|----|---|
| 1. | Some students answered yes, but some others said no. |
| 2. | The students answered no. |
| 3. | Lack of feedback and correction, but had once for peer feedback. |
| 4. | Theories were given but no exposure to the standard criteria marking systems. |
| 5. | Not at all, the students did plagiarisms, did note-taking, and opened the google translation for their essay writing. |

Table 3. Preliminary Data Task 1. 'My Tree of Life'
(Result based on IELTS criteria Marking)

| | Answers | Scores |
|-----|---------------------------|--------|
| 1. | Lisbeth Juliana Sidauruk | 4 |
| 2. | M. Faiz Al Islami Nst | 3 |
| 3. | Geltri Sutra Purba | 3.5 |
| 4. | Honey Crysty Marbun | 4 |
| 5. | Lusy Agnesia Sitanggang | 3 |
| 6. | Dumayanti Batubara | 3.5 |
| 7. | Enmia Virnanda Munthe | 3 |
| 8. | Inayah Safani | 2.5 |
| 9. | Putri Adelia | 3 |
| 10. | Juwita Permatasari | 4 |
| 11. | Niken Yolanda Br. Samosir | 3 |
| 12. | George Silaen | 3 |
| 13. | Christine Lumban Tobing | 4 |
| 14. | Dela Sarifa Manurung | 3.5 |
| 15. | Gracya Natalia Sibarani | 4 |
| 16. | Hanna Panggabean | 4 |
| 17. | Desman Silitonga | 4 |
| 18. | Khoirunnisa Ul-zannah | 2.5 |
| 19. | Rikcyan Syah | 3 |

| | | |
|-----|---------------------------|------------|
| 20. | Nabil Al Hafidz Sah Putra | 3 |
| 21. | Ayudira | 3.5 |
| 22. | Jenny Helvira | 3 |
| 23. | Rani Syahfitri | 3 |
| 24. | Evelyn Rachel | 3.5 |
| | Average | 3.4 |

Table 4. Preliminary Data Task 2.

| | Answers | Scores |
|-----|---------------------------|------------|
| 1. | Lisbeth Juliana Sidauruk | 3.5 |
| 2. | M. Faiz Al Islami Nst | 3 |
| 3. | Geltri Sutra Purba | 3 |
| 4. | Honey Crysty Marbun | 4 |
| 5. | Lusy Agnesia Sitanggang | 3.5 |
| 6. | Dumayanti Batubara | 3 |
| 7. | Enmia Virnanda Munthe | 3 |
| 8. | Inayah Safani | 2.5 |
| 9. | Putri Adelia | 2.5 |
| 10. | Juwita Permatasari | 3 |
| 11. | Niken Yolanda Br. Samosir | 3 |
| 12. | George Silaen | 3 |
| 13. | Christine Lumban Tobing | 4.5 |
| 14. | Dela Sarifa Manurung | 3 |
| 15. | Gracya Natalia Sibarani | 4.5 |
| 16. | Hanna Panggabean | 4 |
| 17. | Desman Silitonga | 4 |
| 18. | Khoirunnisa Ul-zannah | 3 |
| 19. | Rikcyan Syah | 3 |
| 20. | Nabil Al Hafidz Sah Putra | 3.5 |
| 21. | Ayudira | 3 |
| 22. | Jenny Helvira | 3 |
| 23. | Rani Syahfitri | 3 |
| 24. | Evelyn Rachel | 4 |
| | Average | 3.3 |

Table 5. Data after in-depth exposure to the IELTS strategies. Task 1.

| | Answers | Scores |
|----|--------------------------|--------|
| 1. | Lisbeth Juliana Sidauruk | 5 |
| 2. | M. Faiz Al Islami Nst | 4 |
| 3. | Geltri Sutra Purba | 5 |
| 4. | Honey Crysty Marbun | 4 |
| 5. | Lusy Agnesia Sitanggang | 5 |
| 6. | Dumayanti Batubara | 3.5 |
| 7. | Enmia Virnanda Munthe | 4.5 |
| 8. | Inayah Safani | 4 |

| | | |
|-----|---------------------------|------------|
| 9. | Putri Adelia | 4.5 |
| 10 | Juwita Permatasari | 5.5 |
| 11. | Niken Yolanda Br. Samosir | 4.5 |
| 12. | George Silaen | 3.5 |
| 13. | Christine Lumban Tobing | 5.5 |
| 14. | Dela Sarifa Manurung | 3 |
| 15. | Gracya Natalia Sibarani | 3.5 |
| 16. | Hanna Panggabean | 5.5 |
| 17. | Desman Silitonga | 4.5 |
| 18. | Khoirunnisa Ul-zannah | 5 |
| 19. | Rikcyan Syah | 4 |
| 20. | Nabil Al Hafidz Sah Putra | 4 |
| 21. | Ayudira | 3.5 |
| 22. | Jenny Helvira | 4 |
| 23. | Rani Syahfitri | 4 |
| 24. | Evelyn Rachel | 5.5 |
| | Average | 4.4 |

Table 6. Data after in-depth exposure to the IELTS strategies. Task 2.

| | Answers | Scores |
|-----|---------------------------|----------|
| 1. | Lisbeth Juliana Sidauruk | 5.5 |
| 2. | M. Faiz Al Islami Nst | 5.5 |
| 3. | Geltri Sutra Purba | 5.5 |
| 4. | Honey Crysty Marbun | 5 |
| 5. | Lusy Agnesia Sitanggang | 5.5 |
| 6. | Dumayanti Batubara | 4.5 |
| 7. | Enmia Virnanda Munthe | 5 |
| 8. | Inayah Safani | 4.5 |
| 9. | Putri Adelia | 5.5 |
| 10 | Juwita Permatasari | 6 |
| 11. | Niken Yolanda Br. Samosir | 5.5 |
| 12. | George Silaen | 4 |
| 13. | Christine Lumban Tobing | 6 |
| 14. | Dela Sarifa Manurung | 3.5 |
| 15. | Gracya Natalia Sibarani | 4.5 |
| 16. | Hanna Panggabean | 6 |
| 17. | Desman Silitonga | 5 |
| 18. | Khoirunnisa Ul-zannah | 5.5 |
| 19. | Rikcyan Syah | 4.5 |
| 20. | Nabil Al Hafidz Sah Putra | 5 |
| 21. | Ayudira | 6 |
| 22. | Jenny Helvira | 4.5 |
| 23. | Rani Syahfitri | 5 |
| 24. | Evelyn Rachel | 6 |
| | Average | 5 |

From the above table, it is seen that there is a steady improvement in essay writings between before the exposure to the IELTS strategies and after did the exposure, such as formerly there was no thesis statement, no many arguments to support the thesis statement, there were no many supporting sentences, the thesis statement is too specific, wrong structures, the organization of the essay patterns was still dull, wrong or incorrect transitional signals, still using personal pronoun I, you and so on, instead of the writer, the author, or the researcher, still using some rhetorical words, such as very good, very bad, interesting, the way to put ideas in each paragraph were still to and pro, which meant there were no good planning and outlining and another one which the students preferred to do in their essay writing was the use of their google translation as frequent as possible to translate their first language text into the English target one. The students did plagiarisms, taking notes from other sources or consult to the internet due to no control from their teachers. All of these weaknesses finally were gradually improved and improved after exposing to the IELTS strategies including the motivations given to them to prefer writing their own essays to plagiarizing ones.

4 Conclusion

To write any pieces of writings actually needs strategies. Without applying appropriate strategies, it seems the piece of writing would like be a dull one. Among so many strategies available, it is IELTS strategies which is more detail and comprehensively applied to use to any piece of writing including essay writing. Due to this research, there is a steady improvement to the essay writings that the students can write them smoothly and confidently and thus the IELTS strategies are successful to use.

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