UNDERSTANDING ELECTRONIC LETTER WRITING FOR VOCATIONAL SCHOOL STUDENTS: MATERIAL AND PRACTICE

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ABSTRACT

Vocational school students are intended to be informed and instructed on the art of composing business emails through this community service activity. It employed service learning (SL), an approach that combined academic instruction with community service. The service learning was conducted at one vocational school in Bandung City, West Java. There were twenty-two students who participated in this service learning. Besides, the learning service was two hours long. Moreover, the research used qualitative design to describe the students' effectiveness of the service learning in improving the students' email writing ability. Observation was used as a data collection technique. The findings implied that the students showed significant engagement from the beginning of service learning. Besides, they also got involved in a group discussion after the practical practices. Other findings indicated that the students gave positive feedback in which the interactive and participatory format of service learning enhanced their engagement and motivation. Finally, the traning, material and practices gave beneficial experience for students in comprehending business email protocols, equipping them for the professional environment post-graduation.

Keywords: Email; Writing Skill; Vocational School Students.

INTRODUCTION

One of learning objective of english subject in voational school is improving english writing skill through the material and practices of the topic. One of the important materials for vocational students is writing business emails. Based on Liu, Zhang, and Biebricher (2024), it is an important part of preparing them with effective communication skills in the digital world. The material is also

important in academic and professional life. Besides, the learning of business email material include understanding the correct email structure and formata and involving skills in conveying messages clearly and politely.

Moreover, there are several steps in delivering business email materials to the students. The first step is explaining about basic concept of emails. It can include the main purpose of writing emails, such as communicating with teachers, friends, or external parties. Then, it is also important to inform the students of the difference between formal and informal communication, and why choosing the right style is crucial depending on the intended audience (Khalifa and Albadawy, 2024; Wang, Li, and Bonk 2024). For example, emails to teachers or company officials require more formal language, while emails to friends can be more informal.

Next, the vocational students need to understand the important elements in a good email, such as a clear subject line, polite opening, well-structured message content, and appropriate closing. Teaching must emphasize the importance of using appropriate language, choosing words appropriate to the context, and correct grammar (Rabbianty, Azizah, and Virdyna 2023; Storey 2023). The teaching and learning activities can start by providing examples of good and bad emails to guide students, as well as ask them to analyze common mistakes in email writing.

Futhermore, the teaching and learning material should include a practical exercises to help the students in developing business email writing skills. Hardi (2020) wrote that the learning activities can include asking the students to write various types of emails, ranging from personal to formal, such as requesting permission, asking questions about course material, or sending reports. In these exercises, students can be given immediate feedback to correct errors or improve the quality of their writing. With these skills, students not only learn to write effectively, but also prepare themselves to communicate professionally in the future, both in academic contexts and in the world of work (Muhsin 2017; Utami et al. 2023).

The objective of the research was to investigate the students' writing skills after attending the service learning. The thraining was to provide students with authentic experiences that improve their writing skills, particularly in composing business emails. The research questions is, "Does service learning have an impact on students' ability to write emails?"

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *Writing Skills*

Writing is one of four english language skill. It usually become the last skill to be practiced, after listening, speaking and reading. Writing skills are skill to express ideas, thoughts, and information in written form. The skills are crucial since they enable individuals to clearly and coherently express their ideas, arguments, explanations, and information n both academic and professional environments. Writing skills are more than just grammar and spelling. They contain a range of competencies including organization, clarity, tone, and style, all of which are crucial for producing successful written works.

There several elements of a good writing skills. Among the most crucial elements of writing ability is organization. This is the ability to arrange written work coherently and logically, so ensuring that the body, introduction, and conclusion are all clearly defined and linked. A well-organized work of writing helps the reader to follow the argument or narrative without confusion. Good writers aim to clearly and succinctly transmit their ideas, even while they preserve the breadth and complexity of the subject matter. Burns and Siegel (2018) argued that the important elements of writing ability also are tone and style. Tone tells the writer's attitude toward the topic and the reader, while style speaks to the voice and technique of presentation of the content. Beside, using correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling helps one to keep professionalism and clarity (Rizkiani, Bhuana, and Rizqiya, 2020). Mistakes in these areas might lead to misunderstandings and compromise the author's reputation. Writing calls also for critical thinking and imagination.

B. *Email*

One important writing skill to have in today's digital world is the ability to write emails that many people use it. Students who can write emails can learn both the technical parts of email format and the more social aspects of tone and manners. Shen and Teng (2024) said that the best way to start teaching people how to write emails is to go over the basic parts of an email: the subject line, the welcome, the body, the closing, and the signature. Each of these parts does something different and helps organise the message so it is clear and easy to read. For example, the subject line should be short but clear, so the person who receives the email can tell right away what it's about. The greeting sets the tone for the message. For example, serious greetings are appropriate for business or school emails, while casual greetings might be appropriate for emails to friends or peers. One of the most important things to teach people who write emails is how to use tone and politeness. According to Ramadian, Cahyono, and Suryati (2019), it is very important for students to know the difference between formal and informal conversation and how to use language in the right way.

To sum up, the best way to get good at writing emails is to practise. Teachers can give students real-life situations or email writing exercises where they can write emails for different types of situations, such as personal, business, or academic. This gives students a chance to use what they've learnt and get comments on their writing. When students look at example emails together, they can see the mistakes they make most often and learn how to fix them right away.

IMPLEMENTATION AND METHODS

The community service in a form of service learning took place at SMKN 3 Baleendah, Bandung Regency, Jawa Barat provice. The school provided a suitable environment for the service learning with its facilities equipped to support the group size and the nature of the event. The service learning was held from 10:00 am to 12:00 am, a two hours long. There were 24 students who participated in the service learning .
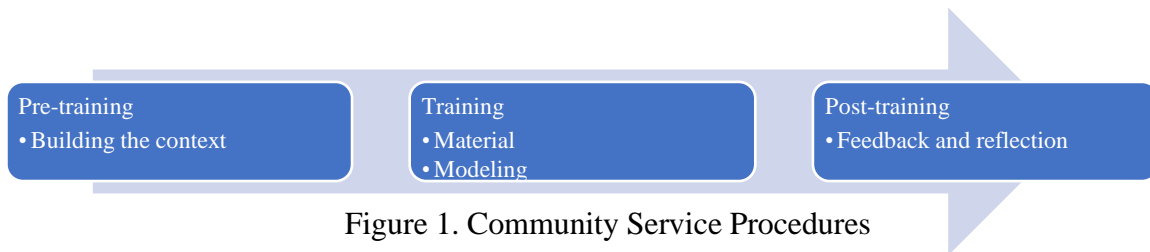
Figure 1. Community Service Procedures

The service-learning used service learning (SL). Service learning applied as the educational approach that integrates community service with academic instruction. The objective was to offer the students with authentic experiences that enhance their writing skills, especially in writing business emails. The combination of lectures, discussions, and hands-on activities ensured that the students received information and practiced them. The facilitators introduced key concepts and guided the students through practical exercises, followed by group discussions to reinforce learning and encourage collaborative problem-solving.

Futhermore, the research used qualitative as the reaserch method. The observation was used as the data collection technique. There were three points that were observed: the students' engangements, group discussions and students feedback.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the findings, the results of the community cervice trining that conducted in SMKN 3 Baleendah were positive and indicative of the effectiveness of the implemented methods. The two-hour service learning, held from 10:00 to 12:00 WIB, was designed with a focus on interactive learning, combining lectures, group discussions, and practical, hands-on activities. The service learning applied in this service learning enabled the students to absorb theoretical knowledge and engage directly with the material. It enhanced both the students' understanding and their ability to apply what they had learned in real-world contexts.
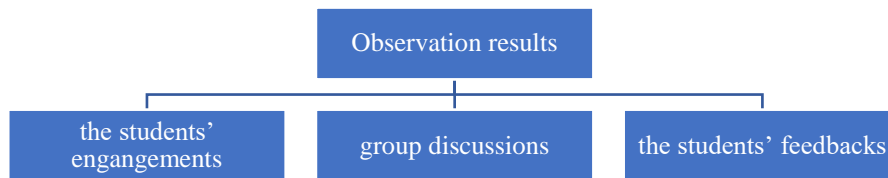
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Figure 2. Research Findings

First, based on the data, it was found that the students the students were highly engaged from the very beginning of the service learning (See Figure 2). After conducting an observation, it was determined that the students' engagement was primarily due to the materials' ease of comprehension and the interactive classroom environment between the instructors and students. They responded well to the clear structure of the service learning which began with a comprehensive introduction to the key concepts. One of the key strengths of the service learning was the emphasis on practical application which the students were given scenarios that required them to apply theoretical knowledge in ways that mimicked real-world situations. This was very important because it helped them see how what they were learning would help them in real life (Nazari, Shabbir, and Setiawan, 2021). Students worked on projects that required them to think critically, solve problems, and work together. These activities not only helped them understand better, but they also helped them learn how to work with others.

Second, the group discussions that came after the practical tasks were just as useful (See Figure 2). The students were able to talk about their ideas, ask questions, and disagree with each other, which helped them understand the material better. The discussions gave the students more confidence to say what they thought, and the facilitator could give immediate feedback and help where needed. This part of the service learning was especially helpful because it got students to learn by doing and helped them remember what they were learning through conversation and interaction with other students. Azizah and Nugraha (2021) said that the collaborative learning environment encouraged students to think critically and helped them understand more complicated ideas that they might not have fully grasped from lectures alone.

Picture 1. The service learning held in the classroom

The last findings were the students'feedback process. During the service learning, the facilitator continually assessed the students' progress, providing them with constructive feedback on their performance. This feedback was instrumental in identifying areas where students might have struggled or misunderstood certain points. For example, some students had trouble at first fully understanding how certain ideas could be used in the practical exercises. But after getting specific help and more explanations from the facilitator, they were able to understand better and use those ideas correctly in the next tasks (Phan, 2023). The students' feedback was mostly positive, and many of them said that the service learning 's interactive and participatory format kept them interested and motivated the whole time. They liked being able to ask questions and get answers right away, which made the process of learning feel more personalised.

The service learning activity at SMKN 3 Baleendah was highly successful in achieving its intended objectives. The service learning gave students complete learning experience by combining lectures, hands-on activities, and group discussions. This way, they could both understand the theoretical parts of the topic and learn useful skills they could use in real life. The service learning 's success shows how important it is to use interactive and participatory teaching methods, which encourage deeper engagement, encourage collaborative learning, and improve students' ability to

remember and use what they have learnt (Rizkiani, Bhuana, and Rizqiya, 2020). In the future, these techniques can be used to make educational activities even more effective, making sure that students are not just passive recipients of information but also active participants in their own learning.

In short, business writing, service learning, and digital literacy are all skills that will help students when they start working in the digital world. They can get to, understand, and use the information better if they know how to use technology. Then, learning how to write for business helps them learn how to talk to people professionally, which is useful in many fields. Service learning can improve both areas by giving students the chance to use their business writing skills directly in the workplace or the community. So, adding service learning, digital literacy, and business writing skills to vocational education makes for a well-rounded and useful learning environment for the workplace.

CONCLUSION

The service learning was conducted successfully at a vocational school in West Java. The activity was advantageous for students in terms of their comprehension of business email protocols, which prepared them for the professional environment they will be entering upon their graduation. The research has several limitations to its short duration and lack of data collection techniques used. In addition, based on the research findings, there are also numerous recommendations. First, the writing skills of vocational students can be enhanced through the regular implementation of English writing materials and service learning. It encompasses not only email materials, but also other English professional materials. Secondly, the subsequent research may employ additional data collection methods, such as interviews and tests, to accumulate additional data and discoveries.

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