EXPLORING LOCAL CULTURE TOPICS AS PREWRITING PROMPTS FOR ESSAY WRITING IN THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT AT UKI TORAJA

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this research is to determine which topics of the Toraja local culture preferred by the students in their prewriting activities in writing their essays. Bringing students closer to their own culture through the use of the Local Culture Supplementing Model or local culture as a teaching resource. Additionally, it is expected that students would develop their essay-writing abilities or perhaps create articles on Toraja to highlight the region's distinctiveness. Students' writings and those of the younger generation can help Toraja culture advance in the writing world. Regarding the findings of this preliminary study, more than 75% of students indicated that they used the strategy when writing essays: Students needed topics on the local culture for prewriting. The data gathered via an online survey on Google Form were explained using a quantitative manner. Through the data analysis, it was found out that tourism object, rambu solo', rambu tuka', food, clothing, social values, and arts are preferred by the students in their prewriting activities in writing their essays.

> ***Keywords :*** *topics, local culture, essay writing, pre-writing*

INTRODUCTION

The ability to write an essay is regarded as the most challenging language talent when compared to other language skills. (Choudhury, 2013; Nguyen Thanh Huy, 2015; Rao, 2017; Senel, 2018; Tangpermpoon, 2008) are a few examples. Rather than starting with sentences, moving on to paragraphs, and then generating essays with several paragraphs, each paragraph must contain a single, interwoven theme from the first paragraph to the last paragraph. (Lehman & Schraw, 2002; Wang, 1994; You, 2004).

According to the reality they encounter, students at the English Department at UKI Toraja continue to have difficulty writing essays. They were unable to refine their arguments or organize them into a cohesive essay. They also think that the knowledge being imparted to them is still general in nature and comes from other nations or places. They find it difficult to write letters as a result.

It is essential to recognize that each country and every region has a distinctive culture of its own. Toraja also fits this description. The Toraja people's cultural customs are being observed today. The level of competency of class-prepared EFL students is substantially impacted by the local culture's incorporation on their reading and writing abilities. Additionally, when students write essays based on local topic, they will find it simpler to generate additional ideas. (Aminullah et al., 2019; Indriyani, 2016; Nambiar et al., 2020) are a few examples. Additionally, it was emphasized that one method for teaching foreign languages is to provide a local context during the learning process. (Gay et al., 2020; Khan, 2016; Umasih et al., 2019; Yusniawati & Lestari, 2021) state that essays are longer writing assignments than paragraphs.

An introduction, a few body paragraphs that support it, and a conclusion make up an essay's three main sections. (1). The reader reads the introduction before continuing with the article. This format for a paragraph is distinct from others. According to (Blanchard & Christine, 2004), there are a variety of approaches to writing an introduction. The following are some illustrations of effective introductions: a) Move from the general to the specific, b) use stories, c) quotes, d) questions, and e) showing facts and statistics. (2) Body: The body of the essay is made up of a number of paragraphs that provide evidence for the thesis. Between the introduction and conclusion come supporting paragraphs. The essay's body must have at least one or two paragraphs that are not immediately related to the subject being covered. (3) Conclusion; the goal of this final paragraph is to restate the main points without repeating them. There are a number of approaches to end a closing paragraph that will compel the reader to concur with, reject, or at the very least consider the thesis, according to (Blanchard & Christine, 2004), make recommendations or predictions; restate the core idea; pose an inquiry; or suggest a solution.

Students learn the skill of writing in school. (Brow.H. Douglas, 2001) asserts that writing is a type of thought. The preceding explanation can be used to illustrate the procedures involved in writing as follows: 1) Prewriting; the prewriting stage is the first in the writing process. It's the phase where we look into our early theories about a subject. The following list includes some of the most well-liked prewriting strategy categories. Free writing, brainstorming, clustering, tag, and mimics are a few examples. The hardest part of writing is frequently the process of getting started. (Mogahed, 2013) Prewriting is like warming up your motorcycle's engine before you ride. To effectively communicate our thoughts prior to writing, there are a lot of tasks that we must complete. The steps are listed below: Brainstorming, clustering, free writing, journaling, planning, and organization are the first four steps. (2) Writing; according to (Hashempour et al., 2015), writing is the second step in the writing process. In this stage, we start to arrange the concepts we've gathered during the prewriting activity. The next step is revision. After writing, there is still an

additional assignment to finish before you are ready to publish your work. Most writing that is longer than a few sentences is organized into paragraphs. Making our main argument clear is the most significant thing that we must do while writing a paragraph. This paragraph's topic sentence should be one short sentence. (3) Editing and revision; this step in the process is quite important. We can add new ideas, change some of the old ones, or remove unimportant ones to improve anything. edit to correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation (Faraj, 2015).

Understanding a culture is the same as understanding a language, and vice versa for describing a culture. Good enough asserts that people's mental representations of how to view, react to, and comprehend various things make up culture. It is challenging to identify culture, which makes it challenging to discuss in second language classes. These concepts are currently common in language instruction (Hall, 2021; Kramsch C, 1996), Language and culture are intertwined, it is difficult to teach a language without culture, and culture provides the necessary foundation for language usage. According to (Matrix., Genc & Bada, 2005), there are two ways that culture influences language education: through language and pedagogical aspects. It affects the semantic, pragmatic, and discourse levels of the language from a linguistic perspective. It has an impact on pedagogy in terms of the linguistic resources chosen and the cultural basis of the instructional strategy. (Evans, 2003; Lê & Short, 2009; Risager, 2005; Thomas, 1983).

Since culture and language are linked together, there is a strong possibility that culture can be incorporated into ELT materials (Sardi, 2002) This is because English cannot be taught without taking into thought the culture of the society in which it is established. Additionally, according to (Wijaya Mahardika, 2018), teaching children about local cultures in the curriculum helps them learn English. The acquisition of sociolinguistics norms can be greatly aided by teachers who are aware of cultural variations around the world and sympathetic to their students' requirements. The act of teaching English to speakers of other languages reflects the changes wrought by a more varied, global, and sophisticated society. He argues that teaching English should take place independently of its cultural context. It is preferable to select circumstances that the students are familiar with. The question is not if cultural elements should be included in English training, but rather how to go about accomplishing so. The second claim assumes that language cannot be divorced from the larger settings in which it is used. It also assumes that in addition to other aspects, these circumstances are influenced by the individuals' cultural backgrounds.

METHOD

In this study, data gathered via an online survey on Google Form were explained using a quantitative manner. A Google Form online survey was used to collect the data for this study. The two most crucial phases of the writing process were the subject of the questionnaire. Prewriting is being done. It is interested in learning whether students are interested in using local cultural subjects to gather writing-related ideas and whether students prefer using local cultural issues to organize ideas. Another one is concerned with local cultural issues that aid in prewriting. Students from the English Department were the study's participants. Between semesters four and ten, there were 110 students. There are 53 students in semester 4, 40 in semester 6, 13 in semester 8, and 4 in semester 10. Google Form was used to collect the data. The students' WhatsApp group was used to share the link to the survey. To determine how students responded to the supplied items, the data obtained were tallied. The data were examined using percentages to ascertain whether or not the students employ local culture subjects in prewriting.

RESULT
Students' Preferences on Local Culture Topics for prewriting

Table 1. Students' Preferences on Local Culture Topics for Prewriting

Statement	Total Resp.	Name of the Local Content's Topic	Percentage	Others' topic Percentage
1. When writing essays, students often draw on personal experiences connected to the culture of the area to gather ideas.	110	Tourism Objects	76,36	23,64
	110	Rambu Solo' / Funeral Ceremony	75,63	24,37
2. When the subject involved the local culture, they wrote about any topic that came to thoughts.	110	Rambu Solo' / Funeral Ceremony	75,82	24,18
	110	Rambu Tuka'/Thanks Giving	70,18	29,82
	110	Food	70,54	29,46
	110	Clothing	70,36	29,64
	110	Social Values	71,27	28.73
	110	Music, Song, arts	73,27	26,73
	110	Rambu Solo' / Funeral Ceremony	75,27	24,73
3. If the subjects they write about have anything to do with local culture, writers aren't supposed to worry about readers' reactions while evaluating their writing.	110	Tourism object	74,72	25.28
	110	Rambu Tuka'/Thanks Giving	70	30
	110	Rambu Solo' / Funeral Ceremony	74,72	25,28
4. Compared to other topics, local culture is my preferred choice for a writing introduction.	110	Tourism object	80	20
	110	Rambu Tuka'/Thanks Giving	70,90	29,10
	110	Social values	70,54	29,55
	110	Music, song, arts	71,45	28,55
	110	Rambu Solo' / Funeral Ceremony	76,18	23,82
5. Being able to organize and write down ideas utilizing local culture as a theme.	110	Tourism Objects	77,82	22,18
	110	Rambu Tuka'	70,18	29,82
	110	Rambu Solo' / Funeral Ceremony	74	26
6. Being able to write well when writing essays on issues related to local culture.	110	Tourism Objects	76,73	23,27
	110	Rambu Solo' / Funeral Ceremony	72,72	27,73

Some findings can be emphasized in table 1 above. As shown in item 1, (76,36 %) of the 110 participants use Tourism objects and Rambu Solo' or Funeral ceremony topics (75,63%) as their personal experiences relating to local culture to collect ideas as pre-writing. Item 2a demonstrates that when the issue was relevant to local culture, participants put all of their thoughts into writing by choosing Rambu Solo' / Funeral Ceremony (75,63%), Rambu Tuka'/Thanks Giving (70,18%), Food (70,54%), Clothing (70,36 %), Social Values

(71,27%), Music, song and arts (73,27%), and Rambu solo/funeral ceremony (75,27%) . Item 3a demonstrates that participants are not worried about reader evaluations of their work if the subjects they write about are local cultural issues, namely: Tourism object (74,72 %), Rambu Tuka'/Thanks Giving (70 %), and Rambu Solo'/Funeral Ceremony (74,72%) . Item 4 shows that Touris object (80%), Rambu Tuka'/ Thanks Giving (70,90%), Social Values (70,54 %), Music, song and arts (71,45%), and Rambu Solo'/Funeral ceremony (76,18%) topics that participants prefer the topic of local culture over other themes when they begin writing. We can observe from item 5 these topics (77,82 %) Tourism objects, (70, 18 %) Rambu Tuka'/ Thanks Giving, (74%) Rambu Solo' / Funeral Ceremony were chosen by participants and claim that they are able to put down ideas effectively and in excellent order using local culture issues. Item 6 reveals that (76,73%) choose Tourism objects and (72,72 %) Rambu Solo'/Funeral ceremony claim that they are able to write effectively while writing essays on local culture subjects.

DISCUSSION

Without being assigned a specific topic, the first step in writing an essay or paper is brainstorming ideas and deciding what to write about. Concept generation is the least methodical and most creative process in academic writing. There is no infallible formula for developing quality ideas, despite the fact that there are several approaches to generate ideas. Students get topics for essays by drawing on personal experiences related to the local culture. (Irawati, 2015) studied whether an interesting topic such as culture, encompassing lifestyle, costume, and tradition, should be included in an Academic Writing class. It is also mentioned by (Nurlia & Arini, 2017) that local culture in English language instruction allows students to learn English skills well since students are asked to talk or describe something they are extremely familiar with. When looking for a topic, students try to think of something they enjoy writing about or a way to incorporate their passions into it, so they use their experience with local culture to acquire the ideas they need for their essay writing. According to (Yu & Zhou, 2022), Chinese EFL learners shown distinctiveness in several elements of SLWA (Second Language Writing Anxiety) due to cultural influences, such as ethnic culture, local culture, academic culture, and disciplinary culture.

Furthermore, when the topic is about the local culture, students write down everything that comes to mind.(Valdes, 1988) presented several writings that language teachers can utilize as a starting point for incorporating a cultural component into their teaching writing essays. With local culture issues, students are better able to express themselves in their writing. Language and culture, as noted by (Hinkel, 1999), are inextricably linked. This is because they connect their writing ideas to their prior knowledge. It is easier to write when we have something in mind that we are quite familiar with.

Additionally, not being concerned about how readers will react to our work is highly beneficial in developing our thoughts in writing because feeling confidence in what we write can help us write much better. (Astuti, 2016; Valdes, 1988) This study discovered that students feel the same way whether the themes they write about have something to do with local culture.

Putting the first sentence down on paper is one of the most challenging duties a writer has to complete. When they first start writing, they prioritize local culture above other topics. This is because selecting a speciality that appeals to writers, one that talks to and about writers, would pique their attention. This expertise is quite useful in dealing with the most difficult aspect of writing. (Astuti, 2016; Irawati, 2015; Valdes, 1988).

People do not want to change anything if it is already fantastic, but they should ensure that the ideas are organized in such a way that readers genuinely understand the point as the writer imagines it: perfect, brilliant, and full of unique insight. According to the students, they can use local cultural concerns to efficiently and logically write down their opinions. Furthermore, they believe that writing essays about features of local culture allows them to clearly express themselves.

This finding is confirmed by (Fox, 1994), who claims that cultures where individuals communicate indirectly and holistically, appreciate the knowledge of the past, and downplay the individual in favor of the collective influence students' writing. And (Alodwan & Saleh Khalaf Ibnian, 2014) proposed that in teaching writing, more focus be placed on the pre-writing stage since it plays an important part in the writing process.

CONCLUSION

Following the discussion of this research, a conclusion can be reached. According to the preceding section's discussion, it was found out that tourism object, *rambu solo'*, *rambu tuka'*, food, clothing, social values, and arts are preferred by the students in their prewriting activities in writing their essays.

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