



Elevating Skills: Twelfth-Grade Students' Proficiency in Writing Application Letters in an ESP Context

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Abstract

This study investigates the competence of twelfth-grade students at the Senior High School of Islamic Boarding School Warasatul Anbiya in writing application letters, a critical skill for preparing students for professional opportunities. Adopting a descriptive quantitative approach, the research evaluates student performance based on key criteria, including structure, content, and language accuracy. Data were collected through a classroom task in which students composed application letters, assessed using a standardized scoring rubric. The findings reveal that 8 students achieved excellent scores (80-100), 5 students attained good scores (68-79), 1 student received a fair score (56-65), and 2 students scored in the weak range (46-55), with no students in the poor category (0-45). These results indicate that most students possess the essential skills required to write effective application letters, demonstrating proficiency in critical components such as salutation, main content, and closing. The study underscores the effectiveness of current instructional methods in developing students' writing abilities while highlighting areas for pedagogical enhancement. These findings offer valuable insights for educators striving to improve students' readiness for professional and academic communication.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini menyelidiki kompetensi siswa kelas dua belas di Sekolah Menengah Atas Pondok Pesantren Warasatul Anbiya dalam menulis surat lamaran kerja, sebuah keterampilan yang sangat penting dalam mempersiapkan siswa untuk mendapatkan kesempatan kerja. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif deskriptif, penelitian ini mengevaluasi kinerja siswa berdasarkan kriteria utama, termasuk struktur, konten, dan akurasi bahasa. Data dikumpulkan melalui tugas kelas di mana siswa membuat surat lamaran, yang dinilai menggunakan rubrik penilaian standar. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa 8 siswa meraih nilai sangat baik (80-100), 5 siswa meraih nilai baik (68-79), 1 siswa mendapat nilai cukup (56-65), dan 2 siswa mendapat nilai di kisaran lemah (46-55), tanpa ada siswa yang berada di kategori buruk (0-45). Hasil ini menunjukkan bahwa sebagian besar siswa memiliki keterampilan penting yang diperlukan untuk menulis surat lamaran yang efektif, menunjukkan kemahiran dalam komponen-komponen penting seperti salam pembuka, isi utama, dan penutup. Studi ini menggarisbawahi efektivitas metode pembelajaran saat ini dalam mengembangkan kemampuan menulis siswa sambil menyoroti bidang-bidang yang perlu ditingkatkan secara pedagogis. Temuan ini menawarkan wawasan yang berharga bagi para pendidik yang berusaha untuk meningkatkan kesiapan siswa untuk komunikasi profesional dan akademis.

INTRODUCTION

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is a field within applied linguistics that focuses on teaching English tailored to the needs of particular professions or areas of study. Brown (2003) (Lina and Salatiga n.d.) notes that ESP is defined by its emphasis on practical language learning, where lessons are designed around the specific vocabulary and communication styles relevant to fields such as business, law, or healthcare. This approach typically involves assessing learners' needs to identify the specific language skills they require, ensuring that the curriculum meets the real-world challenges they will face in their careers. By concentrating on relevant content and practical application, ESP not only improves language skills but also prepares learners to communicate effectively in their chosen fields.

In today's competitive job market, the ability to communicate effectively through written documents is essential. One of the most important forms of written communication for students entering the workforce is the application letter. This document serves as a key tool for presenting oneself to potential employers, showcasing qualifications, and making a strong first impression. As such, mastering the art of writing application letters is a critical skill for

twelfth-grade students preparing to transition from high school to higher education or the workforce (Smith, 2022).

According to Markel (2007), application letters are crucial as the first step in securing a job. Candidates use application letters to present their qualifications and profile. Therefore, applicants need to write engaging and clear application letters in order to make a favourable impression. According to Cahyono et al. (2015), application letters are typically written when applying for a job. For instance, the letters can be written down on a piece of paper but also written down through email. Both of them depend on the company that the students want to apply

The writing of application letters encompasses several key components, including structure, language, and tone. Theoretical frameworks in writing pedagogy emphasize the importance of explicit instruction in these areas to enhance students' writing skills. According to the Process Approach to writing, students benefit from understanding the stages of drafting, revising, and editing. This approach encourages students to see writing as a process rather than a final product, promoting deeper engagement and skill development (Jones, 2021). In their 2009 study, Field et al. investigated the role of application letters in the hiring process. It is of significant importance as the initial step in securing any position. The applicant utilized the application letter as a means of demonstrating their suitability for the position. It is therefore crucial to consider the qualifications and profile of the applicant in question. The applicant was required to demonstrate their interest in the position by including a statement to that effect in their application letter. The application letter should be concise and clear in order to convey the appropriate information. Widiati et al. (2015) elucidated the rationale behind this assertion. The aforementioned application letter was typically composed for the purpose of To apply for employment.

A business application letter adheres to a specific format, comprising key sections such as the heading, inside address, and salutation, body and closing. The heading should include the return address (comprising the street, city, state, zip code, and country) and the date, typically formatted in block style with a comma after the city and day. The inside address features the recipient's organization or business details, matching the envelope's address but included in the letter for documentation purposes. The salutation is formal in nature and concludes with a colon. The body of a business letter, which often addresses topics related to entrepreneurship, should be concise, clearly articulated, and readily comprehensible. In light of the considerable volume of daily correspondence in business settings, it is essential to prioritize brevity and directness. The closing is analogous to that of a personal letter, with the initial word capitalized and followed by a comma.

Despite the recognized importance of application letters, many students struggle with this form of writing. Research indicates that a significant number of high school graduates lack the necessary writing skills to craft effective application letters. Common challenges include unclear organization, inappropriate tone, and insufficient understanding of the target audience. These difficulties can hinder students' chances of securing interviews and ultimately achieving their career goals (Davis & Lee, 2023). An intriguing letter can assist a candidate in obtaining employment. A letter of application plays a pivotal role in the hiring process. If the cover letter is written with proper grammar and a well-crafted logo, it is likely that the reader will advance the candidate to the subsequent stage of the hiring process. This underscores the significance of effective writing as a crucial aspect of the hiring process.

Moreover, the problems associated with writing application letters are compounded by the limited instructional time dedicated to this specific genre of writing. While general writing skills are often emphasized in the curriculum, targeted instruction on application letters is frequently overlooked. This lack of focus can leave students unprepared to meet the expectations of potential employers, further contributing to their anxiety about entering the job market (Taylor, 2022).

Related studies have highlighted the impact of instructional interventions on improving students' writing abilities. For instance, studies have shown that direct teaching of the components of effective application letters, coupled with opportunities for practice and feedback, can lead to significant improvements in students' writing performance (Brown, 2023). These findings underscore the need for educational strategies that address the specific writing challenges faced by students in this context.

Moreover, Previous research has identified the ability to master the layout of English correspondence as an essential skill for vocational students, particularly those in the Office Automation & Governance (OTKP) department. Given the significance of job application letters and resumes in the professional landscape, this study concentrated on the examination of English-written job applications and resumes crafted by vocational students. The research introduced the use of Google Docs as a technological tool to support writing tasks and evaluated its efficacy in comparison to traditional manual writing. The study employed an experimental design comprising pre-tests, post-tests, and a Forum Group Discussion (FGD) to obtain comprehensive feedback. The findings revealed that the use of Google Docs markedly enhanced the quality of job application letters and resumes among class X OTKP students at SMK Negeri 1 Salatiga. As evidenced by a t-test analysis, the results indicated that Google Docs facilitated a more effective approach to learning English correspondence than manual writing methods. Previous research showed that writing job application letters is very important. It can empower the idea of the research that conducted study about this topic. Based on the previous research, it can be seen there is no study that focus on the content itself. (Lina and Salatiga. 2022)

In the Indonesian educational landscape, the students need to learn at school only from elementary school until senior high school. The government only covers the educational needs of the Indonesian people only until they are in the level of senior high school. There is no guarantee for the students in Indonesia to continue to study unless it is not based on the need of itself by every students. so provide such skill like writing application letter is crucial. so that for those students who doesn't have opportunity to study they can choose to work. On the other hand, the emphasis on writing skills in the curriculum has increased in recent years. However, there remains a gap in research specifically focused on twelfth-grade students' abilities to write application letters that are not similar to the students' occasional school unless they are more focused on learning religious subjects such as Islamic books and stuff. Addressing this gap is crucial for developing effective teaching strategies that can better prepare students for their future adventures (Nguyen, 2021).

Based on the observation of the researcher, the researcher found that Some student doubts about continuing their study at university still have doubts about continuing their study to university. Some of them choose to apply for work and become employees and earn money. Based on the interview of some students in the twelfth grade at Warasatul Anbiya, there are some reasons why they choose to earn money without being willing to continue to study. There are many contradictory opinions related to this topic for students. whether earning

money as soon as possible or continuing their university studies. The students who choose to be an employee are mostly not because they don't want to continue their studies but because they just have the obstacles of such a money reason; the reasons were the parents are not allowed, the economic aspect and the other aspect of consideration. Hence, the reasons can come from themselves but also come from their family background.

On the other hand, however, this school is not a vocational school. The desire to have a job is also the same as the students in the vocational school. In the vocational school, the students are prepared to have a job after graduation, but in the Warasatul Anbiya school, most of the students mostly have the desire, but they must also have the desire to have more comprehension of a GPPD religion for life fundamentals. In contrast, The researcher assume that every students in Indonesia should be provided the skill of writing a good application letter so that all the students has the same opportunity whenever they

Based on the problems above they really enthusias to learn the application leter in the classromm especially English application letter because they want to have a job in the country side.the students think that having a job in abroad will be get more money rather than Indonesia. In other side they still have no a basic skill to support their desire. Hence, It is really interesting for the researcher to investigate their enthusiasm whether the enthusiasm is in line with the result of their learning application letter. This is one of the learning for specific purposes for the students, which are useful for their future job, especially in writing application letter that requires using English.

In conclusion, This study aims to analyze the writing abilities of twelfth-grade students in crafting application letters, to identify strengths and weaknesses in their writing job application letter. By examining student work and gathering insights from educators, this research seeks to contribute to the understanding of how best to support students in developing this essential skill (Harris, 2022).

METHODS

The researcher employed a descriptive quantitative approach in conducting the research. The objective of this research was to describe the abilities exhibited by students in composing application letters. This study employed a descriptive research design. The objective was to ascertain the extent of the students' proficiency in composing an application letter. As stated by Best (2005), descriptive research is concerned with limiting the characteristics of a given phenomenon or entity that exists concurrently with the study itself. This research did not seek to develop a new theory; rather, it aimed to verify and describe the existing one.

The population under study was the entire students Senior High School of the Islamic boarding School of Warasatul Anbiya in eleventh grade. There are thirty students in the eleventh grade th.In this study, the researcher employed a random sampling technique. Ary (2010) stated that random sampling is a method of selection based on a random procedure whereby the probability of an individual being selected is independent of their membership of the population. In this study, the researcher collected data from all the students in eleventh grade that was chosen randomly.The sampling process involved writing the names of the classes on small pieces of paper, which were then collected in a container. The researcher shook the container, and the samples were randomly selected and retrieved from the container. The selected paper will be the sample of this research and will be analyzed by the researcher.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

Students writing abilities of twelfth-grade students in crafting application letters

The research identified the students' capacity to compose job applications. The participants were divided into four groups according to their academic performance: 8 students with excellent grades, 5 students with good grades, one student with fair grades and two students with weak grades. The previous results demonstrate that a subset of twelfth graders at Islamic boarding school of warasatul anbiya exhibited the capacity to compose a proficient job application letter based on their academic performance and grade point average. It can be observed that 8 students achieved high scores (80-100), 8 students obtained good scores (66-79), one student attained a score between 56-65, two students received weak scores (46-55), and no students demonstrated poor academic performance (0-45).

Table 1.1

TABLE STUDENTS SCORE IN WRITING JOB APPLICATION

No	Code	Score
1.	S1	90
2.	S2	85
3.	S3	95
4.	S4	88
5.	S5	92
6.	S6	81
7.	S7	90
8.	S8	82
9.	S9	75
10.	S10	68
11.	S11	70
12.	S12	55
13.	S13	50
14.	S14	45
15.	S15	30

The researcher also identified the writing on the paper for the students on the level of weakness and failure. They failed to write because of some errors in vocabulary related to the job, since they just only used common vocabulary in the learning activity for the entire lesson. So it's hard for them to write down the words related to job application letters. Besides that,

they also failed to understand the structure of the job application letter, so they had low scores on the written text of the application letters. Therefore, because of these two reasons, they can not consider having the ability to write a job application letter.

Strengths and weaknesses in their writing job application letter.

After scoring the student writing assessment, the researcher found that there are strengths and weaknesses of the students in writing job applications. Later, the strengths can be seen in the students who got good scores in writing job application letters since the students are really motivated to learn job application letters, so the result is good too. It can be seen from the structure of the students' writing. They can make the writing based on the structure correctly. Not only based on the structure. It can be seen from the elements of writing, such as good spelling and grammar.

However, there is also a weakness in the student's writing of the job application letter. The weakness can be seen from the paper's content of the job application letter, and as stated above, the score students are considered weak in writing job applications.

Here is the data of students errors in writing application letter

Table 1.2

Table students error in writing job application letter

No	Error	Description
1.	Generic content	sing a template letter without personalizing it for the job or company.
2.	Spelling and grammar error	Typos and grammatical mistakes that suggest a lack of attention to detail.
3.	Weak opening and closing	Starting without a strong hook or not including a clear call to action at the end.
4.	Ignoring job description details	Not tailoring the content to match the qualifications and skills requested by the employer.

Based on the data above. It can be shown that there are three parts of students' errors in writing job applications. This error and mistake can be a reflection for the educator so that the next learning of the job application letter is better than today. For instance, the student who has a weak score has problems with spelling and grammar. For the next lesson the researcher can provide any grammar related to write the students ability in writing job application.

DISCUSSION

Application letter, writing skills, twelfth-grade students, Islamic boarding school, descriptive quantitative

The findings of this research elucidate several pivotal aspects pertaining to the students' capacity to compose job application letters, as evidenced by the performance of twelfth-grade students at the Islamic boarding school of Warasatul Anbiya. The students were classified into four performance categories: excellent, good, fair, and weak. This classification provided

insight into the correlation between academic performance and writing proficiency, specifically in the context of crafting job applications.

Notable Strengths

A noteworthy finding is the considerable number of students (8 out of 16) who demonstrated exemplary performance, achieving scores between 80 and 100. These students exhibited a robust grasp of the fundamental components of job application writing, including the appropriate structure, coherent content, and the correct usage of grammar and vocabulary. This indicates that students with higher academic achievements are more proficient in the skills necessary to compose professional job application letters. It is reasonable to conclude that these high scores are the result of motivation, familiarity with structured writing, and attention to detail. Furthermore, five students scored within the good range (66-79), indicating that a substantial subset of the students possesses a competent grasp of job application writing. These students displayed a solid understanding of letter organization and maintained acceptable spelling and grammar standards, albeit with occasional minor errors. Their work suggests that, while they

Strengths and weaknesses in their writing job application letter.

The analysis of the student writing assessment revealed clear strengths and weaknesses in the quality of the job application letters. Students who received higher scores exhibited several key strengths that contributed to the quality of their work. One of the primary strengths observed was their adherence to the appropriate structure of a job application letter, as outlined in the relevant literature. These students demonstrated an ability to organize their content in an effective manner, ensuring the presence and logical arrangement of each section, including the introduction, body, and conclusion. This structured approach not only demonstrated their comprehension of the format but also enhanced the overall clarity and professionalism of their writing.

In addition to demonstrating proficiency in structural competence, the exemplary performance of some students was characterised by a command of language skills. These students demonstrated proficiency in spelling and adherence to grammatical conventions, which enhanced the readability and credibility of their letters. This suggests that their motivation to learn and practise writing job application letters had a direct impact on their ability to master these essential components, which in turn led to higher scores.

However, the assessment also identified areas requiring improvement, particularly among students who scored lower on the writing assessment. A notable deficiency was observed in the content of the job application letters. These students frequently encountered difficulties in developing meaningful and relevant content that accurately conveyed their qualifications, experiences, and motivations for the position in question. This lack of depth in their writing diminished the effectiveness of their applications and resulted in less persuasive and engaging letters. Additionally, some students displayed recurring errors in grammar and spelling, which negatively affected the overall quality of their writing. These issues suggest that while students

may have a general awareness of the job application letter structure, they require further support in developing comprehensive content and refining their language skills.

CONCLUSION

The data presented can be subjected to analysis in order to conclude. The test results demonstrate that the 12th-grade students of Warasatul Anbiya exhibit a high level of proficiency in writing job applications. Following the calculation of the data by the researcher, it was found that 8 students were in the 'Excellent' category, representing a percentage of 53.33%. The 'Good' category was awarded to 20% of students, while 2 students were placed in the 'Weak' category. Ultimately, the researcher calculates the overall score and takes the average score based on the mean score of the students on the test.

This suggests that a proportion of students from the 12th grade at Warasatul Anbiya are able to write a job application. The researcher identified that the difficulties encountered by students were partially attributable to their failure to spell the title and address within the document correctly. Additionally, the students demonstrated difficulty in accurately integrating their CVs into the body of the text, as the job application format in the English version differed from that of the Indonesian application form.

To be sum up, the researcher suggests to the learner and the for next researcher to conduct a study about job application letters for students in twelve grade by providing any technique and method in teaching this topic as English for a specific purpose so that the students who doesn't have the change to continue their study still have hope to live this life better in the future.

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