

An Academic Writing “Essay Writing Training Program for Senior High School Students at MAN Pematangsiantar”

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Abstract. This community service activity aimed to improve students' essay writing skills through essay writing training conducted for senior high school students at MAN Pematangsiantar. Writing essays is an important academic skill that supports students' literacy development, critical thinking, and academic writing ability. However, many students still faced difficulties in organizing ideas, developing paragraphs, and understanding essay structure. Therefore, essay writing training was conducted using lecture, discussion, practice, mentoring, and feedback methods. The activity was carried out through three stages: preparation, implementation, and evaluation. During the implementation stage, students learned essay structure, paragraph development, and transition signals, and then practiced writing essays based on selected topics. The results of this activity showed that students' understanding of essay structure improved, students were able to organize ideas more systematically, and students' motivation and confidence in writing also increased. The training also supported the school literacy program by encouraging students to express ideas in written form. In conclusion, essay writing training is effective in improving students' writing skills and literacy competence. Therefore, similar training activities are recommended to be conducted continuously to support students' academic writing skills.

Keywords: essay writing, training, writing skills, literacy, community service

1 Introduction

Writing is one of the most important language skills that students must master in the educational process. In language learning, writing is often considered the most difficult skill compared to listening, speaking, and reading because writing requires students to generate ideas, organize thoughts, use appropriate vocabulary, apply grammar correctly, and arrange sentences into coherent paragraphs. Writing is not only a communication tool but also a thinking process that involves organizing ideas logically and systematically [1]. Through writing, students can express their opinions, ideas, arguments, and experiences in written form.

In academic contexts, one of the writing forms that students need to master is essay writing. Essay writing is an important academic skill because essays are commonly used in assignments, examinations, competitions, and academic publications [2]. Essay writing also trains students to think critically, analyze problems, and present arguments supported by evidence. Therefore, essay writing skills are very important for senior high school students, especially for those who will continue their studies to university level.

However, in reality, many senior high school students still face difficulties in writing essays. Based on preliminary observations conducted at MAN Pematangsiantar, it was found that many students had low writing ability, especially in essay writing. Students often experienced difficulties in starting their writing, determining essay topics, organizing ideas, developing paragraphs, and writing conclusions. In addition, students also had limited vocabulary and grammar mastery, which made them less confident in writing English essays. Another problem faced by students is the lack of practice in writing. Writing is a productive skill that requires continuous practice, but in classroom learning, writing activities are sometimes limited due to time constraints and curriculum targets. Teachers often focus more on reading and grammar exercises rather than writing practice. As a result,

students rarely practice writing essays and do not have enough experience in organizing their ideas into written form.

Furthermore, students often feel that writing is a difficult and boring activity. They feel afraid of making mistakes in grammar and vocabulary, so they prefer not to write. This lack of confidence becomes one of the factors that hinder students' writing development. In fact, writing skills can improve significantly if students are given proper guidance, practice opportunities, and constructive feedback [3]. Essay writing actually has a clear structure that can help students organize their writing. Generally, an essay consists of three main parts: introduction, body, and conclusion. The introduction presents the background of the topic and thesis statement, the body contains the main discussion or arguments, and the conclusion summarizes the discussion and restates the main idea. If students understand this structure, writing essays will become easier and more systematic. Writing skills are the ability to convey ideas, opinions, and feelings to others [4], [5], [6], [7].

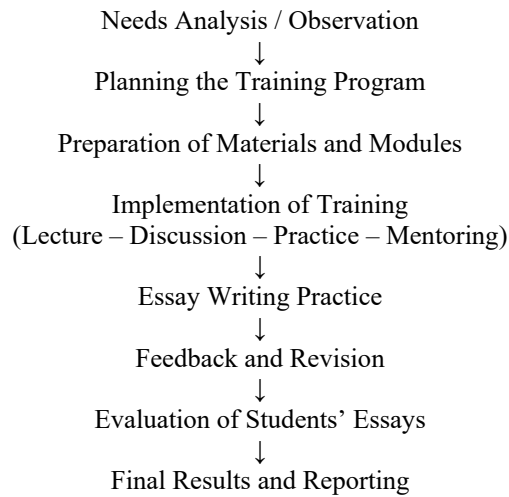
Therefore, it is necessary to conduct essay writing training for students, especially senior high school students. Essay writing training is an activity designed to improve students' writing skills through structured learning, practice, and mentoring [8]. Through training, students can learn step by step how to write essays, starting from choosing topics, making outlines, developing paragraphs, using transition signals, and writing conclusions. The essay writing training conducted at MAN Pematangsiantar aims to improve students' essay writing skills and increase students' literacy competence. Literacy skills are very important in the modern era because students are required not only to read information but also to produce written information in the form of essays, reports, and scientific papers. Writing essays also supports students in participating in essay competitions, writing scientific papers, and preparing academic assignments in higher education. This activity is a form of community service focused on improving students' academic essay writing skills through practical training and mentoring. The primary goal of the activity is not to test educational research hypotheses, but rather to provide beneficial educational interventions for students and improve their academic literacy skills.

In addition, essay writing training can also improve students' critical thinking skills [9]. When students write essays, they must analyze a topic, express their opinions, provide arguments, and draw conclusions. This process trains students to think logically, critically, and systematically. Therefore, essay writing is not only about writing but also about thinking skills development. This training also helps students become more confident in expressing their ideas in written form. Many students actually have good ideas but do not know how to express them in writing. Through essay writing training, students are guided step by step so they can write essays more easily and confidently. Moreover, essay writing training is also expected to support the school literacy program. The literacy movement in schools aims to improve students' reading and writing culture. Meanwhile, [10] stated that writing cannot be considered merely a motor activity, but also a mental activity, because writing is a medium for conveying what the writer feels. Writing essays is one of the activities that can support literacy programs because students not only read information but also write their ideas and opinions based on what they have read and learned.

Based on the explanation above, essay writing training is very important for senior high school students because it can improve writing skills, critical thinking skills, literacy skills, and students' confidence in writing. Therefore, essay writing training activities were conducted for senior high school students at MAN Pematangsiantar to help students improve their essay writing skills and develop their academic writing abilities

2 Method

This Community Service Program will be implemented at at MAN Pematangsiantar. The target group for this Community Service Program, through the Community Partnership Program, is 32 twelfth-grade students of at MAN Pematangsiantar. The Community Service Program activities will be held on May 26, 27, and 28, January 2026. This activity was conducted as a community service program aimed at improving students' essay writing skills through structured training at MAN Pematangsiantar. The method used in this activity was a training and mentoring approach, focusing on practical learning and direct student engagement [11]. This is the step of activity.



The team has added a detailed explanation of the training activity evaluation procedure. The revisions include:

2.1 Assessment Criteria

Assessment is conducted using an academic essay assessment rubric with a scale of 1–5 for each aspect:

Table 1. Assessment Criteria

Assessment Aspect	Indicator
Essay Structure	Completeness of introduction, content, and conclusion
Grammar	Accuracy of grammar and sentence structure
Coherence	Connectedness between ideas
Vocabulary	Use of academic vocabulary
Writing Mechanics	Spelling and punctuation

2.2 Feedback Mechanism

Participants receive direct feedback through:

- a. Writing corrections by the facilitator
- b. Group discussions
- c. Writing revisions based on facilitator comments
- d. Participant essay presentations

2.3 Writing Skill Improvement Indicators

Writing skill improvement is demonstrated through:

- a. Increased average post-test score
- b. More systematic writing structure
- c. More appropriate use of academic vocabulary
- d. Reduced grammatical errors

The activity evaluation was conducted through a descriptive approach using pre- and post-tests on academic essay writing. Assessments were conducted using a rubric covering essay structure, grammar, coherence, academic vocabulary, and writing mechanics. Additionally, observations during the training and direct feedback from the facilitator were used to assess participants' development.

3 Results and Discussion

The community service activity in the form of essay writing training conducted at MAN Pematangsiantar was implemented through three main stages: preparation, implementation, and evaluation. The results and discussion of this activity are presented based on those stages so that the discussion is aligned with the method of the activity.

3.1 Preparation Stage

At the preparation stage, the team conducted coordination with the school and identified students' initial abilities in essay writing. Based on the initial observation and informal discussion with students, it was found that most students had basic knowledge of writing but did not understand how to write a structured essay. Students tended to write paragraphs without clear organization, and some students did not know the difference between introduction, body, and conclusion in an essay.

In addition, students also reported that they rarely wrote essays in English and usually only wrote short paragraphs. Their main difficulties included starting an essay, developing ideas into paragraphs, and using appropriate vocabulary and grammar. Based on these findings, the training materials were prepared focusing on essay structure, paragraph development, and writing practice.

This preparation stage was very important because it helped the training team design materials that matched students' needs. Therefore, the training focused more on practical writing activities rather than theoretical explanations.

3.2 Implementation Stage

The implementation stage was the main activity of this community service program. The training was conducted through several activities, including lectures, discussions, writing practice, mentoring, and feedback.

3.2.1 Lecture and Explanation Session

In this session, students were introduced to the basic concepts of essay writing, including the definition of essay, types of essays, and essay structure consisting of introduction, body, and conclusion. Students were also taught how to write thesis statements, topic sentences, and supporting sentences.

During this session, students showed interest and asked several questions related to essay writing. Some students asked how to start the introduction paragraph and how to write a good conclusion. This shows that students were actively involved in the learning process.



Figure 1. Lecture and Explanation Session

3.2.2 Discussion Session

After the explanation, students were given sample essays and asked to identify the structure of the essays. Students worked in small groups to discuss the introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion in the sample essays. This activity helped students understand essay organization more clearly because they analyzed real examples.

The discussion session also helped students generate ideas for their own essays. Students discussed several topics such as education, environment, social media, and school activities. This activity made students more prepared before starting to write their essays.



Figure 2. Discussion Session

3.2.3 Writing Practice

In the writing practice session, students were asked to write essays individually based on the topics they had chosen. Before writing the essay, students were guided to make outlines consisting of introduction, main ideas for body paragraphs, and conclusion.

This outline-making activity helped students organize their ideas before writing. Compared to their initial writing ability, students' essays became more organized because they followed the outline they had made.

During the writing process, the instructor guided students and helped them when they had difficulties in vocabulary, grammar, or idea development. Some students asked about vocabulary translation, sentence structure, and transition words. The instructor provided guidance and examples to help students continue their writing.



Figure 3. Writing Practice

3.2.4 Mentoring and Feedback

After students finished writing their essays, the instructor reviewed their essays and provided feedback related to organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. Students were then asked to revise their essays based on the feedback given.

This mentoring and revision process was very important because students could identify their mistakes and improve their writing. Most students made mistakes in grammar and sentence structure, but their essay organization improved significantly.



Figure 4. Writing Practice

3.3 Evaluation Stage

The evaluation stage was conducted by reviewing students' essays and observing students' participation and responses during the training. Based on the evaluation results, several improvements were identified.

First, students were able to write essays with clearer structure consisting of introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion. Before the training, many students wrote essays without clear structure, but after the training, most students were able to organize their essays properly.

Second, students showed improvement in developing ideas into paragraphs. Students were able to write topic sentences and supporting sentences to explain their ideas. Their paragraphs became longer and more detailed compared to their initial writing.

Third, students' motivation and confidence in writing increased. During the training, students were more active in asking questions, participating in discussions, and completing writing tasks. Students also stated that writing essays became easier when they followed the steps such as making outlines and developing paragraphs step by step.

Fourth, students became more familiar with transition signals such as *first*, *furthermore*, *in addition*, *however*, *therefore*, and *in conclusion*, which made their essays more coherent and easier to understand.

The team has added indicators for assessing academic essay writing skills to the activity evaluation methods section. Assessment is based on the following aspects:

- a. Organization of ideas and paragraph structure
- b. Grammatical accuracy
- c. Writing coherence and cohesion
- d. Use of academic vocabulary
- e. Accurate use of punctuation and spelling

The team also adds that evaluation is conducted through:

- a. Pre-test and post-test essay writing assessment
- b. Observations during the training process
- c. Analysis of participants' writing results before and after the training
- d. Direct feedback from the facilitator

With these additions, the process of improving writing skills becomes more measurable and systematic.

Table 2. Evaluation Stage

Aspects	Before Training	After Training
Essay Structure	Fairly	Good
Grammar	Not	Good Enough
Academic Vocabulary	Limited	More Varied
Writing Coherence	Less Systematic	More Structured

This training has a positive impact on students' writing skills.

3.4 Discussion

Based on the results of this community service activity, it can be seen that essay writing training using a practice and mentoring approach is effective in improving students' writing skills. The improvement occurred because students were not only given theoretical explanations but also given opportunities to practice writing and receive feedback.

The training process also showed that students' main problem was not only grammar but also idea organization and paragraph development. After students learned how to make outlines and organize essays, their writing became more structured and easier to understand.

This activity also supported the school literacy program because students were encouraged to write essays and express their ideas in written form. Writing activities like this can help improve students' literacy culture, critical thinking skills, and academic writing ability.

Overall, the essay writing training conducted at MAN Pematangsiantar provided positive results in improving students' essay writing skills, motivation, and participation in writing activities. Therefore, similar training activities are recommended to be conducted regularly to continuously improve students' writing skills and literacy competence.

Evaluation results showed an improvement in participants' writing skills after the training. Most students improved their essay structure, use of academic vocabulary, and reduced grammatical errors. The process writing approach helped participants understand the stages of writing systematically, while the genre-based writing approach helped them recognize the characteristics of academic essays.

4 Conclusion

Based on the implementation of the community service activity in the form of essay writing training conducted at MAN Pematangsiantar, it can be concluded that the training activity provided positive impacts on students' essay writing skills and learning motivation. The training helped students understand the basic structure of an essay, including introduction, body, and conclusion, as well as how to develop ideas into paragraphs systematically. Before the training, most students experienced difficulties in determining essay topics, organizing ideas, and developing paragraphs. Students also tended to write essays without clear structure and lacked confidence in writing. After participating in the training, students showed improvement in organizing essays, developing ideas, and using appropriate vocabulary and transition words. In addition, students became more confident and motivated in writing essays.

The training activity also showed that practice and mentoring are very important in improving students' writing skills. Through direct practice, feedback, and revision, students were able to understand their mistakes and improve their writing. The participatory and practice-based training approach made students more active and engaged in the learning process. Overall, this community service activity can be considered successful in improving students' essay writing skills and supporting literacy development among senior high school students. Therefore, essay writing training activities are important to be implemented continuously to support students' academic writing skills and literacy culture in schools. The academic essay writing training program had a positive impact on improving the academic literacy skills of students at MAN Pematangsiantar. Through a process-based training approach and systematic evaluation, participants were able to improve their ability to write academic essays in a more structured and communicative manner.

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