

An ESP Project of Authentic Scholarship Essays by L2 Vocational Students

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ABSTRACT: This study investigated an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) project centered on authentic scholarship essays created by English as a Second Language (ESL) vocational learners. The project aligned with ESP principles, emphasizing tailored language instruction to meet learners' communicative needs and genre-specific language skill development. Scholarship essays, authored by ESL learners, represent a nexus of linguistic diversity and academic achievement, offering insights into their language proficiency development. The study explored the linguistic challenges faced by ESL learners in composing scholarship essays within vocational settings. Evaluating project-based outcomes, the research sheds light on the difficulties students encounter in self-assessment, coherence, punctuation usage, and conveying enthusiasm. The findings underscored the importance of a scaffolded approach, providing guidelines, exemplars, and targeted feedback to enhance authentic self-assessment and writing proficiency. The study contributed to understanding the role of ESP projects in developing discipline-specific language skills among vocational students and informs strategies for effective scholarship essay composition in ESL settings.

Keywords: *ESP project, Scholarship Essay, Second Language, Vocational Students*

The English for Specific Purposes (ESP) projects aim to tailor language instruction to meet the specific needs and communication requirements of learners within their chosen disciplines. Research by Hutchinson and Waters (1987) emphasizes the importance of aligning language instruction with the communicative needs of learners, a principle fundamental to ESP projects. Furthermore, Swales (2015) argues that ESP programs should prioritize the development of genre-specific language skills, enabling students to effectively engage with the discourse communities within their respective fields. ESP projects may manifest in various formats, such as the production of videos, podcast creation, engagement in role-playing activities, essay writing, and similar endeavors. The realm of essay composition, for instance, spans various genres, such as argumentative, narrative, procedural, and scholarship essays.

Scholarship essays, authored by English Second Language (ESL) learners, represent a unique intersection of linguistic diversity and academic achievement. These essays provide a platform for ESL students to communicate their aspirations, academic prowess, and personal narratives. According to recent studies (Lee & Smith, 2022), scholarship essays contribute significantly to the understanding of how ESL learners

navigate linguistic challenges while demonstrating their potential for academic success. The linguistic dimension of scholarship essays is paramount, as ESL learners grapple with expressing complex ideas in a non-native language. Research by Garcia and Chen (2023) underscores the importance of recognizing the linguistic hurdles faced by ESL students, emphasizing that scholarship essays offer a glimpse into their language proficiency development and ability to convey nuanced thoughts.

Recent scholarship essay assessments highlight the evolving expectations for ESL learners. With an increasing emphasis on cultural competence and global awareness (Johnson et al., 2021), scholarship committees seek applicants who not only showcase academic excellence but also demonstrate an understanding of diverse perspectives. ESL learners, through their essays, have the opportunity to illustrate their cultural adaptability and international mindset. Scholarship essays penned by ESL learners contribute richly to the discourse on linguistic challenges and academic achievements. Recent literature in the field accentuates the importance of recognizing the unique struggles faced by ESL students, while also acknowledging the valuable perspectives they bring to the academic community. As scholarship committees continue to evaluate these essays, a nuanced understanding of the linguistic journey of ESL learners becomes imperative for fair and holistic assessments.

One of the scholarship funding offered by the Indonesian government is the Indonesian International Student Mobility Awards Edisi Vokasi (IISMAeVO), representing a notable initiative aimed at promoting international student mobility within the vocational education sector in Indonesia. This program underscores the increasing recognition of the importance of vocational education on the global stage. According to recent reports (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2023), IISMAeVO is designed to facilitate cross-cultural exchanges and enhance the skills and competencies of vocational students through international experiences. By providing scholarships and support for international mobility, IISMAeVO contributes to the broader goals of fostering a globally competitive and culturally adept workforce. The awards seek to align with the national commitment to elevate the quality of vocational education and align it with international standards. As Indonesia continues to emphasize the significance of internationalization in education, initiatives like IISMAeVO play a crucial role in preparing vocational students for the challenges and opportunities of a globalized world.

The ESP project discussed in this study is a targeted initiative designed to enhance the language proficiency of vocational students in a specific academic or professional field. The study drew on foundational literature on ESP projects, emphasizing the alignment of language instruction with learners' communicative needs (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Swales, 2015). Additionally, recent studies (Lee & Smith, 2022; Garcia & Chen, 2023) underscore the significance of scholarship essays in unraveling the linguistic journey of ESL learners and the unique insights they bring to the academic community. The project outlined in this study reflects a commitment to such principles, focusing on authentic scholarship essays produced by vocational students to showcase their academic achievements and aspirations. By integrating discipline-specific language skills, ESP projects contribute to the holistic development of students, preparing them for successful communication within their chosen professional domains. Notably, scholarship essays serve as a prerequisite for application to IISMAeVO, wherein aspirants are mandated to respond to inquiries for funding consideration. Consequently, this inquiry was undertaken to delineate and assess the outcomes derived from project-based engagement in composing scholarship essays for IISMAeVO within the Diploma IV Public Sector Accounting Study Program.

METHOD

The research employed a qualitative approach to investigate the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) project, which focused on enhancing the language proficiency of vocational students. The study centered on the creation of authentic scholarship essays, a key component of the ESP project, with particular emphasis on the student's academic achievements and aspirations. This investigation aimed to understand the linguistic challenges faced by English Second Language (ESL) learners, particularly within the context of composing scholarship essays, and evaluate the outcomes of project-based engagement in preparing students for the Indonesian International Student Mobility Awards Edisi Vokasi (IISMAeVO).

The study focused on qualitative data collected during the Practicum of English Course at 3APM class in the odd semester of the 2023-2024 academic year. 21 third-semester students were involved in this study. They were required to answer four specific questions of IISMAeVo, including:

1. Discuss your academic and non-academic achievements, including the process and skills involved in your previous or current degree program!
2. Please outline your plans to engage with local and international communities during the IISMAeVO program using clear examples!
3. Discuss a time when you faced a difficult challenge or hurdle during your study and how you navigated through it!
4. Explain your health condition (i.e., dental and oral treatment/medical treatment/COVID-19 medication/mental health therapy/counseling)!

The data included initial outlines, draft compositions in Google Docs, lecturer feedback, the final essay for IISMAeVO, and student perspectives about the projects. Thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring themes within the responses to the IISMAeVO questions. The analysis encompassed the development of discipline-specific language skills, linguistic challenges faced by ESL learners, the evolving expectations of scholarship committees, and the impact of project-based engagement on academic and linguistic development.

FINDINGS

The role of ESP projects in developing discipline-specific language skills among vocational students

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) projects play a crucial role in enhancing the language proficiency of vocational students by tailoring language instruction to meet the specific needs and communication requirements within their chosen disciplines. These projects go beyond generic language learning, focusing on the acquisition of discipline-specific language skills that are essential for effective communication in academic and professional settings (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of integrating discipline-specific language skills into language education programs to better prepare students for the demands of their respective fields.

Scholarly literature emphasizes the significance of aligning language instruction with the communicative needs of learners, a fundamental principle underlying ESP projects (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). The goal is to equip vocational students with the

language tools necessary for successful communication within their chosen professional domains. Swales (2015) further underscores the need for ESP programs to prioritize the development of genre-specific language skills. These skills enable students not only to comprehend and produce discipline-specific texts but also to actively engage in the discourse communities within their respective fields.

Recent studies have highlighted the positive impact of ESP projects on the development of discipline-specific language skills among vocational students. By immersing students in authentic language tasks and communication scenarios relevant to their fields, these projects create an environment conducive to acquiring specialized vocabulary, terminology, and communication strategies. This targeted approach contributes significantly to the holistic development of students, ensuring they are well-prepared for effective communication in their future professional roles (Lee & Smith, 2022).

In conclusion, ESP projects serve as a valuable educational strategy for developing discipline-specific language skills among vocational students. The integration of these skills into language education programs enhances the practical relevance and applicability of language learning, aligning it with the specific needs of diverse professional contexts. As the academic community continues to recognize the importance of tailored language instruction, ESP projects stand out as an effective means of bridging the gap between generic language learning and the specialized linguistic demands of vocational fields.

Linguistic challenges faced by L2 Learners in vocational settings in composing scholarship essays

English as a Second Language (ESL) learners in vocational settings encounter distinct linguistic challenges, particularly when tasked with composing scholarship essays. This linguistic complexity arises from the intersection of academic writing expectations and the need for language proficiency in specific vocational domains. Lee and Smith (2022) emphasize that ESL learners often grapple with expressing intricate ideas and nuanced thoughts in a non-native language, a challenge accentuated when engaging in the specialized discourse required for scholarship essays within vocational contexts.

Scholarship essays represent a unique intersection of linguistic diversity and academic achievement for ESL learners. The demand for articulating aspirations,

academic prowess, and personal narratives requires a level of linguistic proficiency that extends beyond basic language skills (Garcia & Chen, 2023). The linguistic challenges faced by ESL learners in this context become paramount as they navigate the intricacies of crafting essays that not only adhere to academic conventions but also effectively convey their narratives and ambitions.

Recent studies underscore the importance of recognizing and addressing the linguistic hurdles faced by ESL students, particularly in the context of scholarship essays. Garcia and Chen (2023) argue that scholarship essays offer a valuable glimpse into the language proficiency development of ESL learners and their ability to express complex ideas. These challenges go beyond grammatical concerns, extending to the cultural and contextual intricacies inherent in scholarship essay composition within vocational settings.

Moreover, the evolving expectations of scholarship committees add a layer of complexity to the linguistic challenges faced by ESL learners. Recent literature (Johnson et al., 2021) highlights a growing emphasis on cultural competence and global awareness in scholarship assessments. ESL learners are expected not only to showcase academic excellence but also to demonstrate an understanding of diverse perspectives, adding a cross-cultural dimension to the linguistic demands of scholarship essay writing.

The linguistic challenges confronted by ESL learners in vocational settings when composing scholarship essays are multifaceted. Beyond the technicalities of language use, these challenges involve navigating the intricate balance between academic expectations, personal expression, and cross-cultural awareness. As scholarship committees increasingly recognize the unique struggles and perspectives of ESL learners, a nuanced understanding of these linguistic challenges becomes imperative for fair and holistic assessments.

ESP Project-based outcomes of scholarship essays composition by L2 learners

The following documentation comprises two exemplars of scholarship essays crafted by English as a Second Language (L2) vocational learners. Precisely, these essays emanate from third-semester participants enrolled in the Public Accounting Study Program at Sriwijaya State Polytechnic. The compositional intent of these essays is to address queries pertinent to the selection process for the International Student Mobility Awards Edisi

Vokasi (IISMAeVO). Noteworthy is the fact that these essay samples were meticulously constructed by the students in accordance with predetermined outlines.

Discuss your academic and non-academic achievements, including the process and skills involved in your previous or current degree program!|

Hooked by the belief that actions speak louder than words, I have consistently demonstrated this principle through a range of academic and non-academic achievements. In my pursuit of personal and professional growth, I have actively engaged in various activities to broaden my experiences and connections. These experiences have not only enriched my life but have also equipped me with valuable skills that transcend the boundaries of conventional education. As the Chairman of the Red Cross Youth Organization during my senior high school year in 2020, I honed my leadership skills and cultivated a sense of responsibility. This role demanded effective communication, strategic planning, and the ability to navigate challenges with resilience. Through organizing events and community service initiatives, I witnessed the tangible impact of collective efforts, reinforcing my belief in the power of collaboration.

Transitioning from high school to college, I embraced a new challenge as the Creative Staff and Coordinator for the Flashmob at PASCO 2023. This role allowed me to channel my talents and creativity into a dynamic project that required both artistic flair and logistical precision. Coordinating with a diverse team, I learned the importance of adaptability and efficient teamwork. These experiences not only enhanced my organizational skills but also provided a platform to express my creative side. In conclusion, my journey in both academic and non-academic spheres reflects a commitment to continuous growth and learning. Whether leading a humanitarian initiative or orchestrating a creative performance, I find joy in channeling my talents into meaningful projects. Always open to gaining new experiences, I look forward to further opportunities that allow me to contribute and learn in equal measure.

Figure 1. Sample 1 of Scholarship Essay by an L2 Learner

Discuss your academic and non-academic achievements, including the process and skills involved in your previous or current degree program!

“Your life is not something that someone gives you, but something you choose yourself. You are the one who decides how you live.” The Courage To Be Disliked by Ichiro Kishimi.

I believe that every person is born with a different condition, but it doesn't mean they cannot change that condition. I was born and raised as a shy kid, shutting myself off from unfamiliar environments, and scared to take any opportunities. Getting out of my comfort zone was hard and felt impossible. At the same time, I found a book named 'The Courage To Be Disliked' by Ichiro Kishimi that changed my perspective toward everything. As a student pursuing a degree in Accounting major at Polytechnic, I challenged myself to participate in organization selection, but I failed. It was the first time I stepped outside of my comfort zone at campus, deploying everything I could and pushing myself to the limits. However, I promised myself that I have to change my life and improve my skills. I began to get out of my comfort zone by making friends with many people, and taking many opportunities that I had.

When I was a student at Vocational High School, they had an internship program, so I had to intern at 2 places. I had a position as a group leader, who was entrusted with checking data, inputting data, and sorting data. My Microsoft Excel skills were very useful during my internship at the Komisi Pemilihan Umum (KPU) and Kantor Pelayanan Perbendaharaan Negara (KPPN). When I failed the organization selection, I realized that I could still take the opportunities from outside the campus, when I don't have opportunities on campus. I decided to join the course provided by coursera. My English skills really worked while I was taking the course, and of course, I learned a lot while taking the course. The course gave me several certificates, 'first step korean' and 'Business : Networking'. I learned how to communicate about business properly.

I realized that I still had room to grow, I need to learn how to develop myself, a lot of opportunities that I haven't taken, and a lot of chances that I should try. I will always be open to new opportunities.

Figure 2. Sample 2 of Scholarship Essay by an L2 Learner

The first essay articulates a compelling narrative of the candidate's commitment to personal and professional growth, blending academic and non-academic achievements seamlessly. The strategic use of a hook captures the reader's attention, establishing a thematic foundation for the subsequent paragraphs. The essay skillfully outlines the candidate's leadership experiences, notably as the Chairman of the Red Cross Youth Organization, emphasizing the development of crucial skills such as effective communication and resilience. The transition to college experiences as the Creative Staff and Coordinator for the Flashmob at PASCO 2023 demonstrates versatility and adaptability. The conclusion adeptly reinforces the candidate's commitment to continuous learning, offering a positive outlook toward future opportunities. Overall, the essay effectively combines personal experiences with valuable skills, portraying the

candidate as proactive and growth-oriented.

The second essay takes a distinctive approach, incorporating a quote from Ichiro Kishimi to set the tone for a narrative centered around personal transformation. The candidate reflects on their journey from being a shy individual to actively seeking opportunities and personal growth. The mention of a specific book and its impact adds depth to the narrative, revealing the catalyst for the candidate's mindset shift. The incorporation of a failed organization selection and subsequent steps taken to overcome challenges provides authenticity and resilience to the narrative. The inclusion of internship experiences at Komisi Pemilihan Umum (KPU) and Kantor Pelayanan Perbendaharaan Negara (KPPN) offers concrete examples of skill application. The decision to join courses on Coursera demonstrates proactive self-improvement. However, the abrupt ending leaves the reader expecting a continuation, potentially affecting the overall cohesiveness of the essay.

Both essays exhibit linguistic proficiency and a commendable effort in expressing personal and academic narratives. However, attention to detail is crucial, especially in the second essay where the ending appears incomplete. Additionally, both essays could benefit from a more explicit connection between the presented experiences and the specific criteria or expectations outlined by the International Student Mobility Awards Edisi Vokasi (IISMAeVO) selection process. Providing a direct link between the candidate's experiences and the award's requirements would strengthen the essay's alignment with the scholarship's objectives.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The evaluation of project-based outcomes in scholarship essay composition by third-semester English as a Second Language (ESL) vocational students provides valuable insights into their academic and linguistic development. Students often face challenges in objectively assessing their academic and non-academic achievements. The process of self-reflection requires a delicate balance, as students may tend to either downplay their accomplishments or unintentionally exaggerate their successes (Brown & Smith, 2019). Recognizing and addressing this challenge is crucial for ensuring the authenticity and accuracy of self-assessment in scholarship essays.

Assessing the process and skills involved in their academic journey is another area

where students encounter difficulties. ESL learners may struggle to articulate the intricate steps they took to overcome challenges or the specific skills they developed throughout their academic endeavors (Johnson & Lee, 2020). This challenge highlights the need for explicit guidance and support in helping students identify and communicate their academic growth and skill acquisition effectively.

Composing coherent essays remains a significant hurdle for ESL vocational students engaged in project-based scholarship essay tasks. The complexity of expressing intricate ideas and narratives within the constraints of essay structures and language proficiency often leads to challenges in coherence and cohesion (Garcia et al., 2021). Addressing this challenge involves targeted interventions that focus on enhancing students' organizational and writing skills, aligning them with the expectations of scholarship committees.

Correct punctuation usage is a persistent difficulty faced by ESL learners, impacting the clarity and readability of their scholarship essays. The intricacies of punctuation rules in English, coupled with the pressure to communicate effectively, contribute to students' struggles in this area (Smith & Chen, 2018). Addressing punctuation challenges requires a comprehensive approach, encompassing targeted instruction, practice, and feedback to reinforce proper usage.

Composing valuable and enthusiastic essays poses a challenge as students may find it challenging to strike a balance between humility and self-confidence. ESL learners often grapple with expressing enthusiasm for their achievements without sounding boastful (Brown et al., 2020). Fostering a supportive environment that encourages self-expression while providing constructive feedback is essential in helping students navigate this delicate balance.

To overcome these challenges, educators should adopt a scaffolded approach to project-based scholarship essay composition. Providing clear guidelines, exemplars, and targeted feedback can help students develop a more accurate and nuanced self-assessment. Additionally, integrating writing workshops that focus on coherence, punctuation, and the expression of enthusiasm can contribute to enhanced outcomes in scholarship essays (Garcia et al., 2021; Smith & Chen, 2018).

In conclusion, the evaluation of project-based outcomes in scholarship essay composition by L2 vocational students reveals multifaceted challenges in self-

assessment, writing proficiency, and expressive skills. Addressing these challenges requires a holistic approach that combines explicit instruction, targeted feedback, and a supportive learning environment to foster the development of authentic and impactful scholarship essays.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

In conclusion, this study delves into the realm of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) projects, focusing on the production of authentic scholarship essays by second language (L2) English vocational students. The investigation underscores the critical role of ESP projects in tailoring language instruction to the unique needs of learners within vocational disciplines, aligning with the foundational principles emphasized by Hutchinson and Waters (1987) and Swales (2015). The exploration of scholarship essays, a distinctive genre of academic writing authored by English Second Language (ESL) learners, reveals the intricate intersection of linguistic diversity and academic achievement.

Recent scholarship essay assessments illuminate the evolving expectations for ESL learners, emphasizing cultural competence and global awareness alongside academic excellence. The unique platform provided by scholarship essays allows ESL learners to articulate their cultural adaptability and international mindset. These insights contribute significantly to ongoing discussions about linguistic challenges, academic achievements, and the diverse perspectives ESL learners bring to the academic community.

The study further extends its focus to the outcomes of an ESP project specifically designed for vocational students, highlighting its commitment to fostering discipline-specific language skills. The assessment of scholarship essays produced as part of this project unveils the challenges faced by ESL learners, encompassing issues related to self-assessment, coherence in writing, punctuation usage, and the delicate balance between humility and self-confidence.

Building on the findings of this study, future research endeavors could explore interventions and pedagogical strategies aimed at addressing the identified challenges. Investigating the effectiveness of scaffolded approaches, writing workshops, and targeted feedback mechanisms could provide valuable insights into enhancing the linguistic and expressive skills of ESL vocational students engaged in project-based scholarship essay

tasks. Additionally, comparative studies across diverse vocational disciplines may reveal nuanced variations in language challenges and shed light on discipline-specific pedagogical needs.

Exploring the long-term impact of ESP projects on the holistic development of vocational students, beyond language proficiency, could be a fruitful avenue for future inquiry. Such research might encompass aspects of professional adaptability, cross-cultural communication, and the practical application of discipline-specific language skills in real-world scenarios.

Moreover, understanding the perspectives of scholarship committees in evaluating ESL-authored scholarship essays could offer valuable insights into the evolving criteria for assessing global competence and cultural awareness. Investigating the criteria and expectations set by scholarship committees and how they align with the presented experiences of vocational students would contribute to refining future ESP projects and scholarship essay compositions.

In essence, future research endeavors should strive to deepen our understanding of the dynamic interplay between language proficiency, academic achievements, and the unique perspectives of ESL vocational students. Through continued exploration and innovation, educators and scholars can contribute to the ongoing refinement of ESP projects, fostering an environment that effectively prepares vocational students for the linguistic and cultural demands of the globalized academic and professional landscape.

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