

## Conference Paper

# Material Development of English Correspondence Using Task-Based Approach (TBA) for UNNES Students

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## Abstract

This study aimed to depict Unnes students' ability in writing formal letters using English; design and develop correspondence material for English subject in Unnes; and evaluate the effectiveness of correspondence learning by applying Task Based Approach (TBA). This study has been done within a year in Universitas Negeri Semarang by using Research and Development approach. The results indicated that most of the students did not understand formal letter writing using English proven by their lack of knowledge about types of formal letter, letter style, and concept of letter sections. The main problems encountered by the students were grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Thus, Task Based Approach (TBA) is an effective learning model to teach English correspondence. Correspondence material designing is an urgent need in regards to the advantages obtained by the students that is to develop their skills and ability in writing formal letter in English.

**Keywords:** Letter, effectiveness, Task Based Approach (TBA)

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Received: 21 May 2019  
Accepted: 26 June 2019  
Published: 7 July 2019

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Selection and Peer-review under  
the responsibility of the UICRIC  
Conference Committee.

## 1. Introduction

Asean Economy Community (AEC) is an integrated association of southeast Asian nations in economic sector. AEC emerges various competitions among ASEAN countries including business and education to invent professional workers. The quality of education is required to make progress and become the main focus of the development of Indonesian's education quality. The higher the education quality, the better the output obtained by the learning process. English skills and ability are essential in facing AEC. It is the key point to face global challenge and AEC. Graduates of Universitas Negeri Semarang are expected to be ready with this kind of situation by possessing a good communication ability in English both in speaking and writing skills. This ability is important since the graduates will face high competition in working field as it also has correlation with the ability in writing formal letters such as business letter and personal letter. However, students still encounter several problems in writing formal letters. They

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get issues in using standardized English and letter style. Kathy (1997) stated that students have difficulties in writing using English due to their problems in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Susan (1994) also argued that many companies complain about the writing ability of graduates. They are not able to write correctly, they are less critical, and they are lack of understanding about company's working rules. In order to enhance students' ability in writing formal letters, an appropriate learning model should be applied. Ahmadi and Supriyono (1991) stated that educators need to pay attention to several things when choosing learning model, such as learning objectives, ability of the educators, students' needs, and content of material.

Constructivism is a learning philosophy where knowledge is built gradually by the human and the results are extended throughout limited context. Knowledge is not a set of facts, concepts or rules that can be taken immediately but it is constructed by the process of building meaning and real experiences in daily life. Constructivism theory is defined as a generative learning that creates a meaning from what has been learnt. Social constructivism emerges as human learns by doing interaction with the surroundings in a social context so that they understand about the real life. In learning context, Vygotsky argued that knowledge construction derives from social context so that teachers have obvious role in helping students to achieve the objectives. Constructivism puts learning as a changing process of an individual as an effect of new knowledge built from a social context before it becomes the part of the individual. Vygotsky believed that learning can develop between individuals in a social context. Then, according to Leonatiev (1981: 82) social constructivism emphasizes on interaction or activity between learners and classroom, learners and study group, learners and teachers, learners and family, and learners with their surroundings as a whole.

Instructional task is an important component in learning English. Task types take part in giving positive influence towards students' performance. Therefore, lecturer is supposed to give such assignment to encourages students to study effectively. The use of tasks in English learning makes students communicate fluently and effectively (Ellis, 2003; Willis, 1996). Task-Based Language Learning (TBLT) can be used in English learning because it provides chances for students to communicate in spoken and written form as task-based learning will encourage them to be more communicative and active. Prabhu (1987) used task-based instruction in middle school in Bangalore, India. Prabhu assumed that students can easily learn non-linguistics problems as they concentrate on linguistic questions. He believed that students can effectively learn when their focus is on the task, not in the language used. Ellis (2003) stated that TBLT is a learning form in which language is the means of communication, not the subject to be learnt. It

means that if students want to improve their speaking skills, they need to use foreign language in any kinds of situation such as discussion, debate, and changing information. Meanwhile Prabhu (1987) defined task as an activity that requires students to achieve a result from given information through several thinking process that allows the teacher to control and arrange the task. Then, Nunan (2004) defined task as a class work that involves students to manipulate, produce or interact using English where their focus is on the meaning. Willis (1996) stated that task is a goal-oriented activity, students practice English while doing the task.

Furthermore, writing skills is a basic knowledge that needs to be mastered by students. It is vital communication means to express ideas and opinion to others. Thus, students of Unnes need to master writing skills, especially in writing formal letter using English. Writing will stimulate the students to think, convey ideas, conclude analysis, and criticize something (Scane et al. 1991 in Al Naqbi, (2011). In addition, Warren and Brian (1995) stated that correspondence is required in daily life, and writing is the way to share information.

## 2. Method

This study attempts to develop educational product and inform the process of decision making during the product development. It also aims to improve the product and the ability to create the same kind of product in the future. Taks-Based Approach (TBA) and English correspondence material were used in this research. The study was conducted in even semester of 2017/2018 by employing S1 students who joined English subject and English correspondence. They were taken from three faculties: Faculty of Arts and Languages (FBS), Faculty of Economy (FE), and Faculty of Engineering (FT).

### 2.1. Implementation of task-based approach (TBA) and english correspondence material

English correspondence learning was conducted in three faculties: FE, FT, and FBS by using Task-Based Approach (TBA). This learning model makes students easier in writing formal letter and helps them to be more active and creative.

## 2.2. English correspondence material development

The material was developed by employing Four-D (4D) model. 4D model is recommended by Sivasailam Thiagarajan, Dorothy S. Semmel, and Melvyn I. Semmel in 1974. It consists of four development stages: Define, Design, Develop, and Disseminate. The development stages will be explained as follows.

### 2.3. Define

This stage analyzed the needs of development. It comprised of analyses of curriculum, students' characteristics, and material. The first step was curriculum analysis to define the competence to be developed. The next step was to figure out the students' characteristics regarding the arrangement of the material. The last step was to identify the main material to be taught, collect and choose the relevant material and rearrange it systematically.

### 2.4. Design

This stage aimed to design the material instrument. There were four steps in this part: (1) creation-test construction, (2) media selection, (3) format selection, (4) initial design of the material.

### 2.5. Development

The development stage was done by examining the content and the readability of the material. The examination was done by the experts involved in the design validation and students who will use the material. The results were used to revise the material to meet the needs of the users. In order to know the effectiveness of the material in improving the learning process, daily practices were given taken from the developed material.

### 2.6. Disseminate

Dissemination was done by conducting socialization of the material to the lecturers and students in a limited number. This step attempted to obtain responses and feedback

towards the material. If the target users indicate a good responses, the material will be printed out in a large quantity.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Questionnaire results

From the questionnaire result, it was found that 69% of the total students who participated in the survey have written a formal letter. They argued that the ability to write formal letter is an important thing that must be possessed by every individual. This is also related to writing formal letters in English where almost of all students encountered various kinds of difficulties including proper vocabulary, diction, grammar, spelling, and punctuation. The lack of knowledge and practice of writing formal letters in English made students confused about how to organize the needed contents and information to make it clearly and straightforwardly understandable.

Regarding the contents of the formal letter, English was an obstacle for students in developing ideas and sentences. This aspect was the reason for their ignorance in composing the right sentence for each part of the formal letter. 69% of them did not understand how to compile the opening sentence, 77% of students stated that they had problems in writing ideas when writing the letter contents, and 63% of them also had difficulties when writing the letter closing section. Another obstacle encountered by students when writing formal letters in English was the lack of knowledge about the types of writing formats. 84% of them did not know what does letter style means.

Then, the questionnaire results also showed that students did not understand various types of formal letters namely goodwill letter, inquiries letter, sales letter, order letter, payment letter, and complaint letter. The limitations of students' knowledge were also compounded by the fact that 84% of them are lack of understanding about how to write a reply in response to a formal letter in English.

#### 3.2. Task-based approach results

The analysis of students' difficulties in writing formal letters in English was also obtained from the Task-Based Instruction implementation result in three different faculties, namely the Language and Arts Faculty, the Economics Faculty, and Engineering Faculty. There were 130 students participated in the formal letter writing test. The kinds of formal letters in English writing test were application letter, thank you letter and sales letter. The

aspects analyzed consisted of six points, namely letter style, opening and introduction, heading and sign off, main body, closing, grammar, spelling, and punctuation. The following tables depict the students' writing assessment result analysis about writing formal letters in English.

TABLE 1: *Application Letter* writing analysis.

No.	Analyzed aspect	Students' Mastery		Mastery Percentage	
		Mastering	Having difficulty	Mastering	Having difficulty
1	Letter style	55	27	67%	33%
2	Opening & introduction	34	48	41%	59%
3	Heading & sign off	5	77	6%	94%
4	Main body	52	30	63%	37%
5	Closing	48	34	59%	41%
6	Grammar, spelling & punctuation	51	31	62%	38%

The first formal letter that has been analyzed is Application Letter. Application Letter is very closely related to the application of student skills in writing because they will practice it when they have graduated from college to apply for a job. From the table above, it can be seen that the majority of students did not understand how to write heading and sign off correctly. It was only 6% of students who understood how to write headings and sign offs of Application Letter. Other students' weaknesses in writing formal letter in English were opening and introduction and letter style understanding. Students tended to write formal letters in an incompatible format with the Application Letters writing format even though there were 67% students who were already mastered letters format. For the opening and introduction, the percentage of students who did not master dominates the percentage of students who have already mastered this section. Then, although 63% of them were able to express the contents of the letter, grammar, spelling, and punctuation still became obstacles that must be addressed immediately.

The next letter that is part of the analysis is Thank You Letter. From the results of the analysis, it can be seen that most of the students were able to write the official English language letter quite well even though there were still various errors. The main highlight in this section is letter style. Letter style was a problem for students, as evidenced by 54% of those who were still wrote letters in an incorrect format. However, for thank you letter writing, students seemed to write the parts of the letter with the right sentences. This is proven by the good results from the percentage of students who have mastered the writing concept in each part. Students were quite capable in expressing thanking and appreciation through formal letters in English. However, grammar, spelling, and

TABLE 2: *Thank You Letter* writing analysis.

No.	Analyzed aspect	Students' Mastery		Mastery Percentage	
		Mastering	Having difficulty	Mastering	Having difficulty
1	Letter style	22	26	46%	54%
2	Opening & introduction	34	14	71%	29%
3	Heading & sign off	32	16	67%	33%
4	Main body	37	11	77%	23%
5	Closing	39	9	81%	19%
6	Grammar, spelling & punctuation	20	28	42%	58%

punctuation were still crucial problems as 58% of the students still showed errors when applying their skills to write formal letters in English.

TABLE 3: *Sales Letter* writing analysis.

No.	Analyzed aspect	Students' Mastery		Mastery Percentage	
		Mastering	Having difficulty	Mastering	Having difficulty
1	Letter style	22	26	46%	54%
2	Opening & introduction	41	7	85%	15%
3	Heading & sign off	32	16	67%	33%
4	Main body	35	13	73%	27%
5	Closing	44	4	92%	8%
6	Grammar, spelling & punctuation	19	29	40%	60%

Another formal letter in English that became the focus of this research analysis is Sales Letter. Table 5.3 shows that students faced the same problem, which is the letter style. 54% of students have not yet mastered the correct sales letter format. They tended to write letters with inconsistency and incompatible with the letter styles. However, in sales letter writing, students already have good skills in expressing ideas in each section of the letter. They were good enough in conveying the intention and purpose of writing sales letters in the content section, opening and introduction, and closing section. However, for the appropriateness use of English, students still encountered problems because 60% of them still made mistakes in terms of grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

### 3.3. Design

After going through the analysis stage of students' difficulties in writing formal letters in English through questionnaires and the implementation of Task-Based Approach, the next step is designing a good and correct formal letter in English to be used as a model and guidance for students. This formal letter is an example that represents the correct forms formal English letters.

### 3.4. Dissemination

In the dissemination stage, Task-Based approach teaching materials were distributed to students for them to learn. After reading the material, students were asked to rewrite the formal letter based on what they have learned from the teaching material. It is expected that students can learn from this teaching material. In this stage, students' understanding in writing formal letter was increase to be 100%.

## 4. Conclusion and Suggestions

The conclusion that can be drawn from the results of this study is that most students do not understand formal letters in English as it was proven by the lack of knowledge about types of formal letters, letter styles, and some of them still do not understand the concept of letter sections. The main problem are grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Task Based Approach (TBA) is an effective learning model for teaching English correspondence for students. The development of the material for writing formal letter in English is an urgent need due to the benefits that can be obtained, that is developing the ability of students to write formal letters.

### 4.1. Suggestions

It is suggested that before teaching English correspondence, the lectures should prepare modules and materials in advance and they should first introduce the types of letters in English, and then continue to teach grammar, spelling, and punctuation to the students.



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