The Art of Self-Introduction: I am … rrr…

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Abstract

This study analyzed the distinctive categories used in describing oneself, self-introduction, written in English by the second-semester students of non-English Department, namely Agriculture in Indonesian. They are found to be categorized as 1) name; 2) hometown; 3) character and physical appearance; 4) preference (favourite food, beverages or activity); 5) age; and 6) academic information. From the data, there are three typical categories, namely, name, preferences, and hometown, which are mostly stated by the students. The students tended to mention their unseen aspects rather than their physical appearance, which are more important and easier to be noticed. Additionally, most of the students thought that mentioning a job as a student was not matter.

Keywords: *writing, self-introduction, non-English department students, unseen aspect*

Introduction

To be known by others, there are, at least, two things which can be done: being an altitude or making an introduction (Hanson, 2013). When it is probably effortful to be an altitude character, people may introduce themselves to be noted. Though it is challenging enough to give a great impression when making an introduction and some great effort must be put. Additionally, a "memory hook", speedy and eye/ear-catching words which others are easy to remember, is another necessity (Queensland Government, 2016).

Realized that introduction skill is a basic demand to be acquired by the students in learning English, as a foreign language and taught as a complementary subject, I inserted the introduction topic to be taught in the class. After the subject was delivered to the students, there was an assignment to describe the students' selves as an introduction to others. The students had to write their descriptions on paper.

When assessing the students' composition, I found a mystery beyond their composition. As said that the research must be done based on the question (Ary et al., 2010:43), this phenomenon attracted me as a researcher to inquire about some pertinent information covered from the students' composition. Thus, I put all the students' compositions to be a corpus to be analyzed.

Corpus-based research has driven many linguists to conduct several pieces of research about analyzing texts and discourses (see e.g., Basthomi, 2012; and Abarghooeinezhad & Simin, 2015). As inspired by Swales' thought about genre analysis in academic writing (Swales, 1990:34), this research was done by using the same method proposed by him. From corpus-based researches, people can see the tendencies owned by the writers. This recent research tried to uncover the non-English students' writing tendency to introduce themselves.

Hence, the core of this study is to analyze the descriptive texts of self-introduction written in English by the second-semester students of non-English Department, namely Agriculture in Indonesia. Furthermore, as additional information, English was a foreign language for all participants. And related to the preceding discussion, the problem in the current study is synthesized in a single question as follows: What do the distinctive categories of self-introduction texts written in English by the second-semester students of the Agriculture Department potentially used?

Methods

This section will try to zoom out the methods used to collect and analyze the data. Narrative inquiry (see e.g., Barkhuizen, et al, 2014) was used as the basic method to design and analyze the data of this research. Moreover, thematic analysis: multiple case studies (Barkhuizen, et al., 2014) was used to analyze the data. The purposive sampling method (see e.g., Creswell, 2012; Fraenkel, et al., 2011; and Ary, et al., 2010) was used in choosing the participants to produce the texts as the corpus data.

Dissimilar with corpus-based researches done by Basthomi (2012) and Abarghooeinezhad & Simin (2015), who collected the data from part of the research reports (thesis and research article), this research only focused on short texts composed by non-English department students as their final assignment in English subject. The students were the second-semester students of the Agriculture Department of State Polytechnic of Jember in the 2018-2019 academic year. There were 76 students but only 68 compositions were analyzed due to blank or incomplete composition.

Instead of the length of the compositions, some categorizes were created to group the compositions. Because of the lack of the information (we may claim that there was no document) about the state of the art of this topic, the categorizes were adopted from Basthomi's research about analyzing curriculum vitae in Master's theses (2012). They are personal identity and academic information. Since the composition was relatively short, to make it more specific, the personal identity category was broken down into 1) name; 2) hometown; 3) character and physical appearance; 4) favourite food, beverages or activity; and 5) age. While academic information generally covers information about what and where they study. Then, all six categories were analyzed with the AntConc corpus analysis toolkit software version 3.5.8.0.

Findings

Most compositions reveal some surprising facts. If the six categories are formed into sentences, it should be at least six sentences that are formed which bared one category for each sentence. Almost 60% of the compositions were written with at least or more than six sentences. Yet, only 13 out of 68 used all six categories. The longest

composition consists of 211 words. More than 55% of compositions were made in the form of a paragraph, while the rest were in the form of a list of sentences.

The following table will give a better understanding of each category posed by the composition.

Table 1. Common Categories Found in the Compositions

Category	Hit(s)	Percentage
Name	64	94.1%
Hometown	42	61.8%
Character and physical appearance	18	26.5%
Favourite food, beverages or activity	44	64.7%
Age	22	32.4%
Academic Information	39	57.4%

Name
Name is a must to be mentioned when we try to introduce our self. From the corpus, only four students did not mention their names in the compositions. Two common ways to mention the name were "I am …" and "my name is …".

> *Example composition #1*
> My name is Adam Jibran Arkan.

All of the compositions mentioned names in it are using "my name is …" form and none uses "I am …", though it is easier to be used. I faced a bit of difficulty in finding a reliable book, article or website explaining this phenomenon. However, according to some forum members at ell.stackexchange.com, there is a slight difference between "I am …" and "my name …". The use of "my name is …" is more preferable and considered as a formal way in introducing name, while the "I am …" is more casual. In this case, I assume that the students think the test is in a formal context (ell.stackexchange.com, 2015). Moreover, people tend to be more convenient to mention themselves as the third person view when writing an academic composition (Basthomi, et al, 2015). Though, there was no clear instruction whether it is informal or informal.

Hometown
Hometown, some students likely referred to it as an address, is the second part commonly mentioned. The word "live" is frequently used to point out the hometown. However, some students misused the word "life" to replace the word "live".

> *Example composition #2*
> I life in Banyuwangi[1], Glenmore[2], East Java.

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[1] Banyuwangi is a city in East Java, Indonesia.
[2] Glenmore is a sub-district in Banyuwangi city.

The misused of "life" instead of "live" is often taken place when I ask the students to speak or write in English. The students' comprehension of certain vocabularies is relatively low, even in distinguishing the words classes (parts of speech). "Life" is a noun and "live" can be a verb, adjective or adverb. In composition #2, it is very clear that actually, the student wanted to write "live".

Besides, some compositions use "I am from …", "I come from …" or "my address is …" to locate the hometown of the student.

Example composition #3
My address is at Villa Tegal Besar Blok E-10.

The composition above is the example of using "address" to locate the student's hometown instead of using the word "live".

Character and Physical Appearance
In some cases, people need to mention their specific character or physical appearance in order to give a hook to be remembered.

Example composition #4
I am so cheerful, sometimes naughty, sometimes calm down when I'm sick.

Example composition #5
I'm tallest than the other.

The student tent to give a clear description of her character when they have nothing special in term of physical appearance. In composition #4, the student tried to describe his personality which is cheerful and naughty. He wanted to give a hook that he was different from other common students in the classroom who were not cheerful and naughty. However, if the students had a special thing in their physical appearance, they tried to mention it briefly. The composition #5 is one example that the student is the tallest among the other students.

Favourite Food, Beverages or Activities
Preference in food, beverages or activities is seen to be more important to be announced to get the others' attention.

Example composition #6
I love everything about gardening, drawing and rock music. I love to eat some sweet food such as chocolate, brownies, and muffin and I like junk food.

The students were trying to mention their hobbies or preference to give more detail information about themselves. From the composition #6, it is clear that he tried to show that he is an Agriculture student who loves gardening. He also mentioned about drawing as his hobby, or maybe as his special ability compared with other students. Moreover, he said that rock music as his preference for listening to music.

Indeed, every man has a unique preference for their favorite food. From composition #6, we know that the student loves something with a sweet taste, such as chocolate, brownies, and muffin. Additionally, he also mentioned that he likes junk food. Sometimes, without mentioning his physical appearance, people are able to predict that the student who writes the composition #6 is chubby because of his fondness of sweets and junk food.

Age

For some cultures, asking or mentioning age in introducing our self may be regarded as something taboo, better be avoided, because of offended feeling, especially for a woman (Basthomi, 2012, and Isbell, 2017). However, in Indonesia, asking or giving information about age is a common thing to do in introducing ourselves (Basthomi, 2012). That is the reason why it was one of the crucial parts to be mentioned for the students in this corpus, whether they said explicitly or implicitly.

Example composition #7
My age is 19 years old.

From the above composition, there is a similar matter happens. There are two patterns usually used, "my age is …" and "I am …". The explanation is quite the same. As information, most of the participants were 19 years old.

Academic Information

The last category about academic information seems to be bound as the students' basic description to be mention since all of them are students in State Polytechnic of Jember.

Example composition #8
Now, I study at State Polytechnic of Jember.

Almost 70% of the participants mentioned State Polytechnic of Jember as the place they studied, whether by using the pattern "I study at State Polytechnic of Jember", like composition #8, or "I am a student in State Polytechnic of Jember". There are at least two major reasons why they mentioned it. First, the job is crucial to be told. Being a student is also a job. The second reason is dignity. As a state university, many new students feel proud to be accepted in State Polytechnic of Jember. Therefore, it will be an honor for them to tell the others that they are the students of State Polytechnic of Jember.

Discussion

From the above-mentioned findings, there was some pertinent information to be discussed. Regarding the six categories, the most participant did not include all of the categories into their compositions. Less than 20% of the participants thought it was important to include all the categories to introduce themselves. Even, only three categories are mostly used by the majority of students. The three categories are name, preference, and hometown. The following parts will elaborate and interpret what is a

matter for non-English students when they were trying to encode themselves in a piece of composition.

The Matter of Name and Origin in Introducing Self

As a part of noun words, the name is really important to mention the "calling way" of the human to differentiate with other humans. All but four compositions include the name. In reality, all of the participants wrote their names as their worksheet's label. Maybe the four participants who did not write their names thought that it was unnecessary to reduplicate their names in the compositions.

In Indonesia, the term first name and family name were unwonted. Indonesian is allowed and will not be irritated called by first or last name, whether in a serious, formal, or casual situation. Therefore, labeling with a nickname is important.

Paying attention to the nickname, there were 23 participants realized that it is important to mention the nickname. 17 people were passively written as "you can call me …", whereas the rest actively stated as "my nickname is …".

There were six participants named Muhammad, Mohammad or Mochammad which pronounced identical. To solve this problem, they may be called with their unique nickname or added their hometown name. The address, or hometown, is the easiest way to distinguish between two, or may in some cases there were six, participants with the same nickname. If the hometown cannot solve the problem, a unique nickname might do.

> *Example composition #9*
> … but my friends at Senior High School call me "*Lampu Taman*"[3], "*Cungkring*"[4]. Why my friends call me with the name "*Lampu Taman*", because my hair is short like a cartoon Dora, and I am tall, so like a lamp on the street.

The above-mentioned composition is an example of giving nicknames based on physical appearances. Although it is a kind of bullying, it has happened in Indonesia, or it may also have happened in other countries. Additionally, there is research shows that the nickname which is given by society can affect the way a man look (Zwebner, et al., 2017).

Hometown is the second category mentioned most in the students' compositions. Almost 2/3 of the participants wrote about their address. The students thought that it is essential to mention their hometown when introducing themselves. Besides, some of them were proud to tell about their hometown.

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[3] "*Lampu taman*" is a lamp which is usually located on side-walk, a park, in front of a house or someone's yard.

[4] "*Cungkring*" means a man with a tall and skinny body

Left Unsaid

There are at least two categories that are left unsaid by most students. The two categories are physical appearance and job (academic information). Character and physical appearance is the last category mentioned in the corpus. There were only 11 students who described their characters and not more than 7 students explained their physical appearances. In reality, physical appearance is the very first to be recognized, even, in most cases, before the name of a man. This could be happened due to vocabulary deficiency of physical appearance. Another possible reason is avoiding body shaming.

Explaining a job in an introduction is important because others will give you more attention when they know where you are working. More than 40% of the participants said nothing about their academic information or job. This phenomenon may have happened because the students did not know that being a student is also a job.

Conclusion

This research has demonstrated some points. The compositions for self-introduction from the Indonesian non-English department students bear three typical categories, namely, name, preferences, and hometown. The preference is more dominant than the physical appearance which is more noticeable. So, it can be said that the students tended to mention something unseen rather than something sight-able. Besides, unlike other professional self-introduction, many students did not include their jobs as students in introducing themselves. From this conclusion, teachers and lecturers may give more stress on physical appearances and jobs in teaching in order to make the students introduce themselves more comprehensively. Furthermore, more researches about this topic should be done with further and more comprehensive data collection to give more complete findings of self-introduction especially in written form.

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