

**Challenges in Developing High-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS): A Study of
EFL Students' Thesis Statement in Writing Essay**

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Abstract

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This study investigates the challenges encountered by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students in developing High-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS), with a specific focus on the formulation of thesis statements in essay writing. As proficient essay writing necessitates the application of critical thinking skills, we examine the hurdles faced by EFL students during this cognitive process. Through a comprehensive analysis, this research sheds light on the specific difficulties and explores potential avenues for enhancing HOTS development in the context of thesis statement construction. The findings contribute valuable insights to pedagogical strategies aimed at fostering advanced cognitive skills among EFL learners. Thus, this study tried to analyze students' thesis statement . The results of analysis revealed that students' thesis statement could be categorized into good thesis statement based on the 14 students' thesis statement in their essay the students' score got 70.71with categoriez as good. And the results also show that the average level of the students' analyzing (C4) tends to be higher compared than the evaluating (C5) and creating (C6) levels, namely 85.71 (C4), 78.57 (C5), and 55.35 (C6).

Kata kunci:

*Tantangan, HOTS,
kalimat topik, esai*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini menyelidiki tantangan yang dihadapi oleh mahasiswa Bahasa Inggris sebagai (EFL) dalam mengembangkan Keterampilan Berpikir Tingkat Tinggi (HOTS), dengan fokus khusus pada perumusan pernyataan tesis dalam penulisan esai. Karena penulisan esai profesional memerlukan penerapan keterampilan berpikir kritis, kami memeriksa rintangan yang dihadapi siswa EFL selama proses kognitif ini. Melalui analisis yang komprehensif, penelitian ini menyoroti kesulitan-kesulitan spesifik dan mengeksplorasi potensi jalan untuk meningkatkan

pengembangan HOTS dalam konteks konstruksi pernyataan tesis. Temuan ini memberikan kontribusi wawasan berharga terhadap strategi pedagogi yang bertujuan untuk mengembangkan keterampilan kognitif tingkat lanjut di kalangan pelajar EFL. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini mencoba menganalisis pernyataan tesis mahasiswa. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa pernyataan tesis siswa dapat dikategorikan ke dalam pernyataan tesis baik, berdasarkan 14 pernyataan tesis siswa dalam esainya diperoleh nilai siswa sebesar 70,71 dengan kategori baik. Dan hasil menunjukkan bahwa pada rata-rata perindikator di dapatkan tingkat analyzing (C4) mahasiswa cenderung lebih tinggi di bandingkan dengan pada tingkatan evaluation (C5) dan evaluation (C6) yaitu 85.71 (C4), 78.57 (C5), dan 55.35 (C6).

INTRODUCTION

Academic writing is the important think from writing which is needed to focus in the university. There are many names for academic writing such as; essay, paper, research paper, etc. Even though, those names has the same principal and goals (Whitaker, 2009: 2 in Anisa, 2019). In addition, Amri (2017) says that academic writing, referred to as essays, papers, articles, or research reports, is a crucial component of academic courses. It requires an analytical perspective, frequent references to other authors' work, and a constructive approach to the topic being investigated. It follows organized criteria for references and citations, ensuring acknowledgment and support.

Writing an essay in particular is challenging because it calls for more than just putting your thoughts on paper. These concepts need to be arranged properly because different writings had different structures. The thesis statement, which responds to the topic question, is the central component of an essay; the remainder of the essay is built around it. To generate quality work, pupils must be able to think critically or at a high level (Aqariza, 2019 in Syafryadin, 2023). Students studying English language education in particular are expected to develop a research strategy in order to finish a high-quality thesis, which will result in publication in a recognized national or international journal. Therefore,

developing high-quality student research planning activities requires the use of higher order thinking abilities, or HOTS. Furthermore, HOTS can encourage pupils to examine, assess, and produce something. HOTS has an important role in encouraging students to write and also is able to stimulate students to be able to analyze, evaluate and create something (Syafryadin, 2023).

A well-crafted thesis statement demonstrates comprehension of the central question. When crafting a strong thesis statement, there are a number of factors to take into account. A strong thesis statement is declarative in nature, condenses the core concept of the subject into one line, and is free of qualifiers (Schaum, 1999). Furthermore, as Chesla (2006) notes, a powerful thesis statement communicates the attitude toward the issue by making a clear and concise declaration. It finds the ideal ratio between being overly wide and too specific. It must be limited enough to contain enough information that can be backed up by proof and concentrated enough to cover just the right amount of ground inside the essay's physical parameters. It is more than just a declaration of the topic. It must explain to readers what you will say about your topic. It is more than just a query or set of queries. It is a factual statement as well.

The ability to apply knowledge, skills, and values in a way that makes sense and reflects in order to solve problems, make decisions, innovate, and create something is the definition of HOTS, as stated by MOE (2015). The Malaysian Education Development Plan (MEDP) 2013–2025 is a long-term strategic plan that aims to implement comprehensive education transformation within the next 13 years, with the ultimate goal of improving the quality of education nationwide. Writing skills have been the subject of numerous earlier studies in the field of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS). Elser's (2008) study on HOTS revealed that the program could enhance the writing abilities of high school pupils. The identification of LOTS and HOTS, which improved students' academic writing abilities, was then covered in a literature study done by Klimova (2013). Similar studies were conducted in 2019 and discovered that students' academic writing scores increased in response to questions or writing exercises that led to HOTS (Sopiani, Said & Ratnawati, 2019; Zahro, 2019; Lustyantje, Arung, & Fitriani,

2019). The application of HOTS by the teacher to students was found to improve students' academic writing abilities in multiple studies conducted in 2020 (Saragih & Simarmata, 2020; Sianturi, Silalahi, & Purba, 2020). However, research conducted in the same year by Fauziya, Ahmadi, & Yani (2020) yielded different results, indicating that HOTS was not able to improve students' academic writing scores.

Ciardiello's invention defines Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) (2000). Interpreting HOTS is more advanced than simply learning facts by heart. It includes problem-solving techniques, the capacity for critical and creative thought, and a broader application of the mind to question information retained in memory and draw conclusions in order to resolve complex issues [4]. It improves pupils' comprehension and proficiency with the course materials. King (2002) went on to describe higher order cognitive processes like hypothesis generation, inference, conclusion drawing, idea synthesis, comparison and differentiation, analysis, and evaluation of alternatives. Revisions to Bloom's taxonomy separated cognitive processes into higher and lower order thinking skills. The skills contained in LOTS are the ability to remember, understand, and apply, while in HOTS include the ability to analyze, evaluate, and create

METHOD

This study examines the thesis statements of the students using a descriptive-quantitative approach. Students in the English department at the Teacher Training and Education Faculty of UNISI who enrolled in class A of the third semester's writer's essay writing course served as the research participants. Nineteen pupils enrolled in the course. The thesis statements from the essays that the students had written served as the data.

To obtain the data, checklists or rubrics were used to analyze the data that was collected. To gauge students' HOTS proficiency in thesis statement writing, the researchers employed the HOTS rubric, comprising analysis (C4), evaluation (C5), and creation (C6) indicators.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Identifying thesis statement

The writer chose the opening paragraph of each student's essay to locate the thesis statement in order to identify each essay's thesis statement. Upon examining the opening paragraph of each essay, the findings indicated that 5 out of 19 essays had thesis statements. None of the five essays had a distinct thesis statement or an off-topic response to a topic question. They were thus thrown away. The 14 thesis statements would then each be examined separately using HOT's indicator.

Analyzing thesis statement

An evaluating table was used to examine those thesis statements in order to determine whether or not each one contained the relevant elements. Here are the students thesis statement;

Table 1. Students' Thesis Statements

Student	Thesis statements
S1	Nowdays, many men and women work very busy for their job. They are serious about becoming successfull, so they work for long hour the week even on the weekend. They really love their job and almost forgot to get rest, people who work for long hour called workholic. Workholic may not spend time for leisure activities. Therefore, workhilocs' lifestyle can affect their families, social live, and health.
S2	In current digital era, online gambling has become a growing phenomenon in society. It is considered a quick way to make money. Even so, the impact of online gambling turns out to be much more dangerous and has serious risks that palyers may nor even think about. Moreover, many incidents related to online gambling have found for players such as teenagers and the elderly.
S3	Nowadays, almost everyone has a cellphone. To search for information via the internet, communicate with friends, or exist on social media, of course you use a cellphone. If someone doesn't have a cellphone, they will be considered old fashioned by those around them, so almost everyone has a cellphone.
S4	Gadgets are widely used in our daily lives, from smartphones to laptops and tablets. While they offer many advantages, such as improved, communication, access to information, and enhanced productivity, they can also have negative effects if not ised in moderation. The overuse of gadgets can lead to the negative effects. Including addiction, eye strain, distrupted sleep, and mental health issue.
S5	Global warming refers to climate change that causes an increase in the average temperature of the earth. Natural events and human influence are believed to be the main contribution to the increase in the average temperature of the earth. Global warming is an increase in the surface temperature and atmosphere of the earth that has changed various forms of life on earth. The climate continues to change for centuries. The influence of nature and human influence is the cause of global warming

S6	Respect is a fundamental aspect of human relationships and interactions. In any society, whether it be at home, in the workplace, or within communities, mutual respect plays a critical role in fostering harmony, understanding, and cooperation. This essay aims to explore the importance of mutual respect in various aspects of life and highlight the significant impact it has on individuals and society as a whole.
S7	In this modern era everyone using gadget.Using gadget it also a good thing,but the misuse or spending more time on gadgets will reduce the learning ability and other outdoor activity. Three of bad impact of gadgets are sleep deprivation,damage eyesight and addiction
S8	Globalization has become an inevitable phenomenon in the modern era, affecting nearly every aspect of human life, including in Indonesia. While it brings the potential for progress and opportunities, the impact of globalization also poses a number of problems and challenges for the Indonesian nation. In this regard, we will explore some of the adverse effects that may arise due to globalization, particularly those affecting the economic and cultural aspects in Indonesia
S9	Fast food is food that is available quickly and ready to eat, such as fried chicken, pizza, hamburgers and others. The ease of obtaining fast food makes almost everyone like this type of food. In addition, processing and preparation are easier and faster and suitable for those who are always busy. They choose fast food because it is practical, tastes good, and certainly saves a lot of time. Apart from tasting good and being practical, fast food has many adverse effects on the health of the body such as obesity, diabetes, and high blood pressure.
S10	Developments in the current era are increasingly rapid, so did the technology and one proof of the development is a smartphone. Smartphone is a handled electronic that has network and can be use as a communication tool. Right now, smartphone is something that we often use. Even nowadays, people are commonly found to have smartphone on their hand rather than a bag. It is indeed a something that we must be concern about. Despite of its benefits, spending plenty of times using smartphone can cause some bad effects to the users. The bad effects can influent the kids, teenagers, even the adults.
S11	The influence of westernization is one of the most serious issues in Indonesia. Today, the culture of the archipelago's ancestors could be abandoned if the influence of westernization is increasingly unstoppable. With today's advanced technology, westernization is very easy to spread through social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, etc. Interaction with the outside world that is not filtered or uncontrolled can also influence people's behavior to westernize. The factors that cause westernization to occur are imitative, consumptive, and cultural mixing.
S12	Gadgets have become an inseparable part of our daily lives. Smartphones, tablets, and laptops have transformed the way we communicate, work, and relax. However, beneath the convenience and sophistication of this technology, there are negative impacts that need to be considered.
S13	Since ancient times people have bathed in water from mineral springs, especially hot springs. But nowadays people often consuming Mineral water as daily beverage. What is mineral water? Mineral water is Water that contains a large quantity of dissolved minerals or gases. Mineral water from natural springs commonly has a high content of calcium carbonate, magnesium, and any others type of mineral which good for human body. Benefits of mineral water such lowering blood pressure, strengthening bones, and increases digestive health.
S14	In my opinion, the family is very important in shaping who we are as individuals and contributing to the fabric of society as a whole. The family should provide an environment that is nurturing and supports us in learning important values. Families also play an important role in a child's emotional and mental well-being because they are the first to offer a helping hand and a shoulder to lean on, and provide strength to face life's difficulties. Whether it's celebrating success, support and understanding from family members, because it can give a sense of enthusiasm and also encouragement. Beyond emotional support, we as a family must cultivate a strong

sense of responsibility and empathy. When we interact with family members and learn respect for others, we cultivate valuable interpersonal skills that translate into the way we treat others beyond those closest to us. Then we can contribute to building a harmonious society.

The next action was to offer HOTS-focused. Determining the extent to analyze (C4), evaluate (C5), and create (C6) students was the goal of the step. The step in question involved examining the thesis statements that the students had written. The stages that were described based on HOTS indicators were examined in order to conduct the analysis. Table 1 below lists the rubric criteria for assigning student HOTS.

Table 2. High order thinking skill scoring indicators

Score	Scoring Indicators
Indicator 1: Analysing	
4	Able to examine and parse information, be able to formulate problems, and provide precise troubleshooting steps.
3	Able to check and parse information appropriately, be able to formulate problems, and provide almost correct solution steps or there are slight errors in answering questions
2	Able to check and parse information appropriately, be able to formulate problems, but there are still errors in solving steps and final answers.
1	Not being able to check and parse information appropriately, not being able to formulate problems, therefore the final solution and answer steps are not correct
0	Not able to do analysis at all
Indicator 2: Evaluating	
4	Able to assess, deny, or support an idea and provide reasons that can strengthen the answers obtained correctly.
3	Able to provide reasons that can strengthen the answers obtained correctly, but do not provide a final decision / conclusion
2	Not being able to provide reasons that can strengthen the answers obtained correctly, therefore they are not able to provide the final decision / conclusion correctly
1	Not able to provide reasons that can strengthen the answer obtained correctly, but the answer is almost leading to the right solution.
0	Not being able to judge, deny, or support an idea and provide reasons that can strengthen the answers obtained at all
Indicator 3: Creating	
4	Able to design a way to solve problems or combine information into the right strategy
3	Able to design a way to solve problems or combine information into a strategy with almost accuracy or there are still a few errors in writing answers
2	Able to design a way to solve problems but not yet able to integrate information into the right strategy
1	Not yet able to devise a way to solve problems or combine information appropriately, but the design of the answers has almost headed in the right way.
0	Not being able to devise a way to solve a problem or integrate information into a strategy at all.

Since there were some indicators in each aspect, the writer encodes the term for each indicator. Furthermore, the acquisition of high order thinking skills score was calculated using the following formula.

$$\text{Final calculation} = \frac{\sum \text{Score Acquisition}}{\sum \text{Total Score}} \times 100$$

Furthermore, the average value was determined by the following qualifications as presented in Table 3 below:

Table 3. Categories of students' high order thinking skills

No.	Student Score	Rating Category
1	81.00 - 100	Very good
2	61.00 – 80.99	Good
3	41.00 – 60.99	Enough
4	21.00 – 40.99	Less
5	00.00 – 20.99	Very less

Discussion

Based on the result, the students score was 70.71, which is in the good level in the HOTS rating category. It means that most of the students have implemented HOTS in writing their thesis statement. The students could implement their analysis for their thesis statements and the findings that have been obtained in the form of arguments accompanied by comments on the research results. Even though their arguments were not perfect, besides, the thesis could clearly be complete and reflect the main points. The information is also logically organized. Furthermore, students also implemented evaluating (C5) in writing their thesis statement, even though the frequency is lower than analyzing. The implementation of the evaluation is not strong enough because several students could identify the weaknesses of the research. For creating (C6), only a few students achieve it because gaining this level is so hard for students. The students were not able to explain the new findings of their research in detail. Then, they could not provide details of the procedure as a recommendation to improve the weaknesses of the research process.

The analysis of results for student's high-level thinking skills for each indicator are shown in table 4, and it was measured according to high-level thinking capability scoring guidelines.

Table 4. The average achievement value of each students' high-level thinking ability indicator

No	Indicator	Achievement Average	Category
1	analyzing	85.71	Good
2	Evaluating	78.57	Good
3	Creating	55.35	Enough
	Average	73.21	Good

Based on Table 3, the average high-order thinking ability of students was in the good category. The condition shows that the students' abilities in the class were good enough. The challenges faced by students in criticizing research results are discussed in the discussion section of the thesis.

Several students faced several challenges in criticizing their thesis statement in the essay. It was difficult to find ideas to start writing a thesis statement, and it was also difficult to craft a thesis statement that must be clear, concise, and precisely convey the main idea. First, some students found it hard to begin writing their thesis statements because they did not have an idea of what to write. They did not know what must be written in the first paragraph of the introductory paragraph. Even though the title of the essay has been found and cleared, second, students work hard to develop a strong and persuasive argument within the constraints of a thesis statement. Third, some students had a problem striking the right balance between being specific enough to provide direction and being general enough to allow for a comprehensive essay. It means that some of them could not organize their ideas within paragraphs or among paragraphs. In this part, some of them could not write their thesis statement logically and structurally.

Writing a good thesis statement is not as easy as students' think. Students must not only have good ability in English, but they must also have good content to be written in their writing. Crafting a thesis statement is an iterative process. It often requires multiple drafts and revisions to arrive at a statement that effectively

captures the essence of your essay. Seeking feedback from peers or instructors can provide valuable insights during this process.

CONCLUSION

The research led to the conclusion that students' Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) for crafting an essay thesis statement fell into the good category. The outcomes are anticipated to serve as a point of reference during the lecture process, where students are introduced to HOTS-oriented questions with the goal of enhancing their critical thinking skills. This is restricted to understanding the students' critical thinking abilities during the HOTS stage. With the aid of tools that make reference to HOTS, it will be possible to advance in the future regarding the application of learning.

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