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## **WRITING IN A DIGITAL CONTEXT: DESIGNING DIGITAL COPYWRITING SYLLABUS FOR APPLIED ENGLISH STUDENTS**

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### **Abstract**

The research aims at designing an appropriate copywriting syllabus for Applied English Students in Indonesia. In this digital era, Copywriting becomes a new trend and creates massive opportunities as a new workplace in Indonesia and worldwide. Since the graduates of applied English as a part of vocational school have to meet the need of industry, teaching specific writing such as copywriting is necessary. However, in reality, learning how to write the content of copywriting only has not met the industry expectation yet. After conducting a survey on 20 students who have completed their internship program, it was revealed that a copywriter also needs to be equipped with the ability to operate the technology. Students need to be familiar with web design, SEO, social media operation, and other digital platforms. Therefore, integrating digital learning to copywriting syllabus is essential. This research is Developmental Research that was done by developing the copywriting syllabus. The results of this study is a set of copywriting syllabus design product for Applied English Students. Digital materials included in the syllabus are web design for copywriter, graphic design for a copywriter, HyperTextMarkupLanguage (HTML), Search Engine Optimisation (SEO), Social Media, and Plagiarism Checker.

*Keywords:* Copywriting, applied English, digital, syllabus

### **Introduction**

Currently, the Indonesian government is focusing on Vocational School. Vocational schools are education skills equivalent to polytechnics. Basically, it is education that is more oriented to the application of science. Vocational schools emphasize structured learning and expertise since the graduates are expected to be competent and skilled at work. Applied English, as one of the major in Vocational School then also should adjust the learning to the orientation of Vocational School.

One way that is essential, yet easy to be implemented is matching the learning syllabus with the need of the industry. [1] argues that there are some skills that can be developed when the universities and industries are doing serious collaboration. Those skills are education and training, the generation, acquisition, and adoption of knowledge (innovation and technology transfer), as well as the promotion of entrepreneurship (start-ups and spin-offs).

Besides, Applied English at Diponegoro University is majoring English for Tourism. It is then can be classified as English as Specific Purposes (ESP). Some previous theories of ESP also support the importance of integrating the purpose of learning to the targeted skill in working place. Absolute Characteristics of ESP explained by [2] are stated as followed:

1. ESP is defined to meet the specific needs of the learners
2. ESP makes use of underlying methodology and activities of the discipline it serves
3. ESP is centered on the language appropriate to these activities in terms of grammar, lexis, register, study skills, discourse, and genre.

Applied English at Diponegoro University, Semarang, Central Java, Indonesia as the object of this study is having "Copywriting" as the new course. Copywriting is chosen since right now there are many job vacancies in copywriting. It is proven by the fact that most of the students were getting a task as a copywriter when they were doing an internship. However, after conducting a survey on 20 Applied English students who have done the internship program, it is revealed that they found that learning copywriting technique in relation to writing itself is not enough. There is another important component that expected to be mastered by the copywriter in the industry. Since copywriting is dealing with the digital world, copywriter also should be able to operate the digital platform such as graphic design, web design, SEO, etc.

There are many previous studies on the importance of integrating the ESP learning and technology. [3] conducted research on English for Tourism classroom and found that *clickers* may be used as a supplementary tool to enhance the performance of ESP learners in the field of tourism and hospitality. Further, [4] stated that technology use in ESP gives some benefits to the ESP learning such as provides learning activities for task-based and collaborative learning, provides content-based authentic materials, and tailored learning environments to students' own needs. Moreover, according to [5], e-learning platforms podcasts, e-magazines, professional newsletters, blog, and social media are really important to be learned by ESP students since it offers opportunities for students to enter semi-professional and professional communication.

Even if various researches related to integrating the ESP learning and technology have already conducted, there is a very limited source on integrating other digital platforms of specific skill into a course. For example, the digital skill of copywriting to the copywriting course itself. Therefore, this research is conducted aiming at providing the specific syllabus design for copywriting in order to match the skill of students to the need of the copywriting industry.

### **Previous Copywriting Syllabus**

Since copywriting in Applied English at Diponegoro University is a part of the writing series along with sentence based writing, paragraph based writing, and academic writing, the learning is focusing on the specific writing technique. As a context, each course in Applied English study program has 16 meetings with 14 meetings for the lesson, meeting 7 for the mid-semester, and meeting 16 for the final examination.

The 14 materials given in the copywriting class are:

**Meeting 1 and 2: Writing Theories** In this first meeting, students are given a background of copywriting by learning the specific writing theories. Writing theories given to the students are not simply about what is writing, why we need to learn writing, but more specifically about what is copywriting, what is usually consider as a good copywriting, what are the various types of copywriting, as well as what is the rationale behind learning the copywriting. Based on [6] telling and showing the students about the learning target at the beginning of the course is important to develop students' understanding of the concept and skills that they should achieve. Understanding the learning target will create a chance for teacher and students to make decisions about further learning.

**Meeting 3 and 4: Sentence Construction and Types** Even if the students have already learned about the sentence types and construction on the previous semester under Sentence Based Writing course, recalling the knowledge is considered important. In relation to copywriting, sentence construction and types are very crucial. It is because the main purpose of copywriting is to create effective writing communication among the writer and all the readers. [7] explained that copywriting as part of technical writing must be able to convert all data into sentences and paragraphs that could accurately be perceived by the reading audiences. In short, what the author had in mind should be transferred into an effective sentence that could be understood easily by the targeted readers.

Meeting 5-13 (7 for the mid-semester): Types of Writing (Writing Headlines, Product Description, Persuasive Writing, Informative Writing)

In order to accommodate all types of copywriting, 6 meetings are used to learn about each type briefly. Based on the research on the most popular copywriting job in Indonesia, three popular copywriting techniques are taught to the Applied English students. Those are writing headlines, product description, persuasive and informative writing.

**Meeting 14-15: Avoiding Plagiarism** Cited from [8], there are some tips in avoiding plagiarism. They are avoiding plagiarism by summarizing and paraphrasing and avoiding plagiarism by developing good study habits. Plagiarism learning is important to be integrated into copywriting since currently there are many studies on plagiarism in the workplace. [9] found that in recent years, plagiarism is moved from academia only to some serious area of concern for business ethicists, managers, and the public. It is in line with [10] who stated that on the 21st century, plagiarism seemed to be more at the forefront of the media and appears to be on the increase. The worst implication of plagiarism on the industry is related to the ethical implication. Ethical implications can have serious consequences for organizations, individuals, and society as well.

### Copywriting on Internship Program

As the research methodology, this research is RnD (Research and Development) by developing the current copywriting syllabus of Applied English students. However, before design the new syllabus of copywriting, a survey is conducted on 20 students in the sixth semester. The survey is conducted to understand what kind of digital competency that the students need dealing with the copywriting. This survey also aimed at evaluating the copywriting with the application of copywriting in the industry. As the context, students of Applied English at Diponegoro University must do their internship program at tourism place or site.

Results of the survey showed that there are twelve students who were getting the task as a copywriter when they were doing their internship program. Data of students who had a task as a copywriter in their internship is showed in the table below.

*Table 1*

Data of Applied English students' year 2018 internship program who had a task as a copywriter

No	Internship Place	Job Task
1	Bersukaria tour and travel	Social media specialist
2	Bersukaria tour and travel	Web content
3	Bersukaria tour and travel	Advertising
4	Railway Museum	Bilingual promotional leaflet
5	Tourism office of Semarang Regency	Printed promotional media – leaflet, brochure

No	Internship Place	Job Task
6	Tourism office of Semarang Regency	Web content
7	Ranggawarsita Museum	Web content
8	Nusantara Tour and Travel	Social media specialist
9	Banaran Coffee Museum	Printed promotional media – leaflet, brochure
10	Gedong Songo Temple	Printed promotional media (leaflet)
11	Gedong Songo Temple	Visitor guidance brochure
12	Youth, Sport, and Tourism office of Central Java Province	Web content

As we can see in the table above, it can be described that Applied English students are commonly worked as a copywriter when they are placed in the tourism industry. Most of them are responsible for the English promotional activity, both in printed or digital. Even if they might have a task to do the printed media, still it can be classified as a content writer since they should make the content that is interesting, informative, but effective. They also should create it using the digital platform first before it can be printed.

Besides those 12 students, there are 8 students that did not get a task as a copywriter. The data of students who received other tasks in their internship program are written in the data below.

*Table 2*

Data of Applied English students' year 2018 internship program who did not have a task as a copywriter

No	Internship Place	Job Task
1	Banaran Coffee Museum	Tour Guide
2	Banaran Coffee Museum	Tour Guide
3	Grand Edge Hotel	Front Office
4	Grandhika Hotel	Front Office
5	Ranggawarsita Museum	Catalog Translator
6	Gedung Songo Temple	Tour Guide
7	Gedung Songo Temple	Notice Board Translator
8	Youth, Sport, and Tourism office of Central Java Province	Document Translator

### **Digital Copywriting Syllabus Design**

Based on the survey and some of the previous theories above, integrating copywriting subject with digital learning is considered essential. Therefore, some basic of digital copywriting is selected to be integrated with the copywriting syllabus for Applied English Students. Some digital materials which are chosen are being matched with previous copywriting syllabus and students need in the industry based on their internship experiences. Since in the previous syllabus have two meetings for one learning topic, the digital materials then can be added in the middle of every topic. By doing this, students can both practicing the writing technique and practicing the digital platform in applying the writing technique. Some digital materials which are added in the new copywriting syllabus are stated as follows:

**Graphic Design for Copywriting** Graphic design is applied art that is intended to communicate messages. There are basic theories and rules that must be learned to

achieve a deep understanding of graphic design. One of the fundamental lessons is to recognize the basic principles of graphic design. [11] suggested that learning about creating a good visual is important since it influences the aesthetics value. The aesthetics itself play an important role in shaping user responses to products and websites. Aesthetic impressions also usually are used by the readers to judge the usability and credibility. Therefore, it is important for training providers and educational institutions to consider visual content learning.

**Web Design** When we take a look at the data of students' job tasks in their internship program, it can be seen that the most popular task is being a web content specialist. Therefore, it is essential for them to be able to understand basic web design. According to [12] copywriting and design affects each other. To result in a strong campaign; it is necessary to have strong compatibility between the visual and the copy. Such as sometimes the copy is stronger than the visual and vice versa. It should be such that it should complement each other.

**Search Engine Optimization** Search Engine Optimization, commonly abbreviated as "SEO" is a series of processes carried out systematically that aim to increase traffic volume and quality of visits through search engines to certain websites by utilizing the working mechanism or the search engine algorithm. The purpose of SEO is to place a website at the top position, or at least the first page of search results based on certain keywords targeted. Logically, websites that occupy the top positions in search results have a greater chance of getting visitors. SEO learning is also integrated with previous copywriting syllabus "writing headlines". After success in writing an effective and interactive headline, it is their task to make the article that they have been writing become popular and read by many people. Therefore, SEO is important to be learned.

**HyperText Markup Language (HTML)** After understanding the web design and SEO, learning about HTML is also fundamental. HTML is the foundation of documents on the web. HTML tags tell browsers how to present content. HTML tags are written in brackets that look like arrows < >. A good digital copywriter will also be able to use basic HTML to lay out copy knowing that the appearance of the page will get his or her words to read. It should be easy for users to skip and skim the copy and it should be easy for them to find the parts that are most relevant to them.

**Social Media** Besides the web, in this digital era, social media is the most popular platform that cannot be separated from the industry. Almost every person, office, and brand are creating their social media to interact with others. In the tourism sector, social media is often used as the most favorite platform both to communicate with society or to do the promotion. Since there are many social media platforms which are being used, learning various types of social media is also needed. Even if students might be already familiar with social media, other important elements such as ethics in social media, social media marketing, advertising, personal branding, and etc., must be learned by the students as now they are using social media for a professional objective.

**Plagiarism Checker** In order to help the students in avoiding the plagiarism as stated above, students also need to learn at operating various plagiarism checker. Some examples of trusted plagiarism detector tools are *Turnitin*, *dupli checker*, *copyleaks*, and many others.

### Conclusion

This research aimed at integrating the syllabus of Applied English as the vocational learning program with the need of the industry. Copywriting is one of the most promising vacancies for Applied English graduates. It is proven by job task provided by the internship place when students did their internship program. Various copywriting tasks

were given to the applied English students. However, learning the language content of copywriting only is not enough. Students also need to learn about the digital world surround the copywriting itself. Copywriting and digital have been classified as one entity that cannot be separated. Therefore, integrating the digital materials to the copywriting for Applied English is recommended.

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