The Analysis of Students Difficulty in Essay Writing Course

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Abstract: This study investigates the difficulties faced by university students in writing essays, particularly in the context of English education in Indonesia. The research identified key challenges such as limited vocabulary, anxiety, time constraints, and difficulty in organizing ideas. Through a quantitative approach that included an online distributed survey, this study collected data on students' experiences and perceptions of their writing skills. The results showed that many students experienced difficulties in various aspects of writing, including grammar and coherence, which often led to a lack of confidence and motivation. The findings highlight the need for better teaching strategies to improve students' writing skills. Recommendations include providing intensive guidance during the writing process, implementing project-based learning, and utilizing technology to support learning. In addition, fostering a supportive environment where students can freely explore topics of interest is essential to motivate them to write effectively. Overall, this study underscores the importance of overcoming skill-based and psychological barriers to improve academic writing proficiency among students in the digital age.

Keywords: teaching strategies, writing skills, grammatical errors

INTRODUCTION

In the digital era, writing skills have undergone a transformation. Students are not only required to write grammatically sound texts, but must also be able to write texts that are creative, persuasive, and appropriate to the digital context. This research can provide insights into the challenges students face in writing essays in the digital era and provide recommendations for curriculum development and more relevant writing lessons. Compared to other abilities such as speaking, reading and listening, writing is a challenging skill. Writing is a necessary skill in the academic field. Most university students have little vocabulary and struggle to develop their writing ideas well (Lestari, 2020). Writing practice is also very important for college students, but before starting to write they must learn the aspects that need to be considered in order to get good writing such as vocabulary selection, grammar, punctuation, and other elements that support writing to be better (Nabu & Pakaya, 2022). Students tend to have sloppy writing habits. If they do not understand the importance of meaningful language use such as improper use of verb tenses and punctuation, their work will be unclear and misinterpreted even though they have received formal instruction and guidance (Sulaiman et al., 2023)

The world of education has the capacity to produce high-quality scientific work. They are expected to have the ability to participate in regular writing activities that will enable them to produce written works such as books and journals as well as popular scientific works such as articles (Muhlisin & Imran, 2023). According to Bailey (2015), academic writing should be objective and accurate. Bailey (2011) also stated that students should have the ability to achieve formal writing, which is characterized by formal structure, systematic, formal language, and logical organization. According to previous research, many students experience difficulties when writing English assignments. Al-Badi (2015) found that some of the problems students face when academic writing are proper language use, cohesion and coherence, finding relevant topics and sources, incorporating references and citations, and finding relevant topics and sources (Fitria, 2022).

The writer can build a consistent and meaningful narrative by analyzing and synthesizing ideas. All students should have good writing skills at the higher education level. This is due to the fact that most coursework requires writing documents, such as papers, articles, reports, assignments, final projects, and theses (Liu & Jeba, 2018). Therefore, it is crucial for individuals to continuously improve their writing skills. In addition, it is crucial for lecturers to continue developing creative teaching approaches that help improve their students' writing skills (Nenotek et al., 2022). Harmer in Annisa (2016) stated that students should pay attention not only on what to write but also on how to write. Previous research shows that during pre-observation, it was found that students had limited vocabulary. Writing in English also gives students more time to process the language compared to the time allocated for the speaking part, thus allowing them to express their imaginative world. However, creating effective writing is not as simple as it seems (Nabu & Pakaya, 2022).

Okpe & Onjewu (2017) stated that gaining the ability to write essay assignments can be one of the beneficial things to do as it can help in daily communication, getting better grades, and becoming a better professional. As a result, essay writing courses have become very important for university students, especially in Indonesia in the English Education department (Bulqiyah et al., 2021). Thus, the academic world is the place that has the most potential to produce high-quality scientific work, which is meant here not only limited to lecturers but also students. As part of the academic environment, students are expected to be able to write regularly. This will enable them to produce written works, both in the form of scientific writing (books and journals) and popular writing (articles). Unlike speaking, writing that contains information about science will serve as an effective symbol or medium for society to develop science (Muhlisin & Imran, 2023). After that, they have to write the first sentence as the main idea of their essay, after they read it, and try to make a conclusion in their own words as an idea. According to Morgan (2016), students will find it difficult to start their

first idea or topic. They may be confused about writing a thesis statement that can be found in the first or last sentence of the paragraph. They also have to consider the audience or readers who will read the essay, as well as the purpose of the essay. Mostly, students feel afraid or fail when writing because of the way they convey their ideas, feelings, and experiences (Sartika et al., 2022). By understanding these challenges, this study aims to provide valuable insights into effective strategies to overcome these difficulties and improve students' writing ability.

RESEARCH METHOD

In analyzing the difficulty of writing essays, this research uses quantitative research methods by distributing questionnaires through online media. The data collection method is done by literature study or literature which is done by reading and researchers can get it through scientific papers, the internet, and sites that provide data related to the subject matter of this research. The data collection method was also carried out by survey to obtain data from the difficulty of writing essays by distributing questionnaires indirectly or online with the help of social media such as WhatsApp by using google form services for filling in by giving several written questions to respondents. After that, all questionnaires that have been collected will be classified using the diagram that has been available on google form.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This survey aims to understand the challenges students face in completing writing assignments and their suggestions for improvement which will be presented with diagrams.
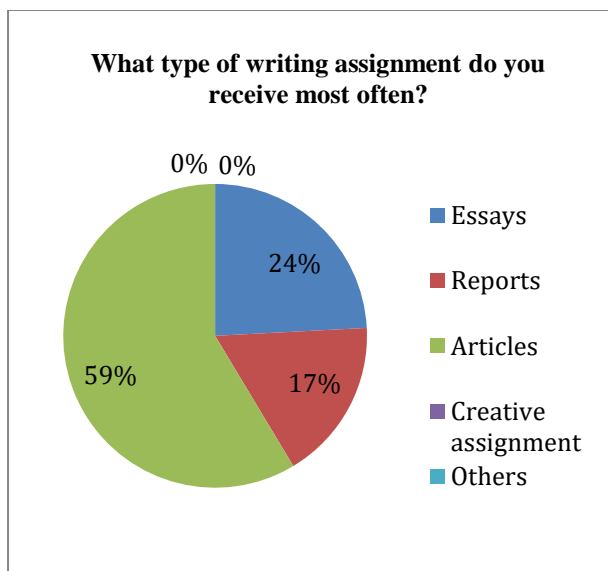

Figure 1. Types of assignments frequently received

From the pie chart, it is clear that article assignments are the most frequently given type of assignment, reaching a percentage of 59%. The second position is occupied by report assignments with a percentage of 24%, followed by essay assignments with a percentage of 17%. Creative and other types of assignments only have a relatively small percentage. It can be concluded that most respondents are more often given article writing assignments than other types of writing assignments. This indicates that the ability to write articles is a skill that is quite important and often trained in the context

of respondents' education or work and shows that the ability to write articles is one of the main competencies that students majoring in English are expected to master.
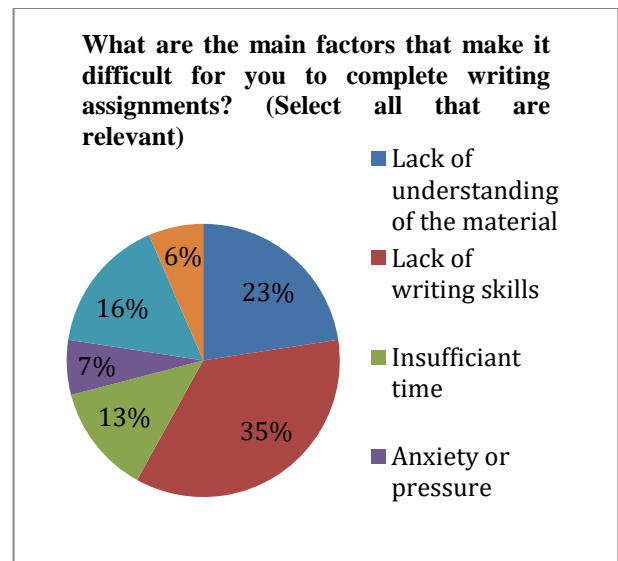

Figure 2. Factors that make it difficult to complete assignments

The diagram below presents the survey results regarding the main factors that make it difficult for respondents to complete writing assignments. From the pie chart, it can be seen that "difficulty in organizing ideas" is the biggest obstacle faced by respondents with a percentage of 35%. This was followed by "lack of time" (23%), "anxiety or pressure" (16%), and "lack of writing skills" (16%). "Lack of understanding of the material" and 'other factors' had smaller percentages. The results of this survey indicate that in addition to lack of time, psychological aspects such as anxiety and difficulty in managing ideas are also significant challenges in completing writing assignments.
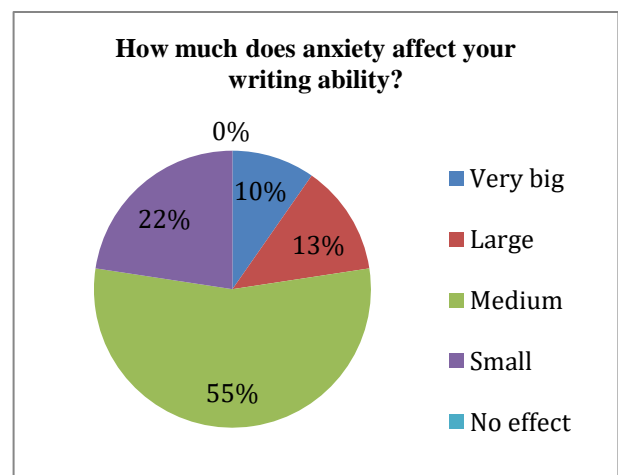

Figure 3. Anxiety affects your writing ability

The diagram above shows the survey results regarding how much anxiety affects one's writing ability. The majority of 54.8% stated that anxiety had no effect at all on their writing ability. Then, 22.6% of respondents felt that anxiety had a very big impact, followed by 12.9% who felt that anxiety had a moderate impact. A smaller percentage, 9.7% of respondents felt that anxiety had a great impact, and only 0%

felt that anxiety had a small impact on their writing ability. In conclusion, based on this survey, most respondents felt that anxiety was not a significant barrier to their writing ability. However, there was also a sizable proportion (22.6%) who felt very bothered by anxiety while writing. This suggests that anxiety remains a factor that needs to be considered in the context of writing ability.

Most of the students felt that their lecturers did not help them with their writing assignments. They wanted more guidance and support to improve their writing skills. This lack of support makes them feel difficult and lack confidence. Therefore, it is important for lecturers to pay more attention to students' needs in developing their writing skills. This digital age also shows that the internet has become the most frequently used resource for respondents to complete writing assignments. While textbooks and other resources are still used, the internet clearly dominates as the top choice. This shows how important internet access and the ability to utilize it is in today's learning and writing process, and reflects a significant shift in the way we seek information and complete academic tasks. When facing difficulties in writing, most respondents chose to outline first. This strategy helps them to organize their ideas better and develop a clearer writing structure. Many respondents also utilize apps or writing aids to make their writing process easier. In addition, discussing with friends and looking for writing samples were also popular choices for some respondents. The results of this survey show that respondents tend to rely on planning and external help to overcome writing difficulties.

To improve students' writing skills, there are several suggestions given by respondents, namely that a comprehensive approach is needed. First, teachers need to provide intensive guidance, especially in the early stages such as brainstorming and outline making. Second, the application of project-based learning can motivate students to be more involved in the writing process. Third, providing constructive feedback is essential to help students correct mistakes and improve the quality of their writing. Fourth, utilizing technology such as writing apps or collaboration platforms can enrich students' learning experience. Fifth, organizing regular writing workshops can provide opportunities for students to develop their writing skills more deeply. Sixth, giving students the freedom to choose topics that interest them can increase their motivation and creativity in writing.

Essay writing is the most difficult skill in writing. That is why students often have difficulties in writing English essays. According to the questionnaire, researchers found that there are five problems in writing essays in English, which are difficulty in understanding the material to be written, lack of writing skills, insufficient time in writing activities, anxiety or pressure when writing, and difficulty in organizing ideas. Students have to research and develop their ideas to create a good essay, but they often get stuck when writing essays. Most of them are afraid of making mistakes when they write down their ideas, feelings, and experiences. Therefore, reading is a fun activity and a source of information, so it is very important for students to read a lot (Rahmany et al., 2013). That is, people who read many sources of information while getting information will increase students' references and knowledge, which will help them make essays (Febriani, 2022).

The results show that students experience difficulties at each stage of essay writing. Difficulties in writing skills

and difficulties in understanding the material were the two stages that received the highest scores, indicating that many students struggled to complete both stages. Ashrafiany et al. (2020) said that students have difficulty outlining their essays because they do not have much information on the topic. In addition, (Bulqiyah et al., 2021)said that students' main problem in writing essays is the context of generating ideas. (Mahnam & Nejadansari, 2012) suggested pre-writing strategies such as concept mapping, reading relevant texts, and negotiation. These strategies were created to consider the difficulties students face when writing essays. They claim that these techniques have a significant impact on students' writing level. It might help students develop more cognitive structures and get more information that is important for writing. (Alemu, 2020) offers additional solutions to help students conceptualize. Brainstorming, clustering, free writing, and questioning are four activities that can be used. Ultimately, these activities help students develop enough ideas to develop a text.

Many students say that putting ideas into writing is difficult because they need to consider punctuation, coherence, paragraph organization, and word choice(Suprapto et al., 2022). In addition, drafting may take a considerable amount of the writer's time. The writer must spend a lot of time writing a rough first draft, looking for unfinished drafts, and rewriting unfinished drafts. (Bulqiyah et al., 2021) showed that some students do not make corrections or revisions and rewrite essays and students have no motivation to improve their writing. Choosing a topic, collecting ideas, and organizing or outlining are all tasks done before writing. Students should read several sources before choosing a topic which makes it difficult. After they choose a topic, they should also create a good thesis statement, clear topic sentences in each body paragraph, and a brief conclusion for their outline (Wijaya, 2017). Therefore, during the writing process, lecturers must provide intensive guidance to students. It is very important for the lecturer to monitor the students' progress at every stage. Providing feedback to students also gives them guidance to improve what they have done. In the end, this guidance will actually encourage students to complete their coursework (Ariyanti & Fitriana, 2017).

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it is evident that students face various challenges in their essay writing process. To overcome these challenges, a comprehensive approach is required. First, teachers should prioritize providing intensive guidance and support to students, especially in the early stages of writing. This includes helping students brainstorm ideas, develop outlines, and providing constructive feedback on their drafts. Second, incorporating project-based learning can motivate students and foster a more engaging learning experience. Third, utilizing technology and online resources can enhance the writing process and provide additional support to students. Finally, regular writing workshops and peer review sessions can help students improve their writing skills and gain confidence.

Future studies could explore the effectiveness of specific interventions mentioned in this study, such as project-based learning, technology integration, and peer review sessions, in addressing students' essay-writing challenges. Researchers could investigate how these strategies

impact different aspects of the writing process, such as idea generation, organization, and revision. Additionally, longitudinal studies could assess the long-term effects of these approaches on students' writing proficiency and confidence. Exploring the role of teacher feedback in various stages of essay writing and examining how cultural or linguistic factors influence students' writing challenges could also provide valuable insights for educators and curriculum designers.

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