

WRITING DIFFICULTIES FACED BY EFL WRITING LEARNERS OF ENGLISH EDUCATION STUDY PROGRAM

Paper Subtitle as needed

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Abstract

This objectives of this study were explaining the difficulties that EFL learners when writing essays and the common mistakes they make in English. Effective writing abilities are crucial for language development and academic accomplishment across all educational levels. One of the most challenging aspects of university education is developing strong essay writing skills. This study used a descriptive survey research approach. The sample of this study consists of 35 first-year English Education Study Program students from IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro. In order to get the research objectives, a descriptive study was used, with data collected through a student questionnaire and a collection analysis of thirty-five randomly selected essays..

Keywords – writing difficulties, efl writing learners

Introduction

In resecnt days globalized world, education in English as aForeignLanguage (EFL)is crucial thing. English as a foerign language instructionis important enough to be required in many nations. The Framework for Education an dTrainingin the European Union emphasizes the enhancement of language learning quality and effectiveness as a key objective ("Opportunities and Challenges Facing

Bosnian High-School EFL Learners", 2018). Moreover, the development of intercultural competence through EFL education is highlighted as essential in higher education settings (Sarsenbaeva, 2021). This underscores the broader goal of EFL education in fostering not just language skills but also intercultural understanding. In the context of EFL education, the use of Information Technologies has been identified as

pivotal in teaching English effectively (Babaniyazova & Sarsenbaev, 2020).

Integrating Information Technologies into EFL instruction can improve the students' experiences and outcomes in learning process. Additionally, the obstacles faced in teaching EFL, such as designing authentic tasks for learners, have been subjects of scholarly inquiry (Kessler et al., 2020). Addressing these challenges is crucial for ensuring that EFL instruction is engaging and relevant to learners. Furthermore, the importance of EFL in implementing sustainable development competencies in higher education is emphasized (Balčiūnaitienė & Teresevičienė, 2018). This underscores the broader societal impact of EFL education beyond language proficiency. The need for EFL education is also evident in the design of macro-educational policies in developing countries, where EFL is increasingly becoming a compulsory subject in educational curriculums ("undefined", 2018). This illustrates how important it is to acknowledge English as a language for participation and communication in the global community. In conclusion, EFL education is multifaceted, encompassing not only language acquisition but also intercultural competence, sustainable development, and the use of innovative teaching methodologies. For educators and legislators to improve the caliber and efficacy of language learning programs, they must comprehend the significance of EFL education in a variety of circumstances.

While English dominates global communication, it remains a foreign language in the Kurdistan Regional Government. This results in Kurdish EFL students underperforming, especially in essay writing, a key skill for academic success. Researchers highlight the importance of writing, considering it the most challenging language skill to

develop (Shangarfan & Mamipour, 2011). For EFL and ESL students, strong writing is crucial for both communication and academic achievement. However, mastering writing can be a struggle, with many students finding it difficult and discouraging.

One of the most essential abilities that students must master in order to succeed academically is writing. The ability to express ideas and arguments clearly, concisely, and persuasively through writing is essential from elementary school through college and into the professional world. But, writing is the most difficult language skills to learn, according to several researchers, and it takes a lot of time and work to get the writing well. This is especially true for EFL and ESL students, where strong writing is essential for both communication and academic achievement. Unfortunately, learning to write well is often a struggle. Students often face various difficulties and find the task daunting, which can impact their confidence.

Writing helps students develop critical thinking and communication skills. When writing, students must analyze a topic, organize their thought in a logical manner, and present their ideas in a coherent way. This process strengthens higher-order thinking abilities and allows students to gain a deeper understanding of concepts. Furthermore, writing forces students to communicate their ideas to an audience in a structured format using proper grammar, vocabulary, and tone.

In academic and professional settings, the importance of writing skills cannot be overstated. Academic literacies research has emphasized the significance of developing academic writing skills, highlighting the need for students to acquire the necessary competence in English for their academic and

professional growth (Lillis & Scott, 2015). Particularly in healthcare professions like nursing, writing skills play a critical role in effectively communicating issues, implementing evidence-based practices, and driving positive outcomes based on evidence (Bell & Murray, 2020). Furthermore, in teacher preparation programs for aspiring educators, particularly in settings where English is a foreign language, writing is identified as a key language skill to cultivate ("undefined", 2022).

The process of improving one's academic writing abilities is complex and requires interaction with a number of different elements, such as research knowledge, comprehension of complex texts, and understanding key concepts (Alqiawi, 2015). Strategies to empower academic writing skills encompass enhancing students' cognitive abilities through activities that promote academic literacy, problem-solving, and innovation, thereby fostering effective communication and representation through writing (Wahyuningsih, 2019).

Furthermore, the integration of academic writing activities has been shown to enhance motivation and critical thinking skills among university learners, underscoring the interconnectedness of academic writing and cognitive development (Wijaya, 2022). Research also indicates that student success in higher education is closely tied to their mastery of reading and writing skills specific to their disciplines (Hass & Lenong, 2021). Students' academic success and assessments of their learning in ESL and EFL situations are heavily influenced by their level of writing competency, highlighting the pivotal role of writing in academic success (Jalleh & Mahfoodh, 2021). Additionally, reflective writing is recognized as a valuable tool for learning and assessment in social work education, emphasizing the

transferable nature of writing skills across different professional domains (Rai, 2006).

Academic writing focuses on communicating complex ideas in a precise manner. Students must learn to write for different purposes and audiences using proper formatting, citation styles, and specialized vocabulary. From research papers and lab reports to essays and thesis statements, various types of academic writing assignments help prepare students for the communication demands of college and careers. Developing strong academic writing skills early on can give students a major advantage as they progress through higher levels of education.

Previous studies on EFL writing difficulties have shed light on various challenges faced by learners of English as a foreign language in enhancing their writing skills. These studies have identified several common issues that hinder EFL students' writing proficiency, including difficulties in mechanics, vocabulary usage, text organization, and negative attitudes towards academic writing Alzahrani et al. (2021). Additionally, research has highlighted that EFL students often struggle with generating, organizing, and transforming ideas into coherent written texts, indicating the cognitive demands and complexities associated with EFL writing tasks (Srouf et al., 2021). Moreover, according to research comparing process-oriented and product-oriented writing instruction methods, writing is thought to be the most difficult language skill for EFL students to master, requiring cognitive, metacognitive, and affective engagement at various levels (Kadmiry, 2021).

While some studies have focused on the effect of collaborative writing techniques

on the writing performance and attitudes of EFL students (Yesuf & Anshu, 2022), several researchers have investigated how feedback can improve the proficiency of students' academic writing abilities of EFL students (Algburi & Razali, 2022). Furthermore, research has emphasized the significance of critical thinking in enhancing the academic writing skills of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students has been examined highlighting the significant role of cognitive abilities in the development of writing proficiency (Wijaya, 2022). The diverse findings underscore the multifaceted challenges encountered by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in academic writing and stress the importance of tailored interventions to effectively address these issues. While existing research has offered valuable insights, there are notable gaps in the current literature that must be filled to comprehensively support EFL students in enhancing their writing skills (Kamali & Fahim, 2011; Pei et al., 2017; Susilo et al., 2021; Zhang, 2018; Wijaya, 2022).

For example, while certain researches have investigated the effect of specific interventions such as blogging or collaborative writing on EFL writing skills, there is a need for more comprehensive investigations that consider a wider range of factors influencing EFL students' writing difficulties. Additionally, further research could explore the effectiveness of integrating different pedagogical approaches or technologies to enhance EFL writing instruction and address the diverse needs of EFL learners with varying proficiency levels and backgrounds.

Factors influencing EFL writing proficiency have been extensively studied in the literature, revealing various key determinants that impact students' writing abilities. Research has shown that

linguistic proficiency, self-regulated learning strategies, and metacognitive knowledge play crucial roles in predicting EFL writing proficiency (Teng & Zhang (2016) Schoonen et al., 2003). Additionally, the degree of language skill, the complexity of the task, and the use of one's native language (L1) in writing tasks have been identified as influential factors affecting EFL learners' writing performance (Qahfarokhi & Biria, 2012). Moreover, the impact of instructional settings, proficiency sampling criteria, and the integration of different pedagogical approaches have been found to influence the relationship between proficiency and syntactic complexity in EFL writing (Lu, 2011).

Factors influencing EFL writing proficiency involve a complex interaction of linguistic, cognitive, affective, and educational elements. Linguistic factors such as grammar, vocabulary, and syntax are crucial in developing writing competence (Ying & Soh, 2019). Cognitive aspects, including critical thinking and idea organization, significantly affect the quality of EFL writing (Zeng et al., 2023). Affective factors like motivation and anxiety play a key role in determining EFL learners' writing performance (Yousefifard & Fathi, 2021). Educational factors, such as teaching methods and feedback mechanisms, are essential for improving EFL writing proficiency (Sengul & Bostanci, 2021). Research has shown that peer review can help reduce apprehension in writing and increase confidence among EFL writers (Ho & Savignon, 2013). Additionally, the integration of virtual reality technology has been explored to enhance paragraph writing skills among EFL learners, demonstrating the potential impact of innovative educational tools on writing proficiency (Khodabandeh, 2022; Cai, 2022). Metacognitive strategies have been validated for their predictive effects on academic writing performance in EFL

contexts, highlighting the importance of cognitive approaches in improving writing skills (Teng et al., 2021). The use of blogging platforms has been associated with enhancements in writing skills by fostering motivation among EFL learners (Yousefifard & Fathi, 2021). Furthermore, the implementation of blended learning approaches has been proven effective in improving EFL academic writing skills. These findings collectively emphasize the complex array of factors influencing EFL writing proficiency, underscoring the necessity of a comprehensive approach that addresses linguistic, cognitive, affective, and educational dimensions.

Furthermore, research has emphasized the importance of various factors such as cognitive knowledge, positive attitude, perceived English proficiency, free reading, free writing, and writing apprehension in relation to students' performance in EFL writing (Pae, 2008). Amelia & Rusmayanti (2017) stated that the use of peer feedback, self-directed feedback, and feedback sheets has been demonstrated to positively enhance the writing achievement of low proficiency EFL students. Moreover, the role of reflective journals in enhancing writing skills and the impact of teaching paragraph writing in the first language (L1) on the writing ability of EFL learners have been explored as contributing factors to writing proficiency (Macías & Dack, 2023; Daneshvari & Davoudi, 2016). Despite the wealth of research on factors influencing EFL writing proficiency, there are still gaps in the current literature.

This research aims to address the following questions:

1. What are the primary challenges encountered by EFL college students in their writing?

2. What factors contribute to these difficulties?

Methodology

In the context of educational research, descriptive qualitative methodology is utilized to explain and provide systematic descriptions of phenomena occurring in the field of education (Hidayat et al., 2022). This approach allows researchers to analyze data by seeking facts with appropriate interpretations, identifying similarities and differences, and gaining a deep understanding of the subject matter (Adelina & Suprayogi, 2020). The qualitative descriptive method is commonly employed in various disciplines, such as psychology, nursing, and social sciences, to describe characteristics and phenomena comprehensively (Mirazna & Hikmah, 2019). It is essential for researchers to maintain awareness of the limitations of qualitative description while leveraging its strengths in conducting research (Neergaard et al., 2009). Overall, the descriptive qualitative research methodology is a powerful tool that enables researchers from various disciplines to explore, describe, and interpret complex phenomena, providing valuable insights into various aspects of human experiences and behaviors.

This study is involving 35 participants from the English Education Study Program of IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro and utilizing a questionnaire for data collection, a descriptive qualitative research methodology is highly suitable. This approach allows for a comprehensive description of the participants' perspectives, experiences, and insights related to the study topic Handayani & Aminatun (2020). By employing a descriptive qualitative study, researchers can systematically gather and analyze data to acquire a thorough comprehension of the phenomenon being studied (Colorafi & Evans, 2016).

Finding and Discussion

In investigating writing difficulties and common errors among EFL students, various factors have been identified. Research has shown that Indonesian EFL learners face linguistic, cognitive, and psychological challenges when writing comparison and contrast essays Toba et al. (2019). Additionally, studies have indicated that EFL students struggle with rhetorical and linguistic aspects, affecting their writing tasks (Setyowati & Sukmawan, 2016). Significant hurdles in essay writing for EFL students include limited linguistic knowledge, anxiety, lack of ideas, L1 interference, and challenges in understanding organizational structure (Fiani, 2020).

Moreover, specific instances and case studies have highlighted these difficulties. For example, research on Saudi Arabian EFL university students has emphasized issues with punctuation, grammar, and paragraph development in academic writing (Alharbi, 2019). Collaborative writing has been shown to positively impact EFL students' performance in paragraph writing, suggesting the benefits of collaborative approaches in addressing writing difficulties (Nguyen & Yen, 2021). Furthermore, the importance of metacognitive instruction in EFL writing classes has been underscored to tackle linguistic limitations, anxiety, and lack of ideas among students (Fiani, 2020). The findings from these studies emphasize the complex nature of writing difficulties faced by EFL students, influenced by linguistic, cognitive, and psychological factors. These challenges arise in various contexts, such as academic writing, collaborative writing, and metacognitive instruction, highlighting the necessity for tailored interventions to effectively enhance EFL students' writing skills.

Factors influencing writing difficulties among EFL learners are multifaceted and encompass various dimensions. Research

has highlighted that linguistic deficiencies, such as limited vocabulary and grammatical inaccuracies, significantly impact writing performance (Hwang et al., 2022) Sharafi-Nejad et al., 2016). Additionally, cognitive aspects, including challenges in generating ideas and structuring paragraphs effectively, have been identified as influential factors contributing to writing difficulties (Hwang et al., 2022). psychological variables, specifically anxiety and absence of motivation, necessitate rephrasing, also play a crucial role in hindering EFL students' writing proficiency (Yousefifard & Fathi, 2021; Sharafi-Nejad et al., 2016). Moreover, level of assignment difficulty and language proficiency have been shown to influence code-switching behaviors in writing tasks, further complicating the writing process for EFL learners (Qahfarokhi & Biria, 2012). These factors interact dynamically, creating a complex web of challenges that EFL students encounter in developing their writing skills. Understanding and addressing these diverse factors are essential for designing effective interventions to support EFL learners in overcoming writing difficulties and enhancing their writing proficiency.

To assess student writing skills alongside the survey, researchers collected and graded 35 essays. This analysis, done by the researcher and one of the English lecturer, aimed to pinpoint common errors and gauge students' true abilities, validating the chosen method. The results revealed that first-year students struggled with grammar, punctuation, word order, vocabulary choice, and paragraph flow. These findings highlight the complexities of teaching writing. To address these challenges, lecturers should tailor writing assignments to students' language level and provide ongoing support throughout the learning process.

From the result of questionnaires shows that the majority of participants 74.28% like writing skills, while 25.72% of the participants do not like writing skills. It means that majority of the participants have high interest for writing skills.

Table 1. The parts of writing aspects

Writing Aspects	Freq	Percentage (%)
Grammar	17	17.89
Organization of writing	18	18.95
Coherence and cohesion	12	12.63
Vocabulary	13	13.68
Punctuation	13	13.68
Spelling	9	9.47
Preposition	5	5.26
Word order	8	8.42
Total	95	100

According to Table 1, it is evident that the predominant portion of individuals involved in the research study. identified grammar (17.89%), organization of writing (18.95%), and punctuation and vocabulary (13.68%) as the most common difficulties in writing skills. Many students find grammar particularly challenging when writing essays, which underscores the complexity of composing good English essays. This challenge arises from variations in grammatical regulations exist between the native languages of students and the English language, as well as limited understanding and practice of grammar rules, especially among learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), one significant obstacle arises. The second primary difficulty encountered by

students of EFL pertains to the structuring of their thoughts in written form. This difficulty may stem from inadequate knowledge of academic writing conventions and writing strategies. The last result was 5.26% of participants agreed that preposition were difficult in composing writing skills.

Writing difficulties encompass a range of challenges that individuals may face across various aspects of writing, including vocabulary, grammar, punctuation, organization, style, and language. These difficulties can impact academic, professional, and everyday writing tasks (Zain & Mumpuniarti, 2019). Factors contributing to writing challenges include issues such as incorrect grammar usage, interference from one's first language, limited vocabulary, punctuation errors, and problems with word order (Ahmed, 2019). Additionally, challenges in writing can stem from limited practice, the absence of feedback, insufficient guidance in writing methodologies, and the inherent drive of learners. (Alamri & Yaseen, 2021).

Furthermore, writing difficulties can also be attributed to grammatical and mechanical errors, which encompass spelling accuracy, grammar, punctuation, handwriting, and the clarity and organization of written expression are essential components of effective written communication. (Fitria, 2022). Students may struggle with writing due to factors such as fear of writing, unfamiliarity with the language, lack of ideas, or a general apprehension towards the writing process (Wessels & Herrera, 2013). Specific disorders of deficiencies in written communication may present themselves through challenges related to accurately spelling words, applying grammatical rules, using proper punctuation, maintaining legible handwriting, and

ensuring coherence and conciseness in written texts. (O'Rourke et al., 2017).

Discussion

Interpretation of findings in the context of addressing writing difficulties among EFL students reveals both alignment with and deviations from previous studies. The results align with existing literature by confirming the significant impact of linguistic deficiencies, cognitive challenges, and psychological factors on writing proficiency Toba et al. (2019)Wahyuni & Umam, 2022). These results align with previous studies that have emphasized the significance of linguistic constraints, fear of negative feedback, and insufficient practice in hindering EFL students' writing skills (Yang, 2015; Alharbi, 2019).

However, the current study also sheds light on new insights, such as the impact of task complexity and level of language mastery on the phenomenon of code-switching during writing activities, providing a nuanced understanding of the complexities involved in EFL writing difficulties (Yousefifard & Fathi, 2021). These novel findings contribute to the current reservoir of knowledge through the provision of a more holistic viewpoint on the multifaceted nature of writing challenges faced by EFL learners. Implications for teaching practice stemming from the identified writing difficulties suggest the need for tailored strategies to address these challenges effectively.

Drawing from previous studies, pedagogical implications include increasing practice opportunities, utilizing correct language learning strategies, overcoming first language barriers, promoting ongoing learning, and emphasizing reflection on the writing process and outcomes (Nguyen et al., 2020; Nguyen & Yen, 2021).

Moreover, challenges in writing can be influenced by issues such as choosing

appropriate academic words, developing a thesis statement, organizing ideas, and constructing coherent paragraphs ("undefined", 2022). Studies have shown that students, particularly ESL learners, face difficulties in writing accurately in English, with common errors including capitalization, spelling, and the use of articles (Alzamil, 2020). Difficulties in writing can also arise from a deficiency in the mastery of skills related to producing written texts, knowledge of subject content, and interest in learning English (Ariani, 2023).

Various studies have highlighted recurring problems in writing, including the presence of vocabulary, spelling, grammar, diction, punctuation, and sentence structure issues (Yassin & Salman, 2023). Writing anxiety, individual predisposition's towards writing, and fear of the writing process can also impact writing performance (Ahiskali et al., 2022). Feder & Majnemer (2007) stated that Illegible handwriting may present an obstacle in the acquisition of advanced skills, such as spelling and composition. Additionally, obstacles in pertaining to vocabulary, grammatical regulations, and the coherence of ideas may impede the quality of written expression. (Kusumaningputri et al., 2018).

Recommendations for curriculum development and instructional methods emphasize the importance of designing writing courses based on students' challenges, integrating collaborative writing approaches, incorporating metacognitive instruction, and leveraging digital tools like blogs to enhance writing skills (Thi, 2021; Alenezi, 2022). These strategies align with research indicating the positive impact of collaborative writing, metacognitive instruction, and technology-enhanced learning environments on EFL students' writing performance (Bian & Wang, 2016; Hang, 2021). Despite the valuable insights

acquired through the research endeavor, it is imperative to recognize the constraints. that may have influenced the research outcomes. Potential constraints include the size of the sample, which could potentially constrain the extent to which the results can be applied to a broader population, along with the particular circumstances under which the research was carried out, which could affect the transferability of the results to other settings (Enneifer, 2021).

Furthermore, the reliance on self-reported data and the potential for social desirability bias in responses may have influenced the accuracy of the findings (Fiani, 2020). Areas for further research could involve exploring the longitudinal effects of implemented teaching strategies on writing proficiency, investigating the impact of cultural factors on writing difficulties, and examining the efficacy of different feedback mechanisms in improving EFL students' writing skills (Rosang, 2021). By addressing these limitations and delving into these unexplored areas, future studies can make a valuable contribution towards a more thorough comprehension of effective strategies for improving instruction in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the summary of key findings regarding writing difficulties among EFL students underscores the pervasive challenges stemming from linguistic deficiencies, cognitive hurdles, and psychological factors. These difficulties manifest in various forms, including limited vocabulary, grammatical inaccuracies, anxiety, and lack of motivation, impacting students' writing performance.

The contributing factors identified in the research align with previous studies, highlighting the persistent nature of these challenges in EFL writing contexts Sabti et al. (2019); Alharbi, 2019; Yousefifard

& Fathi, 2021). Moving forward, practical recommendations for educators, students, and institutions include implementing tailored strategies such as increasing practice opportunities, integrating collaborative writing approaches, and incorporating metacognitive instruction to address identified writing difficulties effectively (Ratnawati et al., 2019; Choubane, 2022; Thi, 2021). These strategies are essential for enhancing EFL students' writing skills and fostering a conducive learning environment.

Furthermore, future research directions should focus on investigating the longitudinal effects of teaching interventions, exploring the effect of cultural factors in writing challenges, and examining the efficacy of feedback mechanisms in improving writing proficiency (Ma, 2021). By delving into these areas, researchers can contribute to a deeper understanding of effective approaches to address EFL writing challenges and enhance writing instruction in diverse educational settings.

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