

## AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES IN ESSAY WRITING AT STUDENTS OF UNIVERSITY

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**Abstract.** This research was aimed to analyzed of the students' problems in essay writing. The study sample consisted of 15 participants. To achieve the purpose of study, the researcher used questionnaire and interview. The questionnaire and interview were given for students. The result showed that there were some students faced difficulties to wrote essay. There were some problems that faced by the sudents. The problems were expressing their ideas, making sentences cohesive and coherence, and lack of vocabulary and grammar. It can be concluded that the students of university still faced difficulties in essay writing. They still faced difficulties how to write and develop their ideas. In addition, the teacher should give a good strategy to develop the students' ideas in writing.

**Keywords:** writing, students' difficulties, essay writing.

### INTRODUCTION

The result of learning a second language involves some of skills. They are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The writing is the skill which demands the students to demonstrate their ideas in written. Susanto (2007) stated that writing skill is a steps to demonstrate the ideas in our liesure. When we have the suggestion and to write something, it will be enjoyable. It means that the people could express their ideas enjoyable.

In addition, according to Nezakatgoo (2010) states that writing is the most difficult skill for foreign learners to be mastered because they have to pay much attention to higher level skills (macro level skills) such as planning, organization as well as lower level skills (micro level skills) such as spelling, punctuation, diction, and so on. From all of the explanation above, writing will be as easy as it seems if someone, who wants to write a good composition, understands what actually writing is and all regulations to produce good writing that can be understood by learning writing itself.

One of the complex skills to master in first and foreign language learning has been and continues to be that of writing. As Richards (2002) puts it, the development of the writing skill necessitates something beyond the accurate use of grammar and a

good range of vocabulary, or linking the written words. Rather, writing is assumed to be an aggregation of many components the most crucial ones are suggested to be evaluated for a course (Raimes,2002).

Moreover, McKay (2008) states that writing is both of process and a product. In other word, the process includes on creating of ideas, mapping, and correcting. The students demonstrate their suggestion by thinking, drafting, and revising. Written products are the result of procedures that require specialized skills, that not every speaker develops naturally such as purpose, audience, clarity, unity, and coherence.

The students of university have learnt how to write well and increased their writing ability. They are demanded not only to be able in writing a sentence, but also to produce into paragraphs and an essay in English in order to make them easy in making their script, thesis, or dissertation later, in which it can be useful for the readers or academic society.

The students could be stated that they have ability in writing that measured through making sentence at least, paragraph, until in making essay. Meanwhile, according to Zemach (2005) states that essay is a group of paragraphs written about a single topic and central main idea. in addition, essay is a form of a complex idea written by university students are various based on the purpose of writing.

Therefore, it will be an illogical and incoherent writing in which the reader cannot understand what the writing actually is about. In addition, aspects of cohesion and coherence have been identified as a challenge for EFL nd ESL students in writing an academic text (Alagozlu, 2007; Barnawi, 2011; Ebrahimi, 2012; Krisnawati, 2013; Ramanathan and Atkinson, 1999; Ramanathan and Kaplan, 1996). In particular, research on Arab postgraduate students has illustrated that the lack of text cohesion and coherence is often clearly visible in their academic writing, and this is due to the inappropriate method of writing teaching in their home countries.

Based on the background of the problem mention above, the formulation of the problem was mentioned as follows:

What are the students' difficulties that faced by the students in essay writing?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

In writing process, the students should produce many languages to develop their ideas in order to be understood the reader. The students could increase their languages by mastering the vocabularies. Brown and Hudson (1998) stated that writing is a productive skill which demand students to produce the language. In other word, writing can be a process and productive skill. Writing is as a process that involves the pre-writing or planning, drafting, and revising. In other word, writing has a highly complex.

The students will produce good writing when they have mastering of many elements in writing. The elements are formation of letters or characters, vocabulary, grammar, punctuation, organization, and selection of appropriate content for intended the reader. Besides, writing is the process for students to make justification for themselves. It is used to learn how to think and communicate in their activities. Pre-writing is a process to build the ideas (brainstorming) and planning. Planning involves a plan that have already been generated. Besides, it is a setting process to elaborate many ideas. Drafting is an important component. It includes on the act of writing. The components consist of introduction, body, and conclusion. Flower and Hayes (1981) refer to as the translation process. The drafting process presents multiple challenges to the writer because different types of paragraphs must be written differently from one another based on the purpose of that paragraph.

Revision, revising is perhaps the most important stage of the writing process. The understanding that writing is an iterative process is of utmost importance to development as a writer. Traditionally, revision is considered as being completed after finishing a first draft of written work, although word processing software have rendered this process more continuous (Faigley & Witte, 1981; Sommers, 1980) and online and thus in alignment with the Flower and Hayes model (1980). Regardless of when revision occurs, revision is the process during which the writer reviews their writing with the intended goal of improving what they wrote (Hayes & Flower, 1980).

It can be stated that writing is a productive skill that has highly complex procedures to demonstrate their ideas or simultaneously about a number of targets, such as formation of letters or characters, vocabulary, grammar, punctuation, layout, organization, and selection of appropriate content for the intended audience, for producing final product that will be read by the reader

The students' problem in learning are the students have difficulty following instructions or directions to complete a task, the students have poor fine motor skills which can affect legibility of handwriting, the students pronounce or read multi-syllabic words with difficulty, the students have reduced or limited vocabulary and word knowledge in comparison to their peers, the students have poor retrieval of information perhaps due to problems with memory, the students have difficulty copying from the board or overhead projector, the students have poor literacy in their first language (Sue Smith, 2015).

Every learner has different difficulties in writing, so the teacher has to find to solve and help their problem in writing. Especially for young learners in which English is as foreign language, the teachers must have to good ways or technique to teach English, for the first in writing. In writing, grammar, punctuation, diction, spelling, organization the ideas, etc. are very important, so the teachers need to teach writing calmly and interestingly ways in order that the learners can enjoy it.

## METHODS

In the research method, the researcher selected qualitative research to get the data. The participants consist of 15 students at the fifth semester of state institute of Islamic studies (IAIN) Raden Intan Lampung. In other words, the researcher selected questionnaire and interview to acquire the data. The written test included the topic that related to essay writing and an interview included the theory of student's problems in writing.

The researcher gave a topic that related to essay writing. Then, the researcher requested the students to write an essay. Therefore, the researcher did an interview with all of the students after they finished the writing. Finally, the researcher gave a questionnaire for students.

## RESULT

After analyzing the data, the researcher concluded the results from the students' questionnaire and an interview. An interview included the theory of students' problems in writing.

**Table 1. The categories of the interview items**

1. Apakah pelajaran Bahasa Inggris menjadi salah satu pelajaran yang menyenangkan?
2. Skill manakah yang menurut anda sulit dalam pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris?
3. Apakah anda mengalami kesulitan dalam mengembangkan ide ketika menulis?
4. Menurut anda apakah grammar menjadi salah satu kesulitan dalam menulis? Mengapa?
5. Apakah menulis secara <i>coherence</i> itu sulit?
6. Menurut anda apakah tanda baca ataupun mekanik dalam menulis itu penting? Mengapa?
7. Menurut anda apakah menulis essay itu sulit dibandingkan paragraph dan teks?
8. Apakah kesulitan anda secara keseluruhan dalam menulis?

The result of interview showed that there were some difficulties faced by the students. The problems showed that they faced difficulties in grammar, the lack of vocabulary, and express the ideas. In addition, they still faced difficulty in cohesive and coherence. They confused to make sentences coherence.

The purpose of the questionnaire was to try identifying the students' problems in writing. There are five main types of writing problems were investigated. They

are; to know starting an essay or paragraph; to write a correct English sentence; put the ideas coherently; to choose an appropriate vocabulary to express their ideas. The students were asked to indicate whether they observe these areas constituted difficulty for them using a Lickert scale that ranged from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”.

**Table 2. The categories of students’ difficulties of writing**

No	Problems and Difficulties	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree
1.	The students have difficulties in writing		
2.	The students feel swamp in writing: they confused how to start, how to expand the ideas and how to conclude it.		
3.	The students’ biggest difficulty in writing is distinguishing how to begin the essay/paragraph.		
4.	The students’ biggest difficulty in writing is not knowing how to write an appropriate sentence.		
5.	The students’ biggest problem in writing is putting the ideas coherently		
6.	The students’ biggest problem in writing is choosing an appropriate vocabulary to convey the ideas.		
7.	The students’ biggest problem in writing is not having enough intention about the topics		

The result of questionnaire showed that there were some difficulties faced by the students. The difficulties were; they could not start and develop their ideas, the lack of vocabulary, and they could not make sentences correctly.

## DISCUSSION

The students’ difficulties include on the lack of vocabulary. It means that the students have enough vocabulary. Therefore, students recurrent the same words. Rabab’ah (2003) clarified that students were not being able to voice their opinion because they were inadequacy of vocabulary. In addition, the other difficulty of writing was the students’ confusing in determining the words. Literature showed that the source of difficulty among EFL students was linguistic repertoire falls short of their aspirations and knowledge of grammatical and syntactic structures (Nanwani, 2009).

Murshidi (2014). Low language proficiency might also obstruct academic writing. Ghabool, Edwina, and Kashef (2012) state that this problem could be the basic source of the challenges students may have in their writing. For instance, the novice writers find it very challenging to establish an effective discussion in the target language (Shafie et al, 2010). As concluded by Al-Khairi (2013), the participants of his study declared that their major problems comprise grammatical

errors, the inappropriate choice of vocabulary, irregular verbs, and incorrect punctuation and spelling. Other causes that could lead to the difficulty in academic writing are L1 interference, inadequacy of ideas, and unclear instructions of the task (Chou, 2011).

Moreover, in grammatical problems. Learners have a number of problems in their attempts to write in the second language. "As verbs take different forms depending on tense and subjects they are used with, they create problems for second language writing students" (Tyner, 1987). Similarly, Kharma (1987) in Melese (2007: 12) states that students have problems with subject verb agreements, pronoun references, and connectors.

In addition, in problems of sentence structure. Sentences reflect various syntactic structures (Reid, 1983). However, incapable learners use run-on, incorrect, and fragmented sentences (West 1966, in Tsegaye 2006:16). Kharma (1986) states that those students who have the problem of writing good sentences structures are unable to produce longer sentences requiring subordination and coordination. According to Zamel (1983:22), cohesive devices are crucial in writing. However, the linking devices have been found to be problematic for English language students.

## CONCLUSION

One of the hardest skill is writing. It includes on content, organization, vocabulary, grammatical and mechanical. There were some difficulties that faced by the students; they were lack of vocabulary, demonstrating their ideas, and making cohesive and coherence sentences. In other word, the students will learn the aspects of writing easily and accurately if the teacher chooses the best method. Furthermore, the students have to more practice in free writing in order to improve their writing ability.

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Name :

NPM :

Give the checklist (√) in the column “strongly agree” or “strongly disagree”

**The categories of students’ problems with EFL writing**

No	Problems and Difficulties	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree
1.	The students have difficulties in writing		
2.	The students feel swamp in writing: they confused how to start, how to expand the ideas and how to conclude it.		
3.	The students’ biggest difficulty in writing is distincting how to begin the essay/paragraph.		
4.	The students’ biggest difficulty in writing is not knowing how to write an appropriate sentence.		
5.	The students’ biggest problem in writing is putting the ideas coherently		
6.	The students’ biggest problem in writing is choosing an appropriate vocabulary to convey the ideas.		
7.	The students’ biggest problem in writing is not having enough intention about the topics		