Exploring Efl Stuednts' Challenges In Academic Writing: The Case Of Indonesian Higher Education

Syla Fadila Batubara¹
Rahmah Fithriani²
¹² State Islamic University of North Sumatera, Indonesia
¹ syla0304193228@uinsu.ac.id
² rahmahfithriani@uinsu.ac.id

Abstract

A limited survey was conducted to evaluate the difficulties that EFL students face when writing academically. The aim of this research is to answer two questions; why Indonesian EFL students find it hard to write academically? What challenges they encountered in academic writing? the subject were ten undergraduate students of English Departmen. Questionare was used to gather the data of this study and it mostly a close-ended questions. To support the data from questionare, two subjects were asked to do interview similar to questionare. The data analysis revealed the most common difficulties students encounter is language, structure and content. Others are related to writing self-efficacy, and the least problematic is student's lack of motivation and practice.

Keywords: Academic writing, Challenges, Indonesian EFL students, Indonesian higher education

Introduction

Writing to earn educational use is recognised as a crucial component of the English-learning process and is also relevant to the study of other areas in which English is utilised as the international language. As the result, academic writing has become widely accepted as one of the most essential forms of writing to develop (Abdulkareem, 2013). Due to the importance of writing skills, many researchers have presented divergent perspectives on how to teach writing in general and writing standards in particular. Along with it, another problem that has received considerable attention from academic writers is the difficulties accompanying academic writing (Al-Badi, 2015). Compared to native speakers who have greater access to the language, EFL students may not have the same level of academic writing proficiency. Thus, the study on EFL students is very popular in educational and teaching environments, researcher began to arise the issue that related to student's native language and writing (Alostath, 2021).

Academic writing is a general form of university to assesing their students by written assignment or conduct a research (Almarwani, 2020). In higher education, students are expected to address an intellectual community in which they engage in active learning using a variety of cognitive skills. Thus, they should be able to transform their idea through writing in empirical, logical and reliable form. In addition, culture and social background influence students to produce Academic writing (Barkaoui, 2007)

Students which English as second language more likely to face difficulties to acquire Academic writing skill (Al Badi, 2015). Casanave & Hubbard (1992) state that Asians are believed to experience more academic writing difficulties. As for Indonesian, there are structural and grammatical differences between Bahasa and English that make

it challenging for EFL students in Indonesia to acquire the art of writing. Furthermore, students must be able to translate or transform the message from Bahasa to English context in order to avoid producing unnatural writing and to ensure that the message understandable to readers, particularly native speakers (Ariyanti, 2016). In the United Sttates, Academic writing is taught from an early age with the aim of improving students' high levels of analytical writing skills and academic language competency. As an outcome, they have established an admirable goal for children at a young age, in order to produce literature that reliable, logical, and completely formed (Maamuujav et al., 2021). Compared to Indonesia, only students in higher education have a significant amount of experience with academic writing (Kurniati & Fithriani, 2022). Thus, writing becomes a challenging endeavour to accomplish (Graham et al., 2003).

Numerous studies have examined the Academic writing challenges of EFL students. In South Africa, for instance, the data revealed that students' linguistic and literacy background effect students' ability to produce Academic writing (Angu, 2013). On the other hand, the challenges that encountered by Afghanistan students are the terms of language, structure and content (Noori, 2020). Althought some researher have investigated the difficulities of academic writing. Likewise, each study context is different. Considering the issue of EFL students in academic writing are abundant and has a different background of participant. Consequently, we have an incomplete puzzle of Indonesian EFL students' challenges in academic writing.

Methodology
Research Design
This research using a qualitative approach to investigate the difficulties of EFL students' in academic writing. Qualitative research method is conducted for discovering and comprehending the significance individuals or groups assign to a social or human situation (Creswell et al., 2007). Quesionare shared to students by google form, this quesionare includes students' biodata, strategies they used, their attitude towards writing assignments and sourches they used, finally the difficulties they encounter. However, this questionare dominant to closed-ended question. Therefore, three students were asked to do interview to support the qualitative data that gathered.

Participants
To acquire participants for this study, the researchers utilized Purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling is a technique used to choose individual or group of potential participants who has knowledge and experience with the topic being studied (Cresswel and Clark, 2011). After explaining the purpose of the research, ten (9 female and 1 male) undergraduate students of English Education Departement took part in the research. The criteria that established by the researcher was the students in eighth semester to ensure the students had similar understanding as they required to publish papers in an accredited scientific journal as a graduation requirement. The participants are from the different social background such as Javanese, Sundanese and Mandailing. Moreover, this participants had differenr mother tongue to use at home but used Indonesian to cummonicate generally.

Data Collection and Analysis
The pilot research was conducted to ensure the validity of quesionare. Three students were given interview to explore students' difficulties in academic writing. The researcher adapted semi-structured interviews which assisted the researcher in follow-

up open-ended questions (Adams, 2015). A student check was conducted to determine whether this study was credible. Students were given access to the researcher's analysis of the interview transcripts, and any assertions were either confirmed or disconfirmed. Finally, the data was examined and the findings were argued and validated by the literature.

Findings and Discussion

This section provides answer to the research question mentioned above. Four significant issues raised by the students are enumerated and discussed in order of difficulty, with a brief summary of their attitudes towards academic writing.

Students' Attitude Towards Academic Writing

Figure 1 display students' view on academic writing. It shows that none of the students find academic writing easy and about 50% (n=5) of students said that academic writing is very difficult. Thus, about 20% (n=2) students find academic writing neither difficult nor easy.
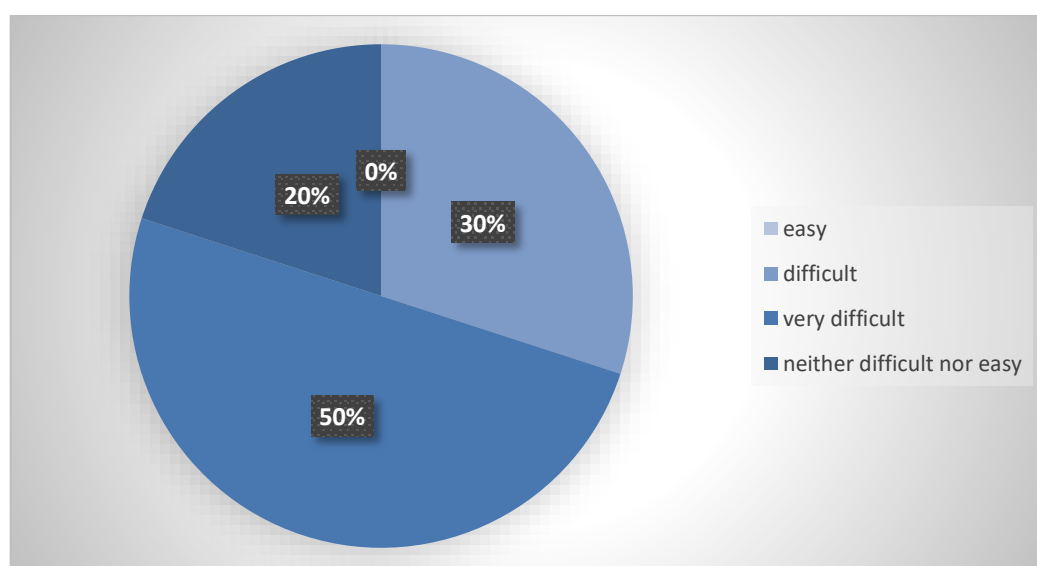

Figure 1: *Students' Attitude Towards Academic Writing*

The majority of students had negative attitude towards academic writing. This fenomenon accurs because of undergraduate students are not much familiar with academic writing. In the interview student 1 mention :

Academic writing is very hard, I do not know how to write abstrac. And when I was going to publish it, I should follow some guidelines.

Compared to undergraduate students, post-graduate students are more familiar with academic due to the condition for graduation, post-graduate students must publish their work in academic journals with a global reputation (Darmalaksana, 2017).

Significant Challenges Students Encounter In Academic Writing

As it shown in figure 2, the are four significan difficulities students enconter in academic writing. The majority of students shown difficulities in language, content, and structure. Moreover, students were reported self-efficacy and motivation as the least difficulities they encounter. Thus, the difficulities are disscussed.
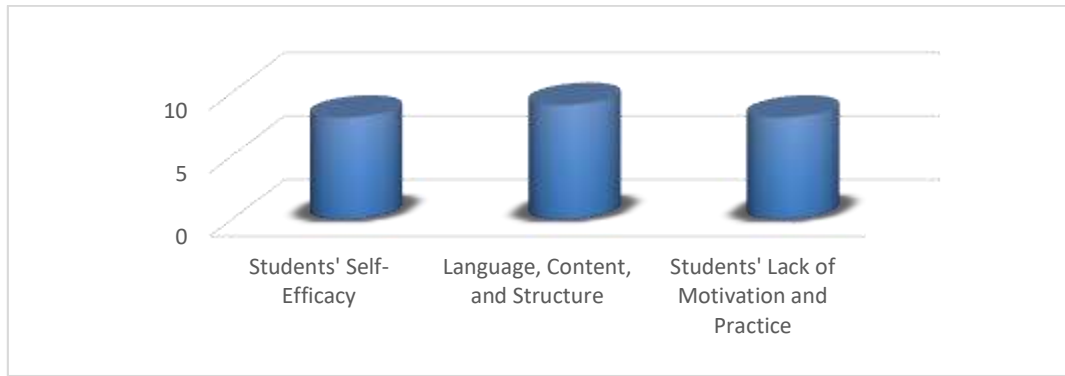
Figure 2 : *Significant Challenges Students Encounter In Academic Writing*

Language, Structure, And Content

The figure 2 reveal that majority of students (9) find language, content, and structure are difficult. Students are find it difficult to providing comprehensible introductions, paraphrasing, and construct grammatically correct sentences. As student 1 stated in the interview :

> *I can not blindly follow the paraphrasing tools because it ruined the structure I made before and I have to provide myself with vocabulary that would fit in.*

Student 2 also stated :

> *Eventhough I used to write in English as an English Department Students but it is not easy for me to transfer the idea into a written form specially in academic writing.*

Students' Lack Of Motivation And Practice

Writing is not innately but rather acquired through consistent effort and extensive practice. The best way to master any skill is to practice it. Motivation is essential to enhancing students' academic performance (Gbollie & Keamu, 2017). However, students' lack of motivation and practice is become the third difficulties in this research. If the students are not motivated, they may not be interested to continuing their writing. In line with the study conducted by Fotima (2022) reported that the main reason for the challenges that students encouter due to the lack of practicing. In addition, the writer's motivation to convey a message is crucial, since it is far more challenging for students to write about subjects they are not interested in. Thus, motivation is increased when writing is set in a realistic environment (Alfaki, 2015).

Students' Self-Efficacy and Writing Anxiety towards Academic Writing

Students reported to have low self-efficacy that affect the process and result of their writing. As a student 1 stated in the interview:

> *Academic writing is different from the assigment that usually given by the lecturer in class. I need to follow its structure and pay attention to the idea in every paragraf, so that it relate to each other. Whenever I write it feels like 'is this right?' 'is this how it goes?'*

From the statemen above it be can conclude that the majority of students (7) had negative relation with academic writing due to students' low self-efficacy. The study conduct by Erkan & Saban (2011) showed that self-efficacy is the assessment of the actual writing performance. Students with low self-efficacy tend to give up more quickly when they faced with challenges.

Conclusions

The current study investigated the challenges Academic Writing poses for EFL undergraduate students in Indonesia. A questionnaire was distributed to undergraduate students in the English Department as part of a qualitative research methodology. According to the study's findings, English students in Indonesia continue to need help with Academic regarding writing self-efficacy, language, structure, and content, topic and reference, and students motivation. However, most students deemed Academic Writing to be of utmost importance. As a result of the fact that this study only involved a small number of participants and was conducted at a single university, it is challenging to extrapolate the findings of this investigation to other settings. Therefore, additional study is required, which should involve a significantly larger number of individuals and should make use of a wide range of research instruments.

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