



IMPROVE STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS FOR ENGLISH MAJOR STUDENTS

**Tiarnita Maria Sarjani Br. Siregar¹, Ameera Fadhilla², Ayu Lestari³, Jumita simbolon⁴,
Mandyansyah Suhendra⁵, Priska Oktaviani⁶, Sarah Hendratno⁷**

English Education, Universitas Negeri Medan, Indonesia

lian.nita2010@gmail.com¹, mirafadhillah05@gmail.com², ayu63187@gmail.com³,
mitaasimbolon@gmail.com⁴, ansyahpunya@gmail.com⁵, thvianipriska05@gmail.com⁶,
sarahhendratno@gmail.com⁷

Abstract:

Writing is considered the most challenging skill for language learners because they need a certain amount of L2 background knowledge about the rhetorical organization, the proper use of language, or the specific lexicon they want to convey to their readers. It is not uncommon for students who are English majors to find it challenging to hone this writing skill. This study aims to see the extent of students' writing skills in the English department and to provide some ways to improve their writing skills. The method used in this study is a qualitative research method with observations of students majoring in English. The results of the research found that students majoring in English who were tested showed that students' writing skills are still inferior and have many mistakes. This research is intended for readers to see a good writing strategy to improve the writing skills of English majors. It can be enhanced with techniques for better writing skills, such as brainstorming before starting and asking WH questions.

Keywords: Improve, Writing skills, English major students

Corresponding: Sarah Hendratno

E-mail: sarahhendratno@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

Writing is a skill that demands careful attention to practice. To become proficient, you must receive training and exercise on a regular basis. For instance, people who practice swimming improve their swimming skills. The same applies for writing (Gallagher, 2023). For the students, honing the skill via practice is crucial. Writing improves language learning and thinking because it is a constructive skill. It fosters critical thinking and increases the visibility of the thought process (Erdoğan, 2019; Bean & Melzer, 2021). Furthermore, the ability to write inspires the communication process. It has been repeated from time to time that writing is the most difficult language skill to learn. Despite the fact that writing is a difficult skill to master in any language, it may be acquired with unwavering practice (Smith, 2013; Hyland, 2019).

The economy is developing rapidly, and many aspects, such as writing ability, have become essential. At this time, people realize how important English writing ability is and how poorly students perform in this area. Under this high pressure, English teachers attach more importance to improving students' writing ability than ever before. And so far, they have made significant progress. Writing is also a stumbling block for some students majoring in English to go further among the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Writing is relatively more troublesome for some students majoring in English. Problems that often arise include grammatical errors, limited vocabulary, thought patterns, and so on. In addition, some students need more motivation to write content and help planning

the writing structure. To improve writing ability, it is necessary to overcome these problems (Alfaki, 2015; Dan, Duc, & Chau, 2017; Jabali, 2018).

Improving writing skills is essential for English major students as it lies at the heart of their academic and professional success (Russell, 2013). Proficiency in written communication is not only a hallmark of a well-rounded education but also a critical skill in the competitive landscape of today's job market (Ahmad & Khan, 2023). This article explores various strategies and techniques to enhance the writing abilities of English major students. Whether you're a literature enthusiast, a budding novelist, or a future journalist, the art of effective writing is a craft worth perfecting (Lopate, 2013). In the following sections, we will delve into critical approaches and exercises that can empower significant English students to elevate their writing to new heights, fostering a deeper appreciation for the nuances of the English language and a heightened ability to express ideas with clarity and eloquence.

We are aware that the traditional method of instruction involves the teacher giving instructions that the pupils must copy down from what they see written or dictated on the whiteboard. Students are expected to write on their understanding once they start college. Subsequently, to advance professionally, people must arrange their ideas and thoughts in writing. They are expected to demonstrate their written abilities on their resume before the interview, and occasionally, they will be required to take written exams as part of the hiring process. Success in the classroom and the workplace depends on effective writing. The primary skills that need to be developed are proper spelling, grammatical use, and a polished manner of communicating the information. As a result, it is imperative that writing skills be improved now (Iftanti, 2016).

METHOD

The method used in this research is quantitative research by observing several students majoring in English. Quantitative research is the process of collecting and analyzing numerical data. It can be used to find patterns and averages, make predictions, test causal relationships, and generalize results to broader populations. The subjects of this research are students majoring in English at Medan State University. By giving instructions to write free English writing, we will then examine the results to see the extent of their ability to compose sentences per sentence. The research steps that we do are:

- 1) Telling what the students will write.
- 2) Instruct students to write according to the theme.
- 3) Collecting students' work to be scrutinized
- 4) Observed the answers, writing skills, and grammar used by the students
- 5) Determining the existing errors and then compiling them in the form of an article to provide solutions to improve their writing skills.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Writing is one of a person's most fundamental language skills. The benefits of writing are: (1) Writing can be used to develop spontaneity and strength. Combined with mechanical elements such as language, spelling, and punctuation, it must also be supported by a component of creativity, which is inseparable from the ability to write. It must also be supported by an element of creativity, which is inseparable from the ability to think in a crisis, the ability to take initiative, and take power. Crisis of thinking, the ability to take the initiative and create something new. (2) Engaging in activities encourages students to be more creative and gives them a chance to discuss the answers in groups or couples and ultimately as a class. It is learner-centered because the activities allow students to organize their assignments and bill themselves with keen enthusiasm. Activities assist students in using the target language outside of the classroom since it serves as a tool for classroom interactions. This instills

confidence in the ability to utilize the language without worry of making mistakes or reluctance. ABL can be used to investigate challenging issues or readings, get all students interested in the subject matter, and—most importantly—provide an excellent platform for the more introverted kids. ABL can be used to investigate complex problems or readings, get all students interested in the subject matter, and—most importantly—provide an excellent forum for quieter students to voice their concerns about cooperating, learning, and imparting knowledge to one another (Oh, 2021).

The results found from the research are that there are still many mistakes in composing writing in various forms of paragraphs. The research showed that 20% of students wrote narrative text, 30% wrote their personal experiences, 30% wrote phenomena that happened around them, and the rest wrote mixed things that could not be identified which type of text they belonged to. Judging from the results of their writing, many things could still be improved, such as sentence errors, paragraph errors, grammatical errors and lack of vocabulary.

This is shown from their writing paper, which could be clearer, aka many mistakes in their writing skills. From this discovery, we realized that students majoring in English are not very good at writing English; their ability in writing skills is still very concerning. This is due to their lack of practice in writing activities and lack of willingness to improve their skills. Several strategies can be used to enhance students' writing skills related to their mistakes, including:

1) Literary Analysis

Encourage students to analyze and write about literature critically. Assign essays that require close reading and interpretation of texts, helping students develop skills in textual analysis, argumentation, and literary criticism.

2) Research Papers

Assign research papers that demand in-depth investigation of literary or linguistic topics. Emphasize the importance of proper citation and source integration, guiding students to use scholarly sources effectively.

3) Writing Seminars

Offer advanced writing seminars that focus on particular aspects of writing, such as creative writing, poetry, non-fiction, or academic writing. These seminars allow students to dive deep into their chosen genre.

4) Peer Workshops

Conduct peer workshops that involve thorough critique and analysis of each other's work. This peer feedback can be invaluable for refining writing skills and gaining different perspectives.

5) Literary Theory and Criticism

Introduce students to literary theories and critical approaches. Please encourage them to apply these theories to texts, deepening their understanding and analytical skills.

6) Creative Writing Exercises

Incorporate creative writing exercises and prompts that challenge students to experiment with different narrative techniques, genres, and styles.

7) Grammar and Stylistic Mastery

Reinforce advanced grammar and style elements. Explore nuances of language, including diction, tone, syntax, and figurative language, to enhance writing sophistication.

8) Dissertation and Thesis Guidance

For graduate-level English majors, provide guidance on structuring and writing substantial research projects like dissertations and theses. Help students develop a clear and coherent argument.

9) Conferences and Presentation Skills

Teach students how to effectively present their research or ideas, as this skill is crucial in academia. Conduct mock conferences and presentations to enhance their communication abilities.

10) Literary Journals and Publications

Encourage students to submit their work to literary journals or academic publications. This can motivate them to produce high-quality writing and gain exposure in their field (McMullen, 2009; Raoofi, Binandeh, & Rahmani, 2017).

There are several ways to improve our writing skills by using the structure of preparing, developing a writing outline, writing a body of writing, and then revising the writing. Remember to apply the WH question to what you are going to write. Pay attention to each element to produce quality writing. Remember to look for as many sources of facts as possible so that the compiled writing has weight. By implementing these strategies, educators can support English major students in honing their writing skills to excel in both academic and professional contexts while nurturing their passion for the English language major (Abas & Abd Aziz, 2018).

There are ways you might be able to adapt this focus to help students express their meanings:

1) Focus on text functions

An important principle here is to relate structures to meanings, making language use a criterion for teaching materials. This introduces the idea that particular language forms perform certain communicative functions and that students can be taught the functions most relevant to their needs. Functions are the means for achieving the ends (or purposes) of writing. This orientation is sometimes labeled “current traditional rhetoric” or simply a “functional approach” and is influential where L2 students are being prepared for academic writing at college or university.

One aim of this focus is to help students develop effective paragraphs through the creation of topic sentences, supporting sentences, and transitions and to develop different types of paragraphs. Students are guided to form coherent sentences according to prescribed formulas and tasks that focus on form to actively reinforce exemplary writing patterns (Ann, 2010).

2) Focus on creative expression.

From this perspective, writing instruction is non-directive and personal because writing is learned rather than taught. Writing is a way to convey personal meaning, and writing courses focus on individuals' ability to form their own views on a topic. Expressionism is an essential approach because it encourages writers to explore their beliefs, engage with the ideas of others, and engage with their readers.

3) Focus on the writing process.

Similar to expression orientation, a procedural approach to writing instruction highlights the author as an independent text producer. However, it goes beyond that and proposes that the teacher should help in guiding the writer. Various forms of this approach recognize that fundamental cognitive processes are crucial to the writing process. Therefore, students must develop their ability to plan, identify rhetorical problems, and propose and evaluate solutions.

Effective feedback is crucial for improving the quality of the teaching and learning process. Teachers should consider various aspects of providing feedback to students. This includes determining the most suitable approaches for writing activities, identifying learning goals and tasks that students are expected to complete, and providing well-balanced feedback. Adequate feedback can significantly

enhance students' writing skills, not just in terms of producing better texts but also in the writing process itself. It is hoped that the other 4,444 researchers will be able to conduct further research on the benefits and drawbacks of both written and oral feedback to improve students' writing skills.

Because the instructional materials, assignments, and activities on particular topics address different learning styles, there is a good chance these exercises will impact a more significant percentage of students. Resources are only beneficial if the instructor uses them to inspire the class. The instructor could pose the questions to make the pupils want to respond. Instead of offering answers to the issue, the following strategies are meant to help the participants gain experience in evaluating their own writing abilities.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, students majoring in English are not really good at English. Among the four skills, writing is the most difficult for them to master. After doing some research, we saw that their writing skills are still inferior and have many mistakes. This research is intended for readers to see a good writing strategy to improve the writing skills of English majors. After all, students, especially English majors, must master the four skills in English, especially writing. Given that writing skills cannot be separated from this department, various tips and methods that have been given are expected to help students improve and improve their writing skills.

REFERENCES

Abas, Imelda Hermilinda, & Abd Aziz, Noor Hashima. (2018). Model of the Writing Process and Strategies of EFL Proficient Student Writers: A Case Study of Indonesian Learners. *Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities*, 26(3).

Ahmad, Ismail Sheikh, & Khan, Zarinah Jan Yusof. (2023). Preparing Students For The Real World: Oral English Communication Skills For Global Entrepreneurs. *MOJEM: Malaysian Online Journal of Educational Management*, 11(4), 29–48.

Alfaki, Ibrahim Mohamed. (2015). University students' English writing problems: Diagnosis and remedy. *International Journal of English Language Teaching*, 3(3), 40–52.

Ann, MacDonald Kimberly. (2010). Two Telecollaborative Contexts for Writing in a Beginner FSL University Program: Achievement, Perceptions, and Identity.

Bean, John C., & Melzer, Dan. (2021). Engaging ideas: The professor's guide to integrating writing, critical thinking, and active learning in the classroom. John Wiley & Sons.

Dan, Thai Cong, Duc, Vuong Minh, & Chau, Phu Thi Hong. (2017). An investigation into common mistakes in paragraph writing of the first-year English-major students: A case study in Can Tho university, Vietnam. *Journal of Education NARESUAN University*, 19(4), 308–330.

Erdoğan, Vacide. (2019). Integrating 4C skills of 21st century into 4 language skills in EFL classes. *International Journal of Education and Research*, 7(11), 113–124.

Gallagher, Kelly. (2023). Teaching adolescent writers. Routledge.

Hyland, Ken. (2019). Second language writing. Cambridge university press.

Iftanti, Erna. (2016). Improving students' writing skills through writing journal articles. *IAIN Tulungagung Research Collections*, 8(1), 1–22.

Jabali, Oqab. (2018). Students' attitudes towards EFL university writing: A case study at An-Najah National University, Palestine. *Helicon*, 4(11).

Lopate, Phillip. (2013). To show and to tell: The craft of literary nonfiction. Simon and Schuster.

McMullen, Maram George. (2009). Using language learning strategies to improve the writing skills of Saudi EFL students: Will it really work? *System*, 37(3), 418–433.

Oh, Daekyun. (2021). Exploring the Feasibility of Teacher Professional Development for Positive Youth Development. The Ohio State University.

Raoofi, Saeid, Binandeh, Massoud, & Rahmani, Saifullah. (2017). An investigation into writing strategies and writing proficiency of university students. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 8(1), 191.

Russell, David R. (2013). Activity theory and its implications for writing instruction. In *Reconceiving writing, rethinking writing instruction* (pp. 51–77). Routledge.

Smith, Frank. (2013). *Writing and the writer*. Routledge.



© 2023 by the authors. It was submitted for possible open-access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY SA) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>).