



HOW TO IMPROVE WRITING SKILLS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Tiarnita Maria Sarjani br. Siregar¹, Azizi Riona², Gloria Pasca Simarmata³, Miranda Simangunsong⁴, Sefrina Anastasya Simbolon⁵, Sherin Aurelya⁶, Zahra Tusyita Siregar⁷

Universitas Negeri Medan

lian.nita2010@gmail.com¹, aziziriona0@gmail.com², gloriasimarmata61@gmail.com³,

mirandasimangunsong565@gmail.com⁴, seprinaanastasya@gmail.com⁵,

sherinaurelya05@gmail.com⁶, zahraatusyita0210@gmail.com⁷

Abstract:

Writing is one of the most important skills that learners of English as a second language must master, especially for students and working professionals. Unlike speaking practice, when you write, you leave a lasting record of your language. This is because it reinforces the grammatical structures and terminology that educators seek to teach their students. Therefore, it is necessary to improve writing skills. This article discusses various effective strategies and techniques to improve writing skills in English. The method used in this journal is library research, collecting data by finding sources and reconstructing them from various sources such as books, and existing research. This article discusses the importance of strong writing skills in today's globalized world and offers practical advice for individuals who want to improve their proficiency. By reading this article, readers can develop their English writing skills and gain the confidence needed to communicate effectively in academic and professional contexts.

Keywords: writing skills, improved writing skills, language skills, strategies, importance of writing, writing process

Corresponding: Sefrina Anastasya Simbolon

E-mail: seprinaanastasya@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

English, as one of the most widely spoken and written languages in the world, opens doors to a plethora of opportunities. Whether it's crafting a compelling essay, drafting persuasive business proposals, or simply writing engaging emails, the power of well-honed writing skills cannot be overstated. Among the four language skills of English, writing, speaking, listening and reading, writing is considered the most complex skill because of its complexity in grammatical structure, vocabulary, spelling, and pronunciation. Furthermore, there is no one-to-one relationship between the spelling and pronunciation systems. In this context, Widdowson rightly says: "Writing is the use of the visual medium to manifest the graphological and grammatical system of the language" (Widdowson, 2001). Crystal says, "Writing is a way of communicating that uses a system of visual marks made on some kind of surface. It is a form of graphic expression" (Crystal, 1999). Furthermore, Richards and Schmidt assert, "Writing is seen as the result of complex processes of planning, drafting, checking and revising" (Richards & Schmidt, 2002; Rao, 2017).

Writing in a second language has become more and more significant in recent years (K Hyland, 2003; Musa, 2016; Hapsari & Sukavatee, 2018). Several studies have discovered data demonstrating the distinctions between writing in first and second languages (L1 and L2). Students generally struggle when writing in a second language since it calls for more sophisticated cognitive abilities. Hyland found the following characteristics to be different between L2 and L1 writing (Ken Hyland, 2019).

- 1) linguistic proficiencies and institutions of language
- 2) learning encounters and classroom expectations
- 3) sense of audience and writer
- 4) preferences for ways of organizing texts
- 5) writing processes
- 6) comprehension of texts used and the social value of different text types

In Indonesia, a study titled *Teaching Writing to Indonesian EFL Students: Challenges of the "voice" and "style" in Adjusting Cross-Cultural Communication Skills* conducted by (Sukandi, 2015) discovered linguistic conditions of Indonesian EFL students that are similar to Webb's. Students in Indonesia generally face similar problems in writing, such as grammatical weakness, poor vocabulary, and, more specifically, a weak ability to express their thoughts clearly. Indeed, students should be able to get more information and experience in order to overcome these issues, such as by being more motivated, proactive, and curious about the writing process (Humairoh, 2021; Nurlatifah & Yusuf, 2022).

The interference of Indonesian first language (L1) writing makes it even more complex. For instance, Bahasa Indonesia, the first language, does not employ the past tense that is used in English. In English, action verbs are modified by adding a new form, whereas in Indonesian, students frequently add an adverb of time at the end of a phrase to indicate past events. Naturally, students may experience frustration when learning tenses if they are unfamiliar with them (Megaiab, 2014; Ariyanti, 2016).

Writing in English is now regarded as a second language in Indonesia. Since Bahasa Indonesia is the official language of Indonesia, writing in it is an essential ability that all students in the country must learn. Indonesians communicate with one another using it. The diversity of tribes from all of Indonesia's islands is the cause of this. Many ethnic groups speak over three hundred different local languages as their mother tongue or first language.

According to (Sukandi, 2015), students who study English as a second language interact with the language frequently in their daily lives. Conversely, even in schools, English is not frequently used as a medium of instruction in Indonesia. With the exception of international schools, teachers typically deliver classes in either Bahasa Indonesia or their native tongue. As a result, Indonesian students may believe that studying English writing is challenging as Bahasa Indonesia lacks some grammatical elements.

METHOD

We used the library research method in this article. Library research is a means of gathering data by analyzing and comprehending material from books, ideas, and papers that are directly linked to problems, where the data collected is in the form of primary data. One of the most important parts of library research is the ability to read and summarize information. By practising this skill, you can improve your ability to identify key points and convey them in a clear, concise manner. You can start by summarizing news articles and then move on to longer texts as you become more comfortable. The purpose of this paper is to improve English writing skills. The review includes theories and findings of previous studies in Indonesia. In this article, we will explore various strategies, techniques, and practices that can help you not only improve your proficiency in English writing but also develop a strong foundation for effective communication in any field.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Writing Process

Writing as a process is connected to how learners grow their language abilities because language learning progress may be seen as writing productivity improves. According to (Harmer, 2006), the writing process follows a continuum known as the process wheel and is comprised of four main stages: planning, drafting, editing, and final version. Planning, also known as prewriting, is the stage in which students are encouraged to write by taking notes, writing down ideas, and gathering material through brainstorming or lists according to (Harmer, 2006).

According to (Harmer, 2006), when planning, authors must consider three major difficulties. First, they must evaluate the objective of their writing; second, they must consider the audience for whom they are writing; and third, they must analyze the text's content structure. Drafting is the step in which the learner lays down his or her ideas and thoughts on paper and creates an outline. The most crucial responsibility at this point is to prepare the general information. At this level, the emphasis is on something other than structuring the content or paying attention to grammar. The following stage is editing. When authors review their work to fix the use of language and the goal of the text, this can be done by the teacher or in groups. The final step is the final version when the writer develops the final version. The major objective of this step is generally to check grammar and spelling accuracy, punctuation, and word choice (Harmer, 2006).

Strategies to improve writing skills

1) Read Widely in English

Read a diverse range of materials, such as books, articles, essays, and other written content, from various genres, authors, and subjects to become familiar with different writing styles. It encourages expanding one's reading choices beyond a narrow focus and exploring a broad spectrum of knowledge and perspectives.

2) Write Regularly in English

This means engaging in the act of writing on a consistent and frequent basis. Practice writing in English daily to build fluency and confidence. Start with short pieces and gradually work your way up to longer compositions. It implies making a habit of writing at scheduled intervals or as part of a routine to improve your writing skills or maintain a journal, blog, or other written content.

3) Expand your vocabulary

This means to increase and diversify the words and terms you understand and use in your language. Learn new English words and phrases regularly. Use them in your writing to make it more expressive and nuanced. It involves learning new words, their meanings, and how to use them effectively in your spoken and written communication. A richer vocabulary can enhance your ability to express ideas and thoughts more precisely and eloquently.

4) Study English Grammar and Punctuation

This means learning the rules and principles that govern the structure and usage of the English language. Grammar focuses on how sentences are constructed, including aspects like verb tenses, sentence structure, and word order. Punctuation involves understanding when and how to use punctuation marks, such as commas, periods, and semicolons, to convey meaning and clarity in written communication. This knowledge is essential for effective writing and communication in English.

5) Read Writing Guides in English

There are many resources available in English that offer guidance on improving writing skills. Explore and study written materials, such as books, articles, or manuals, that provide instructions, advice, or guidelines on how to improve your writing skills in the English language.

These guides can cover various aspects of writing, including grammar, style, punctuation, and more, to help you become a better writer in English.

6) Engage in English Language Learning Communities

Refers to actively participating in groups or communities where individuals come together to learn and improve their English language skills. This engagement can take various forms, such as joining online forums or discussion groups dedicated to language learning, participating in language exchange programs or language partner activities, attending English language classes or workshops, interacting with native English speakers or other learners in social or online settings, collaborating with others on language learning projects or activities, engaging in conversation clubs or language meetups.

7) Edit and Revise

- **Edit:** Editing is the process of reviewing and correcting a written piece for errors and improvements in grammar, punctuation, spelling, and style. It focuses on refining the language, ensuring clarity, and fixing any surface-level issues in the text.
- **Revise:** Revising involves a more comprehensive examination of the written work. It includes making substantial changes to the content, such as reorganizing paragraphs, adding or removing information, and restructuring the document to enhance its overall coherence and effectiveness. The revision aims to improve the content's structure and quality.

8) Practice Writing Different Types of Content.

Engaging in the act of writing across various genres, formats, or styles to improve your overall writing skills. This practice can include writing essays, reports, and academic papers; creating creative writing pieces such as short stories, poems, or novels; crafting persuasive content like advertisements, sales copy, or marketing materials; developing informative content like articles, blog posts, and non-fiction books, composing formal documents like business reports, proposals, or resumes, trying your hand at technical writing for manuals, guides, or instructions, experimenting with different writing formats for social media posts, emails, or newsletters.

9) Use Online Writing Tools

Using online writing tools refers to making use of various web-based software and applications designed to assist and improve the writing process. These tools offer a range of features and functions to aid writers in different aspects of their work. Some common online writing tools include:

- a. **Grammar and Spell Checkers:** These tools help writers identify and correct grammatical errors and spelling mistakes in their text.
- b. **Thesaurus and Dictionary Websites:** They provide synonyms, antonyms, and definitions to enhance vocabulary and word choice.
- c. **Writing and Editing Software:** Such as Microsoft Word, Google Docs, or Scrivener, which offer word processing and formatting features for creating and editing documents.
- d. **Plagiarism Checkers:** Tools like Turnitin or Copyscape help writers ensure their content is original and not copied from other sources.
- e. **Citation Generators:** For creating proper citations and references in various citation styles (e.g., APA, MLA, Chicago).
- f. **Collaborative Writing Platforms:** Like Dropbox Paper or Evernote, which allow multiple users to work on the same document simultaneously.
- g. **Writing Prompts and Idea Generators:** To inspire creativity and overcome writer's block.
- h. **Content Management Systems (CMS):** Tools like WordPress or Joomla for managing and publishing web content.

10) Set Writing Goals

Establishing specific and measurable objectives for your writing endeavours. These goals can include targets such as word count, deadlines, or specific writing projects you want to complete. Setting writing goals helps you stay motivated, organized, and focused on your writing tasks, whether you're working on a novel, essay, blog, or any other form of written content. It provides a clear direction for your writing efforts and allows you to track your progress.

11) Immerse Yourself in English Media

To completely surround yourself with and engage in English-language media, such as movies, TV shows, books, podcasts, or news. By doing so, you can enhance your English language skills, including listening comprehension, vocabulary, and overall fluency. It's a way to submerge yourself in the language and culture to improve your understanding and proficiency in English.

The Importance of writing skills in learning English language

1) Allows you to organize and refine your ideas

Writing is a slower procedure that allows you to better arrange your thoughts before forming phrases. Writing helps you to progressively analyze your words, maybe even looking them up before committing them to paper or a digital record. As you go, you may also learn new vocabulary, spelling, and pronunciation. When you're finished, you may go back and edit what you've written if required.

2) Gives you a "hard copy" of your progress

When it comes to writing, practice makes perfect. When learning a language, you should write as much as possible. You'll be able to examine the development of your language learning journey and analyze your flaws and strengths over time this way. Write not simply to apply your information but also to consistently enhance your vocabulary and sentence structure.

3) Let others give you feedback.

You should not only fix your output, but you should also allow others to examine it. The importance of written comments cannot be overstated. Otherwise, you'll need to recognize it before making the same mistakes. Having someone completely analyze what you've written and provide you with suggestions on how to modify and enhance your writing is another technique to point you on the correct path. With the correct materials, you will not only be led through the writing process, but you will also receive sound suggestions on how to improve.

4) It helps you remember what you've learned.

It might be difficult to remember all of the words, phrases, and regulations in a language. Many studies, however, have demonstrated that writing is a proven method of remembering knowledge. Putting what you learn into practice is vital for consolidating it in your mind, as practice generates new neural connections in the brain. We put considerable attention into assessing and arranging the information we get when we write. This process aids in the consolidation of concepts in our minds, resulting in improved memory.

5) It can also develop your speaking skills.

According to a 2015 study on the link between writing and speaking, students who can develop academic language in writing may readily transfer their reasoning abilities to speaking. So, if you improve your writing abilities in a new language, you will improve your speaking skills as well. It's a win-win situation! As the global workplace requires us to enhance our communication abilities, we should pay special attention to our writing skills because writing is the channel through which communication is transferred the most. Creating well is a talent that will carry you far in the business, partially because it is relatively rare in many locations, and creating particular sorts of documents demands considerable ability.

CONCLUSION

Writing is crucial and regularly utilized in people's everyday lives, whether as an individual (for example, composing application letters, messaging, and disseminating research results) or as a part of society (for example, in workplace concerns). Writing is also taught in formal education due to the necessity of having the aptitude and decent writing abilities. Writing has long been seen as an important ability in the study of the English language. This is because it reinforces the grammatical structures and terminology that educators seek to teach their students. It is an area in which learners require appropriate time to improve their writing abilities; consequently, more time should be allocated to it in classrooms with ELLs so that they are prepared to communicate successfully in both real-life and academic circumstances. Exposing kids to the writing process through multiple places is a great method to accomplish this aim. Furthermore, writing abilities may be enhanced when learners' interests are recognized, and they are provided with frequent opportunities to practice writing. Writing is a process. Don't be too harsh on yourself if you find it difficult to write in your new language. Remember writing fundamentals like structure, format, organization, and brainstorming. All of these factors contribute to the overall quality of your item. Don't rush, and remember to utilize these elements just as you would in your home language. The better you are at writing in your native language, the easier it will be to write in a foreign language.

REFERENCES

- Ariyanti, Ariyanti. (2016). The teaching of EFL writing in Indonesia. *Dinamika Ilmu*, 16(2), 263–277.
- Crystal, D. (1999). *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hapsari, Elsa Widya, & Sukavatee, Pornpimol. (2018). Second language writing instruction: A recent practice in Indonesia. *Journal of Linguistic and English Teaching*, 3(1), 24–48.
- Harmer, Jeremy. (2006). *How to teach writing*. Pearson Education India.
- Humairoh, Sarah Alfiah. (2021). *Exploring Students' Difficulties in Writing (A Case Study at the Department of English Education UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta)*. Jakarta: FITK UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta.
- Hyland, K. (2003). *Second Language Writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hyland, Ken. (2019). *Second language writing*. Cambridge university press.
- Megaiaab, Machalla M. A. (2014). The English writing competence of the students of Indonesian senior high school. *Proceedings of the West East Institute (WEI) Academic Conference, Indonesia*.
- Musa, Aisar Salihu. (2016). Technology and Language: A Review of Students' Perceptions of Blog in some Selected English as a Second Language Writing Classes. *Malaysian Journal of Distance Education*, 18(1).
- Nurlatifah, Lala, & Yusuf, Fazri Nur. (2022). Students' problems In Writing Analytical Exposition Text In Efl Classroom Context. *English Review: Journal of English Education*, 10(3), 801–810.
- Rao, Parupalli Srinivas. (2017). Developing Writing Skills among the EFL/ESL Learners". *Research Journal of English*, 2(3), 52–63.
- Richards, J. C., & Schmidt, R. (2002). *Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*. Edinburgh: Pearson Education Limited.
- Sukandi, Syayid Sandi. (2015). The "voice" in composition: reviewing the essence of writing culturally in English for Minangkabau-Indonesian EFL students. *Proceedings of ISELT FBS Universitas Negeri Padang*, 3, 480–486.
- Widdowson, H. G. (2001). *Teaching a language as communication*. (12th ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.



© 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/>).