

Students' Perception on Writing Problems in the Fifth Semester students at One  
Islamic University in Jambi.

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**ABSTRACT**

Husni, Nur (2017):**Students' Perception on Writing Problems in the Fifth Semester Students at One Islamic University in Jambi**. A Thesis of The Faculty of Teacher Training and Education University of Jambi in Academic year 2017/2018. First Supervisor, SriWacyunni, S.S., M.Hum., Ph.d. Second Supervisor, Akhmad Habibi, S.Pd.I., M.Pd

The aim of this research was to find out students' problems in writing in the fifth-semester students in Islamic University in Jambi. This study use survey with the quantitative approach. The population of this research was the fifth-semester students in Islamic University in Jambi consist of 98 students at English study program at Faculty of Teacher Training and Education "Tarbiyah". Moreover, 70 students were selected as the sample and returned the questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of 28 questions of 7 types of problems with 5 alternative answers. The researcher used SPSS to analyze the data and the descriptive analysis such as sequence percentage, and level of problem types. It was found that there were 7 types of the problems that students faced in their learning writing. They were poor organization/illogical sequence, a problem of word choice, grammatical error, spelling problem, confused on supporting the ideas, punctuation problem, and capitalization. The overall mean of students' problems in writing in the fifth-semester students in Islamic University in Jambi was 3.37 categorized as "medium". Specifically, students problems in poor organization/illogical sequence was 3.69, problem of word choice was 3.72, grammatical error was 3.25, spelling problem was 3.35, confused on supporting the ideas was 3.12, punctuation problem was 3.17, capitalization was 3.35. All the process in scientific approach was categorized as "medium" for the students. It means that the students did not find significant problem in writing course. Moreover, based on the rank, problem of word choice was found as the most dominant problem for the students in writing. The mean score was 3.72 then, poor organization/illogical sequence was the second problem mean score 3.69. For spelling problem and capitalization were the third problem mean score 3.35. Next, grammatical error was the fourth problem mean score 3.25. And punctuation problem was the fifth problem in writing mean score 3.17. And the last confused

on supporting the ideas was 3.11. In conclusion, from the interpretation of the mean, and most of the students agreed that they had dominant problems word choice and poor organization/illogical sequence. And also the most dominant problems encountered by female and male students were for the male, it was grammatical error and for the female, problem of word choice was the problem writing found in writing subject.

**Key words: problems in writing**

## **INTRODUCTION**

One of the aims of teaching English is to develop the ability to communicate. The ability involves the four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. One of the skills that is as the most difficult and complicated to be learned is writing because writing needs hard thinking to produce ideas, words, sentences, paragraph, and composition. Harmer (2001) stated that the students can become very frustrated when they do not have the words or the grammar which they need to express in writing. The students also have difficulties when they are asked to write about the topics that they do not interested doing it, perhaps in unfamiliar genres, and without the necessary information. Writing stimulates students to focus on appropriate language use, they can go through what they know in their mind or even consult the dictionary, grammar book and another reference (Harmer: 2004). It means that writing is not just about an idea but more complex in choosing vocabulary, the using of appropriate structure. It is how the writer presents and expresses these ideas in effective writing.

Bowen & Cali (2003) report that in English writing, there are number of features to make effective writing, those are 1) focus on the topic, 2) organization how to develop the beginning, middle and end of the writing, 3) support and

elaboration of the idea, 4) style which also means the appropriate language use to the purpose of writing, audience and context of the writing, 5) conventions or the correctness of the sentence formation, usage, and mechanics.

Many students at university find difficulties in writing. Based on the theory, problems that have passed in writing included in the questionnaire. Therefore, researcher didn't know the problems in UIN. Hence, the questionnaire made based on the theory that has passed for students in writing. There were many problems that they faced, such as to organize their ideas, to put the right punctuation, to put capitalization, and to make grammar correctly. This research was to know the students' perception of the real problems in writing and what were the dominant problems between female and male students that they faced in writing. Why should the dominant between male and female problem, because the ability in writing between male and female were different, also the problems were not same. According to (clement et.al., 2006; Gur et al., 2000; Phillips et al., 2001; Shaywitz & Shaywitz, 1995), said that female and male have different characteristics and provide evidence that male and female think in different ways and draw from different brain regions to process the same mental or physical tasks .Therefore, it was really important to know about the dominant problems both of them. In doing this study, the researcher used the quantitative method with survey approach which focuses on the problems at English study program at Faculty of Teacher Training and Education "Tarbiyah" at One Islamic University in Jambi.

From the condition stated above, it encouraged the researcher to do research about students writing problems in writing. The researcher chose this

topic of writing subject as the thesis proposal because it was interested to investigate and to know the problems that they faced in writing. The researcher choose UIN (Islamic University in Jambi) as the research because researcher want did the new one to do the research outside in college. After did observation in Islamic University in Jambi, researcher asked for the head of English program in Islamic University, she said that many students had problems in writing. Therefore, it is really curiosity to know their problems in writing.

## **Review of Related Literature**

### **2.1 The Nature of Writing**

Writing is one of four skills in English language teaching. Brown (2001) described that “writing is a process of putting ideas down on paper to transform thoughts into words, to sharpen main ideas, and to give them structure and coherent organization”. The definitions of writing were variously stated by some experts. Brown, (2001: 336) also claimed that writing is a thinking process. Furthermore, he states that writing can be planned and given with an unlimited number of revisions before its release.

Harmer (2004:4) said that to deliver from that explain of course we used to practice to express what idea in our mind in the form of the list, letter, essay, reports, or novels. He added when writing something, we usually expect somebody to read it. It was easy for us to understand what we have written. Because we have already known what we wanted to say. However, it might be difficult for other to understand. From those explanations, the writer concluded that

writing was an activity which expresses knowledge, idea, and feeling in form of text so that the result can be enjoyed and understood by the readers.

### **2.1.2 The Problems in Writing**

There are some classifications of writing problems category of writing problems. They are capitalization problem, punctuation problem, poor organization/ illogical sequence, grammatical error, problem of word choice, and confused on supporting ideas, and spelling problem.

## **2.2. Previous Study**

The previous study was done by Ashari (2013) entitled “Writing Problems and solving strategies: English Department students voices”. This study focused on the problem in writing skill for English department Jambi University and solving strategies. Participants shared their problems when they were in writing course. There were some main problems that students have faced in writing course. There were creativity limitation on topic, supporting paragraph and development, broken grammar, psychological problem. He used qualitative method for his thesis. Problems have been faced by the students and the students used their own strategy to solve it.

There were four main strategies that used by the students to solve their problems which were resourcing strategy, self-management strategy, note-taking strategy, and cooperation strategy. Each strategy used by students based on their experiences when they got problem in their writing class. This research asked the students to fill the gap and be one of the emergent points why this research should be conducted, because he used the qualitative design. Qualitative design was

seldom to be used for another researcher. Qualitative design would give in depth understanding to the research problem. For this research, a qualitative design with a case study approach was used to investigate the problems and strategies English department students have faced and used after completing their writing course. The instrument for his research was interview and demographic survey. According the writer interview was best the way to collect the data. Dorney (2005) has stated that interview is a frequent part of social life surrounding us and interview is a good way in interaction to get an answer. As a result, to focus on individual differences of problem and added by teaching the way to solve the problems (learning strategies) are good ways to overcome the problem.

The second previous research was conducted by Badi (2015).Who researches about **Academic writing difficulties of ESL Learners**. He investigated the academic writing challenges of ESL learners. After he did a survey investigate academic writing challenges encountered by ESL learner to find out the problems in academic writing. The problems were paraphrasing, referencing, & citations, language coherence, & cohesion, expressing an own voice, and last one significant topic & relevant references. He used the questionnaire as the instrument. There was two questionnaire that he used to gather the data of this study. The first questionnaire contains closed question It included four sections such as students biodata, students writing strategies and behavior, learners attitude toward writing an assignment and the references they prefer to use, and finally the difficulties that they faced when writing. Seconds questionnaire contained the closed question, To support the qualitative data

collected from the first questionnaire. Subjects were asked to complete another one and it mostly contains open ended question. These questions are similar to the ones in questionnaire 1 in term of the information required. The first analysis was about the validity of the questionnaire achieved by conducting a pilot study. Two students were given the questionnaire (Questionnaire1 & questionnaire 2) to complete it. After a slight modification, a total number of 20 questionnaires were distributed among international students at a university in Australia. After that, the data was collected and all the questionnaires were reported a valid.

As a result, the subjects tended to have similar difficulties in academic writing. The most common related to language use as well as coherence and cohesion, others related to writing voice finding relevant topics and resources, and the last and less problematic one was referencing and citations. The main factor was the lack of previous experience and knowledge about the conventions of academic writing.

## **Methodology**

For this study, the researcher used the quantitative research, and survey approach design to investigate the student problems on writing at English study program at Faculty of Teacher Training and Education. In doing so, a set questionnaires relating to the problems developed to collect the data from the participants. The data would use to see the percentage of students who had problems in every possible area. After data analysis, the finding and discussion discussed.

There were five classes for the participants in this study. They were the fifth-semester students, class A, B, C, and D who has passed writing subject 1 until writing III in their academic at one Islamic University in Jambi as the participants. Each class had around twenty-five students and the total number of the participants around one hundred students. For the pilot test, the sample was class B of the fifth-semester students in English Department. After the researcher got the data, the researcher analyzed from the questionnaire that students had returned to the researcher, the researcher used SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) to analyze the data. The researcher found the mean score of students' response and then interpreted them.

### **Finding and Discussion**

There were 28 items in the questionnaire that asked students' perception toward the problem in writing. Based on the findings, all of the types such as poor organization/illogical sequence, the problem of word choice, grammatical error, spelling problem, confused on supporting the ideas, punctuation problem, and capitalization perceived in positive perception in students' problem. By knowing the perception result of each type, the researcher could determine the final result. By the result of the study and findings above, it was found that the fifth-semester students at One Islamic University did not face a significant problem in writing. Furthermore, the overall mean showed that it was medium. It meant that the students sometimes faced problem in some types. There were only 2 dominants problems from 7 types that most influence students learning of writing based on

of the level mean score. Those types were the problem of word choice and poor organization/illogical sequence.

First, it was the problem of word choice. Students perceived less understanding on the choice the words and it made them be difficult to expand their writing product if they were stuck when they were in writing. It was supported by statement number (*always using the simple words in writing*) which was used to counter check students' positive response towards students problem. It elicited (58.6%) of agreement and interpreted the high level of mean scores. Moreover, the problem of word choice was also supported by some statements in the questionnaire (statements number 6, 7, and 8). Students agreed to be said that they felt hard by using difficult words in writing. Hence, the students felt confidence if they used the simple words in writing (statements 6). They were actually perceived that the statement number 1 that if it was happened and could limit students' creativity in writing because the lack vocabularies that they have (statements 7). In addition, they also had difficulty in using new vocabularies in writing. They take a long time to understand about the new vocabularies in writing (statements 8). This finding was similar to previous study of Keong and Mussa (2015) which showed the result in the writing difficulties that students faces are a lack of vocabulary. It made them difficult to develop what on their mind.

Based on the result of findings, the problem of word choice had the high level the mean score 3.72 compared to the others. The problem of word choice was the most difficult problem in writing course. If the students got less

vocabulary in writing, they would not develop their own ideas and opinions well. Nevertheless, many of results of respondents' answers also had a problem in all the types. All problems have relation to each other in the learning writing process. Students perceived that they had so many problems while they were in learning writing. According to Nancy (2008), students' perception of difficulty may not always be the same as the actual or performance difficulty that they encounter. A high level of difficulty may be perceived by students who have produced a big number of errors because they could not avoid using items they found difficult.

Second, poor organization/illogical sequence. It focused get less understanding about the techniques in writing. There were four statements and students perceived most of the students had a big problem in this techniques. Based on the respondent answers each type statement, the most students agreed that they got the problem in poor organization/illogical sequence. It was supported the statement number 3 "*making an outline before writing*". It was found 3.85 of agreement answer. It meant that in making writing product they did not use the technique to make them easier in writing. Because in writing, we need to make an outline, in order to make us easy to write about something. By the making an outline, it should focus on the outline that we have done. We are not out of the context. The students perceived that they had low confidence in the techniques skill required in writing. It supported based on statements number 1, 2, and 4 in the questionnaire. The finding also was similar with the previous study Keong and Mussa (2015), which showed the result students got problem poor at organizing and expressing ideas.

In regarding research question number 2, it can be seen by the most dominant problem in writing between male and female student. By the result of the study and findings, in grammatical error type focused on less in grammar that student male had. Based on the result each type in the questionnaire, male students perceived that they had the big problem in grammatical error when doing writing. It indicated the mean score 3.67. The males felt that they had the low level of grammar, and this problem motivated them to be better in writing. They may have a good idea but difficult to improve it. The students also thought that they were not confident in writing. On the other hand, student female got the problem of word choice. Based on the result, female students faced difficulties in it. Most of them always used simple words and got difficult to understand the new vocabulary when learning writing. Look at the result each statement on the problem of word choice in the questionnaire. All of the result in the problem of word choice it indicated high level. The mean score was 3.75, the finding corresponded with Chu-yao, Ciu (2008) in term of writing quantity, the results showed that female student wrote better than male students. For his experiences, female students often wrote more and took more organized records of their written works than male students. Regarding the writing quality, female students better than male students in both the total scores and the analytic scores of English writing. However, the result showed that the difference statistically significant. Nevertheless, the result didn't same with my research. In the contrary of my result, female students were less writing than male students. Based on the result finding, female students got the problem in the problem of word choice. It focused

on less vocabulary that female had, so they couldn't develop writing well. Meanwhile, male students got the problem in the grammatical error. It could be concluded that female students tend to be good in grammar more than male students had less in the grammatical error.

Based on the theory about the characteristic of Adolescent Learner, According to Clements, Rimrodt, Abel, Blankner, Mostofsky, Pekar, Denckla & Cutting, 2006; Kansaku & Kitazawa, 2001; Mack, McGivern, Hyde. Stated that female brains process language activities more easily, earlier, and faster than males, while males more readily excel at spatial mechanical and gross motor skill task, and also from Gurian and Stevens (2004), stated that these differences explained females were outperform than males in reading and writing, and males tend to gravitate toward physical activities and video games. By the result that I got from the males and females problems in writing, it was found both of them had different problem on writing. Why the result both of them weren't same? Because based on the theory the characteristic males and females were different. It has been described according to experts above, and it was contrary with the research which researcher have done. It showed that females had problem in word of choice, and they preferred to use the simple words. Meanwhile for males, they got difficulties in using grammar.

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