

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Writing is a crucial aspect of language learning. Harmer (2004) believes that writing is a more complex process than speaking. To be proficient in writing, a writer must be able to master all the features associated with it, including a rich vocabulary, knowledge of grammar, and the mechanics of writing. One way to improve students' writing skills is to have them write a diary. This writing exercise enables students to refine their writing, reflect on personal experiences, and refine their language skills. However, for English students at Universitas Jambi, maintaining a regular diary can be both beneficial and challenging. Despite diary writing being a common educational practice in language learning, it has become less common for students to engage in this activity in the digital age.

This research is based on an assignment in a course where students are asked to write a diary every day to ensure that they continue to practice their writing skills. This experience sparked the researcher's interest in exploring this topic, as the researcher aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the writing habits of EFL students at Universitas Jambi, including the challenges they face in maintaining these habits and the strategies they employ to overcome these challenges.

A diary is a daily record in which someone frequently documents personal experiences and observations, expressing their thoughts, feelings, and ideas. Many researchers are increasingly using investigations to explore social and psychological processes in everyday situations across various academic, vocational, and educational settings. According to Sumardjo and Saini (as cited in Cintya et al., 2022), a diary is a personal record of a person that reflects their thoughts or

environment and is written regularly. Diaries are often considered to have literary value because they are written honestly and spontaneously, resulting in authentic personal expression. Diaries not only record everyday happenings but can also serve as important documentation of significant events, both on a personal and public scale. According to Bolton (2001), a diary is one of the earliest literary forms in Western culture, containing narratives of daily events, personal reflections, aspirations, and anxieties about the future, as well as memories, ideas, and emotions expressed by the writer.

Maintaining a regular diary writing habit is not only important for language development but also for fostering self-expression and critical thinking skills among EFL students. However, many factors make students lose interest in writing. By studying the challenges faced by English students at Universitas Jambi in maintaining diary writing, educators can gain valuable insights into the specific needs and challenges faced by these learners.

This research is also motivated by the research gap in previous studies. Based on research conducted by Nurhalizah and Safran (2023), which has especially focused on elementary students, examining how diary writing helps enhance coherence and organization in their essays. Meanwhile, based on research by Faiqoh and Ghofur (2023), which investigated the correlation between diary writing habits and paragraph writing skills among high school students, it was found that consistency in diary writing correlates with better writing performance. Another study, conducted by Cintya et al. (2022), targeted secondary school students who showed improvement in descriptive text and storytelling through diary writing. In addition, Aliyah (2020) has studied junior high school students and highlighted the overall improvement in terms of content, organization, vocabulary, and enthusiasm towards writing when using diaries.

Current studies focus on basic writing skills and do not explore unique needs, barriers, and strategies for diary writing among university students. To close this gap, this research will examine the diary writing habits of Universitas Jambi students enrolled in the English Study Program. This research will specifically identify the difficulties they face in maintaining consistency and overcoming language barriers, as well as design specific strategies to improve these practices. This study will provide a deeper understanding of how diary writing can be optimized as a tool for language learning and personal growth in a higher education context, addressing a gap that previous studies have not fully explored.

1.2 Research Questions

1. How are the diary writing habits of students in the English department at Universitas Jambi?
2. What challenges do English students at Universitas Jambi encounter in maintaining a regular diary writing practice, and how do they overcome the problem?

1.3 Research Objectives

This research aims to explore the challenges of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students' diary writing habits, identify the challenges that English students at Jambi University face in maintaining regular diary writing habits, and propose potential solutions to these challenges. By understanding the specific difficulties faced by these students, this study aims to recommend strategies to encourage and maintain their diary writing habits.

1.4. Significance of the Study

For Students: Maintaining a regular diary writing habit can significantly improve writing ability, especially by increasing vocabulary, correcting sentence structure, and strengthening English fluency. Writing in a more casual and relaxed environment gives students more assurance

in expressing their ideas, therefore enhancing their writing ability implicitly. Moreover, diary writing offers a chance for self-reflection and personal development, therefore helping students to evaluate their academic and personal development. This habit also encourages flexibility and autonomy as students pick themes that appeal to them, therefore raising intrinsic motivation. From a psychological perspective, keeping a diary is a type of treatment that helps reduce students' stress and anxiety and so enhance their mental health ultimately.

For Lecturers: This study describes the challenges students face in maintaining their diary writing habits. With this information, teachers can help students overcome these challenges by designing more effective teaching techniques, such as structured writing programs and writing workshops. In addition, this study also provides recommendations on how lecturers can motivate students and encourage their active participation in language learning. By integrating diary writing into projects and homework, lecturers can motivate students to participate more actively in their learning. In addition, the results of this study enable teachers to critically analyze their teaching methods to ensure that they are more in line with students' preferences and needs to improve their English writing skills.

1.5 Limitation of the Research

In this study, the author limits the scope of the study so that this study does not deviate from its outline. The author will focus this study on the challenges faced in maintaining the habit of writing a diary and how to overcome these challenges. Additionally, the author focuses exclusively on students from the English Study Program at Universitas Jambi students who still write diaries or who have written diaries.

1.6 Definition of Key Term

1. **EFL (English as a Foreign Language)** Refers to the learning and use of English by students who come from countries where English is not the primary language. EFL focuses on developing English language skills outside the context of the student's native language.
2. **Writing Habits** The regular habits or patterns that students develop in their writing activities. This includes the frequency, duration, method, and style of writing that students consistently do in their writing activities.
3. **Diary Writing** A personal writing activity done in the form of a diary, where students record their daily experiences, feelings, and reflections. Diary writing is often done regularly and aims to practice writing skills in an informal context.
4. **Challenges** In the context of this study, challenges refer to the difficulties or obstacles that students encounter in maintaining a regular diary writing practice. These challenges can include a lack of time, motivation, language proficiency, confidence in writing, or other personal and academic factors that hinder their ability to write consistently.