

English Literature Students' Problems in English Writing: A Comprehensive Analysis

Dario Rifki Ismail
Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Indonesia
200026016@webmail.uad.ac.id

Aqil Julyanriko Pranata
Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Indonesia
2200026022@webmail.uad.ac.id

Patria Handung Jaya*
Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Indonesia
patria.jaya@pgsd.uad.ac.id

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*corresponding author

Abstract

Conveying a written idea in other languages is really a challenge, especially for students. Not only does the challenge come from the grammar of the target language, but the vocabulary also takes a big deal. These things can result in unclear ideas and failure in written communication. This research aims to find out students' problems in English writing. The data were taken from the writing of English Literature students of Universitas Ahmad Dahlan with samples from three classes. The types of writing were varied starting from essay, formal letter, and topic-based writing. The major finding shows that the students have problems in the subject and verb agreement where they have problems in classifying the subjects and verbs in compound and complex sentences. Besides, the structure of the sentences is sometimes incorrect, especially in forming long phrases. This research is expected to be able to make more students aware of the mistakes and give some clues for the teachers or lecturers related to some problems faced by students in composing a piece of writing.

Keywords: *english literature students, problem, writing, written communication*

INTRODUCTION

Writing can be both embellished and interesting at the same time. When developing paragraphs, it's crucial to observe and compile some of the materials on the sort of placements. With various aspects to compromise, writing has the most patterned activities that are fully accessible for everyone. On the Contrary, some of that variety can absolutely make a hard style of writing, looking to a different window as looking to a different perspective would create an opening to every possibility. Without any limitation. creating a paragraph is just like a boundless sky with so much beauty. There is no perfection, and there will always be mistakes, and so it is with writing. The common mistakes that found on sentences and paragraphs. Students are hardly creating a connection between each sentence and are stuck

on creating the same pattern for each sentence without any improvements. While making a pattern, students are required to think outside of the pattern and make an organizational structure to make a sanctuary or framework that could support their work (Putri, 2021).

Writing develops critical thinking and behaviours. Based on (Muamaroh et al., 2020), several things that essentials need to be considered in producing a piece of writing. Some linguistics aspect, and exposure in practicing the skill. Furthermore, the researcher added that writing is an activity that conveys messages using letters and symbols, which covers the aspects of content, organization, originality, style, fluency, accuracy, and the appropriate use of rhetorical forms of discourse. Thus, creating a great perspective and pouring it into a text would not be an easy job to do.

Students at Universitas Ahmad Dahlan also encounter these challenges, especially the students in the English Literature Department. Most of the students often write the way they speak. It results in unclear structure, spelling errors, and wrong punctuation, which lead to the failure in conveying written ideas. In the department, there are some subjects related to writing that can improve students' points of view and create a good writing environment. However, some students have problems creating a pattern of paragraphs, connecting the sentences, making an interesting hook on each paragraph, developing punctuation, grammar, and vocabularies. Thus, with these problems, there must be a concerning situation that needs to be solved.

To address this issue, it's important to refer to another previous research. Research related to writing and its problems have been conducted before. (Farahsani et al., 2023) wrote Problems in Learning Essay Writing for English for Specific Purpose Students: A Case Study in Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta. This study aims to find out problems faced by students in learning Essay Writing Subjects, where this subject is taught for ESP students. This study uses a qualitative method, namely by looking at 30 essays written by students from various study programs, then researchers find the problems experienced by students. The research finds some results, they are critical thinking, the punctuation, word choice, grammatical problems, and the structure of the essay as the students' problems in learning ESP.

By understanding the concept of these common issues, the English Literature Department at Universitas Ahmad Dahlan can develop targeted strategies to help students improve their writing skills and overcome these challenges. Other interesting research is written by (Hartono et al., 2019) and (Muamaroh et al., 2020). One of the articles aims at identifying and analysing language problems of the Indonesian university lecturers in writing English academic papers for international publications. The subjects of the study were 66 randomly selected lecturers of various disciplines other than English Education and English Literature. The results show that language errors and mistakes in grammar, syntax, vocabulary, spelling, and word forms were all found in the subjects' writings. The other one shows students' English writing problems covered content, organization, vocabulary,

language use and mechanic. The factors that inhibit them in writing English included not being confident in writing English, not mastering grammar and vocabulary, and lack of practice in writing.

Despite this, other research related to writing but with different focuses (Cordero, 2019) and ;(Dwiyanti & Suwastini, 2021) also did research regarding assessment in writing. Cordero aims to analyse the different levels of English writing skills of 4th grade students from both compulsory bilingual and non-bilingual secondary schools in Castilla-La Mancha (Spain). From the results of the study, we were able to examine whether bilingual programs help students improve their English writing skills as well as to compare the results obtained by bilingual schools in Castilla-La Mancha with those developed in other Spanish, or even European, regions. On the other hand, Dwiyanti & Suwastini found that the teacher warned the students about plagiarism and used an online plagiarism checker to check student work's authenticity to solve this problem. Furthermore, to solve the problem of time management, the teacher divided the time strictly between planning, teaching, and assessing. The research suggested a need to conduct training for the teacher to do online assessments, especially on writing skills.

Drawing from the established evidence, there are several researches regarding writing, academic, and problems related to them. Nonetheless, research regarding problems in writing faced by students in the English Literature Department has never been conducted before. These students are Indonesians who use English as a foreign language. However, at the same time, they have to get used to the language since this is their major. Writing skills can be a huge investment for them since some jobs in their field require good writing, such as translator, content creator, copywriter, etc. Hence, knowing their problems related to writing is considered urgent. Therefore, this research aims to achieve while also learn about the problems and barriers in writing faced by students of the English Literature Department of Universitas Ahmad Dahlan. With that problem, the writers mainly focused on this research question: What are English Literature students' problems in English Writing?

METHOD

The design study method used in this research is a qualitative approach. The authors used a descriptive design because the data obtained is through three different classes of English literature students from Universitas Ahmad Dahlan that focus on the current status and phenomena. The data of this research were analysed by checking peers between the lecturer and some of the students of the class to classify the work of the student and peer checking. Conduct a detailed review of each piece of paperwork to enhance the analysis according to students' ability to identify problems. To further this study, the authors consider the descriptive method to be more feasible and suitable for this research. Qualitative research is multi-method in focus, involving an interpretative, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to

them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials – case studies, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts –that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005)

Therefore, the population of this research is students of the English literature department of Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, batch 2022. The samples of this research are 30 English Literature department students from three different classes, which consist of 50 students we chose randomly from each class: class A 10 students; class B 10 students; And class C 10 students in Universitas Ahmad Dahlan. The students write an English text from various writing assignments; some are essays, opinions, and articles. Designated student are filtered based on their ability and their activity in class. With the help of the lecturer, to found and maintain some of the student that being a potential unit to be researched.

One of the learning activities requires the students to write an argumentative essay on certain topics related to the subject. some of the essays are written in class but some of them were taken for assignments, the theme that has been given to students is freely chosen by them to improve their critical thinking and creativity. The authors randomly selected 10 students' works from three different classes as the research samples, so 30 texts (10 from each small class) will be investigated for the research.

Thus, the research procedures are as follows. Whenever the students made random errors in their writing, we noted the writing errors within the student's academic papers and put a note on it. The authors managed to locate the errors in their writing. Furthermore. The authors discussed the errors that are located within the students' writing. and managed to find a variety of problems in the students' writing, such as some grammatical failures, punctuation errors, and a minimum variety of vocabulary. Furthermore, the authors took the errors for the samples of this research to input it to the author's findings.

RESULTS

This research aims to find out English Literature students' problems in English writing. The author found that there are three major aspects related to the problems which vocabulary, punctuation, and grammar.

Problem Regarding Vocabularies

Vocabulary has a crucial role in the writing process. In the realm of written communication, a constrained lexicon can significantly impact both expression and understanding. Students in the English literature department often grapple with the challenge of selecting the optimal terms during their writing endeavours. Those hampered by a limited vocabulary may encounter difficulties articulating their thoughts with the required precision and clarity, leading to the potential for ambiguity and misinterpretation. Here is some of the data that the authors found:

Data 1: "Transgender is a phenomenon that spreads in the modern era as a form of sex."

In this context, the writer's use of the term "sex" is deemed inappropriate. It is because the writer in the data was trying to explain that transgender is a form of someone's identity in this modern era. Therefore, the more suitable and formal alternative would be "sexual identity," providing a nuanced and respectful representation of the subject matter. The correct sentence would be:

Correction: "Transgender is a phenomenon that spreads in the modern era as a form of sexual identity."

Another sentence presenting a vocabulary challenge can be seen in the data below,

Data 2: "Transgender is typically undertaken by individuals seeking to find identity."

The phrase "seeking to find identity" may pose comprehension difficulties for readers due to its complexity. The words "seek" and "find" are quite redundant to be used in one sentence because somehow, they have relatively similar meanings. A more reader-friendly alternative would be "seeking their identity," offering a clearer and more accessible expression of the concept. Hence, the correct form for data 2 would be

Correction: "Transgender is typically undertaken by individuals seeking their identity."

Problem related to vocabularies is in line with the research done by (Pratiwi, 2016). She aimed to find out students' problems in English writing. Based on the result, she said that language use and vocabulary aspects rank the highest problems for students in English writing.

Problem Regarding Punctuation

The pattern of writing may be very varied. The differences in writing could be caused by the rule of punctuation. When in the field, some of the problems are real problems. It can have a whole different meaning. English Literature students can hardly recognize and examine which case they failed and have a small intuition to discover and fix the problems.

Here, we found some punctuation mechanical errors where the writers made some mistakes in some sentences.

Data 3: "Lack the emphasis of their respective local, ethnic and cultural signs."

This sentence employs the use of a serial comma (also known as the Oxford comma), which is placed before the conjunction "and" in a list. The serial comma is used after "ethnic," ensuring clarity and precision in the enumeration of items in the list. The absence of this comma might create ambiguity, so its inclusion helps to clearly separate each item in the list. the correct sentence should be in follow.

Correction: "Lack the emphasis of their respective local, ethnic, and cultural signs."

There is also another punctuation mistake by another writer in which:

Data 4: "... the fact is, although few, young couples marry out of desire and without financially stable..."

This sentence includes several commas to add nuance and clarify the structure. Two commas between the phrase "although few" are not effective. Two commas should indicate appositive or additional information about a noun in a sentence (the subject or the object). In this case, the word "that" needs to be put after the word "is" to indicate an object complement. The comma must be put after the word "stable" to separate the dependent clause from the independent one. Thus, the correct sentence is:

Correction: "... the fact is that although few young couples marry out of desire and without financially stable, ..."

This result is supported by (Bahri & Sugeng, 2009). Based on their research focusing on students' difficulties in writing in vocabulary and grammar, punctuation ranks the second highest problem in students' writing. A limited understanding of this particular thing can create ambiguity in the written communication.

Problem Regarding Grammar

Similar to other languages, English has specific rules in its written expression. Most Indonesian students write in English the way they speak. Furthermore, there is also an intervention from the grammar of Bahasa Indonesia in the process of composing the sentences. Some of the grammar problems are provided below:

Data 5: "The formula about crime story is, I think Films of this genre generally involve various aspects of crime and its detection."

The sentence has two verbs that make it incorrect. In speaking, this is not really an issue. However, in writing, this can be seen very clearly as a mistake because a sentence cannot have more than one verb without a conjunction. The verbs "is" and "think" should not be separated by a comma. Instead, it must be separated by the conjunction "that" to indicate the noun clause as an object complement in the sentence. The correct sentence would be:

Correction: "The formula about crime story is that I think Films of this genre generally involve various aspects of crime and its detection."

There is also another grammatical error in the student's writing using grammatical function the sentence is

Data 6: "The fun fact that I got from this course is not at all campus have this America study courses. You only can find it in a limited places in Indonesia."

The second sentence contains subject-verb agreement errors and awkward phrasing. The phrase "Not at all campus have this American study courses" lacks proper subject-verb agreement. The revised version corrects this error by stating,

"Not all campuses have these American study courses."

Additionally, the original sentence includes an error in the placement of "limited places" and lacks precision in its description. The revised version refines the sentence to convey that these American study courses can only be found in limited places in Indonesia. The revised version is as follows.

Correction: "The fun fact that I got from this course is that not all campuses offer these American study courses. You can only find them in limited places in Indonesia."

While examining the writing of students at Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, a detailed analysis was conducted to identify the most common problems related to grammar, vocabulary, and punctuation. This research aimed to understand the areas where students struggle the most and provide insights for targeted language instruction. By categorizing and quantifying these errors, we can gain a clearer picture of the linguistic challenges faced by the students.

Table. Percentage of Error Writing

Error Type	Frequency	Percentage
Grammatical	12 occurrences	35.29%
Vocabulary	6 occurrences	17.65%
Punctuation	9 occurrences	26.47%
Syntax	7 occurrences	20.59%

The analysis reveals that Grammatical Errors are the most prevalent among students, accounting for 35.29% of all identified issues. This high percentage highlights a critical challenge in mastering fundamental aspects of English grammar, such as subject-verb agreement, tense consistency, and article usage. These difficulties may arise from language transfer, limited exposure to native-like input, or insufficient practice in complex sentence construction. Punctuation Errors follow closely, constituting 26.47% of the total, suggesting a need for targeted instruction on proper punctuation usage, including comma placement, apostrophes, and sentence boundaries, to enhance overall writing clarity and coherence. Meanwhile, Syntax Errors account for 20.59%, underscoring the importance of syntactic awareness and the ability to structure sentences logically and fluently. Although Vocabulary Errors are comparatively less frequent at 17.65%, they still represent a significant area for development, as lexical precision and word choice are essential for effective communication and nuanced expression. These findings emphasize the necessity of a comprehensive, skill-integrated approach to language instruction that addresses these specific challenges, fosters linguistic competence, and ultimately enhances students' academic writing proficiency.

(Bahri & Sugeng, 2009) They also said that grammar can cause students to compose sentences incorrectly and that most students lack understanding of arranging proper

sentences. As the authors stated earlier, Bahri and Sugeng also believe that limited practice in writing is one factor in this issue.

CONCLUSION

Ultimately, English Literature students' problems in English writing consist of three aspects. Vocabulary, punctuation, and grammar become core discussions in this research due to students' limited understanding of these particular things. One significant issue is word choice, as students often use inappropriate diction to convey their ideas. Furthermore, the use of comma and full stop is also problematic since they usually write the way they speak, which leads to inappropriate mechanics in the writing. Finally, the structure of the language can be a nightmare for most students because they need to understand how the idea is composed in English without any intervention from the structure of their mother tongue. Students must learn to organize their ideas in English without interference from their native language structures.

The result of this research is limited to the students' problem in the English Literature Department of Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, which is supported by the previous studies. Different results may be obtained in different places and settings. The authors expect that this research can be a reflection for students in general to be aware of their problems and mistakes in writing. In addition, the lecturers or teachers can also find the best method to teach their students writing after finding out their problems in it. Furthermore, lecturers and teachers can identify the most effective methods to teach writing after understanding the specific issues faced by their students. By doing language transfer between all the class members to make a contrastive analysis, error analysis, and compelling it to a practice writing.

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