UC Journal, Vol. 1, No. 2, November 2020, pp. 135-149

UC Journal: ELT, Linguistics and Literature Journal
http://e-journal.usd.ac.id/index.php/UC
Sanata Dharma University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES IN ACADEMIC WRITING CLASS: STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS

Algrenita Silvina Budjalemba and Listyani
Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana, Salitiga, Indonesia
correspondence: listyani.fbs@uksw.edu
https://doi.org/10.24071/uc.v1i2.2966
received 10 November 2020; accepted 8 December 2020

Abstract
Writing is one of the most difficult skills in learning English as a Second Language (ESL) or English Foreign Language (EFL). Many language learners encountered difficulties from the writing process. At the tertiary level, students are required to produce academic essays, which are difficult and may frustrate students. The purpose of this study was to analyze factors contributing to students' difficulties in an *Academic Writing* course based on the students' perceptions. This study used a qualitative method. The instruments used were open-ended questionnaires and interview protocol. In this study, all the participants' answers were coded and analyzed descriptively. The participants were 22 students who were taking *Academic Writing* class for repeaters in Semester I, 2018/2019 academic year, in an English Language Education Program, in a university in Central Java, Indonesia. Questionnaire data were coded and classified by the researcher. In conducting the interview, data were audio-recorded and transcribed. Those data were analyzed to answer the research questions in this study. Based on the findings, there were two factors that caused students' difficulties in writing academically. The two factors were internal and external. Internal factors consisted of self-motivation, self-confidence, lack of knowledge and feeling of under pressure. External factors consisted of the teacher's teaching style, classroom atmosphere, materials, and writing aspects. This research hopefully can help teachers and instructors in developing appropriate teaching techniques in *Academic Writing* and minimize students' difficulties in *Academic Writing.*

Keywords: Academic Writing, factors contributing difficulties

Introduction
Writing is one of the most important and challenging skills for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) or English as a Second Language (ESL) student. Writing in English might be more difficult than other skills like listening, speaking and reading. At the tertiary level, students who are learning EFL or ESL required to succeed in written and oral production. Many students are worried about writing especially in English. Unlike speaking, writing requires a lot of preparations and aspects, which have to be considered, causing students to feel frustrated and nervous. One of the most problems students face in writing is what should be written and how to write. One of the writing aspects that most students faced is grammar. Grammar tends to make students hesitant to write. In

This work is licensed under CC BY-SA.
Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License

this case, students regarded have difficulties in writing. Sometimes, difficulties bring students to feel nervous, anxious, and lack motivation.

In an English Language Education Program (ELEP), in a private university in Central Java, Indonesia, Academic Writing class becomes one of the most challenging courses for students because it is a preparatory class for students before writing a thesis proposal. Students must pass the Intermediate Grammar course before taking this course. Academic Writing is also known as the highest level of writing courses for English Language Education students. Academic writing itself has the importance not only to master English language but also to be successful in learning other disciplines where English is the medium of instruction as stated by Al-Badi (2015).

In Academic Writing class, many students feel nervous and worried about their writing because students have various difficulties in the world of writing such as proficiency level, lack of motivation, lack of knowledge and so on. It can be seen from students' performance in writing classes, like organizing ideas, encountering arguments, paraphrasing, synthesizing, summarizing, and grammatical problems.

Considering those problems and difficulties, we conducted this research with the aim to find out and analyze what possible factors contributing to students' difficulties are in Academic Writing class. Two research questions were addressed: (1) What factors caused students' difficulties in Academic Writing class? (2) How did students handle their difficulties in Academic Writing class? Hopefully, this research will help students gain a better understanding of the factors and efforts in handling those difficulties. Besides, it can also provide meaningful information for teachers andinstructors to create a better learning atmosphere suitable for students.

Literature Review

The Definition of Academic Writing

Academic Writing course is the highest writing course in an English Language Education Program, in a private university in Central Java, Indonesia. Previously students would take some writing courses like Creative Writing, Procedural Writing, Narrative Writing, and Writing for the Media. Those are the levels of writing courses from the beginning to the advanced level. Academic Writing is the highest-level writing course in this particular university. Abdulkareem (2013) confirms that "academic writing has a fundamental impact on learners' progress in a second language".

Therefore, students' ability, knowledge, and creativity are needed in order to produce a good piece of writing. In *Academic Writing* class, students are expected to be able to argue, correlate arguments with the results of research done by experts, and encounter arguments. Also, students need to apply writing procedures based on applicable provisions, for example, the logical organization, syntheses, quotes, summaries, grammar, mechanics, and avoidance of plagiarism.

Problems in Academic Writing

There are many problems that students encounter in an Academic Writing course. A research conducted by Bacha (2012) reveals that "teachers find students' academic writing weak". According to Shang (2012) when students are asked to write an English composition, they may get nervous because they are afraid of making mistakes in language forms such as grammar and vocabulary. From a psychological perspective, there are many factors that might occur in writing problems. As stated by Byrne (1988,

p.4), writing is complicated and difficult for most people who learn a second language and native language because of particular psychological, linguistic, and cognitive factors. It means that writing problems are not only faced by second language students but also native language students (as cited in, Alfaki, 2015). Raimes (1983) thinks that: When students complain about how difficult it is to write in a second language, they are talking not only about the difficulty of finding the right words and using the correct grammar but also about the difficulty of finding and expressing ideas in a new language. (p. 13)".

Raimes (1983) confirmed that problems often faced by students in Academic Writing are not only about grammar, diction, and vocabulary, but also how to express the idea into a target language using their language. "Other causes that could lead to the difficulty in academic writing are L1 interference, inadequacy of ideas, and unclear instructions of the task" (Chou, 2011). Similarly, Hedge (1988) thinks that students not only have to consider the writing features, but they also have to be able to write in a high degree of organization, appropriate grammar and vocabulary. Students often avoidor not to put more attention on the content and context in *Academic Writing*. It happensbecause students may only focus on grammar and vocabulary.

Another problem encountered by students is time pressure. It was proved by Cheng (2004) on his research on National Taiwan Normal University students. He interviewed 27 students by using a semi-structured interview. The results showed that one of the participants felt extremely anxious when writing under time pressure because the teacher asked the students to write a draft in 60 minutes by following the composition of writing.

Difficulties in Academic Writing

Academic Writing is formal writing in which it is different compared to other types of writing. Nunan (1989) stated that writing is a very cognitive activity that requires students to pay attention to various factors in writing (as cited in Fareed, Ashraf & Bilal, 2016). It is true that to be able to write, students have to follow a number of writing aspects. In the case of *Academic Writing*, students are required to convey arguments and develop ideas precisely.

Hyland (2003) classifies the organization of L2 writing in the different focus: language structures, text functions, themes or topics, creative expression, composting process, content, genre and contexts of writing. Referring to those organizations, students need to consider all of the rules in their writing process. Sometimes, some students lack confidence and are unmotivated after knowing the numbers of requirements.

Moreover, many students have difficulty in finding appropriate theories, combining ideas, correcting sentence structure, and they still feel doubts in writing. Those difficulties may occur because students' English language proficiency is relatively low. Furthermore, linguistic aspects such as grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, and spelling are included as factors that affect students' writing performance.

Factors Contributing to Writing Difficulties

Alfaki (2015) classified several factors that contribute to writing problems and difficulties. They are as follows.

The Nature of Writing Process

Writing is a complex process that requires students mastering the grammatical devices, conceptual thinking and judgmental elements (Byrne, 1988 & Heaton, 1990, as cited in Alfaki, 2015). Abu (2001) also stated that writing is a difficult skill for native speakers and non-native speakers because they are required to fulfill writing components such as content, organization, purpose, audience, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling, and mechanics. As supported by Al-Khairy (2013), that "the major problems comprise grammatical errors, the inappropriate choice of vocabulary, irregular verbs, and incorrect punctuation and spelling". The best reason is that the role of writing skills as written production should be communicative and successful in entertaining readers.

Lack of Learners' Motivation

One of the most important things in writing is the topic. Students tend to feel bored and have difficulties writing because of unfamiliar topics. According to Davies (1998), students will be encouraged to write and motivated because they are interested in the topic. Silva (1997) believed that allowing students to choose their topics can increase their motivation to write (as cited in Thomsan, 2003). Students are given freedom to decide their topic in the hope that it will improve their writing quality. Other than that, Zamel (2017) stated that writing class should consider the purpose of writing itself.

Inadequate Time

According to Guantum and Chakraverty (2002), writing is one of the most important parts of language learning, which requires a lot of time to think about the topic. It was shown that students often run out of deadlines because in the writing process students need to brainstorm ideas, organize ideas, draft, re-read their writing (Hedge, 1988, as cited in Alfaki, 2015).

Lack of Practice

Similar to other language skills that writing also required students to practice those languages that they have learned. If students only learn the skill without practice, knowledge means nothing. Grabe and Kaplan (1996) believed that writing never comes instantly; instead, it needs effort and practice. The more students practice, the more they master the skills.

Teachers' feedback

Some students get confused about the teacher's feedback while consulting their writing. Some teachers may give short or unclear feedback to students. Zamel (1985) stated that teacher feedback can be effective in responding to students' writing rather than examiners because some students feel afraid or worry about their own writing (as cited in Alfaki, 2015). Moreover, Can (2009) states that "conflicting feedback provided by instructors from different departments in an institution might lead to the lack of students' confidence in their writing skills".

Previous Studies

Many pieces of research about writing had been done in the language learning process. Writing is complicated because people generally hate to write. Cheng (2004) investigated National Taiwan Normal University students on his research using

primary data from the participants like open-ended questionnaires, writing assignments, and in-depth interviews. Cheng's findings on the results and discussions showed that teachers should provide students the freedom to choose their topic or interested in it. Besides that, teachers should be giving motivation for students to learn to write by creating relaxed communication with the students without worrying about making mistakes.

Fareed, Ashraf, and Bilal (2016) investigated problems and factors that hampered Pakistani undergraduate students in their writing skills. Their research found the major problems in terms of linguistic proficiency, writing anxiety, lack of ideas, L1 reliance, and lack of organizational structure. The other challenges included teachers, teaching methods, the examination system, lack of practice, classroom large, and lack of motivation and ideas.

In Indonesia, research on the factors contributing to students' difficulties in *Academic Writing* class has been done a lot. However, it seems that only a few pieces of research were conducted on how students handle their difficulties. Therefore, this study aimed to fill the gap so that it can help students gain a better understanding of their difficulties and provide information for teachers and instructors in teaching *Academic Writing* or other writing areas.

Method

Context of the Study

This research was conducted in an *Academic Writing* class by the end of Semester I 2018/2019 in an English Language Education Program, in a private university, in Central Java. The total number of subjects was twenty-two students.

Participants

This study involved English Language Education Program students who were taking *Academic Writing* class for repeaters in the Semester I 2018/2019. The 22 students came from different batches: batch 2013, batch 2014, batch 2015, and batch 2016.

Data Collection Instruments

This instrument used qualitative data. Qualitative researchers can use several techniques in data collection namely observation, field notes, interviews, questionnaires, and examining records (Gay et al., 2006). To collect the data, this study employed two of them, namely questionnaires and an interview protocol.

Data Collection Procedures

The research used open-ended questionnaires to collect the data. The questionnaires were distributed at the end of the class session. The questionnaire consisted of six questions to identify factors contributing to students' difficulties. The questionnaire questions and interviews were conducted in the students' native language to avoid misunderstanding. The follow-up interview aimed at clarifying the students' statements in the questionnaires. The interview used semi-structured interviews so that students could share their perspectives and enable the researchers to ask additional questions to explain the particular issue.

Data Analysis Procedures

The data were analyzed through theme analysis. After students filled out the questionnaires, the data were coded and themes drawn by the researchers. The chosen participants who gave unique statements in the questionnaires were contacted and interviewed individually. During the interview process, note taking and audio recording were done. The data from audio-recorded were transcribed. All the data were discussed in the findings and conclusions drawn.

Findings and Discussion

Findings of this study have been divided into three parts, general problems in *Academic Writing*, internal and external factors contributing to writing problems, and student's efforts in handling difficulties in *Academic Writing*.

General Problems in Writing

According to the data, students had different kinds of problems in writing academically. Mostly, students encountered problems in terms of mechanical problems. They are grammatical problems, lack of vocabulary, *Academic Writing* content and context, and the structure of *Academic Writing*.

First, 14 out of 22 students had problems with grammar. One of the problems was stated by Participant 4.

Excerpt 1:

> "I have difficulties in determining appropriate grammar in my writing. In this class, we must understand grammar. This class uses unfamiliar vocabulary, very formal, even there were some words I have not heard yet." (Participant 4/ Questionnaire on November 27, 2018)

Second, 9 out of 22 students had problems with vocabulary. One of the problems was mentioned by Participant 12.

Excerpt 2:

> "I felt confused and had difficulties in choosing academic vocabulary. The lack of academic vocabulary makes my difficulty in understanding articles that have much foreign vocabulary." (Participant 12/ Questionnaire on November 27, 2018)

Besides academic vocabulary, another problem was mentioned by Participant 22.

Excerpt 3:

> "I feel distressed and confused about finding the right conjunctions. The language used differs from the one used in the previous writing class because the language is too academic." (Participant 22/ Questionnaire on November 27, 2018)

Participant 8 recognized she had difficulties in arranging words. *Academic writing* requires formal writing. Students generally had problems in sentence structures and the rules of *Academic Writing*. It was experienced by Participant 19.

Excerpt 4:

> "I felt lazy to write because I did not understand the structure and rules in Academic Writing. Also, vocabulary and structures are difficult." (Participant 19/ Questionnaire on November 27, 2018)

In general, students had many ideas in their first language (L1). However, writing in the first language (L1) and the second language (L2) was very different. Therefore, students experienced difficulties in the development of ideas, content and context, writing structures, and mechanical problems. From the various problem that has been mentioned, the researchers classified two factors that caused students' difficulties in *Academic Writing,* they are an internal and external factor.

Internal and External Factors Contributing to Writing Problems

In this study, it was found that the student respondents experienced both internal factors and external factors. Included in internal factors were self-motivation, self-confidence, lack of knowledge and feeling of under pressure. While external factors were the teacher's teaching style, classroom atmosphere, materials, and writing aspects. The detailed explanation about the factors is elaborated below.

Internal Factors

The research found 22 *Academic Writing* students who found internal factors in which they encountered various difficulties in writing academically. From the internal factors, there were four things that affected students' performance in writing academically such as self-motivation, self-confidence, lack of knowledge, and feeling under pressure.

Grammar was found as the major factor encountered by the student respondents. Students could spend so much time checking whether the grammar was correct or not. This problem influenced their motivation in writing. One of the participants who experienced this was Participant 1

Excerpt 5:

> "I feel confused and afraid not to get an idea smoothly to write. I also feel difficulty in grammar and lack of vocabulary. My biggest difficulty is grammar and ideas." (Participant 1/ Questionnaire on November 27, 2018)

Similar difficulty was expressed by Participant 18.

Excerpt 6:

> "I feel afraid of being wrong because I do not have experience in writing academically. Besides, I have difficulties with vocabulary and grammar." (Participant 18/ Questionnaire on November 27, 2018)

It showed that those participants felt unconfident and lacked knowledge in the case of vocabulary, grammar, and ideas. According to Alves (2008) one the reasons why students are unable to perform good writing is because they lack writing purpose, for example, they do not know what they are writing for, for who and why. To be able to write, students need to brainstorm their ideas in order to know the topic to be written. Brainstorm helps students to organize their ideas before they form their thoughts into writing. One of them was participant 20.

Excerpt 7:

> "I am feeling difficulty in writing because I have to pay attention to all the writing aspects such as grammar, content, explanation of quotation and et cetera. Also, grammar is too difficult." (Participant 20/ Questionnaire on November 27, 2018)

The difficulties experienced by Participant 20 showed that students tend to feel confused about which part of writing to start that caused them to feel unmotivated to write. The lack of motivation caused students to be lazy and lack the confidence to write. The intention is part of the motivation which causes students hard to build. It was mentioned by Participant 9.

Excerpt 8:

> "At first, I felt normal but was a bit afraid of developing the theme and grammar. I also have difficulties in raising my intention in developing a theme for my writing." (Participant 9/ Questionnaire on November 27, 2018)

It is confirmed by Wallace (1996) that students need to articulate their initial intention. Intention to write is necessary for students to avoid their laziness or lack of motivation to write. Moreover, intention helps students to keep writing on track and to make it easier for them to develop their own writing such as organizing thought, and more practice to write. Students' lack of writing intention may cause them to feel under pressure. The feeling of under pressure could cause students difficulties in developing their ideas and writing thousands of words. It was stated by Participant 3, that he felt pressure to write thousands of words and develop his ideas because it was the first time for him to write.

Excerpt 9:

> "I'm feeling confused and pressured because it is the first time for me to write. I have difficulties with grammar. Also, I felt pressured when the teacher asked me to write thousands of words and have to develop the ideas." (Participant 3/ Questionnaire on November 27, 2018)

The other factors affected students' writing difficulties were the students' background knowledge. The difficulties were experienced by Participant 21. She stated that the lack of background knowledge and the low English proficiency level greatly influenced the process of her writing. It is the fact that L2 mastery limitations can inhibit students, not only in writing but also in a variety of skills such as listening, speaking, and reading. The internal factors are summarized in the Table. 1.

Table 1. Internal Factors Contributing to Students' Difficulties in Academic Writing

Internal Factors	The cause of problems felt by students
Student's self-motivation	Laziness in reading essays and journals, the intention to write, confuse, challenged to write, and difficulty in paying attention
Student's self-confidence	The feeling of nervousness, fear, and doubt
Student's lack of knowledge	The fear in developing a theme, grammar and vocabulary, lack of ideas, difficulties in finding the right conjunctions
Student's feeling of under pressure	Revising essay based on teacher's feedback, the requirement to write thousands of words, difficulties to develop ideas

External Factors

In addition to the internal factors, the external factors also contribute to the difficulties faced by students. It was revealed that there were four factors included in external factors are the teacher's teaching style, classroom atmosphere, materials, and writing's aspect. One of the participants who experienced this is Participant 6. She stated,

Excerpt 10:

> "I feel awkward for not getting used to academic writing. The teacher's explanation and methods used were a little confusing. I have difficulty adapting to that method." (Participant 6/ Questionnaire on November 27, 2018)

Teacher's teaching styles were different and not all of the styles implemented by teachers were suitable to the students. On the other hand, students have their own learning styles. It is proven by Awla (2014) through her research that there should be a balance between teacher and student's learning style. Then, it could be concluded that once the balance is achieved, the teacher and students may have good communication in the classroom and therefore, it will be easier for students to consult their writing to the teacher.

Furthermore, in the follow-up interview, Participant 6 explained that she did not understand the teacher's instruction clearly especially while the teacher was giving an explanation related to their writing in class. A similar situation was felt by Participant 5 and 7 that they had difficulty in understanding the teacher's explanations.

Excerpt 11:

> "First, I felt strained in academic writing. I have difficulty in academic writing because the teacher is boring. Besides, the teacher's explanation is unclear." (Participant 5/ Questionnaire on November 27, 2018)

Excerpt 12:

> "I feel challenged to write academically. I have difficulties in understanding teachers' explanations. When a teacher gives explanations, his voice does not sound clear. Also, I have difficulty in comparing paragraphs." (Participant 7/ Questionnaire on November 27, 2018)

Also, students faced difficulties in understanding the teachers' requests. For example, in terms of giving assignments related to students' writing or classroom activities, the instructions were found to be very unclear and confusing. This was expressed by Participant 4 and 22.

Excerpt 13:

> "I have difficulty determining the right grammar. We have to understand fully about grammar in this class. Also, finding the right vocabulary is hard for me. I think this class uses unfamiliar vocabulary, very formal, even some vocabulary I have never heard before. Several times the teacher often asked us to do A but at the next meeting he said B. This was enough to make us confused because sometimes we were not ready to do B." (Participant 4/ Questionnaire on November 27, 2018)

It has to be noted that the teacher acted as the facilitator in the classroom. To be a facilitator means to help students who were consulting their work and explain necessary materials related to students' needs.

Likewise, the learning environment influenced a student's successful writing. The effectiveness of student learning in the classroom becomes a factor that is as important as knowledge. This was revealed by Participant 1 and 2. It was stated by Participant 2 in answering questions related to the difficulties encountered.

Excerpt 14:

> "I first felt surprised to be academic written by journalists. I had difficulties in grammar and the classroom atmosphere. The factor is the lesson hours take place during sleepy hours." (Participant 2/ Questionnaire on November 27, 2018)

From this situation, students automatically became lazy and concentrated less on writing which caused them to be uncomfortable in class. Student's discomfort in the class causes them to get demotivated. The statements expressed by students were supported by Listyani (2018) on her research on process writing. Her research results showed that the effectiveness and success of the implementation process writingstrategy depend on the classroom atmosphere and situation. As a matter of fact, studentsprefer learning in a comfortable classroom atmosphere and time because it can boost their energy and make it easier in developing ideas, although some students do not careabout the situation itself. Therefore, classroom setting in such times needs to be taken into account for the suggestion, for the future classroom design.

Regardless of the classroom atmosphere, the materials used in *Academic Writing* are considered as the factors that cause students' difficulties. In *Academic Writing* there are two skills used which include reading and writing skills. One of the factors

experienced by students that affect their writing performance is reading journals and articles, as mentioned by Participant 12, 13, & 14. These participants mentioned that the language used in those journals and articles are too academic and too difficult to understand. It can be said that the students lacked the ability to read journals and articles while those tools were needed for students to get references for writing. It is shown that there is a relationship between internal factors (the lack of knowledge such as vocabulary and grammar) and external factors (reading journals and articles). This occurs because journals and articles use academic language which is unfamiliar and hard for students to understand. As this result raises the fact, students can experience both of these factors simultaneously. Writing has rigid rules which cause students to be difficult to follow and pay attention to. It was stated by Participant 15.

Excerpt 15:

> "I feel very ordinary in this class but to be considerate. In Academic Writing class, the context is more academic because it is not as flexible as other writing classes. I also have difficulties in the context and grammar used." (Participant 15/ Questionnaire on November 27, 2018)

It is true that *Academic Writing* context is more academic compared to the other writing classes such as *Creative Writing, Narrative Writing,* and P*rocedural Writing* which give the opportunity for students to write freely. Hence, the writing pressure is not too much. Students can decide their topic and develop their ideas without relying on experts and reading journals and articles. Therefore, *Academic Writing* as a genre allows students to write academically based on a predetermined context. Moreover, it helps students cultivate critical thinking and creativity in writing. Here, the genre of *Academic Writing* is argumentative writing in which students are required to confront their ideas, seeking supporting statements from experts and rebuttal ideas. The external factors are summarized in Table. 2

Table 2. External factors contributing to students' difficulties in Academic Writing

External Factors	The cause of problems felt by students
Teacher's teaching style	Unclear teacher's explanation and instructions, unfavorable characters of the teacher, confusing teaching and learning methods, Requirements of tasks, difficulties in adapting teacher's teaching style
Classroom atmosphere	Classroom situation, Time and setting of the classroom, Rigid rules in Academic Writing (not flexible)
Materials	Difficulties in reading journals, unfamiliar language, Complicated tasks, Citing from a source (quotation)

Writing's aspect	Difficulties in Academic context and content, Academic language (diction, conjunction)

Student's Efforts in Handling Difficulties in Academic Writing

Despite all factors encountered, the student respondents had their own ways of handling those difficulties. There were 18 out of 22 Participants who could handle their difficulties while the rest of the 4 Participants had not yet found an effective way.

From those results, most students were aware of their strengths and weaknesses. The efforts made by these participants were to read related articles (expressed by Participants 1, 7, 15, and 21), consulting dictionary

(Participant 2, 10 and 12), consulting writing to teacher and classmates (Participant 3, 14, and 20), using technology such as the internet, *Grammarly*, and plagiarism checker (Participant 11 and 15), and learning from writing template given by the teacher (Participant 13).

One of the participants practiced writing (Participant 16) while Participant 17 decided to have some refreshing moments from the boredom to write. All the efforts mentioned by the participants depended on their feelings about writing. They had various feelings towards writing in which students had a different sense of comfort too.

For example, students felt comfortable working in groups, working with peers, and working individually to write. Students could find their ways to solve their writing problems and difficulties. Some of the participants were well organized, but some of them were not. This phenomenon is normal because each student has their own learning styles and preferences. However, some participants still could not find an effective way and struggled hard to write academically.

After facing various difficulties in this class, some students felt improved during the writing process. The improvements that they experienced specifically are in developing ideas, the use of academic vocabulary, appropriate grammar use, word compose techniques, and paraphrasing techniques. Additionally, students felt that their confidence increased and were not afraid anymore to write.

Conclusion

Writing is a complicated skill in the second language learning or foreign language learning process. At the tertiary level, students encountered various problems and difficulties, especially in *Academic Writing*. This study analyzed factors which contribute to students' difficulties in *Academic Writing*. The two factors, based on the students' opinions, were internal and external factors. To be able to write academically, students should follow the predefined writing rules such as organizing ideas, paraphrasing, synthesizing, summarizing, linguistic, and mechanics. Moreover, the writing stages that require students to complete in the writing process are planning, revising, and editing (Listyani, 2018).

Referring to those rules, the researchers can conclude some related points. First, grammar learning needs to take teachers or instructors who are teaching writing skills into account. Grammar becomes a major factor for *Academic Writing* students. Both teachers and students should pay attention to not only the content of the academic

essays, but also grammar. Without good grammar, the message in the essays may not be successfully delivered and may cause misunderstanding.

Secondly, the teaching styles applied by teachers also need to be considered because several students have difficulty adapting to the teaching styles such as teachers' way of giving materials, giving instructions, and giving feedback. Third, the classroom atmosphere and students' learning hours are also worth considering. Thereby, the learning process can run well and effectively.

Fourth, students need to be encouraged to practice writing and reading skills. By reading, students get many ideas, references, and knowledge. Also, students are accustomed to using academic vocabulary and sentence structures in their writing.

With the existence of problems and difficulties encountered, students can find their ways that can help them perform better in *Academic Writing* class. Students will be aware of their level of writing and encourage them to practice more in their ways. Therefore, *Academic Writing* teachers and instructors should develop appropriate teaching methods, approaches, and styles in which minimize students' difficulties in writing academically. It serves as the pedagogical implication of this present study.

This research only found out and analyzed factors that contributed to students' difficulties in *Academic Writing*. This research still has many shortcomings, and therefore further research is needed. Future researchers can research these factors by using similar methods in different writing classes with larger participants, then these shortcomings can be solved.

References

Abdulkareem, M. (2013). Investigation study of academic writing problems faced by Arab postgraduate students at Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM). *Theory and Practice in Language Studies, 3*(9), 1552-1557.

Aghayani, B., & Hajmohammadi, E. (2019). Project-based learning: Promoting EFL learners' writing skills. *LLT Journal: A Journal on Language and Language Teaching, 22*(1), 78-85. Doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.24071/llt.v22i1.1727

Al-Badi, I. A. H. (2015). Academic writing difficulties of ESL learners. In *The 2015 WEI international academic conference proceedings* (Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 65-78).

Alfaki, I. M. (2015). University Students' English Writing Problems: Diagnosis and Remedy. *International Journal of English Language Teaching*, *3*(3), 40-52. Retrieved on October 18, 2018 from http://www.eajournals.org/wp-content/uploads/University-Students English-Writing-Problems-Diagnosis-and-Remedy.pdf

Al-Khairy, M. A. (2013). Saudi English-major undergraduates' academic writing problems: A taif university perspective. *English Language Teaching*, *6*(6), 1-12.

Alves, A. R. (2008). Process writing. *Centre for English Language Studies*, 1-24. Retrieved on November 21, 2019 from https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college artslaw/cels/essays/languageteaching/AReisAlvesProcessWritingLTM.pdf

Arindra, M.Y., & Ardi, P. (2020). The correlation between students' writing anxiety and the use of writing assessment rubrics. *LEARN Journal: Language Education and Acquisition Research Network Journal, 13*(1), 76-93.

Awla, H.A (2014). Learning styles and their relation to teaching styles. *International Journal of Language and Linguistics, 2*(3), 241-245. Retrieved on November

22, 2019 from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/275567766_Learning_Styles_and_Their_Relation_to_Teaching_Styles

Bacha, N. N. (2012). Disciplinary writing in an EFL context from teachers' and students' perspectives. *International Journal of Business and Social Science 3*(2),233-256.

Budiartha, C. I. W. E. (2020). The use of academic vocabulary across proficiency levels: A study of efl students' lexical performance in university writing. *ELTR Journal*, *4*(1), 91-102. doi: https://doi.org/10.37147/eltrj.v4i1.63

Can, G. (2009). A model for doctoral students' perceptions and attitudes toward written feedback for academic writing (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Utah State University.

Cheng, Y. S. (2004). EFL students' writing anxiety: Sources and Implications. *English Teaching & Learning*, 41-62. Retrieved on November 7, 2018 from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/306392321_EFL_Students'_Writing_Anxiety_Sources_and_Implications

Chou, L. (2011). An investigation of Taiwanese doctoral students' academic writing at a U.S. University. *Higher Education Studies, 1*(2), 47-60.

Fareed, M., Ashraf, A., & Bilal, M. (2016). ESL learners' writing skills: Problems, factors, and suggestions. *Journal of Education and Social Sciences, 4*(2), 81- 92. DOI: 10.20547/jess0421604201 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/282814183_JOURNAL_OF_LANGUAGE_AND_LINGUISTIC_STUDIES_Attitudes_of_the_preparatory_class_students_towards_the_writing_course_and_their_attitude-success_relationship_in_writing

Hyland, K. (2003). Second language writing. *Cambridge University Press*, 1-15. Retrieved on December 2, 2019 from http://catdir.loc.gov/catdir/samples/cam041/2003041957.pdf

Listyani. (2018). Enhancing academic writing skills through "Reading to Learn" strategy. *Arab World English Journal, 9*(1), 268-280. doi: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol9no1.19

Listyani. (2018). Promoting academic writing students' skill through "Process Writing" strategy. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies, 9*(4), 173-179. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.7575/aiac.alls.v.9n.4p.173

MacIntyre, P. D. (1999). *Language anxiety: A review of the research for language teachers*. In D. J. Young (Ed.). Affect in foreign language and second language learning: A practical guide to creating a low-anxiety classroom atmosphere, 24-45. Boston: McGraw-Hill.

Paker, T., & Erarslan, A. (2015) Attitudes of the preparatory class students towards the writing course and their attitude-success relationship in writing. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies, 11*(2), 1-11. Retrieved on November 29, 2018 from

Politton, M., & Hadiyanti, K. (2019). Enhancing university students' English writing skills on content area. *LLT Journal: A Journal on Language and Language Teaching, 22*(2), 146-155. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.24071/llt.v22i2.1868

Salglamel, H., & Kayaoglu, M.N. (2015). English major students' perceptions of academic writing: A struggle between writing to learn and learning to write. *Journal of History Culture and Art Research, 4*(3), 37-52. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7596/taksad.v4i3.477

Shang, H. F. (2013). Factors associated with english as a foreign language university students' writing anxiety. *International Journal of English Language Teaching, 1*(1), 1-12. Retrieved on October 31, 2018 from http://www.eajournals.org/wp-content/uploads/FACTORS-ASSOCIATED-WITH-ENGLISH-AS-A-FOREIGN-LANGUAGE-UNIVERSITY-STUDENTS%E2%80%99-WRITING-ANXIETY.pdf

Silva, T. (2006). *Second language writing*. Purdue University, West Lafayette, USA, 111-118. DOI: 10.1016/B0-08-044854-2/00631-3

Stawiarska, M. M. (2012). Foreign language writing anxiety among adult advanced learners of English. *Linguistica Silesiana, 33*, 221-239. Retrieved on October 23, 2018 from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281718600_Foreign_language_writing_anxiety_among_adult_advanced_learners_of_English

Zamel, V. (1985). Responding to student writing. *TESOL Quarterly, 19*(1), 79-101. Retrieved on November 12, 2018 from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.2307/3586773