

THE CHALLENGES IN ENGLISH ACADEMIC WRITING AT THE STUDENTS OF THE FACULTY OF DAKWAH AT THE STATE ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY OF SULTAN MAULANA HASANUDDIN BANTEN

Hilda Rosida¹, Istiqomah²

^{1,2}UIN Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten, Jl. Soedirman, Serang, Banten, Indonesia

Email: hilda.rosida@uinbanten.ac.id

Article History

Received: 25-08-2024

Revision: 03-09-2024

Accepted: 05-09-2024

Published: 07-09-2024

Abstract. The prevalence of grammatical and punctuation errors is a significant challenge for ESL learners, particularly in their efforts to produce fluent academic English. Students often face challenges when assigned to write scientific papers. They often lack the understanding of the methodologies and protocols required for effective and accurate academic writing. The aim of this study is to investigate the constraints faced in academic writing in the English and to explain the approach used by students to navigate the challenges associated with academic writing in the English. This qualitative investigation examines the difficulties faced by students in academic writing in the English. The data collection techniques in this study are questionnaires and questionnaires. The findings of this study reveal that the main challenges faced by students in academic writing in English include problems related to structure, idea development, and selection of vocabulary related to topics. Strategies used by students to overcome this challenge in academic writing in English consist of learning from examples of academic writing, searching for and reading various references such as journals, books, and papers, and utilizing the "Grammarly" application to help with grammar verification.

Keywords: Challenges, Academic Writing

Abstrak. Prevalensi kesalahan tata bahasa dan tanda baca merupakan tantangan yang signifikan bagi pelajar ESL, khususnya dalam upaya mereka untuk menghasilkan bahasa Inggris akademis yang fasih. Mahasiswa sering menghadapi tantangan ketika ditugaskan untuk menulis karya ilmiah. Mereka sering kurang memahami metodologi dan protokol yang diperlukan untuk penulisan akademis yang efektif dan akurat. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk menyelidiki kendala yang dihadapi dalam penulisan akademis bahasa Inggris dan untuk menjelaskan pendekatan yang digunakan oleh mahasiswa untuk menavigasi tantangan yang terkait dengan penulisan akademis bahasa Inggris. Investigasi kualitatif ini meneliti kesulitan yang dihadapi oleh mahasiswa dalam penulisan akademis bahasa Inggris. Teknik pengumpulan data dalam penelitian ini yaitu kusioner dan angket. Temuan penelitian ini mengungkapkan bahwa tantangan utama yang dihadapi oleh mahasiswa dalam penulisan akademis bahasa Inggris meliputi masalah yang terkait dengan struktur, pengembangan ide, dan pemilihan kosakata yang berkaitan dengan topik. Strategi yang digunakan oleh mahasiswa untuk mengatasi tantangan ini dalam penulisan akademis Bahasa Inggris terdiri dari belajar dari contoh penulisan akademis, mencari dan membaca berbagai referensi seperti jurnal, buku, dan makalah, dan memanfaatkan aplikasi "Grammarly" untuk membantu verifikasi tata bahasa.

Kata Kunci: Tantangan, Penulisan Akademis

How to Cite Rosida, H & Istiqomah. (2024). The Challenges in English Academic Writing at The Students of The Faculty of Dakwah at The State Islamic University of Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten. *Indo-MathEdu Intellectuals Journal*, 5 (5), 5422-5441. <http://doi.org/10.54373/imeij.v5i5.1785>

INTRODUCTION

In a world where most research results are published in English, it is important that students master the conventions of academic writing in English. This is a process that is best facilitated by an interactive method that accommodates interaction on two levels: teacher/student and student/student (Björk & Räisänen, 2003). The responsibility for the final product is ultimately the student's alone; it is, however, the teacher's task to ensure that the production process is as smooth and efficient as possible (Watson, 1987). As teachers, we must provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary to make wise decisions that lead not only to the achievement of a high grade but facilitate the adaptation of knowledge to new situations and demands (Mattinson, 2012). Most international students need to author essays and reports for exams and coursework. Yet writing good academic English is one of the most demanding tasks students faces. Students often have difficulty authoring scientific papers. They do not understand the steps and procedures in making good and correct academic writing.

Writing remains one of the main ways that will be assessed in University, so it is an important skill to master. As a craft, writing is a complex task, but it is made even more challenging in university due to the specialized nature of academic discourse. Writing is also an iterative process, and it is important to provide a handbook to reflect this process, divided into sections and tasks to which students can refer or return as the teachers approach and complete the various stages of the academic writing task. There should be a guideline to provide advice, strategies and writing activities to help students develop their academic writing, and to feel confident in expressing their own voice in their writing (Fitzmaurice & O'Farrel, 2010).

On the international level, academic communication is conducted in English as it is the language of science. The spread, effect, and importance of English on the academic communities and academic communication cannot be ignored (Ammon, 2007; Hamel, 2007). Thus, in countries where English is a second or foreign language a great emphasis is put on English education. In addition, an increasing number of universities around the world offer undergraduate and graduate programs in English where English is a second or foreign language. A significant number of these students are not only required to write for content classes but also undertake the challenge of producing such long texts as master's thesis and/or doctoral dissertations. It is also a fact that having a publication in the second/foreign language is a requirement for academic success (Lillis & Curry, 2010)

One reason many individuals find the difficulties of writing, it is because of the necessity of learning a mapping skill to use written language. The individual must not only learn to recognize the meaning of words orally but also go through a process of transcribing these

sounds. Therefore, some of the students of Islamic Guidance and Counselling still faced the mistakes in writing skills, such as: many students write too short paragraphs of 1-3 sentences, hence, writing too long paragraphs is also a mistake. no structure. absence of the structure can also become a problem, and some of the students also lack focus in writing. Departing of the problem, this study is intrigued to the challenges that the students face at the Faculty of Dakwah of UIN SMH Banten in English academic writing.

METHOD

Research Design

This study uses qualitative design. In qualitative design, the focus turns to explore and understand a social or human problem. This qualitative research is explorative and explanatory therefore according to the objectives in this study which is exploring challenges in English academic writing, qualitative research was used to collect data productive information of students' challenges, insights and reflection for Indonesian EFL teacher training students in English academic writing which can important to know and explore the challenges in English academic writing and also the possible solutions faced the challenges.

Data Collection

This study was conducted for 15 respondents of Islamic Guidance and Counselling students at Islamic State University Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten. And also from those respondents selected 5 students to being interviewed by the researcher. As the students were not at the campus for the times during the Pandemi of Covid 19, the researcher gives online questionnaire for those 10 students to answer several questions given by the researcher. The data collection that applied in this research for the challenges of English academic writing and the possible solutions of the challenges in English academic writing use two techniques of data collection. The first technique is by surveying the students. The second technique is by interviewing the students. Both questionnaire and interview can be used to collect data for both research question (the challenges and the possible solutions). They are used in corroboration in order to triangulate the data to enhance the trustworthiness. Moreover, further information related to which the possible solutions of possible for the challenges in English academic writing. The survey and the interview conducted in Indonesian EFL teacher training students. Before the survey and the interview, the researcher made appointment with the respondents. Then, give the questionnaire and ask the question to all the students. The objective of the questionnaire and interview is to find out what

the challenges in English academic writing faced and the possible solutions of the challenges in English academic writing faced by Indonesian EFL teacher training students.

Research Instrument

Questionnaire

The questionnaire is developed based on the theories and previous studies of some ideas related with the challenges of English academic writing faced Indonesian EFL teacher training students. The questionnaire designed with dichotomous question contains rating scales. The instrument of questionnaire use Google form with consists of 18 statements. The first, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh statement state about the challenges from the written. The eighth, ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth statement state about the challenges from the develop idea. The thirteenth and fourteenth statement state about the challenges from the grammar. The fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth statement state about the challenges from the vocabulary. The last statement state about the challenges from thinking process. The questionnaire validates first before shared to the respondent. The respondent answer with choose one of the rating scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree).

Interview Guideline

The second instrument is interview. The interview was developed and adapted from previous studies and from literature reviews from this study. The researcher uses semi-structured interview because the researcher can ask additional question when the respondent answer the question of interview. There are 17 questions of interview for training students and 18 questions of interview from teacher training (lecturer).

The questions for students are the first ask about formal structure, the second ask about challenges and strategies in English academic writing except formal structure, the next ask about types of academic writing, the next ask about types of academic writing that most challenging, the fifth ask about the factor, the sixth ask about writing is complex for ESL or EFL students, the next ask about thinking process is one of cause, the next ask about another causes, the ninth ask about challenges and strategies in academic writing especially in structure, the next ask about challenges and strategies in academic writing especially in developing idea, the next ask about challenges and strategies in academic writing especially in grammar, the twelfth ask about challenges and strategies in academic writing especially in vocabulary, the thirteenth ask about challenges and strategies in academic

writing especially in thinking process, the fourteenth ask about challenges and strategies in academic writing especially in expression, the next ask about challenges and strategies in academic writing especially in consistency, the sixteenth ask about students' needs, and the last ask about students' strategy.

Data Analysis Technique

After all the data collected, the researcher did some techniques to analyze the data based on the information from the questionnaire and the interview. Based on Creswell's book, there are some steps in analyzing data in qualitative, they are organizing and analyzing the data, preparing text for coding, coding data, and working with the coded data.³⁶In this study, for analyzing the data, the researcher did the same steps. For analyzing data from questionnaire, after get the data from the participants, firstly the researcher finds the keyword from the answer. Secondly, the researcher lists the keyword and the total of the participants that choose the keyword and lastly, the researcher summarized and established the result of the topic.

For analyzing data from interview, after get the record of interview from the participants, firstly the researcher make transcription from the record. Secondly, the researcher finds the keyword or code from the transcription that related with the topic. Thirdly, the researcher lists the keyword and the total of the participants that choose the keyword and lastly, the researcher summarized and established the result of the topic. For check the validity of the result, the researcher can use two forms of validity from data methods as define the study and the generalizability of the gotten results. (Anderson et al., 1998)

RESULTS

After conducting of the research, the detail explanation of each finding follows. There are some statements in challenges from part of written English academic writing. The statements about the challenges can choose the number by (5 = strongly agree to the statement, 4 = agree to the statement, 3 = neither agree nor disagree to the statement, 2 = disagree to the statement, 1 = strongly disagree to the statement). Difficulties in finding thoughts and ideas to be developed. The result of the questionnaire that shows difficulties in writing introduction part of English academic writing by students can be seen on this figure 1.

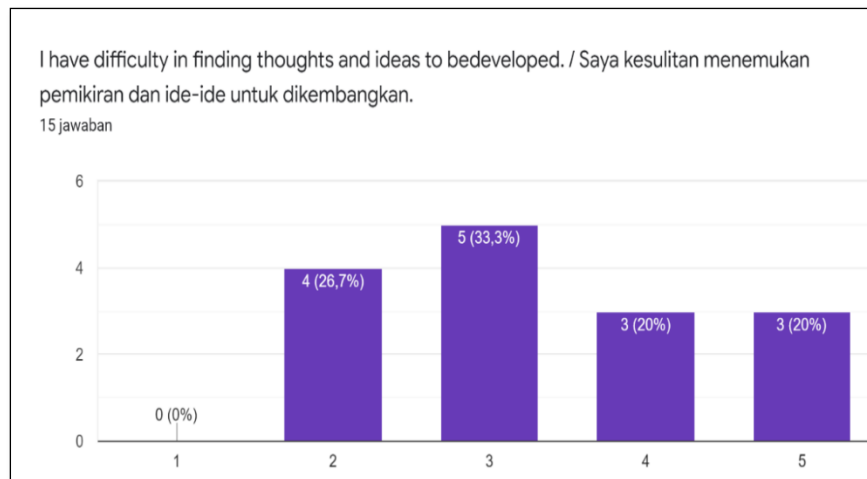


Figure 1. Distribution of questionnaires about difficulties in finding thoughts and ideas to be developed

Based on the figure 1 above, 4 students (26,7%) disagree and 5 students (33,3%) neutral that they have difficulties in finding thoughts of English academic writing. The other students (20%) are agree with the idea that they have difficulties in writing introduction part of English academic writing. One reason many individuals find it difficult to write is because of the necessity of learning a mapping skill in order to use written language. The individual must not only learn to recognize the meaning of words orally but also go through a process of transcribing these sounds

The difficulties to get thoughts and ideas. In figure 2 showed the result of the questionnaire about the difficulties in writing literature review part of English academic writing by students.

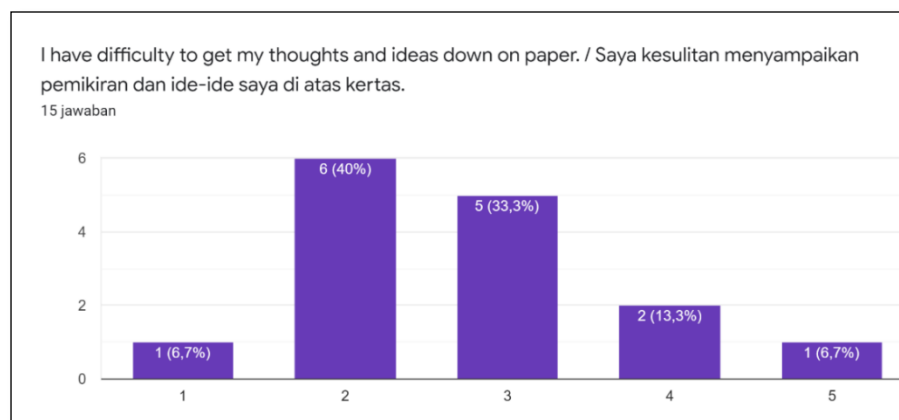


Figure 2. Distribution of questionnaires about the difficulties to get thoughts and ideas

Based on the figure 2 above, 6 students (26,7%) disagree and 5 students (33,3%) neutral that they have difficulties in finding thoughts of English academic writing. The other students (20%) are agree with the idea that they have difficulties in writing introduction part

of English academic writing. There were three factors which contributed on students' difficulties in constructing English sentences such as Interference, Intralingual, and developmental errors.

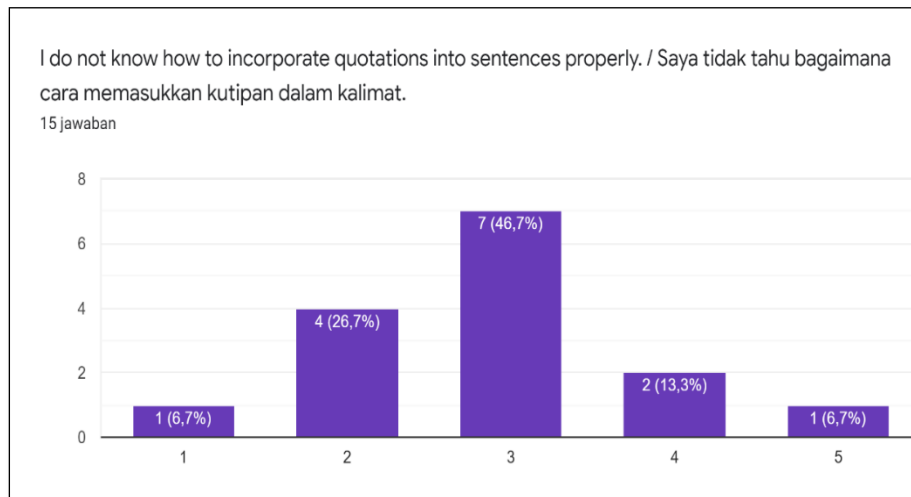


Figure 3. Distribution of questionnaires about incorporate quotations into sentences properly

Based on the figure 3 above, 4 students (26,7%) disagree and 7 students (46,7%) neutral that they do not know how to incorporate quotation into sentences. Based on the results, the students are do not understand how to integrate quotations means, to weave the author's words into their sentences.

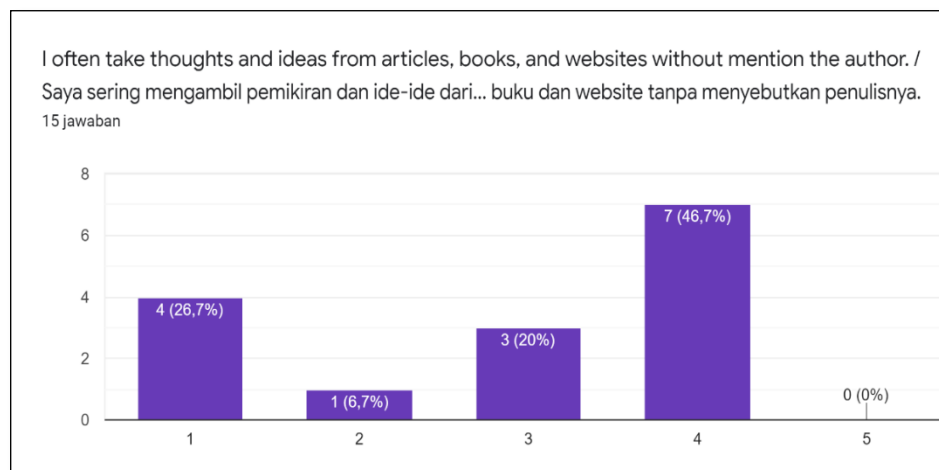


Figure 4. Distribution of questionnaires about the students take thoughts and ideas from the articles, and website without mention the author

Based on the figure 4 above, 7 students (46,7%) agree and 3 students (20%) neutral that they often take thoughts and ideas from the articels without mention the authors.

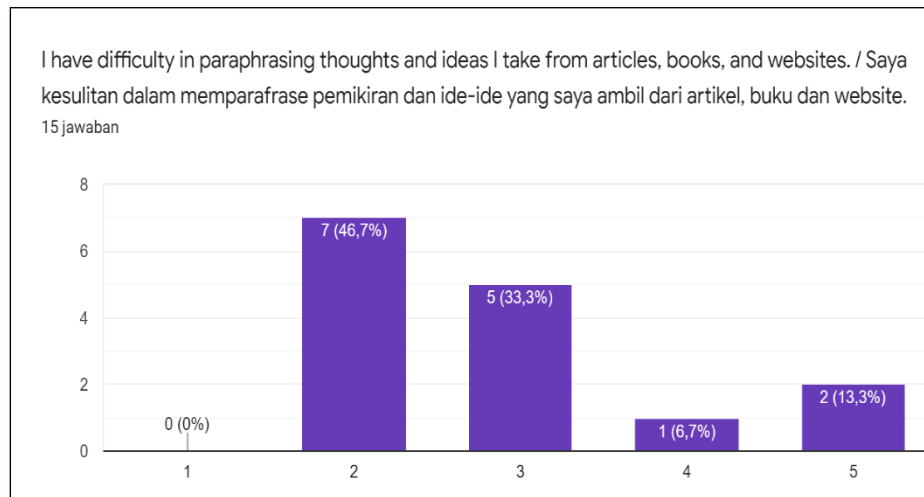


Figure 5. Distribution of questionnaires about the students have difficulties in paraphrasing thoughts and ideas taken from the articles, books and website

Based on the figure 5 above, 7 students (46,7%) disagree and 5 students (33,3%) neutral that they have difficulties in paraphrasing thoughts and ideas from the articles, books and websites. Paraphrasing means formulating someone else's ideas in their own words. In academic writing, it's usually better to paraphrase instead of quoting, because it shows that they have understood the source and makes their work more original. One reason that students struggle with paraphrasing is that they are unsure which words to Change.

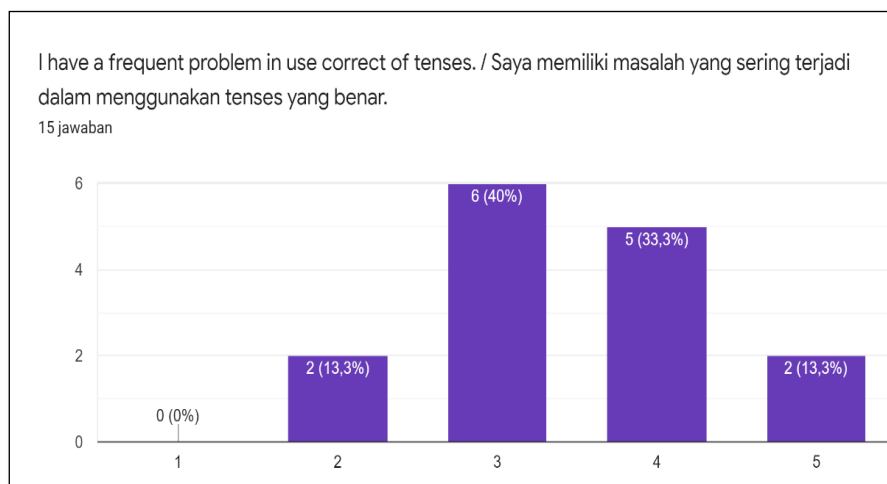


Figure 6. Distribution of questionnaires about the students have a frequent problem in use correct of tenses

Based on the figure 6 above, 6 students (40%) neutral and 5 students (33,3%) agree that they have difficulties in using the correct tenses. There are some factors that cause students' difficulties in grammar such as negative interlanguage and intralingual transfers in the forms of adverb interference, copulative verb interference, word-order interference, tense-form interference. Grammar is an important thing especially in the use of language process.

It is an essential part both in spoken and written language. Learning English will be effective if we also understand the grammar. As we know, grammar is a pattern or structure of the sentence. Therefore, grammar will help learners to understand the meaning of the sentence. Not only a sentence, learners will get the point of the others" means can be form of utterances or paragraphs. The use of grammar is to identify the grammatical form which shows the meaning. The respondents said that grammar as complex system in which all parts of grammar are mutually defining and there is no simple linear path we can take in explaining one part in terms of another.

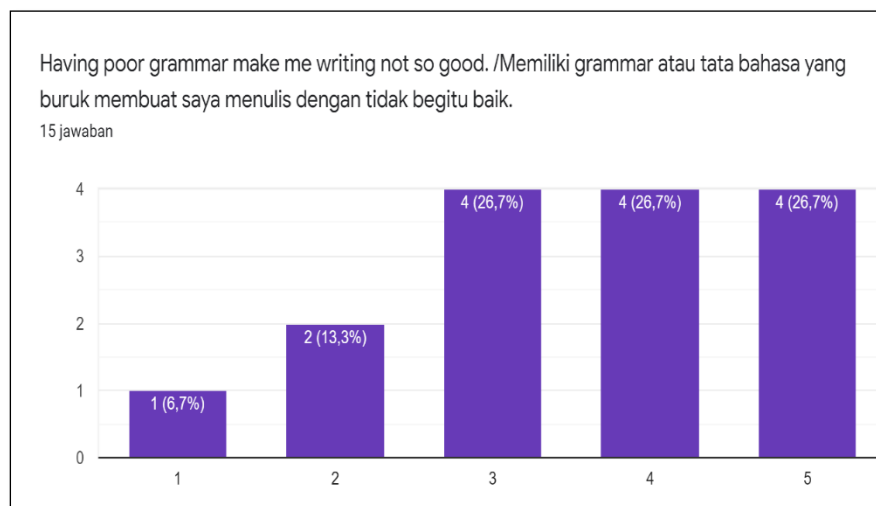


Figure 7. Distribution of questionnaires about the students have a poor grammar

Based on the figure 7 above, 3 students (26,7%) neutral and 4 students (26,7%) agree and 4 students (26,7%) very agree, that they have poor grammar in writing. They said Grammar rules are definitely tricky! One of the biggest reasons that learning and using grammar correctly is so difficult is that there are so many exceptions to every rule.

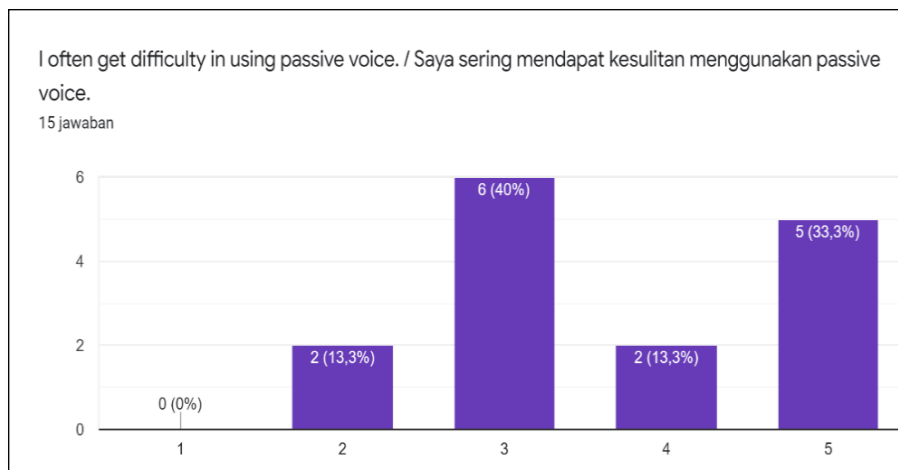


Figure 8. Distribution of questionnaires about the students often get difficulties in using passive voice

Based on the diagram 8 above it can be seen that 6 students (40%) neutral im using passive voice, and 5 students (33,3%) very agree in this statement. Based on the interview with the respondents, they said that passive voice often creates unclear, less direct, wordy sentences, whereas active voice creates clearer, more concise sentences. To change a sentence from passive to active voice, determine who or what performs the action, and use that person or thing as the subject of the sentence.

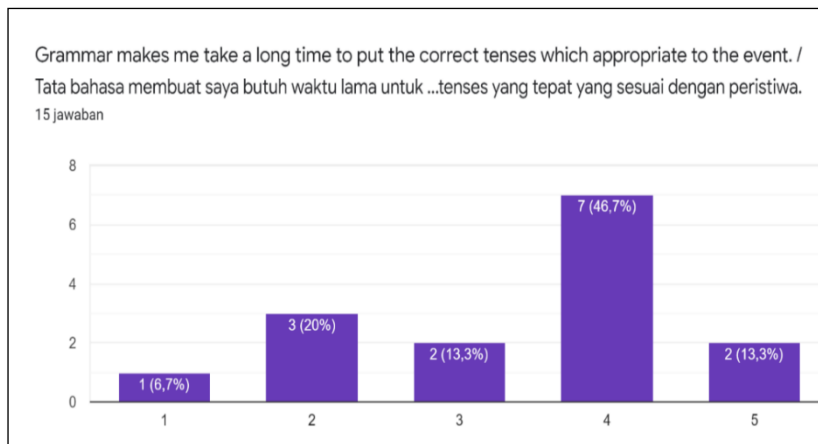


Figure 9. Distribution of questionnaires about the students feels they need a long time to put the correct tenses in appropriate event

Based on the diagram 9 above there are 7 students (46,7%) that agree with the statement that Grammar make the students need a long time to put the correct tenses. Each tense indicates the connection between two or more time periods or the exact time an activity occurred, which underlines the importance of English grammar tenses. They can be used to create different meanings from the same verbs and help to anchor the listener understand the meaning behind the story. As a general rule, the verb tense the students used should be consistent throughout their sentence and their paragraph. For example, the sentence “We had eaten (past perfect tense) dinner, and then we talked (simple past tense)” should be written as “We ate (simple past tense) dinner, and then we talked (simple past tense)”.

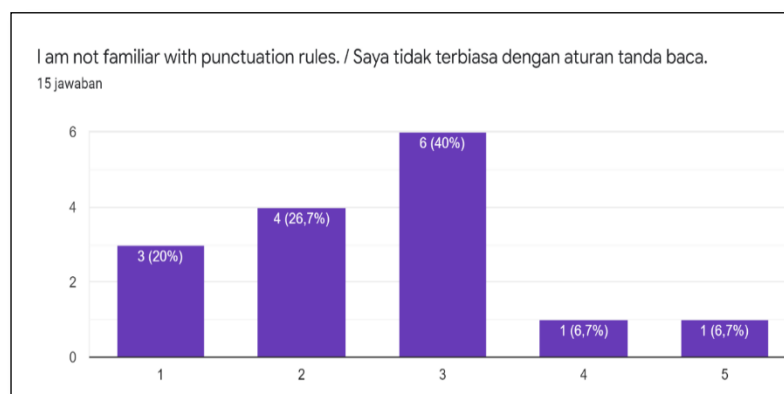


Figure 10. Distribution of questionnaires about the students are not familiar with the punctuation

From the diagram above there are 6 students (40%) that neutral in this statement, 4 students that disagree (26,7%), means that the punctuation is not a big difficulties that they face in learning English reading. Punctuation is essential and is used to convey and clarify the meaning of written language. It is such simple marks as the full stop or the comma, and the more complex ones of semicolons and hyphens. Getting punctuation wrong can change the entire meaning of a sentence. In this research the students are mostly familiar with the punctuation, means that they dont have any big difficulties in learning the punctuation.

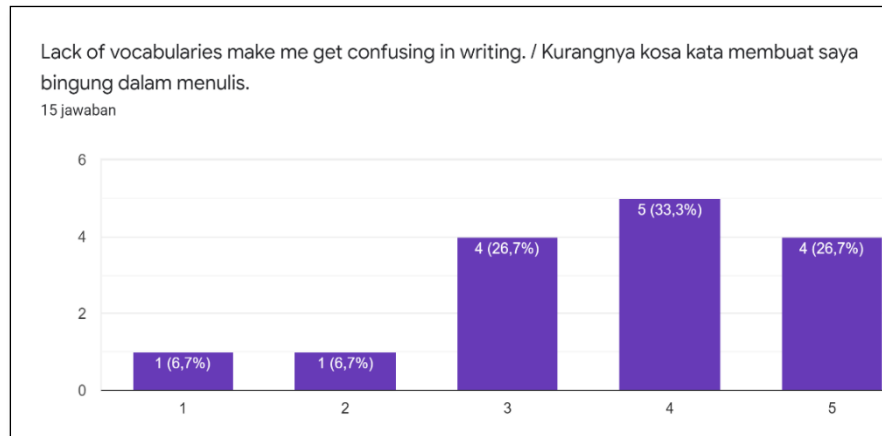


Figure 11. Distribution of questionnaires about the students feel confusing in writing when they lack of vocabularies

The students are agree in this statements for about 33,3% , means they are 5 students that choose this statement, and 4 students (26,7%) that choose neutral and very agree in this statement, it means that the students feel confused in writing when they lack of vocabularies. It is important for the students to know the vocabulary, because it plays a fundamental role in the reading process, and contributes greatly to a reader's comprehension. A reader cannot understand a text without knowing what most of the words mean. Students learn the meanings of most words indirectly, through everyday experiences with oral and written language.

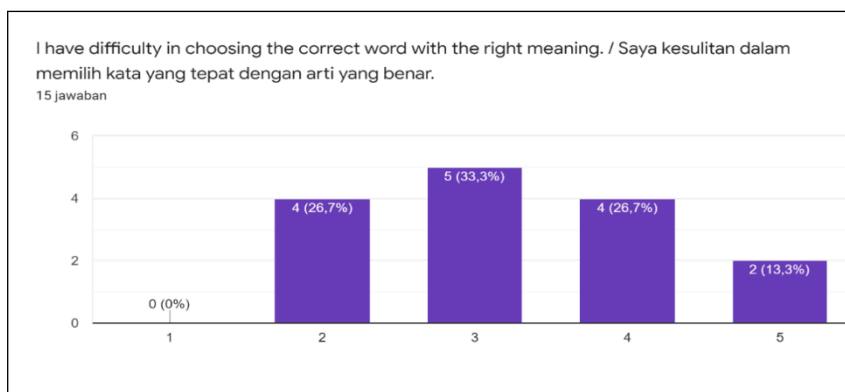


Figure 12. Distribution of questionnaires about the students have difficulties in choosing the correct words with the right meaning

From the diagram above there are 5 students (33,3%) that choose neutral and there are 4 students (26,7%) that choose disagree and agree statement. It means that there are some of the students feel difficulties in choosing the correct words.

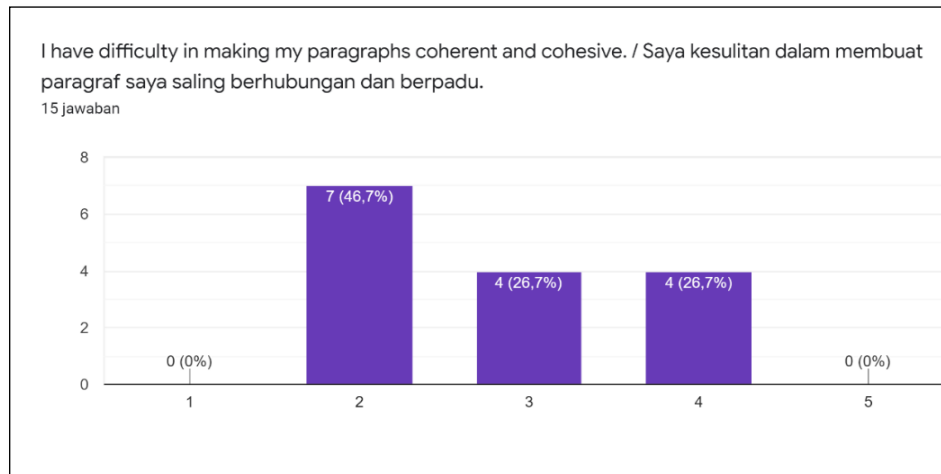


Figure 13. Distribution of questionnaires about the students feels difficulties in making the paragraphs become coherent and cohesive

From the diagram above, 7 students (46,7%) choose disagree, and 4 students (26,7%) choose neutral and agree. It means that making paragraphs becomes coherent and cohesion is only faced by several students from the overwhole students.

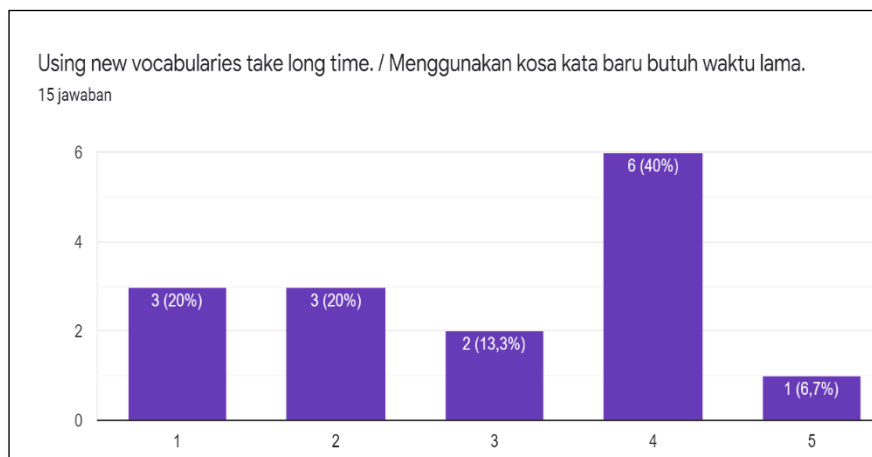


Figure 14. Distribution of questionnaires about the students feels take a long time when using the new vocabularies

From the Diagram above, the students Agree that they need several times in using and understanding the new vocabularies. From the research, we know that vocabulary supports reading development and increases comprehension. Students with low vocabulary scores tend to have low comprehension and students with satisfactory or high vocabulary scores tend to have satisfactory or high comprehension scores.

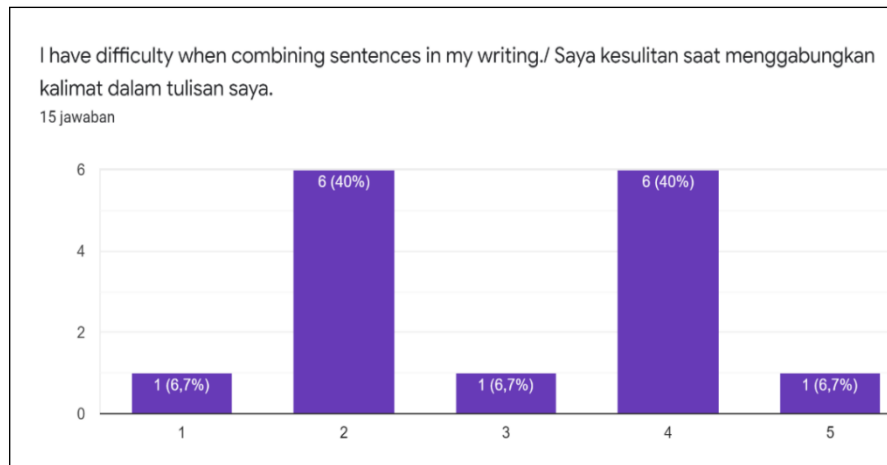


Figure 15. Distribution of questionnaires about the students faced the difficulties when combining the sentences on their writing

From the diagram 15 above it can be seen that there are same respondents on choosing the optional scale, they are 6 students (40%) chose neutral and 6 students (40%) chose Agree. Of all the language skills, writing is the most difficult challenge for language teachers because students have less experience with written expression. Stimulated by audio-visual materials throughout their lives, students are novices in the discipline of writing.

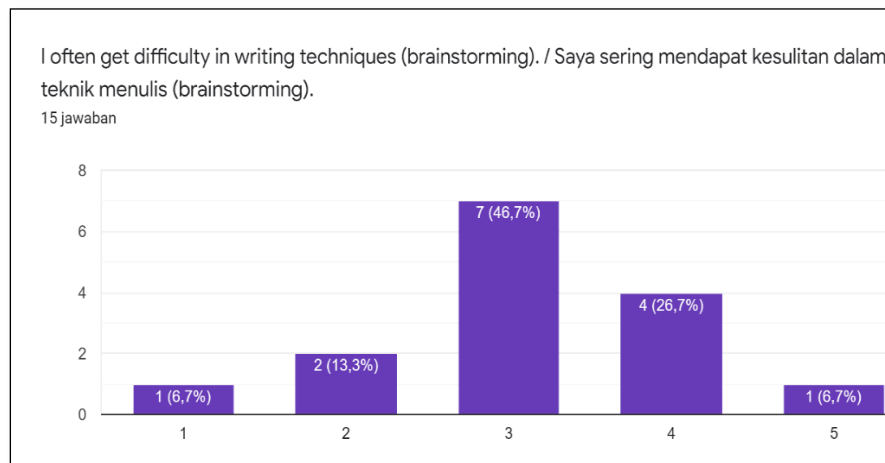


Figure 16. Distribution of questionnaires about the students often get difficulties in writing techniques (brainstorming)

From the diagram 16 above there are 7 students that chose neutral, 4 students that chose agree. Brainstorming is an informal way of generating topics to write about, or points to make about your topic. It can be done at any time during the writing process. You can brainstorm the topics for a whole paper or just a conclusion or an example. Part of brainstorming will involve a selection process. Brainstorming can help the students choose a topic, develop an approach to a topic, or deepen your understanding of the topic's potential.

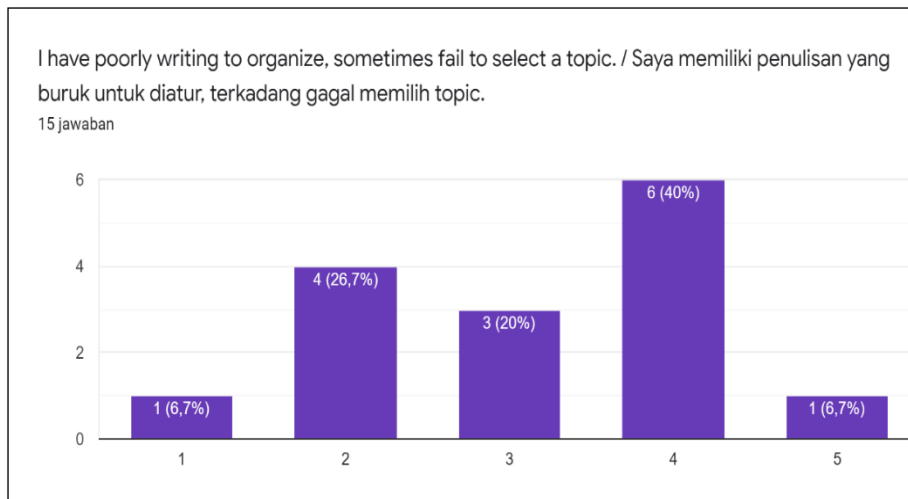


Figure 17. Distribution of questionnaires about the students have poorly writing to organize and sometimes fail to select a topic

From the diagram 17 above can be seen that 6 students (40%) agree that they have poorly writing organization. When students lack skills in these areas, their writing may be unsatisfactory in multiple ways, from poor grammar and syntax to unclear organization to weak reasoning and arguments. Moreover, students may have learned bad habits in high school that they need to un-learn. Based on results and observations while teaching writing to the students, the following was recorded: 1) lack of vocabulary in the target language; 2) difficulty in conveying and organizing ideas; 3) pupils' perception that writing is a hard task; 4) lack of motivation and interest in writing

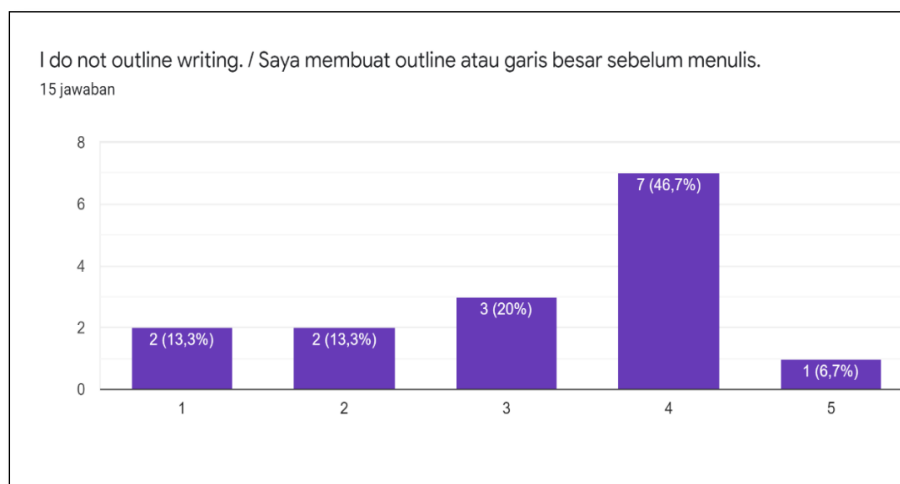


Figure 18. Distribution of questionnaires about the students making an outline writing

From the diagram 18 above most of the students (46,7%) agree that making an outline writing is essential things before writing. Outlining will help construct and organize ideas in a sequential manner and thoughtful flow. Doing so allows them to pick relevant information or quotes from sources early on, giving writers steady foundation and groundwork when

beginning the writing process. Creating an essay outline is a useful way to plan out student's structure before their start writing. This should help the student's work out the main ideas you want to focus on and how you'll organize them. The outline doesn't have to be final.

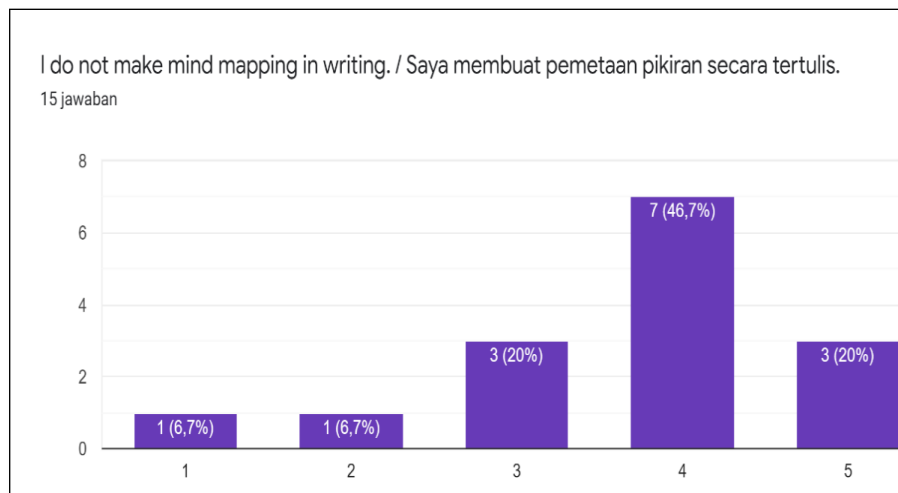


Figure 19. Distribution of questionnaires about the students making an mapping mind on their writing

From the diagram 19 above can be seen that the students mostly (46,7%) making a mind mapping on their writing. Mind Maps help students to note down only the most important information using key words, and then make connections between facts and ideas visually, keeping all of your topic thoughts together on one sheet. This makes note making easier or students, as it reduces pages of notes into one single side of paper.

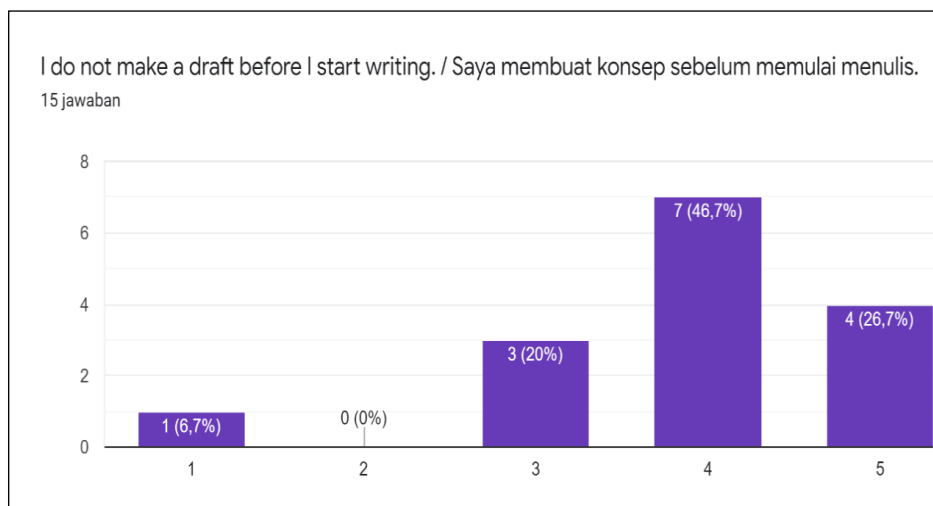


Figure 20. Distribution of questionnaires about the students making a draft before they write

From the diagram 20 above it can be seen that the students mostly agree (46,7%) that they have to make a draft before doing the writing. A first draft is written after the outline is finished and is usually done without much editing. The point of the first draft is to further flesh out your story and provide it with more detail. During the drafting stage of writing, a student develops

a more cohesive text and explores their topic, directed by purpose, audience, genre, and content. Drafting helps students expand upon, clarify, and modify their initial plans and ideas, and it helps them organize their content into a meaningful sequence or flow.

DISCUSSION

The analysis shown that various obstacles encountered by students in the domain of writing, specifically in the areas of grammar, structural organization, and the evolution of ideas. A substantial fraction of students, accounting for 40%, concede to experiencing deficiencies in writing organization, which detrimentally impacts the clarity and coherence of their compositions. Furthermore, students grapple with the proper utilization of passive voice, with 40% expressing neutrality and 33.3% strongly affirming this challenge. The research accentuates the significance of outlining to enhance the quality of writing. A preponderance of students, specifically 46.7%, concur that the formulation of an outline is imperative prior to initiating the writing process. This methodology aids in the sequential organization of ideas and ensures a logical progression within their written work. Brainstorming is also recognized as an essential phase in the writing process. It facilitates students in generating topics and articulating points that substantiate their arguments. The data observes that brainstorming may transpire at any juncture of the writing process, thus offering flexibility and contributing to the maturation of ideas.

The utilization of mind mapping constitutes an additional strategy that students employ to systematically arrange their thoughts. It assists in condensing information and visually correlating ideas, thereby simplifying the note-taking procedure. The manuscript indicates that 46.7% of students engage in mind mapping as part of their writing practices. In Drafting and Revision, the significance of drafting is similarly underscored, with 46.7% of students acknowledging the necessity of creating a draft prior to writing. Drafting enables students to refine their concepts and elevate the overall caliber of their written work. Overall, the data categorizes the obstacles encountered by students into several domains, which include written features, idea development, grammar, vocabulary selection, and cognitive processes. These challenges are particularly pronounced among Indonesian EFL students in their academic writing pursuits. In conclusion, this study emphasizes the multifaceted challenges students encounter in writing and the strategies they implement to surmount these barriers. By concentrating on outlining, brainstorming, mind mapping, and drafting, students can augment their writing competencies and produce work that is both coherent and well-structured.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings derived from the administered questionnaire and the subsequent interview, one can ascertain that the predominant challenges encountered by numerous students pertain to the Structure Development of ideas Selection of vocabulary. In terms of structural challenges, these include aspects of English academic writing such as the introduction, literature review, methodology, results, conclusion, and abstract, as well as the utilization of an appropriate academic writing style in the English language. Regarding challenges associated with the development of ideas, these encompass the synthesis of information and concepts upon acquisition, the logical and coherent expression of ideas during the composition of English academic writing, and the integration of information and ideas upon acquisition.

With respect to challenges in vocabulary selection, these involve the summarization and paraphrasing of statements and sentences from authoritative sources and prior studies, in addition to the proper citation of sources in accordance with the topic. Pertaining to the final research question regarding the methods employed by students to confront the challenges associated with English academic writing, the researcher concludes that a multitude of diverse strategies have been identified that students utilize to facilitate their writing of English academic papers, which also provides insight for lecturers regarding their students' strategies. Based on the data collected from the interview guidelines, most students opt to employ. The strategies that may be employed by students to mitigate writing difficulties are as follows (1) engaging in brainstorming sessions to generate topics for writing, (2) formulating a structured plan for writing endeavors, (3) orally rehearsing sentences prior to transcribing them, (4) elongating sounds in words to assist with spelling, (5) rereading and revising written content, (6) seeking opportunities to incorporate more engaging vocabulary, (7) producing a final manuscript that reflects editing and revisions.

From the questionnaire administered, the challenges encountered by students in the process of learning to write are characterized by: limited vocabulary, awkward phrasing and non-standard grammar, inappropriate application of colloquial language, difficulties with sentence structure and word order, challenges in reviewing written content, as well as difficulties with phonetics, spelling, and word meanings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For students, particularly those enrolled in Indonesian EFL teacher training programs, an understanding of the challenges associated with English academic writing, as identified in this research, enables them to respond more proactively to these difficulties, particularly those that

are personal in nature, and to apply effective strategies to mitigate the obstacles encountered in English academic writing. Likewise, the recommendations presented can be employed by lecturers, particularly those responsible for teaching writing courses, especially in the context of academic writing, as they can incorporate these strategies to assist students in overcoming and circumventing their challenges related to English academic writing. For subsequent researchers, it is important to note that this investigation concentrated solely on the challenges faced in English academic writing within a limited cohort of seventh-semester students from the English Education Department, who are specifically engaged in teacher training.

Therefore, if any researcher intends to investigate a related topic, it is essential to undertake a more extensive analysis of English academic writing across a wider range of EFL learners or among students from various academic semesters, as well as in diverse locations, such as other universities in Indonesia, to better define the categories of English academic writing that can be scrutinized in a more detailed and insightful manner. This is imperative as it is likely that Indonesian EFL learners will encounter additional challenges in the domain of English academic writing.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author wishes to express gratitude to the Rector and the director of the Research Institution at UIN Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten for facilitating the opportunity to develop this manuscript, as well as to my co-author for the collaborative effort in the completion of this article.

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