

EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE STUDENT WRITING SKILLS

**Amelia Putri Tambunan, Ayuzza Bintang Kesuma, Fayyi Fawwaz Tammir,
Josua Pebriano Lumban Gaol, Sultan Ahmad Al Fatah**

English Literature Department, Faculty of Language and Art, Medan State University,
Medan

ameliaputritambunan23@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This research aims to looking at effective strategies to improve writing skills. This research answers the research questions about the student ability in writing. Writing skills are one of the Indonesian language skills that elementary school students must master. Writing skills are the skill of expressing ideas, notions, feelings in the form of written language so that other people who read can understand the contents of the writing well. Writing is very important for students because Writing trains students to select the most relevant material or data or findings to present. Writing trains students to abstract reality or concrete data into scientific statements. Writing gets students used to reconstructing their findings or ideas into thoughts that are easier to understand. That is why every student must have good writing skills. In this research we will discuss the most effective strategies for improving students' writing skills. We use descriptive qualitative research methods because we present the data as it is without manipulation or other treatments. The aim of this research is to present a complete picture of an event or is intended to expose and clarify a phenomenon that occurs.

Keywords: *Strategies to improve, writing skills, student*

INTRODUCTION

The ability to express ideas in writing is one of the most important of all skills. Good writing is a mark of an educated person and, perhaps for that reason, it is one of the most important skills sought by employers and higher education institutions. Developing our learners as writers is more than just asking them to remember tricky spellings, handwriting joins or grammatical constructs. It is a process which is intricate and complicated, but if done consistently and thoroughly, gives learners a tool which is vital for their school years, across all subjects and in life after education. Writing makes learners' thinking and learning visible. It provides them with the opportunity to clarify and refine their ideas for others and to themselves.

Before writing, students must understand basic writing skills. The first is grammar. Grammar is the system and structure of a language and comes with certain rules. It underpins how words are put together meaningfully and sentences are

constructed. When writers use good grammar, they can effectively communicate what they want the reader to know. Through learning about nouns, punctuation, tense and aspect, brackets, semicolons, and connectors, learners can make their writing clearer and control its impact on their readers. And then student must be understand about Spelling and punctuation. Spelling instruction helps learners to develop a connection between letters and their sounds. It also helps learners to recognize high-frequency common exception words. Teaching students strategies for spelling supports them in communicating effectively through writing. While sentences can be written without punctuation, writing becomes a lot more effective if punctuated correctly. Good punctuation allows writers to convey what they mean and enables readers to understand the intended message or meaning. Every piece of punctuation has a particular role; they all work to give clarity and meaning to our written words.

Student must be able to Handwriting. Handwriting is an important skill for learners to develop. Poor handwriting can harm school performance. If a learner views handwriting as something arduous, this can reduce their motivation to write. This lack of motivation may lead to a reduction in practice which can further compound handwriting difficulties. When learners can write comfortably, legibly and at a good pace, it gives them more 'mental space' to think about the content and creativity of their writing, as opposed to the logistics. And then Reading comprehension, Reading comprehension is the capacity to read a piece of text and understand the meaning or intent. It is important in the development of writing skills. Before learners can write with meaning, they need to be able to read. The skills developed in reading and reading comprehension activities feed into many skills required for effective writing. It helps them to:

- Sound out and blend words for meaning
- Extend their vocabulary and learn how to use it contextually
- See how words in a paragraph or in a sentence relate to each other

When the concept of reading at a base level has been achieved, learners can then start to think about a text critically; they can infer meaning and intent and transfer this to their own writing. As well as this, reading comprehension relies on a strong understanding of vocabulary and grammar; writing skills work together and strengthen one another.

The last is student must be able to know about Sentence structure. For writing to progress, learners should have a good grasp of sentence structure. They should know the basic types of sentences: simple, compound and complex. Learners should also be able to modify sentence structure for effect - for example, by using fronted adverbials or passive voice. Learning different ways they can structure a sentence helps learners convey their intended meaning in their writing.

Writing is not easy and is probably the most complex and challenging skill in language learning. It requires many devices such as complex grammatical devices, stylistic skills, mechanical skills, a careful choice of vocabulary, and judgment skills (Hedge, 2005; I. Yulianawati et al., 2022). Writing is also tricky because it deals with psychology, linguistics, and cognition (Byrne, 1995; I. Yulianawati et al., 2022). Moreover, many students feel reluctant to engage in writing activities with enthusiasm (Harmer, 2007; I. Yulianawati, 2022). Foreign language writers usually encounter a significant challenge in developing their writing skills (Evans et al., 2010; I. Yulianawati et al., 2022). The teachers' main challenge in teaching writing is seeing that learners learn from their previous mistakes and acquire writing fluency and accuracy (Hemmati & Soltanpour, 2012; I. Yulianawati, 2022).

Because there are so many problems faced in writing, here we will share the most effective strategies for improving writing skills. This study aims to identify the effectiveness strategies in writing's problem. Accordingly, this research intended to answer the following questions:

1. How to improving student's writing skills?
2. How important improving writing skills for students?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Strategies to Improve Student Writing Skills

Teachers may need to change their techniques and even their classroom layout to engage all students in writing class. Engaging students in an interactive writing format will require teachers to teach in an authentic manner that is responsive to all students' needs (Jordan, 2009; I. Yulianawati, 2022). To develop writing skills the students must practice and the teacher must give many opportunities for them by providing some various types of writing such as Narrative, Recount, Report, Procedure and Descriptive text. According to the expectation, in the beginning, the students have to compose ideas to write as easy as possible with their creativity in order to produce a whole coherent paragraph. However, in fact when the students were asked to (A. Prasetyo Kurniawan et al., 2019).

Mind mapping strategy is one of the researchers' strategies in teaching. Not only mind maps show facts, but also how the overall structure of a subject and the relative importance of individual parts of it. It helps students to associate ideas, think creatively, and make connections that might not otherwise make (Buzan, 2010; A. Prasetyo Kurniawan et al., 2019). Additionally, the implementation of this technique could help the students to think how to write the important points, compose ideas, organize ideas, and arrange sentence to be a good paragraph. Hence, mind map is one of the appropriate technique to facilitate the students to develop ideas and concepts, especially in writing Descriptive text (A. Prasetyo Kurniawan et al., 2019).

In addition, writing can be implemented together with collaborative mind map. If the students work collaboratively using mind map before they make writing product, they will produce a better writing result. It can be assumed that collaborative mind map is the activities that carried by more than one person to sharing and communicate their ideas in order to producing a good paragraph. This activity can stimulate their critical thinking and enhance creativity in structuring students' knowledge. Thus, by collaborating with each other in creating and communicating meaning, learners are able to involve in the composition process with more clarity and understanding (A. Prasetyo Kurniawan, 2019).

Researchers have developed approaches in writing, such as product approach, process approach and genre approach to (Imsa-ard,2020;). Product approach as writing approach that focuses on the product of writing (Harmer, 2007; I. Yulianawati, 2022) Students need to write accurate grammar usage, correct and consistent spelling and well-organized ideas.

Think-Pair-Share is a strategy designed to provide students with "food for thought" on a given topic enabling them to formulate individual ideas and share these ideas with another student (Suhrowardi, 2020). It is a learning strategy developed by Lyman and associates (2001) to encourage student classroom participation. Rather than using a basic recitation method in which a teacher poses a question and one student offers a response, Think-Pair-Share encourages a high degree of pupil response and can help keep students on task.

One way that can be done to improve students' writing skills is that teachers must use a variety of teaching methods that do not cause the class to feel bored, and students are asked to be more active in the teaching and learning process. By using the picture and picture method. Picture and picture is a visual representation of a person, object, or scene, as a painting, drawing, photograph, etc. The picture can be a good stimulus for writing, but the picture must be based on the students' ability (Natalia et al., 2021).

The Importance of Improving Writing Skills For Students

Writing skills are included in productive skills where the product of writing is the target in learning (Syameducation, 2011; Eliwarti & Indah T.P, 2021). As one of the language skills, writing skills are very vital ways to communicate ideas. Even for a scientist or one in a writing-related job, this is sometimes an unavoidable demand (Eliwarti & Indah T.P, 2021). Writing as a complex process that permits writers to explore ideas (Ghaith, 2002; Eliwarti & Indah T.P, 2021) . So, writing is a thoughtful process which comprises some stages and large period of time to state the writers' intention. In the process of writing, a writer desires to consider about many factors such as content of the writing, word choice, reader and grammar.

Writing is an important part of language teaching as it also has a function as an essential tool for learning in which students expand their knowledge of the language elements in reality (Xiao, 2007; Listyani, 2017; Haerazi & Irawan, 2020; Qader & Arslan, 2019; Suhrowardi, 2020). Writing is also viewed as a social and cultural phenomenon as it is meaning-making that is socially and culturally shaped and individually and socially purposeful (Weigle, 2002; Haerazi et al., 2020; Suhrowardi, 2020). Teaching writing is a very important part of second language learning. Writing English is the main goal for many adult learners (Mali, 2017; Suhrowardi, 2020).

Writing is a linguistic activity that is very important in human life. Writing is one of the skills that students must master. By doing writing activities students can express thoughts, ideas through writing (Natalia et al., 2021). The process of writing can be through thinking, drafting, and revising procedure that requires specialized skills (Brown, 2021; Natalia et al., 2021). Writing is an interesting activity, it can give students some advantages although basically there are difficulties in writing but it is still a useful, essential, integral and enjoyable part of the foreign language lesson (Scott (1990; Virdyna, 2016; Natalia, 2021). Writing involves several components which have to be considered including word choice, use of appropriate grammar, syntax, mechanics, and organization of ideas into coherent and cohesive form (Gebhard, 1996; Apsari, 2017; Natalia et al. 2021). Writing is a process to create some ideas of students' knowledge to be a written (Brown, 2004; Rahmadhani & Kumala, 2014; Natalia et al., 2021).

Writing is one of the basic language skills (Harmer, 2003; Musfera & D. Setyawati, 2019) and it is as important as reading, listening, and speaking. As a productive skill, writing becomes one of the indicators of academic achievement as writing can boost comprehension and achievement across all subject areas (Harris & Graham, 2016; Musfera & D. Setyawati). In higher education level, ability to write in English is very important for students, not only for students who are majoring in English language but also for them who are from non-English majors. The ability to write in English is often needed for academic purposes such as for writing a thesis abstract or research article (Musfera & D. Setyawati, 2019).

RESEARCH METHODS

Types of Research

In this research, the author used a qualitative descriptive approach. qualitative descriptive research, descriptive research is a type of research that aims to present a complete picture of a social setting or is intended for exploration and clarification of a phenomenon or social reality. This is done by describing a number of variables relating to the problem and unit being researched among the phenomena being tested. According to Nazir in his book *Research Methods*, the descriptive method is a method for researching the status of a human group, a subject, a set of conditions, a system of thought or a class. events in the present. Qualitative research is research that is

descriptive in nature and tends to use analysis. Process and meaning (subject perspective) are more emphasized in qualitative research. Sugiyono (2015) explained that the qualitative research method is a research method based on the philosophy of postpositivism, used to research the condition of natural objects, where the researcher is the key instrument, the data collection technique is triangulation, the data analysis is inductive or qualitative, and the research results are qualitative. emphasizes meaning rather than generalization.

A qualitative approach is an approach that intends to understand the phenomena experienced by research subjects, for example behavior, perceptions, interests, motivations, actions, by means of descriptions in the form of words and language. This qualitative approach aims to obtain complete information about "effective strategies for improving students' writing abilities".

location and time of research

The author conducted research at the Faculty of Languages and Arts, Medan State University. The reason the author chose this location is because this location is strategic in collecting data related to the focus of the research that the author will examine.

Research Focus

The focus of this research is to find out strategies or ways to improve students' writing skills and how important it is for students to have writing skills.

Data Types and Sources

Data type

This research uses qualitative data. Qualitative Data is data collected in the form of words or images rather than numbers. This data includes interview transcripts, field notes, photography, videotapes, personal documents, memos and other official recordings.

Data Source

The data source used by researchers in this research is interview techniques, where the researcher will collect informants to respond or answer the researcher's questions, both written and verbal questions. The data source is the main subject in the research process on the problem above. The data sources for this research are: First, primary data sources, namely data obtained directly from students majoring in literature and English language education. Then secondary data sources are data obtained from literature, brochures and articles that have relevance to the object of this research.

Data collection technique

Data collection techniques are the processes and methods used by authors to obtain the required data. Every research, whether qualitative research or quantitative research, certainly uses techniques to collect the required data. The purpose of this is to help authors obtain authentic data. The step taken by the author is an interview. An interview is a conversation with a specific purpose by two parties, namely the interviewer as the asker/giver of questions and the interviewee as the giver of answers to those questions. The interview will be conducted face to face with the informant who will be interviewed.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis is a systematic process of searching for and organizing transcriptions of interviews and other material that researchers have collected to increase the researcher's own understanding of the material to enable the researcher to present what the researcher has found to others.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This research was conducted at Medan State University, Faculty of Languages and Arts. In this research, the subjects were Medan State University students majoring in education and English literature. The number of research sources is based on the consideration that qualitative research is more concerned with large amounts of information than the large number of informants.

The results of interviews with students majoring in education and English literature are that first, writing ability is very important for students because writing helps students express their ideas, thoughts and feelings in a clear and structured manner. Apart from that, good writing can increase self-confidence in expressing opinions.

The second result is about how to improve students' writing skills. The result is reading more, such as reading books, articles, essays which can help students understand language style, vocabulary and good writing structure. Another opinion says to study hard, namely by frequently watching videos that contain subtitles.

Discussion

Writing can be said to be one part of the program that has a specific aim in learning a language. Based on what we quoted from Tarigun, writing is also defined as a process that is able to describe a language. Then the message the author wants to convey can reach the readers and be understood. We can also associate writing activities with a process that involves graphic symbols. These graphic symbols are a combination of letters and numbers that can sound the intended language. In placing

these symbols, we cannot do it carelessly, there are rules and regulations that must be followed.

Writing is very important for students, therefore students must have good writing skills so that their writing is better and more structured. The following are strategies for improving students' writing skills:

1. Teachers may need to change their techniques and even their classroom layout to engage all students in writing class.
2. Engaging students in an interactive writing format will require teachers to teach in an authentic manner that is responsive to all students' needs.
3. The students must practice and the teacher must give many opportunities for them by providing some various types of writing such as Narrative, Recount, Report, Procedure and Descriptive text.
4. The students have to compose ideas to write as easy as possible with their creativity in order to produce a whole coherent paragraph.
5. Use mind mapping strategies, It helps students to associate ideas, think creatively, and make connections that might not otherwise make.
6. Use Think-Pair-Share strategies, Think-Pair-Share is a strategy designed to provide students with "food for thought" on a given topic enabling them to formulate individual ideas and share these ideas with another student.
7. The teachers must use a variety of teaching methods that do not cause the class to feel bored, and students are asked to be more active in the teaching and learning process.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research that has been discussed, it can be concluded that writing skills are very important for students because writing trains students to select the most relevant material or data or findings to present. Writing trains students to abstract reality or concrete data into scientific statements. Writing gets students used to reconstructing their findings or ideas into thoughts that are easier to understand. Writing is also important because it allows students to: Improve their understanding of class material and seek clarification . Develop their critical thinking skills and make connections. Communicate ideas, opinions, persuade others, and express feelings.

It can also be concluded that there are many strategies to improve students' writing skills, teachers only need to implement strategies that are fun for students so that students are interested in learning.

REFERENCES

Eliwanti, E., & Purwanti, I. T. (2021). The effect of journal writing technique on students' writing ability. *International Journal of Educational Best Practices*, 5(2), 183-196.

- Kurniawan, A. P., Rahmawati, A., Faihatunnisa, E. I., Paramita, A. T., & Khodriyah, L. (2020, May). The effectiveness of collaborative mind mapping to develop writing skills at MTsN 4 Mojokerto. In *International Conference on English Language Teaching (ICONELT 2019)* (pp. 148-152). Atlantis Press.
- Tarigan, N. W. P., Panjaitan, E. E., Simbolon, P., & Damanik, J. F. (2021). Improving Students' Writing Skills by Using Pictures and Picture Method at Junior High School. *IDEAS: Journal on English Language Teaching and Learning, Linguistics and Literature*, 9(2), 749-767.
- Vadia, M. N., & Ciptaningrum, D. S. (2020, August). Improving students' writing skill using online feedback. In *1st International Conference on Language, Literature, and Arts Education (ICLLAE 2019)* (pp. 178-182). Atlantis Press.
- Wiyaka, W. (2020). improving writing skills. *Journal on English as a Foreign Language*, 10(2), 359-384.
- Yulianawati, I., Saleh, M., Mujiyanto, J., & Sutopo, D. (2022). The effectiveness of writing techniques in improving students' writing ability with different self-esteem. *Studies in English Language and Education*, 9(1), 30-44.
- Yulianti, S., Nuraeni, S., & Parmawati, A. (2019). Improving students' writing skill using Brainswriting strategy. *Project (Professional Journal Of English Education)*, 2(5), 714-721.