

## INVESTIGATING EFL HIGHER EDUCATION LEARNERS ON ESSAY WRITING SKILLS

*Samsul Amri*

English Study Program, Universitas Islam Indragiri, Indonesia

E-mail: [mr.amri85@gmail.com](mailto:mr.amri85@gmail.com)

Article Info	Abstract
<b>Article history:</b> Received Revised Accepted	<p>The purpose of this study was to see how good the students were at writing essays. It was organized as a survey project, with selected respondents from the fourth semester of the English Study Program FKIP – Universitas Islam Indragiri (UNISI) Tembilahan. They were given the assignment to write an essay. Format, mechanics, content, organization, and sentence structure were all evaluated assigns. The data analysis findings indicate that the learners' skill in each area of writing was incredibly diverse. Some learners were able to attain the highest conceivable score, while others were not. The data revealed that five learners (25%) had a very outstanding rating, twelve learners (60%) received a good category, and three learners (15%) received a sufficient rating. Altogether, their proficiency ranged from adequate to excellent. They are encouraged to boost their skills in order to achieve better outcomes.</p>
<b>Keywords:</b> : Essay Writing Skill	<p><b>Abstrak</b></p> <p>Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk melihat seberapa baik mahasiswa dalam menuliskan. Penelitian ini adalah penelitian survey, dengan responden dipilih dari semester empat Program Studi Bahasa Inggris FKIP - Universitas Islam Indragiri (UNISI) Tembilahan. Mereka diberi tugas untuk menuliskan. Adapun indikator penilaian mencakup format, mekanika, isi, organisasi, dan polakalimat di dalam tulisan. Hasil dari analisis data menunjukkan bahwa keterampilan mahasiswa di setiap indikator tulisannya sangat beragam. Beberapa mereka mampu mencapai skor tertinggi, sementara yang lain belum. Data menunjukkan bahwa lima peserta didik (25%) memiliki peringkat sangat baik, dua belas mahasiswa (60%) mendapatkan kategori baik, dan tiga mahasiswa (15%) mendapatkan peringkat cukup baik. Secara keseluruhan, kemahiran mereka berkisar dari level cukup hingga sangat baik. Dari hasil penelitian ini direkomendasikan untuk meningkatkan keterampilan mereka guna mencapai hasil yang lebih baik.</p>
<b>Corresponding Author:</b>  Samsul Amri English Study Program – Teachers Training and Education Faculty Universitas Islam Indragiri <a href="mailto:mr.amri85@gmail.com">mr.amri85@gmail.com</a>	

## 1. INTRODUCTION

One of the most important language skills is writing. By writing, someone can express thoughts and feelings. He can then recite what he has learned through scriptures or articles, as well as anything he has gathered. In addition, transferring knowledge or information in the context of printed communication is a valuable linguistic competence. In summary, writing, being one of the most critical abilities in language instruction, is a medium for communicating one's ideas to others.

Writing is a time-consuming and challenging task. It means that when creating a composition, a writer thinks of fluency (how accessible writing is to grasp); organization (the type of writing, such as a paragraph, essay, or letter; diction (how to use acceptable words in the writing); language use (how to use right syntax); and mechanics (how to use compatible punctuations in writing). Glasswell Kathryn, Parr Judy (2001, p. 1) state that the grading worksheets are tailored to the objective of the composition, with interactions and social aim serving as encompassing ideas. All these fundamental functions have three meta-divisions: rhetorical (user consciousness), organizational (content incorporation; coherence and language resources for attaining goal), and conventional: sentences and words (Language use, spelling, and punctuation).

Academic writing is the composition that learners must accomplish for academic courses. Its projects may be referred to by diverse terms such as essay, paper, article, or research report, but they have the same purpose and concepts. Each of these sorts of academic writing has its style. In most cases, academic writing necessitates an analytical viewpoint. Because academic writers constantly engage with other's works, there will be numerous references to other authors' concepts, thoughts, or research in this discipline. There are organized criteria for references and citations, and the writers should provide acknowledgment to those with whom the writers interact. Also, it is required in academic writing that it is backed up by arguments based on some data the writers are required to adopt a constructive approach to the topic being investigated (Amri, 2017, p. 42-43)

Higher education students are required to have excellent English writing skills; it will benefit them in the future careers. It needs to be taught to them as a linguistic skill. (Kaur, 2017) states that learners do not master writing as a distinct ability from other activities. It entails classifying, generating key phrases and ideas for a topic, gauging one's response to a matter, finding new relationships, abstracting, determining relevance, and formulating arguments, to mention a few. The active and interrelated use of language, speaking, listening, reading, and writing develops and supports our highest cognitive capabilities.

The researcher emphasized essay writing in this present study. According to Oshima and Hogue (2006), an essay is a type of work that includes several paragraphs. As a paragraph, it simply discusses one subject. However, because the essay's theme is somewhat problematic to be covered in a single paragraph, the writer must break it up into numerous paragraphs, one for each main point.

There are three parts to writing an essay. The introductory paragraph includes a general statement and a thesis statement. The writer draws the reader's interest in the issue with the general statement, and the thesis statement states the essay's topic and controlling idea. The most significant sentence in the writer's writing is the thesis statement. If someone were to ask, "What is the topic of the paper?" the explanation would be found in the thesis statement. The body is the second component to consider; there are one or more paragraphs in it. Because each paragraph expands a subdivision of the issue, its length will vary depending on controlling ideas. The last part is the conclusion paragraph. It is a recitation or recap of the crucial ideas discussed in the body (Oshima and Hogue, 2006; Whitaker, 2009).

There have been several pieces of research conducted that are related to this inquiry. (Chase, 2011) examined university students' persuasive writing abilities. The study's objectives were to ascertain how persuasive essays written by tertiary remedial students affect the whole quality of persuasive essays and how the writing indicators and demographic characteristics play a part in the overall quality of persuasive essays. The reasoning in the essays was judged to be only partly established and coherent on average; the writings had enough functional parts and a minimal quantity of cohesive linkages. The findings also revealed that the writer's demographic traits substantially impact the overall quality of the essays. These findings show that teaching should focus primarily on essay coherence and reasoning growth to increase persuasive writing quality. Then, Toba et al. (2019) researched issues with Indonesian EFL students' writing skills, including their competence, difficulty, and cause for having difficulty producing a compare and contrast essay. The results demonstrated that the writing skill of Indonesian EFL students was good, with a mean score of 77.83. However, some of them have difficulties with content, organizing, diction, syntax, and mechanics in their writing. Their reasons for having the difficulties are not only a lack of comprehension of writing elements of comparison and contrast essay itself, but also individual justifications such as a lack of amount of writing practice, a dislike for writing, writing fear, a negative writing view, low writing encouragement, inadequate time given in writing tests, and inadequate teaching of the writing procedure by their instructors. Moreover,

Ulfah (2018) investigated the students' needs, wants, and deficiencies and their learning needs in an essay writing course. It is a survey research strategy. The researcher used a questionnaire and paperwork for third-semester students enrolled in an essay course. The findings encompassed the target needs as well as the students' learning needs. The target needs included necessities, which 81.0% of students desire to study in another country. Students desire  $X = 4.76$ . 54.0% of students would rather learn theory before tackling a writing project.  $X = 4.37$ , and the lacks, the students had difficulties utilizing proper grammar ( $X = 4.08$ ), completing an essay on time ( $X = 3.89$ ), and composing an essay using proper diction ( $X = 3.73$ ), showing difficulty with some essential aspects of writing, notably diction, organization, and grammar. Finally, the research discovered information about the students' learning needs, such as their desired classroom involvement and ideal locations for writing exercises. Students are more interested in participating in activities or projects to develop their writing skills, and they prefer to perform writing tasks in the classroom rather than outside of it. According to those theories and related discoveries, analyzing the students' essay writing was a trend to be an inquiry. When it comes to the English Study Program at FKIP – Universitas Islam Indragiri Tembilahan, learners have learned how to create appropriate essays.

As a result, the primary goal of this study was to build on prior research on essay performance and analyze how the students' essay performance. The researcher would glance at five writing aspects: format, mechanics, substance, organization, and sentence structure. It was believed that examining their writing skills would be considered when deciding on a reasonable policy afterward.

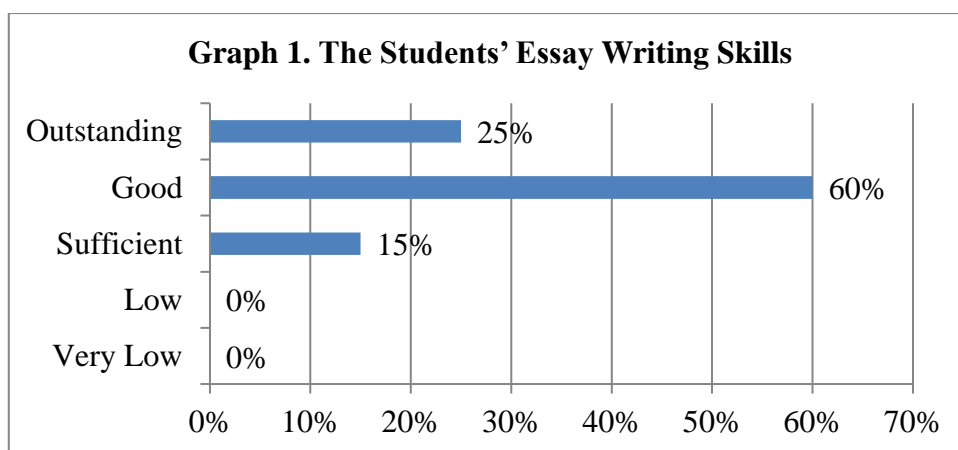
## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

This investigation was created as a survey study. According to Cresswell (2005), survey studies are quantitative methods that the researchers surveyed a sample or the whole population to describe attitudes, opinions, behaviors, or features. The researcher's goal in this study was to assess the students' writing an essay. Twenty Indonesian bachelor learners took part in this study. The data was collected using a test by writing an essay. They were free to choose their topics and organize their essays (block pattern or point-by-point pattern). Furthermore, they had to back up their ideas using quotes, facts, examples, or data. Additionally, the researcher employed descriptive statistical analysis to analyze the data, including individual score, percentage, mean score, and level ability.

## 3. DISCUSSION

### a. The Students' Essay Writing Skills

The researcher assembles the students' essay writing, which can be summarized as follows:



The learners' writing skill is shown in the table above. A total of 20 students were chosen as samples. Five learners (25%) were characterized as outstanding level, which resulted in them being placed in the 80–100 range. Then there were twelve learners (60 %) who scored in the 70–79 range. Three learners (15%) were put into sufficient categories, with scores ranging from 60 to 69. Furthermore, none of them were placed in the low or extremely low categories. It might be inferred that the pupils' composing skills were outstanding. It implies that they have capable quality in writing the essay.

### b. The results of learners' essay writingskill indicators

The results of learners' essay writingskill indicators can be presented as below:

**Table 1. Results of learners' essay writingskill indicators**

No.	Writing Aspects	Classifications				
		Outstanding	Good	Sufficient	Low	Very Low
1	Format	30%	50%	20%	0%	0%
2	Mechanics	70%	25%	5%	0%	0%
3	Substances	25%	55%	20%	0%	0%
4	Organization	35%	50%	15%	0%	0%
5	Sentence Structure	25%	45%	30%	0%	0%

The table above presents the results of learners' essay writingskill indicators. The essay format is one of the evaluation parts of writing. It addresses the title of the composition, the first line of each paragraph, the margins on both sides, and the composition's spacing. According to the factual evidence shown above, the learners' ability to use an appropriate essay format was adequate. It could be demonstrated that five learners (30%) received an outstanding grade, ten learners (50%) had a good result, and four learners (20%) demonstrated a sufficient level. It can be deduced that the learners are capable of using the essay format effectively.

Moreover, mechanics is another criterion for grading writing ability. It involves employing proper punctuation and spelling. The data above depicts the learners' ability to use acceptable punctuation and spelling in their writing. There were fourteen learners (70%) who were flawless in their grammar and spelling. Furthermore, five learners (25%) received good points, while one student (5%) received enough level. It means that they do not have serious trouble using appropriate punctuation and spelling in their work.

The substance is the third part of the composition measurement. It refers to whether the essay fits the assignment's criteria, is enjoyable to read, and demonstrates that the writer put thought into it. In light of the preceding, it is discovered that the learners' competence on the substance component of composition differed. Their performance ranged from average to outstanding. Five learners (25%) received an outstanding grade, and eleven learners (55%) received a good grade. Additionally, four learners (20%) were successful in achieving the required score. However, they did not get both low and deficient scores.

Furthermore, the organization is one of the other components of the composition assessment. It was not easy to figure out how to construct an essay that included an introduction section, body paragraphs, and a closing section. Nevertheless, the data demonstrates the learners' ability to use the writing arrangement of an essay correctly. Furthermore, it may be stated that seven learners (30%) received a fantastic grade. After that, ten learners (50%) received a competency level. Three learners earned a sufficient scoring level (15%). Nobody received the bare minimum. It was clear that the learners had varying levels of organization in their papers. The learners' task papers revealed that some learners employed block organization while others used the point-by-point methodology. It indicates that they are attempting to organize their work by exploring their expertise. Furthermore, they have attempted to create their essay by taking into account the components of an essay (introduction, body, and conclusion). Therefore, it is possible to verify that they all used the parts based on their work. Some of them, though, are still unsure how to begin their work. As an example, the introduction paragraph comprises a broad statement as well as a thesis statement. Some learners struggled to explore their ideas in the general statement, and they needed extra time to do so before reaching the thesis statement. They may also be found to be lacking in their use of proper referencing in their writing. They solely used quotations, examples, data statistics, or facts to back up their ideas.

The sentence structure was the final consideration in grading the writing. This part focuses on utilizing suitable grammar, such as acceptable tenses, vocabulary, sentence construction, subject-verb harmony, parts of speech, and other grammar elements. More information, there were five learners (25%) who got an excellent grade. The learners did well for the most significant percentage, with nine learners (45%). Then there were seven learners (30%) who fell into the moderate category. No one received the lowest marks. In short, the learners' ability to impose language use needs to be improved.

This study aims to build on previous studies that focused on writing analysis, which assesses the learners' ability to write an essay. However, there were specific points that should be examined in light of the supporting data. The first point concerns the learners' ability to employ essay writing elements. As previously stated, format, substance, mechanics, organization, and sentence structure are the five dimensions of essay writing. Their works were being different. As evidence, their ability to use the writing format satisfies considerably. More than half of the learners can achieve sufficient to outstanding grades. Furthermore, their skill to employ mechanics received high marks. It was stated that they could apply mechanics in essay writing. Then their skill in producing substance may reach a sufficient level. Additionally, the competence in applying essay writing organization was a good criterion. This appeared to

be challenging because it involved several aspects (an introductory paragraph, body, and concluding paragraph). Lastly, their competence to use sentence structure was sufficient. To summarize, the learners' competence in employing essay writing skills differed significantly from one another. They have good skills for progressing. The results presented were backed up by other studies, such as Chase (2011), which looked at the essay writing capabilities of college students. He discovered partially established and cohesive on average; the writings featured a moderate amount of functional parts and a minimal quantity of cohesive linkages. The outcomes of this current investigation were similar in that they were categorized as good criteria. Furthermore, both study samples encountered difficulties in their composition.

The second recommendation of this current study is to improve the teaching-learning process. It is supported by research findings of Alodwan & Ibnian (2014), which looked into the impact of employing a process model to writing on the development of university learners' essay writing abilities. The findings revealed that the process model to writing had a favorable impact on learners' EFL essay writing capabilities. The researchers suggested that, based on the findings, more emphasis be placed on teaching writing as a process rather than a product.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This current study is a non-experimental survey research study. The study goal was to see how essay writing skills by the fourth-semester learners English Study Program - FKIP UNISI Tembilahan. Finally, their performances were very different from one another. Nonetheless, their abilities were classified as good. It is recommended that individuals could increase their skills by writing with a higher level of proportion. Then students must acquaint themselves with the topic of writing, assemble their thoughts, and back up their notions.

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