**THE INDONESIAN ACADEMIC WRITING LECTURERS'
PERCEPTIONS, ISSUES, AND STRATEGIES TOWARD TEACHING
WRITING AT A DISTANCE**

THESIS

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ABSTRACT

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This study is aimed to investigate the Indonesian academic writing lecturers' perceptions toward teaching academic writing at a distance. Moreover, this current study also provided data about the issues during conducting virtual classes and followed by the strategies that were used by the Indonesian academic writing lecturers in outgrowing those issues. The objective of this study is to fill the gap in the previous studies that still did not provide the perceptions, issues, and strategies from academic writing lecturers' points of view.

With five Indonesian academic writing lecturers as the participants who were still teaching writing classes online fully from Universitas Islam Malang, IAIN Pontianak, and Universitas Graha Nusantara Kota Padangsidimpuan Sumatera Utara, the data were collected. The data are in the form of qualitative and quantitative. The quantitative data were collected from the questionnaire with twelve closed questions to dig into the participants' perceptions towards teaching academic writing at a distance. Besides, the qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interview guidelines including four core questions to get detailed information about the issues and the strategies in teaching academic writing at a distance. To get the data validation, this study uses member checking to ensure the questionnaire data and triangulation of the interview results.

This study revealed that the Indonesian academic writing lecturers perceived positively about academic writing courses at a distance. However, the participants had several problems while conducting the online writing classes that related to each other. The first issue was the unstable internet connection which can be solved by substituting the class into the assignment that can be submitted several days later. Also, the asynchronous model teaching helped them to diminish these issues. Secondly, the student's motivation is hindered thus the students showed negative attitudes such as did not have enough encouragement in doing their task, the unwillingness to consult their writing product, the tendency to turn off their camera, and doing the class with another activity or even skip the classes. Consequently, the Indonesian academic writing lecturers did numerous activities to minimize these issues such as encouraging them to do their tasks,

decreasing the task, being flexible about the submission time, and creating the strict rules that were communicated at the beginning of the class. The last issue was the students' lack of knowledge in writing which can be solved by making a group discussion and re-explaining the materials.

Unfortunately, this study is limited by the unwillingness of the two participants to do detailed interview sessions lively. Hence, there were only three of them that have the willingness to do the interview. Thus, the researcher suggests for the next study have more participants and really do deep interview sessions. To make better academic writing classes at a distance, the suggestions came from the participants. They mentioned that teachers should be more creative and work harder to engage the students in online classes. The way to convey the materials matter to the students and it is hoped to be one of their motivation to attend online classes.

The findings of this current study are hoped to be one of the references in helping other academic writing teachers to teach their online classes. Also, to anticipate or minimize the issues that would be faced by them. Besides, the strategies to cope with the issues in this study may be solutions too in their academic writing online classes.
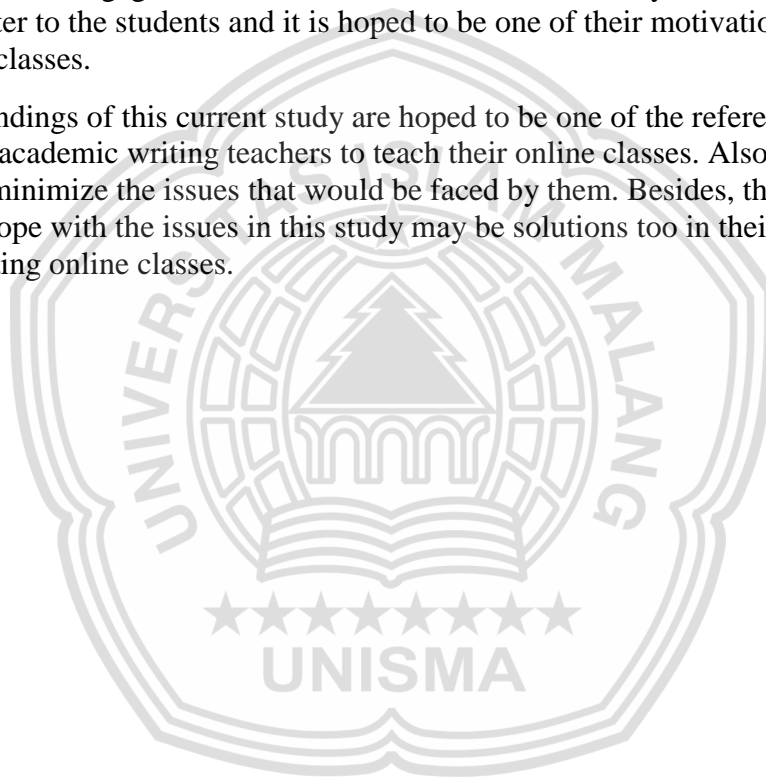
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the background of the study, research questions, research objectives, the significance of the study, scope and delimitation, and definition of the key terms.

1.1 Background of the Study

Distance learning gets its fame nowadays (Alzahrani, 2019), including in language skills teaching. As it is considered a new thing in Indonesia, the issue of teaching at distance is the lack of perceived pedagogical advantages (Todd, 2020). According to Davis, Gough, and Taylor (2019), the obstacles faced by the teacher in distance learning are unbalanced information that is given to the students. To overcome it, the teacher should not give too little information because it can make the students frustrated, also, the teacher should not give too much information because the students may skip the important requirements that get lost in minor details. The issue can be raised from providing feedback and the limitation of communication between the teacher and the students.

However, as stated by Winter, Costello, O'Brien, and Hickey (2021) distance learning can enhance engagement between the teacher and the technology itself. It is undeniable that teaching at a distance provides flexibility. It means the teacher can adjust their schedule while they have another duty from campus. In addition, the efforts when the process of students' learning activity can be tracked by the course management system (Davis, Gough & Taylor, 2019). Thus, to maximize the advantages of distance learning, it needs qualified teachers

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to give knowledge and positive results to the students. It can be seen from the teacher's ability to manage and facilitate the online material. By doing those things, the students get better performance (Alzahrani, 2019).

In formal education settings, according to the students, academic writing becomes the most challenging course to be accomplished (Heriyawati, Sulistyo & Sholeh (2014), particularly when it is not in a face-to-face setting (Selvarasu et. al., 2020). As Selvarasu et. al (2020) stated, different from other communicative skills, writing is more complicated to teach at a distance. This is because the students have to shape their thoughts into content, the organization style, and language use which is related to grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics (Sulistyo & Heriyawati, 2017). Besides, the strange topic and theme that were given by the lecturer at the beginning of writing can be the issue. Furthermore, the problem can be raised from the absence of background knowledge on the topic that they should elaborate in written form. Additionally, the students preferred conveying their thought mostly in speaking, not in writing. Whereas, in teaching academic writing, the writing process should be prioritized over the product itself (Heriyawati, Sulistyo & Sholeh, 2014).

In addition, academic writing issues found by Toba, Noor, and Sanu (2019) that the students felt the writing challenge in the writing aspect knowledge and the text that they should write, inadequate time of writing exercise and test time, low motivation and interest in writing, and writing anxiety. Afterward, from the teachers' point of view, they faced troubles in linguistics ability, the interference of native language, motivation and the students' habit in reading, the

classroom settings, also inadequate facilities and time for teaching writing (Hidayati, 2018). Even though the students had a positive perception of academic writing, they still faced troubles in inadequate ability in organizing systematic ideas, grammar, vocabulary, and diction (Rohayati & Rustandi, 2021).

Related to the studies conducted by Toba, Noor, and Sanu (2019), Hidayati (2019), and Rohayati and Rustandi (2021), although the research settings in the same country as this current study carried out, unfortunately, there were no one of them that used academic writing lecturers as the participants. They conducted their research using university students and English teachers at the high school level. Furthermore, Toba, Noor, and Sanu (2019) and Hidayati (2019) investigated their studies in an offline setting. Different from them, this current study is carried out with academic writing lecturers who were still teaching online fully.

Also, the previous researchers tended to conduct their studies on the students' issues with writing skills, the obstacles that the teacher faced in teaching academic writing in a face-to-face setting, and the students' perception in online writing classes. Whereas, this study is aimed to investigate the Indonesian academic writing lecturers' perception, issues, and strategies of distance learning in writing which is done at the university level.

1.2 Research Questions

From the background of the study above, these research questions can be concluded as follows:

1. What is the Indonesian academic writing lecturers' perception of distance learning in academic writing?

2. What are the Indonesian academic writing lecturers' issues with distance learning in academic writing?

3. What are the Indonesian academic writing lecturers' strategies to overcome the issues in distance learning in academic writing?

1.3 Research Objectives

Related to the statement of the research questions above, this study is intended to:

1. To find out the lecturers' perception of distance learning in academic writing,

2. To find out the lecturers' issues in academic writing online instruction,

3. To find out the strategies which are used by the lecturers to overcome distance learning in academic writing.

1.4 Significance of the Study

1.4.1. Theoretical Significance

This study is about the lecturers' perception of distance learning in teaching writing at a distance because the researcher wants to find out whether writing instruction works well in a distant way to assist the readers to understand

whether distance learning can be one alternative in teaching and learning, particularly in the writing course. Also, this study is hoped to be the other writing teachers' reference in conducting their online writing classes as it provides the problems and the strategies.

1.4.2. Practical Significance

Practically, this study is aimed to help other teachers to anticipate the troubles that may happen in their online writing courses. Also, it is possible for the teachers to teach writing using a better approach or strategy in case to decrease the problems in their online writing learning.

1.5 Scope and Delimitation

The scope of this study is only in academic writing classes in the English Department that are conducted online fully. As the delimitation, this study only discusses the teachers' perception of distance learning in writing. In addition, this case study provides data about the issues and the strategies for conducting writing classes online.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

This part, there were discussed some necessary points that are attached in the title. These terms are needed to be known by the readers because they related to the participants' criteria and the scope of the study.

1. The Indonesian Academic Writing Lecturers

The person who leads and supports the students to learn in the classroom is described as a teacher (Helleve, 2010). In Indonesia, the

function of the teacher is also to be a lecturer. Merely, the term teacher in Indonesia has similar to the lecturer, but if a teacher teaches in basic school, the lecturer teaches at the university level. Whereas, academic writing can be described as essentially the activity that must be done for university courses (Whitaker, 2009).

In this research, academic writing lecturers are the people who teach academic writing courses online fully in English Department. They teach in some regions in Indonesia such as East Java which is represented by Universitas Islam Malang, West Kalimantan which is represented by IAIN Pontianak, and North Sumatera which is represented by Universitas Graha Nusantara Kota Padangsidimpuan Sumatera Utara.

2. Perception

Perception, sometimes, is near with the word of awareness or the discrimination between stimuli and the world, a convincing of the real presence of environment of perceived objects, etc. (Hochberg, 1956). In line with that, Efron (1969) also defines perception as the primary form of cognitive contact with the things around the human.

Qiong (2017) explains there are three grades of perception. The first grade is named selection. In this stage, the meaningful experience is created by the stimuli of the environment. The next level of perception is the organization which is done to find a meaningful pattern after choosing information from the outside world. The last stage of perception is the interpretation which refers to attaching process of meaning which is

converted by the stimuli. In this study, perception is defined as the information which is gained by the teachers in the process of online writing instruction in the writing course. In this study, perception means the undergraduate teachers' way to perceive distance learning in writing and its issues, also the strategies to overcome them during conducting their writing course in distance learning.

3. Issues

According to the Oxford dictionary (2022), issues are described as a problem or worries that someone deals with. In this study, issues mean the things that hinder the academic writing lecturers during writing courses in distance learning.

4. Strategies

Strategy means a plan that is intended to achieve a particular purpose (Oxford dictionary, 2022). This study describes strategy as the activity that can help the writing lecturer to overcome the issues in their online writing classes.

5. Teaching Writing at a Distance

Before the term distance learning become as well known today, it has similar terms to correspondence education, home study, and independent learning. However, the thing that distinguishes them is the ability that can be done in today's terms such as the collaboration in learning regardless of time and place (Moore & Anderson, 2003).

This current study defines distance learning as online learning which means the academic writing lecturers and the students are not in the same place during the instruction. In this study, the researcher confines distance learning only to academic writing courses at the university level in English Department in several regions in Indonesia such as East Java, West Kalimantan, and North Sumatera.

CHAPTER VI
CONCLUSION

In this part, the researcher discusses the conclusion of the study, the limitations, and the suggestions.

6.1 Conclusions

This study indicated that the Indonesian academic writing lecturers have a positive perception toward teaching writing online or at a distance. However, several issues related to the practice are raised by the condition itself. The first problem was bad internet connection that can be solved by substituting the class into an assignment and using asynchronous model teaching. Next, to help the problem with the students' motivation that lead to unwillingness of doing the assignment and consult them, can be diminished by encouraging the students' motivation by reminding their due dates assignment, telling them motivational stories, and making strict rules. Besides, the problem of lack of writing mechanism knowledge was resolved by re-explaining the materials and giving them feedback. Further, the students' involvement in the virtual classroom can be assisted by making group discussions. These findings are hoped to have implications for the writing lecturers to anticipate the same issues in their online academic writing classes.

6.2 Limitations and Suggestions

This study was limited by the condition of the distance itself. Of the five participants, it was only three who have the willingness to do the interview lively

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while the two of them just do the interview through WhatsApp chat and voice note features. Thus, this study suggests that the future researchers have more participants and do research in the effectiveness of applying strict rules in online academic writing classes.

Furthermore, for the implementation of academic online classes, the lecturers can be more creative in arranging the material using online tools that can help the students to get better knowledge in writing. Also, the way the teachers in conveying the material matters in the students' motivation to attend the classes.
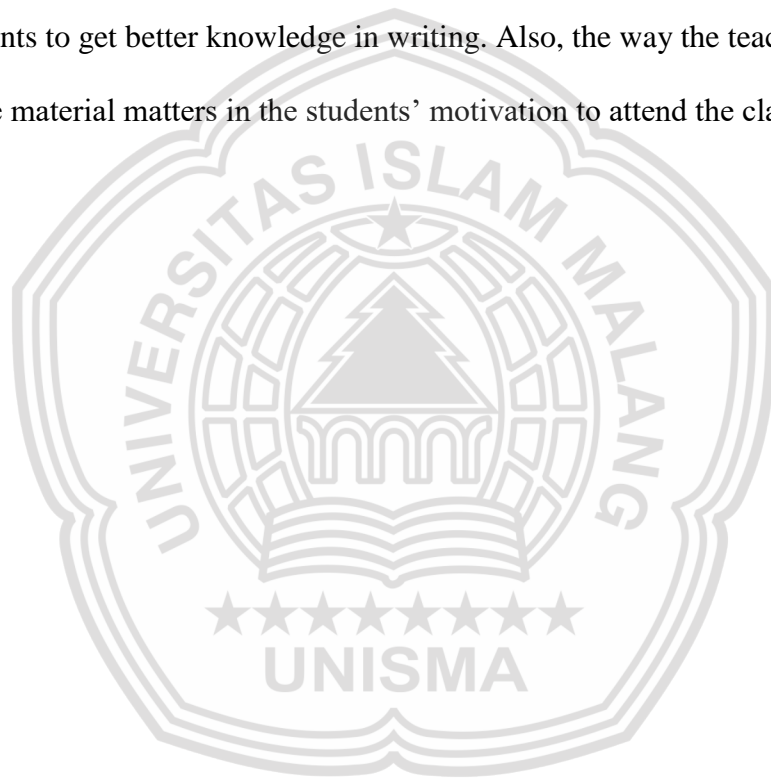
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