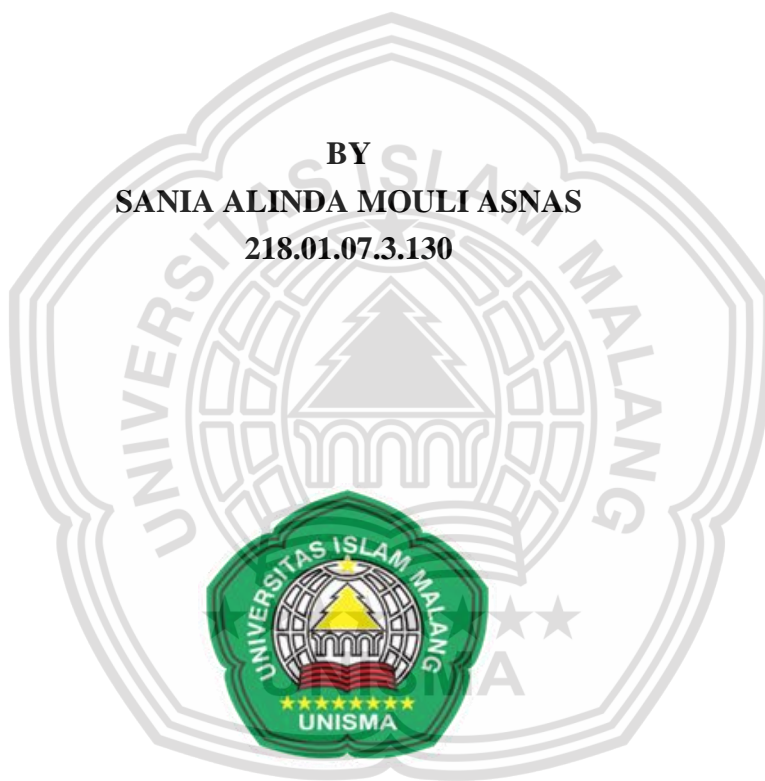




**THE ACADEMIC WRITING CHALLENGES FACED BY  
INDONESIAN UNDERGRADUTE EFL LEARNERS AT  
UNIVERSITY OF ISLAM MALANG**

*SKRIPSI*

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## ABSTRACT

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Academic writing is one of the most difficult types of formal writing for EFL learners because they must adhere the guidelines of writing correctly. The importance of academic writing at university level is to exhibit students' ability to express their ideas to others and to prove whether the student is someone who is able to think critically or not, but in fact EFL learners have difficulties in this regard. Factors that influence difficulties in academic writing are experience or practice in academic writing, knowledge of particular discipline, and English language competence so that EFL learners need a lot of time, patience, and preparation in improving skills in academic writing, so this is a challenging process for them.

This study aimed to describe the academic writing challenges faced by students and how students can overcome their challenges. This study used a descriptive qualitative research design. This research was conducted on 55 English Education students in the 6th semester at University of Islam Malang. There were 5 out of 55 students who were interviewed. The purposive sampling was used in this study. In collecting data, the instrument used was the questionnaire and interview.

The results showed that the students agreed that they had challenges in all the items of the questionnaire except for the part of writing conclusion which stated that it was neutral. Based on the results of interview, the students' strategies to overcome their challenges using seven strategies such as brainstorming, reading many articles, using online applications, receiving feedback, writing practice, using the dictionary, editing their work by themselves. In conclusion, they faced challenges in terms of structure, developing ideas, vocabulary, and grammar.

Based on the finding of this study, the researcher provided some suggestions. For EFL students, they should have a lot of practice in academic writing by paying attention to four aspects of writing such as structure, developing ideas, vocabulary, and grammar to improve their writing skills. For English academic writing lecturers, they can create new strategies to overcome the challenges that students faced in academic writing to support teaching and learning effectively in the classroom. For future researcher, they can use different types of academic writing such as essays to investigate students' challenges and strategies with sample of one or several universities in Indonesia. In addition, they can investigate the factors contributing to students' challenges and steps in writing academic writing, especially in writing research article or essay.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the research context, the research focus, the objective of the research, the significance of the research, the scope and limitation of the research, and the definition of key terms.

#### 1.1 Research Context

Writing is one of the important skills that foreign language learners should strive for their succeed in writing assignments, exams, graduation projects, and their careers because English is the dominant international language in communicating scientific information today (Alkhuzaee et al., 2019). Writing is a thinking tool for someone to convey their ideas through a text with the hope that the writing can achieve communicative competence, but EFL learners must consider problems in their writing such as content, organization, purpose, audience, vocabulary, use of punctuation, spelling, capitalization, and grammar correctly so that writing is a difficult skill for non-native English learners (Al-Tamimi, 2018).

In writing, EFL learners must comply with several writing guidelines to write correctly because the type of writing they are working on is a type of formal writing that is different from other types of writing, so it is called academic writing. Academic writing is the result of a person's critical thinking ability which

acts as a bridge to communicate his ideas to others that can express his intellectual abilities. EFL learners must become proficient in academic writing. They are expected to be able to present arguments and develop ideas appropriately in academic writing (Fareed et al., 2016). The academic accomplishment of EFL learners is determined by the text they produce in English; hence they must be proficient in academic writing. The importance of academic writing at the university level is to show students' intellectual abilities to others, to provide evidence in providing sound arguments in students' problem-solving abilities, to demonstrate students' competence as effective communicators, to denote students' ability to explain their ideas to others, and to prove whether the student is a person who can think critically or not, such as expressing opinions based on thorough analysis, synthesis, and evaluation from various sources (McMillan & Weyers, 2014).

Due to the importance of academic writing in English, there has been a growing number of studies examining the nature and development of students' academic writing practices in various settings, as well as the emergence of different approaches to writing in higher education. In contexts where English is taught and studied as a foreign language, several factors influence students' writing such as first language (L1) and second language (L2), academic writing experience or practice, knowledge of a particular discipline, individual factors, and social context that affect each of them. It is a double difficulty for those who do not speak English as their language as they adapt to an academic writing style (Hyland, 2013). They have to improve their second language (L2) competence

and learn to write in second language (L2), so this does require time and patience for those in the EFL environment as improving skills in academic writing is a challenging process.

There are some shreds of evidence from several research articles showing that the writing process in academic writing is difficult for many language learners, so they face a variety of challenges. One source of frustration for EFL learners in academic writing because they are required to write academic essays at the college level which is heavy and may make them disappointed because they have to make texts in English by adapting their writing style to the rules of academic writing (Budjalemba et al., 2020). Students are frustrated and nervous because they are confused about what to write and how to write it as the most common problems they face. Therefore, writing requires a lot of preparation and consideration.

The challenges in academic writing are that students cannot express their ideas through their writing, so they also cannot handle the words, ideas, opinions of others that can help them in developing their ideas, and they also make mistakes in spelling, sentence structure, and vocabulary (Mousa, 2017).

According to Singh (2019), there are eight challenges faced by students in academic writing, namely lack of English language proficiency, challenges in expressing ideas, disorganized academic writing structure, intentional plagiarism, editing, translation, inappropriateness in academic writing culture, and cheating in their academic writing.

According to Altınmakas & Bayyurt (2019), their experiences teaching academic writing and other undergraduate-level courses led them to notice that EFL students struggle with L2 communication (English). Inadequate academic writing skills among EFL students are seen as a flaw that should have been addressed before they entered the department. Several things were revealed by faculty members related to student academic writing, namely lack of skill in critical thinking, lack of background knowledge about certain disciplines, difficulty in designing ideas, and difficulty in making good arguments.

Students arrive at universities with established identities, a wide range of sociocultural and socioeconomic origins, personal histories, prior learning and schooling experiences, unique learning methodologies, and writing skills. As a result, to generate an excellent piece of writing, students' skill, knowledge, and imagination are required. Students in academic writing are required to be able to argue, correlate arguments with expert research findings, and encounter arguments. Students must follow writing techniques based on the requirements, such as logical organization, synthesis, citation, summary, grammar, mechanics, and plagiarism avoidance.

In Indonesia, especially in the English Education Department, academic writing is one of the most challenging courses for students because it is a preparatory class for students before writing a thesis proposal. For English Education students, academic writing is often recognized as the highest level of writing course. According to Budjalemba et al., (2020), many students in the academic writing class are afraid and worried about their writing because they

face various challenges in the world of writing, such as lack of skills, motivation, knowledge, unable to organize ideas, express arguments, paraphrase, synthesize, summarize, grammar, and other problems.

Due to these problems and considering the challenges faced by EFL learners in academic writing, this study aims to analyze more deeply what challenges are faced by Indonesian undergraduate EFL learners, especially English Education students at University of Islam Malang. This study also aims to find out how they can overcome the challenges they face so that this study fills the gap of the previous studies.

### **1.2 Research Focus**

Based on the background of the study above, the problem in this study is formulated as follows:

1. What are the academic writing challenges faced by Indonesian undergraduate EFL learners at University of Islam Malang?
2. How do Indonesian undergraduate EFL learners at University of Islam Malang overcome the academic writing challenges they face?

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of this study are:

1. to describe what the academic writing challenges are faced by Indonesian undergraduate EFL learners at University of Islam Malang.
2. to describe how Indonesian undergraduate EFL learners can overcome the academic writing challenges they face.

#### 1.4 Significances of the Study

The significances of this study are expected for both theoretical and practical aspects. In theoretical aspect, this study's contribution is related to academic writing challenges in the context of Indonesian undergraduate EFL learners in order to find the strategies at once. The finding of this study is expected to help students to have a deeper understanding of the challenges in writing for academic purposes in terms of research articles to improve their skills in academic writing.

In practical aspect, this study can serve as practical information for the writers and is intended to aid them in locating resources related to academic writing issues which will be useful in their practice of writing, so the writers could continue to learn and practice how to write academically in the correct manner. This current study is also expected to give contribution for the writers to make an attempt to use appropriate strategies after investigating the difficulties they have in their writing practice, especially in research articles.

#### 1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study is focused on the challenges and strategies in academic writing faced by Indonesian undergraduate EFL learners at University of Islam Malang. This study only examines the sixth semester students of English Education. Some considerations of this study are carried out on the sixth semester students because they have experience in academic writing to write essays in Writing III course in the third semester and research articles in Writing IV course in the fourth semester and in Seminar on ELT course in the sixth semester.



## 1.6 Definition of Key Terms

To avoid misunderstanding of the terms of this research, the following definitions are given:

### 1. Academic Writing

This term plays an important role in the students' domain of disciplines at the university which is a means of conveying ideas using the rules of writing as evidence of whether a student can think critically or not, especially in the type of academic writing, namely research article.

### 2. Challenges

This term refers to the difficulties faced by the students and make them frustrated and nervous in writing academic writing during their study in English Education Department at University of Islam Malang.

### 3. Indonesian Undergraduate EFL Learners

As EFL learners, undergraduate students in Indonesia are non-native English learners, so they find it difficult to write in English, especially in academic writing. They have a double difficulty that besides it is not their first language, they must also be able to adapt their writing style to academic writing. This research is conducted on sixth-semester students majoring in English Education at University of Islam Malang.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

In the last part, this chapter sums up the findings as well as the discussion accompanied by suggestions specialized to EFL students and further researcher.

#### 5.1 Conclusion

This presented study has been conducted by investigating EFL learners at University of Islam Malang to answer two research problems. For the first research problem was about the academic writing challenges faced by Indonesian undergraduate EFL learners at University of Islam Malang. The researcher concluded that the students faced the challenges in writing academic writing related to structure, developing ideas, vocabulary, and grammar.

Firstly, the challenges in structure consisted of challenges in writing the introduction, literature review, method, result, and discussion, abstract, using appropriate academic style, but in the writing conclusion section, the students were relatively equally divided about their difficulties. In other words, in writing a conclusion sometimes the students had difficulty and sometimes they did not. Secondly, the challenges in developing ideas consisted of challenges in expressing their ideas clearly and logically, coherence and cohesion, critical thinking, and translating. Thirdly, the challenges in vocabulary consisted of challenges in summarizing, paraphrasing, using the needed vocabulary in their writing.

Then, the challenges in grammar consisted of challenges in linking between one sentence to another, grammatical aspects, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.

For the second research problem was about how Indonesian undergraduate EFL learners at University of Islam Malang overcome the academic writing challenges they face. Firstly, the strategies in structure consisted of reading many articles, using application for references (Mendeley and Zotero), asking for feedback, and writing practice. Secondly, the strategies in developing ideas consisted of brainstorming, reading many articles, and using dictionary. Thirdly, the strategies in vocabulary consisted of reading many articles and using application for paraphrasing and summarizing (QuillBot). Finally, the strategies in grammar consisted of using application (Grammarly) and editing by themselves. The researcher concluded that there were seven strategies used by the students to overcome their challenges in writing academic writing namely, brainstorming, reading many research articles, using online applications, receiving feedback, writing practice, using the dictionary, and editing their work by themselves.

## **5.2 Suggestions**

Considering the results of the study, the researcher provides some suggestions as follows:

### **5.2.1 For EFL Students**

For EFL students, this research is expected to help them to be more responsive to investigate their challenges and can use possible strategies to overcome their challenges after they learn the academic writing challenges and

strategies from the result of this research. In addition, they have to do a lot of practice in academic writing by paying attention to four aspects of writing, namely structure, developing ideas, vocabulary, and grammar to improve their writing skills.

### **5.2.2 For English Academic Writing Lecturers**

For English academic writing lecturers, this research is expected to be beneficial in the teaching and learning process. It is suggested that lecturers develop innovative ways for dealing with challenges in academic writing in order to ensure that the learning process in academic writing works effectively.

### **5.2.3 For Future Researcher**

For future researcher, this research is expected to be a reference and provide a source of information regarding the academic writing issues faced by Indonesian undergraduate EFL learners. The result of this research can help other researchers to explore deeper the challenges in academic writing by using other types of academic writing such as essays to investigate the English Education students in one university or various universities in Indonesia. In addition, they can investigate the factors contributing to students' challenges and steps in writing academic writing, especially in writing research article or essay.

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