

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### A. Background of The Study

Having good writing skills is important in communication. Writing is a way of communication with written expression and transmitting information (Chen, 2021). People can share and communicate their idea through their pieces of writing. However, writing skill is considered as difficult skill to learn because people have to use effective sentences to deliver clear ideas. Writing skills have complexity in grammatical structure, vocabulary, spelling, and pronunciation (Rao, 2017). Therefore, at schools, students learn how to write accurately to be able to communicate effectively in any context, especially learning how to write effective English sentences.

In Indonesia, students learn the English language, as a core subject to be able to communicate in spoken and written forms. According to the National Curriculum in Indonesia (Kemendikbud, 2020), the goal of learning English for high schools is to try, process, and present knowledge in the concrete and abstract domains that are in accordance with what is learned in school and other sources. Students learn to compose texts of oral and written interpersonal and transactional interactions that can be used in academic and non-academic contexts or daily activities. Students in high school levels are expected to be able to write effectively in academic and non-academic contexts. However, the English lesson for high school students is only available for around one or two sessions per week, which makes students unable to focus on writing skills in those limited sessions. Writing skill is integrated to other English skills: reading, listening, and speaking skills. Based on my experience when I was in high school, students were not used to practicing writing complex paragraphs. Students had learned about the paragraph, but they have difficulties to generate and organize the idea of the paragraph (Lastari & Saraswati, 2018). Therefore, students might still find difficulties to write in English language when they enter universities.

In the higher education level, students need to learn English writing skills for academic purposes. For example, students have to write papers, essays, journal articles, reviews, and research reports in English. Hence, university students learn writing for academic purposes to support their academic skills. Learning to write academically trains university students to be more accurate and fluent to express their ideas. Academic writing skills help students have a better presentation, build a strong argument with a central idea, and improve accuracy in using citation and reference (Yung & Cai, 2019). Furthermore, writing for academic purposes in university is also construct knowledge in their fields. Hyland (2013) argued that academies around the world have obtained conventions that writing

in university is central to understand students' disciplines, to establish the academic careers, or to navigate their successful in learning. The common purposes are to do research and to teach students.

Students in the English Language Education (ELE) study program are expected to have excellent writing skills because they are prepared to teach English in the future. They usually have a strong instrumental motivation to learn English and are more aware of the process of learning a foreign language and the strategies required to acquire proficiency (Alhaysony, 2017). However, there are some problems faced by the English as Foreign Language (EFL) university students who take writing skills courses. Itua et al. (2014) revealed that lack of reading, understanding of the complex text, and writing practices were barriers. In addition, McNamara et al. (2018) found out that a lack of knowledge on how to include sources can be a problem in writing. Sudirman et al. (2020) stated that EFL students' problems in starting sentences, exploration of ideas, and fear of making mistakes. It can be summarized that even the EFL students still have problems in learning English skills including the lack of reading, understand the complex text, lack of practices in writing, and they have a problem in making sentences.

Furthermore, EFL new students might have more specific problem in constructing the writing for academic purposes. Nonkukhetkhong (2013) shows that the most frequent errors made by freshmen were general grammatical errors and in using the correct grammatical forms and structures. Similarly, Alghazo and Alshraideh (2020) found out that freshmen have difficulties with grammar. Alharbi (2019) stated that most of the students had difficulty in general writing and the writing mechanism. They are lack knowledge of how to properly write a good sentence or paragraph. Lack of academic writing knowledge leads EFL new students to struggle with the learning process. Writing experience in senior high school is not enough for students to learn writing (Ramadhani et al., 2021). Based on my experience, when I was a EFL new student from vocational high school, I had to struggle with the writing for academic purposes. It might also happen to my classmates. My friends and I come from different senior high schools background, some of us come from vocational schools while others are from general high schools. From these different backgrounds, we have different English learning experiences. For example, when I was in vocational school, I learned to write more business letters and a lot of words that related to the accounting program than general text. On the other hand, my friend from general high school might have learned to write stories and other short paragraphs. With this different knowledge from high schools, there might be different efforts from students to adapt to writing for academic purposes in the college.

Those issues of writing for academic purposes might be happened until recently, especially in the time of the Covid-19 pandemic. EFL university students have to adapt to writing for academic purposes and adjust to the online learning. Although online learning is not something new, learning English skills virtually during the pandemic might become an issue for some universities and their students. In

teaching English writing skills, Sheerah et al. (2022) found out that EFL university students have problems in writing and challenges in academic writing skill while learning English skills online, such as: lack of knowledge on how to write a good sentence, lack of vocabulary and grammar knowledge that can lead them to make less interesting sentences. The issues might also come from the technical stuff, for example, the lack of skills to operate the online tools both the hardware and software to check their writings. Lack of ICT (Information Communication Technology) skills, can be one of issues faced by students and make them frustrated and discourage them while learning writing (Jong & Kim Hua, 2021).

Recently, there has been growing interest in researching students writing skills in online learning mode. There have been several investigations into the issues around EFL students' writing skills as discussed earlier in this section, including the problems in English writing for academic purposes by (Alharbi, 2019), in this study, they want to find the challenges of EFL university students when learning academic writing, but they did not explore their strategies. there is also the challenges of writing in online learning mode by (Sheerah et al., 2022), in this study, they want to investigated the challenges and suggestions in intensive writing. while there is also the advantages of online learning academic writing skills on (Altohami et al., 2022). Therefore, this study aims to explores the challenges and strategies to cope with writing for academic purposes especially from EFL new university students. However, few studies addressed the issue of academic writing from EFL new university students. For example, study from Aunurrahman et al. (2017), this study aim to know the competencies of academic writing of EFL students. They might find challenges to academic life including writing for academic purposes. It might be even worse when they did not learn to write effectively when they were in high schools. Study from Ramadhani et al. (2021) stated that experience in the school is not enough, and students have to continue their practice in writing. They need to struggle with this situation. In addition, during the pandemic era, EFL new students should learn in full online mode until now. They might find other challenges and strategies to learn writing skills. Therefore, this study will explore EFL new university students' challenges and strategies to cope with writing for academic purposes in online learning.

## **B. Research Question**

1. What are the challenges of EFL new university students in learning to write for academic purposes in online learning?
2. What are the EFL new university students' strategies to cope with writing for academic purposes in online learning?

### **C. Aims of The Study**

This study aimed to explore EFL new university students' challenges and strategies to cope with writing for academic purposes in the online learning process.

### **D. Scope of The Study**

This study focuses on how EFL students in higher education adapt and adjust to the academic situation by exploring their challenges and strategies to write for academic purposes, especially in the online learning process. The EFL new university students have to shift from learning English subject in high school to learning separate English skills in university. Besides, they need to adapt more to academic environments. One of the English skills which are developed in university is writing skills. The writing skills emphasize on the academic purposes to prepare students to write academic papers. This research will explore how the students cope with English writing skills. The study involves freshmen in the English Language Education department of a private university in Jakarta, Indonesia, who are taking English writing skills courses.

### **E. Significance of The Study**

The significance of the study consists of:

#### **1. Theoretical Benefit**

This study provides references for further studies in the similar areas of writing for academic purposes during online learning, especially the challenges and strategies of EFL new students to write for academic purposes.

#### **2. Practical Benefit**

For the teacher, this study will help English teachers identify their students' challenges and strategies in the writing class and use the results of this study to create various strategies to teach writing skills. For the university students, the result of this study hopefully can help them to explore other strategies to write academic English to overcome the challenges.

### **F. Definitions of Key Terms**

The terms that link to this study, such as:

#### **1. EFL Students**

EFL students are learners or students that learn the English language in a country that does not have English as the mother tongue. (Teng, 2020) mentioned that an EFL learner is a student that learns English as a foreign language. In this study, EFL learners are students taking an English language major at a university in Indonesia.

2. New University Students

New university students are freshmen students. Freshmen also mean first-year students (Pun & Jin, 2021). Freshmen are university students, especially the first-year university students (Yuyun et al., 2018).

3. Writing for academic purposes

Writing for academic purposes, also mentioned as academic writing is writing skills that use a formal or academic word in it, this writing work in university task, such as article, essay, assessment paper, and thesis. Academic writing is a writing that designed to deliver agreed meaning of complex ideas or concepts to a group of scholarly experts (Fadhly et al., 2017).

4. Writing Challenges

Writing challenges is challenges that writer faced during the writing activities. Academic writing challenges are students' negative attitudes toward the academic writing, language difficulties, and the effects of teachers' teaching methods in the academic writing class (Akhtar et al., 2019).

5. Writing Strategies

Writing strategies is activities that writers employ to finish their writing. The strategies are also called mental activities in which the writer can select, monitor, and focus on some particular manners that are chosen to avoid using ways that are regarded as useless (Chien, 2012). Maharani et al. (2018) stated that writing strategies are important during the writing process and can influence the learners' writing outcomes.

6. Online learning

In this study, online learning includes all activities of teaching and learning that is done in synchronous or asynchronous mode through the screen or technology, or computer. Online learning provides flexibility time management and interaction using online technology (Joosten & Cusatis, 2020). Online learning is learning experienced through the internet/online computers in a synchronous classroom, where the students and the instructors don't rely on their physical location to participate in this online learning experience (Singh & Thurman, 2019).

## **G. Organization of The Paper**

This study paper consists of six chapters. The first chapter is an introduction consisting of a background of the study, research question, aims of the study, scope of the study, the significance of the study, definition of key terms, and organization of the paper. Chapter two consists of the theoretical foundation of this study that reviews the concepts and theories of writing for academic purposes, the relevant previous studies, and the conceptual framework of this study. Chapter three describes the qualitative research design that is employed in this study, and how the data will be collected and

analyzed. The fourth chapter of this study presents the findings of the data analysis result referring to the research questions. Chapter five will discuss the interpretation of the findings related to the literature review and the problems in the area of writing for academic purposes. Chapter six will conclude the study and provide recommendations for further research.