

Undergraduate Students' Perceptions towards the Process of Writing

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Abstract

Writing process has been proven to be an effective approach to enhance students' writing performance. The writing process consists of pre-writing, drafting, revising, and editing. The writing process aids the students in developing ideas while writing, but it was claimed that students also face challenges during the process. Therefore, this current study aimed to investigate the students' perceptions of the writing process and the challenges. The subjects taken were the first-year students of the English Educational program at the State University of Malang, in which 31 students of IC Writing Class were chosen. The perceptions were investigated through a survey study by distributing online questionnaires via Google Form. The questionnaire was divided into four aspects; pre-writing, drafting, revising, and editing, which aimed at exploring the students' perceptions during the writing process and its challenges. The findings of the study showed that the students experienced difficulties in the writing process. The most challenging stages they had were the pre-writing and revising

stage. The students faced challenges in generating and structuring ideas, respectively. Meanwhile, the students claimed that drafting and editing were less challenging since they followed the preceding stage. Nonetheless, the students also believed that proofreading was a complex process in the editing stage. The results of this study will be beneficial for English teachers and future researchers to vary the teaching methodology and reflect a better analysis.

Keywords: students' perceptions, writing challenges, writing process

1. INTRODUCTION

At university levels, writing skill is emphasized by practitioners and experts to develop the students' skill. Al-sawalha (2014) states that university students are demanded to produce written assignments, such as critical reviews, written tests, academic essays, and theses. More importantly, writing is one of the benchmarks to investigate the students' performance in their academic field. The academic field refers to students' language development, critical thinking, and multi-discipline expansion (Bjork & Raisanen, 1997) cited in (Mohammad & Hazarika, 2016). Beyond that, they mentioned that writing is a constructive skill that provides students with writing practices.

There are several fundamental aspects that students need to master in writing skills, such as flow of ideas, language accuracy, grammatical devices, word diction, grammatical patterns, and sentence structure (Smith, 2008). Those aspects also determine the students' writing quality. However, the students have not achieved better elements of writing yet. Consequently, it resulted in more writing issues faced by the students. Maysuroh et al., (2017) investigated university students' writing issues consisting of grammatical, word choice and mechanical issues. Furthermore, further writing issues were explored by Al Mubarak (2017). He affirmed that most university students' issues were such as the use of punctuation, preposition, and verb tense.

It is in line with the previous study that many students failed to transfer their ideas into paragraphs (Ceylan, 2019). It occurred due to their lack of vocabulary acquisition, less skill in sentence structure, and less understanding of idea generation. Moreover, Afrilyasanti et al., (2017) mentioned that students' writing problems were complex related to linguistic factors; word choice, grammar, article, spelling, mechanism, and verb agreement. In addition, Afrilyasanti et al., (2017) revealed that organizing ideas and communicating the target language were the advanced students' difficulties. Those issues were affected by students' low writing practice at home, students' less motivation, and the time allotment or distribution of each writing process was insufficient (Maysuroh et al., 2017).

One of the best ways suggested by researchers to cope with writing issues is through a writing process. It was confirmed that the process approach is helpful because it has various classroom activities, such as leading students to collaborate, improving language use, sharing ideas, triggering students' motivation, and advancing students' behaviour on writing skills (Eliwarti & Maarof, 2017). Moreover, students are trained to learn individually as they explore and produce the writing product themselves. It is believed that the writing process is

effective and meaningful since the students undergo the process from beginning until finishing writing. Bergmann (2010) explained that the writing process encourages students to keep focused on their tasks.

The writing process proposed by Alfaki (2015) also asserted that the process approach goes to planning, drafting, revising, editing and publishing. The first stage, planning, refers to determining the author's point of view and the purpose of the writing in order to ensure the connectivity of the ideas. The writer develops the main ideas into some supporting sentences and later into a paragraph in the drafting stage. The third stage is revising, referring to making arrangements of the ideas developed into a better-written text. The fourth stage is editing the punctuation, spelling, and capitalization mechanism. The last stage is publishing, which refers to sharing the text with a specific audience.

Several previous studies have investigated the students' perceptions of the writing process (Abas & Abd Aziz, 2016; Dewi, 2021; Eliwarti & Maarof, 2017; Kurniasih et al., 2020; Maolida & Mustika, 2018). A study conducted by Dewi (2021) showed that all students had positive behaviour toward the writing process. They admitted that the writing process was practical due to its systematic steps, in which students easily followed the guidance. The students found that planning steps provide them with organizing ideas. Moreover, students assume that revising is essential to improving their writing based on teachers' and peers' feedback. Accordingly, Eliwarti & Maarof (2017) revealed that most students considered that pre-writing was valuable for them as it helped collect and arrange ideas. They also revealed that the writing process helps them produce better writing products.

On the contrary, different students might perceive the writing process differently. It was stated in Abas & Abd Azis (2016) that not all writing processes are suitable for the students since not all the students underwent the same process. Likewise, the writing process may lead to students' writing anxiety. Although Kurniasih et al., (2020) found that students witnessed the writing process's benefits, the writing process's steps must be appropriately conducted. Thus, it is vital to emphasize the positive sides of the writing process to decrease the students' writing anxiety.

Based on the highlighted previous studies, it was concluded that the students' writing problems must be solved by alternating the learning-teaching activities. Consequently, the learning teaching evaluation is necessarily needed as an alternating point through students' perceptions. Thus, this current study explores undergraduate students' perceptions and challenges in the writing process. This current study will benefit teachers as they will get insights from the evaluation. The teachers may develop various writing activities based on the students' weaknesses, problems, and needs. The teachers must comprehensively acknowledge the writing process so that students clearly figure out the writing process. Pertinent to the research subject, this current study investigated four steps; pre-writing, drafting, revising, and editing as the subjects' experiences. Their experiences became a foundation to explore a deep understanding of students' perceptions regarding the writing process. In the bottom line, the research question was proposed as "What are the students' perceptions of the process writing steps?"

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Writing process approach remains in existence because the experts considered the product approach was not ineffective to be used in writing. Many experts believed that the product approach did not teach students to have meaningful learning since it was only focused on the product, not the learning process. Badger & White (2000) viewed the product approach as a traditional method that only emphasized the final product. Thus, it is believed that the writing process was designed to cater to the students' needs in learning writing, where they are trained to write a text, construct a text, and help students to cope with their writing issues. To have effective writing, students need to undergo some stages in the writing process.

The stages in the writing process were defined variously by some experts. Williams, (2003) defined the writing process into eight stages; pre-writing, planning, drafting, pausing, reading, revising, editing, and publishing. Each stage has various activities which lead students to have a meaningful and effective learning process (Williams, 2003). Asriati & Maharida (2013) designed a writing process in five stages; pre-writing, writing, revising, editing and publishing. The writing process is narrowed into pre-writing, drafting, revising, and editing based on the above mentioned.

Pre-writing is defined as brainstorming or generating ideas that require ideas exchanging, outlining, and free writing. This is considered the first stage students have to pass during writing. Drafting as the second stage refers to producing topic, supporting, and concluding sentences that will be developed into paragraphs. In this stage, students continue to organize the ideas based on the topic they had in pre-writing. The next stage is revising, which refers to modifying by suiting the plan with the developed ideas. The critical part of the revising stage is peer review, which asks for suggestions from teachers and friends for a better text. Editing becomes the last stage of the writing process dealing with the continuing process of revising. It concerns the correctness of grammar, punctuation, spelling, capitalization, and writing styles.

Kurniasih et al., (2020) mentioned that the process approach promotes students to experience the learning process instead of only focusing on the product. The learning process will be more organized in gaining ideas, organizing ideas, developing sentences, and reflecting on their mistakes. Besides, Kurniasih et al., (2020) affirmed that students found challenges during the writing process. Hence, by experiencing the process approach, students will better acknowledge their writing challenges and discover solutions to cope with the challenges.

However, the process approach is not always practical, as mentioned above, due to some considerations. The process approach ignores the linguistic elements in writing, while linguistics is essential for students' language skills. Linguistics is also needed to help students write a text with correct grammar, spelling, vocabulary, and punctuation. The writing process decreases the originality of students' writing due to many interventions from teachers and peers. Moreover, it demands much time for the teachers to control the students' progress in writing.

Compared with the mentioned previous studies, most of them did not distinguish which writing processes were complex for the students. Instead, most previous studies

merely explained the concept and types of the writing process, in which it is also essential to present the challenges. Therefore, this current study aims to determine the apparent challenges in each writing process.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Research Design

This current study was employed through a small-scale survey. A survey was applicable due to two considerations; the aim of the study and the practicality. The survey was appropriate to discover the students' perceptions towards the writing process as this study expected and was practical to determine individual behaviour. According to Creswell (2012), survey design aims to describe populations' opinions, attitudes, and behaviours. In this study, the survey collected quantitative data using questionnaires. The obtained data were interpreted to identify the students' perceptions.

3.2 Participants

The respondents involved were 31 students of an Intensive Course Writing class in the first semester. They were selected as they experienced the writing process in a semester. They had been writing various kinds of text such as Narrative, Descriptive, Process, and Compare and Contrast Paragraphs. While writing those paragraphs, they used process writing techniques covering outlining, drafting, revising, and finishing. Besides, the students were convenient and available to be involved in this study as they were similar to other EFL learners. The subjects of this current study and previous studies experienced the writing process in writing class. In addition, they were Indonesian learners who experienced quite similar writing class atmospheres.

3.3 Instruments

The instrument of this current study was a Google Form-based questionnaire created into a closed-ended type, which consists of scales from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The questions were divided into four stages of the writing process; pre-writing, drafting, revising and editing. The questions in each process were adapted from Abas & Abd Aziz (2016). The adaptation was made due to investigating the same objective for Indonesian EFL proficient student writers. Further, the writing process stages in the questionnaire were exemplified by the stages that students had experienced. The questionnaire consisted of 32 questions that regarded writing stages, and each stage consisted of eight questions. The questions dealt with the writing process activities. Table 1 shows the blueprint of the questionnaire.

Table 1. Blueprint of the Questionnaire

Aspects	Variables	Questions
Students' profile	Name	-
Pre-writing	Students' activities in the pre-writing process	Eight questions
Drafting	Students' activities in the drafting process	Eight questions
Revising	Students' activities in revising process	Eight questions
Editing	Students' activities in the editing process	Eight questions

A blueprint is structured guidance in directing a planned framework. In this current study, the blueprint was intended to formulate the questionnaire and became indicators for designing the questions. Each variable of the question was broken down into activities that refer to the writing process.

3.4 Data Analysis

The data was obtained online through the developed questionnaire. Due to the online learning, the questionnaire was online distributed since it was practically applied to both researchers and respondents. After collecting the data, then the mean, modes, and median were calculated. The final result can be seen from the percentage of the data.

4. FINDINGS

This current study aimed at investigating the students' perceptions of the writing process approach. It was proven that most IC Writing class students perceived that the writing process led to new challenges for them. According to the students, the complex parts of the writing process were the pre-writing and revising parts. Meanwhile, the drafting and editing part was less difficult for them. Table 2 shows the detailed data of the students' perceptions.

Table 2. Students' Perception of Writing Process

Questions	Mode	A = Agree
		D = Disagree
1. In the pre-writing stage, I am challenged to generate ideas.	4	A
2. I somehow copy or imitate a model text to generate ideas.	2	D
3. I get difficulties in generating ideas because there is no certain audience determined to read the text.	2	D
4. I frequently do not know what to write	2	D
5. I always feel unconfident with the sentences within my text.	3	A
6. I easily write any ideas in my writing.	3	A
7. I usually browse the internet to start writing.	2	D
8. I also get distracted with the correct use of vocabulary and mechanisms while drafting.	2	D
1. I always encounter problems to draft the structure of my text (topic, supporting, and concluding sentences).	2	D
2. I always encounter a coherence aspect issue in drafting my ideas.	3	A
3. I often think that my ideas do not attract readers.	3	A
4. The most difficult part of the drafting stage is introducing the topic of my writing.	3	A
5. I always feel unconfident with the sentences within my text.	3	A
6. Whatever the topic, the ideas are just flown on my head.	3	A
7. I am somehow worried about my idea structuring.	3	A
8. I also get distracted with the correct use of vocabulary and mechanisms while drafting.	3	A
1. Revising stage is challenging since I always try to remove some ideas written and compel the great ideas.	3	A

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2. I need my teacher's guidance to assess and revise my first draft.	3	A
3. I can revise my own texts by myself, with the assistance of an online tool to detect word diction, grammar errors, and mechanisms.	4	A
4. I do not need my friend's help to comment on my text.	2	D
5. I revise my texts more than three times to make sure all the ideas are coherent.	4	A
6. Revising the grammar aspect is often a difficult part for me.	4	A
7. I often have a peer assessment with my friends to check our writing.	3	A
8. I often revise my writing by reflecting on my friends' writing mistakes.	3	A
1. I always check my spelling and look up the words	4	A
2. I am aware of the use of punctuation in the correct place.	4	A
3. I often re-write sentences to ensure clarity.	4	A
4. I always re-check the grammatical aspect to ensure correctness.	4	A
5. Editing stage is not hard because it only focuses on applying standard English.	3	A
6. I apply the revising stage with the editing stage altogether.	2	D
7. I pause and always reread my writing before making a final draft.	3	A
8. I proofread my writing as many times as necessary.	4	A

The students' perceptions of the writing process can be seen in table 2. Starting from Pre-writing, few students agreed that they faced difficulties generating ideas (37.5%) and being unconvinced with their ideas (43.75%), respectively. Meanwhile, most students believed that generating ideas was not effortful, with a rate of 59.37%. The students also affirmed that they did not copy a model text before writing (46.87%); instead, the ideas were just flown in their minds.

Regarding the second stage, drafting, most students admitted that they encountered difficulties in writing steps. Based on the students' agreement, the difficulties were related to formulating ideas, coherence aspects, text organization, and wording and punctuations. They felt inconvenient in formulating the coherence of the ideas showing a percentage 59.37%. On the side, they considered that their ideas were not engaging for the readers, with the percentage 43.75%. Students (53.12%) had anxiety over text organization. The last, students (40.62%) realized they had issues using the correct vocabulary, punctuation and capitalization. Despite the difficulties explained, most students (46.87%) believe that they had the courage to write about the topic, supporting and concluding sentences.

The revising stage was always problematic for the students because there were many steps they went through. The problems acknowledged by the student were; better ideas production, writing assistance, grammatical issues, and proofreading. The students (56.25%) admitted they frequently edited their ideas after finishing the drafting stage and insisted on developing a better text. Further, they confirmed that the teacher's (50%) and peer's guidance (43.75%) were highly needed. Consequently, they needed to revise the text more than once (40.62%) to ensure the correct use of grammar accuracy (62.5%).

Going to the last stage, editing, most students perceived that many problems occurred, such as spelling, punctuation, sentence clarity, and proofreading. They confirmed they (71.87%) checked the spelling and punctuation to ensure the words and mechanism's correctness. In addition, the students' sentence clarity was a matter (50%) because they frequently re-wrote the sentences, ensuring the readers' readability. Hence, they (62.5%) proofread the text as their last step before submitting it.

5. DISCUSSION

Based on the research findings, it was revealed that the students' difficulties related to the writing process were various. The most problematic issues in the pre-writing stage were generating ideas and being unconfident with their ideas. This result was in tune with previous studies (Afrilyasanti et al., 2017; Alemu, 2020). Alemu (2020) confirmed that idea generation was problematic for students due to insufficient writing proficiency, fewer ideas generation, less language accuracy, less text organization, and lack of text understanding. Consequently, many students were inconvenienced in communicating their ideas in written form. Abdullah et al., (2020) offered solutions to the difficulties in generating ideas by using mind mapping, simulation, role-play, and visual aids. It can be employed in various types of writing.

Considering the ideas generation difficulties in pre-writing, the students were assigned to pass some pre-writing strategies proposed by Alemu (2020), such as; building awareness of ideas generation importance (a), brainstorming (b), clustering (c), inquiring (d), and practising (e). These strategies were considered vital to improve the students' writing skills and to promote students' competence in generating ideas. Along with this, mind mapping is believed to arise the students' understanding of developing ideas. With this in mind, the students easily acknowledge their writing ideas since they have designed the concept in the pre-writing stage.

The drafting stage was also problematic for students since they had problems formulating ideas and understanding writing coherence, text organization, wording, and punctuation. In addition, thesis statement formulation and paragraph organization were considerably challenging processes (Saprina et al., 2020). Moreover, most students did not know the correct use of clauses, conjunction and linking words. They affirmed the issue occurred for the same reason; less understanding of conjunction usage. The problems can be managed by asking the student to have peer feedback, and drafting outlines (Ridge & Elaine, 2010).

A study conducted by Fadhly et al. (2017) presented that the students passed many activities in the revising stage. The students expanded their ideas and suited their contents, language compatibility, coherence, grammar, and topic quality based on the writing format. Besides, they also were required to avoid repetitive ideas by simply using complex and compound sentences. In addition, the students usually made changes to provide a better quality of writing. During the process, it is undeniable that the teacher and the peer's feedback are matters for the students to ensure the clarity of writing. As a betterment of the writing product, according to Ridge & Elaine (2010), teachers can provide a strategy, namely a teacher-student conference where students directly convey feedback and suggestion for their friends' writing.

Pertinent to the editing stage, the students faced some writing issues regarding spelling, punctuation, and proofreading. This stage is crucial to measure the clarity of content and the ideas' connectivity. It was in line with Fadhly et al., (2017) that mentioned that students frequently checked the redundant and repetitive wordings in their paragraphs. However, the editing stage was limited for the students since they had undergone the long process of pre-writing, drafting and revising. Through this, the students generally proofread

their writing only once. Proofread is highly necessary for students to develop and reflect their mistakes to be better in writing.

6. CONCLUSION

This current study confirmed the students' perceptions of the writing process based on the finding. The finding found that most students experienced the writing process as challenging. The writing process refers to pre-writing, drafting, revising, and editing. Pre-writing and revising stages turned out to be the most effortful process they had to pass. Generating ideas was claimed as the students' obstacle in the pre-writing stage. Along with, developing ideas were considerably claimed as the other obstacle in the revising stage. However, according to the students, the drafting and editing stage became a less challenging process. The students felt that those two stages were less complicated because they merely continued the organization of the ideas from the preceding stages. The students also admitted the difficulties of the proofreading process in which they needed to concern themselves with the correctness of spelling, punctuation, and grammar.

The findings of this current study will be helpful for future researchers and English teachers. For future researchers, the findings of this current study can be used as a reference and new insight to conduct research related to the writing process in a wide range of writing classrooms and different conditions. Further, for English teachers, the results of the students' perceptions can be a reflection to develop more varied teaching writing activities. Therefore, it is highly recommended that teachers carry out the following teaching improvements. First, providing mind map techniques to ease the students' outline of their ideas. The mind mapping can be in the form of bullet points, flow charts, treemaps, and circle maps. Second, facilitating group discussions to assist students to communicate their difficulties during the writing process. In addition, they will exchange their ideas to proofread each other's writing.

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