Should Students Keep on Learning Writing although Facing Problems and Feeling Less Confident?

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Abstract

Learning to write in English is not an easy task. Foreign language learners (EFL) need to put their best effort to produce an acceptable piece of writing in terms of content and language. This paper is intended to investigate the English Language Education problems in writing essays. This study uses a descriptive-quantitative design, by using mini-scale research on the 2020 batch of students taking essay writing courses this semester. The total population of the participants was 120 students, Yet, the researchers only took 17% of the total population as the respondents. The instrument used was a five-scale questionnaire in which all items exploring the students' problems in writing. The researchers distributed the questionnaire randomly to 20 students by using a google form application. The result showed that the problems frequently faced by the students are the writers' block during writing. All students also felt that the lack of reading affects the progress of their writing. Furthermore, the students felt they have problems in using proper grammar and how to make the essay intact. As a result, there were 65% of the students do not have enough confidence in writing, and only 30% of them were sufficiently confident with their writing ability.

Keywords: essay, EFL students, problems, writing
A. Introduction

Writing is one of the most important basic language skills besides the three other skills which have a major role in expressing and communicating ideas, feelings, and thoughts in written form in the modern society in this digital era. In this modern era with sophisticated technology, writing becomes an important skill to learn and develop considering the existence of many social media platforms that facilitate someone to share their ideas. Thus, writing has become massive and popular. Besides that, the use of social media continues to increase and this progress leads to the dissemination of information around the world rapidly. The essential writing can be seen in daily life such as the existence of magazines, online newspapers, and literary works. Through writing skills, someone can introduce his work, provide important knowledge and inspire many people. Writing also contributes to the advancement of human civilization and records important traces from past and present generations for future generations.

In academic education institutions, writing is crucial, especially for college students because they are required to write down their ideas that require knowledge in specific fields, such as writing papers, articles, journals, dissertations, and theses. In addition, writing is used for a variety of purposes and in different forms. Having good writing skills is important for students because this skill is very useful for them later and it can be a golden ticket for good grades and satisfactory achievements in academic life. Writing is one of the abilities that can be applied in various learning contexts. Moreover, writing skills encourage students to think critically, beware in processing information, compile background knowledge from their reading creatively, and construct and develop ideas. In other words, writing is one of the competencies students must have when they take English courses. As a foreign language, writing in English is not an easy process because this skill does not develop naturally, but it requires a long process and hard effort to master (Setyowati, Sukmawan, & Latief, 2017). One way is through a lot of practices, which are usually done in a series of lessons informal education.

In the Department of English Education, Faculty of Letter, State University of Malang, students generally get writing course material from basic to higher levels, from essay writing to academic writing. The long-term objective of the essay writing course is to equip students with theoretical and practical ability to write essays by using various types of paragraph development, such as examples-detail essays, cause, and effects, opinion essays, contrast, and comparison, discussion essay, etc. However, based on the researchers’ observation, many students confessed that they were less proficient in writing. As writing is a challenging activity, it is so common that many students have problems in learning it. One of the factors that most students had was a lack of ideas that makes experiencing writer’s block.

Writer’s block is a situation where a writer has no idea to write on paper even after the writer puts his/her best efforts (Flaherty, 2015). Because of writer's block, some writers have different ways of facing it. Some of them avoid writing activities or take a break until these symptoms disappear, while others even choose to give up (Rahmat, 2020). The writer’s block happens because of some factors such as fear of judgment, high perfectionism, excessive criticism, and external (Rahmat, 2020). These factors also contribute to lowering their self-confidence. According to Bénabou & Tirole (2002), self-confidence is an important asset for individuals because it is associated with the improvement of students’ motivation to undertake some challenges and to pursue big opportunities. Related to writing, students need to have good self-confidence about their ability to be motivated in learning writing or improve their writing ability. Hence, students with greater self-confidence will focus on improving their ability in writing and believe in themselves as the key to success despite many obstacles and temptations that discourage them (Bénabou & Tirole, 2002).

Regarding student problems in writing English essays, several studies have recently been carried out by several researchers. Ariyanti & Fitriani (2017) found out that English department students at Widya Gama Mahakam University have difficulties in the use of proper grammatical structure, cohesion, and coherence for their essays. They also have problems in paragraph organization, dictionaries, vocabulary, and misspelled words. Similarly, Ratnawati (2018) also found out that the students have difficulties either in general skills or language problems of academic writing. According to the findings, however, the most difficult thing in writing is using proper grammar such as prepositions, subject-verb agreements, and correct tenses. In terms of self-confidence, Gunawan & Aziz (2018) found out that there is a positive relationship between students’ self-confidence and writing skills.

Research on writing problems in the EFL context is abundant. Yet, specific research investigating the students’ problem when learning to write essays in the English department,
Faculty of Letters, State University of Malang is very few. The uniqueness of this study also lays in the fully online learning implemented by the university during the outbreak of COVID-19. As teaching and learning in a conventional setting and in an online setting offer different experiences for both the lecturer and the students, there might be more problems the students face, which are not confined to the writing itself. Thus, the researchers felt compelled to investigate the issue, so that the students can solve their writing problems and be better writers in the future. Learning from this crucial phenomenon, this paper aims at investigating the student’s opinions about some problems they faced in writing an essay in the English Department, Faculty of the letter, State University of Malang.

B. Literature Review

1. Writing as a Process.

Writing is not a linear process. Mostly it goes in a cyclic process. Because the writer often goes back and forth to revise and edit the composition, before it finally comes to an end product. According to Harmer (2004) writing is a lengthy process that contains four main processes, prewriting, drafting, editing or revising, and final draft. These steps establish easier ways to organize ideas and have a function as a double-check the content so that the final draft is spared from many significant mistakes, which reduce the quality of the writing. Frequently, students need more time to think before writing down their ideas on paper. Even though they can be assisted by dictionaries, books, and other sources, those helps mostly are not enough. Students often have to deal with several difficult components in writing such as vocabulary, grammar, spelling, punctuation, and linking ideas to form unity and coherence. (Hedge, 1988). Thus, the skill of tailoring ideas into a meaningful sentences clearly and convincingly for the readers also a challenge the students must face in writing courses.

2. Recent Research on EFL Students’ Writing Problems

Several studies have recently been carried out by several researchers. One of them was observed by Ariyanti & Fitriani (2017), who investigated the difficulties faced by EFL students in writing essays using an open questionnaire to 33 students majoring in English at Widya Gama Mahakam University. The results showed that students experienced great difficulties in terms of grammatical, cohesion, and coherence structure as well as minor aspects such as paragraph organization, dictionaries, vocabulary, and misspelled words.

Similarly, Ratnawati (2018) investigates the students’ perceptions of the difficulties in academic writing by collecting data through a five-scaled questionnaire given to 34 EFL students from a private university and doing a focus group interview involving 9 respondents. Based on the results, it showed that students deal with difficulties either in general skills or language problems of academic writing. According to the findings, however, the most difficult thing in writing is using proper grammar such as prepositions, subject-verb agreements, and correct tenses. Other research also shows that one problem that the students might face is self-confidence. Gunawan & Aziz (2018), observed the relationship between self-confidence and writing ability using a quantitative approach with a sample of 73 students of Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Bogor using the self-confidence scale data method and creative writing tests as data collection. The results of the analysis show that there is a positive relationship between students’ self-confidence and writing skills.

C. Methodology

1. Research Design

Research is a scientific inquiry to identify some of the problems that students often face in writing courses by following a research design, making it exactly on target, and leads up to the focus of the research. The approach used in this study is a quantitative one. According to Azwar (2009: 5), the quantitative approach is a study that contains numerical data processed by statistical analysis methods. Furthermore, this research is classified as a type of survey research, which is a data collection procedure by distributing questions to the sample or the entire population to describe the opinions, attitudes, behaviors, and characteristics of a particular population by examining the same sample over an extended period (Cresswell, 2012). This research is classified as quantitative descriptive research. According to Sugiyono (2016:13), descriptive research is the research method used to find the acquisition of the value of the independent variable without comparing it to other variables. In this case, this study aims to solve actual problems related to the phenomena faced by most students in writing essays. Hence, the data was collected from respondents using a questionnaire.
2. Participants/Respondents/Population and Sample

The total population of students in English Language Education of Batch 2019 is approximately 85 students, consisting of four parallel classes. Yet, the researchers only took 24% of the total population to distribute the questionnaire randomly. Thus, the participants of this study are 20 college students from the English Language Education courses of the State University of Malang as the respondents, specifically from the same level. They consist of 10 female students and 10 male students who took English as their subject. Furthermore, the respondent is a college student from 2019 and currently taking the fourth semester this year. These participants were assumed to have experience in essay writing courses and know their weaknesses and strengths so that they know the problems they face related to writing an essay as one of the skills they must master in the English education department at Malang State University.

3. Technique of Data Collection

The data collected using a questionnaire consisting of two parts with 10 items to answer the research question. The questionnaire was distributed to fourth-semester students of the English Department, Faculty of the letter, the State University of Malang through Whatsapp because Whatsapp is the easy and quick platform to get the participants. Due to COVID-19, all the participants do not study in college, these factors force the researcher to choose the participants randomly through online questionnaires with Whatsapp and got 20 respondents who filled the data.

4. Instruments

The data was collected from Friday, 6th May 2021 until Tuesday, 10th May 2021, and succeeded in collecting 20 participants from various backgrounds by using questionnaires as the data collection instruments. According to (Arikunto, 2010), a questionnaire is several questions in written form that are used to obtain some information from respondents. The questionnaire is a data collection method that is flexible, efficient, and easy to use as a data collection method. This method has two types from the way of answering it, the open questionnaire and the closed questionnaire. Yet, The author was simply using a closed questionnaire, which already had direct answers provided by the author that the respondent can choose from to collect the information or primary data that comes directly from the respondent. The author used a closed questionnaire type to indicate some of the difficulties they face and which of the many factors are the most dominant. The total number of questionnaires was 10 statements and consist of two parts which were the identity and the difficulties faced by students in writing an essay.

5. Technique of Data Analysis

Data that has been collected from participants through questionnaires was analyzed quantitatively by presenting it in the form of graphs and tables. In this case, the researcher analyzed the percentage and the chart formulation using Google form as a statistic. The researcher also entered the number of responses and the percentage for each statement which has an option of answers 5 Likert scales with choices of strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree to present the data in the table.

D. Findings and Discussion

1. Findings

The result of the study shows that most students agree (SA 60% + A 40%) that they were often experiencing the writers’ block phenomenon in their writing. Apart from writer’s block, most students agree (SA 80% + A 20%) that they have a lack of reading which basically affected their writing process. It indicates that the participants have a low reading interest which becomes a problem in their writing process. Another problem students often experience deals with grammar; most students agree (SA 80% + A 20%) that they feel difficulty using proper grammar in their writing. Another component is vocabulary, most students agree (SA 80% + A 20%) that lack of vocabulary can hinder their writing process. It shows that the participants may have an insufficient vocabulary that affects their writing. Furthermore, the data also shows that students agree (SA 85% + A 15%) that they feel difficulty in making the essay intact with good unity and coherence. Due to some problems in the writing process, some students agree (SA 10% + A 50%) that they feel less confident with their writing. Meanwhile, the students who chose to disagree (D 5% + SD 25%) feel confident enough with their writing.
Table 1. Difficulties in Writing Essays

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I often experience writers' block in writing an essay</td>
<td>12 60%</td>
<td>8 40%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>20 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I think a lack of reading affect my writing process</td>
<td>16 80%</td>
<td>4 20%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>20 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I feel less confident about my essay writing</td>
<td>3 15%</td>
<td>10 50%</td>
<td>1 5%</td>
<td>5 25%</td>
<td>1 5%</td>
<td>20 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I have difficulty using proper grammar in my writing</td>
<td>16 80%</td>
<td>4 20%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>20 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I feel that lack of vocabulary can hinder my writing process</td>
<td>4 20%</td>
<td>16 80%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>20 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I often have some misspelled words in my writing</td>
<td>4 20%</td>
<td>6 30%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>10 50%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>20 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I often find punctuation mistakes in my writing</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>3 15%</td>
<td>1 5%</td>
<td>11 55%</td>
<td>5 25%</td>
<td>20 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I have difficulty forming cohesion between sentences in my writing</td>
<td>1 5%</td>
<td>7 35%</td>
<td>1 5%</td>
<td>8 40%</td>
<td>3 15%</td>
<td>20 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I have difficulty making unity and coherence in my writing</td>
<td>17 85%</td>
<td>3 15%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>20 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I have difficulty making a variety of sentence structures in my writing</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>4 20%</td>
<td>3 15%</td>
<td>11 55%</td>
<td>2 10%</td>
<td>20 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can be summed up that all students faced writers' block during writing (100%), they also have a difficulty in using appropriate grammar (100%) and in creating a unified and coherent essay (100%). Then, they also feel that a lack of reading (100%) makes them unable to write well. The students also feel that they lack vocabulary (100%) that hinders them from producing a good piece of writing. The researchers suspect that because of these factors, the students feel less confident with their writing ability (65%).

2. **Discussion**

Writing essays in English is one of the most challenging tasks for students. The problems faced by the students may come from many factors, either external or internal factors. The findings in this study showed that students face some problems in writing essays. All of them experience difficulties due to writer's block in writing. They also have some difficulties in grammar and confess to having a lack of reading and a lack of vocabulary needed to write the essay. The finding of the study also showed that the students have difficulties in unity and coherence for their writing. Only 35% of them feel confident with their ability to write while the rest feel on the other way around.
The result of this study supports the previous research in which students in the FL context have problems in writing. The research conducted by Ariyanti & Fitriana (2017) showed that the students faced problems in writing an essay. Even though the students in their study also have problems in paragraph organization, diction, vocabulary, and misspelling, yet problems in using proper grammar, coherence, and cohesion seem to be their biggest obstacles Ariyanti & Fitriana (2017) suggested that the student’s need to be given more guidance in the process of writing. To do this, the lecturer can distribute some feedback for the essays to be revised by the students. The result of this research is also similar to Rahmatunisa (2014) in which she found that there are three major problems encountered by the EFL students in writing, namely cognitive, linguistics, and psychological problems. The newer study also shows that the main challenges that students face in writing are organizing ideas, grammar, punctuation, word choice, and word order (Ahmed, 2019). He advised that teachers should provide textbooks for students to practice. Based on previous research and the findings of this study, the researcher came to the conclusion that there are six major problems that students encounter when writing essays.

The first problem that students face when writing is writers’ block. Many authors, whether professional or amateur, have moments when they lose their inspiration and motivation to write. This makes people feel stuck, and it may cause them to abandon their writing project. Writers’ block, according to Duchene (2008), is the difficulty to begin or continue writing due to a variety of variables that afflict the writer, such as fear, lack of inspiration, and anxiety. Most writers suffer from a variety of ailments that have led to writer’s block. Lach (2018), stated that some of the most prominent variables that contribute to writer’s block are fear, perfectionism, self-criticism, and external exposure (Lach, 2018). Writing in English is always a challenge for an EFL writer (Setyowati, Sukmawan, & Latief, 2017). It is difficult for them to push the concepts out of their heads, and as a result, they overthink and are afraid of being judged or criticized by others. It’s natural to be afraid of something, but if the writers can’t conquer their fears, there will be unable to write. As a result, the researchers advised students not to be too hard on themselves. Different sorts of planning activities, such as explicit planning, can also be used by students to help relieve the cognitive burden (Setyowati, Sukmawan, & Latief, 2017). According to Gunawan & Aziz (2018), there is a positive association between students’ self-confidence and their writing abilities in this situation, and they propose that students require a lot of practice to develop a favorable attitude toward themselves.

The lack of reading is the second problem in writing. Reading is a crucial and helpful activity for gathering information and comprehending the text’s meaning, which requires the development of writing skills (Krashen, 2014). Because the two are intertwined, reading can have an impact on writing abilities. Someone who reads a lot has enough knowledge to be able to process it into new forms of information in writing. People who do not read will not gain a broad enough understanding to be able to produce something sensible and trustworthy. The writers will gain a lot of essential knowledge when writing a specific topic if they develop regular reading habits, and they will have less difficulty in writing. Reading is extremely beneficial because it can supply a wealth of writing content as well as inspiration for new ideas. To enrich their writing, students can read some books to gain new knowledge and develop critical thinking skills that will aid them in writing since there is a significant correlation between reading and writing ability (Budi, 2020).

The third problem is the difficulty of writing with good grammar. Grammar is an important part of every language, but it is extremely vital when writing English. Thornburry (1999) stated that grammar is a set of rules for constructing effective sentences in any language, including their meanings. According to the definition, the writer must be familiar with the laws of English grammar for the message to be more effective and understandable to the audience. The majority of students in this study have difficulty using good grammar. They do not utilize the correct tense, make subject-verb agreement errors, employ pronouns and prepositions incorrectly, and so on. The most prevalent grammar mistake is the verb tense, which is very tricky and tough to master. Grammar errors can be a source of frustration for students when writing essays. Students frequently use incorrect grammar because they are perplexed or do not fully comprehend the rules. As a result, students must improve their grammatical competence through extensive practice and, if necessary, enroll in additional courses on any platform to improve their writing because previous research reports that there is a positive correlation between grammar mastery and writing performance (Puspitasari 2017; Praseno, 2017).

The fourth problems in writing are a lack of vocabulary. Vocabulary is an important skill that must be mastered by students who take English as their major. Linse (2005) defines vocabulary
as the set of words. Similarly, Hatch & Brown (1995) defines a vocabulary list of words for a particular language. Without knowing or having a wide range of vocabulary, the students will face some difficulties in writing. Thornbury (2002: 13) states that without grammar there is very little to convey whereas without vocabulary there is nothing to convey. It means that it is useless for the students to have good grammar but have little vocabulary because they cannot even express anything effectively. Likewise in writing, the lack of vocabulary will hinder their writing process because they do not know the meaning and function or meaning of words when arranging their ideas. It will prolong the process of their writing and the wrong choice of words in context can mislead the readers and as a result, they don’t get the right idea.

The fifth problem faced by students in this study is making unity and coherence. Unity means a paragraph only discusses one main idea from the beginning until the end and every supporting sentence must directly explain and support the idea (Oshima & Hogue, 2006). All supporting sentences should support the topic sentences and all unnecessary supporting sentences should be eliminated because they will affect the result of writing. In contrast, students may write more than one supporting topic or sentence in each paragraph, they also have some supporting sentences that do not directly support the main idea, they have too many sentences that go off the topic and they include some irrelevant information in their writing. This issue causes them to produce writing with a lack of unity. Another element of a good essay is coherence that means hold together in Latin. According to Oshima and Hogue (2006), coherence means that the sentences in each paragraph must be connected to each other logically, flow smoothly, and there are no sudden jumps in the movement from one sentence to the next sentences. Oshima& Hogue (2006) propose four ways to achieve coherence in writing. There are involve using pronouns consistently, repeating key nouns, using transition signals to show the relation of one idea to the next idea, and stating the ideas in logical order. It seems easy, therefore, many students do not follow any of these four ways in making coherenc. The most common issue is they do not use consistent pronouns, they do not use pronouns that refer back to key nouns even they do not repeat the key nouns which makes them less effective, and they do not use transitional signals as needed. This problem in their writing is called lack of coherence, it can be said that their writing has a lack of coherence because it does not meet the essential elements. In this case, writing a good essay must make sense and achieve unity and coherence because unity and coherence become important things in a paragraph or essay composition. When writing an essay, the students need unity and coherence to make it logical, clear, and easy to understand for readers because if an essay does not convey what the writers to communicate the idea to readers, the writer will make the readers confused about the idea and cannot get the information. Although it seems simple, as students and writers, they have to make sure that their piece of writing has unity and coherence. To achieve unity and coherence in writing, students should obey the rules of each and do practice in composing their sentences to make unity and coherence.

The last problem is related to students' self-confidence about their writing. Based on the findings, it showed that many students feel less confident about their writing. According to Thantaway (2005), self-confidence is a psychological condition of a person which gives strong confidence in himself to do something. Self-confidence is a positive self-assessment of the ability that exists within itself to face various situations and challenges as well as the mental ability to reduce negative influences that encourage individuals to achieve opportunities or success (Mirhan, 2016). From those definitions, students who have less self-confidence will grow into someone who is pessimistic, afraid, and full of doubts in the face of challenges, conveying ideas, making choices, and also comparing themselves with others. Students who are not confident building bad self-concepts or negative assessments of themselves, so that it hinders the development of their potential, both knowledge and abilities because it is probably caused by a feeling of dissatisfaction with their abilities which creates fear of other people’s assumptions (Surya, 2007). Most students are afraid that their writing is considered bad, they are afraid of getting bad feedback from others, they are afraid that their writing is not as good as other friends which causes their motivation to decrease. However, everyone has different levels of self-confidence, there are some people who have high confidence, some are less confident, some are not confident at all (Setyowati, 2015). Students often experience self-confidence crises in writing because students should master all the elements of good writing that are not easy and their low competence affects their self-esteem (Setyowati, 2015). Their negative feelings in evaluating themselves affect their self-confidence and enthusiasm in writing because self-confidence has a significant relationship with writing ability. A study conducted by Kholid et al. (2017) showed that self-esteem and writing skills are correlated. Research by Gunawan &Aziz
(2018) also showed that there is a relationship between self-confidence with writing ability. The result implies that the higher level of self-confidence impacts on the higher level of writing.

For this reason, the researcher argued that students should keep on learning writing rather than stop although they feel insecure with their ability in writing. There are three reasons why students should continue learning in writing essays although they feel less confident with their ability in writing. First, students should keep on learning writing because it will improve their competence and knowledge which will lead to an increase in their self-confidence and motivation in writing. It is in line with Mirhan (2016) who states that competence and knowledge have a relationship with self-confidence which confidence will not be optimal without knowledge and vice versa. The enhancement of broad insight helps the individuals or students stand out and show their credibility so that people will not underestimate them again and they can also face big problems with high motivation and self-confidence. They can increase their knowledge with many things such as reading books and watching useful videos and high motivation help them in pursuing their goals. Moreover, they can begin to have a positive mind, optimistic view of themselves and they do not afraid to get out of their comfort zone to try many things even though they may face failure which is no longer considered as a disaster but a valuable process where they can learn from that experience. Second, students should keep on learning writing because it will make them focus more on learning and improve their ability to write although they feel less confident. The enhancement in their ability has a significant role to open up some opportunities and careers in the future. Although getting rid of insecurities is not easy, the students need to decide to move on rather than worrying about judgments given by others that make them even more insecure than before. With a focus on learning, they can develop their skills in writing, they only need to write what they want to convey to the readers and focus on improving their ability in writing. It is in line with Gunawan & Aziz (2018) opinion who states that students who write are those who are dare enough in expressing themselves. He further states that this courageous act may increase their self-confidence because they are not afraid to put forward their ideas. This will lead them to ease in getting better opportunities or jobs because writing is an activity that provides benefits. There are several ways to improve self-confidence. One way is by using playwriting. Look (2008), examines the effect of writing, especially playwriting, on the self-concept and writing ability of students.

In sum, it is normal that students feel less confident sometimes with their ability in writing. Yet, they need to raise themselves and continue learning. With a lot of practice, students will be able to increase their writing and increase their confidence. Gunawan & Aziz (2018) state that students who have low writing skills can develop their abilities. With many efforts and supports, students can increase their interest in writing and elevate their self-confidence which is important to maximize their competence.

E. Conclusion

This research is triggered by students' problems in writing essays which are examined through quantitative description methods using an online questionnaire contains ten questions distributed to 20 respondents. It was found out that fourth college student of the State University of Malang who take English as their major have problems in writing an essay especially in terms of phenomena writers' block, lack of reading, using inappropriate grammar, lack of vocabulary, and making unity and coherence. And internally, the students have problems with self-confidence. To cope with these problems from external and internal factors, the researchers provide some suggestions for students. Students can do a lot of practice independently either in class or outside class to improve their abilities in writing essays. They can also learn from a lot of platforms that provide some lessons or tips to create good writing. Also, they can take other courses to increase their ability. The researchers also offer some suggestions to writing lecturers to synchronize textbooks with digital learning and provide feedback on student writing clearly and continuously so that students can recognize their mistakes and correct their writing based on the feedback. The writing lecturer also needs to motivate the students to increase their ability in writing. This study gives contribution to add theories in the EFL teaching and learning area and it contributes to the lecturers in writing classes to understand students' problems in writing so lecturers can apply particular methods in the teaching and learning process. Yet, this study cannot be used as a generalization because of the small sample about 20 students and uses a limited instrument only from the questionnaire to obtain data. Therefore, to have a more extensive view of the students' writing problems in writing, future researchers need to use a bigger sample and a wider population to make generalization. Moreover, future researchers can use various instruments to enrich the
data and explore the students’ solutions to cope with their problems in writing essays because these findings only focus on the problems faced by students in writing.

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