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## Enhancing Language Proficiency Through The Power of Expression and Integration among BSI University Students

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### Abstrak

Studi tentang menulis telah muncul sebagai bidang penyelidikan yang penting dalam penelitian pembelajaran bahasa. Menulis memainkan peran penting dalam mengembangkan kemahiran berbahasa di kalangan siswa, baik secara internal maupun eksternal. Para peneliti telah berupaya untuk mengeksplorasi berbagai fungsi menulis sebagai alat pembelajaran yang efektif. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif untuk menjawab, mendeskripsikan, dan menjelaskan pertanyaan-pertanyaan mengenai permasalahan siswa dalam menulis esai. Analisis deskriptif digunakan sebagai metodologi penelitian ini. Dalam penelitian ini, kuesioner tertutup berupa pertanyaan pilihan ganda digunakan. Pernyataan angket berasal dari penelitian sebelumnya mengenai masalah umum penulisan esai yang dialami siswa. Analisis tanggapan angket mengidentifikasi beberapa permasalahan utama dalam penulisan esai yang dihadapi siswa. Mereka mengalami kesulitan yang signifikan dalam memahami topik esai yang rumit atau tidak jelas, dan menghabiskan banyak waktu untuk memahaminya. Mengorganisasikan pemikiran dan menjaga koherensi merupakan tantangan besar, dimana siswa sering kali gagal mengurutkan ide secara logis atau memastikan kelancaran transisi antar bagian. Esai berfungsi sebagai wadah bagi siswa untuk mengungkapkan pemikirannya, terlibat dalam berpikir kritis, dan mengintegrasikan pengetahuan yang diperoleh dari berbagai sumber. Namun, siswa sering kali menghadapi tantangan dalam menulis esai, termasuk masalah seperti plagiarisme, kesalahan tata bahasa, kesulitan leksikal, kurangnya perencanaan, dan kurang percaya diri.

Kata Kunci: *Peningkatan Bahasa, Ekspresi dan Integrasi, Mahasiswa Universitas BSI*

## Abstract

The study of writing has emerged as a crucial area of investigation in language learning research. Writing plays a significant role in developing language proficiency among students, both internally and externally. Researchers have endeavored to explore the multifaceted functions of writing as an effective learning tool. This study utilizes a qualitative approach to answer, describe, and explain the questions concerning students' problems in writing essays. Descriptive analysis is employed as the methodology for this research. In this study, a closed-ended questionnaire in the form of multiple-choice questions is utilized. The questionnaire statements are derived from previous research on common essay-writing issues experienced by students. The analysis of the questionnaire responses identifies several key issues in essay writing faced by students. They struggle significantly with understanding complex or vague essay topics, spending excessive time on comprehension. Organizing thoughts and maintaining coherence are major challenges, with students often failing to sequence ideas logically or ensure smooth transitions between sections. Essays serve as a platform for students to express their thoughts, engage in critical thinking, and integrate knowledge gained from various sources. However, students often face challenges in essay writing, including issues such as plagiarism, grammatical errors, lexical difficulties, lack of planning, and lack of confidence.

*Keywords: Enhancing Language, Expression and Integration, BSI University Students*

## INTRODUCTION

The study of writing has emerged as a crucial area of investigation in language learning research. Writing plays a significant role in developing language proficiency among students, both internally and externally. Researchers have endeavored to explore the multifaceted functions of writing as an effective learning tool. According to Altun (2023), writing enables learners to express their individuality and promote effective communication. It facilitates the transmission of language from students to their surrounding environment, ensuring that messages and ideas are effectively conveyed. Initially, students learn to organize and articulate their thoughts coherently through writing and subsequently receive feedback. Furthermore, Fareed, Ashraf, and Bilal (2016) posit that writing skills are considered productive as they integrate information obtained through listening, speaking, and reading, and are subsequently expressed in written form. This implies that writing not only enhances students' ability to listen and speak but also expands their overall language proficiency. Consequently, students become more productive as all language skills are activated (Mustafa Altun, 2023); (Fareed et al., 2016)

Within the realm of writing, essays hold a pivotal position in the language learning process. Students' proficiency in using language elements undergoes significant growth. Several pieces of evidence underscore the heightened emphasis on the importance of

essays. Previous studies, such as Jefferson et al. (2020), highlight the value of essay writing exercises in fostering critical thinking about course materials, enabling students to grasp, organize, and integrate prior knowledge with new concepts. This process enhances students' ability to absorb, process, and apply knowledge. Additionally, Maley (2009) asserts that writing promotes language development across various domains, including grammar, vocabulary, phonology, and discourse. Through writing, learners can express their ideas using a wide range of words and expressions, gradually internalizing writing rules and achieving mastery (K. et al., 2020)(Mustafa Altun, 2023)

Throughout the writing process, students may encounter concerns and encounter errors that impede their ability to produce written works. These challenges can stem from language structures or external factors. Researchers have extensively investigated the concerns associated with essay writing. Febriyanti and Sundari (2016) identified ten grammatical errors in students' written English essays, with subject-verb agreement and verb tense and form being the most prevalent. Similarly, Ariyanti and Fitriana (2017) found that tenses and subject-verb agreement were the major grammatical errors in essay writing. Notably, both studies converge on the common theme of language errors in writing, indicating that some students struggle with accurately employing grammatical concepts (Febriyanti & (Le et al., 2022a)Sundari, 2016); (Ariyanti & Fitriana, 2017).

Despite the existing body of research, there is a lack of comprehensive investigation into the specific concerns encountered by students in the Academic Writing class at BSI University. Previous studies may not fully align with the current circumstances of the target audience. Moreover, there are several details that need to be addressed based on the experiences of students in the Academic Writing class itself. Therefore, this paper aims to critically evaluate the challenges faced by students in writing essays, particularly within the context of the Academic Writing class at Bina Sarana Informatika University. To achieve this objective, the research employed questionnaires as the primary data collection method. The study focused on identifying the reasons that hinder students' performance in essay writing. By understanding these obstacles, students can evaluate their work and gradually enhance their writing competence. Furthermore, the findings will contribute to the effective implementation of the learning process in the Academic Writing class.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The identification of students' problems in writing essays can be achieved through various research methods. Qualitative research is commonly employed to address questions related to human experiences and the understanding of meaning in their lives (Fossey et al., 2002). This study utilizes a qualitative approach to answer, describe, and explain the questions concerning students' problems in writing essays. Descriptive analysis is employed as the methodology for this research.

Research instruments play a significant role in obtaining data for analysis (Yin, 2011). Closed-ended questionnaires are commonly used research instruments, including binary, ranking questions, multiple choices, and checklists (Sreejesh et al., 2014). In this study, a closed-ended questionnaire in the form of multiple-choice questions is utilized. The questionnaire statements are derived from previous research on common essay-writing issues experienced by students. The five identified issues were understanding topics, structuring thoughts, linguistic errors, argumentation issues, and time management (Kochubei, 2021; Hunter-Carsch, 1990; Le et al., 2022; Wingate, 2012).

The questionnaire employs a Likert-type scale, which allows respondents to rate their responses to evaluative questions (Vagias, 2006). The scale includes four-point levels of agreement: strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. The "Neutral" option is not included to avoid difficulties in categorizing responses. The questionnaire consists of six sections: personal data, Essay-writing issue 1 (Understanding Topics), Essay-writing issue 2 (Structuring Thoughts), Essay-writing issue 3 (Linguistic Errors), Essay-writing issue 4 (Argumentation Issues), and Essay-writing issue 5 (Time Management).

The research participants in this study are 21 fifth-semester students from the English Department at Bina Sarana Informatika University. The selection of these students is based on the aim to critically identify and evaluate students' problems in writing essays, particularly among the fifth-semester students of the English Department. Additionally, the study aims to enhance students' writing competence to facilitate effective learning. As there is a lack of detailed research on this topic based on the latest conditions of the target audience, the researcher intends to present the data as accurately as possible by directly engaging with the respondents.

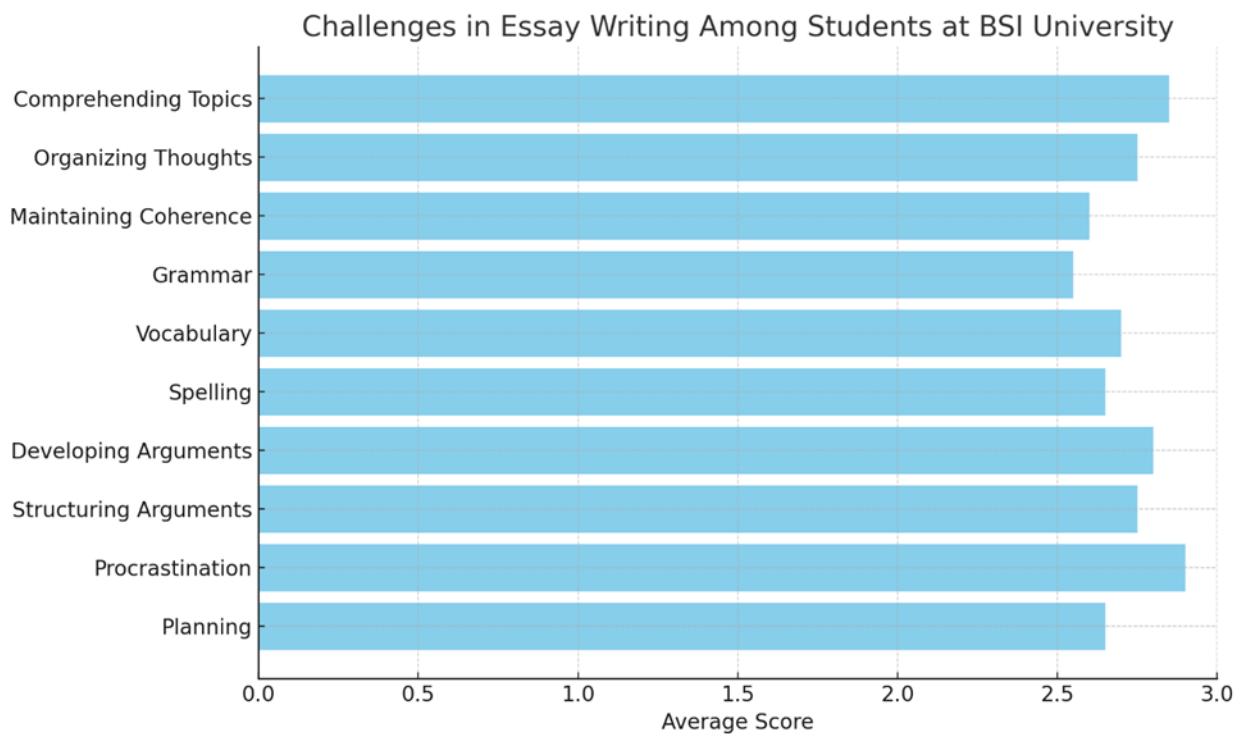
Data collection is conducted through the distribution of questionnaires in Google form to English Language and Culture students during an Academic Writing class. The questionnaire link is shared via WhatsApp and LINE, both in group and personal chat. Once the data is collected, the researcher proceeds to assemble and check the completeness of the questionnaires. The students' answers are then classified and the problems in writing

essays are sorted based on their frequency. Finally, the results are analyzed descriptively to discuss the categories that require more attention in essay composition.

After collecting the data from the questionnaires, the next step involves data analysis. The data obtained from the respondents' answers are examined and categorized according to the identified essay-writing issues. Descriptive analysis is employed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the data and to facilitate the discussion of which category requires more attention in essay composition. Descriptive analysis involves summarizing and interpreting the data using statistical measures such as frequencies, percentages, and averages. The frequencies of responses for each essay-writing issue are calculated to determine the prevalence of the problems among the students. By examining the percentages, the researcher can assess the relative importance of each issue compared to others. Additionally, the average ratings of agreement for each essay-writing issue can provide insights into the intensity of the problems faced by the students. Furthermore, qualitative analysis techniques can be applied to gain a deeper understanding of the students' experiences and perspectives regarding the identified essay-writing issues. Open-ended questions in the questionnaire allow the respondents to provide additional comments or suggestions, which can be analyzed thematically. Themes that emerge from the qualitative analysis provide valuable qualitative data that complement the quantitative findings.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

To address the research inquiry, a questionnaire was administered to a sample of 21 fifth-semester students enrolled in the English Department at BSI University. The questionnaire aimed to explore the challenges that impede students' performance in essay writing across five distinct categories: understanding topics, structuring thoughts, linguistic errors, argumentation issues, and time management. Each respondent was provided with four Likert scale options, with each option assigned a specific score range: Strongly Agree (3-4 points), Agree (2-3 points), Disagree (1-2 points), and Strongly Disagree (0-1 point). The subsequent tables and descriptions illustrate the findings derived from the aforementioned research question.



The first category examined was understanding topics. The data showed that students frequently faced challenges in comprehending essay topics, with an average score of 2.85. This indicates a significant issue, where students often asked for clarification on essay prompts or spent excessive time trying to understand the topic requirements. In the category of structure and coherence, the results indicated that organizing thoughts and maintaining coherence were common challenges among students. The average scores were 2.75 for organizing thoughts and 2.6 for maintaining coherence. This suggests that students frequently created outlines or diagrams but struggled to organize them logically within the essay. Additionally, feedback often indicated that the flow between paragraphs or sections was unclear or disjointed.

Linguistic errors were also prevalent, with vocabulary issues receiving an average score of 2.7, spelling mistakes 2.65, and grammatical errors 2.55. This highlights that students' essays often contained frequent grammatical errors, repetitive word use or inappropriate vocabulary, and multiple spelling errors. These issues were frequently highlighted by feedback from teachers and correction tools. Argumentation issues posed another significant challenge, with developing arguments scoring an average of 2.8 and structuring arguments 2.75. The data indicates that students' essays often lacked strong, persuasive arguments and logical progression in their arguments, as evidenced by feedback pointing out weak argumentation or insufficient evidence. Time management emerged as a critical issue, with procrastination scoring an average of 2.9 and planning 2.65. The results highlight that student frequently started essays close to the deadline, resulting in rushed work.

Furthermore, many students lacked multiple drafts or showed evidence of minimal revision, indicating poor planning and time management.

The analysis of the questionnaire responses identifies several key issues in essay writing faced by students. They struggle significantly with understanding complex or vague essay topics, spending excessive time on comprehension. Organizing thoughts and maintaining coherence are major challenges, with students often failing to sequence ideas logically or ensure smooth transitions between sections. Frequent linguistic errors, including limited vocabulary, spelling mistakes, and grammatical errors, affect the readability and professionalism of their essays. Developing and structuring persuasive arguments with sufficient evidence is difficult for many students, resulting in weak or illogical essays. Finally, procrastination and poor planning are widespread problems, leading to rushed and lower-quality work due to inadequate time for revisions. Address these identified challenges through targeted interventions and support can help students improve their essay writing skills, leading to more effective and coherent academic writing.

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The first category examined was understanding topics. The data showed that students frequently faced challenges in comprehending essay topics, with an average score of 2.85. This indicates a significant issue, where students often asked for clarification on essay prompts or spent excessive time trying to understand the topic requirements. This finding aligns with Hunter-Carsch (1990), who noted that clarity in understanding essay prompts is crucial for effective essay writing (Hunter-Carsch, 1990). This lack of clarity can lead to confusion and delays in the writing process. For instance, Nenotek, Tlonaen, and Manubulu (2022) found that students frequently experienced difficulties with content and organization, particularly in developing thesis statements and related ideas, which underscores the importance of clear and well-defined essay prompts (Nenotek et al., 2022).

In the category of structure and coherence, the results indicated that organizing thoughts and maintaining coherence were common challenges among students. The

average scores were 2.75 for organizing thoughts and 2.6 for maintaining coherence. This suggests that students frequently created outlines or diagrams but struggled to organize them logically within the essay. Additionally, feedback often indicated that the flow between paragraphs or sections was unclear or disjointed. This supports the findings of Le et al. (2022), who highlighted similar issues in essay organization among students (Le et al., 2022b). Another common challenge is organizing thoughts and maintaining coherence.

Linguistic errors were also prevalent, with vocabulary issues receiving an average score of 2.7, spelling mistakes 2.65, and grammatical errors 2.55. This highlights that students' essays often contained frequent grammatical errors, repetitive word use or inappropriate vocabulary, and multiple spelling errors. These issues were frequently highlighted by feedback from teachers and correction tools. Such linguistic challenges are corroborated by (Le et al., 2022b), who noted that students often struggle with grammar and vocabulary in their writing (Qiang, 2008). Moreover, these issues were also highlighted in a study by Hairul (2023), who found that EFL students struggled with developing writing ideas, using correct grammar, and understanding lecturer feedback, all of which negatively impacted their essay quality (Hairul, 2023).

Argumentation issues posed another significant challenge, with developing arguments scoring an average of 2.8 and structuring arguments 2.75. The data indicates that students' essays often lacked strong, persuasive arguments and logical progression in their arguments, as evidenced by feedback pointing out weak argumentation or insufficient evidence. (Wingate, 2012) similarly identified the need for students to develop robust argumentative skills to enhance their essay writing (Wingate, 2012). Furthermore, Cekiso, Tshotsho, and Somniso (2016) identified coherence challenges such as writing effective introductions, thesis statements, and topic sentences, indicating the need for focused instruction on constructing coherent arguments (Cekiso et al., 2016).

Time management emerged as a critical issue, with procrastination scoring an average of 2.9 and planning 2.65. The results highlight that student frequently started essays close to the deadline, resulting in rushed work. Furthermore, many students lacked multiple drafts or showed evidence of minimal revision, indicating poor planning and time management. This issue is consistent with the findings of Peng (2008), who noted that effective time management is essential for producing high-quality academic writing (Peng, 2008). Besides, (Pineteh, 2013) noted that students' academic writing challenges stemmed from inadequate time management and insufficient mastery of writing conventions, which are crucial for producing high-quality academic writing (Pineteh, 2013).

The analysis of the questionnaire responses identifies several key issues in essay writing faced by students. They struggle significantly with understanding complex or vague essay topics, spending excessive time on comprehension. Organizing thoughts and maintaining coherence are major challenges, with students often failing to sequence ideas logically or ensure smooth transitions between sections. Frequent linguistic errors, including limited vocabulary, spelling mistakes, and grammatical errors, affect the readability and professionalism of their essays. Developing and structuring persuasive arguments with sufficient evidence is difficult for many students, resulting in weak or illogical essays. Finally, procrastination and poor planning are widespread problems, leading to rushed and lower-quality work due to inadequate time for revisions. Addressing these identified challenges through targeted interventions and support can help students improve their essay writing skills, leading to more effective and coherent academic writing.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, writing essays is an integral part of language learning and contributes to the development of students' language proficiency. Essays serve as a platform for students to express their thoughts, engage in critical thinking, and integrate knowledge gained from various sources. However, students often face challenges in essay writing, including issues such as plagiarism, grammatical errors, lexical difficulties, lack of planning, and lack of confidence.

Plagiarism is a significant concern, as students may unintentionally or deliberately use someone else's work without proper attribution. To address this, students need to understand the importance of paraphrasing and citing sources accurately. Grammatical errors, such as subject-verb agreement and verb tense, are common in students' essays and can be mitigated through proofreading and increased awareness of grammatical rules. Lexical difficulties arise when students struggle with choosing the appropriate words or vocabulary. Reading extensively and expanding their vocabulary can help students overcome this challenge. Lack of planning leads to disorganized ideas and incoherent essays, emphasizing the need for effective prewriting and drafting processes. Additionally, many students lack confidence in their writing skills and may hesitate to seek feedback or revise their work, hindering their overall improvement.

Further research on students' challenges in essay writing should focus on investigating the effectiveness of different teaching strategies, exploring the impact of feedback on writing improvement, examining the role of technology in essay writing instruction, evaluating the influence of cultural and linguistic factors, investigating the

effectiveness of interventions and support mechanisms, exploring the transferability of writing skills across disciplines, and assessing the long-term effects of essay writing instruction. By addressing these areas, researchers can deepen their understanding of students' difficulties and develop targeted interventions and instructional approaches to enhance students' essay writing skills and overall language proficiency.

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