

THE STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED BY THE TENTH-GRADE STUDENTS IN LEARNING WRITING AT MA ASH-SHALIHIN

Sarina^{1*}, Multazam Abubakar¹, Masykur Rauf¹

¹Universitas Islam Negeri Alauddin Makassar

*e-mail: sarinasapril0@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The objective of this research is to find out the difficulties that were experienced by tenth-grade students in learning to write and the factors that influence students' difficulties in writing. This research uses a quantitative descriptive research method. The subjects of this research were the tenth-grade students of MA Ash-Shalihin. The researchers used a questionnaire to collect data, with a total of 22 students as respondents. The research results showed that based on the questionnaire on students' difficulties in writing, the most dominant difficulties faced by students are writing anxiety (23.1%), lack of motivation (14.6%), content problems (13.1%), mechanical problems (12.3%), problem organization (10.8%), lack of self-confidence (10.8%), grammatical problems (10%), and the lowest is sentence structure problems (5.4%). The most influential factors faced by students in writing are inadequate time (35.3%), lack of practice (27.5%), lack of learners' motivation (19.6%), the nature of the writing process (13.7%), and the lowest is teacher's feedback (3.9%). The findings of this study are expected to contribute to supporting the teaching of writing.

Keywords: *Students' Difficulties, Learning Writing*

1. INTRODUCTION

Writing is a crucial skill in education and everyday life, yet many students experience various challenges when learning to write. Especially at the tenth-grade level, students often face significant difficulties in developing their writing skills. Struggling with writing is a pervasive issue in education, fueled by diverse factors. These can range from confidence issues and limited vocabulary to weak grammar and unfamiliarity with the writing process. The fear of making mistakes and receiving criticism can exacerbate this battle further. For some, rigid guidelines and formats stifle their creativity and expression. This statement is supported by research conducted by Ayu, (2021). The ubiquitous presence of technology and social media has undeniably impacted students' writing, offering both opportunities and challenges. While platforms like online dictionaries and writing tools can enhance vocabulary and clarity, the prevalence of informal communication like texting can lead to reliance on abbreviations and casual language, potentially hindering formal writing skills. Moreover, The continuous stream of bite-sized, attention-grabbing content online fragments students' focus, making it difficult for them to sustain concentration and construct intricate ideas in their writing. To counter this, educators must proactively address these challenges by equipping students with the necessary support and resources to hone their writing skills. This is in line with previous research by Lakhal (2021).

Another writing difficulty students encounter is inconsistent capitalization at sentence beginnings, as well as careless spelling and sentence structure. They often misuse capitals and lowercase letters, omit or add unnecessary letters, and struggle with proper sentence sequencing.

As a result, the word has no meaning and the impact is that the writing cannot be interpreted clearly, difficulty in constructing sentences so that the sentences become incoherent and have different meanings, and difficulty in determining the theme to be described, thus impacting students with confusion and requiring guidance to develop ideas when writing. Sanita, Marta, and Nurhaswinda (2020: 241) observed similar problems, noting that students struggle to articulate their ideas and lack a clear starting point and overall direction for their writing. Additionally, they disregard basic mechanics like spelling, capitalization, and sentence structure.

In this article, we explored the various barriers faced by grade ten students in the writing learning process, as well as the factors that influence these difficulties. In addition, we will discuss the implications that educators and students can apply to overcome these challenges and improve their writing skills. By understanding and overcoming these difficulties, it is hoped that students can develop better and more confident writing skills.

2. METHOD

Quantitative descriptive was applied in this research. As stated by (Arikunto 2006), descriptive quantitative research is a type of quantitative research that is commonly used to describe or explain phenomena or characteristics that are being observed. Descriptive research aims to describe phenomena that exist in a particular population or sample. The main goal is to provide a clear and systematic description of the observed variables. Quantitative descriptive research is research that only describes the content of a variable in research, not intended to test certain hypotheses. Thus it can be seen that quantitative descriptive research is research that describes, examines, and explains a phenomenon with data (numbers) as it is without intending to test a particular hypothesis.

This research was conducted at MA Ash-Shalihin, by using a total sampling technique as Sugiyono (2017) suggests with a population of less than 100, the researchers opted to include every member, ensuring the sample fully captured the characteristics of the target group. The population of interest comprised all tenth-grade students at MA Ash-Shalihin during the 2023/2024 academic year, encompassing a total of 22 individuals. In this research, the researchers used a questionnaire. A questionnaire is a collection of written questions used to collect data from respondents about particular things known by the respondent (Arikunto, 2010). To understand the challenges faced by students in Class X MA Ash-Shalihin, a survey was conducted using a set of 34 close-ended questions. This approach allows for efficient data collection while still capturing valuable insights from 22 student participants.

3. RESULTS

The Students' Difficulties Encountered by The Tenth-Grade Students in Learning Writing at MA Ash-Shalihin

The student's difficulties encountered by the tenth-grade students in learning writing at MA Ash-Shalihin are writing anxiety (23.1%), lack of motivation (14.6%), content problems (13.1%), mechanical problems (12.3%), problem organization (10.8%), lack of self-confidence (10.8%), grammatical problems (10%), and the lowest is sentence structure problems (5.4%).

The Factors Causing the Students' Difficulties Encountered by The Tenth-Grade Students in Learning Writing at MA Ash-Shalihin

The factors of causing the students difficulties encountered by the tenth-grade students in learning writing at MA Ash-Shalihin are the most influential factors faced by students in writing are inadequate time (35.3%), lack of practice (27.5%), lack of learners' motivation (19.6%), the nature of the writing process (13.7%) and the lowest is teacher's feedback (3.9%).

4. DISCUSSION

Students' Difficulties In Learning Writing

The results of the questionnaire distributed to 22 MA Ash-Shalihin class X students regarding student difficulties in writing have eight indicators according to Byrne (1993), namely grammatical problems (10%), mechanical problems (12.3%), sentence structure problems (5.4%), lack of motivation (14.6%), lack of self-confidence (10.8%), writing anxiety (23.1%), content problem (13.1%), and problem organization (10.8%). It shows that the most dominant student difficulty is writing anxiety with a percentage of (23.1%), then the second dominant difficulty is lack of motivation with a percentage of (14.6%), then the third difficulty is content problems with a percentage of (13.1%), the fourth difficulty is mechanical problems with a percentage of (12.3), the fifth difficulty with the same percentage results is lack of self-confidence and organizational problems with a percentage of (10.8%), the next difficulty is grammatical problems with a percentage of (10%) and for the lowest difficulty is sentence structure problems with a percentage of (5.4%).

The results of this study provide answers that the most dominant difficulty felt by class X MA Ash-Shalihin students is writing anxiety with a percentage of (23.1%). This is slightly different from previous research by Byrne 1993 in which writing anxiety is a difficulty faced by students but not the most dominant while in this study writing anxiety is the most dominant difficulty felt by MA Ash-Shalihin class X students.

The next difference is from the research of Anistasya, Damanik, and Marpaung (2022) with results showing that the use of language and vocabulary is the most difficult aspect for students where this is included in the problem organization indicator where the problem organization in this study is one of the least difficulties felt by students. On the other hand, Ismayanti, Kholiq's (2020) research found that students have difficulty in using to be where the use of to be in this study is related to the grammatical problem indicator which is not too difficult for students in this study Khairinisaak, Sartika, and Asmara (2022) which states that the most dominant student difficulties are organizational problems, then grammatical problems and finally mechanical problems which are related to this study but in this study these three indicators are difficulties that are not too influential on class X MA Ash-Shalihin students.

This is considered difficult by students due to several reasons including the increased level of academic demands students often face higher academic demands compared to previous years. They may be given writing tasks that are more complex and require deeper critical thinking, and social comparison at this age, students may be more likely to compare their abilities with their classmates. If they feel less capable in writing than their peers, this may increase their anxiety, and lack of experience and skills, students in grade ten may not have fully developed their writing skills, and they may feel less confident in their abilities. Uncertainty about how to write well and worry about making mistakes can increase writing anxiety and the time demands and pressures students in grade ten may face on standardized tests or other important evaluations that demand quick and effective writing skills. Time pressure and the expectation to produce quality work within a tight time limit can increase writing anxiety.

Factors Of Students' Difficulties In Writing

The results of the questionnaire distributed to 22 MA Ash-Shalihin students regarding factors of student difficulties in writing based on five indicators as cited in Alfaki (2015), namely the nature of the writing process (13.7%), lack of learners' motivation (19.6%), inadequate time (35.3%), lack of practice (27.5%), and teachers' feedback (3.9%). This shows that the most dominant factor affecting students' difficulties is inadequate time with a percentage of (35.3%), then lack of practice with a percentage of (27.5%), then lack of student motivation with a percentage of (19.6%), then the nature of the writing process with a percentage of (13.7%) and the lowest is feedback from the teacher with a percentage of (3.9%).

The results of this study provide answers that the factors that influence students' difficulties in writing perceived by class X MA Ash-Shalihin students are most dominant is inadequate time

with a percentage of (35.3%). This is slightly different from previous research by Alfaki (2015) where the inadequate time in the previous study was in the third position of the factors that students often experience in this previous study did not reveal the most dominant factor. However, when viewed from other previous studies by Ismayanti and Kholiq (2020) state that the factors that influence students' difficulties in writing are the lack of mastery of the text and the lack of knowledge related to the subject content of the text written which is the same as the nature of the writing process while in this study the nature of the writing process is the second less factor affecting students' difficulties in writing.

However, in Magfiroh's research (2023), it is found similar factors of students' difficulties in writing, namely inadequate time, lack of practice, and also lack of motivation experienced by students which is also one of the factors experienced by students in this study.

Inadequate time is the factor that most affects tenth-grade students in writing difficulties for various reasons. Firstly, lack of time can be caused by a heavy workload at school, outside of school, or both. Students often have a busy schedule with lessons, homework, extracurricular activities, and possibly a part-time job. This makes it difficult for them to allocate enough time to plan, develop, and structure their writing well. Secondly, a lack of time management skills can be a problem. Some students may not have enough skills to manage their time efficiently, so they may feel rushed or stressed when writing because they cannot manage their time well. In addition, a lack of understanding of how to plan and write effectively can also be a factor. Students may not know where to start or how to organize their ideas coherently in their writing. Lack of understanding of good writing structure and effective writing techniques can also lead to difficulties in writing. Finally, the pressure that comes from assignment submission deadlines can also cause students to feel rushed and tend to produce writing that lacks quality. Writing difficulties are often compounded when students feel pressed for time and the need to complete assignments quickly.

5. CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that there are 13 indicators contained in the study. Students' difficulties in learning to write in the form of grammar problems, mechanical problems, sentence structure problems, lack of motivation, lack of confidence, writing anxiety, content problems, organizational problems, and factors that influence students' difficulties in learning to write in the form of the nature of the writing process, lack of student motivation, inadequate time, lack of practice, feedback from teachers. For the difficulties faced by students in learning to write, the most dominant is writing anxiety with a percentage of (21.3%) and the lowest is sentence structure problems with a percentage of (5.4%). This research highlights that MA Ash-Shalihin's grade X students face significant writing anxiety, including worries about poor grades, panic under time pressure, and fear of being compared to peers. As for the factors that influence students' difficulties in writing, the most dominant is inadequate time with a percentage of (35.3%) and the lowest is feedback from teachers with a percentage of (3.9%). This study identifies inadequate time as the main factor contributing to the writing difficulties faced by MA Ash-Shalihin's grade X students, who struggle with the need for a long time to generate ideas.

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