

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains background of the research, problem of the research, objectives of the research, purpose of the research, significance of the research, scope of the research, and operational definition of the research.

1.1 Background of the Research

It all started in the beginning of 2020 when news broke out about the pandemic COVID-19 cases in Indonesia. Later on, the government, especially the Ministry of Education and Culture, declared that all schools should be closed and students should be studied at home. Due to prolonged cases of pandemic COVID-19, high school teachers were forced to enact emergency curricula which also meant that students continue their education through online learning with their teachers. It was the best alternative as keeping schools open poses a safety risk. The situation was very challenging for high school students, especially the final year of senior high schoolers who couldn't fully study at their best. They were forced to adapt from face-to-face learning to studying from their home. After graduating high school, the situation became much worse as many people were infected with the COVID-19 and mandate from the government still in which is online learning and studying via video conference.

As fresh graduate high school students who had been entering the English department in the college had to cope with numerous course demands, they also needed to possess good writing skills. Writing skill is one of the key points in learning English. By having the skills to write, students will be able to create an

essay containing their knowledge and convey their thoughts through writing that is interesting and easy to read.

To be able to produce good writing, a process is needed. Zemach and Rumisek (2003, p.3) stated that the writing process comprises pre-writing, drafting, reviewing, revising, and rewriting. This process is carried out as a step in producing good writing in terms of content and other writing components. Essay writing is one of the competency targets in writing learning. Students were asked to understand several types of writing to determine the writing method to be used. In addition, writing essays could also help students practice critical thinking skills, which would be very useful in students' work and social life in the future. Therefore, a study conducted by Preiss, Castillo, Gregorenko, and Manzi (2013, p.7) found that compared to math skills, writing was a significant predictor of university achievement. In the study, they also investigated the relationship between students' writing attitudes and their writing achievement. The results of this study show that students who have excellent writing skills also had high levels of achievement.

However, writing is also the most difficult skill for students face. Previous research had shown several factors that cause students to have a negative attitude toward writing, namely the lack of time to practice in class and ineffective writing course guides and resources for critical writing (Ismail, Hussin, and Darus, 2012, p. 1093). Another factor was stated by Wahyuni and Etfita (2018, p. 3) that students did not master the language components well such as; vocabulary, punctuation, phonology, and grammar. Second, students did not have a space to practice their writing skills.

For this reason, it is necessary to have a learning model that is able to provide a good understanding to students. But of course, this is a new challenge, especially for students who were experiencing a transitional learning period from face-to-face learning to online learning that has occurred due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Online-based learning or commonly referred to as e-learning was a step taken by every educational institution in the world to facilitate students to carry out learning activities amid this pandemic. This is done because online-based learning did not require direct contact between educators and students and online learning could also be done anywhere and anytime, through the use of mobile devices that were connected to the internet and were familiar and easy to use for people nowadays.

Another advantage of online-based learning is that it greatly facilitated students to create learning situations where they presented flexible, effective, and interactive learning with a variety of attractive electronic visual media so that this learning is more impactful. The ease of use of this mobile-based learning makes it easier for students to control how their learning model, whenever, and wherever they want. And also made it easier for students to access the information they need at that time, from anywhere.

In addition, video-based online education, which is recognized as an online education method, is suitable for the 21st-century educational environment to facilitate two-way interaction, participation in learning. It can be said that this form of online education contains the most in common with traditional face-to-face classes of all forms of learning to exist online. However, unlike existing online courses which are conducted according to a planned course design,

emergency on-line teaching is an alternative, temporary teaching method in response to crises (Wang, Zhang, Zhao, Zhang, and Jiang, 2020, p. 945).

Therefore, effective online learning must consider various factors such as speed, student-teacher ratio, pedagogy, online teacher role, online student role, synchronization of online communication, online assessment role, and feedback sources. However, the current classroom design is only a temporary solution for online teaching. Because in operating emergency online teaching for a while without a planned classroom design, unlike existing online learning. This makes both learners and teachers have difficulty adapting to it.

The drawbacks of the online learning model are learning time is limited unlike it is during offline learning, internet network constraints and internet quota costs experienced by students and educators, as well as boredom in learning because the material presented by the teacher was sometimes only as reading material and questions without a direct explanation from the teacher concerned, the lack of supervision from teachers and parents also makes it easier for students to neglect their learning because students' concentration is distracted by other things (Nengrum, Pettasolong, and Nuriman, 2021, p. 8-10).

In the case of understanding essay writing, it is necessary to use online learning tools that can build students' attitudes, interests, and abilities in improving and dealing with the existing difficulties in the process of improving their writing skills. Several previous studies conducted by (Ismail, Hussin, & Darus, 2012, p. 1093-1099) showed that teachers perceive that most students had negative attitudes toward writing as a result of procrastinating their writing work. Students are also indicated to be careless and did not like to write. The findings of

the students also revealed that they found writing in English difficult and they did not like it. This is felt because of the lack of time allocation for practice in class, boring writing activities, and the lack of emphasis on critical thinking in their writing courses. Furthermore, they suggested that special online writing programs be improved to be more attractive so that they could act as a supplement to the course and helped improve students' writing skills and interests.

Other studies about student attitudes toward online writing were presented by (Setyowati and Sukmawan, 2016, p. 368), who explained that as many as 52.63 % of students had a moderate attitude towards writing, and the rest had a positive attitude toward writing activities. However, despite their moderate attitude, students still think that writing is a strenuous activity and had high pressure. Meanwhile, students who have a high attitude towards writing thought this task was attractive and challenging.

Therefore, this study discuss further the attitudes and the difficulties faced by students in online essay writing, especially students majoring in English class of 2020, who feel and adapt the transition from high school which was done offline to online learning activities until currently due to the pandemic.

1.2 Problem of the Research

In accordance with the explanation above, the problem of this research are:

1.2.1 How do the students from semester 4th English Education Program in Muhammadiyah University of Jember in attitude regarding writing especially for academic purposes?

1.2.2 What are the difficulties the students from semester 4th English Education Program in Muhammadiyah University of Jember face in learning to write in online essay writing?

1.3 Objectives of the Research

In accordance with the formulation of the problems above, purpose of the research is as follows:

1.3.1 The researcher is intended to know the students from semester 4th English Education Program in Muhammadiyah University of Jember in attitude regarding writing especially for academic purposes.

1.3.2 The researcher is intended to know the difficulties the students from semester 4th English Education Program in Muhammadiyah University of Jember face in learning to write in online essay writing.

1.4 Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this research is to be useful for instructors who teach Indonesian students majoring in English class of 2020, who feel the transition from high school which is done offline to online learning activities until currently due to the pandemic to find out difficulties and attitude regarding writing. Furthermore, in full positive the result of this study would anticipate the students in writing activities and obstacles, and motivate them to improve their writing.

1.5 Significance of the Research

The research findings are expected to make a positive contribution to:

1.5.1 Theoretical Significances

The outcome of this research might be used as the reference for those who want to conduct research in online writing class.

1.5.2 Practical Significance

The outcome of this research would be provided benefits in English writing class to simulate student needs and interests and insert positive perceptions.

1.6 Scope of the Research

The research focused on the students majoring in English class of 2020 whose attitude regarding writing especially for academic purposes. This research also included identifying difficulties learning to write in online essay writing. The scope of the research is students from semester 4th English Education Program in Muhammadiyah University of Jember.

1.7 Operational Definition of Terms

To deepen understanding of the topics discussed, here are some operational definitions of the important terms raised in this research:

1.7.1 Student Attitude

It was related to the extent of someone's previous writing experience. Experienced students would have a positive attitude and have little difficulty in writing, and vice versa for inexperienced students. The teacher, class environment, interests, and so on usually influence attitude in students' writing.

1.7.2 Student Difficulties

A series of challenges faced by a student in writing. Some challenges faced were lack of interest, distraction, difficulty in basic understanding, and lack of learning resources.

