

EXPLORING EFL UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS LEARNING WRITING OVER VIRTUAL LEARNING SYSTEM: A CASE STUDY OF INDONESIAN COLLEGE STUDENTS

Eka Nur Fitria

Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara

ekanurfitria@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The study was aimed to find out the EFL students' attitude in learning writing over virtual learning system. The researcher used the qualitative study. There were 46 undergraduate students participating in the study. The data was collected by using questionnaire and interview sheet through google form. The result shows that none of the students has low attitude in learning writing through online learning, while 58.69% of them has moderate attitude in learning writing through virtual learning and the rest of them have positive attitude in learning writing over virtual. The interview also reveals that although the students have moderate attitude in learning writing through online, they see learning writing by online learning as difficult and ineffective while the students who have high attitude in learning writing through virtual mostly view learning writing through online as interesting, effective and easy. The students also faced the challenge during learning writing through online learning. They are internet connectivity and distraction. The finding also reveals several students' efforts to improve their writing skill, among others are read a lot to get knowledge and ideas, diary writing and practice writing.

Keywords:

EFL Writing Attitude, Online Learning, Challenges.

1. INTRODUCTION

The corona virus is an infectious disease caused by the discovered coronavirus. The emergence of this virus has an impact on some groups who require them to do all activities from home. The coronavirus (COVID-19) could be a widespread infection that affects the education system of different income level countries (Wajdi et al., 2020). The United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) have been recognized that the coronavirus pandemic outbreak has affected the instruction framework in the world (UNESCO, 2020). A part of pandemics have happened in human history, and influenced human life, education system, and economic development in the world (Editors, 2020). Online or remote education suggest that students are physically distant from the instructors and require a conveyance strategy (Wang, Shannon, & Ross, 2013; Wilde & Hsu, 2019). Online instruction has been considered for decades and compelling online educating is the result of cautious directions plan and arranging (Hodges et al., 2020). In any case, due to the COVID-

19 widespread, individuals have constrained data preparing capacity, and there's potential that combinations of learning modalities can result in cognitive over-burden, affecting the capacity to adequately learn modern data. Additionally, on the off chance that students lack certainty within the innovation they are utilizing or don't feel a sense of cognitive engagement and social association, the result may affect negatively the students' learning outcomes (Bower, 2019). That's why so many challenge for EFL undergraduates students to study through online learning.

In EFL context, the transition from traditional to online learning has its challenges. Marshall and Wolanskyj-Spinner (2020) have shown that classroom learning is superior to online learning in terms of interaction and clarification. Another obstacle to implementing an effective virtual learning environment is the lack of information technology infrastructure (Bediang et al., 2013). The research on the EFL perceptions towards the online learning (Firima and Aries, 2021) result that the students face the difficulty to be optimally participating in online learning mode because of the high demand of internet bundles, low network coverage, frequent local power outage. Another research also found that students felt boring, tiring, unnecessary and challenging during the learning process (Istifci, 2017). Focusing to the EFL context in Indonesia, the challenges are also existed in the numerous reasons. When learning english, students need to master four skills of language, they are listening, speaking, reading and writing. Students often find difficult in speaking and writing. Actually, written language is grammatically more complex than spoken language.

Writing is difficult lesson because written language is more formal. In writing must has correct grammar and structure. Writing has always been seen as the most troublesome and challenging area of language learning for all students without exception especially if it is to be done in a foreign language (Oqab, 2018). Powel (2009) stated that writing is hard to see because it arranges our thoughts and hard to talk about because of the lack of consistent reference that communicates information. It requires a combination of "various cognitive, memory, linguistic, motor, and affective systems, each of which makes its own unique contribution to the writing process and the text that gets written" (Singer, 2004: 2). Writing is one of the most important language skills to be developed for people learning a second language, and this is more emphasized in academic world. Harmer (2004) emphasizes that "being able to write is a vital skill for speakers of a foreign language as much as for everyone using their own first language" (p. 2). In writing, it is very important to pay attention to the students' behavior in learning through virtual.

Learners' attitude is considered a key motivational component and an important nonlinguistic factor that influences second-language learning. Attitude is considered a complicated notion to describe. Therefore, different definitions have been put forward by various researchers to explain it. Allport (1954), for instance, describes attitude as "a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response toward all objects and situations with which it is related" (p. 45). Pickens (2005) argued that attitude is a complex combination of things usually tends to call personality, beliefs, values, behaviors, and motivations. In language learning, Brown (2007) describes attitude as a set of beliefs that a learner holds toward the target language whether it is important, interesting, boring, and so forth. Furthermore, there are two types of attitude, positive and negative attitude. Concurring to Dornyei and Csizer (2002), having positive attitude in learning a foreign language easily; it encourages the method whereas negative attitude prevents learning and; thus, acts as a deterrent against it.

Aikman (1985) contended that negative attitudes to writing are showed in a postponing completing composed assignments or homework. It results from lack of confidence, teaching practices, classroom atmosphere, and first language interference mainly translation.

Based on explanation above, this research aim to explore how is the Indonesian EFL undergraduate students' attitudes towards learning writing over virtual learning system. So in this thesis the researcher wants to study further by conducting research with the title **"Exploring EFL Undergraduate Students' Attitudes towards Learning Writing over Virtual Learning System: A Case Study of Indonesian College Students"**.

DISCUSSION

A. Online Learning in EFL Context

The widespread of COVID-19 is influencing schools, students, teachers, and parents particularly in EFL context. The COVID-19 emergency increases social disparity in schools. Students from more advantaged parents go to schools with superior computerized foundation and instructors might have higher levels of computerized innovation aptitudes. A few schools can be well prepared in advanced innovation and instructive assets. Disadvantaged students are going to schools with lower ICT framework and instructive assets (Di Pietro et al., 2020). In an internet learning environment, students require different computer-mediated instruments to perform their learning activities (Palloff & Pratt, 1999). Although online learning is predicted to be a very effective learning system, it still has weaknesses. The shortcomings incorporate the relationship between course structure and exchange, in this manner expanding the structure alone decreases the discourse. On the other hand, expanding the discourse decreases the structure display in remove instruction (Horzum, 2015; Bound, 2010; Control, 2008). Subsequently not all of the learning materials can be connected through remote learning.)

Gagne (1985) expressed that the five learning results fell into three specific spaces: the *cognitive* domain, the *psychomotor* domain, and the *emotional* domain. He laid out five categories of learning, which are as follows:

1. Intellectual skills (cognitive domain)

As the primary category within the cognitive domain, intellectual abilities diagram how to take after strategies to induce things done. There are five distinctive levels of learning inside the mental abilities category: separation, concrete concept, characterized concept, run the show, and issue solving.

2. Cognitive strategy (cognitive domain)

The second type of cognitive skill is a cognitive strategy. There are some procedures for learning as well as for considering, which are moreover called metacognitive procedures. Learning methodologies incorporate: practice, elaboration, and organizing. Metacognitive methodologies (considering) incorporate: setting objectives, following advance, and adjusting strategies.

3. Verbal information (cognitive domain)

Verbal information is taught using different techniques to aid in memory recall. Using imagery and other mnemonic strategies helps students make connections with the information and remember it more easily.

4. Motor skills (psychomotor domain)

Motor skills are physical actions that are assessed in complex performances.

5. Attitude (affective domain)



Attitude is found within the emotional space due to its one of a kind state. It is frequently challenging to degree state of mind, as each person must pronounce their possess contemplations. Self-reported questionnaires would be an example of how we can assess the attitudes of learners.

B. The Challenges in Learning Writing through Online

Writing is a sophisticated language skill since it requires the ability not only to tailor ideas, but also to construct acceptable sentences to create a meaningful, logical, and comprehensible work. As a result, English as a Foreign Language's (EFL) learners have to maximize their efforts to put their thoughts on the paper. In Indonesia where English is learnt as a foreign language, students learn writing because they want to pass the final examination and get good grades. Therefore, whenever the word 'writing assignment' is announced to the students, they mostly show unhappy faces. Writing ability and academic success are closely related. Research has shown that writing can predict academic achievement. Preiss et al. (2013) investigate how writing predicts the university students' subsequent academic grades. Their finding shows that, compared to mathematics skills, writing becomes a significant predictor of university achievement over time.

Despite writing is a prominent skill, many students still found some problems to write a passage. Steinberg (1982) claims much of the difficulty of writing stems from the large number of constraints that must be satisfied at the same time. In expressing an idea the writer must consider at least four structural levels: overall text structure, paragraph structure, sentence structure (syntax), and word structure (spelling). Another great difficulty for writers is maintaining connective flow. The relationships between ideas must be clear. Yet, in order to write about an idea, it must be expanded downward into paragraphs, sentences, words, and letters. Sometimes writers become lost in the process of downward expansion and lose sight of the high-level relationships they originally wanted to express. Brown (2000) strengthens the difficulty in writing by asserting that written products are often the result of thinking, drafting, and revising procedures that require specialized skills that not every speaker develops naturally. In short, some students find difficult to express their ideas and opinions in writing, the lack of knowledge of grammatically writing and students' distrust of what is written are the challenges in writing.

C. The Attitude in Learning Writing through Online

Schneider (cited in Pickens, 2005) stated "Attitudes are evaluative reactions to persons, objects, and events. This includes your beliefs and positive and negative feelings about the attitude object" (p. 44). According to Vaughan & Hogg (1995), attitude can be defined as "A relatively enduring organization of beliefs, feelings and behavioral tendencies towards socially significant objects, groups, events or symbols or a general feeling or evaluation (positive or negative) about some person, object or issue." Pickens (2005) argued that attitude is a complex combination of things usually tends to call personality, beliefs, values, behaviors, and motivations. In other words, attitude is an evaluation or feeling which are positive or negative to the people, group, object, and event. Attitude is also can be defined as a feeling about person's behavior.

A good writing is enjoyable to read. But behind its opus, there is a very hard effort from the writers to make their writing meaningful, it becomes a matter of pride by the writer, when many people are inspired by their work and bringing benefits to the readers. Rivers (as cited in Gokce, 2001) stated that writing can be done individually or in a group. In the writing processes the teacher and the students may also participate actively. Rivers states that group

writing can be defined as students work in small groups to produce structures. Ranging from "mechanical control to creativity, with good grammar, knowledge of subject matter, awareness of stylistic conventions and various mysterious factors in between" (Wall, 1981: 53), writing is deemed a hard, tough, intricate and demanding skill to master (Graham et al., 2005). The complexity of writing as a task tends to increase levels of tension and puzzlement in students who are taking writing courses at university level. Gere (1987) and Sharples (1993) postulated that such confusion can often hinder and demotivate the student, and thus may result in negative reactions towards writing.

Unfortunately, most English as a Foreign Language (EFL) student has positive and negative attitude in writing towards online learning. They often view writing is a difficult task especially in essay writing. Ismail et. al (2010) find out that most ESL students are apprehensive to writing activity and have negative attitude to academic writing. Usually, the students who perceive writing as difficult would dislike the activity. Consequently, Erkan and Saban (2011) maintained that "success with writing in a foreign language may be related to attitudes towards writing, apprehension about writing, and self-efficacy in writing" (p. 168). Most of students face obstacles and barriers that affect their writing became negative. Among these difficulties include their low level of language abilities, in general, and writing abilities, in specific, both in the mother tongue and the foreign language as well (Badr and Jahin, 2007). Aikman (1985) argued that negative attitudes to writing are manifested in a delaying completing written assignments or homework. According to the explanation above, the students who has negative attitude cause by a lack of knowledge of English and a reluctance to learn it.

Additionally, students who has positive attitude in writing, it can helps them to achieve better writing. Graham et al., (2007) conduct a study on primary grade students to find out their attitude towards writing and their writing achievement. They find out that student who has more positive writing attitudes have better writing achievement than other students who have less favorable writing attitudes. They find out that the students who have more positive attitude in writing have better writing achievement, than other students who have negative writing attitude. In the same way, Gupta & Woldermariam (2011) also reveal that students with strong motivation perform high level of enjoyment, confidence, perceived ability, and positive attitude toward writing, and use frequent writing strategies. Masny and Foxall (1992) maintained that students' attitudes to and performance in writing depend on their academic achievement. They found that the students have high academic achievement have positive attitude towards writing than those with low achievement. In Indonesia where English is taught as a foreign language, writing teachers mostly focus on how to improve the students' ability toward writing in English through the application of media and variety of teaching techniques. One of the important factors which is often neglected is the students' involvement to writing activities. Students' engagement and interest toward writing are important factors that ESL / EFL teachers should be aware of as these factors lead to successful writing (Ismail et al., 2010).

D. Relevance of the Study

Some studies have been done previously relating to this research. Firstly, done by Oqab Jabali (2018) with the title *Students' attitudes towards EFL university writing: A case study at An-Najah National University, Palestine*. In this study, the researcher showed that the participants had positive attitudes toward the skill of writing, the various writing courses offered by the English Department at the university, the type of textbooks or teaching

methods used, and their writing skills and strategies. The study also revealed some further positive attitudes towards performance because most of the respondents showed willingness to do well at writing as they did not have negative conceptions about the evaluation process of their writing. Finally, the research found that very few obstacles, including lack of confidence and time constraints, might hinder them while writing. The similarities of this research is talk about attitudes of EFL university writing, and the difference is in this research does not discuss about learning through online during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Another study is also done with the title *Exploring undergraduate students' attitudes towards emergency online learning during COVID-19: A case from the UAE* by Elham Hussein et al. (2010). The researchers of this study found that the COVID-19 pandemic took the entire world by surprise and impacted all walks of life. In a matter of weeks, most educational institutions around the world had to close down, and face-to-face education was replaced by online education. This abrupt shift placed considerable pressure on all those involved in the educational process, but it has also been an opportunity for educators and students to experience online education first hand. The pandemic has taught us the importance of being well-prepared to ensure that quality education continues when upheavals and emergencies hit. The similarities of this research is discusses about students' attitude in online learning during this pandemic, but this research does not discuss about learning writing.

The researcher in the same field also has been finished by Lestari Setyowati dan Sony Sukmawan (2016) with the title *EFL Indonesian students' Attitudes toward Writing in English*. Helping student writer to achieve their best performance in writing can be done not only from teaching techniques and instructional media, but also from attitude study. Students might have sufficient ability to writing in the foreign language like English, but they may have attitude problems in terms of how they view writing itself. If they have negative attitude toward writing, they might not be able to give their best performance because they are not confidence enough to do it. Based on the finding and discussion, the students who joined essay writing course had positive attitude toward writing in English although they confessed that they have problems in completing the writing task, such as in linguistics elements (grammar and vocabulary), and psychological elements (the feeling of not confident, and fear of being evaluated). The similitude of this research is talk about EFL students' attitude in learning writing but not moot about learning through virtual.

More studies that uses as a references for this research is the research from Isik A. H et al (2010). With the title *Postgraduates Students' Attitudes towards Distance Learning (the case study of Gaze University)*. The research mentioned about distance learning which a new way in the field of education is can meet this requirement. The researchers told us this learning type must be prepared and presented with educational methodology. Therefore, outcome of Leader University in this area must be evaluated carefully. As a result of the research, it was determined that there is a positive approach to post graduate distance learning. In contrast to, they can express themselves freely in web based distance learning. Furthermore, female students express themselves more comfortably in there. Distance learning provides cost free and multimedia enrich education environment for the students. As expected, students who make research recommend web based distance learning much more than other students. In this research only discuss about postgraduates students' attitudes in distance learning, this research does not talk about learning writing.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research was qualitative study carried out through interviews to explore the challenges and attitudes of EFL undergraduate students in writing through online learning. Esterberg (2002) argues that interviewing is at the hearth of social research. If you look through almost any sociological journal, you will find that much social research is based on interview, either standardized or more in-depth (Sugiyono, 2017). An interview has developed to explore the live experience of Indonesian undergraduate students regarding learning writing by virtual in terms of challenges and attitudes. In-depth interviews involve the posing of open-ended questions and follow-up probes designed to obtain an indepth understanding of participants' experiences, perceptions, opinions, feelings, and knowledge (Meagen, 2016).

The students freely show their expression related to their experience in learning writing over virtual, this freedom of expression is particularly important because the purpose of the current study is to obtain an in-depth understanding of the students' perspectives, and to shed light on aspects that were not deemed important by the researchers. Then, the students also asked about the challenges of learning writing through virtual and how they response to the learning process. Google Form can be used to conduct online quizzes, survey on teaching effectiveness, collecting answers of open-ended question and so on. Agarwel (2009). The questions created in Google Form and the Goggle Form link shared through Whatsapp chat. The answers given by each participant can only be seen by researcher. This is as an evidenced that the answers were given by the participant purely based on their personal experience without any influence from other participants' answers. Moreover, the data was analyzed using the Semi-Structured interview to answer the formulation of the problem in this research.

The subject of this research is the EFL undergraduate students. The number of participants is about 30-45 students who are selected through purposive sample, because this research is about undergraduate students' attitudes in learning writing over virtual, the sample data sources are the people who have learned writing through virtual during COVID-19 pandemic. Sugiyono (2017) argue purposive sampling is a sampling technique with certain consideration. The researcher has done the research on fifth and seventh semester English undergraduate students in Medan especially at UMSU. The participants asked to draw their experience in learning writing by virtual during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The data collected by interview. With the interview, the researcher know the undergraduate students' experiences in learning writing through online, to find out what are the challenges in learning writing though online and how are the students' attitudes in learning writing through online learning system. After creating the question in Google Form, the link shared by Whatsapp. The researcher shared the link through some English groups. Then, the students can easily click the link and answer the question in the Google Form. After that, the students can notify the researcher if they have filled the answers so that the researcher can check their responses through Google Form.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There were 46 participants who occupied the questionnaire created through Google Forms. The participants were the fifth and seventh semester undergraduate students in English Education Department at UMSU who had finished the writing lesson via online. The

questionnaire consisted of 5 sections about participants' experience including the students' personal data, 2 sections of multiple choice questions related to Statements about Online Learning and Statements about Students' Attitude towards Learning Writing through Virtual, and 2 sections of essay questions to know the students' experience and Students' efforts to improve their Writing Skill.

The results from Table 1 show that the students feel difficult to interact with the lecturer (35.6% SD+D), 8 students often faced problem in internet connection while attending online learning. Besides that, 26 students claim that the interaction with the lecturers are getting further by online learning, and (42.3% SD+D) 20 students feel expressing the problems faced in online learning to the lecturers uncomfortable than face to face. Furthermore, the interaction between students are getting further in online class (55.6% SD+D), and 21 students find difficult to complete group assignment through online. Moreover, 28 students feel miscommunication between lecturers and students often occurs in online class while 10 students do not feel that miscommunication often happens in online learning. Unfortunately, 20 (42.2% N) students feel neutral in statement easy to understand the material that the teachers give through online learning. Besides that, there are 26 students (57.8% SD+D) difficult to get information from the lecturers via online learning. In addition, there are 10 students (22.2% SD+D) cannot respond the assignment as quickly as possible through online learning while 21 students (45.6% A+SA) can arrange their learning time effectively and submit all assignments on time.

Statements about Students' Attitudes towards Learning Writing through Virtual

A. The Students' Attitudes of Learning Writing through Virtual Learning

Based on the analysis of the students' answer in the interview questions were analyzed by using Semi-Structured interview to identify students' experience and attitudes towards learning writing through online learning. The data from the interview reveals attractive findings. It was found out that many students had negative attitude in learning writing through virtual learning, even though some of them noticed learning writing through virtual a positive one.

B. Negative attitudes of the Students in Learning Writing through Online Learning

In EFL context, writing is often considered the most complicated skill for the most foreign language learners. To be able to have great writing, one needs not only to have satisfactory information how to put words into sentences, and sentences into a meaningful speech, but one needs to have clear inspiration (Setyowati, 2017). Based on the students' answers of the questionnaire about their feeling in learning writing through online, they mostly said "difficult"

"I think learning writing through online learning is hard because it is not easy to understand the material. It needs much time to understand but we don't have much time to do that".

"I found it was difficult to understand the material and theory about writing, and how to make a good essay. Because the limit time".

Based on the respondents' answer, there are 11 students who said learning writing over virtual is difficult, because they often faced bad internet connection and the limited time so they can't easily understand the material. They need more time to understand the material. It is similar to the previous research by Rafiq et al. (2021). They believed time management is an important aspect of online learning, and students should devote adequate time to their

respective courses, participate in group discussions by posting messages, and submit their work on time.

Moreover, one student stated in the interview sheet that he often experiences on his devices became error when learning through virtual learning. Because of the difficulty to find good signal when online learning in progress, the device he uses become slow.

"In my opinion, it is also more difficult to study at home because of many obstacles such as difficult signal and cellphone or laptop errors when doing online learning"

It is in line with the research conducted by Chang et al (2021). They declared the device and facilities required for the learning process include the laptops of both teachers and students, the internet connectivity, and the technology to operate these digital devices. All these factors may be affected by the country's socio-economic conditions.

Besides that, there were 5 students also feel learning writing through virtual learning is an ineffective activity. Some of the students lived in the village where hard to find good internet connection which results in frequent miscommunication. Therefore, some students find it difficult to understand the material given by the teacher through online learning. It was supported by the interview sheet.

"In my opinion when we are learning writing through virtual is not really effective. Because there are several students have a bad connection so they have miscommunication".

"Bad internet connection is the first problem when learning writing by online learning. Because I live in the village and it is hard to find a good signal"

"I think learning writing virtually is not effective do studying because students can't understand the material"

Three of five students above stated learning writing through online learning is not effective study, because most of them often faced slow internet connection. These were in line with the previous research which observed that about 92% of all virtual studies online learning is believed to be at least as effective with face to face studies stated by Nguyen (2015). Miscommunication often occurs in online learning. It also supported by the questionnaire section 2 numbers 7 and 8. In section II number 7, the numbers of percentage showed that there were 65.2% (30 students) agree miscommunication between lecture and student often occurs in online class. Similarly, in question number 8 (54.3% SA+A) students approve in statement miscommunication between students to students also happens in online class.

. Furthermore, the majority of the students asserted they have being confuse about the task because of inscrutable material, and can't focus to the explanation because there are many distractions while doing writing by virtual. This is in contrast with a study done by Alaidarous and Madini (2016). The study mentioned that students perceived their blended learning environment positively. In contrast, the student in the present study argued that using face-to-face application was not effective for learning due to unstable networks. It also stated by the students in the question, do you feel difficult to understand the material through online in the interview sheet.

"Yes, because I haven't a note. The lecturer gives long material which would take a lot of time looking for it all over again. Different from a notebook which only contains the most important notes"

"Yes, because the material shared is not delivered thoroughly and there is interference or noise that occurs in the house so that it makes the mind unable to focus"

"Yes, because I think writing is a hard lesson so we must focus, but when learning online our focus is divided with distractions around the house"

The three students stated that they could not focus in the material that the lecture gives through online learning, because they were disturbed by noise from around their house. It was in line with Yandell (2020) who had found the similar challenges where students could not find a comfortable place to study.

To sum up, in a study conducted by Hussein et al.,(2020) it was found that the components of the negative attitude possessed by students related to online learning were distraction and internet connectivity. This is in line with the challenges experienced by students in this study where most of them find it difficult to find a stable internet connection and find it difficult to find a safe and comfortable place from various kinds of disturbances in learning writing through online learning. Internet connectivity barrier became the most quoted between other challenges. It was stated by 32 students, they more prefer face to face than online learning. These findings are similar to Naji et al., (2020) who have reported students control were a lower rated dimension among other dimensions. Some students also explained in the interview sheet. Because of that, in learning writing through online learning is an ineffective learning process and miscommunication often happens on online learning.

C. Positive Attitudes of the Students in Learning Writing through Online Learning

Setyowati & Sukmawan (2016) claimed the children who had negative attitude to writing viewed writing as difficult and stressful and felt that there was little they could do. On the other hand, the students who have positive attitudes toward writing perceived writing as something interesting, challenging, and fun because writing help them to express themselves and get more knowledge on certain topic. Although the students who have positive attitudes in learning writing, they also faced some difficulties during learning writing through virtual. The problems are about bad internet connection and the limit time that the lecturer gave. Kindly, the students who have positive attitudes view the difficulties in learning writing though online not as barriers, they notice them as something to be solved. It was supported from the students' answer in the questionnaire. There were 6 students who had positive attitude to learning writing through virtual described learning writing through virtual as an effective learning.

"In my opinion, with online learning, I can be more relaxed and can be done remotely without gathering in person in the same place. Besides that, through online learning parents can directly supervise their children in learning and also make students take advantage of technology and their ability in the field of technology"

"I think it is effective for me and for another student because we can write anytime and anywhere".

"I think it is flexible, I can learn anywhere"

Actually, three of the six students claimed learning writing though online is more effective because they can do remotely in any situation. With regards to the effectiveness of digital technology for language learning, a study conducted by Nugroho and Rahmawati (2020) proved that social networking site (e.g. mobile application Instagram) was recognized as an efficient tool to enhance students' writing skills. Virtual learning refers to the use of digital

equipment for teaching and learning as stated by Arkorful and Abaidoo (2014). Technological tools are used to study anywhere and anytime. Virtual learning also involves training, delivery of knowledge and motivating students to interact with their friends.

Furthermore, online learning atmosphere can develop the students' idea in learning writing. It was supported by the data in the interview sheet. There were three students mentioned that learning writing over virtual learning is an easy activity because they can explore many ideas.

"According to me learning writing through virtual make me easy to explore so many ideas to write something, but it often make me misunderstanding about the material because specifically, I have to understand the material as much as possible individually"

"It is more make me feel comfortable to think the ideas"

"It emphasizes that learners are able to use critical thinking process"

The three students feel online learning atmosphere can develop their mind to think critically and explore their idea. It is also supported by Flower & Hayes (1981) that the inspiration has its own place. They trust that inspiration and affect are important to writing. Since writing is a complex assignment and a time expending activity, concentration and determination to finish the task are highly required. It also supported by the section 3 questionnaire numbers 6 and 7. The statement number 6 is by online learning, I never seem to be able to write down my ideas clearly. There were 37% students disagree about that statement, it means the students can clearly write down their idea in online learning writing. Next statement is I feel confident express my ideas in writing through online, it was cited by (37% SA+A) students agree in that statement. Besides that, still in section 3 questionnaire numbers 10. There are 8 students (17.4% SA+A) agree in statement online learning atmosphere help me develop my ideas in writing. It can be conclude some students can develop their idea in their writing though online learning.

D. The Efforts to Improve Students' Writing Skill

Based on the findings of the questionnaire section 5, to solve students' problem in expressing idea there are 3 things that the students can do based on the efforts section. They are read a lot to get knowledge and ideas, diary writing and practice writing. First of all, most of the students believe if they read a lot they get knowledge, information and ideas.

"Before I start to write and even I don't know what I want to write. I read a lot of articles, journals, news, or videos. By doing that, I can find many ideas to write. Doing free writing seems not suitable for me because I don't have a specific theme for my essay on other words I have no ideas. So I start from search for ideas before writing"

"By reading, you will definitely get a lot of information and the more ideas you will suddenly think of what to write"

"Because, if we read a lot of books or others it can help us to write good writing"

Reading is indeed helps the writer to develop their ideas so that they have something to write on paper. Mendelman (2007) argued that a person who could write critically depends on how he reads critically. Similar research also has shown that students who spend more time in reading/writing are more creative than those who do not (Wang, 2010). Reading is a good way to get input for the target language.

Secondly, 10 students believed by diary writing can improve their writing skill. That was found in the previous study by Fatima, Bery & Susanto (2015) they found that writing diary has significant influence on the students' writing ability.

"Because now many diaries are made for essay writing experiments and it can add knowledge about essay writing even though it takes us to understand a little about the writing"

"Because by diary writing make me able to put and explore so many ideas and can develop my written based on experienced"

"Because I always do it, if I do it I always can improve my vocabulary and actually I really like writing diary"

They agree written diary can increase their writing skill, they can write based on their experienced without fear to others. The previous research was found by Euis and Riski (2015), they stated diary writing can be a reserved way in sharpen the students' writing ability. In this activity students can write freely without fear of being evaluated as well as the activity that can encourage students' communication ability specifically in written form.

Thirdly, 9 students believed by practice writing can improve their writing skill. Erna (2016) stated, to make the students' work be more valuable, they require be communicating and disseminating in seminars. Some students not really know how to arrange words for essay. That's why practice writing needed to increase student's writing skill. It also explained by the students in the interview sheet.

"Practice writing English every day the importance of practicing English every day is to practice new habits for you. Writing every day in English will get used to it and become something you look forward to doing. You won't see language development as important, if not dedicated to writing in English you won't be able to create amazing stories without practice writing"

"When we are practicing writing every day, we will know how to write something. And we can learn from our mistakes in writing"

"Because, when we always try to write every day we will get best writing"

They believed they can get better writing if they practice writing, so they can learn the mistakes from the previous writing. The more often they write, the easier it will be for them to string words into beautiful paragraphs. These were in line with previous research by Luu (2010). She argued the more you write, it will be better your writing. One great way to practice writing, even before you start to write essay text it is better to keep daily journal. It is also cited by some students in interview sheet. It is better to often practices writing to get best writing.

4. CONCLUSION

The spread of Covid-19 in Indonesia affects the education system in this country. Face-to-face instructions are changed into online learning from home. This research find out many EFL undergraduate students found trouble during learning writing through online. Based on the data analysis, the main challenges faced by the students are bad internet connection and limited time for students do the assignment.

Helping students to realize their best performance in writing can be done not only from teaching strategies and guidelines media, but also from attitude study. Students may have sufficient power to writing in English, but they may have attitude matter in term how they

view writing itself. If the students have negative attitude in learning writing, they may not be able to give their best performance in their writing. Based on the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that the undergraduate students in fifth and seventh semester of UMSU who have finished learning writing through virtual had positive attitude toward learning writing over virtual even though they confessed faced problems while learning writing by online, such as difficult to understand the material, express ideas in writing and most of the students more prefer face to face than online learning.

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