



Exploring EFL Students' Strategies in Writing Research Background at one of the Universities in Cirebon

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Article History:

Submission
September 26th, 2022

Accepted
December 20th, 2022

Published
January 31st, 2023

ABSTRACT

Learning strategies assist students in revealing their individual learning style, recognizing their identity as “learners”, and being conscious of their learning obstacles. The current study aimed to investigate the strategies in writing research background encountered by English Department students at one of Cirebon’s institutions throughout the academic year 2021/2022. This study employed a qualitative technique with a case study design, with thirty students participating as respondents. The data was gathered via a questionnaire and an interview. There are two research instruments in this research, especially close-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interview. The instruments were also distributed in Bahasa Indonesia. According to the findings, students adopted strategies such as reviewing the references of journal articles. This causes students to use strategies to reduce these difficulties, including reading reference journals or articles. The score using this strategy is 95%. Furthermore, respondents indicated that they were requesting revisions from their supervisor. This is the experience of lecturers were better because they have done research many times. As a result, they were changing the sentence structure check. In addition, it creates sentences that are difficult to understand between sentences and paragraphs that are out of sync. There was a need for a revision of the review to produce a coherent reading and not confused the readers. It is suggested that the students choose the appropriate strategy, so that the strategy can be implemented properly.

Keywords: students strategies; research background; academic writing

INTRODUCTION

At higher education or university level, the main goal is to write academic papers. Writing paper is one of the academic writings. Before compiling a paper, students are required to prepare a research proposal. According to Bailey (2003) academic writing is made for all those who study (or plan to study) in English-speaking colleges and universities and must write essays and other projects for exams or coursework. He goes on to state that academic writing has four purposes: to report on research the author has done, to answer questions the author has given or chosen, to discuss topics of common interest and provide the author’s perspective, and to synthesize the research carried out by others on a topic. This means that researchers and writers must have a clear



understanding of why they are writing or doing research. Therefore, this is different from writing and Bailey (2003) agrees that academic writing strives to be accurate and objective. As a result, correct information based on proper evidence is gathered. In this approach, research findings or results can be justified.

According to Coffin & Donohue (as cited in Aunurrahman et al., 2017), argumentative writing is a significant genre at the university level since it may indicate the writer's critical thinking capacity and high level English examines the competence of EFL students. Meanwhile, Tardy as cited in (Azizah, 2017) because academic writing frequently demands researchers to develop ideas from the perspective of experts, even if they are not regarded experts in the subject. This demonstrates the importance of academic writing in the production of new knowledge or concepts in education.

There is research planning in academic writing. The research planning process is the first phase in creating a research essay, journal article, or other piece of writing that includes an introduction to the topic and background, the aim and benefits of research, and the premise for solving a problem on the chosen issue (Ahmed, 2019). It indicates that the research background is included in the introduction and is crucial in compiling the research. Aside from the title and content of the research. The introduction in this case contains three components. The first part providing background information according to the title taken, the second part justifies the need to explore areas that are not known by the reader, while the third component states the hypothesis or describes the research's objective and purpose by KN 2014 (as cite in Pramonojati et al., 2020).

Based on these theories, academic writing is one of the most important things in education, especially at the university level. This is the purpose of writing this final project as one of the requirements to obtain a bachelor's degree, namely a scientific work. Given its significance, various strategies and methods are consistently developed and used to advance students' academic writing skills. Some common strategies used in Indonesian classrooms include giving students writing portfolios, creating topical and project-based syllabuses, and incorporating ICT (Aprianti & Winarto, 2021). The above initiatives have a specific aim: to familiarize students with the stages of academic writing and to introduce the cycle of the writing process. In addition, Zamel (as cited in Madjid, 2020) describes the writing process as exploratory and generative, in which writers find, generate, and explore ideas while attempting to approximate meaning. Furthermore, when writing, make sure that each sentence is written in a logical order.

Each student has a different way in the learning process to achieve the goal and minimize it in writing. One of them is the strategy used by students, which is called the learning strategy. According to Oxford cited in (Putria, 2017) many factors influence the choice of strategy: level of awareness, learning stage, task requirements, teacher expectations, age, gender, nationality/ethnicity, general learning style, personal nature, motivation level, and purpose for learning the language. Meanwhile, Yulianti (2018) learning strategy facilitates students' expressing their own way of learning, recognizing their identity as "learners," and realizing their difficulties in learning. Students face problems when writing academic papers. These issues relate to content, organization, vocabulary, syntax, and mechanics (Wibowo, 2022). Therefore, when a student realizes what the challenges are, at least they must also know what strategies to use to deal with these difficulties.

Based on previous studies as explained above, it can be inferred that EFL students have strategies during process in writing research background. Moreover, the preliminary observation toward the 8th semester at English Department students at one of the universities in Cirebon, there is the strategies are used to overcome these challenges. The low description writing academic is

because students have various strategies while writing research background to overcome these challenges. Considering the phenomena, that writing research background is very important in various studies; journals, essay, papers, or the others. As English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students in Indonesia, we are taught that English is not a second language. Not only in Indonesia but other countries still have difficulties when writing, because writing is quite complex in term of aspects or the writing process.

Considering the cause of the problems, the researchers investigated EFL students' strategies in dealing with these challenges. The researchers assume that when students used the strategies in writing research background then writing will be faster and easier. So that the issues faced can be solved so easily, to develop and explore ideas to be poured into research background writing. Researches have focused their attention on writing skill as a critical talent that contributes to learning any language and without which education is nearly impossible, Shangarfan & Manipur (as cite in Ahmed, 2019).

LITERATURE REVIEW

ACADEMIC WRITING

Academic writing is one of the goals of higher education or university level. The primary function of teaching and learning scholarship at the institution is academic writing, Lilis & Scoot as cited in (Azizah, 2017). Fukao & Fuji cited in Ankawi (2020) academic writing involves students' capacity to integrate skills such as obtaining information, formulating, summarizing data, organizing thoughts in logical sequence, editing, and finally correcting. According to Bailey, (2003) academic writing is a flexible course that allows students to work either with a teacher or by themselves, to practice those areas which are most important for their students. It means, academic writing differs slightly from ordinary writing ability. Because it has a more complex structure in compiling the writing itself. In addition, academic writing is one of the requirements, especially in research paper to get a bachelor's degree.

WRITING

Writing is one of four skills in English, the others being reading, listening, and speaking. Writing is a type of communication where a writer transmits his idea and thoughts to readers in written (Nurchahya & Sugesti, 2020). Meanwhile, Hyland as cited in (Palanisamy & Aziz, 2021) it is claimed that writing is an effortful endeavor that entails a lot of processes and methods to create a series of written words. In addition, writing is a crucial talent since it serves as an important tool for communicating with others (Napitupulu, 2021). Moreover, Harmer (2004:33) writing is frequently useful as preparation for some other activity, in particular when students write sentences as preamble to discussion activities. Based on the statement above, writing is a skill that everyone has as form of communication to convey ideas or messages to readers. So that writing has different meanings according to what the reader represents.

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Background provides a summary of existing research, highlighting flaws, future directions, and gaps that must be addressed. This section explains why the study stated in the research protocol should be carried out (Majid, 2017). Every researcher believes that writing research background is an important thing when he or she wants to present their research. The research background is not only about writing the fact related to the case, however, it also explains why the researcher chose to conduct the research and how this research differs from previous research. The research

background must be supported by several theories, data, empirical facts, laboratory observations, and literature studies. Students must think, adapt, and construct ideas while writing research papers, see how well it relates to the next sentence or not. The writing research background also has the same process as other types of writing (Madjid, 2020).

As a result, in the background of the study, it is necessary to reinforce arguments related to the research topic chosen in order to persuade readers to read them. The following are some key elements that must be included in the background of the problem: (a) rational and fundamental reasons that pique researchers' attention, as well as why the challenge has not been solved. (b) Symptoms of gaps between events in the field with theory as a foundation for thinking about how problems arise. (c) The losses that will occur if the problem is not addressed. (d) Research benefits, professional partner, and the community that will be gained if the problem was investigated (Nurdiyanti et al., 2022). Therefore, the item must be present in the backdrop. As a result, numerous foundations can be used to strengthen it, including: Juridical Platforms and Pedagogical Platforms (Nurdiyanti et al., 2022).

STRATEGIES IN WRITING

Oxford cited in Yulianti (2018) mentioned that in the language learning process, the language learning approach plays a critical role. Language learning strategies are extremely significant for language acquisition because they are tools for active, self-directed movement, which is critical for communication competence development. Learning strategies, on the other hand, are quite effective in the learning process. Learning strategies facilitate the students to reveal their own way of learning, recognize their identity as "learners" and be aware of their difficulties in learning (Yulianti, 2018). Acquisition methods, as stated above, are an important aspect of the language learning process and can be used in reading, speaking, listening, and writing. As a result, when the correct method is used, learning challenges can be reduced.

Writing strategies have long been acknowledged as essential in assisting successful authors in improving their writing abilities. It was utilized to better regulate and develop learners' writing skills as well as take control of their own learning (Winarsih et al., 2021). Language learning strategies there are two main aspects, it is direct and indirect strategies. Based on the aspect there into six groups categorized, Oxford, 2003; Oxford & Burry-Stock, 1995; Oxford, 1990 (as cited in Pongsukvajchakul, 2021).

- a. Cognitive strategies are used to make sense of learning and manipulated language materials. They are reasoning, analyzing, summarizing and general practicing, such as writing words several times, using words in different ways and writing notes or reports.
- b. Memory strategies help a learner to store information and link an L2 item or concept with another. They are grouping, imagery, rhyming and structured reviewing, such as flashcards, reviewing often and remembering by location.
- c. Compensatory strategies enable a learner to overcome knowledge gaps such as guessing, using synonyms and inventing new words.
- d. Metacognitive strategies help a learner to regulate the overall learning process such as planning, noticing mistakes and looking for chances to practice.
- e. Affective strategies involve a learner's emotional requirements such as having confidence, encouraging oneself, expressing feelings and rewarding oneself.
- f. Social strategies help a learner interact with others and understand a target language, such as asking questions, asking

Oxford's categorization provides the most comprehensive classification of language learning strategies among the existing learning systems listed above. Later, Oxford (2003) creates the

Strategies Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), a standardized questionnaire with a scoring system that will be utilized as the major instrument in determining students' learning strategies (Yulianti, 2018).

METHODOLOGY

This research used case study research design under qualitative research. According to Creswell (2018:41) defined qualitative research as a method for investigating and analyzing the content of individuals or groups in relation to a social or human problem. Case study was suitable for this research because focuses on challenges and strategies in writing research background at English Department at one of the universities in Cirebon in academic year 2021/2022.

SUBJECT OF THE RESEARCH

The participant of this research was the 8th semester English Department students in academic year 2021/2022 at one of the universities in Cirebon while contracting a thesis course. Besides that, students were willing to be participants in this research. The participants in this questionnaire consisted of 20 participants, who were the 8th semester students who had taken Research Proposal Writing course. Meanwhile, the interview participants were chosen based on the criteria of the Research Proposal Writing course score, which include four highest score, four middle-center score, and two lowest score. In addition, this the research amounted to ten students with gender equality: four males and six females.

DATA COLLECTING METHOD

The data collected by questionnaire and interview. Research involved interview and questionnaire the 8th semester English Department students in academic year 2021/2022. Several steps of data collection as follows:

QUESTIONNAIRE

In this case, the researchers used a questionnaire. The Questionnaire strategies were divided into two main aspects, the direct and indirect strategies. Then, it was subdivided into six classes. From these two aspects there are nine statements for each the aspect. Therefore, the questionnaire there are eighteen statements. The steps for collecting data through the use of a questionnaire are as follows:

- a. First, the researcher creates a questionnaire using Google Forms.
- b. The researcher sends questionnaires to students via WhatsApp.
- c. Following that, the researcher demonstrated how to answer the questionnaire's questions.
- d. The researcher requested that the students respond to the questions.
- e. The researcher would now like to thank you for taking the time to respond to the questions.
- f. The questionnaire was distributed on May 19, 2022.

INTERVIEW

An interview at the 8th semester student English Department in academic year 2021/2022 was the next data collection technique used to gather more information. In addition, interviews were used to validate and to strengthen the data to be collected the questionnaire. Interviews were carried out after the distribution of the questionnaires was completed on May 24 – 28 2022. This happened

because it was in accordance with the willingness of students to conduct the interview. The results of the data are transcribed, followed by being translated into English and then making conclusions based on the results of the interviews.

TECHNIQUE OF ANALYZING DATA

The next step after collecting the data is analyzing them. The data was analyzed by qualitative data analysis. Miles and Huberman (2014) technical data analysis were used in the study. As a result, the researchers performed three analytical tasks at the same time: data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions/verification. The information gathered from the result interview and questionnaire was relevant to the research topic, which was to investigate EFL students' strategies in producing research background. The data reduction on the research used by the researchers to reduce appropriate data from the data collection by filtering important data based on research objectives. Meanwhile, the data display, the researchers have reported the relevant data and confirmed the research results. After the data is processed in the previous step, it can be verified or ended by using an inductive method derived from a specific thing to get an objective conclusion.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the result of interview and questionnaire from students have been researchers interviews. There were three the students strategies to overcome challenges in writing research background, such as: reading the reference of journals article, requesting revisions by the supervisor, and revising according to sentence structure review. It could be seen from interpretation result of interview, as follows:

READING THE REFERENCE OF JOURNALS ARTICLE

There were three students use strategy read reference journals to minimizing challenges in writing research background. It could be seen from interpretation result of interview with S3, S8 and S6, as follows:

The explanation above is reinforced by student statement #3.

S3: "Reading reference journals or articles is important because we get an idea of how to compose the background and know what needs to be included in our background".

Student #8 also reported the same thing.

S8: "Looking for references to previous journals and theses. I think this is quite effective because when we look at previous journals, proposals, or theses, at least we can follow the correct format in preparing the background".

This is also explained by student #6.

S6: "Looking for journal references or articles through Sci-hub if there are journals that can't be downloaded. This strategy is the easiest for me, if there is an easier strategy maybe I will use this strategy to minimize difficulties".

Three students use this strategy because reading and searching for journals is the main foundation for making background content directed and in accordance with the rules. That way the theories produced are accurate according to experts in their fields or research that has been done previously.

REQUESTING REVISIONS BY THE SUPERVISOR

There were three students use strategy requesting revision by the supervisor to minimizing challenges in writing research background. It could be seen from interpretation result of interview with S1, S6, S7 and S9, as follows:

The explanation above is also explained by student #1.

S1: *“I sent the research results to my supervisor. From these results I got revisions related to sentences between sentences that are not coherent in one paragraph or even the selection of diction that is not appropriate”.*

Student #6 also explained.

S6: *“When asking for revisions, the supervisor always responds and notifies related errors and lack of content from the background. This really helps the process of my research.”*

The statement was also explained by student #7.

S7: *“The lecturer provides guidance on how to write properly and correctly so that he does several revisions”.*

Student #9.

S9: *“Based on the results of the research background, I asked the lecturer to revise it. The revision results also varied, including the use of upper and lower case letters, the use of punctuation marks and semicolons, then how the main idea connects with the second idea”.*

Four students use this strategy because guidance from lecturers is very helpful for them, especially for upper semesters who are preparing a thesis as a condition for obtaining a bachelor’s degree.

REVISING THE SENTENCE STRUCTURE REVIEW

There were two students use strategy revise according to sentence structure review to minimizing challenges in writing research background. It could be seen from interpretation result of interview with S2 and S9, as follows:

Student #2 explains with the statement below.

S2: *“The strategy is to revise sentences by learning good and correct sentence structures. In addition, learning the latest vocabulary so that you can express and develop sentence ideas”.*

On the other hand, student #9 expressed his opinion.

S9: *“I try to organize and revise the general points to the main points or discussions of importance. I do it sequentially and structured. So that readers can understand the ideas or discussion of my research”.*

Two students used this strategy because writing does not only require ideas, vocabulary, but also a harmonious sentence structure. This is due to the fact that writing must conform to a generic structure so that readers can understand the content of the writing.

The result of questionnaire, could be seen as follows:

TABLE 1. Questionnaire's Result of Students Strategies to Overcome Challenges in Writing Research Background

1	I reread the research methodology material during writing the research background such as: qualitative research methodology and quantitative research methodology.	85%	15%
2	I remember a quote or theory by remembering where I saw the theory (book pages, journals, articles etc.)	60%	40%
3	I relate what I have just learned with what I already know.	85%	15%
4	I read books and journals according to the research topic.	95%	5%
5	I write notes when I find theory.	85%	15%
6	I make a summary of previous research based on what I read	85%	15%
7	I choose a topic according to the desired interest.	95%	5%
8	When I have trouble thinking of the right English words, I like to use words or phrases that have almost the same meaning.	95%	5%
9	I make a new sentence according to the research topic when I don't find the theory from the expert.	70%	30%
10	I find out my writing mistakes to improve the sentence structure.	95%	5%
11	I plan my schedule so I can optimize my research background.	75%	25%
12	I seek as many opportunities as possible to read previous studies related to the research topic.	60%	40%
13	I listen to songs while writing the background to enjoy the writing process.	90%	10%
14	I encourage myself to be passionate about background writing.	90%	10%
15	I look for a comfortable place when I'm writing to focus more.	90%	10%
16	When I don't understand an aspect in English, I ask my supervisor.	100%	0%
17	I ask for corrections and revisions from the supervisor during the process of writing research background.	100%	0%
18	I work with friends to help and remind each other about writing research background.	80%	20%

Lack of reading will cause difficulties that occur because there is no picture or reference that can be used as a reference. This causes students to use strategies to reduce these difficulties, including reading reference journals or articles. The score using this strategy is 95%. It means that strategy is often used to minimize the challenges during the research writing process. As we know, in research, articles and journals are very important to serve as references for conducting research.

Student research will not be successful if there is no help from the supervisor. This is the experience of lecturers were better because they have done research many times. It is not surprising that many students ask for revisions from their supervisors in order to expedite the research process.

Ambiguous sentences will affect the reader's reading results. Messages and intentions written by researchers will get various perceptions. In addition, it creates sentences that are difficult to understand between sentences and paragraphs that are out of sync. There was a need for a revision of the review to produce a coherent reading and not confused the readers.

Based on the discussion, students' strategies to overcome challenges in writing research background were three, such as: reading reference journals, requesting revisions from the supervisor, and revising according to sentence structure review.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The experience of students' challenges in writing research backgrounds could be overcome by three strategies, such as: reading journal articles, requesting corrections or revisions from superiors, and revising according to the reviewed sentence structure. In this case, students can use

more than one strategy to solve the challenges they face during the writing process. Students use the strategies of reading journals or reference articles, which are included in the cognitive strategy; asking for corrections or revisions from the supervisor, which is included in the social strategy; and revising according to the sentence structure, which is included in the metacognitive strategy.

The recommendation, it would be better to do research across multiple aspects of subjects and skills with different methodologies. Strategies are not only related to writing skills but also to other skills such as reading, listening, and speaking. The researchers hope that the next researcher can investigate students' strategies in other skills, so that the research results have a novelty.

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