

EFL_ Indonesian Students' Attitude toward Writing in English

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Abstract

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 (EFL) learners have to maximize their efforts to put their thoughts on the paper. This paper is intended to describe the EFL students attitude toward writing. There were 57 students participating in the study. The data was collected by using questionnaire, interview, and documentation of self reflection essay. The result shows that none of the students has low attitude in writing, while fifty eight percent of them has moderate attitude to writing, and the rest of them have positive attitude to writing. The result from the interview also reveals that although the students have moderate attitude to writing, they view writing as difficult, and stressfull. While those who have high attitude, mostly view writing as interesting and challenging. The finding also reveals several efforts the students do to improve their writing skill, among others are practice writing, reading a lot for knowledge and ideas, and using diary writing. The implication of the finding is discussed.

Key words: EFL writing, Writing attitude, Writing efforts

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Introduction

A good essay is enjoyable to read. But behind its creation, there is a great effort and a winding process from the writer to make the piece of composition becomes so meaningful. Creating a good piece of composition in the native language is a hard work, let alone in the foreign language like English. 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. Their research also has shown that there is a relationship between students' writing attitudes and their writing achievement. If the result of this this research is correctly interpreted, it implies that better writer has more chances to get better grades.

Unfortunately, most English as a Second Language (ESL) /EFL students have negative attitude to writing. They often view writing, especially in the form of essay composition, is a difficult task. 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 (Ismail et al.,2012) . There were some factors why the students have negative perception toward writing, namely the lack of time to practice in the class and the ineffective writing course guide and resources to write critically (Ismail et al., 2012). Furthermore, Zhu (2001) , who investigates ESL graduate students writing difficulties, finds out that the major challenges the ESL students face are the rhetorical and the linguistics aspects during the completion of the writing tasks. Within Indonesian context, the students' dislike to writing are due to the problems they encounter when they perform writing tasks, namely linguistics problems, cognitive problems in relation to paragraph organization and text structure, and phsychological problems, such as moods and difficulty to start writing (Rahmatunisa, 2014).

Ideally, students should have positive attitude to writing as it can help them to achieve better writing achievement. Research reveals that there is a relationship between positive attitude and writing skill (Hashemian & Heidari, 2013). The result of the research also shows that the students who have integrative motivation achieved better success in second language (L2) academic writing than those who have intrumental motivation. In addition, 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 students who have more positive writing attitudes have better writing achievement than other students who have less favorable writing attitudes. The result of their study suggests that writing attitudes can predict writing achievement. Similarly, 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. This means that the more motivated the students are, the more writing strategies they would use. They finally concluded that motivation is found to be one of the important trigger in enhancing EFL learners writing skills.

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 factor 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 successfull writing (Ismail et al., 2010).

So far, there is not much research focusing on Indonesian EFL students' attitude in writing. Much research is dedicated within the context where English is used widely outside the classroom and exposure to the target language is available. Therefore, more research needs be conducted to understand how EFL view writing and identify the possible solutions to the problems that might occur from the students' point of view. Thus, the objectives of the study are a) discovering the level of EFL Indonesian students' attitude toward writing in English, b) discovering the students' attitude toward writing in English, c) describing the students' view of writing in English, and d) discovering their effort to improve their writing skill.

Methodology

The design of the study is descriptive quantitative. The students who participated in the study are the 2014 batch of English Education Study Program of Teachers' College and Education (STKIP) PGRI Pasuruan located in East Java, Indonesia. The instruments used were writing attitude questionnaire developed by Podsen (1997), random interview, and documentation of students' self refelection writing. In the questionnaire of writing attitude, there are five attitude scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*), 2 (*Disagree*), 3 (*Dont't know*), 4 (*Agree*), and 5 (*Strongly agree*) with total of 20 items. Some items in the questionnaire, however, do not show positif direction. Therefore, to analyze the data, some reverse coding were needed. The scores in the questionnaire range from 20 (the lowest) to 100 (the highest). Based on the scores, Podsen (1997) differentiates students' attitude into three levels, low (20 – 39), moderate (40-68), and high (69-100). The result of reliability questionnaire computed by Cronbach Alpha is .737, which means that the questionnaire has high internal consistency. The result of the students' questionnaires were analyzed quantitatively.

Basically, there were 60 students in 2014 batch, but only 57 of them who fill out the writing attitude questionnaire. Some of the students were randonly interviewed to find out their attitude to writing. The students were also asked to write self-reflection essays toward their feeling to writing in English. To analyze the data, simple codification was used.

Finding

The Students' Writing Attitude Level

The result of the students' questionnaire shows that the students' writing attitude level fall in the category of moderate and high based on Podsen (1997) writing attitude questionnaire. High scores indicate positive writing attitude and low apprehension level, and vice versa.

Table 1
Students' writing attitude level

<u>Writing Attitude Level</u>	<u>Attitude Scores</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Low attitude	0	0	0
Moderate attitude	52-68	30	52.63
High Attitude	69-88	27	47.37
Total		57	

Based on the respondents' scores on the adapted writing attitude questionnaires, the students are grouped into two writing attitude levels. It shows that there are 30 students gain writing attitude scores between 50 – 68, while the rest of 27 students score between 69 to 88. This means that 52.63 % of the students has moderate level of writing attitude, while 47.37 % of them belongs to high level of writing attitude group.

So, it can be concluded that the students' writing apprehension level of the students in this college joining the essay writing class was relatively average. This indicates that the students are not apprehensive and sufficiently confident in writing composition using English as a means of communication

The Students' Attitude Toward Writing Students' Response to Negative Attitude Items to Writing in English

The result shows that the majority of the students (76% SD +D) did not avoid writing in whatever the circumstances were. However, they got uneasy when they knew that their compositions were going to be evaluated (63% SD + D). Interestingly, many of them had a mental block when they started writing as they felt that their mind went blank (42% SD + D). Detailed result of the questionnaire can be seen in table 1.

Table 2.
Negative Items Responded by The Students.

	Stongly Disagree %	Disagree %	Don't Know %	Agree %	Strongly Agree %
(1) I avoid Writing Whenever possible	10	66	15	7	2
(4) I am affraid of Writing when I know it might be evaluated	15	48	12	22	3
(5) My mind seems to go blank when I start writing	9	29	20	30	12
(6) Expressing my ideas to writing is a waste of time	36	25	17	20	2
(11) I am nervous about my writing	5	46	8	36	5
(14) I never seem to be able to write down my ideas clearly	5	30	34	29	2
(15) I am not a good writer	4	10	34	42	10
(19) I don't I write as well as most people	5	17	29	49	0

The result of the questionnaire also shows that the students did not feel that writing is a waste of time (61% SD + D). Moreover, half of them also did not feel nervous about their own writing (51% SD + D). In terms of writing down ideas, more than one third of the students (35% SD + D) did not have problem on putting down ideas on the paper, while the other one third (31% SA +A) felt differently. Unfortunately, half of the students did not have confidence to say that they are good writers (52% SA + A), and did not have the ability to write as most people (49% SA + A)..

Students' Response to Positive Attitude Items to Writing in English

In relation to the positive items in the questionnaires, most of the students' respond shows to positive direction. The items mostly asked about fear, confidence, and enjoyment to writing. In detail, the result of the questionnaire can be seen in table 2.

Table 3.

Positive Items Responded by the Students

	Stongly Disagree %	Disagree %	Don't Know %	Agree %	Strongly Agree %
(2) I have no fear of my writing being evaluated	2	20	14	52	12
(3) I look forward to writing down my ideas	2	8	10	68	12
(7) I would enjoy submitting my writing to megazines for evaluation and publication	3	14	47	29	7
(8) I like to write my ideas down	2	7	9	67	15
(9) I feel confident in my ability to express ideas in writing	4	20	24	49	3
(10) I like to have friends read what I have written	4	20	22	42	12
(12) People seem to enjoy what I write	0	10	76	14	0
(13) I enjoy writing	0	20	17	56	7
(16) I like seeing my thoughts on paper	0	8	17	61	14
(17) Discussing my writing with others is an enjoyable experience	0	8	2	54	36
(18) It is easy for me to write good letters	2	34	34	29	2
(20) Writing is a lot of fun	2	15	20	54	9

The results of the questionnaire shows that the majority of the students had no fear if their compositions were evaluated (62% SA + A). More than two thirds of the students confessed that they looked forward to writing down their ideas (80% SA + A) and liked to writing them down (82% SA + A). Interestingly, almost half of them were not sure if they would enjoy writing for evaluation and publication (47% Neutral), with more than one third of them would not submit their writing for evaluation and publication (36% SA + A). In terms of confidence, only half of

the students who were confidence enough to express their ideas in writing (52% SA + A), while the other half are divided between not confident (24% SD + D) and not sure (24% neutral). Half of the students also liked to share their writing with other friends (54% SA + A). Interestingly, two thirds of the students felt that they were not sure if people enjoyed to read what they have written (76% Neutral), with very few of them were confident enough to say that people enjoyed their writing (14% SA + A). The good news are, more than half of the students enjoyed writing (61% (SA + A), and viewed writing as a fun activity (63% SA + A). Moreover, two thirds of them liked to see their thoughts on the paper (75% SA + A), and almost all of them liked to discuss their writing with others and viewed this as an enjoyable experience (90% SA + A) although more than half of them confessed that writing good letters were not easy (63% SA + A).

The Students' View of Writing in English

The data from the interview reveals interesting findings. It was found out that many students had negative attitude to writing, although some of them viewed writing in English a positive one. When the students were asked to describe their feeling of writing in English, they mostly said "difficult" and "stressful".

Writing in English so difficult, because we do not only focus to our writing, we also focus to our grammar, and the second reason we must master vocabulary to result a good writing and to avoid misunderstanding of meaning by readers. That makes writing in English is so difficult. (Dt1/Imam/Att score 75)

I think writing is so difficult for me. There are many rules. We should have good grammar and have many vocabulary. While I am not good to choose the right word and also I have a problem to choose the topic. My knowledge about grammar and vocabulary are not good. (Dt2/Lailatul/Att score 60)

I get depressed when I think about writing, I get stressed and I feel that I can't do it. Writing is so stressful, that's the only negative feeling I get sometimes. I was looking for a way to turn this into a positive feeling so I can be more productive. (Dt4/Nafisyah/68)

On the contrary, the students who had positive attitude to writing in English described writing as "interesting", "fun", and "challenging".

Writing is interesting. Because of writing I can express all of my problems. I can add my new vocabulary. I can get new knowledge with writing. (Dt 5/Sumiati/63)

Writing is fun to do when I write my experience or re-write about story or freewriting. I mean when I can write anything without thinking about the topic. But sometimes in writing lesson, my lecturer gives the topic. So, it makes me hard to think and it is wasting time to write. (Dt6/NurKumala/Att score 53)

It is really challenging because it makes us thinking loudly of what we have to write in the first paragraph. For some people, and of course me, writing in the first paragraph is hard. It makes me so stressful because there is nothing I can do. Although, I love English but for making a good writing is still and always hard for me. I remember, I look up my friends' task when they made the same task like me. They were far better from me. I mean, I don't

know what I have to write. I tried my best but, it is still nothing. There are so much in my head but, it is just a little I have written on the paper. (Dt9/Firza/ Att score 73)

For me writing is fun because from writing I can write anything in my mind. I can share my opinion by my writing and then share my problem to other people. Writing is like a friend for me because a lot of my friends cannot understand me well. So when my friends do not understand about my problem, I always write down my problem in my diary so there is no one can judge my problem. But when I write something I always go to my bedroom and I hope there is no one to look at me.(Dt 10/salim/ Att score 64)

The result from the interview shows that there are two different groups in terms of how the students view writing. The first group belongs to the one who perceive writing as something difficult, and the other group belongs to the one who believe that writing in English is an interesting and fun activity. They, however, admitted that they had problems when they write something. Among others are the topic selection problem, 'don't know what to write problem', and fear of being judged by others.

The Students' Effort to Improve Their Writing Skill

Based on the students' reflection toward writing, it was found out that there were 10 strategies EFL students would do to improve their writing skill. The data are presented in table 4.

Table 4.

The students' Efforts

<u>No</u>	<u>Efforts</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
1.	Diary writing	7	12.3
2.	Practice writing	22	38.7
3.	Letter writing	1	1.7
4.	Read a lot to get knowledge and ideas	15	26.3
5.	Using dictionary to improve vocabulary	3	5.3
6.	Peer feedback for vocabulary and grammar	3	5.3
7.	Thinking positively	3	5.3
8.	Planning before writing	1	1.7
9.	Doing freewriting	1	1.7
10.	Choosing familiar topic	1	1.7

(38.7%). They believed that if they practiced a lot, their writing skill would improve. The second strategy that they used was to read a lot (26.3%). Through reading, they confessed that they would get a lot of vocabulary, grammar, and style that they could transfer ideas into their paper. The third strategy that they would use is to apply diary writing (12.3%). Through diary writing, they said that they were able to pour down their ideas, their daily activities, their feelings, and their emotions by using English without being afraid to be judged by somebody else, since no person would read their diary. Finally the least strategies that the students used are letter writing, planning before writing, doing free writing, and choosing familiar topic.

Discussion

In Indonesian EFL context, it is widely acknowledged that writing is the most complicated skill for most Foreign language learners. Translating ideas into text is a complex one since it involves a wide range of different process which requires high demands on the limited capacity of working memory (Galbraith, 2009). EFL writers, to be specific, need to pay attention to the flow of ideas, how they are related one to another, and whether they are logical and relevant. The students also need to pay attention to the the transition between paragraph, the unity and coherence that make the writing intact, the language, the punctuation, the spelling, and word choice. Therefore, it is not an exaggerating statement to say that writing is a demanding task. Because of high demand in writing, motivation plays an important role to complete the writing task. As for Hidi and Boscolo (2007), writing involves not only cognitive and metacognitive processes, but also involving affective components, such as self regulation and motivation. Further, Pajares and Valiante (2006: 158) believe that the complexity of writing does not lay only in the the thought process underlying the students' composition, but also with the manner in which the students engaged the text. They believe that one effort to understand the complexity is to focus on the students' writing self-belief which become the basis of motivation. This being the case, learners will carry out the writing task well if they believe they can do it.

EFL students in general, especially those who are learning to write or novice writer, view writing as a difficult task. Unlike in the first language (L1) context in which the difficulties might come from the use of strategies of knowledge integration, the creation of unques combination to form a composition, and the use of the links of the prior knowledge and the new topic (Boscolo & Hidi, 2007), in foreign language (FL) context, the students felt that the difficulties mostly come from grammar and vocabulary. The majority of the students thought that a good writing is seen from a flawless grammar and good choice of vocabulary. The students' difficulties as found in this research are similar to Rahmatunisa's (2014). The result of her research shows that Indonesian students who are learning to write in English put linguistics problems as their first barrier to writing, such as grammatical structure, words formation, words classes, and articles.

EFL students in Indonesian context mostly are not aware that a good writing is actually seen not only from the language, but also from the content that talks about one single idea, and how the ideas are connected in a logical way and meaningful for the reader. Because the students put more emphasize on grammar and vocabulary, they become demotivated to write and put themselves in a high anxiety and apprehensiveness even before they started to write anything. As a result, they have negative attitude to writing.

They who had negative attitude to writing viewed writing as difficult and stressfull and felt that there was little they could do. On the other hand, the students who have postive attitude toward writing perceived writing as something intresting, challengging, and fun because writing help them to express themselves and get more knowledge on certain topic. For them, writing is as a way to share ideas with other people and as a means for self-reflection to express themselves and to solve their personal problems. Although they have positive attitude toward writing, they admitted some difficulties before and during writing. The problems are the topic selected by the writing teacher which is not interesting, how to start the first paragraph, how to generate ideas, and fear of being judged by other people. Interestingly, the students who have positive attitude toward writing, view the difficulties not as obstacles, they perceive them as

something to be solved. This is similar to Boscolo and Hidi's argument (2007) who say that expert writers and novice writers would see the problems they encounter during writing differently. The expert writer would see the problems are things to be solved, while the novice writers would see a problem as an obstacle which make the writing task "dangerous" (p. 3) and not interesting.

The result from questionnaire reveals several findings. Firstly, the majority of the students did not avoid writing activity, but they became anxious when they knew that their writing might be evaluated. The data suggests that the students prefer to write for enjoyment and free of being judged. This negative feeling of fear being evaluated indicates the importance of private writing, a term suggested by Elbow (2000). In his definition, private writing means a process of writing in which the students are free to determine the subject and duration of writing. Celik (2015) explains that private writing improves the students' freedom to write on topics that they like, not topics imposed by others; freedom in composing, and in finishing their writing. As a result, private writing enable the students to grow their self-confidence as they are aware that their writing will not be evaluated by others, and will not suffer from anxiety of being evaluated and criticized.

Secondly, the students have confidence problem when it comes to writing in English. The majority of the students feel that they are not good writers, unable to write as most people do, and not confident enough with their own ability to express themselves in writing. And mostly, they have the fear of being evaluated. Students who received heavy feedback from the teacher might think that he is not good enough to writing in English. This, of course, would make their confidence falls apart. In relation to this, feedback plays an important role in enhancing the students' confidence in writing in English as well as their overall writing performance. If the students are afraid of being evaluated, the writing instructor can apply different types of feedback which are not threatening to students' self confidence. Some feedbacks are highly recommended to be used in ESL/EFL classroom, such as direct feedback (Hamidun, Hashim, & Othman, 2012), selective written feedback (Andersson, 2011), progress feedback (Duijnhouwer, Prins, & Stokking, 2010), and content feedback (Simpson, 2006).

Direct feedback refers to the feedback given whilst the students were in the middle of completing the writing task. The direct feedbacks given in Hamidun et.al (2012) study were in the form of idea development, vocabulary choice, sentence construction, and writing conventions. They claimed that by using direct feedback, the students' motivation can be changed into positive one, so that they were more motivated in completing the writing task despite of their lack of vocabulary and grammar mastery. Other type of feedback which is considered effective is selective feedback (Andersson, 2011). Selective feedback focuses only certain type of gramatical feature. Research also has shown that the use of progress feedback can enhance the students's self-efficacy belief to write in English (Duijnhouwer et al., 2010). Progress feedback is based on intrapersonal comparison in which the student writers compare their previous performance with the current performance by filling a feedback form which contain spaces to tick of which writing aspect has improved. Other type of feedback which is considered favorable by learners are content-based feedback (Simpson, 2006) in which the writing teacher focuses more on content and rhetorical issues of writing assignments. Although feedbacks are helpful to improve the students' overal quality of writing performance, writing teachers need to be aware of the different level of students' proficiency. Tsao (2012) states that

different proficiency level of students need to be treated differently when it comes to error correction.

From the teachers' side, the writing teachers should not put the main focus of the evaluation on the linguistics elements only. If writing is seen as a means of communication, then how the ideas are meaningfully transmitted to the readers should be the main concern. Raimes (1985) suggests instead of focusing on the grammatical accuracy, the teaching of writing should stress on the students' ideas, and how to organize them on the paper. If this being the case, in evaluating the students' composition, the primary concern is to give the students feedback in terms of which part of the essay needs improvement through student-teacher conference

Besides giving appropriate feedback to the students, there are also some strategies that can help the students to have more self-confidence. Maguire (1989) proposes several strategies to elevate the students' confidence in writing. Among others are, to have the students keep a personal journals to record felings, ideas, thoughts, and experiences. The students can write in the journal for five minutes to 10 minutes in which the activity can be done in class or out of class. The journal can also serve as the students' self reflection of their own writing progress. Secondly, the writing teacher needs to structure the instruction in such a way so that the students know what is expected from them. One way to do this is to choose topics within the students' personal experience. The instruction can offer some guides to the students in each of the writing phases so that they would not have the feeling to be left alone for the writing battle. And thirdly, the writing teacher can discuss the writing assignment with the class. This can be done during the pre-writing activity. The writing teacher and students share ideas to approach the topic, such as list the ideas, or brainstorm them.

Thirdly, to solve the students' confidence in expressing ideas in writing, there are two things that students can do. First of all, the students need to be introduced with several ways of planning activities, such as freewriting, outlining, and mapping. These planning activities can help the students to discover, collect, and organizing their ideas. Research has shown that outlining strategies are effective to improve the students ability in writing. In a series of studies, Kellog (1988, 1990, 1999) finds out that pre-task planning—specifically outlining—is effective in improving L1 writing quality hollistically. Other type of planning activity, such as freewriting or rough drafting, is also effective to help students collect their ideas (Galibraith & Torrance, 2004). If the students are already familiar with these techniques, they can select which of these technique works best with their learning style. Secondly, to solve how to start writing problem, the students need to learn how to open their compositions by using hook strategies. There are many hook strategies that students can learn, for example using questions, anecdote, definitions or general background information, description, facts/statistics, and quotations. In relation to the topic selection, the writing teacher can suggest topics that may interest the students, but the topics are still challenging enough for them to write and train their critical thinking. The type of topics that are challenging usually deal with students' personal life and experience.

The good news is, although not all students have high level of writing attitude to writing in English, none of them falls into the category of low attitude in writing. Based on the data, it

can be seen that EFL students who join writing course in STKIP PGRI Pasuruan have moderate and high attitude to writing in English. Interestingly, the students who belong to high attitude group do not automatically have positive attitude to writing. This can be seen from the attitude score gained by the students who viewed writing as positive and were randomly interviewed. Take for example the students' interview of data 5 who scored 63, data 6 who scored 53, data 8 who scored 60, and data 10 who scored 64. These students who possess positive attitude to writing belongs to the moderate level attitude group. Similarly, students who had negative attitude to writing in English, some of them had high level attitude to writing, such as students from data 1 who scored 75. These data, however, has confirmed that most EFL students admitted to have problems in writing although they view the activity as something positive. Both the students who have positive attitude and negative attitude to writing believe that grammar and vocabulary are their major problems to writing in English.

The students offer some efforts to solve their writing problems and to improve their writing skill. Based on their reflection essay of writing in English, they have ten solutions that they usually used. Based on the order of importance, the first three important strategies are to practice writing, to read a lot for knowledge and vocabulary, and to have diary writing. The students who choose these strategies are those who understood the value of reading to improve the quality of their paper. They believe that of they read a lot, they would become more intelligent, and in return, the paper would be qualified in content.

If we start to write something of course we have to read first. From reading we can write down something to make an essay. The ideas we get from reading can give us information and of course it can increase our intelligence. If we want to be a better writer we have to collect and find sources as many as we can. Thus, to get many information, the best way is to read. (Wr/Alfis/21/Att score 88)

We should read many books so that we have the insights or good ideas. I also need to keep reading and studying vocabulary to gradually make my language better. (Wr/Bagus/50/Att score/62)

Have a wide knowledge and good sources are really important to build the strength of the content of our writing. We can make a good writing by having good content and trusted sentences. The easiest way to get them is by writing our own experience or we can search on the internet for trusted sources. One more addition, as a writer one should read as much as one writes. Because writing and reading influence each other. So the more often we read, the smarter we can write because we can get many sources and also extra good diction for our writing at the same time. (wr/Riza/57/ Att score 69)

Reading is, indeed, helps the writer to focus on the ideas so that he/she has something to say on the paper. Mendelman (2007) states that a person who could write critically depends on how he reads critically. She said that the texts that are critically read would help the writer to build analysis and argument. 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 also a good way to get input for the target language. Through reading, learners can have language input in terms of vocabulary and spelling (Krashen, 1989) which is very beneficial to writing. Because

of the importance of reading, it is suggested that there is an integration of reading before writing activity which can be done in or out the class.

The second three strategies are to use dictionary to improve vocabulary, to have peer feedback for vocabulary and grammar, and to think positively. Students prefer peer feedback to solve their problems and improve their writing.

When I gave their paper back, I would say "oh, you're good" but, when I had that thought on my mind, I felt like everyone will be do same for me. I tried to show their mistakes as best as I can, but I also realize that it isnot my place to correct their mistake when I lack of English too. (wr/Najah/09/Att score 65)

Research shows that peer feedback helps students feel more confident, relaxed, and inspired with their learning (Lin & Chien, 2009). Finally, the least strategy that they used are to have letter writing, to plan before writing, to do freewriting, and to choose familiar topic during writing task. Particular students prefer these strategies to improve their writing skill.

Conclusion

Helping students 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, it can be concluded that the Students of English Education Study Program of STKIP PGRI Pasuruan 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).

This research, however, has some limitations. Firstly, as the data gained in this research mostly are descriptive data, the result of this research cannot be used as generalization. Secondly, this research did not investigate the the students' writing attitude and how it relates to their actual writing performance. The information whether the students who had positive attitude to writing gain better writing performance than those who had negative attitude needs further investigation. Furthermore, there is no information provided in terms of the relationship between the students' attitude to writing and their writing performance across different level of English proficiency. Thus, future researchers are suggested to conduct further research in writing attitude study, so that the result can be used to help EFL students writer to maximize their writing performance.

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