



KINDS OF WRITING DIFFICULTIES IN ACADEMIC WRITING FACED BY ENGLISH TEACHERS OF SMKN 8 PADANG

Peragita Agdia¹, An fauzia Rozani Syafei²,

English Department

Faculty of Languages and Arts

State University of Padang

email: peragitaagdia35@gmail.com

email: susisyafei@gmail.com

Abstract

Writing is a very complex skill and difficult to master. Difficulties in writing can be seen in various aspects of writing. There are various factors that cause difficulties in writing. This study aims to analyze the kind of writing difficulties faced by English teachers. In addition, this study also identifies factors that cause writing difficulties, namely psychological, socio-cultural and linguistic factors. This research uses descriptive quantitative methods. Data were collected from 5 English teachers who teach at SMKN 8 Padang. In collecting data, the teachers were asked to write an academic essay with the topic English for vocational high school students. To find out the factors that cause teacher difficulties in writing, data were collected through interviews. The results of the study aimed at teachers faced difficulties in every aspect of writing. they were difficulties in contents, organization, language use, and vocabulary. Then, the dominant factors that cause writing difficulties was the psychological factors.

Key words: Writing, writing difficulties.

A. INTRODUCTION

Writing is defined as a process of conveying the ideas into a written form. It is often considered as a creative way of communication where the ideas can organize into a good paragraph. Hyland (2003) defines writing as a way to share personal meanings. Good writing means good in terms of language, content, purpose, and referred reader. In addition, Randal (2004) states that writing is an ability to make a form of words that in general, may have a higher truth value than the fact that it has set it down. It means that the product of writing should be truly accepted by the reader. However to express the ideas in the process of writing are the most difficult skill to be mastered. Writing is usually problematic. It takes a lot of time and requires excessive attention. As stated by Richard (2002), writing is the most difficult skill for second language learners to be mastered.

The difficulty in writing is not only in generating and organizing ideas and finding vocabulary but also in using correct grammar. In addition, Nunan

¹ English ELTSP of English Department of FBS Universitas Negeri Padang graduated on June 2020

² Lecturer of English Department of FBS Universitas Negeri Padang



(1999) also stated that “the most difficult task to do in language learning is to produce a coherent, fluent, extended piece of writing, which is even more challenging for second language learners.” It caused writing is being difficult not only for students but also for teachers.

Based on informal discussion with some high school teachers in Padang, many teachers faced some problems in writing especially English teachers in vocational high school. They stated that writing is the worst issue for them because they rarely apply this skill in their daily life. Some teachers stated that they have inadequate time to write. There were many demands that should be done. For example, the full teaching schedule and many activities out of the schools. The curriculum also not demand them to write. These reasons make them do not really pay attention to improve their ability in writing.

Furthermore, there are many writing difficulties and types of writing problems. Different researchers have different directions for studying and sorting such problems based on their factors. According to Brown (2007) factors that caused writing difficulties can be classified into psychological factors, socio-cultural factors, and linguistic factors. In addition, Bryne (1988) divided the problems that make writing difficult into three categories. They were linguistic difficulty, psychology difficulty, and cognitive difficulty.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This study carried out by using descriptive quantitative research. Creswell (2002) states that quantitative research involves data collection that is typically numeric and the researcher tends to use mathematical models as the methodology of data analysis. The population of this research was the English teachers of SMKN 8 Padang. The total numbers of English teacher in SMKN 8 Padang were 5 teachers. The sample of this research was chosen based on the total sampling technique. Therefore, the sample of this research was all of the English teachers.

In collecting the data the researcher asked teachers to write an academic essay. The teachers were asked to write an essay about five paragraphs in 100 minutes. After discussed with the suggested evaluator the topic is English for Vocational high school students. After the teacher finished the essay, the researcher collected it. Moreover, the researcher interviewed the teachers one by one using the interview guidance.

In analyzing the data the researcher asked the evaluator Dr. Rusdi Noor Rosa to scored the writing test. After that, the researcher interpreted the data through Bryne’s theory, Brown’s theory, and Jacob’s rubric. The researcher also use the website Grammarly to check the language uses, vocabulary, and mechanic of the writing test. Last, thr researchers determined the writing difficulties based on the results of the data interpreted and discussed. Furthermore, the researcher explained the data descriptively

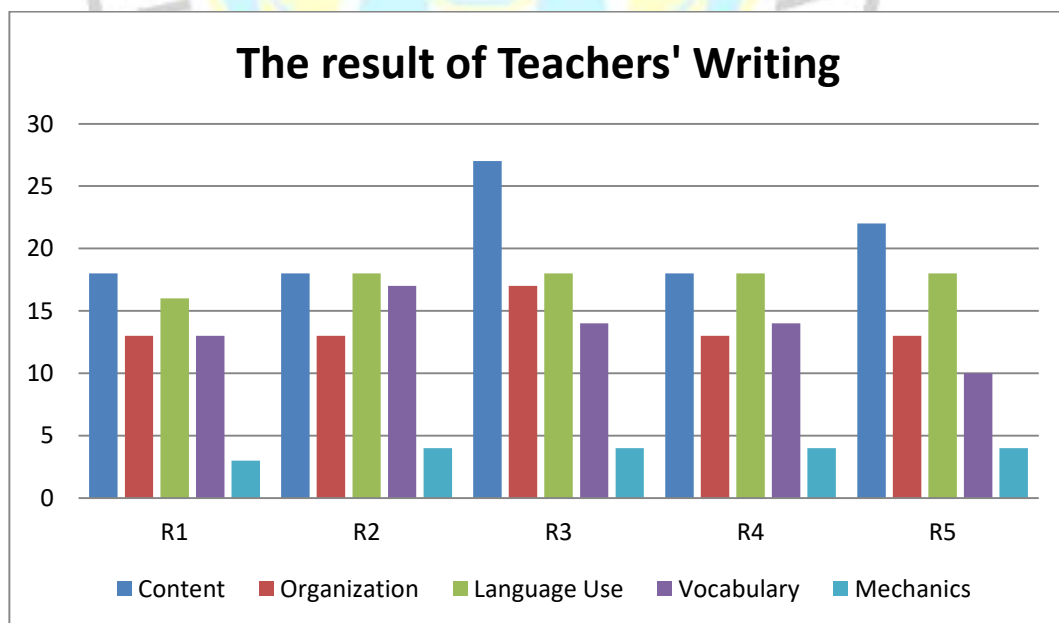
C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Research Finding

The finding of the research showed that the teachers faced some difficulties in every aspect of writing. it can be seen from the results of the writing test are presented as follows:

ASPECTS OF WRITING	SAMPLE					Average score
	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	
Content	18	18	27	18	22	20,3
Organization	13	13	17	13	13	13,8
Language Use	16	18	18	18	18	17,6
Vocabulary	13	17	14	14	10	13,6
Mechanics	3	4	4	4	4	3,8
Total Score	63	70	80	67	67	69,4

Based on the explanation above, it can be seen that the scores of English teachers in writing the academic essay was still categorized into fair to poor criteria. The total score showed the ability of teachers in writing. The average score of teachers only 69,4. The average scores from every aspect of writing were also categorized into fair to poor. The average scores were 20,3 for content, 13,8 for organizations, 17,6 for language use, 13,6 for vocabulary, and 3,8 for mechanics. it can be concluded that the kind of teachers difficulties in writing were in content, organization, language use, vocabulary and mechanics. The result of writing test above can be seen in the graphic below:



From the graphic above, it can be seen the score of the teachers in each aspect of writing. For content, the highest score was 27 (excellent to very good) and the lowest score was 18 (fair to poor). For organization, the high score was 17 (good to average) and the lowest score was 13 (fair to poor). For language use, the highest score was 18 (good to average) and the lowest score was 13 (fair to poor).

For the vocabulary, the highest score was 17 (good to average) and the lowest score was 10 (fair to poor). The last aspect was mechanics that got 4 for the highest score (good to average) and the lowest score was 3 (fair to poor).

The following is the description of writing difficulties faced by the teachers of SMKN 8 Padang.

a. Content

According to Jacobs (1981), content refers to the substance of writing, the experience of the main idea (unity), i.e., groups of related statements that a writer presents as a unit in developing a subject. Based on the result of writing R1 got 18 for content which means limited knowledge, little substances, inadequate development of the topic. It can be seen from the first paragraph which is an introduction of the essay. R1 wrote

"English subject is a compulsory in Indonesia. It is taught in every level of education. We know that most of schools like Elementary, junior high school, Senior high school is taught in an approach called Genre Based approach. Where students are introduced in the texts models, social functions, generic structures and language features of the text genre as a tool to help them in the writing performance "

According to Oshima and Hogue (2006) the introduction consists of two parts that are a few general statements to attract reader's attention and a thesis statement to state the main idea of the essay. However, in the paragraph above there was no thesis statement. It proved that R1 had limited knowledge about the content of the essay. Moreover, it was not substantive because the thesis statement was not stated. It also showed inadequate development of the thesis because the thesis was not clear so the development of ideas was not based on the thesis. It was similar to R2 whom also got 18 which means limited knowledge, little substances, and inadequate development of thesis. It can be seen from R2's writing.

"Education in Indonesia has several types of education. One of education is vocational education. It is quite popular. Vocational education is the type of education that is applied at vocational high school. It gives opportunities to students where they can practice what learn instead of just learning theories "

In the paragraph above, there were no thesis statements that make this essay was categorized into little substance. It means that the writer had limited knowledge about the content of the essay. R2 wrote the inadequate development of the thesis because the thesis stated was unclear. Then, R3 got the highest score for content that was 27 which means knowledgeable, substantive, thorough development of the thesis, relevant to the assigned topic. It can be seen from the results of R3's writing below:

"There are some problems faced by Vocational High School students in Learning English. The problems are lack of interest and motivation in Learning it, English is boring and difficult subject for them and the inappropriate teaching approach and strategy."

According to Whitaker (2009) the introduction have to provides background information, and it also has the thesis statement. R3 wrote an introductory paragraph with a thesis statement about the problems faced by students and the cause of the problem which is explained in a simple way, that makes it easy to understand. It proved that R3 was knowledgeable about the content of the essay. In addition, this paragraph is substantive because it has a thesis that must be presented in an introductory paragraph. Then the essay also relevant to the assigned topic which discussed English for vocational school students. Meanwhile, R4 got 18 for the content which means limited knowledge, little substances, inadequate development of the thesis. It can be seen from the results of R4 below:

"English is an important subject that must be learned by students in every level of education. Since elementary school, junior high school, senior high school, including vocational high school. In studying English the students learn how to communicate in English by practicing conversation. they also study structure and grammar, and they study about various kinds of texts in English. The students study many things about English."

From the introductory paragraph above, it can be seen that the thesis statement is unclear and not specific, it described the little substance and limited knowledge. Last, R5 got 22 for the content which means some knowledge of the subject, adequate range, limited development of thesis lacks of detail, mostly relevant to the topic. R5 wrote:

"Actually, awareness of the importance of English has been felt for a long time.the challenges of globalization in the 21st century increasingly encourage people to have English skills various methods are used by the community to be skilled in English, for example parent register their children in English in English language courses, look for schools whose language instruction is English, while children try to follow English learning well."

In the introductory paragraph above, this paragraph contains a thesis statement in the first paragraph that was 'the awareness of the importance of English'. It described that the writer had some knowledge about the content of the essay. The essay was more purposeful because there was a thesis statement that described that the essay was an adequate range. However, the topic was written is still in general and no specific information, it described the limited development of the thesis and lack of detail.

Based on the explanation above, three respondents have the same score for the content they are R1, R2, and R4 that categorized into fair to poor. One respondent got excellent to very good and one respondent got good to average. In sum, there were more than half of the respondents were categorized in the fair to poor criteria. It showed that respondents had difficulties in writing content. It can be concluded that the difficulty of writing content is included as one of the kinds of writing difficulties faced by English teachers in SMKN 8 Padang.

b. Organization.

Organization refers to the logical organization of the content (coherence). It is scarcely more than an attempt to piece together all collection of facts and jumble ideas (Jacob,1981). It means that the idea in each paragraph of the essay should be related and connected.

Based on the result of the writing test, R1 got 13 for the organization which means non-fluent, idea confused or disconnected, lack of logical sequencing and development. The idea of the first paragraph and the second paragraph did not relate to each other. According to Oshima and Hogue (2006) the second paragraph should be the argument that contains supporting ideas of the first paragraph. However, both paragraphs disconnected. In the first paragraph, R1 did not only discuss the English subject but also the text models. Then, in the second paragraph, R1 did not only discuss the benefit of study English but also teachers' hope about their students. This essay was a lack of logical sequencing and development. (See Appendix 1)

R2 got the same score with R1 that was 13 which means non-fluent, ideas confused or disconnected lacks logical sequencing and development. It can be seen from the essay that each paragraph was disconnected. The ideas in every paragraph are different. The idea in the first and second paragraphs is lack of logical sequence and development. In the first paragraph, R2 discussed with a general description of vocational schools. Furthermore, in the second paragraph, R2 wrote about English as a compulsory subject that must be learned. It showed that the first paragraph and the second paragraph were disconnected. The second paragraph did not show the supporting arguments that related to the ideas of the first paragraph. (See appendix 2)

R3 got 17 which means somewhat choppy, loosely organized but main ideas stand out, limited support, logical but incomplete sequencing. It can be seen from the main idea of each paragraph. In R3's essay, it was found that the ideas in every paragraph was related. In the first paragraph, R3 discussed the problems facing by vocational students. Then, the second paragraph mentioned the first reason that caused students' problems in learning English. In the next paragraph, R3 continued to write some reasons that were related to the previous paragraph. It proved that R3's writing has logical sequences but still incomplete. (See appendix 3). R4 and R5 got the same score 13 which means non-fluent, ideas confused or disconnected lacks logical sequencing and development. R4 and R5 wrote the essay with disconnected ideas in every paragraph. The ideas were confused the readers. (See appendix 4, 5)

Based on the explanation above, there were four respondents were categorized in the fair to poor criteria. It showed that respondents had difficulties in organizing ideas in writing. It can be concluded that the difficulties in aspect organization was also included into the kinds of writing difficulties faced by English teachers in SMKN 8 Padang.

c. Language use

According to Jacobs (1981) language use refers to the use of the correct grammatical and syntactic pattern on separating, combining, and grouping ideas in

words, phrases, clauses, and sentences to bring out logical relationships in writing. Thus the essay should use the correct grammatical and syntactic pattern.

Based on the result of teachers writing R1 got 16 for the language use which means that there is a major problem in simple/complex construction, frequent errors of negation, agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions and/or fragments, run-ons, deletions, meaning confused or obscured. There were some problems with frequent errors of negation, for example “*We know that most of schools...*” there is a negation of determiner “*the*”. The correct form should be “*We know that most of **the** schools*”. Another problem was: “*...like Elementary, junior high school, Senior high school is taught in an approach called Genre Based approach.*” Tobe “*is*” is wrong because there are three kinds of school that is mentioned. Thus, it should be “*...like Elementary, Junior high school, Senior high school **are** taught in an approach called Genre Based approach.*”

Then, R2 got 17 for the language use which means there are some major problems in simple/complex construction, frequent errors of negation, agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions and/or fragments, run-ons, deletions, meaning confused or obscured. There are several errors found in the essay for example, “*...where they can practice what learn instead of just learning theories.*” There is a negation of the pronoun. The correct sentence is “*...where they can practice what they learn instead of just learning theories.*” Then, there is an inappropriate quantifier for example “*Students in vocational high schools learn any kinds of subjects.*” The quantifier “*any*” is usually used for the negative and interrogative sentence. However, R2 wrote it in a positive sentence. The correct sentence is “*Students in vocational high schools learn various kinds of subjects.*” Next, the inappropriate of using past participle forms. For example “*...English is a compulsory subject that has to be learnt by the students*” the word learnt is not the past participle form of learn. The correct sentences should be “*English is a compulsory subject that has to be learned by the students*”.

R3 got 18 for language use which means effective but simple construction, minor problems in complex construction, several errors of agreement, tense, number, word order/ function, articles, pronouns, prepositions but meaning seldom obscured. There is only a little mistake found in the R3 essay. For instance, there is a negation “*There some problems facing by Vocational High School students...*” the correct sentence should be “*There are some problems facing by Vocational High School students.*” Then, the use of inappropriate preposition and adjective. For example “*students come to the school because of they are interest on the majoring...*” the preposition because of is followed by a noun or noun phrase. In addition, the use of word interest is not suitable with the meaning. It should be changed into interested. The correct sentence should be “*students come to the school because they are interested on the majoring...*”

R4 also got 18 for language use which means effective but simple construction, minor problems in complex construction, several errors of agreement, tense, number, word order/ function, articles, pronouns, prepositions but meaning seldom obscured. There are several problems that found in R4 essay.

For example the use of inappropriate gerund “*Since elementary school, junior high school, senior high school, including vocational high school.*”. The verb “*including*” should be changed. The correct sentence should be “*Since elementary school, junior high school, senior high school, include vocational high school.*”.

R5 got 18 for the language use which means effective but simple construction, minor problems in complex construction, several errors of agreement, tense, number, word order/ function, articles, pronouns, prepositions but meaning seldom obscured. There were several mistakes that had been written by R5 for instance, “This is because they are demanded to get job after graduated from the school.” It appeared that an article was missing before the word job. It was considered adding the article. Moreover, the determiner the was used incorrectly. It should be omitted. The correct sentence should be “*This is because they are demanded to get a job after graduated from school.*” Another example was in the sentence “*So, by having English skill, it will become additional point for them to get the job*” it appeared that an article was missing before the word additional. It was considered adding article. Thus the correct sentence must be “*So, by having English skill, it will become an additional point for them to get the job.*”

Based on the explanation above, there were two respondents were categorized in the fair to poor criteria. It makes the average score of all teachers were also categorized into fair to poor. It can be concluded that, Language use was also included as the kind of writing difficulties faced by English teachers in SMKN 8 Padang.

d. Vocabulary

Vocabulary refers to the selection of words that are suitable for the content (Jacob 1981). Good writers have to enrich their vocabulary for their writing’s quality. Meanwhile the result of the test showed that R1 got 13 which means limited range, frequent errors of word/ idiom form, choice, usage, meaning confused or obscured. there are many words that meaning confused or obscured in the essay. For example in the sentence “*they can used it in their jobs of world*” the word choice is confused the meaning. The word “*world* should be ommited.

Then, “*it can make them a good position in job*” the word make in this sentence is not suitable. It is better to change into “*it can make give them a good position in job*”.

R2 got 17 which means adequate range, occasional errors of word/ idiom form, choice, usage but meaning not obscured. This is categorized as average to good, there are only a few meaningless mistakes such as repeated use of words so that the meaning is not so important. For example in the sentence “*Education in Indonesia has several types of education. One of education is vocational education*” the use of word “*education*” should be reduce to make it effective. The correct sentence should be “*Indonesia has several types of education. One of them is vocational education*”.

R3 got 14 which means adequate range, occasional errors of word/ idiom form, choice, usage but meaning not obscured.

R4 got 14 which means adequate range, occasional errors of word/ idiom form, choice, usage but meaning not obscured. There are several repeated words

that are meaningless that can be omitted. For example “*Since elementary school, junior high school, senior high school, including vocational high school.*” The word “*school*” can be omitted to make the sentence effective. The correct sentence should be “*Since elementary, junior, senior, including vocational high school.*”

R5 got 10 which means limited range, frequent errors of word/ idiom form, choice, usage, meaning confused or obscured. This is the lowest score of the five teachers for vocabulary. From the essay, it is found that there is repeated use of word “*..for example parent register their children in English in English language courses,..*” it should be omit “*..for example parent register their children in English language courses,..*”

Based on the data above, there were only two respondents who were categorized into fair to poor. However, it also make the average score of all teachers were categorize into fair to poor. It means that vocabulary was also included as the kind of difficulties in writing faced by English teachers of SMKN 8 Padang

e. Mechanics

According to Jacob (1981) mechanics are descriptions about spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing, and handwriting in written products. Thus mechanics is related to the way the write write their ideas in correct spelling and punctuation. Based on the result of the writing test, R1 has some problem in spelling and capitalization. R1 wrote “*compulsary*”. The correct spelling is “*compulsory*”. Another spelling mistake is “*yunior*” it should be “*junior*”. Then there are many inappropriate capitalization for example “*Especially for The high school*” it should not be a capital letter. Another example is “*...they can understand and able to speak english Later on...Moreover, By understand English,..*”

R2, R3, R4 and R5 got same score in mechanic that is 4 which means occasional errors of spelling, punctuation, paragraphing but meaning not obscured. There are only several mistakes in capitalization and spelling, for example, in R3’s writing “*..students in Learning English. The problems are lack of interest and motivation in Learning it,..* Another example is the inappropriate punctuation such as “*lack of interest and motivation in Learning it, English is boring and difficult subject for them and the unappropriate teaching approach and strategy*” the coma should be changed into full stop.

Based on the explanation above, it showed that mechanics were also included as the kind of writing difficulties faced by English teacher. In sum, in this research, all aspects of writing were included into the kind of writing difficulties for the Englis teachers of SMKN 8 Padang.

Furthermore, in order to answer the second research question, – what factors caused writing difficulties – the researcher interviewed all of the respondents through the interview guidance. Based on the information got from the interview, two respondents also stated that they did not like writing. They assumed that writing skill is a talent possessed by certain people and they stated that they have no talent in writing. Thus, it was difficult to generate ideas correctly. It was categorized into psychological factors where they do not have the

motivation to write, this is also affected by the self esteem of those who are not confident when writing. In addition, all respondents also stated that writing is very rarely applied in daily life than speaking. It is also supported by the fact that they do not asking by the curriculum to teach writing skill to their students. It was included to sociocultural factor and linguistics factors.

Besides, three respondents stated that they had some difficulties in writing due to the lack of reading habit. Thus, there was not much ideas for writing. It was included to sociocultural factor because they rarely to read English texts makes them difficult to show their opinion about some topics.

In addition, two respondents also added that writing was depends on their mood. So that it also has an effect on writing ideas. It was included to the psychological factor that is motivation. Moreover, four respondents stated that they were spending more time on providing teaching materials to students rather than thinking on improving their writing ability. There are many demands that must be resolved besides teaching and also other administrations making it difficult for them to focus on writing

Based on the result of the interviews with all of the respondents, the researchers concluded that, three factors caused writing difficulties were linguistic factors, psychological factors, and sociocultural factors. Moreover, the most influent factor that caused writing difficulties was psychological factors.

2. Discussion

This section presents discussions of the findings. The findings above have already been shown that the English teachers in SMK 8 Padang faced difficulties in aspects of writing. This result is just as Richard (2002). He stated that writing is the most difficult skill for foreign language users. According to Bryne (1988), the difficulties of writing consist of three categories they are difficulties in Psychology (content aspect), Linguistics (language use and vocabulary), and Cognitive difficulties (organization and mechanics). The categories just as Jacob's rubric that categorized five aspects of writing as the kinds of writing difficulties. They are difficulties in the content, organization, language use, vocabulary, and mechanics.

Besides, the finding also showed that the eachers faces difficulties in vocabulary and mechanics. It was proved by the average score of those aspects that were fair to poor. Another finding that also supports this research comes from Annab Abderraouf entitled "Investigating the Difficulties of Writing EFL Students and Common Mistakes in writing A case Study of a Third-year LMD English Student at The University of Bejaia". The findings from his research are three main difficulties; vocabulary as the most frequent factor, grammar, and academic style. It also supported the finding of this research that was the vocabulary also the kind of difficulties face d by English teachers.

The differences between both research and this research was the sample of the research. The sample for both studies were students from English major. However, the sample for this research was English teachers. Moreover, the finding of these research are similar. English teacher also faced the same difficulties with the students.

D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the finding and discussion of the research, it can be concluded that the English teachers of SMKN 8 Padang have difficulties in writing academic essays. The difficulties in writing were found in every aspect of writing include difficulties in the content, organization, language use, vocabulary, and mechanics. While from the teacher's writings the most dominant difficulty is in generating ideas. This is evidenced by the average score of teacher content that is fair to poor. The teacher has difficulty writing the right content. For the second research question about the factors causing these difficulties, it can be concluded that psychological, socio-cultural and linguistic factors are very influential. From the interview results, it can be seen that the factors that dominate are psychological and socio-cultural factors such as motivation, self-esteem, and anxiety

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, There are some suggestions: Extensive reading was suggested to the students in order to develop better writing and to enrich their vocabulary. Then, the teachers should improve their writing skills through joining writing's workshop or training in every chance and practicing writing in their daily routine. Developing a writing culture and providing opportunities for writing practice were also suggested. Moreover, Then, the researcher hopes that the government can organize training or similar workshops to solve writing problems.

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