Challenges in English Writing Skills from the Perspective of Hospitality Students at SMKN 1 Singaraja

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Abstract

In the globalization era, writing skills in English become an important ability for vocational students, especially in the hospitality field which demands professional communication in writing. This study highlights the challenges that hospitality students at SMKN 1 Singaraja face in English writing skills, an area that needs to be explored from the perspective of vocational students. This study aims to find out the challenges in writing skills in English from the perspective of hospitality students at SMKN 1 Singaraja. This research uses descriptive qualitative method, where the author distributes questionnaires and describes it in written form. To support the data, the researcher also conducted interviews with students to find out more about the difficulties experienced. The subjects of this study were 15 students of 10th grade hospitality students at SMKN 1 Singaraja. The results showed that: (1) students have difficulty in writing skills especially in the vocabulary aspect, (2) students lose motivation in writing English, and (3) students have difficulty in using tenses. The implications of the findings suggest the need for more adaptive and contextualized learning approaches, including vocabulary enrichment and simple but applicable grammar learning. This research provides a practical contribution for educators to develop teaching materials that are more suited to the needs of hospitality students, to improve writing competencies that are essential in the hospitality industry.
Keywords: *English, Hospitality Students, Writing Skills.*

INTRODUCTION

Language is essential in daily life as a tool to express thoughts, emotions, and intentions (Awaliah & Rahmawati, 2024). Among many languages, English is widely taught from primary to higher education due to its global importance. English is the main language used in the hospitality industry for communication between staff and international guests (Prabhu & Wani, 2015). As tourism in Indonesia continues to grow Adijaya et al., (2023), students are expected to master communication skills to interact professionally with guests and coworkers (Yuliantini et al., 2024).

For vocational students, especially those in hospitality programs, English writing is a fundamental skill. Writing skills are used for emails, reports, and formal documents, making them vital for vocational students preparing for the workforce (Agustini et al., 2024; Juniarta & Swandana, 2020). Despite its importance, many Indonesian students face challenges in learning English writing. Common difficulties include limited vocabulary, weak grammar, and lack of writing practice (Febyone et al., 2024). Writing requires not only grammar knowledge but also creativity and clear idea organization (Handayani et al., 2013). However, many still struggle with grammar, vocabulary, and motivation. Despite early exposure to grammar, students often lack confidence, especially when using tenses like the simple past

(Kamayana & Dewi, 2022). These issues show the need for better support to help students meet the demands of global communication (Isadaud et al., 2022).

Previous research explains that English language learners face a variety of challenges in writing, which include difficulties in structuring and organizing ideas, limited vocabulary, and uncertainty in the use of correct grammar and sentence structure. In addition, many students experience anxiety and lack of confidence in writing, which is caused by the fear of making mistakes or not being able to meet the expected academic standards (Baharudin et al., 2023). The novelty of this study is based on its specific focus on hospitality students at SMKN 1 Singaraja, highlighting the challenges of English writing from the students' perspective.

Writing skills are essential in hospitality education for tasks such as composing emails, taking notes, and preparing reports. Competency-based materials are needed to help students meet workplace demands. Research suggests that English writing-focused training is critical for hospitality workers like receptionists to communicate effectively with foreign guests. Therefore, English learning in vocational schools must be tailored to industry needs to improve students' job readiness and competitiveness (Herdiawan et al., 2023; Mulyono, 2023; Mulyono & Situmorang, 2023; Rahayu & Darmayanti, 2024). By identifying the factors that become challenges in students' writing skills, this study is expected to provide insights for teachers and educational institutions in developing better learning strategies.

This study focuses on the challenges in English writing skills faced by students majoring in hospitality at SMKN 1 Singaraja. Based on initial observations, it was found that many students experience difficulties in several key aspects, namely vocabulary acquisition, understanding tenses, as well as loss of motivation in writing (Sudana et al., 2024). These difficulties hinder them in expressing ideas in writing, which in turn has an impact on the low quality of their writing. Therefore, this study aims to get clearer understanding of the challenges that students face in writing English as well as provide recommendations to improve the effectiveness of English learning in vocational schools, particularly in the hospitality department. The findings from this study can also be used as a basis for designing English learning programs that are more relevant to the needs of vocational students, especially hospitality majors, in facing the hospitality industry in the future.

METHOD

This study was conducted at SMK Negeri 1 Singaraja, with a sample of 10th grade students. SMK Negeri 1 Singaraja is located on Jalan Pramuka, Banjar Jawa Village, Buleleng Regency, Bali Province. This research uses qualitative research methods with descriptive qualitative research types, where the data collected are words that describe the phenomena that occur in the field (Sugiyono, 2008). The focus of the research is Students' perspective related to challenges and obstacles that they face in learning English, especially in writing English. The research subjects were 10th grade students at SMK Negeri 1 Singaraja which focused on 10th grade students majoring in Hospitality as research subjects. The total research subjects in the 10th grade hospitality program were 15 students. This research also focuses on the learner's perspective on how they face learning English, especially on writing skills. In collecting data, the researcher used observation, interview, and questionnaire as instruments to support data collection. The data that has been collected later will be useful to see how the process of the research.

In collecting the data, a questionnaire was used as an instrument to collect data from the students and interviews were conducted with the students to find out more about the challenges faced by the students in writing English. The questionnaire consisted of 2 question items that correlated with students' perspectives in English writing skills. The researcher used a close ended questionnaire and interviews to collect the results of students' perspectives on challenges in English writing skills.

Table 1. Research Procedure

No	Research Questions	Procedure	Method	Instruments	Source
1.	In the writing aspect, what difficulties are often experienced?	- Do observation - Do survey - Do interview - Transcribing - Verify the data - Conclude	1. Observation 2. Survey 3. Interview	- Observation sheet - Questionnaire - Interview guide	Students
2.	On a scale of 1-5, how fluent do you think you are in the writing aspect of English language learning?	- Do observation - Do survey - Verify the data - Conclude	1. Observation 2. Survey	- Observation sheet - Questionnaire	Students

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
Findings

Based on the research question, the purpose of this study was to find out the challenges faced in English writing skills from the students' perspective. After the data was collected, it was found that 10th grade hospitality students at SMK Negeri 1 Singaraja faced significant challenges in writing English. The following are the data results from distributing questionnaires in grade 10th of SMK Negeri 1 Singaraja:

Table 2. Question 1

No	Aspect	Vocabulary	Coherence	Consistency	Structure
1.	In the writing aspect, what difficulties are often experienced?	15 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

Based on the results of the table above, all respondents stated that their main difficulty was in vocabulary. No student mentioned coherence, consistency, or structure as the main obstacles. This shows that limited vocabulary is the most dominant challenge students face when writing in English.

Table 3. Question 2

No	Aspect	1	2	3	4	5
	On a scale of 1-5, how fluent do you think you are in the writing aspect of English language learning?	0 (0%)	7 (46.67%)	8 (53.33%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

Based on the results of the table above, 7 students (46.67%) considered their writing ability to be at level 2 (quite weak), and 8 students (53.33%) considered themselves at level 3 (moderate). There were no students who considered themselves very weak (score 1) or very fluent (score 4 or 5). This shows that although they have a basic understanding, they are not confident enough in their writing ability. This difficulty is most likely influenced by their lack of vocabulary and the complexity of English grammar structures.

Based on the results of questionnaires and interviews with grade X students majoring in Hospitality at SMKN 1 Singaraja, it was found that there are some major challenges faced by students in English writing skills. The three main problems that emerged were: limited vocabulary, difficulty in understanding and applying tenses, and low motivation to write.

1. Vocabulary Limitations

All students (100%) in the questionnaire stated that vocabulary was their main obstacle in writing. This was also confirmed through interviews:

"I am often confused about choosing the right words when writing. Sometimes I know the point, but I don't know the English word." (Interview, Student A)

"It takes a long time to write because I have to remember the words. I'm afraid of choosing the wrong letters in writing a word." (Interview, Student B)

2. Difficulty in Using Tenses

The use of tenses is a complex problem felt by almost all students. They found the structure of tenses confusing and difficult to apply in their writing.

"Tenses are really difficult. I often forget the rules of past tense, so sometimes the writing is all wrong." (Interview, Student C)

"If you ask me to write using correct grammar, I get confused. I'm afraid of using the wrong verb form." (Interview, Student D)

3. Loss of Motivation and Lack of Confidence

Many students revealed that they felt less confident in writing because they were afraid of being wrong. This prevents them from practicing and improving.

"I prefer speaking or listening. Writing is stressful, I'm afraid of grammar mistakes." (Interview, Student E)

"Sometimes I give up before I start writing, because I don't know where to start." (Interview, Student F)

From the data, it can be seen that internal factors such as anxiety and low self-confidence contribute to worsening existing technical difficulties, such as limited vocabulary and understanding of grammar. This has a direct impact on students' overall low writing ability.

Discussion

The results of this study show that students face significant challenges in writing English, especially in the vocabulary. Based on the data collected, all 15 students reported difficulties with vocabulary, while none of them identified coherence, consistency, or

structure as major obstacles in their writing process. This suggests that limited vocabulary is the main challenge that causes students to struggle in writing in English. Furthermore, when asked to rate writing fluency on a scale of 1 to 5, the majority of students rated themselves at level 2 or 3, with 7 students selecting level 2 and 8 students selecting level 3. Notably, none of the students rated themselves at levels 1, 4, or 5, indicating that although they did not consider themselves to have absolutely no writing ability, this suggests that most students have a basic understanding of English writing but struggle with fluency, most likely due to limited vocabulary. Overall, these findings are in line with the common challenges identified in this study, which reinforce that vocabulary is the most prominent difficulty for hospitality students in writing English.

Based on the results of the research data, it shows that grade X Hospitality students at SMK Negeri 1 Singaraja have difficulties in the aspect of writing in English. Furthermore, the researcher conducted a study by interviewing students about the difficulties they face when writing in English. This aims to find out in more detail the obstacles and factors that make them hampered to understand the writing aspect in English learning. The students said that they always struggle with the choice of words to use. Students are burdened when writing English because they have to follow the writing structure of the writing they will make. Students' difficulties in writing English are generally caused by limited vocabulary, lack of understanding of grammar, as well as the influence of their mother tongue. They often have difficulty in constructing correct sentence structures, such as the appropriate use of tenses, conjunctions, and phrase patterns. In addition, disruptions in text coherence and cohesion, syntax errors, and a lack of understanding of punctuation are also major obstacles. These factors make their writing less clear, difficult to understand, and not in accordance with the rules of standardized English (Rachma, 2022; Ramadhiyanti, 2021; Wigati, 2014; Zai, 2023).

In English, there are 16 tenses that they master in writing. This makes students find it quite difficult to memorise the vocabulary of each tense to be used and of course this affects their confidence when writing. Learning the sixteen tenses in English is a big challenge for many students, mainly due to the complexity of the structures and the differences with their native language. Based on research, errors in the use of tenses often occur due to limited understanding of the concept of time as well as the different verb forms in each tense. Common errors include omission (omitting important elements such as the "-s" ending in the simple present), misinformation (using the wrong verb form, such as "gived" instead of "gave"), and overgeneralization (overapplying rules, such as adding the "-ed" ending to all past tense verbs). These three types of errors show how difficult it is to understand rules that are not always consistent, causing students to often make mistakes in constructing correct sentences. Even after years of learning English, these systematic errors persist if not addressed with more effective learning methods (Siregar et al., 2020).

Students make tenses a burden in writing, students tend to stay away from writing aspects rather than other aspects such as speaking, listening, and reading. In the table, students tend to choose number 2 and 3 which means they are quite proficient and less proficient depending on the material learnt. Some materials require a lot of vocabulary and are new to students, so it is quite difficult for students to feel overly pessimistic when writing in English, so students tend to lose confidence and give up when writing. Students' difficulties in writing English are caused by various factors, including linguistic, psychological, and learning environment aspects. Duha, (2022) identified that the main

obstacles include text structure, grammar, spelling, as well as difficulties in finding and organizing ideas, which make students feel burdened and lack confidence. Fahmi and Rachmijati, (2021) also highlighted weak mastery of vocabulary and grammar, as well as errors in spelling and punctuation, which were exacerbated by low motivation. Meanwhile, Wau, (2022), asserts that the main challenges include the cohesive and coherent organization of ideas, the use of appropriate grammar, and the lack of a supportive learning environment. All these factors contribute to students' difficulties in writing, suggesting that improvements in teaching, motivation and access to learning resources are necessary.

CONCLUSION

Vocabulary limitation is the main challenge faced by hospitality students at SMKN 1 Singaraja in writing English. The findings show that students have great difficulty in choosing words, making it difficult for them to create well-structured sentences. In addition, their lack of confidence in writing is largely influenced by the complexity of English tenses, as students find it difficult to memorise and apply the correct vocabulary associated with each tense. Moreover, the students' self-assessment of their writing fluency also supports this finding, with most of them rating themselves as only moderately proficient. This suggests that although they have a basic understanding of English writing, their fluency is hindered by vocabulary limitations and the perceived difficulty of the grammar rules. As a result, students tend to lose motivation and confidence, which then makes them reluctant to practice and improve their writing ability. Overall, this study highlights the need for more effective teaching strategies and support systems to help students improve their vocabulary and overcome their fear of writing. Addressing these challenges through simplified vocabulary and grammar instruction can help improve students' writing proficiency and confidence in English.

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