

EXPLORING EFL HIGHER EDUCATION LEARNERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD WRITING SKILLS PROCESS

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Abstract: : Learners' writing attitudes have been heavily debated as a research topic. The main objective of this current investigation is to explore the learners' attitudes towards the writing process and functions at the higher education level. It is designed as a quantitative approach, with the design as survey research. Thirty-five learners of the English Study Program of FKIP Universitas Islam Indragiri were chosen as the samples. The researcher utilized a questionnaire designed on a Likert scale in obtaining the data. Then the data was analyzed using descriptive statistical analysis, which included individual scores, percentages, mean scores, and attitude level. The findings indicate that the learners' attitudes toward the writing process and functions ranged in the mean score of 3.83, which was categorized as a positive attitude. Therefore, it can be inferred that they have good skills for writing because they have a positive attitude toward writing.

Keywords: *Writing; Writing Attitude; EFL; Higher Education*

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INTRODUCTION

English is a significant language that has evolved into a global language. It serves as a global communication channel and significantly impacts general functioning. It is paramount for individuals to gain understanding, insights, and communication skills (Ghazali et al., 2009 in (Udu, 2021)). Indonesia has designed English as a mandatory subject for secondary and tertiary education. The English instructional process as a foreign language (EFL) in Indonesia aims to master the linguistic competencies of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Writing is one of the basic macro-language skills. An individual enables to express his concepts and opinions through the writing process. He can then reiterate what he learns through various literature and information he gathers from. Transferring information or news in written communication is a valuable linguistic skill. In summary, writing is a technique for transmitting an individual's idea to the audience and is one of the primary abilities in learning languages.

The writing process is a challenging task. In a broad sense, writing challenges come while the author attempts to synthesize thoughts and opinions regarding a specific topic

(Mohammad & Kamli, 2018). Furthermore, Amri (2017) sums up some experts that writing is difficult to execute since learners must strictly adhere to writing needs to develop good writing. Writing outcomes result from the thinking, drafting, and revising processes. Furthermore, it is not a spontaneously acquired competency; it is transferred through a combination of activities and processes informal educational contexts. It must be honed via repetition. It is a multi-step process that includes communicating in writing and organizing a text to represent a writer's standpoint accurately.

Then an affective aspect influencing writing success is attitude. The attitude covers a judgment of things, people, or situations on a negative to a positive rating scale. It considers us more likely to act in a particular manner when confronted with those things, people, or situations (Bulut, 2017). Furthermore, it refers to a psychological inclination manifested by a positive or negative evaluation of a specific entity. An individual's attitude is controlled by his or her views regarding personal traits (behavioral beliefs), which are adjusted by judgments of those outcomes or traits (Zahroh & Mujiyanto, 2020).

Learners' writing attitudes on second or foreign language learning may influence their outcomes. According to (Hanane 2015); (Graham et al., 2007), writing attitude significantly impacts writing output; learners with positive attitudes outperform negative attitudes. A negative writing attitude often may be resulted in an inefficient writing process. This could be especially bothersome in writing since it is a challenging endeavor requiring much work. (Kotula et al., 2014) conducted research on learners who had inadequate writing skills and discovered that they still exhibit a positive view of the writing process despite their low writing skills.

Some previous studies of writing attitudes have been carried out. In their studies, (Gupta, Deepti & Woldemariam, 2011); Sarkhoush (2013) discovered that students with good attitudes toward writing do better than students with negative attitudes. Then, (Setyowati & Sukmawan, 2018) highlighted that from the survey, it was found that the learners possess a moderate attitude toward writing. They consider it challenging and stressful. Those with a positive attitude, on the other hand, find writing to be both enjoyable and engaging. In another study, (Zahroh & Mujiyanto, 2020) summarized that learners' attitudes could moderate their writing ability. Then knowing learners' attitude aids the teacher in achieving instructional objectives.

According to those hypotheses and studies, exploring the issue of learners' writing attitudes has been a heavily debated position as a research topic. The gap among this current study and the previous studies is that it is more specific on the writing process and functions on academic writing. The indicators of academic writing function cover on writing importance for study and carrier (succeed in university studies, requiring prospective employment, becoming a competent writer, and improving new insights). The indicators of academic writing process include checking and revising writing process,

writing as a skill and a process, and writing feedback process. As a result, the study's primary aim is to expand on prior findings on assessing learners' writing attitudes, mainly on higher education levels.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Writing Skills

Numerous scholars have voiced their thoughts on the essence of writing skills as a productive skill. It is also one of the competencies that helps learners maintain and improve their language cognition skills while mastering a language.

Writing skills are the activity of expressing thoughts until the desired result is obtained. It is a social interaction way that uses a set of visual markings tied to a specific structural language level. In addition, it is the act of individual integrating ideas, opinions, or concepts into proper words and sentences to communicate meaning to the reader (Udu, 2021). Then (Hanane, 2015); (Jabali, 2018) clarifies that the visual symbols must be integrated into specific rules to form words, sentences, and paragraphs in the writing process. A productive skill requires a great reservoir of ideas and thoughts and a good grasp of the language laws.

Writing covers a complex process. (Alves, 2008); (Amri, 2018); Jahin & Idress (2012) in (Jabali, 2018) informs that its process seems to be a more productive technique of writing classes because it allows learners to concentrate on the process of creating text through the steps of brainstorming, outlining, rewriting, and editing. Then it requires alignment among topic, diction, grammatical, organization, and punctuations. Therefore, a writer can share information with his or her audiences by transmitting details and insight to them accurately. According to Hinkel as quoted by (Alsehibany, 2021), despite excellent study skills, most non-native learners (NNL) have significant writing challenges in English. In emphasizing, it is delivered through a complicated procedure.

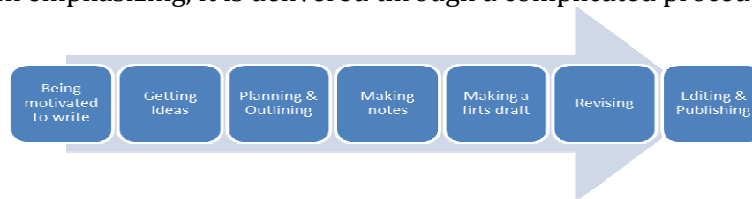


Figure 1. Stages of the writing process (Hedge, 2005 in (Alves, 2008))

Furthermore, writing has an essential role in the higher education academic process. Inline this notion; Ganobscik (2004), as reported by (Pawliczak, 2015) academic writing plays a significant part in higher education, both in learners' understanding of course material and evaluation process. Her research findings support that nearly 90% of academic instructors believe that teaching writing proficiency to higher education learners is vital. It implies that teaching academic writing has substantial effects for both lecturers and learners at the universities level. According to Harder (2006), prepared-

developed writing proficiency is highly demanded (Rushidi, 2013). In reality, learners are unprepared to face the vital issues ahead despite the apparent importance of such abilities in the work context. They are not well equipped to write appropriately in institutions. As a result, writing has become a missed life skill.

Additionally, (Surono, 2015) claims that the two most critical talents for higher education are interconnected writing and logical skills. Good scientific writing gives the impression of being professional. Also, having rationality and a grasp of language can assist learners to think more precisely and comprehensively, which influences all aspects of academic work. (Preiss et al., 2013) look into whether writing determines higher education learners' marks in the future. Their analyses reveal that writing skills can strongly determine higher education performance over time.

Writing Attitudes

Some scholars have explored some definitions of attitude. The term attitude refers to a psychological inclination manifested by a positive or negative evaluation of a specific object. According to the theory of planned behavior, an individual's attitude is controlled by his or her views about outputs or attributes, which are adjusted by their evaluations. Its concept covers the insights of behavioral, cognitive, and affective (Eagly & Chaiken, as quoted by (Zahroh & Mujiyanto, 2020)). The behavioral side of attitude is concerned with how people act and respond in specific contexts. In reality, effective language acquisition allows students to engage with language native speakers and learn a diversity of target language members' characteristics. The cognitive side of attitude covers language learners' views on acquiring and understanding the language learning process. The emotional side of attitude includes how the teacher and the learners interact in various emotional activities. Learners may use attitude to show whether they like or dislike particular objects or situations around them.

Furthermore, Language attitudes are defined as follows in the Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics and Language Teaching (Ahmed, 2015) "the attitudes that speakers of other languages or language variants possess toward each other's languages or their language." Positive or negative attitudes toward a language can represent perceptions of linguistic complexity or clarity, comfort or hardship in learning, significance level, elegance, social standing, and so on. According to (Ali & Awan, 2013), an attitude is a psychological and neurological state of readiness established by practice. It exerts a directive or dynamic impact on an individual's reaction to all related objects and situations. As synthesized by (Udu, 2021) from some experts, he sums up that it relates to an individual's tendencies, beliefs, thoughts, fears, and convictions to an object, circumstance, or value. Commonly, it is accompanied by passions and impulses. It cannot be noticed objectively but must be inferred from overt behavior, both verbally and non-

verbally. Graham, Berninger, and Fan (2007), as quoted by (Bulut, 2017), support that the person writing attitude acts as an efficient regulator, causing him or her to be delighted or unpleasant while writing.

The Role Learners' Attitude toward Writing Achievement

Some studies prove that learners' attitude significantly influences writing performance. One's attitude influences numerous areas of human life. Learners' aptitude in a subject is influenced by their attitudes (Ellah, 2014). Language attitudes often influence mastering a second or foreign language. The language attitudes are measured to give insights that can be used in language instruction (Ahmed, 2015). (Preiss et al., 2013) based on their study that there is a link between learners' writing attitudes and their writing ability. If the findings of this study are accurately assessed, it means that a great writer has a better probability of receiving higher results. In line with Graham et al. (2007), as quoted by (Bulut, 2017), (Jabali, 2018) found that the relationship between learners' attitude and their writing has received little consideration. Overall, an individual's attitude toward writing has a substantial role in success; either it helps or inhibits it.

Moreover, the impact of an individual's attitude on his or her disposition and predisposition to respond positively or negatively to something has an assessment component. It is one of the most important variables determining learners' performance in English language acquisition (Sanchez & Gavilanez, 2017). According to the West African Examinations Council in (Udu, 2021), numerous learners generally express negative attitudes regarding English and reading and writing. The manner learners feel about a subject could influence whether or not they pass it.

METHOD

This current study is designed as a quantitative approach, with the design as survey research. It is a method in which researchers give a survey to participants or the whole population to highlight their views, beliefs, behaviors, or attributes (Cresswell, 2012). The participants of the study were thirty-five language learners of higher education.

Then the researcher gained the data by distributing the questionnaire. It is in line with (Gay et al., 2012), who explain that questionnaires and interviews are the two most common types of surveys. A questionnaire is a collection of survey questions created for a specific population of study to answer. In creating the questionnaire, the researcher used four indicators; writing importance for study and career, checking and revising one's writing, writing as a skill and a process, and writing feedback. Twenty-five statements were created, which are distributed in the Likert Scale form.

The data was also analyzed using descriptive statistical analysis, including individual scores, percentages, mean scores, and attitude level. To answer the research question in this study, the results from the attitude questionnaire were evaluated. The participants' answers to the questionnaire about their attitudes toward writing were assessed and interpreted item by the following criteria as stated in Table 1. (Kulprasit, 2016)

Tabel 1.

Criteria and Interpretation of Writing Attitudes

No.	Range of the Total Mean Sores	Amount of Agreement	Attitude Interpretation
1	4.21 – 5.00	Strongly Agree	Positive Attitude
2	3.41 – 4.20	Agree	
3	2.61 – 3.40	Neutral	Neutral Attitude
4	1.81 – 2.60	Disagree	Negative Attitude
5	1.00 – 1.80	Strongly Disagree	

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This study explores how learners feel about the writing process in higher education. A learners' questionnaire was used for this reason. The goal of these research instruments is to confirm the hypotheses that were presented at the start of the project. Statistical data analysis provides a general insight into the learners' writing attitude regarding all its dimensions. The following details present a short participants' overview overall.

Table 2.

The learners' responses percentages on writing importance for study and carrier

No	Statements	Percentage (%)				
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	Mastering writing in English is essential for me to succeed in my university studies.	62%	38%	8%	0%	0%
2	I should optimize my English writing skills since they require my prospective employment.	31%	48%	18%	3%	0%
3	If I pursue writing	57%	34%	9%	0%	0%

	regularly, I can become a competent writer.					
4	I believe the EFL writing session has taught me a lot.	20%	54%	23%	0%	3%

Table 2 shows the percentages of the learners' responses dealing with *writing importance for study and carrier*, covering four sub-indicators. Their responses to item no.1 are 62% of the learners answered *strongly agree*, 41% gave respond *agree*, 8% answered *neutral*, and none of them answered *disagree* as well as *strongly disagree* to the statement "Mastering to write in English is an essential ability for me to succeed in my university studies". Then their responses to the item no.2 are 31% of the learners answered *strongly agree*, 48% gave respond *agree*, 18% answered *neutral*, and 3% responded *disagree*, none of them answered *strongly disagree* to the statement "I should optimize my English writing skills since it is a requirement for my prospective employment." Their answers to the item no.3 are 57% of the learners answered *strongly agree*, 34% gave respond *agree*, 9% answered *neutral*, and none of them answered *disagree* as well as *strongly disagree* to the statement "I believe that if I pursue writing on a regular basis, I can become a competent writer." Next, their responses to the item no.4 are 20% of the learners answered *strongly agree*, 54% gave respond *agree*, 23% answered *neutral*, and 3% responded *strongly disagree*, and none of them answered *disagree* to the statement "I believe the EFL writing session has taught me a lot about." From the data, it can be summed up that the learners have positive attitude to the statement whether or not writing is importance for study and carrier.

Table 3.

The Learners' Responses Percentages on Checking and Revising One's Writing

No	Statements	Percentage (%)				
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5	I can use appropriate punctuation marks and spelling words accurately.	29%	48%	23%	0%	0%
6	While writing, I proofread my writing to simplify my sentences.	29%	42%	29%	0%	0%

7	After I finish writing, I double-check my work.	34%	46%	20%	0%	0%
8	I make sure that my work is accurate and coherent.	20%	63%	17%	0%	0%
9	I feel worried during writing.	9%	26%	26%	29%	10%
10	I consider the readers of my writing	11%	55%	34%	0%	0%
11	I am glad to revise my writing If my lecturer requests it.	43%	54%	3%	0%	0%
12	Every time I am required to write, I will boost my writing abilities further.	31%	37%	29%	0%	3%

Furthermore, Table 3 presents the percentages of the learners' responses dealing with *checking and revising one's writing*, including eight sub-indicators. Item no. 5 is answered by 29% of the learners on *strongly agree*, 48% *agree*, and 23% *neutral*. None of them answered *disagree* as well as *vehemently disagree* with the assertion "I can use appropriate punctuation marks and spelling words accurately." For item no. 6, there are 29% of the learners justified to *agree strongly*, 42% to *agree*, 29% to *neutral*, and nobody justified to *disagree* and *strongly disagree* to the assertion "While writing, I proofread my writing to simplify my sentences." They also responded to item no. 7, which are 34% of them answered to *agree strongly*, 46% to *agree*, 20% to *neutral*, and no responses both *disagree* and *strongly disagree* to the assertion "After I finish writing, I double-check my work." Next, for item no. 8, there are 20% of them reacted *strongly agree*, 63% *agree*, 17% *neutral*, and 0% responded *strongly disagree*, and *disagree* with the assertion "I make sure that my work is accurate and coherent." Their responses to item no. 9 are 9% of the learners answered *strongly agree*, 26% *agreed*, 26% answered *neutral*, and 29% responded *disagree*, and 10% responded *strongly disagree* to the assertion "I feel worried during writing." Their answers to item no. 10 are the amount 11% of them responded *strongly agree*, 55% *agree*, 34% *neutral*, and none of them answered *disagree* and *strongly disagreed* to the assertion "I consider the readers of my writing."

Moreover, their responses to item no. 11 cover 43% of them answered *strongly agree*, 54% responded *agree*, 3% answered *neutrally*. No one answered *disagree* and *strongly disagree* with the assertion, “I am glad to revise my writing If my lecturer requests it.” In the responses to item no. 12, there are 31% of them answered *strongly agree*, 37% responded *agree*, 29% answered *neutral*, none answered *disagree*, and 3% responded *strongly disagree* to the assertion “Every time I am required to write, I will boost my writing abilities further.” Dealing with the presented data, the researcher concluded that the learners also have a positive attitude to checking and revising in writing. It is a vital process to gain better writing outputs.

Table 4.

The Learners’ Responses Percentages on Writing as a Skill and a Process

No	Statements	Percentage (%)				
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
13	I enjoy writing on topics that I am passionate about and familiar with.	54%	29%	17%	0%	0%
14	I tend to stay away from writing on unknown, complex, or controversial issues for me.	6%	14%	20%	31%	29%
15	When I do not desire to write, I postpone or ignore it.	6%	17%	34%	31%	12%
16	If I do not like the lecturer, I postpone or ignore writing.	17%	57%	17%	6%	3%
17	Even if I am weary, I keep writing as my assignment.	14%	60%	26%	0%	0%
18	I will evaluate how I have accomplished during writing assignments.	26%	48%	26%	0%	0%

19	Writing to convey feelings is a meaningful activity.	34%	51%	12%	3%	0%
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Table 4 displays the learners' attitudes proportion on *writing as a skill and a process* that includes seven sub-indicators. The participants commented to the item no. 13 include 54% of them reacted *strongly agree*, 29% also reacted *agree*, 17% answered *neutral*, and nobody answered neither *disagree* nor *strongly disagree* to the point "I enjoy writing on topics which I have a passion for and familiar with me." They commented on item no. 14 are 6% answered *strongly agree*, 14% *agreed*, 20% reacted *neutral*, 31% answered *disagree*, and 29% *strongly disagreed* to the point "I tend to stay away from writing on unknown, difficult or controversial issues for me." Their comments to item no. 15 are 6% answered to *agree strongly*, 17% to *agree*, 34% to *neutral*, 31% to *disagree*, and 12% to *strongly disagree* to the point "When I am not in the desire to write, I postpone or ignore it." Furthermore, their responses to item no. 16 are 17% commented *strongly agree*, 57% gave respond *agree*, 17% answered *neutral*, and 6% responded *disagree*, and 3% responded *strongly disagree* to the point "If I do not like the lecturer, I postpone or ignore writing." Their responses to item no. 17 are 14% responded *strongly agree*, 60% provided respond *agree*, 26% answered *neutrally*. No one responded *disagree* and *strongly disagree* with the point "Even if I am weary, I keep writing as my assignment." Their responses to item no. 18 are 26% of the learners answered to *agree strongly*, 48% to *agree*, 26% to *neutral*, and no answer to *disagree* as well as *strongly disagree* to the point "I will evaluate how I have accomplished during writing assignments." Inline this point, their responses to the item no. 19 are rated that 34% of them answered *strongly agree*, 51% responded *agree*, 12% answered *neutral*, 3% gave *disagree* respond, and none of them answered *strongly disagree* to the point "Writing to convey feelings is a meaningful activity." Based on the described details, the researcher concludes that the learners' attitude to the point writing as a skill and a process is positive.

Table 5.

The Learners' Responses Percentages on Writing Feedback

No	Statements	Percentage (%)				
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
20	I avoid negative comments from my lecturer and classmates if I do not like them.	20%	34%	31%	9%	6%

21	My family and friends provide voluntary input to my writing ability.	0%	20%	51%	29%	0%
22	I feel worried when my lecturer or classmates provide comments on my writing.	3%	31%	31%	29%	6%
23	I feel free after gaining positive or negative comments.	26%	45%	29%	0%	0%
24	I consider negative comments as valuable criticism.	29%	51%	17%	3%	0%
25	After obtaining substantial comments, I am more motivated to enhance my writing ability.	60%	37%	3%	0%	0%

Moreover, Table 5 exposes how the learners' attitudes rates related to *writing feedback*, which deals with six sub-indicators. For item no. 20, 20% of the learners claimed to *agree strongly*, 34% to *agree*, 31% to *neutral*, 9% to *disagree*, and 6% to *strongly disagree* toward the item "I avoid negative comments from my lecturer and classmates if I do not like them." For item no. 21, no one answered to both *strongly agree* and *strongly disagree*, 20% gave to respond to *agree*, 51% to *neutral*, and 29% to *disagree* toward the item "My family and friends provide voluntary input to my writing ability." For item no. 22, there are 3% of them answered to *agree strongly*, 31% gave to respond to *agree*, 31% answered to *neutral*, 29% reacted to *disagree*, and 6% answered *strongly disagree* to the item "I feel worried when my lecturer or classmates provide comments on my writing." Then for item no. 23, 26% of them commented to *agree strongly*, 45% to *agree*, 29% to *neutral*, and nobody responded *disagree* and *strongly disagree* to the item "I feel free after gaining positive or negative comments." Their responses to item no. 24 are 29% of the learners answered *strongly agree*, 51% responded *agree*, 17% answered *neutral*, 3% responded *disagree* and 0% answered *strongly disagree* to the item "I consider negative comments as valuable criticism." For to the item no. 25, there are 60% of them answered *firmly agree*, 37% gave respond *agree*, 3% answered *neutral*, and none of them answered *disagree* as well as *strongly disagree* with the statement "After obtaining substantial

comments, I am more motivated to enhance my writing ability.” Dealing with the facts, the researcher concludes that the learners’ attitude to the writing feedback is positive.

Table 6.

Descriptive Statistics on the Learners’ Writing Attitude

	Std. Deviation	Mean	Overall Mean score	Criteria
Writing importance for study and carrier.	.51450	4.25	3.83	Positive Attitude
Checking and Revising One’s writing	.43378	3.92		
Writing as a skill and a process	.41449	3.62		
Writing feedback	.33589	3.67		

Table 6 informs the learners’ attitude toward writing. Those indicators describe the learners’ attitudes towards the writing process, which is proven by sharing each indicator those are 4.25, 3.92, 3.62, and 3.67. Those are classified as positive responses. Moreover, the overall mean score is 3.83, which is also categorized as positive responses. Thus, the researcher implies that the learners have a positive view of the writing processes and functions.

Discussion

The corpus has proven that the learners’ attitudes toward writing skills are classified as positive responses. The first relates to the statement on writing importance for study and carrier; this current result is that the participants possess a positive attitude. To strengthen this result, the previous study also revealed the same point of view as (Jabali, 2018) that discovered in his study that due to the assumption that most English major students have positive attitudes toward the language and its skills, such as writing; they choose to major in English of their own will. Then dealing with the second findings, the learners have positive belief toward the writing feedback, correcting, and revising process. It is supported by (Zahroh & Mujiyanto, 2020) strengthen by exploring their research results that the participants have a positive attitude toward teachers’ corrective feedback. In line with this view, (Alsehibany, 2021) indicates that most participants agreed on the usefulness of peer feedback with a checklist in EFL writing class.

Furthermore, the overall mean score shows that the learners’ attitude toward writing skills is categorized as an optimistic view. This finding relates to the previous studies’ results from (Setyowati, 2017), who found that their research participants’ attitude toward writing in English was positive and moderate (82.12%). Then (Fadhilah et

al., 2018) also revealed that their samples had a positive attitude toward writing, covering three dimensions affective, behavior, and cognitive. In addition, (Jabali, 2018) his study findings showed that the participants had positive attitudes toward writing, the various writing courses offered by the English Department at the university, the type of textbooks or teaching methods used, and their writing skills and strategies. To sum up, the learners possess positive attitudes toward writing functions and the writing process.

CONCLUSION

This investigation was proposed to explore the learners' attitudes towards EFL higher education level writing at Universitas Islam Indragiri. The study findings showed that the participants had positive attitudes toward writing both functions and processes. Moreover, it can be implied that the learners have excellent writing skills because they have a positive attitude toward writing. Thus, these trends' insights will encourage other researchers and practitioners to recognize the nature of writing in an EFL setting and students obtain their best writing outcomes.

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