

Chapter One

Introduction

This introduction chapter presents some points regarding the main issues of this study. This chapter comprises research background, problem statement, problem limitation, research questions, research objectives, research significance, and research outline.

Background

Academic writing is one of special writing genres in writing skill since it has its own a set of conventions and it is commonly used in high school grades to post-secondary education. This is clarified by Bailey (2006) who defined that academic writing is a writing genre that is commonly produced by students who are studying in schools and universities, and it is often found by students as a challenging course since it requires them to adopt its conventions, its referencing rules, and its layout. Also, Messaouda (2014) explained that academic writing as a part of writing genres in productive skill demands on higher order of thinking and energy since it relies on some linguistic features such as vocabulary, grammar, sentence structure, paragraph coherence and cohesion, and semantics. Moreover, as declared by Badan Standar Nasional Pendidikan (BSNP) Indonesia (2006), writing skill in English subject continuously have been becoming one of four major language skills that have to be learned and mastered by language learners in higher education level, and academic writing has been becoming the essential feature of the school curricula regarding writing skill itself.

Academic writing as one of writing genres which mostly produced by language learners throughout the study process has the important role in English

language teaching and learning. This is in line with Brown (2004) who declared that academic writing is one of the most common genres of writing which students might produce. Besides, academic writing is defined to have the significant role in English language teaching and learning since all fields of study in higher education level require students to be able to compose written text academically, properly, and in line with academic requirements such as an essay and a thesis.

Then, the ability to write academically well is crucial for students to have since it can be the key for achieving academic success, especially on English subject. As clarified by Alber-Morgan, Hessler, and Konrad (2007), students' proficiency in written expression is strongly essential in determining their academic achievement. Besides, Kelley (2008) as cited in Giridharan (2012) pointed out that post-secondary students' academic success depends on their academic writing. It reiterates that the capability to write academically well can be considered as the predictor and the determinant in students' academic success.

In addition to the fact that academic writing is important in English language teaching and learning, Yuliana (2014) affirmed that having ability to write well in English is essential since it can express thought and can be a valuable asset for further career. As well, Tuan (2010) highlighted that the success of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in academic writing benefits them not solely to their English learning, but also to their life-long careers. It shows that having a good competency in academic writing can increase students' opportunities in both English learning and career promotion.

Although having ability to write academic writing well is intensely important in some fields as explained above, unfortunately, some students frequently still face some difficulties on the process of writing that appropriate with academic writing requirements. As clarified by Xiao (2007), “most EFL learners are frequently frustrated by such problems as lacking appropriate English lexical expression and struggling with mechanics, grammar, sentence structure, paragraph coherence, rhetorical patterns, and academic writing requirements” (p. 20). It indicates that most students including EFL students commonly confront some difficulties to write that in line with academic writing conventions.

Due to the fact, based on the researcher’s observation and experiences at EED of UMY, the students’ proficiency at EED of UMY in academic writing still need a lot of improvements. In the other words, similar case was found at this department. It was seen from some students’ works which still need a lot of revisions in some linguistic features such as on grammar accuracy, sentence structure, paragraph coherence and cohesion, citation, and logical reasoning. As Harmer (2004) emphasized, students’ writing can be used to measure the students’ achievement in the process of learning the language. Thus, it can be highlighted that some EED students of UMY still face some difficulties in the ability to write academically that in line with academic writing requirements.

In line with the difficulties which were faced by some EED students of UMY regarding academic writing, based on the researcher’s observation and experiences at EED of UMY, the researcher found and argued that students’ difficulties in academic writing came from some reasons. In addition to students’ writing competency level which is certainly diverse, most of them said that it

happened as a result of there was only a little assistance from some of their teachers during teaching and learning process. They told that some teachers did not explain clearly and give either feedback or suggestions throughout teaching and learning process. As a consequence, students did not get the clear explanation and did not know their mistakes and weaknesses, and how to write properly, and ultimately, some of their academic writing quality was poor. This means that in addition to students' writing competency level diversity, strategies that were used by teachers also closely relate to students' proficiency and learning outcomes. As Armstrong (2013) highlighted, teaching strategies refer to techniques and activities that were used by teachers in order to help students in learning the course contents and enhancing the learning outcomes. It shows that teachers need to consider using strategies that could be useful to teaching and learning process so they can help their students to perform better in academic writing.

Learning English means learning in two aspects, there are skill and components (Heaton, 1991) as cited in Yuliana (2014). The skill comprises four major skills through language including listening, speaking, reading and writing; while components encompass phonology, vocabulary, and grammar. In response to Heaton's belief, Coffin, Curry, Goodman, Hewings, Lillis, and Swann (2003) proposed *focus on text* and *focus on process* as teaching strategies that involve those two aspects and it could be applied in teaching academic writing. *Focus on text* strategies mean that teachers need to pay more close attention to students' knowledge on some specific linguistic features including text types, rhetorical convention, academic register, and linguistic accuracy. While *focus on process* strategies require teachers to emphasize more attention on students' writing

process comprising pre-writing, planning, drafting, reviewing, and refinement. Thus, the researcher believes that a study which discusses teachers' strategies in teaching academic writing is imperative to be conducted. It is intended to fill the need in relation with the importance of using some strategies that could be helpful to address EED students of UMY weaknesses and needs in academic writing.

Moreover, many *obstacles* usually impede the teaching and learning process. The common obstacles that are faced by teachers can be on two major problems; those are on students' linguistic development and the physical context of classroom (Bilal, Tariq, Din, Latif, and Anjum, 2013) and (Xiao, 2007). Problems on students' linguistic development relate to students' lack of linguistic competences such as on spelling and grammar accuracy, creativity, and sentence structure. While problem on the physical context of ELT class refers to the physical situation of classroom such as the big-sized class and overcrowded situation either inside or outside the classroom. Again, based on the researcher's observation and experiences at EED of UMY, those two common obstacles were found at EED of UMY. In addition to some EED students of UMY whose still face some difficulties in the ability to write an academic writing well, there was oftentimes also still heard noisy situation during teaching and learning process as a result of big-sized class in which it potentially bothers the teaching and learning process itself. Those reasons made the researcher interests to investigate obstacles that are faced together with how to deal with those obstacles in teaching academic writing at EED of UMY.

Problem Statement

Since the ability to write academically well are perceived as difficult skill to be mastered, actually teachers need to assist students in writing process because it will give positive impacts on students' academic writing performance. This is supported by Fowler, Aaron, and Okoomian (2007) who clarified that teachers are responsible for students' academic writing such as an essay, a report, or other pieces of academic writing. So, teachers need to facilitate students in writing process such as providing explanations and opportunities, and giving feedback and freedom in expressing ideas because it potentially can help them to perform better in academic writing (Fowler, Aaron, and Okoomian, 2007).

Unfortunately, in fact, based on the researcher's observation and experiences at EED of UMY, some teachers have not given yet opportunities to students to get the precise treatment in addressing students' weaknesses and needs regarding academic writing. This is similar with Ariningsih (2010) who stated that some teachers have not given yet the appropriate treatment to students in relation to catching students' writing problems, and they also have not found yet appropriate strategies to teach writing effectively. The researcher found that most subjects including listening and speaking subjects require students to write academic writing. Nevertheless, there are only a few and even no adequate assistance from some teachers. For instance, some teachers did not explain clearly and provide feedback and suggestions to students' academic writing. As a consequence, it causes students did not know how to write properly, what their weaknesses and mistakes are, as well as how to revise their work. This means that

some EED students of UMY need to be assisted and facilitated during teaching and learning process.

As a result of problems stated above, teachers need to facilitate students during teaching and learning process. As Harmer (2001) highlighted, in teaching writing, teachers are required to act not solely as a language instructor, but also as a motivator, a resource, and a feedback provider. Moreover, Jose and Galang (2015) confirmed that to address students' weaknesses in academic writing, teachers also need to learn, adopt, and use strategies to teaching and learning process. Strategies in teaching academic writing have broad area to be discussed, and there are a lot of studies which have talked over this topic. This study may present some findings on the strategies used by some EED teachers of UMY and the obstacles faced together with the solutions in teaching academic writing which could be useful to be applied at EED of UMY.

Problem Limitation

This study focuses on finding out some EED teachers of UMY strategies in teaching academic writing. The discussion of strategies is limited to *focus on text* and *focus on process* strategies, so, it will be more specific on the discussion later. To complete the discussion, this study also aims at investigating the obstacles that are commonly faced by some EED teachers of UMY together with how they deal with those faced obstacles in teaching academic writing.

Research Questions

Many problems emerge from the research background. Thus, the research questions of this study are set as follow:

1. What are strategies used by EED teachers of UMY in teaching academic writing?
2. What are obstacles confronted by EED teachers of UMY in teaching academic writing and how do these teachers overcome those obstacles?

Research Objectives

Due to the research questions addressed above, this research encloses two research objectives in which set as follow:

1. To identify strategies used by some EED teachers of UMY in teaching academic writing.
2. To investigate obstacles faced by EED teachers of UMY together with how they overcome those obstacles in teaching academic writing.

Research Significance

This study is expected to benefit both teachers and students in English language teaching and learning. This study is intended to benefit not solely professional and experienced teachers, but also novice and prospective teachers. Afterwards, this study is also addressed to benefit the researcher herself and further researchers.

Professional, novice, and prospective English teachers. This study is expected to benefit professional, novice, and prospective English teachers. First, this study can provide an additional knowledge and information on some helpful

strategies used by some EED teachers of UMY in teaching academic writing. It is also followed by the description of the obstacles faced together with the solutions in dealing with those obstacles. So, it might broaden insight of strategies and obstacles together with the solutions in teaching academic writing. Second, this study can be a reference for evaluating strategies used during their teaching career, especially on teaching writing. So, they may adopt and integrate some strategies that are perceived can help them to improve teaching progress. Third, this study can be a reference for involving some techniques in response to dealing with the obstacles that hinder the process of teaching academic writing.

Students. This study is expected to benefit students. First, this study can provide additional knowledge, information, and references on some fruitful strategies regarding academic writing. Second, this study may provide useful insight on techniques to deal with some common obstacles faced during learning academic writing. Third, this study can be a reference for integrating those strategies and techniques independently without waiting their teachers ask them in response to improving their academic writing competences.

The researcher. This study benefits the researcher herself. First, this study can be a medium to broaden and explore more knowledge, information, and experiences on related studies. Second, this study can be a source of motivation in order to teach academic writing through some helpful strategies as discussed in this study. Third, it is hoped can construct the researcher self-awareness on the use of strategies and techniques in dealing with some faced obstacles so that she can improve her sense of responsibility to integrate some helpful strategies and techniques to deal with some obstacles during teaching academic writing.

Further researchers. This study is expected to benefit further researchers. First, this study can encourage other researchers to conduct a further research regarding strategies in teaching academic writing with different research focus and methodology. Second, this study might become a reference of theoretical framework for further researchers who conduct similar study. Third, this study can provide the findings that can be the additional information for further researchers who conduct a study in the context of teaching academic writing.

Research Outline

This *skripsi* comprises five chapters. Firstly, it is introduction chapter which presents the research background, problem statement, problem limitation, research questions, research objectives, research significance, and research outline. Secondly, it is literature review chapter which describes some definitions of the terminology used and elaborations of the theories and references used. Then, it reviews some previous studies and presents the conceptual framework of this study. Thirdly, it is methodology chapter which discusses research methodology; it consists of the research design, research setting and participants, research instruments, data collection procedures, and data analysis. Fourthly, this is the chapter which reports the finding and discussion of this study; it reports the study findings that relate to the literature used. Then, the fifth chapter presents conclusion and recommendation of this study. This chapter summarizes the research findings and suggests some recommendations emerged from the findings.