The Students' Perception
On Writing Tools Application For Essay Writing Class

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Abstrak

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mendeskripsikan pendapat siswa 1) tentang menulis secara umum, 2) jenis aplikasi alat tulis yang digunakan oleh siswa dalam menulis, 3) aplikasi alat tulis yang paling disukai. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain deskriptif kuantitatif. Subjek penelitian ini adalah 32 mahasiswa semester IV Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris Fakultas Pedagogi dan Psikologi Universitas PGRI Wiranegara Pasuruan. Instrumen yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah angket, wawancara dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa setengah dari peserta merasa menulis itu sulit sedangkan setengah lainnya merasa menulis itu mudah. Hampir separuh siswa (47%) menyatakan bahwa bahasa/tata bahasa adalah unsur yang paling sulit dalam menulis. Jenis aplikasi alat tulis yang digunakan siswa adalah Grammarly (55%), Kamus U (24%), dan Goggle Translate (21%). Alat tulis ini membantu siswa untuk memecahkan masalah menulis, seperti dalam bahasa, kosa kata, pengembangan ide, dan penyusunan. Siswa berpendapat bahwa aplikasi alat tulis ini praktis dan menghemat waktu (74%). Para mahasiswa juga percaya bahwa aplikasi alat tulis bermanfaat dan membantu meningkatkan kualitas esai mereka. Menariknya, para siswa mengaku tidak yakin bisa menulis dengan baik tanpa aplikasi alat tulis. Beberapa dari mereka merasa tidak bisa menulis dengan baik tanpa bantuan aplikasi. Implikasi dari temuan tersebut dibahas.

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to describe the students' opinion 1) about writing in general, 2) the type of writing tools application used by the students in writing, 3) the most preferable writing tools application. The research uses a descriptive quantitative design. The subject of this research was 32 fourth-semester students in the English Education Study Program, Faculty of Pedagogy and Psychology of the University of PGRI Wiranegara, Pasuruan. The instruments used in this study were questionnaires, interviews, and documentation. The result reveals that half of the participants feel writing is difficult while the other half feel writing is easy. Almost half of the students (47%) state that language/grammar is the most difficult element in writing. The types of writing tool applications used by the students are Grammarly (55%), U Dictionary (24%), and Goggle Translate (21%). These writing tools help the students to solve the writing problems, such as in language, vocabulary, idea development, and drafting. The students think that writing tools application is practical and save time (74%). The students also believe that the writing tools application is beneficial and help to improve the quality of their essay. Interestingly, the students confess that they are uncertain if they can write well without writing tools application. Some of them feel that they cannot write well without the help of the application. The implication of the finding is discussed.

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INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, technology has become part of the life of modern society. Technology has an impact and influence on several aspects of contemporary culture in today's era. According to Hanafizadeh, Gandchi, & Asgarimehr,(2017) new technologies such as computers, internet, wireless devices, social n etworks, have become part of most people's l ives regardless of age and gender. Innovations resulting from technological developments make people communicate easily, do social interaction differently, shop easily online, and many more. Grabe (2007) stated that the development of technology nowadays has gone through innovations and it changes the societies from the way they think, works, and live. Thus, people tend to be more dependent on the use of technology in their daily lives.

Besides, the development of modern technology has now spread widely and has an impact on various sectors, including education. The existence of modern technology has made the development of education in the present era gain many advantages. Technology has changed and given a new way of teaching and learning to be more exciting and comfortable. According to Alonso, López, Manrique, & Viñes (2005) technology has changed the teaching process becomes simpler and without limitation in time or space. Applying modern technology in education can make teachers have various ways to teach. For example, the teacher can use online learning in the teaching and learning process, create virtual learning that can motivate students in learning, create instructional materials in teaching, etc.

Learning English as a foreign language, tools, and media is needed to help students learn a language effectively. The use of modern technology correctly as a supporting tool in learning English, makes students learn a language more effectively. The existence of technology provides many advantages for students in learning English by providing a new way in the learning process to be more fun, exciting, and more comfortable. According to Gilakjani (2017) technology offers both teachers and learners a lot of materials and communication opportunities to improve their language teaching and learning. For instance, learners can improve their English skills through online learning, mobile learning, game online, video on YouTube, etc. Gençlter (2015)said that technological development is very important and effective in learning a new language. Through the internet, the learners can get unlimited sources in learning language so that it can motivate the learners in learning the language.

In the context of learning English, it is necessary to master these four skills of speaking, writing, reading, and listening. Among the four skills, writing becomes a difficult skill to master for students. According to Rass (2001: 30), writing is a difficult skill for native and non-native speakers because in writing the writers must concern with the component in writing such as content, organization, purpose, audience, vocabularies, and mechanics as capitalization, spelling, and punctuation. As a result, students often make mistakes in writing, such as grammatical errors, spelling errors, wrong punctuation, etc. Nunan (2003:3) said that writing is a concern of work in generating ideas, thinking, and organizing them into statements and paragraphs that can be understood by a reader. Therefore, it is necessary to integrate good ideas in writing and how to write paragraphs that are good and clear so that the reader quickly understands them. That is why writing skills for students are difficult to master.

Thus, writing in English is not easy (Setyowati, Sukmawan, Latief, 2017). The students not only need to think about ideas, but also how to organize them. In addition, before submitting/publishing their composition, the students need to proofread and recheck their writing in terms of language, vocabulary, and spelling. Students need technology as a tool to identify this language and writing problems. Therefore, the use of technology in writing is needed. According to Williams, & Beam (2019) the use of technology motivated student engagement and participation in writing assignments and increased social interaction and peer collaboration. In this case, the teacher can utilize technology, such as writing application tools to increase student motivation in the learning process of writing English. There are many kinds of technologies that can be used to facilitate students in writing through application writing tools. Writing tools application can help the student to identify mistakes and other language errors in writing efficiently (Wang, Shang & Briody, 2013).

Parra & Calero (2019) state that the improvement of the writing skill with the help of modern computer programs has gained considerable attention in the English as a Foreign Language writing learning process, and a better understanding of the contributions of these technological programs are needed in the field of education. The use of technology, namely writing tools application, is very needed for students to help them in Writing. Warschauer & Grimes (2008) stated that one of these new implementations of technology in language training is automated writing evaluation (AWE), which has provided exceptional support to meet the needs of diagnostic feedback to the needs of summative assessment on aspects of Writing. From the above statement, it can be said that the use of technology in Writing, namely the application of stationery is a tool that provides benefits to assist students in writing difficulties and to evaluate aspects of students' Writing.

The essay writing class at the University of PGRI Wiranegara Pasuruan uses some writing tools applications to write essays. As written in Basic Course Outline, the objective of learning writing are to develop the students' ability to write various types of English essays developed by examples, details, comparison, and contrast, cause and effect relations, classification, process analysis for expository and argumentative types of essays. In other words, the students are expected to have the ability to write paragraph essays by using various types of rhetorical organization. Many student essay writing assignments in essay writing class have been published or uploaded on YouTube. Because of these unique characteristics, the researchers are interested to explore the use of writing tools application used by students in writing their essays. The objective of this research is to investigate the students' opinion 1) about writing in general, 2) the type of writing tools application used by the students in writing, 3) the most preferable writing tools application.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Writing

The term writing has several meanings. Many experts have proposed definitions and explanations for Writing. According to Nunan (2003: 3), writing is a conceptual painting in generating ideas, thinking, and organizing them into statements and paragraphs that can be understood by the manner of the reader. It means that Writing requires the integration of the ideas and how they are arranged into good paragraphs that are clear enough for the reader. Raimes (1983:

76) stated that Writing is a talent that expresses ideas, feelings, and thoughts into words, sentences, and paragraphs by the usage of the eyes, brain, and hand. It means that writing is a complex process in which the writer must coordinate their ideas, feelings and translate them into a discourse by using words, sentences, and paragraphs.

Harmer (2002: 255) further states that writing has rules that should be concerned, and it is different from speaking. Even though both speaking and writing also involve grammar and vocabulary, in writing skills, there are issues in the formation of letters, words, and text which are executed by the writer. It shows that writing is a very complex process because writers must pay more attention to these components of writing. Moreover, Kroll (1990: 140) stated that writing is commonly a difficult skill for any language user because Writing offers a quite challenging task for both native and non-native speakers.

Previous Studies on Writing Tools

In the literature, there is some research on writing tools application. Firstly Parra & Calero (2019) investigate the use of technology for writing. They investigate the impact of implementing Automated Writing Evaluation (AWE), such as Grammar and Grammarly, on Ecuadorian English teachers training students' writing performance. The result reveals that the assistance of modern technology can improve students' writing skills.

Next Wang, Shang & Briody (2013) investigate the effect of writing tools on EFL students' writing elements on EFL freshmen in the Department of Applied English in South of Taiwan by using a mixed-method design. The result shows that there is a significant difference in the students' writing performance between the experimental group and the control group on the students' writing accuracy, learning autonomy, and interaction. Wang, Shang & Briody (2013) also stated that this program helps to improve learners` writing quality due to its fast and individualized feedback with explanations of grammar, spelling, sentence, and word usage, which can contribute to learners' autonomy.

The next study is from Parra & Calero (2019) who investigate the use of automated writing evaluation tools for writing skills. She concludes that automated writing evaluation programs such as Grammar and Grammarly enhanced significant aspects of the writing skill on the students' writing performance. These applications also motivate the students to reformulate their errors by the sense of awareness and autonomy that the learners are conscious of when using these tools without the support of the teacher's feedback.

A newer study is conducted by Lee (2020). Her research explores the use of machine translation for foreign language writing. The result shows that machine translation helped students minimize grammatical errors, select more appropriate and contextualized vocabulary, and give them more choices in authentic expressions, thus enhancing the overall quality of their writing. And also, the students made use of diverse writing strategies while editing with machine translation, such as double-checking, using previous knowledge, inferencing, paraphrasing, and rewriting. Comparing their versions with the machine translation version encouraged the students to identify and fix their errors.

The next study is conducted by Grami (2020). His research investigates whether online writing checkers, including tools

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looking at grammar, punctuation, spelling, and composition, do help potential English second language writers and, if so, to what extent, in what areas, to what effect, and at what cost. His research result shows that online and electronic writing assistance tools, including concordances, grammar checkers, thesauruses, and others, are a high manifestation of these efforts that combine new technologies to solve an age-old question.

METHOD

This research uses a descriptive quantitative design. According to Sugiyono (2014), descriptive research is research that describes a phenomenon, events either using quantitative or qualitative data. Furthermore, Sudijono (2008) stated that a descriptive quantitative method is a method that describes the state of a phenomenon that has been done by the measuring instrument then processed following the function. In other words, descriptive quantitative have to organize and analyze the numeric data to provide a view regularly, concisely, and clear about a phenomenon or event. This study aims at describing the use of writing tools application for an essay writing class in the English Study Program University of PGRI Wiranegara.

The subject of this research was 32 fourth-semester students in English Education at the University of PGRI Wiranegara. The instruments used in this study were questionnaires, interviews, and documentation. The questionnaire was about the students' responses on the use of writing tools application during their essay writing class. The researchers also used interviews for clarification purposes. It supports the result of the questionnaire. The researchers used unstructured interviews for the participants. The interview was done by calling the

students by phone personally, or via chats on social media.

Creswell (2012: 218) states that a one-on-one interview is ideal for interviewing participants who are open so that the participants can share ideas comfortably. The third instrument was documentation. The researchers documented all chats and interview results from the participants. As stated by Ary (2006), this type of research may also use written documents to gain an understanding of the phenomenon under study. The result of the questionnaire was analyzed quantitatively in the form of pa percentages, while the result of the interview was analyzed qualitatively. Thus, the researchers used a simple codification to categorize the data and analyze them.

The researchers used Google form as media to distribute the questionnaire by giving the URL sites of Google form to the participants. Before distributing the questionnaires, the researchers developed the questionnaire based on the research questions, validated them, and tried it out to different batches who had similar characteristics with the participants under study. After the researchers were certain that the questionnaires were clear and had no ambiguous meaning, the questionnaires were distributed to the targeted participants. The researchers distributed the questionnaires through WhatsApp Group class of essay writing batch 2018 A and B. The data collection took one week. After all the questionnaires were collected and analyzed, the researchers interviewed some participants randomly to get some clarification. The researchers will interview the students by giving them a question using WhatsApp messenger. Some students answered the interview by phone, while others answered by recording their voice by using the audiotape

feature in WhatsApp messenger or typing their answers in chats.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
The Students' Opinion about Writing

The students mostly have an almost equal opinion about writing. Half of them state that writing is difficult, while the other half, state that writing is easy (47%). The result of the students' opinions in terms of writing is presented below.
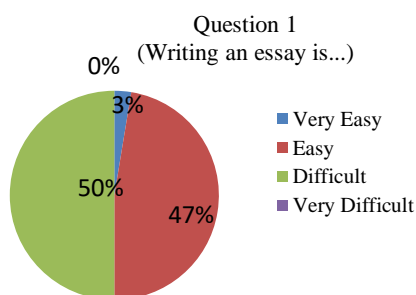
Figure 1. Diagram percentage of question number 1

Figure 1 shows that one student (3%) answered that writing is very easy, while 18 students (47%) answered writing is easy. On the other hand, the rest of the students (50%) feel negative about writing. They think that writing is difficult. This finding is interesting because half of the students feel positive about writing, while the other half feel the opposite.
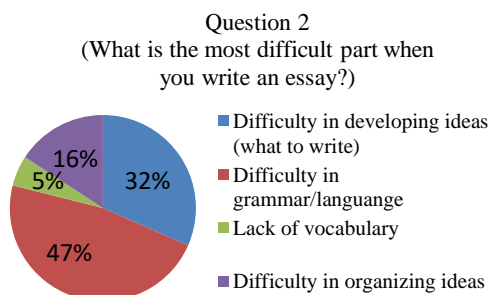
Figure 2 Diagram percentage of question number 2

Figure 2 shows that almost half (47%) of the students answered language is the most difficult part of writing. The next difficult part in writing is developing ideas (what to write) (12 students) and organizing ideas (16%). The least difficult part in writing is vocabulary (5%). For some students, English syntactical structure becomes their main problem in writing.

"The most difficult thing in writing is the grammar." (YD/18/B)

"Sentence structure in English is difficult. Sometimes I write my sentence ba, in Indonesian style. The vocabulary also becomes my problem". (Al/18/B)

While for another student award, the difficulty of writing lies both in the ideas development and the language to express them.

"Writing an essay is difficult. The difficulty is in defining and developing ideas. I was also confused by the use of grammar in my writing" (IVF 18/B).

It can be concluded that for foreign language learners, language becomes their major hindrance in expressing their ideas on a paper. The highest opinion is in an answer that difficulty in grammar/language**.** They said that the most difficult part when they write an essay is grammar/language. It is in line with Kumala, Aimah, Ifadah's (2018) state that grammar is the most difficult problem, especially in student writing. Then vocabulary mastery becomes the second problem, and organizing ideas is the next problem in writing. Consequently, those problems have an impact on students' writing performance.

Writing tools application for writing

The result of the questionnaire also reveals that the majority of the students believe that the writing tools application helps them in making their writing better.
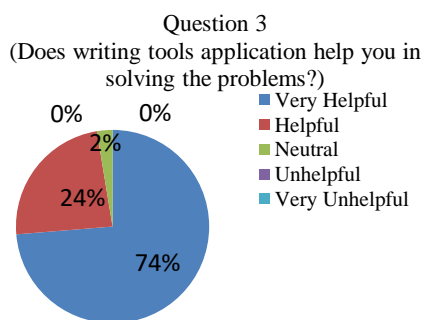

Figure 3 Diagram percentage of question number 3

Figure 3 shows that almost all students feel positive about writing tool applications. There were 28 students (74%) who state that writing tools application is very helpful, and 9 students (24%) say that the tool is helpful. But, 1 student (2%) says neutrally. Fortunately, no students feel negative about the writing tool application.

Some students say that they use the writing tools application to help them solve their language problems. They use the tool to check and re-check their grammar before they submit the composition to the lecturer.

"Yes, it is. When I have finished writing a few paragraphs, I always check the grammar in my writing by using Grammarly. I like using Grammarly applications because with these applications, I can learn to understand grammar mistakes in my writing so that I can correct them". (S2/18/B)

If I don't know the word/sentence in English, I use the dictionary.

After that, I check with the Grammarly application on my hand phone's keyboard (automatically). Grammarly application helps me to check grammar and other similar words (synonyms). (Mh/18/A)

The preferable writing tools application

Students have their preference about the writing tools application for writing. Their answers varied. Yet, mostly prefer to use the Grammarly application for their writing assistance.
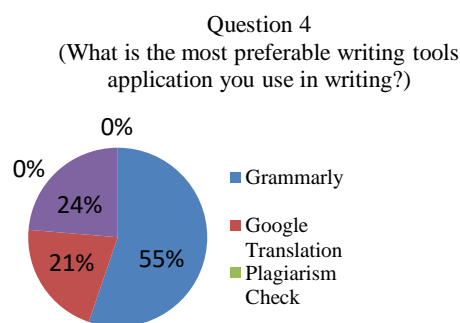

Figure 4 Diagram percentage of question number 4

Figure 4 shows that 21 students (55%) answer that Grammarly is their favorite, 9 students (24%) state that U_ Dictionary is their best, while 8 students (21%) say that Google translate is their best assistant. Interestingly, none of the students choose Plagiarism Check and Thesaurus as their writing assistants.

I chose Grammarly as the most used/preferable writing tool application for writing. This application can help me easily to arrange a series of words according to the correct language order. (NT5/18A)

Grammarly application makes me confident in my writing (Mh/18/A)

Some students prefer to use U_dictionary as their writing assistant. They feel that this application is more helpful than other applications.

I think Grammarly does not help much. It just checks the mistakes, but it is specific enough to tell me which error I make. I prefer U_dictionary. (Fik/18/A)

I use U_dictionary to help me write. If I have difficulty with my vocabulary, from Indonesian to English, I rarely use Google translate. I prefer U_dictionary. I can check my grammar also in U_dictionary. (El/18/A)

Undoubtedly, the writing tools application helps students in accomplishing their writing tasks. They help the students to solve writing problems, namely in language, vocabulary, idea development, and planning.
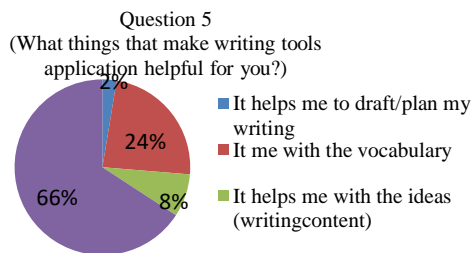

Figure 5 Diagram percentage of question number 5

Figure 5 shows that most of the students confess that the writing tools application helps them in solving the language problem (66%). It also helps them in the vocabulary problem (24%). The remaining small portion of the students states that the writing tool application helps them in the idea of development and planning/ drafting their writing.

The result of this study corresponds to the research conducted by Wang, Shang & Briody (2013). According to them, one of the benefits of using automated writing evaluation is this tool help improve the students' writing accuracy (grammar, spelling, sentence, and word usage). Similarly, electronic writing tools also help them to solve the difficulty in organizing ideas of writing (Li, 2007). Li (2007) also states that automated writing evaluations can help students to improve their writing proficiency by extending students' writing ideas. In addition, Lee (2020) also asserts that the use of automated writing assistance helps the writer to reduce grammatical problems and minimize errors.

Writing Tools Application is Practical and Saves Time

The editing process before a submission is a demanding task. Any writers need to check carefully their use of language, grammatical accuracy, spelling, and punctuation in their composition. Time devoted to the editing and proofreading process is perhaps as much as the time devoted to the drafting process. Thus, having a writing application that saves time and energy is always welcome by any writer. In this research, the majority of the students say that writing tools application is practical and save time (74%). It is practical because the application does the proofreading for them. It checks the language, punctuation, and spelling. This is in line with Liao (2016), who stated that the guidance received from the computer programs encouraged the learners to produce better-written texts and to correct their errors by themselves, while at the same time, promoting interaction with peers.

Question 6
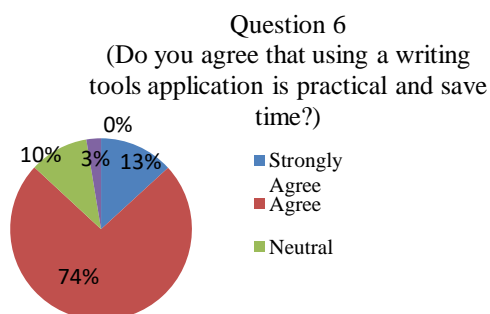(Do you agree that using a writing tools application is practical and save time?)

Figure 6 Diagram percentage of question number 6

Figure 6 almost all the students feel that the writing tool application is practical and does save their time. Only 4 students (10%) choose neutral, and 1 student disagrees with the statement. It can be concluded that the students, in general, are on the positive view. Lee (2004) states through the use of technology-based writing assistance, the students expressed their satisfaction about saving more time during the editing process. This makes them give more focus on content development in computer writing.

Writing Tools Application for Academic Writing

Almost all assignments for university students involve the writing process. That is why college students need to equip themselves with writing sufficient skills to be able to succeed in academic life. Language learners who learn English as a foreign language should learn how to write different types of essays, most specifically the expository type and the argumentative type of essay. As writing is not only about generating ideas and organizing them, the student-writer needs to also learn how to make their sentences understandable and logical for the reader. To help them do this, they can utilize the writing tool application to make a better writer. The participants in the present study state that the writing tools applications help write a say As stated by Azah (2019), Grammarly checker, as one of the writing tools applications, is effective to improve the students' writing. It helps students to locate errors and fix spelling mistakes.

Question 7
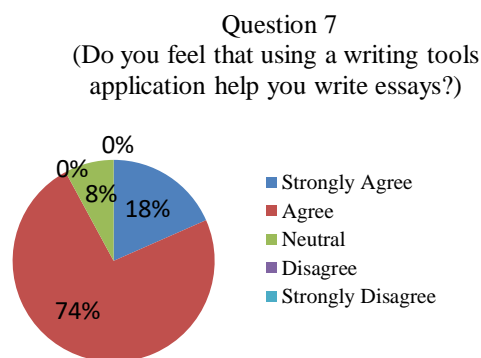(Do you feel that using a writing tools application help you write essays?)

Figure 7 Diagram percentage of question number 7

Figure 7 shows that almost all the students agree that writing tools application is beneficial for them (74% A + 18% SA). None of them agree on the idea that writing tools are useless. The writing tools are helpful because it contains a feature that writers need. Li (2007) states that automatic writing evaluation possesses not only the features of grammatical and spelling check but also the function to guide learners to create correct sentences.

Furthermore, the students also believe that the writing tools application improves the quality of their essays (79% A + 10.5 % SA). None of them disagree with the idea that it is not helpful.
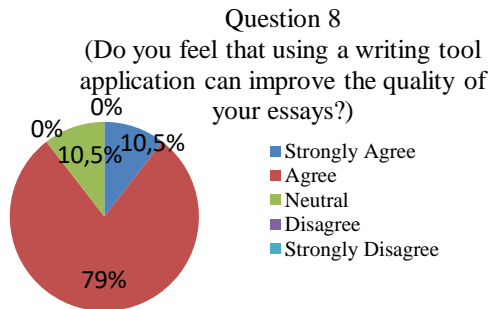
Question 8
(Do you feel that using a writing tool application can improve the quality of your essays?)

Figure 8 Diagram percentage of question number 8

Question 9
(The writing tool applications make me comfortable in learning to write essays...)

Figure 9 Diagram percentage of question number 9

The same conclusion was confirmed by Parra & Calero (2019). Based on their experimental research, the use of automated writing evaluation, such as Grammarly, can improve the students' writing performance rather than not using it. Further, Lee (2004) argues that as the application is practical, it helps the writer in the editing process so that he/she can give more attention to content and idea development

Writing Tools Application and Learning Comfort

Writing in English for foreign language learners is not easy. Many of them feel that writing is a difficult skill to master (Setyowati, Sukmawan, Latief, 2017). Thus, it is important to give them a sense of success and comfort while learning to write. About this, the students in the present study state that writing tools applications make them comfortable when they have to finish their writing task.
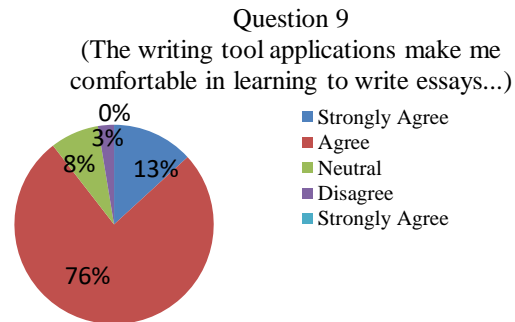
Figure 9 shows that the majority of the students feel that the writing tools application they use makes them feel comfortable in writing essays (76% A + 13% SA). Three students (8%) choose neutral, and only 1 (3%) students disagree with the statement.

> *"Writing an essay is more comfortable by using a writing tool* application. *I feel writing tool applications such as Grammarly are helpful. I can find my mistakes or weaknesses in my writing. It makes me confident when submitting my writing assignments to the lecturer because the quality of my writing is better".* (*PIWS4/18A*)

Interestingly, when the researchers asked them whether they can write as well as when they do not use writing tools application, many of them feel uncertain. The result of the questionnaire shows that almost half of them chose neutral (47% N). Surprisingly, 17 students (26% A + 19% SA) admit that they cannot write better without writing tools application. Only a very small portion of the students feel confident that they can write although they do not use writing tool applications.

Question 10
(I cannot write better without writing tools application...)

0%
8%
19%
47%
26%

- Strongly Agree
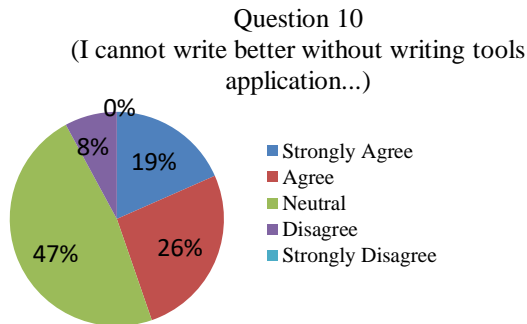- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Figure 10 Diagram percentage of question number 10

According to one of the students, he feels discouraged if the lecturer does not allow him to use writing tools application in his gadget.

I cannot write better without writing tool applications... (FEB/18/A).

He said that he needs a writing tool application to write about an unfamiliar topic. If the topic is about daily life, he said that he did not need to use writing tool applications because he could master the vocabulary. But if he writes about topics that he is familiar with, such as politics, he needs to use a writing tool application because he could not master the vocabulary related to the topic.

After I develop the ideas, then I use gadgets to help. It makes me more confident. (FO/18/B)

It is difficult to write without a gadget because I write in Indonesian first, then translate it into English. I depend on the gadget. I think all my friends are like that too. (NL/18/B)

The result of questionnaire item no 10 is intriguing and shows that the students mostly are dependent on technology. They feel not confident if they have to finish the writing task without the help of the writing tool assistance. For foreign language learners, it is understandable if language/grammar becomes their main concern. It is because the syntactical structures between Bahasa Indonesia and English are different.

The result of this study implies that to teach writing in a foreign language context, the writing teacher/lecturer should allow the students to use gadgets to help them write. Perhaps the writing teacher/lecturer teaches the students how to use some writing tools application for the benefit of the learners. In this digital era, it is almost impossible to separate technology from all aspects of human life, including education. Thus, incorporating technology in a foreign language writing class is close to a must.

CONCLUSION

The researchers conclude that the students feel positive about the use of writing tools application for writing an essay. They feel that the writing tools application, such as Grammarly, U_Dictionary, and Google Translate, help them to write a better essay. Among other writing elements, the students give more concern to the language and vocabulary. Yet, grammar becomes the most difficult problem for foreign language learners in this study to be able to express themselves in a foreign language in written form. To help them solve this problem, they use writing tools applications, and they chose Grammarly as their favorite. Surprisingly, they state that without writing tools application, they feel uncomfortable and not confident to write in English.

The result of this study suggests that the teaching and learning process of essay writing should incorporate technology to help the students to be better writers. Yet, the researchers suggest that the writing teacher/lecturer should teach the students not to be too dependent on the writing tools in their gadgets or those provided for free on the

internet. The writing teacher/lecturer should encourage the students to expand their knowledge on grammar and vocabulary by giving them authentic materials relevant to the writing topic (Setyowati & Sukmawan, 2019), and encourage them to have extensive reading outside the classroom either for enjoyment or for the sake of knowledge.

This study, however, has some limitations. Firstly, it is descriptive. Thus, the result of this study cannot be used as a generalization. Secondly, the researchers do not explore the students' performance in writing an essay when they finish the writing task by using writing tools application. Thus, future researchers must investigate the students' ability to write essays seen from the content, organization, language, vocabulary, and mechanics after they use writing tools application. And third, since the writing tools application mostly works on grammar, it may be interesting to find out whether the students still make errors in their writing. All in all, the researchers believe that the writing tools application is good, beneficial, and practical for a foreign language class.

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