ENGLISH TEACHER'S CHALLENGES IN TEACHING WRITING SKILLS AT 8th GRADE IN SMP TELKOM PURWOKERTO BANYUMAS

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Abstract

This research explores the challenges faced by the English teacher in teaching writing skills to 8th grade students in SMP Telkom Purwokerto Banyumas and the strategies to overcome these challenges. This study used a descriptive qualitative method, utilizing data collection techniques that included observation, interviews, and documentation. In analyzing the data, this research used data reduction, data display, and conclusion. The findings of this study show that English teacher face challenges in teaching writing skills, such as adapting instructional methods to accommodate students' varied learning styles, managing heterogeneous classrooms with differing levels of writing proficiency, coping with time limitations that hinder the completion of writing activities, and addressing students' lack of motivation. In response to these challenges, the teacher implemented a range of strategies, including Teaching Writing Across the Curriculum (TWAC), applying suitable media based on student learning style, assigning differentiated tasks, and fostering a classroom environment that promotes both achievement and risk-taking. These strategies emphasize the necessity of pedagogical flexibility and responsiveness in the EFL classroom, particularly in teaching writing.

Keywords: teacher challenges, teaching writing, writing skills

INTRODUCTION

Education is essential for navigating the era of Society 5.0, which presents a significant challenge if human resources must be sufficiently developed and ready to take over as the country's next great force for growth. In an era of digital connectivity, mastering English is a crucial skill for personal development, professional advancement, and meaningful engagement with the world. Furthermore, learning English enhances an individual's status and opportunities in education, technology, global trade, and business (Kannan, 2009, as cited in Derakhshan & Shirmohammadli, 2015). Therefore, teaching English becomes a crucial part of preparing individuals to thrive in this digital and interconnected world. According to Harmer (2007), teaching is a multidimensional process, and teachers should pay enough attention to all students' skills.

Furthermore, educators are expected to facilitate the development of all four essential language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Harmer, 2007). These skills are not isolated but interconnected, and effective teaching requires strategies that address the diverse needs

of students. Among the four skills, writing is widely acknowledged as one of the most complex and challenging to teach (Richards & Renandya, 2002). According to Nunan (2003), writing is not a simple action of putting words on paper, but a process that involves thinking, planning, drafting, revising, and editing. Meanwhile, writing instruction also requires adequate time for feedback, revision, and practice, which is often limited in classroom settings. Therefore, it is imperative that educators possess the essential expertise and methodologies necessary for the effective dissemination of information and the encouragement of student engagement (Purnama et al., 2023).

Teaching writing is a fundamental aspect of education that enables students to communicate effectively and express their thoughts clearly and concisely (Harmer, 2007). Teaching writing skills has remained a crucial component of language education, particularly in light of the rise of digital communication and the increasing need for clear, practical written expression across academic and professional contexts. Meanwhile, teaching writing skills is a multifaceted task that requires attention to cognitive, linguistic, and socio-cultural factors (Anaktototy et al., 2023). Moreover, students need to link and connect ideas to write clearly, so practical writing skills are essential for communicating ideas clearly and concisely through written language (Bowker & McBride, 2017). Indeed, teaching writing as an effective form of language has proven crucial in foreign language classes, as it is a vital skill for language learners to develop their language proficiency.

It requires a comprehensive understanding of the writing process and practical teaching techniques to help students develop writing skills. Similarly, teacher should encourage students as their write concepts and details. Indeed, in teaching writing, the teacher needs several things, such as an organization to develop and build ideas, arguments, and information. (Ahlsén & Lundh, 2007). Moreover, teacher should be aware of and attentive to rhetorical patterns in writing English as a foreign language to facilitate the writing process for students in the classroom (Nassi & Nasser, 2018). On the other hand, teacher faced challenges in developing students' English writing skills due to their lack of knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, and motivation, among other factors.

Teaching writing is a complex and demanding task that presents numerous challenges for educators. One of the primary challenges is the diverse abilities of students. In most classrooms, teacher face students with varying writing proficiency levels, from advanced writers to those struggling with basic composition skills. This diversity makes it challenging to address individual needs effectively, especially in large classes with limited personal attention. (Bora, 2023). Instead, another significant challenge is time constraints. Teaching writing, which involves guiding students through the drafting, revising, and editing process, can be a time-consuming task. The pressure to cover other curriculum areas within limited instructional hours further exacerbates this issue (Moses & Mohamad, 2019).

Previous studies relevant to this research include a study conducted by Moses and Mohamad (2019), which analyzed the challenges that students and teachers face in learning to teach writing skills in elementary schools. Meanwhile, Mzinganjira & Chauma (2024) argue that a product-oriented approach is a way for teachers to teach composition. However, this approach has some drawbacks: surface mistakes, a lack of ideas or vocabulary, poor organizational skills, and the

general inability of students to compose well. Research conducted by Hidayati (2018) concluded that both internal and external factors contribute to teachers' challenges in teaching writing skills. Instead, the researcher aims to investigate the challenges that English teachers encounter when teaching writing skills. Lastly, Rashid et al. (2021) findings and recommendations may help teachers reflect on their teaching practices and assist authorities in supporting teachers' efforts to improve student writing skills.

On the other hand, based on preliminary research through interviews with an English teacher at the 8th grade level in SMP Telkom Purwokerto Banyumas, one of the challenges in teaching English is developing writing skills. Additionally, this research is worthwhile to conduct because it is crucial to address the challenges faced by English teacher in teaching writing skills. Moreover, most students require assistance in comprehending and using English with proper grammatical structure. After finding this background, conduct the research using the title "English Teacher's Challenges in Teaching Writing Skills at 8th Grade in SMP Telkom Purwokerto Banyumas."

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design to explore the challenges faced by English teachers in teaching writing skills. Qualitative research is appropriate for investigating and understanding participants' experiences, perceptions, and meanings related to a particular phenomenon (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Through this approach, the researcher sought to obtain an in-depth understanding of the challenges encountered by an English teacher in teaching writing skills to eighth-grade students.

The study was conducted at SMP Telkom Purwokerto Banyumas during the 2024/2025 academic year. The participant of this study was an English teacher who taught eighth-grade students. She was selected purposively because of her direct involvement in teaching writing and her extensive teaching experience across different curriculum implementations, including the 2013 Curriculum and the Merdeka Curriculum. The study examined the challenges encountered by the English teacher when teaching writing skills to eighth-grade students.

Data were collected through classroom observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Non-participant observations were conducted in Class 8.4 from April to May 2025 to examine classroom interactions, teaching practices, and challenges that emerged during writing instruction. Field notes were used to record significant events, teacher-student interactions, and classroom conditions. Furthermore, an in-depth interview was conducted with the English teacher on May 23rd, 2025, to gather detailed information about the difficulties encountered in teaching writing skills and the strategies employed to overcome them. In addition, documentation was collected in the form of lesson plans and classroom teaching videos. These documents provided supplementary information regarding instructional planning, teaching strategies, classroom activities, and the implementation of writing instruction.

To ensure the reliability of the findings, this study employed methodological triangulation by combining data obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation. The interview data served as the primary source of information, while observation and documentation data were used

to verify and strengthen the findings. This triangulation process enhanced the credibility and validity of the research results.

The data were analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which consists of three stages: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. In the data condensation stage, the researcher selected, simplified, and organized relevant information obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation. Subsequently, the data were systematically presented in narrative form to facilitate interpretation and identification of emerging patterns. Finally, conclusions were drawn by interpreting the findings and verifying them continuously throughout the analysis process to ensure consistency and accuracy. Through these procedures, the study generated a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by the English teacher in teaching writing skills at SMP Telkom Purwokerto Banyumas.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Teacher Challenges in Teaching Writing Skills

Teaching has always been challenging for teacher, especially in teaching writing skills. However, teacher challenges refer to the various challenges teacher face in their duties. Therefore, the classroom observation conducted in the 8th grade revealed several challenges faced by the teacher in teaching writing skills, particularly when delivering different text types, including procedure texts, recount texts, narrative texts, and poster material. Furthermore, for a further explanation of the challenges English teacher face in teaching writing skills, see below.

a) Adjusting to Different Styles of Instruction

The findings revealed that one of the major challenges faced by the English teacher was adapting instructional approaches to accommodate students' diverse learning styles. Classroom observations showed that students demonstrated different preferences in learning, including visual, auditory, and kinesthetic modes. Consequently, the teacher was required to modify teaching methods and learning materials to ensure that all students could actively participate in writing activities.

During the teaching of procedure texts, some students responded positively to visual models and written examples, while others required verbal explanations and direct demonstrations before they could understand the material. This situation often resulted in unequal levels of engagement, as students whose learning preferences were not accommodated tended to become distracted and less involved in classroom activities. These findings support Tomlinson’s (2014) theory of differentiated instruction, which emphasizes the importance of adjusting teaching strategies to meet students’ varying learning needs.

The challenge became more evident during the instruction of recount and narrative texts. The teacher carefully selected learning media, particularly videos, that matched students’ language proficiency, age level, and learning objectives. Animated videos were preferred because they provided clearer content, increased student engagement, and minimized inappropriate emotional responses. Furthermore, in poster-writing activities,

the teacher had to guide students in combining creativity, vocabulary use, grammatical accuracy, and visual presentation. Such complexity increased the instructional burden because students processed information differently and required varying levels of support. Therefore, adapting instructional styles emerged as a pedagogical necessity rather than merely a teaching preference in writing classrooms.

b) Managing Heterogeneous Grouping

Another significant challenge identified in this study was managing heterogeneous groups. The findings indicated that students possessed diverse levels of language proficiency, learning motivation, cognitive abilities, and writing competence. To address these differences, the teacher attempted to create mixed-ability groups so that stronger students could support those with lower proficiency levels.

However, observations and interview data revealed that many students preferred working with close friends rather than participating in balanced groups. As a result, the intended benefits of heterogeneous grouping were often not fully achieved. Lower-achieving students tended to become passive participants, while higher-achieving students frequently dominated the tasks and decision-making processes. This finding is consistent with Costeleanu (2022), who argues that social comfort often takes precedence over learning optimization in collaborative settings.

The challenge was particularly evident in recount writing activities, where students preferred working individually because the tasks required personal reflection and experience sharing. Similarly, during procedure and narrative writing lessons, stronger students often assumed leadership roles while weaker students relied heavily on them. Consequently, learning opportunities became unevenly distributed among group members. Although the teacher attempted to assign specific roles to encourage participation, implementation remained difficult due to the large class size and the need for continuous monitoring.

Poster-writing activities further highlighted this challenge because students were required to combine linguistic competence with visual creativity. In such situations, weaker students often contributed less to the task, increasing dependency on more capable peers. These findings suggest that heterogeneous grouping, while theoretically beneficial, requires substantial teacher guidance and scaffolding to ensure equitable participation and meaningful learning outcomes.

c) Time Management Constraints

Time management emerged as another critical challenge in teaching writing skills. Writing instruction involves multiple stages, including brainstorming, modeling, drafting, revising, editing, and providing feedback. Consequently, the available classroom time was often insufficient to complete all stages effectively.

During procedure-text instruction, the teacher attempted to implement a complete writing cycle within an 80-minute lesson. However, time limitations prevented all student groups from presenting their work, forcing the teacher to prioritize selected groups while

others submitted their assignments without oral presentations. These findings support Raputri and Widi (2024), who emphasize that writing activities generally require more instructional time than other language-learning tasks.

Similarly, in recount-text lessons, time constraints limited the teacher's ability to provide individualized feedback. Although students needed extensive support during idea generation and revision, the teacher was often required to provide only general comments due to limited instructional time. This finding contrasts with Reigeluth (2011), who highlights the importance of specific and timely feedback for effective learning.

The challenge also appeared in narrative writing lessons, where students progressed at different speeds. Some students required additional time to develop ideas, revise drafts, and correct grammatical errors. Consequently, managing classroom activities and ensuring that all students completed the tasks became increasingly demanding. In contrast, poster-writing activities were completed more efficiently because the tasks had clearer objectives and more structured outputs. This finding suggests that task complexity significantly influences teachers' ability to manage instructional time effectively.

d) Students' Lack of Motivation

The findings further indicated that students' lack of motivation constituted one of the most persistent challenges in teaching writing skills. This issue was observed across all writing genres, including procedure, recount, narrative, and poster texts. Low motivation manifested in limited participation, reluctance to answer questions, hesitation to write on the board, and minimal engagement during classroom discussions.

During procedure-text lessons, many students showed little enthusiasm when asked to contribute vocabulary or respond to questions. Interview data revealed that students often felt uncomfortable attracting attention, even when their contributions were positive. This suggests that motivational issues were closely related to self-confidence and classroom anxiety rather than mere disinterest.

Similar patterns were observed in recount writing lessons. Although recount texts allow students to write about personal experiences, many students struggled to generate ideas and lacked confidence in expressing themselves in English. Consequently, they produced short and underdeveloped texts and relied heavily on teacher assistance. These findings support Adam et al. (2021), who argue that students' motivation is strongly influenced by their linguistic competence and confidence levels.

In narrative-writing activities, students were expected to exercise creativity and imagination. Nevertheless, many remained hesitant to develop ideas because they feared making grammatical and vocabulary errors. Likewise, during poster-writing activities, students often contributed minimally despite the use of visual and interactive elements. Although multimodal activities were intended to increase engagement, insufficient vocabulary knowledge and low confidence continued to hinder active participation.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that students' lack of motivation significantly affected classroom participation, writing performance, creativity, and learning outcomes.

Motivation was closely linked to students' self-confidence, language proficiency, and willingness to take risks in using English. Therefore, enhancing student motivation remains a fundamental challenge that must be addressed to improve the effectiveness of writing instruction.

B. Teacher Strategies for Teaching Writing Skills

Teacher strategies are techniques that teacher use to assist students in understanding planned course material and create achievable goals for the future, enabling them to employ various strategies (Haynes & Zacarian, 2010). Teaching writing skills in junior high school requires teacher to implement a variety of strategies and approaches that address both curriculum demands and the diverse needs of students. One of the essential strategies involves integrating writing instruction across the curriculum, ensuring that students develop their ability to express ideas clearly and effectively in multiple text types, such as procedural texts, recount texts, narrative texts, and poster materials. On the other hand, several strategies include teaching writing across the curriculum, adjusting heterogeneous grouping through differentiated instruction, and encouraging achievement and risk-taking. For a detailed explanation, please see below.

a) Teaching Writing Across the Curriculum

The findings revealed that the teacher implemented Teaching Writing Across the Curriculum (TWAC) as a strategy to enhance students' writing skills by connecting writing activities with other learning contexts. However, the implementation was adapted according to the characteristics and objectives of each writing genre. Rather than applying cross-curricular integration uniformly, the teacher selected approaches that were pedagogically relevant and meaningful for students. This finding is consistent with Clifford (2007), who states that writing across the curriculum encourages students to apply language skills in diverse contexts, thereby promoting meaningful learning and improving knowledge transfer across subject areas.

In teaching procedure texts, the teacher emphasized real-life contexts rather than integrating the lesson with other subjects. Students were asked to write procedures related to daily activities, such as making simple drinks. This approach enabled students to connect writing tasks with their personal experiences, thereby increasing comprehension and engagement. The finding supports Rahman and Ekkayokkaya (2024), who argue that contextualized instruction can be as effective as interdisciplinary integration when it facilitates meaningful learning. Furthermore, Nunan (2003) emphasizes that language learning becomes more effective when students can relate classroom activities to authentic situations and personal experiences.

A different strategy was observed in recount-text instruction through the ENSIP (English and Seni Pilihan) project. The teacher integrated English learning with Prakarya and Seni Musik subjects. Students collaboratively wrote recount texts and published them on blog platforms, while also composing song lyrics based on their personal experiences and performing them in groups. This integration promoted not only writing development

but also technological literacy, creativity, and communication skills. The findings support Clifford (2007), who emphasizes that cross-curricular learning encourages deeper understanding and knowledge transfer across disciplines. Similarly, El Ouidani and Madaoui (2024) argue that process-based writing activities integrated with authentic projects provide students with meaningful opportunities to develop both writing competence and collaborative skills.

Similarly, narrative-text instruction was integrated with Seni Rupa. Students wrote narrative texts and subsequently illustrated scenes from their stories through visual art activities. This integration enabled students to express ideas through both written and visual modes, fostering creativity, imagination, and multimodal literacy. The findings align with Patterns (2018), who suggests that combining writing with artistic expression enhances students' engagement and creative thinking. In addition, the British Council (2004) notes that integrating multiple modes of expression within the writing process can increase students' motivation and support the development of creative language production.

In contrast, poster-writing activities linked with obligation and prohibition materials were not integrated with other subjects. Instead, the teacher focused on authentic language use in real-life contexts, such as cultural, social, and religious themes. This finding indicates that effective implementation of TWAC requires flexibility and should be adapted to the instructional goals and nature of the writing task rather than applied universally. According to Tomlinson (2014), effective instruction should be responsive to students' learning needs and the objectives of the lesson rather than relying on a single instructional model for all situations.

b) Applying Suitable Media Based on Students' Learning Styles

The findings demonstrated that the teacher addressed diverse learning styles through the use of various instructional media. This strategy was employed to accommodate visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners within the same classroom and reflects the principles of differentiated instruction proposed by Tomlinson (2014). According to Tomlinson (2014), differentiated instruction enables teachers to adjust content, processes, and learning resources to ensure that students with different abilities and learning preferences can access the same learning objectives.

In procedure-text instruction, the teacher utilized YouTube videos containing visual demonstrations and audio explanations. These multimedia resources enabled visual learners to observe procedural sequences, auditory learners to listen to explanations, and kinesthetic learners to engage in practical modeling activities. The teacher also provided worksheets that guided students to identify connectors and sequence procedural steps, thereby supporting comprehension before students began writing. This finding is supported by Mayer's Multimedia Learning Theory (2009), which suggests that students learn more effectively when information is presented through a combination of visual and verbal channels.

During recount-text lessons, the teacher implemented scaffolded instruction by gradually moving from simple sentence construction to paragraph writing. PowerPoint presentations containing pictures and visual prompts were used to support understanding, while personal storytelling served as an effective model for students. Likewise, narrative-text instruction employed storytelling activities and video-based materials to stimulate students' imagination and facilitate idea development. According to Vygotsky's concept of scaffolding, learning becomes more effective when teachers provide gradual support that helps students move from guided practice to independent performance.

In poster-writing lessons, the teacher utilized visual images and videos to demonstrate language functions related to obligation and prohibition. These media provided concrete examples and supported students in understanding vocabulary, expressions, and grammatical structures. The findings suggest that carefully selected multimedia resources can improve student engagement and accessibility, particularly in mixed-ability classrooms. This result is in line with the conclusion of the study, which found that appropriate media selection can help address challenges in differentiated classrooms by supporting students with diverse learning styles and abilities.

c) Assigning Differentiated Tasks

Another significant strategy identified in this study was assigning differentiated tasks. The teacher designed writing activities that accommodated students' varying abilities, learning preferences, and levels of readiness. Rather than grouping students strictly according to ability, the teacher provided scaffolded tasks that enabled all students to participate meaningfully. This finding supports Clifford (2017), who argues that differentiated instruction allows teachers to adapt writing tasks according to students' needs while maintaining common learning objectives.

In procedure-text instruction, students initially completed guided activities involving pictures and scrambled sentences. They were required to arrange the sentences according to the correct sequence of steps, allowing them to understand procedural structures through visual and interactive learning. Subsequently, students progressed to more complex tasks, including creating their own procedure texts using digital platforms such as Canva. This progression enabled students to gradually develop their writing competence while simultaneously enhancing their creativity and digital literacy skills. The findings support Sari et al. (2023), who state that differentiated tasks enable students to engage meaningfully with content according to their readiness levels. Furthermore, Suryani et al. (2024) argue that digital task-based learning promotes creativity, problem-solving, and authentic writing experiences.

Similarly, recount-text instruction began with guided sentence-matching activities designed to strengthen students' understanding of text structure. Students then progressed to independent writing tasks involving topic selection and outline development. More advanced activities were integrated with the ENSIP project, where students published their writing on blogs and composed song lyrics related to their experiences. This process-based

approach provided students with authentic writing experiences while encouraging self-expression and creativity. The findings align with El Ouidani and Madaoui (2024), who emphasize that process-based writing instruction supports students in developing writing skills gradually through planning, drafting, revising, and publishing activities.

In narrative writing, students drafted stories and later illustrated them through Seni Rupa activities. This integration supported students' creative development and enabled them to communicate ideas through multiple forms of expression. Meanwhile, in poster-writing activities, students completed structured tasks involving vocabulary identification, language-feature analysis, and project development. Through gradual scaffolding and task differentiation, students at different proficiency levels were able to participate successfully and build confidence in writing. This finding is supported by the British Council (2004), which highlights the importance of structured writing tasks and multimodal activities in promoting student engagement and writing development.

Overall, differentiated task assignment enabled the teacher to address classroom diversity while promoting student engagement, autonomy, and writing development. This finding reinforces Tomlinson's (2014) view that differentiated instruction helps create equitable learning opportunities for students with diverse backgrounds and abilities.

d) Encouraging Achievement and Risk-Taking

The findings further revealed that encouraging achievement and risk-taking was a key strategy for addressing students' lack of motivation in writing. The teacher consistently created a supportive learning environment that encouraged students to express ideas, experiment with language, and learn from mistakes without fear of negative judgment.

One of the primary strategies involved allowing students to select topics that were personally meaningful and relevant to their interests. This approach was implemented across procedure, recount, narrative, and poster-writing activities. By providing students with greater autonomy, the teacher increased intrinsic motivation and encouraged students to engage more actively in the writing process. This finding supports Tomlinson (2014), who argues that offering students choice enhances engagement and promotes academic risk-taking.

In addition, the teacher regularly provided constructive individual feedback. Rather than emphasizing errors, the teacher focused on students' efforts, progress, and strengths. When students produced unclear or inaccurate writing, the teacher guided them through questioning and clarification instead of direct criticism. This approach helped students develop confidence while improving their writing quality. The findings are consistent with Fachrunnisa (2024), who emphasizes the importance of positive feedback in increasing students' self-confidence and willingness to participate.

Furthermore, the teacher fostered a classroom atmosphere in which mistakes were viewed as natural parts of the learning process. Students were encouraged to share ideas, ask questions, and participate in discussions without fear of embarrassment. Verbal praise, emotional support, and peer collaboration were consistently used to strengthen students'

confidence and motivation. These findings support Young (1991), who argues that risk-taking is more likely to occur in supportive and non-judgmental learning environments.

Overall, encouraging achievement and risk-taking proved to be an effective strategy for increasing students' motivation, confidence, and willingness to engage in writing activities. By creating a positive classroom climate and emphasizing growth rather than perfection, the teacher successfully supported students' development as emerging writers.

CONCLUSION

This study found that the English teacher at SMP Telkom Purwokerto faced several challenges in teaching writing skills to eighth-grade students, including accommodating diverse learning styles, managing heterogeneous classrooms, coping with time constraints, and addressing students' low motivation. To overcome these challenges, the teacher implemented various instructional strategies grounded in differentiated instruction principles.

The findings revealed that the teacher utilized appropriate learning media, such as videos, pictures, and modeling activities, to accommodate students' diverse learning preferences. In addition, the Teaching Writing Across the Curriculum (TWAC) strategy was applied through the integration of writing activities with other subjects, particularly in recount and narrative text instruction through the English dan Seni Pilihan (ENSIP) project. Furthermore, differentiated tasks were implemented through a step-by-step learning process, enabling students with different proficiency levels to participate actively in writing activities. The teacher also employed direct questioning techniques to monitor students' understanding and structured learning activities into clear stages to address time management challenges.

Moreover, students' lack of motivation was addressed by encouraging achievement and risk-taking through topic choice, constructive feedback, and continuous support throughout the writing process. These strategies helped increase students' confidence, engagement, and willingness to express their ideas in written English.

In conclusion, the implementation of differentiated instruction, cross-curricular integration, structured task progression, and supportive feedback contributed to creating a more inclusive and engaging writing classroom. These strategies enabled the teacher to accommodate students' diverse needs while supporting the development of their writing skills effectively.

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