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Process of Writing: The Challenges in Writing Skill Among ESL Learners

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Abstract
Writing in English is considered a challenging task for students who learn English as a second language. This is proven through studies on writing that revealed ESL learners faced difficulties in writing due to various factors. This quantitative survey study is conducted in order to investigate the relationship between writing difficulties with before and while writing. A survey questionnaire consisting of five sections with 41 items was distributed to 179 respondents who are ESL learners at the centre of foundation studies in Malaysia. The finding of this study revealed that the main difficulty faced by the ESL foundation learners in writing is the inability to achieve the goal of the writing task given to them in language classrooms. Even though there is no strong correlation between writing difficulties and the writing process, this study helps both ESL learners and educators to understand some of the actual factors that caused ESL learners to feel unmotivated during writing activities and the writing process to some extent helps learners to develop their writing skills.
Keywords: Writing Difficulties, Writing Process, Pre-Writing, While-Writing, Esl Students

Introduction
Background of Study
When it comes to learning another language, writing is believed to be one of the crucial skills for learners to acquire. Learners are expected to develop and to enhance their writing skills as it is the primary objective of learning writing (Bulqiyah, et. al., 2021; Al Khazraji, 2019). Not only that, in learning writing, language learners are expected to be actively involved in the processes that occurred during the three stages of writing namely; the prewriting stage, the while-writing stage and the post-writing to enhance their competency in writing (Bulqiyah et al., 2021; Bakry & Alsamadani, 2015). However, mastering a skill especially is not like a walk in a park. Writing has still become an onerous skill for learners to acquire. Similar remarks stated by Pablo and Lasaten (2018) that, since writing is the highest form of academic skills as it reflects a person's level of language competence, concept development, and abstraction, hence writing is a complicated process where it requires a combination of skills.
With such a perception that writing is a complex task, most language learners will avoid writing tasks because they are struggling with the difficulties in writing (Pablo & Lasaten,

2018). Hence, writing is frequently accepted as being the last language skills to be acquired as compared to reading, speaking and listening. Difficulties in writing faced by language learners especially for second or foreign language learners vary from one learner to another. As for Pablo and Lasaten (2018), writing difficulties faced by language learners are identified and classified based on different ideas, which includes content and ideas, organisation, vocabulary and word choice, language use, formality and objective and referencing. According to the writing difficulties classified by Pablo et. al (2018); Ahdi Hassan, et. al (2020) strongly believed that they lead to frustration in learning writing as learners are oriented towards certain standardised characteristics in order to acquire the written skill. Hence, writing becomes goal-oriented rather than indulging in the process that helps to address the difficulties in writing.

Given the difficulties faced by learners as listed by Pablo et. al (2018) to acquire writing skill, hence, it is crucial to find an appropriate approach to minimise the shortcomings and most importantly to overcome writing anxiety among language learners. One of the ways is through the process writing approach which is widely embraced and adopted by English educators as opposed to the conventional product-oriented approach (Ahdi Hasssan et. al., 2020). When adopting the process writing approach, learners will undergo through different stages namely; before-writing, while-writing and after-writing that will allow them to develop and enhance their skills in writing, enable them to fully appreciate their writing and most importantly to reduce the amount of frustration when it comes to writing tasks in the classroom (Dunsmuir et. al., 2015). This is due to the fact that when learners are involved in the writing process, they are focusing mostly on different activities in the language classroom that help with the production of the writing such as brainstorming, revising, editing and other relevant activities to writing (Haiyan & Rilong, 2016). Not only that, when learners are exposed to the process of writing, it can assist language educators in determining the difficulties faced by the learners in completing their writing tasks as learners go through different stages in writing.

It is indeed that mastering written skills is a major challenge for learners and throughout the writing process, they will face different challenges. This scenario is experienced by the majority of the language learners including Malaysia since English is considered as a second language and where social and cultural backgrounds are totally different from the English native speakers. Therefore, this study is crucial for language educators in order to identify the difficulties in writing faced by learners to minimise the identified writing difficulties. By doing so, language educators will be able to plan and develop materials that are useful to be utilized during the stages in writing that will further address the identified difficulties in writing faced by language learners in Malaysia.

Statement of Problem
Studies on writing difficulty have rather extensively been conducted across the globe. The intensive coverage on the diverse aspects of writing have yet to uncover the effective methodology in teaching writing, or even the relevancy of writing instruction to writing difficulty. Writing is an exceptionally complex skill Hayes (2012), that requires a comprehensive cognitive process (Bulqiyah, et. al., 2021). Therefore, to achieve an effective writing product requires inclusive writing instructions, namely strong apprehension of the writing process, along with other contributing factors in achieving this goal (Kao & Reynolds, 2018, Farooq et al., 2012). Thus, apprehending and mastering good instruction in writing demands sufficient time allocated for writing lessons and practices (Graham, 2019).

According to Graham (2019), the route to the realisation of effective writing may be hindered by these four factors: (1) Insufficient time devoted to writing instruction given in classroom, (2) lack of writing exercise given to students particularly in extended essay, (3) insufficient use of teaching procedure which resulting the lack of depth and intensity of writing instruction and lastly, (4) the deficiency of digital tools for writing used in classroom. Other studies assert that lack of interest and motivation, minimum collaborative learning in the writing classroom, teachers' teaching styles, and insufficient time spent in writing instruction may contribute to writing difficulty (Bulqiyah et. al., 2021; Graham, 2019; Kao & Reynolds, 2018).

Despite the tremendous volume of studies conducted, perhaps, limited emphasis is given on the specific teaching procedure on the writing instruction and the integration of this aspect to the teaching writing goal (Graham, 2019; Kao & Reynolds, 2012). One of the major writing difficulties faced by students is the writing process (Bulqiyah, et. al., 2021, Uba and Souidi, 2020), consequently, it is important to educate students on how to conduct critical writing processes such as planning and revising as highlighted by (Graham, 2019). In order to make sense of this factor, it is crucial to first discover the relationship between writing difficulty, and the writing processes (before-writing, while-writing and post-writing) among students.

Objective of the Study and Research Questions
This study is done to explore perception of learners on their use of learning strategies. Specifically, this study is done to answer the following questions;
- How do learners perceive writing difficulty?
- How do learners perceive the before writing stage?
- How do writers perceive the when writing stage?
- How do writers perceive when revising stage?
- Is there a relationship between writing difficulty and the writing process?

Literature Review
Writing Difficulties
As writing is one of the most challenging skills in learning a language, it comes with some difficulties that learners of ESL/EFL have to deal with. Not only that the learners have external difficulties namely transcribing and structuring ideas, vocabulary mastery, language accuracy and misinterpreting instruction (Ceylan, 2019) but the writers also face difficulties internally as they are lack of interest, motivation and self-confidence which resulted them in having anxiety in composing (Bulqiyah et al., 2021). These findings correlate with Budjalemba's and Listyani's (2021) as they also assert that teacher's teaching style and classroom environment are other factors that cause learners to struggle in writing. With these difficulties, writers often struggle to begin their writing causing writer's block and eventually will make them feel unmotivated to finish their writing. Besides Ceylan (2019) also emphasizes that limited knowledge of academic writing i.e the process of writing makes the writing more challenging. Meanwhile, Riadil et al (2023) state that reading and technology contribute to writing difficulties. If the learners read less, it will result in a lack of vocabulary, ideas and they are unable to structure ideas and produce good writing. Technology also contributed largely in this matter as learners nowadays are exposed more to text messages and social media platforms. The style of writing that they use in these platforms will somehow affect their writing skills. Asare et al (2022) emphasized that social media affected the students' writing

skills when they write individually as the users will employ the social media lingo. This is why students were found to be interested in learning writing but they were reported to have low proficiency in that particular skill (Riadil et al., 2023).

Writing/Composing process
The writing process is a systematic approach that writers follow to produce written content. It involves several stages, each with its own specific tasks and goals. Each requires attention and commitment in assisting writers to translate their ideas, keywords and experiences to a composition. Any writing requires organisation and even if the writing is done in the spur-of-moment, the writer eventually will eventually reread it and make any necessary adjustments to ensure the composition accomplished its purpose and is clear to the intended audience. The difficulty of writing is mainly due to many processes involved in composing, however, if the ESL/EFL learners avoid these processes, it might make writing even more challenging. Although female writers executed more strategies in writing as compared to male writers, Aripin and Rahmat (2021) emphasise that despite strategies used, planning, observing, and assessing are crucial processes in assisting writers in creating quality work. As illustrated in Flower and Hayes (1981), writing is best described as a collection of diverse mental processes that authors coordinate or organise when producing. Flower and Hayes' model of writing emphasizes on identifying problems and to whom the problem is addressed to - the audience which then leads to planning, translating, reviewing and monitoring. Hence, while the writing process can vary from person to person, it generally consists of the following key steps: 1) Before writing (Pre-writing), 2) When writing 3) After writing (Post-writing). The writing process is not always linear and writers may revisit and repeat stages as needed. It is a flexible but a systematic framework that allows for creativity, iteration, and improvement throughout the writing journey.

Past Studies on Writing Difficulties
Many studies have been conducted on essay writing in contexts of English as a Second Language (ESL) to investigate areas such as writing difficulty, writing instructions, the processes, and more. Bulqiyah et.al (2021) examined the perspectives of writing difficulties among tertiary students. A mix research methodology is used to gather data as these 21 participants had to fill-out a questionnaire while 6 among these respondents were further interviewed to gain in depth perceptions.The findings show that the investigated 21 undergraduates faced two main writing difficulties which are categorised as affective problem and cognitive problem. The affective problem studies the issue of students' and lecturers' attitude towards writing instruction while cognitive problem discover the difficulty in aspects of the technical and mechanics of writing such as lack of depth in viewpoint, transferring language, a lack of wide range of vocabulary, poor organisation of ideas, process of writing, and linguistic problem. This study implies that the undergraduates are struggling in writing within both the affective and cognitive aspects.

Next, the study by Uba and Souidi (2020) at Dhofar University, Oman, also looked at the writing difficulties among ESL learners' and writing processes. Forty essays written by the Business Course undergraduates were analysed by adapting textography approach to study writing practice among tertiary students. The findings indicated that students faced difficulties in writing up thesis statement, topic sentences, generating ideas, poor organisation, lack coherence, and limited vocabulary. The study discovers that one of the factors of this issue is that limited time for writing lessons was allocated for the course.

According to Uba and Souidi (2020), not more than 4 hours was apportioned to writing practices or lessons throughout the course. Thus, they suggested that more contact hours should be given to teach essay writing, more exposure given to students to critical thinking activities, and lecturers should introduce more academic vocabulary to students.

In another study, Phuong (2021) explored the perceptions of fifty students who were English majors sophomores at Tay Do University. The survey shows that the undergraduates had seven difficulties in learning English writing namely limited vocabulary, linguistic problems (grammar, spelling and mechanics), inadequate prior knowledge, poor organisation, time constraint, and language transfer. The findings showed that there are recurring errors in students' academic writings. Among major difficulties they faced were lexical error and time constraints. The study strongly recommended that educators should emphasise on the writing instruction in the writing classroom in order to strengthen students' writing skills. Phuong also suggested that more time should be allocated in writing class to allow more sessions for academic writing practices to take place. In summary, the study conducted by Bulqiyah, et. al (2021); Uba and Souidi (2020); Phuong (2021), have displayed an important association between writing difficulty and writing instruction. The participants in the research conducted have mainly faced similar writing difficulties in terms of lexical error, poor organisation, limited knowledge, and poor grasp in the process of writing. In conjunction, the researchers suggested that increment of time allocation to writing lessons is crucial to ensure students have sufficient writing practice. Apart from that, the emphasis in the writing instructions and the writing processes in the writing classroom is also necessary in order to achieve an effective writing goal.

Past Studies on Writing Process
Many studies have been conducted to investigate the writing process experience among language learners when learning writing in language classrooms. In general, Muamaroh et al (2020) mentioned that the writing process that involves four stages namely; planning, drafting, editing and final revision are able to assist learners in overcoming their difficulties in writing especially in terms of the content, organization, vocabulary, language use and mechanics in writing. Similar remarks made by Wayan and Alexandra (2020), frequent exposure to the writing process where learners are expected to apply certain techniques in writing such as brainstorming for ideas, organising ideas, revising and editing their mechanics in writing help to improve their ability to produce a piece of writing. Since writing skills do not occur overnight, therefore being involved in the writing process is considered as demanding to some learners and writing is more laborious as compared to other skills (Wayan & Alexandra, 2020).

In one of the past studies on writing process, Muamaroh et. al (2020) conducted a study to investigate the process of English writing in order to identify problems faced by learners in writing English as well as to find out the factors which inhibit and improve their writing skills. In this study, learners' writing tasks of undergraduate six females in international class were documented on top of the open-ended questionnaire and interview to gather data. The findings of Muamaroh et. al (2020) revealed that all of these respondents used all of the four stages in the process of writing, nevertheless they still faced difficulties in writing in terms of the content, organization, vocabulary, language use and mechanics. This study also showed that learners' mastery of grammar, vocabulary, lack of practice and self-confidence to write in English are the strongest factors that inhibit their writing in English. Therefore, findings

from Muamaroh et. al (2020) revealed that although learners are actively involved in the writing process, they still faced difficulties in writing.

In another study conducted by Wayan and Alexandra (2020), it was to find out the ESL learners' participation and engagement in the writing process when process-approach and collaborative learning were implemented in the language classrooms. Seven ESL learners or tutees and an English tutor were chosen to participate in this study. Nine observations were conducted during the tutoring sessions between the tutor and the tutees. To further understand the ESL learners' participation in the writing process, semi-structured interviews and the survey or questionnaire were given to both tutor and tutees. In this study, 5 stages of writing; pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing and publishing from Grave (cited in Zhou, 2015) was used and collaborative learning in writing was gauged using Puntambekar and Hübscher's (2005) scaffolding theoretical framework. The study by Wayan and Alexandra (2020) revealed that most participants did not actively go through the stages in writing except for the revising stage where during this stage, they have to revise their writing to ensure that they produced a good piece of writing. The study concluded that, students do have difficulties in writing ranging from content to mechanical errors, but Wayan and Alexandra (2020) further suggested that, based from the data collected, writing process does not contribute much with the difficulties and or to minimised the challenges in writing but the role of the educators is crucial to assist students to develop their writing skills and to overcome difficulties faced by students with their writing.

Conceptual Framework
Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework of the study. This study explores the perception of learners on writing difficulty. This study also investigates learners' perception of the writing process. Writing is a long process that begins with the writer deciding on the topic of the writing assignment that may not end at the end of the composing process. The writer goes through many stages; sometimes going back and forth to the same stages to make improvements. According to Rahmat (2023), the beginning and the middle part is the most difficult. Both the stages require much time from the writer. In the context of this study, writers' perception of difficulty influences how they begin writing. It also influences their while-writing stage. According to Flower and Hayes (1981), writing is difficult because of the rhetorical situation, the goal setting process, or the composing process. According to Petric & Czalr (2003), the difficulties that writers face begins (a) before writing, (b) while writing and also (c) when revising.
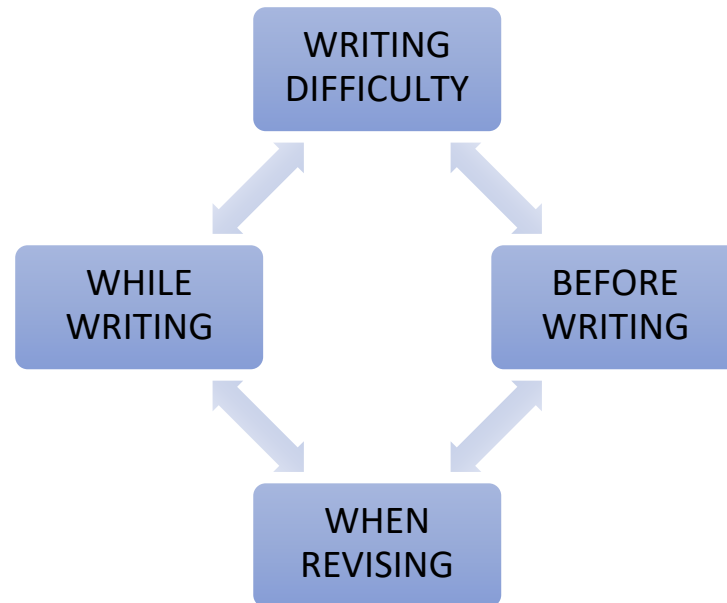
Figure 1- Conceptual Framework of the Study- Relationship between Writing Difficulty with Before and While Writing

Methodology

This quantitative study is done to explore motivation factors for learning among undergraduates. A purposive sample of 179 participants responded to the survey. The instrument used is a 5 Likert-scale survey and is rooted from Flower and Hayes (1981) and also Petric & Czalr (2003) to reveal the variables in Table 1 below. The survey has 4 sections. Section A has items on demographic profile. Section B has 7 items for writing difficulties. Section C has 8 items on before writing. Section D has 14 items on while writing and section E has 16 items on when revising.

Table 1
Distribution of Items in the Survey

SECTION	WRITING STAGE	NO OF ITEMS
B	Writing Difficulty	7
C	Before Writing	8
D	While writing	14
E	When Revising	12
		41

Table 2
Reliability of Survey

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.839	41

Table 2 shows the reliability of the survey. The analysis shows a Cronbach alpha of .839, thus, revealing a good reliability of the instrument chosen/used. Further analysis using SPSS is done to present findings to answer the research questions for this study.

Findings
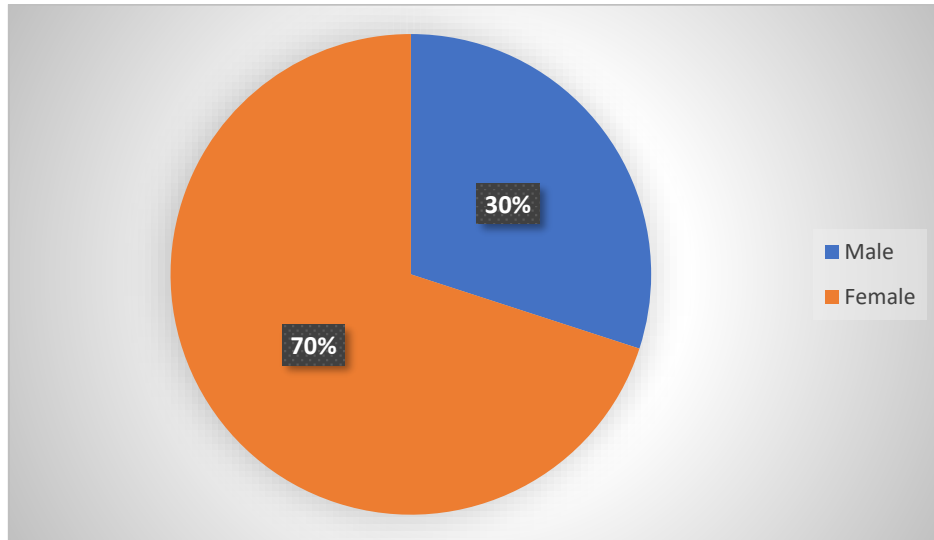Findings for Demographic Profile

Q1 Gender

Figure 2- Percentage for Gender

Figure 2 presents the percentage for gender involved in this survey. Female respondents outnumbered the male respondents in which from the overall total number of respondents which is 179, 70% are female and the remaining 30% are male.
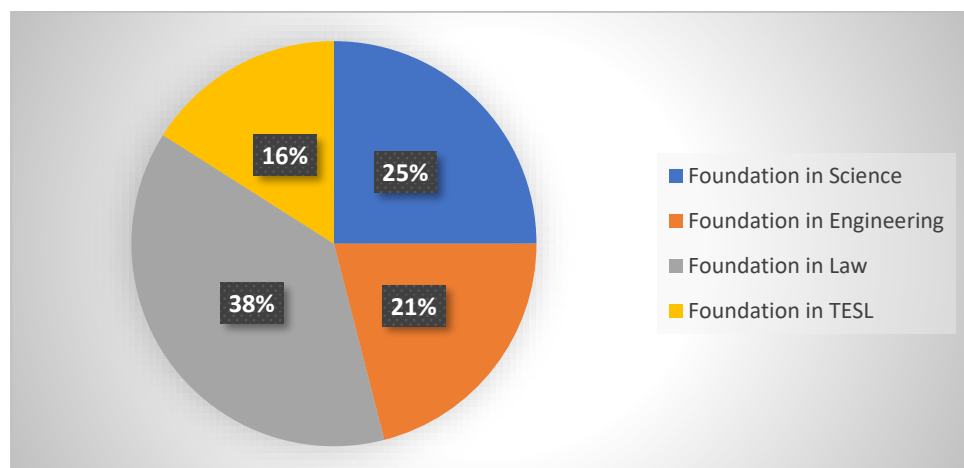
Q2 Discipline

Figure 3- Percentage for Discipline

Based on figure 3, 38% of the respondents are doing foundation in law which are the majority of the respondents for this survey. Whereby, the percentages for other disciplines such as foundation in science and engineering are 25% and 21% respectively. The percentage of respondents of this survey from Foundation of TESL is the least, which is only 16%.
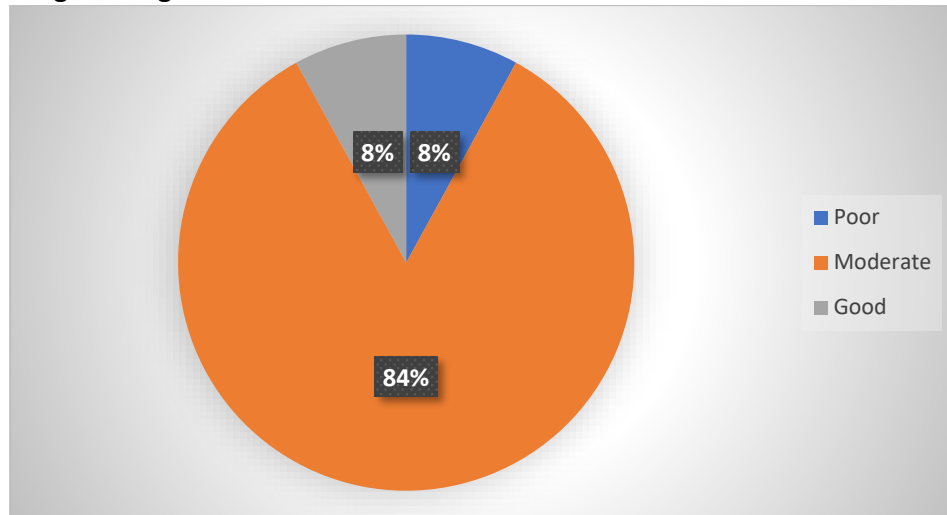
Q3 Self-Rating Writing Skills

Figure 4- Percentage for Self-Rating Writing Skills

For question number three, as illustrated in figure 4, 84% of the respondents believe that their writing skills are at the moderate level and the same percentage for respondents that self-rating their writing skills for poor and good which is 8% respectively.

Findings for Writing Difficulty
This section presents data to answer research question 1- How do learners perceive writing difficulty?
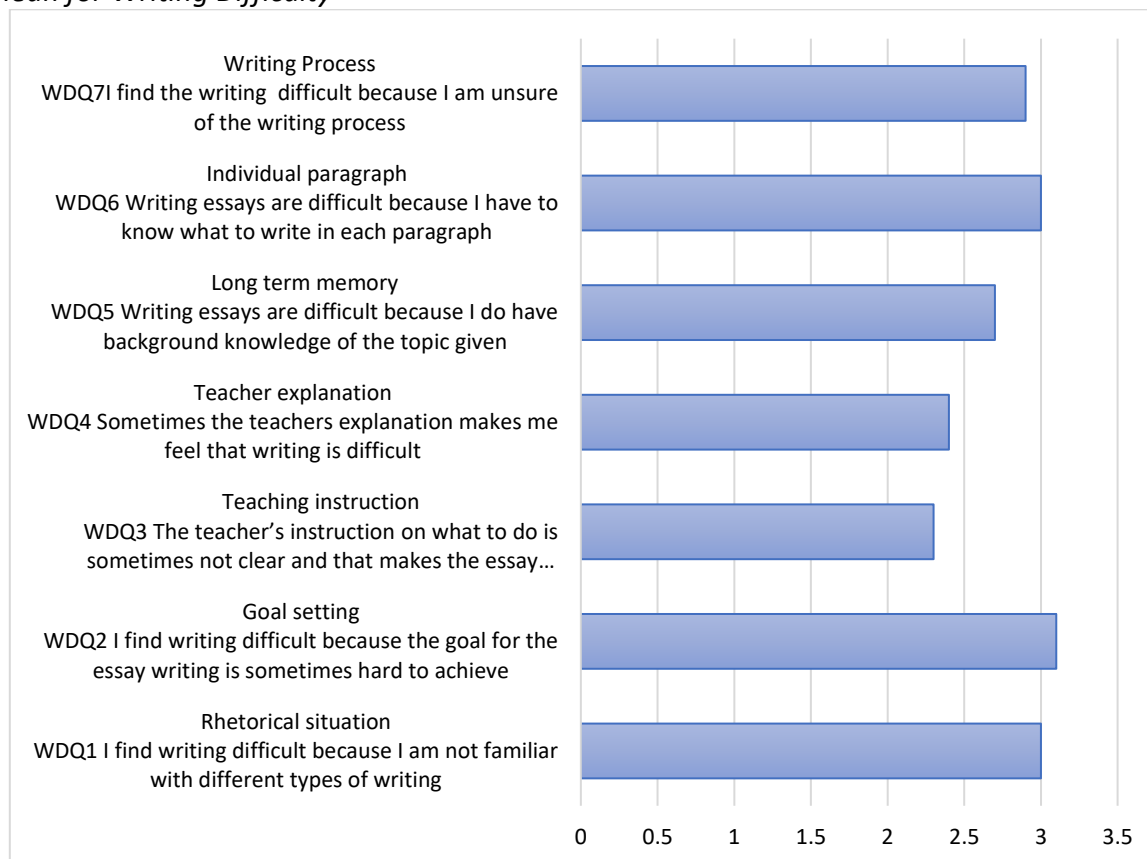
Writing Difficulty
Table 5
Mean for Writing Difficulty

Figure 5- Mean for Writing Difficulty

Figure 5 illustrates the mean scores for writing difficulty. The analysis indicates that students find writing difficult because the goal for the essay writing is sometimes hard to achieve (M: 3.1). This is followed by students feeling that writing is difficult because they are not familiar with different types of writing and lack knowledge of what to write in each paragraph (M: 3), respectively. Apart from that, students perceive writing as difficult because they are unsure of the writing process (M: 2.9). Nevertheless, lack of background knowledge of the topic given has a mild contribution to writing difficulty among students (M: 2.7). Other than that, the mean score,(M: 2.4) shows that on an occasional basis, the teachers' explanation makes the students feel that writing is difficult, indicating a small contribution to the writing difficulty factor. Lastly, a rather small mean score (M: 2.3) indicating that the 'teacher's instruction on what to do is sometimes not clear' suggests that insufficient teaching procedure may not contribute to writing difficulty.

Findings for Before Writing

This section presents data to answer research question 2- How do learners perceive the before writing stage?
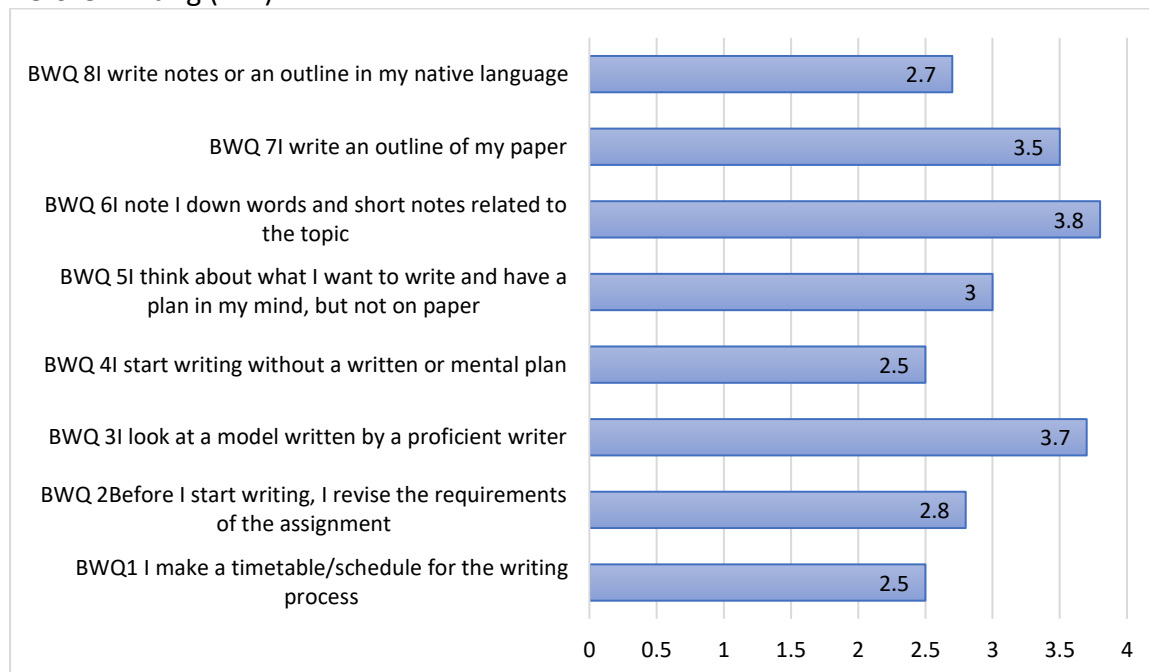
Before Writing (BW)

Figure 6- Mean for Before writing

Figure 6 presented the results on 8 items specifically asking the participants their perceptions before the writing stage. Based on the results, the majority of the participants perceived (M=3.8) that sometimes 'note down words or short notes related to the topic' would be the action taken before they started writing. This is followed by 'refer to a model written by a professional writer' (M=3.7) and participants also agreed on writing an outline (M=3.5) as their pre-writing strategy. Furthermore, with a similar mean score, most participants disagreed on 'making timetable or schedule for the writing process' as well as on 'start writing without written or mental plan' (M=2.5). This is contradicted with the score of "I think about what I want to write and have a plan in my mind, but not on paper" (M=3) as the participants only preferred to brainstorm mentally of what they want to write but not start to write mentally. The result also revealed that the participants claimed that they rarely revise the requirements of the assignment (M=2.8) and use their native language in writing notes or making outlines (M=2.7). As shown in the result in the table above, writing short notes, looking at the example writing and outlining are the pre-writing activities that the participants do. According to Al-Gharabally (2015) writing ideas in note form is one of the strategies to help second language learners with writing. Tomlinson (1998) concurs with McDowell (1999) that brainstorming is a prewriting exercise in which a writer takes notes on anything he can think of as a series of subjects without deciding the concepts (as cited in Hasempour et al., 2015). To add, according to Al Islamiah and Sari (2021) writing is made simpler and more focused by outlining, which keeps it close to the topic at hand. This shows that the participants use the writing strategies to produce their writing. However it was found that they do not use these strategies often as the results indicated that the highest mean is only 3.7.

Findings for When Writing
This section presents data to answer research question 3- How do writers perceive the when writing stage?
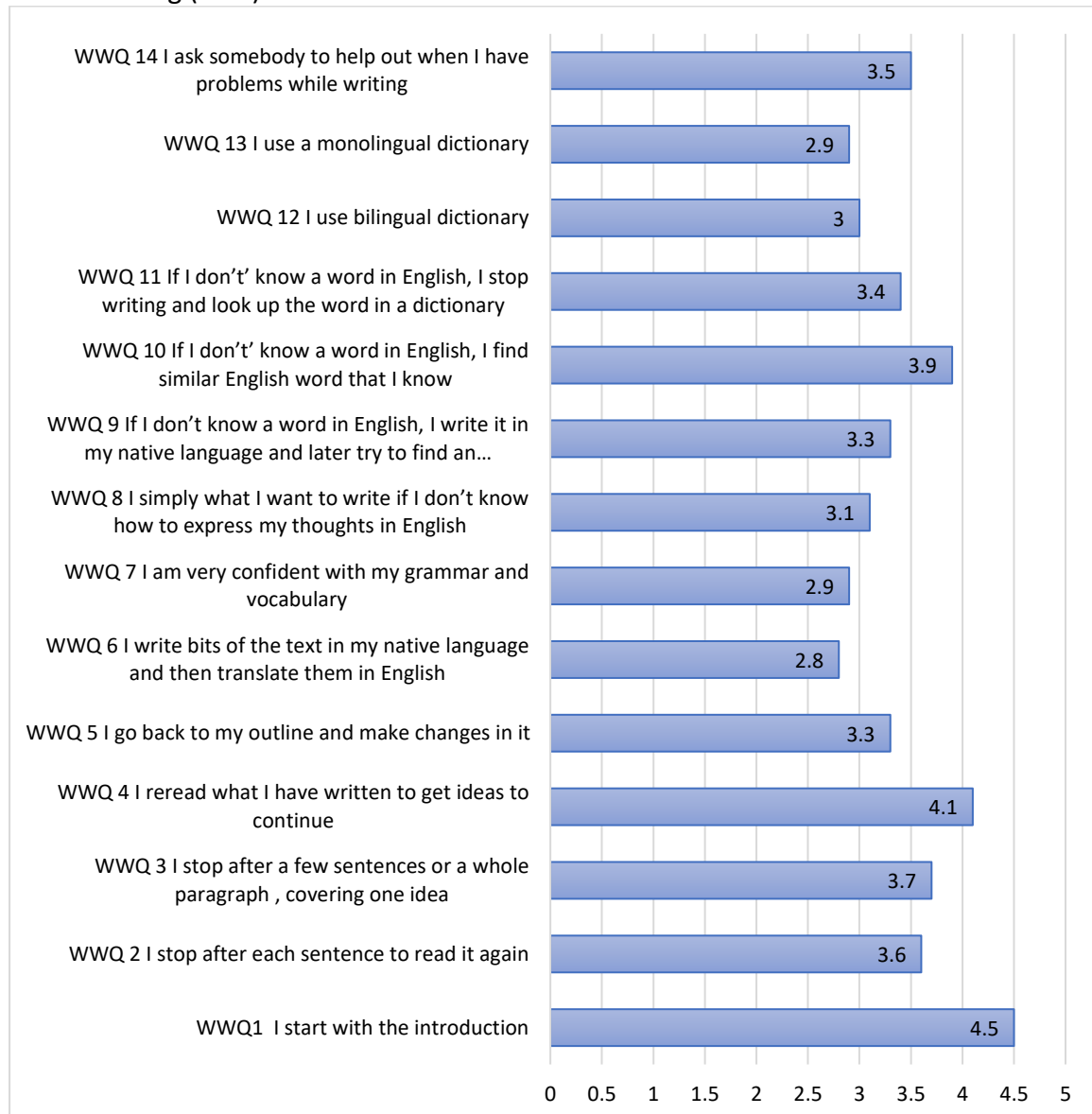
When Writing (WW)

Figure 7- Mean for When Writing

Figure 7 indicates the results for when writing with 14 items specifically asked the participants their perceptions during the writing process. Majority of the participants indicated that they start their writing by writing an introductory paragraph (M=4.5). They also claimed that they often reread their writing in order to get ideas to continue (M=4.1). This shows that the participants are involved in monitoring when they are writing as they are checking the ideas while engaging with their writing. According to Goctu (2017), monitoring is seen as a controller that helps writers write judiciously (as cited in Aripin & Rahmat, 2021). Even though the participants applied a monitoring technique, item 5 proved otherwise as it has a lower mean score (M=3.3) as the participants claimed to not make changes in their outline (pre-writing stage). Apart from that, regarding the use of vocabulary, if they cannot

complete a sentence due to an unknown word, the participants are most likely to find a similar English word (M=3.9) rather than to stop writing and look up the word in a dictionary (M=3.4). They also reported to rarely use their native language as a temporary substitute and later try to find an appropriate English word (M=3.3). Similarly, the mean score shows that they also rarely use bilingual dictionaries and monolingual dictionaries, (M=3) and (M=2.9) respectively. Instead, the participants preferred to ask somebody to help out when they have writing problems (M=3.5). Although the participants professed that they are rarely confident with their grammar and vocabulary (M=2.9) but the mean score showed lowest for the item 6 'I write bits of the text in my native language and then translate them in English' (M=2.8) which indicates that the participants will continue to use English language while writing their writing. The findings contradict with few studies (Mustafa et al., 2022; Bulqiyah et al., 2021; Altinmakas & Bayyut, 2019; Hasan & Marzuki, 2019) that highlight language interference which in their findings, native language is used as a coping strategy in conveying what the learners want in their writing.

Findings for When Revising
This section presents data to answer research question 4 - How do writers perceive when revising stage?
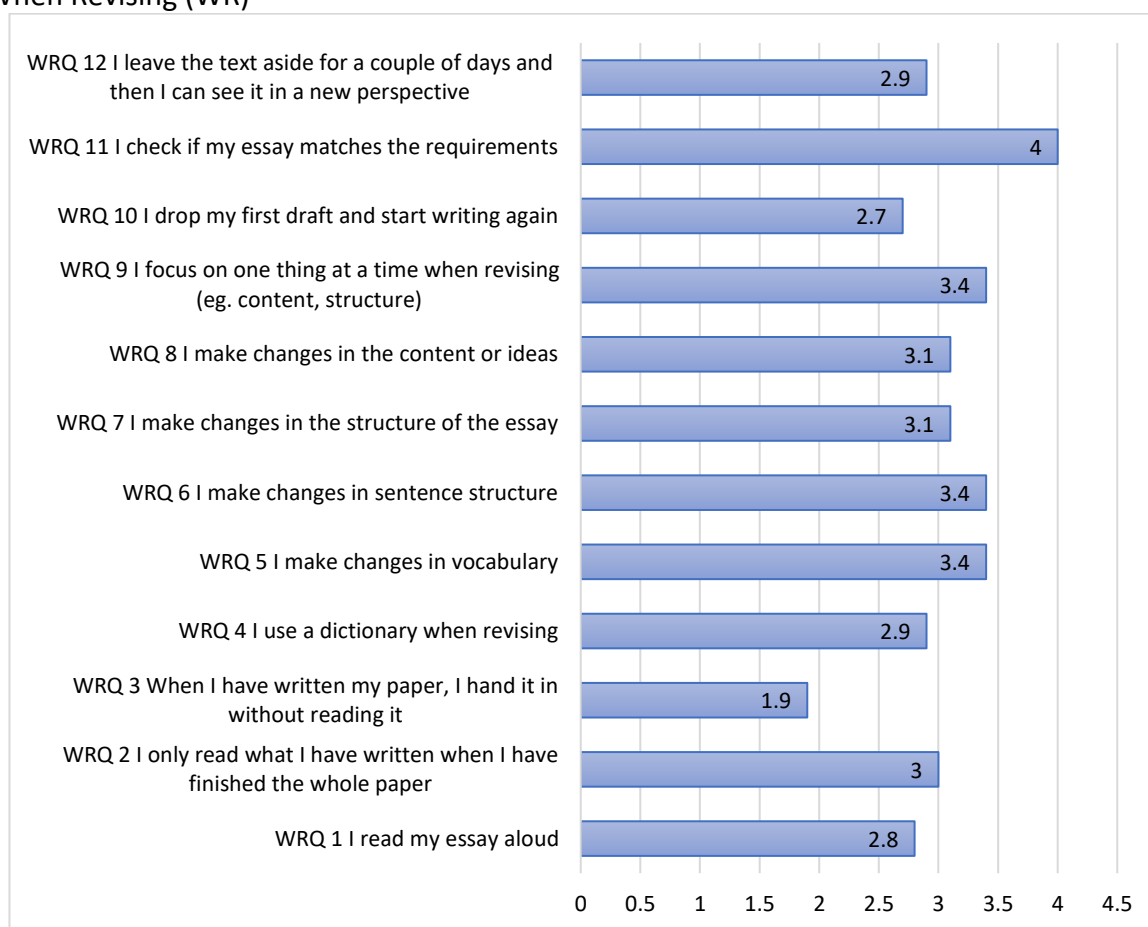
When Revising (WR)

Figure 8- Mean for When Revising

Based on figure 8, students are actively involved in when-revising stage by agreeing to item 11 'I check if my essay matches the requirements' (M = 4). This is similar to a finding by Wayan

and Alexandra (2020) students are being actively involved in revising activity to ensure that their writing matches the requirements from the rubric. Items 5, 6 and 9 shared the same mean score which is M = 3.4 where they believed that they make changes to their vocabulary, sentence structure and in doing so, they 'focus on one thing at a time when revising'. They also make changes to the structure of their essay (Item 7) as well as to the content and ideas (Item 8) (M = 3.1). The mean scored for 'I only read what I have written when I have finished the whole paper' that is M = 3 indicate similar finding from Wayan and Alexandra (2020) that when students are involved in revising stage, they normally read their essay more than twice when preparing the essay especially when they did consultation with their language teacher. Four items recorded low mean scored which are item 12 'I leave the text aside for a couple of days and then I can see it in a new perspective' (M = 2.9), item 4 'I use a dictionary when revising' (M = 2.9), item 1 'I read my essay aloud' (M = 2.8) and item 10 'I drop my first draft and start writing again' (M = 2.7). The findings from this study also shared the similar findings from past studies that students are involved in when writing stage. They disagree with item 3 that 'When I have written my paper, I hand it in without reading it' since the mean score for this item is the lowest which is M = 1.9. This shows that students are involved in the writing process consciously or unconsciously and they emphasised on the final product of their writing and it confirmed the remarks made by Ahdi Hassan et. al., (2020) that writing is a goal-oriented task.

Findings for Relationship between writing difficulty and the writing process
This section presents data to answer research question 5- Is there a relationship between writing difficulty and the writing process? To determine if there is a significant association in the mean scores between writing difficulty, before writing, when revising and while writing, data is analysed using SPSS for correlations. Results are presented separately in table 3, 4, 5 and 6 below.

Table 3
Correlation between Writing Difficulty and Before Writing

Correlations

		WRITINGDIFFICULTY	BEFOREWRITING
WRITINGDIFFICULTY	Pearson Correlation	1	−.142
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.059
	N	179	179
BEFOREWRITING	Pearson Correlation	−.142	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.059	
	N	179	179

Table 3 shows there is a negative association between writing difficulty and before writing. Correlation analysis shows that there is no significant association between writing difficulty and before writing (r=-.142).

Table 4
Correlation between Before Writing and when revising

Correlations

		BEFOREWRITING	WHENREVISING
BEFOREWRITING	Pearson Correlation	1	.435**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	179	179
WHENREVISING	Pearson Correlation	.435**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	179	179

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4 shows there is an association between before writing and when revising. Correlation analysis shows that there is a moderate significant association between before writing and when revising (r=.435**) and (p=.000). According to Jackson (2015), coefficient is significant at the .05 level and positive correlation is measured on a 0.1 to 1.0 scale. Weak positive correlation would be in the range of 0.1 to 0.3, moderate positive correlation from 0.3 to 0.5, and strong positive correlation from 0.5 to 1.0. This means that there is also a moderate positive relationship between before writing and when revising.

Table 5
Correlation between when revising and while writing

Correlations

		WHENREVISING	WHILEWRITING
WHENREVISING	Pearson Correlation	1	.601**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	179	179
WHILEWRITING	Pearson Correlation	.601**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	179	179

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 5 shows there is an association between when revising and while writing. Correlation analysis shows that there is a strong significant association between when revising and while writing (r=.601**) and (p=.000). According to Jackson (2015), coefficient is significant at the .05 level and positive correlation is measured on a 0.1 to 1.0 scale. Weak positive correlation would be in the range of 0.1 to 0.3, moderate positive correlation from 0.3 to 0.5, and strong

positive correlation from 0.5 to 1.0. This means that there is also a moderate positive relationship between when revising and while writing.

Table 6
Correlation between while writing and writing difficulty

Correlations

		WHILEWRITING	WRITINGDIFFICULTY
WHILEWRITING	Pearson Correlation	1	.007
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.924
	N	179	179
WRITINGDIFFICULTY	Pearson Correlation	.007	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.924	
	N	179	179

Table 6 shows there is a positive association between writing difficulty and while writing. Correlation analysis shows that there is no significant association between writing difficulty and while writing (r=.007).

Conclusion
Summary of Findings and Discussions
This study was exploring the relationship between writing difficulties faced by ESL students with before and while writing stage. In general, based on the findings of this study, the causes of writing difficulties experienced by ESL students are not related to the before and while writing or the writing process as a whole. But, ESL students believe that writing is a goal-oriented task and there are specific requirements that they need to achieve in order to be considered as a good writer. A study by Ahdi Hassan et. al (2020), also confirmed the fact that when there is a certain standard that learners need to abide by, it will lead to the feeling of frustration in performing writing tasks if they fail to fulfill the criteria. Similar remarks made by Farooq et. al (2012) that failure to fulfill the requirements in writing causes frustration for a writer. Hence, based on this study, ESL students felt frustrated and perceived writing as difficult since they are frustrated with the fact that they are unable to meet the requirement when they are doing their writing.

When it comes to before-writing process, ESL students in this study employ the strategy of writing down words or notes related to the topic and by producing an outline in order to overcome their difficulty in producing ideas since they have a lack of knowledge of the topic for them to write. By involving in before-writing process through brainstorming of ideas, it is able to help these learners to overcome their difficulty in writing from the very beginning. As emphasised by Aripin and Rahmat (2021) on, strategies used along with proper planning and organisation of ideas during before-writing stage help in assisting writers in creating a good piece of writing. This is also agreed by Muamaroh et. al (2020) that the planning before writing can act as a helpful tool in overcoming study difficulties in writing especially in terms of what to write.

One of the findings of this study also revealed that ESL learners are actively involved in while-writing and also during when revising processes. During the while-writing stage, ESL students

reread the writing to find ideas and to connect them. This in a way helps them to meet the requirement of writing when they revise their writing. As mentioned earlier, since writing is viewed as a goal-oriented task, it can be said that these two stages are considered as crucial for ESL students as they are concerned that their piece of writing is indeed following the criteria set for them. Therefore, due to such a situation, ESL students also believed that ESL educators play a major role in helping students to ace in their writing by paying close attention to their instruction and expectation in writing classrooms. This finding is similar to findings conducted by Bulqiyah, et. al (2021); Uba and Souidi (2020); Phuong (2021) that writing instruction and expectation have important associations between writing difficulty where it does help to minimise the difficulties and anxiety in writing if students are clear and aware of them.

Finally, this study also revealed the most important objective of this study that is to determine the correlation between writing difficulty and the writing process. Majority of the ESL learners in this study believed that there is no strong significant correlation between writing difficulties faced by them and the writing process. In fact, this finding is similar to the findings from past studies about writing difficulties that ESL learners faced writing difficulties due to affective problem or the learners' attitude towards writing instruction and cognitive problems such as the technical and mechanics of writing such as lack of depth in viewpoint, transferring language, a lack of wide range of vocabulary, poor organisation of ideas, process of writing, and linguistic problem (Bulqiyah et.al., 2021). These findings also correlate with a study by Ceylan (2019) that ESL learners' difficulties in writing are closely related to transcribing and structuring ideas, vocabulary mastery, language accuracy and misinterpreting instruction (Ceylan, 2019).

Pedagogical Implications and Suggestions for Future Research

Writing is a literacy skill and a complex form of self expression. It is a form of an exhibition of cognitive, visual, conceptual and motor potentials (Farooq et. al., 2012). Therefore, ESL learners will experience various difficulties in writing and it is crucial for ESL educators to assist them using the right approach. Writing process approach is believed to be a helpful tool to minimise the difficulties in writing among ESL learners but the role of the language educators is still crucial in helping learners to face the difficulties when performing writing tasks. Educators need to ensure that their instructions and expectations in writing classrooms are visible and understood by the learners. It is also considered as an advantage for ESL learners when they are constantly being exposed and involved in the writing process as it can contribute to the learners' development in writing skills and to make them become more confident in writing.

Further work on writing difficulties and its relationship with post writing stage might become an eye opener for ESL students and educators to understand the difficulties faced and ways to overcome it. Secondly, this study is only restricted only to the small sample range of ESL learners at foundation level, thus the findings do not represent ESL language learners in Malaysia as a whole. Finally, it is suggested that for future research to triangulate the results obtained, a hybrid analysis approach utilizing two or more approaches could be more accurate in order to determine the difficulties in writing and the impact of the writing process towards the development of the writing skills among ESL learners.

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