

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Writing is an essential skill in academic and professional life because it enables individuals to express ideas, construct arguments, and communicate knowledge effectively. According to Oanh (2024), writing skills are fundamental to academic success since they function as the primary means of communication in higher education, allowing students to demonstrate comprehension, critical thinking, and the ability to present research findings coherently. Furthermore, according to Abdel-Haq & Ali (2017), proficient writing is one of the fundamental abilities needed in the twenty-first century, especially in a time when digital communication and information are predominant. Therefore, writing is not only an indicator of academic achievement but also an important competence in professional contexts.

In the Indonesian EFL context, writing in English has been recognized as both important and challenging. Febriani (2022) found that Indonesian university students experienced difficulties in organizing ideas, using correct grammar, and maintaining coherence in essay writing. Similarly, Asnas (2022) reported that students at the University of Islam Malang still struggled with vocabulary, grammar accuracy, and writing organization. The results imply that writing continues to pose considerable difficulty for Indonesian EFL students, underscoring the necessity for increased pedagogical emphasis on writing skills within higher education.

Narrative writing is often seen as both a favored and difficult genre among EFL students, given the need to arrange events chronologically while maintaining grammatical accuracy, appropriate vocabulary, and textual cohesion. According to Oshima & Hogue (2007) students need to organize ideas logically and use suitable language structures to achieve coherence in narrative writing. Likewise, Dinna Auliya, & Afrianto (2016) explain that narrative writing allows students to express experiences and ideas creatively while developing their written language skills. Nonetheless, a lot of EFL students still have trouble coming up with topics, structuring paragraphs, and using proper grammar in narrative essays.

Several previous studies have identified these problems. Purnama (2018) found that students had difficulties focusing on a main idea, using varied vocabulary, and applying correct grammar, especially verb tenses. Similarly, Dinna Auliya, & Afrianto (2016) revealed that students of the English Study Program at Riau University experienced problems in language use, particularly in tenses and sentence construction. In addition, Rizkiawan et al. (2025) found that female students tended to produce more expressive, descriptive, and coherent narratives with better organization and richer vocabulary use. Additionally, Suganob-Nicolau & Sukanto (2016) discovered that although writing practice, instructional assistance, and self-efficacy all had an impact on writing performance, female students outperformed male students in writing, particularly in terms of organization and grammatical accuracy. These findings suggest that grammar mastery, vocabulary range, organization, and gender-related factors may significantly influence students' narrative writing ability.

To address these challenges, experts have proposed several pedagogical approaches to improve writing skills. In order to assist students generate well-organized essays, Oshima & Hogue (2007) stress the significance of guiding them through the writing process, including planning, drafting, rewriting, and editing. In addition, Grenville (2001) states that effective writing instruction should encourage students to construct texts with clear structure and coherence, especially in narrative writing.

Despite the existence of previous studies on narrative writing, most of them mainly focused on describing students' difficulties or measuring their general writing proficiency. Studies conducted by Dinna Auliya, Afrianto (2016) as well as Purnama (2018) did not specifically compare narrative writing performance between male and female students within the same study program. In addition, previous studies rarely employed analytical scoring rubrics to examine students' writing outcomes systematically. Moreover, Rizkiawan et al. (2025) as well as Sukanob-Nicolau & Sukanto (2016) indicate potential gender-based differences in writing performance, where female students tend to perform better in several aspects of writing. Therefore, it is yet unknown if male and female students in the English Language Education Study Program have significantly different narrative essay writing skills.

Gender was selected as the comparative variable in this study because male and female students may demonstrate different writing characteristics, language use, and levels of writing achievement in EFL contexts. Previous educational research suggests that gender may influence language learning performance,

particularly in writing skills, due to differences in learning strategies, motivation, language exposure, and communication styles. This study aims to give empirical evidence about whether gender disparities exist in narrative essay performance among fourth-semester students by comparing the narrative writing skills of male and female students.

Based on this gap, this study entitled “*A Comparative Study of Writing Ability in Narrative Essays of Fourth Semester Students in the English Language Education Study Program*” seeks to ascertain whether male and female students in class K1 have different narrative essay writing skills. This study focuses on students’ writing results assessed using an analytical scoring rubric without manipulating any variables. This research is important because it contributes empirical evidence regarding gender-based differences in narrative writing ability within the same class and study program. It is anticipated that the results will help shape writing assessment and teaching methods in EFL learning environments. This study employs a descriptive comparative quantitative method, in which students’ existing writing scores are statistically analyzed to compare the writing performance of male and female students.

1.2 Identification of the Problems

The study's context allows for the identification of several issues:

- 1) Students in their fourth semester still struggle to write narrative essays, especially when it comes to structuring their thoughts, employing the past tense appropriately, and expanding their vocabulary.
- 2) There is limited research that compares narrative essay writing ability based on gender within the same class in the English Language Education Study Program.

1.3 Limitation of the Problem

This research is limited to comparing the narrative essay writing ability of fourth-semester students in the English Language Education Study Program, specifically male and female students in Class K1.

1.4 Research Question

Given the context and the issues mentioned above, the research question for this study is:

Is there a significant difference in narrative essay writing ability between male and female students of the fourth semester in class K1 of the English Language Education Study Program?

1.5 Research Objective

To determine whether there is a significant difference in narrative essay writing ability between male and female students of the fourth semester in class K1 of the English Language Education Study Program.

1.6 Significance of the Research

Both theoretical and practical benefits are expected from this research:

1) Theoretical Significance

This study contributes to EFL writing research by providing empirical evidence on differences in narrative essay writing ability based on gender within the same classroom context. It enriches the discussion on individual learner differences in writing performance and extends comparative studies in Indonesian higher education, particularly in the area of narrative writing skills among EFL learners.

2) Practical Significance

- 1) For Lecturers: The findings help evaluate students' writing achievement, identify strengths and weaknesses, and adjust teaching strategies for better outcomes.
- 2) For Students: The study offers feedback on performance, raises awareness of areas needing improvement, and motivates them to enhance their writing skills.
- 3) For Future Researchers: The research serves as a reference for similar studies in different contexts and supports the development of frameworks for analyzing EFL writing performance.

- 4) For Policy Significance: The findings of this study are expected to serve as a source of information for study program administrators and educational institutions in developing instructional strategies and support programs aimed at improving students' writing ability in EFL contexts. In addition, the results may serve as a consideration in academic decision-making related to writing instruction.

1.7 Definition of the Key Terms

The following important concepts are specified in order to prevent misunderstandings and to give clarification regarding the terminologies used in this study:

1. Descriptive Comparative Study

A descriptive comparative study is a quantitative research methodology that uses no variable modification to describe and statistically compare pre-existing results or features of two or more independent groups. An Independent Sample T-Test is used in this study to compare the narrative essay writing abilities of male and female students in K1.

2. Writing Ability

The ability of students to create a narrative essay that is accurate, coherent, and well-structured is known as writing ability. In this study, writing ability is measured through five weighted aspects: content, organization, vocabulary, language usage, and mechanics, using an adapted version of the Jacobs analytical scoring criteria as applied in Setyowati et al. (2020).

3. Narrative Essay

A narrative essay is a kind of essay that recounts an event or narrates a tale, usually from personal experience. It includes a clear structure with orientation (introduction of characters, setting, and time), complication (the problem or conflict), resolution (how the problem is solved), and sometimes a coda (reflection or moral lesson). Narrative essays usually employ past tense and chronological organization to present events in the order they occurred.

4. Gender

In this study, gender refers to the classification of students into male and female groups for the purpose of comparing their narrative essay writing ability.

