English Composition within Multi-linguistic Challenges in Minangkabau-Indonesian EFL Students’ Writing Behaviors

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ABSTRACT

Certain interesting writing behaviors emerge between students coming from homogenous but diverse linguistic environment in Minangkabau-Indonesian EFL backgrounds. Their writing behaviors show a picture of how complex it is to teach writing to students whose background is in the position of viewing English as a foreign language. In this paper, the core issue being discussed is the idea of English composition—as an intellectual pursuit among Minangkabau-Indonesian EFL students—in facing multi-linguistic challenges in the process of their studies. The focus of the discussion is put within the context of Indonesian higher education. In other words, the data that are presented in this article are taken from the emerging data existing in the classroom process in the courses of Writing at College of Teacher Training and Education in West Sumatra, Indonesia. The findings show that writing behaviors existing within each of the students’ mind reflect how they grow as new novice student writers in the Minangkabau-Indonesian EFL circle.

Keyword: English Composition, Multi-Linguistic Challenges, Minangkabau-Indonesian EFL Students, Writing Behaviors

1. Introduction

As an archipelago country in the region of Southeast Asia, Indonesia has multiple languages existing within each of its provinces. Started from Aceh into Papua, such languages influence the way English is being learned and taught in Indonesia. English plays a role as a foreign language in Indonesia; therefore, the variety of languages available in the country makes students facing multi-linguistic challenges in their daily life. Eventually, learning how to write well in English becomes a tremendous challenge for them.

1.1 English as a Foreign Language in Indonesia

The condition of English as an international language is interesting to see. “English is the language of prestige of the moment. It is one of the main or official languages in more than 60 countries. About 400 million people speak English as a first language, whereas 350 million speak it as a second language” (Brisk, 2005, p. 12). It means that in the world alone, English is being used as a language for communication for about more than a half of total population of people on earth. In countries like the United States, English is considered as English as a native language or ENL; meanwhile, in countries like Indonesia, English is considered as English as a foreign language or EFL. “EFL is used to describe English teaching that occurs in places where English is not the native language, and ESL is used to describe English teaching that occurs in places like the United States, Canada, England, and Australia where the first language of most people use is English” (Norland, 2006, p. ix). With that in mind, to see how English is being used beyond the border of countries above, the notion is automatically set into international context. “International context means contexts where people from diverse linguistic, cultural and national backgrounds interact and communicate with each other” (Matsuda, 2012, p. 2). Japan, Hong Kong, England, New York, or Sydney are places where people use English as in international contexts; however, in Indonesia, English is used particularly as a means of communication for people coming from overseas, but to use English within the country in daily basis among Indonesian people is difficult to find, unless in academic settings.

Thus, to be able to call oneself as an Indonesian, being able to communicate in Indonesian language and in indigenous languages existing in Indonesia are a must. It deals with community and culture as part of
identity. Widodo points out that “language functions not only as a tool for communication, but [it also functions] as a symbol of belonging and a representation of community and culture” (2011, p. 129). Consequently, mastering English as a foreign language adds values to oneself as an educated Indonesian citizen; nevertheless, mastering Indonesian language is essential if one wants to be a living Indonesian who can speak with people coming from different provinces across the archipelago. “English is only a foreign language in Indonesia, whereas the Indonesian language is the national, official language of Indonesia, and at the same time, the lingua franca among speakers of different mother tongues” (Pasassung, 2003, p. 35). In addition, being able to speak only one indigenous language existing in an area of a province—such as Medan area in Sumatera Island, cannot help that very much for the same person to talk to people coming from other islands in Indonesia who speak other indigenous languages. This person can only speak with other people in other islands if they can speak Indonesian language as a language of unity, or lingua franca, in Indonesia.

The concept of communicative competence developed under the views of “language as context”, “language as interaction”, and “language as negotiation” (Widiati, 2006, p. 272). Learning English composition, especially in the form of academic writing in a university level in Indonesia demands students to have good skills on adapting context, interaction, and negotiation into a piece of written text. This kind of expectation is difficult to achieve to some extents due to the variety of Indonesian students’ linguistic backgrounds. Besides, five variations emerging in terms of the existence of English are related to social, personal, temporal, and regional variations (Crystal, 1994, p. 3). All these variations support the view of English in Indonesia to have certain images and pictures within the idea of English as a foreign language. Eventually, to learn English in Indonesia is complex in its own contextual terms.

1.2 Complexities of Learning English in Indonesia

As we know too well from our students and so are from ourselves, language is used in order to convey what we mean to people who speak and use the same language as us in an available community. Three aspects of meaning in language that we convey: speaker’s meaning, hearer’s meaning, and sign meaning (Cruse, 1996, p. 6). For our students, they use English of course to a degree for us. We become their hearer and they become the speaker; meanwhile, the way they communicate their meaning to us depends on how appropriate the signs they use in a proper context. Since the context of our relationship with students is in academic sphere; therefore, the proper signs to be used must be within academic context. In terms of using English as sufficient as a person from an English speaking country, different story emerges. Although Sinha clearly states that “no one language, besides English, is adequate in its ability to aid communication between people of diverse cultural backgrounds” (2011, p.5); the reality is that English is still a foreign language for people living in countries that do not speak English in daily basis, such as Indonesia.

In addition to that, skills that are still minus for the majority of Indonesian students learning English are the speaking and writing abilities. Most of the time, reading and listening are the two dominant skills being taught in most Indonesian schools within the curriculum point of view. From elementary school up to senior high school, passive English learning plays dominantly. As Widiati points out that “the practice of teaching EFL speaking in the Indonesian context” deals with: “teaching problems, classroom activities, teaching materials, and assessment” (2006, p. 278). These four things add the complexities of what it means to teach English in Indonesia. Furthermore, the complexities of learning and teaching English can be seen from Riau—one of the provinces in Indonesia. A case study of English teachers in the province of Riau in Indonesia revealed that: “English language training program was highly effective in terms of overall effectiveness and in improving teachers’ confidence and motivation as EFL learners. But in terms of improving the basic English knowledge as the most important aspect for being effective EFL teachers was still not effective yet” (Wati, 2011, p. 1). It indicates that learning English as a means of being able to teach it in the context of Indonesian EFL is in need of further adjustments; in spite of the fact that learning English as a means of only being able to use it in communication is to some extent needs rigorous planning and careful curriculum designs to meet the expectation from global views. “The situation of second language writers is vastly more complicated due to the variety of situations in which a second language is learned, the reasons for learning that language, the relative usefulness of writing in the L1 versus the L2, and whether an L2 learner is literate in L1” (Weigle, 2005, p. 128). Learning English as a foreign language is influenced by the existence of the first language. As Weigle has mentioned above, if the learners are already literate in the first language, it means that the learner can learn English in literate form as well. Unlike the students in Indonesia, they are generally literate in English passively since elementary school level, but to use English as efficient as it should
be as in the international setting is far from expectation, especially after considering the multi-linguistic challenges that they encounter daily.

2. Conceptual Understandings

To comprehend the essence of teaching and learning English writing within the notion of EFL in Indonesia, especially in the province of West Sumatera, we need to look at three concepts: Minangkabau-Indonesian EFL contexts, multi-linguistic challenges, and English composition in Indonesian EFL settings.

2.1. Minangkabau-Indonesian EFL Contexts

As it has been discussed earlier that Indonesia is an archipelago country where most people who live in the country speak Indonesian language and at least one indigenous language. The province of West Sumatera is located in the island of Sumatera, or in the west side of Indonesia. In this province, the indigenous language that is widely used is Minangkabau language. Statistic shows that the number of people who speak Minangkabau in the province of West Sumatera is around 7.1 million people (Lowenberg, 2000, p. 136). It indicates that people who speak Minangkabau are generally literate in Minangkabau language. If we see the correlation between this literacy with overall literacy on the use of Indonesian language as a national language in Indonesia, we can see that the existence of Minangkabau language helps how far Indonesian language can be mastered. “L1 literacy was found to be moderately correlated with L2 language proficiency with L2 reading comprehension” (Jiang, 2011, p.178). In other words, the literacy of Minangkabau and Bahasa Indonesia helps the way the people reach the literacy in English. The question is, “How far the literacy in English can be achieved for students who already speak Minangkabau and Bahasa Indonesia in their daily life?”

To answer the question above, awareness on English for Specific Purpose comes to play. Since the students being discussed in this writing speak languages beyond English hemisphere; therefore, the process of teaching the students is in need of further reviews. For teaching of writing alone, the Minangkabau-Indonesian EFL students have to face dilemma in composing solid writings. The solution might be geared toward looking at the things that the students really need to study. Essentially, “ESP must be seen as an approach not as a product”, which means “an approach to language learning, which is based on learner need” (Hutchinson, 1991, p. 19). Teaching these types of students by applying methods and techniques that are acceptable in the ENL or ESL linguistic environment does not mean that the very same methods and techniques can be applied in EFL linguistic environment, considering the background languages that the students already speak in their life.

2.2 Multi-linguistic Challenges

The idea of Minangkabau-Indonesian EFL students is that the students are categorized as Indonesian citizens who are originally born in Indonesia and raised in Indonesia, but the place where they grow up is in the place where Minangkabau language dominates. Linguistically speaking, data about how many indigenous languages being spoken by Indonesian people are various. “Estimates of the number of regional vernacular languages in current use range from 250 to almost 700, depending on criteria employed to distinguish languages from dialects” (Lowenberg, 2000, p.136). Dialects and indigenous languages are at a close relationship. Even within one indigenous language, many dialects exist. Payakumbuh, Padang, Pariaman, Sijunjung, Dharmasraya, Pasaman, and Bukittinggi are major places in the West Sumatera province. Local people who live there speak Minangkabau language, but deeply within its phonological and morphological circumstances, they basically speak in different dialects and accents. However, they can still recognize one another as one Minangkabau people.

Considering all multi-linguistic challenges above—internal and external challenges, writing in English becomes a serious task that the students need to conquer. Writing in a language that is rarely used in daily life is indeed giving certain challenge. Code switching or code mixing can happen unconsciously. They speak English, but the structure of English that they utter can reflect the structure of the first language that they have. In the process of composing ideas, the battle between choosing which words to write and which structure to use takes place during the process of writing. Thus, language structures and composing processes are two of the seven guidelines in second language writing teaching (Hyland, 1996, p.2). Without teaching the students to write by explaining to them the structures of English and describing to them the processes of writing in English seems to make them facing more difficulties to express themselves properly in English.
the minds of the Minangkabau-Indonesian EFL students, they phonologically, morphologically, syntactically, semantically, or even pragmatically already have many embedded linguistic forms: one is from Minangkabau language and the other one is from Bahasa Indonesia. A word with a specific meaning in English needs to be carefully chosen if the students want to use the word properly in English because the same word might not be properly translated in the first language precisely. In writing, for example, spelling is important in English. English teachers had long been told that wrong spelling can cause wrong meaning. However, when it comes to meaning, every student has different inclination toward the words that are accepted in English. “Although appropriate spelling level is critically important, equally important is the quality of engagement with words that students experience” (Templeton, 2007, p.115). With this in mind, the challenges that Minangkabau-Indonesian EFL students face become problematic. The reason is that if one particular word exists in Minangkabau and so does in Bahasa Indonesia, but if it does not exist in English, the students will have difficulties to express what they have in mind into English utterances or sentences. The challenge will not be that high if the same word exists in the three languages, although semantically each words defines different usages. The students can move easily from one language to another; however, being aware to the contexts of where a word should or should not be used is also crucial for them to know. This kind of awareness adds another layer of challenges for them.

Furthermore, the identity that Minangkabau-Indonesian EFL students have is related to the societal circumstances: cultures and laws. These two languages influence how far a language can be used in the Indonesian settings. Propriety and impropriety exist from first language up to the foreign language. “Languages are intimately related to the societies and individuals who use them”; meanwhile, “value judgments about different languages or dialects are matters of taste” (Daniels, 2008, p. 3). Therefore, when it comes to teaching English writing, the students have to choose one consistent form from many forms that they already know. They need to accommodate these challenges into a proper English usage. In essence, the role of indigenous languages in Indonesia is basically framing up more gates for them to expand their linguistic experiences. “In this respect, teachers have the responsibility for allowing students to use their heritage languages. Even, a teacher should help students use their heritage linguistic resources. In doing so, teachers should be bilingual or multilingual, and their bilingual competence should fit with students’ native languages” (Widodo, 2011, p. 137). Ideally, teachers who come from the same background with the students are in fit connection with the students because they have similar linguistic backgrounds.

2.3 English Composition in Indonesian EFL Settings

Moving from all layers of challenges above, we now come across the idea of English composition at the university level. Academic writing is a required activity to do in the level of college and university education (Oshima, 1999, p. 2). Similarly, being able to write academically by following all the given standards in the academic writing is at least a sign of an educated person, especially in an EFL environment. This notion deals with rhetorical circumstances: writer, voice, audience, and message. In that particular notion, there is a shifting paradigm from English as in monolingual and multilingual setting. Indonesia can be considered generally as monolingual background. The changing patterns in rhetorical perspectives involve the shifts from monolingual orientation and multilingual orientation to pedagogical implications that are needed in monolingual and multilingual orientation (Canagarajah, 2010, p. 175). Besides, the shifts in rhetorical perspective happen pedagogically in different modes between monolingual and multilingual orientation (Horner, 2010, p.175). He states that in monolingual orientation, like what is happening in Indonesia, the student-writers is considered as in three conditions: “passive”, “linguistically or culturally conditioned”, and “coming with uniform identities”. Therefore, the pedagogical implications for such condition are considering rules as the focus of the writing process and looking at the text produced as “transparent”. Unlike monolingual orientation, English speaking countries that already have diverse types of students, such as the United States of America, England, or even Australia, already create multilingual orientation in which student-writers are seen as in three conditions: “agentive”, “rhetorically creative”, and “constructing multiple identities”. All these views bring us to the idea that teaching English composition in Indonesian EFL settings is under the monolingual orientation, and to some extent different from that existing in ENL or ESL settings, which are multilingual orientation.

As a consequence from the above differences, language assessment should be addressed properly. Writing assessment cannot happen just once like speaking assessment. “When assigning formal writing, treat writing as a process” (Bean, 2011, p.1). Writing needs process. The EFL students who are being assessed for
their writing abilities need at least four times to compose their writing from writing the draft up to publishing the writing to the targeted readers. If the students are judged only from one writing task, it would be unfair for them to be treated so. “Clear meaning” and “clean language” cannot be addressed properly in writing if it is composed in stressful condition. Essentially, as Earle points out, “there are many kinds of meaning that have nothing to do with language and its conventions. But even within language, meaning is not a homogenous phenomenon. We must, for example, distinguish what people mean, in using language, from what the words and sentences they use mean” (Earle, 1992, p. 174). It indicates that meaning exists beyond the words and sentences that someone writes. This phenomenon is usual for EFL students: they know what they think about the subject being discussed, but at the same time they get confused how to express that kind of thought properly in English. Dictionary for some reasons can help them; however, to achieve a solid and thoughtful writing is something that is beyond their capability, given the rubrics and all writing standards that they have to follow every time they write in English.

3. Methodology

This writing is aimed at describing theoretically holistic views toward Minangkabau-Indonesian EFL students’ writing behaviors; therefore, the design of this documentation research is constructed under the paradigm of descriptive research. The construction of this research follows the principles of composition research in Composition studies that deal with context-sensitive text analysis. As a researcher whose specialization is rhetoric and composition or teaching of writing, addressing the data found from the class he teaches is what he does in writing this article. Two examples of students’ writings are taken from two different classes: one is from Psychology department in Andalas University, a state university, and the other one is from Indonesian language and literature education department in College of Teacher Training and Education, a private university. Both of these universities are located in West Sumatera province. These two departments are chosen because the researcher had taught English writing course in the two universities. One of the forms of methodological characteristics of context-sensitive text analysis is that it “tries to account for as much of the context of situation as possible” (Huckin, 1992, p. 89). Moreover, this type of writing research analysis sees that people write different kinds of topics deals with “the contextual factors, such as social, cultural, and other factors” (Huckin, 1992, p. 89). In relation to this research, the researcher had started observing students’ writing behaviors since 2008 up to 2014. All of the students’ writings resemble interesting insights on the students’ writing behaviours. Therefore, to describe this phenomenon through the view of holistic perspective within descriptive form of composition research is what the research does in this research.

4. Findings and Discussion

Based on the researcher’s experiences in reading the students’ writings from different Writing courses since 2008 up to 2014, it was found that individual writing behaviors among the EFL students is various and it cannot be seen as in one size fits all mode. Every piece of writing shows significant and interesting pictures of what it means of English within the EFL context. However, if we see this individual trait through holistic perspectives, we can come to a collective picture of Minangkabau-Indonesian EFL students’ writing behaviors.

The basic component of a good academic writing is its composition. The way the writer organizes his or her writing determines how far such writer can produce a significant and useful piece of writing for the readers. Unity and coherence are two of the most important standards in academic writing. Coherence means “improving the flow of ideas” (Lane, 1999, p. 278). It means that a good writing shows clear and smoothly presented ideas on paper. The more understandable the writing, the better its quality actually is; though at some points, the function of the readers might influence the judgment of the quality of the writing. For Minangkabau-Indonesian EFL students, composing writing by considering coherence at the same time during the process of writing itself is the first language behavior that the students show in the process of composing a paragraph or writing. Generally, most of the students faced writers’ blocks when they seem to be lost in composing a paragraph. Thinking too much on coherence influenced the process of composing a solid writing for these types of students.

Although compositionists agree that the process of writing involves many steps. Steps in academic writing: pre-writing, drafting, reviewing and revising, and rewriting (Zemach, 2003, p. 3; Oshima, 1999, pp. 2-15; Boardman, 2003, p. 11). All these steps demand the EFL students to follow rigorous process. Writing a piece of writing at the first stage cannot be seen as a final work. However, often times, as the second obvious
writing behavior, the students have different paths of writing individually; in spite of that, a large number of the students followed the steps above because of the given instruction in the classroom. The eagerness to move on until the last step, rewriting, depends on the students’ efforts individually. These efforts at times are difficult to do because they have to switch on and off their linguistic sense in their minds from one language to another and vice versa. “…shuttling between different languages within oneself is not only lonely, but also troubling and confusing” (Zacharias, 2012, p. 242). Not only considering the coherence in writing as a handicap for the students to write in English, following all these steps are also problematic, considering the learning schedules, school policies, and other institutional pedagogical issues that influence the method or technique of how they learn writing.

The third Minangkabau-Indonesian EFL students’ behavior can be seen from their voices and arguments. Writing within personal values, voices, or arguments are challenging for them. As Lisle mentions, “For some students, personal writing is difficult not because individualistic constructions of self are foreign but because such writing is fraught with risk” (1997, p. 15). Arguing about sensitive issues, such as legalizing abortion, marijuana, same-sex marriage, gun possession, or premarital sex, are challenging their status quo as citizens of Indonesia and as a member of Minangkabau ethnic in Indonesia. These topics are generally good topics to be debated in English Debate classrooms where the students openly argue in the form of affirmative versus negative group or government versus opposition group. For individual writing assignments, the situation will be different. This situation illustrates that Minangkabau-Indonesian EFL students will likely write arguments or persuasive essays within their Minangkabau culture or Indonesian perspectives at large. Idealism in particular does not exist in students’ writing, unless they learn politics, laws, or economic policy.

First and second language writers, or foreign language writers, have six differences on the aspect of: “linguistic proficiencies and institutions about language”; “learning experiences and classroom expectations”; “sense of audience and writer”; “preferences for ways of organizing texts”; “writing processes”; “understandings of texts uses and the social value of different text types” (Hyland, 1996, p.31). All these differences trigger the way we look at what it means to write in English within the EFL circumstances. Essentially, content, organization, expression, and mechanics are four aspects of evaluating writing in order to come into proper conclusion (Hindman, 2002, p. 416-7; Fornier, 2004, p. 20). All these things can only be possible for students in the EFL classroom if only they have been equipped well about those things above; otherwise, drafting and revising should be practiced prior submitting their final works to us in order to be graded based on the available rubrics for the EFL students.

As the data samples, the following two paragraphs are taken from an English course that was instructed to students taking Psychology major in Andalas University, Padang, Indonesia, for the academic year of 2014.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question:</th>
<th>What do you have in mind when people say that you are an excellent student?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student 1</td>
<td>I’m so proud for my skills, because to be an excellent student so difficult. When people say that, I’m so happy and say thank you so much for the people. To be an excellent student I must learning and struggle. Eventough i’am an excellent student, I must learning again until the end.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 2</td>
<td>When someone says I am an excellent student. In my mind, I’Il think that I can do something better than them. But sometimes, when someone says I’m an excellent student, I think they are lying. They just wanna make me happy. And to the other situation, when someone says I’m an excellent student, it just part of someone to cover that they are veryy excellent better than me.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Samples of students’ writings from Psychology major in Andalas University

From the above samples, it can be seen that the students imitate their English speaking style into writing. From EFL assessment, the writing is acceptable, especially if we look at how speaking existed before writing for a person’s linguistic growth. Speaking to some extents influence the forms of writing. At this
point, the sentences are generally fine; however, if the writings above are assessed by the English instructor, the grades will probably be different depending on which aspects that the instructor will focus.

In addition, types of sentences in academic writing English discourses: simple sentences, compound sentences, complex sentences, and compound-complex sentences (Michigan, 2002, p. 136). It is believed that “a sentence must always have a subject and a verb” (Rook, 1990, p. 1). Therefore, the next Minangkabau-Indonesian EFL students’ behavior is that they already know the forms of the sentences, but to compose writing in English by considering the types of sentences at the same time when they write, that process is extremely difficult. Drafting is always a good point to consider for revising the students’ writing further. Grading the draft is unfair assessment process for them.

Along with the discussion on EFL students’ writing behaviors, four competences that create major differences between first and second language writers are grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic, and strategic competences (Hyland, 1996, p.32). Having the lack of grammatical correctness and appropriate diction for appropriate discourses are the fifth writing behavior that the students reflect from their writings. This kind of grammatical incompetence and disintegrated usage of diction are partly showing the external influences that come to the students. “Language behavior is the outcome not only of the multiple interactions between different factors, but also of social and psychological mediating processors” (Hamers, 2004, p.13). In addition, “introducing an individual to the language used in literacy, mainly through the means of learning to read and write, will induce changes in his or her language behavior” (Hamers, 2004, p. 11). Consequently, the existence of the first language, which is Minangkabau language, followed by Indonesian language; English will automatically be influenced to a certain degree. More often than not, “the prior knowledge that ESL/EFL readers bring to a text is often culture-specific” (Lin, 2004, p.192). With that in mind, as the two writings of the Psychology major students above show, culture has never been easy to be left out in writing process and assessment in the EFL writing classroom.

For example:

The following two paragraphs are taken from students’ mid-term test. The students are registered in the department of Indonesian language and literature where the main emphasis is on Indonesian language at College of Teacher Training and Education of West Sumatera, Indonesia.

| Student A | At the time still a senior high school, I dream of becoming a nurse or engaged in health. Therefore, I to become diligent for study. I hope to get Faculty of Medical, Andalas University. One day I am to register for SNMPTN from school and to take one of the course that I am dreaming. The day pass, I to grant adabiah senior high school and just waiting for the result SNMPTN come out. Finally, the results SNMPTN out. It turns out that the results do not make me happy. I failed to get the direction. I am to feel very sadness. |
| Student B | Yesterday I am go to Painan, I came to my friend house. He is best friend, is name Alex. I go, because He invite me for came He’s party. Over there, I see a girl. She was playing game, then she call me. I am happy, because she call and request my phone number. The girl is fani, she ever see me in facebook, therefore she to know me. but I do not know, who she is. But I know she in my friend party. Every day we chatting on short message service. I am happy because, I can chatt with she every day. |

Table 2. Students’ writing samples from College of Teacher Training and Education

Unlike the writings composed by the two Psychology students provided earlier, these two students show an even more grammatical deficiency. Besides, the coherence is absurd, but the message will likely be understandable for readers who come from the same background as the students. Notice that spelling is also a problem in that writing. For readers whose background is native speakers of English, they will likely express annoyance reading such writings; however, for readers whose background is the same as the students, the expression for the writings would be different. Additionally, even though using more complicated vocabulary
can enrich the quality of the students’ writings in terms of diction; however, if the students are searching for the translation forms of the words they have in Indonesian language into English, the meaning would be various depending on the context of the usage. At this point, being aware of contextual understanding is very important. “Although demonstrating command of a rich vocabulary is a definite in EFL writing, learners need to be cautious not to go to extremes in their attempt to avoid using the same word/expression again” (Gabrielatos, 2002, p.4). As a result, this picture shows that usually, the EFL students who are learning writing depend heavily on the bilingual dictionary: English – Indonesia or Indonesia - English. Using dictionary too often when they are in the process of writing is the common writing behavior of the Minangkabau-Indonesian EFL students. Kusni mentions that, “writing during and after reading is basically advantageous” (2014, p.279). In this case, reading dictionary might be helpful to locate the word of the intended meaning; nevertheless, experiencing how the same word is being used in its proper context is also important. All these writing behaviors reflect how complex it is to teach writing for Minangkabau-Indonesian EFL students.

5. Conclusion

Learning writing in English demands proper attention and rigorous process from both sides: students and the instructor or teacher. Without positive connection and positive teaching and learning process from these two sides, the quality of the students’ writing will slowly improve. Since process is the key in learning writing at the EFL classroom; therefore, understanding the students’ behaviors, as they have been explained above, are essential for the EFL writing instructors. The teacher or instructor can understand the students’ writing behaviors so that the students can get suitable teaching approaches given by the teacher or instructor in the EFL writing classroom process.

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