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EFL Preservice Teachers' Intrinsic Motivation in Writing Essays in a Blended Learning Environment

Abstract

Writing motivations are crucial because they have an impact on how well students write. In the context of EFL preservice teachers, they are urged to practice essay writing in both in-person and online settings. They can write better in these learning modes when they are very motivated to write. This study sought to investigate the intrinsic motivation of EFL preservice teachers to write essays in a blended learning environment. A survey with a quantitative description of opinions was the research approach used. 45 EFL preservice teachers from Universitas Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. Hamka were the participants. An online survey was used as the instrument to gather the information. The mean and standard deviation were then calculated using descriptive analysis on the data. The findings demonstrated that needs, interest, curiosity, and enjoyment were among the intrinsic motivations of preservice EFL teachers that fell into the high group. To put it another way, they have good reasons for wanting to practice writing essays in a blended learning setting. Consequently, it was inferred that it should help to retain the intrinsic motivation of EFL preservice teachers to write an essay in English for their better futures and careers.

Keywords: EFL preservice teachers, intrinsic motivation, writing, Essay, blended learning

INTRODUCTION

The ability to write effectively is one that all university students should have. Writing is the hardest skill to master compared to others (Farooq et al., 2020; Nunan, 1999; Rahman et al., 2020). Students studying English as a foreign language (EFL) should be able to express their ideas or thoughts in writing to other readers while also considering the organization of the writing flow and grammatical usage (Li & Huang, 2022). In writing, an essay is a set of paragraphs that describe, justify, or support a point of view (Zemach & Rumisek, 2010). However, EFL students find it difficult to put together an essay. As a result, some students struggle to write since they do not comprehend the fundamentals of essay writing (Warburton, 2020). While they are conscious of writing knowledge, it does not necessarily mean they can write more effectively. Learning motivation is one of the factors influencing the quality of the essay writing.

Motivation is the act of behaviors in particular tasks. There are two types of motivations: intrinsic and extrinsic (Brown, 2014; Howard et al., 2016). Intrinsic motivation is someone's desire to perform one activity in personal factors such as needs, interests, curiosity, and enjoyment (Howard et al., 2016; Marsh, 2010; Oxford & Bolanos-Sanchez, 2015; Richards & Renandya, 2002). In EFL instruction, some students practice writing in English as they think writing is necessary for their careers to be English teachers. In addition, they would write in English since they intend to train their writing skills and improve their writing knowledge (Ling et al., 2021). Some students feel that writing some ideas in English is also very important for them in the preparation of writing an article or an essay as the fulfillment of completing their studies.

In the context of learning modes in the Covid-19 Pandemic era, blended learning (BL) is an alternative to accommodate the teaching and learning activities of writing for students. This is not something new for lecturers to conduct (Setyowati et al., 2021). BL is a combination of face-to-face classroom and online learning activities to support the students to learn independently, flexibly, and timely (Dewantara & Dibia, 2021; Marie, 2021; Rasheed et al., 2020). From this idea, EFL preservice teachers who would be teachers of English at schools would learn and practice writing essays in the classroom and through online instruction within synchronous and asynchronous learning forms. In line with this, they used G-Meets for discussions and joined a Moodle-based Learning Management System (LMS) for writing practices at their own pace and location, which is believed that it had positive responses from EFL students in learning English (Apoko, 2022) as well as positive attitudes on the writing lesson and their awareness of increasing critical thinking (Tran & Nguyen, 2021).

There are some previous relevant studies on the motivations in Essay writing in the situations of BL. Setyowati and Sukmawan (2021) investigated the effect of news items on Essay writing in a BL environment. Another study found a relationship between motivation and students' performance in writing (Ling et al., 2021). This study is also supported by (Hashemian & Heidari, 2013), who found a relationship between motivation and writing skills. In addition, Bailey et al. (2021) discovered that there was a relationship between motivation for writing in collaboration to utilize a language learning technology. However, in line with this current research, there is still limited study on EFL preservice teachers' intrinsic motivations in writing essays in the BL environment. Therefore, it is essential to do a study to examine EFL preservice teachers' intrinsic motivations in writing essays in BL environment. The research question addressed is "How is the intrinsic motivation of EFL preservice teachers in their writing essay in BL environment?"

METHOD

The study used a survey as its method. It gave a quantitative description of the population's attitudes and beliefs and assisted the researcher in determining the proportions of EFL preservice teachers who were intrinsically motivated to write essays (Creswell, 2018). Participants in the study were EFL preservice teachers from Universitas Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. Hamka in Jakarta, Indonesia. 84.4% of the 45 participants were women, while 15.6% were men. The majority of the participants (77.2%) were fourth-semester students. The majority of them (51.1%) resided in the Jakarta region. 11.1% were discovered to be residing away from Java Island. Reading proficiency (37.8%) was the most desired language ability from table 1.

Table 1. Demographics of Participants

No	Categories		Number of Participants (N: 45)	%
1	Semester	4	35	77.8
		6	10	22.2
2	Gender	Female	38	84.4
		6 Male	7	15.6
3	Age	<20 years old	5	11.1
		20 years old	22	48.9
		>20 years old	18	40.0
4	Home Location	Jakarta	23	51.1
		Banten	3	6.7
		West Java	9	20.0
		Central Java	2	4.4
		East Java	3	6.7
		Outside Java Islands	5	11.1
5	Most preferred language skill	Listening	5	11.1
		Speaking	13	28.9
		Reading	17	37.8
		Writing	10	22.2

An online questionnaire survey was the tool employed in this study. There were 12 valid items out of the 18 total, and the reliability was 0.834. Hence, a total of 12 items which include four indicators: needs, interests, curiosity, and enjoyment were utilized to measure the intrinsic motivations of EFL preservice teachers. The instrument's specification after the tryout is as follows.

Table 2. The specification of intrinsic motivation in writing essays

No	Indicators	Item Numbers		Amount
		Positive Items	Negative Items	
1	Needs	1, 2	3	3
2	Interests	4, 5	6	3
3	Curiosity	7, 8	9	3
4	Enjoyment	10	11, 12	3
		Total		12

In table 2, there are positive and negative statements. For positive statements, the categories of responses started from strongly agree (5), agree (4), neutral (3), disagree (2), and strongly disagree (1). Meanwhile, for negative statements, the responses ranged from strongly agree (1), agree (2), neutral (3), disagree (4), and strongly disagree (5).

In collecting the data, the researcher distributed the online questionnaire to the students taking *Essay Writing* Course via WhatsApp Group. The students were given one day to complete the questionnaire. However, not all the students filled out the questionnaire. After the data were collected, they were analysed with descriptive analysis to provide each item's mean and standard deviation. In addition to calculating mean and standard deviation, each question item was calculated to describe the percentages of EFL preservice teachers on their intrinsic motivations in writing essays in English.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

As it is presented in table 3, it was found that there are 84.5% who said agree and strongly agree with the necessity of EFL preservice teachers to write for their future careers. They also had very affirmative statements on acquiring more writing knowledge when they wrote (91.1%). Therefore, there was only 11.1% believed that writing was not necessary for their study.

Table 3. EFL preservice teachers' needs in writing

No	Question Items	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	STDEV
1	I need to write for my future career.	0.0	2.2	13.3	35.6	48.9	4.31	0.79
2	Writing makes me have more knowledge.	0.0	2.2	6.7	46.7	44.4	4.33	0.71
3	Writing is not necessary for my study.	4.2	31.1	15.6	4.4	6.7	2.02	1.18

Note: SD for strongly disagree, D for disagree, N for neutral, A for agree, and SA for strongly agree

Related to another intrinsic motivation, EFL preservice teachers' interest (see table 4), it was found that they were primarily interested in writing essays (77.8%). They also paid more attention to what their lecturers explained on how to write essays better (93.3%). Moreover, when they found writing challenging to practice, they did not stop writing (66.7%).

Table 4. EFL preservice teachers' interests in writing

No	Question Items	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	STDEV
4	I am interested in writing an essay.	0.0	2.2	20.0	60.0	17.8	3.93	0.69
5	I pay attention to what my lecturer explains about how to write.	0.0	0.0	6.7	48.9	44.4	4.38	0.61
6	When I find writing difficult, I stop writing.	20.0	46.7	20.0	8.9	4.4	2.32	1.04

Dealing with EFL preservice teachers' curiosity (see table 5), it was discovered that they were curious to read some essays or articles before they wrote (57.8%). They were also curious about having an essay writing class online either synchronously or asynchronously (53.3%). However, 33.3% of the EFL preservice teachers felt passive when they learned to write essays online.

Table 5. EFL preservice teachers' curiosity about writing

No	Question Items	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	STDEV
7	I am curious to read some essays or articles before writing.	0.0	4.4	37.8	46.7	11.1	3.64	0.74
8	I am curious about having a writing class online.	0.0	6.7	40.0	48.9	4.4	3.51	0.70

9	I feel passive when I learn to write in online learning.	0.0	33.3	42.2	20.0	4.4	2.96	0.85
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Table 6 below points out that EFL preservice teachers enjoyed practicing writing in English (84.4%). Few students did not like writing essays (8.8%). In addition, the result showed that a few of them were not bored with writing materials (13.3%).

Table 6. EFL preservice teachers' enjoyment of writing

No	Question Items	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	STDEV
10	I enjoy writing English.	0.0	2.2	13.3	71.1	13.3	3.96	0.60
11	Writing is not easy for me, so I do not like writing.	2.2	44.4	24.4	4.4	4.4	2.24	1.00
12	I am bored with writing materials.	26.7	31.1	28.9	8.9	4.4	2.33	1.11

This research examined EFL preservice teachers' intrinsic motivations in writing essays in a blended learning environment. Intrinsic motivations, including needs, interest, curiosity, and enjoyment, are believed to promote EFL preservice teachers' writing skills in essays. It is, therefore, obvious that intrinsic motivation is one of the influential factors in the psychological domain of writing performance. In the pandemic of Covid-19, intrinsic motivations are required by EFL preservice teachers to be eager to practice writing essays better for their careers in the future.

The findings indicated that writing was crucial for the EFL preservice teachers' careers and studies since writing increased their knowledge. It is consistent with what Yu et al. (2019) and Wang (2021), who both expected that motivation might impact EFL students' writing ability, discovered in their studies. In addition, it was revealed that their interests in writing essays were strong. It took place as a result of the materials they studied and practiced, including some fascinating and relevant subjects. Despite finding it difficult to write, they persisted and sought advice from their lecturers. They thought the writing was necessary and beneficial for them (Mahakaew, 2021).

This study also discovered that more EFL preservice teachers were curious to read relevant essays or articles before writing. Some available reading materials such as articles from online media and journals were read for the prior knowledge of investigating the topic they would write. In addition, the result also showed that the EFL preservice teachers' engagement and participation in writing assignments were also motivated when using technology such as online learning, which promoted social interaction (Williams & Beam, 2019). They also enjoyable to practice writing essays, both facilitated with online learning synchronously and asynchronously (Alberth, 2019; LaSalle, 2015) and conducted in the classroom. As a result, instruction with blended learning (BL) enhanced their writing competence (Lam et al., 2018; Wu et al., 2020) as well as promoted students' autonomy and motivation (Albiladi & Alshareef, 2019) since BL provided time and place flexibility (Challob,

2021; Islam et al., 2018). Moreover, BL with flipped classrooms encouraged them to be more active in using idiomatic knowledge in class (Chen Hsieh et al., 2017).

Dealing with EFL preservice teachers' excitement or enjoyment in writing revealed that they tended to prefer writing essays despite the difficulties of writing, such as making errors in grammar use, spelling, and punctuation (Nasser, 2018; Sermsook et al., 2017) as well as vocabulary and the structure of the Essay (Bulqiyah et al., 2021). As this study focused on one of the private universities in Indonesia, this could not represent all EFL preservice teachers. Therefore, it is much better if there are more participants from other universities to be respondents in further studies.

CONCLUSION

Writing motivations have a significant impact on how effectively students write; for example, in the context of EFL preservice teachers, they are encouraged to practice essay writing in both in-person and online environments. When individuals are very motivated to write, they can produce better outcomes. Therefore, based on the finding and discussion, intrinsic motivations of EFL preservice teachers in writing essays in a blended learning environment were in the higher category. They have positive needs to write English for their future and careers. In addition, their interests in writing essays in English increased. They were also curious to practice writing essays in a blended learning situations. Finally, they were really enjoyable to write essays. Thus, intrinsic motivations should keep being maintained for a better English essay writing practice.

However, this current study has some limitations. This study only included a small number of participants and was conducted at a single university; more participants would have made the study more effective. In line with this conclusion, it is then recommended that teachers or lecturers design an English learning environment that could encourage aspiring EFL teachers to practice writing essays because intrinsic motivations have a positive impact on their motivation to do so in a blended learning environment.

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