

# DIFFICULTIES IN WRITING ESSAYS OF ENGLISH-MAJORED SOPHOMORES AT TAY DO UNIVERSITY

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## ABSTRACT

Writing skill is an important part of communication, which helps people express ideas, experiences, and feeling exactly. Good writing skill allows them to communicate their message with clarity and ease to a far larger audience than through face-to-face or telephone conversations. However, students in universities often face some difficulties when they write essays. This thesis "Difficulties in writing essays of English-majored sophomores at Tay Do University" was conducted to examine the difficulties that second-year students majoring in English often met in writing essays. For this purpose, the participants in this study were about 60 English-majored sophomores in classes 16A and 16B at Tay Do University. The interview with 3 extended statements and a questionnaire with 18 closed statements for students were used as instruments to collect the data. The data from the interview and questionnaire were collected to make clear and prove the problems that the students have challenged in writing essays. The study would have figured out some difficulties in grammar, vocabulary, background knowledge, and psychological factors in writing essays faced by the second-year students majoring in English at Tay Do University. Besides, this study also helps students realize their challenges and improve their writing essays.

**Keyword:** writing, essays, difficulties, sophomores, university

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Rationale

English is increasingly important and meaningful in people's lives due to its globalisation. English is not only used in documents, newspapers, and computers but is also a common language to communicate on the Internet or social networking sites such as Facebook, Zalo, Twitter, etc. Besides, people also use English as a tool to earn money as interpreters, translators, English teachers, tour guides, and many other jobs. Therefore, English is becoming more and more popular, and it is the most popular international language for exchanging knowledge with other nations out of all the languages spoken on the planet.

English has four skills, which are listening, speaking, reading, and writing, and each skill contributes significantly to language acquisition. However, for conferences or important signed contracts, writing becomes the most vital key because writing in English is essential and a form of written communication. The receptive skills are listening and reading, because learners do not need to produce language to do these; they receive and understand it. Reading and listening involve receiving information, so they are called receptive skills. These skills are sometimes known as passive skills because they can be contrasted with the productive or active skills of speaking and writing, and they are known as productive skills because they involve producing words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs. Additionally, writing is considered a crucial skill in teaching and learning English as a foreign language. Boonpattanaporn (2005) stated that "Writing is one of the necessary means for people to express their thinking or emotion and to communicate precisely".

Furthermore, essay writing is not an easy task, and it is sure that essay writing is harder for English learners who use English as a second or foreign language in countries like Vietnam. Most students confirm that they always have problems writing essays. Especially in a university environment, students must deal with a variety of discourse

texts, including argumentative, expository, evaluation, and explanation. Grammar and vocabulary are the most noticeable problems that go along with a lack of unity in the organisation and a lack of coherence that language learners have to face.

Especially English-majoring sophomores at Tay Do University still face difficulties for four reasons. Grammar is a big challenge because mistakes in grammatical structures and orthography affect their writing. The lack of vocabulary is a big problem for them due to not having an efficient vocabulary to express their ideas, feelings, and thinking. They also have obstacles in the way that they convey their own ideas if they do not have background knowledge related to what they want to talk about. Moreover, students are also affected by psychological factors such as fear and not being confident, leading to a lack of ideas and insufficient general knowledge to write essays.

Recognising the difficulties students faced in writing essays, some researchers have previously explored and found the various difficulties students encounter when they write essays, for example, "*Problems Faced by Indonesian EFL Learners in Writing Argumentative Essay*" (Rahmatunisa, 2014), "*EFL students' difficulties and needs in essay writing*" (Ariyanti & Fitriana, 2017), "*Second-Year English Majored Students' Perception of Possible Problems in Writing Essays*" (Trang & Khoa, 2021), "*Students' Ability in Writing Argumentative Essay at the English Education Department of the State Islamic University of Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau*" (Idola, 2022), etc. However, there are few studies that have investigated the difficulties in writing essays by second-year students in the English major at Tay Do University.

For those difficulties, the researcher decided to conduct the thesis "*Difficulties in Writing Essays of English-majored Sophomores at Tay Do University*" to explore those issues and find out ways to improve the difficulties relating to writing essays English-majored students at Tay Do University have encountered.

### 1.2. Significance of the research

This study is designed to help find the causes of difficulties for second-year students in English major at Tay Do University with writing essays. For these issues, the researcher expects to help students realize their problems in writing essays so that they can find out some effective methods to overcome difficulties and better their writing skills.

### 1.3. Organization of the research

The study is made up of five main chapters as follows:

- Chapter 1: *Introduction* provides the rationale, research aims, research questions. Besides, the significance and organization of the research are also listed here.
- Chapter 2: *Literature Review* includes a definition of essay, types of essays and their importance, difficulties in writing essays and related studies.
- Chapter 3: *Research Methodology* indicates the study's method employed in this thesis including such features as research design, participants, instruments, and procedure.
- Chapter 4: *Results and Discussion* part report the findings of the research to figure out difficulties in writing essays.
- Chapter 5: *Conclusion, Limitations, Implications and Recommendation*. This chapter indicates the conclusion, implication, reflect on the limitations of the study, and put forward recommendations or suggestions for further research.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Definitions of essay

An essay often has a particular subject such as arguing an issue or advancing a specific idea or describing something. Besides, Wikipedia defines "*An essay is, generally, a piece of writing that gives the author's argument - but the definition is vague, overlapping with those of a paper, an article, a pamphlet, and a short story. The essay has traditionally been sub-classified as formal and informal*". An essay has been defined in a variety of ways as one definition shown by Phillips (1979) "*An essay is a series of paragraphs that develop a topic and express a writer's opinion about that topic. The hardest part of writing a good essay is to decide what your opinion is and find proof to support it*". Besides, Langan (2004) showed a simpler definition of "essay" by comparing between "paragraph" and "an essay". The author claimed that "an essay does the same thing a paragraph does". However, the difference is "*a paragraph is a series of sentences about one main idea or point, while an essay is a series of paragraphs about one main idea or point called the central idea*".

Essays are not fictional but may be subjective opinions of the individual or can be literary criticism, perspective on a certain issue, describe daily life, recollections, and reflections of the author. Considering the basic structure of an essay, according to Langan (2004), there are three parts in an English standard college essay, also

known as a one-three-one essay or five-paragraph essay: Introduction, Body with supporting paragraphs, and Conclusion. He presented an overview of the traditional form of the essay through the following table.

**Table 1: Basic structure of English essays (Adapted from Langan, 2004)**

<b>Introduction</b>	- Open remarks to catch the reader's interest - Thesis statement
<b>Body</b>	- Topic sentence 1 (supporting point 1) - Specific evidence
	- Topic sentence 2 (supporting point 2) - Specific evidence
	- Topic sentence 3 (supporting point 3) - Specific evidence
<b>Conclusion</b>	- Summary - General closing remarks

## 2.2. Types of essays

Having good writing skills in different types of essays is very useful and necessary for learning as well as in life. Essay writing is a popular school exercise, part of the standard test and requirements for college applications. To distinguish between the types of essays, we need to identify the writer's purposes such as personal experience, describing something, sharing knowledge, explaining a problem, or convincing readers to accept a mandate certain points. There are many kinds of essays such as argumentative, expository, evaluation, explanation, etc.

### 2.2.1. Argumentative essays

An argumentative essay presents an extended, evidence-based argument. It requires a strong thesis statement - a clearly defined stance on your topic. Your aim is to convince the reader of your thesis using evidence (such as quotations) and analysis.

Different scholars have suggested a number of concepts for an argumentative essay. White and Billings (2008) defined an argument as "*A form of discourse in which the writer or speaker presents a pattern of reasoning, reinforced by detailed evidence and refutation of challenging claims, that tries to persuade an audience to accept the claim*". Besides, argumentation necessitates the opportunity to assume a position, anticipate the audience's competing opinions, contradict certain ideas, and persuade the reader to trust that position with ample supporting proof. Rather than only the author's thoughts and views, a strong argumentative article would use proof and evidence to support the argument.

Furthermore, according to Oshima and Hogue (2006), an argumentative essay is one in which the authors accept or do not with a particular topic and then present facts to justify their stance. Students should be able to have "*the clear and logical presentation facts (premises) so as to arrive at valid conclusions*" while writing an argumentative article.

For example: *Some people believe that hobbies need to be difficult to be enjoyable. To what extent do you agree or disagree?*

Some hobbies are relatively easy, while others present more of a challenge. Personally, I believe that both types of hobbies can be fun, and I, therefore, disagree with the statement that hobbies need to be difficult in order to be enjoyable.

On the one hand, many people enjoy easy hobbies, one example of an activity that is easy for most people is swimming. This hobby requires very little equipment, it is simple to learn, and it is inexpensive. I remember learning to swim at my local swimming pool when I was a child, and it never felt like a demanding or challenging experience. Another hobby that I find easy and fun is photography. In my opinion, anyone can take interesting pictures without knowing too much about the technicalities of operating a camera. Despite being straightforward, taking photos is a satisfying activity.

Moreover, difficult hobbies can sometimes be more exciting than you think. If an activity is more challenging, we might feel a greater sense of satisfaction when we manage to do it successfully. For example, film editing is a hobby that requires a high level of knowledge and expertise. In my case, it took me around two years before I became competent at this activity, but now I enjoy it much more than I did when I started. I believe that many hobbies give us more pleasure when we reach a higher level of performance because the results are better and the feeling of achievement is greater. In conclusion, simple hobbies can be fun and relaxing, but difficult hobbies can be equally pleasurable for different reasons.

### 2.2.2. Expository essays

An expository essay explains or defines a topic, using facts, statistics, and examples. The expository essay can be the comparison and contrast essay, or the cause, and effect essay. Expository essays are based on facts, not personal feelings, and are concise. English learners do not show their emotions and write in the first person.

For example: *Some people want to live in a house while others prefer living in an apartment. Does living in a house bring more advantages than living in an apartment? Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.*

There are many people who believe that living in a house is the best. However, some people disagree with this opinion and instead prefer to live in an apartment. This essay makes a comparison of the two and chooses the most preferred option.

To begin with, living in a flat definitely brings several advantages to a resident. One of the most important reasons behind this is the huge convenience it offers. An apartment is a part of a large building giving a feel of living in a small societal association that takes responsibility for any fix or repair or maintenance required. For example, if one needs to repair the roof, the maintenance charges are borne by the landlord. Moreover, various facilities, as well as amenities, are available nearby including a shopping mall, tuition center, medical store, bus station and so on.

On the other hand, living in an owned house does not offer the facilities that one can avail of while living in an apartment. One reason for this is that it is quite lonely to stay in a house which occupies a large land area bringing boredom and snatching the joy of living with so many people around. For example, it would be such a dull experience of sitting alone in the garden with no one around to share life experiences. In addition to this, maintenance and cleanliness of the house are borne by the owner and thus it is costly to live in a house.

Conclusively, living in an apartment is comparatively better than staying lonely in a house. Though a house provides a large spacious area to move around, living in an apartment enhances more social interaction and adds more excitement to life.

Furthermore, the key to a good comparison and contrast essay is to choose two or more subjects that connect in a meaningful way. The purpose of conducting the comparison or contrast is not to state the obvious but rather to illuminate subtle differences or unexpected similarities.

### **2.2.3. Evaluation essays**

An evaluation essay is a piece of writing in which writers make value judgments about a subject based on a set of criteria. Evaluative writing, evaluative essay or report, and critical evaluation essay are all terms for the same thing. *“Any kind of review is essentially a piece of evaluative writing,”* says Allen S. Goose (2001) *“This type of writing calls for the critical thinking skills of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation”*.

The purpose of an evaluation essay is to present an opinion or viewpoint on a subject or body of work. It should firstly provide a summary of the article in question, then using a thorough, well-structured argument the writer presents a point of view supported with examples and evidence.

Considering the example below, it is obvious which one provides the clearest definition of what the essay is about, and the argument it will present: *Doing an enjoyable activity with a child can develop better skills and more creativity than reading. To what extent do you agree? Use reasons and specific examples to explain your answer.*

Parents throughout the world place spend time reading with their offspring to prepare them for a school where their literacy skills are further developed; however, recent research suggests that focusing on reading at an early age can be detrimental, and participating in fun activities would be far more beneficial. I am a strong advocate of this approach, and the benefits of it will be covered in this essay.

A fundamental reason for this is that there is no biological age for reading and pushing infants to acquire this skill before they are ready could have repercussions. For example, in the UK, many boys are reluctant readers, possibly because of being forced to read, and this turned them off reading. By focusing on other activities and developing other skills such as creativity and imagination, when they are ready to read, they usually acquire this skill rapidly.

In addition, the importance of encouraging creativity and developing a child’s imagination must be acknowledged. Through play, youngsters develop social and cognitive skills, for example, they are more likely to learn vocabulary through context rather than learning it from a book.

Furthermore, play allows youngsters to mature emotionally, and gain self-confidence. There is no scientific research which suggests reading at a young age is essential for a child’s development; moreover, evidence suggests the reverse is true. In Finland, early years’ education focuses on playing.

Reading is only encouraged if a child shows an interest in developing this skill. This self-directed approach certainly does not result in Finnish school leavers falling behind their foreign counterparts. In fact, Finland was ranked the sixth best in the world in terms of reading.

Despite being a supporter of this non-reading approach, I strongly recommend incorporating bedtime stories into a child's daily routine. However, reading as a regular daytime activity should be swapped for something which allows the child to develop other skills.

#### **2.2.4. Explanation essays**

An explanation essay is one that describes our views or opinions on a particular subject or topic. The main function of an explanation essay is to clear up the issue of the research, describe it and reveal the essence of the matter in a brief and coherent way. To make the work easier, apply the following questions to your thesis statement such as What? Who? Why? What for? When? How?

For example: *How are hurricanes similar to tornadoes? Explain your ideas.*

Hurricanes and tornadoes are magnificent weather phenomena that inspire awe or fear in all those who see and experience them. Regardless of how you feel about them, it must be noted that they are remarkable and are very similar in structure, design and destruction. It is very evident those both are related and should command similar respect.

Both hurricanes and tornadoes are caused by instability in weather conditions such as temperature and pressure and have a rotating column of air. Their rotation varies depending on whether it's the southern hemisphere or the northern hemisphere. In the first case, the rotation is clockwise while in the latter case it's counterclockwise. Another feature they both share is their strong winds and rain. However, it should be noted that hurricanes can sometimes bring about tornadoes but tornadoes cannot bring about hurricanes.

A hurricane is different from a tornado in terms of the fact that it only brings rain as precipitation, whereas tornadoes can bring about rain, hail and sleet. Another defining factor is that hurricanes last for days while tornadoes have a lifespan of a few minutes. The amount of warning given for a hurricane can be between days to a week whereas a tornado warning is from a few minutes to a few hours. Another key point of difference is their size, hurricanes span hundreds of kilometers whereas a tornado spans hundreds of meters.

While a hurricane and tornado have several differences, their similarities are much more striking. Both are formed in a similar manner, have a similar makeup, rotate similarly and bring about rain, strong winds and possibly similar destruction. Based on these factors, it can be said that the similarities outweigh the differences so a hurricane and a tornado are very much alike. In these types of essays, expository and argumentative essays are usually required in academic writing for second-year students in English major at Tay Do University.

#### **2.3. The importance of essay writing**

Writing is an important skill in many contexts of life such as school, work, and the community. Rohmah (2008) said that: *"Writing is one of the language skills with the help of which is believed to make important contributions to human work"*. The ability to write demonstrates one's capacity for thought and opinion in ways that may surprise the learner himself. Good writing skill helps people to deliver their message clearly and exactly to the reader, more precisely, the better students write, the more easily readers can understand. It can be considered as a tool to express oneself and convince others, also, the skill helps English learners put their thoughts into words in a meaningful form and mentally interact with the message.

Besides, writing which is the ability to compose text effectively for various purposes is a tool for communication and learning that allows people to collect and circulate detailed information. For a job, people might be called upon to write a report, plan, or strategy at work. A well-written CV or résumé with appropriate spelling or grammatical structure is necessary if seeking a new job. A well-paying and fulfilling career is far more likely if you have a strong command of English. Writing in English is crucial for a future career because, when working with foreign clients and suppliers, a company will rely on its employees to interpret the day-to-day operations. Additionally, working in an international company necessitates the use of emails that are written in English for communication.

An essay with a good method will embed all the facts and figures together which had been received from different sources by simplifying and explaining complex ideas. Learning to go from the complex to the simple makes the piece of writing more acceptable to the readers. Essays serve as a tool to test the student's knowledge by assessing their arguments, analyses, and specific examples as well as the conclusions they draw regarding the material covered in the course. When writing essays, students are actually trying to express themselves in order to disseminate comprehensive information to the lecturers. Therefore, improving their essay skills, with appropriate vocabulary and well-organized writing style, will help them to express themselves to hone their writing skills much more perfectly and logically than other skills.

Next, the students can show their creativity in each stage of the process of writing an essay about any subject or field. By improving essay writing skills, the students can be talented and creative writers, speakers as well as logical thinkers. Moreover, at universities, students are required to write theses, project reports, and essays in English. In academic writing and foreign references are often written in English. English majored students at Tay Do

University will study how to construct logical arguments as well as how to extend their vocabulary, understand grammar structures, and express themselves clearly through essay writing. It may seem easier to find material for an essay, but the difficulty lies in assembling and arrangement of the material into a good essay, and creating a flow in writing an essay is an art of its own. Hence, all of these involve a lot of creativity and intelligence, which contributes to the intellectual development of the student and helps the student become sharp and organized in his academics and daily life. Therefore, students need to understand clearly the importance of writing and improve their writing skills, especially writing essays.

#### 2.4. Difficulties in writing essays

When speaking cannot prove to be clearly or directly, writing becomes more effective to express thoughts and feelings but is considered to be one of the most challenging aspects of language learning. According to Kroll (2001), "*writing assignments written by students and the methods of the feedback given by the teacher as the two basic components of any writing course.*" So, doing their job means they are improving their writing skill and getting feedback from their teachers to recognize their writing ability. However, students are facing the problem of using English to express their thoughts effectively, in particular, second-year students in English majors at Tay Do University do not have good essays because they lack grammar, vocabulary, background knowledge, and psychological factors.

##### 2.4.1. Grammar

As Jame (2005) said, "*Grammar is a study of the structure of the language and describes the way of putting words together to make meaningful sentences*", it is very important in writing skills because of providing information that helps the reader's comprehension. It is also the structure that conveys precise meaning from the learner to the reader. Eliminating grammatical errors from students' writing, and rewarding our readers with clear communication through the use of grammar reasonably will help them have a quality essay. So, if a student wants to write an essay well, he or she must be competent and fluent in grammar because grammar is the skeleton of the language.

The first difficulty that students face with grammar is the usage of tense, Larsen-freeman (2002) said that "*for students, the difficult thing in mastering English grammar is English verb tenses*". To avoid this, learners have to understand and master tenses will help college students to write an essay well. Tense refers to the time of an event or activity that happened in a sentence.

Generally, tense use specific verbs in sentences like "study-studied-studied, go-went-gone, speak-spoke-spoken, and so on". According to Cowan (2008), there are three main tenses such as past tense, present tense, and future tense and it is necessary to determine various aspects in terms of English verbs, such as the state of being, continuing action, or completed action. Using appropriate tenses helps to express ideas clearly and effectively and allows the readers to comprehend accurately what the learners have written. It is necessary to know how to conjugate verbs properly by focusing on the structures of tenses and modal tenses to create sentences exactly and effectively. When students are weak in grammar, their sentences can be ambiguous so that readers are unable to understand what they want to write, or the meaning of sentences that they present can be changed. As a result, if students want to write a good essay, they must know how to use the proper tenses.

The second difficulty in grammar which is a great challenge when writing is part of speech. Richards et al. (1992) said that "*part of speech is a traditional term to describe the different types of words that are used to form sentences such as noun, pronoun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition, conjunction, and interjection*" and according to Bisignani and Brizee (2009), parts of speech include nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions, prepositions, and interjections. All words in the English language can be classified as one of the eight different parts of speech. Understanding the different parts of speech is important in understanding how words can and should be joined together to make sentences that are both grammatically correct and understandable. An understanding of the parts of speech is also important for knowing how to correctly punctuate sentences. If the students do not know the functions and rules of part of speech, they can misuse the function of the word which makes the readers cannot understand or the sentence is the wrong meaning.

Finally, the subject-verb arrangement is also a difficulty for students when they write an essay. The subject-verb agreement simply means the subject and verb must agree in number both need to be singular or plural. However, students often do not know that the subject is singular or plural so there is no subject-verb arrangement that will lead to the fact that their sentences are ungrammatical. Some words when acting as subjects can confuse students such as compound subjects, collective nouns, inverted subjects, indefinite pronouns, etc.

For examples of grammatical mistakes about tense and superlative adjectives:

*He like playing football. (wrong)*

✓ *He likes playing football. (right)*

*She is the beautifulest girl in our class. (wrong)*

✓ She is the most beautiful girl in our class. (right)

In summary, grammar is an element that cannot be neglected if students want to master writing skills, especially in writing English essays.

#### **2.4.2. Vocabulary**

Vocabulary is one of the knowledge areas in language and plays a great role for learners in acquiring a language. It is easy to see that a word often has more than one meaning and many synonyms, so students are easily confused in choosing words to write correctly. “*Vocabulary knowledge is considered as having two main dimensions such as breadth and depth*”, Read (1988) said. The meaning of the word sometimes depends on the situation so it is very important to choose the right words for each context. The wrong choice of words can lead to misunderstandings or not express the author’s thoughts clearly. Thus, students need to have a rich vocabulary to express what they think by choosing proper words that will make the sentence a beautiful one.

Moreover, vocabulary acts as a significant role in language learning and it is an indispensable ability for learning to read, speak, and especially in writing. Richards and Renandya (2002) stated that: “*Vocabulary is a core component of language proficiency and provides much of the basis for how well learners listen, speak, read and write. Without an extensive vocabulary... learners often achieve less than their potential and may be discouraged from making use of language*”. In addition, vocabulary is an important component to have good essay writing. However, students often lack the necessary vocabulary when they write, this is a reason why they cannot express their thoughts clearly and understandably. Thornbury (2002) said that “*without grammar, very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed*”. Lack of large vocabulary is one of the most difficult things that students face, they do not have enough vocabulary to express ideas, thoughts, and feelings exactly, they just keep them inside. The knowledge meaning of the word is large, students have to know the meaning and understand how to use it. Lack of vocabulary makes them confused when demonstrating a topic. So before writing an unfamiliar topic, students have to find new words and search for the topic to write better.

Besides, the students have to keep in mind collocations which are made up of two or more words that are commonly used together in English such as “*get a job*”, “*make a promise*”. Using collocations in writing makes the sentences more natural and easier to understand. There are many collocations to remember the meaning and they have no clear rules and no specific regulations to follow. Therefore, students do not know exactly what collocations mean, the way words go together, and their meaning. This is one of the difficulties that students often faced when they write an essay. In conclusion, having a large vocabulary is a good way to express ideas more attractively and the essay will be understandable and successful.

#### **2.4.3. Background knowledge**

In addition to grammar and vocabulary, lack of background knowledge also affects psychology that is the importance of what students have memorized or learned plays a significant role. Marzano (2004) reports that “*There is a close relationship between prior knowledge and how children do well in school.*” In teaching English, Nation (2006) concludes from his research that “*Learners need to know about 98% of the words in the written or spoken language to be able to understand what they hear or read well.*”

Moreover, background knowledge is also a massive difficulty in the essay writing process of students. It is also viewed as previous knowledge that someone has experienced, perceived as their way. An (2013) defines, “*Background awareness as previous knowledge about a subject. Background knowledge can influence someone’s ability to understand the meaning of texts.*” When they encounter certain circumstances or know this before, they become aware of the meaning of topics easily.

Indeed, background knowledge also influences the essay writing process quite a bit. When a student has a strong and broad background, exposure to unfamiliar or out-of-curriculum topics will not or may cause little hindrance in developing ideas. On the contrary, when the background knowledge is limited to the curriculum or the background knowledge is not wide enough, it will cause many obstacles. Especially, the written test in IELTS or Toeic exams requires candidates to have enough or wide background knowledge to be able to build into a complete essay and attract examiners.

Background knowledge is very essential when we write an essay. The most obvious being is that it improves the flow of the essay, creates interest and helps readers understand the points to express. If the students want to have a good essay, they need to have a rich knowledge of various fields. Poor knowledge makes them unable to understand the topic or unable to organize their ideas well. They will feel nervous when they face unfamiliar or hard topics because they do not have practical experiences in social life.

In short, background knowledge is a prerequisite for students to develop ideas. Due to that reason, students both in urban or rural areas have to widen their knowledge through the internet or books.

#### **2.4.4. Psychological factors**

Nadjette (2016) claimed that the learner's psychology is a pivotal contributor to the success of a foreign language learning process. Anxiety, motivation, and inhibition are some psychological factors that would assist the success or lead to unconsciously built barriers that end with an evident failure in acquiring the necessary skills to achieve competence and proficiency in the English language.

The first factor is students' anxiety which occurs when students are under pressure about their writing assignments. With unfamiliar topics, students tend to quit easily because they lack knowledge. They are afraid that they cannot handle the topic because their minds go blank, so they cannot write anything. This problem is very harmful to the learning writing process of students when they are in university.

The second factor is motivation which is regarded as an influential factor in the success of any activity. It plays a significant role in reaching the desired goals, including learning English that essay writing also needs to have. Motivation is one of the factors that make a difference in the language learning of each person in the same environment and learning conditions. For instance, Cook (2000) confirms that *"the second language acquisition of learners is influenced by three main factors, such as age, personality, and motivation, among which motivation is the most significant one"*. Similarly, Lightbrown and Spada (2001) identify motivation in second language acquisition as *"a complex phenomenon which can be defined in terms of two factors: learners' communicative needs and their attitudes towards the second language community"*. More specifically, Richards and Schmidt (2002) consider *"motivation as the primary causes of success and failure in second language learning"*. Therefore, motivation in learning English is a combination of effort and desire to obtain the aim of learning English as well as the positive attitude toward learning English, especially in essay writing.

The final factor is inhibition which is a condition in which someone or students lose face, worry about making mistakes, and are afraid of the attention that they attract (Ur, 1996). This results in their performance where either they make a lot of mistakes despite having very good knowledge in the area or keeping silent. This problem happens when students try to complete their assignments in the classroom. Many factors prevent them to do this in a good way such as Littlewood (1999) stated, *"It is too easy for a foreign language classroom to create inhibition and anxiety."*

The fear of making mistakes is one of the reasons why students are not able to use English to express their ideas well in the essay. Moreover, foreign language anxiety restrains students' English performance and impacts their body reactions because when students undergo foreign language anxiety, some may give up the chance to write in English, and others may become too embarrassed to express themselves in the essay. These students have a conflict between trying to overcome their worry to learn well and avoiding embarrassing themselves before others. If students cannot balance them, they may give up and become passive learners.

## 2.5. Related studies

Previously, many researchers had some related studies on English essay writing problems as well as difficulties that hindered English-majored students in writing essays. However, the topics are not completely the same and the participants may be from different levels. The related studies below may give supporting shreds of evidence for this research.

Firstly, Rahmatunisa (2014) found that there are three main problems faced by EFL students in essay writing, specifically, linguistics, cognitive, and psychological problems. She suggested that the teacher needs to encourage the student's motivation to write an essay as well as provide various supportive writing activities such as peer correction and frequent use of dictionaries. Not only the problems above, cultural and religious aspects also influence the production of the EFL students such as the prohibition in a family where the topic is too sensitive for several certain groups.

Secondly, Ariyanti and Firtriana (2017) had a survey about *"ELF Students' Difficulties and Needs in Essay Writing"*. The study focused on investigating the difficulties faced by ELF students in essay writing as well as exploring their learning needs to have a better quality of English composition. The population of this study is 33 EFL students and a lecturer at Widya Gama Mahakam University. Examining essays and a questionnaire for students are two study instruments that support the author's analysis. For lecturers, a semi-structured interview was also conducted to collect the lecturer's perceptions related to challenging matters about teaching essay writing. The research findings showed that students have difficulties in grammatical, cohesion, and coherence terms, paragraph organization, diction, and vocabulary, misspellings. Additionally, the students expected more intense guidance from the lecturer. Besides, the results from the interview illustrated that limited time and a big number of students in one class became the lecturer's barriers to improving the students' essays. Hence, two possible suggestions were recommended for the lecturer as follows guiding students properly using step-by-step procedures and explicit explanation related to the revision given is a need.

Thirdly, Belkhir and Benyelles (2017) conducted a study on *"Identifying EFL Learners Essay Writing Difficulties and Sources: A Move toward Solution the Case of Second Year EFL Learners at Tlemcen University"*



and pointed out EFL learners essay writing difficulties. The questionnaire, interview, and students' finale essay writing drafts are three research instruments that help authors to gather and record data both quantitatively and qualitatively. The results showed that EFL learners meet difficulties in both coherence and cohesion due to the lack of reading, first language transfer, and low writing practice. From the findings above, the authors recommended that ELF students should build their reading and writing habits to write an effective essay.

Next, Al-Mukdad (2019) investigated *“English academic writing problems that students at Arab International University encountered when they are taking the Academic Writing module”*. The study was conducted by using a questionnaire delivered to 50 students studying various majors at Arab International University. The results showed that the sample population agreed that they had problems with all aspects of writing. In particular, the study indicated that the participants encountered problems in revising their own writing products due to their low detection of their own mistakes. Other problems related to their ability to use correct grammatical and linguistic features. The students also admitted that they had low motivation of doing good writing. The study also suggested some applicable solutions to help the students better in their writing academic pieces.

Then, Hanh et al. (2020) conducted the research entitled *“A study on the difficulties in writing argumentative essays of English-majored sophomores at Tay Do University”* with the purpose of pointing out some common difficulties of sophomores in writing argumentative essays. The participants of this study were 90 English-majored sophomores of course 13, and two teachers who teach English language at Tay Do University. In this study process, questionnaires and interviews were used as two instruments to collect the data. The results of the research would show that English majored sophomores met difficulties in terms of linguistic competence (vocabulary, grammar, and coherence), organization and development of an argumentative essay, and the lack of critical thinking.

Moreover, Trang and Khoa (2021) study an article entitled *“Second -Year English Majored Students’ Perception of Possible Problems in Writing Essays”* is aimed to investigate second-year English majored students’ perception of essay writing problems encountered and solutions to overcome these problems. The participants of this study are 44 second-year English majored students at a public university in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam, consisting of 32 females and 12 males. The data were collected by a questionnaire to explore the difficulties encountered by EFL learners in writing essays and their expectations from their lecturers as well as from themselves to have better performance. The results revealed that students face major difficulties in writing essays including linguistic, psychological, and cognitive factors. With the hope to get better writing performance, the students expected more assistance from their lecturers, including giving more feedback on their writing pieces, recommending appropriate reading materials and providing more grammar courses. They also admitted that their writing pieces will be improved when they themselves practice more such as forming their writing habits, gaining more vocabularies and self-editing or asking for feedback from peers.

Besides, Dung et al. (2022) conducted this research titled *“Some Common Problems in Writing Essays of English Majored Sophomores at a University in the Mekong Delta”* to figure out common problems in writing essays by students majoring in English. The participants of this research were 85 English-majoring sophomores at Tay Do University and the two main research instruments for collecting the data were the questionnaire and the interview. The findings of the research would point out the students’ problems in linguistics, including grammar and vocabulary, writing styles, idea arrangement, background knowledge, and other problems.

In addition, the research is conducted by Idola (2022) in order to analyze students’ writing ability in argumentative essays in the third semester at English Education Department of State Islamic University of Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau. Unfortunately writing still becomes a problem for the majority of students and the students have low competency in writing their understanding of aspects of writing is not excellent. Their knowledge of grammar, diction, cohesion, and coherence is not used appropriately and students’ sentences often contain a lot of grammatical errors. They have difficulties in taking words to the context when developing sentences, so they cannot compose a good paragraph. Some other obstacles in writing essays such as lack of vocabulary, hard to generate ideas, and incorrect placement of essay structures in every paragraph. The method of this research is descriptive quantitative research was conducted to find out how is students’ ability in writing argumentative essays in the third semester of English Education Department State Islamic University Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau. Based on what has been discussed, presented, and analyzed, the researcher concluded that students’ ability to write argumentative essays in the third semester of English Education Department State Islamic University Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau is in a good category.

Finally, in the thesis *“A study on the difficulties in writing essays of English-majored sophomores at Tay Do University”*, Uyen et al. (2022) conducted to examine the difficulties that second-year students majoring in English often met in writing essays. For this purpose, the participants in this study were 100 English-majored sophomores in classes 14A, 14B, and 14C at Tay Do University. The interview with 3 extended statements for English-majored teachers and a questionnaire with 25 closed statements for students are used as instruments to

collect the data. The data from the interview and questionnaire were collected to make clear and prove the problems that the students have had in writing essays. The study figured out some difficulties in background knowledge, vocabulary, grammar structures, idea arrangement, and orthography in writing essays faced by English majored sophomores at Tay Do University. Besides, this study also helps students realize their challenges and improve their writing essays.

In short, essay writing is not an easy process, students will have to meet some difficulties that are factors come from subjectivity as well as objectivity. Despite the growing amount of research supporting the exploration of difficulties in writing essays for improving foreign language competence, many researchers are still uncertain about how effective it is. Therefore, in this study, the researcher investigates the factors causing difficulties in writing essays faced by second-year students in English major at Tay Do University. Thanks to this, these students cannot only realize their obstacles but can also overcome and develop their essay writing.

### **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Research Aims – Research Questions – Hypothesis**

##### **3.1.1 Research aims**

The purpose of this study is to find some difficulties encountered by second-year students in English majors in writing essays. The expectation of the study in comprehending students' essay writing challenges, and the knowledge amassed gives them the tools they need to identify effective solutions to overcome difficulties and have good essays.

##### **3.1.2 Research questions**

This study aims to answer the following research questions:

- What are the difficulties in writing essays of English-majored sophomores at Tay Do University?
- How should the students do to overcome difficulties in writing essays?

##### **3.1.3 Research hypothesis**

According to most of the second-year students in English major at Tay Do University, essay writing is the most difficult skill in English skills that they learn in university. Through the literature review and the research questions, it is hypothesized that second-year students majoring in English at Tay Do University have faced difficulties in writing essays such as grammar, background knowledge, vocabulary, and psychological factors. These difficulties could be the principal causes that they have met in writing essays. Remarkably, depending on these problems, students can recognize their shortcomings and overcome their weaknesses. Since then, they will have more motivation in essay writing and improve their essay writing skill.

#### **3.2 Research Design, Participants, Instruments, Data Analysis**

##### **3.2.1. Research design**

The research was carried out to find out the problems that the second-year students in English major at Tay Do University faced in learning English essay writing by using a combination of quantitative and qualitative. The reliability and validity of the research results were based on instruments such as questionnaires and interview questions. The questionnaires are delivered to students in order to survey their opinions. Also, to make the research more reliable, some students are randomly selected to answer the interview questions. The main key to this research will be participants who are second-year English-majored students and they will give information about their difficulties in writing essays.

##### **3.2.2 Participants**

The participants in this thesis are about 60 second-year students in English major studying in two classes including English 16A and 16B at Tay Do University. Most students are at the age of 19 to 23 and they come from different provinces in Vietnam. They speak Vietnamese as their mother tongue and English as foreign language. The reasons for choosing these participants are based on the English writing skill they are learning, the length of their English learning, and their competence in English as a foreign language. Their ages and learning process are nearly the same, so they have the same ways of thinking and have faced some similar difficulties.

##### **3.2.3 Instruments**

In this thesis, the questionnaire with 18 statements and the interview paper with 3 questions are two main instruments. All of the statements used in the questionnaire were designed originally in English. Questionnaires were a useful and convenient tool to collect information because they had high reliability and validity and provided an easy and practical way for collecting data from a number of people in a short time. Besides, in order to provide more specific feedback, the interview is designed clearly.

##### **3.2.3.1. Questionnaire**

In this research, the questionnaire includes 18 statements and it is classified into the following group:

Group	Summary of question group
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A. From 1 to 5	Students' personal background
B. From 6 to 9	The problems related to grammar
C. From 10 to 12	The problems related to vocabulary
D. From 13 to 15	The problems related to background knowledge
E. From 16 to 18	The problems related to psychological factors

In group A, there are 5 questions that investigate the students' personal background. Students are required to choose the answer that best suits their opinions. In some cases, they will give their specific answer (question 2 and question 3) and choose more than one answer (question 5).

The other groups with 13 statements related to students' difficulties in speaking are designed on the basis of the five-degree scales including strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), neutral (3), agree (4), strongly agree (5). In this part, students are required to circle the number next to each statement provided in the answer sheets to indicate their level of difficulty in writing essays.

### 3.2.3.2. Interview

In order to make the study more specific and objective, the interview papers are delivered to 6 second-year students in English major who are randomly selected in different classes at Tay Do University including 3 questions that mention difficulties in writing essays.

### 3.3 Data analysis

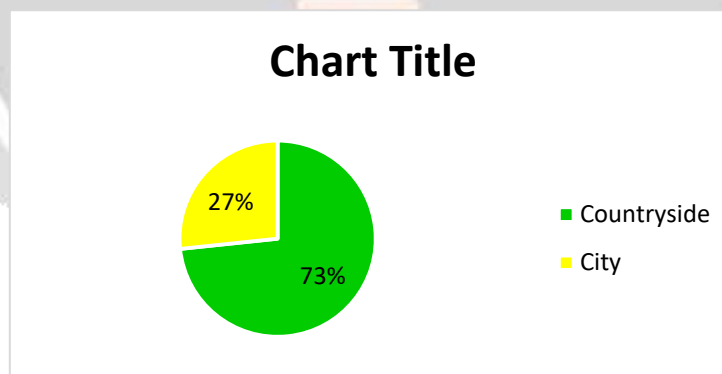
After the data collection, data from the questionnaire will be analyzed by using Google form software and Excel software. Data from the interview papers were mainly explained by using the qualitative analysis method. All the collected data were compiled and calculated.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Results from questionnaires

#### 4.1.1 Students' personal background

According to random statistics with the first question "Where do they come from?", 26.67% (16/60) of the participants who were English majored sophomores, course 16 at Tay Do University said they were from the city. In addition, 73.33% (44/60) of the remaining students had come from the countryside. They came from different areas, both the city and the countryside; moreover, each area has its own teaching method, manual, and style. That was the explanation for why they have not found effective academic writing skills in English. Therefore, it may be concluded that they came from various backgrounds. While classroom practises vary from school to school, rural educators typically place a greater emphasis on grammar than on other skills.

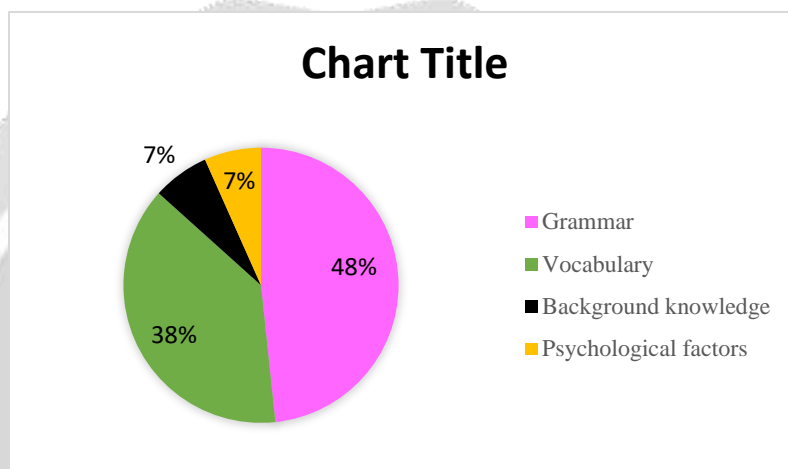


Students' learning processes have been significantly impacted by their living conditions, especially among those who have chosen English as their major. Students must, therefore, pay more attention to their living environments. The researchers can measure the fundamentals during their writing thanks to the question regarding students' years of learning English. In response to the question, "How long have you studied English?". There were 28 students (46,67%) said they had studied English for nine years. This indicated that majority of them had been learned English from grade six before they entered university. Nearly one third of the students (35%) have been studying English for 11 years. In addition, 18,33% percent of the remaining students had studied English for 14 years. It meant that their English ability was quite well.

When being asked about "Is essay writing their favorite subject?", Nearly 40% (25/60) of participants confirm that they really enjoyed English so that why they choose English for their major at University. It meant that 58.33% of students did not like writing essays in English.

With the question number 4, “How do you evaluate your writing skills” Most of students (61,67%) admitted that their writing skills are not good, only 8,33% said that their writing skill are quite well and the remaining participants with 30% had no ideas about this question.

About the problems that challenge students in writing essay in English with the question number 5, “What difficulties have you encountered when writing English essays?” The majority of students ( 48.33%) confirmed that they had difficulties with grammar, vocabulary was the second problems with 38.33%. Besides, background knowledge and psychological factors were nearly the same were 6.67%. In short, grammatical factors and vocabulary were the most difficulty in writing essay. Students come to class with a wide range of general writing skills and knowledge of effective general writing or study techniques. Therefore, without access to formal education, individuals were more likely to struggle with English writing. That’s why it was taken so long to develop efficient methods for learning writing essays in English.



**4.1.2 Students’ difficulties in writing English essay**

Statements	Strongly agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly disagree (1)
<b>A. GRAMMAR</b>					
6. I make some grammatical errors such as errors of tense, subject-verb and noun-adjective agreement.	26.67%	68.33%	5%	0%	0%
7. Due to my habit, I usually write may ill-formed sentences.	33.33%	38.33%	26.67%	1.67%	0%
8. I often get bad marks in writing due to grammatical errors in 12 tenses.	28.33%	63.33%	6.67%	1.67%	0%
9. My writing is full of grammatical mistakes and errors.	26.67%	65%	5%	3.33%	0%

As can be seen from table, there was a remarkable number of students (95%) who think that their grammar knowledge is not good enough when choosing the appropriate tense in the sentences, such as using tenses, subject-verb, and noun-adjective agreement in the statement 6; however there was still 5% of students had no idea.

Besides, in the statement 7, students also claimed that they usually write may ill-formed sentences because they do not understand clearly the functions and rules of part of speech leading them to misuse the function of the word making the readers unable to understand or the sentence is wrong meaning with more than 71.66% of participants agreed with statement 7. Only 1.67% of participant disagreed with statement number 7. It could be explained that there was one student who seldom had difficulties in grammar when writing essays in English.

Sophomores agreed with statement 8 and 9 that their writing is full of grammatical mistakes and errors with more than 90%. According to the examined data, the most challenging aspect of grammar use for students was tenses used in a sentence. They also lacked a basic knowledge of how to use 12 tenses in English competently that results in using grammatical or meaningless sentences. An article requires many kinds of sentences, all of which must be well-organized and interconnected in tenses and sentence structures. Moreover, grammar supports our communication. Knowing how it works helps us evaluate language's meaning and efficacy. It can improve accuracy, detect ambiguity, and use English's expressiveness.

Grammar is considered as the language's skeleton; hence students must be proficient in grammar to write successfully. Students regularly commit grammatical errors in their writing, including sentence structure, tenses, relative clauses, subject-verb agreement, prepositions, and articles. To summarize, grammar is an essential aspect of teaching and learning. Students can focus on grammar constructs if English learners want to write good essays.

Statements	Strongly agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly disagree (1)
<b>B. VOCABULARY</b>					
10. Lack of vocabulary makes me cannot express my thoughts sufficiently and understandably.	28.33%	51.67%	16.67%	3.33%	0%
11. The knowledge meaning of the word is immense and complicated, I do not know clearly the meaning and understand how to use it.	26.67%	58.33%	15%	0%	0%
12. I have some difficulties in the way to choose appropriate words in contexts and the collocations	40%	25%	35%	0%	0%

The figure showed the percentage of students' difficulties in studying vocabulary. As can be seen from this chart with the statement number 10, "Lack of vocabulary makes me cannot express my thoughts sufficiently and understandably", 80% of students completely agreed that they had difficulties in studying vocabulary including 51.67% of students who had agreed ideas and 28.33% of them strongly agreed.

Meanwhile, 16.67% of students had no ideas with the importance of vocabulary in writing. Moreover, there were 3.33% of students disagreed the importance of vocabulary and the scale of "strongly disagreed" viewed as 0%. The figures indicated that participants really had problems with vocabulary when writing essays because of the immense and complicated meanings which was nearly 95%. Therefore, vocabulary is one of the challenges to the complicated writing essays. Specific difficulties that students faced in vocabulary were lacking words, word choices, and collocation.

The statistical table showed that the students lacked words were 65% (39/60). Besides, they also said that they do not know the exact meaning of the words and how to use it in the context. In general, most of participants admitted that they had challenges in using vocabulary when writing English essays.

Statements	Strongly agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly disagree (1)
<b>C. BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE</b>					
13. It is very essential to have good background knowledge in order to learn essay writing better.	38.33%	53.33%	6.67%	1.67%	0%
14. I am unconfident in writing a new essay assignment because I do not have sufficient background knowledge of the topic that I am going to write about.	43.33%	53.33%	3.33%	0%	0%
15. Poor background knowledge often makes me unable to organize ideas well.	26.67%	58.33%	8.33%	6.67%	0%

In statement 13, "It is very essential to have good background knowledge in order to learn essay writing better" second-year students believed that background knowledge is an essential component in the process of second or foreign language acquisition, with 91.67% of participants agreeing and 1.67% disagreeing, while the

remainder of 6.4% had neutral ideas. Also, more than 95% of them agreed with statement 14: *“I am not confident in writing a new essay assignment because you do not have sufficient background knowledge of the topic that you are going to write about.”*

Poor background knowledge was also the obstacle for sophomores in writing English essays with 85% of agreement in statement 15 while 8.33% of participants did have any idea and 6.67% did not agree with this statement. To summarize, vocabulary is really challenging for students in writing essays in English. To strengthen their writing skills, students should have an adequate vocabulary knowledge to support their writing skills in various fields of life.

Statements	Strongly agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly disagree (1)
<b>D. PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS</b>					
16. I feel anxious when I cannot complete my given writing assignment in class because I am under pressure to develop enough ideas in limited time.	41.67%	58.33%	0%	0%	0%
17. I feel unconfident about my essay writing because I don't have any motivation to write as I am not good at writing skills.	38.33%	56.67%	5%	0%	0%
18. I am always worried about making mistakes when writing English essays.	26.67%	71.67%	1.67%	0%	0%

When mentioning the psychological factors, all sophomores still had obstacles with the time limitation with 100% including 41.67% of “strongly agree” and 58.33% of “agree”; besides motivation in writing essays was also another issues for students, nearly 95% considered that if they had no motivation, they could not create good essays and always worried about making mistakes when writing essays in English. No one showed disagreement with psychological factors. It could be concluded that psychological factors were also affected students’ writing process.

#### 4.1 Results from interview

The paper interview consists of three questions including the first question is the students’ challenges when learning writing essays, the difficulties that they have encountered in their writing essay course, and propose some suggestive strategies that students often use to improve for writing essay better.

In question 1 *“What are some difficulties do you often have when learning writing essays in English”* 100% respondents (5/6) confirmed that still make mistakes on sentence fragments, paragraph organization, and grammar structures. As a result, they do not know to use different structures to make their writing more attractive. Besides, they do not have enough ideas and vocabulary to write when they were given a topic about essay writing, especially for some topics about culture and traveling abroad. In addition, they do not know how to arrange their ideas logically. It is difficult to understand if the essay is long and dull. They may be off-topic or fail to communicate the main message if they do not have a clear idea or understanding of the topic. Therefore, the cohesion of ideas and coherence of the text is indispensable and compulsory.

Besides, four students (4/6) responded in the second question *“Which one of those problem (grammar structures, vocabulary, background knowledge, and psychological factors) do you often encounter in writing essay course?”* All participants admitted that they seemed to be stucked in those problems above.

Moreover, students also gave more beneficial suggestions in the question number 3 *“ Could you suggest some effective strategies that improve your writing skills better”*, 3/6 students enjoyed working in group with peer-evaluation and peer review, they loved to share ideas before writing and giving their essays to their friends for finding some simple mistakes, they often read English materials as much as possible for learning new words and the ways to arrange ideas logically and spent more time on practicing writing and avoiding plagiarism.

#### 4.3. Discussion

The researcher can measure the basics of their talents and knowledge during their writing thanks to the survey about the time students spent learning English. They have been studying English for 9 to 11 years. In addition, the remaining students have studied English for 14 years. Their English is rather good, but they are not sure how good their writing skills are. They could talk and listen well, but writing was a challenge for them. Since writing is a challenging task, students often concentrate on skills such as listening and communicating rather than writing. According to the research results, there were five main causes, including grammar structures, vocabulary,

background knowledge, and psychological factors, that cause English-majored sophomores to write unsuccessful English essays.

First of all, students were unable to organise their thoughts due to a lack of prior information. As a result, they will be perplexed when confronted with new subjects due to a lack of expertise in various fields. Another issue with context education was a lack of realistic social life experiences. Besides, sophomores often lacked the requisite vocabulary when writing. It was difficult for them to describe themselves and their topics clearly. When presented with new subjects, they will be perplexed. Additionally, students found it difficult to use suitable vocabulary in various ways. There are many major collocations in the context that must be remembered.

Consequently, students were unsure what collocations, or word combinations, were and how words are combined. It was a common stumbling block for students. Apart from that, the importance of grammar in literature cannot be overstated. Grammar constructs became the most daunting aspect of writing essays. When using coherency, personal pronouns, and tenses incorrectly in English, it may be confusing or misinforming for the audience. Besides, English pronunciation is a significant challenge. It is difficult for students because there are so many distinct tones. Although they are spelled the same, verbs and nouns are usually pronounced differently. Furthermore, students struggled with subject-verb structure, resulting in grammatical errors in their sentences.

Moreover, the organisation of ideas was also a challenge for students when writing the essay. They did not know what they were talking about or did not understand it well enough. Besides, they might have misunderstood the subject or failed to articulate the key meaning. In addition, students struggled with objectively organising concepts and missing key ideas or subject sentences in paragraphs and essays. They often had too many thoughts while writing, resulting in paragraphs that were lengthy, repetitive, or needless. Consequently, students often had to deal with orthography issues such as punctuation, pronunciation, and contractions, which were common problems.

All things considered, English-majored sophomores at Tay Do University faced many difficulties in writing, including grammar structures, vocabulary, background knowledge, and psychological factors. To improve their writing skills, students must identify their challenges and devise effective solutions..

## **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

In learning English as a foreign language, it is not easy to be a good learner in writing skill, especially writing essay. However, if learners want to express many ideas well in the essay, they must try their best to get over their nervousness while completing an essay in English. Consequently, English-majored sophomores at Tay Do University have also faced a lot of troubles in essay writing related to grammar (the usage of tense, part of speech, and the subject-verb arrangement), vocabulary (choice of words, background knowledge, and psychological factors (anxiety, motivation, and inhibition).

### **5.1. Grammar**

Grammar structure is one of the common difficulties in essay writing and students often face a lot of obscurities with grammar structure such as the tenses of the sentence, part of speeches, and the subject-verb arrangements. The biggest difficulty in grammar for students may be how to choose the appropriate tenses in the sentences of paragraphs or essay writing. They often do not understand how to use tenses in English clearly, so their sentences are ungrammatical or not meaningful. Because an essay needs ample sentences and all of the sentences must be well-organized and interlinked in tenses, hence it is difficult to write a good essay in a short time. Therefore, grammar is an important factor in writing so they should pay attention to grammar structures if wanting to have good essays.

### **5.2. Vocabulary**

When encountering some difficulties in essay writing, good knowledge of vocabulary is indispensable and very necessary for students majoring in English. Vocabulary is an important component to have good essay writing students also often are afraid when they attend universities. More precisely, second-year students in English major at Tay Do University often struggle with vocabulary in writing essays and specific difficulties are word choices, lacking words, and collocation

### **5.3. Background knowledge**

Background knowledge is always a concern factor that students cannot be ignored if they learn a foreign language, especially English. Students lack background knowledge because they often dislike reading books and newspapers. Moreover, they come from the rural areas so they do not have more opportunities to get hi-tech to upgrade their language skills. So, they need practical experience to learn more because real experience and knowledge can make their writing more insightful, interesting, and emotional. For example, when the topic requires writing about a landscape where they have never been to, they can only learn through pictures in books and social networks, their essay may be unattractive or accurate. Furthermore, if the essay given topic requires students to talk about a person's creativity in many fields such as business, singing, writing, or the issues that are being noticed in

today's society, but do not know or do not have much information about them, they will be unable to write well. Therefore, to have a good essay, students need to have efficient background knowledge in various fields and have more practical experiences.

#### 5.4. Psychological factors

Problems related to psychology are barriers that many students have to face but most of them underestimate its influence. It cannot be denied that inhibition makes students' essay writing ability develop slowly, students are often afraid of making mistakes so they do not dare to express or present their ideas in the assignments which are requested in class. Furthermore, lacking motivation in writing makes English learners get bored when learning English essay writing. They can only improve their skills if they have motivation such as the deadline for submissions is coming up or they have to prepare for important exams like TOEFL, IELTS, and so on. Additionally, to be successful in writing essays is partly due to self-confidence, but students often encounter this problem and worry or be afraid of writing strange topics that they have never known or rarely had information about it.

On the whole, based on the problems mentioned in the survey, the author expects that this study will help students recognize some challenges in essay writing and thereby figure out better methods to learn English essay writing effectively.

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