

# THE DIFFICULTIES AND SOME SOLUTIONS FOR WRITING A PARAGRAPH OF ENGLISH MAJORED FRESHMEN AT TAY DO UNIVERSITY IN VIET NAM

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## ABSTRACTS

*Writing is the most important skill in learning English especially writing a paragraph. In fact, English majored freshmen at Tay Do University still have many difficulties and need some solutions for a better paragraph writing. This study aims to find out the learners' common difficulties in idea, vocabulary, and grammar then find ways to enhance their writing skill such as writing an outline, reading book and group writing. Although, these solutions are not new, they are useful and effective. The data was collect via sixty-eight students chosen to respond 16 questions in the questionnaire, and twenty writing tasks written in English by groups of three or four people. The result could provide students with valuable information so that they would be more confident and enjoyable when practicing writing and improve their writing skill positively.*

**KEY WORDS:** *writing skill, difficulty, solution, English majored freshmen, university*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays in Vietnam, all universities, colleges, and high schools choose English as an important subject, this is because English is used as one of the popular means of communication in the world. Furthermore, it is the international language of diplomacy, banking, computing, medicine, business, science, technology and many other branches in today's society. Therefore, learning English also offers the opportunities to learners who want to get good jobs.

According to Burns & Richards (2012) "English is no longer viewed as the property of the English speaking world but is an international commodity sometimes refer to as world English or English as an international language." In Viet Nam, English is considered as a second language and it is taught popularly in schools and centers. Many books, newspapers, magazines, novels, stories and documents are written in English. In addition, English is also the most commonly used language in the sciences.

When learning English, learners must develop four main skills. They are listening, speaking, reading and writing. Writing is one of the important skills, because it is a productive skill. Writing also supports learners to learn other skills better. First, writing reinforces the grammatical structures, idioms, and vocabulary. Second, when writing, students also have a chance to be adventurous with the language. Consequently, writing is considered as an important skill in the market economy age. In fact, in information technology era, people get in touch with each other most through emails, so good writers are highly evaluated at the workplace today.

However, some English learners say that writing is a difficult skill because writing is a hard work and makes learners bored when they just practice alone. Furthermore, it is difficult to write a good writing with a clear organization. It means that a good writing has to begin with an interesting introduction and then it is supported throughout the body to demonstrate the topic and followed by an impressive conclusion. Hairston (1998) points out, "People for writing is difficult may believe that writing is a mysterious process that an average person

cannot master.” Moreover, when students learn English writing, they can get some problems with thesis statement, style, content organization, etc.

Basing on these above reasons, the study “The difficulties and some solutions in writing a paragraph of English majored freshmen at the Tay Do University” was conducted with two main purposes. The first aim is to investigate the factors about some difficulties in learning writing skill among English majored freshmen at Tay Do University. It is necessary for students to know their weak points, but it is not enough. They also need to know the factors causing their weakness so that they can use the most useful ways to minimize them effectively. The second aim is to find out some realistic and helpful solutions that students studying English as a foreign language often utilize to overcome their difficulty in learning writing skill.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Writing skill in English**

#### **The definition of writing**

There are many definitions of writing given by different researchers. Each one has their own idea about writing. For example, Tribble (1996) considers writing as language skill involving not just a graphic representation of speech, but the development and presentation of thought in a structured way. Writing is considered as a physical and mental act. It means that writing requires writers to commit words or ideas and to convert ideas, think about how to express them, and organize them into statements and paragraphs. Besides, the writers have to generate ideas, organize, draft, edit, read, re-read to produce a paragraph and they try to express their ideas, feeling to impress readers in certain ways.

In addition, according to Harris (2003), “Writing is one of four aspects of language writing, reading, listening and speaking.” More specifically, Byrne (1988) informs, “Writing is a primary means of recording speech, even though it must be acknowledged as a secondary medium of communication.” In fact, writing skill is specific abilities which help writers put their thoughts into words in a meaningful form and to mentally interact with the message.

From the definition above, we can realize more clearly about what writing is. We infer that writing is the ability of human beings to express their thinking clearly, accurately, and compellingly that exist in mind through writing.

#### **The important role of writing**

Learning how to write well in either a first or a second language is one of the most difficult tasks that a learner often encounters. Learning to write well is a hard and long process that can cause anxiety for many English learners. They feel discouraged and do not want to face challenges. Nevertheless, learners believe that writing is one of the most important tools of communication, so good writing skill is valuable to career success as well as to subjects that students learn in school.

Good writing skill is critical for today’s students. According to Tribble (1996), “Writing skill is more and more important nowadays. Becoming a proficient writer is one of the major objectives of many students, especially for those who want to become members of international business, administrative or academic communities.” According to Rao (2007) points out that, “Writing strengthens learners’ learning, thinking and reflecting on the English language in their academics.” Writing is the ability to use pen and paper to convey ideas through symbols so that the representation on the paper reflecting the writer’s messages can be expressed to other people. Together with the current trend of globalization, having the ability to write successfully in English is becoming more and more beneficial.

Besides, good writing skill is also necessary to find many good professions and success at the workplace. In short, good writing skill plays a significant role in academic success and occupational field. According to Black (2005), “Writing is a tool for success.” Writing skill is more and more crucial because communication range not only happens for students in Vietnam but also rises up throughout the world with various standards of language. Therefore, to get success in school and promotion in job, they need to have good writing skill and from now on, they should invest time to develop their writing skill.

### **Definition of paragraph writing**

There are various definitions of a paragraph but in general a paragraph can be understood including topic sentence and supporting sentences to make the main idea clearer. According to Alice & Ann (1996), "A paragraph is basic unit of organization in writing in which a group of some related sentences develop one main idea. A paragraph can be as short as one sentence or as long as ten sentences. The number of sentences is unimportant. However, the paragraph should be long enough to develop the main idea clearly".

From that, a paragraph can be understood that a paragraph is a self-contained unit of a discourse in writing dealing with a particular point or a single idea. It consists of one or series of sentences closely related to one another and devoted to the development of one topic. It is marked by indentation at the beginning, pause of various lengths and a break in the dot at the end. A good paragraph should have a topic sentence related supporting details and a concluding sentence. A good topic sentence should contain a topic, a main idea, and the controlling idea. Supporting details are sentences used to support the main idea stated in the topic sentence. A concluding sentence should review the topic sentence and give some final thought about the subject.

### **2.2 Problems in writing a paragraph**

Writing is an art because it is a great tool to express human beings' ideas, emotion and point of view. In addition, writing helps each country keep important materials about history, culture, society, etc. In the era of globalization, writing becomes one of the most popular means of communication in the world. However, students have to face so many difficulties in writing. One of the most popular difficulties is that students lack many of the basic components of writing such as ideas, vocabulary, and grammar structures.

#### **Ideas**

Idea in writing means the issue or the problem that the writers have to depend on it in their writing. Ideas in writing refer to two kinds: the main idea and the supporting idea. The main idea is the most important information that tells more about the overall idea of a paragraph. It may be stated directly or it may be implied. In addition, main idea is what the writers have to follow in all their work. Moreover, the main idea is reinforced by a series of other points or details that support the premise of the main idea. These are called supporting ideas. The supporting ideas are some discussing ideas to make the main ideas obvious.

When writing about something, students have to find out the main idea first and it usually appears in the topic. Then students may write about this idea from general to specific. If the writers want to write in a good way, they have to identify the main idea and the support idea carefully.

Lack of ideas is a factor that students usually meet in process writing. Lack of idea is lack of plan, thought, or suggestion, especially about what to do in a particular situation. It is a cause that writer feel hard to write well.

Moreover, incoherence is also element other in learning writing that students met. Coherence is one of the characteristics of a good writing because it makes the ideas flow continuously, Wyrick (2002). Incoherence is lack of cohesion or clarity or organization and it is also nonsense that is simply incoherent and unintelligible. Incoherence has strong influence on students' learning English writing. Thus, if students want to write better, they need to pay attention to two elements that are lack of idea and incoherence.

#### **Vocabulary**

There are many different definitions of vocabulary. Linse (2005) write, "Vocabulary is the collection of words that an individual knows". Vocabulary is the glue that holds stories, ideas and content together and that facilitates making comprehension accessible. Also, Richards & Renandya (2002) suggest, "Vocabulary is a core component of language proficiency and provides much of the basic for how well learners speak, listen, read and write". Vocabulary is a central element of language proficiency and contributes much of the basis for how students speak, listen, read and write. Vocabulary is an important part in writing, because English learners have to use vocabulary to communication with everyone about ideas, thoughts, and emotions to those around them. If students do not know the meaning of words, they will not be able to write anything.

Besides, improving vocabulary can help the students to learn writing better. However, the English writers usually choose wrong words or confuse in word choice when they write. It becomes the popular errors. If students confuse in word choice, they will not be able to write good and make readers misunderstand the content.

Vocabulary influence on successful writing. Because the writing process is linked to the reading process, and the reading process is heavily dependent upon vocabulary, it naturally follows that the writing process is likewise dependent. Besides, words are the writer's most important tools, and vocabulary development must be important and ongoing part of classroom learning. Good writing is all about good word choice and proper ordering of those words. The word has to be appropriate for the context and use words the way they are commonly used. In addition, word choice is mistake in vocabulary that students usually meet in writing. Word choice is a term used to describe the words chosen by an author, using words that are very specific and descriptive of exactly what students want to say. The meaning of the word choice is similar to the meaning of the word options.

Beside that, word spelling is also another factor. Spelling is the process or activity of writing or naming the letters of a word and spelling is writing or stating the letters and diacritics of a word. Thus, spelling is very important in learning English writing.

In summary, vocabulary is an important factor to learners. Students with lower vocabulary level will have difficulty about writing fluency. If they have limited vocabulary, their paragraph length will not be long. Vocabulary proficiency will be a predictor of a paragraph quality. Thus, enhancing vocabulary knowledge might be one of the useful ways to write excellent English paragraph.

### **Grammar**

Similar to vocabulary and ideas, grammar is a useful tool in process writing. Grammar has an important role in learning English writing because grammar is inescapable it is the backbone of any language and must be understood in order for one to writing effectively. Moreover, grammar is a tool that students can use to communicate their message properly. If students' grammar is poor, they risk blurring their message.

There are many ways to describe the grammar of a language. According to James (2005), "Grammar is a study of the language and describes the way of putting words together to make meaningful sentences." Grammar is the structural foundation of our ability to express ourselves. The more we are aware of how it works, the more we can monitor the meaning and effectiveness of the way others and we use language. It can help foster precision, detect ambiguity, and exploit the richness of expression available in English. In general, we can simply define grammar as the set of rules to make word in order and meaningful.

Grammar is one of the keys that effect writing. When writing in a grammatically incorrect manner, it can make confusing as trying to understand a foreign language. However, if students want to write language well, they know grammatical knowledge clearly. Words, phrases, or sentences are meaningless if they do not put together in an appropriate order. When using ungrammatical sentences, people are not able to convey their messages to other people clearly and effectively. Grammar itself cannot lead learners to better writing, but students have a good knowledge of grammar, and it helps to allow for more successful in the learning writing. In brief, grammar is the important factor in process writing that learners have to attention.

Tense is the most important part in grammar because it is signals of time. One problem in this area is failure to maintain tense continuity. Godfrey (1980) defined maintaining tense continuity as "once a tense is used representing a particular temporal reference central to the topic, the tense will continue until the topic with which it is associated is exhausted. In addition, verb tenses influence the meaning of a sentence when it is conveyed with different tenses. Besides, it keeps writing coherent for English learners. Tense is a grammatical category that helps locate a situation in time. When learners are writing, they want to be as clear as possible so that people can interpret their words, and part of that is keeping in time.

Part of speech is also the part in grammar. In fact, learning the English parts of speech is necessary if students want to learn grammar. A part of speech is a linguistic category of words. Some parts of speech are articles, nouns, pronouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, conjunctions, prepositions, and interjections. In addition, the parts of speech are important because they show students how the words relate to each other. Moreover, if we change the role (part of speech) of a word, the meaning can become completely different.

In short, grammar is the second essential thing in the writing process. Failure to master tenses, and part of speech easily leads to many difficulties as well as discourages students. Therefore, students need to master basic grammar to avoid those problems and to write better.

### 2.3 Some suggestions to improve writing

To write better, learners have to satisfy many requirements of idea, vocabulary, and grammar, and contents, etc. However, these requirements cause many difficulties for them. Among these, the most common problems related to idea, vocabulary, and grammar. Therefore, students should have some ways to solve those difficulties in writing a paragraph. Following these is some suggestions for solutions.

#### Write an outline

Writing an outline is one of the methods to improve idea, which help the students to improve their writing skill. An outline is a great way to organize thoughts that it can prepare a paragraph, or even a study guide. Besides writing an outline also helps learners keep track of their information and help learners organize their ideas.

There are many reasons to create an outline for a paragraph; but in general, it may be helpful to create an outline when the students want to show the logical ordering of information. For creative writing, an outline may organize the various plot threads and keep track of character traits. It is the primary reasons for creating an outline.

When the freshmen organize the idea, they can start defining the main points and sub points of their paper, and create the outline. The following describes the parts of an outline.

+ Thesis: The thesis is the main idea of the paper. Since all the information in the outline supports the thesis should list first.

+ Main Points: After the introduction (or after the thesis) learners should list all main points that support the thesis.

+ Sub points: A sub-point is any piece information that supports a main point. If a main point does not have two supporting points, it may not need to be a main point but instead a sub-point.

+ Conclusion: Concluding sentence is usually a single sentence, but some paragraphs may require more than one concluding sentence. The conclusion is usually placed at the end of paragraph. It summarizes or restates the main point made.

#### Read book

Reading book relating to topics help freshmen to become better readers, and most importantly, better writes. Beside that, the solution for read book is very necessary for students to improve vocabulary in learning English writing. Furthermore, reading book gives learners a lot of information about new words. In fact, reading book is the key to learning vocabulary.

Reading book is an important factor for students to learn and retain vocabulary in the most natural way. Using reading book, students would be active in creating semantic connections between old words and new words. This point will help students to increase a large amount of their vocabulary.

In addition, reading book is very useful because if students read a book and they get vocabulary that they do not know, and then they can check it by dictionary. Thus, students automatically learn words they did not know before, including spelling. If students have to write a paragraph, they can use the words that they read in book. It will make a good paragraph. Moreover, English learners can memorize things better when they read a book.

#### Group writing

Group writing is gathered from two to three or many people. English learners should use group writing strategy in writing. It has many advantages for learners such as group writing not only brings effective for students in the writing process, but it also saves much time and improves relationship among students. When group writing, freshmen will write faster because they have many ideas, vocabulary, and grammar in writing. Therefore, freshmen will save much time. Moreover, group writing also has benefits for students such as grammar check, or additional ideas, etc. Thus, group writing is popularly used now in young people especially English majored freshmen at Tay Do University.

To sum up, group writing is one of a necessary solution that students should apply to learn in learning English writing. It helps students build creativity and skill, as well as overcome their fear of writing poorly.

### 3. RESEARCHER METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Research aims

Many English majored freshmen Tay Do University think that writing is a difficult skill to master and they worry about learning it. For this reason, the research aims at finding out factors that cause difficulty in learning writing. Moreover, this survey also wants to find some solutions that students often use to minimize difficulty in learning this skill.

#### 3.2 Research questions

This study was conducted with the purpose of dealing with the following questions:

1. What are factors that cause difficulty in learning writing a paragraph of English majored freshmen at Tay Do University?
2. What are solutions students often use to overcome difficulty in learning English writing?

#### 3.3 Research design

This research was designed to find the answers of the research questions. Questionnaire was used to gather the information. Also, students' writing tasks were collected to support the questionnaire results and to gain more insights about the difficulties in writing.

#### 3.4 Participants

The population of the research consisted of sixty-eight English majored freshmen at Tay Do University. The ages of these students are from 18 to 20. They have learnt English for about 8 years. Vietnamese is the first language that all of them learnt and English is considered as their foreign language. Students were studying in the same environment. They still had different difficulties in idea organization, vocabulary as well as grammar.

#### 3.5 Instruments

Questionnaire and students' writing tasks were used as instruments in this survey. The questionnaire would be delivered for sixty-eight students and seventeen students' writing tasks were collected and analyzed.

#### Questionnaire

The questionnaire is used in this study for many reasons. First, the questionnaire can be delivered to many participants at the same time and collect the information quickly. Second, it helps to gather a large amount of information in a short period of time.

The questionnaire included 16 questions in total. They focused on three main factors: student's English background, some common problems and the ways students do to improve writing skill. Students had about 20 minutes to read the questions and gave suitable answers to their opinions.

**Table 1: The gist of questionnaire**

Question/Statement	Summary of the question's/statement's content
From 1 to 4	Students' background
From 5 to 8	Factors causing difficulty in learning writing
From 9 to 16	Solutions to improve writing skill

#### Students' writing tasks

The writing samples were 15 paragraphs written in English by groups of two or three English majored freshmen. These paragraphs were around 120 to 150 words. It was about "The importance of health".

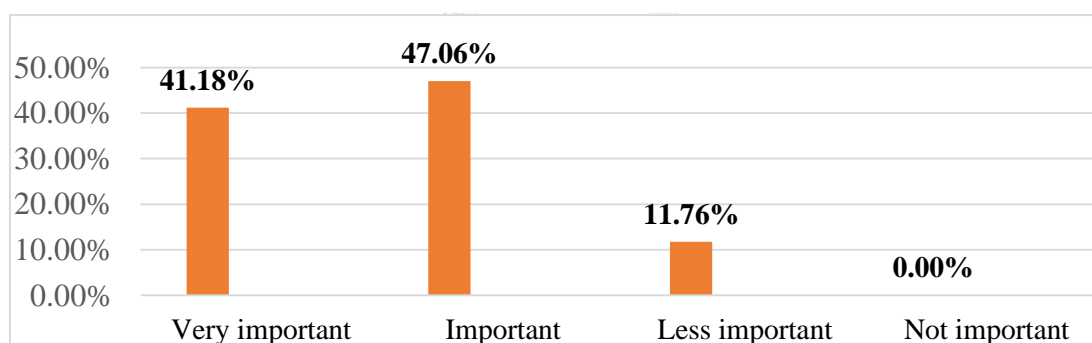
The writing samples for the study were seventeen paragraphs written in English by first year English majored students. These paragraphs were from 80 to 150 words each. The topics were “The important of health” and “Some traditional ways to treat the flu”. The participants were taught how to write a well-organized paragraph and they were given many ideas relating to the topic. They had one week to write before their paragraphs were collected for analysis.

#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the questionnaire and students’ writing tasks, many valuable and reliable data from the participants about personal ideas as well as their perception related to writing skill were collected. The results were presented as follow.

##### 4.1. Students’ background

###### The students’ attitude toward writing skill



**Figure 1: Students’ opinions about learning English writing**

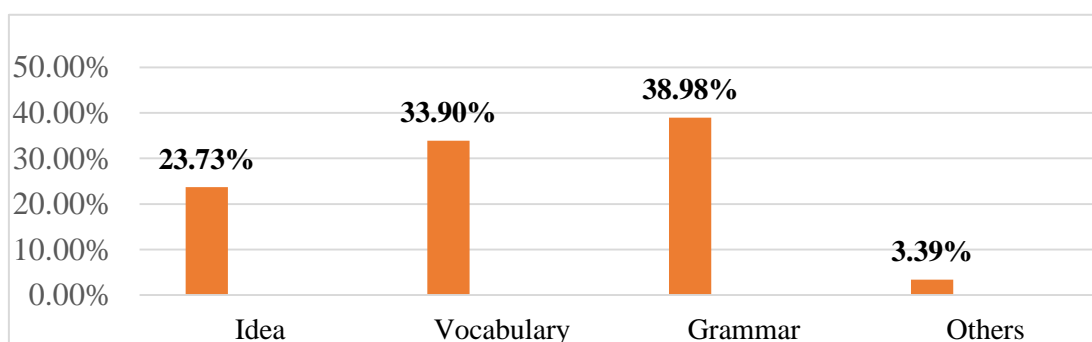
41.18% of students who agreed that learning writing in English is very important, and 47.06% agreed that writing is an important skill. Through writing students can express their ideas and take note effectively what are being said. In addition, learning English writing helps them improve idea, vocabulary, and grammar. Meanwhile, 11.76% of participants thought that learning writing is less important. In short, most of learners thought that learning writing in English is important.

**Table 2: Students’ reflection in their difficulty on writing skill**

Do you get any difficulty in writing skill?	Percentage
Yes	94.12%
No	5.88%

Writing skill is also an essential key to support and help other skills such as reading, listening and speaking. However, it is not easy to be good at writing because it requires good ideas and grammar structures. In addition, written language takes on many different registers depending on the function of the written words. For this reason, when being asked, “Do you get any difficulty writing skill?” there were 94.12% of the students answering difficult. In contract, there were only 5.88% of students answered that writing was an easy skill.

#### 4.2 Students' difficulties in learning writing

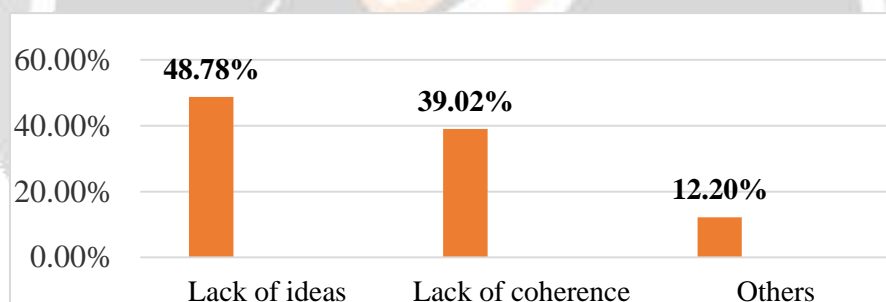


**Figure 2: Students' problems in learning writing**

Learning any subject has its own difficulties and writing is too. The figure showed that the number of students who met difficult in writing process were quiet many. The proof was that 23.73% had the problem with idea (lack of idea and lack of coherence). Furthermore, 33.90% stated that they met problem about vocabulary. Students did not have much vocabulary (word spelling and word choice). In addition, 38.98% thought that the biggest problem in writing was grammatical (part of speech, and verb tenses). On the other hand, 3.39% did not face idea, vocabulary, and grammar problems.

#### Ideas

Idea is one of the difficult in writing skill (23.73%). Therefore, when being asked, "What are your idea problems in the process of writing?", 48.78% chose lack of idea is the popular element of idea problems in writing. Moreover, 39.02% thought that incoherence. Only 12.20% did not face on lack of idea, and incoherence problems (others).



**Figure 3: Idea problems**

Almost the students agreed that ideas affected their writing heavily. Therefore, they could not write a good paragraph, or they just used some available ideas that they read in books or got from their teacher. Lacking of idea and incoherence are two main problems that students usually met in looking for ideas.

Example of students' error in lack of ideas:

"Health is very important for everyone. When you are healthy, you will be happy. The first, if you have without good health, you will not study well." Freshmen did not have many ideas; they had only idea about health. Writers should have more supporting ideas about good and bad health.

Example of students' error in incoherence:

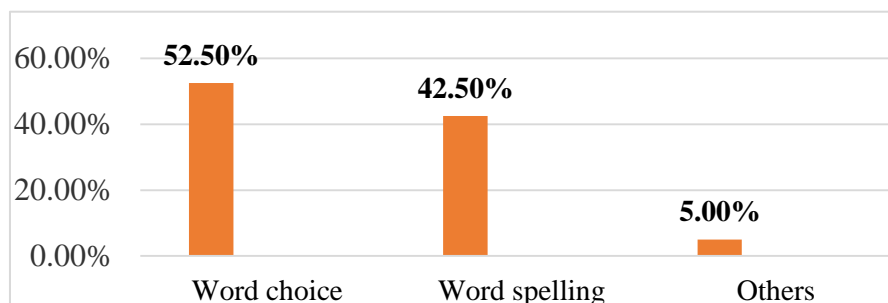
"If you are unhealthy, you cannot enjoy your lives. You have bad health, you will spend a lot of money on treatment. In short, health is very important, you need to protect it." Students did not use reasonable conjunctions to connect sentences in a paragraph, their paragraph was incoherence. They should use more connectors such as and, in addition, furthermore, moreover, etc.

In brief, through the result of data analysis, it could be seen that some students often wrote irrelevant idea and this led them to a bad writing.



## Vocabulary

In writing process, vocabulary was ranked as the second difficulty (33.90%). Word spelling and word choice are two popular mistakes of students in vocabulary difficulties. According to the questionnaire, 52.50% agreed that word choice was a factor affecting writing. Besides, word spelling was accepted by 42.50%, and 5% chose other problems.



**Figure 4: Vocabulary problems**

Basing on figure 4, it was seen that word choice was one of the big problems in learning English writing. In fact, many words had the same meaning so they were very difficult for learners to use or choose the word to write. Moreover, word spelling was also difficult in writing a paragraph since the arrangement of the letters in the word have nearly similar. In addition, students did not remember all of the rules of the word as extra "s", "es" for plural nouns. Therefore, students could write wrong spelling words. The table below showed some errors of learners in vocabulary when they wrote a paragraph.

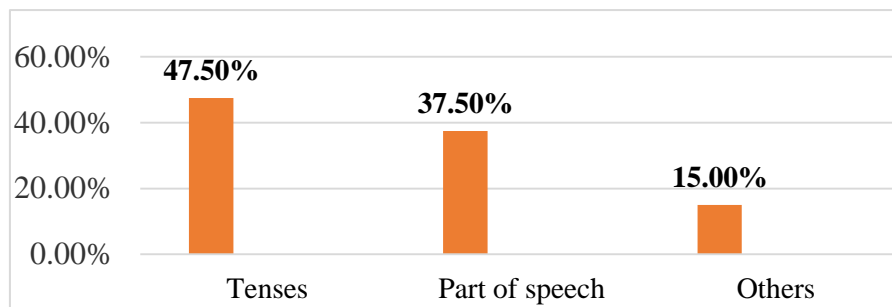
**Table 3: Example of students' errors in vocabulary difficulties**

Error in vocabulary	Identifying errors	Correct sentences
<b>Error in using word choice</b>	When we sick, we should <u>drink</u> medicine.	When we sick, we should <u>take</u> medicine.
<b>Error in using word spelling</b>	To <u>sup</u> up, when we have good health, we will accomplish the <u>dreames</u> and enjoy life. If you do not have a good health, you <u>make</u> waste of money on treatment.	To <u>sum</u> up, when we have good health, we will accomplish the <u>dreams</u> and enjoy life. If you do not have a good health, you <u>may</u> waste of money on treatment.
<b>Error others</b>	On <u>other the</u> hand, we have a good health, we can study or work well.	On <u>the other</u> hand, we have a good health, we can study or work well.

To sum up, word spelling and word choice are big obstacles of students in writing process because lacking vocabulary or choosing unsuitable words make students interrupted writing and cause of wrong writing. Consequently, word spelling and word choice are necessary and important for learners to write and help them to have good and smooth writing scripts.

## Grammar

38.98% of the participants (the highest percentage) thought that the biggest problem in writing was grammatical structures. Besides ideas and vocabulary, the freshmen often make many grammatical errors in which verb tense and part of speech are considered as the most typical mistakes. After collecting students' ideas from the questionnaire, the finding showed that 47.50% had problems with verb tenses, 37.50% thought that part of speech was the popular element of grammar problems in writing. Only 15% chose other problems



**Figure 5: Grammar problems**

Grammatical knowledge plays an important role in a paragraph writing process. If learners do not have enough grammatical knowledge, they make mistakes easily in writing a paragraph. In addition, if learners are not good at grammar, it is hard for them to express what they want to convey to readers. There are many grammatical errors in writing, but students’ popular mistakes are tense and part of speech.

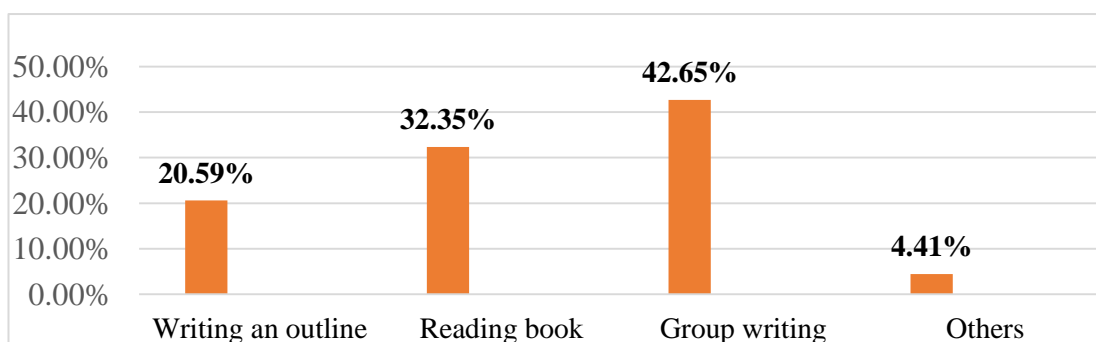
**Table 4: Example of students’ errors in grammar difficulties**

Error in grammar	Identifying errors	Correct sentences
<b>Error in using tense</b>	Vitamin C will <u>helps</u> you strengthen the resistance. Traditional treatments <u>is</u> very popular.	Vitamin C <u>will help</u> you strengthen the resistance. Traditional treatments <u>are</u> very popular.
<b>Error in using part of speech</b>	Ex: <u>Healthy</u> is the most valuable thing in our lives. If you have a good health, the life will be <u>wonderfully</u> .	Ex: <u>Health</u> is the most valuable thing in our lives. If you have a good health, the life will be <u>wonderful</u> .
<b>Error others</b>	Ex: Health is <u>an important</u> .	Ex: Health is <u>important</u> .

Tense is very necessary in writing process. Students writing is frequently marked with incorrect tenses that make the writing difficult for the readers to read and understand. Also, part of speech is also necessary. Each part of speech explains not what the word is, but how the word is used. In brief, through the result of data analysis, the English learners could see that verb tense and part of speech are factors influencing the improvement of learning English writing as well as studying foreign language. The students can choose suitable ways to learn and increase their level.

**4.3 Some suggestions to improve writing a paragraph**

Many solutions help students to improve learning English writing. Nevertheless, there are three common



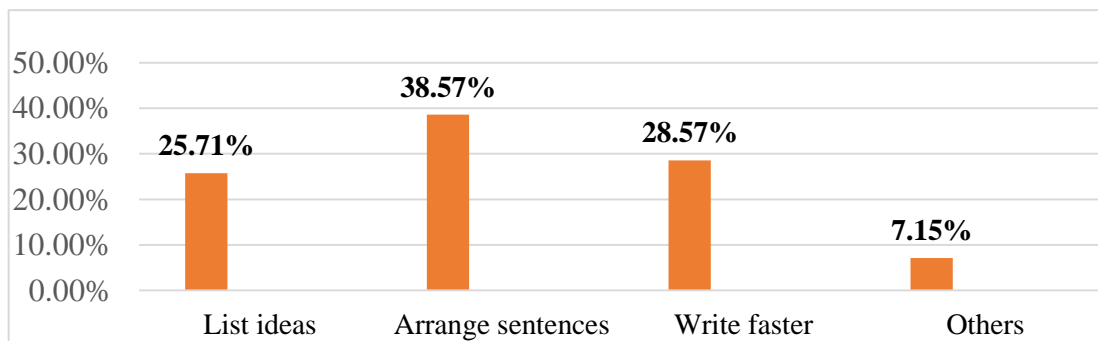
elements. They are writing an outline, reading book and group writing.

**Figure 6: Useful ways for writing**

Writing needs more solutions to improve it. When students write, they do not have clues as body language and intonation to support what they want to convey. There are many suggestions to improve writing. However, three elements that are writing an outline, reading book, and group writing are the popular elements helping the students to improve their learning English writing. In detail, 20.59% of the freshmen mentioned to writing an outline, 32.35% chose reading book, 42.65% said that group writing was the best way, and only 4.41% of English learners thought about other solutions.

**Writing an outline**

Before freshmen write a paragraph, they should write an outline (20.59% of freshmen agreed). When writing an outline, they can improve idea better. Some benefits help English learners such as writing faster, arranging sentences more logically and listing many ideas. In detail, 28.57% chose writing faster, 38.57% thought that they would arrange sentences better. In addition, listing ideas was chosen by 25.71%, and there were 7.15% who thought about other ways. The result showed that writing an outline was very necessary to improve writing a paragraph.



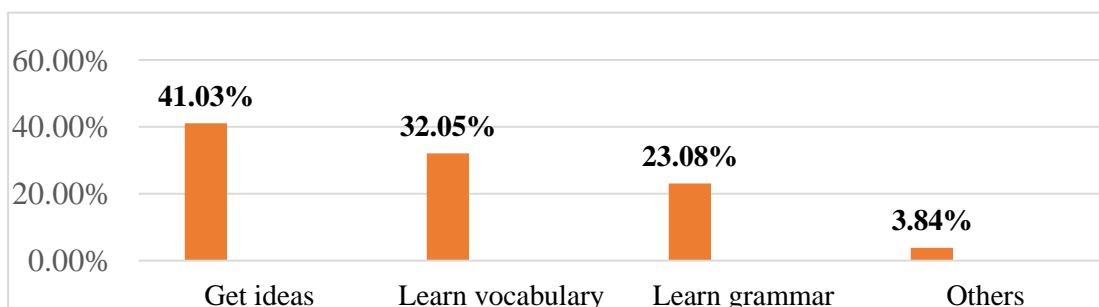
**Figure 7: The benefits of writing an outline**

Writing an outline is beneficial during writing a paragraph, the reason is that it helps freshmen organize their thoughts. Outlines enable freshmen list ideas and examples to support the main idea as well as visualize whether they have included enough information for a paragraph. Idea organization makes the difference between a good paragraph and a poor one. A student may have some great ideas, but if those ideas are unorganized and poorly worded, it becomes difficult to read and despite the great ideas, it is not a good paragraph. Furthermore, when writing an outline, writers can move information around and arrange logical sentences. Besides, outlining actually helps to write more quickly and effectively.

**Reading book**

Reading book is the second way to have a better writing (32.35%). In fact, vocabulary is an essential part which has a strong influence in students’ writing process. If freshmen want to write a paragraph, they must have abundant vocabulary. 91.18% participants who were strong agree and agree that vocabulary was necessary to their writing.

Freshmen should read book before writing. Especially, they read books relating to the given topics. It has many benefits such as increasing vocabulary, expanding vocabulary, improving spelling, having many ideas, and so on. 41.03% said that increasing vocabulary was one of the best way to get ideas. Beside that, 32.05% thought that reading book before writing helped to expand vocabulary to write. In addition, 23.08% mentioned that they could improve grammar. Only 3.84% thought that there were other ways.



**Figure 8: The benefits of reading books**

Reading book is one of the efficient solution for English learners to improve vocabulary in writing. When learners read book, they will get more ideas and remember many new words, so they will increase vocabulary and improve spelling. Vocabulary expansion is one of the benefits when students read book. Reading book helps students know how to use new words in the context. In addition, if learners want to have vocabulary in different fields, they can read books to find information.

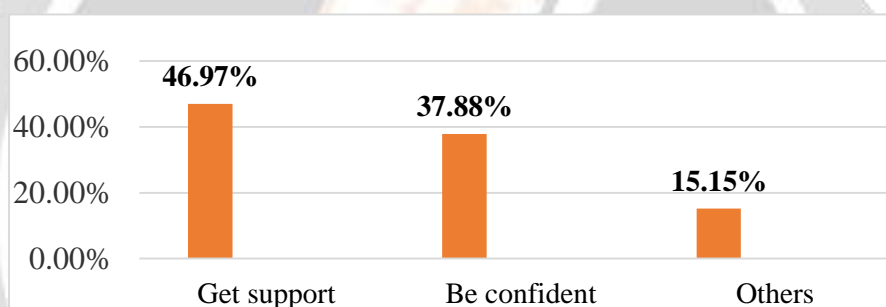
Furthermore, reading book is one of the important steps to learn grammar structures; it is also the best way to check on how to use grammar that they have already learned. The English learners can read whatever interests them; it helps them not feel bored in reading books also.

In short, reading book has many benefits. The learners not only develop writing skill but also others skills in English.

### Group writing

Almost students agreed that group writing was very necessary in English writing process. English learners can meet difficult when they start the writing process, and group writing is a strong influence in writing for English learners. As mentioned above 42.65% (the highest percentage) said that group writing was the best way. In fact, freshmen have just entered the university environment, they do not have much experience to study, and then group writing can bring many benefits for them in improving grammar structures like students can find and fix the grammar error for each other, and learn some good point of views from other students in their group.

46.97% said that group writing would help them to get support from other participants in the group. Besides, 37.88% thought that they could be more confident and 15.15% thought about other advices.



**Figure 9: The benefits of group writing**

In fact, group writing can associate with write an outline to support the freshmen to improve in learning English writing quickly and effectively. They can be divided into groups to have many words and ideas about the writing. Moreover, group members are able to provide, help, and support when a member in group meets difficulty in the writing process.

In conclusion, the result of the questionnaire showed that the English majored freshmen at Tay Do University met many obstacles in a writing process. Through the result of data analysis, it could be seen that writing an outline, reading a book, and group writing had an important role in developing writing skill. The students could choose these solutions to learn and increase their writing level.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Basing on the findings of the questionnaire, nearly 100% of the students admitted that writing was important. This demonstrated that they realized the importance of good writing skill to success in school and workplace. Students had positive attitude towards learning writing. However, it was not easy to become good writers because learners had to face with many difficulties in writing process. Among these problems, the idea, vocabulary and grammar were three main issues that students needed to consider to improve in their writing.

Firstly, the ideas (23.73%) had a strong effect on students' English writing. If learners want to write better, they will find many good ideas. It is very difficult to understand the writer's intention when the main idea and the supporting idea are not clear. In addition, students can see that when reading the sentences, other people can misunderstand what the writer's intention if they are not clearly written. Secondly, the vocabulary (33.90%) was also an effective factor in writing paragraph. Students said that vocabulary obstructed them in writing because they did not have enough vocabulary or wrong word spelling when they wrote. Finally, the grammar (38.98%)

was a biggest problem that learners often met in process writing. They usually used incorrect verb tenses and some simple grammar mistakes such as part of speech, word order, and passive voice.

From the above problems, some suitable solutions were suggest and through the open question. All of the students admitted that they find out ways to improve better writing. Many students agreed that they should write an outline (20.59%) before they wrote a paragraph. In addition, reading book relating to the topic (32.35%) also helped students improve and enhance vocabulary. Moreover, most of students thought that they should be in group writing (42.65%); this helped them to raise and overcome their mistakes. Besides, watching TV, practice writing and so on were other ways (4.41%) to improve writing skill.

First, writing an outline is a good instrument that helps learners improve their writing skill, especially it helps student improve about idea in writing. If students write an outline before they write a perfect paragraph, they will have many good ideas and create better coherence for a paragraph. Next, reading book is a popular and easy ways to improve vocabulary. Reading book brings students vocabulary knowledge such as form of the word, synonym, antonym, and word class, etc. In addition, students can learn new vocabulary, avoid wrong word spelling and use word choice better from reading book. Lastly, group writing also creates opportunities for students to correct mistakes by themselves thanks to help of their friends and they have a good memory about mistakes they made then can avoid them later. In addition, they can learn from their friends new grammar or their friend scan help them repair or support about writing when they work in group. It equips and develops their English foundation and helps them be more confident.

In brief, doing this research, it was hoped to find the difficulties in writing of English majored freshmen at Tay Do University, and this research could help students recognize their weaknesses in writing process so that they could find appropriate resolutions for improvement. If freshmen have a strong passion in writing and try to overcome the difficulties, they become good writers. Vietnamese have the proverb, "No hard work just fear of failure." Success comes to those who persevere to overcome the challenge.

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