

Difficulties in Writing Skill of Master of Business Administration at Tay Do University, in Vietnam



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ABSTRACT: The study “Difficulties in writing skill of Master of Business Administration at Tay Do University, in Vietnam” was conducted to examine the reasons why learners met the difficulties in writing. Especially, it investigated the difficulties and aimed to help learners overcome the difficulties relating to writing. Three instruments were employed to collect data. First, 50 participants in three classes - Master of Business Administration - course 8 and 9 responded 10 questionnaires with 21 closed statements. Second, 10 out of participants were invited randomly in these classes to conduct a paper interview to supply more information to make clear and prove the difficulties that learners had in writing essays. The data were analyzed by using descriptive approach. Moreover, this research gave a clear and specific view about difficulties in writing faced by Master of Business Administration at Tay Do University.

KEYWORDS: writing essay, difficulty, master of business administration, university

1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents in details the rationale of this research, the research aims, the research questions, and the organization of the study.

1.1 Rationale

In the trend of globalization today, English communication is very important. There are several factors that make the English language essential to communicate. First of all, it is the most common foreign language. Throughout the world, when people from different nationalities want to communicate, they commonly use English. That is the reason why people call English the language of communication. English connects people from all over the world. Vietnamese have also recognized the importance of learning English. Actually, English is a new door to help people integrate. In modern life, English is also considered the universal language for business. People have the option to apply for jobs requiring English. Besides, using English is an effective tool to promote social, economic development as well as improve cultural exchange between Vietnamese and other nations in the world. If learning English well, people can enjoy and get a lot of knowledge. Furthermore, English also plays an important role in education. If learners have good English, there will be the best way to improve life.

Boonpattanaporn (2005) commented the importance of writing. He said that “*Writing is one of the necessary means for people to express their thinking or emotion and to communicate precisely.*” Besides, in the aspect of a subject or skill, writing is also appreciated highly in comparison with reading, listening and speaking. Writing is one of the most difficult tasks because writing requires the writer to master and use a complex combination of language skills, from vocabulary and spelling to the ability to organize ideas logically. In addition, it can also reflect the competence of thinking, organizing and expressing.

Writing is important because it requires writers to have basic necessary knowledge and skills. Writing is not an easy work, and it is sure that writing is harder to writers who use English as the second or foreign language countries like Vietnam. Most of learners reveal that they always get problems in writing. Grammar and vocabulary are the most noticeable problems; besides, a lack of unity in organization, a lack of coherence that writers have to confront.

Although learners are Master of Business Administration, they still complain that they face difficulties when writing. It is complained that it is not easy to write in English. Perceiving the importance of writing skill and difficulties that learners are confronting, the research "Difficulties in writing skill of Master of Business Administration at Tay Do University, in Vietnam " is carried out to find out the difficulties relating writing essays of Master of Business Administration at Tay Do University.

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1.2 Research aims and research question

1.2.1 Aims of the study

The research aimed at investigating the difficulties in writing skill of Master of Business Administration at Tay Do University to help learners recognize their own difficulties. Besides, this study was expected that learners could restrict their difficulties and improve their writing skill positively.

1.2.2 Research question

The research was conducted to deal with the research question: “What are the difficulties in writing skill of Master of Business Administration at Tay Do University?”

1.3 The significance of the study

Writing is not only an important content in learning process, but also a necessary skill in working. Problems in writing lead to many difficulties in different fields. The study shows a clear and specific view about difficulties in writing confronted by Master of Business Administration at Tay Do University. The results will give a general view to instructors about problems learners are facing in the writing process as well as help learners have the perception on their problems themselves. In other words, the findings of this study will hopefully be beneficial for instructors in their teaching and for learners in learning writing. Finding the problems, the study helps learners improve writing skill, and achieve academic success.

1.4 The organization of the study

This study consists of five chapters including:

Chapter One - Introduction - presents background information and reasons for conducting the research. Besides, this chapter also introduces the rationale, significance of the research as well as the organization.

Chapter Two - Literature Review - includes the definitions and the importance of writing. The chapter gives definitions, types of the essay, and the difficulties in writing as well.

Chapter Three - Research Methodology - shows the research methods including characteristics such as research design, participants, instruments and data collection for the study.

Chapter Four - Results and Discussion - reports the findings of this research to figure out the participants' common difficulties in writing. Then, the discussion will follow to wrap up the chapter.

Chapter Five - Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations - summarizes the findings of the study. This chapter also presents the implications as well as the recommendations for further research related to the current one.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Definition of writing skill

Writing particularly in a foreign language is one of the most complicated skills in learning and practicing the language. Sokolik (2003) described writing as a combination of physical and mental acts. It is a physical act of committing ideas to a message and the mental act of generating and organizing ideas into paragraphs. Writing is also viewed as a process as Hyland (2003) explained writing as “A *socio-cognitive activity which involves skills in planning and drafting as well as knowledge of language, contexts and audiences*”. Besides, writing involves many different aspects. They are handwriting, spelling, punctuation, sentence construction, organizing a text and paragraphing, and so on. All aspects are carefully considered by the writers.

Writing skill is one of language skills that is very important to be mastered in learning English as a foreign language. Tribble (1996) considered writing as language skill involving not just a graphic representation of speech, but the development and presentation of thought in a structured way. It means that writing requires writers to commit words or ideas to express them, and organize them into statements and paragraphs. Besides, writing is a process and a product. The writers have to generate ideas, organize, draft, edit, read, re-read to produce a product - a paragraph expressing ideas, feeling to impress the readers in certain ways.

Therefore, good writing skills are essential for effective communication. The better the writers write, the more easily the readers will understand. Learning to write well takes time and practice. Petty and Jensen (1980) defined that, “*Writing refers to the mental and physical act of forming letters and words, but it is much more than that; it is putting words into sentences, and paragraphs, spelling words correctly, and observing conventions in written forms and more.*” In fact, skill in writing is an acquired art, which is learnt from practice and experience. Besides, writing is a means of communication made possible through graphics symbols, arranged according to certain conventions to form words which in turn are arranged to form sentences. The sentences are logically and grammatically connected to form a piece of writing.

2.2 The importance of writing

Writing is considered the most important language skill that writers require for their personal development and academic success (Mukulu et al. 2006). Similarly, Rao (2007) pointed out that “*Writing strengthens learners' learning, thinking and reflecting on the English language in their academics.*” In addition, Ahmed (2010) noted that competence in writing helps learners perform

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well in the academic programmes. Moreover, being proficient in writing in English will enable learners to be professionals and active researchers in the future.

Firstly, learners with good writing abilities have an edge over the others. They generally score better than the others as they can effectively convey what they have learnt in the written way.

Secondly, whichever course learners pursue, the importance of writing well cannot be undermined. For e.g. an engineering student should have knowledge of technical writing as he may be required to write technical documents while training and after joining a job. Similarly, a science student might be required to write research papers. For writing, it is necessary that he is able to put forth the right facts and information. Also, the research papers should be free from spelling and grammar errors. If learners are good writers, then they will be able to accomplish this task properly.

Lastly, good writing skills are also required for getting a job. These days, the employers look for good verbal and writing abilities of candidates. Every profession requires effective communication, and good-writing skills are a must. These are required for making reports and are handy for communicating through emails. In short, if writing skills are not very good, learners must learn these skills since that would be useful for studies and future professions.

2.3 Definition of essay writing

Langan (2004) showed a simpler definition of essay by comparing between a paragraph and an essay; the author claimed that “an essay does the same thing as a paragraph does”, 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”. Although there are many terms and patterns used in the definition of essay, the core elements are similar.

In brief, it can be summed up that an essay writing is a piece of writing about a particular topic. It consists of a group of connected paragraphs which serves one of the purposes, e.g. explore, discuss, analyze and compare.

Meyer (2005) suggested that an essay is composed of three parts: introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion.

Introduction

The introduction is the first paragraph that opens the essay and gives information about the topic. It is supposed to attract the reader's attention and also present the main idea of the essay or the writer's purpose. The quality of the introduction determines whether the essay gets read in the first place. A good introduction gives the reader a first impression and encourages the reader to read on.

An introduction normally begins with a general, interest-grabbing remark that will identify the topic, establish the tone and lead the reader from the broad view of the topic to the intention of the writing. It usually ends with a thesis statement containing the main idea of the essay.

Body paragraphs

The body of the essay supports the main point of the thesis statement. These paragraphs clarify or explain the thesis statement by giving facts, statistics, examples, illustrations or descriptions. Each paragraph comprises a topic sentence and supporting details.

The supporting details in an essay should be arranged in order so that the reader do not get confused. There are three widely used patterns - chronological order, spatial order and order of importance. The writer can employ one or combination of these patterns to arrange supporting details.

Conclusion

Conclusion is the final paragraph that briefly summarizes the main points in the essay or gives a prediction, solution or recommendation. It concludes matters and should create the final impression, influence the reader's reaction to the essay and also leave the sense of closure.

Reid (1988) and Brandon (2005) suggested that the writer should avoid too long summary if the essay is short and should avoid new idea since the reader will expect clarification and also avoid apology about the quality of the essay.

Good writing skills are also required coherence. Coherence is the relationship between paragraphs by linking ideas presented in writing together. Coherence is one of the characteristics of a good writing because it makes the ideas flow continuously. Wyrick (2002), Brandon (2005) mentioned several ways to achieve coherence:

Repetition of key ideas: Repetition of words or phrases will help the reader remember the main idea of the essay. Repeated words throughout the essay will tie one paragraph to another and make it easy for readers to follow the main points.

Pronoun reference: Pronouns offer connecting link in the essay. They guide the reader back to the former thought before leading to the new one.

Transitional expressions: Transitional expressions or cohesive devices are words or phrases that connect sentences and paragraphs together. The writer can use these transitional expressions to vary sentence structure. Common transitions used can be classified according to the purpose.

2.3.5 Kinds of Essays

There are different types of essays consisting of narration, description, comparison, argumentation, and so on. Among them, comparative and argumentative ones are usually required in academic writing at Tay Do University.

Narrative Essay

A narrative essay achieves a certain purpose through telling a story, which makes it interesting to readers and also results in getting some points. For example, you might write a story about meeting someone special to you. The purpose may be to tell how meeting this person affecting to your decision to attend college or to entertain readers with a funny story about that person. The purposes of writing narratives are to create a sense of shared history, to provide entertainment, to offer instruction, and to provide insight. Some examples of narrative essay topics are writing about a special person, an event, or a place. After choosing a topic, you should determine the main point you want to make about that topic and then concentrate on that point throughout the rest of the paper.

Descriptive Essay

A descriptive essay tells about a certain topic or story, using details to appeal to the five senses. It gives readers the ability to vividly imagine the situation or scene and feel as if they are experiencing it firsthand. To write a descriptive essay, you could choose a person, a place, an event, an object, or an experience and describe it thoroughly using many sensory details.

Comparison and/or Contrast Essay

A comparison and/or contrast essay tells about two or more main subjects by pointing out similarities and/or differences. One way to write this type of essay is to choose two or more objects, people, places, events, experiences, or ideas and compare and/or contrast them according to a few specific points.

Cause and Effect Essay (also called causal analysis)

A cause and effect essay analyzes what causes certain things happen or why things are in a certain way, the results bring about by certain events. For example, you may want to write an essay about an event that happened and then tell how it affected to your life. This would tell the cause (the event) and the effect (how it affected your life). To begin writing a cause and effect essay, you may want to first decide on a topic, such as an event or a person, and then decide what you will tell about that topic, such as what happened to make that specific event take place or what made the person have a certain attitude or personality. You could also tell about a specific topic and what effects it had on the future events.

Argumentative Essay

An argumentative essay makes a claim and then gives examples and evidences to prove that point. You can begin writing an argumentative essay by deciding on a certain topic, such as something about a belief, an idea, or a controversial issue. Then, do research to obtain detailed information. The information can be statistics, stories, examples, observances, and other facts. Use the information throughout the essay to argue your point and convince readers.

Classification Essay

A classification or division essay presents several topics by organizing them in a clearly defined pattern. A classification essay takes several topics that are related to some way and sorts them into groups or categories according to certain characteristics. Some examples of this type of paper would be three objects, people, or places that are each described separately, but they are also categorized and presented in such a way so that the connection among them is clear to readers.

Division Essay

A division essay begins with one topic and divides it out into several parts to take a closer, more detailed look at it. To write a division essay, you could choose a topic about a person, a place, an object, or an event and then divide it into several aspects that analyze the topic from different points.

2.4 Difficulties in writing skill

To write clearly it is essential to understand the basic system of language. It has been noted that learning to master writing skill is difficult that learners face at all levels of the education system. Specially, Master of Business Administration meet many difficulties in the content, idea organization and language when they study how to write.

2.4.1 Difficulties in the content

Difficulties in the content are all the difficulties that show the learners' lack of good outline before writing, lack of understanding about structure of essay and especially influence of Vietnamese literature style. All things make the learners meet the difficulties in the content.

Firstly, it is impossible to write well without an outline. An outline is useful for any type of writing because it helps to organize thoughts in a logical or sequential order. Nguyen (1998) stated that: "*Most of professional writers, experienced critics and talent authors still need an outline before writing. An outline can be written oversight on the paper or can be thought in the writer's mind.*" Because learners are in learning and practicing process at school, it is necessary to write a clear outline out on the paper before writing. Actually, the main purpose of writing an outline on the paper before writing is asking writers to think, brainstorm about the topic they want to write. An outline helps learners be more comfortable and easier in writing because it provides all key points and the connection between different points. As Bean (2001) noted: "*Some writers organize better before they write while others organize better after they have attempted to write something.*" It is helpful to show relationships among the ideas and details.

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Besides, according to Langan (2004), there are three parts in an English standard essay as introductory paragraph, body with supporting paragraphs and conclusion. The structure is the core of each essay that helps learners make a very well founded written construct. In order to compose an essay, it is necessary to keep in mind the main hints concerning the contents of the essay structure elements. Essay writing has been considered a difficult task. We need to write the exact content of each part. It can be said that writing an essay is a challenge because the essay measures the writer's ability to develop each part. Weakness in mastering in structural format is one of these difficulties.

A Vietnamese essay also has three parts: introduction, body and conclusion. Based on the Vietnamese essay model, it is easy to recognize thesis statement in the introduction, topic sentence with supporting ideas in each paragraph or restatement in the conclusion, etc. Learners just write essays based on their own habit. It leads to negative transfer in writing essays from the mother tongue to English. It is one of reasons that make learners get difficulties in writing essays in English.

2.4.2 Difficulties in the idea organization

The learners face with many writing difficulties. They are lack of background knowledge, influence between mother language and foreign language, and lack of coherent ideas.

Firstly, background knowledge is essential to have a good writing. Background knowledge consists of many aspects in practical life such as culture, society, custom and so on. According to Bransford, Brown, and Cocking (2000), "*All learning involves transfer from previous experiences. Even initial learning involves transfer that is based on previous experiences and prior knowledge.*" If the learners are poor background knowledge, they cannot build good ideas to attract readers. They do not know how to show what they want to say because they are lack of information about new topics. Moreover, they will be confused to show thoughts when they face unfamiliar topics. This will make readers feel bored because learners do not have enough background knowledge in writing. That is the reason why the learners face many difficulties if they are lack of knowledge.

Secondly, Nunan (1999) stated that in fact, influence between mother language and foreign language in writing is an enormous challenge, especially in one's second language. Each language has its own rules. For example, the rules of English texts - the structure, style, and organization differ from those in other languages. Therefore, the learners not only have to cope with one language but two languages in writing. Wang and Wen (2002) also stated: "*One important difference in writing processes is that writers have more than one language at their disposal. They may use both languages for cognitive operations when they are composing in the second language.*" The difference has received limited attention from second language acquisition, resulting in little understanding of the unique features of writing.

Lastly, an essay includes many paragraphs. Coherence is the relationship between paragraphs by linking ideas presented together. Coherence is one of the characteristics of a good essay because it makes the ideas flow continuously. Brandon (2005) mentioned several ways to achieve coherence: repetition of key ideas, pronoun reference and transitional expressions. It seems that learners do not master the linking ideas in writing. This difficulty is caused by learners' lack of understanding the use of linking words. They face many difficulties in connecting the idea smoothly. The connection among different sentences is very weak, so the ideas are unconnected. The learners write as many sentences related to the topic as possible without putting them in the logical order. It is very difficult to understand the learners' intention because the ideas are not logical.

2.4.3 Difficulties in the language

Vocabulary, grammatical and orthographical are always the most common difficulties in language for second language learners.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary as one of the knowledge areas in language plays a great role for learners in acquiring a language (Cameron, 2001). However, in writing skill, lack of vocabulary knowledge is a huge obstacle for learners. They face many difficulties such as lacking words, lacking word choices and lacking practicing vocabulary.

Firstly, according to Thornbury (2002) "*Without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed.*" If the learners do not have rich and plentiful vocabulary, they will be confused when they want to express thoughts in writing. For that reason, lacking words is one of the most difficult things that the learners usually face.

Secondly, word choices are also huge obstacles for the learners. The first factor to realize about vocabulary items is that they frequently have more than one meaning. A word does not merely have a meaning that it has many different meanings in a particular context. Therefore, the learners usually face the difficulties in identifying the suitable words when they want to show thoughts in writing.

Lastly, in writing skill, there are not only good vocabulary knowledge but also practicing vocabulary. Practicing vocabulary is a very important part of learning a language. It seems to be one of the easiest things about learning language, but it is also one of the hardest things to do, especially when learners have reached a certain level. They need practice and use vocabulary regularly. One of the biggest difficulties is that what is 'learned' today is often forgotten tomorrow.

Grammar

All languages have grammar, and each language has its own grammar. Grammar has been identified in different ways on the linguistic theory. Besides vocabulary, grammar structure is an important element affecting writing skill. As the purpose of good grammar is to ensure the paper is written correctly. William (2005) stated, "*Grammar is a study of the structure of the language*

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and describes the way of putting words together to make meaningful sentences.” Grammar is the way a language manipulates and combines words or bits of words to form longer units meaning. Grammar is very important. Learners face difficulties in this field such as tenses, articles and prepositions.

Firstly, tense is the important thing in grammar because it is signal time. It is argued that mastering grammar is a complex process. Generating the awareness of tense is not easy. Learners need to choose the suitable tense to make writing clearly and coherently. When learners use wrong tense, the meaning of sentence is also wrong. So, if learners want to have a perfect sentence, they have to understand how to use tense appropriately.

Secondly, an article is a word used to modify a noun, which is a person, a place, an object or an idea. There are two different types of articles that the learners use in writing to point out or refer to a noun or group of nouns: definite article (the) and indefinite articles (a/an). If the learners do not have knowledge about articles, they will make the mistakes in choosing between definite and indefinite ones.

Lastly, prepositions are words that show the relationship between a noun or pronoun and other words in a sentence. If learners do not understand the function and principle of prepositions in use. They will make the mistakes in the selection and use of preposition. For the same prepositions, if they are put on different categories, they create different meanings. So learners need to enhance knowledge of prepositions.

Orthography

Punctuation, spelling and contraction are the difficulties that the learners face.

Firstly, punctuation is the pragmatics of written language. Punctuation is one of the most important things of written English. Punctuation is used to create sense, clarity and stress in sentences. The learners use punctuation marks to structure and organize writing. Use of wrong mark of punctuation or even wrong placement of mark of punctuation can change the meaning of sentences. The paragraph without any punctuation will make readers unclear. Therefore, learners need to use punctuation exactly.

Secondly, spelling is a linguistic process of phonemic orthography (correct writing) with the necessary letters and diacritics present in a comprehensible order, usually with some degrees of standardization; it is the conventions which determine how the graphemes of a writing system are used to write a language. If learners want to create a good impression in writing and make sure they get meanings across clearly, it is important to get good spellings. English spelling is incredibly inconsistent and this makes it really tricky for learners.

Lastly, contraction forms are not used in writing, they mostly occur in speech and informal writing. Especially, they are avoided in formal writing types such as academic prose, business reports and journal articles. Contractions in English have two types; negative contractions (isn't, haven't, doesn't) and verb contractions (I'm, they've, that's). As learners develop writing, they need to think carefully about the choice of words. A contraction is another area with a great number of difficulties for learners. Most learners do not understand that writing needs being forms. The reason for those difficulties is not only lack of English knowledge but also bad habits of carelessness.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the design of the study, participants, and the instruments.

3.1 Design

The present study followed descriptive approach with quantitative and qualitative method for data collection. In educational research, surveys are the most commonly used with descriptive approach. The quantitative method was used to design the questionnaire and the paper interview for learners was designed following the qualitative one. This descriptive study aimed to investigate the difficulties in writing of Master of Business Administration.

3.2 Participants

3.2.1 Participants for questionnaire

The target was 50 Master of Business Administration studying course 8 and 9 at Tay Do University. The reasons for choosing these participants were based on the subject they are learning, the length of their English learning, their competence in English as a foreign language, and they studied how to write essays. Every essay is about 200 - 250 words. Before finishing an essay, they were required to write complete sentences about the topic, write parts of the essay, then they finish the whole writing. The topics are about business as 1. Entrepreneur, 2. Management Role, 3. Planning and Strategy, 4. Decision Making, 5. Personnel, 6. Motivation, 7. Brand and Trade, 8. Production, 9. Marketing, and 10. Research & Development.

3.2.2 Participants for interview

10 Master of Business Administration studying at Tay Do University were invited randomly to participate in the paper interview. Learners could be free to share the ideas.

3.3 Instruments

To answer the research questions, the participants' difficulties in writing skill of Master of Business Administration were measured. Two types of instruments were employed: the questionnaire and the paper interview. Questionnaire was chosen as an

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instrument because it was widely used in social sciences and it provides an easy and practical way for collecting data from quantities in a short time. In addition, interview was used to gain more insight learners' thinking.

3.3.1 The Questionnaire

The questionnaire with the total of 10 questions and 21 closed statements is written in English with careful and clear instructions as well as guidance to make sure that respondents could easily understand and give appropriate answers to the statements. They were carefully prepared and delivered to Master of Business Administration.

Table 1: The gist of questionnaire

Question/Statement	Summary of the question's/statement's content
From 1 to 10	Learners' background
From 11 to 13	The importance of writing skill
From 14 to 31	The difficulties in writing skill

3.3.2 The Interview

The interview was constructed to support the questionnaire results and to gain more insights about the difficulties in writing. The interview for learners included five opened questions designed in English.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the result of the study basing on the difficulties in writing of Master of Business Administration will be presented. The following section describes data serial by instrument: first from the questionnaire, next from the interview.

4.1 Results

After collecting all the necessary information and ideas from 100 Master of Business Administration by questionnaire and interview, the data were analyzed. The findings were split into two groups: the results of the questionnaire, and the results of the interview.

4.1.1 Results of the questionnaire

The findings of the questionnaire were classified into two basic items consisting of the learners' background and learners' difficulties in writing.

The learners' background

Learners' attitude towards learning English

English has become an international language and it is also a useful tool for job requirements in many countries around the world in general and in Vietnam in particular. Actually, learning English is very important for learners who want to have good jobs in the future. Therefore, studying the attitude towards the importance of learning English is helpful. There is no doubt that the percentage of learners who thought that English was very important was up to 74% and 26% thought that learning English was important. This means that learners are aware of the importance of learning English. With the open door policy and the attraction of foreign investment, learners have many opportunities to cooperate with foreign partners, and evidently, English will be the language that people use to communicate with others. Hence, learning English is a top target of many learners.

Learners' attitude towards English writing skill

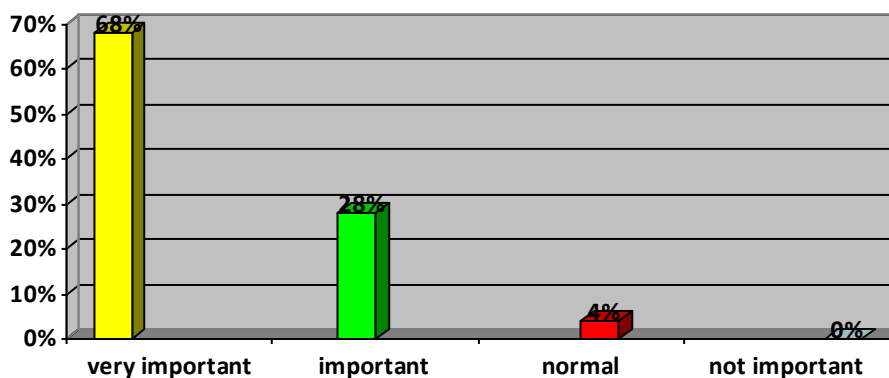


Figure 1: The importance of writing

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It is not difficult to see that the percentage of Master of Business Administration who claimed that writing was important was high. In fact, 68% of the participants believed that writing was a very important skill that could not be ignored in the process of learning English and 28% thought that it was important.

Table 2: The importance of writing

Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
11. Learning writing plays an important role in your studying and job in the future.	0%	0%	10%	64%	26%
12. If you have a good writing skill, you will master in learning English.	0%	0%	16%	54%	30%
13. Writing is an essential component in the process of second or foreign language acquisition.	0%	0%	18%	68%	14%

Glancing at table 2, the percentage of the respondents who strongly disagreed and disagreed with three statements was zero; on the contrary, the percentage choosing “strongly agree” and “agree” was almost overwhelming. Particularly, nearly 100% of learners agreed that writing had a vital role in life and in studying. 26% strongly agreed and 64% agreed with statement 11, “Learning writing plays an important role in your studying and job in the future.” In addition, 54% of learners believed that having a good writing skill, they will master in learning English and 30% strongly agreed with statement 12, “If you have a good writing skill, you will master in learning English.” Besides, the number of the respondents who agreed with statement 13, “Writing is an essential component in the process of second or foreign language acquisition.” was also high, 68% selected “agree” and 14% “strongly agree”. From collecting data, we considered that the learners not only understood the importance of learning English but also were aware of the importance of writing.

Difficulties in writing

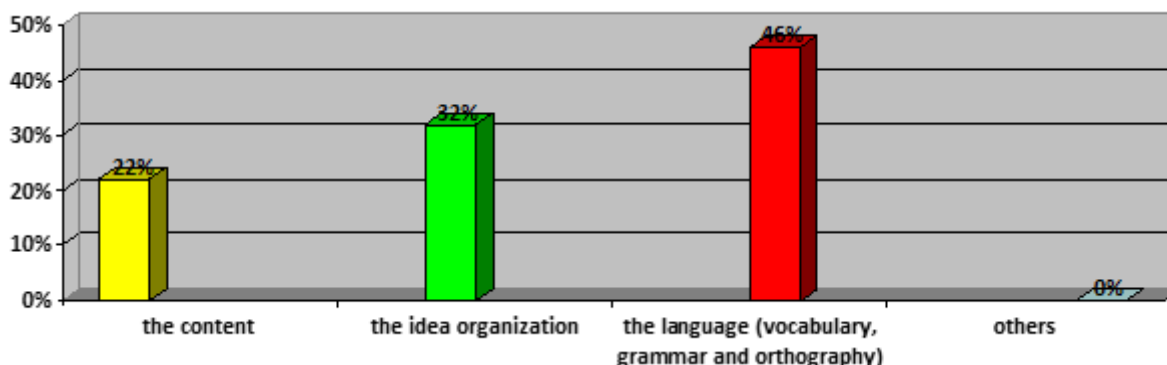


Figure 2: Difficulties in writing

Taking a quick look at figure 2, it was not difficult to see that the percentage of participants who claimed that their difficulties were the content (22%), the idea organization (32%) and the language (vocabulary, grammar and orthography) (46%). The percentage of the difficulties in the language was the highest, it means that learners made many mistakes in language. Although the percentage of the difficulties in the content and the idea organization were lower, they were also the huge obstacles for learners.

a. Difficulties in content

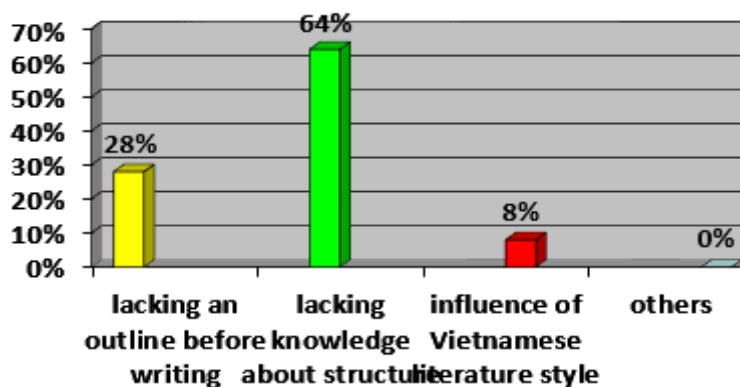


Figure 3: Difficulties in content

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Figure 2 showed that the content was the common difficulties, 22%. And from figure 3, it showed more details that many learners frequently encountered difficulties in writing. They were 28% lacking a good outline before writing, 64% lacking knowledge about structure, and 8% influence of Vietnamese literature style. Let's see table below.

Table 3: Difficulties in content

Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
14. You have faced difficulties in the content.	0%	4%	10%	62%	24%
15. You cannot write a good outline before writing.	0%	8%	20%	50%	22%
16. You do not know how to use the structure of an English essay, which consists of Introduction, Body and Conclusion.	0%	0%	8%	70%	22%
17. Your writing is influenced by Vietnamese literature style.	0%	4%	42%	44%	10%

Looking at table 3, the participants claimed that they faced difficulties in the content such as lacking an outline before writing, lacking knowledge about structure and influence of Vietnamese literature style, 62% agreed and 24% strongly agreed with statement 14, "You have faced difficulties in the content."

Firstly, the difficulties in lacking a good outline before writing occupied 28% of the sum from the figure 3 and 50% agreed and 22% strongly agreed with statement 15, "You cannot write a good outline before writing." Although not all learners strongly agreed with lacking of an outline, it was also difficulties to the participants. Because of lacking a good outline before writing, their thoughts were not logical and sequential order. They often crossed out the sentences in writing.

Next, "Lacking knowledge about structure" was the first choice of many participants, 64% from figure 3 and 70% agreed, 22% strong agreed with statement 16, "You do not know how to use the structure of an English essay, which consists of Introduction, Body and Conclusion."

Lastly, the difficulty in influence of Vietnamese literature style had the lowest percentage, 8% from figure 3 and 44% agreed and 10% strongly agreed with statement 17, "Your writing is influenced by Vietnamese literature style."

b. Difficulties in idea organization

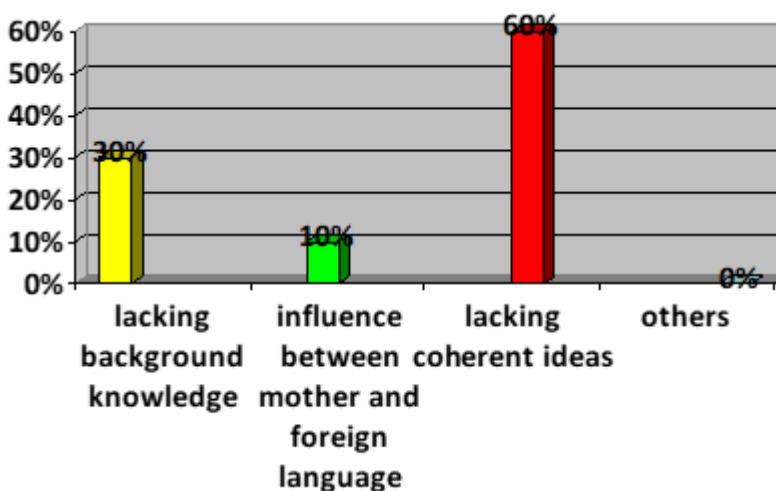


Figure 4: Difficulties in idea organization

Continuing with another difficulty that does not belong to the linguistic branches. Figure 2 showed that the idea organization was the second common difficulties, 32%. And from figure 4, it showed more details that many learners frequently encountered difficulties in writing. They were 30% lacking background knowledge, 10% influence between mother and foreign language, and 60% lacking coherent ideas. Let's see table below to check whether idea organization is a difficulty that learners often encounter or not.

Table 4: Difficulties in idea organization

Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
18. You have faced difficulties in organizing ideas.	0%	4%	16%	58%	22%
19. Lacking background knowledge that makes you not have enough information to express the ideas.	0%	4%	16%	60%	22%
20. You cannot write well because of influence between mother language and foreign language.	0%	10%	38%	42%	10%
21. You cannot organize and express ideas in a coherent manner.	0%	2%	6%	72%	20%

It can be seen that difficulties in idea organization was 32% from figure 2, and 58% agreed and 22% strongly agreed with statement 18, “You have faced difficulties in organizing ideas.”

First, lacking background knowledge was the difficulty that learners faced, 30% of learners chose from the figure 4 and 60% agreed and 22% strongly agreed with statement 19, “Lacking background knowledge that makes you not have enough information to express the ideas.” When learners lacked background knowledge about topics, they would be confused to express their ideas.

Next, the difficulty in influence between mother language and foreign language had the lowest percentage, 10% of the sum chose from the figure 4 and 42% agreed and 10% strongly agreed with statement 20, “You cannot write well because of influence between mother language and foreign language.”

Lastly, “Lacking coherent ideas” was the difficulty that the percentage was high. 60% of learners chose from figure 4, and 20% absolutely approved and 72% consented with statement 21, “You cannot organize and express ideas in a coherent manner.” It seemed that learners did not master the coherent ideas. Most difficulties were caused by learners’ lack of understanding the use of linking words.

c. Difficulties in language

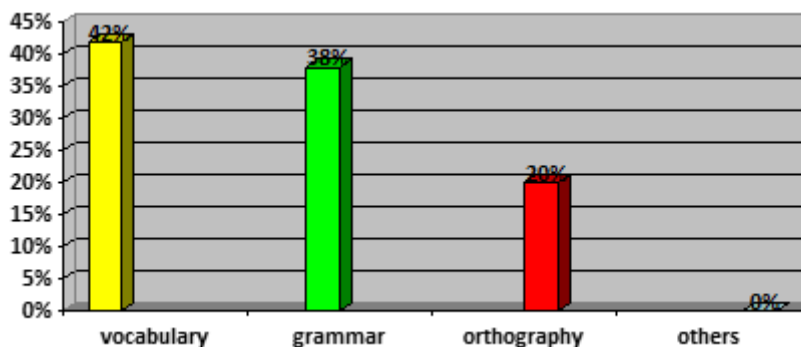


Figure 5: Difficulties in language

It can be seen that difficulties in language was the most difficult, 46% from figure 2, Vocabulary, grammatical and orthographical difficulties were always the most common for second language learners in general and for Master of Business Administration at Tay Do University in specific because most of them learn foreign language by sentence transformation. The percentage of vocabulary difficulty (42%) and grammatical difficulty (38%) were high, it means that the learners made mistakes in these difficulties. Although the percentage of orthographical difficulty (20%) was low, it also was one of the obstacles. In addition to lack of native teachers, they did not have chance to practice, or in other words, the learners did not have a good environment to practice English regularly to remember vocabulary and structure. These difficulties were all agreed by the learners.

Vocabulary

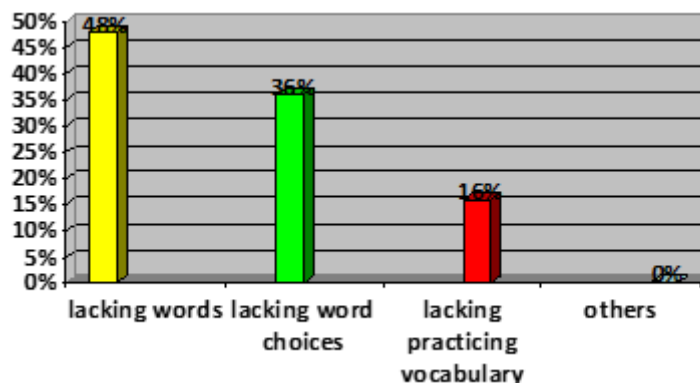


Figure 6: Difficulties in vocabulary

Figure 5 showed that vocabulary was the most difficult, 42%. And from figure 6, it showed more details that many participants frequently encountered difficulties in vocabulary. They were 48% lacking words, 36% lacking word choices, and 16% lacking practicing. Let’s see table below.

Table 5: Difficulties in vocabulary

Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
22. You have faced difficulties in vocabulary.	0%	0%	16%	68%	16%
23. You do not have enough words to express your ideas, thoughts and emotions.	0%	2%	6%	66%	26%
24. You have faced word choices in a particular context.	0%	0%	8%	68%	24%
25. One of the biggest problems with your vocabulary learning is that what’s learned today is often forgotten tomorrow.	0%	8%	20%	54%	18%

Vocabulary knowledge has been considered as basic principles of learning English and it also has a determinant impact on writing skill. However, the analysis of learners’ difficulties showed that vocabulary is also one of the learners’ weaknesses. 68% agreed and 16% strongly agreed with statement 22, “You have faced difficulties vocabulary.”

Firstly, lacking words was the difficulty having the highest percentage, 48% from figure 6 and 66% agreed and 26% strongly agreed with statement 23, “You do not have enough words to express your ideas, thoughts and emotions.”

Next, word choice was another difficulty, 36% from figure 6 and 68% agreed and 24% strongly agreed with statement 24, “You have faced word choices in a particular context.” It means that the participants faced the difficulties about vocabulary knowledge. Almost learners made mistakes in writing. A great of vocabulary wrong choices occurred.

Lastly, lack of practicing vocabulary had the lower percentage of the participants only 16% from figure 6, but it was also a huge obstacle. 54% agreed and 18% strongly agreed with statement 25, “One of the biggest problems with your vocabulary learning is that what’s learned today is often forgotten tomorrow.” Because learners did not learn many words, it would lead them not have good vocabulary knowledge. It is important that learners learn and remember vocabulary regularly because lack of vocabulary will effect to writing skill. Most learners are aware of the fact that learning a new vocabulary may imply forgetting the old one. So, they must learn how to cultivate vocabulary knowledge. It will be good for writing.

Grammar

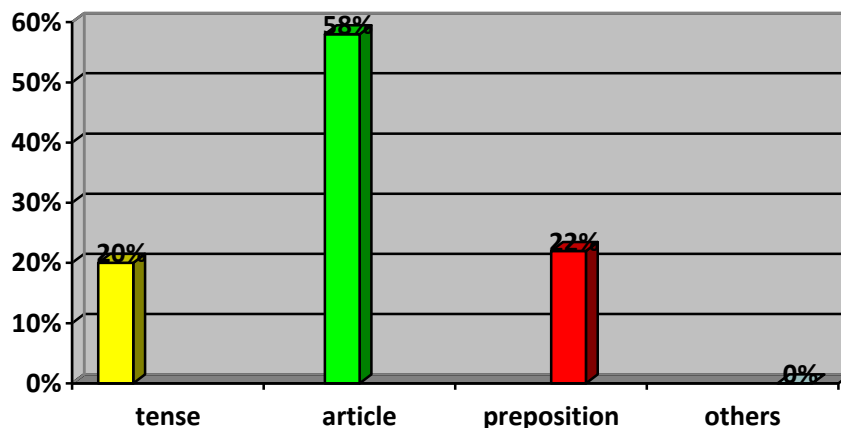


Figure 7: Difficulties in grammar

Another point is the obstacle about grammar. Figure 5 showed that grammar was the second difficult, 38%. And from figure 7, it showed more details that many learners frequently encountered difficulties. They were 20% in tenses, 58% in articles, and 22% in prepositions. The difficulties were showed in the table below.

Table 6: Difficulties in grammar

Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
26. You do not understand how to write sentences using the correct tense.	0%	0%	12%	60%	28%
27. Using articles appropriately is one of the challenges for you while writing.	0%	2%	4%	74%	20%
28. Most of your sentences are not use preposition exactly.	0%	2%	10%	64%	24%

First, tense is one of the difficult, 20% from figure 7 and 60% agreed and 28% strongly agreed with statement 26, “You do not understand how to write sentences using the correct tense.” Next, we see that article was the difficulty having the high percentage, 58% from figure 7. That means that the learners agreed they faced difficulty with article. 74% agreed and 20% strong agreed with statement 27, “Using articles appropriately is one of the challenges for you while writing.” So article was a huge obstacle for learners. Then, preposition was rather difficult, 22% from figure 7 and 64% agreed and 24% strongly agreed with statement 28, “Most of your sentences are not use preposition exactly.”

Orthography

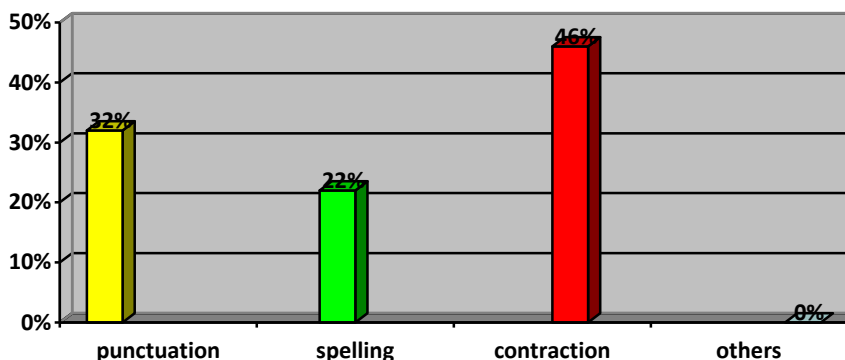


Figure 8: Difficulties in orthography

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This is the final part of the questionnaire indicating the percentage of the learners who met difficulties with the orthography. Figure 5 showed that orthography was the least difficult, 20%. And from figure 8, it showed more details that many participants frequently encountered. They were 32% in punctuation, 22% in spelling, and 46% in contraction. These were showed more in the table below.

Table 7: Difficulties in orthography

Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
29. You usually meet difficulties in punctuation.	0%	2%	18%	62%	18%
30. Spelling is another difficulty that you face in writing.	0%	6%	22%	52%	20%
31. You usually have habits to use contraction forms in writing.	0%	0%	10%	82%	8%

Both figure 8 and table 7 stated that learners met difficulties in orthography. 62% agreed and 18% strongly agreed with statement 29, "You usually meet difficulties in punctuation.". 52% agreed and 20% strongly agreed with statement 30, "Spelling is another difficulty that you face in writing.". Although the percentage were lower than the difficulty in contraction forms, they were obstacles. With contraction errors, the percentage of the respondents who concurred was almost high, 46% from the figure 8 and 82% agreed and 8% strongly agreed with the statement 31, "You usually have habits to use contraction forms in writing."

4.1.2 Results of the interview

After the data from the questionnaire were collected, the interviews were conducted with the total of 10 participants. The interview aimed to collect more data and gained insight into the participants' thoughts and ideas. The interview was processed by using qualitative data analysis.

In question 1, "Do you like writing?" Most of learners gave the answers that showed their positive attitude towards studying writing. Some of the interviewees said that they like writing very much because writing skill can help them improve grammar, word, and sentence. Six learners shared the idea that being proficient in writing in English will enable them to be professionals and action researchers in the future. They believed that writing would contribute to set a basic skill to other skills. The rest ones were the participants whose purpose of learning writing was to convey effectively what they have learnt in the written examination.

In question 2, "Is writing English difficult?" 10/10 learners gave the answers "Yes" that showed the participants all had difficulties in writing.

In question 3, "What are your difficulties in writing?" They responded that the content, idea organization, vocabulary, grammar and orthography were all difficulties that made them feel confused. Actually, the participants said that writing required them to have grammatical knowledge, lexicons and background knowledge in many fields. Besides, it was hard as the learners did not know the way to organize the text. Furthermore, they thought that writing was difficult as they lacked vocabulary, grammar structures, ideas arrangement as well as background knowledge.

In question 4, "Which factor has become your biggest difficulty in writing (content, idea organization, vocabulary, grammar, orthography, etc)?" Most of learners stated that one of the biggest difficulties with vocabulary learning was that what had learned was often forgotten. So, they did not have enough vocabulary to express ideas, thoughts and emotions. Besides, some of them considered that the difficulties were from idea organization. "Writing is a challenge because of ability to organize and express ideas in a coherent manner". Outstanding from these mentioned difficulties, it was found that vocabulary and idea organization became the two biggest obstacles in writing of all 10 respondents who participated in the interview. The learners said that "Without vocabulary nothing could be conveyed."

The last question, "What should you do to improve your writing?" the learners have different ways in dealing with the difficulties they encounter. Some learners are concerned with fluency by taking the risk of losing accuracy while some learners spend quite a long time checking and correcting their work. They suggested that they should spend much time for self-studying or usually practice writing and finish well the exercises. Besides, they thought when learning vocabulary, it should be written down and put it into sentences and contexts to remember it.

4.2 Discussion

The findings of questionnaire indicate that many Master of Business Administration classes, course 8 and 9 spent on different time to learn and practice English. This will influence to the level and knowledge of learners, especially in writing skill. Despite the fact that they have been taught in the different environment, all of them usually have positive attitude towards writing and they

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were aware of the importance of writing. Unfortunately, they faced many difficulties; it was revealed that their difficulties of writing mostly fell on the content, idea organization, vocabulary, grammar and orthography.

First of all, the content was a huge obstacle for the learners in writing. It was impossible to write well without an outline. An outline could be written oversight on the paper or could be thought in the writer's mind. However, the learners rarely wrote an outline on the paper before writing. It is recommended that an outline helps learners be more comfortable and easier in writing because it provides all key points and the connections between different points. Besides, the content was considered a difficult task of the respondents. They needed to write the exact content of each part. It could be said writing was a challenge because of learner's ability to develop a full structure. Weakness in mastering in structural format was one of the difficulties. In addition, the learners were also influenced by Vietnamese literature style. They could know thesis statement or topic sentence or restatement mean exactly, but they just wrote based on their own habit. It led to negative transfer in writing from their mother tongue to English. So they need to have a thorough understanding of writing knowledge.

Secondly, the idea organization was another difficulty of Master of Business Administration in writing. It could be said that writing was a challenge because lack of background knowledge, learners would not have enough information to organize and express ideas in writing. Besides, learners not only had to cope with one language but also two languages in writing. Therefore, they were usually influenced by two languages to transfer their ideas when writing. Lastly, to produce a coherent ideas of writing was an enormous challenge. Learners did not have enough experience in arranging the ideas chronologically and logically. They wrote as many sentences related to the topic as possible without putting them in the logical order. So learners should be aware of idea arrangement that they want write.

Last but not least, the language included vocabulary, grammar and orthography. They also were considered the difficulties of the learners. Vocabulary as one of the knowledge areas in language plays a great role for learners in acquiring a language. However, in writing skill, lack of vocabulary knowledge is a huge obstacle for learners. They faced many difficulties such as lack of words, word choices and learning vocabulary. In addition, grammar points were actually difficult to learn and learners were even more difficult in writing because they did not spend time doing grammatical exercises. Therefore, tense, article and preposition caused learners' confusion in the process of writing. Besides, most of learners did not pay attention to punctuation, spelling and contraction. The reason for these difficulties was not only their lack of English knowledge but also their bad habits of carelessness. To improve the difficulties, the learners should enhance their knowledge about vocabulary, grammar and orthography and do more exercises.

5. CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

Now English is the language that many people around the world use to communicate with each other, learning English becomes a great interest of many learners. In fact, to learn English effectively, it is necessary to learn writing. For Master of Business Administration at Tay Do University, they believe that writing is an indispensable skill because it helps them much in studying and in daily communication as well. However, during the English learning process, they encounter many difficulties which block their success, especially in writing. After collecting important information given by learners, the most common difficulties in learning writing were found out. They were difficulties about the content, idea organization and language (vocabulary, grammar, and orthography). Thus, learners have to make lots of effort to overcome their difficulties. In brief, the research "Difficulties in writing skill of Master of Business Administration at Tay Do University in Vietnam" was useful to help learners learn writing effectively. From these mentioned difficulties, they could find appropriate resolutions for improvement.

To sum up, if learners 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.

5.2 Implications

Studying learners' difficulties relating to writing shows that most of the participants realized the important role of English in writing. It is almost always true that if they want to be successful in a specific field, they have to understand clearly about their real ability. Therefore, Master of Business Administration need to be aware of their difficulties in writing in order that they can be good writers. From the findings, it can be seen that the participants had many difficulties in writing related to the content, idea organization and language (vocabulary, grammar and orthography). The purpose of this research points out difficulties and then, they can find out the appropriate learning methods for themselves. Furthermore, this study is also useful for the teachers who want to know their learners' difficulties, then they can find out the proper teaching methods making learners' writing smoothly and accurately. From that, they can offer their learners good materials for writing and good teaching methods helping learners in writing more effectively.

5.3 Recommendations

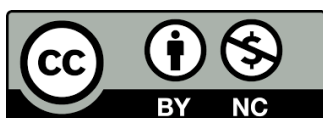
This present study was conducted with descriptive approach; the result can be limited. Therefore, it might be a good idea to do the same research with experimental approach. The findings of this study point out difficulties of learners encountered during the process. There are two recommendations: implication for teaching and learning writing of teachers and learners; and recommendations for further study.

Writing is learnt through practices, the role of the teachers should be to provide positive and cooperative learning opportunities, allowing and encouraging learners to express themselves without being afraid of the teachers. Teachers could stimulate learners' thinking through various pre-writing strategies. Although learners use the Internet as a major source of information, teachers should urge them to get other kinds of information such as quotations that they seldom use. Apart from gathering information from the Internet, learners can be encouraged to use free writing and writing journals strategies. When learners practice these two strategies, they can just express their ideas without worrying about organization or mistakes. Practicing these strategies can make learners feel at ease to write and can help them solve difficulties and feel confidence to write.

Besides, a major concern of future research is in comparing the result between a group that receives process-oriented teaching and practicing in class and a group that receives in-class teaching plus computer-based lab practice in order to see whether computer-based practice shows any different effect on learners' learning. Further study should be focused on observing learners' behaviors during the composing process to get the actual steps learners use to produce a piece of writing. The results can give ideas to teachers to assist learners in acquiring skills in writing.

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