CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

The spread of Covid-19 outbreak transformed the education system. The transformation also happened in English Language Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education (ELESP FTTE) in one of private universities in Denpasar. Due to the outbreak, both the lecturers and the students were allowed to work and learn from home. This decision was made based on the joint decision amongst the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry of Religion, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs about the guidelines for organizing learning in the academic year and new academic year during the pandemic Covid-19 and the circular letters of the Rector.

Within the 21st century, teaching and learning writing (in the mist of Covid-19 emergence) is obviously filled with opportunities and challenges. Regardless of the kind of writing, it has been said that in an EFL context, it is challenging to teach and learn (Rubiyah et al., 2018). Good writing requires careful consideration of several factors, including organization, ideas, word choice, language use, and a clear aim. These whole elements of writing must be well formulated. This complexity of writing activity, based on Gonye et al. (2012), requires systematic and well-ordered thinking of students which finally will be the way of their behavior.

Additionally, writing becomes complex when students as the they neglect step by step processes in writing. It has been stated that the actual teaching of writing is bounded by the ideas of product approach (Li & Razali, 2019). In writing, abundance theory breeds lethargy and an unwillingness to combine ideas, creativity, and past experience to produce high-quality writing. Dependence on the more traditional product approach rather that the process of writing is failed at portraying the actual development of the students' writing. When traditional teaching principle-based writing classroom is highlighted, writing is no longer regarded as a pivotal aspect of language learning (Martínez et al., 2020). Less experiencing process in creating writing product has been criticized for considering writing as being primarily related to linguistic knowledge, with attention focused on the appropriate use of vocabulary, grammar, and cohesive devices which deserting students' ongoing progress to accomplish a final product (Xu & Li, 2018).

In Indonesia, writing in foreign language is seen as the most challenging skill to be taught. The utmost reasonable reason is due to the difference in cultural background between the students' mother language and English which enables the production of their writing sounds inappropriate to the culture of English (Ariyanti, 2016). Writing expresses writers' characters and background by the used tone and style for example expressing the same voice while adhering to often strict style guidelines of another language can be daunting. In comparison with other cultures, English speakers tend to write short and simple sentences to represent their responsibility to be comprehended by the reader. In contrast, within EFL writing, wordiness and repetition abound in the attempt to continue making a more

comprehensible point. Additionally, this typical circular writing deals with reflecting cultures that honor being polite and indirect to avoid offending others.

Without exception, it has been stated that university students in Indonesia are reported to possess low writing ability (Fatimah & Masduqi, 2017). Writing has been viewed as the most difficult skill for foreign language learners to master (Richard & Renandya, 2002). This is due to the complexity of writing; writers of foreign languages must deal with both lower-level skills like spelling, punctuation, and word choice, as well as higher-level skills like organizing and planning. A research study done by Rahmatunisa (2014) figured out 3 main problems the EFL writers faced in writing namely, linguistics problems, cognitive problems, and psychological problems. The linguistic problems are related to the grammatical structure, the use of article, formatting words, words classes, and error in using words. Cognitive problems, meanwhile, are dealing with organizing paragraph, difficulties in remaining word classes, getting lost the generic structure, making a conclusion, and putting punctuation. Last, psychological problems cover the writer's laziness, lack of concentration, bad mood, and difficulties to start writing.

The students with poor literacy experience and English proficiency who enrol in English departments at Indonesian universities complicate the problem of teaching English. For Indonesian students who perceive writing based on cultural values from their mother tongue, the demands of English literacy in this level combat great challenge to actualize. In addition, the English teaching at university level is outside the whole system, and English instruction is not clearly seen as significant part of the overall plan of instruction (Widiati & Cahyono, 2006). It

means that English is not used within the students' social life and communication. They also experienced dilemma in mastering writing due to the lack of knowledge in vocabulary and grammatical features of English (Imelda et al., 2019). It leads the students tend to translate Bahasa Indonesia to English without considering the culture of English. Furthermore, the status of English as a foreign language brings lack of exposure to use English for the students; therefore, the tendency to ignore immediate need to use English, particularly in writing becomes obvious.

The problems also faced by the fourth semester students in English Language Education Study Program (hereafter ELESP), Faculty of Teacher Training and Education in one of private universities in Denpasar, when they composed an essay in English language. For them, writing course was necessitated extra efforts not only in thinking about their essay and how to shape it into a unified and coherent essay but also in joining the process to produce a quality essay product. It definitely required much time, and it even worsen by the fact that they are not native speakers of English which is the target language in writing. When they wrote, automatically their first language was activated instead of the foreign language they employed to communicate in written forms.

Besides the language barrier, the students also encountered problem in developing the idea and organized it into a well written essay. To start their writing, the lecturer either provided the students with a theme or discussed with them what theme inspired them the most in writing. However, when they were instructed to select their topic based on the theme and develop it into their essay, it seemed that their cognitive process was stuck and they kept struggling to write anything related

to the topic as the starter activity. They were needed the lecturer's scaffolding to guide them during this period which considered effective in leading the students to start their writing in the form of outline.

Then, when they proceeded to drafting activity, they were lack of ability and creativity to develop their outline into a well-organized essay. They often requested extra time due to drafting and rereading their draft to create a better writing. Moreover, because of language barrier, the students' essays were also identified to have poor grammar knowledge and deficient vocabulary. These insufficiencies were revealed in their writing which affected them to create repeated sentences and unclear meaning of the sentences. They also had low motivation in writing as can be seen through their unsatisfactory efforts in bettering their essay.

The previous problems were strengthened by the results of the preliminary study wherein the researcher administered a pre-test to gain exact data of their struggles in writing an essay. The students were instructed to create an argumentative essay which covered education as the theme in 90 minutes. In accordance with the provided theme, they were allowed to choose their own topic and title which was still relevant to education as the main theme. This pre-test was followed by 28 students as the research participants. The data gained through pre-test were then tabulated and analyzed by means of descriptive statistical analysis. It was figured out that the mean score of the students' writing achievement in pre-test was 79.86. From 28 students, only 18 students could achieve an A in argumentative writing course.

Parallel with the fact that writing is imperative for EFL learners, the approach of teaching writing should respond to students' needs and ignite their writing enthusiasm to function effectively in most of today's world. The current understanding in EFL writing classrooms is that writing activities should take precedence over writing theory in writing education. Producing quality writing is the aim of every student when given a writing assignment (Chandra & Ignasia, 2018). It means that writing needs a process to produce a product (Febriyanti et al., 2018). Furthermore, Indrilla & Ciptaningrum (2018) stated that based on the perspective of the teaching learning process, writing should be changed from using the teacher-cantered approach to the student-cantered approach.

Process approach is considered as beneficial for helping students to write and it has been commonly used approach to teach writing in ELESP. It is grounded on sociocultural theory proposed by Vygotsky wherein good writers plan and revise, rearrange and delete text, re-reading and producing multiple drafts before producing the completed document (Eliwarti & Maarof, 2014). The approach consists of pre-writing, drafting, reflecting, peer or tutor reviewing, revising, and publishing (Coffin et al., 2003). It has been suggested that the process approach to teaching English writing differs from the conventional product-oriented approach of teaching writing, leading to a new realization that this approach is widely used and adopted by English teachers in their English writing classrooms (Sun & Feng, 2009).

Process approach is preferable than product approach, and it represents the change from product focus to process focus where the ways of accomplishing

writing products executed (Hasan & Akhand, 2010). In process approach, students are motivated to write based on their original idea which intended to achieve real purposes and the results are intended for real audiences (Graham & Sandmel, 2011). Additionally, this approach focuses on purposes, theme, text type, and audiences wherein creativity to develop original ideas and peer collaboration are used as the indispensable points (Klimova, 2014). Thus, writing within process approach is regarded as recursive, exploratory and generative process which involves discovering idea and making meaning within positive collaborative workshop atmosphere (Ngo & Trinh, 2011).

To support the use of process approach during online learning, technology in EFL writing classroom is vital. The immersion of technology in teaching and learning process provides abundance of opportunity for learners to study independently and collaborate with their peers (Warni et al., 2018). Technology in writing enables learners to write and share information everywhere and every time (Gamble & Easingwood, 2000). Technology utilization reduces the limitations of time and place that traditional writing affords. There is also the argument that given the sophisticated technology used in education and the focus on the value of students' independence in solving problems, lecturer ought to modify student-centered learning.

The advent of technology in language teaching has sparked a renewal interest in writing as an essential part of written communication. Technology has constantly changed why to write, how to write, and how to learn to write whether it is the invention of a reed stylus, papyrus or the printing press. People nowadays write as

never before – in print and online form (Yancey, 2009). Moreover, this skill is always a technology of explosive force which produced as the reflection of human mind (Powell, 2012). It is the lens through which literate people see the world and change what in their mind is as written form. Therefore, writing, in fact, is beneficial to convey information throughout the world (Cahyono & Mutiaraningrum, 2015), express ideas (Imelda et al., 2019), and promote thinking ability (Klimova, 2014).

Nowadays, Generative AI (hereafter, GenAI) shocks the publics due to challenges it brings to the act of writing. The emergence of AI writing tools triggers an intangible cultural moment. Universities are forced to adjust to GenAI as a phenomenon before there is consensus on how AI writing should be employed or even appreciated by society. It is still debatable whether the GenAI is factually correct or not in the writing it produces, or whether a student might be cheating and it creates negative writing culture. This opinion piece contends that GenAI writing's recent hype is a reaction to its cultural disruption. There are four main issues at the moment relevant to cultural adaptation to GenAI and the hype surrounding it. First, the speed of adoption had been intense as GenAI has emerged more quickly than any current internet platforms. Second, GenAI is deplorable because its writing is correct alike that of human. Third, autonomous agents that address individuals as though they are other people are how GenAI is intended to communicate with humans. Last but not least, because of the language used in the training materials, GenAI generates biased and prejudiced outcomes.

Today's students are the representation of generation who grow up with advanced and updated technology as the 21st century' trademark. This generation

is well known as Z-generation digital natives who spend their whole lives surrounded by and using internet, computers, gadgets, and all the other toys and tools of the digital age (Ceylan & Kesici, 2017). These advanced are superior technology stuffs are integral in their everyday experiences and daily lives. Almost all activities require the use of technology. It has been identified that average college graduates, nowadays, spend over 10,000 hours playing video games, and, unfortunately, less than 5,000 hours of their lives reading (Prensky, 2001). Due to this recent phenomenon, innovation which engages the use of technology to rejuvenate the generation is cordially urgent.

The innovation can be simply started by building awareness of digital literacy amongst students. Technology stands in attracting relation to literacy (Gamble & Easingwood, 2000). Moreover, digital literacy can be defined as the use of social practices of creating and interpreting meaning through texts with technology (Maureen et al., 2018). Digital literacy can also be defined as the ability of an individual in operating computers to investigate, create and communicate in the attempt to effectively participate at home, at school, in the workplace and in society (Fraillon et al., 2014). Possessing profusion digital literacy, students particularly gain new skills related to this literacy such as computational thinking, problem solving, computer coding, and, algorithmic thinking (Ceylan & Kesici, 2017).

However, digital literacy encompasses not just technical competence but also the concerns, customs, and mentalities related to technologies utilized for specific purposes. It also needs digital skill which focus on which tool to use and how to use it. Digital skill can be stated as the ability to perform technical skills of technology.

This skill is defined as the capacity to gather and analyze data, use digital tools creatively, and engage in conversation and interaction with others in digital contexts (Godhe, 2019). Moreover, digital competency is also essential for learning, work and active participation in society. It is related to how much the ability is to use technology for purposes. Information skills and the skills to communicate via ICT are closely related to digital competency (McGowan & Bessette, 2020).

Transforming learning is being proposed as a means to diminish the disadvantages of Covid-19 outbreak towards the learning system and to understand the complexities of education in the moment where information and communication technologies are persistently reshaping and redefining education (Inoue, 2010). Furthermore, incorporating technology into education which based on digital literacy basis, then, becomes crucial. Equipping students with technology devices as well as software will definitely pave a new way in relation to instructional innovations.

As technology has advanced, various courses start adopting technology. It is certainly lucrative to provide necessary and appropriate way to combine technology and learning within education. Using connected mobile tools in learning means that it is purposively blend physical and online activities which create meaningful experiences (Stein & Graham, 2014). Blending is the art of teaching practiced by inspiring teachers. Blending provides opportunity to mix the best of onsite and online which create new learning experiences for students (Littlejohn & Pegler, 2007). It has been formulated threefold reasons of blending in education such as

increasing access and convenience, enhancing learning, and offering flexible costs (Stein & Graham, 2014).

The term blended learning is modern in education (Al-Madani, 2015). Blended learning is regarded as the epicenter of teaching and learning evolutionary transformation (Garrison & Vaughan, n.d.). It is believed that blended learning is capable to fulfil students' educational demands Hew & Cheung (2014). It is the combination of face-to-face delivery and online learning, and it is promising as it upholds the expediency of online learning while simultaneously recollecting various traditional learning components (Harrell & Wendt, 2019). Similarly, blended learning suggests elegant opportunity to intermingle innovation and technology offered by online learning combined with the interaction and participations provides in traditional learning (Thorne, 2003).

Blended leaning is mix of various event-based activities. The essential part of it is the combination of both face-to-face interaction and computer-meditated instruction which goal should be unite the best features of in-class teaching with best of online learning (Graham, 2006). The first trait of blended learning involves sources with traditional approachOnline resources that are dynamic, interactive, and rich in media give lecturers and students the chance to add content before, during, and even after the course experience.

Such kind of materials are supported by virtual learning environment assisted by the institution. Just as classroom-based learning necessitates facilities, blended learning also requires technological infrastructure and digital janitors where institutional support is a necessary. Moreover, educators should prepare students by

incorporating technologies within the learning and teaching process. The use of technology can facilitate the learning process and dynamics in ways that are not achievable by face-to-face interaction. Therefore, profound learning and teaching plans required at practical learning and teaching level, especially in teaching writing.

Effective teaching and practice methods are necessary to help students become more proficient writers who can express their thoughts and emotions in written form. Educators must link online learning to face-to-face learning or field teacher training programs, as well as blend face-to-face and online activities in blended learning. Blended learning in teaching writing promotes active and self-directed learning opportunities for students that supports their achievement and outcomes.

Grounding the practice of blended learning in theory will assist making better decision when implementing blended learning and support students to achieve meaningful learning at their best. Principally, underlying philosophy of blended learning is all people learn differently, in other words, it emphasizes individual learning. Individual learning based on Piaget, does matter in constructivism. Piaget has influential role in the development of constructivism who believes that structure of knowledge does not exist outside of students' mind, but knowledge is constructed as a result of continuous interaction with the existing structures and mental reflections of outside world understanding. Learning, thus, something done by the students individually, not something imposed to them (Al-Huneidi & Schreurs,

2013). It is because they have their own individual ideas about the world which combined with common patterns in their ideas.

Besides, blended learning assists students learn at their cognitive level of functioning. Cognitivism recognizes that all students have distinguished level of cognitive abilities. Cognitive learning can be made more relevant by using blended learning through letting students access to different mediums of learning. Gagne in 1985 postulated that the heart of cognitivism deals with how individuals use their brains to think about what they are learning which makes blended-learning users must challenge students' minds to the fullest. Additionally, meaning in which cognitive presence is crucial can be constructed and validated by online learners through the process of reflection, discourse, analysis, and synthesis (Harb & Krish, 2020).

Parallel to constructivism and cognitivism was the work of social constructivism by Vygotsky. The focus of social constructivism is to describe and explain teaching and learning as complex interactive social phenomenon between teachers and students (Picciano, 2017). Learning is problem-solving and the basis of the learning process is the social constructions of solutions to the problems. Vygotsky posited a zone of proximal development wherein teachers, students, and a problem to be solved exist during teaching and learning process.

Blended learning provides various models. Four models were proposed in 2012 namely, the Station Rotation model, the Lab Rotation model, the Flex model, and the Flipped Classroom model (Staker & Horn, 2012; Walne, 2012). More recently, as the result of development between virtual and flipped classroom, a new

concept of learning has been started namely Virtual Flipped Classroom (known as VFC). VFC is a blend of primarily synchronous (live instruction from real-time class meetings) and asynchronous (teacher directed homework) learning with regular modifications to ensure that students are receiving an experience closely aligned with concurrent on-campus experiences. These courses fall into two groups in this model: synchronous online courses and asynchronous online courses. For theoretical classes that can be taken remotely, asynchronous online courses are ideal. In the meantime, greater direct interaction between the lecturer and students is beneficial in synchronous online classes.

VFC is suitable to be combined with process approach in teaching writing and providing students with meaningful phases of writing which foster their autonomy in writing. VFC involves 2 major stages, namely; a) Self-learning stage where the teacher provides video lectures out of the classroom's official time to avoid the problem of a lack of classrooms and time, and b) Interactive activities in the classroom stage where the teacher performs plenty of individual and group activities to deepen the students learning. Writing course delivery can be assisted by the use of asynchronous and synchronous activity of using VFC. When theory is emphasized, asynchronous activity can be done where course materials provided through recorded videos, online materials and so forth. Specifically, the lecturer models the stages of every step of process approach can be done asynchronously. When face to face interactions required, synchronous activities are available and set by the lecturer. This type of class is student-centered and students can often take the lead and show the work they have done to the entire class.

The aforementioned underpinnings of teaching writing in EFL context should have implications of the teaching writing in Indonesian context. Thus, it is greatly pivotal in tracing how the students' writing be nourished through the use of process approach and blended learning. There have been several researches conducted previously on the process-based approach as well as blended learning. A comprehensive study was done to investigate the effects of collaborative blended learning writing environment on students' writing apprehension and writing performance which involved a selected group of EFL students enrolled in one of the international schools in Malaysia (Challob et al., 2016). It employed qualitative case study which used semi-structured interview, learning diaries and observation to gain data. According to the results, the students felt positively about the collaborative blended learning writing environment they had encountered. They believed that the collaborative blended learning exercises had improved their writing skills and helped them overcome their fear of writing since they had gained a great deal of experience and knowledge about both the little and large parts of writing.

Another study published in 2016 examined the level of student involvement within blended learning model (Tay, 2016). This research was conducted by distributing questionnaires to 123 participants and conducting interview to 10 participants. It was figured out that the learning model was able to increase the students' involvement in learning. A study in 2017 explored the viability of using e-mail in facilitating topical discussions via e-mail exchanges amongst six ESL writing classes of 198 students in a private university in Manila, the Philippines

during the first semester of the academic year 2014-2015 (Mabuan & Jr., 2017). The information gathered through student reflections, interviews, surveys, and focus group discussion showed that, despite certain technological and motivational constraints, email use in the classroom can foster the students' interest in and confidence in writing, improve their social and technological skills, foster students' autonomy, and improve their attitudes toward learning English.

Meanwhile, a study also conducted dealing with comparing the outcomes of the blended learning model using Schoology and the problem-based learning method (Irawan et al., 2017). This study showed that the learning outcomes of blended learning are more significant than using problem-based learning method. The blended learning model using Schoology provided opportunities for students to explore the material independently outside of class hours. Moreover, another study had been conducted to examine the implementation of blended learning model to enhance the learning experience of international students at Canadian University (McPhee & Pickren, 2017). This study found that blended learning model supported multiliterative learning in tertiary institutions as measured by students' perceptions. Blended learning was considered easy and enhanced learning. The students also found the assignments in blended learning were interesting and informative.

Additionally, a study investigated the effect of blended learning on the development of clause combining as an aspect of the acquisition of written discourse by Jordanians who are learning English as a foreign language (Zibin & Altakhaineh, 2018). There were sixty participants involved in the study who

were divided into treatment and control groups. The effectiveness of blended learning was then evaluated by administering a pre-test and post-test using an experimental design to gauge participants' ability to combine English clauses utilizing subordination or parataxis. The post-test was one area where the treatment group fared better than the control group, according to the results. The findings further demonstrate that the students' attitudes toward learning clause combining were enhanced by the use of technology, which also made learning simpler and more pleasurable.

Then a study also conducted to investigate the effect of blended learning using Google Classroom on writing ability of EFL students across autonomy levels which engaged 53 third semester students taking Essay Writing course in two classes at Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia (Sujannah et al., 2019). It was discovered that the EFL students who were taught through blended learning with Google Classroom had higher writing proficiency than the other group. Additionally, the writing abilities of the high autonomous EFL students were superior to those of the low autonomous EFL students. Besides, the use of blended learning was also investigated to figure out its effectiveness in improving Saudi EFL students' English paragraph writing at Shaqra University. An experiment was done within 6 weeks engaging 70 EFL students. The gathered findings indicated a statistically significant difference favoring the experimental group's mean scores between the control group (conventional teaching mode) and the experimental group (blended learning). This demonstrated how well blended learning worked to increase participants' proficiency in paragraph writing.

A significant issue which has been considered in EFL writing, and deserved considerations in writing process is gender difference (Al-Saadi, 2020). Different writing performance is associated to gender differences. These differences should be conceptualized as phenomena contingent on context and power (Bijami et al., 2013). The phenomena that occurs in process writing classes likely take into account some aspects, such selecting a topic, organizing, writing, editing by peers, and revising; nevertheless, as a concentrate on the final product, it may also examine word choice, syntax, discourse organization, audience awareness, and other related topics (Kubota, 2003).

Raising gender issues related to writing is of profoundly necessary based on the following reasons. First, gender inequality still occurs in Indonesia. Data from Directorate of Demography, Women Empowerment, and Child Protection of Indonesia in 2019 shows that there is still a problem in the development of gender equality and women empowerment in Indonesia as seen in the gender gaps in various fields of life ("Rancangan Teknokratik: Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Nasional 2020-2024," 2019). Second, it is advantageous for both the lecturer and the students to comprehend the difficulties that the students face when writing, particularly when writing essays that require higher order thinking, such an argumentation. The lecturer can help the students overcome their writing obstacles. The students, on the other hand, may be more conscious of gender issues.

In particular, gender disparities in writing bring up another point of concern. Similar phenomena that distinguish the fourth semester English Language Education Study Program students by gender also occurred which resulted from

analyzing their argumentative essay as the pre-test results. Because the students are male and female, they each view the world differently, which influences how they write ideas or opinions. It is noted that the female writers perform the assignment effectively. Before writing the entire draft, they usually use an outline to guide their ideas. Once finished, they thoroughly go over and double-check every word in their writing. Nevertheless, male students write quickly and in just a few lines. The majority of them choose to paraphrase rather than write from scratch. When writing, they frequently finish without organizing or proofreading first. The intricacy of the sentences revealed that the female students' writing was longer than that of the male students. The male students, meanwhile, were more direct in their communication. Aside from that, the thesis statement, diction, and sentence form all contributed to the difference.

A study done to compare gender groups on the processes used in writing essays in an online assessment (Zhang et al., 2019). Four-grade middle school students' responses to essays were divided into two persuasive subgenres: argumentation and policy recommendation. Four indicators taken from students' keyboard logs were used to infer writing processes. Generally speaking, females not only scored more on essays than males did, but they also wrote in different ways. Females exhibited less need to halt at planning-related points (e.g., between text bursts, at sentence boundaries), more macro and local editing, and more fluid text entry. Because these discrepancies persisted even after adjusting for essay scores, it is unlikely that differences in group writing proficiency is the only explanation for them.

Another study assessed the perspectives of teachers on genders' classroom performance (Hanane, 2019). Its goal is to learn about the difficulties encountered when teaching foreign languages. A questionnaire was given to 46 teachers in Tissemsilt, Algeria, as a research instrument. The findings show shortcomings in managing students, particularly when it comes to using the language in an oral or written assignment. In addition, the aggressive behavior of men in the classroom is considered a barrier to maintaining order in the classroom, interacting with students, and imparting knowledge.

Despite many researches on those topics have been conducted already, research combining the four topics, process approach, blended learning, gender in writing become crucial aspects to be delved in the context of higher education using qualitative based design and have never been conducted yet previously. Scarcity of this research in relation to the aforementioned topics inspire the researcher to conduct a study on Blended Process-based Approach in Teaching Writing: A Phenomenological Study in English Language Education Study Program Unmas Denpasar.

1.2   Problem Identification

Writing is the process of putting thoughts, feelings, and arguments into written form. Students cannot be removed from writing tasks or activities when teaching and learning process. A variety of writing assignments were assigned to the students, such as taking notes, composing letters or requests, and completing lecturer exercises that called for recording everything on paper or in a book. For

these reasons, students typically experience desperation and struggle, particularly when required to compose an essay or paper.

Writing in a foreign language is typically a difficult skill for both EFL lecturers and students to acquire. Many EFL students still struggle with a number of major issues that prevent them from producing quality essay writing, despite the innumerable studies and attempts made by researchers and lecturers to improve these students' writing skills. Starting an essay with a blank page of paper or computer screen is actually quite frustrating, and it is a common occurrence. Writing an essay is difficult, regardless of whether it is a research paper, narrative, or argumentative essay. Writing is a journey that involves several stops along the way and extensive rewrites.

Within the context of essay writing for the fourth semester students in English Language Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, in one of private universities in Denpasar, writing an essay in the target language requires effort and is not a simple or trouble-free endeavour. It takes a lot of time and work. The students encounter several essay writing challenges that impede their ability to compose well-written essays. They also run into difficulties that prevent them from writing. In this sense, it is thought that rather than thinking in the target language, the students' native language is active in their minds. This fact has motivated several researchers to look into this conundrum. Even though the lecturers emphasize that students must think and write in English, occasionally, the students disregard this directive.

The majority of the writing that the students produce is unfortunately restricted to the classroom. Their shortcomings in EFL writing have been linked mostly to the instructional approach and the surrounding conditions. Both the educators' disinterest and the students' lack of drive are factors contributing to their poor English proficiency. Moreover, their vocabulary is poor. Thus, repetition of the same words by the students stifles their ability to be creative. There are four main problems that the students encountered in writing; (1) idea development and organization, (2) limitation of time to revise their paper, (3) grammar knowledge and vocabulary insufficiency, and (4) low motivation to write.

In regard to the first problem, the students keep struggling in developing their ideas into a systematic writing as well as in supporting their ideas with strong explanation and evidence. They also get used to focus on creating perfect product instead of enjoying the experience of following the stages of writing process. Moreover, the second problem deals with time restriction to develop their idea and do revision. It is caused by the limited time and the lecturer does not give a special time to share with the students wherein they just write on paper for each topic for the whole semester without any chances to make it better. The third problem is caused by deficiency of grammar and vocabulary mastery. Finally, these four problems contribute the students' motivation in writing.

In writing an essay, the fourth semester students valued the process in writing. The process allowed them to choose their idea and develop it into a rough draft. Moreover, the process in writing also let the students to make their rough draft

better after having feedbacks from the lecturer or their friends. Finally, they could fix their essay into publication-ready argumentative essay.

Educators frequently ask if they would educate in the same way or in a different way if they had to implement the government policy that called for online learning to support studying or working from home during the Covid-19 pandemic. The only thing that can be done for them, given the amount of time that educators and students spend working to learn while also staying productive, is to change the manner that they educate. Educators worldwide are now compelled by the demands of their jobs to utilize digital technology to its fullest potential in order to meet learning objectives and deliver instruction. The use of digital technology in education will become more integrated due to the rapid advancement of technology. At this stage, blended learning—also referred to as integrated or mixed learning— becomes the preferred model in educational settings for all parties involved and continues to grow.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak in 2020, the learning system done in campus where the research conducted had to be changed into online system. This phenomenon definitely brought huge changes to the lecturers as well as the students. Especially in teaching learning process of writing class, the students used to have practices in writing during face-to face activities in the same place and time, and it was swiftly changed class distance learning. The online learning in writing course was already supported by a number of technologies such as WhatsApp, Google Classroom and Zoom Meeting. Those technology-based applications were beneficial in supporting the online learning in writing.

Since writing class conducted online, it is evident that the advantages and disadvantages came up as the consequences. The advantages coped the synchronous and asynchronous mode of learning. Synchronously, online writing class provided the students and the lecturer to connect in real-time. Both could use the internet to stay connected in studying the materials, doing the discussion and communicating. Asynchronously, both the lecturer and the students were able to stay connected without limited by zones, locations and distance due to the power of technology which made it possible. The lecturer could upload the materials which could be accessed by the students anytime.

Meanwhile, one primary disadvantage of online writing class was lack of engagement amongst the students and between the students and the lecturer. Besides, it also resulted in the emergence of learning loss caused by non-maximum teaching learning process. Therefore, the online learning was less successful than the offline learning because the explanations and interpretations were inadequate. The students obtained knowledge through an inefficient learning method, which will lead to subpar learning outcomes for them. Learning impairment therefore affected the human resources standard born in the Covid-19 pandemic year.

Furthermore, gender differences in writing rises another issue to consider. Due to their differing perspectives on many topics, as well as their gender, men and women write ideas and opinions in distinct ways. The similar phenomenon happened which differentiate between male and female fourth semester students in English Language Education Study Program. Based on the pre-test result, the intricacy of the sentences revealed that the female students' writing was longer than

that of the male students. Male students, meanwhile, were more direct in their communication.

Apart from that, the difference was also due to the thesis statement, diction and sentence structure. It is identified that the female writers did the task well. They tended to guide their idea by creating outline before writing full draft. After finishing, rereading and rechecking their writing word by word were completely done. Male students, on the other hand, wrote quickly and in just a few lines. The majority of them chose to paraphrase rather than wrote from scratch. When writing, they frequently finished without organizing or proofreading first.

Based on the identified problems in writing as mentioned previously, it is crucial to conduct a research which investigates the implementation of blended process-based approach in online writing classroom. It is also insightful to delve how blended process-based approach helps students in writing. Specifically, the differences between the male and female students' writing during the implementation of blended process-based approach in writing are also of necessary to dig.

1.3   Limitation of the Study

The limitation of the study is crucial to make a discussion about the research problem more specific and avoid complicated discussion. Consequently, the researcher needs to narrow down this research area. Therefore, to focus on a specific writing skill area and avoid misunderstanding and misleading in conducting the present study, limitation of the study must be determined. The present study was

limited to investigate the use of blended process-based approach in teaching writing which based on the phenomenon happened in English Language Education Study Program during the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak.

The Covid-19 pandemic outbreak forced the abrupt changes on the education system in every level of education, one of which was the education in university level. The teaching learning process which was used to conduct offline by highlighting the face-to-face meeting in the same time and place was changed into conducted online which required technology to support its process. The face-to-face meeting was surely exist but within virtual condition where the lecturer and students could meet virtually without being limited by time and space. This virtual condition could happen due to the integration of technology based applications or platforms to assist the teaching learning process. Therefore, based on the phenomenon, this teaching learning process in this current research was conducted fully online.

Moreover, the course to be investigated in this current research was Argumentative Writing as a compulsory 4 credit course taken in the fourth semester. Based on the KKNI curriculum, Argumentative Writing course is the continuance of Paragraph Writing and Essay Writing. In Argumentative Writing course, the skills introduced are writing logical reasoning, strong and convincing argument, writing subject-related argumentative essay, understanding academic writing, understanding plagiarism, practicing how to avoid plagiarism which involves citing, quoting, and referencing, and lastly, writing a research background. There was one class which consisted of 28 students involved in this research. They faced the phenomenon due to Covid-19 pandemic, and enrolled in the Argumentative Writing class.

Due to the phenomenon, blended process-based approach was implemented. It was the term referred to the combination of process approach in writing and Virtual Flipped Classroom (hereafter, VFC). The blended process-based approach consisted of 6 steps of writing such as pre-writing, drafting, reflecting, peer or tutor reviewing, revising, and publishing which had different purposes and brought distinguished writing experiences for the students. These steps were covered by the nature of VFC that allows the students to watch and listen to lectures from home, afterwards, they can use their knowledge in interactive exercises and real-world applications in a setting that closely resembles a classroom.

To conduct the blended process-based approach, several prominent technology-based applications were utilized such as Zoom Meeting, Google Classroom, WhatsApp, Mentimeter, and YouTube. The aforementioned applications were used and integrated into teaching and learning process primarily based on their own functions in supporting the teaching and learning process. The virtual meeting was conducted by means of Zoom application that could unite the lecturer and the students virtually per scheduled. Meanwhile, to provide the students with video lectures, the learning materials, and the task designs in each writing stage, Google Classroom was mainly used. This platform was also used as the main hub in submitting the students; writing product in each writing stage. YouTube was used to select suitable and relevant videos which links attached via Google Classroom. Furthermore, Mentimeter was utilized as the applications to support the lecturer in explaining the learning materials as well as the intermezzo during the teaching learning process.

Learning experiences are of classroom and outside classroom activities. Both individual and group performances are noted. Therefore, in this research, the students were instructed to create an argumentative essay based on the provided theme. They could finalize and publish their argumentative essay after joining the stages of blended process-based approach in writing. Furthermore, it should fulfil the scoring criteria, which were focused on several aspects; kinds of topic, variations of diction, length of paragraphs, format, punctuation and mechanics, content, organization, and the last grammar and sentence structure.

In addition, the differences of gender in writing were also investigated due to the phenomenon happened in the class which portrayed that the participants of this research were different in their writing activities and writing product quality. The writing activities of the male and female students had been disclosed in each stage of blended process-based approach. In addition, similarly, the writing product quality which composed in each stage of blended process-based approach had been scrutinized. The qualities were portrayed through the analysis of the writing products and the scores obtained by the students by assessing their final writing product.

1.4 Research Questions

Based on the elucidation on the previous discussion, four questions to investigate are proposed as follows:

1.4.1 How does the lecturer implement the blended process-based approach in writing classroom?

1.4.2 How does the blended process-based approach help students in writing?

1.4.3 How are the differences between male and female students' writing skill?

1.4.4 What are the students' perceptions of blended process-based approach in writing classroom?

1.5 Research Objectives

Based on the research questions, the research objectives are as follows:

1.5.1 To describe how the lecturer implements the blended process-based approach in writing classroom.

1.5.2 To delve how the blended process-based approach help students in writing.

1.5.3 To investigate the differences between male and female students' writing skill.

1.5.4 To analyze the students' perceptions of blended process-based approach in writing classroom.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The result of the present study is expected to bring both theoretical and practical significances to the teaching and learning process. Process development of the students' writing is the focus of the present study. In addition, the findings of the present study are expected to give both theoretical and practical significance.

Theoretically, the findings are expected to contribute further in supporting the existing research findings and empirical evidence of the working knowledge and principles of process writing in EFL Writing. The findings of the present study should be planned on the basis of some relevant existing studies and should

reinforce some relevant theoretical frameworks. Moreover, some information and theories provided in this study can be taken to enrich the reference.

Practically, the findings of the present study are beneficial for the English lecturers, the students and the other researchers. First for the English teachers, these findings can give feedback whether the process of writing that had been experienced by students is successful or not. Second for the students, they are guided to compose a good essay by following solid and systematic writing processes. Third, for the other researchers, they can find the weaknesses of the present research; hence they can develop and give good feedback in conducting a better research.

1.7   Definition of Key Term

In the present study, both conceptual and operational definitions are needed to avoid misunderstanding. The researcher considers it is important to define the key terms which are used in the present study. There is key term which is used in the present study. The key term is defined the definitions as follows:

1.7.1 Conceptual Definitions:

a.   Blended Process-Based Approach

The concept of blended process-based approach in this research refers to combination of the concept of virtual flipped classroom that is a form of learning model which allows the students to watch and listen to lectures at home and then perform their interactive activities and apply their knowledge in a virtual synchronized classroom in a way similar to the real classroom environment (Ismail & Abdulla, 2019) and the concept of process-based approach to writing that is an

iterative process which involves pre-writing, drafting, reflecting, peer or tutor reviewing, revising and publishing where teachers can help clarifying students' misconceptions about writing by explicitly teaching the stages of the writing process (Coffin et al., 2003).

b.   Argumentative Essay

Argumentative essay is an essay in which the writers agree or disagree on an issue, using reasons to support the writers' opinion, and its goal is to convince readers that the writers' opinion is right (Oshima & Hogue, 2016).

1.7.2 Operational Definitions:

a.   Blended Process-Based Approach

In this research context, blended process-based approach is a model of learning used in online writing classroom in English Language Education Study Program which combines Virtual Flipped Classroom and process-based approach that blend primarily synchronous and asynchronous modes of learning to ensure that the fourth semester students of English Language Education Study Program create a quality argumentative essay as the writing product of following the process in writing by following six steps of writing such as pre-writing, drafting, reflecting, peer or tutor reviewing, revising and publishing.

b.   Argumentative Essay

Argumentative essay, in this research context, is operationally defined as an essay which is composed by the fourth-semester students to argue on particular

issue in education. The argumentative essay must be 5 paragraphs in length including an introductory paragraph, body paragraphs and a concluding paragraph.

1.8   Novelty of the Research

Good research has a discernible level of novelty. New, unique, or distinctive in a research study are the traits that referred to as research novelty. It is that which distinguishes research from earlier research and advances our understanding of a certain topic. Because it facilitates the emergence of novel ideas, new understandings, and the uncovering of previously undiscovered knowledge, novelty is crucial to research. It is frequently connected to determining where research is lacking and venturing into unexplored areas.

The novelty of this study can be briefly noted as follows. First of all, as the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak, the teaching and learning system of writing classroom was changed into online learning. It was assisted by the implementation of blended process-based approach which combined process approach in writing with Virtual Flipped Classroom (VFC). The combination referred to blended process-based approach which was preferable to be used dealing with the phenomenon. The blended process-based approach definitely proposes new syntax of teaching and learning due to the use of synchronous and synchronous mode of learning as well as proper web-based applications or platforms to support it. The new syntax is named as Prosadery Learning: A Flipped Process-Based Approach. Prosadery Learning: A Flipped Process-Based Approach comprises essential aspects such as Adaptation, Discovery, Holistic Development and Reflection.

Moreover, the students' writing was delved in detail incorporating every step of blended process-based approach to portray their writing. More specific, the students as individuals categorized into male and female whose writing were scrutinized to figure out the differences of their writing in term of the activities they had done and the quality of their writing products. Furthermore, in this research, not only the characteristics of male and female students' writing were elucidated but also their perception was delved.