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AN ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH DEPARTMENT STUDENTS' ABILITY IN WRITING ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to describe the English Department students' ability in writing an argumentative essay. The research is designed as a descriptive quantitative method. The population of the research is the fourth semester students of English Department at Universitas Bengkulu in academic year 2018/2019. This research used random sampling technique in deciding the sample. The samples were 26 students. The students were asked to write an argumentative essay within 100 minutes. The students writings were analyzed by using assessment rubrics adapted from Schwalm (2007) and Jacobs et.al (1981) which consists of introduction, body paragraph, conclusion, language use, and mechanics. The result shows that students ability in writing argumentative essay is fair. From the final scores it could be seen that there was one student (3.8%) got very good grade, then 11 students (42.3%) got good grade, the most of the students or 12 students (46.2%) got fair grade, the rest of them or 2 students (7.7%) got poor grade.

Keywords: analysis, writing, argumentative essay

INTRODUCTION

As an English student, especially the candidate of English teacher, there are four skills that he/she must master. Those skills are listening, reading, speaking and writing. However, as the candidates of English teacher, the student also must aware that writing is the most important skill that needs special attention because writing is considered as the most challenging skill for many students.

The reason of writing as the most important skill that should be learned by students is because writing is one of productive skills and an activity in which someone can convey some information and express his/her feelings and thoughts to the readers in written language. The student is required to write his/her ideas in written language clearly. Therefore, he/she should master components of writing such as; content, organization, vocabulary, language use and mechanics. Ur (2003) stated that students must pay attention to formal aspects in writing such as, neat handwriting, correct spelling, and punctuation, as well as acceptable grammar and careful selection of vocabulary. Therefore, a good writing should contain components of writing like, grammar, effective sentence structures, spellings, punctuations, coherent ideas, etc. A good writing can convey the message as clear as possible.

According to Harmer (2004) writing skill is also considered as the skill that has close relationship with the higher education. As we probably know that most exams given by the teacher or lecturer, whether they are testing foreign language abilities or other skills, often rely on students' writing proficiency in order to measure their knowledge. It seems that good writing is needed to get good score in facing exams specially for college students because by students' writing the teacher or the lecturer can measure the students' understanding about the knowledge that they get during learning process in the past. Moreover, every student in college must complete the final task in the last semester by producing a thesis. Fundamentally, writing cannot be separated from education system or the teaching learning process.

There are some kinds of text or written form that will be gotten by the students during learning in every college. They are narrative, descriptive, explanation, recount, exposition, and argumentative. In this study, the researcher refers to argumentative essay as a subject to the research. According to Oshima and Hogue (2006), argumentative essay is mainly focusing on in which you as the students, the writers agree or disagree with an issue, focusing on reasons to support your opinion. Then, the goal is to convince the readers that your opinion is completely right. The other reason is why the argumentative essay is proper to students is that it forces the students to think on their own. The students have to take on an issue, support their stand with solid reason, and support their reason with solid evidence.

The reason of the researcher chose the argumentative essay as the focus of the research was because every college student is required to produce a thesis in the final semester. In making thesis, the students have to choose interesting problems in the field to be a good research and to produce a good thesis. The students need strong evidences to encourage their statements in their research. It means that by practicing to write an argumentative essay, it will help the students in making thesis in the final semester because argumentative essay is an essay that force the students to get good arguments with strong evidence in order to persuade the reader.

Thus, this research was conducted at fourth semester students of English Department at Universitas Bengkulu in the academic year 2018/2019. The first reason for doing the research in this university because the researcher is a student of English Department of Universitas Bengkulu. Based on the researcher experience, writing argumentative essay is not simple because it needs much time to choose interesting idea or topic and good thesis statement, and needs to master the aspects of writing essay.

The second reason is because there are previous studies that are related with this study. Mubarak (2013) conducted a research at fourth year students of English Department at University of Bengkulu and the study was descriptive research that used quantitative approach to analyze the data. The previous study

was conducted to know the students' ability in writing argumentative essay and the researcher of the previous study found that the students have difficulties in cohesion and coherence. Then, Arieza (2013) investigated the coherence in students argumentative essays in English education study program of Universitas Bengkulu. The study focused on the content, language use and organization. The result showed that there were 2 essays categorized as barely acceptable and 2 essays categorized as poor.

Based on the differences of the final finding of those previous studies and the preliminary finding of this study, therefore the researcher is interested in conducting this study to know other abilities or difficulties of the students in writing argumentative essay by concerning other aspects of writing besides the cohesion and the coherence of the students' essay.

Based on the above reasons, the researcher conducted a research entitled "An analysis of English Department students' ability in writing argumentative essay", which focused on the aspects of writing or the structure of argumentative essay such as the introduction, body paragraph, conclusion, language use and mechanics.

METHOD

This research was a descriptive quantitative research. This used because the purpose of this research was to describe the English Department students' ability in writing argumentative essay. According to Arikunto (2010) descriptive research is a research that explain about the situation based on the real condition of research subject. In addition, according to Arikunto (2010), quantitative research is an attempt to investigate an issue by using numerical data and statistical processing.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the researcher described the result of students' ability in writing argumentative essay at fourth semester students of English Department at Universitas Bengkulu. In order to know the students' overall ability in writing

argumentative essay, the researcher used the average of combining scores between researcher and co-rater.

The result of the students' writing show that there was 1 student in very good grade, 11 students in good grade, 12 students in fair grade, and 2 students in poor grade. The percentage of the students' ability is shown in the table below:

Table 1 Percentage of Students' Ability in Writing Argumentative Essay

Criteria	Grade	Frequency	Percentage
17 - 20	Very Good	1	3.8
13 -16	Good	11	42.3
9-12	Fair	12	46.2
5-8	Poor	2	7.7
Total		26	100

Students' Scores in Introduction

This is the first aspect in describing the scores of students' ability in writing argumentative essay. The percentage of students' scores in introduction is shown in table below:

Table 2 Percentage of Students' Ability in Introduction

Score	Frequency	Percentage
4	1	3.9
3 - 3.5	7	26.9
2 - 2.5	11	42.3
1 - 1.5	7	26.9
Total	26	100

Based on the table above, it was clearly shown that most of the students got scores 2-2.5. It means that most of the students of English Department at Universitas Bengkulu did not know how to arrange a good introduction in argumentative essay.

Students' Scores in Body Paragraphs

This is the second aspect in describing the scores of students' ability in writing argumentative essay. The percentage of students' scores in body paragraph is shown in table below:

Table 3 Percentage of Students' Ability in Body Paragraph

Score	Frequency	Percentage
4	0	0
3 - 3.5	8	30.8
2 - 2.5	12	46.1
1 - 1.5	6	23.1
Total	26	100

Based on the table above, it could be concluded that there were a lot of students that still could not arrange a good body paragraphs in argumentative essay.

Students' Scores in Conclusion

This is the third aspect in describing the scores of students' ability in writing argumentative essay. The percentage of students scores in conclusion is shown in table below:

Table 4 Percentage of Students' Ability in Conclusion

Score	Frequency	Percentage
4	2	7.7
3 - 3.5	9	34.6
2 - 2.5	10	38.5
1 - 1.5	5	19.2
Total	26	100

From the students' score above, it means that there were a lot of students still could not arrange a good conclusion of argumentative essay.

Students' Scores in Language Use

This is the fourth aspect in describing the scores of students' ability in writing argumentative essay. The percentage of students scores in language use is shown in table below:

Table 5 Percentage of Students' Ability in Language Use

Score	Frequency	Percentage
4	0	0
3 - 3.5	15	57.7
2 - 2.5	11	42.3
1 - 1.5	0	0
Total	26	100

As the result showed above, it means that some students still made mistakes of language use in writing argumentative essay.

Students' Scores in Mechanics

This is the fifth aspect in describing the scores of students' ability in writing argumentative essay. The percentage of students' scores in mechanics is shown in table below:

Table 6 Percentage of Students' Ability in Mechanics

Score	Frequency	Percentage
4	0	0
3 - 3.5	7	26.9
2 - 2.5	15	57.7
1 - 1.5	4	15.4
Total	26	100

Based on the table above, it could be concluded that, most of the students still made mistakes of mechanics in writing argumentative essay.

In this research, the researcher used documentation in order to gather the data. The documentation in this research referred to the students' essays. The

participants of this research were 27 students of fourth semester students' of English Department at Universitas Bengkulu. In analyzing the data, the researcher found that there was one student who cheated in writing argumentative essay. The students' essay was copied from internet, so the researcher only took 26 essays to be analyzed.

Based on the results, it could be concluded that the English Department students' ability in writing argumentative essay was fair. It means that the students' ability in writing argumentative essay were still far from the criteria of argumentative essay in high score that was stated by Schwalm (2007) and Jacobs et.al (1981).

The first aspect was about introduction. According to Schwalm (2007) in arranging introduction, the students should give detail background information about the topic of the argumentative essay by giving a clear explanation or definition of the problem. Furthermore, in arranging introduction, the students should introduce the main idea of the essay by stating the thesis statement. Based on the students result, in arranging introduction, many students wrote some background information and stated the problem, but it was unclear and almost all of the students lack in arranging thesis statement. They wrote many sentences but almost all the sentences did not support their thesis statement and many students did not arrange their thesis statement correctly, thus causing their thesis statement was unclear or vague.

The second aspect was about body paragraphs. According to Schwalm (2007) in arranging body paragraphs, the students should have at least three main points and the students should be able to develop those main points with supporting details. Based on the students' result, in arranging body paragraphs most of the students wrote body paragraphs less than three main points, also most of the students did not explain their main points with supporting detail.

The third aspect was about conclusion. According to Schwalm (2007) in arranging conclusion the students should summarize the main points without repeating previous sentences. Also, the students should give their personal

thoughts or their opinion about their topic of essay. Based on the students result in arranging conclusion, many students just stated the summary of the main points, even many of them just repeated the previous sentences. Also, most of the students did not give their personal thoughts about the topic of essay.

The fourth aspect was language use. In language use the students should concern to the rules of grammatical structure such as tenses, subject verb agreement, sentence construction, articles, prepositions, etc. Based on the students' result, in language use most of the students had mistakes in subject verb agreement.

The fifth aspect was mechanics. In mechanics students should concern with technical rules of writing included punctuation, spelling, capitalization, and paragraphing. However the result showed the students' writing was dominated by errors of all the technical rules. It might happen because students wrote their writing recklessly, so it caused difficult to give the score.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher concluded some reasons why the students' ability in writing argumentative essay were fair. First, it happened probably because the students lack of knowledge about argumentative essay, so the students got confused in bringing the idea based on the topic given. As we know that the goal of argumentative writing is to convince audience, and it is done in a situation where a conflict exist between the beliefs and attitudes of the writer or speaker and reader or audience (Hyland, 2002). Thus, writing argumentative essay is not easy, the students needs critical thinking and also great opinion so that readers will argue their argument or believe that the opinion is true. Therefore, the students need more practice to make their writing better. This result was supported by Frestisa (2017) that had similarities result with this study. She said that it happened because they did not have enough knowlege and ability in arranging each aspects of argumentative essay.

Second, the students' ability in writing argumentative essay were fair probably because the students have limited stock of vocabulary. Therefore the students end up repeating the same words when writing argumentative essay. This

result also in line with Al-Khasawneh in Rahmatunisa (2014) who clarified that students could not give voice to their thoughts because lack the adequate stock of vocabulary. Moreover, English language learners do not use invented spelling and their written texts are restricted to words which they know.

CONCLUSIONS

The researcher had analyzed the students' ability in writing argumentative essay written by the fourth students of English Department at Universitas Bengkulu. This research focused on the structure of argumentative essay or the aspect of writing such as introduction, body paragraphs, conclusion, language use, and mechanics.

Based on the result of the research that was described in the previous chapter, the researcher concludes that the students ability in writing argumentative essay was fair, because many students still made mistakes in writing argumentative essays. This research also in line with Frestisa (2017) who said that the students had difficulties in writing thesis statement, arguments, and concluding sentence, in choosing appropriate vocabulary, in using grammar and in applying mechanics.

As the data was unfolded, results showed that most of the students still lack of knowledge about argumentative essay. It would be homework for the lecture to give more practices to the students to make the students be able to develop their ability in writing argumentative essay.

After discussing the result and making conclusion, there were some suggestions for the students of English Department at Universitas Bengkulu, for the lecturer and for the next researcher, as follow:

1. For the students

To have good skills in writing, the students need to improve themselves to do many more exercises in writing argumentative essay. The researcher recommended the students to develop their ability, not only in writing, but also in reading, speaking, and also listening. By mastering

others skills will make their writing more extensive and complete their skills in mastering English.

2. For the lecturer

The lecturer really had done good effort in order to make her students understand how to write argumentative essay as well, but some students had some problems in writing argumentative essay. The researcher had found the problem that used to faced by students and also their weaknesses. By reading this thesis, the lecturer could develop and improve her way in teaching and learning process. She could make the material become more interesting to the students and make them more motivated.

3. For further researcher

Further researcher who wants to conduct the research about argumentative essay, it would be better if they solves problems and find good solutions for the students who got fair and poor grade because it would assist them in improve their way in writing argumentative essay.

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