



A STUDY OF STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES IN WRITING ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY ON ESSAY WRITING SUBJECT OF ENGLISH DEPARTMENT FKIP UNES PADANG

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Abstract: The objective of this research was to find out the students' difficulties in writing argumentative essay on Essay writing subject. The method used in this study was descriptive research. In Essay writing subject the students studied about kind of essay such as Descriptive, Argumentative, Procedural, Comparison-contrast essay. Students frequently encounter a range of difficulties when writing argumentative essays, a genre that demands critical thinking, clear articulation, and robust support for a stated position. These challenges can be broadly categorized into linguistic, cognitive, psychological, and structural issues, often intermingling to create significant obstacles for the students. This study has been done in English Department students' FKIP (Faculty of Teacher Training and Education) Universitas Ekasakti Padang in the academic year 2023/2024. Researchers analyzed the difficulties of students in writing argumentative essay. There are five categories of writing should be existed in students writing they are developing the ideas, organizing the ideas, vocabulary, grammar and mechanics. The researcher found that the students' difficulties in English Department writing argumentative essay was in developing ideas. The developing idea's score was 46%. The developing ideas is started by choosing a good topic, and topics sentences, it called paragraph unity. Based on the findings the students did not develop the arguments well, they only stated some theories without developed it well. Moreover, the students did not give specific ideas and arguments related to their topic. statements also did not develop in body of paragraph well.

Keywords:

Students' difficulties, Essay Writing, Argumentative Essay.

A. INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the most important skills that have to be mastered by the English Education Students. Brown (2001) claimed that “writing is a thinking process. Furthermore, he stated that writing can be planned and given with an unlimited number of revisions before its release”. Meanwhile, Harmer (2004) states, writing is a way to create language and express thoughts, emotions, and opinions. It can be said that writing is a process to develop the ideas into a good combination of sentences which express the idea of the writer.

Writing is considered one of the most important skills a college student should have (Morris et al., 2018). This skill is not only important for the students' life at the undergraduate level, but it is also an important factor for students' employability and career success. To be an effective writer means a better ability to express one's opinions and ideas (Al-Jamal & Zennou, 2018; Lam et al., 2018).

In the university level, essay writing is one of the subject that should be mastered by the students. It requires the students to write various types of essay. One of them is Argumentative Essay. As stated by Allen et al. (2019) Argumentative Essay a complex cognitive process that is related to the authors' purpose, the prospects of audiences, the contextual position, and the predictable rhetorical patterns. The aim of argumentative is to persuade the audience and make them understand the other side of the argument by offering logical reasons to support a belief or idea (Wolfe et al., 2009). It also involves critical thinking skills as well as organizational skills that involves planning how to construct the argument (Vögelin et al., 2019).

Moreover, Oshima and Hogue (2006) noted that an argumentative essay is an essay in which writers agree or disagree with a particular issue and afterwards, they use reasons to support their opinion. Moreover, Zemach & Rumisek (2005) emphasize that the thesis statement of argumentative essays is not a sentence that merely gives rise to a fact, but that it is something that can be debated or discussed and specifically gives the writer's opinion.

The argumentative essay is one of the most common models of writing taught in higher education (Rubiaee et al., 2020; Zarrabi & Bozorgian, 2020). The current literature about L2 argumentative essay writing has led to different ideologies. The section below highlights some of the current approaches.

Related to the students' difficulties in writing argumentative essays, some previous researchers have found various difficulties in writing argumentative essays by the students. For example, Thi Hanh Dang, et al (2020) found that English majored sophomores met difficulties in term of linguistic competence (vocabulary, grammar and coherence), organization and development of an argumentative essay, and the lack of critical thinking. In addition, Tasya (2022) found that the causes of student difficulties were lack of proficiency in production skills, lack of knowledge related to the subject matter of the content to be written, and lack of effective

strategies for planning or revising essays. Furthermore, Saprina (2021) pointed out that the students still have some difficulties in constructing thesis statement, organizing paragraph, making writing coherent and combining ideas in correct sentences.

The components of writing are considered as developing ideas, organizing ideas, grammar, vocabulary and mechanics.

(a). Developing the Ideas

According to Reep (2009) each paragraph in a document is a unit of sentences that focuses on one idea and acts as a visual element to break up the text into manageable chunks of information. Effective paragraphs guide readers by introducing individually distinct but related topics, Emphasizing key points, Showing relationships between major points and providing visual breaks in pages to ease reading.

In developing the ideas, the writer should consider of unity. According to Reep (2009:82) unity in a paragraph means concentration on a single topic. One sentence in the paragraph is the summary sentence (also called the topic sentence), and it establishes the main point.

(b). Organizing Ideas

In organizing the ideas, the students have to identify the use of AI in English subject. In the topic sentence the students have to identify the place by writing about the AI first. In this case, the students have to mention about the use of AI. The importance of using the AI in English subject and the possibilities of using AI in doing the task in English subject.

Furthermore, in organizing the essay the student must pay attention to the coherences of the text. Reep (2009:82) stated that "a paragraph achieves coherence when the sentences proceed in a sequence that supports one point at a time. Transitional, or connecting, words and phrases facilitate coherence by showing the relationship between ideas and by creating a smooth flow of sentences".

(c). Grammar

Different experts define the term of grammar in various ways. Brown (2001:362) defines that "grammar is the system of rules in governing the conventional arrangement and relationship of words in sentence". Technically, grammar refers to sentence-levels rules only, and not to rules governing the relationship among sentences, which refers to discourse rules.

(d). Vocabulary

Vocabulary is one important language aspects to be learned by senior high school students. If the students make errors in grammar in their writing, it may be

able to understand. But when students do not have the right word to express something, it will make misunderstanding among them. Without knowing the vocabulary, students will be unable to grasp idea of the reading material or construct a good sentence in writing or work in other skill like speaking or listening and speaking English. In this case, the lack of students' vocabularies, make their writing does not develop well. They can not convey their ideas as clearly as they would have to.

Stahl (2005) says that "vocabulary is the knowledge of words and word meanings and also puts vocabulary knowledge as the knowledge of a word not only implies a definition, but also implies how that word fits into the context". Vocabulary knowledge is not something that can ever be fully mastered; it is something that expands and depends over the course of a lifetime. Instruction in vocabularies in vocabulary involves for more than looking up words in a dictionary and using words in sentence.

(e) Mechanics

According to Olstain in Murcia (1991:236) "mechanics is the first step in writing in which the writer refers to recognition and discrimination of letter, acknowledgment of word, spelling, punctuation and capitalization". Based on this statement, it can conclude that, mastery in all of the components of mechanics is the first step to make students' writing readable and understandable. In accordance with Brown (1991:357) "there are several categories to evaluate writing; they are content, organizational, discourse, syntax, vocabulary, and mechanics". In mechanics the categories that will be evaluated are punctuation, spelling, and capitalization.

Table 1: Writing Indicators

The Content	Indicator	Sub-Indicator
1. Developing Ideas	1. Paragraph Unity	a. topic b. topic sentence c. supporting sentence d. concluding sentence
	2. Coherence	a. the sentence hold together b. understandable

2. Organizing Ideas	1. Coherences 2. Identification 3. Description	a. repeat key words from sentence to sentence b. use pronoun for preceding key term c. use demonstrative adjective use connecting words a. identify the name of place and location b. describe the complete features of the place Parts, Qualities and Characteristics
3. Grammar	1. Simple Present tense 2. Relational verbs 3. Adjective words	a. to describe actions or conditions that are usual, habitual or permanent b. to state general / truth c. for future action on schedule time d. for future action in certain time relational verbs used when classifying and describing appearances/qualities and parts/functions of phenomena (is, are, has, have) used to add extra information to nouns and may be technical, everyday or literally, depending on the text.
4. Vocabulary	1. Word choices 2. Amount of Vocabulary	Choose the appropriate and accurate words to express ideas. 200 words
5. Mechanics	1. Punctuation 2. Capitalization 3. Spelling	a. comma b. Period c. the colon d. semicolon e. apostrophe f. Quotation marks g. the dash a. capitalize the first word in sentence b. capitalize pronoun I c. capitalize the titles of composition d. capitalize the proper noun e. capitalize name of detail, title, month, day, specific group or people, geographic areas, and specific structures. Avoid misspelling

From the indicators above, it lead to the data description and will be able to answer the research questions. This indicator helps the researcher and the scorers to score the students' test. From those indicators, the researcher can see the students skill through their test and analyze the data into the data description.

The purpose of this research was to find out the students' difficulties in writing argumentative essay. The research was done at FKIP (Faculty of Teacher Training and Education) Universitas Ekasakti Padang in the academic year 2023/2024.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

The research method of the research was Descriptive research. As stated by Arikunto (2019) research designed is used to find out the conditions or other circumstances mentioned, the results of which are presented in the form of a research report.

The population of the research was the students at second semester of Academic Year 2023/2024. The total were 15 students. This research used total sampling, so that the entire population was chosen as sample of the research.

C. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

In this study, the argument that should build by the students in their essay was about The Use of AI in English Subject. the researchers chose the second semester students as the research sample which consisted of one class with 15 students in Essay writing subject. The reason why researchers chose the second semester as the subject was the because students of this class consider typical cases and the most potential data sources for research because they have experience in Writing. Researchers use techniques that most help researchers understand research problems and questions (Creswell, 2003, p. 166).

The students' scores in writing argumentative essay were presented in the following table:

Table 2. Students' Score for Each Component of Argumentative Essay

No	Category	Developing Ideas		Organizing Ideas		Grammar		Vocabulary		Mechanics	
1	Very Good	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	6%	1	6%
2	Good	3	21%	4	27%	5	33%	4	27%	4	27%
3	Fair	5	33%	5	33%	7	46%	6	40%	6	40%
4	Weak	7	46%	6	40%	3	21%	4	27%	4	27%
5	Poor	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
	Total	15	100%	15	100%	15	100%	15	100%	15	100%

The table presents the students' score for each component on writing argumentative essay. The components that have been analyzed were developing ideas, organizing ideas, grammar, vocabulary and mechanics. It can be seen that only three of the students got very good for developing ideas component. There are 46% of the students got weak score for developing ideas which categorized as weak, 40% students got weak for organizing idea and grammar component was 46% categorized as fair. while in vocabulary there 40% got fair scores. For mechanic's component there are 40% students got fair score. So, it can be concluded that the lowest score was in organizing ideas. In summary, the students' biggest problems in argumentative essay is in organizing their ideas.

First, developing ideas is the most important thing for the students in writing descriptive text. By developing the ideas, the students can make a good writing text and developing their ideas clearly on each paragraph. In the topic sentence, the students have to identify the topic first; they can identify the phenomenon related to their topic. In developing the ideas, the students have to describe about the place by describing parts, qualities and the characteristics of the place.

The developing ideas is started by choosing a good topic, and topics sentences, it called paragraph unity. Based on the findings the students described the ideas without organizing it well, and they did not give specific information about the argument. They did not provide any additional information or appropriate explanation to maintain the main ideas where the students only gave a short explanation without organized the ideas.

Developing ideas was the most critical foundational element, and its absence or weakness means the essay lacks of direction and focus. The analysis indicates that students often present overly broad statements, factual declarations rather than arguable claims, or theses that are not consistently supported throughout the essay. Research indicates that students often fail to develop sufficient, relevant, and well-elaborated arguments to support their thesis. These matters affected the student's ability in developing the ideas. Many studies link the aforementioned inabilities to underdeveloped critical thinking skills. This impacts students' capacity to analyze complex issues, evaluate evidence, identify assumptions, and construct logical and persuasive arguments.

Second, in organizing the ideas the students have to write the essay with the correct coherences. In writing the argumentative essay, the students have to describe about their argument well; in order to inform the reader, they have to state their genuine and original argument about the use of AI in English subject. The sentences must be understandable and hold together. In the identification part the student has to identify the object very well. It will develop into good paragraph with good description. Furthermore, the students have to mention why the use of AI allow or not allow in English subject. The students can write the additional information in the supporting paragraph or body of the essay. They may write two

or three bodies based on the thesis statement mentioned in the introductory paragraph.

A prevalent finding is students' difficulty in logically organizing their arguments and structuring the essay coherently. This includes poor paragraph structure, lack of clear topic sentences, ineffective transitions between ideas and paragraphs, and an overall disjointed flow that confuses the reader.

Third, Grammar is the system of rules governing the conventional arrangement and relationship of words in sentence. Technically, grammar refers to sentence-levels rules only, and not to rules governing the relationship among sentences, which refers to discourse rules. In this case, the students have to write the text with good relational verbs and adjective words to make a good writing text, the students were not able to function the appropriate grammar in their essay. It is illustrated by 46% of the students got poor score for their grammar component.

Technically, grammar refers to sentence-levels rules only, and not to rules governing the relationship among sentences, which refers to discourse rules. In this case, the students have to write the essay with relational verbs and adjective words to make a good essay. the students were able to apply correct grammar in argumentative essay with fair categorization.

Fourth, the ability of students in using appropriate vocabulary in writing argumentative essay. There were 47 % students got fair for the vocabulary. It can be seen that there is no student got poor for their vocabulary component, same as any other elements. Research indicates that students often fail to develop sufficient, relevant, and well-elaborated arguments to support their thesis. Their points may be superficial, underdeveloped, or lack logical reasoning. Research consistently shows that students face challenges in selecting appropriate evidence, integrating it smoothly into their writing, and explaining how the evidence supports their claims.

The last result is about the mechanics. In this case, the students were able to use the appropriate mechanics. The students got good score with 27% of good categorization, but most of students got 40% categorized as fair. The students were able to use punctuation, alphabet and some mechanics itself.

D. CONCLUSION

Based on the result of the research it was found the problem faced by the student was developing the ideas. There are 46% of the students got weak score for developing ideas which categorized as weak. Research indicates that students often fail to develop sufficient, relevant, and well-elaborated arguments to support their thesis.

These matters affected the student's ability in developing the ideas. Many studies link the aforementioned inabilities to underdeveloped critical thinking skills. This impacts students' capacity to analyze complex issues, evaluate evidence, identify assumptions, and construct logical and persuasive arguments.

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