



Analysis of Students' Difficulties in Developing Argumentative Essay

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Abstract

This study is aimed to explore the students' difficulties in developing an argumentative essay in Writing for Academic Purposes Subject in of English Department, Universitas Negeri Gorontalo. The participants of this research are the students of class C, which consists of 8 students in the 5th semester of the academic year 2019/2020. Using a qualitative method that data were obtained from the semi-structured interview. This study also used Braun and Clarke's (2006) theory as the technique for analyzing the data. Therefore, the interview questions were adapted and developed from Creswell (2002). As a result of this research, the students, when they are writing an argumentative essay, still face difficulties although they have already passed the material. Besides, the students have various difficulties such as difficulty determining the topic, difficulty using the academic word, difficulty collecting data and information, and some students lack understanding of how to write an essay.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui kesulitan mahasiswa dalam mengembangkan esai argumentatif pada mata kuliah Writing for Academic Purposes di Jurusan Bahasa Inggris, Universitas Negeri Gorontalo. Partisipan penelitian ini adalah mahasiswa kelas C yang terdiri dari 8 mahasiswa semester 5 tahun ajaran 2019/2020. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif yang datanya diperoleh dari wawancara semi terstruktur. Penelitian ini juga menggunakan teori Braun dan Clarke (2006) sebagai teknik analisis data dan pertanyaan wawancara diadaptasi dan dikembangkan dari teori Creswell (2002). Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa para siswa ketika menulis karangan argumentasi masih menghadapi kesulitan meskipun mereka sudah menguasai materi. Selain itu, siswa mengalami berbagai kesulitan seperti kesulitan menentukan topik, kesulitan menggunakan kata akademik, kesulitan mengumpulkan data dan informasi, dan beberapa siswa kurang memahami cara menulis esai.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Writing in English is one of the skills taught and studied at all levels, from beginner to advanced level. Students learn to order their sentences into paragraphs to convey

information, thoughts, and opinions as part of writing instruction. According to Brown (2001), writing is the written process of thinking, drafting, and rewriting that demands specific abilities in generating ideas, organizing them coherence, and producing a finished output. Writing, according to Brown, is the process of thinking, drafting, and editing in a written format. When writing an essay, students must express their feelings and thoughts on paper.

In the fourth semester of college, one of the lessons is how to write an academic essay. An academic essay is a type of English writing where students have to think critically and be creative to improve their ideas in paragraphs. Hyland (2003) says that an academic essay is a way of thinking critically, and that students can express their ideas in paragraphs. On the other hand, writing an argumentative essay is one of the parts of an academic essay. Students learn how to write ideas, opinions, and strong arguments about a given topic in argumentative essay writing materials. However, some students still struggle with argumentative writing because they struggle with topic, organization, and writing rules.

In this study, the researcher will examine the challenges students face when writing argumentative essays. On the other hand, an analysis of students' difficulties plays an important role in solving the students' problems in writing an argumentative essay, determining the causes of the students' difficulties in writing an argumentative essay, identifying the factors that influence the students' difficulties, and determining how the students can learn from their mistakes in writing an argumentative essay so they do not encounter the same difficulties in writing an argumentative essay in the future.

1.2. English Writing Skill

English writing talent may be a specific ability that facilitate author place their thought into words in a very meaty type and to mentally move with the message. English writing is one among the language skills that ought to be tutored besides the other skills.

Writing is thought to be a productive skill it aims at aiding students in expressing their plan written. Brown (2001) state that writing is the written process of thinking, drafting and revising that need particular skills on how to generate ideas, how to organize them coherently, and how to produce a final product. In short, in manufacturing a bit of text, the intelligence becomes an important demand to use.

In writing, students will share their idea, feeling, or anything that exist in their mind. It is supported by Greetham (2001) that stated by English writing, the students are forced to organized their thinking and develop their ideas on the issues, and they will know how well they understand the object and know where their strengths and weakness. Writing prosecutes students to concentrate on generating ideas, organizing, coherently, redaction it into sensible composition, victimization sensible punctuation, and piece of writing text for acceptable grammar. Therefore, students who want to be able to write a good writing must learn to write regularly.

1.3. Aspect of Writing

Writing skill enclosed all the data and skills associated with expressing ideas through the word. In writing skill, students have to pay attention with the aspect of writing when they are writing which important for students to make a good writing. According to Jacob et al (1981), there are five aspects of writing. Those aspects are: **(1) Content:** Content refers to substance of writing, the expert of the most plan unity, i.e., teams of connected statements that a author presents as unit in developing a subject matter. **(2) Organization:** Organization is the logical organization of the content. It contains sentences that square measure logically organized and flows smoothly. Logical arrangement refers to the order of the sentences and

plan. **(3) Vocabulary:** Vocabulary refers to the choice of words those square measure appropriate with the content. It begins with the idea that the author wish to specific the concept as clearly and directly as he will. **(4) Language Use:** Language use refers to the utilization of the right grammatical and syntactical pattern on separating, combining, and grouping concept in words, phrases, clauses, and sentences to bring out logical relationships in paragraph writing. **(5) Mechanic:** Mechanic refers to the utilization graphic typical of the language, i.e., the steps of arrangement letters, words sentences, paragraphs by victimization information of structure and a few alternatives associated with one other.

1.4. Writing Argumentation Essay

Argumentative essay is one of academic essay that explain the fact, issues, collecting important information, generating, and evaluate evidence. In writing argumentative essays, the writers should present clear evidence for claims, and qualified statements rather than sweeping assertions (Belmont & Sharkey, 2011). That is why argumentative is very crucial for students and becomes one of the important essays to be learned. The argumentative essay is additionally referred to as a genre of writing that needs students to search a subject or information.

1.5. Generic Structure of Argumentative Essay

When writing, students frequently have more time to think than they do in oral activity. In university, students have to learn how to write a good paragraph. Some students in university get difficulties in improve their writing especially academic writing in argumentative essay. In argumentative essay, there is the generic structure that students have to pay attention when they are writing an essay. There are ; First, it has a topic sentence. Second, it has supporting sentence for pros and supporting sentence for cons (further both of them is called these are called argument), and third, it has to use deductive or inductive reasoning, cause, effect, argument by authority.

1.6. Students' Difficulties in Developing Argumentative Essay

One of the skills in English that has challenges in learning is writing. On the other hand, writing is a skill that allows students to convey ideas or opinions by paying attention to the structure of the language. However, at the university level, there are some students who have difficulty writing.

At the university level, students must be able to think critically and be able to convey their ideas in order to attract the attention of readers, it is supported by Bromley (2003) explained that when students practice and try to think critically when they are writing, they become more articulate about their knowledge in writing.

However, to achieve this, students must pay attention to the points in writing. These points are in the form of grammar, punctuation, spelling, vocabulary, and how to start a sentence in the introduction, body of sentence, and end with a conclusion.

1.7. Students' Difficulties in Writing

Composing written essay is a complicated activity which needs full of concentration and knowledge about what we are going to write. In fact, students always face the difficulties when writing especially for those writing in a second language in academic context.

Difficulty means that a issues that arduous to accomplish, deal with, or perceive. On the opposite hand, issues probably state of affairs of being long face with one thing that desires nice mental or physical effort in order to be done successfully. According to Oxford Dictionary (2010) as cited in Erisda (2017), difficulty is a quality or state of being hard to

do, deal with or understand. The students don't develop and improve their writing techniques in learning English. The students' ability for obtaining concept depends on what quantity they write of their topic.

According to Graham & Harris in Glynn et al (2006:98) as cited in Erisda (2017) difficulty to write from students may, in large part, be the result of three factors such as lack of proficiency in the text production skills, that is, frequent errors in spelling, the use of upper and lower case, punctuation, and language use. Moreover, lack of knowledge relating to the subject content of the script to be written, and/or of the conventions and information. Furthermore, lack of effective strategies in planning or revising text.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research focused on student's difficulties in writing argumentative essay. The researcher will use qualitative research to find out the questions of the research. Qualitative research is designed to reveal a target audience's range of behavior and the perceptions that drive it with reference to specific topics issues. According to Creswell (2008), Qualitative research method as an approach or search to explore and understand a central phenomenon. He also said that to understand the central phenomenon, the researcher interviewed the research participants or participants by asking general and rather broad questions.

2.1. Research Participant

The participants of this research are the students in the 5th semester which they already finished Writing Academic Purposes courses in English Department of Gorontalo State University. In addition, the participants on this research are English Department students of Class of 2019 (Class C) who already passed the material of writing argumentative essay in writing for academic purposes. The researcher will choose twenty five students from Class C to become the participants on this research.

2.2. Research Location

This research will be conducted in English Department of Gorontalo State University of the 5th semester students. The students in the 5th semester is already past the material of argumentative essay in writing for academic purposes subject.

2.3. Technique of Collecting the Data

This is the instrument that the researcher will use to collect the data. The researcher will be using interview with the participant and have decided some questions that will be used in the interview of students in 5th Semester in English Department of Gorontalo State University. Interview is a meeting of people face to face, especially for collecting information. In interview, the researcher will be doing conversations with the participant where the researcher will give some questions about their difficulties to improve their argumentative essay. It means that the interview will help the researcher to know the difficulties that the students faced when writing. The type of questions that will be used in the interview is semi-structured interview which means that the answers will not only be based on the questions provided but also can be developed during the process of interviewing. The process of the interview will be done by online interview, where the researcher used a link platform (Google form) as the instrument to support the original data. This part also provides the list of questions that related to the Students Difficulties in Developing Argumentative Essay.

2.4. Technique of Analyzing the Data

After collecting the data from the interview, the researcher analyzed the data by used a thematic analysis. According to Braun and Clark (2006, p.6), thematic analysis is the method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within the data. In this research, the researcher will used Braun and Clarke 6-step framework to analyze the data. This step was chosen because this step included an influential approach that can produce a clear data. There are 6-steps of thematic analysis, were to become familiar with data, generate initial code, and search for themes, review themes define themes and writing up.

2.5. Thematic Analysis

The researcher conducted interviews with participants to obtain accurate information. After the researcher doing interview and got all the data from participants, the researcher began to analyze the data by using thematic analysis. After the researcher got the answer of the participants, the researcher is began to analyze the data. First, the researcher reads all the data obtain from the participants in order to get familiar with the data which were being analyzed. Second, after getting familiar with the data, the researcher try to doing code that were considered capable of helping answer the research question. Third, the researcher categorized the codes that had similar meanings. After that, the researcher looked for a theme for the code that had been grouped. The themes were defined based on the indicators of the interview. Then, the researcher reviewed the theme to make sure the code and themes were appropriate. Finally, the researcher writes the report to be presented in order to answer the research question.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Results

Argumentative Essay in English writing subject. Research findings intended to describe the result of the interview and research discussion intended to describe the mentioned findings. The interviews were conducted with eight students as participants and the students gave some variety answer about difficulties in writing argumentative essay. Additionally, some of the participants answered the question in Indonesia and to display the data, the researcher provides the answer of the participant in English.

3.1.1. Argumentative Essay

The participants were asked whether they have known about argumentative essay. The answers showed that all participants know about argumentative essay. Based on the result of the interview, the participant gave the variety answer about argumentative essay. As we know that argumentative essay is a kind of writing academic essay that have a critical thinking to organized students idea. Beside, all the participants already familiar with writing argumentative essay because they have pasted the material in previous semester.

3.1.2. Difficulties

In writing argumentative essay, students have to pay attention with the rules and structure, such as how students can organize their idea and knowledge about the topic, how students will get detailed information that related with the topic that will be discussed and how students using academic words without error. But when writing argumentative, some students often face difficulty and in the other hand there is students did not face difficulty.

The students face the difficulties in determining the topic. By seeing the result of the participant, it can be seen that the students face the difficulty when they begin to write an argumentative essay especially in determining the topic. The students still feel hard to determine the topic because sometimes they have no idea to choose what topic that they want to write.

By seeing the result of the interview that already been displayed by participant, the students gave statement that the students faced the difficulty in using academic word. In this case, the students feel hard in using academic word. By during the interview, the reason why they still feel difficult to use academic word because they have a lack of vocabulary especially academic word. In writing argumentative essay, students have to write in academic rules because writing argumentative essay is a kind of academic essay.

The last difficulties face by students is difficulty in collecting data and information. In writing argumentative essay, the writers should present clear evidence for claims, and qualified statement rather than sweeping assertions (Belmont and Sharkey, 2011). . But in this case, most of students gave the statement that the students feel difficult to collect the data and information based on the topic that the students wants to write. Data and information is important in writing argumentative essay. Some of participants feel hard to get the detail data because the students feel they lack of information. By collected the detail data and got the information, the students will be able to organize their idea in paragraph essay. In other word, that is related with the body of writing. Additionally, the body of writing is a part of argumentative essay that the writer will give the fact as evidence to strengthen the sentence.

3.1.3. The Reasons

When writing argumentative essay, most of students face the difficulties. In this line, there is three response mostly said by the students regarding the difficulties in writing argumentative essay, first it is the lack of understanding about how to write. Second, students should be quoting others people's opinion to avoid plagiarism. Third, students feel hesitant to discuss sensitive topics.

The reason that makes them feel difficult to write an argumentative essay is the students have lack of understanding about to write. When writing argumentative essay, the students should pay attention with the rules of writing, parts of writing argumentative essay and aspect of writing. In this case, some of them have lack of understanding about to write and it is confirmed by some English Department students in class C that they gave a statement that they still do not know how to make a good argumentative essay with the rules although they already learn the material in 4th semester in writing for academic purposes course. In line, the students gave a statement that they think that they are not a smart person because they always got the difficulties in writing argumentative essay. This condition, definitely, makes them hard to write.

By seeing the result of the interview by participant, another reason that make them feel hard to write an argumentative essay is be more careful in quoting others people opinion to avoid plagiarism. In academic essay especially in argumentative essay, is not only the rules of writing that the students should pay attention but also about plagiarism. As people know that plagiarism is a crucial thing in every essay and something like that. Plagiarism is about the errors of using other people statement and idea. So, in writing there is a APA style that can help students to avoid the plagiarism. In addition, APA style such as paraphrase, citation, and quotation that make the students to avoid the plagiarism. In this case there are some participants that make statement that the students feel difficult with the writing rules such as writing with APA style. Another reasons that make them feel difficult in writing

argumentative essay is the students feel hesitant to discuss sensitive topics. In writing argumentative essay, the first step that doing by students is determining the topic. There are many interesting topic that students can find out. But in fact, there is the topic that students cannot write and developing in writing argumentative essay because is kind of sensitive topic although the topic is interesting. Furthermore, the students should change the topic and that is make them feel hard because they think that is hard to organize and write their idea with the topic that they did not want to write.

3.1.4. Suggestion

There are some students feel difficult in writing argumentative essay in writing for academic purposes subject. Although the students are face the difficulties, the students are trying to overcome their errors. Additionaly, there are three responses mostly said by them regarding the students difficulties in writing argumentative essay, firstly keep reading in order to got the information and idea, secondly keep practice in writing, thirdly pay attention with the rules of writing.

Furthermore, according to the all of the result of participant above, it can be seen that the students are trying to learn more and trying to overcome their errors that they already experienced. Their suggestion will help themself if writing argumentative essay again and is useful for those who want to write an academic essay especially in argumentative essay. All the participant learn based on their errors.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

4.1. Conclusion

This study was collected at English Department, Faculty of letters and culture, Gorontalo State University, in class C in the fifth semester in the academic year 2020/2021 in Writing for Academic Purposes Subject. The researcher used qualitative method in order to collect the data. In this study, thematic analysis was used to analyze the data and grouping into the theme.

Consequently, writing argumentative essay was difficult for students although the students already learned the material in previous semester, also it is proved by several students in English Department in class C. When the students are writing, they always face kinds of difficulties such as difficulties in using academic word, difficulties to collecting the data and information, and also the students are face the difficulties because some of them did not understand how to make a good essay and did not pay attention with the rules such as aspect of writing and part of argumentative essay in order that to make them easier to write.

Furthermore, although the students are face the difficulties, the students are trying to doing their best in order that to overcome their errors. The students will trying to keep practice and pay attention with the all aspect in writing and part of argumentative essay in order that they will got more knowledge in writing. Therefore, the students will be able to overcome their anxiety in writing and errors that make them face the difficulties.

4.2. Recommendation

This research reveals recommendations both for the students and lecturer toward the difficulties in developing argumentative essay for the English Department, Gorontalo State University.

For students, this research helps them to gain the information related to the difficulties in writing argumentative essay. The students must learn all of aspect of writing and parts of argumentative essay when they are wants to writing argumentative essay in writing subject.

Additionally by this research, the students will be able to overcome their errors in writing because this research explained that the important material such as aspect of writing that students should learn.

This research suggests for the lecture who teaching argumentative essay in writing subject, the lecturer will know the students weakness in writing argumentative essay and the lecture can take full obligation to make the students more understand about writing argumentative essay.

This research also recommended to the next researcher who interested with the same field. Additionally, the future researcher can research about how to overcome the difficulties in order that to make students completely improve their skill in writing especially in writing argumentative essay.

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