



**WRITING ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY IN ONLINE ACADEMIC WRITING
CLASS: STUDENTS' VOICE, DIFFICULTIES, AND WRITING ENJOYMENT**

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Abstract

The present study is aimed at finding out 1) students' voices and their difficulties towards Academic Writing, and 2) students' awareness of Argumentative essay. This study employs a qualitative case study involving twelve six semester students of English Department and enrolling Academic Writing course. The class is conducted online using Google Meet. The participants are selected purposively and divided into two category: six students with six years writing enjoyment and six students with three years writing enjoyment. The primary data are obtained through semi structured interview and students' document Argumentative text conducted online. The result of interview are transcribed, categorized, coded, and interpreted. Meanwhile, the students' document of Argumentative text are analyzed by utilizing the generic structure checklist of argumentative essay adopted from Derewianka (1990). The findings reveals that all of students perceived Academic Writing positively. Meanwhile, all of students' writing ability are hampered by their less ability in organizing idea systematically, grammar, vocabulary and diction. Specifically, students who have six years writing enjoyment faces difficulties in Academic writing due to their lack of understanding the instruction and managing assignment. In contrary, the students with three years writing enjoyment find Academic Writing difficult due to low management of revision and less enthusiastic and motivation. The result of students' document of Argumentative texts indicate that students' awareness on Argumentative essay still need improvement. It is recommended for the further research on related topic to investigate the novel cases using the different method.

Keywords: Argumentative essay, students' voice, writing difficulties

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui 1) pendapat siswa dan kesulitan mereka dalam penulisan teks akademik, dan 2) pemahaman siswa terhadap esai Argumentatif. Penelitian kualitatif ini menggunakan jenis studi kasus yang melibatkan dua belas mahasiswa semester enam Jurusan Bahasa Inggris dan mengikuti mata kuliah Academic Writing. Kelas dilakukan secara online menggunakan Google Meet. Para peserta dipilih dengan teknik purposive dan dibagi menjadi dua kategori: enam siswa dengan pengalaman menulis enam tahun dan enam siswa dengan pengalaman menulis tiga tahun. Data primer diperoleh melalui wawancara semi terstruktur yang dilakukan secara online dan dokumen berupa teks Argumentative yang dikirim

secara online. Hasil wawancara ditranskrip, dikategorikan, diberi kode, dan diinterpretasikan. Sementara itu, dokumen teks Argumentasi siswa dianalisis dengan menggunakan teori struktur generik esai argumentatif yang diadopsi dari Derewianka (1990). Temuan menunjukkan bahwa semua siswa merespon positif terhadap Academic Writing. Sementara itu, kemampuan menulis seluruh siswa terhambat oleh kurangnya kemampuan mereka dalam mengorganisasikan ide secara sistematis, tata bahasa, kosa kata dan diksi. Secara khusus, siswa yang memiliki enam tahun pengalaman menulis menghadapi kesulitan dalam penulisan bidang akademik karena kurangnya pemahaman instruksi dan pengelolaan tugas. Sebaliknya, siswa dengan pengalaman menulis selama tiga tahun mengalami kesulitan dalam Academix Writing karena manajemen revisi yang rendah dan kurang antusias dan motivasi. Hasil dokumen teks Argumentatif siswa menunjukkan bahwa pemahaman mahasiswa terhadap esai Argumentatif masih perlu ditingkatkan. Penelitian selanjutnya, masih dengan topik terkait, dianjurkan untuk menyelidiki kasus baru dengan menggunakan metode yang berbeda.

Kata kunci: teks argumentative, kesulitan menulis, pendapat siswa.

I. INTRODUCTION

Writing activity manifested in, among other, academic writing course, is one of subject held in tertiary level. It includes essay, journal, annotation, thesis, dissertation, and appraisal (Swales & Feak, 2012). Moreover, it deals with process of composing and usually needs multiple drafts before creating an effective product and idea in writing must be supported by specific reasons or details (Langan, 2018). Meanwhile, Nation (2020) argues that writing involves complex thinking skill and special ways of organizing and presenting the writing (specialized skills) that deserves attention and can be prepared for other skill of listening, reading, and speaking. As a means to convey ideas, describing enjoyment and share feeling it also

needs a standardized system of communication and as a tool for learning that indicates students' thinking and reasoning skills (Chaffee et al, 2014).

However, students' ability in academic writing has not shown the contented result because it is considered difficult by the students in the research sight. Based on the pilot study, it was found that students mostly has not reached the desirable level. One of the common reason is that they feel it difficult to express the idea and structure the argumentative organization. It is indicated also in the research conducted to three international students in London in 2012; it reveals that "uncertainty in demonstrating an argument, insufficient subject knowledge, and problematic issues surrounding the essay genre, such as authorial

voice and assessment demands were encountered by the students" (Vyncke, 2012).

Argumentative essay which is also called a position paper is a kind of genre or writing used to state and defend a thesis through argument that has several parts covering conclusion and reasons, fact, and description or explanation which supports the side being argued (Emilia & Christie, 2013, p. iii; and Swales & Feak, 2012). An argumentative essay that relates to feeling reflecting students' judgments when they encounter certain issue, is usually presented in school or academic essay (Chaffee et al, 2014 ; Fahim & Hastroodi, 2012).

In terms of organization, exposition text has several structure texts as suggested by Emilia (2012) and Derewianka (1990, p. 70). Those include: (1) a Thesis which introduces the issue and the writer's point; (2) a series of Arguments which supports the thesis, containing any factual information, evidence, description or explanation which supports the thesis; and (3) a Restatement or Reiteration of the Thesis which refers to a stronger and more direct statement of the thesis which is introduced in the first stage. However, discussion text is different in term of stages which cover: (1) an issue stage, that introduce the issue and summarize the debate and present what the

discussion is about; (2) arguments for one side and arguments against for the other side; and (3) recommendation or judgment which is presented as the most logical conclusion and recommends a final position on the issue (Derewianka, 1994, p. Emilia, 2012).

Linguistic features of argumentative essay as suggested by Derewianka (1990); Emilia & Christie (2013), and Emilia (2012) are as follows: (1) generalized participants, (2) possibility of technical terms relating to the issue; (3) variety of verbs, 4) mainly timeless present tense, (5) frequent use of passive to help structure the text; (6) actions are often changed into 'things', (7) connectives (conjunction) associated with reasoning, and (8) argument quite often employs emotive words (blatant disrespect, we strongly believe) and modal verb such as "should". In essays, the use of emotive words is generally more successful if the writer seeks to convince the reader through logic and evidence.

Difficulty of critical expression in English academic essays may be encountered regarding the critical expression in English Academic essays are such as follow (Chaffee et al, 2014; Vyncke, 2012, p. 20): (1) insufficient of subject knowledge that hamper students to develop critical thinking skills, (2) manifes-

ting their presence, or authoritative ‘voice’, (3) fallacies or ambiguous language in informative and argumentative discourse, and (4) presenting the essay genre. Miller, Mitchell, and Pessoa (2014) claims that writing argumentative essay requires the students to identify a great number of rhetorical features and linguistic aspects. Martinn, Maton, and Matruglio (2010) and Coffin (1997) confirms one of the extreme challenges for students in writing argumentative essay is to make their own evaluations and interpretations in “uncommon-sense” ways (p. 441), to present factual information and increasing use of interpreter voice.

There are principles of teaching writing that should be paid more attention for the teacher. The reason is that not only do those principles give a big impetus for the present study but also are considered to be an underpinning theory to justify and interpret what the data are about or imply. The following principles are ranked from the most important principle to the least as suggested by Nation (2020) such as follows; (1) meaning- focused input in which learner should include their experience and knowledge to their writing; (2) meaning-focused output that is more language-focused learning in which learners should write different kinds of writing types with a

message- focused purpose and based on their interests, feeling of success in their writing, and to use writing to increase their language knowledge; (3) language-focused learning in which learners should have a conscious strategies and realize about the writing process and discuss it in relation to their own and other’s writing, be aware of ethical issue in writing, and be given an appropriate feedback; and (4) fluency development in which learners should increase their writing speed and write a simple material at a reasonable speed.

The writing difficulties are also determined by students’ writing enjoyment. According to Chaffee et al (2014), writing can be utilized for describing enjoyment. The students’ writing enjoyment may lead to the high writing achievement since it is an embodiment of students’ interest in writing process. The students’ writing enjoyment are characterized by their liking in writing certain type of genre (e.g. short story, poets, diary, essay, etc.) and their positive attitude and emotion towards writing (Zumbrunn, Marrs, Broda, Ekholm, DeBusk-Lane, & Jackson, 2019).

Students’ difficulties in writing academic, in particular, Argumentative essay, for certain context, is still indistinct until the students convey it directly. Students are indeed

have a clear voice towards academic writing, difficulties and their enjoyment in writing. Students' voice serve as a catalyst to introduce their perspectives (Miller, Mitchell, and Pessoa, 2014). Voice, which is analogous to perceptions, pertains to an individual's powerful belief towards the existence of factors; in this case, academic writing and its difficulties; and it can be influenced by previous experience, and avoiding the future event or situation, as well as attitude (Choy, Lee, & Sedhu, 2015).

Previously, several research on related topic have been carried out. For example, a mini research carried out in MA in English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics, England, which conducted by Vyncke (2012). The study employing an interview to three international students reports that the students have the capacity to learn and master a new discourse, although cultural background plays a role in influencing their writing styles. They encountered problem because of uncertainty in demonstrating an argument, insufficient subject knowledge, and problematic issues surrounding the essay genre, such as authorial voice and assessment demands.

In addition, Al Fadda (2012) revealed that students writing difficulties arose from

their inability in distinguishing between spoken and written English, outlining before drafting, recognizing the skills for successful writing, and avoiding words and phrases which are plagues. Meanwhile, Liao (2017) suggested that the students with high frequency in recalling grammar and structure resulted in the positive perception to poetry writing. Jokhio, Raza, Younus, and Soomro (2020) reveals the challenge faced by students in teaching larger classes. The last, Azizah and Budiman (2017) who focused on the students' challenge in writing academic for international publication came up with the finding that claiming knowledge is the most difficult aspect in writing academic for international publication.

However, research on students' voice on academic writing in perspective of students' background (six years writing enjoyment and three years enjoyment) in writing is still sparse. Thus, this study attempts to (1) find out students' perceptions of academic writing, (2) students difficulties in academic writing, and 3) students' awareness of argumentative essay.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative design with the type of case study and carried out at the English Department of a State University

in West Java, Indonesia. The present study took place during pandemic Covid-19; so, there was no interaction between teacher and students, or among students.

The participants involved in this study were sixth semester twelve students. They had enrolled six meeting of online Academic Writing. The participants were selected based students' writing enjoyment. The students with six writing enjoyment are those who have been writing since they were in senior High School. In contrast, the students with less writing enjoyment have started writing at the time they attend the English Department. The participants were chosen by using purposive technique.

The platform used for teaching process was Google Classroom for material given by teacher and students' tasks submission. In addition, Google Meet was employed for lecturing, answer and questions, and giving a feedback. After two meetings lecturing, the students were required to write an essay at which the students were free to choose their own topic. The material followed the syllabus that was writing an essay. This study was conducted before mid-term test which lasted for three meetings. The primary data were collected through an open ended questions and online

semi-structure interview. Subsequently, the results of interview were transcribed, categorizing, coding, and interpreting as suggested by Kvale (1996). Another primary data were students' document texts which were uploaded onto Google Classroom. Those students' document text was to be analyzed by using the theory of argumentative essay proposed by Derewianka (1990), in particular in generic structure aspect.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The present study is intended to find out students' voice towards the Academic Writing and their difficulties in writing academically; as well as students' awareness of Argumentative essay. The findings of the present study is elaborated into the following organization:

Students' voice on academic writing

As previously mentioned, the semi-structured interview with the type of open ended questions were used to investigate students' voice toward academic writing. Of all twelve students delivered their attitude on academic writing which is categorized into two major students' writing enjoyment: students' with six years writing enjoyment and those who had three years enjoyment (see Table 1).

Table 1 Students' voice towards academic writing based on their writing enjoyment

| Students' Category | Students' voices |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Six years writing enjoyment | Student 1: I am ok with the subject |
| | Student 2: Exciting |
| | Students 3: Exciting |
| | Student 4: Academic Writing is a very important lecture to be mastered. It must be understood because it can assist the students in the future. Therefore, it is recommended for lecturer to give the lecturing which is very clear and comprehensible. |
| | Students 5: Exciting |
| | Students 6: I love this lecture but I sometimes feel it difficult to follow the further explanation |
| Three years writing enjoyment | Student 7: Exciting |
| | Student 8: Through Academic Writing, I can increase writing ability, mainly, the ability to master grammar. |
| | Students 9: This lecture is very useful. I recommend that the instruction should be more detail. |
| | Student 10: I sometimes feel it difficult to understand the material. |
| | Students 11: Academic Writing is a kind of lecture which is very demanded and beneficial to support writing ability, especially in writing academically. |
| | Students 12: Actually, I like this lecture very much. But, there is always the reason for me to be less enthusiastic. To tell the truth, I really insisted to master this lecture optimally. |

Table 1 indicates that students with high frequent writing activity respond the academic writing positively, with a very high enthusiastic and motivation to increase writing ability. It might also be that they have been sufficient knowledge on the genre of essay (Chaffee et al, 2014; Vyncke, 2012, p. 20). Apart from showing their enthusiastic, they also proposed some recommendation for their lecturer since

they find academic writing important. Implicitly, they had a great demand of having a face to face learning of writing academically.

Students' difficulties in academic writing

Regarding difficulties in Academic writing, as given in Table 1, students with six years enjoyment of writing seems to have a comprehensive knowledge of structuring the type of text. In addition, they also did not find difficulty in grammatical aspect. This findings correlates to the study conducted by Liao (2017) reporting that students recalling the grammar and structuring the writing text will perceive the other text type positively. Also, it is in line with Vyncke (2012) stating that students who have been equipped by cultural background , for example, she/ he has been accustomed to writing activity, can write well with the proper style of text. The main focus for this kind of group is their necessity in improving vocabulary mastery.

Table 2 Students' difficulties in academic writing

| Students' Category | Students' difficulties |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Six years writing enjoyment | Student 1: Lack of understanding the instruction |
| | Student 2: Lack of Vocabulary |
| | Students 3: Lack of understanding the instruction |
| | Student 4: Lack of vocabulary and conveying idea |
| | Students 5: Lack of diction |
| | Students 6: Lack of managing assignment |

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Three years writing enjoyment | Student 7: Lack of vocabulary Student 8: Difficulties in revising Students 9: Lack of grammar understanding and vocabulary building Student 10: I sometimes feel it difficult to understand the grammar. Students 11: Lack of enthusiastic and motivation Students 12: Difficulties in organizing the idea systematically |
|-------------------------------|--|

Meanwhile, the students with three years writing experience admits that their writing ability was hampered by their lack of vocabulary and grammar. According to Al Fadda (2012), the inability of vocabulary selection results in unsuccessful writing. This implied that students have not been familiar with the spoken and the written text so that they are facing the situation of using the plagues of words or phrases. Besides, the students also seems to be hampered by their inability of or-

ganizing the essay, especially in writing argumentative text as suggested by Derewianka (1990); Emilia & Christie (2013), and Emilia (2012).

Student' awareness of writing argumentative essay

Students' awareness of argumentative essay were obtained from students' document text. They were required to write argumentative essay after two meetings of lecturing. Due to their difficulties in academic writing, the students' argumentative essay did not meet the desirable expectation. After examining aspect of generic structure, the result of students' awareness of Argumentative essay is given in Table 3.

Table 3 The result of students' writing argumentative essay

| Students' Category | | Issue | Thesis Statement | Generic Structure |
|-------------------------------|------------|-------|------------------|-------------------|
| Six years writing enjoyment | Student 1 | √ | √ | √ |
| | Student 2 | - | - | - |
| | Student 3 | - | - | - |
| | Student 4 | √ | √ | √ |
| | Student 5 | √ | √ | √ |
| | Student 6 | - | - | - |
| Three years writing enjoyment | Student 7 | - | - | - |
| | Student 8 | - | - | - |
| | Student 9 | - | - | - |
| | Student 10 | √ | √ | √ |
| | Student 11 | - | - | - |
| | Student 12 | - | - | - |

Table 3 links to finding resulted from interview, i.e., students' voice and difficulties in writing argumentative essay. The findings implied that the students found writing argumentative essay difficult. Rather than writing argumentative essay, two students from the category of six years writing enjoyment (Student 2 and Student 3) and five students from three years writing enjoyment (Student 7, student, 8, Student 9, Student, 11, and Student 12) wrote the other type of essay. Thus, the result was contradictive with what has been proposed by Derewianka (1990).

IV. CONCLUSION

It has been so far discussed the students' voice and their difficulties in Academic Writing. It is indeed that students' background of writing enjoyment influences the way they perceive Academic Writing. The more enjoyment in writing the students have, the more enthusiastic the students perceive the Academic Writing. In contrary, little writing enjoyment lead to the unstable behavior in viewing the Academic Writing. Fortunately, it leads to students' willingness to improve their ability in writing academically because they find Academic Writing important subject. Meanwhile, the students recalled more the struc-

tured writing enjoyment and grammar is one step ahead so that they only need to increase their vocabulary mastery. Their difficulties in writing argumentative essay were also reflected on their essay which resulted in unexpected result. Overall, they implicitly argue that traditional learning with high frequent interaction with the teacher is beneficial for the process of teaching and learning writing.

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