

An Analysis of Students' Difficulties in Writing Argumentative Essays at the Sixth Semester of English Educational Department in PGRI University of Banyuwangi

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ABSTRACT

This study is an analysis research on students' difficulties in writing argumentative essays at the Sixth Semester of English Educational Department in PGRI University of Banyuwangi. The aims of this research were to find out the dominant of students' difficulties in writing argumentative essays on cognitive problems by Byrne (1988) and their causes by Graham and Harris in Glynn note this (2006). Using a purposive sample, students in the sixth-semester of the 2019/2020 academic year were selected as samples in this study. This study used a qualitative descriptive method. The instruments used in this research was close-ended questionnaires. In carrying out the research, researchers used an online platform to obtain instrument. The results showed that the dominant in writing difficulties of students' difficulties in writing argumentative essays are content problems. This was evidenced by the finding of difficulties in students' argumentative essay categorized by Guttman scale. Content problems get very bad category, which means there are only 2 out of 12 the sixth semester English education students who have good ability on content problems in writing argumentative essays. The causes of students' difficulties in writing argumentative essays on cognitive problems at the sixth semester of English educational department in PGRI University of Banyuwangi are the lack of knowledge, lack of an effective strategy, and lack of proficiency. Based on the results above, it was concluded that the sixth semester students of English Educational Department in PGRI University of Banyuwangi has difficulties in writing argumentative essays on cognitive problems.

Keywords: *Difficulties in Writing; Causes of Difficulties in Writing; Argumentative Essays; Cognitive Problems*

A. Introduction

Writing is one of the most important skills and needs to be developed. There are many benefits that can be obtained in writing, as well as getting a lot of information and knowledge. Marpaung (2019) state that a person's writing skills will help him convey his thoughts, feelings, and thoughts about his experiences. Writing skills are not only important for daily life communication, it is also very important for university level students as well. In the world of education, writing skills are very helpful for students in

doing several tasks such as research, essays, and so on. Harmer (2004) argue that Writing is a method of expressing ideas, emotions, and opinions by the use of language. It means that writing skills help students in expressing their opinions and expressing their ideas in written form. So it is important for them to master and develop their writing skills both for their individual assignments and for international competitions in the world of education.

There are many types of essays, these are: narrative, descriptive, expository, and argumentative. But in this research, the researcher chooses argumentative essay as the main ones. This type of essay is one of the essays being studied by sixth semester students. Argumentative is an essay or a piece of writing that contains a debated issue. In essence, we are asked to write an essay containing responses, and opinions expressed in written form. This is also accompanied by clear evidence so that the reader believes in the author's opinion. because after all, the purpose of this type of essay is to create an agreement between the reader and the writer.

Argumentative essay is a type of essay that needs to be mastered by sixth semester students. Barbee (2015) stated that an argumentative essay is a piece of writing in which the writer discusses their opinions and provides evidence for those opinions. The point of writing an argumentative essay is to clarify a claim or argument. An argumentative essay's goal is to persuade the reader through written arguments. Therefore, students need to improve their argumentative essay writing skills.

There are many difficulties faced by sixth semester students in writing argumentative essays, such as about topic. Developing a topic for an essay will be difficult if the writer does not know the topic. According to Campbell (2002) the problem with pupils writing is that students are afraid that their thoughts can't be expressed properly in terms of language and grammar, therefore they can't put their ideas and facts on paper.

There are two objectives of this research. First is to analyze the dominant of writing difficulties in writing argumentative essays on cognitive problems at the sixth semester of English educational department in PGRI University of Banyuwangi and to find out the causes of difficulties in writing argumentative essays on cognitive problems

at the sixth semester of English Educational Department in PGRI University of Banyuwangi.

Writing has become a part of everyday human life, by taking notes, making instructions, doing campus assignments, and as a means of communication. According to Marpaung (2019) that this skill is a type of communication in which people use words to convey their thoughts, views, feelings, or ideas regarding certain information or experiences. This means that writing is not a skill that only relies on theory, but also requires the development of ideas, feelings to convey the message to be conveyed, to the placement of the right words so that the message conveyed can be conveyed properly. Because after all writing is a way of communicating with someone in written form.

Writing skills are not only important for daily life communication, it is also very important for students. In the world of education, writing skills are very helpful for students in doing several tasks such as writing argumentative essays. Rahmawati (2018) stated that planning, composing, reconsidering, and restructuring are all ongoing processes in writing. This means that writing helps students in compiling argumentative essays such as determining topics, developing content, and making conclusions, so that the resulting essays are well organized.

According to Octaviana (2016) stated that lack of motivation, lack of self-confidence, and writing anxiety are psychological problems that face by students. The students will lose interest in learning writing skill, misbehave, and have discipline problems when they are not motivated in given learning situation. On the other hand, if students are highly motivated while learning, they will be active and get more attention to their learning situation.

According to Alfaki (2015) stated that grammatical, mechanical, and sentence structure problems are linguistic problems that prevent students from writing in English activity. There could be a language barrier between Indonesian and English as the cause of the few words. When the students write in Indonesian, they typically only utilize a small number of terms and phrases that have an equivalent in English, even when they attempt to translated.

According to Tasya (2022) that the cognitive problems that students face includes punctuation, capitalization, spelling, content, and organization. Punctuation in writing refers to the use of spacing and signs (comma, semicolon, full stop, ellipsis mark, question marks, exclamation points, quotation marks, parentheses, etc.) to help the reader grasp the essay. In addition, punctuation marks are useful for showing pauses with various intonations, to indicate questions or excitement, as well as when we stop and start a sentence. There was no norm set for children to adjust to faultless writing, which caused problems with punctuation. Crrol and Wilson (1995; 191) stated that there are no norms for punctuation, hence students' work often has punctuation issues.

A reader can employ capitalization as cues. They serve three basic functions: indicating the beginning of a sentence to the reader, emphasizing key words in titles, and highlighting proper names, and official titles. Additionally, Kroll (1990) argue that initials of sentence, the beginning of significant terms, themes, heading, etc. Should all be written in capital letters. Hence, Gowere et al. (1995) stated that capitalization problems might be challenging for pupils to distinguish between proper and common nouns because capitalization standards are not universal.

Spelling is a collection of written words used to communicate a message in writing. Due to the influence of their native tongue on pupils learning English as a foreign language, issues in spelling have arisen. Based on Gowere, (1995) that the English spelling system, which has become uneven due to the influence of the other language, different pronunciations, and other historical reasons, is difficult for students to understand.

Content problems are a type of difficulty faced by students where they find it difficult to explain, develop, and justify their ideas based on information and examples from reliable sources. It is important that their essays have a central idea or argument that is the focus of the essay content. According to Clifford (1987) educators should encourage students to put more emphasis on the message, ideas or thought they want to convey than on mechanics like syntax, spelling, and punctuation.

According to Kharma (1986) learners struggle with constructing a paragraph, developing a paragraph's topic, structuring the entire discourse, and developing a discourse's theme. Paragraphs and sentences are elements of writing order that affect

how readers comprehend students' thoughts. The way pupils conveyed their thoughts in writing is called organization. Raimes (1983) stated that another issue with organization in student writing is the challenge of distinguishing between a theme and its supporting concepts, generalizations, and precise details.

Students' difficulties appear to be caused by a number of causes. Graham and Harris in Glynn note this (p. 98, 2006) difficulties in writing may be caused in significant part by three variables (Ismayanti & Kholiq, 2020), which are: 1) Lack of Knowledge. 2) Lack of Effective Strategy. and 3) Lack of Proficiency

According to MacArthur and Graham (in Wearmouth, 2006;252), the lack of proficiency in the writing production skills as seen by frequent spelling, capitalization, and punctuation. When this is experienced by students in writing argumentative essays, it means the students still often make mistakes in writing producing essays. Aspects in essay writing skills caused by lack of proficiency are spelling, use of upper and lower case letters, and punctuation. This cause the writing is not easily understood by the reader.

B. Research Method

Researcher used qualitative research. Based on Sugiyono (2016), qualitative reasearch methods for examining the condition of natural items. This study used qualitative research method because it attempt to describe students' difficulties in writing argumentative essays at the sixth semester of English Educational Department in PGRI University of Banyuwangi. The focus of the researchers was to analyze the difficulties in writing argumentative essays by giving questionnaire (close-ended questionnaires).

This research was conducted in PGRI University of Banyuwangi which was located at Jalan Ikan Tongkol No.22, Kertosari, Banyuwangi. The researcher choosed this university as the research object is because the sixth semester students of English language education are students who have taken argumentative essays material and therefore this made it easier for researchers to access the problems to be researched.

The researcher choosed 2019 students of PGRI Universty of Banyuwangi as respondents. There are 12 students in class 2019 of PGRI University of Banyuwangi,

which consist of 3 male students and 9 female students. Researchers applied purposive sampling because the sample was chosen based on what was being investigated and who was deemed to have the best understanding of the topic. This sampling technique was chosen because the research respondents were only students in the sixth semester of class 2019 at PGRI University of Banyuwangi.

According to Sugiyono (2016), that the most important step in research is data collection. In this research, researchers collected data using a questionnaire. Questionnaire is a data collection technique that is done by giving a set of questions or written statements to respondents to answer. The questionnaire used in this research consisted of two types, namely a questionnaire about the students' difficulties in writing argumentative essays on cognitive problems and questionnaire about the causes of the students' difficulties in writing argumentative essays on cognitive problems.

Data analysis is the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, field notes, and other materials that can be accumulated to increase people understanding and to present what the researcher has discovered to others. There are three steps that must be done in doing data analysis. Those are reduction of the data, display the data, and conclusion drawing/verification.

The first stage of data analysis is data reduction. Sugiyono (2013) stated that reducing data means summarizing, choosing the main things, focusing on the things that are important. Therefore, data that are reduced will give clearer drawing and make the researcher easier to collect the next data. The researcher analyzed writing difficulties and the factors of students' writing difficulties in writing argumentative essays. Then the researchers classify and categorize based on the type and the results obtained by a questionnaire

Data display in qualitative research can be in the form of descriptions, charts, and flowcharts. The researcher used data obtained from students' questionnaire. The research's results are displayed in tables and descriptive by drawing conclusions of this research question.

Verification refers to the process which are able to answer research questions and research objectives. In this step, the researcher compiles and analyzes all the data that has been collected based on the students' difficulties in writing an argumentative essay.

C. Research Finding and Discussion

Research Finding

The Questionnaire Results of Students' Difficulties in Writing Argumentative Essays

One of the focuses in this research is to know the dominant of the students' writing difficulties in writing argumentative essays on cognitive problems at the sixth semester of English educational department in PGRI University of Banyuwangi. To find out these difficulties, the researcher conducted an analysis of students' writing difficulties through several questions in the form of a questionnaire. The students' writing difficulties questionnaire consist of five indicators namely, punctuation problems, capitalization problems, spelling problems, organization problems, and content problems. Students' difficulties sheet questionnaire is arranged with alternative answer "Agree" and "Disagree" with score scale 1 and 0. This questionnaire consists of 25 items. The results of the questionnaire will be presented in a table as follows:

Table 1 Results of the Questionnaire

No	Indicators	Items	Score	percentage	Category
1	Punctuation problems	1,2,3,4,5	0,66	66,10	Fair
2	Capitalization problems	6,7,8,9,10	0,82	81,67	Good
3	Spelling problems	11,12,13,14,15	0,4	40,00	Bad
4	Organization problems	16,17,18,19,20	0,37	36,67	Bad
5	Content problems	21,22,23,24,25	0,18	18,33	Very bad
	Average		0,49	48,55	Fair

The score is at interval 6 which means the quality of students' abilities in writing argumentative essays is fair in the five measured indicators namely punctuation problems, capitalization problems, spelling problems, organization problems, and content problems. Indicators of capitalization problems are in the good category. Based on the number of respondents, there are 10 out of 12 students who have good abilities on capitalization problems in writing argumentative essays. Therefore, capitalization problems get value of 0,82 or equivalent to 81,67%. Then, punctuation problems get a fair category. Based on the number of respondents, there are 8 out of 12 students who

have a pretty good ability on punctuation problems in writing argumentative essays. Therefore, punctuation problems get value of 0,66 or equivalent to 66,10%. Besides that, spelling and organization problems get a bad category, which means there are 5 out of 12 students who have quite a lot of difficulty on spelling and organization problems. Content problems get a very bad category. This means that the respondent's ability on content issues is classified as weak so that the resulting value is low because there are only 2 out of 12 respondents who have good abilities on content issues in writing argumentative essays. And it is also proves that the problem of content is a problem that dominates students' difficulties in writing argumentative essays. The difficulties they experience such as difficulty in explaining detailed information in essays so that it affects their ability to write argumentative essays. So that there is a need for an evaluation of students to overcome difficulties in content problems in writing skill, especially writing argumentative essays.

The Questionnaire Results of Causes of Students' Difficulties in Writing Argumentative Essays

Supporting the researcher in knowing students' difficulties also the causes while writing argumentative essays, the questionnaire was used in this research. The questionnaire of causes of students' difficulties aims to find out the causes of students' difficulties in writing argumentative essays on cognitive problems at the sixth semester of English educational department in PGRI University of Banyuwangi. The causes of students' difficulties questionnaire consist of three indicators, namely lack of knowledge, lack of effective strategy, and lack of proficiency. The causes of students' difficulties sheet questionnaire is arranged with alternative answer "Agree" and "Disagree" with score scale 1 and 0. This questionnaire consists of 30 items. Result from the questionnaire displayed in table below:

The score is at interval 1 which means that there are difficulties that students experience in writing argumentative essays because they lack of knowledge, effective strategies, and proficiency. Whereas, seen from the three indicators have different values or percentages. On the lack of knowledge get value of 0,38 or equivalent to 37,50%. Besides that, on the lack of effective strategy get value of 0,34 or equivalent to 34,17%. And the lack of proficiency indicators get value of 0,46 or equivalent to

45,83%. Based on the difference in the value or percentage of each indicators above, indicators of the lack of effective strategy get a fairly low value or percentage. This means that there are difficulties for students in writing argumentative essays in the sixth semester of English Educational students in PGRI University of Banyuwangi because they lack of effective strategies. This is evidenced by their answers to the questionnaire where they have difficulty in revising the writing of argumentative essays in a timely manner. So to overcome this, they need to improve their strategies to reduce students' difficulties in writing argumentative essays.

Discussion

This research was categorized as descriptive qualitative. The researcher's focus was on finding out the students' writing difficulties in writing argumentative essays on cognitive problems to respondents. Therefore, the researcher analyzed this problems. They are punctuation, capitalization, spelling, organization, and content problems. The topics used in the students' difficulties namely argumentative essays. Based on the results of questionnaire of students difficulties, the researcher concluded that the respondents has the dominant of students' difficulties on cognitive problem in the content problems. This showed that content problems get a very bad category by obtaining a score or percentage of 0,18 or equivalent to 18,33%. It means that the content problems is the biggest problems that students experience in writing argumentative essays, because there are only 2 out of 12 respondents who have good ability on content problems in writing argumentative essays. And it is also proves that the problem of content is a problem that dominates students' difficulties in writing argumentative essays.

Roza et al (2011) stated that content describes how a writer incorporates their ideas into their work. Whereas, the difficulties they experience such as difficulty in explaining detailed information in essays so that it affects their ability to write argumentative essays. This causes their ability to write argumentative essays is weak. So that, there is a need for an evaluation of students to overcome difficulties in content problems in writing skill, especially writing argumentative essays.

Based on the causes of students' difficulties in writing argumentative essays on cognitive problems at the sixth semester of English educational department in PGRI University of Banyuwangi. Therefore, the researcher analyzed the causes of students' writing difficulties on cognitive problems. Graham and Harris in Glynn note this (p. 98, 2006) stated that difficulties in writing may be caused in significant part by three variables (Ismayanti & Kholiq, 2020). They are lack of knowledge, lack of effective strategy, and lack of proficiency. Based on the results of questionnaire of cases of students difficulties, the researcher concluded that the cause of student' difficulties in writing argumentative on cognitive problems is because students lack of knowledge, lack of effective strategy, and lack of proficiency. This showed that the lack of knowledge get a bad category by obtaining a score or percentage of 0,38 or equivalent to 37,50%. There are only 5 out of 12 the sixth semester English education students who have good knowledge in writing argumentative essays.

According to Wray (in Wearmouth, 2003;252) argue that the knowledge of the writing process is crucial for metacognition and reflection. Meanwhile, based on the results of questionnaire above, shows that their knowledge in writing argumentative essays is lacking . It can be seen that the sixth semester English Education students have difficulty in creating critical and logical thinking to make a conclusion that can be accounted for in argumentative essays. By knowing it, the students need to increase their knowledge to reduce difficulties in writing argumentative essay on cognitive problems.

The lack of effective strategy is a factor that causes students' difficulties in writing argumentative essay on cognitive problem. This showed that the lack of effective strategy get a bad category by getting a score or percentage of 0,46 or equivalent to 45,83%. There are only 5 out of 12 respondents who have good effective strategy in writing argumentative essays. It means that their strategy in writing argumentative essay is lacking. It can be seen that the respondents have difficulty in revising the writing of argumentative essays well. To overcome it, Graham and Harris (in Glynn, 2006;98) used a cognitive approach to help students who are having writing difficulties since it stresses individual writing production processes that may be worked on individually. So that students' difficulties in writing argumentative at the sixth

semester of English Education Department in PGRI University of Banyuwangi can be overcome properly.

The lack of proficiency is a factor that causes students' difficulties in writing argumentative essay on cognitive problem. This showed that the lack of proficiency gets a bad category by obtaining a score or percentage of 0,38 or equivalent to 37,50%. There are only 4 out of 12 the sixth semester English education students who have good proficiency in writing argumentative essays. It means that their strategy in writing argumentative essay is lacking. According to MacArthur and Graham (in Wearmouth, 2006;252), the lack of proficiency in the writing production skills as seen by frequent spelling, capitalization, and punctuation. It can be seen that the sixth semester English Education students have difficulty in using word spelling in writing argumentative essays. By knowing this, the sixth semester English Education students need to improve their proficiency in order to reduce difficulties in writing argumentative essays on cognitive problems.

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that the dominant of students' difficulties in writing argumentative essays on cognitive problems of respondents are in the content problems caused by lack of knowledge, lack of effective strategy, and lack of proficiency.

D. Conclusion

Based on the research problems of the research that the dominant of students' difficulties in writing argumentative essays on cognitive problems at the sixth semester of English educational department in PGRI University of Banyuwangi are in the content problems. The results of data analysis obtained from questionnaires that have been given to students of English Education in the sixth semester show that the value or percentage of the content problems are in the very bad category with a value of 0,18 or equivalent to 18,33%. Furthermore, the causes of students' difficulties in writing argumentative essays on cognitive problems at the sixth semester of English educational department in PGRI University of Banyuwangi are the lack of knowledge, lack of an effective strategy, and lack of proficiency.

The researcher hopes that other researchers can examine student difficulties in different types of problems such as linguistic problems and psychological problems and use this thesis as an additional source of information. Beside that, the English lectures be able to evaluate the students' difficulties and the causes of students' difficulties in writing argumentative essays and make students' writing achievement can be better than before.

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