A STUDY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH PARAGRAPHS IN WRITING ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAYS AT SMKN 1 BATANG HARI

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ABSTRACT

This research was conducted based on problems related to the poor ability of students in writing argumentative essays in English at SMKN 1 Batang Hari. The purpose of this study was to determine the ability of students to write paragraphs of argumentative essay development. This research is descriptive research. This research instrument uses writing assignments. The study population was class XII students of SMKN 1 Batang Hari. By using cluster random sampling, researchers took one class as a sample of this study. From the research findings, it was found that students' abilities in writing argumentative essays were low. The most common mistake made by students is in using evidence and writing the exact sentence. It can be concluded that students still have difficulty writing good sentences based on grammar rules. They also don't know how to write good conclusion paragraphs from argumentative essays.

Keywords: paragraphs development, argumentative essay

INTRODUCTION

Writing skills are very important for students in their school years. They very often need to write reports and several other types of writing, so writing activities cannot be avoided. Especially writing arguments seems to be the most important task for students because they need to use it in making scientific work such as essays. Currently students are trained in English subjects to be able to write essays, proposals, continue, read reports, scientific reports, and others. These facts indicate that writing some types of argumentative essays needs to be mastered by students. In conclusion, argumentative essay writing is not as easy as people think because the topic and argument must be carefully prepared for the purpose of the essay which proves the author's point of view about any phenomenon is true. Batang Hari Vocational School 1 provides students with English language subjects about essay writing. During the lesson, students have been taught how to write paragraphs and essays in several different genres by developing their paragraphs and essays well. Students start with learning how to write correct sentences, make paragraphs, essays that are well-developed and eventually become a good scientific paper.

However, writing in a foreign language is not easy for students. Writing requires a lot of concentration to get successful results or products. Based on the interviews of researchers with several students in 1 Batang Hari Vocational School, it can be assumed that students still have problems in writing a documentative essay in English. First, students have problems expressing their ideas, they have difficulty choosing the
right words. They also experienced difficulties in writing acceptable essays based on well-organized patterns. They have a problem connecting their ideas even though they already have an outline of their topic. They still have problems using transitional words, phrases and spelling.

Another problem is that students have problems in composing sentences based on English grammar rules. In developing their essays, students still make mistakes using word forms, such as present tense and past tense. They also have difficulty arranging words to be organized. These problems cause their essays not to be easily understood by the reader. In addition, dealing with vocabulary, they face problems in choosing the right words to use in expressing their ideas to develop essays. It is assumed that they lack vocabulary mastery and also lack of reading activity.

Related to this phenomenon, it appears that there are several problems faced by students in writing argumentative essays. Therefore, researchers are interested in conducting classroom action research to investigate those problems more deeply. This research is about analyzing students’ ability in developing argumentative essays based on well-developed patterns by students of SMK 1 Batang Hari XII Accounting class.

There are several expert perspectives on the concept of argumentative essays. Soles (2010: 2) states that argumentative essays are written texts that make a claimant affirm a thesis on a matter of disagreement, provide clear evidence to support an argument or thesis, and summarize and refute evidence that contradicts the claim or thesis. Furthermore, Oshima (2004: 142) explains that argumentative is an essay in which the author agrees or disagrees with a problem, using reasons to support the opinion of the author. The aim is to convince the reader that the author’s opinion is correct.

To convince readers in argumentative essays, it is important to give them clear main points and lots of logical evidence to support them. Point of evidence must link to the topic clearly and support the main points that are trying to be conveyed to the reader. Therefore, based on the above theories, it can be concluded that the purpose of the argumentative essay is to convince the reader of the author's argument about a controversial topic using some evidence or data to avoid the readers’ doubts about the topics discussed in the author’s essay.

According to Oshima (2006: 56), essays are a group of paragraphs that only consist of one topic. In principle, an essay consists of three main parts, they are the introductory paragraph, the body (at least one, but usually two or more paragraphs) and the closing paragraph. Introduction is the first paragraph of the essay that attracts the interest of the reader, makes the main claim of the essay in the thesis statement, and can introduce body paragraph ideas (Meyers, 2004: 3). The introduction consists of two parts: several general statements to draw the attention of the reader and the thesis statement to express the main ideas of the essay.

The second part of the essay is the body. The body is the longest part of an essay, discussing subtopics, one at a time. The essay body consists of several paragraphs that support the thesis statement. Usually, this is arranged by topic sentences, several supporting sentences and closing sentences. While the body of the
essay consists of one or more paragraphs and explains and supports the thesis statement and comes between the introduction and conclusions. Each supporting paragraph must begin with a topic sentence stating the points specified in that paragraph. Each paragraph develops a topic subdivision, so the number of paragraphs in the body will vary with the number of subdivisions or subtopics.

And the last part of the essay is a conclusion. This is the final signal from the essay. Wyrick (2005: 88) states that a good essay should not be above in the middle, it must have a satisfying conclusion, which gives the reader a sense of completion on the subject. The closing paragraph summarizes or restates the thesis and ideas of supporting essays. This reminds the reader of what the writer said.

According to Oshima (2004: 146) argumentative essays contain these five key elements, namely: the first is an explanation of the problem; the introductory paragraph of the essay contains an explanation of this problem, which is an important part of the argumentative essay.

The second is a statement of scientific problems; The statement of scientific problems is the most important sentence in the introduction. It states specific topics and often lists the main subtopics that will be discussed in the body of the essay. Thesis statements for essays such as topic sentences for paragraphs. This gives readers a general idea of the contents of the essay. Furthermore, this can indicate the organizational method that will be followed by the essay. The thesis statement in the argumentative essay clearly states which party the author is in.

The third is a summary of the opposite argument; the opposite argument is a point or opinion that supports to support the writer’s ideas. It is a mistake to ignore the point of view that is contrary to the opinion of the author. Acknowledging other perspectives strengthens the position of the writer in several ways. This will give the impression that the essay writer is a reasonable person, wants to see problems from all parties. The fourth is the rebuttal of the opposite argument; to argue means to show the problem with the opposite point of view, to show where the opponent argument is broken. In other words, rebut means showing the problem with the other party's reason to prove that it is not a good reason.

And the last is about the author's own argument. Support arguments with empirical evidence in the form of facts, data, statistics, examples, controlled observations, and so on. The author's argument is needed to make the reader more confident about the topic and the author can use several sources to make his argument strong enough to support his point of view in his essay. All the elements described above are needed in developing good argumentative essays to make essays well organized and clear so readers can decide their opinions and deal with the author's arguments.

Related to the explanation above, the researcher's questions from this study are;

Q.1 What is the student's ability to develop an argumentative essay regarding introduction, body paragraphs, conclusions, use of evidence and accuracy of sentences in 1 Batang SMKN students in Class XII Accounting?
Q.2 What are the problems faced by students in developing argumentative essays regarding introduction, body paragraphs, conclusions, use of evidence and accuracy of sentences in 1 Batang SMKN students in Class XII Accounting?

RESEARCH METHOD

This research was conducted using a descriptive approach. The purpose of this research is to obtain information about phenomena to describe the conditions in the field. According to Gay (2000: 315), descriptive studies determine and explain how it is. In addition, he also stated that descriptive studies involve collecting data through questionnaires, surveys, interviews, observations, and other more discursive sources of information to answer questions about the status of current research subjects.

In this case, the researcher discusses the students' ability to develop paragraphs of argumentative essays and their problems in writing them. This means that the results of this study are descriptions of students' abilities in the paragraphs of argumentative essay development and problems faced by students in writing argumentative essays made by students of SMKN 1 Batang Hari class XII Accounting.

This research was conducted in Accounting XII class of the students of SMK 1 Batang Hari. The population of this study was students of Accounting XII class of SMKN 1 Batang Hari. The XII Accounting class students are divided into 3 groups, each consisting of 10-15 students. All students have taken Writing 1, 2, and 3 so that they have studied the stages of the writing process including the types of essays, introductions, bodies and closing paragraphs as well as the mechanism of essay writing such as punctuation, capital letters, etc. In addition, students have also taken the vocabulary and grammar courses needed as important elements in writing good sentences for writing essays.

The research sample was taken using cluster random. Cluster random sampling is sampling where groups, not individuals, are randomly selected (Gay, 2000: 110). This type of sample is suitable for this study. Because there is an Accounting XII class of students at SMK 1 Batang Hari, researchers have chosen 1 class randomly using cards and giving numbers to one to three. The instrument of this research is the task of argumentative writing. The students are asked to write argumentative essays based on several topics given. There are five topics given to one parallel class. These five topics are used as data for this study. Students are asked to write argumentative essays based on these topics. Student writing assignments are collected after 90 minutes. The length of the essay is in the range of at least 100 words.
FINDING AND DISCUSSION

After analyzing student essays, the researchers found that students' performance in writing argumentative essays was still low. There are 52.4% of students who are fair-unacceptable which means that more than half of students get grades ranging from 6 to 11. There are 6 students who get grades ranging from 12 to 14 and that means that 28.6% of students fair enough. Meanwhile, there were only 2 students who got scores ranging from 15 to 17 which meant that around 9.5% of students were in pretty good condition. There is only 1 student in very good condition and also 1 student in an unacceptable condition which means there are around 4.7% of students in each category. For more details, it can be detailed as follows:

1.) Students’ ability to develop argumentative essays regarding introductions, body paragraphs, conclusions, use of sources and accuracy of sentences:
   a. Introduction
      In writing an introduction to the argumentative essay, students write a problem statement in the first paragraph. The problem stated is not enough to explain the background of the problem and also lack detail. Other students write problem statements or state essays but are not clear. Background detail is a collection of information that seems random, unclear, or not related to the topic. Meanwhile, other students made an introduction containing some background information and stated the problem, but did not explain in more detail. And only 4 students got a score of 4 which means they wrote a well-developed introduction and contained detailed background information, clear explanations or problem definitions and scientific statements.

   b. Body paragraph
      In developing body paragraphs, body paragraphs must consist of three or more main points that are well developed with supporting details. The refutation paragraph presents an opposite view and summarizes the main points. Each supporting paragraph must begin with a topic sentence stating the points specified in that paragraph. In well-developed body paragraphs, each body paragraph must introduce supporting ideas in the topic sentence, develop ideas in the body, and also have conclusions with the transition to the next paragraph.

   c. Conclusions
      In writing conclusions from argumentative essays, it must summarize the main topic without repeating the previous sentence. This is the final signal from the essay. This reminds the reader of what the writer said. The author can draw conclusions from the essay by writing a scientific statement again, writing a summary of the main points in the body paragraph, writing the final comment which is one final thought that the author wants to leave reddish. The opinions and suggestions of the authors are also logical and carefully thought out.
d. Use of evidence

In using evidence in argumentative essay writing, this serves to support the author's argument to make the reader more confident with the author's opinion about the topic being discussed so that the reader will agree with the author's argument. Evidence must have a relationship with the topic, not just random information gathering. The proof can be a quote from an expert or can also be used as statistical data from reliable and valid sources in the community. In this case, there is only 1 student who gets 4 points in using evidence in writing essays. Most students only get point 1 in using evidence as their reference to support their point of view on a topic. Based on the assessment rubric, the use of evidence must be used smoothly and integrated with each other. All sources must also be documented accurately and in the desired format on the page of the work cited. They must be relevant and reliable with the topics discussed in the essay so that readers will be more confident with the opinions of the authors.

e. Accuracy of Sentences

In writing their essays, students' sentence accuracy is not good enough because many unclear or confusing sentences are found. Students still often use "you" and "I" in their essays. Students using "you" and "me" in their actual essays should not be permitted in writing argumentative essays. In addition, also found structural sentences written in students' essays are influenced by their mother tongue, in this case Indonesian as the mother tongue.

2.) The problem of students in developing argumentative essays regarding introductions, body paragraphs, conclusions, use of evidence and the accuracy of the sentence as follows:

a. Introduction

The first problem is dealing with the introduction of essays. Most students have difficulty starting their essays, they cannot express their ideas accurately. Students do not state their problem clearly and the background details are gathering information that seems random, or not related to the topic. Some students did not provide more explanation about the topics discussed, they did not mention the reasons why they chose the topic which should be a matter of debate. Another problem faced by students in developing argumentative essays was found that some of them did not state their position on the topic whether they agreed or not. They only mentioned that there were two different perspectives on the topic discussed. They also wrote an introduction with confusing supporting details that did not focus on the main idea. This makes their introduction not well developed as an introduction to good argumentative essays.

b. Body paragraphs

The second problem is dealing with paragraphs of body essays. Most students fail to show regular body paragraphs and coherence. Students cannot
arrange information in the desired paragraph of the order. Their movements follow obscure orders. They do not provide enough information and supporting details to support their opinions and convince readers more about their opinions argument. Some students do not write refutation paragraphs, or even if they have included a refutation paragraph but are not clear and lack details. Another problem found is that some students do not summarize their main points in the last paragraph of their body paragraph.

c. Conclusions

In making a conclusion paragraph, it was found that some students did not simply summarize the main points. Also there are no suggestions for changes or opinions included in their essays. Most students write a summary of their main points, but that is only a repetition of the sentence they have written in the body paragraph. Students do not review the main points of the essay and refer them back to the scientific statement made.

d. Use of evidence

In writing argumentative essays, students have used some evidence in their essays to support their argument. Meanwhile, based on the research it was found that some of the evidence used by students had no relation to the topics discussed. Although the evidence is included in the student essay but some of them do not paraphrase in a good pattern. They only do direct quotes to support their opinions. Some of their essays are still lacking in evidence and unreliable and relevant to the topic. Other students write their evidence not in the desired format. This means that students have problems using evidence to make their arguments stronger to convince readers about it.

e. Accuracy of sentences

The final problem is dealing with the accuracy of the sentence. After analyzing the data, it was found that there were many sentences that were not clear in the student essay. They write sentences not in a good structural pattern. They still have problems in the grammar and word forms used. In addition, they are influenced by the structural patterns of their mother tongue. In other words, there is an L1 disorder found in students' essays in expressing their ideas on one topic. From the findings, it can be seen that students have abilities that are still low in developing argumentative essays and they face several problems in developing essays.

CONCLUSION

Related to the findings of the above research about students' ability in writing paragraphs on argumentative essay development in students of class XII Accounting at SMKN 1 Batang Hari can be summarized as follows: the ability to develop
argumentative essays in class XII Accounting at SMKN 1 Batang Hari is still low. This can be seen based on the analysis of all indicators in this study such as introduction, body paragraphs, conclusions, use of evidence and accuracy of sentences. While the problems faced by students in developing argumentative essays deal with each component of writing itself.

Regarding the use of evidence and conclusions, students have problems expressing their ideas in written form. They cannot focus on the main idea of their essay. In other words, students develop their essays without regard to the contents of the essay. It makes their ideas unclear and uninformative.

REFERENCES