

The Ability of English Department Students in Writing Cause and Effect Essay in Universitas Negeri Padang

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Abstract

This research aims to find out the ability of the third year of English Department students in writing cause and effect essay in *Universitas Negeri Padang*. The type of this research is descriptive qualitative research. The source of the data is the cause and effect essays written by the students taken by random sampling. The instrument used in collecting the data is writing test. There are 13 cause and effect essays as the source of data. Next, the data is analyzed by using the indicator of a good cause and effect essay that is divided into three categories; the introductory paragraph, the body paragraphs, and the concluding paragraph. The research findings showed that the students' ability in writing the introductory paragraph of cause and effect essay was considered good (84.62% of students belonged to Good category). Next, the students' ability in writing the body paragraphs of the essay was considered poor (53.85% of the students belonged to Poor category). Finally, the students' ability in writing the concluding paragraph of cause and effect essay was considered good (46.17% of the students belonged to Good category).

Keywords: *students' ability, essay writing, cause and effect essay*

Introduction

Writing is an important means in learning and self expression. It is the tool used by people to demonstrate their acquisition of knowledge in all content areas. In academic life, most of the time university students have to write an essay, paper, or analysis as their weekly or final assignments for each of the subject they take. Because of the importance of writing, it has become a required skill for the students to be able to write academic English compositions in universities.

Despite of the importance of writing stated before, it is believed that mastering the writing skill is not an easy task. In mastering this skill, not only students have to understand the theory of how to write well, but they also have to master several components involved in writing such as huge variety of vocabulary, grammatical rules, punctuations and mechanics, unity, coherence, and organization of ideas. Therefore, various learning activities are designed, such as, cooperative and collaborative (Sariasih, 2019), magic back and forth (Karyawetti, 2011). Besides, the students also have to have a good reading skill in order to perform the writing skill successfully. Without reading, the students will not have much knowledge and as a result they will not be able to produce a good quality of writing. In short, writing involves a quite complex process to do.

In order to make the students to be able to write the essay well, English Department of Universitas Negeri Padang provides its students with several writing subjects since the first year of study such as *Paragraph Writing, Essay Writing, Article Writing, Academic Writing* and *Paper/Thesis Writing*. In the *Paragraph Writing* and *Essay Writing* subjects, the students are taught not only about the correct development of ideas in a paragraph or essay but also about the other components of writing such as the correct grammatical structure of an essay, correct mechanics and punctuations as well as the correct and appropriate organizational patterns of an essay. Meanwhile, they learn about how to write a well-built academic writing such as paper, articles and thesis in the last three of the writing subjects mentioned before.

In the *Essay Writing* subject, the students are taught to compose essays. One of the essays is expository essay. Expository essay is considered one of the most important types of essays that need to be mastered by the university students because it is the most systematic essays of all. This essay requires students to explore an idea, evaluate the evidence, elaborate on the main idea, and state their argument on the idea in a coherent manner. In short, the main focus of the expository essay is to explain the facts.

In developing the expository essay, there are several types of organization patterns that can be used. As stated by Soles (2010) that there are six types of organization patterns in developing expository essay; *process analysis, cause and effect essay, comparison/ contrast essay, analysis/ interpretation essay, problem/*

solution essay, and *details and examples essay*. In line with this, the English Department students are provided in the syllabus with the cause and effect essay as one of the types of essay organization of expository essay.

Even though the students have been introduced to several kinds of essay in university by being exposed to the examples of the essay as well as the grammar, the development of ideas, the organization of ideas, mechanics and vocabulary, students ability in writing the essay is considered not satisfactory because they face problems in the writing process specifically in writing different patterns of essay organization. Based on the researcher's experience who has taught writing for a few years, it has been found that the students have different abilities in writing the different patterns of expository essay organization. Some of the students might find one pattern of essay organization a lot easier than the other one. The fact is that there are six different patterns of essay organization that they learn and they have to be able to write all of them well.

Based on the reasons elaborated above, the researcher is interested to conduct a study about the ability of the English Department students of *Universitas Negeri Padang* in writing the cause and effect essay as a pattern of essay organization of expository essay. The research aims to find out the ability of the English Department of Universitas Negeri Padang; (1) in writing the introductory paragraph of the cause and effect essay, (2) in writing the body paragraph of the cause and effect essay, and (3) in writing the concluding paragraph of the cause and effect essay.

Method

Population and the method of sampling

As the subject of the research, the researcher chose the third year students of English Department of Universitas Negeri Padang in academic year 2015/2016. There were three classes of the third year students in English Department of State University of Padang. The total number of students was 92 students. Each class consisted of approximately 30 students. The researcher took the third year students because the students in this level had passed all of the writing subjects. Because of that the students were assumed to have studied all the language skills completely. The sample of this research was chosen by using cluster random sampling. As stated by Gay (2011) that cluster random sampling is a sampling in which group not individual are randomly selected. The researcher chose one among the three classes randomly by using three cards and numbering them from one to three. Then the researcher randomly chose one.

Instrumentation

In this research, the researcher used writing test as the instrument to collect the data. In the test, the students were asked to write cause and effect essay based on given topics. In order to guide the students to write the text easily, the researcher gave each topic a prompt. The researcher did not try out the topic before doing the test because she had discussed the topics with several writing lecturers. In addition, the test was considered valid because as stated by Gay (2011) that a test measures what supposed to be measured. In this research, the researcher wanted to find out students' writing ability, then she used writing test as her instrument. Moreover, this research was supposed to measure the students' ability in writing cause and effect essay based on their introductory paragraph, body paragraphs, and concluding paragraph.

Technique of Data Collection

The researcher used writing test as the technique in collecting the data. The researcher gave the students topics with prompts and asked the students to write the cause and effect essay based on the given topics. The researcher asked the students not to forget to write the title of their essay, and that the essays should at least consist of five paragraphs. The allocated time that was given by the researcher for the test was 60 minutes. After the data had been collected, the researcher analyzed the ability of the students in writing the cause and effect essay based on the organization of the essay, namely the introductory paragraph, the body paragraphs, and the concluding paragraph.

Technique of Data Analysis

In order to know the ability of the third year students of State University of Padang in writing cause and effect essay, the researcher analyzed the students' writings according to the criteria of good cause and effect essay based on the introductory, body and concluding paragraphs. Each essay was analyzed based on the indicators of a good introductory paragraph, a good body paragraphs and a good concluding paragraph of cause and effect essay. The indicators are as follows:

Indicators of a good cause and effect essay

A. The Introductory Paragraph

1. The introduction identifies the topic by providing necessary background or general statements to introduce the readers to the topic.
2. It presents a thesis statement that clearly indicates whether the essay will discuss about causes or effects or both.
3. The thesis statement provides a clear and logic relationship of the causes and effects.
Instead of using a broad assertion, the thesis statement should be limited by using phrases such as “*may be*”, “*a contributing factor*”, “*one of the main reasons*”, “*two important causes or effects*”, and so on.

B. The Body Paragraphs

1. The essay should be clearly organized whether by block or chain organization.
2. The essay clearly indicates the model of development of the cause and effect essay.
3. There should be a cause and effect relationship between the topic sentence and the supporting sentences, or even between major supporting details and the minor ones.
4. The topic sentence should be strengthened by using relevant supporting details that is well elaborated.
5. There should be cohesive devices in the form of appropriate transition signals used in the body paragraphs to emphasis the cause and effect relationship.
 - For causes: because, due to, one cause is, another is, since, for, first, second, etc.
 - For effects: consequently, as a result, thus, resulted in, one result is, another is, therefore, this lead to, etc.

C. The Concluding Paragraph

1. It gives a summary of the argument by re-stating the thesis statement
2. It gives a quick summary of each of the points of analysis discussed in the body paragraphs.
3. It should give suggestions or predictions or opinion related to the topic.

After the researcher analyzed the data, the researcher drew a conclusion about the ability of the English Department students of Universitas Negeri Padang in writing the cause and effect essay based on the three parts of the essay organization by using the scoring rubric of cause and effect essay. The scoring rubric can be seen in the table below:

Table 1. Scoring Rubric for the Cause and Effect Essay

Category	4	3	2	1
Introductory paragraph	Very well developed introduction and thesis statement. The introduction engages the readers by stating several general statements before coming to the thesis statement. The thesis statement should be narrowed down from the general topic into manageable aspects of the topic by clearly stating whether this essay will be about causes and/or effects.	Fairly well developed introduction and thesis statement. The introduction only has a few general statements before coming to the thesis statement, but the writer does introduce the topic and include the causes and/or effects that are going to be elaborated in the body paragraphs.	The introduction and thesis statement include the general topic being analyzed but they do not narrow down into the list of the causes and/or effects of the topic.	The introduction and thesis statement do not include what is being analyzed and there is no apparent basis for the causes and/or effects analysis indicated.

Cont. Table 1. Scoring Rubric ...

Body Paragraphs/ Topic Sentences and Supporting Details	Each body paragraph contains a clearly focused topic sentence that relates to the thesis statement. Details in the body paragraphs are concrete and specific, and they effectively represent either causes or effects related to the topic of analysis. There are enough details to clearly analyze the topic and each cause or effect has sufficient details for clear analysis.	Each body paragraph contains a topic sentence that relates to the thesis statement. Details are concrete and specific but they are not engaging and interesting. There are sufficient details for the analysis but they could be clearer.	Not all paragraphs have a clear topic sentence that relates to the thesis statement. There are details but they are either not concrete and specific, or there are not enough of them to adequately analyze the topic. One or more causes or effects are not given sufficient details.	There are no apparent topic sentences in the paragraphs, or they do not relate to the thesis statement. Details are either wrong or lacking, or they are not related to the topic sentence or the analysis.
Conclusion	The concluding paragraph effectively unifies the essay around the thesis statement. The reason for the analysis is clearly re-stated and the essay is effectively summed up. There should not be a new idea stated in the concluding paragraph.	The concluding paragraph unifies the essay around the thesis statement. The writer re-states the reason for the analysis, but there are new ideas appear in the concluding paragraph.	The concluding paragraph does not re-sate the reason for the analysis, and it does little to unify the essay around the thesis statement.	There is no concluding paragraph.

Results and Discussion

Major Findings of the Research

a. The students’ ability in writing the introductory paragraph

There was only one student out of thirteen (7.69%) belonged to the Very Good category. Eleven students out of thirteen (84.62%) belonged to the Good category. There was no student belonged to Fair category. The remaining one out of thirteen students (7.69%) belonged to the Poor category, and there was no student belonged to the Very Poor category.

b. The students’ ability in writing the body paragraphs

There was no student belonged to Very Good category. Three out of thirteen students (23.07%) belonged to Good category. Furthermore, there was only one student (7.69%) belonged to Fair category. Seven students out of thirteen (53.85%) belonged to Poor category and the remaining two of thirteen students belonged to Very Poor category.

c. The students’ ability in writing the concluding paragraph

One student out of thirteen (7.69%) belonged to Very Good category. There were six out of thirteen students (46.17%) belonged to Good category. Next, three out of thirteen students (23.07%) belonged to Fair category. There were three students out of thirteen (23.07%) belonged to Poor category and there was no student belonged to Very Poor category.

Discussion

The purpose of this research was to find out the third year English Department students’ ability in writing the cause and effect essay viewed from the introductory paragraph, the body paragraphs and the concluding paragraph in Universitas Negeri Padang. From the findings, it can be seen that the students’ ability in writing the introductory paragraph of the cause and effect essay was considered good. It was found that most of the students had already fulfilled the criteria of a good introductory paragraph of the cause and effect essay. However, the students were not able to write a restricted thesis statement in their introductory paragraph.

Most of the students only stated a too broad thesis statement by using phrases such as “*some negative effects*” or “*there are several causes of*”.

This result can also be found in a research conducted by Gusman (2014). Based on her research, it was found that the students’ ability in writing the cause and effect essay was good. Most of the essays analyzed by the researcher were categorized as Good. The difference between Gusman’s research and this research is that Gusman conducted the research to find out the students of STAIN Batusangkar’s ability in writing the cause and effect essay viewed not only from the organization of the essay but also from the grammar, the sentence structure and mechanics of the essay. Meanwhile in this research, the researcher conducted the study to find out the students’ ability in writing the cause and effect essay based only on the organization of the essay.

Based on the findings, it can be seen that the students’ ability in writing the body paragraph of the cause and effect essay was considered Poor. Most of the students did not use transition signals as a part of cohesive devices to show the cause and effect relationship in their essays. Even though cohesive devices consist of several types but the most important one in the cause and effect essay is the use of transition signals. The use of the transition signals in the cause and effect essay will help presenting the relationship of the cause and effect in the essay.

The finding was also found in a research conducted by Guna (2015). His study revealed that there were four types of cohesive devices used by the students in their cause and effect essay; reference, substitution, conjunction and lexical cohesion. Among the four types of cohesive devices, conjunction was ranked as the second lowest frequency that the students used in their cause and effect essay. In line with this, Sari (2018) in her research also found that the students’ ability in writing supporting sentences of cause and effect paragraph was low. It was proved by the fact that there were 16 students (51.61%) got low ability. The research done by Sari (2018) was similar with this research in which both the researchers conducted a study about the students’ ability in writing cause and effect pattern of development. The difference is that in this research, the researcher analyzed the cause and effect essay; meanwhile Sari (2018) analyzed the cause and effect paragraph.

The findings of this research showed that the students’ ability in writing the concluding paragraph of cause and effect essay was good. This finding was also found in a study conducted by Mahmudah (2017). She found that the students’ ability in writing the reiteration (concluding paragraph) was good. However, these findings were different from the ones Sari (2018) found. In her research, where she analyzed the cause and effect paragraph, she found that the students’ ability in writing the concluding sentence was low. It was proved by the fact that 77.42% of the students (24 students) got low ability.

Conclusions

Based on the research findings and discussion, there are three conclusions that can be drawn from. First, the students’ ability in writing introductory paragraph of cause and effect essay is considered good. Most of the students had been able to fulfill the criteria of a good introductory paragraph of cause and effect essay. The most common problem found in developing the introductory paragraph was that the students wrote a too broad thesis statement. Based on the conclusions stated above, it is implied that the students had not been able to write a restricted thesis statement as the key point of the introductory paragraph of a cause and effect essay. Therefore, they need to be provided more explanation about how to write a restricted thesis statement that can indicate that the essay is going to be about causes or effects or both.

Second, the students’ ability in writing body paragraphs of cause and effect essay is considered poor. Most of the students did not use transition signals that indicate the cause and effect relationship. Although most of the students had provided supporting sentences to support their topic sentences, but the students still did not elaborate the body paragraphs well. As a consequence, the students failed to show the cause and effect relationship between the topic sentence and the supporting sentences. Most of the students wrote the cause and effect essay by using block organization and used model of development of one cause and multiple effects. Based on the conclusions stated above, it is implied that the students had not been able to provide well elaborated supporting sentences in their body paragraphs. They also had not been able to use cause and effect transition signals as a part of cohesive devices. Therefore, they need to be provided more explanation about how to write good and relevant supporting sentences and elaborate them well in order to show the cause and effect relationship in the essay. They also need to be taught about kinds of transition signals that can help them to emphasize the cause and effect relationship in the essay.

Third, the students’ ability in writing the concluding paragraph of cause and effect essay is considered good. Most of the students had fulfilled all the criteria of a good concluding paragraph except that they did not restate the thesis statement that they had introduced in the introductory paragraph. Based on the conclusions stated above, it is implied that the students had been able to write the concluding paragraph of

the cause and effect essay well. However they had not been able to restate the thesis statement in their concluding paragraph. Therefore, they need to be provided a more explanation about the criteria of a good concluding paragraph and how to restate the thesis statement.

Referring to the conclusions and implications above, some suggestions are proposed as follows:

1. It is suggested to the English Department students of State University of Padang especially for those who have lack of ability in writing the introductory paragraph, body paragraphs or concluding paragraph to learn more about how to write a good cause and effect essay by focusing more to the characteristics of a good introductory paragraph, the body paragraphs and the concluding paragraph.
2. It is suggested to the Writing Subject lecturers especially those who teach the Essay Writing to facilitate their students to enhance the students' competence in writing a good cause and effect essay.
3. For other researchers who will conduct a further research about the students' ability in writing cause and effect essay, it is suggested to them to dig more about the other aspects of writing cause and effect essay.

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