

AN ANALYSIS OF THIRD YEAR STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES IN WRITING COMPARISON AND CONTRAST ESSAY OF ENGLISH DEPARTMENT AT BUNG HATTA UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

This research was aimed to describe the difficulties faced by the third year students of English Department at Bung Hatta University in writing comparison and contrast essay. The design of this research was descriptive research. The number of population members of this research was 112 students. They were divided into three classes; class A, class B, class C. The researcher used cluster random sampling technique to choose the sample. The instrument used to get the data was writing test. The data of this research were students' difficulties in writing comparison and contrast essay. Generally, the result of data analysis showed that 16 students (55.17%) have difficulties in writing comparison and contrast essay. Specifically, the result of data analysis showed that 23 students (79.31%) have difficulties in organizing idea, 13 students (44.83%) have difficulties in using correct grammar, 7 students (24.14%) have difficulties in using appropriate words, 26 students (89.65%) have difficulties in using transition signal, 11 students (37.93%) have difficulties in using mechanics. Based on the result of data analysis and discussion, it could be concluded that students had difficulties in writing comparison and contrast essay. Dealing with this conclusion, the researcher expects to the students to do more exercises, and do more practices at home. For the further researcher, it is suggested to find out the factors that causes of difficulties by students on each aspect of writing.

Key words : Writing, Comparison and Contrast Essay, Students' Difficulties

Introduction

Writing is one of important skills to be mastered by the learners, because through writing the students can communicate and know how to express their ideas, feeling, and their experience in

order to make readers understand what is talked about in written form.

As you know, form of writing consist of sentence, paragraph, and essay. Sentence is a group of words that has

subject and predicate having meaning, Paragraph is a group of sentences that consists of topic sentence, supporting sentences and concluding sentence. Essay is a combination of several paragraphs that consist of introductory paragraph, body paragraph and concluding paragraph.

There are many expert opinions about writing. The National Council of Teacher of English (1986:3) declares that writing is the process of selecting, combining, arranging, and often, longer unit of discourse. It means the selection, combination, arrangement, and development of ideas occurs, not prior to writing, but through the writing itself.

Troyka in Admin (2010) states that writing is a way of communicating a message to a reader for a purpose to express one's self, to provide information for reader, to persuade a reader, and to create a literary work. In addition Widdowson in Admin (2010) states that writing is the act of making up correct sentence and transmitting them through the visual medium as mark on paper.

According to Oshima and Hogue (1981:76), essay is a piece of writing consisting several paragraphs that cover of an introductory paragraph, a body, and concluding paragraph. In addition, Crews

(2000) states that an essay is as a fairly brief piece of nonfiction that tries to make a point in an interesting way.

Oshima and Hogue (1981:113) state that comparison and contrast is a very common and useful method of essay organization and it is a form of writing that is frequently used in college work, and in business and the profession as well. Anything can be compared or contrast such as period in history, characters in stories, kinds of equipment, or the qualification of two jobs applicants. It means everything can be compare and contrast to make an essay.

Donald et al (1995:167) also state comparison and contrast come easily to mind and it is one of the best ways to make your writing interesting and informative. It means that comparison and contrast essay is not an interesting essay and it can give information to the reader.

Based on the researcher's experience, when she took writing subject, many students got difficulties in doing their writing exercises. They made mistakes in organizing ideas, grammar, choice of words, punctuation, spelling and using transition signals. Based on the fact above the researcher is interested in doing a research on the difficulties faced by the third year students of the English

Department of teacher Training and Education Faculty of Bung Hatta University in writing comparison and contrast essay.

The researcher only focused on the difficulties in writing comparison and contrast essay, that the third year students of English Department Bung Hatta University had by using point by point model.

Based on the limitation of the problem above, the problem of this research was formulated as follow, “What difficulties do the third year students of English Department of Bung Hatta University have in writing Comparison and Contrast Essay”?

The purposes of this research was to describe the difficulties that the third year students of English Department of Bung Hatta University have in writing comparison and contrast essay. Specifically the purposes of this research was as the followings;

1. To describe the difficulties that the third year students of English Department have in organizing ideas in writing comparison and contrast essay.

2. To describe the difficulties faced by English Department students to use correct grammar in writing comparison and contrast essay
3. To describe the difficulties faced by English Department students to use appropriate words in writing comparison and contrast essay
4. To describe the difficulties faced by English Department students to use appropriate transition signal in writing comparison and contrast essay
5. To describe the difficulties faced by English Department students to use the correct mechanics in writing comparison and contrast essay

Research Method

In this research the researcher applied the descriptive design. Descriptive research is useful for investigating a variety of educational problem. The researcher conducted this analysis to describe the difficulties that the students had in writing comparison and contrast essay.

In this research the population was the third year students of English Department of Bung Hatta University.

They had got knowledge about comparison and contrast essay. They were distributed into three classes, class A, B, and C. Each class approximately consisted of 37 students. The total numbers of population were 112 students.

Due to the large member of population, in this study the researcher used sample. The researcher used cluster random sampling technique to get the sample because the population is classified into one group or classes and they were homogeneous. It means that they were taught with the same syllabus and material.

The instrument used in this research was writing test. The researcher used writing test to collect the data of this research. The students were asked to write comparison and contrast essay by choosing one of the given topics. The topics are:

- a. Facebook and Twitter
- b. Android and Blackberry
- c. Village and City
- d. One Direction and Super Junior
- e. Your Own Topic

A good test should be valid and reliable. To make valid the test, the researcher used content validity. It means

the test was constructed based on syllabus and teaching materials.

Before giving the real test, the researcher gave try out the test to the student out of sample. In this case, she gave try out of the test to make sure whether the students understood the instruction or not, and what they did with the test in writing comparison and contrast essay.

To see the reliability of the test, the researcher used inter-rater technique. There were two assessors. The first assessor was Assessor 1 and the second assessor was Assessor 2.

And then, to calculate the correlation coefficient of the scores given by two assessors the researcher used Pearson Product Moment Formula (Gay:1987:364) as Follows:

$$r_{xy} = \frac{\sum XY - \frac{(\sum X)(\sum Y)}{N}}{\sqrt{(\sum X^2 - \frac{\sum X^2}{N})(\sum Y^2 - \frac{\sum Y^2}{N})}}$$

Finally, the researcher used the degree of coefficient correlation based on Arikunto (2010:75):

- 0.81 – 1.00 : Very high
- 0.61 – 0.80 : High
- 0.41 – 0.60 : Enough

0.21 – 0.40 : Low

0.00 – 0.20 : Very low

In this research the researcher used writing test to get the data. The procedures of gathering data were as follows:

- a. The researcher asked students to do the writing test on a piece of paper and chose one of the topics
- b. The researcher collected students' writing
- c. The researcher copied the student's writing and gave one copy to assessor 1 and another for assessor 2
- d. The assessors read the students' writing one by one
- e. The assessors gave check to the kinds of difficulties faced by students using the table below:
- f. The researcher identified whether the students had a difficulties or not based on these criteria:

Table 1
Students had a difficulties or not based on the criteria

| NO | Aspect | Criteria |
|----|-----------------|---|
| 1 | Organizing idea | Students had difficulty in organizing of idea, if they lost |

| | | |
|---|-------------------|---|
| | | of introduction or conclusion; no apparent organization of body; severe lack of supporting evidence (could not be outlined by reader). (Brown and Bailey Cited in Douglas, 2004:244) |
| 2 | Grammar | Students had difficulties in grammar if they could not understand what the writer was trying to say; unintelligible sentence structure (Brown and Bailey Cited in Douglas, 2004:244). |
| 3 | Vocabulary | Students had difficulties in vocabulary if there were inappropriate uses of vocabulary (Brown and Bailey Cited in Douglas, 2004:244). |
| 4 | Transition Signal | Students had difficulties in using transition signal if they did not use appropriate transition signal (Oshima and Hogue, |

| | | |
|---|-----------|---|
| | | 2007:156) |
| 5 | Mechanics | Students had difficulty in mechanics, if they made mistakes in using appropriate punctuation and spelling (Brown and Bailey Cited in Douglas, 2004:244) |

In analyzing data, the researcher did the following steps:

- a. The researcher checked the table that indicates the students' difficulties on each aspect of writing comparison and contrast essay
- b. The researcher listed the students difficulties on each components of writing comparison and contrast essay by using the formula below:

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100\%$$

Where: P = percentage

F = frequency

N = Total sample

The students are said that they have problem if the percentage above 50% and they have no difficulties if the percentage less than 50%.

Finding and Discussions

Generally, based on the result of the data analysis, the researcher found that 16 students (55.17%) out of 29 students had difficulties in writing comparison and contrast, and 13 students (44.83%) had no difficulties. Specifically, it was shown on the table below:

Table 2
Percentage of the Number of Students Who Had or Had No Difficulties in Writing Comparison and Contrast

| No. | Students | | | | |
|-----|-------------------|------------------|--------|---------------------|--------|
| | Aspect | Had Difficulties | | Had No Difficulties | |
| | | Frequency | % | Frequency | % |
| 1 | Organizing idea | 23 | 79.31% | 6 | 20.69% |
| 2 | Grammar | 13 | 44.83% | 16 | 55.17% |
| 3 | Vocabulary | 7 | 24.14% | 22 | 75.86% |
| 4 | Transition Signal | 26 | 89.66% | 3 | 10.34% |
| 5 | Mechanics | 11 | 37.93% | 18 | 62.07% |

| | | | | | |
|--|------|--|----|--|----|
| | tics | | 3% | | 7% |
|--|------|--|----|--|----|

The researcher found that there were some difficulties that students have in writing a comparison and contrast essay such as: organizing idea, grammar, vocabulary, transition signal and mechanics.

As already discussed previously, this research found that 23 students (79.31%) have problem in organizing idea. It means that more than a half students did not understand how to organize idea. Below is an example:

Student's writing:

Facebook and twitter is social media. Using facebook and twitter easy to people communicate to their friend. In java especially jakarta the people using twitter but in sumatra especially west sumatra still using facebook because using facebook easily than twitter. To me, i using facebook because using facebook is easy and intereste for me, and using facebook make me can meet to new people. Facebook has much fuction like can make a status, tag, foto, coment status some one and the other.

However using twitter is difficult for me. I ever make twitter but i can not to apply twitter so i don't using twitter until now althoug my friend said give easy to uses but i think using twitter not to advantages for me because twitter only make a status and make hashtag.

The correct one :

Facebook and twitter are social media. Using facebook and twitter make our easier to communicate to their friend. In java, especially Jakarta the people using twitter but in Sumatra especially west Sumatra still using facebook because using facebook easily than twitter. For me, I am using facebook because using facebook is easy and interest for me, and using facebook I can meet a new people. Facebook has much function like make a status, tag photo, comment status someone and the other.

However using twitter is difficult for me. I had ever made twitter but I could not apply twitter so I did not using twitter until now although my friend said easy to use but I think using twitter not to advantages for me because twitter only make a status and make hash tag.

In summary, it is better for me to using facebook because it's easily and interest, than using twitter that hard for me to using it.

In the example above the researcher found students had difficulties in organizing idea. Theoretically, the organization of comparison and contrast essay consists of introductory paragraph, body paragraph, and concluding paragraph. As matter of fact, the students' writing above did not have thesis statement, body paragraph with point by point models and concluding paragraph.

Another finding of this study was that 13 students (44.83%) had difficulties in using appropriate grammar. It means that some students still had difficulties in using grammar. Based on Brown and Bailey's idea cited in Douglas (2004:244), students have difficulties in grammar if the readers cannot understand what the writer is trying to say. For examples:

a. Students' writing :

- 1) Facebook and twitter is social media.
- 2) I ever make twitter but I can not to apply twitter so I don't using twitter until now.

b. The correct one :

- 1) Facebook and twitter are social media
- 2) I had ever made twitter but I could not apply twitter so I did not use twitter up until now.

In the example 1, it demonstrated that some students did not use the correct form of "be". They used "is" instead of "are". In the example 2, students did not use the correct tense. They used "present tense" while the sentence should be constructed using "past perfect tense".

The next findings on using appropriate vocabulary revealed that 7 students (24.14%) had difficulties and 22 students (75.86%) had no difficulties. It means that some students were not able to use the appropriate words as it is. Based on Brown and Bailey cited in Douglas

(2004:244), students have difficulties in vocabulary if there are inappropriate uses of vocabulary. Some examples are given belows :

a. Students' writing :

- 1) There are very popular now but many teenagers use social network are lost because they used it as a mistakes.
- 2) On facebook, you can get information like inform for you old friend.

b. The correct one:

- 1) They are very popular now but many teenagers use social network are lost because they used it as a mistakes.
- 2) On facebook, you can get information like information from your old friend.

In the example 1, it demonstrated that some students did not use the appropriate vocabulary. They used "there" while it should be "they". In the example 2, students did not use appropriate words such as, "inform", "for", "you" while it should be "information", "form", "your".

Another aspect that should be considered in writing comparison and contrast essay is the use of transition signal. Based on the result of data analysis it was found that 26 out of 29 students (89.65%) had difficulties in using appropriate transition signal. It means that more than a half students did not

understand in using transition signal. Based on Oshima and Hogue (2007:156) Students have difficulties in using transition signal if they do not use appropriate transition signal. Below is example of student's difficulties in using transition signal:

a. Students' writing :

Advantages of facebook are to communicate with other people, such as friend or unknown, to make relationship with other people, to get more knowledge.

Disadvantages of facebook are can make wasting time and if we can use facebook not better, we can escape the time. So we can't do exercise better.

b. The correct one :

Advantages of facebook are to communicate with other people, such as friend or unknown, to make relationship with other people, to get more knowledge. In other hand, disadvantages of facebook are can make wasting time and if we can use facebook not better, we can escape the time. So we can't do exercise better.

From the example above, it demonstrated that most of students did not use the appropriate transition signal. In body paragraph they did not use a transition word that they should used.

Based on result data analysis, the researcher found that 11 students (37.93%) had difficulties in using appropriate mechanics. It mean that some students still had difficulties how to use mechanics.

Brown and Bailey Cited in Douglas (2004:244), students have difficulty in mechanics, if they make mistake in using appropriate punctuation and spelling, as illustrated in the following example:

a. Students' writing :

- 1) However using twitter is difficult for me.
- 2) This media is easy to use and ease to creat.

b. The right one :

- 1) However, using twitter is difficult for me.
- 2) This media is easy to use and easy to create

In the example 1, it demonstrated that some students did not use appropriate punctuation. They did not use “,” (comma) after they use transition signal “however” at the beginning of sentence. In the example 2, students did not use the correct spelling. They wrote “ease” and “creat” instead of “easy” and “create”.

Conclusions

There were some conclusions in this chapter such as :

1. Generally, the third year students of English Department at Bung Hatta University in academic year 2010/2011 had difficulties in writing comparison and contrast essay. It

- was proved that 16 students (55.17%) out of 29 students had difficulties in writing comparison and contrast essay.
2. The third year students of English Department at Bung Hatta University in academic year 2010/2011 had difficulties in organization of idea. It was proved that 23 students (79.31%) had difficulties in organizing idea in writing comparison and contrast essay.
 3. The third year students of English Department at Bung Hatta University in academic year 2010/2011 had no difficulties in grammar. It was found that 13 students (44.83%) had no difficulties in using appropriate grammar in writing comparison and contrast essay.
 4. The third year students of English Department at Bung Hatta University in academic year 2010/2011 had no difficulties in using appropriate vocabulary. It was found that 7 students (24.14%) had no difficulties in using appropriate vocabulary of writing comparison and contrast essay.
 5. The third year students of English Department at Bung Hatta University in academic year 2010/2011 had difficulties in using appropriate transition signal. It was found that 26 students (89.65%) had difficulties in using appropriate transition signal of writing comparison and contrast essay.
 6. The third year students of English Department at Bung Hatta University in academic year 2010/2011 had no difficulties in mechanics. It was proved that 11 students (37.93%) had no difficulties in mechanics of writing comparison and contrast essay.

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