

# AN ANALYSIS ON THE ABILITY OF THE THIRD YEAR STUDENTS AT ENGLISH DEPARTMENT OF BUNG HATTA UNIVERSITY IN WRITING ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY

Maya Rismawanty<sup>1</sup>, Welya Roza<sup>2</sup>, Fatimah Tanjung<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Mahasiswa Jurusan Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan,  
Universitas Bung Hatta

E-mail: rismawanty.maya@yahoo.co.id

<sup>2</sup>Staf Pengajar Jurusan Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan,  
Universitas Bung Hatta

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## Abstract

The background of the problem in this research was that the third year students got difficulties in writing argumentative essay. This research was aimed at describing the ability of the third year students at English Department of Bung Hatta University in writing argumentative essay dealing with content, organization ideas, vocabulary, grammar and mechanics. The design of this research was descriptive in nature. The total population were 112 students. The researcher took 30 students as the sample by using cluster random sampling technique. It means that the percentage of the member of sample was 27%. The researcher used writing test in the form of essay to collect the data. The test was try out to the students out of the sample since the instrument was categorized non-standard test. The researcher used inter-rater technique to know the reliability of the test. The reliability index of the test was 0.84. It was categorized very high correlation. It means that the instrument was reliable. Generally, the result of this research showed that the ability of the third year students in writing argumentative essay was moderate (22 students). In specific, there were 16 students had moderate ability in writing a good content, 19 students had moderate ability in organizing ideas, 19 students had moderate ability in using vocabulary, 21 students had moderate ability in using grammar, and 23 students had moderate ability in applying mechanics. Based on the findings above, it could be concluded that the third year students' ability in writing argumentative was moderate.

**Key words:** Ability, Writing, Argumentative essay

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## Introduction

Writing is one of the four language skills that should be mastered by the students. By mastering this skill, they can express their ideas, opinions, feelings, and thoughts in order they can communicate

with others through the media of paper. Writing is also a complex activity that requires students to have ability such as mastering grammar, vocabulary, mechanics, and how to express idea. It is supported by Bell and Burnaby in Nunan (1999:36) who

point out writing is an extremely complex cognitive activity in which the writer is required to demonstrate control of content, format, sentence structure, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling and letter formation. If the students want to be successful in writing, they must master all of them. As a result, they will produce a good writing.

Writing is one of the skills which is taught on English subject at English Department of Bung Hatta University. The students have studied writing I to writing IV from the second semester until the fifth semester. They are expected to master all of them. Finally, they are expected to have ability to produce some writings such as an essay, research paper, articles, reports, etc.

Based on syllabus in academic year 2012/2013, writing an essay was one of writing activities done by the students in writing IV on the fifth semester. One of the types of essay which has been studied by them is argumentative essay. An argumentative essay tries to change the readers' mind by convincing them to agree with the writer's point of view. It has four components. The first paragraph is introductory paragraph. Introductory paragraph has function to get the readers' interest. General statement and thesis statement should be in the first paragraph.

The second paragraph is background paragraph which includes factual and/or historical information about issue. The third paragraph is body paragraph. It provides pro and contra arguments. The last one is concluding paragraph which restates the main points, relates the conclusion to remark in introduction, and provides readers with final comments on the topic. In addition, argumentative has three organizations. In organization A, the writer begins with developing the pro arguments before refuting the counterarguments (contra arguments), but the writer begins to mention the counterarguments and refutes them in organization B. Then, he/she develops pro arguments. The last is organization C. In this organization, the writer states counterarguments and then refutes it with the appropriate pro argument (Tunceren and Cavusgil, 2006).

Even though the third year students have studied argumentative essay, some of them still got difficulties. Based on the researcher's informal interview with the students at English Department of Bung Hatta University on March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2013, the students said that they still had difficulties in writing argumentative essay. They got difficulties in writing a good content, organizing ideas, using appropriate

vocabulary, appropriate grammar, and applying mechanics.

Based on the fact above, the researcher wanted to conduct a research about an analysis on the ability of the third year students at English Department of Bung Hatta University in writing argumentative essay by using the pattern of organization A.

The general purpose of this research was to describe the ability of the third year students at English Department of Bung Hatta University in writing argumentative essay.

The specific purposes of this research were:

1. To describe the ability of the third year students at English Department of Bung Hatta University in writing a good content of argumentative essay.
2. To describe the ability of the third year students at English Department of Bung Hatta University in organizing ideas (introductory paragraph, background paragraph, body paragraphs, and concluding paragraph) of argumentative essay.
3. To describe the ability of the third year students at English Department of Bung Hatta University in using appropriate words (vocabulary) in writing argumentative essay.
4. To describe the ability of the third year students at English Department of Bung Hatta University in using grammar in writing argumentative essay.
5. To describe the ability of the third year students at English Department of Bung Hatta University in applying mechanics (spelling, punctuation, and capitalization) in writing argumentative essay.

### **Research Method**

The design of this research was descriptive research in nature. According to Gay (1987:189), descriptive research involves collecting data in order to answer question concerning the current status of the subject of the study. In this research, the researcher described the ability of the third year students at English Department of Bung Hatta University in writing argumentative essay. The population of this research was the third year students were registered in academic year 2010/2011. The total number of this population were 112 students. They were distributed into three classes, namely Class A, Class B, and Class C.

According to Gay (1987:101-103), sampling is the process of selecting a number of individuals for a study in such a way that the individual represents the larger group from which they are selected. In this

research, the researcher used cluster random sampling technique in selecting sample. Cluster random sampling is a sampling in groups that are randomly selected, and all members of selected groups have similar characteristics (Gay, 1987:110). In other word, the member of the population has same characteristic or homogeneous. It means that they had same syllabus, teaching materials, and lecturer.

In taking the sample, the researcher wrote each name of classes on three pieces of paper. Then, she rolled and put them into a box. After that, she shook the box and took two out from it with closed eye. The first paper was class B as try out class and the second one was class C as the sample in this research. Real test has been conducted in Class C on June 25th, 2013. The researcher took 30 students. It means that the percentage of the member of sample was 27%.

The researcher used a writing test in the form of essay as an instrument in this research. The researcher gave four topics to the students. They just chose one topic and then developed it into argumentative essay. The researcher also provided text citation for each given topic. The time allocation to do the test was about 90 minutes.

Before giving the real test, the researcher did try out test. Try out test has been conducted for the students out of the sample on June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2013. The purposes were to make sure whether the students understood with the instruction or not, what they did with the test, and whether they could write argumentative essay in the allocated time or not. The result of try out test was used to find out the reliability of the test.

To determine the validity of the test, the researcher analyzed content validity. Brown (2004:22) states that a test is valid when it measures what is supposed to be measured. It means that the researcher constructed the test based on syllabus and teaching materials that have been given to the students.

To know the reliability of the test, the researcher used inter-rater technique. It meant that there were two scorers (scorer 1 and scorer 2) to check the test. Its function was to minimize subjectivity in scoring of the test.

After the researcher calculated the result of trying out by using Pearson Product Moment Formula (Arikunto, 2012:87), it was found that the coefficient correlation of two scorer was 0.84. It was categorized very high correlation. It meant that the instrument

was reliable and could be used to collect the data.

In gathering data, the researcher gave a writing test in the form of essay to the students. The researcher gave students' score based on the criteria of scoring which has been modified based on Heaton's idea (1988:146). The highest possible score for all items is 100 and the lowest score was 48. In addition, the researcher analyzed the data by presenting the raw score from two scorers. Then, the researcher counted the average score of two scorers. Next, the researcher calculated Mean (M) and Standard Deviation (SD). After that, the researcher classified the students' ability into high, moderate, and low. Then, the researcher calculated the percentage of the students who get high, moderate, and low ability. Finally, the researcher interpreted the result of the third year students' ability in writing argumentative essay.

## Findings and Discussions

### Findings

#### 1) The Students' Ability in Writing Argumentative Essay

Based on the criteria of scoring, the highest possible score was 100 and the lowest score was 48 in writing argumentative essay. The result of the test

proved that the highest score was 92.5 and the lowest score was 67.5. The result of mean was 2466.5 and standard deviation was 204016.8. The result of data analysis can be seen in Table below.

The Score Range	Categories	Number of Students	The Percentage
>88.81	High	4	13.33%
75.59 until 88.81	Moderate	22	73.33%
<75.59	Low	4	13.33%
Total		30	99.99%

#### 2) The Students' Ability in Writing A Good Content

Based on the criteria of scoring, the highest score was 20 and the lowest score was 9. The result of the test proved that the highest score was 30 and the lowest score was 17.5. The result of mean was 778.5 and the standard deviation was 20575.75. The result of data analysis can be seen in Table below.

The Score Range	Categories	Number of Students	The Percentage
>33.48	High	0	0%
26.42 until 33.48	Moderate	16	53.33%
<26.42	Low	14	46.67%
Total		30	100%

### 3) The Students' Ability in Organizing Ideas

Based on the criteria of scoring, the highest score was 20 and the lowest score was 9. The result of the test proved that the highest score was 20 and the lowest score was 14. The result of the mean was 526 and the standard deviation was 9323.5. The result of data analysis can be seen in Table below.

The Score Range	Categories	Number of Students	The Percentage
> 19.4	High	5	16.67%
15.66 until 19.4	Moderate	19	63.33%
<15.66	Low	6	20%
Total		30	100%

### 4) The Students' Ability in Using Appropriate Word (Vocabulary)

Based on the criteria of scoring, the highest score for this component was 20 and the lowest was 9. The result of the test proved that the highest score of the students' ability in using appropriate word was 19.5 and the lowest was 14. The result of mean was 510 and standard deviation was 8727.5. The result of data analysis can be seen in Table below.

The Score Range	Categories	Number of Students	The Percentage
>18.36	High	6	20%
15.64 until 18.36	Moderate	19	63.33%
<15.64	Low	5	16.67%
Total		30	100%

### 5) The Students' Ability in Using Grammar

Based on the criteria of scoring, the highest score for this component was 25 and the lowest score was 12. The result of the test proved that the highest score of the students' ability in using grammar was 21.5 and the lowest score was 15.5. The result of mean was 546.5 and standard deviation was 10018.75. The result of data analysis can be seen in Table below.

The Score Range	Categories	Number of Students	The Percentage
>19.63	High	4	13.33%
16.81 until 19.63	Moderate	21	70%
<16.81	Low	5	16.67%
Total		30	100%

### 6) The Students' Ability in Applying Mechanics (Spelling, Punctuation, and Capitalization)

Based on the criteria of scoring, the highest score for this component was 5 and

the lowest score was 3. The result of the test proved that the highest score of the students' ability in using mechanics was 5 and the lowest score was 3. The result of mean was 107.5 and standard deviation was 399.25. The result of data analysis can be seen in Table below.

The Score Range	Categories	Number of Students	The Percentage
> 4.28	High	7	23.33%
2.88 until 4.28	Moderate	23	76.67%
< 2.88	Low	0	0%
	Total	30	100%

## Discussions

### 1) The Students' Ability in Writing A Good Content

The ability of the students in writing a good content was categorized into moderate. It was proved by 16 students (53.33%) got moderate ability. Based on the students' answer sheet, the students still expressed ideas incomplete. Their essays missed some details and limited the development of thesis.

### 2) The Students' Ability in Organizing Ideas

Based on the data, the students still had a problem in writing introductory paragraph, background paragraph, body paragraph, and

concluding paragraph. For example in writing introductory paragraph: *Many people using facebook to spend their time or just having fun beside their activity that make tired, because of that many opinions that create about using facebook.* Based on the example, the student did not state thesis statement clearly. The students had to list the subtopics of the main point in thesis statement in order the point was clear. The example above could be changed: *People should be careful with the use of facebook in their activity because it can waste their time.*

In writing background paragraph, some of students made some mistakes. For example: *This controversy still make an issue. The implementation of national examination is assumed seize the teachers' right in doing evaluation to the students. Though, national examination is not at all seize the teachers' right.* Based on the example above, background paragraph of this essay did not provide basic information about the topic clearly. The students had to write background paragraph clearly so that it could get the readers' interest to agree with the writers' argument. It could be changed: *National examination still become a controversy in Indonesia nowadays. The controversy begins since the government wants to increase the quality of education by*

*raising the passing grade of the students every year. The major cause of this controversy is that the implementation of national examination has seized the teachers' right in evaluating the students. Although the students refute national examination, the government still maintains it.*

In writing body paragraph, the students could write body paragraph of argumentative essay, but it was inappropriate with the researcher's criteria. Some of them only wrote pro argument paragraph without writing counterargument + refutation paragraph. For example: *Facebook has many disadvantages for children. First, facebook disturb the children study..... Second, it make the work of children become worst.....Last, it give disadvantages to health.* The example could be changed: *Although facebook has disadvantages for children, this argument seems inadequate when we look at the real fact right know that many children use it to learn English.*

In writing concluding paragraph, the students also could not conclude their essay clearly. Based on the students' answer sheet, the students wrote concluding paragraph unclear. For example: *It was clear that smoking is not only as a poisonous thing in*

*our life and have bad beneficial in life style. But according to other expert there are many advantages of smoking. The example above could be changed: Finally, it was clear that smoking is not only as a poisonous thing in our life, but it also has beneficial in our life style. Now, it depends on us as the smokers in giving response about the danger of smoking for our life.*

### **3) The Students' Ability in Using Appropriate Word (Vocabulary)**

The students' ability in using appropriate word (vocabulary) was moderate. The students had problems to find an appropriate word, so they are difficult to develop their ideas in writing argumentative essay. Besides that, they still used Indonesia language in essay. It means that they were still less in vocabulary. For example:

1. *National examination is not foreign again in the world of Indonesia education.*
2. *The viewers are willing to merogoh around their pocket just following what is on offered.*

The correct one:

1. *National examination is a common case in Indonesia's education.*



2. *The viewers are willing to release their money for following what is on offered.*

#### **4) The Students' Ability in Using Grammar**

The students' ability in using grammar was moderate. The students still made mistake in using tenses, word order, article, and preposition, so the readers felt difficult to understand what the writer talked about. For example:

1. *Advertisement have influenced the children.*
2. *Many benefit if we are using the facebook.*

The correct one :

1. *Advertisement has influenced the children.*
2. *We can get many benefits when we use facebook.*

#### **5) The Students' Ability in Applying Mechanics (Spelling, Punctuation, and Capitalization)**

The students' ability in using mechanics was moderate. Based on the data, many students made some mistake in spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. For example: *Facebook was First Found by*

*mark Zackerberg has given benefit for them Facebook Provides information From all people in different country, culture and languge. The example could be changed: Facebook was first found by Mark Zackerberg that has given benefit for people. Facebook provides information from all people in different country, culture, and language.*

#### **Conclusions**

Based on the findings, the researcher concludes that in general, the ability of the third year students at English Department of Bung Hatta University in writing argumentative essay was moderate. It was proved by the fact that there were 22 students (73.33%) had moderate ability. In specific, the researcher draws six conclusions as follows:

1. The ability of the third year students at English Department of Bung Hatta University in writing a good content of argumentative was moderate. It was proved by the fact that there were 16 students (53.33%) had moderate ability.
2. The ability of the third year students at English Department of Bung Hatta University in organizing ideas of argumentative was moderate. It was

proved by the fact that there were 19 students (63.33%) had moderate ability.

3. The ability of the third year students at English Department of Bung Hatta University in using appropriate word (vocabulary) in writing argumentative essay was moderate. It was proved by the fact that there were 19 students (63.33%) had moderate ability.
4. The ability of the third year students at English Department of Bung Hatta University in using grammar in writing argumentative essay was moderate. It was proved by the fact that there were 21 students (70%) had moderate ability.
5. The ability of the third year students at English Department of Bung Hatta University in applying mechanics in writing argumentative essay was moderate. It was proved by the fact that there were 23 students (76.67%) had moderate ability .

### **Suggestions**

Based on the conclusions above, the researcher gives several suggestions as follows:

1. Based on the result of this research, it reveals that the ability of the thid year students in writing argumentative was moderate. So, writing lecturers are suggested to give more explanations

about argumentative essay and exercises (for example, the current issues happened in the world today). Writing lecturers are suggested to give more practices to the students in writing argumentative essay in order they can improve their understanding and skill in writing. In addition, writing lecturers are suggested to give more explanations about organizing ideas of argumentative such as introductory paragraph, background paragraph, body paragraph, and concluding paragraph.

2. The students are suggested to do more practices or exercises in writing argumentative, especially in writing introductory paragraph, background paragraph, body paragraph, and concluding paragraph. They should pay attention to use appropriate words, grammar, and mechanics, so they can improve their ability in writing argumentative essay. As the result, they will produce a qualified essay.
3. For the next researcher, the researcher suggests to do the research on argumentative essay from different aspect such as the factors that make the ability of the students was moderate.

## **Acknowledgments**

First of all, the researcher would like to acknowledge her countless thanks to the Most Gracious and the Most Merciful, Allah Subhanahuwata'ala who always gives blessing, love, opportunity, strength, and health to the researcher, so the researcher can accomplish this thesis entitled **“An Analysis on the Ability of the Third Year Students at English Department of Bung Hatta University in Writing Argumentative Essay”**. It was aimed at fulfilling a partial requirements for getting S1 degree at English Department of Bung Hatta University.

The researcher presents her sincere appreciation to her advisor, Dr. H. Welya Roza, M. Pd., as the first advisor and Dra. Fatimah Tanjung, M. Hum., as the second advisor, who have spent their time, guided her, given advices and comments, and spirit for improving this thesis. Furthermore, the researcher would like to express her great thanks to Dr. Marsis M. Pd., as the Dean of the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education and Drs. Khairudin, M. Si as the Vice Dean of the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education at Bung Hatta University. Then, the researcher also expresses her thanks to Dra. Ernati, M. Pd. as the chairwoman of English Department,

and Dra. Lisa Tavriyanti, M. Pd. as the secretary of English Department. The researcher also thanks all the lecturers who have shared valuable knowledge to her and all administrative staff of FKIP Bung Hatta University for their help during her study at English Department.

Next, the researcher's deepest appreciation goes to her father, Bambang Risyatno and her mother, Kiswanty, for the endless love, pray and support. The researcher would like to express her great thanks for her younger brother, Rico Hariyanto, who always prays, supports and helps her. The researcher also thanks for her younger sister, Yulia Paramitha and her youngest sister, Geisya Leona Maril, who always prays and supports her. And last, the researcher says thanks to her beloved friends (Tuti Handayani, Mega Muspita, Muhammad Fauzi, Rolia Gusta Neri, Ryana Damsi Putri, Yuyus Nuraini, etc.) who always supports and gives contribution during the time.

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