

# **A STUDY ON THE ABILITY OF THE THIRD YEAR STUDENTS AT ENGLISH DEPARTMENT OF BUNG HATTA UNIVERSITY TO WRITE A PERSUASIVE ESSAY**

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## **Abstract**

**This research was aimed at describing the ability of the third year students at English Department of Bung Hatta University in writing a persuasive essay dealing with content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. The design of this research was descriptive in nature. The population of this research was the third year students at English Department of Bung Hatta University. The total population members was 107 students. The writer used cluster random sampling technique to take sample. Based on the result of this research, it was found that the ability of the third year students at English Department of Bung Hatta University in writing a persuasive essay was high. It was proved by the fact that there were 19 students (58.82%) were categorized to have high ability and 16 students (45.71%) were categorized to have ability.**

**Key words: Writing, Persuasive Essay, Students Ability.**

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## **Introduction**

It is generally known that there are four common English skills that must be mastered by the students, they are: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Writing is one of the important language skills that has to be mastered by the students, it is a kind of useful activity to express one's idea on a paper. Writing needs accuracy in order that the students can communicate and know how to express the idea about something, the feeling and also experience to make readers understand what they write about.

This skill is used as medium for delivering the writer's ideas, feeling, and perception to the readers. In detail Glazier (1987:208) states that writing is good for us because it can make us express our idea, feeling, emotion and opinion in the written form of sentences, paragraph, and composition/essay.

As we know, writing is a progressive activity. This means that when you first write something down, you have already been thinking about what you are going to write. Then after you have finished writing, you read over what you have

written and make changes and correction. Therefore, writing is a process that has several steps. In writing the students are expected to be able to write sentences.

Writing is one of the difficult subject to be mastered because writing is a complex skill that needs writer's ability to use appropriate word (vocabulary), grammar, and to express idea to be written. The students should have basic knowledge in organizing idea, grammar, vocabulary, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation to make a good writing.

Based on the perception of some students of English Department and also the writer's experience when she attended writing course, writing is a difficult skill to be mastered. It is revealed from the fact that most of the students still made mistakes in writing exercises. It can be seen from many comments or corrections given by the lecturer on student's writing exercise. The lecturer gave corrections on their spelling, organizing and developing the ideas, grammar, vocabulary or choice of the word, punctuation, and capitalization. This might be the reflection of their ability in writing, but it is not proved scientifically yet, so further research is needed to be conducted.

Essay is the basic unit of organization in writing that consists of

more than one paragraph. According to Oshima and Hogue (2007:77) an essay is a piece of writing consisting of several paragraphs long instead of just one or two paragraphs. It is written about one topic, just as a paragraph is. It has three main parts: an introductory paragraph, a body, and a concluding paragraph.

We know that there are several kinds of essay. The third year English student at Bung Hatta University have studied five kinds of essay. They are analytical report, persuasive essay, objective report, argumentative essay, and expository essay. One of the types of essay which has been studied by them is persuasive essay. Persuasive essay is a kind of essays that persuades the reader to share an opinion and support that opinion by providing strong evidence. The writer thinks that they do not have difficulties in writing persuasive essay dealing with the use of appropriate vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics.

In fact, the third year students have studied persuasive essay, but some of them still get difficulties. Writing an essay is considered as the most difficult skill by the students. Based on the writer's informal interview with some of the third year students at English Department of Bung Hatta University, she found out that the students still had problems in writing

persuasive essay. They got difficulties in developing and elaborating ideas. They also had to synchronize their ideas with organization of persuasive essay (introduction paragraph, background paragraph, body paragraphs, and concluding paragraph) itself. Besides, they had to master some components of writing such as content, the choice of words, grammar and mechanics (spelling, punctuation, and capitalization) As the result, the students produce an unqualified essay. In addition, one of the lecturers of Writing subject at English Department of Bung Hatta University Mr. Yandri S.Pd, M.Pd said that the students still had difficulties when they were asked to write a persuasive essay. It was proved by their scorers in writing. Not all students got a satisfied result. He added that they still had moderate ability in writing.

Based on the fact above, the writer was interested to conduct this research about the ability of the third year students of English Department of Bung Hatta University to write a persuasive essay.

### **Research Method**

This research aimed to describe the students' ability of the third year students at English Department of Bung Hatta University to write a persuasive essay dealing with content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics.

Relating to this, the writer used descriptive research. According to Gay (1987:189), descriptive research is a research that determines and describes the way things are and also it involves collecting data in order to test hypotheses or to answer questions concerning the current status of the subject of the study. The population of this research was all of the third year students at English Department of Bung Hatta University. The population was divided into three classes. The total numbers of population were 107 students. They were selected because they have studied Writing I, II, III, IV.

In choosing the sample of this research, the writer used cluster random sampling. The writer applied cluster random sampling because the population was grouped into three classes. They were selected randomly because all members of the population at each class were homogenous. It means that, they were similar in terms of teaching materials..

In choosing the sample, the writer chose two classes as sample by writing the number of the classes (A, B, C) on small papers and put them into a box. Then, the writer mixed them and took two of them with closed eyes. The first taking was class C as the sample of try out test. It consists of 19 students. The second taking was

class B as the sample of real test of this research. It consists of 40 students.

In this research, the writer used an essay writing test to collect the data. The writer firstly gave the try out test to the students out of sample. The writer gave three topics to the students. The writer also provided text-citation (references) for each given topic.

The time allocation was 60 minutes to do the test. Before giving the tests, the writer did a try out test to the students out of the sample. The purposes were to make sure whether the students understood with the instruction or not, what they did with the test, and whether the time allocation was enough.

The criteria of good instrument is valid and reliable. To see the validity of the test, the researcher used content validity. Relating to this, the test was constructed based on the curriculum and syllabus used at the third year students at English Department of Bung Hatta University. To see the reliability of the test, the writer used inter rater technique. It means that there were two scorers to check students' writing. To find out the correlation of two scorers, the writer used the Pearson Product Moment formula as suggested by Arikunto (2012:87) as follows:

$$r_{xy} = \frac{n \sum xy - (\sum x)(\sum y)}{\sqrt{\{n \sum x^2 - (\sum x)^2\} \{n \sum y^2 - (\sum y)^2\}}}$$

The writer used the degree of coefficient of correlation based on Arikunto's idea (2012:89):

.81 – 1.00 : very high correlation

.61 – .80 : high correlation

.41 – .60 : enough correlation

.21 – .40 : low correlation

.0 – .20 : very low correlation

The coefficient correlation of the test was .96.

After conducting the try out test, the researcher compared the value of  $r_{\text{calculated}}$  with the value of  $r_{\text{table}}$  on the level of significance 95% ( $\alpha .05$ ) and the degree of freedom (df) 19-2 (17). It was found that  $r_{\text{calculated}}$  (.96) was higher than  $r_{\text{table}}$  (.45). It can be concluded that the test was reliable, and it could be used as instrument to collect the data of this research.

In analyzing the data, the researcher used the procedure as follows:

1. The writer presented the raw score from two scorers
2. The writer counted the average score of two scorers by using the formula:  
Students' score = 
$$\frac{\text{the 1}^{\text{st}} \text{ scorer} + \text{the 2}^{\text{nd}} \text{ scorer}}{2}$$
3. The writer calculated the Mean (M) of average score of two scorers.

$$M = \frac{\sum x}{n}$$

4. The writer classified the students' ability into high and low ability using the following categories:

$>M$  = High ability

$\leq M$  = Low ability

5. The writer calculated the percentage of the students who got high and low ability by using formula:

$$P = \frac{R}{T} \times 100\%$$

### **Finding**

Generally, based on the result of the tests, it was found that the lowest score in writing a persuasive essay was 51.5 and the highest score was 92.

Specifically, for expressing ideas (content), it was found that the highest score was 30 and the lowest score was 20. For organizing ideas, it was found that the highest score was 20 and the lowest score was 10. For using appropriate words, it was found that the highest score was 20 and the lowest score was 10. For using grammar, it was found that the highest score was 25 and the lowest score was 8. For applying mechanics, it was found that the highest score was 5 and the lowest score was 3.

### **Discussion**

In general, the ability of the third year students of Bung Hatta University in writing a persuasive essay was high. It was proved by the fact that 19 students (54.29%) were categorized to have high ability. It means that the most of students was able to write a good content, to organize the ideas, to use appropriate words, to use the correct grammar and apply the mechanics well.

Based on the result of the data analysis, the ability of third year students in expressing ideas was high. It was proved by the fact that 23 students (65.71%) were categorized to have high ability. It means that, most of them was able to write to write a good content based on the topic given. The students' ability in organizing ideas was high. It was proved that 18 students (51.43%) were categorized to have high ability. it means that most of them was able to write organization of persuasive essay well. The students' ability in using appropriate words was low. . It was proved that 19 students (54.29%) were categorized to have low ability. Based on the students' answer sheets, most of students had still some mistakes in using appropriate words. The students' ability in using grammar was high. It was proved that 20 students (57.14%) were categorized to have high ability. It means that, most of

them understood about the usage of the correct grammar.

### **Conclusions**

Generally, the ability of the third year students in writing a persuasive essay was high. Specifically, such as on the component of using appropriate words, the students' ability was low. It means that, some of them did not get difficulties in expressing ideas, organizing ideas, using correct grammar, and apply mechanics but in using appropriate words they still got difficulties. It was proved by the data analysis.

Another conclusion that the writer just focused on five components or elements of writing paragraph. They were expressing idea, organizing idea, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. The result of the data analysis showed that the students got high ability in four component(content,

organization, grammar, mechanics) and low ability in using appropriate words.

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