STUDENTS’ WRITING ESSAY ABILITY OF “ILMU PERPUSTAKAAN ISLAM”

Elvina Gusman
AIN Batusangkar
Email: elvinagusman@gmail.com

Abstract: This research was conducted to see how the ability of students majoring in Islamic Library Science, Faculty of Islamic Law Adab and the Da’wah IAIN Batusangkar in writing discourse. In general, the components of writing discourse that are of concern are Organization, Content, Grammar and Sentence structure, Mechanics and Vocabulary. This research focuses on organization and grammar and sentence structure. This research uses descriptive method. The data of this study were taken from the test of the ability to write discourse by students of Islamic Library Science in the first year. Then, the data is analyzed using the qualitative method. The results of this study indicate that of 38 students majoring in Islamic Library Science, 20 students were able to write discourse while 18 students were only able to write a few sentences. Of the 20 discourses, 1 discourse has used writing components very well. 4 discourses are already using writing components well. 5 discourses are categorized as moderate. 10 discourses are categorized as lacking and there are no discourses categorized as very lacking in using writing components, especially organization and grammar and sentence structure.

Key words: Writing and Essay

INTRODUCTION

Writting is one of the essential skill to be mastered by the ESL and EFL students for written way communication. It can be seen through academic, personal, and job-related writing. Academic writing focuses on writing papers, essays, theses and dissertations. Writing diaries, notes, fictions, and others are related to personal writing. Job-related writing focuses on writing messages, letters, e-mails, and others.

To be able in writing, the students need to practice it every time and everywhere to improve their skill. Without practicing, their writing skill is hard to be developed. When they were in junior and senior high school, the students have already got the writing subject even though in implicit way. In university level, the students learn how to write a sentence, paragraph, and essay. In writing sentence, the students learn the components of good sentence that consists of subject, predicate, object, and complement. In writing paragraph, they could elaborate the topic sentence then supported it by some supporting sentences. In Essay, they have got how to organize the essay, how to use the correct grammar and sentence structure, how the content of the essay is, how to use the appropriate mechanics and how to use the vocabulary of the writing.

In the preliminary study, the writer gave the writing test to the students with free topics. It was found that students had problems in writing. The problems were about students’ difficulties in organizing the essay, using the correct grammar and sentence structure, content of the essay, using the appropriate mechanics and using
the appropriate vocabulary. Also, the problem that the writer found in the field was the students were lack in writing practice. They only wrote when they had an assignment from their lecturer. Sometimes they did not write if the lecturer did not give assignment to them. In fact, when the lecturer asked the students to write for instance an essay, they just took from the internet then collected as their assignment. It means they are not able in writing.

So that way, the writer interested in analyzing students’ of “Ilmu Perpustakaan Islam” writing essay ability due to in university level, the students have got the English lessons since primary, junior, and senior high school. Also, they have got experiences in writing. It could be in academic, personal or job-related writing. Some experts defined what the writing is. Meyer (2005:2) defines the writing is speaking to other on paper or on a computer screen. Writing is partly a talent, but it’s mostly a skill. Writing can be improved by practicing. Writing is also an action or a process of discovering and organizing the writer’s idea and putting them on paper, reshaping and revising them. Writing can be a pleasure for someone if she/he knows how the important of writing is and what the purpose of writing is.

According to Harmer (2004) writing skill is likely to take place when students are writing real messages for real audiences, or at least when they are performing tasks which they are likely to have to do in their out-of-class life. In summary, writing brings the writer to real situations. Then, Reid (2000:28) states the writing strategies are steps to achieve a goal more quickly, more easily, and more effectively. Such as, taking notes and writing the assignment immediately; then, thinking about the ideas before beginning to write. The next strategy is pre-writing of making an outline. Then, brainstorming the ideas helps the students to write. Also, working with small groups of classmate helps produce ideas or prefer to work alone. In short, many strategies can be used by the students in writing in order to be easy to write.

There are many types of writing; one of them is an essay. According to Oshima (2006:56) an essay has three main parts/components. These are explained in the following explanations:

1. The introductory paragraph consists of two parts; first, a few general statement tells about the subject to attract the reader’s attention. Second, a thesis statement to state the specific subdivisions of the topic.

2. The body paragraph consists of one or more paragraph. Each paragraph develops a subdivision of the topic, so the number of paragraphs in the body will vary with the number of subdivision or subtopics.

3. The concluding paragraph is a summary or reviews of the main points discussed in the body or rewrite the thesis statement in different words.

The main parts of the essay will be influenced by the genre of the essay. In general, the main parts of the essay are:

a. Organizing idea

In organizing the idea students should make an outline of their writing. Outline forces them to put their ideas into logical order. Start from introduction, body, into concluding paragraph. Also,
there are some aspects that should be considered, they are unity, coherence and using transition signals. Oshima (2006:18) states the unity is a paragraph discusses one and only one main idea from beginning to the end. For instance, if the paragraph is about the positive effect of internet for students, do not discuss the negative effect. When a paragraph has unity, all the supporting sentences relate to the topic sentence (Boardman, 2002:44).

Coherence is made up of sentences that are ordered according to a principle (Boardman, 2002:31). For coherence in writing, the sentences must hold together; that is the movement from one sentence to the next must be logical and smooth. There must be no sudden jumps. Each sentence should flow smoothly into the next one (Oshima, 2006:21). Then, Transition signals are words and phrases that link one sentence with another sentence, usually the one immediately before it. They can also be used in a compound sentence to connect the second independent clause with the first one. These words and phrases function as adverbs that modify entire sentences; hence, they are called sentence adverbs.

b. Grammar and sentence structure

Brown (2001:362) defines that grammar is the system of rules in governing the conventional arrangement and relationship of words in sentence. A sentence makes a complete statement or asks a question. It contains a subject and a predicate. The subject, which usually begins the sentence, is who or what the sentence discusses. Usually, the subject is a noun, pronoun, gerund, infinitive, or noun clause. The predicate completes the statement or question. It begins with a verb, which tells what the subject does or is (Meyers, 2005:128).

In addition, Robinson (2004:10) explores five steps of writing process. They are getting ideas, organizing ideas, writing first draft, revising to improve content and organization, and editing for language errors. There are several ways to get ideas for writing, one method is free writing, or writing whatever comes to your mind about a topic in order to get ideas. The students can write without stopping. They do not stop to correct the grammar or spelling. They let their ideas flow onto the page.

Based on the theories above, the assessment of writing is not simple task. The writer tried to assess the students’ writing focused on essay in order to know how the component of writing written by the students. In assessing writing, the writer evaluated or estimated the nature, ability, or quality of the writing. In this study, the writer assessed the students’ writing based on the criteria from the experts; they are Brown (2010:287), Oshima and Hogue (2006:316), Hughes (2003:101), and Reid (1993:237). The writer focused to assess the organization and grammar and sentence structure.

Related to the explanation above, the research questions of this study are:

1. How is the organization in essay writing used by the students of Ilmu Perpustakaan Islam at Ushuluddin Adab and Dakwah Faculty at IAIN Batusangkar?
2. How is the grammar and sentence structure in essay writing used by the students of Ilmu Perpustakaan Islam at Ushuluddin Adab and Dakwah Faculty at IAIN Batusangkar?
METHOD

This study was a descriptive study. The purpose of the study was to gain information about phenomena in order to describe existed condition in the field. Gay and Airisan (2000: 276) state that the study which collects data in order to answer the question about the status of the subject of study as the descriptive study. There are some basic steps should guide descriptive study; identify a topic or problem, choose the participants, collect valid and reliable data, analyze and report conclusion. In this study, the writer analyzed the students’ essay. Subject of this study was the students’ essay writing. The essays were written by the students of “Ilmu Perpustakaan Islam” at Ushuluddin, Adab and Dakwah Faculty of IAIN Batusangkar.

In collecting the data, the writer asked the students to write an essay. She gave free topic to the students and asked them to elaborate the topic into a good essay. There were 38 students in Ilmu Perpustakaan Islam department. There were 20 students who were able to write essay. 18 students were able just in writing sentences. Then, the writer checked the essays to see how were the components of writing written by the students in their essay. There were scoring rubrics for analytical score according to experts; for instance, Brown (2010:287), Oshima and Hogue (2006:316), Hughes (2003:101), and Reid (1993:237). In this study, the writer adopted from these experts to score the students’ writing essay.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The finding of this study was 1 student’s essay was excellent category. It means 5% of the students have good capability in writing. 4 students’ essays or 25% were in good category. It means the students were able to write but still have problems in writing components. 5 students’ essays or 20% were satisfactory and 10 students or 50% were in weak category. None students or 0% was poor. It means some of the students still have low ability in writing.

Based on the research questions of this study, it was found that:

1. Organization

Related to the organization of the writing essay, the writer found that, there were 1 essay in excellent, 4 essays in good, 5 essays were in satisfactory, 10 essays were in weak, and 0 essays in poor category.

In excellent and good category, the essay had at least introductory, body, and concluding paragraph. The essay had thesis statement in the introductory paragraph. Also, it was supported by the examples, facts, and opinions. The last, the essay was concluded in the concluding paragraph.

For instance, in essay number 19, the title of the essay is “Education”. The topic sentence is education is very important for all people. The supporting sentences are we can get so many knowledge, we can read and write something. Reading and writing are the key of success. …. So, people who get education always get success than people who never touch it. Based on the example above, it can be seen that essay had good organization because the title, the topic
sentence and the supporting sentences then concluded by the concluding sentences. The topic, the supporting, and concluding sentence are very closely related.

In satisfactory and weak category, it could be seen the essay still was not provided with clear thesis statement and specific details. They were lack of organization. The essay did not present sufficient supporting sentences to support the main idea. They did not provide any particular reasons or facts, or examples to maintain the main idea.

For instance, in essay number 12, the title of the essay is “The danger of Smoking”. Many teenagers today are smoking, which resulted in the destruction of generation of Indonesia, that is: a. lungs are disturbed. Teenagers who smoke are difficult to breathe properly, because of the influence of the content of cigarettes. b. Addiction. If someone smokes for the first time, then he will be addicted to the next to smoking. In this essay, the organization is categorized as satisfactory because there is no concluding sentence.

In conclusion, the organization in this essay was not clear. The first paragraph did not consist of general statement and end with thesis statement. In the second paragraph, did not begin with topic sentence. There were not clear supporting sentences just the sentences that not related each other. It made the readers difficult to understand what the writers mean.

2. Grammar and sentence structure

Brown (2001:362) defines that grammar is the system of rules in governing the conventional arrangement and relationship of words in sentence. A sentence expresses a complete thought and has a subject and a complete verb. The sentence is the basic unit of writing in English (Robinson, 2004:17). The subject of the sentence may be a single noun, a noun phrase, a pronoun, two or more nouns, noun phrases or pronouns and –ing verb. The verb of a sentence must be complete or include all necessary verb parts. It can consist of more than one verb. Hence, the relationship between subject and verb that have meaning could be said a sentence.

Related to the grammar and sentence structure, the writer found that, there was 1 essay was in excellent, 4 essays were in good, 5 essays were in satisfactory, 10 essays were in weak and 0 essay was in poor category. It means they need improvement about grammar and sentence structures. In this case, the writer...
found many essays had many mistakes in grammar and sentence structure. The writer confused how to use the appropriate grammar and sentence structure. She/ he did not consider who the subject was, what the subject did, and etc. Also, the predicate in the sentence was not appropriate. Then, the sentences did not consistent with the pronoun.

For instance, in essay 8, the sentence like: Ten years then, a mangrove forest cleared out. Used land of the forest was transformed into a pond farmed shrimp. In this sentence, the idea is not clear and the tense also is not clear. In essay number 9, if you diligently to read .... The correct one is, if you are diligent to read .... In essay 18, if I didn’t go to campus every day, … it was not coherence the tenses and adverb of time. It will be good if the sentences if I don’t go to campus every day, …. If I learning English language I will,... the correct sentence is if I learn English, I will..... The mistake in the second sentence is the verb, it should consider the tense with the verb.

Because of many problems in writing, the writer suggested to the students do more practice to make her/his writing in good ordered in grammar and sentence structure. If they could use the appropriate grammar and sentence structure, the readers would be easy to comprehend the content of that essay.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the quality of the students’ essays were satisfactory. The students still had problems in composing writing essay.

1. The organization of the essay was still not in good order. Some of the students could not organize and develop the writing essay well based on the organization pattern of writing essay.
2. The grammar and sentence structure were still not in correct one used by the students in composing writing essay dealing with using tense, pronoun, and parallel structure in a complex sentence.

SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the writer would like to give some suggestions as follows:

1. It is suggested to the lecturer to help the students in composing good essay by giving various ways to develop their idea and organizing the idea by using correct grammar and sentence structure.
2. It is suggested to the lecturer to provide time to the students to practice their writing skills; in this case the lecturer has to teach the students how to organize ideas well, how to use the correct grammar and sentence structure. Also, the lecturer rechecked the students work in order to correct their mistake and to get more understanding about all components of writing.
3. It is suggested to the lecturer to brainstorm the idea and make an outline before coming to the writing activities. The outline will help the students to organize their ideas well.
4. It is suggested to the students to do writing practice more in or out of the
classroom after getting the materials given by the lecturers in the classroom.

REFERENCES


