



## Difficulties in Developing Idea Encountered by Students in Writing Argumentative Essay

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### Abstract

Writing is one of the most important skills that have to be mastered in the art of language learning. In the university level, EFL students have essay writing subject that requires them to write many types of essay, among those being the argumentative essay. In writing an essay, they need to be able to develop their own original ideas, despite the fact that some of them still consider this a difficult task. This research is aimed to highlight set of difficulties encountered by students that are assigned to develop ideas whilst writing argumentative essay. This research was conducted at *Pakuan University* and involved 23 students as participant of this study. Qualitative method and descriptive analysis are applied in conducting this research. To gain the research data, three research instruments were used, they are: documentation, questionnaire and interview. Documentation instrument was used to analyze students' work of argumentative essay. The questionnaire was administered to all participants and the interview was conducted once for each student. This study reveals that the students still have some difficulties in constructing thesis statement, organizing paragraph, making writing coherent and combining ideas in correct sentences. Finally, the result of this research may urge the students to improve their writing skills and provide the teachers to explore more on teaching writing practices.

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### INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of skills in learning language that has to be mastered. It is because in writing, people can share information, ideas and thoughts in many ways. Furthermore, writing can be a bridge for people to convey their ideas or information into written form. For English learners, mastering writing skills is such a necessity. It is because writing is part of the curriculum in schools from the earliest grade to university level. [1]

In the university level there is an essay writing subject that requires students to write many kinds of essay, including argumentative essay. One of the purposes in writing an argumentative essay is to convince the readers to agree with the writer's opinion. Therefore, students are expected to be able to make a clear

idea from beginning until the end since it deals with persuading the readers.

Since writing is considered as a complex process, thus, there are some problems faced by students in their writing process. Heong et al. as cited in Harris et.al [2] stated that the difficulty of students in writing is in generating their ideas. The students are not able to organize their ideas into written form. In addition, the difficulty of writing is not only about how ideas are developed but also its ideas should be understandable (Richards and Renandya) [3]. It means that they have to think how to organize their ideas into concrete one to avoid readers' confusion.

Furthermore, according to Farooq et al [4] grammar is the most difficult part for L2 writers. Then, students have difficulty in constructing sentence in the correct structure. It is because creating a good grammar rule is extremely difficult and communication may suffer if it is violated [5]. Vocabulary is also considered as one of other difficulties that students face in writing. Strakey synthesized that choosing the right words in an essay is one of the best ways to convey the ideas accurately. [6]

Developing idea is one of activities in writing that need to be done by the writers. They may have the best ideas in the world but if they do not know how to connect them together, it may be difficult to convince the readers to accept the ideas. There are four important things to remember when the students develop ideas in their essays, they are: constructing thesis statement, organizing paragraph, making writing coherent, and combining ideas into correct sentences. [7]

In accordance with the above description, this research is keen on finding students' difficulties in developing idea in writing argumentative essay.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study applied qualitative research design since it investigated a phenomenon as described by Creswell [8] that qualitative approach is an approach which was needed to explore the phenomenon from the perspective of distance education students. Descriptive method was applied because in this case the writer intended to investigate difficulties in developing idea encountered by students in writing argumentative essay. These are the way how the researcher collects the data:

a. Documentation

Students' argumentative essays taken from lecturers in essay writing class were compiled and were analyzed in order to get the data dealing with the difficulties in developing idea based on indicators provided.

b. Questionnaire

Close-ended questionnaire was administered through Google Form to the

students to get more information about students' difficulties in developing idea in writing argumentative essay.

c. Interview

Interview was conducted as the complementary data or as the triangulation. The interview was recorded and the result was transcribed and analyzed.

## DISCUSSION

Having gathered the data from three different instruments, as it is mentioned in advanced, some difficulties encountered by students in developing idea in argumentative essay were identified. First, constructing thesis statement is one of the difficulties that students faced. It is proved from the data of students' work that 87% students could not construct the thesis statement. The following figures are the examples taken from the students' essay.

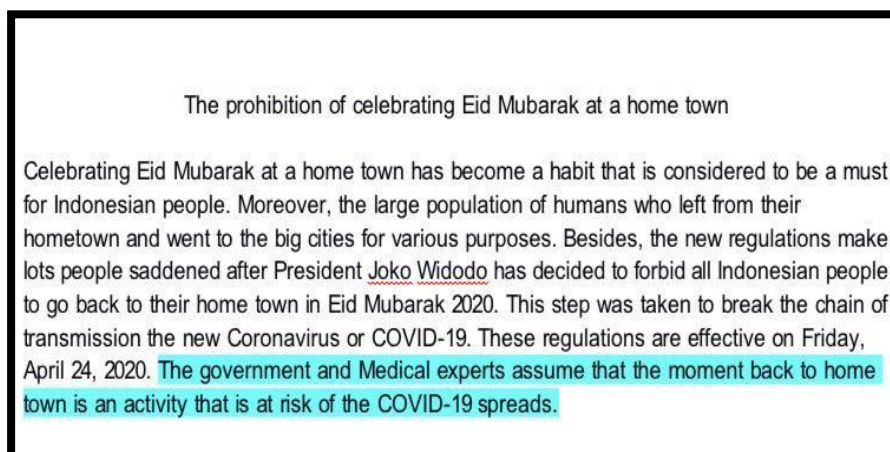


Fig.1. The first Example of Student's Essay

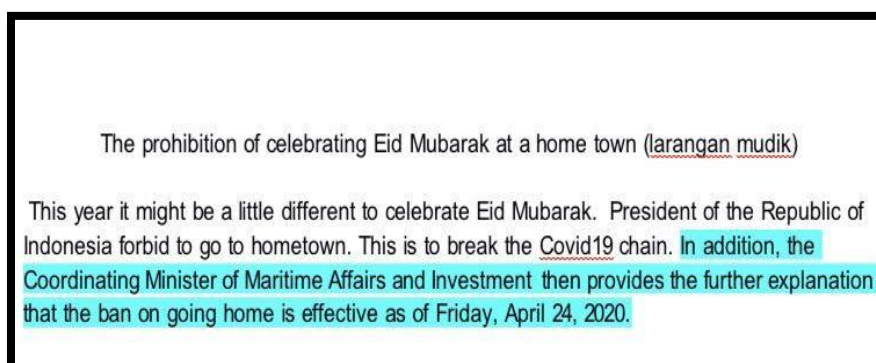


Fig. 2. The second example of Student's Essay

The sentences in blue are the thesis statement from the essay. By seeing those figures, it can be stated that both thesis statements are inappropriate because the students did not take a stand or position on the issue while the topic of the essay she requires the students to state whether they are pro or cons.

The result of the questionnaire supports the findings from the documents. Almost of students (77, 3%) admitted that they cannot construct the thesis statement properly in writing an essay. Then, in constructing the thesis statement, the students also found difficulties since they still feel confused in determining the position and the words related to the topic.

The next difficulty found was **organizing paragraph**. It was proved from data of documentation that indicates 35% of students could not organize their paragraph well. The following figure will show the evidence dealing with students' problem in organizing paragraph.

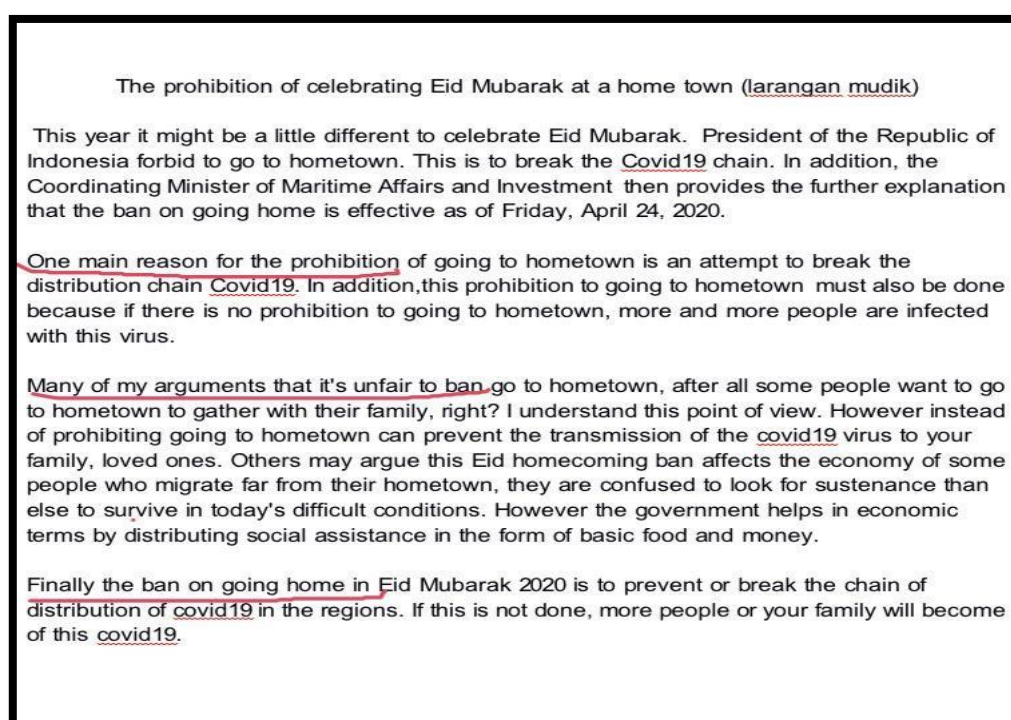


Fig 3. Student's Problem in Organizing Paragraph

The above figure shows that each paragraph does not support the thesis statement. Moreover, paragraph two has only two sentences, meaning, it is not a complete paragraph. It also appeared in the last paragraph that only has two sentences. It means the student still had no idea how to organize the paragraph correctly.

The result of the questionnaire also discovered that more than half (64, 3%) of students admitted that they cannot organize the ideas logically. Some students could not organize their paragraph well because they feel difficult to make the

paragraph supported by the thesis.

Another difficulty was **making writing coherent**. Based on the data from documentation, this one becomes the major difficulty that students faced since there are 91% of students are not able to make their writing coherent. It is also supported from the fifth statement in questionnaire showed that more than half (66%) of students acknowledge that they cannot develop their ideas coherently and cohesively when writing an essay. The following table is the evidence.

No	Statement	Alternative Answer	Frequency	Percentage
1.	I cannot develop my ideas coherently and cohesively in writing an essay.	Strongly Agree	0	0
		Agree	13	56,5%
		Hesitant	5	21,7%
		Disagree	4	17,4%
		Strongly disagree	1	4,4%
2.	I can use linking words/transition (therefore, in addition, moreover, etc) and pronoun to reach cohesive in writing an essay.	Strongly Agree	0	0
		Agree	10	43,5%
		Hesitant	7	30,4%
		Disagree	6	26,1%
		Strongly disagree	0	0

Table 1. Students' Problems in Making Paragraph Coherent

Somehow, making writing coherent is absolutely necessary to be done to avoid readers' confusion. However, they still cannot make their writing coherent because they cannot use transition or pronoun properly since it deals with those things. It is proved when the students stated they feel confused in using proper transition.

The last difficulty found **was combining ideas to become correct sentences**. In order to combine the clauses into correct sentences, the use of conjunction is needed. However, some students still considered it as a difficulty since from data gathered from documentation there are 48% students could not use the conjunctions properly. In addition, in the eighth statement in questionnaire showed that more than half (65, 2%) of students claim that they cannot use coordinating and subordinating conjunctions properly in combining the sentences. It is because some of students do not fully understand to use proper conjunction to link the sentences.

No	Statement	Alternative Answer	Frequency	Percentage
1.	I know what coordinating and subordinating conjunctions are	Strongly Agree	1	4,4%
		Agree	16	69,6%
		Hesitant	6	26,1%
		Disagree	0	0
		Strongly disagree	0	0
2.	I cannot use coordinating and subordinating conjunctions properly in combining sentences when I write an essay.	Strongly Agree	0	0
		Agree	8	34,8%
		Hesitant	13	56,5%
		Disagree	2	8,7%
		Strongly disagree	0	0

Table 2. Students' difficulties in combining ideas into correct sentences.

The result of interview also acknowledged that the students find it difficult to select appropriate conjunction to link the clauses into meaningful and logical sentences.

As the conclusion, by the result of this research, it was showed that there were some difficulties in developing idea encountered by students in writing an argumentative essay. It is because they could not follow the principle of developing idea in writing an essay. The first difficulty was constructing thesis statement. It is considered difficulty is because according to Troyka and Hesse [9] stated that a thesis statement should consist of claim which is an expression of a point of view on debatable topic and it supported by evidence but some students did not do it while writing an essay.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This research was conducted to the fourth semester students of essay writing class in Faculty of Teacher Training and Educational Sciences, Pakuan University. It was conducted to find out students' difficulty in developing idea in writing argumentative essay. In conducting this research, three instruments for gaining the data were occupied. They are documentation, questionnaire and interview. The data were gained by analyzing students' work, distributing questionnaire and interviewing some selected participants.

After conducting this research some difficulties encountered by students in developing idea when they wrote argumentative essay were discovered. The

most difficulties faced by students is making coherent followed by constructing thesis statement, combining ideas in correct sentences and organizing paragraph. It can be concluded that when the students write argumentative essay, developing main idea still becomes a major problem for them.

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