

## ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' CAUSE AND EFFECT ESSAY WRITINGS AT STAIN BATUSANGKAR

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**Abstrak:** Penelitian ini dilakukan untuk melihat bagaimana ketepatan penggunaan komponen-komponen writing dalam wacana sebab akibat yang ditulis oleh mahasiswa program studi Bahasa Inggris tahun ketiga STAIN Batusangkar. Komponen-komponen writing itu adalah Organization, Content, Grammar and Sentence structure, Mechanics dan Vocabulary. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode descriptive. Data penelitian ini diambil dari tes kemampuan menulis wacana sebab akibat oleh mahasiswa tahun ketiga program studi Bahasa Inggris. Kemudian, data tersebut dianalisis dengan menggunakan metode qualitative. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa dari 30 wacana sebab akibat yang ditulis oleh mahasiswa, 5 atau 16,67% wacana sudah menggunakan komponen-komponen writing dengan sangat baik. 12 atau 40% wacana sudah menggunakan komponen-komponen writing dengan baik. 10 atau 33,33% wacana dikategorikan sedang. 3 atau 10% wacana dikategorikan masih kurang dan tidak ada atau 0% wacana yang dikategorikan sangat kurang dalam menggunakan komponen-komponen writing. Beberapa komponen writing yang sudah digunakan oleh mahasiswa dalam menulis wacana sebab akibat dengan baik diantaranya content dan vocabulary. Akan tetapi beberapa komponen belum digunakan secara tepat oleh mahasiswa dalam menulis wacana sebab akibat diantaranya penggunaan organization, grammar and sentence structure dan mechanics.

**Key words:** Cause and Effect, Essay, Writing

### INTRODUCTION

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

writing can be used as written way for communication.

To be able to write, the students need to take Writing Subject class. In the Writing subject, the students get the lessons how to write paragraphs, essays, papers, and theses. All of them related to the students' ability in every components of writing. They are 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 this case, the researcher had done the preliminary research at the third year students of English Department of STAIN Batusangkar in December 2013. The researcher asked the lecturers also the students that related to the writing. 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. From the result of their writing test, many students' writings were unsatisfied. Many students could not write well in English. They had problems in organizing the essay, displaying the content, using appropriate grammar and sentence structure, choosing the words or vocabulary and using appropriate mechanics.

Also, the problem that the researcher 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 an essay, they just took from the internet then collected it as their assignment. It means they are not able in writing.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher conducted the research in writing essays by the third year English Department Students of STAIN Batusangkar. The students had studied Writing I up to

Writing V subject, Grammar I up to Grammar V, Speaking I up to Speaking V, Reading I up to Reading V, Listening I up to Listening V and Vocabulary subject. It means that they were able to write an essay well. Since there are many types of essay, such as argumentative essay, logical division, comparison and contrast, and cause and effect essay that they learned, the researcher focused on cause and effect essay.

The researcher interested in cause and effect essay due to that essay has much closed related to the real life now. Whatever someone's did, she/he needed to think why she/he did that and what the effects were. In high technology era and in the daily life, they needed to consider doing something.

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 researcher'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 (2004:39) 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.

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 writing 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 this case, the researcher focused on cause and effect essay.

There are five components in writing cause and effect essay;

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 or pronoun. The predicate completes the statement or question. It begins with a verb, which tells what the subject does or is (Meyers, 2005:128).

c. Content

The content refers to the topic of that essay. It is found in the first paragraph or introductory paragraph, exactly in the thesis statement of the essay. Then, it is supported by facts, examples, and arguments. The facts, examples, and arguments, put in the body of the essay support the thesis statement in the introductory paragraph or the topic of the essay. Also, the content of the essay consists of a concluding paragraph. In the concluding paragraph, the writer tells the final thought by stating the main point of that essay. In short, it fulfills the requirement of the essay.

d. Mechanics

Murcia (1991:236) states that mechanics is the first step in writing in which the writer refers to recognition and discrimination of letter, acknowledgement of word, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. Brown (2006) classifies several categories to evaluate writing. They are content, organizational, discourse, syntax, vocabulary, and mechanics. In mechanics the categories that will be evaluated are punctuation, spelling, and capitalization.

e. Vocabulary

Vocabulary is one important language component to be mastered

by the students. If the students used the inappropriate vocabulary, the readers will be confused about their writing. What the writer means will be different with the readers. In this case, the lack of students' vocabularies makes their writing not develop well.

In addition, Robinson (2004:10) explores five steps of the writing process. They are getting ideas, organizing ideas, writing the 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 freewriting, 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 no simple task. The researcher tried to assess the students' writing focused on cause and effect essay writing in order to know how the component of writing written by the students.

In assessing writing, the researcher evaluated or estimated the nature, ability, or quality of the writing. In this research, the researcher 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).

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

1. How is the organization in cause and effect essay writing used by the students in writing class of English Department of STAIN Batusangkar?

2. How is the grammar and sentence structure in cause and effect essay writing used by the students in writing class of English Department of STAIN Batusangkar?
3. How is the content in cause and effect essay writing used by the students in writing class of English Department of STAIN Batusangkar?
4. How is the mechanics in cause and effect essay writing used by the students in writing class of English Department of STAIN Batusangkar?
5. How is the vocabulary in cause and effect essay writing used by the students in writing class of English Department of STAIN Batusangkar?

## **METHOD**

This research was a descriptive research. The purpose of the research was to gain information about phenomena in order to describe existed condition in the field. Gay and Airisian (2000: 276) state that the research which collects data in order to answer the question about the status of the subject of study as the descriptive research. So, the current research with the title "Analysis of Students' Cause and Effect Essay Writings" is classified into the descriptive one.

There are some basic steps should guide descriptive research; identify a topic or problem, choose the participants, collect valid and reliable data, analyze the data, and report conclusion. In this research, the researcher analyzed the students' cause and effect essay writing of the third year of English Department students' of STAIN Batusangkar.

Subject of this research was the students' cause and effect essay writing. The essays were written by the third year of English Department of STAIN Batusangkar. The researcher chose them because they had taken Writing I up to IV that concern with writing essay. It meant they were able in writing an essay.

There were three classes of the third year students of English Department of STAIN Batusangkar; class A, B, and C. The total students were 108. Every class was taught by the same lecturer. The lecturer gave the same curriculum and material to them. In this research, the researcher took 30 students' cause and effect essays randomly.

The researcher used the writing test as the instrument. Then, the researcher and two scorers check the essays to see how were the components of writing written by the students in their cause and effect essay.

In collecting the data, the researcher asked the students to write cause and effect essay. She gave some titles, asked students to choose one, and elaborate the title into a good cause and effect essay. The researcher did a validation before asking the students to write an essay. The validation was done related to the topics of the essay, time allocation, and the length of the essay. In order to validate the instruments, the researchers asked a help from the writing lecturer. The validation was done before the researcher came to the field to collect the data. In short, the researcher gave some topics and free topic to the students to make them to be easier to create a cause and effect essay.

There are 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 research, the researcher adopted from these experts to score the students' cause and effect essays.

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this research were 5 students' essays were excellent category. It means 16.67% of the students have good capability in writing. 12 students' essays or 40% were in good category. It means most of the students were able to write but still have problems in some aspect. 10 students' essays or 33.33% were satisfactory and 3 students or 10% 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 cause and effect essay, the researcher found that, there were 6 essays in excellent, 10 essays in good, 4 essays were in satisfactory, 8 essays were in weak, and 2 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.

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.

Then, only two students' essays were poor category. The essays did not have clear organization, they did not have three main part of essay such as introductory, body, and concluding paragraph. The introductory did not have thesis statement. In the body, the essay did not state clear facts, examples, explanations, and argumentations.

For instance, in the introductory paragraph of student's essay, the thesis statement was not clear. .... the communication system use of mobile phone very help much people for communication other activities. The underlined sentence above was the thesis statement of that essay but it was not related to the topic of the essay. The title of the essay was "The Effect of Mobile Phone for the Students".

So, the thesis statement should have a topic and a controlling idea. It would make the writing focus on that. It would be better if the writer use the thesis statement like this, "**Mobile phone gives some positive effects for the students**". It would guide the writer to write the positive effect of mobile phone for the students in the body and concluded it in the concluding paragraph.

In conclusion, the organization in this cause and effect essay was not clear, some of the essays did not use block or chain organization. The first paragraph did not consist of general statement and

end with thesis statement. In the second paragraph, it did not begin with topic sentence. There were not clear supporting sentences. It made the readers difficult to understand what the writers mean. This essay, did not explain the effects of mobile phone for the student clearly.

Also, the essay was lack of unity and coherence. Then, the essay was lack of using transition to link the sentence into paragraph. In the last paragraph, the writer did not conclude the essay or paraphrase the thesis statement because the thesis statement was not clear too.

## 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 researcher found that, there were 2 essays in excellent, 11 essays in good, 6 essays were in satisfactory, 9 essays were in weak, and 2 essays in poor category. It means they need improvement about grammar and sentence structures.

In this case, the researcher 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, the student wrote *Mobile phone is a thing communication very important for the student, not only student but to all people.* The sentence had problems dealing with sentence structure. The writer did not consider the clauses and the parallel structures. It could use the correct parallel structure (*not only .... but also*).

The problems that the researcher found in student's writing were the students did not consistent with the pronoun. Such as: ***They*** can have many friends in ***our*** society, such as *BBM, Line, Kakao Talk, face book, Twitter.* ***It*** can bad effect for many students, can make ***students*** lazy in ***our*** study. ***Because they*** active in social networking. The bold words showed that the student did not consistent with the pronoun. It should be ***they*** with ***their, students*** with ***their***.

Because of many problems in writing, the researcher suggested the students to 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 easier to comprehend the content of that essay.

## 3. Content

The content refers to the topic of that essay. It was usually in the first paragraph or introductory

paragraph, exactly in the thesis statement of the essay. Then, it supported by facts, examples, and arguments. The facts, examples and arguments, put in the body of the essay support the thesis statement in the introductory paragraph. Also, the content of the essay consists of a concluding paragraph. In concluding paragraph, the writer tells the final thought by stating the main point of that essay. So, content of the essay was the main point is discussed in the essay as a whole.

In this research, the researcher found that there were 2 essays in excellent, 11 essays in good, 6 essays were in satisfactory, 9 essays were in weak, and 2 essays in poor category. It means they need improvement about the content of the essays.

#### 4. Mechanics

Mechanics consisted of using appropriate capitalization, spelling and punctuation (Murcia, 1991:236). Capitalization, for instance, capitalize the first word in the sentence and all proper nouns. A direct quotation begins with a capital letter. Spelling is forming words with the correct letters with the correct order. Punctuation is the use of special mark that adds to writing to separate phrases, clauses and sentences. Using correct punctuation is important because punctuation conveys meaning.

The researcher found that there were 4 essays in excellent, 15 essays in good, 5 essays were in satisfactory, 4 essays were in weak, and 2 essays in poor category.

The researcher found the mistakes that the student's done related to capitalization, spelling, and punctuation. For instance, in the title of the essay, the student had problem

with capitalization such as *The Effect Of smoking*. The correct one was letter *o* in *of* should be small letter and letter *s* in *smoking* was capitalized.

The researcher found many mistakes in spelling. For instance, in the student's essay, it was found that *It such as cough, fly, chest sik, and other*. The bold words (*Fly* and *sik*) were not correct. The correct one was *flu* and *sick*. So, it was suggested to the writer to pay attention about mechanics, it influenced the meaning of the word and sentence. The meaning would be different if there were many mistakes in using mechanics especially about spelling. One letter mistakes gave the different meaning.

#### 5. Vocabulary

Based on the result of the students' test, it was found that 8 essays were in excellent category, 7 essays were good, 14 essays were satisfactory, none of the essay was weak, and only 1 essay was poor.

In this research, the researcher found two essays were poor category in using vocabulary in the cause and effect essay. The essay showed that, there was still lack of vocabulary in composing the essay. When the writer was lack of vocabulary, the writing would be confusing and did not interesting to be read by the readers.

From the description above, the findings of this research about the five main components in students' cause and effect essay writing; organization, content, grammar and sentence structure, mechanics, and vocabulary could be used by the students, even though there were still had problems in some components. The problems were about



organization, grammar and sentence structure, and mechanics.

## **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 cause and effect essays at the third year of English Department of STAIN Batusangkar.

1. The organization of the essay was still not in good order. Some of the students could not organize and develop the cause and effect essay well based on the organization pattern of cause and effect essay.
2. The grammar and sentence structure were still not in correct one used by the students in composing cause and effect essay dealing with using tense, pronoun, and parallel structure in a complex sentence.
3. The contents of the essay were still weak in composing cause and effect essay written by the students.
4. The mechanics were still confusing used by the students in composing cause and effect essay. There were still found that the students had mistakes dealing with using appropriate capitalizations, spellings, and punctuations.
5. The vocabulary was still insufficient used by the students in composing cause and effect essay.

The problem occurred not only because of students' failure in the order of writing process but also because of less effort. They rarely practice writing in and out of the classroom. They already know

the rules of writing but still unable to apply it. Those problems make their writing skill is still satisfactory.

## **SUGGESTIONS**

Based on the findings and conclusion of the research, the researcher 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, appropriate mechanics, and sufficient vocabulary.
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 the ideas well, how to use the correct grammar and sentence structure, appropriate mechanics, content, and various vocabularies. 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.
5. For further researchers who will conduct the research about writing can go further research about the writing skills.

**Note: This article was written from the writer's thesis at Pascasarjana of State University of Padang supervised by Prof. Dr. H. Mukhaiyar, M.Pd and Dr. Kusni, M.Pd.**

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