Students' Writing Quality Viewed from Four Cs (Concise, Credible, Clear, and Correct) at English Department of Padang State University

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini memiliki tujuan untuk mengetahui seberapa ringkas, terpercaya, jelas, dan benar karya tulis mahasiswa. Sampel adalah mahasiswa tahun ketiga di Jurusan Bahasa Inggris Universitas Negeri Padang. Data berasal dari tes tertulis. Penelitian ini menggunakan deskriptif kuantitatif. Berdasarkan hasil penelitian, 66% dari tulisan mahasiswa dikategorikan sedang, 32% dari tulisan mahasiswa dikategorikan Buruk, dan 2% dari tulisan mahasiswa dikategorikan Sangat Buruk. Keringkasan tulisan siswa dikategorikan sedang, dan buruk untuk kredibilitas, kejelasan, dan kebenaran.

Keywords: writing, concise, credible, clear, correct

A. Introduction

Writing is an essential skill needed by college students. They have to be able to produce a piece of good writing. Clouse (2004:26) states that writing is a process. It cannot be done quickly. To write sentences become a paragraph has some processes. Each sentence must be coherence and unity. Each sentence has relationship with the previous or the next sentence in the paragraph. This is to keep the ideas not to jump from the topic sentence. Therefore, writing as a process can be described as stepping back before going forward. For example, when students write an essay, firstly they will choose a topic. Then, they begin to arrange the ideas. While students are writing an essay, they will discover some ideas that maybe not have relationship with the ideas before. As the result, they have to look back the ideas before going forward.

There are some characteristics to produce a piece of good writing. Barlow (2006) states that high or low writing quality; it depends on grammar and mechanics. Grammar and mechanics are as a control of writing. It means that without a good grammar and mechanics, the writers can not achieve their purpose in the essay.

Furthermore, Yan et al (2011) say that writing quality depends on dictation, and speed of processing. Writing should be clear and organized well. Therefore, the writer should choose appropriate dictation in the essay. In addition, the speed of writing process also affects the quality of writing.

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In university, there are Writing classes. Through these classes, the students can develop their writing skill, and they are taught how to make a piece of good writing. It can help them to write a paper or thesis as their final project at university. In contrary, some students still have some problems in writing; they have some weaknesses in producing a piece of a good writing such as in conciseness, credibility, clarity, and correctness.

There are many characteristics of good writing stated by experts. Peha (2002: 5) states that a piece of good writing should have a good main idea, thesis statement should be clear, no grammatical errors, compose effective paragraph, and give logic evidence to give a strong statement. On the other hand, there are four characteristics of good writing according to Long (2007:25), they are concise; credible; clear; and correct.

Concise is one of the characteristics of good writing. Murray (2012: 26) states that concise are the important rules of academic writing. Conciseness in academic writing keeps a writing brief and to the point. In other words, concise writing is economical in using language and it just writes what needs to be written. Besides, concise writing means that writing a practice essay. Therefore, the sentence should be practice and effective. For example, "He wants to say", it should be "He adds".

Moreover, Long (2007: 25) explains that there are some questions to determine whether the paragraphs are concise or not. They are: (1) Do the essay have a clear statement?, (2) Does each paragraph have a topic sentence directly supports the thesis statement?, (3) Does every single detail support the thesis statement?

The fact that there are run on and redundant sentences in the students' writing, the idea sometimes do not relate each other. Wilbert (2000: 14) states that redundancy is a problem for many writers; they do not use words economically. They tend to use more words than needed. Therefore, students' writing can not be called concise.

Furthermore, credibility in writing is also crucial in writing academic. Credible writing has to give the reason for the opinion in the essay. It is used to give a evidence and fact or specific details to illustrate the topic sentence. For example, if topic of the essay is about the effect of smoking, so that the topic should be supported by evidence. It can be a data from medical sources or give some facts about the dangerous of the smoking.

In addition, Martinez et al (2008: 73) say that credible in academic writing relate to accuracy. Accuracy means that an essay has appropriate evidence to support the topic sentence, and factual means that the information of the essay is based on the fact. Moreover, Metzger and Rawlins (2010: 277) say that credibility is expertise. Arguments in the essay must be supported by some experts to provide powerful context. The experts' opinion can be quoted or paraphrased by the writer. But, students' writing was less credible, because students' did not give expert's opinion, they just wrote based on their argument.

The third characteristic of good writing is clarity. According to Long (2007:34) clear writing means that the idea of the essay easy to be followed, and transition signal can be used to give details or important point in the essay. For

example, the essay is about the negative effects of smoking, it can be mentioned by using transition signal such as first, then, and next.

In addition, Cutting and Draper (2008) state that clear writing has a clear message. The information in the essay can be understood, and it is not difficult to be read. Moreover, clarity closes to the correctness. If the essay is not correct, the essay will not clear. Therefore, clear writing has to have a good structure. Enright (2012) says that clear writing can be described by three words, they are structure, structure, and structure. This means that if structure of the essay is wrong, it will change the message of its content. Briefly, students have to focus with the structure while they are writing.

The last characteristic of good writing is correctness. Long (2007:41) explains that correct writing means free of errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Grammatical errors are often found in the students' writing. Based on the explanation above, the purpose of the research is to explain how concise, credible, clear, and correct students' writing is.

B. Research Methodology

This research was conducted by using quantitative descriptive because it used numerical data to describe and analyze four Cs (concise, Credible, Clear, and Correct) of Collage students' writing at English Department of Padang State University. According to Sandelowski (2000) quantitative descriptive is a research method by selecting the variable that will be studied and it draws conclusions from the result of statistical test.

The population of this research was the third year students of English Department of Padang State University who registered on 2010. These students were chosen because they have taken some Writing classes, such as Writing I, II, and III. This research used random sampling. Gay (2000: 123) states that random sampling is a way to selecting a sample by giving a chance to every population. The size of population is more than 10%. In addition, Gay states that population more than 10% are better. Therefore, this research took 25 the third year students of English Department of Padang State University as sample.

Research instrument was a writing test. The students wrote an analytical essay. There were three topics (National Examination, Additional Classes, and Death Penalty) provided for the test, the students chosen one of the topics to be written. This test took 135 minutes (3 sks). Then, the students' writing was scored by writing lecturer of Padang State University by using an analytical rubric adapted from Rublee (2005).

For assessing writing, it usually uses a rubric. Many scorers usually use analytic rubric to give a score. According to Weigle (2002: 114) that analytic scoring gives criteria rather than single score. It depends on the purpose of the assessment. For example, the scorer can assess the content, organization, cohesion, grammar, and mechanics. In addition, according to ACT program (2002) to measure skills necessary for effective writing, it includes punctuation, grammar, sentence structure, organization, and style. On the other hand, this research assessed four indicators. It depended on the purpose of this research.

Therefore, this research used a rubric that assessed concise, credible, clear, and correct of students' writing. The range of the rubric was from 1 to 4. (See appendix)

Students' writing was scored based on the rubric. The four indicators (concise, credible, clear, and correct) were summed and divided into four. The average scores of students' writing were found by using the formula from Sudjana (1982):

 $M = \sum x/N$

Where:

N = Total number of subject

 $\sum x$ = The sum of all scores

M = Mean score

The average scores of students writing was categorized into four. They were Very poor (< 1.51), Poor (1.51 - 2.50), Fair (2.51 - 3.49), and Good (3.51 - 4).

C. Research Finding and Discussion

As the result of data collection has been found that the average scores of the students' writing were categorized *Fair*. The scores were in range 2.51 – 3.49. Indicator concise got the highest scores then the others indicator. It was categorized *Fair*, it means that the students' writing was concise enough. The average scores for indicator *concise* were in range 2.51 – 3.49, it was 2.88. Indicator *credible* was categorized *Poor*, because the range of the scores was 1.51 – 2.50. It was 2.46. Indicator *clear* was also categorized *Poor*, it was in range scores 1.51 – 2.50. The average scores of indicator *clear* were 2.38. For indicator *correct*, it got the lowest scores from the others indicators, it was categorized *Poor* because the range of the scores were 1.51 – 2.50. The average scores of indicator *correct* was 2.36.

Table 1. The Average of Students' Writing Scores

Students	SCORE				Average	Catagorias
Students	Concise	Credible	Clear	Correct	$M=\sum x/N$	Categories
1	3	2.5	3	2.5	2.75	Fair
2	3	3	3	2	2.75	Fair
3	2	2.5	2	2	2.13	Poor
4	2	2.5	2	1	1.88	Poor
5	3	3	2	1	2	Poor
6	2.5	2	2	1.5	1.88	Poor
7	3	3	3	3	3	Fair
8	3	3	3	2.5	2.88	Fair

9	3	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.63	Fair
10	3	2	2	2	2.25	Poor
11	3	3	3	3	3	Fair
12	3	3	2.5	2.5	2.75	Fair
13	3	2	2	3	2.5	Fair
14	3	2	2	2.5	2.38	Poor
15	3	2	2.5	3	2.38	Poor
16	3	3	3	3	3	Fair
17	3	2	2	2	2.25	Poor
18	3	2	3	2.5	2.5	Fair
19	3	2.5	2	3	2.63	Fair
20	3	3	3	3	3	Fair
21	2.5	2	2.5	2.5	2.38	Poor
22	3	2	2.5	2	2.38	Poor
23	3	3	2	2	2.5	Fair
24	3	2	2	3	2.5	Fair
25	3	3	2	2	2.5	Fair
Average M=∑x/N	2.88	2.46	2.38	2.36	2.52	Fair

From table 3, it can be seen that the average of the students' writing scores and the average scores of indicator *concise*, *credible*, *clear*, and *correct*. For indicator *concise*, from twenty five students, twenty three students were in *Fair* category and two students were in *Poor* category. For indicator *credible*, fifteen students were in *Fair* category and ten students were in *Poor* category. For indicator *clear*, thirteen students were in *Fair* category and twelve students were in *Poor* category. For indicator *correct*, fifteen students were in *Fair* category, eight students were in *Poor* category, and two students were in *Very Poor* category.

1. Characteristics of Good Writing

The students got different scores for each indicator of four Cs (Concise, credible, clear, and correct). The scores of *concise*, *credible*, *clear*, and *correct* are analyzed below.

1) Concise

From table 3, it can be seen that the average of students' scores for indicator *concise* was 2.88. The conciseness of students' writing was categorized *Fair*. Below is the table of scores for indicator *concise*:

No Category **Scorers Students** 3.51 - 4Good 1 2 Fair 2.51 - 3.4923 students (Student number 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, and 25) 3 2 students (Student number 3, and 4) 1.51 - 2.50Poor 4 Very Poor < 1.51

Table 2. The Categories Scores of Indicator Concise

The table above explains that none of students are categorized *Good* and *Very Poor* for indicator *concise*. From twenty five students, twenty three students were categorized *Fair* for indicator *concise* and two students were categorized *Poor*. The students were categorized *Fair* because their writing were less concise and had few unnecessary words. For example in the second paragraph, "Additional classes will make their children be active students where usually their children are passive students before". To make this sentence more concise and to the point, it should be written "Additional classes will make their children be active students than before."

In addition, the students were categorized *Poor* because their writing less concise and had some redundant words. For example, "National Examination gives 3 days for students to test all what they have leaned during school. Government only gives 3 days to determine their graduation. If they fail in the test for 3 days, they cannot graduate from the school. In addition, the government also set passing standards. It is one of the requirements that must be met by the student. If their test scores do not meet standardize that has been set by the government, they cannot not graduate from school."

To make the paragraph above more concise, the student should write such as the following paragraph:

"National Examination gives 3 days to determine students' graduation. It will test what students have learnt during at school. In addition, the government also set standardize of National Examination as a requirement of graduation. If students cannot pass standardize of national Exam, they cannot graduate from school."

2) Credible

The students' scores for indicator *credible* were in average 2. 46, it was categorized *Poor*. Below is the table of the scores for indicator *credible*:

No Category **Scorers Students** Good 3.51 - 41 2 Fair 2.51 - 3.4915 students (Student number 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 16, 19, 20, 23, and 25) 3 10 students (Student number 6, 10, 13, Poor 1.51 - 2.5014, 15, 17, 18, 21, 22, and 24) 4 Very Poor <1.51

Table 3. The Categories Scores of Indicator Credible

Based on the table, none of students were categorized *Good* and *Very Poor*. Fifteen students were categorized *Fair*, and ten students were categorized *Poor*. The problem of students' writing was they did not give enough examples to support their argument in the essay. They gave the examples in paragraph 1 and 2. But, in the third paragraph they just explain the topic without supported by the examples.

3) Clear

The average of students' scores for indicator *clear* was 2.38. It was categorized *Poor*. The message of students' essay was less clear. The students' problem existed on the construction of the sentences. Some students wrote a sentence not structure well, and the information were not delivered well. Therefore, indicator *clear* was categorized *Poor*. The table below shows students' scores on each category.

No Category **Scorers Students** Good 3.51 - 42 2.51 - 3.49Fair 13 students (Student number 1, 2, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 15, 16, 18, 20, 21, and 22) 12 students (Student number 3, 4, 5, 6, 3 Poor 1.52 - 2.5010, 13, 14, 17, 19, 23, 24, and 25) 4 Very Poor < 1.51

Table 4. The Categories Scores of Indicator Clear

There were some words in Indonesia language in students' essay, such as "government standar nasional" and "Bahasa Indonesia", "Study Inggris" and "standar". These words affect the meaning of the sentence. Therefore, the sentence was unclear and the message of the essay was not clear to be read.

4) Correct

Correct writing means free from grammatical errors, spelling errors, and punctuation errors. From table 3, it can be seen that the average scores of the students' writing for indicator *correct* was 2.34. From four characteristics of good writing, indicator *correct* was the lowest scores. The table below shows students who are categorized *Good*, *Fair*, *Poor*, and *Very Poor*.

No	Category	Scorers	Students
1	Good	3.51 - 4	EC
2	Fair	2.51 - 3.49	15 students (Student number 1, 7, 8, 9,
	/ /		11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21,
			and 24)
3	Poor	1.51 - 2.50	8 students (Student number 2, 3, 6, 10,
	0.1		17, 2 <mark>2,</mark> 23, and 25)
4	Very Poor	<1.51	2 students (Student number 4, and 5)

Table 5. The Categories Scores of Indicator Correct

Fourteen students were categorized *Fair* for indicator *correct*. They had few grammatical errors, spelling error, and punctuation errors. Students who were categorized *Poor*, they had some grammatical errors, spelling errors, and punctuation errors. In addition, students were categorized *Very Poor* because they had many grammatical errors, spelling errors, and punctuation errors. The errors were such as the following below:

Errors:

- National Examination that education is an essential thing in human being life.
- There are some many student fell depressed and worried if they can't pass the examination and will suicide her self.
- Second purpose of national examination is measuring ability of students about government standar nasional, national examination have 3 subject, which are math, bahasa Indonesia, and English.
- Third it might create an image as it other subjects are actually not necessary to be learnt. The students might just focus on those 3 subjects, which will be tested nationally, which are subject of English in national examination it can measuring ability of studenst in study inggris national examination that give standar.
- National examination can be a motivation for the students for get better and learn, the students are to study hard have good comprehension, it can be measure ability a student that they have a low knowledge.

The errors above should be:

- National Examination is an essential thing in human being life.
- There are many students feeling depressed and worried, if they cannot pass the examination, they will suicide.

- Second purpose of National Examination is to measure students' ability by using standardize score. National Examination has 3 subjects; they are math, Indonesian language, and English.
- Third, it may create an image that the other subjects are not necessary to be learnt. The students just focus on 3 subjects that will be tested nationally. English can measure students' English ability.
- National Examination can be a motivation for students to get deserves learning. Students will study hard to have good comprehension. It can measure students' ability, do students have low knowledge or not?.

2. Major Finding

The average score of students' writing is made into percentage in order to conclude what percentage students' writing quality in the *Good*, *Fair*, *Poor*, and *Very Poor* category.

No	Categories	Concise	Credible	Clear	Correct	Total
1	Good	4	- 1	-	D-1	-
2	Fai <mark>r</mark>	92%	60%	52%	60%	66%
3	Poor	8%	40%	48%	32%	32%
1	Very Poor				8%	2%

Table 6. Percentage of the Average Score of Students' Writing

Percentages of category *Good* for indicator *concise*, *credible*, *clear*, and *correct* is empty, because none of students was categorized *Good* for each indicator. For indicator *concise*, 92% students' writing was categorized *Fair* and 8% students' writing was categorized *Poor*. For indicator *credible*, 60% students' writing was categorized *Fair* and 40% students' writing was categorized *Poor*. For indicator *clear*, 52% students' writing was categorized *Fair* and 48% students' writing was categorized *Poor*. For indicator *correct*, 66% students' writing was categorized *Fair*, 32% students' writing was categorized *Poor*, and 2% students' writing was categorized *Very Poor*.

In conclusion, the big problem of students writing was indicator *correct*. The students still had many problems in grammatical errors. From the four characters of good writing, the average scores of indicator *correct* was the lowest than the others, it was categorized *Poor*. Grammatical errors affected the quality of students' writing. Therefore, the students' writing was not concise, and clear. Furthermore, some students' writing was not clear. Indicator *clear* became the second lowest scores of students' writing score. They had problem in constructing the sentence. Therefore, their writing was not structure well. Structure has important rule in the essay. It makes the message of the essay can be understood.

D. Conclusion and Suggestion

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that, firstly 92% of the *conciseness* of students' writing was categorized *Fair*, and 8% was categorized *Poor*. Over all, the *conciseness* of students' writing was categorized *Fair*, and 40% was categorized *Poor*. Over all, the *credibility* of students' writing was categorized *Poor*. Third, 52% of the *clarity* of students' writing was categorized *Poor*. Third, 52% of the *clarity* of students' writing was categorized *Poor*. Over all, *clarity* of students' writing was categorized *Poor*. Fourth, 60% of the *correctness* of students' writing was categorized Fair, 32% was categorized *Poor*, and 8% was categorized *Very Poor*. Over all, the *correctness* of students' writing was categorized *Poor*. The big problem of students writing was in indicator *correct* Briefly, 66% of students' writing was categorized *Poor*, and 2% was categorized *Very Poor*.

Generally, none the third year English Department students could write a piece of good writing. They still have problems in producing a piece of good writing. Lecturers of writing should give a writing habit to the students by giving a lot of writing exercise to the students.

Note: this article was written based on Thesis of the writer with her advisors Dra. Yenni Rozimela, M.Ed., Ph.D. and Yuli Tiarina, S.Pd., M.Pd.

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Appendix Rubric

	Concise	Credible	Clear	Correct
4	Writing is concise,	Skillfully/effectiv	Message of the	There are no
	without	ely supports an	essay can deliver	errors in
	unnecessary words	opinion with	very well to the	mechanics
	and redundant	relevant and	reader, well	usage, no
	word, the essay is	sufficient facts/	organized, and	grammar errors,
	focus, effective,	example and	good	spelling errors,
	and to the point.	details from	chronological	and punctuation
	The essay has a	recourses with	order.	errors.
	clear statement;	accuracy.	Essay makes a	
	topic sentence	Use credible	clear point about	
	directly supports	sources.	the topic	
	the thesis			
	statement.	er you		
3	Writing is less	Essay supports an	Message of the	There are few
	concise; there are	opinion with	essay can deliver	errors in
	few unnecessary	relevant and	well to the reader,	mechanics,
	words and a few	sufficient facts/	clear organization	grammar errors,
	repetitive words	example and	but strays slightly.	spelling errors,
	used occasionally	detail but may not	Tan and a segue of	and punctuation
	used. The essay is	provide enough or	3/11/2	errors.
	less to point and	still less detail.		
	not less focused.			/
	Topic sentence a		4)	
	few support the			
	thesis statement.		0 /	
2	There are some	Essay supports an	Message of the	There are some
	unnecessary	opinion with few	essay are less	errors in
	words, redundant	relevant and	understood by the	mechanics,
	words occasionally	sufficient facts/	reader. There are	grammar errors,
	used. Some words	example and	problems in the	spelling errors,
	are not too well	details from	construction of the	and punctuation
	constructed. Topic	sources with	sentence, and it is	errors.
	sentence	accuracy.	less organized	
	sometimes		well.	
	supports the thesis			
	statement.			
1	There are many	Fails to supports	Message of the	There are many
	unnecessary	an opinion with	essay unclear.	mechanics
	words, redundant	relevant and	Many problems in	errors,
	word. Essay is not	sufficient facts	recognize the	grammatical
	focus, not effective	and details from	essay and	errors, spelling
	and not well	resources with	chronological	errors, and
	constructed. Topic	accuracy.	order.	punctuation

sentence does not		errors.
support the thesis		
statement.		

