

**AN ANALYSIS OF ARGUMENTATIVE ELEMENTS
AND FALLACIES IN STUDENTS' DISCUSSION ESSAYS**

THESIS



By

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ABSTRAK

Witri Oktavia. 2014. Analisis Unsur Argumen (*Argumentative Elements*) dan Kesalahan Logika (*Fallacies*) pada Tulisan *Discussion* Mahasiswa. Thesis. Program Pascasarjana Universitas Negeri Padang.

Penelitian ini dilakukan untuk memahami bagaimana mahasiswa jurusan bahasa Inggris UNP menyajikan unsur-unsur argumen, apa saja bentuk kesalahan logika yang umumnya dibuat oleh mahasiswa serta bagaimana kedua aspek diatas dapat menggambarkan kualitas tulisan mahasiswa secara keseluruhan. Penilaian dan penyajian unsur-unsur argument dalam bentuk grafik, pengidentifikasian kesalahan logika, dan penilaian terhadap kualitas tulisan siswa adalah beberapa prosedur yang dilakukan pada analisis data. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa tulisan mahasiswa yang memiliki kualitas bagus cenderung merupakan penggabungan antara *defending argument* dan *counter argument* dalam pendapat mereka. Berkaitan dengan struktur argumen, argument majemuk (*multiple arguments*) memiliki pengaruh yang lebih besar terhadap kualitas tulisan siswa. Selanjutnya ditemukan bahwa kesalahan logika *hasty generalization* dan *post hoc ergo proper hoc* adalah dua tipe kesalahan logika yang paling banyak dibuat oleh mahasiswa. Hal ini menunjukkan bahwa masih kurangnya kemampuan mahasiswa dalam menyajikan bukti terhadap opini yang mereka kemukakan. Namun demikian, kedua kesalahan logika tersebut tidak dapat menggambarkan kualitas tulisan mahasiswa karena hamper seluruh mahasiswa membuat kesalahan logika tersebut.

ABSTRACT

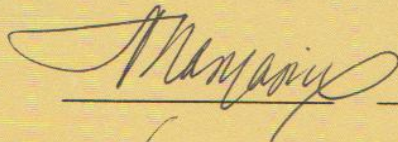
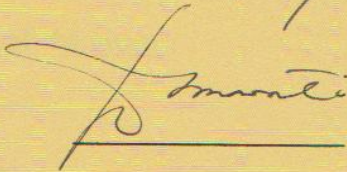
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This study was carried out in order to understand how the students majoring in English Education at UNP presented their argumentative elements, what types of fallacies they mostly made, and how these two aspects figured out the overall quality of the students' discussion essays. Scoring and graphing argumentative elements, identifying fallacies and assessing the quality of the students' discussion essays are several procedures conducted in the data analysis. The findings showed that better quality of discussion essays were performed by the students who integrated arguments and counterarguments in their defense. Regarding its structures, multiple arguments which were used to defend standpoint contributed more on the quality of the writing. Furthermore, it was found out that the fallacy of hasty generalization and the fallacy of post hoc ergo proper hoc mostly occurred in the students' essays. It indicated their less ability in presenting adequate evidence. However, these fallacies did not figure out the quality of the students' discussion essays since all students made those fallacies.

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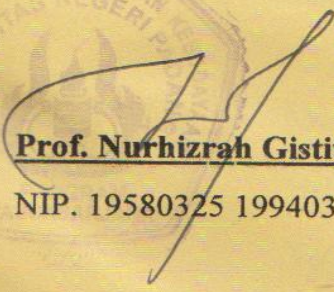
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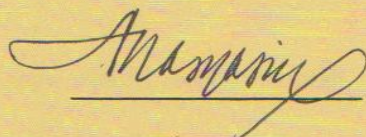
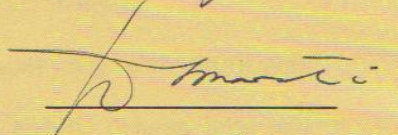
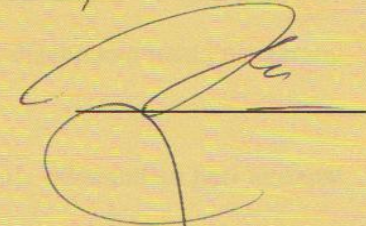
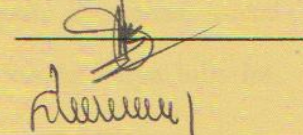

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Saya yang menyatakan,



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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Research

Different from verbal communication in which speakers can clarify the meaning uttered, writing is a nonverbal communication which requires writers to deliver the crystal gist to readers and minimize any errors or mistakes. Thus, for most of the language learners, writing seems to cause bigger problem than other language skills.

Brown (1994) states that unlike other language proficiencies, writing requires learnersto havea different set of competences in which learners should focus on how to generate ideas, organize them well, and arrange them cohesively into a written text. In the matter of fact, a previously conducted research (Hirose 1998 as cited in Newfield 2003) showed that teaching writing for EFL learners was mostly emphasized on sentence-level translation. Another similar research (Fujioko 2003 as cited in Newfield 2003) presented that a writing instruction which focused on a strong grammar and concerned with paragraph-level form was the way how Asian EFL learners gain academic writing skills. The result of the research also showed that critical thinking tended to be abandoned there. As a result, students were not familiar with the conventions of English academic writing, and they were not familiarized with the distinctive ways in communicating ideas between writers' first language and English. Thus, it can be

stated that several factors -including the difference of conventions of writing in the first language and English- should be considered by a writer in order to preclude ambiguity of meaning. For that reason, much attention on students' ability in writing should be emphasized.

Basically, writing is determined as one of the compulsory subjects learned by the students of the State University of Padang (UNP). As stated in its syllabus, one of the main objectives of teaching and learning writing for the students of UNP is emphasized on the students' ability in composing different types of essays. These students are expected to develop ideas and elaborate details in accordance with the purpose of essays (exposition, narrative, report, etc) and their patterns of development (i.e. classification, comparison-contrast, cause-effect, etc).

Based on its syllabus, teaching and learning process in Writing 2 classes focuses on fostering the students' ability to construct three types of argumentative essays-analytical exposition, hortatory exposition, and discussion- in which they are required to convey convincing ideas or arguments. Kalli (2006) explains that argumentative writing is one of genres which calls for students to process information deeply, then construct the relationship among ideas by considering diverging point of views. In addition, Martin as stated in Nunan (1995) argues that argumentative writing is a form of factual writing which can help students to improve their critical thinking skill, and it will be beneficial for them to explore and challenge social reality. In short, obtaining the proficiency in argumentative writing is very essential for students.

However, based on the interviews conducted to both lecturers and students in order to acquire information related to writing ability of English Department students of UNP, it was found out that most students get dissatisfying scores for Writing 2. Among 200 students taking Writing 2 in 2011/2012 academic year, 18 of them got A, 73 got B, 64 got C, 36 got D, and 9 of them got E. This result indicates that the students' ability in composing argumentative essays is still far from satisfactory. Regarding the students, they stated that they mostly have difficulties dealing with writing argumentative essays. These obstacles are mainly related to their lack of ability to attain and develop persuasive ideas, and also their inadequate comprehension with the issues discussed. In addition, the interview result also revealed that most of the students tended to focus on the accuracy of grammar in their writings, and they did not know the criteria of good arguments and how to make them convincing.

Hence, this present study is conducted to obtain in-depth comprehension of the students' ability in writing argumentative essays- not only to get explanation from their scores. It is expected that this study is able to explain in detail the kinds of arguments students are lack of and the fallacies which make their arguments less convincing. Thus, types of argumentation mostly produced by students could also be recognized and how significant their arguments contributed to overall quality of students' essays.

B. Identification of the Problem

Basically, the overall quality of argumentative writing can be analyzed from several aspects. First, it can be emphasized on observing the syntactic features of a composition. Here, students' ability in writing grammatically correct clauses and sentences is examined. Second, paragraph development of an argumentative writing is evaluated in order to know whether students can organize their paragraphs well and know the elements of a good essay. In addition, cohesion and coherence of an argumentative essay are two aspects commonly chosen by researchers to be analyzed since both of them have an essential role in determining quality of an essay. Besides these two aspects, its quality can also be analyzed by identifying the argumentative elements used by writers in composing their argumentative writing based on pragma-dialectical framework. It is a framework applied to find out the resolution of different opinions between two opposing parties rather than to get winner of a argumentative discussion. A contrastive analysis is likely to be conducted if the result of these analyses is later compared with the quality of native speakers' writing.

Besides analyzing quality, argumentative writing is analyzed by observing strategies applied in composing an argumentative writing. This analysis is expected to be able to provide explanation for the strategies mostly used by students- cognitive, social, or metacognitive strategies- which later can be correlated with overall quality of students' writing. Further research is conducted in order to identify students' difficulties in both writing process and the implementation of strategies.

Furthermore, identifying students' errors or mistakes is one of the ways to identify quality of their argumentative essays related to the soundness of the argumentation given. It can be looked over by concerning their grammatical errors-which occur in the level of morphology, morphosyntax, syntax, and semantic- or by observing their logical errors which are also known as fallacies.

C. Limitation of the Problem

This research is intended to analyze overall quality of the students' argumentative essay. Since understanding how the students provided their arguments on two opposing points of view is the main concern of this research, the argumentative essays analyzed focuses on discussion essays. Furthermore, finding the resolution of different opinions is the basic concepts of pragma dialectical framework. Therefore, the students' discussion essays were analyzed based on this framework. Based on this concept, arguments conveyed by the students in their essay were analyzed regarding the argumentative elements used. It was aimed at understanding in more detail types of arguments mostly employed by the students since different types bring different effect to the overall quality of their composition.

The quality of argumentation was also analyzed by identifying fallacies. Regarding this point, the researcher conducted an analysis of fallacies as violations of the rules for critical discussion based on pragma-dialectical framework in the discussion essays composed by the students of State University of Padang majoring in English who have accomplished Writing courses. The

result of the analysis in the inclusion of argumentative elements, and fallacies were further analyzed concerning their contribution and influence to the overall quality of the students' discussion essays. By recognizing their qualities, both the lecturers and the students are expected to be able to find out the students' strengths and weaknesses in composing discussion essays. Therefore, a better implementation of future teaching and learning process can be more easily achieved.

D. Formulation of the Problem

This research was conducted with the intention of analyzing quality of discussion essays concerning their argumentative elements applied and fallacies made by the students majoring in English and have accomplished Writing courses at State University of Padang.

Based on the explanation above, the problem of this research can be formulated as follows:

1. How do the students present argumentative elements in their discussion essays?
2. What fallacies are made by the students in constructing discussion essays?
3. How do argumentative elements and fallacies figure out the overall quality of the students' discussion essays?

E. Purpose of the Research

Based on the problems formulated above, this research was conducted with the aim at explaining:

1. how the students present argumentative elements in their discussion essays
2. fallacies made by the students in constructing discussion essays
3. how argumentative elements and fallacies figure out the overall quality of the students' discussion essays.

F. Significance of the Research

Theoretically, fallacies and argumentative elements contributed to the quality of the students' argumentative writing. The result of this present study could provide in-depth information about types of fallacies and argumentative elements mostly produced by students.

Meanwhile, there are some contributions which can expectedly be offered by this research. First, the result acquired from this research is not only the general description of the students' ability, but also the details of arguments produced by students. These results can be used to evaluate the techniques or materials used for the sake of improvement in the students' quality especially in writing. In addition, recognizing fallacies which are mostly produced by students in their discussion essay can be beneficial for both lecturers and students. Lecturers can use this finding as a consideration for the next teaching and learning process in order to minimize fallacies made by the students in which it can

weaken their arguments. Through the lecturers, the students can measure their level of mastery in organizing ideas and giving logical arguments. By knowing their weaknesses, it is hoped that the students can learn and practice more to write discussion essays which are supported by convincing reasoning.

In short, the analysis of how significant argumentative elements and fallacies contribute to overall quality of the students' discussion essays will provide lecturers with well-defined depiction of students' strengths and weaknesses in writing discussion essays. This result will help them in determining both appropriate materials and techniques in teaching discussion essays.

G. Definition of the Key Terms

a. Pragma-dialectical framework

is a framework which considers the purpose of argumentation is to find out the resolution of different opinion between two opposing parties which are performed in specific context and situation.

b. Fallacies

are the violations of critical discussion rules which are considered as incorrect discussion moves that can hinder the resolution of a difference of opinion.

c. Discussion essay

is an essay which requires writer to put forward their opinions related to a certain issue from two opposing points of view –for and against, and support them with adequate evidence and rebut the standpoint contradicting writer's standpoint

d. Argumentative elements

are the components in the structure of argumentation and types of argument produced.

e. Analysis

Is the examination of something in detail in order to understand it better or draw conclusion from it.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION, IMPLICATION, AND SUGGESTION

A. Conclusion

Through this present study, it was found out that the students presented all argumentative elements in their discussion essays, and represented them in various structures of argument: simple, multiple, subordinative, and coordinative argument. Furthermore, it was also found out that the generation of counterargument can increase the persuasiveness of the students' arguments since it indicated that the students defended his stand not only by concerning his supporting views but also the opposing views which potentially able to weaken his stand.

In addition, among 22 types of fallacies, the students made 9 common types of fallacies in their discussion essays. These nine types of fallacies are related to the strength of evidence given. It was previously assumed that the types of fallacy were going to be much different for every different quality of their writing. However, the findings show that there were quite the same fallacies appeared in various qualities. In other words, all students either with well-developed or minimally developed essays must have produced fallacies in their writing.

Overall, the students produced partially developed essays in all criteria: ideas and arguments, rhetorical features, and language control. However, they did better in language control.

B. Implication

The research implies that the students need to be introduced to the concept of argumentative elements and fallacies. Hence, they can independently measure or evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their arguments before handing their writing to the lecturer.

This research also implies that the students' lack of knowledge on current issue hindered them in providing convincing arguments to defend their standpoint. Therefore, the students should understand more that a claim should be supported not by giving personal opinion but by stating examples, statements of the experts, and adequate facts.

C. Suggestion

Concerning the result of this research, it is expected before assigning students to write discussion essays, lecturers need to expose them to many kinds of reading materials in order to enhance students' knowledge and understanding especially on the issue being written. Moreover, writing subject is better to be introduced to students after they master other skills such as reading, and structure.

Apart from it, several suggestions are proposed by this present study. First, this research merely investigated the argumentative elements and how they were structured. It did not identify argumentative strategies commonly used by their writers in defending their standpoint. Therefore, analyzing argumentative strategies is suggested for further research since understanding the argumentative

strategies will help researcher to recognize how the students present their evidence.

Second, the study of fallacies on this research was based on pragma-dialectical framework by Van Eemeren et al. (2004). Since Boyesian approach put forward relatively different concept of fallacies in which fallacies are not merely identified based on its context, but also content, it will provide more insighton the study of fallacies if the findings of this study are compared to the result from Boyesianapproach. Third, deeper insight can be obtained if the data of this research are followed through with interviewing the students regarding the argumentative elements and fallacies made. Through this interview, we can gain information about whether or not the topic of discussion influences their argumentative elements and fallacies.

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