

**AN ANALYSIS ON STUDENTS' ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAYS  
THROUGH RHETORICAL STRUCTURE THEORY  
IN CLASS XI IPA 1 AT SMA 10 PADANG**

**THESIS**



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## ABSTRAK

**Mulyaningsih, Sri. 2015. Analisa Esai Argumentatif Siswa menggunakan *Rhetorical Structure Theory* di kelas XI IPA 1 SMA 10 Padang. Tesis. Program Pascasarjana. Universitas Negeri Padang.**

Penelitian ini dilakukan untuk menjelaskan kualitas esai argumentatif siswa apakah kualitasnya bagus atau tidak dengan menggunakan analisa *Rhetorical Structure Theory (RST)*. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian deskriptif analisa teks. Partisipan dari penelitian ini adalah kelas XI IPA 1 di SMA 10 Padang. Pemilihan sampel dilakukan dengan cara *random sampling*. Untuk pengumpulan data, peneliti menggunakan tes penulisan esai argumentatif. Selanjutnya, data dianalisa menggunakan *Rhetorical Structure Theory (RST)* dimana ada tiga indikator yang dikemukakan oleh Mann dan Thompson (1988) yaitu keterhubungan, keunikan dan kelengkapan. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa banyak dari esai siswa tidak lengkap, kurang unik dan tidak terhubung secara keseluruhan. Dari data yang diperoleh tersebut maka dapat disimpulkan bahwa kualitas esai argumentatif siswa di kelas XI IPA 1 di SMA 10 Padang tidak bagus. Untuk itu, penelitian ini secara tidak langsung menyatakan bahwa analisa menggunakan *RST* disarankan untuk digunakan sebagai alat untuk menganalisa berbagai jenis teks karena berguna untuk menjelaskan bagaimana kualitas dari teks itu sendiri. Para guru bahasa Inggris juga disarankan untuk memberikan lebih banyak latihan menulis yang berhubungan dengan kemampuan siswa untuk menghasilkan kualitas menulis esai yang baik. Dan bagi peneliti selanjutnya disarankan untuk melakukan penelitian yang berhubungan dengan penemuan dari penelitian ini dan menganalisa jenis-jenis teks lainnya menggunakan *Rhetorical Structure Theory (RST)*.



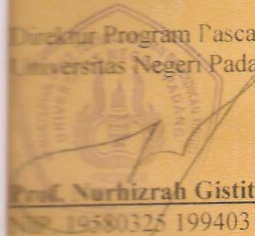
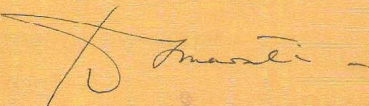
## **ABTRACT**

**Mulyaningsih, Sri. 2015. An Analysis on Students' Argumentative Essays through Rhetorical Structure Theory in Class XI IPA 1 at SMA 10 Padang. Thesis. Graduate Program. State University of Padang.**

This research was conducted to explain the quality of students' argumentative essays whether they are good or poor through Rhetorical Structure Theory (RST) analysis. This research was descriptive textual analysis research. The participants of this research was IPA 1 class of the eleventh grade students at SMA 10 Padang. This research used random sampling technique to define the sample of the research. To collect the data, the researcher used the writing of argumentative essay test. Then, the data were analyzed through Rhetorical Structure Theory (RST) analysis where there were three indicators proposed by Mann and Thompson (1988); the connectedness, uniqueness, and completedness. The results of this research was most of the students' argumentative essays do not have the completedness, they also lack of uniqueness and their nucleus-satellites relations are not fully connected. From the data got, it can be concluded that the quality of students' argumentative essays in class XI IPA 1 at SMA 10 Padang is poor. Therefore, this research implies that RST analysis is suggested to be used as a tool to analyze many kinds of text because it is useful to explain how the quality of the texts themselves. The English teachers at Senior High School are suggested to give more practices in writing related to the students' ability in producing a good quality of essays writing. And future researchers are suggested to conduct a further study related to the findings of this research and analyze other kinds of texts by using Rhetorical Structure Theory (RST).

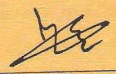
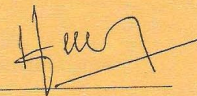
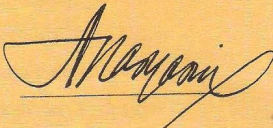


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Saya yang menyatakan,



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The Researcher

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **A. Background of the Problem**

Writing is an important part of language learning. It requires enough time to think about the specific topic, to analyze and to use any background knowledge which is related to the topic. It can improve students' language and it also gives stimulation to the students' cognitive ability in learning English. The students can express their ideas, opinion, reality and point of view through writing. When the students write, they should consider some aspects of writing such as content, grammar, vocabulary, form, mechanics and style. Besides, they should also consider other important components of writing such as sentence structure, unity and coherence.

There are many kinds of writing. One of them is essay. This is the most common kind of writings that is required at schools and colleges. Essay has many types such as narrative, descriptive, persuasive, argumentative, and comparison and contrast. Among them, argumentative essay or argumentation is a popular kind of question because it forces students to think on their own: they have to take a stand on an issue, support their stand with solid reasons, and support their reasons with solid evidence. [Oshima and Hogue (2006)]

Moreover, Oshima and Hogue (2006) explain that in writing the argumentative essay, the students can organize it into introductory paragraph, body, and concluding paragraph. In introductory paragraph, there are thesis

statement and explanation of the issue. In body, there are some supporting arguments or counter-arguments related to the issue that is discussed. And in concluding paragraph, there is a summary of the student's point of view.

Here, related to teaching and learning process at Senior High School where the curriculum 2013 has been applied in the eleventh grade, there are two kinds of argumentative text that are taught to the students; analytical and hortatory exposition text. In learning the texts, the students should be able to express their ideas about many kinds of topics that are given to them analytically and responsibility. When they write an essay about the topics given, the students should be able to take a stand on the issue whether they are pro or con. Then they should be able to give their arguments by giving supporting sentences and the explanation. And at the last of their essays, they should be able to write the conclusion about their point of view.

Besides, the students should also pay much attention to the language features of the essay that they write. First, they should have more vocabularies related to the topics discussed. Second, they should have good grammar related to their arguments' arrangement, such as simple present tense, verbs (be, have) and the transitional signals (first, similarly, finally, etc.). Third, they students should be able to use singular and plural nouns correctly whether they are using *a*, *the*, *this*, *those*, *my* or not. At last, the students should know the correct spelling and punctuation.

Furthermore, to be able to compose a good argumentative essay, the students should also have some knowledge of what paragraph is, topic sentence,

supporting details, unity and coherence as well as concluding sentence. Besides that, the students should also have good ability in writing skill because it will give contribution to develop their knowledge as it is known that writing is transferring idea from one to another. It can be said that good students are the ones who can communicate their thought in the written form such as essay. Writing an essay makes the understanding of the students to subject matter well, improves the students' language skills and helps the students to think critically.

In order to communicate the thought in essay and the reader can understand what the student wants to convey in his/her argumentative essay, the student should perform a good quality essay. A good quality of an essay can be seen from two criteria that exist in each paragraph; unity and coherence. As Hairston in Nordquist (2008) explains that the essential quality of a paragraph should be unity and coherence. Unity means that a paragraph is supposed to have a central idea, and everything in the paragraph relates to and develops that idea. The reader finds no surprises, and every sentence fits with the others. Then, coherence involves the clear movement of thought from sentence to sentence or paragraph to paragraph. It means that the sentences follow each other in logical order so that one could not move the sentences around at random: each one needs to be in its particular place to advance the internal development of the paragraph.

Nevertheless, the findings of the researcher's preliminary research done to the students in class XI IPA 1 at SMA 10 Padang, most of the students did not perform good quality in their essay. It happened because there were some problems faced by the students which caused the students' poor performance

when writing and organizing the argumentative essay. First, the students had problems in writing the thesis statement and the explanation of the issue that they wrote. It is known that a thesis statement has function to state the main idea of the essay. They tended to write an unclear thesis statement. It happened because they had lack of vocabularies, so that they could not arrange the words into good sentence to express their ideas in order to convey the message in writing form. And of course it gave impacts to the way how they explained the issue that they would discuss in their argumentative essays such as they could not explore and develop their writing by having such little ideas whereas.

Second, the students had problems in developing supporting sentences or supporting arguments. In their argumentative essays, there were not sufficient details of the topic explanation. They sometimes did not relate to the topic or main idea of the paragraph. And the relationships between the details were not good enough and/or not relate to other details. It seemed that the students were not sure exactly what the paragraph is and almost never had adequate topic or topic sentence which stated the main idea of the paragraph. Therefore, there was not a unity of the paragraph.

Another problem that was also faced by the students was there was a bad arrangement of paragraph organization produced by the students. It indicated that the paragraphs produced by them were not in good coherence. The supporting sentence as an explanation of the topic tends to less coherence of the topic. It indicates that the words and information they convey did not relate to another so that it was difficult to follow the flow of the ideas, thought and information from



sentence to sentence. It seemed that there was less dynamic of quality because there was no a good movement of information.

At last, the students had problem in using the transitional signals. It is known that the transitional signals are words that show progression from one point to another. They are also known as connectors. They are used to join ideas together. They help to make writing more coherent. The body of the essay must flow from one idea to the next. The function of transitional signal here is to link the ideas among paragraphs. There are transitions between paragraphs, and transitions within paragraphs. Because of some students did not use the transitional signals correctly, so the movement among the body in their argumentative essays was not coherent.

Based on the phenomena above, it seemed that the problems discussed caused the students were hardly to write a good quality of an argumentative essay. It can be seen from the argumentative essays that they wrote where most of them were not unity and coherence. The lack of unity and coherence in those argumentative essays happened because the students faced some problems such as they were not able to write a clear thesis statement, develop the paragraph unity, organize the paragraph coherently and used the transitional signals correctly.

## **B. Identification of the Problem**

Based on the background of the problems above, the students' problems in writing the argumentative essay can be identified that they were not able to write a clear thesis statement; develop the paragraph unity; organize the paragraph coherently; and use the transitional signals correctly. Therefore, the problems that faced by the students above will appear in their argumentative essays. The lack of unity and coherency in the students' argumentative essays, actually can be seen from the analysis that is done to them through Rhetorical Structure Theory (RST)

Here, RST was used because according to Taboada and Mann (2006), RST addresses text organization by means of relations that hold between parts of a text. It is designed to explain the coherence of text by postulating a hierarchical, connected structure of texts, in which every part of a text has a role, a function to play, with respect to other parts in the text. It also can be said that RST describes texts in a rich and highly constrained way and thus predicts much about their character and effects, and functions and structures that make texts effective and comprehensible tools for human communication.

Based on the explanation above, the analysis on the students' argumentative essays through RST was done by looking at the relations between one sentence to other sentences. It is known that in a paragraph, there are a thesis statement and supporting sentences. Here the supporting sentences should be related to the thesis statement in order to make the paragraph will be unity and coherence. In RST analysis, the thesis statement is called nucleus and the supporting sentences is called satellites. Firstly, an RST analysis starts by dividing

a text in this case argumentative essay into some minimal units of interest, such as independent clause. A role in the text is then assigned to each such unit, primarily by linking parts of the text together using relations, and by aggregating related parts into spans. Spans can be linked to other units or spans, so that the text is connected together into a hierarchic structure. By doing so, the quality of students' argumentative essays can be seen whether it is good or bad. A good argumentative essay is the essay which paragraphs are unity and coherence.

### **C. Limitation of the Problem**

In relation to identification of the problems above, it could be summarized that there were many problems faced by students when they wrote the argumentative essays. But the researcher limited her research only on the content and the organization of the students' argumentative essay. The content is to see the unity of the students' argumentative essays and the organization that is to see the coherence of the students' argumentative essays based on the principles of Rhetorical Structure Theory (RST). It is done because a good essay is an essay which paragraphs are unity and coherence. Moreover, unity and coherence are included in basic assumptions underlying RST.

#### **D. Formulation of the Problem**

Due to the limitation of the problem above, the problems are then formulated as follow:

1. How is the students' argumentative essays' connectedness analyzed based on the principles of Rhetorical Structure Theory?
2. How is the students' argumentative essays' uniqueness analyzed based on the principles of Rhetorical Structure Theory?
3. How is the students' argumentative essays' completeness analyzed based on the principles of Rhetorical Structure Theory?
4. Why is the quality of students' argumentative essays' analyzed based on the principles of Rhetorical Structure Theory poor?

#### **E. Purpose of the Research**

In relation to the formulation of the problem above, the purposes of this research are:

1. To explain the students' argumentative essays' connectedness analyzed based on the principles of Rhetorical Structure Theory.
2. To explain the students' argumentative essays' uniqueness analyzed based on the principles of Rhetorical Structure Theory.
3. To explain the students' argumentative essays' completeness analyzed based on the principles of Rhetorical Structure Theory.
4. To figure out the problems of poor students' argumentative essays' quality.

**F. Significance of the Research**

This research is supposed to have theoretical and practical significance for teachers, students and other researchers. Theoretically, it is expected that the result of this research can be useful input for the teachers regarding to the purposes of writing subjects at senior high school. By knowing the weaknesses of the students in writing the argumentative essay, the teachers can develop their teaching in order to enhance the ability of students in writing the argumentative essay. Practically, this research can help the students to improve their ability in writing argumentative essay. They will get knowledge how to write a good argumentative essay so that they can practice it in their essays such as they will be able to write a clear thesis statement, paragraphs unity, paragraphs coherence and write the sentences in grammatically correct. And for other researchers, it will give contribution in evolving knowledge and skill to do a Rhetorical Structure Theory (RST) analysis in other written texts such as letters, magazines or advertisements.



### **G. Definition of the Key Terms**

To avoid misunderstanding of the terms used in this research, the key terms are defined as follow:

1. Argumentative essay is an essay written by each student in Class XI IPA 1 at SMA 10 Padang which he/she should be able to convince his/her readers by performing the logical reasoning and solid evidence in it.
2. Rhetorical Structure Theory (RST) is a tool used to analyze the students' argumentative essays where RST will describe the relations that hold between parts of text to see the unity and the coherence of them.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **CONCLUSION, IMPLICATION AND SUGGESTION**

#### **A. Conclusion**

Based on the findings above related to three indicators proposed by Mann and Thompson (1988); the connectedness, uniqueness and completedness, in order to see the quality of students argumentative essays through Rhetorical Structure Theory (RST) analysis where the nucleus-satellites relations are seen as the completed units, there are some conclusions that can be derived.

First, the connectedness of units' relations in the students' argumentative essays are not fully connected. It happens because between one unit to the other units are not related each other. For example, in unit 1 (thesis statement) as nucleus, the students talk about cigarette, but then in the rest of sentences in the same paragraph, they talk about other ideas such as the classification of smokers or the effect of smoking. Of course, it makes the nucleus and satellites relations are unconnected. Then, while writing the first sentence in body paragraph, the students tend to use the transitional signals which are not connected to the sentences in the previous paragraph, so that the unconnected relations occur in the essay. Next, the unconnected relations also occur when the students want to make the conclusion in their essay, there are some of them write the conclusion only in one sentence, there is no other sentences which support that sentence. So that, the sentence stands alone, there is no relation to the other sentence which cause there is schema blank.

Second, as mentioned in the previous discussion above that the uniqueness of argumentative essays can be seen from the amount of schema application through RST analysis. There are five schema application that can be applied. On the other hand, after doing RST analysis on students' argumentative essays in class XI IPA 1 at SMA 10 Padang, there is no student who applies these five schema application. Most of them only apply two of these schema application. It happens because the students are lack of variation in writing.

Third, the incompleteness in the students' essays cause their essays are not unity and coherence. The incompleteness of the argumentative essay occurs in the introductory paragraph, in body and also in concluding paragraph. In introductory paragraph, the incompleteness occurs when the students cannot develop their thesis statement. In body, the using of inappropriate transitional signals when the students want to move to the new paragraph, it seems that they cannot relate the new sentence to the previous ones. And also in concluding paragraph, the students cannot write a good conclusion. They tend to restate what they have mentioned above, so that the relations among the sentences are difficult to be understood. Overall, the incompleteness occurs in the students' argumentative essays because they have many ideas to be mentioned in a paragraph which cause the ideas are jumping, the movement from one sentence to the next are not logical and smooth, and the paragraphs are not easy to be read and understood.

From the explanation above, it can be stated that the quality of students' argumentative essays in class XI IPA 1 at SMA 10 Padang is poor. It can be seen from the connectedness, uniqueness and completedness of those essays where most of them do not have fully connectedness among the units in the essays, lack of uniqueness where they only apply 1-2 schema application and many incompleteness of unit relations occurs in the essay which cause their essays are not unity and coherence.

Actually, the students' inability to perform the unity and coherence in their argumentative essays which cause their essays' quality are poor. The students' essays poor quality is caused by the students' poor understanding about what the topic sentences and supporting sentences are. Most of their supporting sentences are not related to their topic sentences. And, the students' poor comprehension in writing such as the importance of unity and coherence while they are writing. As it is known that the good quality of writing can be seen from the unity and the coherence among the sentences.

## **B. Implication**

Based on the result of the research, this research has some implications for teaching and learning English especially in writing. Actually, the Rhetorical Structure Theory (RST) analysis can be done by everyone includes the English teachers in order to see the quality of their students' writing. After doing the RST analysis, the teachers will find whether their students have poor quality in writing or not. If they got most of their students have had poor quality in writing

performance, they will find the solution to solve the problems. For example, there is no unity and coherence in the students' essays, so before giving the writing to the students, the teachers explain such as what the topic sentence is, the supporting sentences are, and concluding sentences are, the transitional signals are because it is known that these elements will connect and relate each other in order to achieve the unity and the coherence in an essay.

Then, for students who have known that they have poor performance in writing an essay, such as they have such little ideas whereas; their one sentence to the other sentences do not relate each other; and they tend to use the transitional signals unappropriately; they will evaluate themselves and will be motivated to have more practice in writing an essay because practice makes perfect.

### **C. Suggestions**

Based on the findings and conclusions above, the researcher would like to provide some suggestions as follows:

1. Rhetorical Structure Theory (RST) is suggested to be used as a tool to analyze many kinds of text because it is useful to explain how the quality of the texts themselves. The quality of the text is seen from the relation among the sentences whether they are related to each other or not.
2. The English teachers at Senior High School are suggested to give more practices in writing related to the students' ability in producing a good quality of essays writing.

3. Future researchers are suggested to conduct a further study related to the findings of this research and analyze other kinds of texts by using Rhetorical Structure Theory (RST). The further study can be an analysis of other aspects of writing which are also included in basic assumption underlying RST.

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