AN ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH STUDENTS' ABILITY IN ORDERING TOPICS AND THEIR SCOPES IN WRITING THE BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM OF THE PAPERS BASED ON THE 'NARROWING PRINCIPLE'

THESIS

Submitted as a Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Strata One (S1) Degree at the English Department of FBSS UNP Padang

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2009

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ABSTRAK

Saunir, Ihsan. 2009. *An Analysis of English Students Ability in Ordering Topics and Their Scopes in Writing the Background of the Problem of the Papers Based on the 'Narrowing Principle'*. Skripsi Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris. Universitas Negeri Padang.

Mahasiawa Jurusan Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris FBSS-UNP Padang yang telah menulis tugas akhir (TA) berupa makalah atau skripsi seharusnya telah dapat dengan baik membuat tulisan ilmiah mereka dengan mengaplikasikan teori-teori dan cara-cara yang baik dalam tulisan mereka. Salah satu dari teori yang yang dipelajari mereka adalah prinsip penulisan yang dimulai dari ide ataupun topik yang lebih umum ke yang khusus. Namun kenyataan menunjukkan mahasiswa itu cenderung mengabaikan prinsip ini.

Untuk mengetahui kebenaran dari kecenderungan mahasiswa itu secara ilmiah, perlu dilakukan sebuah penelitian. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk membuktikan secara ilmiah kecenderunan tersebut terhadap latar belakang masalah draf pertama tugas akhir mahasiswa Jurusan Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris FBSS-UNP Padang secara deskriptif kualitatif.

Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa secara umum kemampuan mahasiswa Jurusan Bahasa Inggris dalam mengembangkan topik dan cakupan-cakupan topik sangat beragam. Berdasarkan prinsip tersebut, kemampuan mahasiswa dalam mengembangkan paragraf lebih baik dibandingkan dengan mengembangkan latar belakang masalah secara keseluruhan.

Oleh karena itu, diharapkan agar pembelajaran menulis lebih dapat diperhatikan untuk peningkatan kemampuan menulis mahasiswa di masa yang akan datang.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Bukittinggi, Da Pet, Uni Dewi, Dede, and all friends in FBSS and in the neighborhood for their friendship.

Padang, 13 Agustus 2009

The Writer

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Problem

Writing is one of the four skills in a language which has a complex process and principles that should be mastered by the university students, especially by the English Department students, because many courses in university need the ability of writing. Through writing, they can show their knowledge acquisition in many areas. By mastering writing, they are able to demonstrate their ideas, thoughts and feelings in order to communicate with other people through media of paper.

In the English Department of UNP Padang, Writing is considered very important to support the students' professional and academic success in the future. The importance of writing in this department can be seen in the offerings writing courses. The writing courses consist of Writing 1, Writing 2, Writing 3 and Paper/Thesis Writing. Each of the courses has its own target of competence. Writing 1 course is aimed training the students mainly to develop a paragraph. Then Writing 2 is aimed at training or making the students able to develop a short academic essay. In addition, Writing 3 is aimed at training the students to write a short paper with some additional competence such as reading a graph and quoting references. Meanwhile, the paper/thesis writing course is aimed at helping the students to make the final paper or thesis at the end of their study in the university.

To be a master in writing, a student usually takes a long time and process in the real practice. However, there are several problems commonly faced by the students in

1

writing. A problems is concerning with the lack of ideas. They often get stucked on short list of ideas that they do not know what to write. It still happens even when the teacher provides them with a list of topics to choose to write. Quite often, many students cannot elaborate the ideas they have. They keep moving around the same spot with no valuable progress. Another problem which is still found in the students' writings or essays, according to a Writing lecturer of UNP Padang, is about the order of the topics in the essay themselves. They often do not care about the order of the topics of each paragraph from an essay such as in a paper and a thesis.

Other problems in the students' writings found by the lecturer are about the coherence and the cohesion of the writing either in the forms of paragraphs or the essays. That means that the paragraphs or essays are not about the same topic and the flows of ideas is not smooth. The problems mentioned above, are probably caused by lack of understanding and practice of writing.

These problems make the students find it difficult to write the final project, namely a paper or a thesis when they are in the last semester of that program. Consequently, this condition becomes one of the causes making the students have to extend the study period in the English Department.

In a larger scope of writing such as a paper and a thesis, the students of the English department tend not to be aware of the order of topics as a subject in the paper or thesis, as informed by a senior writing lecturer of the department, whereas for a good essay, it is normally written with the narrowing principle, the writer should consider this principle seriously.

To support this practice, one can learn from the papers written by professional writers or academicians who keep ordering the topics and ideas from the larger scope to the smaller scope of topics such as the papers written by Prof. Mohd. Ansyar, Ph.D., Prof. Soenjono Djardjowijojo, Dra. Hermawati Syarif, M.Hum. (now Prof. Dr.), and Dr. Mukhaiyar M.Pd. (now Prof.) (paper from the 41th Teflin Seminar in Padang, 1993). From the papers, it can be inferred that the scope of topics were ordered in the way as mentioned above and this also means that academic writings tend to follow the narrowing principle.

Based on the explanation above, this research is aimed at identifying the students' ability in ordering the topics and their scopes in the papers, especially in the backgrounds of the problem. Whereas the topic of an essay or paragraph determines the good order of an essays or paragraph.

1.2 Identification of the Problem

As mentioned above, in writing, there are many problems faced by the students, namely lack of ideas, inappropriate orders of topics, coherence and cohesion. Students' ideas are very important to have before beginning to write but, unfortunately, students often lack of ideas when they have to write about something. They may spend a long time to think of an idea to write about. Actually, if they are aware and sensitive with what they experience, see and hear in their life, they can get the idea easily.

Another problem that is also serious for a student is making appropriate order of the topics in writing such as a paragraph or an essay/paper. A writing that does not consider the appropriate order of topics to be developed will sound 'to go here and there'.

A good order of topics, understood from several professional writers as mentioned in the background above, is the one that follows the narrowing principle in writing.

The other common problems are cohesion and coherence of a writing. The cohesion is the smoothness of thought or idea flows in writing. Usually, a writing is made cohesive with the use of transition words or phrases. The coherence is that the condition of the writing must be about the same topic discussed in the wring.

1.3 Limitation of the Problem

Based on the identification of the problem above, the problem of this research is limited to the study of the English education students' ability in ordering the topics in writing the backgrounds of the problem in the first written draft of the papers proposed in the January-June 2009 semester, based on the narrowing principle. The main reason for taking the first written draft a paper is that they can show the basic or original ability of the students.

1.4 Formulation of the Problem

The problem of this research was formulated as follows: "How is the ability of the students of the English Education Program of FBSS-UNP in ordering the topics of the first written drafts in the backgrounds of the problem of papers?"

1.5 Research Questions

To help conduct the research easily, the formulation of the problem above was elaborated into the research questions below:

    a. How is the students' ability in ordering the topics of the backgrounds of the problems in writing the first draft papers?

    b. How is the students' ability in ordering the topic scopes in the paragraphs of the backgrounds of the problem of the first draft papers?

    c. What problems are found in the ordering of the topics in the backgrounds of the problem and the topic scopes in the paragraphs of the backgrounds?

1.6 The Purposes of the Research

The purpose of this research is to identify the English Education students' ability in ordering the topics in the backgrounds of the problem of first written drafts of the paper proposals. The other purpose is to identify the problems made by the students in ordering the topics and the topic scopes in the first written drafts of the paper proposals.

1.7 Significance of the Problem

This research about the students' ability in ordering the topics and the topic scopes in the background of the problem of the first written drafts of the papers is very worth doing because writing, especially writing papers, is a compulsory subject in the English Department. Through this research, the students' ability about writing the background can be identified and used for academic decisions in the department.

Beside that, this research is also expected to give inspirations to English lecturers and other students to do further research about students' ability in other language skills, especially those of the English Department students of UNP Padang to get more information about the students' ability for the academic improvement of the department.

1.8 Definition of the Key Terms

It is important to put a clear definition of the key terms used in this study to avoid the ambiguous meaning or misunderstanding on some conceptual terms that might occur later on. The following definitions will be useful:

Students' writing ability **:** The ability of the Education English students in writing the first drafts of the backgrounds of the problem

Backgrounds of the problem **:** The backgrounds of the problem found in the first drafts of the paper proposals

Narrowing principle **:** The principle of ordering the topics and topic scopes from general to specific of the backgrounds of the problem and the paragraphs of the backgrounds.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

5.1 Conclusion

In the background of this thesis, it was mentioned that writing a scientific writing is not easy for the English students of UNP Padang even though they have taken several writing classes in the department. This has been the main reason of this research to identify the students' ability in writing the background of the problem in the paper proposals. From the analysis, it was found that the students' ability is vary from the acceptable to the unacceptable orders of topic and topic scopes based on the narrowing principle. For the unacceptable orders, the data show that the students had similar problems in writing both the backgrounds and the paragraphs on the backgrounds based on the narrowing principle.

The problems are (1) the main topic in the background or the main topic in the paragraph is smaller than the other subpoints in both the background and the paragraph, (2) a subpoint or subpionts of both the background an the paragraph are smaller in scope than the other subpoints, (3) a subpoint or subpoints are not about the same thing or a part of the main topic of the background or the paragraph, and (4) a subpoint or subpoints are not about the same thing or a part of the background or the paragraph. In this research, the data also show that writing a background is more difficult for the students than writing a paragraph based on the narrowing principle.

Based on the purpose of this research, it was found that the ability of English Department students of FBSS-UNP Padang in ordering the topics in the background of the problem was very bad or failed in ordering the topics in the background of the

problem. In the other hand, the ability of English Department students in ordering the topic scopes in the paragraphs of the background of the problem of the first draft paper was *good.* Like discussed in the discussion above, it seems that the ability in developing or ordering a topic into a paragraph does not guarantee the ability in ordering topics into a background of the problem of a paper.

5.2 Suggestions

Based on the research findings and the conclusions of the research above, some suggestions are drawn as follows:

1. The English Department students need to develop their knowledge about the ordering the topic especially in writing a scientific writing.

   Some ways are drawn as follows:

   a. They should more pay attention when their lecturers explained their lesson in writing

   b. They should read other books that are relevant with writing especially in ordering the topic.

   c. They should keep practice a lot not only in the classroom but also outside of the classroom.

2. The English Department lecturers are suggested to pay attention to the students' writing.

   Some ways are drawn ass follows:

   a. They should give more assignment to their students in order they will practice in writing.

b. They should analyze students' writing by discuss it after after the students finish in writing.

3. In addition to that, for a scientific purpose, it is also suggested that a further research be conducted about other aspects of a paper in relation to the application of the narrowing principle and other aspects in relation to the writing of a background.

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