

# STUDENTS' ABILITY IN WRITING ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY ANALYICAL APPROACH

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## Abstract

Writing an argumentative essay is essential for the university students since they are required do academic works whether in the classroom or in their professional life. The objective of this study was to analyze the students' ability in writing argumentative essay. The sample of this study was 42 first year students of Islamic Studies International Program (ISIP) at CIS, PSU Pattani Campus. Instrument of this research was a writing an argumentative essay based on the topic given. The result indicate that the university students are in the *adequate* category and 21.95 for average score, meaning they are capable to write an argumentative essay although they have some difficulties to accomplish it.

**Keywords:** writing, writing ability, argumentative essay

## I. INTRODUCTION

Writing is a complex activity. It starts by selecting the topic, arranging the structural framework, expressing the theories, ideas and opinions and forming them into an understandable and readable text or essay for the readers. Therefore, it is an essential English skill students should understand and master for it has multiple advantages for present and future life of the students. English language learning writing is important with full supports by Thailand's government. Saito (2010:16) states that the national goal of teaching English in Thailand is to develop the students' ability to communicate in English effectively in their personal life and professional setting.

Although writing is essential for their current and future life but the students are still struggling with it. This is due to the fact that writing is a more difficult skill than any other skills a notion is supported by Besral (2006:10) who states writing is difficult because of some problems such as content, organization, vocabulary, language use and mechanical considerations such as spelling and punctuation. with Permata et.al (2019:892) echo the same statement that students need to integrate all language elements in order to produce a good writing skill. Writing is a productive skill that delivers some ideas from author's mind based on their feelings and experiences incorporated into good and proper sentences, paragraphs and texts.

In line with the objective of Thailand's government in supporting English, in its ISIP, CIS has made English as a compulsory subject for the first year students where they spend their first semester learning and are lectured in English. This clearly demonstrates that writing has a role in determining students' success in their learning. English learning covers the four skills of English, but one of the objective for English writing is students are able to write an argumentative essay in various topics.

Writing an argumentative essay is different from any other essays for this an essay which has a different generic structure and language feature. The topic rises from an issue, and then the writer should write different point of views toward the topic. In other words, the writer has to state the supportive ideas to persuade the reader to believe the topic. Therefore, argumentative essay is a complete essay as it involves all aspects of the writers, such as scientific ideas, rhetorical features and adds "sense" to readers to accept it.

Based on the above statement, the aim of this article is to analyze the ISIP students' ability in writing an argumentative essay at CIS.

## II. Related Theories

### 1. Nature of Writing

As stated earlier, writing is a complex activity which is initiated by selecting the topic, arranging the structural framework, expressing the theories, ideas and opinions and forming them into a logically comprehensive text or essay for the readers. Hakim (2016:1) opines that writing is a productive skill which requires the ability to transfer ideas, information, or message in a written form. In addition, Laaer et. al (1981:1) say writing is one way of creating meaning from experience for ourselves and for others. Thus, writing is a platform to share the implicit and explicit meaning indirectly to the other and share the experience or the information from the author's.

Additionally, writing is a process of adding ideas on their mind to a paper then transform them into words and become sentences by using structure and coherent organization. In other words, writing is not only "how" to write but also "how" to write and share the values through the proper ways to the readers. Furthermore, Barnet and Stubbs (1990:4) state writing is not simply a way to express ideas, but a way to acquire them. Brown (2001:336) adds that writing is a process of thinking . In line with Nunan (2003:88) writing is the process of thinking about how to express the ideas into a good writing, and arranging the ideas into statements and paragraphs clearly. Then, Oshima (1987:3) states writing is a *process* not a *product*. To make a product need a process, the result of the product depend on the process that had though, same case in writing, the final result of writing is a written and it will show the process how to produce it.

In addition Hamp-Lyons in O'Malley and Pierce (1996:136) add that writing is a personal act in which writers take ideas or prompts and transform them into "self-initiated" topics. Writing is all of the author's ideas that can be expressed to develop the topic that he/she raised. Then good writing is rhetoric, structural, appropriate diction, vocabularies and coherence to each other clearly.

### 2. Argumentative Essay

The argumentative essay is the scientific essay which discusses an issue, or controversial issue in the society. In writing an argumentative essay the writer have to state his/her strong opinion with the related theory to convince the reader, pro and contra on the issues that being discussed are the part of argumentative essay as well. Argumentative essay is a scientific paper that contains arguments, explanations, proof or reasons then the writer argue for a certain idea and try to persuade readers to adopt the writer's point of view (Abbas; 2018, Permata, 2019, Oshima, 2004).

Generally, essay consists of three main paragraphs: opening, body and closing paragraph which are related to one topic as well. Housden (as cited in Abbas, 2018) points out that generally in an argumentative essay, there is an objective review or information followed by examples, analogies and cause and effect relationship. The characteristic of the argumentative essay is in convincing the readers by the issue being written and it is important to state the original evidence. In other words, a writer can play the emotion of the readers by providing different point of views which is supported by evidences.

The essential part in writing an argumentative essay is in convincing readers because it needs specific language feature. To convince the reader, it is important to give them clear main points and plenty of logical evidences, and it must be linked to the topic and tries to get across the readers (Sukma, 2019; Permata, 2019). Writing is a product as well as the argumentative essay, so therefore, to produce a good writing product the writer has to choose the topic, draw the outline, collect the evidence, organize and arrange into good and proper paragraphs, added coherence and cohesiveness of paragraphs which have important role in it because it helps describe the topic or issue that is being discussed.

### III. RESEARCH METHOD

This study is descriptive research since the aim is to investigate the students' ability in writing argumentative essay. The sampling of this study was purposive sampling and the data were taken from the argumentative essay writing by 42 first year students of ISIP, assigned to write an argumentative essay based on the topic given. The data were analyzed by using writing scoring rubric by Hughes (1990) which contains five indicators of writing scoring: grammar, vocabulary, mechanism, fluency and form, and the range of the score for each indicator is 1 to 6.

The score is classified into 5 categories 28 - 30 are categorized into excellent, next the students scores 25 - 27 are categorized into good, then the students that have 22 - 24 scores are categorized into adequate, the students that have scores 18 - 21 are categorized into fair. Lastly, 1-17 are categorized into poor.

### IV. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 describes the students' ability in writing argumentative essay by first year ISIP students of CIS.

No	Students' Score	Category	F	%
1.	28 - 30	Excellent	0	0
2.	25 - 27	Good	8	19
3.	22 - 24	Adequate	13	31

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4.	18 - 21	Fair	10	24
5.	1 - 17	Poor	11	26
	Total		42	100%
	Average Score		21.95	

The table shows that the writing ability of the students is in “adequate” category (31%). Meanwhile the result indicates that the average score of students’ ability in writing argumentative essay is 20.35. The highest score is 24 and the lowest is 17. Next, the good category is in 19% and fair category (24%), lastly poor category is 11 students (26%). Meanwhile, the table discovered that there were no students in the excellent category, which demonstrates that the students could not write the argumentative essay effectively as its own standard.

Generally, the writing ability for first year university students is *adequate*. Although the result was adequate but most of the students still had difficulties in writing it. The adequate category students were able to write the essay based on its generic structure and language feature but in some ways they had difficulties in using persuading word and sentences, various vocabularies, grammar and misspelling words. The other students who are in *good* category were able to write the essay nearly to excellent but they did mostly misspelled words and erred in punctuations.

This result of the study also indicates the students in *fair* categorize could write the essay. However, they had difficulties in grammar, spelling and vocabulary although they were able to write based on its generic structure. In addition, they had difficulties in starting the arguments and concluding the essay. They had difficulties as in writing evidence, and writing exact sentence, because the nature of argumentative essay is complex since the writer has to take position, provide evidence to convince the reader toward the controversial issue (Sukma, 2019 Permata et.al, 2019). The students who are in the *poor* category had major difficulties in writing the essay because they had major difficulties in writing thesis statement, starting the ideas with topic sentences, and arguments in the body of essay, plus difficulties with grammar, vocabulary, and form.

Although the highest rank is in adequate category, in fact the students need to learn and practice more in writing argumentative essay. Ka-Kan-Dee (2015:21) and Permata et.al (2019:894) states argumentative writing has been confirmed by many researchers to be the hardest genre in writing although it has been learned for several times from their high school level. As stated above that it is a scientific essay it has thus an important role especially for the university students to express their ideas because this is related to Thai’s government objectives in making use of writing in academic field.

To overcome students difficulties in writing the argumentative essay, increasing the students' ability in writing argumentative text can be accomplished by providing suitable strategies. This statement is supported by Abbas et.al (2018), by explicating that even though the students have difficulties in writing argumentative essay but providing appropriate strategy by using collaborative writing strategy can solve the students' problem in writing argumentative as well. Auliatus (2018), states by providing mind mapping technique to instruct argumentative writing ability it helps the students to activate their critical thinking as well as it is related to the learning style that can help the students comprehend the lesson. Similarly Ka-Kan-Dee (2015), Keskitalo (2014) and Saito (2010) say using approach, techniques and strategy can overcome the difficulties and increase the students' ability in writing argumentative essay.

## V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion the result of this study shows the first year ISIP students of CIS are in the *adequate* category. Meaning, the students are able to write the argumentative essay based on its generic structure; thesis statement, arguments, and closing. The result also indicates the students who are in the adequate category can improve their writing ability by involving suitable instructional approach, method, technique and strategies. It will also assist the other students who are in fair and poor category and it will give a significant improvement and boost those students' confidence who are in the *good* category.

Although the study indicates that the students are in the adequate category and shows the students have the ability in writing the argumentative essay, this result is in the medium stage for the first year students. Meanwhile they still should do more practicing in writing the essay. To support the students' ability and to overcome the problem which is faced by the others, the writing strategy can help to improve, increase and solve the related matters.

Furthermore, the College is therefore recommended to incorporate these techniques and strategies in students writing texts. What is more, lecturers need to review the writing lesson of the students, more writing practice and providing the catchy or appropriate techniques or strategies to support the students. Overall, by adopting the techniques or strategies it can help the students learn the generic structure, grammar, vocabulary and else easily.

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