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Writing Pattern: an Investigation on The Essays of The Students of ELT Major

Hikmah Zalifah Putri^{1✉}, Aulia Agustiani², Nurul Masyithah Rery³

Universitas Riau

Email: [email[✉]](mailto:hikmah.zalifah@lecturer.unri.ac.id) : hikmah.zalifah@lecturer.unri.ac.id

Abstract

This article aimed to explore the writing pattern from writing academic essays by the students of ELT major. A content analysis was employed to find out the most common pattern shown in the essays of the participants. The data were the argumentative essays written by the students majoring in ELT as their course requirement to pass. The data were analyzed by looking at the common pattern shared amongst the essays which are (a) thesis statement, (b) coherency, and (c) concluding remark. The result of this research showed that participants shared similar writing pattern when it comes to writing an academic essay in English. They are, (1) broad or general thesis statement, (2) inconsistent use of pronoun when it comes to plural/singular nouns, and (3) additional and unnecessary information/topic in the concluding remark.

Keywords: *Writing Pattern, Argumentative Essays, Rhetoric Pattern*

Abstrak

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi pola penulisan dari penulisan esai akademis oleh mahasiswa jurusan ELT. Analisis konten digunakan untuk mengetahui pola paling umum yang ditunjukkan dalam esai para peserta. Data tersebut adalah esai argumentatif yang ditulis oleh mahasiswa jurusan ELT sebagai persyaratan mata kuliah untuk lulus. Data dianalisis dengan melihat pola umum yang dimiliki oleh esai-esai tersebut yaitu (a) pernyataan tesis, (b) koherensi, dan (c) pernyataan penutup. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa para peserta memiliki pola penulisan yang sama dalam hal menulis esai akademis dalam bahasa Inggris. Pola-pola tersebut adalah, (1) pernyataan tesis yang luas atau umum, (2) penggunaan kata ganti yang tidak konsisten dalam hal kata benda jamak/tunggal, dan (3) informasi/topik tambahan dan tidak perlu dalam pernyataan penutup.

Kata Kunci: *Pola Penulisan, Esai Argumentatif, Pola Retorika*

INTRODUCTION

The preference of non-Native English writers' cultural rhetoric pattern has always influenced the way writers put their thoughts in writing. According to Kaplan (1996), the non-English writers often used the rhetoric and thought sequence that sometimes contrasts the rhetoric and thought sequence that are used by the English Native writers whenever they try to write in English. Each language have their own text logic or thought process. In the case where the two languages are completely different, it should be obvious that the two languages will have this difference. Even though that, Kaplan states that thought process or text logic is something that writers employ unconsciously. The writers may not aware that there is a difference between the text logic of native language and the text logic of English. They may not aware of the fact that their native laguage text logic influences the way they write in English. That is why, some Asian students will unconsciously use their native language rhetoric pattern when writing in English.

When it comes to writing academically in English, Western and Asian students use a very different rhetorical pattern. While English-native students tend to be direct, non-native English students, such as Asian students prefers to be indirect and conveying opinions in a roundabout way.

The preference in values and writing style used by the students' local writing community are affected by the cultural rhetoric pattern of the students (Xu, Huang, & You, 2016). Some students in Indonesia use these preferences as the writing standard and it slowly become their writing culture. The most common thing to do is to copy the work of other students from earlier year. Thought the goal for writing in English is to be able to write a piece that can be internationally accepted, but in reality, not all the works are

internationally acceptable because of copying the way others wrote. One essay that is not written in the way native English usually write, will lead to essay written because the writer copied it from that one essay to become unacceptable. Based on my experience during undergraduate study this practice still happens in Indonesia.

Loi, Evans, Lim, and Akkakoson (2016) conducted a research about the differences in thesis' discussion part by English-native students and Malay students. The researchers used Peacock's (2002) framework model to assess the participants' thesis to see how Malay students' write their discussions part in their thesis. The result showed how Malay students wrote down the discussions part of their thesis with dependency on the context. Only a small part of the discussion part showed the original ideas from the students. Meanwhile, the discussions part written by English native students are independent and full of their own opinions. Malay discussions tended to not conform to the concluding part of the three-part framework in Peacock's (2002) model. Malay discussions seem to mirror an abrupt ending with no "concluding" moves as labeled in Peacock's model. The result also discusses how Malay students did not put much explanation on the unexpected outcome and the limitation of the research.

Even though the way Asian students write will not be a problem for Asian readers as they have the same rhetorical pattern. However, it will pose a problem for international readers who thought logic is vastly different from those of Asian. Ideally, Asian students majoring in ELT who are writing academic essays should have been able to avoid this problem. Asian ELT students should have adopted the use of Western rhetorical patterns when writing in English. It is encouraged even for the students to be able to internalize the rhetorical pattern of Western.

These previous researches explained the theories on different rhetoric pattern of writing between non-Native and Native English writers and the problems that are usually emerged as a result of said differences. However, they do not discuss the possibility of specific patterns that the students of ELT used in writing. Especially when we consider the theory by Kaplan of the unconscious act of using L1 rhetoric writing pattern and the knowledge of academic writing in English that the students gained during their study. That is why this research tried to find out the writing pattern and writing logic used by the ELT students.

METHOD

Research Design

This study will draw conclusions from content analysis of the students' essay writing. To answer both research questions, a content analysis will be needed. Content analysis will give in depth insight on the writing pattern and writing logic used by the ELT students of a university. The analysis will identify the most common pattern in the students' writing.

Data Collection and Tools

Content Analysis

In analyzing the students' essays, some codes will be used as a guide on what to analyze. The codes will be extracted from the share properties that each essay has and the text organization of an argumentative essay. From this code, the essays will be analyzed to find out the writing pattern the students' have in each code category.

Participant of the Research

The participants of this study will be 40 students a university who will take Advanced Writing. Only one class will be used as the participant of this research because they meet the criteria set beforehand. The criterion is students in the class have taken Beginners Writing and Intermediate Writing in the previous semester. Therefore, the most suitable to be the participants are the students who will be taking Advanced Writing.

The students are those who have taken Advanced Writing Course with two semester hours. The Advanced Writing course's objective is to help the students in making argumentative essay. The lecturer uses a writing process approach where the students have to start their writing with planning in the form of determining title and points of development. Then the students have to write down a draft of their essay in a few meetings. The students are given occasional feedback by the lecturer regarding their essay and some revisions are made. The students are given time to revise and improve their essays before the deadline. The essay is submitted in the middle of the course in the form of hard copy.

Data Source

The material for the data of this study will be 40 argumentative essays that they will submit as the partial fulfillment to pass the course. The students are required to write the introduction paragraph, body paragraphs, and the conclusion paragraph. The essays for this study will be the final version of the argumentative essay that has been checked and revised during the class.

Research Procedure

The following steps will be the procedure of this study:

1. Categorizing

Based on the lecturer's rubric for an argumentative essay, the shared properties of the argumentative essays are categorized into codes.

2. Coding

The codes for this study will be Thesis Statement (TS), Coherency (C), Arguments (A), Organizations (O), Concluding Remark (CR).

3. Collecting

The essays will be collected after the lecturer has first check on the completeness of the minor criteria such as format, and length.

4. Listing

With the codes as guidance, the most common codes that appear in the students' writing will be stated as the students' tendencies in argumentative essay writing.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The result of the data analysis showed that the essays written by English department students in Indonesia still has recognizable rhetoric pattern in Indonesia in their Thesis Statement (TS), Coherency (C), and Concluding Remark (CR).

Table 1

Code	Theme
Thesis Statement	The thesis statements are too broad
Coherency	Inconsistent use of pronoun
Concluding Remark	Concluding remark still shows roundabout way of reiterating the main points
	New points/topic introduced in the concluding remark

Thesis Statement

When writing the thesis statement, most participants still wrote down a general or broad thesis statement. The participants used common phrases such as "because of" or "several" when writing down their thesis statement without any controlling ideas. According to Oshima and Hogue (2006), this preference of writing down thesis statement without any clearly stating the controlling idea links to the logical division of ideas of the writers. It is clear that there is a common theme when it comes to writing down thesis in English by

Indonesian students that showed shared rhetoric pattern.

Coherency

Coherence is the logical way in which the writer transitions ideas in their essay (Oshima & Hogue, 2006). In order to have a coherent essay, writer can apply four cohesive devices; repetition of key nouns, the consistent use of pronouns, the use of transition signals, and the arranging ideas in a logical order.

Based on the data analysis, the most common pattern for Indonesian students is the inconsistent use of pronouns. There seems to be a mixed up in using singular pronouns in referring a plural noun. There are couple participants that uses the pronoun 'it' to refer to nouns that are writing in the plural form. Since Indonesian language does not have a specific marker when it comes to plural form, it can be understood how this rhetoric pattern is transferred into their writing (Cholsy, 2005). There is an intra-system shift when it comes to two languages when translating the singular and plural forms (Haryanti & Fatimah, 2016). For pronoun, there is no clear difference between plural or singular nouns and the reader can usually guess based on context clue. However, in English there is clear distinction between pronouns used for plural and singular. This creates a different rhetoric pattern between Indonesian and English, when Indonesian language do not have to pay close attention when it comes to singular/plural pronouns.

Concluding Remark

A good essay needs a good concluding remark that will act as the closing of your whole essay (Boardman & Frydenberg, 2008; Oshima & Hogue, 2006). Concluding remark can be in the form of paraphrased thesis statement, summarizing, suggestion and/or recommendation. The common theme for the participants is the introduction of new topics at the concluding remark. Some participants even add sentences that ended up contradicting their thesis statement. Almost half of the essays wrote how disadvantageous something is in the thesis statement, only to include how something had advantages in the conclusion. This may be the result of the rhetoric thought pattern of Indonesian, in which the thought process is indirect and explained in a roundabout way. There seems to be the same style of thinking, where participants gave their reasoning by skirting around the topics and go 'around' explaining other things before going back to the 'main' idea (Harjanto, 1999; Wahab, 1995).

CONCLUSION

The participant has shown clear writing pattern and thought processes that could be attributed to their native language rhetoric pattern. Even when they were writing in English there are still some Indonesian rhetoric pattern that were transferred into their writing. The participants constructed broad/general thesis statement that lacks specific controlling ideas, were still inconsistent when it comes to using pronouns referent, and included unnecessary additional information/topics in their concluding remark. So, it can be concluded that the writer's native rhetoric pattern has an influence in the way the writer writes in English.

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