An analysis of students' argumentative text writing in EFL classroom

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ABSTRACT

Writing skill is one of four English skills besides reading, listening, and speaking that should be mastered by the students of senior high school. The purpose of this research is to investigate how students' argumentative texts are composed. The research participants were six eleventh grade students a senior high school in Cirebon who were selected based on their achievement in English. This research used a qualitative approach with a document analysis design involving students' writing projects as a ample. The result shows that the number and types of errors found in the students' argumentative essay included 4 errors in the aspect of content, 20 errors in the aspect of vocabulary, 94 errors in the aspect of grammar, and 54 errors in the aspect of mechanics. It shows that the most number of errors found in students' argumentative text is grammar with 94 errors in total. In addition, frequent errors were also found in the use of prepositions, where the student misplaced or misused prepositions so as to interfere with the meaning of the sentence. This research recommends that students engage more reading in order to develop knowledge of vocabulary and grammar which will better equip them in writing.

1. Introduction

Writing produces occasions to foreground and clarify thinking; to record, shape and analyze experiences to express internal lives; to explore ideas learned from others (Lieberman & Wood, 2002 as cited in Gooda, 2016). Writing is the activity where the writers express their ideas, opinion, or experiences freely. However, the writer should also be able to provide the logic story. Therefore, the reader can comprehend what the writers trying to deliver. In other words, the writer should understand the topic that the writer tries to convey in writing context. Furthermore, it is a must for the writer to master several aspects in writing such as vocabulary, grammar, content and the structure. According to Harris (1979) as cited in Wulandari et al. (2015) there are five aspects in of writing skills that is content; is the expression of the main idea unity, grammar refers to the use of grammatical rules and syntactic patterns, vocabulary refers to the choice of lexical items that gives flavor to the writing, organization refers to the logical of the content coherence, and mechanics is refers to the use of graphic convention of the language. Meanwhile, Brown (2007) as cited in Huda and Rahadianto (2019), assert that the components of writing are content, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. From the explanation above, it can be concluded that the components of writing are content, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. Content is when the information is presented through the paragraph with carefully chosen details by the writer. The writer should also present the coherent sequence with logical reason. The organization in the text such as thesis, arguments, and conclusion are included in

content. Vocabulary is how the writer chooses the appropriate vocabulary, so it does not interfere with understanding. Students might deliver their statement using more suitable or powerful language. Grammar refers to sentence pattern and grammatical rules. Grammar choices should not interfere with understanding. Mechanics are including spelling, punctuation and capitalization. However, mastering writing skill is often considered as the most difficult skill for foreign language learners. Since it is need a high thinking skill to write the forward and backward movements of the writer's idea and write it in a structured text. Writing consists of challenging steps such as developing ideas, outlining, drafting, revising and editing (Floranti & Adiantika, 2019). Murcia and Olshtain (2000) as cited in Cekiso et al. (2016) state that writing requires a high level of language control.

According to Swales, (1990, as cited in Yigitoglu & Reichelt (2014), genre is defined as class of activities in which language has a significant role which share some sets of communicative purposes. Such as, genre is often used in seminar presentation, or university lecturer. According to Paltridge (2001) as cited in Yigitoglu and Reichelt (2014), genre has organizational structures or generic structures which usually consist of the beginning, middle, and end. To sum everything up, genre is a structured and purposeful activity that is used by speaker or writers to communicate. Genre has been introduced into EFL teaching and learning activities through genre-based approach. According to Paltridge (2001) as cited in Yigitoglu and Reichelt (2014), a genre based approach combines conversation with the contextual language elements of structures, function, and lexicon. It seeks to assist students in understanding the rhetorical pattern, including the purpose, target audience, and textual organization. Therefore, the relationship between language and its social purposes is highlighted by the genre-based approach. In Indonesia most of the schools use a genre-based approach to teaching all kinds of texts, so that the students would be easier comprehend the text.

Argumentative text is a text commonly used in essay writing. In argumentative text, the writer should state the point of view whether the writer agrees or disagrees with a statement (Fan & Chen, 2021), the writer also should be able to provide evidence to support the argument. In the end, the writer should organize the claim and evidence into a structured paragraph. Another expert also states that argumentative writing needs a higher level operation where the writer is able to generate arguments and compile them into structured coherent sequence (Midgette & Haria, 2016). According to Toulmin (2003) as cited in Fan and Chen (2021), argumentative essay is consist of claims, evidence, and conclusion.

Argumentative text is one of text that commonly taught in both school and university. According to Nippold and Ward-Lonergan (2010) as cited in Campbell & Filimon (2018), says that argumentative writing is a complex communication task, because it requires deep cognitive and linguistic skills. Argumentative text is often considered as a difficult task for foreign language learners. Students should be able to make each sentence connected so it becomes a coherent and readable sequence (Adiantika, 2015). Hillocks (2011) as cited in Campbell and Filimon (2018), assert that argument is the most important thing of critical thinking that requires making a case to sustain a claim, providing evidence to support the claim logically. However, proficient writing is the key for students to be successful in school and life beyond school (Campbell & Filimon, 2018).

Writing is one of English skill besides reading, listening, and speaking that should be mastered in high school. for students, being able to write a coherent written text is an important skill both in school and in life beyond school (Campbell & Filimon, 2018; Karimah & Pratolo, 2020). Students are taught many kinds of argumentative text in high school. In eleventh grade they are taught analytical exposition text and hortatory exposition text. The difference between analytical exposition text and hortatory exposition text lies in generic structure of the text. In analytical exposition, the generic structure consists of thesis, arguments, and conclusion. While in hortatory exposition, the generic structure consists of thesis, arguments, and recommendation, where the author offers suggestions for the reader.

Some previous studies have investigated different issues in regard to students' skills writing argumentative essays. For example a research study by Fan and Chen (2021), aimed to enhance learners' argumentation abilities in writing using Computer-Aided Argumentative Essay Writing System (CAEWS) in elementary school in New Taipei City. The result revealed that students who use CAEWS (argument map) improved their argumentative essay writing ability as compared to those who use concept map and those who use the conventional writing method. Another study by Cekiso

et al. (2016), explored the challenges that first-year student teachers experience in relation to coherence in writing essays in English in South African University. The result revealed that students were having difficulties in writing such as writing an introduction, a thesis statement, topic sentences, supporting sentences and conclusion. Lastly, a research study by Puspita (2021) focused on identifying what types of grammatical errors made by students while producing argumentative writing. The result showed that the types of errors found include in misinformation, omission, addition and misordering.

Based on the result of interview in preliminary observation that has been done with the English teacher in one of senior high school in Cirebon, students of eleventh grade have several problems in writing such as lack of vocabulary and grammar. However, writing skill is important for students to be mastered. Therefore, this research decided to investigate students' argumentative text and their difficulties. This research revealed argumentative text writing by the students and expected to give broader view about argumentative text.

In connection with the background above, this research aimed to address the following question:

How student's argumentative texts are composed?

2. Method

This research adopted qualitative with document analysis design. According to Lodico, et al (2010) as cited in Charisma and Nurmalasari (2020), qualitative research is focuses on social phenomenon and allow the researcher to dig deep into information about the issue being studied. Qualitative research enables us to gain in-depth description of how people experience life. Qualitative research is effective in obtaining information about the values, opinions, behaviors, and social context of particular populations. Therefore, the researcher assumes that qualitative methodology is suitable for this research because this research focused on the value of student's argumentative text writing project. Under this qualitative approach, this research used document analysis as a data collection method. Document analysis is a systematic procedure to analyze the contents of written documents (Wach & Ward, 2013). According to Dvora Yanow (2007) as cited in Owen (2014), document reading can be part of an observational study or an interview-based project.

Based on the explanation above, this research involved six eleventh grade students of one of senior high schools in Cirebon who were selected based on their achievement in English according to the result of the interview with the English teacher. They were classified as high achievers, medium achievers, and low achievers; two were from high achievers, two medium achievers, and two low achievers. Since the method of this research is qualitative with document analysis design, the instrument is students' writing project. The students were given an assignment to write hortatory exposition text by the teacher. They were asked to write an argumentative text with the topic "The Influence of Social Media". The texts were then analyzed in order to identify how they were composed in terms of the content, vocabulary, grammar, mechanics, and the language features. After all the data were thoroughly analyzed and classified into topics. They were subsequently examined using a scoring rubric by Brown (2007) as cited in Huda & Rahadianto (2019).

Table 1. Aspect of writing

Aspect	Frequency
Content	
Vocabulary	
Grammar	
Mechanics	
Total	

3. Findings and Discussion

To analyze students' error in writing argumentative text, this research using scoring rubric adapted from Brown (2007) as cited in Huda & Rahadianto (2019):

Table 2. The result of student's argumentative text writing

Participants	Content	Vocabulary	Grammar	Mechanics
Student 1	1	3	7	10
Student 2	1	6	21	13
Student 3	-	2	20	1
Student 4	1	2	20	13
Student 5	1	3	8	17
Student 6	-	4	18	-
Total	4	20	94	54

From the table above, it can be seen that there are still many errors in student's argumentative writing. Content is when the information is presented through the paragraph with carefully chosen details by the writer. The writer should also present the coherent sequence with logical reason. The organization in the text such as thesis, arguments, and recommendation are included in content. Some students did not even provide the recommendation. Vocabulary is how the writer chooses the appropriate vocabulary, so it does not interfere with understanding. Students might deliver their statement using more suitable or powerful language. Grammar refers to sentence pattern and grammatical rules. Grammar choices should not interfere with understanding. Mechanics are including spelling, punctuation and capitalization. Many errors were found in spelling and capitalization. Students incorrectly used the capitalization such as not using capital alphabet at the beginning of the sentence after full stop sentence. Misspellings were also found in student's writing.

Student #1 shows major error in the aspect of mechanics. Student often did misspelling such as "dailly", "usefull", "bussines", "day to-day".. Misplacing punctuation and capitalization were also found in students' argumentative text. The next error was found in the aspect of grammar, such as "social media today is playing an essential part in our day to-day life (it is supposed to be 'plays' and 'lives').", "some are addicted to it so much that the first thing they do after waking up is checking their social media feeds (it is supposed to be 'check').", and "social media enables communication not only for one's personal life (it is should be 'in').". The last error was found in the aspect of vocabulary such as using "part" rather than "role", "feeds" rather than "timeline".

Student #2 showed major error in grammar such as "they are many negative impacts of social media for children and teenagers (it is supposed to be there).", "if a child is too much communicating in the virtual world (it is supposed to be 'if a child spends too much communicating..')", "….use the real identity or not. (it is supposed to be 'uses a real')", "the best ways is not to heed or confirm….(it is supposed to be 'way')", "then, they use the data they get for their bussiness of wickedness. (it is supposed to be 'their wicked business')". In the aspect of mechanics, student #2 frequently made a mistake in misspelling such as "from", "net working", "empathetic", "faund", and "bussiness". Misplaced of punctuation and capitalization were also found in students' argumentative text. The next error was found in the aspect of vocabulary such as using "needs" rather than "requires", "monitor" rather than "supervise", "declined" rather than "conscious" rather than "aware", "last" rather than "finally". The last error was found in the content, the student did not write the recommendation, since it is part of the generic structure.

Student #3 showed major error in the aspect of grammar, such as "…in which the users can easily participate, share, and create the content of blog,… (it is supposed to remove the article 'the' and 'blogs').", "Blog and social networking is the form of social media that mostly used by the community around the world. (it is supposed to be 'blogs', 'are', 'forms', 'that are mostly', and 'communities')", "social media, with is various features… (it is supposed to be 'its')", "for the worst, we have to restrict them to use social media. (it is supposed to be 'their use of')", and so on. The other errors were found in the aspect of mechanics and vocabulary.

Student #4 showed major error in the aspect of grammar, such as "there is not the rules of spelling an grammar… (it is supposed to be 'there are no rules of spelling and grammar')", "…on social networking sites and the real world. (it is supposed to be 'and in the real world')", "fourth, the assumption that internet is identical…(it should add 'the internet')", "the producers of browser complete… (it is supposed to be 'browsers')", and so on. The error was also found in the aspect of mechanics, student often did misspell such as "aroud", "dissemanation", "crimina", and so on. Misplaced the capitalization also frequently found in students' argumentative text. The last error was found in the aspect of vocabulary, student used "declined" rather than "diminished", and "conscious"

rather than "aware". Student #4 also did not write the recommendation from what has been elaborated earlier.

Student #5 showed major error in the aspect mechanics, misspelling often found in students' argumentative text such as "unlimite", "shere", "bisiness", "whith", "sunch", and so on. Misplaced capitalizations were also found in students' argumentative text. The aspect of grammar also seems to be the most error, for example "…connect with everyone who is joined in the same social media to share information and communicate. (it is supposed to be 'has joined' and remove the 'in')", "Social media invite anyone… (it should be 'invites')", "….often used us media for business promotion and the bisiness of it users. (it is supposed to be 'as media' and 'its users')", and so on. The next error was found in the aspect of vocabulary which the student use "stare advance" rather than "stare ahead". Student #5 also did not write the recommendation as a suggestion that should be mention since it is a part of the generic structure of hortatory exposition text.

Student #6 frequently made error in the aspect of grammar, such as "Social media is an online media in which the users can easily participate, share, and create the content of blog, social networking and the virtual world. Blog and social networking is the form of social media that mostly user by the community around the world. (it supposed to remove 'the', 'blogs', 'blogs', 'are', 'that are mostly')", "…impacts of social media for children and teenagers. (is supposed to be 'on children and teenagers')", "…then their knowledge about the details of communicating… (it supposed to be 'of the details..')", "The cyber criminals often commit in this field. By the open system,.. (it supposed to remove 'the', 'commit crimes in..', 'by using the..')", and so on. The error was also found in the aspect of vocabulary such as using "declined" rather than "diminished", and "last" rather than "finally".

The result revealed that errors were frequently found in the aspect of grammar with 94 errors in total. The errors were often found in the case of using prepositions, in which students misplaced the preposition with the appropriate word that can interfere with the meaning. The second most errors were found in the aspect of mechanics with 54 errors in total. The common mistakes found in students' writing project were in the aspect of mechanics such as capitalization and spelling. Students frequently did not use capital at the beginning of the paragraph or a new sentence. Spelling errors were also common in the aspect of mechanics. For example, there was sometimes a doubled alphabet where it shouldn't be doubled. The third error is vocabulary with 20 errors in total. Students failed to utilize appropriate vocabulary to express ideas in writing. The last error was related to content with 4 errors in total. Hortatory text consists of thesis, arguments, and recommendation. However, the recommendation was often found missing in the students' text. The fact that many errors were found in students' argumentative text, shows that students were struggling in writing an argumentative text. This is in line with a previous study by Puspita (2021), in which grammatical errors such as omission, misinformation, addition, and disordering were found in the students' argumentative writing.

4. Conclusion

The findings revealed that there were many errors in students' argumentative texts in regard to content, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. Based on the findings above, the number and types of errors found in the students' argumentative text include 4 errors in the aspect of content, 20 errors in the aspect of vocabulary, 94 errors in the aspect of grammar, and 54 errors in the aspect of mechanics. It shows that the most number errors found in students' argumentative text is grammar with 94 errors in total. There were also frequent found errors in prepositions, where the student misplaced its preposition so as to interfere with the meaning of the sentence. Therefore, this research suggests that the students improve their writing skills and read more English books so that they can enrich their vocabulary and become familiar with sentence patterns. Teachers are also expected to use more suitable method to teach English. In addition, this research has the potential to serve as a reference for future researchers in order to find a better method for teaching argumentative text.

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