

A SNAPSHOT OF STUDENTS' ABILITY IN WRITING SHORT ESSAYS AND THEIR TRANSLATION OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION PROGRAM

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to analyze how students' ability in writing short essays and their translations majoring in Islamic Education Program, STAIN Mandailing Natal. Generally, the components of writing are vocabulary, sentence structure, mechanic, content and organization in writing essay. This research concerns about how to write short essays and their translation correctly. Descriptive method is used in this research. In collecting the data, the author used students' test results of Islamic Education Program. Then, the data is analyzed by using the qualitative method. The results of this study indicate that from 20 students majoring in Islamic Education Program, 3 students were able to write short essays appropriately, while 10 students were only able to write a few sentences, and 7 students were able to write one sentence. Three students' short essays applied writing components very well. 10 were already using writing components well. 7 short essays were categorized as lacking and no writing components. Related to their translation, 3 short essays were easy to understand. 10 short essays were mediate, and 7 short essays were poor. It could be said that, students' ability in writing short essay is moderate while the translation of their writing is still confusing because of their inappropriate grammar and sentence structure, organizing their ideas, and vocabulary that they used.

Key words: *Writing, Short Essay, and Translation*

INTRODUCTION

English skills is divided into four, they are listening, speaking, reading and writing. As English as foreign language or English as second language students, writing is one of the essential skills to be mastered especially for written way communication, for instance, academic, job-related, and personal writing. Academic writing deals with writing essays, papers, discourses, theses and dissertations. On the other hand, writing diaries, notes, fictions, and others are related to personal writing. Job-related writing concerns about writing e-mails, messages, letters, and others. Mastering in writing, the learners should rehearse it whenever they are in order to improve their writing skill. By practicing their writing skill, their skill will be developed. The students were in junior and senior high school, have already got the writing subject even though in implicit way. Then, in university level, the learners learn how to write a sentence, paragraph, and essay.

There are several steps in writing. Firstly; writing sentence, the students learn the components of good sentence that are subject, predicate, object, and complement. Secondly; writing paragraph, learners are able to elaborate the topic sentence then supported it by some supporting sentences. Then; in writing short essay, they have to understand how to organize the essay, how to use the appropriate mechanics, how to use the vocabulary, how to use the correct grammar and sentence structure, and how the content of the essay is, of the writing. In the preliminary study, the writer provided the writing test to the students with free topics. In fact, the students still had problems in writing. The issues were about students' difficulties in organizing their short essay, using the correct grammar and sentence structure, content of the essay, using the appropriate mechanics and using the appropriate vocabulary.

Furthermore, issues that the writer found in the field was lack in writing practice by the students. They just wrote if they had tasks from their lecturer. But, some of them did not write if the lecturer did not distribute the assignment. In addition, when the lecturer asked the learners to write for instance a short essay, they only searched from the internet then submitted as their assignment. It means they are still difficult in writing. Based on this phenomenon, the writer interested in analyzing students' of "Islamic Education Program" writing short essay and their translation ability due to in university level, the students have got the English lessons since primary, junior, up to senior high school. Then, they have received many experiences in writing.

According to Meyer (2005:2) defines the writing is speaking to other on paper or on a computer screen. Writing is an action or a process of discovering and organizing the writer's idea and putting them on paper, reshaping and revising them. Writing is partly a talent, but it's mostly a skill. Writing can be improved by practicing. Writing can be a pleasure for someone if she/he knows how the important of writing is and what the purpose of writing is. Furthermore, Harmer (2004) writing skill is likely to take place when students are writing real messages for real audiences, or at least when they are performing tasks which they are likely to have to do in their out-of-class life. In conclusion, writing brings the writer to real situations. Moreover, Reid (2000:28) states the writing strategies are steps to achieve a goal more quickly, more easily, and more effectively. For example, taking notes and writing the assignment immediately; then, thinking about the ideas before beginning to write. The next strategy is pre-writing of

making an outline. Then, brainstorming the ideas helps the students to write. Also, working with small groups of classmate helps produce ideas or prefer to work alone. So, many strategies can be used by the students in writing in order to be easy to write. There are many types of writing; one of them is an essay.

An essay has three main components, Oshima (2006:56). These are explained in the following explanations:

1. The introductory paragraph consists of two parts; firstly, a few general statements tell about the subject to attract the reader's attention. Secondly, a thesis statement to state the specific subdivisions of the topic.
2. The body paragraph could be one or more paragraphs. Each paragraph develops a subdivision of the topic. The number of paragraphs in the body will be various with the number of subtopics or subdivision.
3. The concluding paragraph is a summary or reviews of the main points discussed in the body or restate the thesis statement in different vocabularies.

Two parts in writing which are essential are structuring or organizing idea and grammar and sentence structures.

a. Structuring or organizing idea

In organizing the idea learners should write an outline of their writing. Outline forces them to put their ideas into logical order. It starts from introduction, body, to the concluding paragraph. Then, there are some aspects that should be considered in writing, they are unity, coherence and using transition signals. Oshima (2006:18) states the unity is a paragraph discusses one and only one main idea from beginning to the end. When the paragraph is about the positive effect of internet for students, do not discuss the negative effect of it. If a paragraph has unity, all the supporting sentences connect to the topic sentence (Boardman, 2002: 44). Coherence is made up of sentences that are ordered according to a principle (Boardman, 2002:31). Coherence in writing happens when the sentences must hold together; that is the movement from one sentence to the next must be logical and smooth. There must be no sudden jumps. Each sentence should flow smoothly into the next one (Oshima, 2006:21). Then, Transition signals are words and phrases that link a sentence with another sentence, normally the one immediately before it. They are used in a compound sentence to connect the second independent clause with the first one.

These words and phrases function as adverbs that modify entire sentences; hence, they are called sentence adverbs.

b. Grammar and sentence structure

Related to grammar and sentence structure, Brown (2001:362) states grammar is the system of rules in governing the conventional arrangement and relationship of words in sentence is very important. For instance, a sentence makes a complete statement or asks a question. It contains a subject and a predicate. The subject, which usually begins the sentence, is who or what the sentence discusses. Usually, the subject is a noun, or noun clause, pronoun, gerund, and infinitive. The predicate completes the statement or question. It usually begins with a verb, which tells what the subject does or is (Meyers, 2005:128). In addition, Robinson (2004:10) expose five steps of writing process; getting ideas, organizing ideas, writing first draft, revising to improve content and organization, and editing for language errors. Generally, there are several ways to get ideas for writing, one method is free writing, or writing whatever comes to your mind about a topic in order to get ideas. The learners are able to write without stopping. They do not stop to correct the grammar or spelling. They let their ideas flow onto the page. Related to the above theories, the assessment of writing is not simple task. The writer tried to assess the students' writing concern about short essays and their translations in order to know how the component of writing written by the students, and how about their translation. In assessing writing, the writer evaluated or estimated the nature, ability, or quality of the writing. In this study, the writer assessed the students' writing based on the criteria from the experts; they are Brown (2010:287), Oshima and Hogue (2006:316), Hughes (2003:101), and Reid (1993:237). The writer focused on assesses the students' short essays and their translation. Related to the explanation above, the research questions of this study are:

1. How is the students' ability in writing short essay of Islamic Education Program at STAIN Mandailing Natal?
2. How is the translation of writing short essay applied by the students of Islamic Education Program at STAIN Mandailing Natal?

METHODOLOGY

In this study, a descriptive study method is applied. The purpose of the study was to gain information about phenomena in order to describe existed condition in the field. Gay and Airisian (2000: 276) state that the study which collects data in order to answer the question about the status of the subject of study as the descriptive study. There are some basic steps should guide descriptive study; identify a topic or problem, choose the participants, collect valid and reliable data, analyze and report conclusion. In this study, the writer analyzed the students' essay. Subject of this study was the students' short essay writing. The essays were written by the students of "Islamic Education Program" of STAIN Mandailing Natal. In collecting the data, the writer provides a question the students to write a short essay. She provided free topic to the students and asked them to elaborate the topic to be a good essay. There were 20 students in Islamic Education Program department. The writer asked students to write short essay and checked the essays to see how were the components of writing written by the students in their essay. There were scoring rubrics for analytical score according to experts; for instance, Hughes (2003:101), and Reid (1993:237), Brown (2010:287), Oshima and Hogue (2006:316). There were 3 students who were able to write short essay. 10 students were able just in writing few sentences. Then, 7 students just write a sentence.

After checking students' short essay, the writer tries to analyze the translation or meaning of their work. Do the short essays are easy to understand or totally difficult to be understood. The way that the writer used in understanding the meaning is by reading all sentences and pays attention to the subject, predicate, object and all components of writings particularly vocabulary.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Once analyzing the students' works, the writer found that 3 student's short essay was in strongly excellent category. It means 15% of the students have good capability in writing. 10 students' essays or 50% were in neutral category. It means the students were able to write but still have problems in writing components. 7 students' essays or 35% were in weak category. None students or 0% was poor. It means some of the students still have low ability in writing. Based on the research questions of this study, it was found that: Related to the components of short essay writing, the writer found that, there

were 3 essays in strongly excellent category, 7 essays in good, 3 essays were in weak category. In excellent and good category, the essay had at least introductory, body, and concluding paragraph, but the meaning of their essay are some confusing. 3 essays could be understood easily and 10 short essays are neutral. Furthermore, three essays had thesis statement in the introductory paragraph. Also, it was supported by the examples, facts, and opinions. The last, the essay was concluded in the concluding paragraph. While, from 10 short essays, there are still miss conception about the first paragraph which did not consist of general statement and end with thesis statement. In the second paragraph, did not begin with topic sentence. There were not clear supporting sentences just the sentences that not related each other. It made the readers difficult to understand what the writers mean.

However the students know about the sentences' components, but they still lack of using that in their short essay. According to Robinson (2004:17), a sentence indicates a complete thought and has a subject and a complete verb. The sentence is the basic unit of writing in English. So, the students should use these basic units of writing in order to reach good translation. The subject of the sentence may be a single noun, two or more nouns, noun phrases, pronouns, gerund, and infinitive. The verb of a sentence must be complete or include all necessary verb parts. It could consist of more than one verb or linking verb. Hence, the relationship between subject and verb that have meaning could be said a sentence. Based on these theories, the students will be easy to write and translate their essay well.

Related to the grammar and sentence structure, the writer found that, there was 2 essay was in excellent, 3 essays were in neutral, 5 essays were in satisfactory, 10 essays were in weak category. It means they need improvement about grammar and sentence structures. In this case, the writer found many short essays had many mistakes in grammar and sentence structure. She/ he did not consider who the subject was, what the subject did, and etc. Also, the predicate in the sentence was not appropriate. Then, the sentences did not consistent with the pronoun.

Because of many problems in writing focus on grammar and sentence structure, so the translation or meaning of students' short essay also confusing. However, they have done their essay but the meaning still in issues. That is a snapshot of students' short essay writing and their translation of Islamic Education Program at STAIN

Mandailing Natal. So, this case is still in consideration for lecturer and stakeholders in order to make students more confidence in writing. In addition, the writer suggested to the students do more practice to make her/his writing more concise ordered in grammar and sentence structure to be more meaningful. If they are able to use the appropriate grammar and sentence structure, the readers would be easy to comprehend the content of that essay.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the discussion and findings above, can be concluded that the quality of the students' short essays writing were neutral. There are still improvements for the lecturers, stakeholders, particularly for the students to overcome the issues in composing short essay writing. Related to the organization of the essay was still not in good order. Some of the students could not organize and develop the writing essay well based on the organization pattern of writing essay. Moreover, grammar and sentence structure were still not in correct used by the learners in composing writing essay dealing with tenses, pronoun, and subject verb agreement. Due to the issues in organizing idea and sentence structure, the translation or meaning of the short essays is still confusing.

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