

**STUDENTS' SEVENTH SEMESTER OF ENGLISH EDUCATION (TBI)
STAIN PADANGSIDIMPUAN ABILITY IN ACADEMIC WRITING
By Elisa Dora¹, Rayendriani Fahmei Lubis, and Eka Sustri Harida²**

Penelitian ini terkait dengan kemampuan menulis mahasiswa STAIN Padangsidimpuan secara akademis. Menulis tulisan akademis maksudnya menulis tulisan secara ilmiah. Tujuan penelitian ini untuk mengetahui kemampuan menulis essay mahasiswa semester VII TBI STAIN Padangsidimpuan, selain itu juga untuk mengetahui kesulitan yang dimiliki mahasiswa dalam mengembangkan kemampuan menulis karya ilmiahnya. Dari penelitian ini ditemukan bahwa kemampuan mahasiswa dalam menulis masih cukup rendah, dan kesulitan mereka adalah dalam mengarang karangan imilah, dalam hal pengembangan ide dan kosa kata.

Key Word: Students, Ability, and Academic Writing.

INTRODUCTION

Language is a communication system in speech and writing used by people of particular country, such as Japanese, French, and Arabic. It is used to convey a person's feeling, emotion, idea, or thought. English is language which now a language worldwide uses. It is one of the most common languages used by the international community in dealing with the other people from other different language countries. People use the language both in spoken and written form.

At the university level, disciplinary knowledge and understanding are largely exhibited and valued through the medium writing. Students can begin to understand the significance of writing by becoming aware that writing takes particular conventional forms in different contexts. Writing, particularly academic writing is not easy. It takes study and practice to develop this skill. For both native speaker and new learner of English, it is important to note that writing is a process not a product. It means that a piece of writing, whether it is a composition for English class or examination is never complete; it is always possible to review or revise again.

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There are number reasons for these mistakes in making the composition of academic writing among the students particularly in STAIN Padangsidimpuan. *The first* one is that they are lack of interest in writing that makes their ability in writing is poor and the composition of their writing is inappropriate structure. *The second* is that they are lack in comprehension of the composition of academic writing. The next issue is that their motivation to write is too low, after asking several seventh semester students of TBI STAIN Padangsidimpuan they explained that they are too idle in practicing writing on their daily life, they said that there many more things that attract their attention than just merely practice to write to be a good writer. The students also think that the subject is difficult due to the complexity of the sentence pattern. Some of them even said that they lack of imagination to write.

Moreover, the students do not have the writing habits in their family environment. Since they were born, their parents did not have the interest to teach their children to have the habits of writing particularly their daily activity. Consequently, when they enter to college or higher education, their ability in writing is poor, especially when it deals with foreign language. Because not only they are lazy but also they do not used to practice writing, which is derive them to be careless in writing.

Actually, a good sentence structure, and a proper punctuation are highly demand on academic writing. The reader of academic writing usually is educated people such as, scientist, educators, and researcher. Hence, the students should be more aware of the importance of the regulation in composing academic writing intentionally to provide the best result. The purposes of this research are 1) To know how the students seventh semester of English Education (TBI) STAIN Padangsidimpuan ability in academic writing in 2011 was, 2) To know the difficulties faced by the students in academic writing, and 3) To know the efforts done by the students to resolve the difficulties in academic writing.

METHODOLOGY

Based on the analysis of the data, this research used qualitative approach. The sources of this research were the seventh semester of English Education (TBI) STAIN Padangsidempuan in 2011-2012 academic years. The researcher has taken 15 students out of all the students of seventh semester of English Education (TBI) STAIN Padangsidempuan in 2011-2012 academic years. The researcher was taken sources for 15 students in order to gain the more comprehensive and deep data result.

To get the data in this research, the researcher used instrumentation such as: Interview some of the students seventh semester of TBI STAIN Padangsidempuan in 2011-2012 academic years to get the data. Then, test, test is some questions to get information that pointed to students' ability in academic writing. In this research, the students have been asked to write an essay and the lattices of writing essay were identify introduction 15, identify body were 15, identify conclusion were 15, vocabulary were 10, mechanics were 10, identify paragraph development were 15, identify coherence were 15, and diction were 10. After collecting the data, the researcher analyzed the data through some steps.³ They are editing, reducing, tabulating, describing, and taking conclusion.

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

1. The Nature of Academic Writing

a. Writing

Writing is one of the elements of skill in language. The main goals in writing activity are able to write ideas, information in a good logical order, expressing their thought clearly, and improve that they have in mind so that the reader easier to know what that read.

David Nunan said "writing is both a physical and a mental act. It is a mental work in creating ideas to express and to organize them in paragraphs so

³Lexy J. Moleong.*Op. Cit.*, p. 247.

that the reader will be easier to understand the writer's intention."⁴ Writing is process and product as well. The process of begins from imagine until rereads and become some kinds of writing such as essay, letter, story or research report.

So based on the scientists estimation above, the researcher concludes that writing is a written work to express one's feeling, ideas, and thinking, and organize them into a good statements and paragraphs in order to be understand by all of the reader easily of what the writer wants to say.

b. Academic writing

Academic writing is one of writing genre which is usually used in a complex writing composition. Academic writing also called as scientific writing. In a higher education or university, this genre of writing is highly demand on students' writing in fulfilling most of their assignments. Alice Oshima said that academic writing is the kind of writing that required to do in college or university. It is different from other kinds of writing such as personal, literary, journalistic, or business writing. It has a special audience, tone, and purpose.⁵

From the statements above, the researcher concludes that academic writing is a kind of writing usually done by the college students with a particular arrangements, tone, purpose and audience based on an observation, whether it is field observation or literature observation. The researcher also can conclude from the expert opinion that essay paper in academic writing has principle outline, they are: (1) organization of the paper, (2) paragraphs development, (3) sentence composition, and (4) diction as the researcher will explain later.

2. The Purpose of Academic Writing

Students' writing is at the center of teaching and learning in higher education, fulfilling a range of purposes according to the various contexts in which it occurs. The purposes include:

⁴ David Nunan. *Practical English Language Teaching*, (USA: The Mc. Grow Hill Companies, 2003), p. 88.

⁵ Alice Oshima. *Writing Academic English*, (New York: Longman, 1999), p. 2.

- a. Assessment, which is often a major purpose for student writing. Students may be required to produce essays, written examinations, or laboratory reports whose main purpose is to demonstrate their mastery of disciplinary course content.
- b. Learning, which can help students grapple with disciplinary knowledge as well as develop more general abilities to reason and critique.
- c. Entering particular disciplinary communities, whose communication norms are the primary means by which academics transmit and evaluate ideas.⁶

Hullon Willis pointed out that: “It may be designed to amuse, to inspire, to persuade, to inform, to deceive, to guide, to enlighten.”⁷ The purpose of a piece of writing determines the rhetorical form chosen for it. A persuasive essay will be recognized in one way and expository essay in another way.

3. *The Characteristic of Academic Writing*

There are some characteristic marking a scientific writing, they are;

- a. Common sense, which mean every information presented have a make sense argumentation.
- b. Systematic, which indicates that all the things proposed organize based on the level orderly and continually.
- c. Objective, all of the information provided is just the way they are, not fictitious.
- d. Complete and total, which mean all of the side of the problems provided studied completely and totally.
- e. Accurate, that is try to avoid oneself form various mistakes, no matter how small they are.
- f. Clear, every information stated can convey the meaning clearly
- g. The truth can be tested
- h. Open, which mean that all of the things proposed are able to be alter when a new opinion appear.

⁶ Caroline Coffin. *Teaching Academic Writing*, (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 2.

⁷Hulon Willis. *Op. Cit.* p. 1.

- i. Universal, it means that all of the conclusions are universal for all of the populations.
- j. The presentation concern about the language manner and the standard grammar.⁸

4. *The Forms of Academic Writing*

Generally, academic writing can be categorized based on the level of the problem study on the writing. Some of the academic writing examines the problem in simple terms, and others examine it into detail. The kinds of writing including into academic writing are: report, paper, project script, thesis, dissertation, textbook/ lectures textbook.⁹

a. Report

Report is a form of writing made by someone after conducted an experiment, observation, reference and so on. It composed based on the data within the evaluation objectively and also some necessary suggestion.

b. Paper

The term of paper define as every kinds of written assignment related to a subject matter, the result of a book study or writing about a certain matter.

c. Project paper

It is a scientific writing written based on the end result of an observation or library research as a conditional requirement to get an undergraduate degree in a college or university and assert on seminar examination.

d. Thesis

Thesis is a scientific writing which level is higher and methodic than a project paper.

e. Dissertation

⁸Madyo Ekosusilo. *Op.Cit.*, p. 12.

⁹Ibid., p. 16-18.

It is a scientific writing to fulfill one of the requirements to get graduate degree. It is shown to get the Doctor degree.

f. Textbook/ lectures textbook

Textbook is also one kind of the scientific writing. Both textbook and lectures textbook provide factual information of knowledge discipline.

Generally, common books print by a publisher for public consumption, while lectures textbook written in certain condition and to guide the learning process of the students and also restricted only for the lecture and students only.

5. *Types of Text*

In composing essay paper, there are many possible types of text used by the students. According to Caroline Coffin the most commonly labeled text type is the essay. Most students will have been taught a basic essay outline – introduction, body and conclusion – at school.”¹⁰

Furthermore, H. Douglas Brown said that there are literally hundreds of types of written text, much more of a variety than found in spoken texts. Each of the types listed below represent, or is an example of, a genre of written language:

- ... non fiction
 - reports
 - editorial
 - essays, article
 - reference (dictionaries, encyclopedias)
- academic writing
 - short answer test responses
 - reports
 - essays, papers
 - theses, books
- forms, applications
- questionnaires ...¹¹

6. *The Organization of Essay*

¹⁰ Caroline Coffin. *Op.Cit.*, p. 22.

¹¹ H. Douglas Brown. *Op.Cit.*, p. 286-287.

As said by Leonard A. Podis, “The standard essay patterns are: introduction, body, and conclusion”.¹² This pattern has become standards because it helps both writers and readers. Writer can use it to organize nearly any topic, while readers appreciate its inherent logic. For example, the reader may be oriented to the topic in the introduction, progress through specific ideas about the topic in the body, and be reminded of its significance in the conclusion.

7. *Paragraph Development*

In composing a basic organization of a paper, the writer should divide the whole into separate units, and these units will form paragraphs. It is not indentation but the central idea of a group of related sentences that makes a true paragraph.

As said by Alice Oshima that paragraph is a basic unit of organization in writing in which a group of related sentences develops one main idea. A paragraph can be as short as one sentence or as long as ten sentences. The number of sentences is unimportant; however, the paragraph should be long enough to develop the main idea clearly.¹³ Moreover, Hulon Willis pointed out “a paragraph then, is a series of sentences all pertaining closely to one central idea.”

In academic English, paragraph writing often tends to observe the conventions listed below:

- 1) A paragraph should usually deal with one main topic
- 2) The main topic may be expressed in a topic sentence. This is a sentence which expresses the central idea of a paragraph and serves to unify its content. The topic sentence is often (but not always) the first sentence in a paragraph. This position helps the reader follow the ideas presented in an orderly fashion.

¹² Leonard A. Podis. *Writing: Invention, Form and Style*, (USA: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1984), p. 110.

¹³ Alice Oshima. *Op.Cit.*, p. 16.

- 3) The idea expressed is developed from one sentence to the next by sentences which add information closely related to the topic sentence.
- 4) A new main topic should be dealt with in a new paragraph.¹⁴

A paragraph has three major structural parts: a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence.¹⁵

1) Topic sentence

The topic sentence states the main idea of the paragraph. It not only names the topic of the paragraph, but also limits the topic to one or two areas that can be discussed completely in the space of a single paragraph. The specific area is called the controlling idea.¹⁶

When the writer expressed the central idea of the paragraph in an initial topic sentence, the writer prepares his/her reader for the detailed explanation that will follow. Thus the topic sentence is an instrument of clarity. It helps the reader follow the writer's line of thought.

There are three important points to remember about topic sentence.

- a) A topic sentence is a complete sentence; that is, it contains a subject, a verb, and (usually) a complement.
- b) A topic sentence contains both a topic and a controlling idea.
- c) A topic sentence is the most general statement in the paragraph because it gives only the main idea. It does not give any specific details.¹⁷

The topic sentence may be the first or the last sentence in a paragraph.

The topic sentence may also be the first and the last sentence of the paragraph – “sandwich style”.¹⁸

2) Supporting sentence

¹⁴ John Treziack. *Op.Cit.*, p. 61.

¹⁵ Alice Oshima. *Op.Cit.*, p. 17.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* p. 17.

¹⁷ Alice Oshima. *Op.Cit.*, p. 20.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

Supporting sentences develop the topic sentence. That is, they explain the topic sentence by giving reasons, examples, facts, statistic, and quotations.¹⁹

3) Concluding sentence

The concluding sentence signals the end of the paragraph and leaves the reader with important points to remember. The following are the signal to the end-of-paragraph to introduce the conclusion sentence.

Based on the explanations above, the researcher taking conclusion that a paragraph has three major structural parts, they are a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence.

Paragraph Unity

Another important element of a good paragraph is unity. Every good paragraph has unity, which means that only one main idea is discussed. The second part of unity is that every supporting sentence must directly explain or prove the main idea that is stated in the topic sentences.

The writer should not include any information that does not directly support the topic sentence.²⁰ Beside, Hulon Willis said “a successful paragraph must be not only complete in its development, but also unified in its structure.”²¹

Furthermore, Hulon Willis also stated that the unity of a paragraph may be violated in two ways: (1) through the inclusion of a second central idea or (2) through the inclusion of one or more sentences of detail that are not related, to the paragraph’s central idea.²² A paragraph may also seem to lack unity when no central idea apparent in it.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 17.

²⁰Alice Oshima. *Op.Cit.*, p. 30.

²¹Hulon Willis. *Op.Cit.*, p. 94.

²²Ibid. p. 94.

Paragraph Coherence

The Latin *cohere* means “hold together”. In order to have coherence in writing the sentences must be together; that is the movement from one sentence to the next (and in longer essay form one paragraph to the next) must be logical and smooth. There must be no sudden jumps. Each sentence should flow smoothly into the one.²³ Coherence literally means a sticking together of parts and that in the whole paper coherence is achieved when there is a clear transition, or links, between its major parts, the paragraphs.²⁴

Alice Oshima stated that there are four ways to achieve coherence. The first two ways involve repeating key nouns, and using pronouns that refer back to key nouns. The third way is transition signals to show how one is related to the next. The fourth way to achieve coherence is to arrange sentences into logical order.²⁵ Coherence can be Coherence through repetition of key words, Coherence through pronoun reference, Coherence through transitional signals, and Coherence through logical order.

Based on the explanations above, the researcher concludes that every good paragraph has coherence. Coherence is achieved by (1) repeating key words (2) using pronoun (3) using transition signals (3) stating the ideas into some kind of logical order.

8. *Diction*

According to A.S. Hornby, diction is the choice and use of words in literature.²⁶ Furthermore, GorysKeraf stated “Pilihan kata atau diksi adalah kemampuan membedakan secara tepat nuansa – nuansa makna dari gagasan yang ingin disampaikan, dan kemampuan untuk menentukan bentuk yang sesuai dengan situasi dan nilai rasa yang dimiliki kelompok masyarakat pendengar.”²⁷ (Choice of

²³Alice Oshima. *Op.Cit.*, p. 40.

²⁴Hulon Willis. *Op.Cit.*, p. 98.

²⁵Alice Oshima. *Loc.Cit.*, p. 98.

²⁶A.S. Hornby. *Op.Cit.*, p. 366.

²⁷Gorys Keraf. *Diksi dan Gaya Bahasa*, (Jakarta: PT. Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2002), p. 24.

word or diction is the ability to differentiate exactly the meaning circumstances of the idea and the ability to determine the appropriate form within the situation and sense of the listeners).

Choice of word determines the writing character like cold, formal, informal, scientific, popular and so on. In choosing word one has to be careful due to the difference in using word to certain circle of society.

Based on the explanations above, the researcher can conclude that in writing the writer should pick suitable words to the circumstance of the writing. The choice of words will determine quality of the writing. In the diction a writer should avoid vagueness and jargon in order the writing become appropriate, vague, and consistent.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

A. Findings

1. The Description of Students' Seventh Semester of English Section (TBI) STAIN Padangsidimpuan Ability in Academic Writing

Based on the result of the test given to the respondents, it can be seen that the score between respondent between 50 up to 85. It means that the highest score gotten by respondents was 85 and the lowest score was 50. The description score of them in writing essay can be seen as the tables below:

Table 2: Identify of the introduction

No.	Lattice	F	%
1.	Absence of introduction	-	-
2.	Adequate introduction, sequence is logical but transitional expressions maybe absent or misused	8	53,33
3.	Appropriate introductory paragraph and the topic is stated	7	46,67
	Total	15	100 %

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From the data above, it can be known that the students who cannot write the introduction were 0 students, while the students who can write the introduction adequately, sequence is logical but transitional expressions maybe absent or misused were done by 8 students (53,33%), and the students who can write the introduction appropriately and the topic is stated were 7 students (46,67%).

Table 3: Identify of the Body

No.	Lattice	F	%
1.	No apparent organization of body	-	-
2.	Body of essay is acceptable, but some evidence may be lacking, or some ideas aren't fully developed	12	80
3.	Arrangement of material shows plan and the supporting evidence given for generalizations	3	20
	Total	15	100 %

From the data above, it can be known that the students who have no apparent organization of body were 0 students, while the students who can write the body of essay is acceptable but some evidence may be lacking, or some ideas are not fully developed were 12 students (80%) and the students who can write arrangement of material shows plan and the supporting evidence given for generalizations were 3 students (20%).

Table 4: Identify of the Conclusion

No.	Lattice	F	%
1.	Conclusion weak or illogical	2	13,33
2.	Adequate conclusion	10	66,67
3.	Conclusion logical and complete	3	20
	Total	15	100 %

From the data above, it can be known that the students who can write conclusion weak and illogical were 2 students (13,33%), while the students

who can write adequate conclusion were 10 students (66,67%) and the students who can write conclusion logical and complete were 3 students (20%).

Table 5: Vocabulary

No.	Lattice	F	%
1.	Vocabulary inadequate even for the most parts of the intended communication	-	-
2.	Good vocabulary	12	80
3.	Precise vocabulary usage	3	20
	Total	15	100 %

From the data above, it can be known that the students who can write vocabulary inadequate even for the most parts of the intended communication were 0 students, while the students who can write good vocabulary were 12 students (80%), and the students who can write precise vocabulary usage were 3 students (20%).

Table 6: Mechanic (spelling, punctuation, capitalization)

No.	Lattice	F	%
1.	Ignorance of the conventions of punctuation	-	-
2.	Some problems with writing conventions or punctuation	7	46,67
3.	Correct use of English writing conventions	8	53,33
	Total	15	100 %

From the data above, it can be known that the students who can write ignorance of the conventions of punctuation were 0 students, while the students who can write some problems with writing conventions or punctuation were 7 students (46,67) and the students who can write correct use of English writing conventions were 8 students (53,33).

Table 7: Identify of the Paragraph development

No.	Lattice	F	%
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1.	Essay does not reflect careful thinking	-	-
2.	Essay addresses the issues but misses some points	14	93,33
3.	Essay addresses the assigned topic	1	6,67
	Total	15	100 %

From the data above, it can be known that the students who can write essay does not reflect careful thinking were 0 students, while the students who can write essay addresses the issues but misses some points were 14 students (93,33) and the students can write essay addresses the assigned topic were only 1 student (6,67%).

Table 8: Identify of the Coherency

No.	Lattice	F	%
1.	There is no coherent on the writing	-	-
2.	Apart of the writing has coherent	10	66,67
3.	The writing is fully coherent	5	33,33
	Total	15	100 %

From the data above, it can be known that the students who write there is no coherent on the writing were 0 students, the students who write apart of the writing has coherent were 10 students (66,67%) and the students who write the writing is fully coherent were 5 students (33,33%).

Table 9: Diction

No.	Lattice	F	%
1.	Poor expression of ideas	-	-
2.	Style fairly concise	14	93,33
3.	Register good	1	6,67
	Total	15	100 %

From the data above, it can be known that the students who can write poor expression of ideas were 0 students, while the students who can write style fairly concise were 14 students (93,33%) and the students who write register good were only 1 students (6,67%).

Based on calculating score, students' seventh semester of English section (TBI) STAIN Padangsidempuan ability in academic writing was 57,5%. So, by looking at the criteria above, the students' seventh semester of English section (TBI) STAIN Padangsidempuan ability in academic writing can be categorized into enough categories.

2. The students' Difficulties in Academic Writing of seventh semester of English section (TBI) STAIN Padangsidempuan

Based on the result of interview with students of seventh semester of English section (TBI) STAIN Padangsidempuan, the researcher has found that there were some difficulties that faced by students when they wrote essay. They were conclusion, vocabulary, paragraph development and diction.

First, the students were lack in making conclusion. They tend to ignore the significance of their writing or essay so that they careless when they composed the conclusion as the final of their writing. Many students were only making the conclusion just as a closing without wrote down the whole point of their essay.

Second, the students were lack of vocabulary. Even though the students were on seventh semester, they still have problem in their vocabulary especially in academic writing, since they need a lot more of scientific terms. This difficulty faced by the students were the same as diction, they were lack of making variation in their choice of word. It was also because the vocabularies to make the variation they have were quite inadequate in scientific writing.

The last, paragraph development was the students' difficulties in composing essay. Their paragraph development often to be unclear, this was

because when they were writing the essay they did not know many kinds of paragraph development method. Sometimes they also forget the paragraph development method taught by the lecturer; consequently they did not develop their paragraph with certain method.²⁸

B. Discussion

To write an essay well, it should be written in a good structure of organization. They are introduction, body, and conclusion. Leonard A. Podis said, “The standard essay patterns are: introduction, body, and conclusion”.²⁹ In a good writing essay, no appropriate introductory paragraph and the topic is stated, arrangement of material shows plan and the supporting evidence given for generalizations, conclusion logical and complete, precise vocabulary usage, correct use of English writing conventions, essay addresses the assigned topic, the writing is fully coherent and register good.

Based on the calculating score, students’ of seventh semester of English Education (TBI) STAIN Padangsidimpuan ability in writing essay was 57,5%. It can be categorized into adequate categories. Meanwhile Helmia Sari Hasibuan in her script: *The Correlation between Sentence Arrangements and Ability in Composition of the grade VIII students at SMP Negeri 8 PalopatPijorKoling*, stated that the result of the data analysis shows that the relationship between sentence arrangement and ability in composition have a very significant relationship on taraf significant of 0,69.

There were some difficulties that faced by students when they wrote an essay. They were conclusion, vocabulary, paragraph development and diction. It can be seen from students’ score (see appendix III). Almost all of the students got low score in conclusion, vocabulary, paragraph development and diction.

²⁸ Students Seventh Semester of English Education (TBI) STAIN Padangsidimpuan, private interview, November 22th 2011

²⁹ Leonard A. Podis. *Writing: Invention, Form and Style*, (USA: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1984) , p. 110.

In addition, based on interview with seventh semester TBI students the researcher has found the same answered. The students faced difficulties in essay because they were lack of making conclusion, vocabulary, paragraph development and diction.

CONCLUSION

After getting the result of the research, the researcher came to conclusion as follows:

- 1) Based on the result of the test given to respondents, it can be seen that most of the students could write the introduction adequately while the rest were able to write it appropriately. In writing the body of the essay, almost all the students were able to compose it to the extent of acceptable even though they were lack in ideas development in some areas. The students' ability to develop the paragraph can be assumed good as most of the students were able to address the issue in their essay. In short, the students' seventh semester of English Education (TBI) STAIN Padangsidempuan ability in academic writing in 2011-2012 academic year was categorized as adequate by getting score 57,5%.
- 2) There were some difficulties that faced by students in academic writing. They were conclusion, vocabulary, paragraph development and diction. It can be known from students' score in conclusion, vocabulary, paragraph development and diction and from interview with the students of seventh semester of TBI STAIN Padangsidempuan as well.

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