

Chapter One

Introduction

This chapter presents an introduction of the study. There are some sub chapters that are covered in this part. First, the background of the study describes why the researcher is interested to discuss the topic. Second, the statement of the problem shows why the problem that the researcher is interested in is important. Meanwhile, research questions are things that the researcher is going to find out in this study. Third, the purposes of the study describe the aims that the researcher would like to achieve during this study. Forth, the significances of the research present the benefits of this research toward particular people. The last, outline of the research shows the writing organization of each chapter.

Background of the study

Writing skill is one of the important skills in academic performance. Good writing skill can help people to communicate their ideas in the form of written document. Based on the researcher experiences, writing skill is really needed because it can improve creative thinking, and creativity. Bizzell (1986) stated, "students' intellectual socialization may be accomplished not only by interacting with people but also by encountering the writing of others" (p.65). It is proven that students do not only need to have a good interaction with others, but also they have to able exchange ideas in the form of writing.

Writing is necessary on academic performance because on academic field the students should make a lot of assignment that requires writing skill.

Zimmerman and Reiserberg (1997) stated that writing is a directed and self-sustained action requiring the management ability of the writing, the targets of the

writers, the data processes, and skills involved in composing. Meyers (2005) stated that writing is a process of determining and managing someone's opinions, putting them on paper, and then revising them. From these statements, the researchers can conclude that writing is a complex process because it involved some process started from organizing someone's ideas, putting them on the paper and then revising them. Thus, it makes writing not an easy thing that many people can do especially for beginner students. It is because when people write something, they should have good knowledge, and they also should arrange their idea on their writing.

Writing aims at making the readers understand what the writing is about, just like what Pincas (1998) wrote that "writing is a way of communicating a message to a reader for a purpose" (p.3). Pincas further mentioned that the purposes of writing are to state individual identity, to provide information for the reader, to persuade the reader, and to construct a literary work. For undergraduate students, writing skills are really needed because they need to make papers, research papers, reports, a thesis, and any other writing for academic purposes.

Academic essay is a kind of writing that must meet certain standard in terms of structure and use a formal language. An academic essay consists of an introductory paragraph, body paragraphs, and concluding paragraph. The introductory paragraph is where the writers introduce the topic that they are going to write in their essay and also introduce the content of the essay. The important thing that writers should pay attention is that they should provide a clear topic sentence, so the reader will understand what the essay is going to discuss. Another important thing is on the body paragraphs, where the writers support the topic

sentence with some examples, evidences, descriptions, explanations, or definitions in order to make the topic sentence strong. Finally, in the conclusion, writers have to restate the thesis statement and summarize the points of the essay. In the conclusion part, writers may also provide a suggestion for further research or investigation. In writing an academic essay, writers must avoid slang language, and they should use formal language. Types of academic essay also vary such as descriptive essay, compare and contrast essay, cause and effect essay, argumentative essay, critical essay, and so forth. Although there are some different kinds of academic essays, the important thing is that academic essay is a kind of writing that discusses or analyzes one topic then supports the topic with specific details and explanation.

In writing academic essays there are three major problems that may be faced by the students. First, the problems may come from students itself, such as deciding the topic that the students are going to write in their essays, supporting and elaborating their essay. The second major problem is plagiarism. The third major problem is grammar and structure, which also becomes big problems in writing an academic essay.

For some students, the hardest part in writing an academic essay is deciding the topic. The researcher has also experienced that kind of problem in writing an academic essay. It is because to put an idea or opinion in the form of writing is not an easy thing to do. Deciding the topic may be challenging for some students because sometimes students are confused about what they are going to write on their papers. In writing academic essays students have to understand the importance of topic sentence which is stated in the first sentence, and the other

sentences in the rest of paragraph should support the topic sentence. In supporting sentences students should explain their argument clearly, support ideas with evidence, and elaborate their ideas on the writing. The problems for many students are first students' lack of ideas to explain their argument clearly. Second, students lack of doing research and reading so they may not know what to do to support the ideas. Third, students may not know the techniques on how to elaborate the ideas on the writing.

Plagiarism also becomes a big problem in writing an academic essay because once students write someone's opinion in their essay without the citation it is called plagiarism. Students do the plagiarism because they have no idea how to do the proper paraphrasing. Some students also face difficulties in grammar and structure in writing academic essays such as double verb, active and passive, and any other things that are related to grammar and structure.

In English Education Department of Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta (EED of UMY), writing academic an essay is a familiar thing to every student. During their study at EED of UMY, it is a must for students to write academic essays, starting from writing a simple paper, report, annotated bibliography, research paper, and at last the students have to make their own undergraduate thesis as the requirements for the degree of *Sarjana Pendidikan*. In writing an academic essay sometimes the students find some difficulties that make them hard to write it. Therefore, one of the reasons why the researcher chooses the research entitled *Students' difficulties in writing academic essays at English Education Department of Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta* is to find out the big problems which are faced by EED of UMY students in writing academic

essays. Besides that, the researcher is also going to find out the students strategies to solve the problems when they write an academic essay.

Statement of the problem

People who are involved in educational field surely are familiar with academic essays. It is also for English Education Department students because they have to be able to write academic essays properly. Writing an academic essay is really important for EED of UMY students because they need to write it during their study at EED of UMY. Students have to write a lot of academic essays such as papers, reports, annotated bibliography, research papers, and any other academic essays. However, writing an academic essay is not as easy as turning the palm of the hand. The students need to put their ideas in the form of writing, and also elaborate them.

The issues related to writing academic essays are varied such as what academic essay is, kinds of academic essay, and how to write academic essays, discussing about academic essay surely students should understand what academic essay is. At least students understand that an academic essay consists of an introductory paragraph, body paragraphs, and concluding paragraph and it should use formal language. Kinds of academic essay may also be varied such as papers, reports, annotated bibliography, research papers, and any other academic essays. Students also have to understand how to write academic essays in order to make readers understand what the essays are going to discuss. For example they have to explain their argument clearly, support their ideas with evidence, and elaborate their ideas on the writing.

Other issues that are related to writing academic essays are about problems in writing academic essays, and strategies to solve the problems in writing academic essays. In writing academic essays there are some problems that may be faced by the students. First, it may come from the students themselves, for example the students may find it hard to explain their argument clearly, support it with evidence, and also elaborate their ideas on the writing. Second, plagiarism also becomes a big problem in writing an academic essay because once students write someone's opinion in their essay without the citation, it is called plagiarism. Third, the problem comes from grammatical error and any other things that are related to grammar and structure. Beside the problems there are also the strategies to solve those problems. Strategies to solve problems may be varied because each students has they own strategies to solve problems in writing academic essays.

Limitation of the study

Although this research has its aims, there were unavoidable limitations. The study aims to find out the big problems in writing academic essays and find out the ways the students solve the problems when they write an academic essay. Thus, this research focuses only on finding big problems that are faced by EED of UMY students in writing academic essays. Also this research attempts to find out the ways the students solve the problems when they write academic essays. So, this research does not focus on what academic essay is, kinds of academic essays, and how to write an academic essay.

Research questions

Based on the background of the research, the statement of the problems, and the limitation, the research questions for this research are:

1. What are the difficulties faced by English Education Department of Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta students on writing academic essays?
2. How do the English Education Department of Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta students solve the difficulties in writing academic essays?

Purposes of the research

Based on the research questions, the purposes of this research are:

1. to investigate the difficulties faced by English Education Department of Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta students in writing academic essays.
2. to identify how the English Education Department of Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta students solve the difficulties in writing academic essays.

Significances of the research

This research may give some benefits to several groups of people. They are students, teachers, and other researchers.

Students. Students can take advantages from the findings of this research. They will understand the big problems that are faced by EED of UMY students in writing academic essays. Therefore, later when they write an academic essay, they can avoid the problems or at least they will know how to solve the problems in

writing academic essays. Researcher hopes when students read this research, writing academic essays may become easier for every student at EED of UMY.

Teacher. For teacher as a learning facilitator in the teaching and learning process where students can ask, this research is valuable for them. By reading this research, the teacher will know the big problems faced by the students in writing an academic essay. In addition, the teachers will be able to help their students by giving them suggestions or strategies that students should use when they write an academic essay.

Other researchers. The results of this research may hopefully give benefit to other researchers who concern with investigating students' difficulties in writing academic essays. Other researchers can use the finding of this research as the theoretical overview of further research on the same topic and might become an analytical reference of further research.

Outline of the research

This research is divided into five chapters and each chapter has sub-chapter, they are as follows.

Chapter one, this chapter presents an introduction of the study. There are some sub chapters that are covered in this part. First, the background of the study describes why the researcher is interested to discuss the topic. Second, the statement of the problem shows why the problem that the researcher is interested in is important. Meanwhile, research questions are things that the researcher is going to find out in this study. Third, the purposes of the study describe the aims that the researcher would like to achieve during this study. Forth, the significances of the research present the benefits of this research toward particular people.

Chapter two, this chapter discusses theories related to the topic of the research. There are several contents which must be discussed in the literature, including definition of academic writing, definition of academic essays, difficulties in writing academic essays, strategies to solve the difficulties in writing academic essay, conceptual framework, and also review on related studies.

Chapter three presents the methodology that is employed in this research. There are five sections namely research design, research setting, research participants, data collection method, and technique of data analysis. Several theories are also included in chapter three which aim to support the research methodology.

Chapter four, this chapter the researcher reports the findings based on data analysis and the discussion of the finding. There are two major findings reported in this research based on the research questions. First, the researcher reports the difficulties faced by English Education Department of Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta students on writing academic essays. Second, the researcher reports how the English Education Department of Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta students solve the difficulties in writing academic essays. Chapter five concludes the research and provides recommendation of the research. The conclusion answers the research questions of the research and also recommendations are added in the end of this research to obtain the solution.