

The Difficulties Of Argumentative Essay Writing Experienced By Undergraduate Students Of English Department Mulawarman University

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to find out the difficulties faced by the undergraduate students in writing argumentative essay and their strategies to solve their difficulties. The design of this study was qualitative case study that aims in understanding and explaining the difficulties faced by the undergraduate students of English Department Mulawarman University in writing argumentative essay. The subject of this study was the seventh semester students of English Department Mulawarman University in academic year 2019/2020. The data were collected from students' argumentative essay writing task and semi-structured interview. The result of the study showed that the students faced difficulties in linguistic, cognitive, and psychological aspect when writing argumentative essay. The most dominant difficulties in linguistic aspects were grammar, finding the correct diction, and in linking paragraph. Then, idea organization was claimed as the most difficult thing in cognitive aspect. Moreover, in psychological aspect the students mentioned stress and laziness. Based on those mentioned difficulties they had their strategies: they used the internet to search about the explanations of the given topic and examples of the correct punctuation and connector. In addition, they used the dictionary to find the correct diction and synonym of a word. Revising and translating were also mentioned as their strategies to solve difficulties in spelling and sentence structure.

Keywords: Argumentative Essay Writing, Writing Difficulties

1. Introduction

Argumentative essay is considered as a challenging writing for some students because they have to investigate a topic, gather and analyze evidence, and decide their position on topic in a brief manner. Moreover, many students find it a demanding task because in writing argumentative essay they have to think critically which is supported by strong arguments. Result of a research by Hasani (2016) revealed that students' low ability to think critically affect their argumentative writing ability. Hasani's finding also supported by Joderi (2005) whose found that there's a significant relationship between critical thinking ability and writing proficiency. He concluded that the higher the level of the participants' critical thinking, the more skillful their English writing ability would be.

The problems that faced by students in writing argumentative essay were showed in the result of the study conducted by Rahmatunisa (2014) and Ka-kan- dee & Kaur (2014). Rahmatunisa (2014) discovered that in linguistic aspect, the students had problem in grammatical structure (23.2%), words formation (30.2%), words classes (16.3%), error in using words (9.3%), and article use (21%). In 4 cognitive aspect, the related problems were difficulties in remaining word classes, paragraph organization, making a conclusion, putting punctuation and generic structure. In the psychological aspect, the problems linked to

laziness, egoism, bad mood, and difficulties to start writing. Then, the other study by Ka-kan-dee & Kaur (2014) showed that the main Thai EFL English major students' difficulties were grammar, providing solid evidence, vocabulary, argumentative text structure, deadline, idea organization, fulfilling task demand, L1 transfer and translating, writing thesis statement, interpreting the question, understanding the question, pacing, topic choice, evaluating and length

Despite numerous studies that have investigated the rhetorical and linguistic feature of argumentative essay writing, there is lack of research on argumentative writing difficulties in English Department Mulawarman University. Hence, there is a critical need to investigate about the difficulties that students faced in writing argumentative essay. By learning about the challenges students face and their use of strategies, teachers can gain valuable insights to inform their practice. One aim of this study is to explore the students' struggle experience in writing argumentative essay in the hope of providing insights that could be used to enhance materials and instruction. Another equally important objective is to examine how students strategies to solve the problems they face in writing argumentative essay

2. Review of Literature

2.1. Difficulties in Writing Argumentative Essay

Many researchers have argued that argumentative writing essay is the most difficult genre for both ESL and EFL learners. Nippold and Ward-Lonergan (2010) explained that "argumentative writing is a challenging communication task that needs sophisticated cognitive and linguistic abilities." Byrne (1993), explained that there are three problems in writing that makes people feel difficult to do it, there are psychological problems, linguistic problems, and cognitive problems.

The first problem raised is psychological problem; that writing is a solitary activity which writers have to write on their own, without the possibility of interaction or the advantage of feedback, in itself makes the act of writing difficult. Furthermore, Byrne (1993) explained that writing is difficult because we are not facing our interlocutor and getting feedback directly like when we are speaking. When we talk to someone, the interlocutor feels our emotion directly through what we talk about. They can see our joy, excitement, or sadness directly. It means that psychological problem concern to the writer's emotion. Moreover it also deals with how the mind constructs a language to become a sentence. Particularly, it is how to express their idea into written form. Because when it comes to writing, we should make the readers understand to what we feel or what are we going to deliver to them through our writing.

The second problem explained by Byrne (1988) is linguistic problems; that writing is difference to oral communication. In writing writers have to keep the channel of communication open and to ensure that the readers get the writer's meaning. It can be achieved through writers' choice of sentence structure and by how the sentences are linked together and sequenced, so the text that is produced can be interpreted on its own. Linguistic features of writing is the key to make the essay understandable and sophisticated.

The last problem stated is cognitive problem, that writing is learned through a process of instruction. Writers have to master the written form of the language and to learn certain structures for effective communication in writing. Writers also have to learn about how to arrange their ideas in such way that they can be understood by the readers. In other words, the idea that the writer want to write should be organized and linked to the topic, so it can be well interpreted by the readers (Byrne, 1988). Rahmatunisa (2014) added that cognitive problems in argumentative essay writing relate to how to organize ideas, addressing topic, following topic, following instruction, and directions.

2.2. Classification of Writing Strategies

Writing strategy refers to any actions applied in the act of producing an essay that occurred during the prewriting, planning, drafting, revising and editing stages (Abas & Aziz, 2016). In classifying the writing strategies, many studies have been conducted on the writing

strategies of both L2 learners and L1 learners. In this present study, a Taxonomy of Writing Strategies by Mu (2005) is used to classified the strategy used by the students to solve their difficulties in writing argumentative essay. This taxonomy consist of five broader categories and twenty-one writing strategies. The broader categories are: (1) rhetorical strategies, which refer to the strategies that writers use to organize and to present their ideas in writing conventions acceptable to native speakers of that language; (2) meta- cognitive strategies which refer to the strategies that the writers use to control the writing process consciously; (3) cognitive strategies which refer to the strategies that writers use to implement the actual writing actions; (4) communicative strategies which refer to the strategies that the writers use to express ideas in a more effective way; (5) social/affective strategies which refer to the strategies that the writers use to interact with others to clarify some questions and to regulate emotions, motivation, and attitudes in their writing (Mu, 2005).

3. Methods

3.1. Research design

This study employed a case study as the research design that aimed in understanding and explaining the difficulties faced by the undergraduate students of English Department Mulawarman University in writing argumentative essay. According to Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun (2012), “what case study researchers have in common is that they focus their research on the study of such cases” (p. 434). “a case comprises just one individual, classroom, school, or program. A case is not an individual or situation that can easily be identified (e.g., a particular individual, classroom, organization, or project) it may be an event (e.g., a campus celebration), an activity (e.g., learning to use computer), or ongoing process (e.g., student teaching)” (p. 434).

3.2. Participants

There were four participants involved in this study from the seventh-semester students of class B 2017 of English Department Mulawarman University in academic year of 2020/2021. The seventh-semester students were chosen for this research because they had completed the Advance Writing course. The researcher chose the participants by their quiz score, two students with highest score and two students with lowest score were chosen as the participants. In assessing their argumentative essay writing task, the researcher used a rubric (the rubric of assessing argumentative essay writing) which was developed by Jacobs et.al (1981).

3.3. Research Instruments

3.3.1. Argumentative Essay Document

The document that used in this present study is argumentative essay writing task made by students. In this present research, the students were required to write one argumentative essay consist of minimum 500 words on this statement: “Government Should Consider The Legalization of Abortion in Indonesia”. The argumentative essay will be written at home due to COVID-19 situation.

3.3.2. Essay Rubric Assessment

The essay rubric assessment that was used is adapted from Jacobs et.al (1981) which consists of introduction, body paragraph, conclusion, language use, and mechanics. This rubric was used to assess students’ argumentative essay writing and also to choose the participants that were interviewed. There were three raters in assessing students’ argumentative essay writing. As Bogdan & Biklen (2006) stated that cross verification from more than two sources can facilitates the data validation.

3.3.3. Interview Guideline

In qualitative research, interview guideline was used to dig information from the subject orally (Hatch, 2002). The type of the interview that applied in this present study was

semi-structured interview. The interview was recorded in order to know the students' difficulties and their strategies to solve their problems. The subjects were interviewed in order to know to know their difficulties in linguistic, psychology and cognitive aspects in writing argumentative essay and also their strategies to solve those difficulties. All of the interviews were in the form of voice recording.

3.4. Data Collection

The following techniques were applied for collecting the data. In this study, the researcher used documents and interviews. Following procedures below were conducted to collect the data:

1. Documents The researcher used document from students' argumentative essay writing task. First, the students were asked to write an argumentative essay, then the researcher assessed their argumentative essay task by using a rubric. After assessing their essay, the researcher made conclusion about the students' score based on the marking scale that adapted from Jacob's scoring profile.

2. Interview In this present research, a semi-structured interview was used to find out the difficulties faced by the undergraduate students in writing argumentative essay and their strategies to overcome those difficulties. The documentation of the interview was recorded using a recorder tool. The process of the interview was conducted informally. The interview protocol questions were based on the three problems in writing by Byrne (1988). After assessing their argumentative essay task, the researcher chose four students; two students with the lowest score, and two students with the highest score to be interviewed about the difficulties that they faced in writing argumentative essay and also their strategies to solve those problems. The approximate duration for each interview is 30 minutes, and the interviews were conducted by phone call. To collect the data interview, the researcher had done several procedures as follows: (1) the researcher prepare the concept of question to be asked, (2) The researcher conducted the interview, (3) The researcher transcribed the interview result.

3.5. Data Analysis

Data analysis technique by Miles, Huberman & Saldana (2014) was applied for this present study. The data analysis has three concurrent flows of activity: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

In data condensation, the researcher did a few steps to condense the data as follow: a) The researcher read the interview transcript and students' argumentative essay writing task. b) The researcher analyzed the interview transcript and students' argumentative essay writing task by identified the difficulties faced by students in writing argumentative essay. c) The researcher constructed the codes and notes that related to difficulties in writing argumentative essay and their strategies to solved the difficulties.

Then in data display, the findings were described in the form of narrative text. The researcher also displayed the findings of the students' difficulties and strategies by categorizing the data based on the problems in writing which are psychological problem, linguistic problem, and cognitive problem.

After analyzed the documents of argumentative writing task and interview transcripts, the researcher obtained the clear information that can answer the research questions. Next, conclusion of the result about the difficulties faced by the undergraduate students in writing argumentative essay was elaborated by the researcher.

4. Result

4.1. Difficulties faced by the undergraduate students in writing argumentative essay

1 . Linguistic Aspects

A. Sentence structure

Based on the argumentative essay written by the students, the researcher found that some students faced problems in sentence structure as follows:

*“It is an achievement to the women in New Zealand because they could choose freely in having a family or not ~~and by~~. **By** doing abortion there has to be an appropriate reason and they will follow the procedure that ~~has been set by their government~~ **their government has set**. (AED-P4, L28-L31).*

“... If they turn into ~~larger fetus, then a larger fetus~~, it can be called ~~as~~ a murder since the fetus can feel the pain” (AED-P3, L14-L15).

The researcher found that the first paragraph above are too long, as result, readers found it was hard to follow. This finding supported by the the writer, participant 4, who claimed that it was difficult to construct a sentence in English because the arrangement is different from Bahasa Indonesia, *“In constructing a sentence in English is quite difficult because, you know, the arrangement, the order is different with Indonesia. We have to think which word should come first and something like that”* (IT-P4, Dif, L23-L25). Moreover, participant 3 also added that construct a sentence in English is hard, *“I often have some difficulties there, because I don’t know whether my sentence is right or wrong. I just think that’s a bit hard”* (IT-P3, Dif, L25-L26).

B. Grammar

As stated by all participants in the interview, they declared that they faced difficulties in grammar while composing argumentative essay. They find it difficult to decide the tense of a sentence, *“I feel confused about using grammar in the sentence. I know the pattern of the grammar, but sometimes I just feel confuse to decide which tenses that’s correct for a sentence”* (IT-P2, Dif, L25-L27). Supported with participant 3 who face the same difficulties, *“I find it hard to decide the tense of a sentence, and also the structure of the sentence itself often make me confused.”* (IT-P3, Dif, L38-L39). This findings are inline with findings from the documents where the researcher found some grammatical errors in their argumentative essay.

C. Spelling and punctuation

Based on the interview, only one participant of the study (P1) had problem with spelling. P1 stated that he often finds typos in his essay, *“Actually I found it (typo) pretty often”* (IT-P1, Dif, L53). Otherwise, the documents revealed that there was one participant of the study (P4) who faced problems in spelling.

On the other hand, there are three out of four participants of the study revealed that they faced difficulties in finding the correct punctuation for the paragraph, *“Because I don’t know what is the right punctuation like the full stop, the comma”* (IT-P1, Dif, L31-L32). Besides, they also stated that they got confused in the use of punctuation in writing an essay, *“I think I often got confused for using comma or semicolon.”* (IT-P2, Dif, L36), *“I often confused with colon or semicolon”*, (IT-P4, Dif, L41-L42). These findings on the interview are similar with the findings found in the documents.

D. Diction

All participants of the study agreed that they faced difficulties in diction while writing argumentative essay. Most of them explained that it’s hard to choose the right word for their writing, *“because I think it’s a bit challenging when we want to express the idea in another language. Sometimes I got confused on which word that I want to use.”* (IT-P2, Dif, L46-L48), *“I want to write something in English, but I can’t find the right word to express my idea”* (IT-P3, Dif, L63-L64). Other participant added that it is confusing to find accurate diction for

their essay since they have to choose the right word that suits the context, “...I think it’s a bit confusing to find or translate the word based on the context.” (IT-P4, Dif, L47-L48).

E. Connectors

According to the interview, Participant 2 and 3 mentioned that they don’t have any problem with connectors. Meanwhile, Participant 1 and Participant 4 stated that they had difficulties in using connectors, “yes. I don’t know why but until now I often confuse with the use of connectors. Like in combining the sentence I confuse to choose the right connectors. Do I have to use the furthermore or ought to or something like that” (IT-P1, Dif, L98-L101). Both of them agreed that choosing the right connectors could be confusing, “I often get confused in it. So when I want to use connectors I opened up my notebook to see the list because I usually use however as the connector, in fact, there are still many connecting words that I can use instead of just ‘however’” (IT-P4, Dif, L57-L60).

In contrary to the result of the interview, the documents study revealed that there were no error or mistake found in their essays. All connectors used in the essays are varied, and it correctly showed the relationship between the ideas in two clauses.

F. Linking the paragraph

The interviews showed that all participants of the study faced difficulties in linking the paragraph. Most of them find it confusing to choose the correct linking words for the paragraph, “Sometimes I got confused to choose the right linking words to begin the paragraph. Because there are so many linking words and I often forgot or confuse in determining the right words to link the previous paragraph to the next paragraph” (IT-P2, Dif, L69-L72). This statement is supported by another participant, “I find it difficult to choose the correct linking words for my paragraph” (IT-P4, Dif, L67-L68).

G. Coherence

In this aspect, only one participant of the study who stated that he had problem making an essay coherent, “yes, sometimes I lost my point to support my thesis statement, so my essay became not coherent” (IT-P1, Dif, L124-L125). In contrary to the P1, the other three participants of the study didn’t face any difficulties in coherence.

H. Paraphrasing

According to the interview, three out of four participants of the study faced difficulties in paraphrasing a sentence or paragraph. Most of them admit that it’s hard to find the correct synonym of a word, “when we paraphrase a sentence, we have to keep the meaning of it with a different word, and sometimes I find it hard to find the right synonym that suits the context of the sentence.” (IT-P2, Dif, L91-L93). Other participant also agreed with the previous statement, “it’s hard because we have to keep the meaning of the sentence or the paragraph, but we need to change the word so we must find the correct synonym of it” (IT-P4, Dif, L85-L87).

Another participant explained that vocabulary range may affect their paraphrasing skill, “when we don’t have enough vocabulary range, it’s hard to change a sentence to another sentence with the same meaning” (IT-P3, Dif, L116-L117).

2. Cognitive Aspects

The difficulties that students faced in this aspect will be explained below:

A. Idea organization

Based on the interview, some participants stated that organizing ideas could be hard if the topic given is unfamiliar, “if I’m not familiar with the given topic then I may have some difficulties in it” (IT-P2, Dif, L111-L112). P3 added that, “when we’re given a topic, and we

have no clue about the topic at all, so it becomes hard to organize the idea to be a complete argumentative essay.” (IT-P3, Dif, L128-L130). The previous statement is supported by other participant of the study, “if I never heard about the topic then I would find it difficult to organize the idea” (IT-P4, Dif, L94-L95).

This result of the interviews showed that there were three out of four participants of the study who faced difficulties in organizing ideas in argumentative writing. They revealed that the difficulty that they faced mainly caused by an unfamiliar topic given.

B. Addressing topic

According to the interview, there were two participants of the study who faced some difficulties in addressing a topic in writing argumentative essay. They have different reasons for it. P3 explained, “when I have an argument, but I can’t find any sources to support my argument.. that’s why I think that sometimes it’s hard to addressing a topic” (IT-P3, Dif, L166-L168). Unlike the previous statement, P4 thought that addressing the topic could be hard if the topic was unfamiliar, “I may face some difficulties if the topic is unfamiliar” (IT-P4, Dif, L114-L115).

C. Following instruction

In this component, only one participant of the study who stated that it’s hard to follow instruction from the lecturer, “sometimes there’s time I can’t understand what the lecturer wants and the example that they gave sometimes too complex for me to understand.” (IT-P3, Dif, L184-L186). She explained that it’s not happened really often, and it is mainly caused by the example given by the lecturer that’s too complex to be understood.

3. Psychological Aspect

In this aspect, participants of the study were asked whether they faced any psychological problems when writing argumentative essay. And based on the result of the interview, all participants claimed that they have faced psychological issues when writing argumentative essay.

As revealed by two participants, they explained that they got stressed when writing argumentative essay, “sometimes writing argumentative made me stressed because I have to think a lot about my arguments when writing an argumentative essay.” (IT-P1, Dif, L169-L170). In addition to the previous statement, another participant also agreed that writing argumentative essay could be stressful if there are only a few supporting data on the internet, “I got stress when the topic is too hard and there are only few supporting data on the internet.” (IT-P2, Dif, L131-L132).

Furthermore, the last participant mentioned another issue that differs from the previous ones; laziness. “... when I feel confused on how to write or to address the idea that I got on the internet to my essay, I got lazy to continue my writing” (IT-P4, Dif, L131-L132).

To sum up, there were some issues related to psychological problem that faced by the participant when writing argumentative essay. Such as stress and laziness.

4.2. Students strategies to solve their difficulties in writing argumentative essay

1. Linguistic aspects

A. Sentence structure

The result of the documents study and interviews showed there were two participants of the study who faced difficulties in sentence structure. In order to overcome their difficulties, they mentioned several strategies as follows,

“I translate my writing from Bahasa Indonesia to English.” (IT-P3, Sol, L34)

“I usually check my sentence in grammar checker online to see if there’s any mistake or not” (IT-P4, Sol, L27-L28)

Based on the excerpts above, the first strategy mentioned was translating sentences to English (using of L1), and using grammar checker tool (clarification) to check sentence

structure of the essay. According to Mu (2005), The first strategy mentioned was classified into rhetorical strategy, and the latter was classified as rhetorical strategy.

B. Grammar

The result of documents study and interviews revealed that all participants of the study faced difficulties in grammar. To overcome the difficulties they had various strategies as follows,

“I checked my work on Grammarly” (IT-P2, Sol, L29)

“I use Grammarly to check my writing.. or sometimes when I feel a bit confused about something I would search it in the internet” (IT-P4, Dif, L35-L36).

“I read the context of the sentence, when did it take place, yeah, I just see the situation of the sentence. And also I do googling to help me figure out about the grammar structure because I don’t remember the structure of each tenses” (IT-P3, Sol, L44-L47)

“I open my notebook to recall my memories or I search on the internet” (IT-P1, Sol, L50)

The excerpts above showed that P2 and P4 had similar strategy which is the use of online grammar checker tool (clarification) to solve their difficulty. Furthermore, P3 and P1 who had difficulties in tenses and grammar structure mentioned that they used the internet (resourcing) to deal with the difficulty they faced.

C. Spelling and punctuation

In spelling, only one out of four participants of the study who admit that he often found typos in his essay, and his solution to it was revised the word that was not spelled correctly, *“I revised it”* (IT-P1, Sol, L59). This strategy was classified into cognitive strategy based on Mu (2005).

On the other hand, there were three participants of the study who claimed that they faced difficulties in punctuation. Three of them had similar strategies to solve their difficulties. They told the researcher that they used internet (resourcing) to search for more explanation and examples about punctuation, *“I search the example in the internet and try to read from my note.”* (IT-P1, Sol, L82-L83). Other participants also agreed with the previous statement, *“I try to look at the internet for more explanation or example”* (IT-P2, Sol, L43) and, *“I search for explanation and examples in the internet”* (IT-P4, Sol, L44).

D. Diction

Based on the interview, all participants of the study faced difficulties in finding the right diction for their essay, and their strategies to solve those problems were quite similar to one another.

P1 explained that he searched the word on the internet and dictionary, *“I search the internet and then I read the word in the dictionary”* (IT-P1, Sol, L87). P2 also had similar method as mentioned by the previous participant, *“I try to search the word and the meaning of it in the dictionary and I try to understand the context of the sentence of decide which diction suits the context.”* (IT-P2, Sol, L50-L52). The previous statement was supported by other participant who also use dictionary to help her find the right diction for her essay, *“I try to understand the context of the sentence then I try to find the word in the dictionary”* (IT-P4, Sol, L50-L51). Another strategies mentioned by one participant of the study was translating the word, *“I try to translate the word from Indonesia to English, then I search the explanation of the word on the dictionary like Oxford or Merriam Webster”* (IT-P3, Sol, L66-L67).

E. Connectors

The result of the interviews showed that there were two participants of the study who faced difficulties in finding connectors. And they had similar strategies as follows,

“I often look up on the internet to see some examples and explanations about it” (IT-P1, Sol, L106-107)

“I opened up my notebook to see the list” (IT-P4, Sol, L58)

Based on the excerpts above, P1 explained that she searched for examples and explanations about connectors on the internet (resourcing). Besides, the strategy used P4 was differ from the previous one, she explained that she checked her notes to see the connectors list (resourcing). These two strategies was classified into social/affective strategy.

F. Linking the paragraph

In linking the paragraph, all participants of the study have varied strategies to solve their problems. P1 explained that since he only knew few linking words or conjunctive adverbs to link his paragraph, so he search for other conjunctive adverbs for his essay on the internet, “I try to find conjunctive adverbs that can link my paragraph” (IT-P1, Sol, L118). Similar to P1, P2 also had same strategies to solve her difficulties in finding the right linking words, “*I read my notebook or I search about it in the internet*” (IT-P2, Sol, L75).

Meanwhile, there’s a strategy mentioned by P3 that differ from other participants of the study. She explained that she revised her paragraph to make it linked to one another and asked for feedback from her friends, “*I revise it to make it linked, then usually I asked my friends to read my essay and ask for feedback from them*” (IT-P3, Sol, L101-L102). Unlike P3, strategies explained by P4 is similar with P1 and P2 who used the internet to help her solve her problems in finding the right linking words, “*I searched for the linking words lists on the internet, and also the explanation of it*” (IT-P4, Sol, L70-L71).

G. Coherence

The result of the interview showed that there was one participant of the study who admit that he faced difficulties in making his essay coherent. To solve the difficulty, her strategy was by read and focus to the thesis statement (planning). Based on Mu (2005), this writing strategy classified into meta-cognitive strategy.

H. Paraphrasing

There are two strategies mentioned by three participants of the study regarding to the difficulties in paraphrasing a sentence. The first mentioned strategy was searching for synonym of the word in the dictionary, and the second strategy was by using an online paraphrasing tool.

2. Cognitive aspects

A. Idea organization

Most participants of the study faced difficulties in idea organization if the topic given was not familiar with them. Their strategies to solve the difficulties is similar to one another. They mainly used the internet to access articles or other supporting data related to the topic given, “*I will search about the news or articles related to the topic in the internet, so I have background information of it to organize the idea*” (IT-P4, Sol, L98-L99). The previous statement supported by other participant who explained that she also used internet to help her organized her idea in argumentative essay, “*I search for news or articles related to the topic on the internet, or I search for another essay for references.*” (IT-P3, Sol, L136-L137).

B. Addressing topic

There are two participants who admit that they faced difficulty in this aspect. P3 who stated that she found it difficult addressing a topic in argumentative essay if she couldn’t find supporting data to support her argument, and her strategy to it is search for other references to support her argument, “*I revise it, I search for another sources to support my argument*” (IT-P3, Sol, L170).

Furthermore, P4 who explained her difficulties in addressing topic in argumentative essay is when the topic given is unfamiliar with her. And her strategy to solve her difficulties is did some research about the topic, “*I do research about the related topic, so I can address the topic well*” (IT-P4, Sol, L119-L120).

C. Following topic

Based on the interview, participants of the study have various strategies in solving their problems in following topic when writing argumentative essay. P2 explained that she used the

internet to search for data related to the topic and she also asked her friends to discuss about her problem. On the other hand, P3 explained her strategies to solve her difficulties is by reading more articles and references related to the topic.

D. Following instruction

In this component, there's only one participant of the study who claimed that she sometimes faced difficulties in following instruction from the lecturer. And her strategies to it is by asking her friends opinion about the instruction given by the lecturer, "*usually I ask my friends for help, what do they think about the instruction*" (IT-P3, Sol, L188-L189).

3. Psychological aspect

In this aspect, all participants admit that they faced psychological issues when writing argumentative essay. P1 explained that he tried to read many data from the internet to reduce his stress when writing argumentative essay. Meanwhile P2 had different strategies in facing her stress. She tried to calm herself and took a nap to make her mood got better. Similar to the previous statement, P3 also took a short break from writing to relax her mind. Furthermore, P4 also agreed with P2 and P3. She explained that whenever she become lazy to continue her writing, she would take a break before continue her writing.

4.3. Discussion

Based on the result of the interview, the researcher found that in linguistic aspect the most dominant difficulties mentioned by the students are grammar, diction, and linking the paragraph. These difficulties were similar with the study carried out by Kakandee & Kaur (2014) whereby they revealed that the main difficulties faced by Thai EFL English major students were vocabulary (diction) and grammar structure. Moreover, the result of the interview also showed that punctuation and paraphrasing were the next most common difficulties in linguistic aspect faced by the students. This findings were inline with the findings of Peloghitis (2016) where he explained that the 1st-year Japanese students faced difficulties in finding the right punctuation and paraphrasing when writing argumentative essay. Other linguistic difficulties such as concerns about sentence structure, connectors, and coherence were also indicated. These findings showed that in writing argumentative essay, many EFL students faced similar problem in linguistic aspect. It may caused by the language differences between L1 and L2.

The findings on the interview regarding difficulties in cognitive aspect showed that the most difficulty faced by the students in writing argumentative essay was idea organization. The students explained that they faced difficulties in finding valid evidences to support the thesis statement to how to write a good thesis statement to convince readers. The finding of this study was similar to the study carried out by Kakandee & Kaur (2014) who revealed that this difficulty was one of the most dominant problem faced by the Thai EFL English major students. In addition, a study by Peloghitis (2016) also reported that organizing idea was the most difficult problem faced by the Japanese EFL students. Moreover, the result of the interview also showed that the participants of the study faced problems in addressing topic and following instruction. These findings was differ from the previous studies related to problems in argumentative essay writing.

Then in the psychological aspect, the result of the interview indicated that all participants of the study faced psychological problems when writing argumentative essay. The problems mentioned are stress and laziness. These was a bit different from Rahmatunisa (2014) who mentioned egoism, bad mood, and difficulties to start writing as the difficulties regarding to psychological problems faced by the Indonesian EFL students. This may happen because human psychology and emotion are complex. So there are many possibilities of answers regarding to this aspect.

As regards to the second research question, the result of the interviews indicate that the participants of the study were resourceful learners because they used a variety of strategies to

facilitate their writing and overcome problems they faced in writing argumentative essay. The strategies used by the students in linguistic aspect are translating (using of L1) and checking their sentences using grammar checker online (clarification) to solve their problems in grammar and sentence structure. Besides, they also used revising as their strategy in spelling and in linking the paragraph, and this strategy is in line with the study of Peloghitis (2016). Another strategy mentioned by the participants is searching for examples and explanations on the internet (resourcing). They used this strategy to solve their difficulties in finding the correct punctuation and connectors for their paragraph. Furthermore, they used dictionary (resourcing) to help them finding the correct diction and to help them in paraphrasing by finding synonym of a word.

In addition to the previous aspect, there are some strategies used by the participants to solve their problems in cognitive and psychological aspects. Their main strategy to solve their problems in cognitive aspect is by gathering ideas about the topic of argumentative on the internet (generating ideas). They will search many supporting data and references related to the topic such as articles, news, or journals so they can organize their idea and address the topic when writing argumentative essay. This strategy is similar with finding to the study conducted by Peloghitis (2016), where he found that generating ideas was the most frequently used strategy by the participants of his study. On the other hand, their strategies to solve their problems in psychological aspect are varied to one another. One mentioned that by reading many references can make him feel better about the stress when he wrote argumentative essay. Another participant explained that she would take a little break from writing so she could continue her writing. Moreover, another participant added that taking a short nap could make her mood get better to continue her work.

5. Conclusion and Suggestions

5.1 Conclusion

1. Difficulties in writing argumentative essay

In linguistic aspect, participants of the interview mentioned that the most dominant difficulties that they faced were grammar, finding the correct diction, and in linking the paragraph. Other difficulties reported by the participants included paraphrasing, finding the right punctuation and connector, sentence structure and in making essay to be coherent.

In cognitive aspect, there are several difficulties mentioned by the participants of the interview. Based on the result of the interview, the most common difficulty mentioned by the participants was idea organization, then followed by addressing topic and following topic. Moreover, one participant of the study also reported that she faced difficulty in following instruction from the lecturer.

In psychological aspect, participants of the interview explained varied problems that they faced when writing argumentative essay. The problems mentioned are stress and laziness.

2. Strategies to solve the difficulties in writing argumentative essay

The strategies that they have to solve their difficulties in writing argumentative essay are varied. Most participants of the study explained that they used the internet to search about explanation about the topics of argumentative essay, so they can organize their idea and address the topic well when writing argumentative essay. They also used the internet to search for examples of a correct punctuation and connectors for their paragraph. Besides, they also used translating and using grammar checker online to solve their problems in grammar and sentence structure. Other strategies mentioned by the participants are revising to solve their problems in spelling and in linking the paragraph. Moreover, participants of the interview also explained that they used the dictionary to find synonym of a word and to find a correct diction for their writing. Furthermore, participants of the interview also mentioned several strategies

to solve their problems related to psychological aspect. The strategies are read many references on the internet, took a quick nap, and took a short break from writing.

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