

***A STUDY ON THE ABILITY OF THE THIRD YEAR STUDENTS OF  
THE ENGLISH STUDY PROGRAM OF FKIP RIAU UNIVERSITY  
IN WRITING A NARRATIVE ESSAY***

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**Abstract:** *The objective of this study is to find out the level ability of the third year students of the English Study Program of FKIP Riau University in writing a narrative essay. The research design is a descriptive quantitative research. There are 25 students chosen as the samples of this research. The instrument of the research was a written test that was assessed by the three raters by referring Heaton's scoring guide and Harris' measurement. It was found that 3 students (12%) were in excellent level, 12 students (48%) were in good level, 9 students (36%) were in mediocre level, 1 student (4%) was in poor level, and there was no student in very poor level. It can be concluded that the students can write a narrative essay with the average score was 65,15. Overall, the students' problems were dominated in category of language usage. Most of students made a lot mistakes in using tenses and constructing sentences.*

**Key Words:** *Students, Ability, Writing, Narrative Essay*

## **KEMAMPUAN MAHASISWA TAHUN KETIGA PROGRAM STUDI BAHASA INGGRIS FKIP UNIVERSITAS RIAU DALAM MENULIS SEBUAH KARANGAN NARASI**

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**Abstrak:** Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui level kemampuan mahasiswa tahun ketiga di Program Studi Bahasa Inggris FKIP Universitas Riau dalam menulis sebuah karangan narasi. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian deskriptif kuantitatif. Terdapat 25 mahasiswa yang dijadikan sampel dalam penelitian ini. Instrumen yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah melalui sebuah tes tulis yang dinilai oleh tiga orang penilai berdasarkan scoring dari Heaton dan Harris. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa 2 orang mahasiswa (8%) berkemampuan sangat baik, 12 orang (48%) berkemampuan baik, 9 orang (36%) berkemampuan cukup, seorang mahasiswa masih kurang dalam menulis dan tidak ada satupun mahasiswa dengan kemampuan sangat kurang. Dapat disimpulkan bahwa mahasiswa punya kemampuan yang bagus dalam menulis karangan narasi dengan nilai rata-rata yaitu 65,15 (baik). Keseluruhan, mahasiswa cenderung mengalami kesulitan dalam aspek penggunaan bahasa. Kebanyakan mahasiswa tersebut membuat kesalahan dalam penggunaan dan penyusunan kalimat.

**Kata Kunci:** Mahasisawa, Kemampuan, Menulis, Karangan Narasi

## INTRODUCTION

Writing is a necessary skill to learn in the academic field. Heaton (1975) states there are five components in making a good writing. They are content, organization, vocabulary, language usage, and mechanics. Content is the idea of writing. Organization is about chronological order. Vocabulary is all the words used by the writer. Language usage is about the tenses or the construction in writing. Mechanics is the use of writing spelling, capitalization and punctuation. Those components are necessary for students to learn in order to be a good writer.

Based on the Curriculum of the English Study Program of FKIP Riau University, writing is a compulsory subject, especially as the subject of writing I, writing II and writing III. During these classes, the students are taught several types of essay writing, such as: descriptive, and narrative. The third year students are expected to apply those kinds of essay. Here, the goal of learning writing is to enable the students to write. In this case, the students should apply those essay in their writing activities to make sure that they have the ability in writing.

To be more specific, writing a narrative essay enables students to deliver their knowledge and information, and to communicate with other people in different places. In other words, a narrative essay is an interesting one that offers the students not only to develop their thinking but also to use the sentences in written form. For learning a narrative essay writing, the students should be able to explore ideas because the narrative essay will help the students find the problem around them and they will know how to solve it based on their experiences in the past (Hidayati, 2012).

Based on the writer's experience in writing III class of the English Study Program of FKIP Riau University, many students did not write well and got difficulties in writing a narrative essay. Some of them decided to ask other students to help them in order to finish their writing assignment. They did not know about what should they do and write. There were some reasons that made them unable to write well. First, they have lack background knowledge to develop the writing. Second, they were afraid of making mistake in grammar, and choice of words. Third, they confused with the components or elements of writing. In this research, the writer chose a written test as the instrument to find out the ability level of the third year students of the English Study Program of FKIP Riau University in writing a narrative essay.

## METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted at the English Study Program, Riau University, Pekanbaru, on May 24, 2016. It is a descriptive quantitative research. Ary (1985) states descriptive research is designed to get information focusing on the status of phenomena. It is not directed toward hypothesis testing. There is no treatment or control as in the experimental study. The objective is to describe what exists with respect to the condition in a situation. As mentioned before, the objective of this study is to find out the ability level of the third year students of the English Study Program of FKIP Riau University in writing a narrative essay. It is also quantitative in a sense that the writer deals more with numerical data than qualitative data.

Fraenkel and Wallen (1993) state that population is the group whom the results of the study are intended to apply. In this study, the population is the third year students of the English Study Program of FKIP Riau University. There were 74 students registered at the English Study Program. They were divided into three different classes, namely class A, class B and class C.

A sample is a group of subjects from whom the data are collected to select the sample. Cluster random sampling was used. Each group has similar characteristics: the time allocation, lecturer and learning material. In this case, the sample selection is determined by having similar characteristics. Then, this technique involves efficient time. As mentioned before, the writer decided to use cluster random sampling as a technique to get the sample as proposed by Gay (2000).

In this study, the procedures to choose the samples were first, the writer provided three papers and one piece of papers written with the word SAMPLE. Then, the papers were scrolled and put in a box. The writer asked all chairmen of classes to get one piece from the box. The chairman of class B who got the paper with word of SAMPLE was taken as the sample. In this study, out of three classes, the students for class B was selected as the sample (25 students).

The instrument of this research was a written test. The test was designed by the researcher by following the suggestions from Heaton (1975), Hudge (1993) and Harris (1974). The test consists of five sub-indicators: content, organization, vocabulary, language usage and mechanics. It is shown by the blueprint below:

**Table 1. The Blueprint of a Narrative Essay**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Sub-Indicators</b>
<b>Narrative Essay</b>	1. The generic structure of a narrative essay 2. Language features of a narrative essay	1. Content 2. Organization 3. Vocabulary 4. Language Usage 5. Mechanics

Then, the students' writings were checked by three raters. They were qualified as rater based on their experiences. They were Ernofalina, M.Pd (English Teacher at SMAN 8 Pekanbaru), Risna Murida, S.Pd (Teacher at SMAN 8 Pekanbaru) and Neli Indrayani, S.Pd (English Teacher at SMKN Taruna Pekanbaru). The writer calculated the average score from them and they became the students' scores. The students' scores were calculated by using Harris (1986) writing assessment as follows:

**Table 2. The Measurement of the Students' Ability**

<b>Score</b>	<b>Level of Ability</b>
<b>81-100</b>	Excellent
<b>61-80</b>	Good
<b>41-60</b>	Mediocre
<b>21-40</b>	Poor
<b>0-20</b>	Very Poor

In scoring the students' writings, the writer used the scoring guide by Heaton (1975) as follows:

**Table 3.The Scoring Guidance**

<b>Ability Level</b>	<b>The Aspect of Writing</b>	<b>The Score</b>
	<b>Content</b> ( the content must be about experience or story in the past)	<b>30</b>
<b>Excellent</b>	knowledgeable-substantive	<b>27 – 30</b>
<b>Good</b>	some knowledge of subject – adequate – range	<b>22 – 26</b>
<b>Mediocre</b>	limited knowledge of subject - little substance	<b>17 – 21</b>
<b>Poor</b>	does not show knowledge of subject – non-substantive	<b>13 – 16</b>
	<b>Organization</b> (the idea stated chronologically and clear )	<b>20</b>
<b>Excellent</b>	fluent expression – ideas clearly stated	<b>18 – 20</b>
<b>Good</b>	somewhat choppy – closely organized but main ideas stand out	<b>14 – 17</b>
<b>Mediocre</b>	non – fluent – ideas confused or disconnected	<b>10 – 13</b>
<b>Poor</b>	does not communicate – no organization	<b>7 – 9</b>
	<b>Vocabulary</b> (the words are effective and the verbs used are vivid and precise )	<b>20</b>
<b>Excellent</b>	sophisticated range – effective word / idiom form, choice and usage	<b>18 – 20</b>
<b>Good</b>	adequate range – occasional errors of word / idiom form, choice, usage but meaning not obscured	<b>14 – 17</b>
<b>Mediocre</b>	limited range – frequent errors of word / idiom form, choice, usage	<b>10 – 13</b>
<b>Poor</b>	essentially translation – little knowledge of English vocabulary	<b>7 – 9</b>
	<b>Language Usage</b> (the correct construction and use of simple past tense)	<b>25</b>
<b>Excellent</b>	effective complex constructions	<b>22 – 25</b>
<b>Good</b>	effective but simple construction	<b>18 – 21</b>
<b>Mediocre</b>	major problem in simple / complex constructions	<b>11 – 17</b>
<b>Poor</b>	virtually no mastery of sentence constructions rules	<b>5 - 10</b>
	<b>Mechanics</b> (the punctuation for conversation text must be clear- if any)	<b>5</b>
<b>Excellent</b>	demonstrates mastery of conventions	<b>5</b>
<b>Good</b>	occasional errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization	<b>4</b>
<b>Mediocre</b>	frequent errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization	<b>3</b>
<b>Poor</b>	no mastery of conventions – dominated by errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing	<b>2</b>
<b>The Maximum Score</b>		<b>100</b>

To get the total score of each student, the writer used following formula as follows:

$$TS = C + O + V + L + M$$

Where: TS : Total Score  
 C : Student's ability in Content  
 O : Student's ability in Organization  
 V : Student's ability in Vocabulary  
 L : Student's ability in Language Usage  
 M : Student's ability in Mechanics

To know the score of each student from three raters, the following formula used:

$$A = \frac{R1 + R2 + R3}{3}$$

Where: A : Average Score  
 R1 : Students' scores according to Rater 1  
 R2 : Students' scores according to Rater 2  
 R3 : Students' scores according to Rater 3

To know the percentage of the students' ability in writing a narrative essay, the following formula used:

$$P = \frac{f}{N} \times 100$$

Where:  
 P : Percentage  
 f : Frequency  
 N : The number of the students

## RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Research Findings

To get the data, the writer conducted a written test and asked students to choose one of three topics. The topics were "my childhood memory, my unforgettable experience and how my life has changed" (see in appendix 1). Based on the writer's observation, most of them (72%) decided to choose the topic of "my unforgettable experience" to be developed. The students' writings were measured by using Harris

(1986) writing assessment. The following table presents the level of students' writings ability according to three raters:

**Table 4. The Students' Score According to Three Raters**

No	Classification		Frequency	Percentage
	Test score	Ability level		
1	81-100	Excellent	3	12%
2	61-80	Good	12	48%
3	41-60	Mediocre	9	36%
4	21-40	Poor	1	4%
5	0 -20	Very poor	0	0%
<b>Total</b>			<b>25</b>	<b>100%</b>

It shows that the ability level of the third year students of the English Study Program of FKIP Riau University in writing a narrative essay was in *good* level. In details, 3 students (12%) were in *excellent* level with the score range 81-100. It means that they could write a narrative essay well. Then, 12 students (48%) were in *good* level with the score range 61-80. It means that they had good ability in writing a narrative essay. After that, 9 students (36%) were in *mediocre* level with the score range 41-60. Then, 1 student (4%) was in *poor* level with the score range 21-40. It means that there was a student who had poor ability in writing a narrative essay and she or he needs more practice to improve it. Finally, there was no student in *very poor* level.

After describing the students' ability in writing a narrative essay, it was necessary to know their ability in each aspect of writing. The writer presents the following classification of the students' ability in each aspect of writing as follows:

**Table 5. The Students' Ability for Each Aspect of Writing According to Three Raters**

No	Aspects of writing	Average score	Ability level
1	Content	66	Good
2	Organization	69	Good
3	Vocabulary	67.8	Good
4	Language Usage	55.3	Mediocre
5	Mechanics	64	Good

## Discussion and the Interpretation of the Data

Based on the findings, it can be inferred that the third year students of the FKIP of Riau University could write a narrative essay quite well. They were good in the aspects of content, organization, vocabulary and mechanics. But, they still had difficulty in language usage aspect. Most of students made a lot mistakes in using tenses and constructing sentences as some examples mentioned in the following section. This finding is different from Gita's study (2012) in which the students' ability in writing narrative paragraphs by using picture series at SMPI Sunan Kalijaga Jember was classified into poor category (mean: 57.26). They had difficulties in the aspects of

grammar and organization. In contrast, this study was categorized into *good* level with the average score 65,15. It means that the result of this study was better than Gita's study (2012).

Futhermore, the following sections describe the students' writings ability based on each aspect of writing:

## Content

Content is the most important aspect in writing. How the students express and deliver the ideas can be identified in the content. The teacher will know the students' ability from analyzing it. According to Heaton (1975), content in a narrative essay must be about experience or story in the past.

In this study, the students' ability in terms of content was in *good* level (66). Based on the data checked by the three raters, some of students did write well. They expressed the ideas clearly in the first paragraph until the last. This can be seen in the following example:

*"There were actually a lots of memorable moment in my life that were so unforgettable that I cannot forget ever after. Moreover, there was one time I consider as an experience "La Decima" in 2012 and I could not stop crying like crazy".....*

## Organization

Organization shows the story chronologically (Heaton, 1975). The writer should pay more attention to this aspect to make the reader easy to catch the ideas of writing. The organization of a narrative essay consists of beginning, complication and ending.

In this study, the writer found that the students' writings ability in terms of organization was in *good* level (69). Some of the students have already known about the organization of writing. Some of them just wrote several sentences without having a well organization. This unorganized sentence expressed the ideas unclearly. There was no a thesis statement in the first paragraph. The following example is one of students' writings that the idea of first paragraph was not delivered well.

*"My name is Lydia Kusyanti Tasya. I am the student of English Department. Now, I am in the sixth semester of my study."*  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 (there was no thesis statement)

*Everybody has their own dreams, including me. One of my biggest dream is go abroad. In 16<sup>th</sup> May 2016, is the first day, first experience of me to go abroad."*

This paragraph may be improved with the following new organization:

*My name is Lydia Kusyanti Tasya. I am the sixth semester student of English Study Program of Riau University. Everybody has his own dreams, including me. One of my biggest dreams was going abroad. (There is a thesis statement)*

*On May 16, 2016 was my first experience to go abroad.*



## Vocabulary

Vocabulary is the basic aspect of language proficiency, especially in writing. In this study, vocabulary aspect was in *good* level (67,8). Based on the students' writings, there were some students who still lacked of vocabulary. They got difficulties in delivering ideas because of limited vocabulary. Then, most of students were using the monotonous vocabulary to express the different meaning. They often used the repetition words that influenced their writing. It can be seen from the representative of students' writings as follows:

*"...like usual, I went to my friend's home to join them played together. When I asked my friend to played the marbles, my friend didn't want played marbles. So, my friends want played swing at my home"*

## Language Usage

Having a good ability in language usage helps the students avoid misunderstanding in interpreting the meaning. In the context of this study, language usage is about the correct construction and use of simple past tense (Heaton, 1975). The level ability of the third year students was in *mediocre* level (55.3). Based on writer's analysis, most of students made a lot mistakes in using tenses and constructing sentences. In a narrative essay, the students have to use simple past tense, but most of them often used simple present tense. It can be seen in the following example:

*"Three years ago, there is something that make me feeling surprise. When I graduated of Senior High School and want to continue my study in University, especially, in one of universities in pekanbaru....I can continue my study in English Department of Riau University"*

## Mechanics

Mechanics deals with spelling, capitalization and punctuation of writing. The use of mechanics in writing can avoid ambiguities for the readers in comprehending and understanding the story. Here, the students have to focus on this aspect. Based on the data, the result showed that the students' ability in mechanics aspect was in *good* level (64). Some of them had difficulty in the aspects of mechanics. The students wrote without paying attention more about this aspect, especially in terms of the spelling error, for example:

*"...At the same time\_ we practive how to make bandages for victims when the disaster happens. At the same time\_ we also have done direct resquing when there a lots of victims of disaster and the committee turned on the sirine"*

After analyzing all the related studies, it was found that this study has similar problem with other related studies (Hidayati, 2012, Gita, 2012 and Barokatul, 2013). Most studies indicate that the most common problem faced by the students in writing a narrative essay are in terms of grammar or language usage (See Hidayati, 2012 and Gita, 2012). This is also confirmed by the findings of this study. However, another study by Barokatul (2013) reported a slightly different finding. She found that the main problem faced by her participants was in term of mechanics.

## CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that the ability level of the third year students of the English Study Program of FKIP Riau University in writing a narrative essay was in *good* level with the average score 65,15. In details, 3 students (12%) were in *excellent* level with the score range 81-100. It means that they could write a narrative essay well. Then, 12 students (48%) were in *good* level with the score range 61-80. It means that they had good ability in writing a narrative essay. After that, 9 students (36%) were in *mediocre* level with the score range 41-60. Then, 1 student (4%) was in *poor* level with the score range 21-40. It means that there was a student who had poor ability in writing a narrative essay and she or he needs more practice to improve it. Finally, there was no student in *very poor* level.

Based on writer's analysis, the writer found that the students' main problem was dominated by *language usage* aspect with the average score was 55,3. It was difficult for the students in constructing sentences and using tenses appropriately and correctly. They need to learn and practice it more in this aspect to develop their writing.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusion above, it is revealed that the ability of the third year students of FKIP Riau University were *good* in writing a narrative essay. Here, the writer would like to give some recommendations for the students, teachers and next researchers.

For the students, they should pay more attention to language usage aspect. This aspect was the main problem for the third year students. They should improve their ability in writing by practicing it more and having a good motivation to learn more about the language usage, so that they can avoid misinterpretation in their writing.

For the teachers, they should provide more interesting topic assignments or practices to train the students to write well. A teacher has an important role in order to improve and assess the students' writings. So, the students will know their mistakes and know how to improve their weaknesses in writing.

For the next researchers, the writer realizes this research is far from perfect. However, the writer still expects that the other researchers can use this research as a reference to conduct further research. They can continue this study by using appropriate teaching methods to improve the students' ability in writing a narrative essay.

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