

**A STUDY ON THE ABILITY OF THE FIFTH SEMESTER ENGLISH STUDY
PROGRAM STUDENTS OF FKIP UR IN WRITING ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAYS**

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Abstract

Writing in college often takes the form of persuasion. It should be convincing, interesting, and attracting readers. In college, course assignments often ask students to make a persuasive case in writing such as analytical essay, expository essay, and argumentative essay. One kind of essays that is important and useful in academic life is argumentative essay. In this kind of essay, students are asked to convince the readers of their points of view. This article is based on descriptive research which focuses on checking the ability of the fifth semester students in writing argumentative essay.

Keyword: *Descriptive Research, Writing, Ability, Argumentative Essay.*

INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of productive skills. Writing encourages students to explore many aspects in language learning process. Raimes and Allen (1983) say that writing helps students to learn several things. Firstly, writing reinforces grammatical structures, idioms, and vocabularies. To have a good writing, the students have knowledge on sentence structure, writing styles and sufficient vocabulary. Secondly, the students have a chance to be adventurous with the language and go beyond what they have just learned to say when they write. They are asked to be creative and imaginative. And the last, they necessarily become very concerned with a new language when they write.

According to Andersson et al. (2007), an academic essay is defined as a document that has a defined structure; they are an introduction, a body and a conclusion. In writing an essay, there are three main parts (Oshima et al. 1978), they are:

1. An introductory paragraph.
It attracts the reader's attention and gives information to the readers what the main topic of discussion will be. An introductory paragraph has two parts:
 - a. General Statement
 - b. Thesis Statement
2. Body.
It discusses the major point, one by one. It contains as many paragraphs as necessary to explain the controlling ideas in the thesis statement.
3. Conclusion
It reminds the reader of what have been said in essay.

Writing is a required subject for English Study Program students in Teachers' Training and Education Faculty of Riau University. Levine (2002) identifies some problems that are faced by students such as trouble in generating ideas or elaborating them, difficulty in developing and organizing ideas, lack of opinion or sense of audience, and difficulty in writing tasks that require creativity and/or critical thinking. Based on writer's observation, students got difficulty in writing argumentative essay. First, it is difficulty in constructing thesis statement. Then, they got difficulty in telling what plan to argue in the thesis statements and they were confused how to develop a thesis statement by reflecting the full scope of the arguments.

Tardiff and Brizzee (2010) state that an argumentative essay is an essay that makes a claim about a topic and justifies this claim with specific evidence which could be an opinion, a policy proposal, an evaluation, a cause-and-effect statement, or an interpretation. The goal of the argumentative essay is to convince the audience that the claim is true based on the evidence provided.

Bowell and Kemp (2002) define argument as "an attempt to persuade by giving good reasons to an argument". It means that to persuade readers, a writer should give good arguments. They further mention that critical thinkers should be interested in arguments primarily by providing us with good reasons for acting or believing.

Valli (2007) states that academic argument is related to what should happen. It is a kind of argument that concerned with questions being asked for analysis and evaluation. Not all essay questions involve controversy. Some are aimed at practising the discipline's method.

Reid (1982) states that there are three goals of argumentation, they are:

1. To present a viewpoint to the reader.
Here, a writer gives him/her viewpoint about a topic to the reader.
2. To explain, clarify, and illustrate that viewpoint
In the main point of argumentative essay, a writer should give a brief explanation about his/her viewpoint. After that, clarification and illustration are important things to support the writer's argument.
3. To persuade the reader that the viewpoint is valid.

According to Endy (2001), here is a very brief outline of argumentative essay:

<p>0. TITLE</p> <p>1. INTRODUCTION: explain the thesis precisely without presenting the evidence yet.</p> <p>2. BODY</p> <p>Paragraph #1</p> <p>Topic sentence (main argument of the paragraph)</p> <p>Specific examples to support the topic sentence</p>
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Paragraph #2, and so on
 Same as Paragraph #1
 3. CONCLUSION: quick summary of thesis.

The students should pay attention to the aspects of writing an argumentative essay. They are grammar, vocabulary, mechanics, organization, and fluency. (Harris in Hughes 1989).

This article presented the ability of the fifth semester English Study Program of FKIP Riau University. The discussion is based on the result of the students' scores in writing argumentative essays. Specifically, this study attempted to answer the following questions: "How is the ability of the fifth semester students of English Study Program of FKIP-UR in writing argumentative essays?"

METHODOLOGY

This is a descriptive research that has only one variable. Gay (1976) says that a descriptive research involves collecting the data or to answer questions concerning the status of the object of the research. In this research, the sampling technique is cluster sampling. According to Gay, cluster sampling is randomly selects the group, not individuals. All the members of selected groups have similar characteristics. There are two classes, A and B, and the writer chose one class to become a sample by lottery. The writer selected the class randomly by preparing two pieces of paper; one paper is written "SAMPLE", another is blank paper. The chairmen were asked to take the paper. In this research, class B became the sample (25 participants). To get the data, the writer used a written test focusing on writing argumentative essays. The time given to the students to write the essay was sixty minutes for two topics. In this test, the students should pay attention to the aspects of writing argumentative essays. They are grammar, vocabulary, mechanics, organization, and fluency.

In scoring the students' composition, the writer uses Harris (1974) to find out the scoring system of writing ability as follows:

Table 1. The Scoring System of Writing

No	The Aspect of Writing To Be Evaluated	The Score Range
1	The Accuracy in Grammar	5 : 4 : 3 : 2 : 1
2	Vocabulary	5 : 4 : 3 : 2 : 1
3	Mechanics	5 : 4 : 3 : 2 : 1
4	Form/ Organization	5 : 4 : 3 : 2 : 1
5	Fluency	5 : 4 : 3 : 2 : 1

Table 2. The Interpretation of the Students' Ability Level based on Their Scores

No	Test Score	Level of Ability
1.	81-100	Excellent
2.	61-80	Good
3.	41-60	Mediocre
4.	21-40	Poor
5.	0-20	Very Poor

To know the average score of students, the writer uses the formula by Hatch & Farhady (1982).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

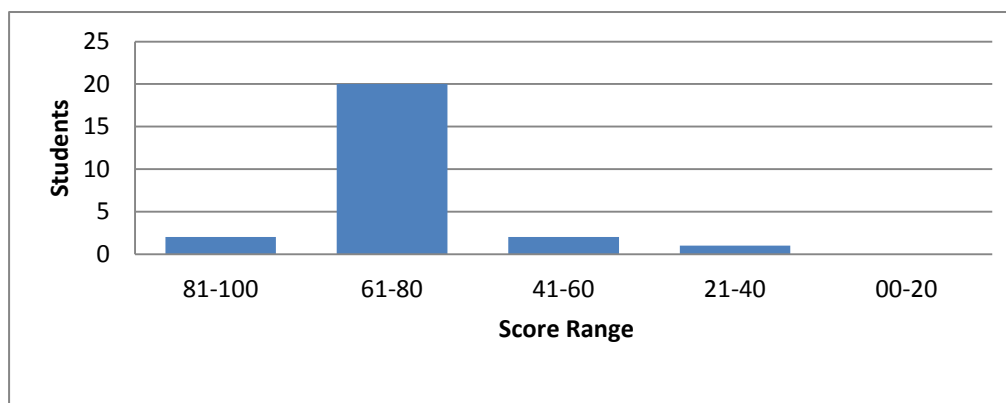
After the research, the writer found out the ability of the students in writing argumentative essays based on their scores for all aspects in writing argumentative essays.

Table 3. The Percentages of the Students' Ability According to the Three Raters

No	Classification		Frequency	%
	Score Range	Level of Ability		
1	81-100	Excellent	2	8
2	61-80	Good	20	80
3	41-60	Mediocre	2	8
4	21-40	Poor	1	4
5	00-20	Very Poor	0	0
Total			25 students	100

In general, according to the three raters, the fifth semester students in English Study Program are good in writing argumentative essays. It can be seen from table 2 that out of 25 students, 20 students (80 %) are in good level, while 1 student (4 %) is in poor level. 2 students (8 %) are in mediocre level, and 2 students (8 %) are in excellent level. The ability in students' writing can be seen in graph 1.

Graph 1. The Fifth Semester Students Ability in Writing Argumentative Essays



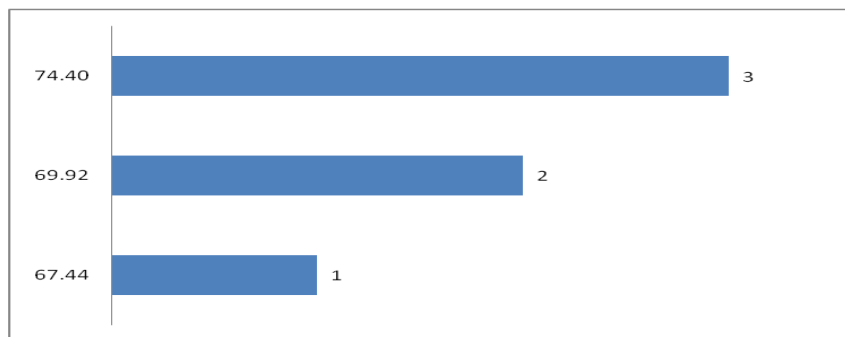
Next, the writer calculated the students' mean scores obtained from the three raters as follows:

Table 4. The Mean Score of the Student in Writing Argumentative Essays According to the Three Raters

Rater	Total Score	Mean	Level of Ability
1	1686	67.44	Good
2	1748	69.92	Good
3	1860	74.40	Good
Total		1765.3	
Mean score		70.61	Good

Table 4 shows that the mean score of the students according to the first rater is 67.44, according to the second rater is 69.92, and according to the third rater is 74.40. Overall, the mean score is 70.61 (good level). The result of students' mean scores can be seen as in graph 2.

Graph 2. The Mean Score of the Students in Writing Argumentative Essays



The Presentation of the Research Findings for Each Aspect of Writing

The data gathered in the research findings about the students' ability in writing argumentative each aspect of writing can be seen in table 5:

Table 5. The Percentage of the Students' Scores for Each Aspect of Writing the First Topic According to the First Rater

The Score Range	The Aspects of Writing Evaluated									
	Grammar		Vocabulary		Mechanic		Form		Fluency	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4
4	13	52	14	56	11	44	9	36	12	48
3	12	48	10	40	13	52	13	52	10	40
2	0	0	1	4	1	4	3	12	1	4
1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4
	$\sum x = 88$ N = 25 $m = 3.5$ RS = 70		$\sum x = 86$ N = 25 $m = 3.4$ RS = 68		$\sum x = 83$ N = 25 $m = 3.2$ RS = 64		$\sum x = 81$ N = 25 $m = 3.2$ RS = 64		$\sum x = 88$ N = 25 $m = 3.5$ RS = 70	

Notation: F: frequency
 N: number of students
 m: mean score
 RS: real score

Table 5 shows the percentage of the students' scores for each aspect of writing the first topic according to the first rater. In terms of grammar, 13 students (52%) get the score of 4 (good) while 12 students (48%) get the score of 3 (mediocre). Then, in terms of vocabulary, 14 students (56 %) get the score of 4 (good), 10 students (40%) get the score of 3 (mediocre), and 1 student (4%) get the score of 2 (poor). In terms of mechanic, 11 students (44%) get the score of 4 (good), 13 students (52%) get the score of 3 (mediocre), and 1 student (4%) gets the score of 2 (poor). Meanwhile, in terms of form (organization), 9 students (36 %) get the score of 4 (good), 13 students (52%) get the score of 3 (mediocre), and 3 students (12%) get the score of 2 (poor). Last, in terms of fluency, 1 student (4%) gets the score of 5 (excellent) , 12 students (48%) get the score of 4 (good), 10 students (40%) get the score of 3 (mediocre), 1 student (4%) gets the score of 2 (poor), and 1 student (4%) gets the score of 1 (very poor). According to the first rater, the students get the highest mean scores in terms of grammar and fluency. The score is 3.5 (70). The lowest scores are the in terms of mechanic and form. The score is 3.2 (64)

Table 6. The Percentage of the Students' Scores for Each Aspect of Writing the Second Topic According to the First Rater

The Score Range	The Aspects of Writing Evaluated									
	Grammar		Vocabulary		Mechanic		Form		Fluency	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
5	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	0	0
4	14	56	12	48	10	40	8	32	11	44
3	10	40	12	48	14	56	14	56	11	44
2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	2	8
1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	$\sum x = 86$ N = 25 $m = 3.4$ RS = 68		$\sum x = 84$ N = 25 $m = 3.4$ RS = 68		$\sum x = 82$ N = 25 $m = 3.3$ RS = 66		$\sum x = 81$ N = 25 $m = 3.2$ RS = 64		$\sum x = 81$ N = 25 $m = 3.2$ RS = 64	

Notation: **F:** frequency
N: number of students
m: mean score
RS: real score

Table 6 shows the percentage of the students' scores for each aspect of writing the second topic according to first rater. One student (4%) did not make the essay in the second topic. In terms of grammar, 14 students (56%) get the score of 4 (good) while 10 students (40%) get the score of 3 (mediocre). Then, in terms of vocabulary, 12 students (48%) get the score of 4 (good) and 12 students (48%) get the score of 3 (mediocre). In terms of mechanic, 10 students (40%) get the score of 4 (good), 14 students (56%) get the score of 3 (mediocre). Furthermore, in the terms of form (organization), 1 student (4%) gets the score of 5 (excellent), 8 students (32%) get the score of 4 (good), 14 students (56%) get the score of 3, (mediocre) and 1 student (4%) gets the score of 2 (poor). Next, in terms of fluency, 11 students (44%) get the score of 4 (good), 11 students (44%) get the score of 3 (mediocre), and 2 students (8%) get the score of 2 (poor). In the second topic according to the first rater, the students get the highest mean scores in terms of grammar and vocabulary. The score is 3.4 (68). The lowest scores are in terms of form and fluency. The score is 3.2 (64)

Table 7. The Percentage of the Students' Scores for Each Aspect of Writing the First Topic According to the Second Rater

The Score Range	The Aspects of Writing Evaluated									
	Grammar		Vocabulary		Mechanic		Form		Fluency	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
5	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	8	1	4
4	8	32	16	64	15	60	12	48	7	28
3	15	60	9	36	10	40	10	40	17	68
2	2	8	0	0	0	0	1	4	0	0
1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	$\sum x = 81$ N = 25 $m = 3.2$ RS = 64		$\sum x = 91$ N = 25 $m = 3.6$ RS = 72		$\sum x = 90$ N = 25 $m = 3.6$ RS = 72		$\sum x = 88$ N = 25 $m = 3.5$ RS = 70		$\sum x = 84$ N = 25 $m = 3.3$ RS = 66	

Notation: F: frequency
 N: number of students
 m: mean score
 RS: real score

Table 6 shows the percentage of the students' scores for each aspect of writing the first topic according to the second rater. In terms of grammar, 8 students (32%) get the score of 4 (good), 15 students (60%) get the score of 3 (mediocre), and 2 students (8%) get the score of 2 (poor). Then, in terms of vocabulary, 16 students (64%) get the score of 4 (good), and 9 students (36%) get the score of 3 (mediocre). In terms of mechanic, 15 students (60%) get the score of 4 (good) and 10 (40%) get the score of 3 (mediocre). Next, in terms of form (organization), 2 students (4%) get the score of 5 (excellent), 12 students (48%) get the score of 4 (good), 10 students (40%) get the score of 3 (mediocre), and 1 student (4%) gets the score of 2 (poor). Last, in terms of fluency, 1 student (4%) gets 5 (excellent), 7 students (28%) get 4 (good), and 17 students (68%) get 3 (mediocre). According to the second rater, the students get the highest mean scores in terms of vocabulary and mechanic. The score is 3.6 (72). The lowest score is in term of grammar. The score is 3.2 (64).

Table 8. The Percentage of the Students' Scores for Each Aspect of Writing the Second Topic According to the Second Rater

The Score Range	The Aspects of Writing Evaluated									
	Grammar		Vocabulary		Mechanic		Form		Fluency	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4	11	44	20	80	17	68	14	56	11	44
3	13	52	4	16	7	28	10	40	13	52
2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	$\sum x = 83$ N = 25 $m = 3.3$ RS = 66		$\sum x = 92$ N = 25 $m = 3.7$ RS = 74		$\sum x = 89$ N = 25 $m = 3.6$ RS = 72		$\sum x = 86$ N = 25 $m = 3.4$ RS = 68		$\sum x = 83$ N = 25 $m = 3.3$ RS = 66	

Notation: F: frequency
 N: number of students
 m: mean score

RS: real score

Table 8 shows the percentage of the students' scores for each aspect of writing the second topic according to the second rater. From 25 students, one student (4%) did not make an essay. In terms of grammar, 11 students (44%) get the score of 4 (good), 13 students (52%) get the score of 3 (mediocre). Then, in terms of vocabulary, 20 students (80%) get the score of 4 (good), and 4 students (16%) get the score of 3 (mediocre). In terms of mechanic, 17 students (68%) get the score of 4 (good), and 7 students (28%) get the score of 3 (mediocre). Next, in terms of form (organization), 14 students (56%) get the score of 4 (good) and 10 student (40%) get the score of 3 (mediocre). Last, in terms of fluency, 11 students (44%) get the score of 4 (good) and 13 students (52%) get the score of 3 (mediocre). According to the second rater, the students get the highest mean score in terms of vocabulary. The score is 3.7 (74). The lowest mean scores are in terms of grammar and fluency. The score is 3.3 (66).

Table 9. The Percentage of the Students' Scores for Each Aspect of Writing the First Topic According to the Third Rater

The Score Range	The Aspects of Writing Evaluated									
	Grammar		Vocabulary		Mechanic		Form		Fluency	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
5	1	4	6	24	2	8	1	4	5	20
4	19	76	13	52	14	56	10	40	13	52
3	5	20	6	24	9	36	12	48	7	28
2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	8	0	0
1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	$\sum x = 96$ N = 25 $m = 3.8$ RS = 76		$\sum x = 100$ N = 25 $m = 4$ RS = 80		$\sum x = 93$ N = 25 $m = 3.7$ RS = 74		$\sum x = 85$ N = 25 $m = 3.4$ RS = 68		$\sum x = 98$ N = 25 $m = 3.9$ RS = 78	

Notation: F: frequency
 N: number of students
 m: mean score
 RS: real score

Table 9 shows the percentage of the students' scores for each aspect of writing the first topic according to the third rater. From 25 students, in terms of grammar, 1 student (4%) gets the score of 5 (excellent), 19 students (76%) get the score of 4 (good), and 5 students (20%) get the score of 3 (mediocre). In terms of vocabulary, 6 students (24%) get the score of 5 (excellent), 13 students (52%) get the score of 4 (good), and 6 students (24%) get the score of 3 (mediocre). In terms of mechanic, 2 students (8%) get the score of 5(excellent), 14 students (56%) get the score of 4 (good), and 9 students (36%) get the score of 3 (mediocre). In terms of form (organization), 1 student (4%) gets the score of 5 (excellent), 10 students (40%) get the score of 4 (good), 12 students (48%) get the score of 3 (mediocre), and 2 students (8%) get the score of 2 (poor). Last, in terms of fluency, 5 students (20%) get the score of 5 (excellent), 13 students (52%) get the score of 4 (good), and 7 students (28%) get the score of 3 (mediocre). According to the third rater, the students get the highest mean in term of vocabulary. The score is 4 (80). The lowest mean score is in term of form. The score is 3.4 (68).

Table 10. The Percentage of the Students' Scores for Each Aspect of Writing the Second Topic According to the Third Rater

The Score Range	The Aspects of Writing Evaluated									
	Grammar		Vocabulary		Mechanic		Form		Fluency	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
5	3	12	7	28	3	12	1	4	4	16
4	15	60	12	48	13	52	14	56	15	60
3	6	24	5	20	8	32	8	32	4	16
2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	1	4
1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	$\sum x = 93$ N = 25 $m = 3.7$ RS = 74		$\sum x = 98$ N = 25 $m = 3.9$ RS = 78		$\sum x = 91$ N = 25 $m = 3.6$ RS = 72		$\sum x = 87$ N = 25 $m = 3.5$ RS = 70		$\sum x = 94$ N = 25 $m = 3.8$ RS = 76	

Notation: F: frequency
N: number of students
m: mean score
RS: real score

Table 10 shows the percentage of the students' scores for each aspect of writing the second topic according to the third rater. From 25 students, one student (4%) did not write the essay. In terms of grammar, 3 students (12%) get the score of 5 (excellent), 15 students (60%) get the score of 4 (good), and 6 students (24%) get the score of 3 (mediocre). In terms of Vocabulary, 7 students (28%) get the score of 5 (excellent), 12 students (48%) get the score of 4 (good), and 5 students (20%) get the score of 3 (mediocre). In terms of mechanic, 3 students (12%) get the score of 5 (excellent), 13 students (52%) get the score of 4 (good), and 8 students (36%) get the score of 3 (mediocre). Next, in terms of form (organization), 1 student (4%) gets the score of 5 (excellent), 14 students (56%) get the score of 4 (good), 8 students (32%) get the score of 3 (mediocre), and 1 student (4%) get the score of 2 (poor). Last, in terms of fluency, 4 students (16%) get the score of 5 (excellent), 15 students (60%) get the score of 4 (good), 4 students (16%) get the score of 3 (mediocre), and 1 student (4%) gets the score of 2 (poor). According to the third rater, the students get the highest mean score in term of vocabulary. The score is 3.9 (78). The lowest mean score is in term of form. The score is 3.5 (70).

Table 11. The Students' Average Scores for Each Aspect of Writing the First Topic According to the Three Raters

The Aspects of Writing	Rater 1			Rater 2			Rater 3			The Average Scores	Real Scores
	$\sum x$	N	\bar{X}	$\sum x$	N	\bar{X}	$\sum x$	N	\bar{X}		
Grammar	88	25	3.5	81	25	3.2	96	25	3.8	3.5	70
Vocabulary	86	25	3.4	91	25	3.6	100	25	4.0	3.7	74
Mechanic	83	25	3.2	90	25	3.6	93	25	3.7	3.5	70
Form	81	25	3.2	88	25	3.5	85	25	3.4	3.4	68
Fluency	88	25	3.5	84	25	3.3	98	25	3.9	3.6	72
										3.54	70.8

From table 11, the students get the highest average score in Vocabulary by getting 74. It shows that students in fifth semester have improved their vocabularies a lot since they have

studied many English materials. Next, students have satisfaction in Fluency by getting 72 and Mechanic and Grammar by getting 70. Form is the lowest average score in the aspect of writing in the first topic by getting 68. It can be inferred that students still have problem how to develop and organize their ideas.

Table 12. The Students' Average Scores for Each Aspect of Writing the Second Topic According to the Three Raters

The Aspects of Writing	Rater 1			Rater 2			Rater 3			The Average Scores	Real Scores
	Σx	N	\bar{X}	Σx	N	\bar{X}	Σx	N	\bar{X}		
Grammar	86	25	3.4	83	25	3.3	93	25	3.7	3.5	70
Vocabulary	84	25	3.4	92	25	3.7	98	25	3.9	3.7	74
Mechanic	82	25	3.3	89	25	3.6	91	25	3.6	3.5	70
Form	81	25	3.2	86	25	3.4	87	25	3.5	3.4	68
Fluency	81	25	3.2	83	25	3.3	94	25	3.8	3.4	68
										3.5	70

Table 12 shows the average scores from all aspects of writing in the second topic. Students could gain the highest average score in Vocabulary by getting 3.7 (74). Next, students have satisfaction in Mechanic and Grammar by scores 3.5 (70). Next, Form and Fluency are the lowest average scores in the aspect of writing in the second topic by getting 3.4 (68). It can be inferred that students still have problem in how to develop and organize the ideas and the communication in writing.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, most of students could write argumentative essays well. In this research, the writer asked the fifth semester students to write two topics argumentative essays that had been provided in the research instrument. Based on the result of all participants, 20 students (80%) are in good level. Next, for each aspect of writing, students gained the highest score in Vocabulary term for the both topics. The score is 3.7 (74). The lowest score for the first topic is Form. The score is 3.4 (68). The lowest score for the second topic are Form and Fluency terms. The score is 3.4 (68)

SUGGESTIONS

Regarding to the result of the research, as we know that writing is a skill, it is suggested to students to take a great deal of practice. It can start from writing a simple article, diary, or short story. Besides that, reading many books, articles, magazines or newspapers can improve the students' writing ability. It can enrich their knowledge about styles of writing from many writers. And for educators, it suggested to keep supporting students to apply their knowledge in writing.

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