

ANALYSIS ON PARAGRAPH WRITING OF THE SECOND SEMESTER STUDENTS OF ENGLISH DEPARTMENT OF UNIVERSITY OF KUTAI KARTANEGARA

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***Abstract:** This research is aimed at describing the types of paragraph writing made by the undergraduate students at University of Kutai Kartanegara. This study used content analysis as the design, focusing on the structural parts and the unity of paragraph writing in developing English academic essays written in English language. The study assigned 9 students as a subject of the study. Data of this study included English essays using different topics. This study revealed that not all students understand how to write a good and unified paragraph. The fact is that some students tend to having problem in writing structural parts of paragraph such as topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence. In this case, appropriate structural parts of a paragraph leads to the unity of the paragraph. Furthermore, failures of the students in producing unified paragraph dominantly caused inappropriate supporting sentences. The mistake done by the students in developing supporting idea of a paragraph is caused by their lack knowledge of the function of topic sentence.*

***Keywords:** paragraph writing, topic sentence, unity, academic writing.*

WRITING is one of skills among reading, speaking and listening. Like the other skills, writing is an important part of communication. People frequently have to communicate in writing. There are many activities and occupation which need writing activities. People need writing to write personal letters, reports, applications, articles, and so on. In such terms, writing is a language skill which functions as indirect communication.

For the academic purposes, writing is an impetus to present the quality of proficiency. In this respect, the ability to write is a must for those who are involved in the academic atmosphere. However, writing is hard to achieve, except some basic principles and experience equipping academic writing are well-mastered (Budiharso, 2005:1). English academic writing has become a model of writing. The organization and style of language in English become the reference of rhetoric in academic writing. In addition, syntactical features, grammar, diction, and mechanic of writing in English provide model that most academic writing followed. Good writing in English requires good grammar and good organization. When a writer produces a writing work, she or he should consider several things, such as the purpose of writing, the audience, tone, the organization, and the principle of rhetoric. As Arapoff states in Budiharso (2005:1) essentially, writing is much more than orthographic symbolization of speech. It is more importantly a purposeful selection and organization of experience that require active thought. When writing, the students must keep in mind their purpose, think about the

facts they will need to select which are relevant to that purpose, and think about how recognize those facts in a coherent fashion.

A study on assessment on English writing skills for English Foreign Language (EFL) students conducted by Latief (1990) indicates that students taking more writing courses do not improve the rhetorical and coherent qualities in their writing. The students did no exercise on the scientific writing are lacking. The study suggests that the writing process is not learned well by students. Some high group students (Grade Point Average is 3.0 and up), all of middle group students (GPA 2.5 to 2.9), and all of the low group students (GPA is less than 2.0) write draft of their English essay in Indonesian before they write the final copy in English. Most students also lacked the coherent of an essay; for instance a thesis statement is not clearly stated or additional sentences irrelevant to thesis statement are added. Apparently, the studies indicate two main concerns of essay writing. First, students have problems preparing topics, developing ideas, and elaborating the contents, resulting in a lack of focus in the essay. Second, errors on essay elements (i.e. introductory paragraph, body of paragraph, and closing paragraph), paragraph elements (i.e. topic sentences, supporting details, and relevant conclusion), and sentence problem (e.g. fragment, choppy, run-on, stringy sentences) are dominant.

Academic writing is the kind of writing that required to do by the University or College students. In academic environment, writing skill is something that should be known by students in order to help them in demonstrating or represent the knowledge into a written form. Performing a scholarly writing, e.g. abbreviated essay, term paper, report on research is repeatedly required by the college students (Hoggins and Lillard in Budiharso (2006:93). For the academic purposes, writing is an impetus to present the quality of proficiency. In This respect, the ability to write is a must for those who are involved in the academic atmosphere. However, writing is hard to achieve, except some basic principle and experience equipping academic writing are well mastered (Budiharso, 2005).

Good writing in English requires good grammar and good organization. In order to write well in English, learner must learn not only rules of English grammar, but also the principles of English rhetoric. The rhetoric that deals with organization and style can be learned from a study and practice (Oshima and Hogue (1991) and Budiharso (2005:2). Rhetoric is the art of good writing, which is the standard of straightforward and clear style of writing. To achieve a good rhetoric, a researcher needs to know not only the proper subject and interest in his or her writing, but also he or she should know and understand the acceptable modes of packaging what he or she wants to say. The packaging is the rhetoric. Packaging is powerful. The right wrapping can usually compensate for poor content, but even solid content can be weakened by a dated or inappropriate style (Budiharso, 2006:88). Briefly, the rhetorical rules include theories on paragraph, theories of composition and essay, and process of writing. Theories of paragraph are required to discuss since they provide basic knowledge of how to develop ideas in standard writing of English. Theories of composition and essay provide more information on how paragraph should be developed into a longer and more detail of organization.

A paragraph consists of some sentences that related each other and organized logically so that the readers can know the idea of the paragraph easily. There is only one

main idea that be discussed in a paragraph. Good organization of the idea in a paragraph help the readers to know the message that the researcher wants to convey. The definitions above leads to a conclusion that a paragraph is a group of related sentences that organized logically to express one main idea. In other word, the sentences in a good paragraph should have qualities of unity and coherence. Those sentences consist of a topic sentence, some supporting sentences as the development of the topic, and a concluding sentence.

According to Oshima and Hogue (1999:23), there are two essential parts of a topic sentence: the topic and the controlling idea. The topic names the subject, or main idea, of the paragraph. The controlling idea makes a specific comment about the topic, which indicates what the rest of the paragraph will say about the topic. It limits or controls the topic to a specific aspect of the topic to be discussed in the space of a single paragraph.

This is the example of topic sentence:

TOPIC	CONTROLLING IDEA
Convenience foods	are <u>easy to prepare</u> .

As the development of topic sentence, the supporting sentences of course should be related to the topic. In order to fill the qualities of unity and coherence of the paragraph, the unrelated sentence which not supports the topic of the paragraph should be omitted

The concluding sentence must be worded differently from the topic sentence. One way to conclude a paragraph is to restart the topic sentence in question. Another way is to summarize the contents of the paragraph. Adverbial connectives such as in short, to sum up, for these reasons are useful for introducing such summarizing statements.

Unity means that a paragraph discusses only one main idea. The main idea is stated in the topic sentence, and then each and every supporting sentence develops that idea (Oshima and Hogue, 1991:8). According to www.nisd.net, a paragraph must effectively use unity, relevance, clear order, and completeness of thought in order to communicate ideas effectively. Unity means every sentence in a paragraph should relate to the topic sentence just like every paragraph in an essay should relate to the thesis. Paragraph unity means that one paragraph is about only one main topic. That is, all the sentences- the topic, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence- are all telling the reader about one main topic.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used content analysis that aimed at analyzing the content of structural parts and unity of paragraph writing by the students. Content analysis involves a series of activities in analyzing documents or other files, and then describing them based on some developing theories related to the research.

The subject is used to determine aspect of the focus not how many people are representative. Based on the statement previously, the study designed to investigate the structure and the unity of 9 descriptive paragraphs made by the second semester students of English Department of University of Kutai Kartanegara.

The students wrote a paragraph using different topics. The topics of the paragraph are: *Waduk Sukarame is as complete place for recreation, Mahakam river is the dirtiest river in Tenggarong, and English Department of University of Kutai Kartanegara is an uncomfortable environment to study.* The researcher provided 3 topics. According to Oshima and Hogue (1991) in writing a student may have blank idea about so that they need other topics that they understand. Therefore, this study gave alternative topics more than one to anticipate if students do not know about one topic but understand on other topics.

The data of the research are derived to analyze the structural parts of descriptive paragraph and the unity of the paragraph. The structural parts of the paragraph are: topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding. The analysis is done to find the important things should be in attention in writing topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding, the way to avoid un-unified paragraph, the appropriate way in writing descriptive paragraph.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

From analysis done to the 9 paragraph, the researcher found that all of the paragraphs have topic sentence; 2 of them considered as inappropriate topic sentence and the other are quite good as topic sentence. From the supporting sentences aspect, there are 5 paragraphs that consist of sentences that can not support the discussion of the topic. Whereas from the concluding sentence aspect, there is 1 paragraph that presents inappropriate concluding sentence. The table bellows shows the presentation of good structure lay out of the paragraph by the students.

The most of the writing problems of the students occur in the supporting sentences writing. That fact shows us that the students may capable in writing appropriate topic sentence, but it not means they are also capable in writing appropriate supporting sentences. There are some students still having problem in writing unified paragraph. The students may have problem in developing idea stated in the topic sentence.

Referring to the result of paragraph writing by the students, these sentences are the examples of good topic sentence:

- (1) *Waduk Sukarame is a complete place for recreation.*

The examples above can be considered as good topic sentences. Both of the topic sentences have clear controlling idea. The controlling idea of the topic sentences limits the discussion of the topic. So, the reader will have their first impression before they read whole paragraph. For example in sentence (1a), the topic is *Waduk Sukarame* and the controlling idea is *a complete place*. By reading the topic sentence, the reader will know that the paragraph going to discuss the completeness of Waduk Sukarame.

All of supporting sentences should support the topic sentence. A writer should avoid including unrelated idea in paragraph writing. As we can see in the following examples, all of the sentences support the idea in the topic sentences (1):

- (2) *There are many kinds of tree and flower. Those trees are complete with the name on the board so we can know what kind of tree we see. We also can see animals there, such as snakes, deer, crocodiles, orangutans, and birds. An animal can have more than one kind. For example the birds. We can see pigeon, peacock and enggang. For primate animal, there are available orangutans and uwa-uwa.*

In sentences (1), all sentences discuss about the completeness of *Waduk Sukarame* as stated in the topic sentence (1a). Sentences that not discuss about the completeness of *Waduk Sukarame* should be omitted.

Concluding sentence can reinforce the discussion of whole paragraph. The paragraph will be more effective if there is a concluding sentence. There are some ways in writing concluding sentence; summarize the important points of the paragraph, restart the topic sentence in other words, and giving comment to the discussion of the paragraph. These are example of concluding sentence of the paragraph are as follows:

- (3) *From the description above, we can know that Waduk Sukarame is a multifunction place: for recreation, study, camping, playing, meeting, and sport.*

The concluding sentence above is the summary of the topic and supporting sentence of the paragraph 1. The writer put all supporting idea in one sentence to remain the discussion of paragraph.

A paragraph can be considered as a unified paragraph if the paragraph discusses only one topic. In the other word the topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentences are in the same discussion. If there is one of the structural parts do not clarify same topic or discussion, the paragraph will be an un-unified paragraph. The examples bellows are topic sentence (1), supporting sentences (2), and concluding sentence (3) of paragraph 1.

- (1) *Waduk Sukarame is a complete place for recreation.*
- (2) *There are many kinds of tree and flower. Those trees are complete with the name on the board so we can know what kind of tree we see. We also can see animals there, such as snakes, deer, crocodiles, orangutans, and birds. An animal can have more than one kind. For example the birds. We can see pigeon, peacock and enggang. For primate animal, there are available orangutans and uwa-uwa.*
- (3) *From the description above, we can know that Waduk Sukarame is a multifunction place: for recreation, study, camping, playing, meeting, and sport.*

The topic sentence has clear controlling idea that limits the discussion only about the completeness of *Waduk Sukarame*. The supporting sentences follow the limitation of

discussion stated in the topic sentence, there are no unrelated sentences in the paragraph. The concluding sentence clarify the topic sentence and supporting sentences by summarize the discussion of the paragraph.

DISCUSSION

The fact is that some students tend to having problem in writing structural parts of paragraph such as topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence. As stated in the background of this study, the research done by Sabilah (1999) concludes that one of factors that cause the failure of good essay by students is the errors in writing paragraph elements (i.e. topic sentences, supporting details, and relevant conclusion). The study shows that the structural parts of a paragraph pay important role in the writing of more complex writing work such as an essay or article, whereas the students still having problem in paragraph writing.

In writing a paragraph, a writer should pay attention to the development of idea going to discuss. A good paragraph considered as a group of sentences having relation of the same idea. In the other words, all sentences being developed in a paragraph should discuss one idea. Smalley and Ruetten (1982) and Oshima and Hogue (1991) in Budiharso (2005:18) state that a good paragraph has the elements of unity and coherence. The unity qualities of unity can be achieved if the structural parts of paragraph being wrote appropriately. In addition, Oshima and Hogue (1991:17) state that a paragraph has three major structural parts: a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence. Regards to the statements above, the students tend to having problem in the developing idea of paragraph. The findings also intend that the failure of unified paragraph writing cause by the mistake in developing idea in the structural parts of paragraph.

The most important sentence in a paragraph is the topic sentence. The main idea of a paragraph is stated in topic sentence. The vital sentence serves as a commitment for the writer to provide an explanation or illustration of this main idea (Smalley and Reuten, 1982; Wingersky, Boerner and Holguin-Balogh, 1992; in Budiharso, 2005). The main idea of the topic sentence can be seen in the controlling idea. The controlling idea limits the discussion of the paragraph. According to Oshima and Hogue (19991:23), there are two essential parts of a topic sentence: the topic and the controlling idea. The topic names the subject, or main idea, of the paragraph. The controlling idea makes a specific comment about the topic, which indicates what the rest of the paragraph will say about the topic. It limits or controls the topic to a specific aspect of the topic to be discussed in the space of a single paragraph. The problem of topic sentence found in the research is the mistake in deciding of controlling idea. The failure of topic sentence in limiting the discussion of the paragraph may be caused by the unclear controlling idea. Inappropriate controlling idea makes the main idea in the topic sentence being not clear and can not limit the discussion of the paragraph. The problem of topic sentence writing process can be a serious problem in supporting sentences development.

By reading the topic sentence, the reader will have their first impression about what the paragraph going to discuss. For example in topic sentence (1), the reader will think about the complete service of *Waduk Sukarame* and they will have impression that the paragraph will discuss about the completeness. Beside helps the reader in understanding the discussion of paragraph, topic sentence also helps the writer in

developing the idea of the paragraph. In topic sentence (1a), the writer knows that the discussion of the sentences developed in the paragraph should be only about the completeness of *Waduk Sukarame*. A good writer will not include ideas that not relate to the main idea. The discussion of the paragraph is being limited by the topic sentence. The problem occurs if the writer do not pay more attention to main idea in the topic sentence, the paragraph may discuss more than on idea. Problems of understanding the topic sentence influence the supporting sentences development. Some students still do not understand the function of controlling idea. They do not pay attention to the main idea stated in the controlling idea, so that they include more than one idea in a paragraph. Whether the topic sentence writes appropriately, if the ideas in the topic sentence do not attended by the writer, there is will be a problem in supporting sentences writing.

CONCLUSION

Most of the students are capable in writing appropriate structural parts. However, some students still having problems in producing unified paragraph, but the unities of the paragraph writing made by the students are quite good. The paragraphs made by the students are dominant by the unified paragraph.

The failures of the students in producing good and unified paragraph are dominantly caused by the lack knowledge of structural parts of a paragraph. First of all, they do not understand the function of a topic sentence as a limitation of paragraph discussion. Because of that, they include unrelated idea in the paragraph. They also do not know how to write good topic sentence that can limit the idea in supporting sentences development of the paragraph. In the other words, the knowledge of topic sentence influences the process of supporting sentences development. The knowledge of topic sentence also influences concluding sentence writing. If a writer does not understand well about the function of topic sentence, he or she may include more than one idea to the paragraph. The mistakes do in developing supporting sentences of course can cause the mistake in writing concluding sentence. In conclusion, knowledge of good topic sentence leads to appropriate supporting sentences and concluding sentences.

In producing unified paragraph, students should pay attention to the idea in each sentences of the paragraph. All sentences of the paragraph should relate by the same idea. The unrelated sentences should be omitted from the paragraph. As stated in previous paragraph, the main idea can be seen in the controlling idea of the topic sentence.

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