

Students' Ability to Develop Sentences in English Writing

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on analyzing students' ability to develop paragraphs through the number of sentences, quality or understandability of paragraphs by analyzing the unity and coherence of sentences. This study is a quantitative-qualitative study. The research subjects are students in the 5th semester of the English program. The data collection tool is an experiment. Quantitative data were analyzed using the frequency formula, and qualitative data on sentence unity and coherence were analyzed using coding. Thus, the results show that most students can write two to three sentences in a paragraph. Paragraphs consisting of one sentence and two sentences are rated as poor paragraphs. Paragraphs consisting of four, five, six and seven sentences are considered to be quite good paragraphs; and the paragraph consisting of three and eight sentences was marked as a good paragraph.

INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of language skills should be achieved by students, especially, for English education students. The obligatory of writing achievement relates to students' final task in the end of their study in university, namely thesis writing. Students are expected to be able to write scientific writing relates to the research by themselves to avoid plagiarism issues. Council of Writing Program Administrators (2005) states that plagiarism occurs when a writer deliberately uses some else's language, ideas, or other original material without acknowledging its source. They also mention the effects of plagiarism for students. They are: students may fear or fear taking risk in their own work, students may have poor time management skills or they may plan poorly for the time end effort required for research-based writing, and believe they have no choice but plagiarize, students may view the course, the assignment, the conventions of academic documentation, or the consequences of cheating as unimportant.

Latterman (2006) mentions that the causes of plagiarism are students do not understand how to integrate source material into their own argument and they lack confidence in the ability to do academic work. The teacher's guide and writing practice are expected to help students to make their own academic writing and improve their confidence and their honor to writing. Evaluation is one way to analyze students' writing ability. The evaluation is used to improve or to design some techniques to solve teaching learning problems. Therefore, this research attempts to evaluate students' writing ability as study that can be used to improve the quality of writing teaching.

Brown (2001) mentions categories for evaluating writing. They are content, organization, discourse, syntax, vocabulary, and mechanics. However, in this research, the researcher limits the writing evaluation into writing content, organization, and discourse which include the development, the unity, and the coherence of students' sentences in writing paragraph. The development of paragraph writing relates to the number of sentences students can develop in a paragraph. The development of paragraph writing relates closely to the unity and the coherence of writing. Many students lose and forget their main idea when their writing flew.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The unity means that only one main idea discussed (Oshima & Hogue:1999). A good paragraph only discusses one main idea in each paragraph. If writer begin to discuss another advantage, he should start a new paragraph. Sometimes it is possible to discuss two or even three aspects of same idea in one paragraph if they are closely related each other. The coherence refers to the extent to which the flow of ideas in a paragraph is easily understood by the reader. For this reason, coherence is closely related to unity. When a writer changes main ideas or topics within a paragraph, confusion often results. To achieve coherence, then, a writer should show how all of the ideas contained in a paragraph are relevant to the main topic. This research includes three research questions relates to analysis or students' English writing paragraph as follow; 1) How many sentences can students develop

in English paragraph writing? and 2) What is the quality of students' paragraph writing in relating to sentence unity and coherence?

The objective of the research is to analyze the ability of students in developing sentences to be a paragraph and to analyze the unity and coherence of the sentences in a paragraph. Significance of the research includes theoretical significance. The result of the research can develop the writing skill theories. It will show the ability of students in developing a paragraph and the characteristics of students' writing; then it can be used to designing a writing teaching strategy to improve students' writing skill. In this research the writers elaborate some theories relating to the paragraph. Paragraph writing remains one of the most important parts of writing. The paragraph serves as a container for each of the ideas of an essay or other piece of writing. Paragraphs are versatile and can take many forms that strengthen the writing, provide variety for readers, and help readers to organize the ideas presented.

A Paragraph is basic unit of organization in writing in which a group of related sentences develop one main idea. A paragraph can be as short as one sentence or as long as ten sentences. The number of sentences is unimportant; however, the paragraph should be long enough to develop the main idea clearly. A paragraph is the container for only one idea. Often, a longer paragraph can – and should – be divided into smaller units. Usually a large, complex idea is made up of smaller ideas and can be explained in more paragraphs with those smaller ideas. The point, though, is to have one coherent paragraph – all of the ideas in each sentence of the paragraph must relate to a single main point. That point is most often made in a topic sentence. A paragraph has three major structural parts: a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence. The first, The topic sentence states the main idea of the paragraph. It not only names the topic of the paragraph, but it also limits the topic to one or two areas that can be discussed completely in the space of a single paragraph. The specific area is called the controlling idea. Every good paragraph has a topic sentence, which clearly states the topic and the controlling idea of the paragraph. It is a complete sentence. It is usually (but not always) the first sentence in the paragraph. A topic sentence is the most important sentence in a paragraph. It briefly indicates what the paragraph is going to discuss. For this reason, the topic sentence is a helpful guide for both the writer and the reader. The writer can see the information to include (and what information to exclude). The reader can see what the paragraph is going to be about and is, therefore, better prepared to understand it.

There are three important points to remember about a topic sentence: a) a topic sentence is a complete sentence; that is, it contains a subject, a verb, and (usually) a complement, b) a topic sentence contains both a topic and a controlling idea. It names the topic and then limits the topic to a specific area to be discussed in the space of a single paragraph, and c) a topic sentence is the most general statement in the paragraph because it gives only the main idea. It does not give any specific details. The second is supporting sentence. Supporting sentences develop the topic sentence. That is, they explain the topic sentence by giving reasons, examples, facts, statistics, and quotations. In other

words, they develop the topic sentence by giving specific details about the topic. In order to choose details to support the topic sentence, rephrase it as a question, and then answer that question with your supporting sentences. The third is concluding sentence. After you have finished writing the last sentence supporting the main point of a paragraph, you must end the paragraph with a concluding sentence. This sentence tells the reader that the paragraph is finished, and it completes the development of subject of the paragraph. Concluding sentence signals the end of the paragraph and leaves the reader with important points to remember. The concluding sentence is like the topic sentence because both are general statements. However, the topic sentence is usually the first sentence, a general statement that introduces the topic to be discussed in the paragraph. The concluding sentence is also a general statement, but it is the last sentence and ends the paragraph.

Relates to the semantic unit in writing, a good paragraph includes unity and coherence. Oshima and Hogue (1999) explain what unity and coherence is. The unity means that only one main idea is discussed in each paragraph and coherence means "hold together". That is the movement from one sentence to the next must be logical and smooth. It is important for a paragraph to have unity. When a paragraph has unity, all of the sentences in it discuss only one idea. Another part of unity is that every supporting sentence must directly explain or prove the main idea that is stated in the topic sentence. Do not include any information that does not directly support the topic sentence. Sometimes students write supporting sentences that are "off the topic". These are irrelevant sentences. There are three ways to achieve coherence. The first way involves repeating key nouns and using pronouns that refer back to key nouns. The second way is use transition signals to show how one idea is related to the next. The third way to achieve coherence is to arrange the sentences in logical order. The choice of logical order depends on the topic and the purposes. Students may even combine two or more different logical orders in the same paragraph. The important point to remember is to arrange the ideas in some kind of order that is logical to reader accustomed to the English way of writing.

Evaluating Students Writing

The evaluation of writing, especially in a process-oriented classroom, is a thorny issue. Correction of written work are essential to developing writing skill (Lado: 1998). If you are a guide and facilitator of students' performance in the ongoing process of developing a piece of written work, how can you also be the judge? What do you judge? The answer to the first question - how can you be a judge and a guide at the same time - is one of the primary dilemmas of all teachers. Juggling this dual role requires wisdom and sensitivity. The key to being a judge is fairness and explicitness in what you take into account in your evaluation.

Brown (2001) shows the six general categories that are often the basis for evaluation of student writing as follow: 1) Content: thesis statement; related ideas; development of ideas through personal experience, illustration, facts,

opinion; use of description, cause/effect, comparison/contrast; and consistent focus, 2) Organization: effectiveness of introduction, logical sequence of ideas, conclusion, and appropriate length, 3) Discourse: topic sentences, paragraph unity, transitions, discourse markers, cohesion, rhetorical conventions, reference, fluency, economy, and variation, 4) Syntax, 5) Vocabulary, 6) Mechanics: spelling, punctuation, citation of references, and neatness and appearance. Experts disagree somewhat on the system of weighting each of the above categories, that is, which of the six is most important, next, and so on. Nevertheless, the order in which the six are listed here at the very least emphasizes the importance of content over syntax and vocabulary, which traditionally might have had high priority.

METHODS

Design of the research is quantitative-qualitative research. The research data of first research question were collected and analyzed by using quantitative method and the research data of the second and the third research questions were collected and analyzed by using qualitative method. The research was conducted in Tarbiyah Department at English Education Study Program of Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidenreng Rappang. The subject of the research is the fifth semester students of English Education Study Program. There are five group works students of writing subject, then the researchers take three group works as sample. The researchers used random sampling technique in selecting the sample. The number of sample was 48 students.

Instrument of data collection is test. The test is essay writing test. The researchers will prepare some topics of academic writing. The topics relates to teaching English as foreign language such as teaching listening, speaking, reading, and writing, motivation in learning English, problems in learning English, and the like. Procedure of data collection is applying essay writing test. The students were asked to write an academic writing. The researchers prepared some topics relates to academic writing; then the students chose one topic and develop the topic into a paragraph.

Quantitative data was analyzed by using frequency formulation to answer the research questions. The researchers account the number of sentences students make in a paragraph by identifying sentence as utterance begun by capital letter and ended by full stop. Qualitative data about the unity and the coherence of sentences was analyzed by using coding. Coding is the process of categorically marking of referencing units of text (e.g., words, sentences, paragraph, and quotations) with codes and labels as a way to indicate patterns and meaning (Gay: 2006).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There are four paragraphs are analyzed here. The researchers analyze the number of sentences developed by students in a paragraph. That in paragraph one students are able to write one sentence to seven sentences in a paragraph. 6 (13%) students are able to write one sentence in a paragraph, 16 (33%) students write two sentences, 15 (31%) students write three sentences, 6 (13%) students write four sentences, and 2 (4%) students write five and seven sentences in a paragraph.

In paragraph two students are able to write one sentence to five sentences in a paragraph. 13 (27%) students are able to write one sentence in a paragraph, 13 (27%) students write two sentences, 13 (27%) students write three sentences, 6 (13%) students write four sentences, and 3 (6%) students write five sentences in a paragraph. sentences in a paragraph. 6 (13%) students are able to write one sentence in a paragraph, 18 (38%) students write two sentences, 13 (27%) students write three sentences, 8 (17%) students write four sentences, and 1 (2%) students write five, six, and eight sentences in a paragraph.

In paragraph four students are able to write one sentence to six sentences in a paragraph. 12 (25%) students are able to write one sentence in a paragraph, 16 (33%) students write two sentences, 13 (27%) students write three sentences, 5 (10%) students write four sentences, and 1 (2%) students write five and six sentences in a paragraph.

The most students are able to write two to three sentences in a paragraph. The diagram shows that more than 30% students write two sentences and more than 20% students write three sentences in a paragraph. Eventhough one sentence in a paragraph is not expected but more than 10% students are able to write 1 sentence. In paragraph two and four, more than 20% students are not able to develop their sentences in a paragraph.

The big number of sentences in a paragraph is not measurement a good paragraph but a good paragraph should contain one topic sentence, one or more supporting sentence, and one or more concluding sentence. However, less than 10% students are able to write more than 4 sentences in a paragraph. Then, the researcher analyzed the sentence unity and coherence to find out the quality of students' paragraph writing.

The Quality of Students' Paragraph Writing

The quality of paragraph writing was analyzed based on sentence unity and coherence. Unity means one paragraph just has one main or topic sentence and coherence means all sentences in a paragraph are relevant to the main topic. The researchers analyze the unity and coherence in paragraph contains one sentence to eight sentences. One sentence in one paragraph. The paragraph just contains one sentence and the writing also has many grammatical and vocabulary errors. The researchers cannot find the sentence unity and coherence in this paragraph. The paragraph which contains one sentence doesn't have sentence unity and coherence. The paragraphs become incomprehensible because no sentences support each other or support main idea. Two sentences in one paragraph. The paragraph is indicated as a poor paragraph. Eventhough the paragraph has two sentences, the sentences in each

paragraph don't support each other. It means that the paragraphs don't have unity and coherence. For example: (1) In era modern, speaking is very important if we want to get a job. (2) I think if we want to be a good speaker we must speak, speak, and speak. Some sentences in the paragraph are also very incomprehensible. There are many grammatical, vocabulary, and punctuation errors. Three sentences in one paragraph. This paragraph is identified as a good paragraph because it has sentence unity and coherence. For example: (1) All normal people can use all of this sense to interaction of their people. (2) The ability hearing or listening is born with the human use to copy all the word that some one talk to his and use that word to interaction to the other people again year by year. (3) This ability grow and it can prove it in how the people speaking. Sentence two and three seem support the first sentence.

Four sentences in one paragraph. This paragraph is indicated as fairly good paragraph because it has one main sentence and the other sentences support the main sentences. However, in some paragraphs consist four sentences occurs repetition. For example: (1) We can know people's language skill from his speaking. (2) If someone good in speaking, automatically we think that he good in the language. The meaning of sentence one is same to sentence two. Five, six, and seven sentences in one paragraph. This paragraph is also indicated as fairly good paragraph because eventhough the sentences support each other and main sentence, some repetitions still occur. Eight sentences in one paragraph. This paragraph is indicated as a good paragraph. It has sentence unity and coherence. The main idea of this paragraph is about ways to improve speaking ability. The first sentence is indicated as a main sentence and the other sentences support the main sentence by mentioning seven ways to improve speaking ability. For example: There are some ways to improve or increase ability. The first way is memorizing the vocabularies and the second is writing down the words that we don't know the meaning than look for the meaning. The third way is memorizing the expressions to get us easy in speaking. The fourth way is speak up even the grammar is wrong, let the other people correct us. It will make us easy to speak up. The fifth way is always speak up even we have to combine the words or we can ask the people around us. The sixth way is looking for someone to accompany us to always speak up in English. The seventh is get course and never less spirit.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The finding shows that students are able to write one sentence to eight sentences in one paragraph. Most of the students are able to develop their paragraph by writing two to three sentences in a paragraph. More than 30% students write two sentences and more than 20% students write three sentences in a paragraph. Eventhough one sentence in a paragraph is not expected but more than 10% students are able to write 1 sentence. In paragraph two and four, more than 20% students are not able to develop their sentences in a paragraph. Paragraphs consist of one sentence are indicated as poor paragraph because they don't topic sentence and supporting sentence. Automatically, they don't

have sentence unity and coherence. Paragraphs consist of two sentences are also indicated poor paragraph because even though this paragraph has two sentences, the two sentences don't support each others. The researchers cannot identify the idea discussed. Automatically the two sentences can be main idea. Paragraphs consist of four, five, six and seven sentences are indicated as fairly good because some sentences don't support main idea even though the others support the main sentence. Those paragraphs also contain sentence repetition and implausibility. Paragraphs consists three and eight sentence are indicated as good paragraph because they have one main idea discussed and the other sentences support main idea and support each others. The idea of the paragraph is plausible and the researchers don't find sentence repetition.

FURTHER STUDY

This research still has limitations so further research needs to be done on this topic "Students' Ability to Develop Sentences in English Writing."

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