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## The Problem Faced by Freshmen Students of English Education Department In Writing English Paragraph

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### Abstract

This research is aimed to reveal new students' obstacle in doing paragraph writing; from the pre-writing activity, writing process and also editing. Descriptive qualitative was done to conduct this research. The researchers used interview to collect data and also to verify the result of the data by doing observation on student's work in writing process. After the results revealed, it is hoped that they are useful for teachers and also students to know the problem they probably face in paragraph writing teaching and also learning, therefore they can anticipate the problem and find solution to those obstacles. The result of this research shows that the students face difficulties in determining topic, main idea, and also the rest of content, grammatical error, vocabulary difficulty, making brainstorming phase, forgot or confused to determine conclusion, punctuation, translation and coherence problem, mistake in language (sentence structure, spelling and word choice).

**Keywords:** paragraph; writing; freshman; problem

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of for English skills. It is very important for English department students to master this skill because it is not only important in daily communication but also in academic field such as writing essay, paper, article, mini research and also thesis. Paragraph is a group sentences explaining about one topic, or in other word a small organization of idea in academic writing (Wali & Madani, 2020).

To create good essay and thesis, students should know how to write a good paragraph first. Therefore, there is one subject for the freshmen of English department called Paragraph Writing. This subject is important for student to lead them to the good writing skill from the small part of writing product. Despite of the importance of paragraph writing, student face some problems to their paragraph writing process. The researchers find some error on their very first paragraph on first meeting in Paragraph Writing Class. Therefore, the researchers wanted to analyze the problems the new students face in writing paragraph in Paragraph Writing Class.

Freshmen are the new students or the first-year students at university. In this research, the freshman of English department of university of Widya Gama Mahakam are the students who enroll their study in the middle of 2022 for academic year 2022/ 2023. Freshmen tend to face problem in English Writing since it is their first semester year or even first semester study on English department, therefore the subject of Paragraph Writing is their first subject for writing skill, academically, or in other words it is their basic to learn how to write in the level pf university. It is very important for freshmen to master how to write a paragraph because in later semesters they will have other subjects related to writing in higher level, such as Essay Writing, Introduction to Essay Writing, Academic Writing and finally writing thesis for their final task to be done for graduation. As an outcome, the goal of this research is to discover about the difficulties that freshmen students in the English Education Department of Widya Gama Mahakam Samarinda University face when writing English paragraphs.

### *1.2 Paragraph*

Paragraph is basic organization in writing skill (Wali & Madadi, 2020). A paragraph is a group of sentences combined together to explain about one topic (Zeemach & Rumisek, 2003). There are some kinds of paragraph, which are Narrative Paragraph, Descriptive Paragraph, and Expository Paragraph, etc (Ameri, 2008). Moreover Zeemach & Rumisek (2003) proposes that there are three parts of paragraph—topic sentence, supporting sentences, concluding sentences.

***a. Topic Sentence***

Topic sentences or the main idea of paragraph is usually put on the first sentence of paragraph. The paragraph will be mainly talking about this sentence. The sentence in main idea should be the most general among the sentences.

***b. Supporting Sentences***

Supporting sentence's function is to explain about the topic sentence. The sentences should be more detail and must be on the same topic with main idea.

***c. Concluding Sentences***

Concluding sentences is usually on the last sentence. It is the repetition of main idea or final comment about the topic to strengthen the purpose of the paragraph.

***1.3 Paragraph Writing***

Paragraph writing is one of obligatory subject that have to be taken by an English student of University of Widya Gama Mahakam Samarinda. The weight credit of this subject is 3 SKS. Writing is one of four basic skills of English therefore Paragraph Writing is needed to be successfully taken. Paragraph Writing is given to the first semester student of English Department of UWGM because paragraph is the smallest organization of academic writing. Students paragraph writing mastery should be decent, not only because this is an obligatory subject, but also because if they failed to write a good paragraph, they tend to fail to write a good longer writing like essay, mini research and even thesis. Paragraph Writing is very important subject that is needed to be done well.

***1.4 Problem in Writing a Paragraph***

There are some problems that students face in doing writing, according to Putri (2021), students tend to make errors on certain categories as content and topic sentence, organization of paragraph, grammar and mechanics. Ly et. al (2021) states that the difficulty students face in doing paragraph writing are as follows: (1) Problem with vocabulary, in writing English paragraph, vocabulary mastery plays extremely important roles. Yet as students, especially first semester students, their vocabulary mastery is still not on master level. (2) Problem with grammar, there are a lot of studies had proven that grammar is one of students difficulty in writing. Ammar (2017) states that students face difficulty on grammar as much as they have on punctuation error. (3) Problem with Coherence, coherence will create the effect that a paragraph would be easy to understand to reader. Error in combining and assembling good paragraph would make it is hard to understand.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

This research utilized quantitative research method. Descriptive qualitative is the design of this research. Qualitative data has some characteristics including; observation notes, interview transcripts, literary texts, minutes of meetings, historical records, memos and recollections, documentary film (Walliman, 2018). As Walliman proposes, qualitative research is suitable for this study because the researchers did interview and also analyze data in qualitative way. In this study, the researcher used open-ended question adapted by Putri (2021), Chung (2015) and Ly et. Al. (2021) to interview freshmen students about their problem in doing paragraph writing. After that the result was analyzed and elaborated descriptively.

## 3. FINDINGS

After doing an interview to the first semester students of English Education department of UWGM, the researcher got their answers as the data analyzed. Here are the responds of those 19 students:

### *a. What are the problems did you faced in writing paragraph?*

According to students' response to the open-ended question, the researcher conclude that students' think and realize the most that they have difficulty in determining topic, main idea, and also the rest of content. Seven students admit that this is one of their problems in their answer and this problem is found the most out of other problems. As two examples of students mention bellow:

***“Often confused in describing, and difficulty finding the main idea.”***

***(Student 1)***

***“So far I just have a problem about how to write a right paragraph and choose the topic about my paragraph.”***

***(Students 5)***

These two students admit that one of their problems is dealing with determining main idea and also the topic of paragraph. This problem of choosing the topic actually only happened if they are the one who will choose the topic. If the topic is already decided by lecturer of a test, they will not have this problem. Meanwhile for the main idea and content, even the topic is chosen by lecturer, they need to think about them by themselves and choose the main idea and content wisely.

The next problem they face is about grammar. It is undyeable that the problem of first semester of English department students is the matter of grammatical error. There are a lot of regulation in grammar that they need to learn in further subjects that probably the haven't got in high school or they learn it by themselves before. The example of transcript of two students are shown as follows:

***"I have problem making a conclusion, brainstorming, and grammar"***

**(Student 2)**

***"The most common problems when I writing are difficult to remember what the right grammar and punctuation should I put in my sentences so my paragraph could not only good in a topic that I choose but also grammatically correct."***

**(Student 9)**

Other problems that the students admit they got in the process of their writing in order of numbers are namely vocabulary difficulty, making brainstorming phase, forgot or confused to determine conclusion, punctuation, translation and coherence problem.

***b. Do you understand the explanation from lecturer?***

The researcher found 14 students are highly understand the explanation, 4 students admit they sometimes find it easy but sometimes it is difficult to digest lecturer's explanation, meanwhile one student admit it is hard to understand lecturers' explanation on Paragraph writing that is explained both with English and Indonesian language.

***"Yes. It's because the teacher explains the lesson in sentences that are easy for me to understand. And use many good metaphors like burger. That's why I can understand it more."***

**(Student 4)**

***"I do, when there's a lot of examples. Because I could understand the context of the lecture a lot more."***

**(Student 19)**

The students 4 and 19 said they have no problem with lecturer's explanation. They add that teaching with certain method and a lot of examples make them easier to understand the paragraph writing materials brought by lecturer.

***"Yes, but sometimes, I misunderstood (the explanation) because the lecturer used uncommon words to speak."***

**(Student 3)**

***“Sometimes I understand because it's explained clearly but, there are also things I don't understand a little because it's explained too quickly.”***

***(Student 6)***

There are some factors that makes them feel that they sometimes do not understand the elaboration delivered by students. Student 3 thinks that sometimes lecturers used some vocabularies that he/ she does not understand. Student 6 admit that the lecturer explains the material very fast therefore she or he could not catch it up. One student who said that he/ she cannot understand lecturer's explanation admit that feeling sleepy is the reason he/ she cannot get the explanation.

***“No, because I always yawning while studying that's why I can't focus.”***

***(Student 2)***

***c. Do you think your vocabulary mastery helping you? Do you have problem with it?***

Out of 19 students, 11 of them are confident about their vocabulary mastery and think it helps them writing their paragraph.

***“Yes, it is very helpful, by increasing your vocabulary we can easily arrange words into a sentence.”***

***(Student 17)***

***“It's is helping me indeed. Because now I can read more like an English person.”***

***(Student 4)***

The two students 17 and 4 are very confident about their input in vocabulary. Meanwhile some students believe the useful vocabulary mastery but in the same time still not confident about it or think that they need to increase their level of vocabulary mastery, like the students answers bellow:

***“Very helpful, but frequently I find words that are foreign to me.”***

***(Student 1)***

***“Of course, it is very helpful in making regular sentences but my vocabulary mastery is still messy.”***

***(Student 11)***

***d. Do you have frequent mistake in language use?***

Three students confidently said that they have no problem with that. But the rest of students find it difficult to avoid mistake in language use when writing a proper paragraph. Their common mistakes are; sentence structure mistake, spelling errors, word choice, technical and punctuation error. Here are three of their responses:

***“Yeah. About structure, when I write a paragraph, I always write so far and sometimes out of topic.”***

***(Student 5)***

***“I have trouble choosing words because I'm afraid of being wrong and afraid it doesn't match the true meaning.”***

***(Students 8)***

***Spelling errors include capital letters, italics, abbreviations and acronyms, prepositions, word combinations, writing numbers and numbers.”***

***(Student 15)***

***e. Do you have time management problem?***

Eight students responded that they have problem with time management in writing their paragraph task. Meanwhile the rest 11 students think they always finish the paragraph on time regarding to the deadline given by lecturer.

***“Many problems, to complete the paragraph often takes longer.”***

***(Student 1)***

***“The problem of time usually depends on what theme will be written, if the theme has to be as detailed as possible it takes a lot of time.”***

***(Student 14)***

Student 1 and student 14 said that they need longer time to do paragraph, especially paragraph with detailed explanation. Meanwhile these students manage to finish their paragraph very well.

***“No, I don't. I finished it quite on time because just I need to force myself first then I do it.”***

***(Student 4)***

***I don't think so because when we understand how to make a paragraph, it will be easy for us to complete it.”***

***(Student 16)***

***f. How do you edit and evaluate your paragraph? Is it quite easy or hard?***

Eight students think that editing and evaluating process in paragraph writing is easy, seven students says that it is hard and four people admit that it is quite easy but sometimes it is difficult too.

***“Quite easy”***

***(Student 1)***

***“Sometimes easy, like re-read the paragraph and maybe writing revision if needed.”***

***(Student 4)***

***“For now. It's quite hard because when I write, I don't know what point should be changed or erased from the paragraph.”***

***(Students 19)***

The students' responses above are different to each other. The first comment from student 1 implied that he or she is quite confident about how to edit and evaluate the paragraph after finish writing it. The second answer brought by student 4 imply that he or she knows how to edit and evaluate paragraph but sometimes it is difficult to do the process. The last answer is from student 19, for he or she, editing and evaluating are hard for now, he or she thinks he cannot find what point should be edited or omitted from the paragraph.

#### **4. DISCUSSION**

According to research result, the problem that freshmen students of English Education Department of University of Widya Gama Mahakam Samarinda are; difficulty in determining topic, main idea, and also the rest of content, grammatical error, vocabulary difficulty, making brainstorming phase, forgot or confused to determine conclusion, punctuation, translation and coherence problem, mistake in language (sentence structure, spelling and word choice). This findings are supported by Putri (2021) and Ly et. Al (2021), stating that students tend to have error on choosing idea, grammar, word structure, coherence, vocabulary and mechanics. Meanwhile the problem like difficulty in understanding lecturer's explanation, time management and editing-evaluating difficulty are only faced by minority of students, yet both students and lecturers need to carefully think about solving of this matter.

#### **5. CONCLUSION**

Based on the findings explained above freshmen students of English Education Department of University of Widya Gama Mahakam Samarinda are; difficulties in determining topic, main idea, and also the rest of content, grammatical error, vocabulary difficulty, making



brainstorming phase, forgot or confused to determine conclusion, punctuation, translation and coherence problem, mistake in language (sentence structure, spelling and word choice).

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