
**COLLEGE STUDENT'S PROBLEMS IN WRITING PARAGRAPH
(A CASE STUDY AT FOURTH SEMESTER STUDENTS OF
INFORMATICS MANAGEMENT OF AMIK MITRA GAMA)**

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to analyze problems faced by the college students of the Informatics Management study program at AMIK Mitra Gama in writing a paragraph. This study was descriptive qualitative research. The participants of this research were fourth-grade students of the Informatics Management study program attending the Applied English II course and registered on the 2018/2019 academic year, 31 students. Instrumentation of this research was student's paragraph writing entitled "Computer in the Digital Age" in 100-150 words and interview. The result of this study found that the students had the organization of paragraph, grammatical and mechanics problems in writing a paragraph. The most typical difficulty was the organization of paragraph problems in writing concluding sentences (90,3%). Secondly, grammatical problem in using adjective (77,4%), article (64,5%), and verb (58,1%). Third, mechanics problem in punctuation (38,7%). Lastly, based on the interview, these problems arise from the students' used Google Translate more often in finishing their writing. They translated their paragraph in Bahasa Indonesia into English directly without paying attention to the aspects of writing a paragraph. It made them difficult in choosing the appropriate words. For the next study, it was suggested to further investigate another aspect of grammatical (preposition, transition word, and conjunctions) and mechanics of writing such as content and organization. It implies that writing skills should be included in course design to enhance student's ability in writing.

Keywords: *Student's problem, Writing, Paragraph*

INTRODUCTION

One of the language skills used by someone to express her ideas, information, experiences thoughts, and feeling in written form is writing. It is a tool of written communication to provide some information to the reader. The process of communication between the writer and the reader is in the form of written text. It could be effective communication if the readers get the main points of the writer's idea. By writing, the writer can know about themselves and others also can know about her because writing reflects the writer's thoughts or feelings.

Writing is categorized as a productive skill (Harmer, 2007). It is more complicated and seems to be the hardest skill even for native speakers of the language. Furthermore, writing involves not only just a graphic presentation of speech but also the development of thought presentation in a structured way. It is a way of communication in written form.

Since writing is either a communicative activity or an important role in communication, it becomes an important teaching skill at all levels of education. It needs more attention in the teaching and learning process. Writing is complex and difficult for students because the writers have to balance multiple issues such as content, organization, purpose, audience, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling, and mechanics (capitalization). Sometimes, they need much time to get an interesting topic before writing the text.

According to Oshima and Hogue (1997, 3), writing is a process that is not such a simple process. It is a process of discovering the new one. When the writer writes something, she may find other ideas that may not in his list. She needs to add or to throw out these ideas. It means the writer needs the practice to get her writing perfect.

The process of writing is started from writing a paragraph. A paragraph refers to a basic unit of organization in writing (Oshima and Hogue, 1997). It is a group of related sentences that develops one main idea. It can be as short as one sentence or as long as ten sentences. The number of sentences is unimportant. The paragraph should be long enough to develop the main idea. It has three major structural parts: a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence.

Furthermore, Nation (2009, 113) defines writing as an activity that can be planned by a task in the other skills of listening, speaking, and reading. In this planning activity, it is possible for words that are used receptively to become productive use. In addition, based on the academic curriculum of English at AMIK Mitra Gama, the four skills such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking taught integratedly. The lecturer taught writing skills adjoining with listening, speaking, and reading. For example, a Basic English course is taught at the beginning of the program with the topic or issue about the computer. This subject aims to provide the students becoming an expert on her study program. Discussed topic or issue will be continued to the next English subject – Applied English I and II. At the end of the courses, they can write a paragraph and a text well with the topic or issue about the computer.

In fact, during the teaching and learning of these courses, most of the students still make errors in their product (writing) especially in writing a paragraph. They found some difficulties in expressing their ideas correctly, arranging the sentences based on the right grammatical rules, and choosing the appropriate word. The purpose of this study was to

answer the question: What are the difficulties aspects experienced by fourth-semester Management Informatics students in writing a paragraph?.

METHOD

This study was qualitative research. According to Gay (2009: 365), the qualitative study analyzes the interrelationship of the data which involves collecting the data to get a hypothesis or to answer the questions concerning the status of the subject of the study. It is aimed at gaining information about a phenomenon to describe the existed condition which does not involve other variables. It is a scientific description of an actual phenomenon by explaining one variable to another without describing the relationship among them which can be useful for further research.

According to Fraenkel, et.al. (2012, 20) the actual procedure of the study is what the researcher will do (with whom, when, where, what, and how) from beginning to end in the order in which they will occur, should be spelled out in details. The procedures are as following; (1) preparing instrument, (2) giving a written test, (3) coding students' writing difficulties focused on organization, grammatical and mechanics of writing a paragraph, (4) calculating the result, (5) recording the follow-up interview, (6) and displaying the data as research findings.

This study was conducted at AMIK Mitra Gama Duri. The population of this study was the fourth-semester students of the Informatics Management study program 2018/2019 academic year which consists of two classes: 4 PMI (31 students) and 4 MMI (27 students). As Gay (2009, 124) states that population is the group of interest to the researcher, the group to which she or he would like the result of the study to be generalized.

The participants were chosen by using the cluster random technique. The writer prepared two small pieces of paper which wrote the name of each class and rolled it; (2) She placed the small roller papers into a glass and shook them; (3) She took only one small roller paper. 4 PMI students 31 students were chosen as the participants. The participants attended the Applied English II course. It is quite representative of other classes. The writer was an English lecturer on this campus so that the writer was able to observe vividly and easier to have an interviewing schedule.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The writer presents the result and discussion of the research to answer the research problem proposed earlier. It was divided into two parts: difficult frequency of organization,

grammatical and mechanics aspects of writing a paragraph, and the students' perception about writing a paragraph.

The writer analyzed the data to get a deeper analysis. After the analysis, the researcher found that there was eleven paragraph writing aspect difficulties made by AMIK Mitra Gama students that were categorized into three aspects: organization, grammatical, and mechanics aspects. To demonstrate the difficulties faced by the students, the researcher classifies the types of difficulties, frequency, percentage, and rank of difficulties in the table below.

Table 1. Types of difficulties, frequency, percentage, and rank of difficulties found in writing a paragraph

Types of Difficulties	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Organization of Paragraph Problems			
Topic Sentence	5	16,1%	11
Supporting Sentence	15	48,4%	6
Concluding Sentence	28	90,3%	1
Grammatical Problems			
Noun	14	45,2%	7
Verb	18	58,1%	4
Adjective	24	77,4%	2
Pronoun	16	51,6%	5
Article	20	64,5%	3
Mechanics Problems			
Spelling	8	25,8%	10
Punctuation	12	38,7%	8
Capitalization	10	32,3%	9
Total	151	100%	

Table 1. showed that the most difficulty faced by the students was writing a concluding paragraph (90,3%) as one of the paragraph organization problems. Then, grammatical problems, respectively adjective (77,4%), article (64,5%), and verb (58,1%). After that, mechanics problem such as punctuation (38,7%) was the last problem.

A. Organization of Paragraph Problems

A paragraph has three major structural parts: a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence. First, The topic sentence refers to the main idea of the paragraph. Its function not only names the topic of a paragraph but also limits the topic. It includes a specific topic called the controlling idea. Second, supporting sentences. It develops the topic sentence by explaining reasons, examples, facts, statistics, and quotations. Lastly, a concluding paragraph means the end of the paragraph and leaves the reader with important points to remember. A good paragraph has to have all these elements (Oshima and Hogue: 1997).

The data analysis was shown that the students had difficulties in arranging the idea into a good paragraph. For example:

1. Topic Sentence

In writing the topic sentence, it was found that five students made some mistakes. Let see example 1: *Get to know information, make assignments easy and easy*. From this sentence, the writer did not know not only the meaning of the sentence but also the student's purpose in writing this sentence. No idea is included in this sentence because the sentence is such a kind of imperative. Then, for example, 2: *ATM is a machine which we often user for cash withdrawals and transfers through accounts that we have which previously we have saved our money in a bank that is connected to the machine*, the writer found an inappropriate topic sentence in which the respondent explained directly about the function of ATM.

2. Supporting Sentences

Supporting sentences should develop the topic sentence. But in example 3: *Various kinds of electronic devices and Android are increasingly sophisticated. Because as time goes by Android is now made more cool and sophisticated, like the image above Android is made full screen and the sysytem is even more sophisticated*, the writer did not find that it explained the topic sentence before. The first sentence "Various kinds of electronic devices and Android are increasingly sophisticated." was the topic sentence for the second sentence. In addition, the word "sophisticated" replied several times without describing the meaning of that word.

Example 4: *Computers are media or tools to facilitate ones work both in educated and others. Computers are very active role in education. Besides being able to access information from all corners of the world.*

3. Concluding Sentence

Writing a concluding sentence became the student's major problem here. Around 90,3% of the students had a problem in writing this last sentence. For example, example 5: *Computer can also help teachers to teach and present interesting and creative lessons both at school and in college so that students feel comfortable with the teaching that has been given by their teacher.* and example 6: *So, an era like now smartphone play an active role for the lives of students.* Both of the sentences did not give the reader not only the end but also the main point of the paragraph.

B. Grammatical Problems

The next difficulties came from grammatical problems. From the analysis of the data, respectively the students had problems with the adjective (77,4%), article (64,5%), and verb (58,1%). Here was the example of the student's problem is: (a) Adjective. Example

11: The monitor area is *wide* open by a view that is protected by glass. Example 12: For example in calculating the weather that will occur for the *save of passenger safety*; (b) Article: Example 15: Because *all the hardware* is connected to the computer and *all of the work* is controlled through the computer.

Example 16: *Students and teachers* can also get useful additional information; (c) Verb: Example 9: Positive influence *that is* useful in the world of education, business, and others. Example 10: *Bank* are the best reference for saving; (d) Pronoun: Example 13: *The* are digit account numbers that must be input to access the ATM machine and see the balance he has. Example 14: Because *these* days *it* *guys* use computers in job; and (e) Noun: Example 7: Smartphone are *certainty no stranger to everyone*. Example 8: *Get to know information, make assignments easy and easy*.

C. Mechanics Problems

Some problems in mechanics of the writing a paragraph are:

1. Spelling

Example 17: The latest laptops are displayed to attract the attention of *buyers*.

Example 18: Computers are a *much-needed form* of education.

2. Punctuation

Example 19: May be this place a recommendation from biggest company. Because in room place so clean.

Example 20: In the banking sector, computer function are very very influential at all with banking activities, both savings and loans and other financial transaction can run smoothly.

3. Capitalization

Example 21: *they* also look focused on their work.

Example 22: *there* is a full screen, the highest quality camera, touch screen, network speed and various other best features.

D. Student's Perception in Writing a Paragraph

Supporting the research findings by having an interview with 31 students was scheduled every Monday in a month starting from March 4th, 2019 until March 25th, 2019. The result of the interview showed that around 16 students had difficulty in writing the concluding paragraph. They thought that it was an easy job, but when they wrote it they failed. Then around 23 students had a problem with the grammar. They wrote just based on their limited knowledge about grammar. They made an error with grammar often. In addition, around 25 students said that they used the Google Translate application in

writing. They entered their sentences in Bahasa Indonesia then click the translation in English. After that, they copied that sentences without paying more attention to aspects of writing such as the grammatical and mechanics of writing of the paragraph. Furthermore, around 26 students asked that writing a paragraph is difficult for them. During the research, they wrote a free writing paragraph. They did not know about the aspects of writing a paragraph. It can be concluded that writing a paragraph was not an easy job for the students. Most of them did not understand the right way to write a paragraph.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The result of this study was the students had difficulties in writing a paragraph in aspect organization/structure, grammatical and mechanics of writing a paragraph. The most typical difficulty was the organization of paragraph problems in writing concluding sentences (90,3%). Secondly, grammatical problem in using adjective (77,4%), article (64,5%), and verb (58,1%). Third, mechanics problem in punctuation (38,7%). Based on the interview, these problems arise from the students' used Google Translate more often in finishing their writing. They translated their paragraph in Bahasa Indonesia into English directly without paying attention to the aspects of writing a paragraph. It made them difficult in choosing the appropriate words. For the next study, it was suggested to further investigate another aspect of grammatical (preposition, transition word, and conjunctions) and mechanics of writing such as content and organization. It was implied that writing skills should be included in course design to enhance student's ability in writing. It would be better starting at Basic English to introduce the students to how to write a good paragraph in general topics before they write about their specific topic on computer.

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