AN ANALYSIS OF THE STUDENTS' WRITING SKILL IN DEVELOPING PARAGRAPH AT SEMESTER FOUR OF STUDENTS OF BATANGHARI UNIVERSITY IN ACADEMIC YEAR 2014/2015

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Abstrak

Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui kemampuan siswa dalam mengembangkan paragrap perbandingan-kontras terkait isi dan organisasi, tata bahasa, kosakata dan mekanik. Masalah pada penelitian ini adalah 'Bagaimana kemampuan mahasiswa dalam mengembangkan paragrap perbandingan dan kontras terkait isi dan organisasi, tata bahasa, kosakata, dan mekanik pada mahasiswa semester empat Universitas Batanghari-Jambi tahun ajaran 2014/2015?' Sampel dari penelitian ini adalah mahasiswa semester IV/A yang terdiri dari 25 orang mahasiswa. Penelitian ini adalah penelitian deskriptif kualitatif. Data pada penelitian ini diperoleh dari tes. Nilai rata-rata dari hasil tes mahasiswa adalah rendah. Hal ini dapat dilihat dari hasil tulisan mereka.

Kata kunci : kemampuan siswa, kemampuan menulis

INTRODUCTION

There are two Medias for language communication: 1) receiving the message, i.e., reading and listening, 2) and sending the message, i.e., speaking and writing. Writing is more complex than the other skills such as: speaking, listening and reading. For example, when we are speaking there are many situations and contexts that able to support one understanding between speaker and listener, but when the author writes something he/she must use complete sentences in order to avoid misunderstanding.

To be skilful in writing is not an easy task. It needs a lot of concentration to do it successfully. According to Flower (1990:121), writing is described as a strategic process. This process is quite complex and interactive as it deals with many things including context, goal, and strategic. Moreover, this complexity can be recognized from some aspects that are involved in it, such as vocabulary, grammatical rules, punctuation, unity, coherence, and ideas organization.

To make students able to write, English department of Batanghari University provide their students writing subject or classes begun from writing I, II, III, and IV. Students have to deal with various types of written form such as: writing sentences, paragraphs, essays, and letters. There are several kinds of paragraph development that have to be mastered by the English students of Batanghari University including paragraph development by definition, listing, example, process, classifying, telling story, describing something, cause-effect, and comparison-contrast paragraph. The students are accepted to be able to write all kinds of these paragraphs.

However, according to the researcher's experience during teaching writing, most of students still got problems and difficulties in developing paragraph. Some of the students do not take into account the components of writing well. They could not express their ideas clearly and structurally in paragraph. They often make mistakes in composing their ideas into paragraph which are related to the content and ideas, failure to support their point of view, lack of organization and coherence of paragraph.

These problems can be caused by several factors. The factors may come from the background of the students themselves such as their intelligence and motivation, the lack of understanding in organizing paragraph, the lack of practice, and background knowledge of how to compose their ideas into in good way. So they cannot explore and develop their ideas into paragraph by having such little ideas whereas they do not follow writing stage and do not prepare an outline first as guideline to write before coming to while writing process.

Based on the phenomena above, the researcher was interested to conduct the research in order to know the

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students' skill in developing paragraph at semester four of Batanghari University in academic year 2014/2015. The research question of this reserch is: "How is the students' skill in developing Comparison-Contrast paragraphs concerning with its Content, Organization, Grammar, Vocabulary and mechanics at the fourth semester students of the English Department of Batanghari University?"

The purposes of this research is to explain the students' skill in developing Comparison-Contrast paragraph concerning with its Content, Organization, Grammar, Vocabulary and mechanics at the fourth semester students of the English department of Batanghari University. This research is expected will be useful for English Department as information in developing students' quality in learning English especially in writing. It is hoped that the students themselves will be able to improve and develop their skill and practice writing consistently. Moreover, this research will give contribution to English teacher/lecture to investigate the students writing skill and evaluate the teaching and learning process. In addition, the result of this research will be as a reference for further researcher.

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

1. Writing Skill

Writing is a process of composing and expressing ideas into written form which involves more than just producing words and sentences, but try to produce or reproduce written messages (Bram, 1995: 7). Therefore, to be able to produce a piece of writing such as a paragraph, a writer should be able to write a connected series of words and sentences which are grammatically and logically linked, so that the purpose of a writer has in her/his mind will suit the intended readers.

Writing is a complex process that allows writers to explore thoughts and ideas in writing form. It needs some abilities, such as: using vocabularies, generating the ideas, and using tenses or grammar for writing. Furthermore, there are some steps that should be done by a writer such as: the product of writing should be examined, changed, and edited to get the perfect writing.

Moreover, White & Arndt (1991) stated that in writing process, there are six activities can be done periodically. They are: (1) generating (2) focusing (3) structuring (4) drafting (5) evaluating and (6) reviewing. It means that, to make a good product of writing, a writer should follow the writing process which can be done periodically as stated by White and Arndt.

Based on the some linguists' opinions above and previous explanation, it can be construct that writing skill is complex and sometimes difficult to mastered, requiring mastery not only of grammatical and rhetorical devices but also of conceptual and judgmental elements.

In conclusion, for doing the writing activity, the writer must have the ability or prior knowledge in mastering the components of writing to increase their writing ability. The writing components should be are: (1) *grammatical ability* – the ability to write English in grammatically correct sentence, (2) *lexical ability* – the ability to choose words that are correct and used appropriately, (3) *mechanical ability* – the ability to correctly use punctuation-spelling-capitalization etc, (4) *stylistic ability* – the ability to use sentences and paragraphs appropriately, and (5) *organizational ability* – the ability to organize written work according to the conventions of English, including the order and selection of materials.

2. Nature of Paragraph

A paragraph is a group of related sentences which develops one main idea or one main topic. A good paragraph has five basic elements: a topic sentence, supporting sentences, concluding sentence, unity and coherence (McWhorter, 1992:168). A topic is what the paragraph is about or what the paragraph will going to

discuss. This topic is usually expressed in a topic sentence. Thus, a topic sentence announces what a writer is going to write. A good topic sentence has a focused controlling idea which limits or controls and announces the aspect of the topic. While, supporting sentences develop writer's topic sentence in the controlling idea. Furthermore, focus on the controlling idea in the topic sentence helps a writer produces supporting sentences which are relevant with the controlling idea.

> Oshima and Hogue (1990:3-4) explain that:
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> the topic sentence states the main idea of the paragraph. It not only names the topic of paragraph, but it is 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 controlling idea. Meanwhile supporting sentences are the sentences that develop the topic sentence. That is, they explain the topic sentence by giving reasons, examples, facts, statistics, and quotation. And concluding sentence is the sentence that signals the end of the paragraph and leaves the reader with important points to remember.

All supporting sentences that relevant with the controlling idea in the topic sentence produce a unified paragraph. A unified paragraph discusses only one main idea stated in the topic sentence, or more specifically in the controlling idea. Besides being unified, a good paragraph should be coherent. A paragraph is coherent if the movement from one sentence to the next is logical and smooth. Therefore, the idea in a paragraph must be related. McWhorter (1992:168) states that "a paragraph can be defined as a group of related idea". It means that all of the supporting sentences in a paragraph must be related to the topic sentence.

From the statement above, it shows that the unity is achieved when a paragraph has one main idea to discuss. On the other word, every sentence that supports the main idea must be mutually unified; it discusses one main idea from the beginning to the end.

3. Developing Paragraph

In developing paragraph the main idea is usually the first sentence. This sentence contains the controlling idea of the whole paragraph. It tells the reader what the paragraph is about and other sentences develop the idea expressed by the main idea. The ideas in the paragraph must be presented in logical order by using transition words or connecting words which indicate the relationship between the ideas (chronological, causal, etc.). While, the sentence that most clearly states this main idea is called the topic sentence.

Depending on its placement within the paragraph, the topic sentence provides the reader with different clues. In this occasion, there are several of the most common placements of the topic sentence and the clues that each offers the reader about paragraph development and organization.

Beside the topic sentence as the one of element of the paragraph, the supporting detail is also the important element in a paragraph. There are many types or pattern of details that a writer uses to explain or support a main idea. The supporting details can be illustration and examples, facts and statistics, reasons, and description with its common organization pattern such as chronological order, a process, comparison-contras, cause-effect, enumeration, and problem-solution.

In conclusion, there are many ways in developing a paragraph. The pattern of paragraph a writer uses will depend on a writer's purpose for writing. Besides, a writer must to

consider the paragraph elements itself such as topic sentence, supporting detail, concluding sentence, coherence and unity. Therefore, to produce an effective piece of paragraph, a writer should focus on organization by 1) choosing an appropriate topic sentence 2) identifying general and specific statements 3) arranging sentences in order and 4) inserting or deleting some sentences and ending with a concluding sentence. Moreover, to make a good paragraph, a writer should master all of writing components its self as presented before on previous page such as: Content, Organization, Vocabulary, Grammar and Mechanics.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a descriptive method to describe and explain the Students' skill and their problems in writing paragraph. Gay and Airasian (2000:275) states that "a descriptive study determines and describes the way things are". This research used random sampling technique. The sample of the research was the fourth semester students (IV A) of the English Department of Batanghari University. The number of the student is 25. The instrument of the research is writing test. The researcher collected the data by asking the students to write paragraphs. The writing test is used to take the students' paragraph in order to know their skill in developing paragraph related to the content and organization, grammar, vocabulary and mechanics. The data were analyzed in order to describe and explain the students' skill. It was analyzed by identifying the the students' test that deal with content and organization, grammar, vocabulary and mechanics.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

After scoring and analyzing the students' paragraphs, no one of students could achieve very good category. Meanwhile based on the average score of test I, II and test III, there were 2 students (8%) got good category in developing Comparison-contrast paragraphs. They were: student 5 and student 14. These students fulfilled the criteria of good score. In addition, there were 11 students (44%) categorized into poor category. They are student number 1, 4, 8, 9, 10, 15, 17, 18, 20, 23 and 24. These students fulfilled the criteria of poor score. While there were 12 students (48%) got very poor score and categorized into very poor category. They were: student 2, 3, 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 16, 19, 21, 22, and student 25.

After analyzing the students' paragraphs, there were 2 students got good score (student 5, and 14), 12 of them got poor score (students 1, 4, 8, 9, 10, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 23, and 24). And 10 of them got very poor score (students 2, 3, 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 16, 21, 22, and 25) for Organization and Content aspect. There were 4 students (student 1, 5, 17 and 18) got good score, 14 of them (student 2, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 19, 20, 23 and 24) got poor score, and 7 of them (student 3, 6, 13, 16, 21, 22 and 25) got very poor score for vocabulary aspect.

Based on the result of the test I, II and III, in grammar aspect the researcher found that there were 5 students (student 1, 5, 9, 14, and 18) got good category, 9 of students (student 2, 10, 12, 15, 17, 19, 20, 23, and 24), and 11 of them got very poor category (student 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 11, 13, 16, 21, 22, and 25). In mechanic aspect, there were 5 of students got good category (student1, 5, 14, 15 and18), 14 of them got poor category (student 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 17, 19, 20, 23 and 24). Meanwhile, there were 6 of students got very poor category (Student 11, 13, 16, 21, 22 and 25). After analyzing the students' paragraph, the researcher found that the students' skill in developing Comparison-contrast paragraph was poor. There were 48% of the students got very poor score, it means that most of the fourth years students of Batanghari University had poor writing skill. There were also 44% of students got very poor score, and just 8% got good score.

There were five components being analyzed in the students' comparison-contrast paragraph. They were Content, Organization,

Vocabulary, Grammar and Mechanics. The roles of each component are interrelated and contributed to the result of the test. From the result of the test, no one of the components was mastered well.

CONCLUSION

As shown on the results of the data analysis and finding of this research, the researcher concludes that the skill of the Fourth Semester Students of the English Department of Batanghari University is poor. It could be seen based on the analysis of all of the indicators in this research such as content, organization, vocabulary, grammar and mechanics.

SUGGESTIONS

Based on the result of the research, the researcher purposes some suggestion for those who are concerned with the area of study English lecturers and students in order to be able to improve their writing skill. First, the concept of comparison-contrast paragraph with its features and elements should be learnt and taught deeply. Second, the lecturer must consider about appropriate strategy and method in teaching comparison-contrast paragraph, applying some strategies to improve students' skill in developing comparison-contrast paragraph. Third, both of the lecturer and students have to consider about the writing component such as content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. So the lecturers and the students should always practice to write continually and simultaneously.

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