

DEFINITION PARAGRAPH : PROBLEM FACED BY STUDENTS

Oleh:

Impiani Zagoto¹⁾, Restu Damai Laia²⁾, Senadaman Wau³⁾, M. Yunus Laia⁴⁾

¹Fakultas Keguruan Dan Ilmu Pendidikan (FKIP) UNIRAYA

zimpiani@gmail.com

restudamailaia@gmail.com

swauuniraya@gmail.com

yunuslaia21@gmail.com

Abstract

Definition paragraph is a paragraph which defines or explains something. In writing a definition paragraph, a writer should pay much attention to the organization and the language features of the paragraph. The third semester students of English Department of FKIP UNIRAYA, however, faced problems in writing the definition paragraph. This case motivated the writers to do a research to describe what the problems faced by the students are. This research was a kind of qualitative research. The result of the analysis showed that the students' problems were in elaborating the controlling idea which is stated in topic sentences, and in drawing a concluding sentence. Moreover, the students have problems in grammar, spelling, punctuation, and mechanic in writing. Based on the result, it is concluded that the students are not able to write a good definition paragraph because of the problems faced. Hence, it is suggested that those students' problems need to be considered in teaching the paragraph.

Keywords : Paragraph, Problem Faced

1. INTRODUCTION

Paragraph is a group of sentences that develops a single idea or topic. A paragraph deals with group of sentences that talk one topic (Savage and Shafiei, 2007). Moreover, Oshima & Hogue (2017: 3) state that paragraph is a group of related statements that a writer develops about a subject. The first sentence states the specific point, or idea, of the topic. The rest of the sentences in the paragraph support that point. In other words, a paragraph contains some sentences that develop one topic.

A paragraph should contain a topic sentence, supporting sentences and concluding sentences. A topic sentence usually appears at the beginning of the paragraph which controls the next ideas of the paragraph. The controlling idea, then, will be explained in the supporting sentences. Supporting sentences explain what the topic sentences talks about or give more information about topic. Concluding sentences, on the other hand, summarizes the main points or restates the topic sentence in different words.

In academic writing, there are some kinds of paragraph that should be understood by the learners in order to have a good writing. One of the paragraphs is definition paragraph. Definition paragraph definitely refers to a paragraph that tells about what something is. When there is something that could not be understood by someone, you explain or define the thing then, it's called definition paragraph. In addition, Oshima and Hogue (2007) state definition paragraph is a paragraph that tells about what something is, such as love, happiness, sadness, poorness, etc. In conclusion, a definition

paragraph is a kind of paragraphs intended to define or explain something. It explains the meaning and significance of something.

Like a paragraph in general, a definition paragraph has organization that consists of topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence. Oshima and Hogue (2007) say that there are three ways to write the topic sentence of a definition paragraph, namely: (1) the word or thing you will define or explain (topic), (2) the large category or group to which the word or thing belongs, and (3) the distinguishing characteristics that make it different from other members of the category. Then, in supporting sentences, add details that explain the topic more completely. The supporting sentences may give additional facts telling *who, what, where, how, and why*, an explanation of a process, examples, and a description. The last, in concluding sentence, you may tell why the topic sentence is important, interesting, or unique". Thus, a correct definition paragraph must have topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence with all components or rules within them.

Writing a good definition needs skills. Oshima and Hogue (2007) say "The ability to use appositives and adjective clauses is the mark of mature writing style". Thus, a good writer of definition paragraph must have this ability, the ability of using appositives and the ability of using adjective clause. Appositives are noun or noun phrases that rename a preceding noun or noun phrase. They are very useful in writing definition because they give the reader more information about your topic concisely (without a lot of extra words). Adjective clause, on the other hand, is dependent clause that modifies nouns and

pronouns. It begins with the words *who*, *whom*, *which*, and *that*, among others. These words are called relative pronouns, and adjective clauses are also called relative clauses. An adjective clause joined to an independent clause makes a complex sentence. Because adjective clause is used to give more information about noun, they are useful in writing definition.

Considering the way how to write a good definition paragraph, most of the students of Nias Raya University faced some problems. They couldn't write a definition paragraph well. The students' writing about definition paragraph was like a paragraph in general. The organization of a definition paragraph couldn't find in their writing. This problem was found based on the preliminary research done. Therefore, this research tried to describe what the problems faced by the third semester students of English Department of Nias Raya University in writing a definition paragraph are.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

Considering the objectives of this research, qualitative research was used to describe the students' problems in writing a definition paragraph. The students' worksheets about definition paragraph were the source of getting the problems faced. The students' writings were analyzed based on the organization and the language features of a definition paragraph.

3. RESEARCH FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The result of the analysis on the students writing definition paragraph showed that the students got problems in:

1) Organization of definition paragraph

A paragraph contains three components, they are topic sentence, supporting sentence and concluding sentence, so there is no exception for a definition paragraph. Oshima & Hogue (2006) state all paragraphs have a topic sentence and supporting sentences, and some paragraphs also have a concluding sentence. Based on the students writing, it was found that there was much absence of concluding sentence in the students' writing of definition paragraph. This finding was proved by the example of students definition paragraph below:

Data S23: "Learning is process of acquiring new knowledge, understanding something like a materials, books and etc. which is obtained to add insight. For example when we reading English book in the same as learning to get knowledge. When we take it, use seriousness, sincerity and intention to be able to absorb what will be learned. Knowledge can be obtained by learning a lot and having a lot of experience".

The definition paragraph made by student above consisted of four sentences, namely: "Learning is process of acquiring new knowledge, understanding something ..." as the first sentence,

"For example when we reading English ..." as the second example, "When we take it, use seriousness, ..." as the third sentence, and "Knowledge can be obtained by learning ..." as the third sentence. It is clear that the paragraph doesn't have a concluding sentence.

2) Supporting sentence

In a definition paragraph, supporting sentence gives details about topics. According to Oshima and Hogue (2007) the supporting sentences may give additional facts telling who, what, where, when, how, or why, an explanation of a process, examples, or a description. In writing supporting sentence, the students got difficulties. They tended to give an example without elaborating the topic more completely. Moreover, the students do not consistently to explain the topics. Sometimes their supporting sentences occurs new topic. It can be seen in the example below:

Data S1: "Learning is an activity that is carried out by each individual in improving his abilities and knowledge. For example a child who has just come home from school repeats the material he has learned at school someone who doesn't know anything knows. However, not only those who can learning anyone can learning so that we know many things. Learning can be done anywhere and anytime. When someone goes to school and listens to the teacher's explanation that person learning".

The student writing above proves that they are difficult to explain the topic sentence. The explanation of learning is far from the controlling idea given in the topic sentence. In addition, the sequence of the supporting sentences shown in the paragraphs is not indicating the unity of the paragraph.

3) Concluding sentence

Concluding sentences tries to emphasize what the topic talks about. Similarly, Oshima and Hogue (2007) state that in definition paragraph a concluding sentence may tell why the topic is important, interesting, or unique. In this part, most of the students got problems in drawing the conclusion of the paragraph. This case can be seen in the following example:

Data S22: "Learning is the process of gaining an understanding of knowledge^p, for example^p learning a language is the ability to improve student's abilities in their respective fields.^p this^c learning is very important for everyone to have their own professions and skills. learning^c must also have the attitude and character of each relative to each other".

Data S23: "Learning is process of acquiring new knowledge, understanding something like a materials, books and etc. which is obtained to add insight. For example when we reading English book in the same as learning to get knowledge. When we take it, use seriousness, sincerity and intention to be able to absorb what will be learned. Knowledge can

be obtained by learning a lot and having a lot of experience”.

Both paragraphs above indicate that the students are not able to draw a definition concluding sentence. Even, there is no a concluding sentences of the paragraph.

Furthermore, the students got problems not only in the organization of the definition paragraph but also in technical writing in general, even in sentence structures. As Anker (2010) stated that writing that tells or explains what a term or concept means. Moreover, they also are able to organize their ideas structurally in a paragraph, organize their sentences coherently and cohesively in a paragraph, use their own competence in grammar, mechanics, style and quality of expression to deliver their ideas in a good paragraph. In other words, grammar and mechanics influence the quality of someone writing.

1. Grammar

The third semester students also got the problem in sentence structure. The students were difficult in composing correct sentences. Here are two examples of incorrect sentence made by the third semester students in writing definition paragraph.

Data S24: Learning is study the new things, about knowledge, the problem, and experience. In our life we have many *solution*[#] from the problem that already happen. So The learning we can getting not only in school, colloge, or by books but we can be getting from our life, in family, environment and we can *found*^{mf} the problem and also found the solution

It can be seen in the example showed above that the students have mistakes to use correct word form after modal –can. Besides that, the mistake seemed at the use of number (-s as the marker of plural) in the students’ sentence *In our life we have many solution from....*

Moreover, the problem could be also seen on the use of simple sentence with present form in the following student’s writing.

Data S15: “learning is the activity or process of gaining knowledge. or the same way is skill by studying, practicing or experiencing something. ‘skill’ to knowledge about new training or something else, learning can be to try or someone learn a new process. For example’ someone learn how to be good Teacher, however, we can learn how we can prepare or stand up in front of students. be good teacher that’s from own self how to related and how to build relationship with students. The rules of the learning That’s not meaning to grab or imitate with another people such as how to be good a parner’ learn how to teach students that’s all of them becomes what we look. Show or know that’s becomes from own self. That’s activity when we want to a good teacher or a process of gaining knowledge”.

The problem happened in constructing a correct simple sentence with present form. In other words, the writer frequently added helping verb of

nominal sentence –is in constructing simple sentence with present form.

2. Punctuation, Spelling, and Mechanics

The third semester students also were difficult in using correct punctuation, spelling and mechanics in writing definition paragraph. From their own writing of definition paragraph, there were found some errors made as the difficulty in using the correct ones. Here are two examples of mistakes as the problems made by the students.

Data S22: “Learning is the process of gaining an understanding of knowledge^p, for example^p learning a language is the ability to improve student’s abilities in their respective fields.^p this^c learning is very important for everyone to have their own professions and skills. learning^c must also have the attitude and character of each relative to each other. Learning is also shows a person’s ability in a task that he owns,^p learning^c is also sometimes a person is embarrassed ask something about what he doesn’t know,^p For example^p in subjects he doesn’t know what to do, therefore learning is very important to beat it”.

The students’ writing of definition paragraph above showed the students’ problems on the use of punctuations (period and comma) as seen in the second line –knowledge, in the third line –field, in the seventh line –owns, and in the ninth line –for example. This case also implied the students’ carelessness on the other hand.

On the other hand, proper spelling shows meaningful expression of what is being stated, and indeed, it would produce a good writing product. The position of proper spelling even very determines the meaning of the sentence. Repetition of the mistake done by the writer in spelling proper word indicated the ignorance of the student of the important role of proper spelling.

4. CONCLUSION

Definition paragraph deals with a paragraph that defines or explains about what something is and shows the things related to it, and why it is defined in that way. Result of the research shows that the third semester students of English Department of FKIP UNIRAYA face the problems in writing definition paragraph. They faced the problems in elaborating controlling the ideas built related to the definition given in the topic sentence, and in drawing concluding sentence. However, the students’ problems are not only in definition paragraph particularly, but also in writing generally. The problems are in grammar, and in punctuation, spelling, and mechanics. Therefore, it is suggested to English lecturer to notice these problems faced by the students, so they are able to write definition paragraph properly, and it is also expected to the students to increase knowledge about the subjects that support the writing ability very well.

5. REFERENCES

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