

**A STUDY ON THE ABILITY OF THE FOURTH SEMESTER  
STUDENTS OF ENGLISH STUDY PROGRAM FKIP UR  
IN WRITING A PARAGRAPH**

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**Abstract:** *This descriptive research was conducted to find out the ability of the fourth semester students of English Study Program FKIP UR in writing a paragraph. The sample was 60 of the fourth semester students of English study program FKIP UR which was decided by using Simple Random Sampling technique. The data were collected by giving a written test to the students. The students are expected to write a paragraph by choosing one of the given topics. The students' score were graded by three raters and were analyzed by using Harris' scoring system which concerned with five aspects of writing; content, form, grammar, style, and mechanics. The findings showed that there were 53 students (88%) in good level and 7 students (12%) in average level, and no student in excellent, poor and very poor level. It was also found that the students' ability in organization aspect was the highest among the other aspects, with the average score of 69,26, while grammar aspect was the lowest one, with the average score of 63,52. Based on the result obtained, it can be inferred that the fourth semester students of English Study Program FKIP UR were able to write a paragraph and their level of ability was in good level with the average score of 67,48. This study recommended to the students to keep improving their ability and to the further study in the writing skill can focus more on how to improve students' grammar in writing.*

**Key words:** *Study, Ability, Writing, Paragraph*

## **PENELITIAN TERHADAP KEMAMPUAN MAHASISWA SEMESTER EMPAT FKIP BAHASA INGGRIS UR DALAM MENULIS SEBUAH PARAGRAF**

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**Abstrak:** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui level kemampuan mahasiswa semester empat Prodi Bahasa Inggris FKIP UR dalam menulis sebuah paragraf. Desain penelitian ini adalah penelitian campuran (deskriptif-kualitatif). Sampel penelitian ini adalah 60 mahasiswa semester empat Prodi Bahasa Inggris FKIP UR dalam menulis sebuah paragraf yang ditentukan dengan menggunakan teknik *Simple Random Sampling*. Data dikumpulkan dengan memberikan tes tertulis kepada mahasiswa. Mahasiswa diharapkan menulis sebuah paragraf dengan memilih salah satu topic yang telah disediakan. Skor para mahasiswa dinilai oleh tiga orang penilai dan dianalisa dengan menggunakan sistem penilaian Harris yang menyangkut kepada lima aspek menulis; *grammar* (tatabahasa), *vocabulary* (kosakata), *mechanics* (mekanik), *organization* (organisasi) dan *fluency* (kepasihan). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ada 53 mahasiswa (88%) pada level *good*, 7 mahasiswa (12%) pada level *average*, dan tidak ada mahasiswa yang berada pada level *excellent*, *poor* dan *very poor level*. Diketahui juga bahwa kemampuan mahasiswa pada aspek *organization* merupakan yang tertinggi dari semua aspek, dengan nilai rata-rata 69,26, sedangkan aspek *grammar* merupakan yang terendah, dengan nilai rata-rata 63,52. Berdasarkan hasil yang didapatkan, dapat disimpulkan bahwa mahasiswa semester empat Prodi Bahasa Inggris FKIP UR dapat menulis sebuah paragraf dan kemampuan mereka berada pada level *good* dengan nilai rata-rata 67,48. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan mahasiswa untuk tetap meningkatkan kemampuan mereka dan riset akan datang mengenai kemampuan menulis yang dapat lebih fokus kepada bagaimana cara meningkatkan kemampuan *grammar* mahasiswa dalam menulis.

**Kata kunci:** Penelitian, Kemampuan, Menulis, Paragraf

## INTRODUCTION

Writing is important to be learned. Writing is learnt by EFL students because according to Huy (2015), firstly, writing is a good way to help to develop student ability of using vocabulary and grammar, increasing the ability of using language. Writing well is a major cognitive challenge, because it is at once a test of memory, language, and thinking ability. Secondly, writing is an essential tool to support other skills. If a student has good writing ability, they can speak and read the text more effectively.

Writing is considered to be difficult for students. As a skill, writing is considered to be difficult for students. This might be writing has some steps to be done and components to be considered. It takes study and practice to develop this skill. It is supported by the previous studies done by Richards and Renandya (2002), that most of the EFL students writing contains of errors. They are in the field of content, organization, and language. Another research is done by Sattayatham & Honsa (2007), these researchers find that types of errors in English paragraph writing made by first year medical students is in the grammar.

Having good writing ability is a must for students of English Study Program of FKIP UR. writing is important to be learnt by fourth semester students of English Study Program of FKIP UR because as a candidate of teacher, writing is an important tool in their profession and for further education. Writing is very close to them, they will write the next level of writing such as, an essay up to a thesis. After they graduate, it's likely they will write various forms of English writing with different purposes.

Paragraph writing is the foundation of all essay writing, whether the form is expository, persuasive, narrative, or creative. It is a building block of essay development which develops the thesis of a paper. Nothing in the writing process is more fundamental than writing a solid paragraph. If students can write a good paragraph that is an intelligent, well-organized paragraph, they will be able to write any other great writing from stories to essays to research reports.

Based on the writer experience, the paragraphs in essay writing of the fourth students of English Study Program of FKIP UR, who had already learnt writing a paragraph, contains of some errors. That fact makes the writer curious to find out how is the ability of fourth semester students of English Study Program of FKIP UR in writing a paragraph whether it's bad or not. So that, it's important to find out the view of students' ability in writing; to get a view which describes the grade or level of students' ability in writing a paragraph and also tells what problems they face at most.

According to Oshima and Hogue (1991) paragraph is a basic unit of organization in writing contains of a group related sentences 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. This definition is in line with Meyers (2005), who states that a paragraph is a group of sentences that discuss a smaller idea.

The other definition of a paragraph comes from Langan (2001) who points out that a paragraph is a short paper of around 150 to 200 words. Furthermore, paragraph likes an essay. It generally contains an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. Just like a "mini-essay" or essay within an essay, with its own mini-thesis is as topic sentence, middle or body is as supporting details, and end or conclusion is as concluding sentence.

According to Oshima and Hogue (1991), a paragraph has three major structural parts:

a) A topic sentence

A 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 of topic sentence is called controlling idea. The model states both the topic and the controlling idea.

TOPIC

CONTROLLING IDEA

Gold, a precious metal, is prized for two important characteristics.

b) Supporting sentences

Supporting sentences develop the topic sentence by giving reasons, examples, facts, quotations, etc.

c) A concluding sentence

A concluding sentence signals the end of the paragraph and leaves the reader with important point to remember.

Other experts (Cohan, 1976; Walter, 2000; and Sarada, 2003) call these three major structural parts are as rhetorical structure of a paragraph which is the foundation of writing paragraphs. Furthermore, according to Folse et al (2001) there are four features of paragraphs:

a) A topic sentence

The most thing that characterizes a paragraph is the existence of topic sentence. It is the foundation for a paragraph that states main idea. The main idea holds the reader to understand what the paragraph is about.

b) Unity

Unity means only one main idea is discussed. All other information in the paragraph must be connected to main idea in the topic sentence (Oshima and Hogue, 1991). So that, there are no unrelated or extra sentences.

c) Indented

The first line of a paragraph must be indented. It means that there must be a blank space of the first line of the paragraph that is inserted. In computer usually it is done by using TAB button. This gap or open space in the first line is called indentation.

d) Concluding sentence

Concluding sentence brings the reader to a logical conclusion of a paragraph. For some writers, this is one of the most difficult features of a good paragraph. A concluding sentence usually states the main point again or summarizes the main idea of the paragraph. In addition, it can offer a prediction or suggestion.

The other important element of a good paragraph which is not yet stated in four feature of the paragraph that's provided by Folse at al (2001) above is coherence. Coherence is different with unity. While unity means that, all of the sentences relate to the controlling idea, coherence means that every sentence relates to each other. Each sentence must be tied to the one before and after it, like links in a chain so that, the movement from one sentence to the next must be logical and smooth (Oshima and Hogue, 1991). Coherence also plays important role in making a good paragraph read

well. According to Siahaan (2008), there are four ways to achieve coherence. They are by repeating key nouns, using pronouns, using transition signals and arranging the sentences in logical order.

According to Holt and Rinehart (1996) there are four types of paragraph. The first is narrative. Narrative paragraph is used to tell a story or sequence of events, usually in chronological order. Most short stories and newspaper articles are examples of narrative writing. The second is descriptive paragraph. Descriptive is used to describe a scene or an object. The third is expository, expository is used to provide information, including facts, instructions, and definitions. Writers also use expository paragraphs to define terms, make comparisons, and show cause and effect. Since information in expository writing can usually be put into categories, it often uses logical order. The last is persuasive paragraph, persuasive paragraph is used to share opinions and convince others to agree or take action.

In this study, based on the syllabus, fourth semester students of English Study Program FKIP UR learnt to write an expository paragraph which is used to define terms, make comparisons, and show cause and effect.

The writing that's required to do in university cannot be done in random ways (Oshima and Hogue, 1991). It takes study and practice to develop this skill. It is important to note that writing is *process*, not a product. This means that a piece of writing is never complete; that is, it is always possible to review and revise, and review and revise again.

According to Oshima and Hogue (1991), there are four main stages in writing, they are: prewriting, planning, writing/drafting and revising draft, and writing the final copy to hand in. Those four stages have their own steps that can be seen as follow;

a) Prewriting

Prewriting is the planning, exploration, and preparation before writing the first draft. Prewriting process consists of choosing and narrowing the topic and brainstorming.

(1) Step 1: Choosing and Narrowing a Topic

It is impossible to write broad topic in a single paragraph. Limiting a topic to a specific focus is very important in writing so that the students can write about the topic clearly and completely. For example, it is impossible to write about pollution in one single paragraph because the topic is too broad, so it must be limited into the specific one, such as the effect of air pollution.

(2) Step 2: Brainstorming that includes listing, freewriting and clustering.

Brainstorming is a process to generate ideas. Brainstorming for ideas can get start writing more quickly and save time in the later stages of the writing process. There are three brainstorming techniques: listing, freewriting and clustering.

(a) Listing

Listing is a brainstorming technique in which the student/the writer makes a list of words or phrases coming into their mind in order to get many ideas in a short time and find a specific focus for a topic.

## (b) Free writing

Free-writing is a brainstorming activity in which the students/the writers write freely about a topic to generate ideas as many as possible and look for a specific focus without thinking about the appropriateness, grammar, spelling, logic, or organization.

## (c) Clustering

Another brainstorming activity is clustering that can be used to generate ideas. In this activity the writer writes a topic in the center of paper and draws a “balloon” around it. It becomes the core. Around the core, the writer writes ideas that come to mind in balloon.

## b) Planning (Outlining)

In this stage, students organize the ideas generated by brainstorming into an outline. There are some steps in this stage: making sub-list and preliminary outline.

## (1) Step 1: Making Sub list

In making sub-list, the ideas in prewriting are divided into sub list and the items that not belong are crossed. The result of making sub list next is called preliminary outline without topic sentence. So that, the next step after making sub list is writing the topic sentence

## (2) Step 2: Writing the Topic Sentence

Finally, write a topic sentence. The topic sentence is the most general sentence in a paragraph, and it expresses the central focus of the paragraph. It contains the main idea of the paragraph (Kelly, 2000).

## (3) Step 3: Outlining

An outline is a formal plan for a paragraph. In an outline, the students write down the main point (the topic sentence) and sub-point (the sub list of the ideas) in chronological order.

## c) Writing and Revising Drafts

## (1) Step 1: Writing the first rough draft

In the process of writing and revising drafts, the students start writing their ideas down on paper in a rough draft without paying too much attention to grammar, punctuation or spelling. In this stage, Oshima & Hogue (1991) state that when writing the rough draft, the students don't need to correct grammar, sentence structure, spelling, or punctuation. It only concerns mainly with content and organization. After revising the first draft, then, the students rewrite the paragraph that becomes the second draft.

## (2) Step 2: Revising content and organization

During the revision, the changes are sometimes needed to check over the content and organization, including unity, coherence, and logic. Changing, rearranging, adding, or deleting some of the words or ideas are common in order to communicate the thought more clearly, effectively, and in a more interesting way.

### (3) Step 3: Proofreading the Second Draft

The next step is proofreading. The students need to proofread their work to check for grammar, sentence structure, spelling and punctuation after writing the second draft. In this activity, Oshima & Hogue (1991) suggested to:

- (a) Check over each sentence for correctness and completeness; no fragments or run-on sentence.
  - (b) Check over each sentence for a subject and a verb, subject-verb agreement, correct verb tenses, etc.
  - (c) Check the mechanics: punctuation, spelling, capitalization, typing error, etc.
  - (d) Change vocabulary words as necessary.
- d) Writing the final copy.

After proofreading the second draft, the students start writing the final copy neatly and legibly which is belong to the stage fourth.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This is a descriptive research. There is only one variable of this research. That is dependent variable. The variable is the students ability in writing a paragraph. According to Russefendi (1994) descriptive research is conducted to explain a condition in the present time including case, survey, development and correlation research which are done by observing or interviewing. In this study, the writer tried to describe the ability level of fourth semester students of English Study Program of FKIP UR in writing a paragraph.

Arikunto (2006) says that population is all subjects of a research.. The population of this research is The population of the research is all of the Fourth Semester Students of English Study Program of FKIP UR 2015/2016 consists of 88 students. Surrakhmad (1998:100) states that if the population is homogenous enough and less than 100 persons so the sample should be about 50%; and if they are more than 100 persons, the sample can be about 15%. Because the population of the research is 88 students , the writer decided that the sample for this research is 70%, or around 60 students to make this study more represent the population. Random sample is a procedure in which all individuals in the population have an equal and independent chance to be selected in the sample design (Gay and Airasian, 2000). According to Sugiyono (2012), it is done by lottery technique.

The instrument used in this study was a written test. The test was adapted from Oshima and Hogue (1991) book. The students are asked to write a paragraph based on the given topics. There are three topics which are provided for the students. Then, the students were asked to choose one topic to be written to be a paragraph. The writing steps and the model of well-written paragraph are also applied on the instrument to remind the students. The time for students to do the test is 60 minutes. It concluded all the writing steps that may be done. The students' writing were analyzed and scored by three raters in order to have valid data. Then, the writer calculated the score of each students writing aspect.

The writer used the following assessment system which is adapted from Harris (1974) in order to find out the students' ability level in writing a paragraph.

**Table 2.1 The Level of Writing Ability**

Test Score	Level of Ability
81-100	Excellent
61-80	Good
41-60	Mediocre
21-40	Poor
0-20	Very Poor

In scoring the students' composition, the writer also used the scoring system from Hughes (1989). The aspects of writing which are analyzed in this study are *grammar*, *vocabulary*, *mechanics*, *organization*, and *fluency*. The scores for each aspect of writing start from 1 up to 6. Score of 1 is the lowest and score of 6 is the highest one.

After the data were collected, the writer then summed up the score of each aspect which was obtained from the raters in order to find out the total score for each student's writing. Then, the total score was divided into 30 (the maximum score) and multiplied by 100 in order to find out the score of each individual. Finally, the writer summed up the total score of each students from the three raters and then divided into 3 in order to find out the real score of each student.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Result

After the students did the test, the writer asked three raters to score the students writing. Then, the writer analyzed the data by using the data analysis technique that had been discussed in chapter IV. It was found out that the ability of fourth semester students of English Study Program of FKIP UR in writing a paragraph is in good level with the mean score 67,48 (see Appendix 5 and 13). It means that most of the students got RS in the range of 61-80. How many students who got RS in excellent level, good level, mediocre level, poor level and very poor level can be seen from the table 4.1 below:



**Table 4.1: The Percentage of the Students' Ability Level**

No.	Classification		Frequency	Percentage
	Test Score	Level of Ability		
1	81-100	Excellent	0	0%
2	61-80	Good	53	88%
3	41-60	Mediocre	7	12%
4	21-40	Poor	0	0%
5	0-20	Very Poor	0	0%
<b>Total</b>			<b>60</b>	<b>100%</b>

The table shows that almost all of the students got RS in good level with the score range of 61-80. It was found that there are 53 students (88%) in good level. After that, only 7 students (12%) who are in mediocre level in with the range score of 41-60. Furthermore, no student is in excellent, poor and very poor level. It can be inferred that overall, the ability of fourth semester students of English Study Program of FKIP UR in writing a paragraph is in good level.

### **The Presentation and Discussion of the Students' Ability for Each Aspect of Writing**

In terms of grammar, There are 44 students (73%). Nevertheless, the students who are in below good level are much more than those who are in above good level. There are 15 students (25%) who are in mediocre level and 2 students (3%) who are in poor level, while in excellent level, there's only 1 student (2%). In line with the mean score of students in this aspect, that is 63,52; it can be concluded that the students' writing ability in grammar aspect is in good level. (see Appendix 8)

In terms of vocabulary, almost all of the students are in good level. They are 55 students (92%) who achieve good level. The number of the students who is in good level in vocabulary is much more than those in grammar. It means that the ability of students in vocabulary is better than the ability in grammar. Then, the rest are 3 students (5%) who are in mediocre level and 2 students (3%) are in excellent level. Incredibly, there is no any student in poor level. The total number of the students in good and excellent level is much more than those in average level. It means that most of the students have a lot of English words. So, they can express their ideas by using appropriate and various vocabularies. From the presentation, it can already be concluded that the students ability in vocabulary is in good level, with the mean score 67,96.

In terms of mechanics, similar with vocabulary aspect, there is no student who is in poor level. There is 56 students (94%) or almost all of the students are in good level in this aspect. Then, the number of the students who are in mediocre level are the same number with those in excellent level. They are 2 students (3%) in average level and so are in excellent level. The mean score in mechanics aspect is 68,61. In brief, the students' ability in mechanics aspect is also in good level.

In terms of organization, the number of the students in good level is the most. It is 51 students (85%) who are in this level. Next, there are 7 students (12%) in mediocre level; while in excellent level, there are only 2 students (3%). After that, there is no any students (0%) too who is in poor level. It is the same with vocabulary and mechanic. The mean score of this aspect is 69,26. From the percentage, it can be concluded that the students' writing level ability in organization is also in good level.

In terms of fluency, it's also a high number of students who are in good level. There are 55 students (92%) in this level. The rest is 4 students (6%) are in mediocre level and 1 student (2%) in excellent level. There is also no student (0%) in poor level. The mean score of this aspect is 68,06. From the percentage and the mean score, it can be concluded that the students' writing ability in fluency is also in good level.

In summary, the writer found out that the students' level in writing ability is good with the mean score 67,48. Based on the percentage of students, the number of students who have scores in the range of 60-79 or in good level is the most. They were 55 students (92%). Besides, this result was also in line with the result of students writing ability level in each aspect of writing. From the previous figures that showed the percentage of students level in each aspect of writing (Grammar, Vocabulary, Mechanic, Organization, and Fluency), most number of the students had RS in good level. Moreover, all of the various mean score of each aspect was also in the range of good level (60-79) in which the students mean score in terms of organization was the highest among the other aspects (69,26), while grammar terms is the lowest one (63,52).

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Conclusions**

As it has been discussed in the previous chapters, the writer tried to find out the answer to the question in the formulation of the problem in this study. Based on the result of this study, the writer found out that the students writing ability is in good level with the mean score 67,48. Although the mean score is good, but it is belong to the low part of the range 61-80, because this score is closer to the 61, not 80. So that, it is not a really good result, since writing skill is very important to be mastered by the students of English Study Program of FKIP UR who are not only as EFL students but also as the candidate of English teachers. As EFL students, they are required to have competence in the target language and they must be able to communicate their thoughts towards appropriate language use and communicative strategies (Richards & Renandya, 2002). As the candidate of English teachers, it is they who will be responsible for the way of how their learners acquire language (Mosenthal, 1983).

### **Recommendations**

Based on the conclusion of this study, the students writing ability level is already been in good level, but the mean score is relatively low. So, the students need to keep improve their ability. To improve their writing ability, the writer would like to propose some recommendations related to this study.

i. The students need to pay more attention to every aspect of writing, because by mastering each aspect of writing, the student can improve their writing ability.

ii. Since most of the students are weak in grammar aspect, it is better for the students to do the two important ways that probably can solve this problem. First, the students need to learn more about grammar. Second, after learn more, they need to practice more. Specially, in grammar, it doesn't only need to learn, but also practice. The more the students practice, the better they will be in grammar.

iii. Besides doing a lot of practice, to improve a writing ability, the students should also need to read more, especially a kind of academic or scientific reading, because writing ability is closely related to reading ability.

In addition, related to the grammar aspect as the aspect in which most of the students are still weak, it is also recommended to the further study in writing skill to focus more on how to improve the students' grammar in writing. By doing this research, the writer hopes that this study can give some valuable contributions to education knowledge and information needs in writing like has been discussed in the need of the research in chapter I of this study.

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