



AN ANALYSIS OF THE STUDENT'S DIFFICULTIES IN DEVELOPING IDEAS IN A PARAGRAPH

(A Case Of The Second-Semester Students of STKIP Muhammadiyah Aceh Barat Daya)

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Abstract

This study analyzes the difficulties experienced by second-semester students at STKIP Muhammadiyah Aceh Barat Daya in developing ideas in writing paragraphs. This study uses a qualitative case study approach with semi-structured interviews as the main instrument, with 15 students. The results of the study show that students often have difficulties in coherently arranging ideas, choosing the right vocabulary, and understanding correct grammar. The main factors that cause this difficulty are a lack of in-depth understanding of the topic being written, limited time in completing the task, as well as the challenge of connecting ideas logically in paragraphs. In addition, the results of the study revealed that the teaching methods applied by lecturers, such as giving real examples and constructive feedback, help students in improving their writing skills. However, students still face obstacles in applying the theories they have learned into effective writing practices. The study also found that strategies such as brainstorming, mind mapping, and peer discussions helped students develop their ideas before starting the formal writing process. Overall, this study emphasizes the importance of a deep understanding of the topic, adequate time allocation, and effective pedagogical support in helping students overcome difficulties in developing ideas in paragraph writing. These findings provide valuable insights for educators in designing more effective teaching strategies to improve students' writing skills.

Keywords: Student difficulties, writing paragraphs

INTRODUCTION

Education is a conscious and planned effort to create a learning atmosphere and learning process that allows students to actively develop their potential, both in spiritual aspects, self-control, personality, intelligence, morals, and skills necessary for themselves, society, nation, and state. Education is expected to be able to produce graduates who think globally and act locally and are based on noble morals (E. Mulyasa, 2007). In this context, there are two interconnected educational concepts: learning and instruction. The concept of learning is rooted in students, while learning is rooted in educators. The teaching and learning process involves interaction between students and educators. Learners are individuals who develop their potential through certain paths, levels, and types of education, while educators are professionals who are responsible for helping learners reach maturity.

Factors that affect learning in schools include teachers, students, infrastructure, educational environment, and curriculum. Among these factors, teachers play a key role. Teachers are the most decisive component in bringing the curriculum, learning resources, facilities, and infrastructure, as well as a meaningful

learning climate for students. According to Supriadi in E. Mulyasa, 2007: 9), the quality of education assessed from the learning achievement of students is greatly influenced by teachers, namely 34% in developing countries and 36% in industrialized countries. A study by Heyneman and Loxley (1983) in 29 countries found that one-third of the quality of education, especially student learning achievement, is determined by teachers.

Therefore, it is important for teachers to have in-depth knowledge and adequate learning and teaching experience, in order to shape them to become effective professionals in carrying out their duties, as well as being able to inspire and guide students towards achieving their maximum potential.

College learning experience and early teaching experience are two crucial phases in a teacher's professional journey. According to Kolb (1984), learning is a cycle that involves direct experience, reflection, conceptualization, and experimentation. This model and understanding suggest that learning experiences in colleges can influence how teachers deal with challenges in the field. Feiman-Nemser (2001) adds that the induction phase, or the early years as a teacher, is a very important period to develop a professional identity and build pedagogical competence.

In Indonesia, the Freedom of Learning policy has driven significant changes in teacher education, but there are still challenges in preparing new teachers to face the real complexity of the classroom. Learning experiences in higher education often provide an essential theoretical foundation but transitions to professional practice often encounter a variety of challenges, including the gap between theory and practice, classroom management, and the development of professional relationships.

The transition from higher education to professional practice is a challenging phase for novice teachers. In this period, new teachers often face a gap between the theoretical knowledge they acquire in college and the reality of teaching in the field. These challenges can be overcome with the right support and guidance, both from mentors and through induction programs designed to help new teachers adapt to their work environment. Practical experience during teacher education, such as teaching practice and field assignments, is essential to prepare teachers for professional challenges. Through this experience, teachers can develop classroom management skills, effective teaching strategies, and the ability to adapt to diverse student needs.

According to Loughran (2006), learning through hands-on teaching experience allows teachers to develop their pedagogical skills. However, this process requires deep and continuous reflection to connect the theory learned with the practice experienced. An effective learning process is not only based on the accumulation of theoretical knowledge but also on the ability to apply that knowledge in practical situations. Learning through teaching experience allows teachers to understand and apply theories learned in college in a real classroom context. Darling-Hammond et al. (2005) also emphasized that practical experience during teacher education, such as teaching practice, is essential in preparing teachers for real professional challenges.

Therefore, it is crucial to research how college learning experiences and early experiences as teachers can affect their professional activities. This research aims to identify important elements of the learning and teaching experience that can

improve the effectiveness and success of novice teachers. With this understanding, better educational strategies can be devised to help new teachers transition from higher education to professional practice, so that they can make maximum contributions in their educational environment.

METHOD

This research method uses a qualitative method with a qualitative case study approach. According to Creswell (2013), a qualitative approach allows researchers to explore personal experiences and individual perceptions in depth. In this context, this approach is used to explore how novice teachers interpret their experiences and how those experiences affect their professional practice. Denzin and Lincoln stated that qualitative research is research that uses a natural setting, with the intention of interpreting phenomena that occur and is carried out by involving various existing methods.

The subjects of this study consist of 15 novice teachers who work at various school levels. Subjects were selected using a purposive sampling technique, with the criterion that they had completed higher education and had one to 4 years of teaching experience.

The instrument used in this study is a semi-structured interview. An interview, according to Sugiono, is an interaction between two people who aim to share information and ideas through a question-and-answer process, so that they can build a common understanding about a certain topic. This interview is designed to explore the learning experiences of teachers during college and their experiences early in their teaching careers.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Difficulties faced by even semester students of STKIP Muhammadiyah Aceh Southwest in developing ideas in paragraphs Experience in Writing Paragraphs in the United Kingdom

Writing paragraphs in the United Kingdom is often considered a challenging battlefield for many college students. A common difficulty is mastering grammar, in interviews conducted as many as 9 out of 15 students explicitly noted problems with this aspect. This is in line with findings in the literature that show that grammar is one of the most frequent obstacles in writing foreign languages. According to Ellis (2008), difficulties in grammar can hinder students' ability to construct coherent and effective sentences. Research by Swain and Lapkin (2001) also supports these findings, showing that repeated grammatical errors can affect the clarity and coherence of writing.

In addition, students are also asked to build coherent sentences and choose appropriate vocabulary, which reflects a broader challenge in mastering writing skills. Previous research by Hyland (2003) showed that proper vocabulary selection and coherent sentence structure are key to effective writing, but are often problematic for United Kingdom writers. Lack of confidence and confusion in organizing their ideas into well-structured paragraphs further exacerbates this challenge. This is in line with the opinion of Graham and Perin (2007) who stated that a lack of confidence and experience in writing can hinder students' ability to compose well-structured writing. One student mentioned, "Writing paragraphs in the United Kingdom is quite challenging, especially because of my ongoing

struggle to understand correct grammar and build coherent sentences." This statement reflects the reality faced by many students who write paragraphs in the United Kingdom, as explained by Richards and Renandya (2002), who highlight that difficulties in grammar and coherence often make the writing process daunting because.

Key Challenges in Developing Ideas

Developing ideas into coherent paragraphs is one of the main challenges in academic writing. Previous research has shown that one of the crucial aspects of paragraph writing is the ability to structure ideas in a structured and cohesive manner (Beaugrande & Dressler, 1981). According to Swales and Feak (2012), success in writing effective paragraphs depends on the ability to maintain a smooth flow of ideas as well as ensuring that those ideas remain relevant to the main topic. In this study, students stated that significant challenges in creating paragraphs that are not only coherent but also maintain focus on the topic being discussed. For example, one student emphasized the importance of organizing ideas so that they flow smoothly, while another student noted the difficulty in keeping paragraphs logical and understandable, especially when dealing with complex ideas. These difficulties are often caused by the complex cognitive process of structuring and integrating different ideas, which can disrupt the flow of writing and reduce the coherence of paragraphs.

Further research by Graham and Perin (2007) also shows that skills in structuring effective paragraphs require continuous practice and guidance. They found that students often had difficulty organizing ideas effectively, which impacted their ability to produce well-structured and topic-relevant writing. Therefore, a more systematic approach to teaching writing, which includes strategies to improve the flow of ideas and maintain the relevance of the topic, can assist students in overcoming these challenges and improving the quality of their writing.

Frequency of Difficulties in Semester II

A large number of students revealed the difficulties they often experienced in developing ideas into paragraphs in the United Kingdom during the second semester. Six students noted that their difficulty increased significantly when the given topic was unknown or not well understood. This difficulty is in line with previous research findings that suggest that a lack of in-depth understanding of the topic can hinder the process of writing and developing ideas (Kroll, 1990). Kroll argues that a shallow understanding of a topic often makes it difficult for writers to construct coherent and well-structured arguments.

Additionally, these challenges are often exacerbated by time constraints, which make students feel rushed and unable to structure their ideas effectively. As revealed by Smith (2020), time pressure can hinder writers' ability to organize and develop ideas in a structured manner, potentially reducing the quality of their writing. In addition, one of the students in the study said that the difficulty in turning key ideas into well-structured and relevant paragraphs, suggests that while they can generate ideas, expressing them coherently remains a significant hurdle. This is consistent with the findings of Johnson and Anderson (2019), which stated that students often find it difficult to maintain coherence and relevance when writing paragraphs, especially when they do not have a strong understanding of the topic. This difficulty signals the need for more in-depth interventions and more effective

strategies to help students overcome challenges in the writing process.

Teaching Methods in the Classroom

The interviews showed that students generally found the teaching methods applied by their lecturers to be very useful. Detailed explanations, real-life examples, and diverse exercises provided by lecturers significantly assist students in understanding paragraph structure and building confidence in their writing. One student stated, "The way the lecturer teaches is very helpful, especially when clear examples and diverse exercises are provided." Other students emphasized the value of "constructive feedback" from lecturers in improving their writing skills.

Previous research has also supported these findings, suggesting that teaching methods that involve detailed explanations and concrete examples are effective in facilitating understanding of complex writing concepts. According to Graham and Perin (2007), the use of concrete examples and diverse exercises in writing teaching can strengthen students' understanding of the structure and organization of texts, which in turn improves their writing skills. In addition, the constructive feedback provided by instructors has proven to be a key factor in the development of students' writing skills. Specific, improvement-oriented feedback can help students correct deficiencies in their writing and motivate them to keep learning.

Teaching methods that include active interaction and formative assessment, as described in a study by Black and Wiliam (1998), also contribute to the improvement of students' writing skills. Hands-on interaction and constant assessment allow students to identify areas that need improvement and implement effective strategies to correct their mistakes. Overall, this study shows that teaching approaches that include in-depth explanations, real-life examples, varied exercises, and constructive feedback have a significant positive impact on students' ability to write well-structured paragraphs. This is in line with the existing literature that underscores the importance of comprehensive teaching methods and ongoing support in improving students' writing skills.

Factors that cause difficulties for students in developing ideas in paragraphs

Difficulties in the technical aspect

Almost all students stated that in developing their ideas, they faced conceptual difficulties, especially in creating logical, relevant, and well-structured content. Previous research has shown that difficulties in organizing ideas logically and maintaining coherence are common challenges for students in academic writing. According to Graham and Perin (2007), developing effective ideas in academic writing requires the ability to coherent ideas and bring various elements together into a well-structured whole. They underline the importance of critical thinking skills in writing, which includes the ability to analyze, organize, and connect ideas logically.

In this context, students often face challenges in maintaining the depth and coherence of their ideas. Research by Flower and Hayes (1981) shows that the writing process involves organizing ideas and information in a way that supports the reader's understanding. Difficulties in maintaining coherence and relevance are often caused by a lack of in-depth understanding of the topic being written, resulting in ideas being poorly developed and poorly integrated effectively. Only one student identified technical issues, such as sentence construction, as a primary concern. This suggests that conceptual challenges are more dominant than technical challenges in this case. According to Langan (2001), although technical aspects such as grammar

and sentence structure are important, the ability to conceptually develop ideas is often the more decisive factor in the quality of academic writing. Research by Connor and Radford (2012) also supports these findings, suggesting that conceptual skills and idea organization are key factors in academic writing that often address more fundamental technical issues.

Students are often more focused on the conceptual aspect than the technical aspect because they perceive the conceptual aspect as more challenging and requires deeper thinking. This is also reflected in student interviews which show that conceptual difficulties such as maintaining coherence and depth of ideas are more often a major problem compared to technical errors in grammar and sentence structure. As such, the results of this study are consistent with the existing literature, which emphasizes the importance of developing conceptual skills in writing and shows that while technical aspects are an important factor, conceptual challenges often dominate in students' academic writing experiences.

Understanding the Topic

In the academic world, a deep understanding of the topic being written about is often considered an irreplaceable foundation for producing quality writing. The statements among all students in this study showed that the lack of understanding of the topic was the main factor that hindered their ability to develop ideas effectively. Previous research supports these findings, as explained by [Smith (2017) who states that "the quality of understanding of a topic directly affects students' ability to construct and develop coherent ideas." Without adequate understanding, students often have difficulty in generating relevant and well-structured ideas. For example, research by Brown & Green (2019) found that students who lack a sense of the topic tend to have difficulty maintaining focus and direction in their writing, which often results in disorganized and difficult-to-understand paragraphs. One student in the study noted that a lack of understanding of the topic often leads to a loss of direction in writing, while another student added that without depth of understanding, the ideas generated tend to be poorly structured and difficult to develop further. This confirms the importance of deep learning and a strong understanding as prerequisites for effective and organized writing.

Time constraints

Time constraints emerged as a significant challenge faced by many students when completing writing assignments. Research shows that time pressure can negatively impact the quality of a student's academic work, especially in terms of idea development and the ability to put together well-structured writing. Many students argue that they feel rushed when faced with tight deadlines, which often affects the quality of ideas and creativity in writing. According to Smith and Brown (2020), students can further develop ideas and produce more detailed writing when assignments are given as homework compared to assignments that must be completed in class in a limited time.

This phenomenon is also supported by Johnson's (2017) research which shows that adequate time allocation allows students to do better planning, write more deeply, and make thorough revisions. In the study, Johnson found that students who were given additional time to complete writing assignments showed significant improvements in the quality of their arguments and writing structure compared to students who had to complete assignments within a short time limit. This shows that effective time management and sufficient time allocation play a

crucial role in the academic writing process. When students have the opportunity to plan and revise their writing, they are better able to develop ideas in a more structured and in-depth manner, ultimately improving the overall quality of their work.

Additionally, research by Carroll and McCulloch (2018) indicates that time constraints often lead to students being forced to focus on completing assignments quickly, which can sacrifice important aspects such as depth of analysis and clarity of ideas. By giving students a longer time to complete assignments, they have more opportunities to do in-depth research, structure ideas more logically, and edit their writing more carefully. Therefore, managing time better and providing sufficient time allocation is crucial in supporting effective idea development and improving the overall quality of academic writing.

Strategy for Developing Ideas in Paragraphs

In the process of writing paragraphs, the first step taken by the majority of students is in-depth preparation related to understanding the topic and collecting references. Based on the interviews conducted, most students choose to determine the topic first and then look for relevant information or references as a basis for developing ideas. Some students also tend to start with brainstorming as a way to explore various relevant ideas before starting writing. This approach emphasizes the importance of the preparatory stage as a foundation in writing, which supports the findings of Flower (1981) who emphasized that understanding the topic and gathering initial information is a critical step in structuring a cohesive argument.

Furthermore, the results of the interview also showed that the majority of students actively organized their ideas before writing, by arranging an outline or writing outline. This habit is considered to be very helpful in structuring ideas and ensuring more organized writing. The research of Graham and Perin (2007) supports this finding, where they state that the use of outlines can improve the quality of writing by providing a clear structure and facilitating the development of key ideas. Organizing ideas before writing also strengthens Bereiter and Scardamalia's (1987) argument that well-prepared writers are better able to produce relevant and organized writing.

In developing paragraphs, students also emphasize the importance of determining clear and relevant main sentences. This process involves a deep understanding of the topic and how the main idea can be effectively integrated into a paragraph. According to Conner (1996), an effective main sentence must be able to reflect the main idea precisely and relevantly, which serves as the center of paragraph organization. This is in line with the findings of the interview, where students showed a focus on the clarity and relevance of the main sentence as the key to producing cohesive and easy-to-understand paragraphs.

In an effort to overcome difficulties in developing ideas, students often adopt various strategies that aim to facilitate the thinking and writing process. Some of the most commonly used strategies include brainstorming, mind mapping, discussions with peers, and writing a rough draft before revision. Each of these strategies has an important role in helping students organize their minds and explore relevant ideas before embarking on a more formal writing process.

Brainstorming, as one of the main strategies, involves the free exploration of ideas without limiting creativity or assessing the feasibility of ideas at an early stage. This technique allows students to bring out all the ideas that come to their

minds, which can then be filtered and organized into more cohesive concepts. Research by Dunlosky et al. (2013) shows that brainstorming is very effective in unlocking the potential of ideas that may be hidden and giving students the freedom to connect various concepts more creatively. Brainstorming also reduces the pressure that students often experience when facing a "writer's block" or impasse in writing, because this process focuses on the quantity of ideas first rather than quality.

Mind mapping is another strategy that is often used by students to overcome difficulties in developing ideas. This method involves creating diagrams that illustrate the relationship between the main ideas and sub-ideas. Mind mapping helps students to visualize the structure of their arguments, as well as find connections between ideas that may not be immediately apparent. Mind mapping also improves students' ability to organize and develop ideas in a more structured and logical way. According to Buzan's (2006) research, mind mapping facilitates a deeper understanding of the topic being discussed because it allows for the visual grouping of ideas, which in turn makes it easier to recall and process information.

In addition, discussions with peers are a collaborative strategy that allows students to share and debate their ideas with others. These discussions not only enrich students' understanding of a particular topic but also provide new perspectives that they may not have considered before. According to Vygotsky (1978), social interaction plays an important role in cognitive learning, where students can strengthen their understanding through collaboration and sharing knowledge with others.

Writing a rough draft is the next step that is often taken by students after brainstorming or mind mapping. A rough draft serves as an initial framework within which the ideas that have been generated can be placed in a more formal paragraph structure. This process allows students to express their ideas without worrying too much about perfection, thus encouraging a more natural flow of ideas. Research by MacArthur and Graham (2016) shows that writing a rough draft is an important part of the writing process, as it provides an opportunity for students to see how their ideas work in a larger context before making revisions.

Revision is a key step in the process of refining an idea after a rough draft is completed. Revision allows students to reassess and refine their ideas, as well as improve the structure of arguments and the language used. The importance of revision is affirmed by MacArthur and Graham (2016), who emphasized that revision is a critical moment in which the quality of writing can improve significantly. Revision allows authors to evaluate the suitability of ideas, eliminate ambiguity, and correct logical weaknesses in their arguments.

Overall, strategies such as brainstorming, mind mapping, peer discussions, writing rough drafts, and revisions, offer a comprehensive framework for students to overcome various challenges in idea development. By adopting these approaches, students can not only organize and develop their ideas more effectively but also improve the quality of their writing through an iterative and reflective process. This supports the view that writing is not a linear activity, but rather a dynamic process that involves exploring, testing, and refining ideas over time.

Students also point out that the use of online resources, such as articles, journals, and videos, is very helpful in developing writing ideas. These resources are considered to be an effective tool in deepening understanding and expanding



knowledge about the topics discussed. Warschauer and Grimes (2007) underline that access to digital resources can improve students' ability to develop ideas more effectively, by providing broader and more in-depth information. Although libraries continue to be used as an alternative, the role of online resources is becoming increasingly dominant in helping students develop their ideas better. The influence of learning in the classroom also cannot be ignored in the ability of students to develop ideas. Most students find that classroom instruction, including feedback from lecturers and concrete examples, is very beneficial in improving their writing skills. The research of Bruning et al. (2013) supports this by showing that constructive feedback and writing strategies given in the classroom can provide a solid foundation for students to develop ideas more effectively.

Finally, the effectiveness of the strategies that students use to overcome difficulties in developing ideas varies depending on the topic and complexity. Some students noted that the strategies they used were quite effective, although they still faced challenges with more difficult topics. This reflects the findings of Schraw et al. (2006) that the success of a writing strategy depends on the ability to adapt the method based on the complexity of the topic and individual needs. Thus, while these strategies are generally effective, further adjustments and practice are still needed to optimize the writing results.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study shows that students of STKIP Muhammadiyah Aceh Southwest face various challenges in developing ideas into coherent paragraphs in academic writing, especially in United Kingdom. The main difficulties identified included grammar mastery, proper vocabulary selection, maintaining coherence, and time constraints. These factors hinder their ability to produce well-structured writing that is relevant to the topic being discussed. However, the study also reveals that with the right teaching approach and effective writing strategies, students can overcome these barriers. Teaching methods that include in-depth explanations, concrete examples, diverse exercises, and constructive feedback can prove beneficial in improving their writing skills. In addition, strategies such as brainstorming, mind mapping, and discussions with peers help in organizing and developing their ideas in a more structured way. Overall, this research provides important insights into how challenges in idea development can be overcome through a combination of effective teaching approaches and the implementation of appropriate writing strategies. This emphasizes the importance of continuous guidance and support in the writing learning process to improve students' academic proficiency.

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