

STUDENTS' ABILITY IN WRITING A NARRATIVE PARAGRAPH AT THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT OF BUNG HATTA UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

This article presents the result of a descriptive research on the students' ability in writing a narrative paragraph at the English Department of Bung Hatta University. The research sample comprises 37 sophomores and they were selected by using total sampling technique. The data were collected by administering a paragraph writing test and analysed by using a descriptive statistics. The results of data analysis show that most students had very high ability to express the content and to apply mechanics in writing a narrative paragraph, but less than half students had very high ability to use vocabulary and to apply correct grammar. Moreover, the majority of students had moderate ability to organize a narrative paragraph. Based on the accumulative result of data analysis, it can be concluded that the students had a high ability in writing a narrative paragraph, and further research is needed to find out why their ability to organize the paragraph is not high.

Keywords: *students' ability, writing, narrative paragraph*

INTRODUCTION

A paragraph is a group of sentences that develop one idea. Savage & Shafiei (2007) state that a paragraph is a grouping of sentences throughout a topic. In addition, Heard & Tucker (2016) explain that a paragraph is a group of sentences that all deal with the same topic or core idea. Moreover, Refnita (2020) states that a paragraph is a group of sentences concerning with developing or expressing a single topic (one main idea). The aim of each paragraph is to explicitly and effectively express the idea to the reader. Therefore, a paragraph can be either short or long. A good one should be long enough to acquire the main idea. The number of sentences in a paragraph is determined by the subject matter. A paragraph with an easy subject might have five sentences, but one with a complicated subject may have ten sentences. (Refnaldi, Al-Hafizh, and Ardi 2016).

There are many types of paragraphs in Paragraph Writing subject, learned by the second-year students of English Department of Bung Hatta University. They are paragraph of description, paragraph of explanation, paragraph of narration, paragraph of argumentation, paragraph of definition, paragraph of comparison and contrast, paragraph of illustration-example, and paragraph of cause and effect.

A narration or narrative paragraph is a paragraph that tells a story, either fictional or factual, with a significant meaning (Heard & Tucker, 2016; Refnita, 2016; Pardiyono, 2016). In addition, Evans (2000) states that a narrative presents a connected series of events, either based on imagination or personal experience, in a vivid descriptive style. Furthermore, Anker (2010) states that narration tells the story of an event or an experience. Moreover, Checkett and Checkett (2010) states that narration is simply the telling of a story, either to entertain or inform a reader. In conclusion, it can be stated that a narrative paragraph tells experiences or events that happened in the past for the purpose of entertaining or informing the readers.

There are already many empirical studies on students' narrative paragraphs and texts. Some of them study university students' problems (Aulia, 2017; Sonanda, 2018; Murthofi'ah, 2019), and some others study high school students' ability and the way to improve it (Andayani&Arono, 2018; Sunarwan, 2016); however, this topic is still interesting to investigate in order to have more comprehensive knowledge about it. Therefore, this article presents the results of a descriptive study on university students' ability to write narrative paragraph seen from all components of paragraph evaluation suggested by Brown and Abeywickrama (2010). In other words, the analysis of students' ability was done in terms of paragraph content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics.

METHOD

The researchers used a descriptive method because the aim of the research is to answer the questions concerning the current status of the subject of the study (Refnita (2018). The population of this research was the second year students at the English Department of Bung Hatta University and the researcher chose them because they had learned Paragraph Writing subject. The researcher used the total sampling technique to select the sample because the number of population was only 37 students. The data were collected by using a writing test as the instrument, by which the researchers asked the students to write a narrative paragraph in 60 minutes. The test is valid in terms of its content because it measures what it is supposed to measure and, consequently, permits appropriate interpretation of scores (Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2012). The reliability of the test was maintained through the application of interrater method.

The researchers collected the data by doing the following procedures: 1) The researchers created WhatsApp group whose members were all of the research sample, 2) The researchers administered the test by using a Google form application in 60 minutes, 3) The researchers converted the students' answer sheets from Google form to Word document and 4) The two scorers checked the students' answer sheets and gave scores by referring to the Table 1.

Table 1. Scoring Criteria

No	Aspects	Criteria	Score	
1	Content	100% sentences are about the topic of the paragraph	30	
		95% sentences are about the topic of the paragraph	28.5	
		90% sentences are about the topic of the paragraph	27	
		85% sentences are about the topic of the paragraph	25.5	
		80% sentences are about the topic of the paragraph	24	
		75% sentences are about the topic of the paragraph	22.5	
		Note: Other scores are counted accordingly.		
		Maximum Score for Content	30	
2	Organization	a. Topic sentence	The student writes a topic sentence	5
			The student does not write a topic sentence	0
	b. Supporting sentences	The student writes 17-18 supporting sentences	9	
		The student writes 15-16 supporting sentences	8	
		The student writes 13-14 supporting sentences	7	
		The student writes 11-12 supporting sentences	6	
		The student writes 9-10 supporting sentences	5	
		The student writes 7-8 supporting sentences	4	
		The student writes 5-6 supporting sentences	3	
		The student writes 3-4 supporting sentences	2	
		The student writes 1-2 supporting sentences	1	
	c. Concluding sentence	The student writes a concluding sentence	3	
		The student does not write a concluding sentence	0	
	d. Transitional words	The student writes enough transitional words	3	
		The student writes a few transitional words	2	
		The student writes few transitional words	1	
		The student does not write any transitional words	0	

		Total Score for Organization	20
3	Vocabulary	The student writes ≥ 200 appropriate words	20
		The student writes 190-199 appropriate words	19
		The student writes 180-189 appropriate words	18
		The student writes 170-179 appropriate words	17
		The student writes 160-169 appropriate words	16
		The student writes 150-159 appropriate words	15
		The student writes 140-149 appropriate words	14
		The student writes 130-139 appropriate words	13
		The student writes 120-129 appropriate words	12
		The student writes 110-119 appropriate words	11
		The student writes 100-109 appropriate words	10
		The student writes 90-99 appropriate words	9
		The student writes 80-89 appropriate words	8
		The student writes 70-79 appropriate words	7
		The student writes 60-69 appropriate words	6
		The student writes 50-59 appropriate words	5
		The student writes 40-49 appropriate words	4
		The student writes 30-39 appropriate words	3
		The student writes 20-29 appropriate words	2
The student writes 10-19 appropriate words	1		
		Maximum Score for Vocabulary	20
4	Grammar	100% sentences apply correct grammar	25
		95% sentences apply correct grammar	23.75
		90% sentences apply correct grammar	22.5
		85% sentences apply correct grammar	21.25
		80% sentences apply correct grammar	20
		75% sentences apply correct grammar	18.75
		Note: Other scores are counted accordingly.	
		Maximum Score for Grammar	25
5	Mechanics a. Punctuation	The student always applies correct punctuation	2
		The student sometimes applies correct punctuation	1
		The student never applies correct punctuation	0
	b. Capitalization	The student always applies correct capitalization	2
		The student sometimes applies correct capitalization	1

		The student never applies correct capitalization	0
	b. Spelling	The student always applies correct spelling	1
		The student sometimes applies correct spelling	0.5
		The student never applies correct spelling	0
		Total Score for Mechanics	5
		Total Score	100

To analyze the data, the researchers did the steps as follows: 1) The researchers counted the raw score of each student, 2) The researchers calculated the students' ability in writing a narrative paragraph by referring to the criterion-reference used at Bung Hatta University as seen in Table 2, 3) The researchers counted the number of students who had very high, high, moderate, and low ability, 4) The researchers counted the percentage of students who had very high, high, moderate, and low ability, and 5) Finally, the researchers discussed the result of data analysis.

Table 2. Criterion Reference Used at Bung Hatta University

Score	Grade	Ability
85-100	A	Very high
80-84,99	A-	
75-79,99	B+	High
70-74,99	B	
65-69,99	B-	
60-64,99	C+	Moderate
55-59,99	C	
45-54,99	D	Low
0-44,99	E	

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There are five research questions to answer in this article: 1) How was the students' ability to express the content of a narrative paragraph? 2) How was the students' ability to organize a narrative paragraph? 3) How was the students' ability to use vocabulary in writing a narrative paragraph? 4) How was the students' ability to apply grammar in

writing a narrative paragraph? And 5) How was the students' ability to apply mechanics in writing a narrative paragraph? The results of data analysis dealing with these five research questions and the accumulative result of data analysis are presented below.

1. The Students' Ability to Express the Content of a Narrative Paragraph

After calculating the students' scores of expressing the content and classifying them based on the criterion stated in Table 2, it was found that 36 students (97%) had very high ability, 1 student (3%) had high ability, and no students had moderate or low ability to express the content of a narrative paragraph. These results can be depicted in Chart 1.

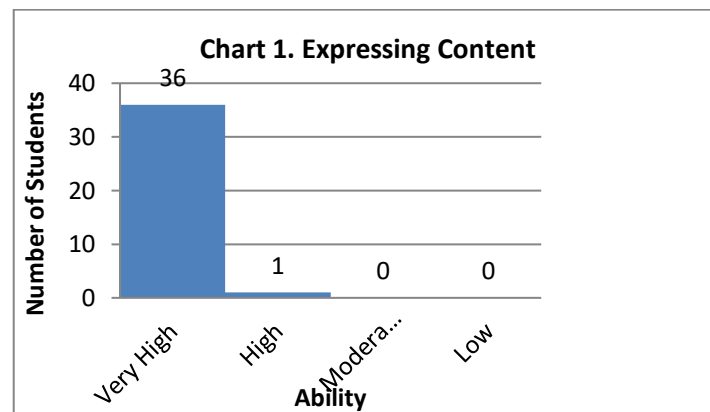


Chart 1 shows that almost all students had a very high ability in expressing the content of the paragraph. It is supported by the data that all students could write their narrative paragraph well in terms of its content. All sentences that most students wrote support the topic of the paragraph, and only four sentences written by one student are irrelevant sentences. This finding is contrary to the result of research which was conducted by Oktawati(2020), revealing that the third semester students had a problem to express the content of a narrative paragraph.

2. The Students' Ability to Organize a Narrative Paragraph

In terms of students' ability in organizing the paragraph, the results of data analysis revealed that 10 students (27%) had very high ability. In addition, 9 students (24%) had high ability, 11 students (30%) had moderate, and 7 students (19%) had low ability. These results are shown in Chart 2 below.

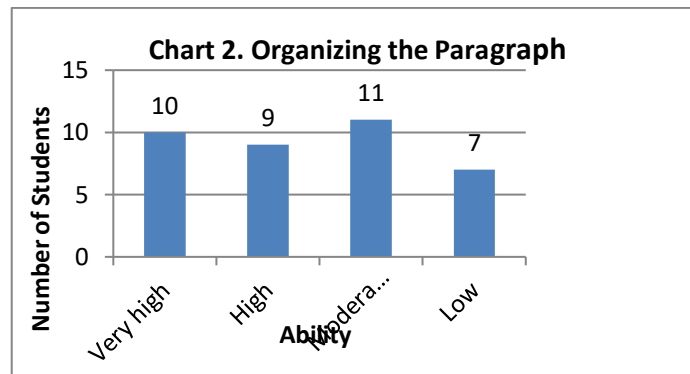
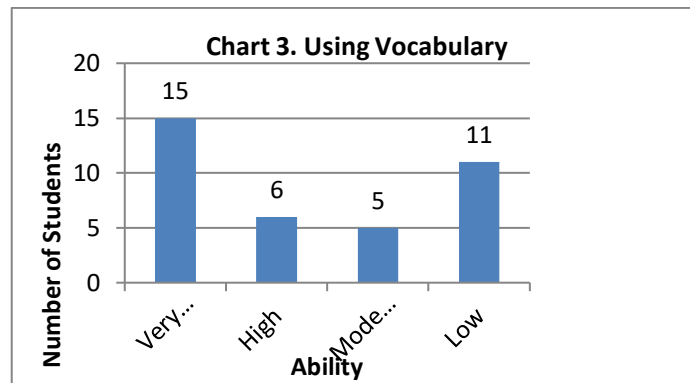


Chart 2 shows that the number of students who had very high ability is a little smaller than the one who had moderate ability. It also shows that nine (24%) students had high ability and the other seven (19%) students had low ability in organizing the narrative paragraphs. The analysis on students' paragraphs shows that all students wrote the topic sentence and supporting sentences, six (16%) students did not write concluding sentence, and only 12 (32%) students used enough transitional words. Since the availability of concluding sentence and enough transition is considered in assigning scores, its absence results in lower score. In turn, among the four classification of students' ability, the majority of students' ability in organizing the paragraph fell into the moderate category. This finding is in line with the finding of a previous study which was conducted by Sonanda (2018). She found 23 students (100%) had no problem to write a topic sentence and supporting sentences, but 12 students (52.18%) had problem in writing a concluding sentence.

3. The Students' Ability to Use Vocabulary in Writing a Narrative Paragraph

The results of data analysis related to students' scores in using vocabulary categorizes students' ability as follows: 15 students (41%) had very high, 6 students (16%) had high, 5 students (14%) had moderate, and 11 students (30%) had low ability to use vocabulary in writing a narrative paragraph. These results are represented in Chart 3.



The students' ability to use vocabulary was evaluated based on the number of suitable words used by the students when writing the paragraph. The very high ability students could write 160 to 351 words in their paragraph, the high ability students could write 141-153 words, the moderate ability students could write 111-121 words, and the low ability students could only write 53 -107 words, while the average words per paragraph is 200. Chart 3 shows that among the four categories of students' ability, the majority of students belong to a very high ability. This finding was consistent with the result of a study conducted by Yuliani (2018). She found that the first year students in the academic year 2017/2018 at English Department of Bung Hatta University were good at vocabulary mastery.

4. The Students' Ability to Apply Grammar in Writing a Narrative Paragraph

Related to students' ability to apply grammar in writing a narrative paragraph, the results of data analysis show that 13 students (35%) had very high ability, 5 students (14%) had high ability, 9 students (24%) had moderate ability, and 10 students (27%) had low ability. These results are shown in Chart 4.

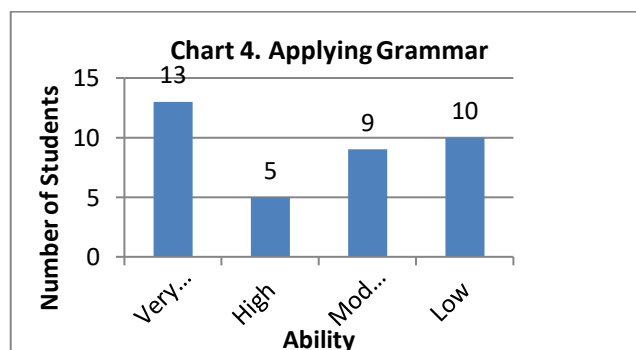
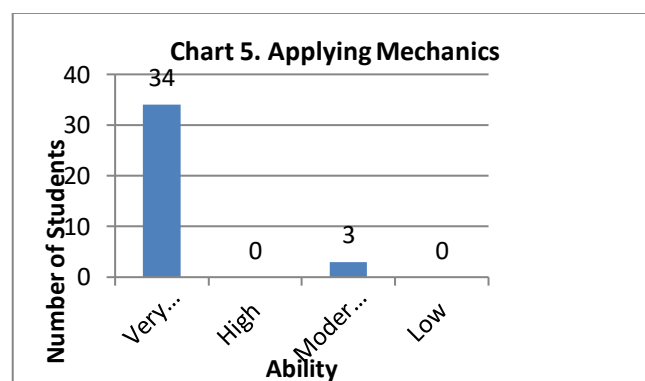


Chart 4 shows that the majority of students had a very high ability to apply grammar correctly in writing a narrative paragraph, the second majority had low ability, the third one had moderate ability, and the least number of students had high ability. The finding of this research is in line with the result of a study which was conducted by Jayanti (2017). She found that the second year students at the English Department of Bung Hatta University in the academic year 2016/2017 had good ability to use grammar in writing a descriptive paragraph.

5. The Students' Ability to Apply Mechanics in Writing a Narrative Paragraph

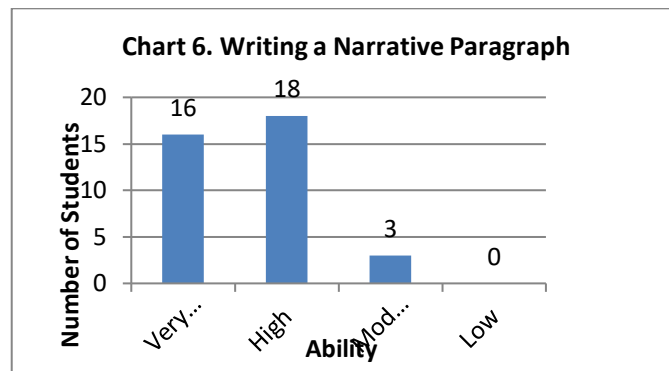
Related to the last research question, that is about students' ability to apply mechanics in writing, the data analysis results in the following classification of students' ability: 34 students (92%) had very high ability, none of the students (0%) had high ability, 3 students (8%) had moderate, and no students (0%) had low ability to apply mechanics in writing a narrative paragraph. This classification is depicted in Chart 5.



Students' ability to apply mechanics was evaluated in terms of using correct punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. The results of data analysis reveal that most of the students had a very high ability in applying mechanics. The three students who had moderate ability had a small problem in using capitalization but no problems in using punctuation and spelling. This finding is in contrast with the result of a study which was conducted by Frestisia (2017). She found that the second year students at the English Department of Bung Hatta University had difficulties in applying mechanics.

Besides analyzing the data to answer the five research questions, a more comprehensive analysis was also done to know the students' ability to write a narrative paragraph as a whole. The results of data analysis show that 16 students (43%) had very high, 18 students (49%) had high ability, 3 students (8%) had moderate ability, and no

students (0%) had low ability in writing a narrative paragraph. This accumulation is shown in Chart 6.



Based on the results of this study it can be concluded that the sophomores at the English Department of Bung Hatta University in the academic year of 2020/2021 had a high ability in writing a narrative paragraph as shown in Chart 6. However, additional efforts are still demanded to achieve a very high ability and to reduce problems related to paragraph organization, vocabulary, and grammar.

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