

**STUDENTS' INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH IN WRITING
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ABSTRACT

There are three structures of academic essay: introductory, body, and concluding paragraphs. This research puts its focus on the introductory paragraph. The objective of this research is to analyze students' introductory paragraph in writing academic essay in forms of the analysis of the general statements and thesis statement. This research was qualitative research and the data was collected from students' writing. The respondents of this research were third semester students of English literature study program. The result of the analysis shows that most of the students' essay (90,7%) put general statements on introductory paragraph. It shows good result in practice because students already know the importance of general statements in introductory paragraph. Students comprehend and implement the main function of general statements, i.e. to attract the reader's attention. In addition, it was also revealed that there were 68,5% of the students' essay put thesis statement on introductory paragraph. The result is quite satisfying, although there are some of the essays not contain thesis statement. Indeed, thesis statement is important in writing introductory paragraph because it functions to state the specific subdivisions of the topic and/or the "plan" of the paper.

Keywords: Academic writing, Essay, Writing skill

A. INTRODUCTION

Writing as the reproductive skill in learning English is highly needed for someone who wants to be successful in his academic and job world. Effective writing is a skill that is grounded in the cognitive domain. It involves learning, comprehension, application and synthesis of new knowledge (Defazio et al., 2010). Someone needs to master components in writing English to boost his academic and job world. As stated by Al Mubarak (2017) that writing skills are the most important part of academic life for students because writing skills require students to be able to think critically and develop the contents of their academic writing. Thus, students are introduced to write since they were in elementary school. In university, types of writing written by students are increasing. They not only write a summary, but also a research, book review, journal, synthesis, and even essay.

Academic writing is different from procedural, descriptive, or non-fiction writing, such as novels and short stories called creative writing, and personal writing is categorized as informal writing (Bailey, 2011). Thus, students find writing an academic essay challenging.

It is supported by Fared et al. (2016) that students find difficulties accomplishing writing tasks. It may happen because they are not used to writing academic essay nor they are lack of experience in writing it. Another difficulties are revealed by Richards and Renandya (2002) that students get difficulties not only in expressing and arranging the ideas but also in writing these ideas into readable text. Thus, it can be concluded that writing essay is not an easy thing to conduct, but it merely takes some effort to make it coherence and meaningful. Based on these problems, students in English Literature study program at Jenderal Soedirman University get some subjects that are arranged to help them write better. Basic Writing, Genre-Based Writing, and Academic Writing classes are designed to help students learn writing better. Academic Writing class focuses to help students write more in academic writing, moreover in writing essay.

Academic essay is a document that has a defined structure – an introduction, a body and a conclusion (Babaei & Id, 2013). Academic essay aims to persuade readers of an idea based on evidence and it should answer a question or task. It should have a thesis statement (answer to the question) and an argument. It should try to present or discuss something: develop a thesis via a set of closely related points by reasoning and evidence. An academic essay should include relevant examples, supporting evidence and information from academic texts or credible sources. In addition, an academic essay has different function. Its function is to state a case objectively because it should attach some evidences and theories in the writing, not only exposing argument of the writer.

There are three types of academic essay, i.e. descriptive essay, expository essay, and argumentative essay. Among those three types of essay, each of which should consist of three components of an essay. They are introduction, body, and conclusion (Oshima & Hogue, 2006). The first part in writing essay is introduction. Introductory paragraph functions to introduce the topic of the essay and give general background of the topic, body paragraph, consisting of one or more paragraphs, works like the main supporting of an essay, and concluding paragraph indicates the readers that the essay is completed. According to Schwalm (2007) in arranging introduction, the students should give detail background information about the topic of the argumentative essay by giving a clear explanation or definition of the problem. Thus, it plays important role in introducing the essay to the readers. When someone writes his introductory paragraph well, the readers are eager to read next paragraphs.

In addition, body and concluding paragraphs describe and explain about the topic more after being introduced by introductory paragraph. body paragraph includes the evidence and support of the essay in addition to the writer's ideas and it must include a topic sentence which relates the discussion back to the thesis statement. In arranging body paragraphs, the students should have at least three main points and the students should be able to develop those main points with supporting details (Schwalm, 2007). Last, concluding paragraph should wrap all of the arguments and points and should relate the main arguments in a simplified manner. In another words, in arranging conclusion the students should summarize the main points without repeating previous sentences.

In writing, the first thing that a writer does is to write the introductory paragraph, which introduces the subject to be dealt with the readers. The introductory paragraph is broken down into two parts, i.e. general statements and thesis statement (Oshima & Hogue, 2006). According to Mills (2002), a general statement is sentences that give background

information on the subject and gradually lead to the readers in the specific topic. It means that general statements should introduce the topic of the essay and give background information on the topic. While, thesis statement is a sentence (or sentences) claim in the end of the form of a clear statement at the beginning of the essay. According to Fournier (2004, cited in Anita, 2016), thesis statement is a deliberate affirmation expressing an opinion, an attitude or original idea on the topic or a piece of literature.

There are also some previous researches dealing with similar issue. Fatsah et al. (2020). which explored the difficulty faced by students in writing essay. The result of the paper showed that students find difficulty in pre-writing and pre-drafting which may happen in getting the topic and organizing the essay. Another study was conducted by Setyaningsih & Larassati (2021) found that some students still do some errors in writing. Students make some errors in forms of contraction, addressing the reader directly, direct question, adverb in initial or final position, interjection and hesitation filler, short form of the word or slang, inappropriate negative form, and figures at the beginning of the sentence. In addition, Weston-Sementelli et al. (2018) revealed that students in the blended strategy training condition produce higher quality source-based essays than students in the reading comprehension-only, writing-only, or control condition, with no differences observed between the latter three conditions. It can be implied that learning to write needs stimulus to make it work.

Among those three previous papers, the focus of all papers are in the writing product, such as essay. Indeed, none of the paper analyzes each part of essay. The gap among those papers lead the researchers to conduct analysis on part of essay. In this case, this research puts its focus on the introductory paragraph. Thus, this study is intended to analyze students' introductory paragraph in writing academic essay in forms of the analysis of the general statements and thesis statement.

B. METHOD

This research was qualitative research. As stated by Arikunto (2010) that descriptive research is a research that explain about the situation based on the real condition of research subject. Third semester students of English literature study program at Jenderal Soedirman University were chosen as the subject in this research because they already had Academic Writing class and they already exposed to Basic Writing and Genre-Based Writing classes previously which made them ready to write academic writing. There were 54 students worked as the respondents of this research. Students as the subject of the research were asked to write an academic essay on their own. Thus, this research uses content analysis design. The researchers analyzed the students' composition after they wrote opinion essays as instructed by the lecturer a simple academic essay in Academic Writing class. The essay used in this research was argumentative essay, in which the students wrote about Covid-19 condition as the main topic. It has three sub-topics, i.e. condition after pandemic, regret when the pandemic was over, and hope in online class during pandemic condition. The writings were not limited to number of words, nor other specific requirement. It was done to make the respondents develop their essay more.

C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Students' argumentative essay was used as the data for this research. The essay focused on Covid-19 condition as its main topic. The topic was narrowed down into three sub-topics, i.e. condition after pandemic, regret when the pandemic was over, and hope in online class during pandemic condition. This research focused more on the introductory paragraph of the essay. The purposes of introductory paragraph are (1) introduces the topic of the essay, (2) often indicates the overall "plan" of the essay, (3) gives a general background of the topic, and (4) should arouse the reader's interest in the topic (Oshima & Hogue, 2006).

In analyzing the introductory paragraph, it was broken down into two parts, i.e. general statements and thesis statement. General statements function to attract the reader's attention, while thesis statement functions to state the specific subdivisions of your topic and/or the "plan" of the paper and it can be said a topic sentence for a paragraph. (Oshima & Hogue, 2006). The two parts of introductory found in students writing can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. The parts of Introductory Paragraph

	General Statement	Thesis Statement
Students' Writing	49 (90.7%)	37 (68.5)

Table 1 showed that there were 49 (90,7%) of the introductory paragraph already put general statements, while there were only 5 (9,3%) of it did not put the general statements. And there were 37 (68,5%) of the introductory paragraph put thesis statement and 17 (31,5%) did not. The detailed description from the two parts of introductory paragraphs are elaborated in the next session.

1. General Statements

There were 49 introductory paragraphs that put general statements in them. General statements function to introduce the topic of the essay and give background information on the topic. The general statements written by students mostly introduced the topic of the essay. It could be seen from the word choice chosen by students. Most of the general statements started with elaborating the definition of the topic. Some samples of general statements were stated in the table 2.

Table 2. Students' General Statements

Essay No	General Statements
1	We are currently dealing with a Covid-19 pandemic that has lasted more than a year. As a result, the vaccination is a safe and clever technique of inducing an immune response in the body without producing illness. Vaccines minimize the risk of contracting a disease by enhancing your body's natural defenses.
2	Covid-19 virus has come from Wuhan since 2020. It causes many disadvantages to all aspects of life. The government makes many attempts to protect their country.
3	You must be familiar with these words, "In a healthy body there is a strong spirit". That's right. The human spirit is important for one's identity. If our body is not healthy, then our soul will also weaken.
4	A pandemic is an epidemic of a disease that spreads over a large area, for example several continents, or across the globe. Since the end of 2019 there has been a corona pandemic which has caused changes to the existing system

in the world. The education system is no exception, almost all over the world the education and learning system has been changed to an online system for a while.

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10 In the current situation, every student must bring themselves to accept the presence of the new classroom model. The transition from offline school to a virtual class in the pandemic can be a tricky change. Some of them can adapt quickly to the virtual class, while others may have difficulty with it. We need to enjoy even if it is hard in the virtual class.

11 Everyone very bored with the COVID-19 pandemic that never be ended until right now. Many students also complaining because learning activities with online system then it make results in a less than optimal understanding of the material, so many students want learning activities by face-to-face in real life.

13 Have you ever imagine when the world is finally recovered from the corona virus, things might get back to be normal? Well, that sounds pretty amazing and dreamy, right? Some people might happy to finally get back to school and reunite with their friends. But, is there anything that you will regret when the pandemic is over? Because I do have a thing I regret when everything finally get back to normal . Looking back, the corona virus has been blocking us to do our normal life and it pressed us to make a huge change in the way we socialize, survive, etc. Furthermore, the corona virus has taken away many lives and left a big wound in the hearts of the bereaved family. Fortunately, we slowly able to overcome the corona virus that has been rampant in the world for this past 2 years by vaccine. The world seems to recovered from this pandemic and we can slowly live our normal life again step by step. The school and the shopping center one by one finally open. The theatre, zoo, and park finally open for everyone, even though we have to do the Covid-19 protocol. It is so happy to see the world slowly heal from this virus.

14 In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, many countries around the world have closed schools to help reduce the spread of the virus. The impact on schools was a generational disaster. According to data from the UN SDGs quality education, “Before the pandemic, progress was slow and insufficient to achieve the education targets in the goals. An estimated 101 million additional children and youth (from grades 1 to 8) fall below the minimum reading proficiency level by 2020 due to the consequences of the pandemic, which erased educational attainment over the past 20 years” (2020). With this uncertain background, it is important to identify policies that can maximize effectiveness, namely through online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic.

From table 2, it could be seen that most of students write the general statement in academic essay clearly defined the topic and background information on why the topic was put up in the essay. Elaborating definition of the key word in the topic was one of useful ways to start and introduce the essay. It is in line with Mills (2002), a general statement is sentences that give background information on the subject and gradually lead to the readers in the specific topic.

2. Thesis Statement

Next analysis was analysis on the thesis statement. Thesis statement functions to state the main topic, list the subdivisions of the topic, may indicate the method of organization of the entire essay, and is usually the last sentence in the introductory paragraph. Some samples of thesis statement were stated in the table 3.

Table 3. Students' Thesis Statement

Essay No	Thesis Statement
29	This essay aims to present several personal longings that I would want to obtain after getting vaccinated twice.
30	This new study habit at home than in school are certainly very different.
31	The second dose of the vaccine gives a person better immunity than just getting one dose.
32	We have to use new strategies in order to survive during online classes and this pandemic.
34	If the procedure of the vaccination for the most part successful, it could be a matter of time until we are back into face to face education, the curing of our economic structure and a somewhat normality with us freely going anywhere without restriction what so ever.
35	This is why vaccination is needed to prevent the virus from spreading.
36	After being vaccinated twice I hope I can travel safely and when I was exposed to Covid 19 the symptoms I experienced were not severe.
39	There are several things that I will do when I must attend the class.
40	There are so many people who hoped that by being vaccinated could make this virus will be soon go away little by little and it would be the biggest lie ever if I say I'm not wishing it too.
46	Doing online classes made it difficult for me at first because there were some problems that I experienced and things I had to do when taking online classes.

The data above showed that most of the students (68,5%) comprehended the importance of thesis statement in essay. They wrote thesis statement in their essay in good way. Almost all the essays put the thesis statement in the last sentence of introductory paragraph. It showed good practice because good components of essay always put thesis statement in the last sentence of introductory paragraph. Referring to the findings, most of the students had built good introductory paragraph in their essay. Most of their general statements exposed more of the definition or elaboration of the topic, but some of them started with individual argument. This practice could be said good because in writing argumentative essay, someone needed to give arguments that could support the topic. It was in line with the nature of

argumentative writing, i.e. to get reader to acknowledge that your side is valid and deserves consideration as another point of view.

Meanwhile, most of students' thesis statement were written in affirmative sentences, while others were written as an announcement. They were regarded as an announcement because students' thesis statement did not clearly and directly reveal the attitude towards the essay topic. It could also be seen that the focus of students' thesis statement was mostly too broad. It could lead to unclear discussion for the next paragraph. Regarding the analysis of students' introductory paragraph as a whole, it could be said that students' knowledge influenced students' writing and essay development. This result was quite different with previous studies done by Wijaya (2017) that the analysis deal with students' thesis statement using Chesla's aspects, namely assertion, focus, and idea. The result of his research showed that students' thesis statement could be categorized into good thesis statement, good thesis statement with some focus, good thesis statement with too broad focus, quite good thesis statement, and not good thesis statement. The possible causes that emerged and influenced students' thesis statement were students' grammatical mastery level and their topical knowledge (Wijaya, 2017)

D. CONCLUSION

Based on the finding and discussion, it can be concluded that most of the students' writing already put general statements and thesis statement in their essay. It shows good practice and comprehension for students in learning writing essay. They know what details should be put in their introductory paragraph and to make it coherence. More practice given to the students makes their writing better. It is suggested for lecturers to be aware in teaching academic essay. They need to teach it in more interesting way to make students feel eager and interested in writing more.

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