The Undergraduate Students' Difficulties in Writing Thesis Proposal

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Abstract:
The purposes of this research were to find out the students' difficulties in developing a paragraph and to understand the students' difficulties in implementing the writing elements in writing their undergraduate thesis proposals. This research used the descriptive qualitative method. The instrument used in this research were interviews, documentation, and Oshima & Hogue's Paragraph Rubric. The research subject was 7 eighth-semester students of UINSI Samarinda. The data were collected from the background of the study of the student's undergraduate thesis proposals and analyzed with the Miles and Huberman Model. The result showed that the difficulties in developing a paragraph experienced by the students were related to too specific and too general topic sentences, poor supporting sentences, the absence of concluding sentences, inconsistent topic discussion, and inharmonic sentences. At the same time, the students' difficulties shown in implementing the writing elements were found in the organization (the failure to run the sentences smoothly), vocabulary (informal phrases, redundancy, unclear word), grammar (singular and plural error, wrong word choice errors, missing word error, article error, subject-verb agreement error, fragment error, conjunction error, wrong word form error, wrong word order error, and preposition error), and mechanics (capitalization error, punctuation error, and

spelling error). The causes of these problems were the interference of students' native language and the lack of knowledge about the rules of the development of paragraph and writing elements.

Keywords*: developing paragraph, students' difficulties, undergraduate thesis proposal, writing skill*

1. INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the essential skills to be mastered by every human due to its critical functions (Fauzan et al., 2020). As a communication tool, writing can connect humans by presenting and informing ideas on a particular medium using letters or symbols. Not only that, but through writing, humans can communicate and express their thoughts, feelings, and opinions to others effectively. Besides that, it can also train human thought since writing requires broad insight. So, by mastering writing, humans will communicate and think better. Nevertheless, its functions are also in rows with their complexity to be mastered. It has several elements to be given heedful attention.

Writing skill is a hard skill among others because it has to be concerned more about it, and we need to follow some rules related to every single step (Dewi, 2022; Sa'adah, 2020, 2021). Five elements are considered the key to writing: content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. A writer must provide content that refers to the substance of writing that conveys the main topic of the written work. Thus, the conveyed topic must be logically organized, arranged, and flow smoothly to accomplish coherence. The suitable selection of words and the correct grammatical syntactic also holds a crucial role in writing. Besides, the writer also needs to be concerned with spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and paragraphing to support the other elements. Those elements are fundamental and inseparable from one another. So, every writer, especially students and college students, must implement all those elements to produce a perfect written work, especially if the writer wants to conduct academic writing.

Academic writing is one of the formal writing styles used in schools and colleges. Due to its formality, the writer requires carefulness to write complete sentences and organize them specifically (Ariyanti, 2016; Khamkhien, 2021; Therova, 2021). The writer also needs to answer and demonstrate an understanding of the subject discussed in academic writing. Besides that, academic writing must contain knowledge of the subject's area supported by evidence and accurate references. Therefore, every writer who wants to conduct academic writing must be concerned with those rules, especially the age students who want to conduct scientific work as a thesis and thesis proposal.

A thesis on college students combines their knowledge and skill in understanding, analyzing, and explaining problems related to their field. Therefore, writing a thesis

became the main requirement for every undergraduate student to graduate in Indonesia. Yet, before arranging the thesis, the students must submit a proposal paper to clarify their thesis topic, namely the thesis proposal. A thesis proposal is a document that outlines the thesis topic, defines the issue that the thesis will address, and explains why the topic warrants further research. The thesis proposal generally contains three chapters describing several major aspects: introduction, review of related research, and research methodology. In the introduction section, the thesis proposal must contain the reason that caused the writer to choose the topic. Then, in the review of the related research section, the writer must provide relevant theories related to the chosen topic. Lastly, in the research methodology section, the writer must explain what methodology will be used in conducting the research. So, those aspects must be arranged, concisely, and intensely to produce a good thesis proposal.

Many undergraduate students today are still struggling to write their thesis proposals. This condition was proved by some other researchers such as Arifuddin (2021; Indrian & Ardi, 2019; Lestari et al., 2018). There are many problems in writing an undergraduate thesis (Ashipala & Livingi, 2021; Cao & Zhang, 2022; Fitria, 2022). In the Indonesian context, some researchers have tried to solve the writing problems faced by the students (Ado & Alsheyab, 2019; Farizka et al., 2020; Linuwih, 2021; Meysarah, 2018; Santosa et al., 2019; Silvani, 2020).

In line with the statement that writing is considered the most demanding and difficult skill, in UINSI Samarinda, especially for the English Education Department students, writing has indeed been one of the major problems for years. Writing a thesis proposal has become quite challenging over the last year or even become a serious problem. It is evidenced by the decline in the number of students submitting thesis titles each year last year. This might be caused by various reasons such as the lack of students' knowledge about thesis and thesis proposal, the lack of students' motivation, or the lack of the student's ability about writing, making the students fearful to begin to write. These finally underlie the researcher to conduct a research entitled "An Analysis of Students' Difficulties in Writing Undergraduate Thesis Proposal of English Education Department of UINSI Samarinda". Following the research background above, the problems of this study are:
1. What are the students' difficulties developing a paragraph in writing the research background of undergraduate thesis proposal at the English Education Department of UINSI Samarinda?
2. What are the students' difficulties in implementing the writing elements in writing the research background of undergraduate thesis proposal at the English Education Department of UINSI Samarinda?

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design
This research used a qualitative descriptive method that produced the research result in descriptions. Qualitative research is concerned with the participant's experience

with the issue or problem under the research itself. Creswell (2014) stated that "The data that emerge from a qualitative study is descriptive. That is, data are reported in words (primarily the participant's words) or pictures, rather than in numbers" Bogdan & Biklen (2006) presented a similar idea by pointing out that in conducting qualitative research, the researchers equip strategies and procedures to allow them to consider experiences from the participants' perspectives. Based on the statements above, the researcher chose the qualitative descriptive method since it meets the researcher's purpose to analyze the participants' experience with the issue related to the student's difficulties in writing the undergraduate thesis proposal of UINSI Samarinda.

2.2 Data and Data Source

Ary (2010) explained that qualitative research generally uses two sources; namely primary data source and secondary data source. Primary data sources are original documents (correspondence, diaries, reports, etc.) that rely on remains or artifacts. These are the direct outcomes of events or the record of participants. In this research, the primary data source was the result of the interviews and documents related to the difficulties in writing an undergraduate thesis proposal that the researcher would collect from the eight-semester students of the English Education Department of UINSI Samarinda. Secondary data sources are the data that the researcher obtained from others. Secondary data sources are history books, encyclopedias, and research reviews. In this research, the researcher's secondary data were books, articles, dictionaries, and other documents related to the student's difficulties in writing an undergraduate thesis proposal.

2.3 Research Subject

This research used purposive sampling in choosing the subject. Purposive sampling is a sampling technique in which researchers choose a sample based on their personal preferences. The researcher assumes they can utilize their insight into the population to decide whether or not a specific example will be a delegate. The researcher selected 7 students throughout 2 classes of the eighth-semester English Education Department of UINSI Samarinda, who had accomplished a proposal seminar from November 2020 until April 2021.

2.4 Research Instrument

The researcher holds a vital role in qualitative research as the main instrument. Not only to plan the study but also to arrange the situation to observe, interview participants, examine the records, put ideas together, and write the reports (Stake, 2011). Furthermore, Creswell stated that "Qualitative researchers collect data themselves through examining documents, observing behavior, or interviewing participants. They may use a protocol (an instrument for collecting data), but the researchers are the ones who gather the information (Creswell, 2014). To support the researcher as the main instrument, the researcher used other instruments, which are

interviews, documentation, and Oshima and Hogue's rubric as an additional instrument.

2.5 Data Analysis Technique

Miles et al (2014) stated that there are several activities that the researchers need to do in analyzing qualitative data. Data condensation is a step where the researchers select, simplify, abstract, and transform the collected data to be organized, reconfigured, and centralized to the main purpose of the research. In this research, the researcher selected and centralized the collected data from interviews and documentation related to the student's difficulties writing undergraduate thesis proposals, specifically their difficulties in writing the research background section. In the data display step, the collected data is organized and united to form understandable data. In this research, the researcher displayed the collected data by text since this research design is descriptive qualitative. Conclusion drawing/verification is a step that requires the researchers to decide the significance of the collected data and explain the research finding. In this research, the researcher summarized and verified the answer to the research problems based on the interviews and documentation findings related to the student's difficulties in writing undergraduate thesis proposals, especially in the research background section.

2.6 Data Validation

Sugiyono (2013) explained that data validation in qualitative research involves credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. *Credibility* is done by lengthening observations, increasing persistence in research, data triangulation, negative case analysis, material reference, and member checks. Next, *transferability* refers to how qualitative research findings can be extended or applied to different conditions or environments. Then, d*ependability* or reliability. A reliable analysis is one in which the testing process can be repeated and reflected upon by others. The auditing of the whole testing process is undertaken in qualitative research to ensure dependability. Last, *confirmability* refers to testing the finding of the research. If the test findings are a feature of the research process used, the study has met the criteria for confirmability. In research, the research finding must comply with the research process.

However, the researcher used one credibility subset in this research, namely triangulation. Triangulation is one of the critical ways to strengthen a research design. Dezin in Flick (2018) classified triangulation into four basic types: Data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, and methodological triangulation. *Data triangulation* is the use of different data sources in a study. *Investigator triangulation* uses different observers or researchers to minimize suspicion from an individual researcher. *Theoretical triangulation* is the use of several different perspectives and points of view. *Methodological triangulation* is the use of multiple methods to examine a single problem.

3. FINDINGS

3.1 The Students' Difficulties in Developing Paragraphs

There are five terms that every writer, or in this case, students, requires to be concerned with in producing a well-developed paragraph. Those terms refer to providing a proper topic sentence, explanations or examples in supporting sentences, a concluding sentence, and arranging the sentences in unity and coherence. However, students often experience some difficulties in performing those terms in the process of writing a written work, especially in writing undergraduate thesis proposals. Therefore, to know the students' difficulties related to those terms, the researcher interviewed several students and took their documents. The result of the interview and documentation are explained below.

3.1.1   The Students' Difficulties in Writing a Topic Sentence

In the telephone interview, the researcher asked several questions to the students. The first question is, "Did you feel difficult to begin to write the main topic that you are going to discuss in your paragraph? Explain!". Student 1 stated, "At first, I felt difficult to begin to write my main topic because I did not know where to start. But after I read some references related to my topics, I did not feel any trouble anymore." According to with the statement, the researcher indeed did not find any topic sentence problems in the student's 1 undergraduate thesis proposal. In other words, student 1 has already provided a proper topic sentence in each paragraph of his undergraduate thesis proposal.

In contrast, student 2 said, "It was a little bit difficult for me since I have limited words and thoughts. I needed to read many references first to inspire myself to write a topic sentence." In line with the answer, the researcher found a lack of topic sentences in the sixth paragraph of the student's 2 undergraduate proposals. The problem is that student 2 wrote the topic sentence too specifically. So, it can be concluded that student 2 faced problems writing a topic sentence.

Then, student 3 answered, "I did not feel difficult because I already have enough knowledge about writing, and it helped me a lot to begin my paragraph." The researcher found a discrepancy between the answer and the document of student 3 since some of the paragraphs, such as the first and the ninth paragraph, contained nonproper topic sentences. The researcher considered that the first and the ninth paragraph of the student 3 undergraduate proposal contained too general a topic sentence. Thus, student 3 also faces difficulties in writing a topic sentence.

Next, student 4 said, "It was hard for me to begin my paragraph because I do not know what to say. I needed to find related references first to understand the topic that I want to discuss." However, student 4 showed that there is no nonproper topic sentence. In other words, student 4 has already written a topic sentence well.

Unlike student 4, student 5 answered, "I did not feel difficult because it is simply deciding a topic, so it was easy for me." In agreement with the answer, the researcher

did not find any topic sentence problems in the student 5 undergraduate thesis proposal. In short, student 5 did not face any difficulty writing a proper topic sentence. Student 6 furthermore said, "I did not feel any difficulties at all because I already knew how to write my main topic properly." Consistent with the statement, student 6 provides a good topic sentence in each paragraph of her undergraduate thesis proposal. So, student 6 is considered to fulfill the criteria of a good topic sentence. Last, student 7 stated, "It was not difficult for me, but sometimes I felt a little bit confused to begin my sentence." Corresponding to that, the researcher found a too-specific topic sentence in the tenth paragraph. So, student 7 did not fulfill the criteria of a good topic sentence.

In conclusion, three out of seven students find writing a good topic sentence difficult. Those three students are student 2, student 3, and student 7. Student 2 and student 7 wrote a too-specific topic sentence, while student 3 wrote a too-general topic sentence. The limited vocabulary and ideas caused these problems and the confusion at the beginning of the paragraph.

3.1.2 The Students' Difficulties in Writing Supporting Sentences

The second question is, "Did you face any obstacles in providing examples or explanations in writing supporting sentences of your paragraphs? Explain!". Student 1 answered, "I just felt difficult to find references to support me in providing explanations for some particular topics. But, when I already got the references, I did not feel that I had any trouble writing it down." Following that answer, the researcher, as expected, did not find any supporting sentence problems in student 1 undergraduate proposal. In other words, student 1 did not face any obstacles in writing supporting sentences.

Then, student 2 answered, "It was neither easy nor difficult for me. It was a little bit difficult to write the topic sentence section, but once I made it, providing examples or explanations was not too difficult for me." Student 2 provided a proper supporting sentence in each paragraph of her undergraduate thesis proposal in line with the statement. So, student 2 is considered to fulfill the criteria of good supporting sentences.

Next, student 3 uttered, "Since I am a person who understands anything easier with examples, I will naturally state my ideas followed by examples. So, I did not find it difficult to explain or give examples in writing paragraphs." Corresponding to the answer, student 3 surely did not face any difficulties in writing supporting sentences since no nonproper supporting sentences were found in student 3 undergraduate thesis proposal. In short, student 3 has already provided good supporting sentences in his undergraduate thesis proposal.

Student 4 surely answered, "I did not face any obstacles in providing or explaining something in my paragraph as long as I have some related references related to my topic." Following the answer, student 4 provided proper explanations in writing

supporting sentences. So, student 4 surely faced no obstacles in writing supporting sentences.

Then, student 5 uttered, "I did not face any obstacles in deciding and providing the explanations or examples, but sometimes it was complicated for me to arrange them orderly." Agreeing with the statement, student 5 indeed provided proper supporting sentences in her undergraduate thesis proposal. So, the researcher confirms that student 5 did not face obstacles in writing supporting sentences. Student 6 similarly uttered, "I just got some obstacles in arranging my sentence logically. Providing explanations or examples to support my main topic was not a problem for me." In contrast, supporting sentences were found in the first, second, third, and eighth paragraphs of the student's 6 undergraduate thesis proposals. In short, student 6 faced difficulties in providing supporting sentences.

In contrast, student 7 stated, "Yes, it was difficult for me because there are still limited references for my topic." The researcher found a lack of supporting sentences in the fourth paragraph of the student's 7 undergraduate thesis proposals. So, the researcher asserts that student 7 faced difficulties in writing supporting sentences.

The finding shows that two out of seven students find it difficult to write supporting sentences. Student 7 declared that the problem was caused by the limited reference to the chosen topic.

3.1.3 The Students' Difficulties in Writing a Concluding Sentence

Next, the researcher asked the students, "Did you feel hard to summarize your paragraphs? Explain!". Student 1 surely answered, "No, summarizing paragraphs was not a problem for me since I already understood how to conclude paragraphs properly." On the contrary, the researcher found that there are several lacks of concluding sentences in the second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth paragraph in student 1 undergraduate thesis proposal. So, the researcher certifies that student 1 faced difficulties in summarizing his paragraphs.

Student 2 stated, "Actually, summarizing a paragraph was easy for me. It was easier for me to summarize a paragraph indirectly. But, when it comes to the rules that I have to use concluding signals such as so, therefore, etc., it suddenly becomes difficult for me." The researcher found several paragraphs that did not contain proper concluding sentences, such as the first, second, sixth, and seventh paragraphs. So, student 2 is considered to face difficulties in writing concluding sentences.

Student 3 closely uttered, "Sometimes I find it complicated because I prefer an indirect conclusion in summarizing my paragraph. Unfortunately, some writing rules require me to use words or phrases to end my paragraph. It made my indirect conclusion seems unfilled with the rules and considered wrong." This statement corresponds to the research finding in the first, second, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, and tenth paragraphs, which did not contain a proper concluding sentence. Therefore, student 4 surely finds it hard to summarize his paragraph.

Student 4, without hesitation, answered, "Summarizing a paragraph was not a problem for me. It is because before I write the whole paragraph, I would make sure that I understand what I am going to write first so that I will conclude a paragraph easier." Unfortunately, research findings showed that the first, third, fourth, and fifth paragraphs in the student 4 undergraduate thesis proposal did not contain a proper concluding sentence. In other words, student 4 dealt with some difficulties in summarizing her paragraphs.

Student 5, in contrast, stated, "Absolutely. Especially in academic writing where I have to cite several experts' theories and summarize them, it was hard for me." Student 5 undeniably did not provide a proper concluding sentence in the sixth and seventh paragraphs commensurate with the statement. So, the researcher concludes that student 5 felt quite difficult in summarizing her paragraphs. Student 6 similarly answered, "It was hard for me because I knew that in summarizing paragraph, we have to restate the previous sentences in other similar words, and my problem was I have limited vocabulary mastery." Most of the student's 6 undergraduate proposal paragraphs have no proper concluding sentence. The problems can be seen in the second, fourth, fifth, sixth, eighth, tenth, and eleventh paragraphs. Hence, the researcher assumes that student 6 surely experienced difficulties summarizing her paragraphs.

On the other hand, student 7 certainly answered, "I did not find it hard because I understand what I have written. But, if I'm required to conclude the paragraphs with rules, it is a little bit hard for me." However, the researcher lacked concluding sentences in most of the paragraphs in its research background section, such as in the second, third, fourth, fifth, seventh, eighth, and tenth paragraphs. Therefore, the researcher believes that student 7 find summarizing paragraph difficult.

In short, all of the students were having difficulties summarizing their paragraphs. Even though some of the students stated that they did not find it hard, the documents showed otherwise. The limited vocabulary and the ignorance of concluding signals were the causes of this problem.

3.1.4   The Students' Difficulties in Writing in Unity

Furthermore, "Did you have any difficulties in maintaining the paragraph to consistently discuss one main idea? Explain!" Student 1 surely answered, "It was not a big deal for me because I know the correct pattern of the paragraph that I will write." Following the statement, student 1 indeed wrote his paragraphs in unity. Each paragraph consists discussion based on the topic sentence. So, the researcher considers that student 1 already performed unity in writing his paragraphs.

Student 2 uttered, "It was difficult but not too difficult either. The same reasons as I said before because I have limited words, I sometimes unconsciously write non-related topics from the main topic that I discussed in the first sentence." The researcher found several unrelated sentences in student 2's paragraphs based on the

document. Furthermore, the researcher noticed that the absence of transitional phrases in each paragraph makes the sentences seem unrelated. Hence, the researcher concludes that the coherence problems could cause the student 2 problems in unity.

Student 3 stated, "I did not have any difficulties about it because I have enough knowledge on how to elaborate my main topic and how to maintain the effectiveness of the main topic." The document supports this statement, which showed that each paragraph consistently discussed one topic. Therefore, the researcher assumes that student 3 did not face any unity problems in writing his paragraphs. Student 4 said, "It was difficult for me because I often get unclear references that make me confused in maintaining the paragraph to discuss one single topic." According to the document, student 4 already focused on maintaining one single topic. Each paragraph discussed one main paragraph supported with proper explanations. So, the researcher assumed that student 4 did not find it hard to write in unity.

Student 5 said, "I felt it difficult because I personally often lose my focus when I do something, and it also happens when I write." However, the researcher did not find any unity problems in student 5 undergraduate thesis proposal. All of the paragraphs discussed the main topics properly in unity. So, the researcher asserts that student 5 has already performed unity in writing her paragraphs. Student 6 answered, "I faced some difficulties with keeping focus discussing one topic. I sometimes feel confused about whether to write the topic in one paragraph or divide it into two paragraphs." Indeed, the document showed that student 6 divided some paragraphs that should be united and made them seem unrelatable. This finally leads the researcher to assert that student 6 faced difficulties writing her paragraphs in unity.

Student 7 uttered, "Yes, I found it difficult to maintain the paragraph to consistently discuss one topic because I sometimes run out of ideas and am confused about what else I should write." The researcher spotted similar problems as student 6, in which student 7 divided paragraphs that should be united in once into some paragraphs. Therefore, the researcher assumes that student 7 finds writing her paragraph in unity difficult.

The research data presents that most of the students find it hard to write in unity. Four out of seven students faced difficulties in writing their paragraphs. The problems were caused by limited vocabulary, limited references, confusion about the paragraph arrangement, and few ideas.

3.1.5 *The Students' Difficulties in Writing in Coherence*

The last question is, "Did you feel that it is complicated to arrange the sentences one another logically in your paragraphs? Explain!" Student 1 doubtlessly answered, "It was easy for me since I already knew the structure of the sentence I would write." Inconsistent with the answer, student 1 arranged sentences in his undergraduate thesis proposal improperly. The researcher found harsh movements in several sentences of his paragraphs. In other words, student 1 did feel difficulty writing incoherence.

On the opposite, student 2 uttered, "I did feel it complicated to arrange my sentence because I had limited knowledge about kinds of transitions that can be used in writing." Corresponding to the utterance, the researcher found several abrupt movements between one sentence and another. It can be seen in the first, second, and third paragraphs of the student 2 undergraduate thesis proposal. So, student 2 is considered to face complications in writing her sentence coherently.

Then, student 3 stated, "Sometimes, I feel that it is complicated to run the sentences logically. Again, because of the grammatical rules that often get me stuck about which words I must use to deliver ideas in my brain and move on to the next sentence." However, the researcher found that student 3 could already write his sentences in coherence based on the document. So, the researcher assumes that student 3 did not face difficulties in writing coherently. Next, student 4 answered, "Sometimes I feel difficult when I do not have enough references. But when I have enough references, I have no problem with it." Following the answer, the researcher found a lack of coherence in the third paragraph of the student 4 undergraduate thesis proposal. Hence, this surely means that student 4 finds it difficult to write coherently.

Moreover, student 5 implied, "I can arrange the sentences smoothly, but sometimes the sentence that I wrote goes too far from the main topic." The researcher found no coherence problems in student 5 undergraduate thesis proposal. For that reason, the researcher considered that student 5 already performed coherence in writing her paragraphs.

In contrast, student 6 stated, "I felt it is complicated to choose which transition I should use to make the sentences organized logically and flow smoothly." The researcher found a lack of coherence in the first paragraph of the student 6 undergraduate thesis proposal based on the document. In this way, the researcher clarifies that student 6 felt it was complicated to write incoherence.

Similarly, student 7 answered, "I felt confused choosing the transition to use to arrange the sentences logically." However, the document showed that student 7 has already performed coherence in writing each paragraph of her undergraduate thesis proposal. So, student 7 is considered to fulfill the coherence writing criteria.

The researcher found that three out of seven students were facing difficulties writing their paragraphs coherently. Several documents correspond with the interview results. At the same time, the rest of the students' documents and interview results are inconvenient. According to the research findings, it can be summarized that all students experienced difficulties in developing their paragraphs. However, the researcher found that some of the students' statements did not conform to what the researcher found in the documents.

3.2 The Students' Difficulties in Implementing the Elements of Writing

In analyzing the students' difficulties in implementing the elements of writing, the researcher used documentation and rubric paragraphs adapted from Oshima and

Hogue. The researcher found several difficulties that the students faced in implementing the elements of writing: content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics, as listed below.

Table: Errors made by the students

No	Errors	Example of Errors	Corrected Errors	Data
1	Informal word	Language is one of the most important tools in human life, because language is…	Language is one of the most important tools in human life due to the fact that language is…	1E1
2	Singular/plural	This is why mastering a foreign languages other than the mother language is required.	This is why mastering a foreign language other than the mother language is required.	1I2
3	Capitalization	Most of people know that english is an International language.	Most of people know that English is an international language.	1T3
4	Wrong word choice	Based of these facts…	Based on these facts	1N4
5	Missing Word	…must be able ^ master it.	…must be able to master it.	1P5
6	Article	Indonesia is one of ^ countries that studying English.	Indonesia is one of the countries that studying English.	1O6
7	Redundant	...there are some skills that everyone must mastered it namely speaking skill….	...there are some skills that everyone must master namely speaking skill….	1G7
8	Rough Transition	…writing is a challenging and fulfilling activity. It brings about all your…task. Listening skill is important…	…writing is a challenging and fulfilling activity. It brings about all your…task. Besides writing, listening skill is important…	1D8
9	Punctuation	In learning English being able to speak is important.	In learning English, being able to speak is important.	1S9
10	Wrong word form	…there are some skills that everyone must mastered…	…there are some skills that everyone must master…	1N10
11	Spelling	Currently, COVID-19 is affecting 213 countries and teritories.	Currently, COVID-19 is affecting 213 countries and territories.	1U11
12	Subject-verb agreement	It's appear pros and cons about using E-learning…	It appears pros and cons about using E-learning…	1K12
13	Fragment	The researcher ^ interested to conduct…	The researcher was interested to conduct…	1J13

The table above shows some difficulties in implementing the writing elements were as organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. There are some difficulties in implementing the elements of writing found in proposal.

4. DISCUSSION

This research aims to discover the difficulties in developing paragraphs and implementing elements of writing in writing undergraduate proposals faced by the eighth-semester students of the English Education Department of UINSI Samarinda.

The data were collected online because this research was conducted during the pandemic COVID-19. The collected data related to the student's difficulties in developing paragraphs are described based on the result of the interview and documentation, and the student's difficulties in implementing the element of writing are described based on the result of documentation and Oshima and Hogue's rubric for paragraph writing.

As the researcher elaborated in the section, a well-developed paragraph should contain at least a proper topic sentence, supporting sentences, a concluding sentence, unity, and coherence. However, the researcher's data showed that students faced difficulties in developing paragraphs.

The difficulties were found in all of the student's undergraduate thesis proposals. The difficulties are caused by the limited vocabulary, the limited ideas, and the confusion at to beginning of the paragraph. These problems eventually lead the students to write either too specific or too general topic sentences. Related to writing supporting sentences, the researcher found that there are only two out of seven students faced difficulties in writing supporting sentences. A paragraph should also contain a good concluding sentence to be considered as good-developed. Unfortunately, all seven students did not provide a good concluding sentence in some of their paragraphs. This study confirms that the students may have difficulty developing paragraphs (Anggraini & Lume, 2021; Oktavianti et al., 2021; Saprina et al., 2021).

The researcher spotted several problems related to unity in the students' undergraduate thesis proposals. According to the result of the interviews, student 1 and student 3 uttered that they did not find it difficult to write in unity. While, Students 2, student 4, student 5, student 6, and student 7 admitted that writing in unity is a hard thing to be done. Following that, the document showed that student 1, student 3, and student 5 successfully wrote their paragraphs in unity. While student 2, student 4, student 6, and student 7 supposedly find it difficult to write their paragraphs in unity. The result shows that some other researchers also spotted the same area in writing (Amalia, 2021; Sasmita & Setyowati, 2021).

There are several key elements that every writer or student needs to be concerned about in writing. They are content, organization, vocabulary, grammar or language use, and mechanics. Nevertheless, after analyzing the data, the researcher found that the students faced various problems in implementing those elements in writing their undergraduate thesis proposal, especially in the research background section.

Weigle (2002) stated that the content should be knowledgeable, carry the facts about information, and be relevant to make the written works understandable. Related to this issue, this study found that the students, the writers of the examined proposals above, did not face any difficulties in content since all of the proposals qualified the criteria of good content in writing.

Oshima & Hogue stated that organization refers to how the writers provide logically organized and smoothly flowed sentences in writing paragraphs by using consistent nouns and pronouns, transitioning and appropriate expressions, and arranging the sentences logically. However, the research data showed that several sentences in the proposals did not flow smoothly as '…writing is a challenging and fulfilling activity.

According to Jacobs and Richards, vocabulary is related to how the writers express clear and direct assumptions, use formal vocabulary, avoid redundancy, and avoid unclear words to prevent the readers from confusion in reading the written works. The research data showed that the students faced several problems related to informal vocabulary and redundant and unclear words in their undergraduate thesis proposals. The first example of the informal word problems can be seen in the sentence 'Language is one of the most important tools in human life, because language is a communication tool used by humans to interact with each other (1E1)'. The second example is '…so that little by little they can master English (4E9)'. The third is 'The researcher wants to do an analysis…(5E6)'. The word "because" in the first example could be replaced with "due to the fact that", then the word "little by little" in the second example should be replaced with "progressively", and the word "do" in the third example could be replaced with "conduct" to make it seems more formal and proper for academic writing. There were no similar problems in the previous studies.

The next problems in the vocabulary aspect that the researcher found were redundant. For example, 'This is influenced by some skills that exist in English that need to be mastered by learners (2G7)', 'Refers to Keraf, diction is the selection and use of words by the author to consider aspects of the meaning of the word denotative and connotative meanings for a word can lead to a variety of senses (3G8)', '…for examples USA, UK, and etc. (5G4)', '…our English will be difficult to be understood by native speakers and also we will have difficulty… (7G4)'. The words "the meaning" are considered repetitious and unnecessary since the writer mentioned it twice in the sentence. Next, the words "some skills that exist in English" in the second example could be replaced with "certain English skills" to make it more concise. Then, the word "and" in the third example is unnecessary and should be eliminated since it is followed by an abbreviation "etc" which already contains the word "and" due to the fact that it stands for et means "and", and cetera means "other similar things". Last, since there is the word "and" in the fourth example, the sentence does not require any other words, such as "also," to avoid redundancy and make it more concise. Aulya (2020) also found a similar phenomenon where students used unnecessary words in their written works.

Thus, in the grammar aspect, the researcher found that the students did not perform correct grammar since the paragraphs of their proposals contain various grammatical errors; fragment, singular, and plural, article, wrong word choice, subject-verb agreement errors, conjunction, and proposition. Similar problems were also found in the previous studies conducted by Aulya (2020) and Nanning et al.'s research. Last but not least, spelling errors. Spelling means how to write a word correctly. The

researcher spotted spelling problems in several students' undergraduate thesis proposals. Mustikawati (2019), Suyadi, et al. (2020), and Aulya (2020) also found a similar phenomenon. All of the above mechanic problems were caused by typological errors and the students' lack of competence in mechanic rules in writing.

Many problems are faced by the students in producing the writing. There are some alternative ways to solve and overcome the students' problems in writing (Ado & Alsheyab, 2019; Farizka et al., 2020; Linuwih, 2021; Meysarah, 2018; Santosa et al., 2019; Silvani, 2020) that the English teachers may use in his/her English classroom. The teacher might use social media like Facebook to teach writing (Annamalai, 2017), or using Self Regulated Strategy (Sartika & Rachmanita, 2017), or implement Collaborative Writing on Google Docs (Valizadeh, 2022). One of the most important keys and successful ways to enhance the students writing is when the student has a difficulty in writing, the English teacher should find a solution to solve it (Setyowati et al., 2020).

5. CONCLUSION

This research has achieved its purpose: to know the difficulties of English Education Department Students of UINSI Samarinda in developing a paragraph and implementing the writing elements in writing the research background of an undergraduate thesis proposal. The difficulties found in developing paragraphs were the students wrote too specific and too general topic sentences, poor supporting sentences, the absence of concluding sentences, inconsistent topic discussion, and inharmonic sentences. These problems were considered as the consequence of students' incomprehension about the aspect of how to develop a paragraph itself, the lack of vocabulary mastery, the limited ideas, and the limited references. The difficulties in implementing the writing elements were found in organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. The frequently found problems were the failure of smoothly running sentences, redundancy, singular and plural, missing article, wrong word form, wrong word choice, and punctuation. These problems were caused by the interference of students' native language and the lack of students' knowledge about the rules of writing elements.

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