AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS’ ERROR IN APPLYING PUNCTUATION MARKS IN WRITING PARAGRAPH:
A CASE STUDY AT FIRST SEMESTER STUDENTS OF ENGLISH DEPARTMENT OF FKIP UNRAM ACADEMIC YEAR 2015/2016

AN ARTICLE
Submitted as a Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Bachelor Degree in English Department Faculty of Teacher Training and Education

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UNIVERSITY OF MATARAM
2016
This Article Entitled:

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An Analysis of Students’ Error in Applying Punctuation Marks in Writing Paragraph: A Case Study at First Semester Students of English Department of FKIP UNRAM Academic Year 2015/2016

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Abstract: This study is entitled ‘An Analysis of Students’ Error in Applying Punctuation Marks in Writing Paragraph: A Case Study at First Semester Students of English Department of FKIP UNRAM Academic Year 2015/2016’. The aims of this study are to find out the problems that students have in applying punctuation mark and also the factors that may cause the problems. The population of this study is the whole number of the first semester students that is 80 students at writing class in English Department of FKIP University of Mataram in academic year 2015/2016. By using pusposive sampling, the sample was A class (27 students). To analyze the data, I used two kinds of instrument: test and interview. By using descriptive quantitative method, I counted student’s result and found that the most dominant errors of punctuation is dash (13.32%). The result of interview showed that factors causing students in making punctuation errors in writing paragraph are they lack of accurate punctuation placement, vocabulary, grammar and they also lack of knowledge about the use of punctuation mark.

Key words: Writing Skill, Paragraph, Punctuation Mark.
Analisis Kesalahan Mahasiswa Dalam Mengaplikasikan Tanda Baca Pada Penulisan Paragraf: Studi Kasus Pada Mahasiswa Semester Satu Jurusan Bahasa Inggris FKIP Universitas Mataram Tahun Ajaran 2015/2016

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Kata kunci : Kemampuan Menulis, Paragraf, Tanda Baca
Background

Writing is a very important skill in school and university study. Students will write assignments in a form of a paragraph or an essay. As we know that, at the end of the study, they should write a thesis in English. It means that, the curriculum is arranged to drill students starting from the beginning of semester. This matter is expected to help students to be advance in their writing. This research is inspired by a case in writing class in the first semester of English Department at FKIP, University of Mataram. In writing class, the students did exercise to make paragraphs which consist of at least five sentences; it took ten minutes to do so.

Some of them forgot to put the full stop at the end of the sentence or did not use comma to separate a phrase, and to connect the words or part of the word. The lecturer stated that they were too focused on the structure or the grammar of writing. So the researcher raised this issue to find what kinds of punctuation error that made by students and how many students in the class having problems with punctuation and what factors faced it.

English as The Main Subject of Foreign Language Learning

People as human beings are created to interact with others in social environment. In people’s interaction, they need medium which we call it a language to build a communication, both in spoken and in written language.

Focusing on written language as one of medium to communicate, we need to learn text types with its differences for communication. According to Harsyaf and Izmi Z. (2009:3) states that commonly all written texts have two important things. First, they are written to communicate a particular message, and second, they are written to communicate with somebody. The message and the addressee of the message will affect the style and content of our writing.

In this case, punctuation mark is one of the important things which should be learned. By using correct punctuation marks, the reader will have the understanding of the paragraph easily. In addition, Jowers (2012 in Sulastriani, 2012:10) states that basically punctuation can help reader to indicate the pauses, intonation such as rises and
drops of voice which are important for understanding. It means that language is not only spoken, but it also can be expressed in written text form.

Errors

When we talk about errors, we may also think about mistakes. Errors and mistakes are not the same, it is crucial to make distinction between both of them. Most of people still misunderstand about the definition of error and mistake.

According to Brown (1983:134), stated a mistake refers to a performance error that is either a random guess or a slip of tongue. In that meaning it is a failure to utilize a known system correctly. All people make mistakes in both native and second language situations. Another definition comes from Hubbard (1983:134), he stated errors are caused by lack of knowledge about the target language (English) or by incorrect hypotheses about them; and mistakes are caused by temporary lapses of memory, confusion, slips of the tongue and so on. Another way to differentiate between error and mistake is if the learners can correct themselves, it is probably mistake, but if they cannot, it is an error.

Paragraph

A text consists of paragraphs, in which paragraph is a collection of sentences which all relate to one main idea or topic (Arifudin, 2007). It means that an effective paragraph has to contain sentences that connect one sentence and others with one main idea or topic.

According to Arifudin (2007), an effective writing has four characteristics;

a. Topic Sentence

The paragraph should have a topic sentence. Usually this sentence appears in the first sentence of paragraph, but not necessarily, because it may come after transition or even at the end of paragraph.
b. Unity

Unity is the extent to which all of the ideas contained within a given paragraph in a way that reader may be easier to understand what the writers want to convey.

c. Coherence

Coherence refers to the extent to which the flow of ideas in paragraphs is easy to be understood by the readers. For this reason coherence is interrelated with unity.

d. Adequate Development

A paragraph can be said adequate by developed if it describes, explains, and supports the topic sentence. Writer should make sure that the topic sentence of paragraph should contain four sentences which explain and elaborate the topic sentence.

Punctuation Mark Rules for Paragraph Writing

Writing punctuation that the researcher is interested in this research is “punctuation”. The punctuation devices of the researcher concern are the errors of punctuation in students writing. The researcher will focus on their frequent use, where they should be placed, where they usually appear, their functions, and how they must appear in English sentences and clauses when writing paragraph.

Punctuation marks are the “traffic signals” of a language. When correctly used, they guide the reader through the text and make comprehension easier. However, when incorrectly placed, they can also change the meaning of a sentence. In other words, punctuation is important material for students. At least students in the first semester should understand about the basic punctuations.

Based on Widjono (2007:61), he stated that punctuation mark comprise of period, comma, semicolon, colon, hyphen, question mark, exclamation point, parenthesis, italics, and apostrophe. However, the writer decided to use comma (,), period/full stop (.), colon
Research Design

This research was case study. To analyze the data the researcher used descriptive quantitative method. According to Muijs (2004) quantitative research used to explain the phenomena by collecting numeral data that analyzed mathematically based on the methods of statistics. This type of methods emphasized that the data which were analyzed and the result has the form of phenomenon by nominal form. Researcher used this method to count and describe the errors of punctuation which were made by the first semester students of English Department of FKIP at University of Mataram academic year 2015/2016.

Research Instrument

The researcher used two kinds of instrument. The first was a test as the instrument in this research. The test was writing test. It was used as the parameter for the researcher in analyzing the errors of the students in using punctuation in writing. The second was interview. Based on Arikunto (2010:198) interview was a dialog between the interviewer and the interviewee which aimed to gain some information related to the research. In this case, this type of instrument was used to know the factors of punctuation errors in writing paragraph.

Finding

As previously stated in chapter I, the first research question is to find out what kinds of punctuation errors in writing paragraph are made by the first semester students in English Department of University of Mataram academic year 2015/2016.

Based on the punctuation errors made by students on the table 4.2. above, the researcher calculates the percentage of each kind of punctuation. To know the most punctuation errors which are made by the students, the researcher uses the formula below;
\[ P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100\% \]

P = Percentage (kinds of errors)
F = Frequency (total errors)
N = Total number of errors

Table 4.3. Table of Punctuation Errors in Percentage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Punctuation</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(,)</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>6,55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(.)</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>9,77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(: )</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>8,44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(;)</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>11,21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(-)</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>9,88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(—)</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>13,32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(')</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>7,99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(&quot;&quot; )</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>6,66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[() ]</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>9,43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(!)</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>6,55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(?)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>5,55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>4,66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>901</td>
<td>100,00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hence, there are 901 various kinds of errors found by the researcher. Where the most dominant errors made by the students are in the way they use dash that is 13,32%.

The second problem of study stated in chapter I is to know factors that make errors in applying punctuation marks in writing paragraph by the first semester students of English department of FKIP at University of Mataram academic year 2015/2016? Therefore, to get information about the factors causing students’ errors, the researcher interviewed some students as the respondents.
Discussion

Some important information appeared in the result of the interview above. As we know that students have different ability especially in applying punctuation. Generally from the twelve kinds of punctuation that were used by students was found many errors in the text. In this study, the researcher found some factors of punctuation errors in writing paragraph that made by students.

To make it easy to understand the data, the researcher summarized the data and presented the data in table of punctuation errors 4.2. above. In the table of punctuation error, the research found the most dominant errors of punctuation which is dash. The errors in applying dash is 13.32%.

Conclusion

From the test result and data analysis, the most frequency of punctuation errors is dash with frequency 13.32%. Most of students answer has problems and difficulties in applying dash in writing paragraph. The lowest error is capitalization with frequency is 4.66% or 20 students from 27 respondents made some errors in capitalization.

The factors that cause student problems in applying punctuation in writing paragraph was the lack of vocabulary in some sentences that they recently found in the test. Student also lack of accuracy in placing punctuation, they put some punctuation in wrong place. Some of them did not know more information about some punctuation marks and the functions. Another factor is students did not pay attention when reading the text. This means that student sometimes too fast in reading so they directly adding punctuation without think more about the compatible punctuation. The last is student do not know well about the organization of some sentences in other word they lack of grammar. Whereas, they could put punctuation easier when they learn more about grammar.
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