

INCORPORATING PARAGRAPH PUNCH INTO EFL WRITING CLASS

Nia Pujiawati*

Department of English Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas
Singaperbangsa Karawang

To cite this article: Pujiawati, N. (2018). Incorporating *Paragraph Punch* in EFL writing class. *ELT in Focus*, 1(1), 1-10.

Abstract

The research was aimed at examining the effectiveness of *Paragraph Punch* in developing students' writing paragraph fluency. Classroom action research was implemented to address the research questions. Relating to participants, it involved thirty students of English Department, University of Singaperbangsa Karawang, who had enrolled in Writing for General Communication and have experience in using software. The data from the students in Cycle 1 and 2 were analyzed using the theory of writing skills developed by Lyster and a theory of the standard organizational patterns of the paragraph proposed by Oshima and Hogue for evidence of how *Paragraph Punch* affected their skill in paragraph composition. The study indicated that the software effectively enhance the students' writing ability both in the process and learning products. Thus, it is recommended that EFL teachers use *Paragraph Punch* as alternative way to improve the teaching quality.

Keywords: *Paragraph punch, classroom action research, paragraph composition*

INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the four basic skills that English Foreign Language (EFL) students should learn. It basically develops students' ability to express their ideas, thought, feelings, emotions, and etc. in written form, which further supports their success both at academic life and professional one.

At university level, this productive skill is usually divided into several stages of courses. At first stage, it builds up students' ability to write in different type texts including narrative, recount, descriptive, report, explanation, analytical exposition, etc. At next level, it equips the students with the skill to write English expository essays and also to present logical reasoning, using different methods of development like examples, details, chronological order, comparison and contrast, cause and effect relations, as well as division and classification. After that, the students will be exposed to academic writing that enhance students' competency in producing any educational text.

However, it is not that simple to master this aptitude. Based on what writer experienced, there are many problems found during the process of learning, especially in paragraph writing class, a beginning stage leading the students to compose more variety of writing. Most of the students taking this class, psychologically tended to be anxious in learning paragraph writing. They did not enjoy the class, especially when in starting to write. They worried too much on the topic to be developed, what sentence look like is in the beginning of a paragraph, and what is the next sentence to continue writing. As a result, they got many troubles even it is just to write a single piece of paper.

Moreover, the students taking writing paragraph course technically lack of knowledge dealing with basic writing skills, e.g. grammar. The writer discovered a variety of language errors that she has found in grading students' works. One she noticed most is in recognition of tenses. In writing, the use of tenses will be based on the text type the students will develop. To

*Corresponding author.

E-mail: nia.pujiawati@staff.unsika.ac.id

make it worse, the students also do not have sufficient knowledge about the elements of writing skills e.g. punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and etc. With this condition, they will surely get many obstacles in performing the assigned tasks that may impede their achievement.

Therefore, to overcome the problems found in writing paragraph class or at least to diminish the toughness of teaching writing described above, the lecturers are required to be more creative in finding better and more effective teaching media to replace conventional/traditional teaching method that is considered less innovative and makes students feel bored and tired in following the lesson presented. The ability of a teacher in selecting teaching media might be able to help students understand the subject more quickly and comprehensively so that the objectives of the course can be reached.

In the era of globalization, where the progress of science and technology is unstoppable, a lecturer can take advantage of the existence of computer as a medium that can be used in the process of learning English, including writing. Computer should be promoted in writing paragraph classroom because the writer believes that it can be beneficial in language teaching-learning process, as Coby and Stevens (1996) points out that "It (computer) easily assists and even stimulates young second language learners in all four skills of listening, speaking, writing, reading, and also critical thinking". With its flexibility and interactive capability with the users through diverse programs and systems offered, computer are considered to have a great value on enhancing the learning process and helping in stimulating and developing learners' language outcomes. In line with this, Nelson et. al (1976: 28) affirm that:

"The unique property of the computer as a medium for

education is its ability to interact with the student. Books and tape recordings can tell a student what the rules are and what the right solutions are, but they cannot analyze the specific mistake the student has made and react in a manner which leads him not only to correct his mistake, but also to understand the principles behind the correct solution".

From the statement above, it can be seen that computer may function as a tutor, assessing the learner's reply, recording it, pointing out mistakes and giving explanations. It then guides the learner towards the correct answer, and generally adapts the material to his or her performance, which books or the other materials cannot provide.

Computer-assisted language learning (CALL), related to the use of computers for language teaching and learning as described above, is actually not a novel thing in language teaching; it began in the 1960s. Since then, as Hah M (1996: 25) said "the development of CALL software has followed the changes in teaching methodologies. As teaching methods changed to audio - lingual and communicative approaches, CALL software included simulations and more interactive programs."

One of those CALL software is "Paragraph Punch". It is a software designed by Merit Software to help learners write an effective, clear, and organized paragraph. "Paragraph Punch" takes learners through the **process of writing** a well-composed basic paragraph. From pre-set writing prompts learners develop an idea and write their own topic sentence, body, and a conclusion. According to Fouser, "Paragraph Punch" provides a clear, if somewhat formulaic, introduction to the construction and organization of paragraphs. The sequences build gradually

on one another, guiding learners to an understanding of paragraph writing in the process. In the final sequences at the end of each unit, the program asks learners questions about their writing, which helps develop awareness of their writing and guides them to self-correction. On this basis, this study then is aimed at examining the effectiveness of “Paragraph Punch” in developing students’ writing paragraph fluency.

METHOD

In this study, the researcher applies a type of research defined as *action research* - the combination of action and research as it gathers information about a specific issue through observations and reflections, in order to deliberate interventions to improve the situation (Lerma Gonzalez, 2004) - to examine the use of CALL instructional software programs of English language in the writing class and its effect upon students’ writing skills and attitudes towards paragraph writing.

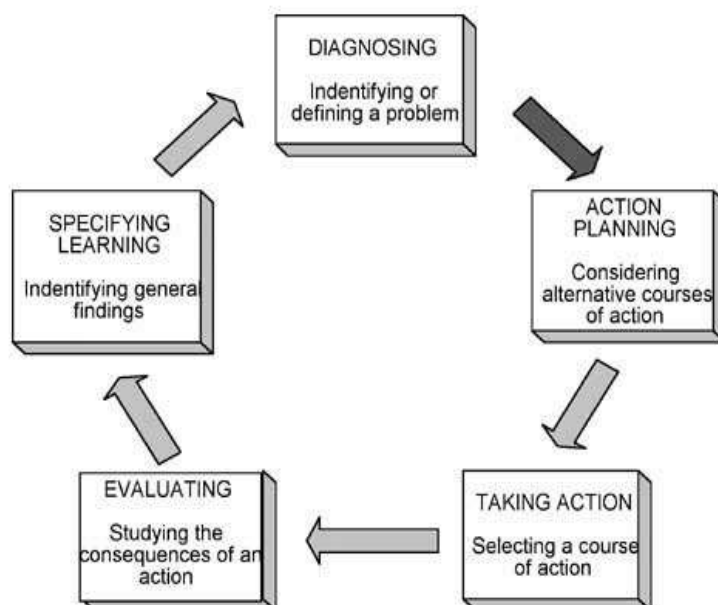


Figure 1. *Susman's (1983) Action Research Model*

In conducting action research, the researcher were guided by a concept proposed by Susman (1983) comprising five phases of inquiry: diagnosing, action planning, taking action, evaluating, and specifying learning as it is shown through the following figure.

The Figure 1 above shows that the first step the researcher took is identification of a problem followed by collection of information about the problem. Then the data is analysed to find potential solutions and based on the

analysis, one possible solution or intervention is implemented. Later the data on the outcome of the intervention is studied and reviewed to find out how well was the plan was carried out and whether the outcomes was successful or not. The problem is reassessed and cycle starts again and continues to evolve until an adequate solution is found.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Here is described the results of data analysis according to research undertaken

to determine the development of learning activities and the development of the students' ability to write paragraphs of students.

The students' ability to write paragraphs can be seen from the values obtained on the pre-action test, cycle I and cycle II. From the scores obtained by the

students on each test, the researcher can classify the students' ability level based on the predetermined criteria of assessment.

Preprint test stage the during pre-action

Level of students' writing skills testing can be seen in this circular table:

Table 1. *Students' ability to write paragraph on pre-action test*

Ability criteria	Total	Percentage (%)
<i>Excellent</i>	0	0
<i>Good</i>	2	6.6
<i>Fair</i>	8	26.66
<i>Poor</i>	20	66.66
<i>Very Poor</i>	0	0

Based on the above table, the level of writing ability of students' paragraphs on pre-action test can be interpreted as follows:

- a. None (0%) students who have very less ability.
- b. Most (66.66%) students have less ability.
- c. A small number (26.66%) of students have sufficient ability.
- d. A small number (6.6%) of students have good skills.
- e. None (0%) students who have excellent ability.

The result of students' initial ability in writing paragraphs on each aspect of assessment can be described as follows:

Aspects of Content

In the pre-action stage, the average grade obtained in this aspect is 14.66. If the students' ability in this aspect of content is obtained, the value of 48.86 is included in the less criteria. Therefore, on the content aspect needs to be improved again so as to obtain better criteria. For example, students'

writing on preemptive tests to be analyzed based on the content aspect.

My Activity

I woke up immediately turn off all the house lights, then I cleaned the house, then shower, breakfast, and the task subjects writing about analyze the paragraphs. Then until 11 o'clock I watch television, FTV is my favorite show, then I shower and get ready for college. The course today is a new professor all, among them is that I think is fun there is also contrary, but I must still respect and follow courses that take place. After college I went home, bathe, play watch television, and now time for me to sleep. so none of this special day, have a nice dream for me.

As mentioned before, that aspect of the content of the paragraph is judged by the suitability of the text by the title. From the above article it can be seen that the students told about their activities. This shows the

contents of the paragraph actually matching the title, but if we read in its entirety this paragraph does not show the development of a good topic so that the reader finds it difficult to find the main idea developed in the paragraph.

Organizational Aspects

The organizational aspect is judged from the development of sentences into paragraphs. The average score obtained by the students in the pre-action test of this organizational aspect is 12, 6 or if presented the results to 63. From the above article it appears that the student has not clearly written the three main components of a paragraph namely: the main sentence, the supporting sentence, and closing sentences. In fact, if the main sentence is not clearly written in a paragraph, the reader will find it difficult to understand the subject of the subject matter of the paragraph. Then, there is also no unity and coherence in the above paragraph. This is because the students have not used the word liaison either inside or between sentences correctly.

Aspects of Vocabulary

In this aspect it is judged to be the accuracy of the use of vocabulary in the context of a sentence. The average score that students get in the prestige test from the aspect of vocabulary is 11, 33 or 56.5 which means that the ability of students to use vocabulary in the paragraph is still lacking. The use of vocabulary is still limited, is still often found error in the selection and use of words or idioms, so that the meaning of the sentence becomes unclear and difficult to understand.

Aspects of Language Usage

On the aspects of language use judged is the accuracy of the use of sentence structure and grammar. The average score obtained by students in the pre-action test of this aspect is 9.3 or 37.2 which means that the students' ability in sentence structure and grammar in the paragraph is still very less. If we look at the scoring rubric above, this means that the students do not have the ability to make sentences in accordance with the rules that apply. Then the paragraph is also still dominated by mistakes, even considered not eligible for assessment.

Mechanical Aspect

Points assessed on mechanical aspects are spelling and accuracy of punctuation and capitalization. The average score that students obtain in the pre-action test of this aspect is 2.67 or 53.4. This means that the ability of students in this aspect, as in the previous aspects, is also very less. This is also clearly seen in the students' writing above. In the paragraph there are only two punctuation marks, the comma and the dot. Based on the rubric, at this level the resulting paragraph will be dominated by misspellings, punctuation, capitalization, or even unfit for evaluation.

Result of Cycle I Test

Level of students' writing ability from cycle I can be seen in this circular Table 2:

Table 2. *Students' ability to write student paragraph on Cycle I test*

Ability criteria	Total	Percentage (%)
<i>Excellent</i>	0	0
<i>Good</i>	5	16.66

<i>Fair</i>	12	40
<i>Poor</i>	13	43.33
<i>Very Poor</i>	0	0

Based on the above table, the level of writing paragraph ability of student in cycle I can be interpreted as follows:

- a. None of students (0%) who have very less ability.
- b. Most students (43.33%) have less ability.
- c. A small number of students (40%) have sufficient ability.
- d. A small number of students (16.66%) have good ability.
- e. None of students (0%) who have excellent ability.

The result of student ability in writing paragraph in cycle I in every aspect of assessment can be described as follows:

Aspects of Content

In the pre-action stage, the average grade result in this aspect is 15.3. If the ability of students on the aspect of this content presented, it is obtained value of 51 which is still included in the criteria poor or less. Therefore, in the aspect of the content still needs to be improved again so as to obtain a better criterion on the results of the next cycle. For example, students' writing on this cycle I to be analyzed based on content aspect.

Going to Hawaii with friend

I will invite Riekha join with me to go to Hawaii. First she is a sister a funny. Next she is smart, also she is interest and beautiful. At the same time she is a easy going and enjoy to invite traveling. I think by invite riekha go to Hawaii very good idea.

As mentioned before, that aspect of the content of the paragraph is judged by the suitability of the text by the title. From the above article it appears that the students told the reason to invite friends to go to Hawaii. This shows the contents of the paragraph actually matching the title, but if we read in its entirety this paragraph has already begun to show the development of a good topic so readers find it easier to find the main idea of the paragraph.

Organizational Aspects

The organizational aspect is judged from the development of sentences into paragraphs. The average score obtained by students in the pre-action test of this organizational aspect is 14.36 or 71.8 which means the student has good ability. It can also be seen from the text above that the student has written three main components of a paragraph namely: main sentence, supporting sentence, and closing sentence. However, in the main sentence I will invite Riekha join with me to go to Hawaii, the student does not add *controlling idea* so the main topic is still weak. Topic sentence above should be changed to be I will invite Riekha join with me to go to Hawaii for Several reasons or There are Several reasons why I will invite Riekha to go to Hawaii with me, making it clear that the subject of that right are discussed in this paragraph is the reason why the author invites Riekha, her friend, to go to Hawaii.

Aspects of Vocabulary

In this aspect it is judged to be the accuracy of the use of vocabulary in the context of a sentence. The average score obtained by students in cycle I from the aspect of vocabulary is 11, 93 or 59.65

which means that the ability of students to use vocabulary in the paragraph is still lacking. The use of vocabulary is still limited, is still often found error in the selection and use of words or idioms, so that the meaning of the sentence becomes unclear and difficult to understand.

Aspects of Language Usage

On the aspects of language use judged is the accuracy of the use of sentence structure and grammar. The average score obtained by students in the pre-action test of this aspect is 9.93 or 39.72 which means that the students' ability in sentence structure and grammar in the paragraph is still very less. If we look at the scoring rubric above, this means that the students do not have the ability to make sentences in accordance with the rules that apply. Then the paragraph is also still dominated by mistakes, even considered not eligible for assessment.

Mechanical Aspect

Points assessed on mechanical aspects are spelling and accuracy of punctuation and capitalization. The average score that students obtain in a pre-action test of this aspect is 2.83 or 56.6. This means that the ability of students in this aspect, as in the previous aspects, is also very less. This is also clearly seen in the students' writing above. In that paragraph the student should use a coma after the *first* and *next*, the letters writing of the person's name must also be written using capital letters, and should also put a point mark between the words *beautiful* and the phrase *at the same time* to show that both are inside different sentences. Based on the rubric, at this level the resulting paragraph will be dominated by misspellings, punctuation, capitalization, or even unfit for evaluation.

Result of Cycle Test II

The level of students' writing ability from Cycle II can be seen in circular Table 3:

Table 3. *Students' ability to write paragraph on Cycle II test*

Ability criteria	Total	Percentage (%)
<i>Excellent</i>	0	0
<i>Good</i>	11	36.66
<i>Fair</i>	13	43.33
<i>Poor</i>	6	20
<i>Very Poor</i>	0	0

Based on the above table, the level of writing ability of student paragraphs on pre-action test can be interpreted as follows:

- a. None students (0%) have very less ability.
- b. A small number of students (20%) have less ability.
- c. Most students (43.33%) have enough ability.
- d. Most students (36.66%) have good ability.
- e. None of students (0%) who have excellent ability.

The result of student ability in writing paragraph in cycle II on every

aspect of assessment can be described as follows:

Aspects of Content

In the second cycle, the average grade in this aspect is 16.13. If the ability of students on the aspect of this content presented, it is obtained value of 80.65. This shows that students' ability in terms of content aspect has reached a good level. This can be seen from the results of the student's paragraph below.

*Reasons why I Like My
Biology Teacher*

There are three reasons why I like my Biology's teacher. Firstly, she is kind. She was very respectful to all her students. Secondly, she is not come too late. Although her house is so far, she always came to school on time. Thirdly, she is never angry. She can control emotions and talk softly. That's all three reasons why I like my Biology's teacher.

From the text above it appears that the contents of the paragraph have been in accordance with the title and this paragraph has shown the development of a good topic so readers can easily find the main idea developed in the paragraph.

Organizational Aspects

The organizational aspect is judged from the development of sentences into paragraphs. The average score that students obtain in the pre-action test of this organizational aspect is 16.23 or 81.15. This shows that most students have excellent ability in terms of organizational aspects of a paragraph. From the above note it appears that the student has clearly written the three main components of a

paragraph namely: the main sentence, supporting sentences, and closing sentences. The topic sentence is clearly written and has followed the existing rules, that *topic sentence* must have *topic* and *controlling idea*. In addition, each supporting sentence is given additional explanations or details so that the information provided in the paragraph is clear enough and no longer raises questions for the reader. Then, it is also seen that this paragraph has unity and coherence because the students have used the connecting or *cohesive devices* such as *firstly*, *secondly*, and *thirdly*, so that the transfer of ideas from one idea to another is not rigid and the reader.

Aspects of Vocabulary

In this aspect it is judged to be the accuracy of the use of vocabulary in the context of a sentence. The average score that students get in the pre-action test from the aspect of the vocabulary is 13.2 or 66 which means that the students' ability to use the vocabulary in the paragraph is good enough. In other words although there are still some errors in the use or selection of vocabulary, the meaning to be conveyed to the reader is not confusing.

Aspects of Language Usage

On the aspects of language use judged is the accuracy of the use of sentence structure and grammar. The average score obtained by students in the pre-action test of this aspect is 11.43 or 45.72 which means that the students' ability in sentence structure and grammar in the paragraph is still very less. If we look at the scoring rubric above, this means that the students do not have the ability to make sentences in accordance with the rules that apply. Then the paragraph is also still dominated by mistakes, even considered not eligible for assessment.

Mechanical Aspect

Points assessed on mechanical aspects are spelling and accuracy of punctuation and capitalization. The average score the students obtained in the pre-action test of this aspect was 2.96 or 59.2. This means that the ability of students in this aspect has reached a sufficient level. This is also clearly seen in the students' writing above. In that paragraph students have used punctuation, spelling, and capital letters well. Based on the rubric, at this level the resulting paragraph will still be found spelling errors, punctuation, capitalization, but the meaning to be conveyed can still be understood by the reader.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that students' ability to write paragraph after application using software *Paragraph Punch* found an improvement, both in the process and learning products. Increased process is evident from a more conducive learning situation change. While improving the product can be seen from the average grade of the class before and after the action. The average class on pre-action of 50.56 increased to 54.56 on the implementation of the action cycle I and again increased in Cycle II to 60.26. In the aspect of the error content that occurs in Cycle I hardly appear again in Cycle II. Errors that arise in the organizational aspects of Cycle I such as the development of explanatory sentences in each paragraph, inconsistent sequence of explanations begin to improve better in Cycle II. Errors that occur in aspects of language use is still on vocabulary selection and the use of inappropriate grammar. The mechanical aspects of Cycle II have partially implemented the proper use of punctuation, good and correct spelling, and appropriate application of cohesion and coherence.

When viewed from every aspect of content, organization, vocabulary, language and mechanical usage, it can be concluded that *Paragraph Punch* software

significantly improves writing ability of paragraph from side aspect of organization. For other aspects still need to be improved again because the results achieved are still at a level enough, even for aspects of language use are still found at the poor level.

REFERENCES

- Beatty, K. (2003). *Teaching and researching computer-assisted language learning*. New York: Longman.
- Borg, W. (1981). *Applying educational research: A practical guide for teachers*. New York: Longman.
- Carr, W. & Kemmis, S. (1986). *Becoming Critical: education, knowledge and action research*. Lewes: Falmer.
- Christopher, K. (1995). The effect of time on computer assisted instruction for risk students. *Computer journal of research on technology in education*, 28(1), 85-98.
- Cobb, T. & Stevens, V. (1996). Computer assisted development of spoken language skills. In M. Pennington (eds.). *The Power of CALL*. Houston: Athelstan Publications.
- Computer. Retrieved on January 30th 2011 from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Computer>
- Davies, G. Authoring CALL Courseware: A Practical Approach. In Leech, G. and Candlin, N.L. (eds.) *Computers in English Language Teaching and Research*. London: Longman, 12-29.
- Elliott, J. (1991) *Action Research for Educational Change*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Hah, M. (1996). Strategies employed by users of a Japanese computer assisted language learning program. *Australian Journal of Educational Technology*, 12(1), 25-34.
- Hampton, R. S. (1989a). Community involvement in alphabet and material development. *Notes on Literacy*.

- Hartoyo. (2006). *Individual differences in computer-assisted language learning*. Pelita Insani: Semarang.
- Levy, M. (1997). *CALL: Context and conceptualization*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Nelson, E., Ward, M., & Kaplow, R. (1976). Two new strategies for computer assisted language instruction. *Computer Journal of Foreign Language Annals*, 9(2), 28-37.
- Nunan, D. (1990). Action research in the language classroom. In J. Richards & D. Nunan (eds.) *Second language teacher education* (pp. 62-81). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Pennington, M. C. (in press). *The computer and the non-native writer: a natural partnership*. Cresskill, NJ (USA): Hampton Press.
- Schwartz, H. J., Geest, van der. T. & Smit-Kreuzen, M. (1992). Computers in writing instruction. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 7(1), 38-50.
- Susman, G. (1983). *Action research: a sociotechnical systems perspective*. London: Sage Publications.
- Warschauer, M. (1996). Computer-Assisted Language Learning: An Introduction. In S. Fots (Ed.), Retrieved Aug 1, 1999 from, <http://www.logsintl.com/LogosCompassSeries.html>.