

EFL Students' Unity in Paragraph Development: a Matter of Controlling Idea

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ABSTRACT

Explicit controlling idea with its related supporting details create unity in paragraph. On the contrary, the disunity occurs if supporting details does not support its controlling idea. Then the purpose of the study are to explore the possibility of disunity occurs in the paragraph and what are the most frequent supporting details being used in paragraph. The samples are taken from 50 intermediate to advanced EFL's compositions which consist of 70 paragraphs. The study also employs critical reading and content analysis as the methodology by reading and then decontextualized the paragraph to identify the controlling idea and its supporting details. The finding reveals that the disunity does occur in paragraphs. There are 51 paragraph unities or 73 % of the 70 samples. There are also 19 disunities out of 70 samples or 27 % of overall paragraph. The most frequent supporting detail is reasoning type supporting detail which take 35 times usage or 50 % of overall supporting details type in paragraph.

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INTRODUCTION

Every writer is relatively familiar with the term of controlling idea. And for those who ever learned formally they were taught that the controlling idea may reveal the writer's opinion, point of view, or attitude toward the subject of the paragraph, which automatically will set parameters for discussion of the topic. It is an important part of the topic sentence which lead the focus of our writing in a paragraph. For trained writers, It enables them to organize and narrow the writing according to the chosen specific subject (Oshima & Hague, 2006; Bailey, 2011; Zemach & Rumisek, 2006). In other words they will not discuss anything unrelated to the mentioned controlling idea in a paragraph. It shows the direction the writers are going to take in paragraph about the topic and would not deviate from it. Controlling idea also offers a writer's perspective regarding a particular topic. It resounds the writer's point of view, attitude, or opinion regarding certain issue and how the issue is directed toward the writer's interest. It provides the area of pro and cons, agree and disagree, advantage and disadvantage, and even blurry idea of certain things. At the end its objective is to consolidate the paragraph based on the writer objective.

From the readers perspective, controlling idea helps them to understand the essence of the writing to an extent that the readers will not be confused what is being discussed in a paragraph (Jarman, 2011). It helps the readers to predict what information they can find in a paragraph (Zemach & Rumisek, 2006). Controlling idea also helps the readers to sort out the information into categories which ease them to recall the information later on. It also helps the reader understand the purpose for writing the paragraph or essay. Further, when the controlling idea is explicit it helps the novice readers or EFL learners which start to learn English to track down the plot of the story and make the reading a fun experience to do. These facts covertly state that an explicit controlling idea is the first step in creating an effective writing in paragraph.

As the main component in paragraph development, topic combined with controlling idea, which is topic sentence, can be spotted easily in the first line of paragraph in its generic structure. This structure will be followed by the supporting details which must be related to controlling idea (Jordan, 2003). Thus it creates a web of idea within a paragraph which is inevitable. However the structure doesn't always mean creating unity since there must be connection between the limit of discussion i.e. controlling idea and supporting detail. When it is off the limit thus the disunity is created. This disunity or inconsistency as what we call it is created by several reasons. One of the most common is unawareness of the writer which is usually novice and stemmed from lack of knowledge about the convention of controlling idea in topic sentence to limit the discussion in a paragraph. Therefore when this disunity or inconsistency occur means the paragraph lose its focus and fail to consolidate the writers objective (Rahman, 2020). Then it is a problem.

Several studies related to coherence have discussed the inconsistency or the author's failure to apply the concept of coherence in writing. Carrell (1982), Karadeniz (2017), and Rahman (2013) have discussed the writing performance of EFL learners in several aspect like their general errors and the lack of unity caused by cohesive devices. However in EFL context, the role of controlling idea as a blue print in paragraph seems to be forgotten. With regard to the concept of coherence in the paragraph, it has been acknowledged that the concept is supported by controlling ideas and supporting details when the two elements of writing support each other to produce unity in writing (Blass & Vargo, 2018). At this point, students are required to understand the need of coherence in writing controlling ideas and supporting details to create unity in writing. In-depth understanding and identification of problems will indirectly provide a reference for teachers to create learning spaces and materials needed. Besides that, consistency in creating unified idea in writing to create unity is a must for every EFL learner.

At this point, EFL students who are still developing their writing skills and struggling with all intricacies in writing would definitely have difficulties to perform consistently in their work (Anh, 2019). These inconsistencies would show up in many spectrum and one of them is the inconsistency to perform unity between the controlling idea and supporting details. The disunity between these two then need to be analyzed since this logically occurred in EFL student's paragraph. Surely the reason behind the disunity of paragraph among students need to be studied separately in different study. This study mainly focus on the consistency for creating unity in paragraph development between controlling idea and supporting details the frequency of disunity of controlling idea and supporting detail in student's composition.

Topic, Controlling Idea, and Supporting Details

The topic sentence gives a paragraph direction and purpose (Anh, 2019). It shows what the paragraph is about while the controlling idea indicates how the writer will develop that topic. Being able to identify these key ideas in a topic sentence will help the writer and reader write and read with more understanding because they better know the composition focus. The process may also improve their own expository and academic writing as they come to understand and see how to write a topic sentence in the papers or essays (Miller & Pessoa, 2016).

The controlling idea is located in the main sentence (topic sentence) of a paragraph (Trzeciak, 2003). Both are an inseparable part. However, it needs to be distinguished between the two, because even though it is located in the main sentence, the controlling idea is only a word or phrase that represents our opinion on the theme of the writing, while the topic sentence is the entire sentence that contains the main idea of the paragraph.

The topic itself answers what the paragraph is and controlling idea answers the question of "why" or "How" in the paragraph (Zemach & Rumisek, 2006; Chin et al, 2012). In other words, Controlling Idea can be said as an expression of how and why the writers feel about the theme or topic of an article. By mastering this, every writer can produce well organized paragraph so that readers will easily understand the essence of what they write. And for this matter, Controlling Idea is a really important step that cannot be skipped. This is because a Controlling Idea that is stated explicitly in an article is believed to be the first step in creating an effective written work (Negari, 2011).

The controlling idea comes from the purpose and the subject (Andersson, 2001). It gives readers a map of the essay's territory, a framework in which to interpret the specific material the essay will present. It gives writers a basis for decision-making: every sentence, every paragraph in the essay should be directly related to the controlling idea. We can conclude that controlling idea is the accumulation of purpose plus subject and your point of view.

Another important rule to remember is that there can be many different controlling ideas about the same topic. For examples the general topic, swimming, can be the basis for persuasive, informational, and narrative controlling ideas. It is also important to note that there are different kinds of controlling ideas for different patterns and purposes. Furthermore, Controlling Idea is part of a paragraph that contains our opinion on something that is the theme of an article. This is an important thing because its existence is able to maintain the development of the writing so that it is well directed in accordance with our main intentions or ideas and does not spread anywhere or discuss matters that are not related to the main idea of an article.

The Controlling Idea, as just stated above, can appear in the form of a word or a phrase (Blass & Vargo, 2018). It can be in the form of an adjective, an adjective phrase and a noun phrase. The following are some examples of Controlling Idea from these three forms: 1. Adjective: Wonderful, Sophisticated, Good, Bad, Difficult, Easy, Good, Wrong, Healthy and more. 2. Adjective Phrase: Easy to make, Difficult to do, Nice to do, Good to read, Well-furnished, Extremely dangerous, Very cool and more. 3. Noun Phrase: Special place, Intriguing part, Amazing scenery, Happiest moment of my life, Several ways, three steps, six groups, many reasons, two important reasons and more.

The term supporting details can be defined as additional information that explains, defines or proves an idea (Wood et al, 2018). The term might sound simple, but because this concept is so important in many types of writing or speaking, it's

highly recommended that you make sure you understand exactly what it entails. Learn more about what supporting details are and review some examples. Supporting details are pieces of factual information that back up the main idea(s) you are trying to convey. These details clarify the main idea you are describing and bring it into clear focus for those who are reading your writing or listening to what you are saying.

Supporting details can be any kind of facts that help to develop or support the main idea the writers are trying to convey: descriptions, examples, impact, reasons, results, statistics (Wood et al, 2018). Supporting details aren't just meant to give more information about a situation – they're also meant, literally, to support the point, meaning that without them, the writers may not succeed in making the argument successfully. Using supporting details properly could be crucial in a variety of situations, whether the writers defending their innocence or just their thesis statement.

The idea behind supporting details is simple; it's all about providing information to explain and bolster someone's opinion, claim or belief and how did the writers reach the conclusion or opinion. And definitely, the explicit supporting detail is the simplest way to convince someone else to see the writer's way is to provide them with the same information they used to reach that decision. In addition, it's difficult to argue with the facts, and the more supporting details the writers can provide, the more evident it is that the facts are on the writers side (Bailey, 2011).

There are six main types of supporting details: descriptions, vocabulary, proof, voices, explanation, and importance (Jordan, 2003). Description is fairly self-explanatory: the writer can use the five senses, comparison, and metaphors to help paint a vivid picture for the reader. Vocabulary helps with clarification. Proof is often made up of facts, statistics, and dates that are hard evidence for your main point. "Voices" are expert quotes, individual opinions, or different perspectives that can be considered "soft proof." Explanation is restating the main point more simply, and "importance" is answering the question "so what?" after a fact or a quote.

METHOD

The study focuses on the unity of controlling idea and supporting detail in paragraph development. Controlling idea is regarded as the lead and supporting detail as the tail to elaborate the controlling idea while the topic is the umbrella to cover the package. This idea is the basic tenant to identify the unity between controlling idea and supporting details. It also means this is the simple way to track point to point whether the supporting details, which can come more than one, follow the controlling idea.

Data gathering procedures involves a variety of measures to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. The compositions were collected from English course which based on total immersion English program and the participants are in intermediate and advanced level. The essays itself were assessed by the researcher. Content analysis model was selected as the most comprehensive framework for the analysis of the unity between controlling idea and its supporting details in student's writing (Krippendorff, 2013). The analysis of the data were carried out by identifying the controlling idea and supporting detail and they are put side by side. To determine the unity of paragraph, supporting details are tested whether they answer the question of 'why' or 'how' stemmed from controlling idea.

Four prompts are used to generate the topic sentence and controlling ideas. The following prompts are selected due to it is to understand and it is not too complicated:

1. What is approach to problem-solving and how does it work for you? Use specific details to support your response.
2. In some organizations, promotions are based on seniority, while in other organizations, promotions are based on performance. Discuss the advantages of each position. Then indicate which position is best and why.
3. In some classes, course grades are based solely on exams, while in other classes, grades are based more on class participation than on exams. Which type of grading do you prefer?
4. Telecommuting (working for a company from home rather than in the office and communicating with the office by computer) is becoming more and more common. Discuss the advantages of telecommuting versus working in an office. Then indicate which you prefer and why.

The samples consist of 70 compositions written by EFL students in Indonesia from intermediate to advanced level of English. The composition itself range 3 to 5 paragraph. However the paragraph taken as the samples are from body of composition which usually comes from second or third paragraph. So every composition just produce one or two paragraphs as samples.

The participants in this study were highschool and university students who has taken english course more than one year and all of them have good English foundation. It was signified with their familiarity with preliminary writing rules and skills.

The present study employed content analysis approach to identify the unity of controlling idea and supporting detail. The approach was entirely dependent upon controlling idea to identify unity. The controlling idea were regarded as the lead while the modifiers, supporting details, as tails. The following are the procedure of analysis.

First, read the paragraph and then identify the topic sentence. To make sure that the identification of topic sentence is correct so that the paragraph is read two times eventhough the generic structure of topic sentence is in the first or second sentence in the paragraph. However if the topic sentence is hard to be identified then read the entire paragraph to which the sentence is connected. By looking at the entire paragraph, the researcher may be able to distinguish context clues that direct to ease identification and comprehension of the topic sentence. It is done by looking the keywords of that appears regularly in the entire paragraph. The repeated keywords with its markers then can be identified as the topic or the controlling idea.

Second, identify the subject and nouns of the topic sentence. Most often the topic of a topic sentence is its subject. For example, "The volcanos in this island are very active and they erupted once in every several decades." "volcano" is the subject of the sentence and the topic of this topic sentence. When a topic sentence begins with the pronoun "there" or "it," look for the element that "there" or "it" is substituting for. For example: "There are volcanos in this island" is equivalent to "volcanos are active in the this island." Hence, "volcanos" is identified as the topic.

Third, identify the controlling idea. The controlling idea is either an opinion that needs to be proven or an idea that leads to a list of things that need to be developed. Controlling statement examples like, "Indonesia has the most beautiful mountains" is an opinion. Someone may think that Japan or China have more beautiful mountains. Asking "how do you know?" can help identify the controlling idea of an opinion-based topic sentence. Identifying lists requires a "What are..." question. For example, "The life cycle of a frog has two stages." What are the two stages? This question then leads to a list. "The life cycle of the frog" is the topic, and "has two stages" is the controlling

idea. Thus, the remainder of a paragraph with this topic sentence would discuss each of the two stages of a frog's life cycle. Look at the other examples altogether with how the topic and controlling idea can be identified easily.

1. Topic : Who/What the paragraph is about
2. Controlling idea : Why the paragraph is written

For example:

Dony is a clever student.

Who/what is the paragraph about? Dony (topic)

Why is the paragraph written? to show why Dony is a clever student(controlling idea).

Fourth, make the table to ease the identification of controlling idea and supporting detail by putting side by side in the table. In this way we can synchronize between controlling idea and supporting detail. In this stage we can put the discussion to clarify the connection between controlling idea and its supporting details.

Fifth. Decide the types of supporting details by looking the definition of each supporting detail as reference.

Sixth. Decide whether the controlling idea is supported and elaborated by supporting details. if yes then the paragraph contains unity and if not then the paragraph is in inconsistency. For further explicit analysis is presented in table 1 below.

Table 1. Analysis Steps of De-Contextualizing Controlling Idea and Supporting Details

Step 1 & 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6
Read the Paragraph & Spot the Topic Sentence	Determine the Controlling Idea	Side-by-side Analysis of controlling Idea and Supporting Detail	Types of Supporting Detail	Result
U.S. workplace discrimination is <i>common</i> .	Workplace discrimination is far too <i>common</i> in the United States. In 2020 alone, more than 67,000 charges were filed with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).	Controlling idea: <i>common</i> . The supporting detail: explore the commonness of us workplace discrimination.	statistics	Unity

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The 70 student compositions analyzed were not done independently by breaking away from the composition context, but reading the 1st and 2nd analysis stages was done by reading the entire article. So that the topic of reading as a whole can be captured by the reader. While the reading itself is done repeatedly 2 times to determine exactly the topic sentence of each paragraph.

From the results of reading the 70 compositions, there were 280 paragraphs, most of which consisted of 300 to 500 words. The following are four paragraphs of the overall 50 compositions. These five examples are taken from each composition from

samples. In this analysis we assumed that we have read the paragraph and identify the topic sentence and decide the topic. From there we can depart to step 3. As we can see in the table below that the step 3 is carried out in samples of paragraph.

Table 2. Analysis of the Text: Step 3&4

Samples	Paragraph	Step 3 &4
<p>Samples 1</p>	<p>The first reason because all of that entertainment really attractive and entertain us when we really need time to break after exam, go home from school or work. At the time that we feel so tired and want to do something that not make us thinking hard, feel relaxed, comfy, and also make us feel happy so we can forget bad experiences, dumb things, or work tension that we do or get when we work in company or study in school. For me the right way are by watching Net Flix and play Plant versus Zombies in our cell phone. What we do will influence us so like when we watch korean drama sometimes we can cry at the time we see the main character died or the son of the main charater died, so dumb right, but that happen with us especially for girl who watch korean dramas.</p>	<p>Topic: the reason The controlling idea: entertainment attractive and entertain. Supporting details: (the supporting details should ask why does the entertainment are attractive and entertain). Discussion: the supporting details should ask why does the entertainment are attractive and entertain but it answers the influence of entertainment. The answer doesn't coherent and inconsistent with the question asked by the controlling idea. Therefore it can be inferred that the paragraph doesn't contain unity.</p>
<p>Samples 6</p>	<p>Promotion based on seniority will be the first one I will discuss. The boss of a company will give a promotion to his/her employee who has been working in that company for a long time. Having this type of promotion implemented in a company means that almost every long-time-employee have a high chance of getting promoted, unless he/she decides to quit before it happens. The employee who knows that this kind of system is being used by the boss will, of course, do his best in his work hoping not to get fired by the boss. He/She knows that if he/she keeps up his/her good work, someday, the boss will promote him/her to a higher position. But</p>	<p>The topic: Promotion The controlling idea: seniority Supporting details: type of promotion, ... the system..., follow his senior Discussion: why does promotion based on seniority matters? The supporting details repeatedly mention the key word 'seniority' of controlling idea and other synonym of the word to emphasise the focus of paragraph and the supporting detail give some reasoning thus answer the questions of why does promotion based on seniority matters?</p>

there is also a possibility that this type of promotion will turn out bad instead. If someday there is a new employee who does his/her works better than the seniors, and in some time, knows that the boss use this kind of system, he/she will then follow his seniors, which means that he/she does his/her works worse than before. That new employee's will then decide not to work hard for the company, because they know it will only tire them out.

From the elaboration in table 2, the analysis can further be accomplished to determine the type of supporting details and the result of the paragraph; whether it has unity between controlling idea and its supporting details or on the other ways it just contains a partial unity in which it discusses just a part of the controlling idea. The other possibilities the controlling idea and supporting detail has nothing to do each other. This mean the disunity occur within a paragraph.

The next step to complete the analysis of paragrah is to decide the type of supporting details. The supporting details itself can be categorized into six types: descriptions, examples, impact, reasons, results, statistics. This categorization is used to support the relation between the controlling idea and supporting details; whether they are compatibel and relevant each other. The result which is provided in the last step, step 6, decides whether the paragraph contain unity or on the other hand it contains inconsistency between the controlling idea and supporting details.

Table 3. Step 5& 6: Type of Supporting Detail and Result

samples	Step 5: Type of Supporting Detail	Step 6: Result
Samples 1	Descriptions & example	disunity
Samples 6	Descriptions & reasons	unity

The disunity from sample 1 is derived from inconsistency of supporting detail with the controlling idea which are: the supporting details should ask why does the entertainment are attractive and entertain but it answers the influence of entertainment. The answer doesn't coherent and inconsistent with the question asked by the controlling idea. Therefore it can be inferred that the paragraph doesn't contain unity. The sample 6 display the unity due to the consistency of supporting detail with its controlling idea as follow: why does promotion based on seniority matters? The supporting details repeatedly mention the key word 'seniority' of controlling idea and other synonym of the word to emphazise the focus of paragraph and the supporting detail give some reasoning thus answer the questions of why does promotion based on seniority matters?

To complete the analysis of the samples, tables 4 provides the accumulation of supporting details types in 70 paragraphs of 50 students compositions.

Table 4. The Accumulation of Supporting Detail Type

Type of supporting details	Number of supporting details
Descriptions	10
Example	13
Impact	5
Reasons	35
Result	7
Statistics	0
Total	70

As it is mentioned, the accumulation reflects the number of supporting details found in the samples. There are 10 descriptions types of samples. The following is the example of description type of supporting details taken from samples 12: 'Hard-work is also important to be successful in the future. The simple thing a student can do to give their best at something is studying. If we have an exam, it will encourage us to study hard in order to get a good grade and it can also improve our endurance to do our best at something, which is important in our adulthood to maintain our good and happy life. We all know everyone can do this if we try, unlike class participation which some people don't have the courage to do so.' The paragraph answer the question how in which the answer need a description how hard-work is very important in a student's life and could be a life changing experience.

The number of example used as supporting details is 13. Sample 2 provides the example of supporting detail of this type.'The second one is every things that we do will affect us in any parts of our daily life especially our behavior because all of things that we do will process by our mind and will recorded in our subconscious and can be out anytime without our permission. For instance, when we still kids we watch some horror movies, and when we sleep may be we can scared and can't sleep because scared that scenes that happen in the movie will happen with us.' It is obvious that the word " for instance' signifies the use of example as a type of supporting details. And this type of supporting details is mostly common started with the word, for instace, i.e., or for example.

The supporting detail, Impact, is used five times. The following is the example from sample 4: 'The second factor that makes me unorganized is because of the tendency to change my mind. I can not stick to one idea until the end, so if I am working on something, and then I suddenly get a better idea to complete the task, I can consider myself to start it over. If I got another better idea after starting over, I can consider myself to start it over and over again. Of course this takes a lot of time and will make me unable to finish the best idea I can think of until the end of the deadline. For example, I got an assignment to do, such as making something. After thinking a lot of time, I finally got an idea and proceed to work on that idea. But then halfway done, I think this idea of mine is so bad, so I decided to find a better idea. After figuring out, I can consider myself to start it over.' The supporting detail of this type can be identified by asking what is impact or effect of the subject mentioned in the controlling idea. In the paragraph, it is clear that the

Reasons as one form of the supporting detail takes the most frequent use in supporting detail. it is found 35 reasoning as supporting details. The example of reasoning is taken from sample 35: 'The first reason because all of that entertainment

really attractive and entertain us when we really need time to break after exam, go home from school or work. At the time that we feel so tired and want to do something that not make us thinking hard, feel relaxed, comfy, and also make us feel happy so we can forget bad experiences, dumb things, or work tension that we do or get when we work in company or study in school. For me the right way are by watching Net Flix and play Plant versus Zombies in our cell phone. What we do will influence us so like when we watch korean drama sometimes we can cry at the time we see the main character died or the son of the main charater died, so dumb right, but that happen with us especially for girl who watch korean dramas.' It is evident that the word 'reason' is found in the first sentence of the paragraph. It is a sign that

Result is used seven times as supporting details. The example of result is taken from sample 46: 'The other way of promotion is based on the members' performance. This promotion will be depending their work result. When the members do their job well, the organization give a promotion to make the members stay in that organization andd give a better result on their job. The organization thinks that a promotion could give more spirit to their members. Another reason of this promotion is that the members study higher for their educational stage. The higher educational stage shows that the members' have interest on giving a better result for the organization.'

As for the statistics, it has not been found any in the overall 70 paragraphs. It indicates that the statistics is not the easiest supporting detail type to present. It is probably due to the need of research to display it in the paragraph.

Table 5. The Result

Paragraph	Number of Paragraph
Unity	51
Disunity	19
Total	70

From the table 5, it can be found that unity in paragraph appear 51 times which means it is still dominant in overall samples. It can also be inferred that most of the writer aware about the importance of linking controlling idea and their supprting detail. While there are 19 disunity occur in paragraph which can be interpreted as this error or mistakes do occur but in minor portion. There are few possibilities range from the lack of knowledge how to write an effective paragraph to the ignorance of the existance of unity is a must between controlling idea and its supprting details.

CONCLUSION

The finding reveals that the disunity does occurs in paragraph. There are 19 disunity out of 70 samples or 27 % of overall paragraph. While there are 51 unity out of 70 paragraphs or 73 % of overall samples. This mean, though minor, almost a quarter of the controlling idea and its supporting details in the EFL student's paragraph are still inconsistence. The inconsistency appears in several type of supporting details: reasoning, examples, and description. Most of the inconsistency contains the the deviation of supporting details toward its controlling idea and the supporting details does not answer the question of why or how toward the controlling idea. Instead some of the supporting details discuss other subjects or partially support the controlling idea.

The most frequent supporting detail is reasoning type supporting detail which take 35 times usage or 50 % of overall supporting details type in paragraph. Example type supporting details takes 13 times usage and description type supporting detail takes 10 usage. While result and impact supporting detail take 7 and 5 times respectively. However the statistics supporting detail type cannot be found in the sample paragraph. It can be concluded that reasoning supporting detail is the most common supporting detail though and statistics is least supporting detail in unprepared essay.

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