

## **A STUDY OF UNITY AND COHERENCE IN INDONESIAN SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' WRITING**

**Dewanti Naga Putri**

Universitas Negeri Surabaya  
dewanti0618@gmail.com

### **Abstrak**

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menginvestigasi performa siswa sekolah menengah dalam menggunakan kesatuan dan keterpaduan dalam menulis paragraf serta mengeksplor kesalahan menulis yang mungkin mereka alami selama prosesnya. Data untuk analisis adalah sampel tulisan dan hasil wawancara 10 siswa sekolah menengah di Jawa Timur yang berpartisipasi dalam kajian ini. Seluruh siswa diberi sebuah tautan ke Google Form yang menjadi sarana pengumpulan tulisan mereka tentang “budaya” dalam waktu 24 jam, kemudian mereka diwawancarai esoknya untuk mencari tahu kendala-kendala dalam menulis yang mungkin mereka temui selama menulis. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa para siswa menulis teks dengan kesatuan dan keterpaduan yang baik meskipun memproduksi kesalahan kecil. Sementara, para siswa menyebutkan kendala-kendala kepenulisan seperti tata bahasa, memilih kosa kata yang benar dan tepat, kesalahan pengejaan, serta struktur dan organisasi.

**Kata Kunci:** Kesatuan, Keterpaduan, Siswa sekolah menengah, Tulisan.

### **Abstract**

This research is aimed to investigate secondary school students' performance in using unity and coherence in paragraph writing as well as to explore writing issues they might face during writing process. The data for analysis were writing samples and interview results from 10 East Java secondary school students who participated in this study. Students were given a link to Google Form where they must submit their writing about “culture” within 24 hours, then they were interviewed the next day to find out writing problems they might encounter during writing. Findings showed that the students wrote texts with good unity and coherence albeit minor mistakes they produced. As for writing issues, the students mentioned grammatical, choosing the correct and suitable vocabulary, misspelling, as well as structure and organization.

**Keywords:** Unity, Coherence, Secondary school students, Writing.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Writing is a highly complex task that merges cognitive processing, dissemination of linguistic knowledge, and recognition of the social context in which the written communication takes place (Flower & Hayes, 1981; Gee, 2001; Bereiter & Scardamalia, 2013; Qin & Uccelli, 2016). It is a difficult task to carry out which requires complex thinking, planning, and organizing processes of ideas (Vögelin et al., 2019). It is a well-structured product that needs careful considerations to the factors like organization and flow (Poudel, 2010; Swales & Feak, 2012, p.3). For those who are unfamiliar with producing a good writing, this task is challenging (Zhang, 2010; Fajri, 2016). In fact, the reader will not grasp the idea of a text if the writer could not arrange their writing in such a good organization.

To communicate our thoughts and feelings through writing, we need to take into account the consideration of using paragraph unity and coherence. Unity in a paragraph means that the paragraph focus on only one topic sentence.

The supporting sentences must directly explain the topic sentence and should not contain any unrelated idea (Oshima and Hogue, 1999:30; Fajri, 2016; Munawarah, 2019). It means that every sentence must be explaining the same topic so that the reader can easily catch the writer's idea (Zamach & Islam, 2005; Anggraini, 2019). However, this task is hard to execute. Munawarah (2019) quoted from Gusman, Yelfiza and Sariasih (2013, p.2) which argue that students have difficulties in organizing and connecting ideas. They discussed more than one idea in one paragraph. Another study by Fajri (2016) reports that there are students who have problems in supporting their topic sentence. (Anggraini, 2019) also states in her report that there are students who wrote off-topic paragraphs.

Moreover, coherence refers to connectedness of sentences. A coherent paragraph delivers clear and logical idea from one sentence to another; it refers to an organized fitting element in a paragraph (Munawarah, 2019). It is the connection of ideas related to its context which exist in people (Taboada, 2004, p.158; Yule, 2008, p.126; Poudel, 2010).

Coherence also means the interpretation of a text and it depends on the readers' ability to understand the text (Poudel, 2010). When the idea delivered could be understood by the readers, it is an indication that the writing is a good and coherent writing (Gusman et al., 2013; Munawarah, 2019).

Fajri (2016) cites from Oshima and Hogue (1999:40) the four ways of achieving coherence; repeating key nouns, using pronouns that refer to the key nouns, employing transition signals, and arranging sentences in logical order. Hence, the result of their study mentions that there are inconsistency of pronouns and transition signals usage. Contrasting to Fajri, Anggraini (2019) found that fourth semester students of TBI IAIN Bengkulu are able to use coherence in their paragraph correctly.

English writing is learned in almost all education stages and proficiency levels in Indonesia. Senior high schools are one of the education stages that learn English writing. The kind of writing learned in high school or other formal education institutions is academic writing, which is a formal writing that demonstrates the writers' knowledge on a certain topic with certain skills in thinking, interpreting, and presenting (Oshima and Hogue, 2007; Irvin, 2010, p.8; Poudel, 2010).

In Indonesian high school, students usually learn English writing from the first year to the last year corresponding to the national curriculum, Permendikbud Tahun 2016. Based on the curriculum, students learn English in order to be able to communicate using the language. In learning English writing, students are usually asked to create a text. This text later will be analyzed by the teacher and will be the source of data for further evaluation, and the result of each student will be different. This case becomes an interesting issue for the author to write a study to find out whether Indonesian intermediate students are able to produce a unified and coherent writing or not.

Findings on a previous study (Keller et al., 2020) mention that students in Switzerland and Germany were able to write English essays that address real-world, controversial issues and use developed explanations, exemplifications, and details of argumentation to support their points of view. Their texts showed sufficient unity, progression, and coherence for readers to understand the main message, though connection of ideas was occasionally obscured. Another study by Munawarah (2019) in Palangka Raya, Indonesia, shows a distinct result from Keller. In Munawarah's result, the students wrote incomplete sentences where they did not neither relevantly support their topic sentences nor write relevant concluding sentences. Some students wrote a paragraph without unity, and some others without coherence. Fajri (2016) also

reports in their study that students conveyed irrelevant idea regarding to their main topics.

The previous study by Munawarah (2019) reports university level students' performance in writing a unified and coherent paragraph, which indicates that the study on high school level students has not yet been reported. In order to study Indonesian secondary learners' skill in employing unity and coherence in paragraph writing, a thorough analysis is needed.

### **Research question**

This research examines the performance of Indonesian secondary level students in utilizing unity and coherence in writing by adopting two questions:

1. How is the unity and coherence of the students' text writing?
2. What are the students' problems in writing the text?

### **METHODS**

This study is a qualitative study which employed content analysis of ten East Java secondary school students with the same mother tongue who have the best English score among all students as subjects. The researcher decided to choose 10 subjects because it is believed to show the number of best students who are able to produce English texts with unity and coherence in the targeted high school.

The data for this research was collected in two different days as follows; firstly, the participants were given a link to Google Form which contained a simple writing instruction and a topic of "culture" that must be completed within 24 hours. The author believed that within 24 hours, the students will have enough time to study the topic as well as to finish their writing as good as possible. The data used for the analysis will be derived from their text into; the unity of the whole text, whether each paragraph consisted of one topic sentence and several supporting sentences relevant to the topic sentence or not, and the coherence of every sentence, whether the sentences flow smoothly from one another and in logical order or not; secondly, a structured interview was held the next day for each student to find out their writing problems.

### **RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS**

#### **Result**

The following are examples of the students' writing result.

#### **Student 1**

##### **Text**

*As indicated by German legends, night waltz is a night when the witches banquet and dance on brocken, the zenith of this festival in the mountains of harz to mess around with Satan. The festival is carried on by witches*

lighting a pitch and hopping on it. Albeit in certain pieces of the nation it's not associated all the time with enchanted witches. The festival was completed by witches in the evening toward May 1 every year to praise the colder time of year solstice, the change from winter to spring that they had such a huge amount to anticipate. Parada, a music and culinary program that highlights German frankfurter (brockwurst) and malbock customs for the most part go with may tree enhancements. In a few different regions, for example, Brandenburg, wooden bars and manikin witches were singed to drive out culprits who frequently took the mei tree.

### Analysis

The student brought up a topic about Walpurgisnacht, a Germany witch festival, and developed the text into report text. Paragraph one talks about the description on what Walpurgis night is, indicated by the first sentence of the paragraph "As indicated by German legends, *night walpurgis is a night when the witches banquet and dance on brocken*, the zenith of this festival in the mountains of harz to mess around with Satan." There are 5 supporting sentences that follow the main idea (in bold) which mention how the festival is carried out. All sentences are written smoothly, connected to each other. It flows from how the festival conducted to regions where the festival took place.

### Conclusion

Finally, it can be concluded that the student wrote a unified and coherent text, with one paragraph not unified prior to the topic out of five paragraphs. According to the scoring rubric, the student achieved good score (one clear topic sentence, the majority of supporting sentences directly explain the topic sentence and the minority do not) from 3 raters.

### Students 2

#### Text

*In Indonesia, there are several impacts of western culture, including: People prefer goods from abroad and choose a consumptive lifestyle. There are behavioral deviations that are contrary to Indonesian culture, this is also very common among teenagers because they think that doing western things even though they deviate from Indonesian norms is a cool thing to do. The rise of the influence of western culture is that there are various types of song listeners who prefer western songs that suit their tastes rather than local songs. Some people can't tell the difference between good and bad culture.*

*Imitating the western lifestyle, in the sense that many people prefer foreign brands even though the quality is not*

*much different from local products, they are even willing to spend a lot of money to look stylish with branded goods.*

### Analysis

Following the example, the bad impacts of that culture to a country are mentioned. "In Indonesia, there are several impacts of western culture, including: *People prefer goods from abroad and choose a consumptive lifestyle.*" The third paragraph consisted of 4 sentences that support the main idea of the topic sentence. Behavioral deviations that is contrary to Indonesian culture and other influence of western culture are mentioned in the current paragraph. Each sentence connects one another and is understandable.

### Conclusion

Finally, it can be concluded that the student wrote a unified and coherent text, with one paragraph not unified prior to the topic out of four paragraphs. According to the scoring rubric, the student achieved good score (one clear topic sentence, the majority of supporting sentences directly explain the topic sentence and the minority do not.) from 3 raters.

### Student 3

#### Text

*What do you know about batik? must be familiar right? Batik is a craft made of cloth that is painted using wax to produce a variety of high-value motifs. Batik comes from the word "amba" which means to write and "nitik" or dots which can be interpreted to make dots or pictures. The oldest batik art was found in the 17th century AD and 18 AD during the Majapahit kingdom. At that time batik was only used by the palace people and their followers. However, over time the art of batik was also spread outside the palace and became clothes that are also worn by the general public to this day*

*Batik cloth is a product that can be used in everyday life. In this case, batik cloth can be used as a material for making clothes. In addition, batik cloth can also be used as a sarong, jarik, shawl, or veil.*

### Analysis

The student brought up a topic about batik culture and developed the text into report text. The first paragraph identifies the history of batik from the year it was found to batik nowadays. The topic sentence "*Batik is a craft made of cloth that is painted using wax to produce a variety of high-value motifs*" is supported with the origin of the culture, from its name to its birth place. The current paragraph is served with connectedness of every sentences. However, the following 3 sentences which could be put as part of the introduction, were written as a

separate short paragraph. It thus creates incoherency in the text.

### Conclusion

Finally, it can be concluded that the student wrote a unified and coherent text, with one paragraph incoherent prior to the previous paragraph out of five paragraphs. According to the scoring rubric, the student achieved good score (each sentence is connected but the minority are not in logical order) from 3 raters.

### Student 4

#### Text

*Foreign cultures that entered Indonesia have a huge impact on life, especially for the teenagers. Many foreign cultures have entered, therefore we must be wise in sorting out the cultures that have a good impact on us. The first example is the use of the internet. If we use it properly, internet will provide many benefits. But if we use it freely and without supervision it will have a bad impact. Teenagers who are addicted to playing gadgets tend to not care about their surroundings. This is against the culture of politeness that exists in Indonesia. The second example is in terms of fashion. Foreign cultural fashion styles may be able to provide fashion inspiration for producers in Indonesia, but this must still be adapted to the existing Indonesian culture. Many people wear clothes that show their 'bodies' and colored their hairs. The negative impact of the entry of foreign cultures, such as the emergence of individualism, materialism, a luxurious lifestyle, the existence of a culture that deviates from Indonesian cultural values, and religious values are starting to be ignored.*

#### Analysis

Move on, the third paragraph talks about the examples of foreign cultures that enter Indonesia. However, there is incoherency between the sentences. "*Many foreign cultures have entered, therefore we must be wise in sorting out the cultures that have a good impact on us.*" This sentence is put after the topic sentence, whereas "*The first example is the use of the internet*" is put as the third sentence that built the paragraph. The second sentence above could be utilized as the last sentence of the paragraph, so that the paragraph unity balanced.

#### Conclusion

Finally, it can be concluded that the student wrote a unified and coherent text, with one sentence incoherent prior to its paragraph out of four paragraphs. According to the scoring rubric, the student achieved fair score (minor sentences are not connected to the whole paragraph but in logical order) from 3 raters.

### Student 5

#### Text

*In this era of globalization, Indonesia has begun to be entered with foreign cultures. Foreign cultures that enter Indonesia have a huge impact on the lives of the younger generation. Culture is a way of life that develops and is shared by a group of people and is passed down from generation to generation. Unfortunately, not all foreign cultures have a positive impact. One of the weaknesses of the Indonesian people is that it is easy to freely accept the entry of foreign cultures without any filtering. The people of Indonesia are very easy to be open to innovations that are present in real life without sorting out which ones are by applicable norms and rules and which are not appropriate in Indonesia. The rapid advancement of technology and the unstoppable influence of globalization make us find out various information quickly, facilitate communication, and even accelerate the spread of foreign cultures. Cultural clashes lead to the acculturation of foreign cultures with local cultures. Therefore, every Indonesian citizen must maintain and maintain the nation's culture and be selective in filtering foreign cultures that enter Indonesia so that local culture is not eroded or lost. Because this will result in not knowing the next generation of the nation in its own national identity.*

#### Analysis

The student brought up a topic about the importance of filtering foreign cultures and developed the text into report text. The first paragraph starts with "*In this era of globalization, Indonesia has begun to be entered with foreign cultures.*" Then, there seems to be incoherency between the second and third sentence. "*Culture is a way of life that develops and is shared by a group of people and is passed down from generation to generation.*" This third sentence could be switched with the second sentence which says "*Foreign cultures that enter Indonesia have a huge impact on the lives of the younger generation.*" By this change, the paragraph would be more coherent due to the following supporting sentences.

#### Conclusion

Finally, it can be concluded that the student wrote a unified and coherent text, with minority of the sentences incoherent prior to its paragraph out of five paragraphs. According to the scoring rubric, the student achieved good score (each sentence are connected but the minority are not in logical order) from 3 raters.

### Student 6

#### Text

*Culture can be divided by two that is material culture and non-material culture. Material culture is a culture that is physical or material that can be seen clearly such as the shape of the house, the type of food, and the shape of the building. For example, Rumah Joglo from Java, Gapura Candi Bentar from Bali, etc. While non-material culture is a culture including ideas, views, beliefs, customs and so on. Cultures like this can't be seen directly. This culture will only be grasp when it is in that society for a long period of time. For example, Upacara Ruwatan and Tingkeban from Java.*

#### Analysis

The second paragraph mentions "Culture can be divided by two that is material culture and non-material culture." The topic sentence is supported with brief explanation and examples of both material culture and non-material culture. In this paragraph, the sentences are fully connected and is easy to understand.

#### Conclusion

Finally, it can be concluded that the student wrote a unified and coherent text out of four paragraphs. The text is built in an excellent unity and coherence. According to the scoring rubric, the student achieved excellent score (one clear topic sentence, the supporting sentences directly explains the topic sentence; each sentence are connected and in logical order) from 3 raters.

### Student 7

#### Text

*Batik is a picture cloth that is specially made by writing or applying wax to the cloth, then treating it in a certain way that has its own characteristics. Indonesian Batik, as a whole of techniques, technology and the development of related motifs and culture, has been designated by UNESCO as a Humanitarian Heritage for Oral and Intangible Culture (Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity) October 2, 2009.*

#### Analysis

The student brought up a topic about batik culture and developed the text into report text. However, there is no clear idea separation in the text and instead the text is written in seemingly only 2 paragraphs. The paragraph starts with "Batik is a picture cloth that is specially made by writing or applying wax to the cloth, then treating it in a certain way that has its own characteristics" that can be identified as the topic sentence. The idea is then followed by "has been designated by UNESCO as a Humanitarian Heritage for Oral and Intangible Culture (Masterpieces of

*the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity) October 2, 2009."*

#### Conclusion

Finally, it can be concluded that the student wrote a unified and coherent text. Despite the unclear splitting of idea, the text is still written in unity and the idea is delivered very well. According to the scoring rubric, the student achieved excellent score (one clear topic sentence, the supporting sentences directly explains the topic sentence; each sentence are connected and in logical order) from 3 raters.

### Student 8

#### Text

*Traditional dance is a dance that has been developed and preserved from generation to generation in a certain area. This dance usually has various characteristics that highlight the philosophy, culture, and local wisdom in which the dance develops, so it can be guessed that each region will have its uniqueness, especially in Indonesia, where the diversity of the people seems limitless. There are many dances in Indonesia. At first, traditional dances were created for traditional purposes such as in rituals. But along with the times, traditional dance is now a cultural entertainment as well as a medium for regional cultural education, for example, Yapong Dance from Betawi, Jaipong Dance from West Java, Serimpi Dance from Yogyakarta, Plate Dance from Minangkabau, and others.*

#### Analysis

The next paragraph discusses traditional dance, yet it is not in logical order. This paragraph is opened with "Traditional dance is a dance that has been developed and preserved from generation to generation in a certain area." It has a good following sentence, but the third sentence that follows the opening could be moved to the first line of the paragraph, which says "There are many dances in Indonesia." Taking a look at the fourth sentence, this organization does not make sense. If the first and third sentence are not exchanged in position, the paragraph will be incoherent.

#### Conclusion

Finally, it can be concluded that the student wrote a unified with minor incoherent text out of five paragraphs. According to the scoring rubric, the student achieved good score (each sentence is connected but the minority are not in logical order) from 3 raters.

### Student 9

#### Text

*Because globalization is brought about by developed countries with different cultures from developing countries*

*such as Indonesia, Western cultural values can be a threat to the preservation of local values in developing countries, including Indonesia. For the Indonesian people, Western values that have joined the flow of globalization to the Indonesian people have become a threat to local culture in this nation. Therefore, nowadays, the toughest test faced by local culture is to maintain its existence in the midst of rapid globalization. So, it is necessary that appropriate strategies in strengthening the existence of local culture must be formulated. The following are strategies that can be applied.*

**Analysis**

The second paragraph is meant to introduce the strategies mentioned in the title, yet there is not much information written on what are those strategies. Instead, this inductive paragraph only mentions "*The following are strategies that can be applied,*" whereas it would be better if the strategies are included in the sentence, so that the reader can grasp the idea faster. After that, the third to five paragraphs is about the strategies. Each paragraph is unified to the idea of each strategy and the sentences are coherent.

**Conclusion**

Finally, it can be concluded that the student wrote a unified and coherent text out of five paragraphs. The text is built in an excellent unity and coherence even though there is lack of information in one of the topic sentences. According to the scoring rubric, the student achieved excellent score (one clear topic sentence, the supporting sentences directly explains the topic sentence; each sentence are connected and in logical order) from 3 raters.

**Student 10**

**Text**

*as well as technology, culture also can change. culture is a dynamic things, ever-changing to fit the times. guess what causes culture to change from time to time. eum, maybe some people think that causes by human. but there are a valid reason which causes culture to change, that is a current development. this things reinforced by Rudito opinion (1991:3) which said that society changes divided into two that is physical changes and knowledge changes in society.*

**Analysis**

The second paragraph begins with "*as well as technology, culture also can change.*" The following sentences directly support the topic sentence, which then the last line of the paragraph "*this things reinforced by Rudito opinion (1991:3) which said that society changes divided into two that is physical changes and knowledge changes in*

*society"* connects to the idea of the third paragraph, which says "*in physical changes includes the rate of population growth is very rapid, changes in knowledge can be in the form of technology that is increasingly developing in that society.*" However, it can be seen that there is an issue with punctuation which may leads the readers to confusion. Moreover, there is no clear transition signal written in the sentence. These issues will also not be discussed in this research, as previously mentioned.

**Conclusion**

Finally, it can be concluded that the student wrote a unified and coherent text out of five paragraphs. According to the scoring rubric, the student achieved excellent score (one clear topic sentence, the supporting sentences directly explains the topic sentence; each sentence are connected and in logical order) from 3 raters.

The result of 10 students' writings submitted in Google Form link given show variety of focus from the topic "culture". Six students wrote external element of culture, as in what happen to culture, such as the impacts of foreign cultures to local cultures and strategies to maintain local cultures in globalization era, while the other four wrote internal element of culture, as in kinds of culture itself, such as batik from Indonesia and Walpurgisnacht from Germany. The results vary from one another, even though some students brought up the same focus. They were free to develop their text into any kind of text and all of them developed their text into report text which concluded as follows: student 6 and 10 wrote an excellent text with no mistakes in unity and coherence; student 7 wrote an excellent text despite of the unclear splitting of idea; student 9 wrote an excellent text despite of lack information on topic sentence; student 1 and 2 wrote a good text with one paragraph not unified; student 3, 5, and 8 wrote a good text with minor sentence not in logical order; and student 4 wrote a fair text with minor sentence not connected to the whole paragraph.

Table 1. Students writing scoring rubric

	<b>Unity</b>	<b>Coherence</b>
<b>Excellent</b>	One clear topic sentence, the supporting sentences directly explains the topic sentence.	Each sentence is connected and in logical order.
<b>Good</b>	One clear topic sentence, the majority of supporting sentences directly explain the topic sentence and the minority do not.	Each sentence is connected but the minority are not in logical order.
<b>Fair</b>	One clear topic sentence, the majority of supporting sentences do not explain the topic sentences.	Minor sentences are not connected to the whole paragraph but in logical order.

<b>Poor</b>	No clear topic sentence, the supporting sentences do not explain the topic sentence.	Each sentence is not connected and not in logical order.
-------------	--	--

The table above is the scoring rubric used to analyze the students' writing result. 3 raters took participation in the process of analyzing the texts. Result from 3 raters were combined and from the drawn conclusion, it showed that 4 students received excellent score, 5 students received good score, and 1 student received fair score. The following are excerpts of students' interview result.

**Student 1**

In their opinion, things that need to be considered in English writing are conformity to the theme/topic, choosing up to date topic, and neat and correct use of language. Meanwhile, writing mistakes that they might do are phrase writing, translation issue in writing the sentences, and misspelling.

**Student 2**

In their opinion, things that need to be considered in English writing are vocabulary issues such as words that have many translations and text structure. Meanwhile, writing mistakes that they might do are grammar and complicated vocabularies.

**Student 3**

In their opinion, things that need to be considered in English writing are grammar and sentence structure, because English language is different from Indonesian language. Meanwhile, writing mistakes that they might do are grammar, sentence structure, and word translation.

**Student 4**

In their opinion, things that need to be considered in English writing are structure and organization, the topic of each paragraph, and grammar. Meanwhile, writing mistakes that they might do are misspelling and a habit of shortening words such as writing "becs" instead of "because".

**Student 5**

In their opinion, things that need to be considered in English writing are how to make the writing structured, avoiding complicated vocabularies and repetitive words, and instead choosing familiar words that are used in daily basis. Meanwhile, writing mistakes that they might do are misspelling and complicated vocabularies resulting in ineffectiveness.

**Student 6**

In their opinion, things that need to be considered in English writing are grammar, sentence building, and choosing familiar vocabularies. Meanwhile, writing mistakes that they might do are sentence building and grammar.

**Student 7**

In their opinion, things that need to be considered in English writing are choosing interesting topic/theme and grammar. Meanwhile, writing mistake that they might do is grammar.

**Student 8**

In their opinion, things that need to be considered in English writing are sentence building, grammar, and choosing familiar vocabularies. Meanwhile, writing mistakes that they might do are choosing incorrect words and misspelling.

**Student 9**

In their opinion, things that need to be considered in English writing are word choosing and sentence building. Meanwhile, writing mistake that they might do is about word choosing.

**Student 10**

In their opinion, things that need to be considered in English writing are the suitability of the title and content of the text, write according to facts, and word choosing. Meanwhile, writing mistake that they might do is grammar.

An interview to find out students' writing problems were held after the writings were complete. It was found that many of them have similar learning habits. The majority of the students participated in this research learnt English since elementary school, but they began to be interested in English lesson since middle school, especially English writing. Some of them are self-study, while others learnt to write by the help of either their family, friends, or their teachers at school. All of them learnt English writing through online platforms such as YouTube and educational blogs, in which they claimed to be having an easier access. After that, they were asked about things to be considered in English writing and also writing problems they might encounter, and many of them mentioned grammatical and vocabulary issues including misspelling as well as structure and organization. Meanwhile, the rest mentioned conformity to the topic, suitability of both title and text, up to date topic selection, factual writing, and translation issue. All participants sought out references before writing and yet the majority of them are unconfident about their writing ability.

## **Discussion**

To answer the first research question, the result of the students' writings is used. There are 4 students who produced texts with excellent unity and coherence. The first one is student 6 who brought up a topic about general identification of culture. Next, student 10 who reported on how culture changes in spite of having few grammatical errors. Then, student 7 with their topic of batik culture albeit their mistake in not separating the ideas clearly. Last, student 9 with their topic of strategies to maintain local culture in globalization era. All of them were able to write their texts with balanced unity and coherence, which means that every paragraph united to one main idea and the sentences are in logical order and understandable.

The other students who either lack in unity or coherence could not balance the two elements well. There are 5 students who produced good texts and 1 student who produced fair text. For example, student 8 with good score who wrote some sentences not in logical order did not properly arrange their sentences. It makes the idea of the paragraph unclear and thus the coherence is lost. Another example is from student 3 with good score who experienced the same issue as student 8. This is a minor problem that does not get enough attention in which could lead to a bad habit. There are separate short paragraphs with the same idea that could be merged into one paragraph yet it is not executed, hence the idea is incoherent and become unclear prior to the text. This lack of understanding may be affected by the students' learning habit. Students who are self-study may not find the correct resources of writing elements. They also may lack in understanding what they have learned compared to those who are assisted by teachers. In summary, the students' writings showed a good quality result despite minor mistakes they produced, so their performance in using unity and coherence in text writing could be considered good.

The findings on Munawarah's (2019) study showed a similar result to these findings. In Munawarah's report, she stated that the majority of EFL students of IAIN Palangka Raya wrote paragraph with incomplete unity and coherence. From 10 students participated in her research, the writings showed either not unified or not coherent, the paragraph is not completely built, not having a developed and or irrelevant idea, and other aspects such as errors in grammar, spelling, word choice, etc. According to her conclusion, the unity in paragraph writing of EFL university students participated in her study is less and the coherence is considered good. Compared to EFL secondary school students participated in this study, the majority of the students mastered the use of both unity and coherence in their text even though there are only 4

students out of 10 students who scored excellent according to the scoring rubric. However, there are similar problems found in their writings, such as paragraph with incomplete unity or coherence as well as grammatical and word choice mistakes.

To answer the second research question, a summary of the interview results can be drawn about students' problems in writing. First of all, they learnt English writing since middle school with either the help of others or self-study. Even so, they have evident resources for their learning. As for learning difficulties, some of them mentioned grammatical, vocabulary issues, structure and organization. Some students are aware of the difficulty of what to write and how to write, yet nobody mentioned the term unity and coherence. Most of them utilized vocabularies that are used in daily conversation, while the minority used academic language. Some of them also have problems in translating their idea from Bahasa Indonesia into English which connects to incorrect grammar application. These intricacies could be seen in some of the students' works. For example, translation problem may be the cause of some mistakes in their culture texts. There are sentences with simple idea yet written in a complicated way. Often times, mistranslation leads to misunderstanding. If students were too focused to write a text with perfect grammar, they would overlook the meaning behind the sentence itself. It then relates to the misuse of vocabulary. Students who feel lack in vocabulary variation may find writing as a very difficult task. Furthermore, most of the students claimed themselves to be willing to learn English writing in depth supported by various reasons.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, this research is conducted to study Indonesian secondary school students' performance in using unity and coherence in paragraph writing as well as writing problems that they might encounter during the process. Ten secondary school students with the same mother tongue who have the best English score among all students in the targeted high school were chosen as the subject of this study. Whereas the author believes that the number of subjects participated in this study shows the best students in the targeted high school who are able to produce English texts with unity and coherence. Then, they were given a submission link for their writings and interviewed the next day to find out their writing difficulties.

The result of this study showed that; first, students from targeted high school were able to write texts with good unity and coherence despite of minor mistakes they produced. This result is similar to a previous study by Munawarah (2019). She studied the unity and coherence

in paragraph writing of EFL university students and reported that the writings have less unity but good coherence. Second, some of the students mentioned grammatical, vocabulary issues, structure and organization as the issues they often face during writing.

Furthermore, the limitation of this study is the grade of students who participated. This research was intended to employ 10th to 12th graders, but later the author found out that 12th grade students were unable to participate due to final exam preparation. Prior to this reason, the students who participated were 10th and 11th graders only. Meanwhile, the product of the students showed better quality than anticipated. Even though the vocabulary utilized in the writings were mostly that are used in daily conversation, they were able to build good texts with unity and coherence. It was expected that the students would utilize academic language in their texts for the majority of them, but this did not lower the quality of their products. These preclusions are unexpected and show a good sign of well-aware students.

### **Suggestion**

This study is expected to be able to contribute in the production of lesson plans of teaching unity and coherence in paragraph writing for teachers and other educators, as well as to give insight for students in the preparation of learning how to write a good and coherent paragraph. The use of paragraph unity and coherence of other education stages students could be conducted for future research.

### **REFERENCES**

Anggraini, E. P. (2019). Students' strategies in reaching unity and coherence in their essay writing (a content analysis on the students' essay at the fourth semester students of TBIA IAIN Bengkulu in academic year 2017/2018) (Unpublished thesis). State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN) Bengkulu.

Bereiter, C., & Scardamalia, M. (2013). *The psychology of written composition*. Routledge.

Fajri, N. (2016). Assessing unity, coherence and word usage in students' writing. *English Education Journal (EEJ)*, 7(1), 102–116.

Flower, L., & Hayes, J. R. (1981). A cognitive process theory of writing. *Source: College Composition and Communication*, 32(4).

Gee, J. P. (2001). Reading as situated language: a sociocognitive perspective. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 44, 714–725.

Gusman, Yelfiza, & Sariasih. (2013). An analysis of unity and coherence of students writing in composing paragraph (a study at second semester year of English department students of STIKIP PGRI West Sumatra in 2012/2013). *Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris*, 2(2). <http://ejournals1.stikipgris>

Keller, S. D., Fleckenstein, J., Krüger, M., Köller, O., & Rupp, A. A. (2020). English writing skills of students in upper secondary education: Results from an empirical study in Switzerland and Germany. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 48, 100700. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2019.100700>

Munawarah. (2019). An analysis on unity and coherence in paragraph writing at EFL students of IAIN Palangka Raya (Unpublished thesis). State Islamic Institute of Palangka Raya.

Oshima, A., & Hogue, A. (1999). *Introduction to Academic Writing Third Edition*. Logman pearson education.

Poudel, A. P. (2010). *Academic writing: Coherence and Cohesion in Paragraph*. January, 1–10.

Qin, W., & Uccelli, P. (2016). Same language, different functions: A cross-genre analysis of Chinese EFL learners' writing performance. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 33, 3–17. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2016.06.001>

Vögelin, C., Jansen, T., Keller, S. D., Machts, N., & Möller, J. (2019). The influence of lexical features on teacher judgements of ESL argumentative essays. *Assessing Writing*, 39, 50–63. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.asw.2018.12.003>

Zhang, Y. (2010). The impact of ESL writers' prior writing experience on their writing in college. [http://www.ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/Resources/Books/CollegeLeve%0A12/YufengZhang\\_final.pdf](http://www.ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/Resources/Books/CollegeLeve%0A12/YufengZhang_final.pdf)