THE ABILITY OF FRESHMEN IN DEVELOPING DESCRIPTIVE PARAGRAPH

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Abstract: This study concerns on students' ability in developing a descriptive paragraph based on three paragraph components and characteristics of good paragraph, but it is not based on the grammatical error. It focuses on descriptive paragraph because it is supposed as one type of paragraph that will be use more by students both during their courses and their works. The populations of this study are students first semester of English department in STAIN Tulungagung. There are 31 students (20%) as samples selected randomly, and they are taken from 152 students who divided into 5 classes. They are assigned to develop descriptive paragraph in the end of the semester as their final project. The result of this study shows that generally students' ability in developing descriptive paragraphs are good, it is shown from their average score (72.14). Moreover, there are 22 or 71% students who get 75 up to 84, means that most of their ability in developing good descriptive paragraphs are very good.

Keywords: students' writing ability, descriptive paragraph

One of an English skill must be mastered by English department students; especially in STAIN Tulungagung is writing. This importance related to their need to full fill their assignments during the course, or even to write their thesis when the program ends. Moreover, writing will help much to students' life, for examples: preparing some documents, such as memos, bussiness letter and informal reports. It also happens on educational field, most of students communicate in written form, for examples: in answering questions, making essay, papers, composition, and reports.

The fact shows that writing is important, but it is also not always easy to everyone. It is believed as the most difficult skill among the other skills (reading, listening and speaking). The limitation of using gesture becomes one of barriers to make the reader understand about the idea in the text. So, the using of a correct structure, diction, sentence organisation, and also punctuation is including writers' responsibility to convey ideas to readers. Haffernan and Lincon (1982:Vi) stated that the writer have to convey the ideas through the words and punctuation alone. Therefore the writer has to organize words and sentences in such ways that readers are able to understand the ideas very clearly without asking questions.

Although writing is hard to learn, but students need to learn how to organise their compositions and essays. Mastering a paragraph is important for them before they come to compositions and essays. Haffernan and Lincon (1982:Vi) say that effective essays are made from paragraphs. In addition, If we can make a good paragraph, we are on the half way to make a good composition.

There are four types of paragraph, descriptive, narrative, expository, and argumentation. However, mastering a descriptive paragraph is more important and usefull for students than other types of paragraph, because it is used in many kinds of writing forms such us: history books, guide books, magazines, scientific articles, poems, novels, and short stories. Based on this reasons, this study is limited in developing descriptive paragraph only, not other types of paragraph. It also not focus on the grammatical errors, but on the element of paragraph (a topis sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence) and the characteristics of a good paragraph (unity, coherence, capitalisation and punctuation).

AN OVERVIEW OF A PARAGRAPH

A paragraph is a group of sentences that develop one main idea. Certainly, a paragraph consists of a single main idea. Moreover, the main idea is supported by sentences that give explanations, examples, reasons, and arguments. All the supporting sentences are related to the main idea, wether it is directly or not. According to Farbman (1994:353) a paragraph is a squence of sentences in which each sentence contributes toward the expression of a single idea. Therefore, it is suggested that a good paragraph has one main idea, and it is supported by related sentences.

Paragraphing is not only useful for the readers, but also for the writer. It gives a chance to the writer to tell the readers that one idea is more important than the others. Crimmon (1992:194) maintains that a writer uses paragraph to organize and to present ideas. It also allows the writer to control emphasis how much important to lend to an idea) and rythm (how to create various pattern for presenting ideas).

Developing a Descriptive Paragraph.

A descriptive paragraph helps the readers to visualize a scenne or person, or to understand a sensation or an emotion. According to Wishon & Burks (1990:128) a paragraph description helps a readers, through his/her imagination, (1) to visualize a place, an animate, or a scene, and (2) to understand a sensation or an emotion. There are two kinds of object that usually describe using descriptive paragraph. They are places or things and person. Below is the discussion.

Descriptive paragraph may tells the readers about place as clear as possible like color, condition, and decoration of place, so that they can imagine what the place look like. Wishon & Burks (1990:128) state that the description helps a reader, through his/her imagination, (1) to visualize a place, an animate, or a scene, (2) to understand a sensation or an emotion.

Other subject usually describes in descriptive paragraph is person. By describing person, writer can explore about the phisycal characteristics, such as

mouth, nose, skin, hair, and others. In addition, other details like, clothes, manner of walking, and the way of thinking of that person are also suggested to describe. Smalley and Reutten (1992:77) state that in a descriptive paragraph you can describe physical appearance, the behavior, or both of them.

The Elements of Paragraph

A paragraph is made up of three kinds of sentences that develop the writer's idea, opinion, or feeling about the subject. According to Oshima and Hogue (2000: 3) a paragraph has three major structural parts. They are a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence. Therefore, if the paragraph has those three elements of paragraph, means that the paragraph is a good paragraph.

The first element of a paragraph is a topic sentence. Each paragraph consists of one main idea which is stated in a topic sentence. It usually states in the first sentence of the paragraph, but it also possible states in the midle and in the end of the paragraph. The topic sentence is not too general and not too specific, because if it is too general, the writer cannot tell exactly that the paragraph are going to discuss, otherwise if it is too specific, it will less of the completness of the idea. According Oshima and Hogue (2000:6) convey that the topic sentence is a helpful guide both to the writer and to the readers. The writer can see what information to include and what information to exclude.

Basically the topic sentence must states in a complete sentence, means it contains of a subject, and a predicate or even a complement. Moreover, a topic sentence consist of two parts, a topic, and a controlling idea. The topic usually states as a subject, and the controlling idea is the statement gives a limitation of writer's idea will develop in a paragraph. According to Smalley and Reutten (1992:7) a good topic sentence states an idea or an attitude about a topic well. This idea or an attitude about the topic is called the controlling idea.

The second part of paragraph is supporting sentences, means the sentences that develop a topic sentence. They serve some explanations, example, argumentations, facts, reasons, and also question and answer. According to Oshima and Hogue (2000:3) the supporting sentences develop the topic sentence by given specific details about the topic. Therefore, to make a good paragraph understandable for readers, the writer should give some explanation in detail through supporting sentences. To formulate supporting sentences, it usually uses the questions and answers form. It likes the bridge between a topic sentence and supporting sentences. Moreover, it helps the writer to develop a paragraph by answering that question.

After organised all supporting sentences, we may end the paragraph using a concluding sentence. A concluding sentence becomes a summary of the whole paragraph that stated in the last sentence of a pargarph. Smalley and Reutten (1992:16) say that the sentence which summarises the main idea in the paragraph is called the concluding sentence. Therefore, a concluding sentence usually has the same idea with the topic sentence. To formulate a concluding sentence, we can write a sentence that summarise the content of the whole paragarph, beside rephrase the topic sentence by different words. Moreover, the use of transitional signal in the concluding sentence is needed not only to tell the

reader that the paragraph was completed but also to give summary of the paragraph. The transitional signals usually used are therefore, in summary, finally, in short, and so on. According to Oshima and Hogue (2000:12) when you write a concluding sentence you can state the topic sentence in different words and summarise all of the main point of the paragraph. In addition to that method, the writer ca use the transitional signal in the beginning of a concluding sentence.

The Characteristics of a Good Paragraph

In spite of those three paragraph elements above, a paragraph must unity, coherence, and good in punctuation and capitalisation as characteristics of a good paragraph. Oshima and Hogue (2000:3) stated that a well written paragraph consist of five elements: a topic sentence, supporting sentences, a concluding sentences, and unity and coherence. Similar to the statement above, Karim and Rahmadie (1997:22-40) suggested that the characteristics of a good paragraph are unity, coherence, capitalisation and punctuation.

Unity means oneness and oneness that a paragraph has derived from its development of one single idea. To mantain the paragraph's unity, supporting sentences must directly explain/support the controlling idea in a topic sentence. If the sentences have relating, interesting and accurate information about a topic but do not directly support the controlling idea are judged to be irrelevant sentences. And they must be excluded and don't write such sentence. It is because the sentences can ruin the focus of discussion provides by paragraph. Tyner (1987:3) states that a paragraph has unity when all of its sentences are related to the main point. Therefore, it is important to the writer to keep a paragraph in unified form, in order to make it focuses in one topic.

The logical arrangement of ideas and sentences in a paragraph is called coherence. Coherence attaches ideas within a paragraph together; therefore, the sentences in a paragraph flow smoothly and the paragraph sounds more natural. It is important because it helps reader to get the idea of a paragraph easily. The reader can understand the writers' ideas or though and through a clear relationship among sentences within paragraph. Therefore, to organize a coherence paragraph is not easy, but some additional methods are helpful and necessary for the writer. Firstly is using transitional signals (furthermore, beside, conversely, but, and, and the like), and secondly is arranging sentences in logical order (using chronological order and order of importance).

Good paragraphs should also have proper punctuation and capitalization. According to Kariem and Rachmadie (1997:33) punctuation and capitalization are important to make each sentence clear. They also have some rules as stated below:

- 1. End-of-sentence punctuation rules
 - a. A period (full stop) in the end of a sentence
 - b. A question mark (?) in the end of a question
 - c. An exclamation mark (!) in the end of a sentence to show strong feeling
- 2. Comma rules

Comma is used within a sentence in the following ways::

- a. To separate words, phrases, or clauses in a series (a group of three or more)
- b. To separate the part of dates and address, except ZIP codes
- c. After the time expression
- d. Before the coordinating conjunction in a compound sentence.

In addition of punctuation, there are also many rules using capital letters, such as the first word of sentence, pronoun I, all proper nouns, names of deities, names of people and their titles, specific places, days, months, geographic areas, building, bridge, specific organization, composition, stories, books, and magazines.

METHOD

This study is descriptive study, because it measures what already exist at that time of study and gives no treatment either, means it analyzes students' descriptive paragraph based on the characteristics of a good paragraph.

The students of first semester at English department (TBI) of Tulungagung Islamic Collage take as the population in this study, because they consider have learned about descriptive paragraph and knew well about unity, coherence, punctuation and capitalization, and how to formulate topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence. There were 152 students that divided into five classes, TBI A consisted of 27 students, TBI B consisted of 27 students, TBI C consisted of 33 students, TBI D consisted of 32 students, TBI E consisted of 33 Students and they are taken 20% as samples of this study. It means that there are 31 students as the samples that are taken using systematic random sampling.

The result of final project in paragraph writing practice class is considered to be an instrument in this study which is conducted in the end of their first semester. Students are assigned to develop four types of paragraph, and descriptive paragraph has been chosen as the instrument to get the data needed. It is supposed that they knew all types of paragraphs well, and they can differentiate each type of paragraph.

The completeness of three structural parts of a paragraph and characteristics of a good paragraph become the basic of data analysis that was following some steps:

- Checking the completeness of three structural parts of a paragraph and the completeness of the characteristics of a good paragraph by reading each paragraph carefully.
- 2. Identifying the three structural part of a good paragraph and the characteristics of a good paragraph by underlining them.
- 3. Scoring the completeness and the characteristics of a good paragraph using scoring scale. The analytical method is used in composing scoring scale by considering all characteristics of a good paragraph including a topic sentence, supporting sentences, a concluding sentences, unity, coherency, punctuation and capitalization. Below are the scoring scale:

Scoring Scale Based on The Component of A Good Paragraph Scoring Scale of The Topic Sentence

- 1. There is no a topic sentence in a paragraph
- 2. There is a topic sentence, but it is not stated in a complete sentence. It is stated in a phrase. So, it has neither a topic nor a controlling idea.
- 3. There is a topic sentence in a paragraph with a topic and a controlling idea, but it is too general or too specific.
- 4. There is a topic sentence in a paragraph. it is stated in a complete sentence and has a topic and controlling idea. It also not too specific and not too general.

Scoring Scale of Supporting Sentences

- 1. All supporting sentences did not support a topic sentence
- 2. There is a major supporting sentences related to a topic sentence but there are no minor—supporting sentences or they not related to major supporting sentences.
- 3. There are one or two major supporting sentences and minor sentences, but the minor supporting sentences did not related to major supporting sentence.
- 4. There is one or more major supporting sentences and minor supporting sentences, and they are related each other.

Scoring Scale for Concluding Sentence

- 1. There is no a concluding sentence in paragraph
- 2. There is a concluding sentence, but it does not summaries the whole content of a paragraph
- 3. There is a concluding sentence and it summarizes the whole paragraph, but it starts with inappropriate transitional signals.
- 4. There is a concluding sentence and it summarize the whole paragraph, and it starts with appropriate transitional signals

Scoring Scale Based on The Characteristics of A Good Paragraph Scoring scale based on unity

- 1. The paragraph has no main idea. It has two or more topics, which are irrelevant
- 2. The paragraph has one main idea, but all supporting sentences not related to the main idea
- 3. The paragraph has one main idea, and some supporting sentences not related to the main idea
- 4. The paragraph has one main idea, and all supporting sentences related to main idea

Scoring Scale Based on Coherency

- 1. The paragraph has no connection between one supporting sentences to others. The sentences are not logically order, there is no transitional signal.
- 2. The paragraph has little connection between one supporting sentences to other supporting sentences. The sentences are not logically ordered, and there are some inappropriate transitional signals.

- The paragraph has some connection between one supporting sentences to others. Most transitional signals are employed appropriately.
- The paragraph ahs strong connection between one supporting sentence to other, and they in logical order. All transitional signals are employed appropriately.

Scoring Scale Based on Punctuation And Capitalization

- The paragraph has no correct punctuation and capitalization at all.
- The paragraph has little correct punctuation and capitalization. There are three or more incorrect capitalization and punctuation.
- 3. The paragraph has some correct punctuation and capitalization. There are one or two inappropriate capitalization and punctuation
- 4. The paragraph has correct and appropriate punctuation and capitalization.
- 4. Summing all the students' scores in each paragraph element into raw scores
- Computing the grade of all students for each paragraph elements, in order to know the ability of all students in developing each element and characteristics of a good descriptive paragraph.

Grade
$$1 = \frac{\sum x_1}{\sum x_0} \times 100$$

Grade
$$2 = \frac{\sum x_2}{\sum x_0} \times 100$$

Grade
$$3 = \frac{\Sigma x3}{\Sigma x0} \times 100$$

Grade
$$4 = \frac{\sum x_4}{\sum x_0} \times 100$$

Grade
$$5 = \frac{\sum x_5}{\sum x_0} \times 100$$

Grade
$$6 = \frac{\sum x_6}{\sum x_0} \times 100$$

- Summing all the elements of good paragraph score for each students
- Computing the grade of each student's paragraph to know every student's ability in developing a good descriptive paragraph. Grade of each student's paragraph = $\frac{\sum X}{\sum X0}$ x 100

 $\sum X$: the sum of each element of each student paragraph

 $\sum X0$: the sum of maximum score of each paragraph element 8. Computing the mean of the grade from all the students' paragraph to identify the ability of all students in developing a good descriptive paragraph.

Mean : The sum of all grade of each students
The number of students

9. The last step is classifying students' ability based on buku Pedoman Penyelenggaraan Penddidikan tahun akademik 20012/2013 (2012:146). It classifies students' ability on the table below:

Students' score	Grade	Meaning
85-100	A	Excellent
75-84	B+	Very good
70-74	В	Good
65-69	C+	Good enough
60-64	\mathbf{C}	Fair
55-59	D	Fair enough
< 50	E	Fail
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FINDINGS

After collecting and analyzing students' descriptive paragraph, the next step is describing the finding of the study that is shown on the table below:

No.	Paragraph components	Score							
		4	3	2	1				
1.	Topic sentence	20 (64%)	5 (16%)	3 (9%)	3 (9%)				
2.	Supporting sentences	13 (41%)	12 (38%)	6 (11%)	0 (0%)				
3.	Concluding sentence	11 (35%)	8 (25%)	7 (22%)	5 (16%)				
4.	Unity	12(38%)	11(35%)	8 (25%)	0 (0%)				
5.	Coherence	0 (0%)	13 (41%)	16 (51%)	2 (6%)				
6.	Punctuation and capitalization	15 (48%)	15 (48%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)				

The table above draws the first finding is the data of topic sentence made by students in their descriptive paragraphs. There are 20 students or 64% who write good topic sentences, means that their topic sentences stated in a complete sentence, and it is not too general or too specific. Moreover, 5 students or 16% of them develop too general or too specific topic sentences, 3 students or 9% develop topic sentence in a phrase or has no controlling idea or even has incomplete

controlling idea, and 3 students or 9% develop descriptive paragraph without a topic sentence.

In term of supporting sentences, there are 13 students or 41% who are able to develop good supporting sentences, that their supporting sentences consist of major supporting sentences and minor supporting sentences and all of them are related each others. Then, 12 or 38% of students write major supporting sentences, but some minor supporting sentences are not related, and 6 students or 11% who write a major supporting sentences related to a topic sentence but there are no minor supporting sentences or they not related to major supporting sentences.

In addition of unity, 12 or 38% students develop descriptive paragraph in oneness, means that their paragraph has one main idea, and all supporting sentences related to the main idea. Then, 11 or 35% of their descriptive paragraph has one main idea, but some supporting sentences not related to the main idea, 8 or 25% their paragraph has one main idea but most of supporting sentences not related to the main idea, but there was no students who write descriptive paragraph that has no main idea or has two or more topics, which are irrelevant each other.

In contrast, no students write a descriptive paragraph in well coherence, 13 students or 41% who write descriptive paragraphs that have some connections between one supporting sentences to others. 16 students or 51% their paragraph has little connection between one supporting sentences to other supporting sentences. The sentences are not logically ordered, and there are some inappropriate transitional signals. Moreover, 2 students or 6% of their paragraphs have no connection between one supporting sentences to others, the sentences are not logically order, and there is no transitional signal.

In term of punctuation and capitalization, no one of their paragraph have any correct punctuation and capitalizations at all. However, 1 or 3% of their paragraphs have three or more incorrect punctuations and capitalizations, 15 or 48% of their paragraph have one or two inappropriate punctuations and capitalizations, and 15or 48% of students punctuation and capitalizations correctly.

All the expl	lanation a	bove can b	oe drawn	in the	fol	lowing	tab	le:
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The the explanation above can be trawn in the following table.											
No.	X	X	X1	X2	X3	X4	X5	X6	\sum ×	\mathbf{Score}	Grade
1.	4	24	2	4	1	4	2	4	20	83.3	B+
2.	4	24	4	3	2	3	3	3	18	75.0	B+
3.	4	24	4	3	4	3	3	3	20	83.3	B+
4.	4	24	4	2	3	4	3	3	19	79.2	B+
5 .	4	24	4	3	4	3	2	4	20	83.3	B+
6.	4	24	4	3	4	3	3	2	19	79.2	B+
7.	4	24	4	3	3	3	2	3	18	75.0	B+
8.	4	24	3	4	4	4	2	4	21	87.5	B+
9.	4	24	1	2	2	4	1	3	13	54.1	D
10.	4	24	4	3	3	4	2	4	20	83.3	B+
11.	4	24	4	3	3	3	2	3	18	75.0	B+
12.	4	24	4	4	4	3	2	3	20	83.3	B+
13.	4	24	1	2	4	2	2	3	14	58.3	D
14.	4	24	1	4	1	4	3	3	16	66.6	C+

15.	4	24	4	2	4	2	2	4	18	75.0	B+
16.	4	24	4	4	1	4	3	4	20	83.3	B+
17.	4	24	4	3	4	3	2	3	19	79.2	B+
18.	4	24	4	3	3	4	2	4	20	83.3	B+
19.	4	24	4	4	1	4	3	3	19	79.2	B+
20.	4	24	4	2	3	2	2	4	17	70.8	В
21.	4	24	2	3	2	3	2	4	16	66.6	C+
22.	4	24	2	2	1	2	2	3	12	50.0	\mathbf{E}
23.	4	24	4	4	4	4	3	4	23	95.8	A
24.	4	24	4	4	2	2	2	3	17	70.8	B+
25.	4	24	4	4	4	4	3	4	23	95.8	A
26.	4	24	4	3	4	4	2	4	20	83.3	B+
27.	4	24	3	4	2	2	3	4	18	75.0	B+
28.	4	24	3	3	3	2	3	3	17	70.8	В
29.	4	24	3	4	3	2	3	4	19	79.2	B+
30.	4	24	3	4	2	3	3	3	18	75.0	B+
31.	4	24	4	4	2	3	2	4	19	79.2	B+
\sum	124	-	108	100	85	97	74	107	-	2,337.9	
Grad	de		87.0	80.6	68.5	78.2	59.6	86.2	-	72.14	-

The table above shows that students' score in developing topic sentences is 87.0, in term of supporting sentences is 80.6, concluding sentence is 68.5, unity is 78.2, coherence is 59.6, and punctuation and capitalization is 86.2. Those scores indicate that:

- a. Students' ability in developing topic sentences is excellence.
- b. Students' ability in developing supporting sentences is very good.
- c. Students' ability in developing concluding sentence is fair.
- d. Students' ability in developing unity descriptive paragraph is good.
- e. Students' ability in term of coherency is poor.
- f. Students' ability in using punctuation and capitalization is excellence.

This table also provides data about each student's ability in developing a good descriptive paragraph. Two of students or 6% who get grade A, B, C+, and D, but most of them (22 or 71% of students) get grade B+. In contrast, one student gets grade E, but no students get grade C. This result shows that generally their abilities in developing descriptive paragraphs are **very good**.

DISCUSSIONS

The discussion section analyzes several descriptive paragraphs made by students as the examples. They are retypes without any diminishing and supplementing as stated below.

My father is my motivation. Because my father always give me motivation for study by hard. Every day, he always work by hard too. My father's characteristics are: he is a handsome man, he is a police man, he is a responsible man. He is a kind man. And he has physical appearances. He has 1.8 metters tall, he has pointed nose, he have brown skin, he has short hair, he is not fat, but he weight around 65 kilos. And my father hobby is he like play guitar. I was studied by him a long day. So, I am very happy because I have a perfect father.

The topic sentence in this paragraph supposes as a good topic sentence, it has a topic and a controlling idea.

<u>My father</u> is <u>my motivation</u>

(Topic) (controlling idea)

However, some supporting sentences underlined above are not in well coherency and unity. They not related to the topic sentence. The topic sentence discusses about how is the father can motivate writer, but the supporting sentences discuss about fathers' physical characteristics, except the first and the second sentences that correlated to topic sentence.

I have a cat, I usually call it "pretty". It is so funny. It's age is around five month. It's soft and attack feather have white with mixed blac and red colour. It is so matching. Pretty's long tail always moved when it walk. I give's it meal every morning, afternoon, and evening. Usually, I give's it salted fish with mixed rice. It eat with very greedy. My neighbor also have a cat. It name is "sweety". Pretty and swety is the best friend. Almost everyday, they always playing together. Pretty is a smart cat. It is very cleaver to catch the mous. But, pretty does not like to eat it. Pretty like salted fish my product.

This paragraph is not has a good topic sentence, because it has no controlling idea. it is suggested as "my cat (topic) is a funny cat (controlling idea)", based on this topic sentence the writer is allowed to discuss about the reasons why the cat is classified as a funny cat in the supporting sentences. It is also found that some supporting sentences underlined are unrelated to the topic sentence; means that the writer tells about another cat belongs to her neighbor namely sweety, whereas the topic sentence discuss about funny cat. The concluding sentence of this paragraph also not represents as a good concluding sentence. It is not related to topic sentence and not as a restatement of the topic sentence.

I have a best friend. He have a big body, his weigh about 74kg. **he** have a black hair, brown skin. **he** have sharp nose. I like him when he smile and laughing. Because it is makes him look so cute. His hobby is eating, singing, and makes all the people around him is laughing, include me. **i** am always happy if I beside him. I very confert if beside him, because he can keep me well.

The incorrect use of capitalization are found in the paragraph above, the worlds in bold typing are considered as the incorrect use of capitalizations. The first letter of pronoun" he" and "I" must be capitalized, because they are used after full stop.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion above, it can be stated that generally the ability of students first semester of English department STAIN Tulungagung in developing descriptive paragraph is very good. It is proved by students' mean score is 72.14 and the grades of most students (22 or 71% of students) are B+represented from their score 75 up to 84. They are also good in developing a topic sentence, supporting sentence, and using punctuations and capitalizations. In contrast, they need more practice to organize sentences in well coherency.

This study gives some suggestions both to students and lecturer. It will be good for students to understand theories of descriptive paragraph and its

characteristics, and then apply them when they develop it. More practice is better for students. Moreover, it is suggested to the lecturer to help students in organizing a coherence paragraph by emphasizing the explanation on it. Pair assessment is also possible to apply to check their work in order to give some feedback for each student.

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