

# Pragmatic as Learning Material in Identifying Authors Main Idea

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**Abstract**—Identifying main idea is kinds of cognitive knowledge in reading which is necessary in comprehending a text. However, students still got difficulties in comprehending and translating authors' thought. In addition, the material provided has not fully helped them to easily identify the principal thoughts of the author. Due to this reason, pragmatic knowledge is needed to overcome students' difficulties. This study aims at constructing learning material in identifying authors' main idea in the text. Descriptive qualitative approach was employed. The research finding shows that pragmatic knowledge especially reference can be constructed as learning material which assists students in finding author's main idea in a text.

**Keywords**—learning material; main idea; pragmatic

## I. INTRODUCTION

In essence, Indonesian language learning organized by schools prepares learners to have a number of language competencies. These competencies are in the form of passive-receptive language skills such as listening and reading and productive skills such as speaking and writing. It is intended that learners are able to communicate in real life and in modern life that requires students to interpret and interact skillfully.

Concrete efforts in realizing these competencies are currently packaged in the form of communication known as text or previously more popular in terms of discourse. According to Van Dijk the term text is same as discourse namely the unity of several sentences which is closely bounded [1]. Based on this, it can be ascertained that the text is equated with discourse or conversely the discourse is equated with the text namely the unity of closely intertwined sentences. It is also revealed by Arifin et al that discourse or text is the most complete (intact) language unit that is realized in the form of a complete essay with a complete mandate and with continuous high coherence and cohesion, which is capable of having a real beginning and end, delivered orally or in writing [2]. It implies to us that the text or discourse is considered as a unit of language that is intact, coherent and cohesion, and it contains the complete idea or message of the speaker or writer. So, the text can be seen as oral or written communication.

At present, the ability to interpret texts in learning is emphasized since the text has become the basis for individuals and teachers in the implementation of learning and achieving a

number of emphasized learning goals. In every learning subject in the 2013 curriculum, the text is a figure for the knowledge of students and teachers. Students are expected to be able to understand and complete a number of tasks from the text they read. These activities are reflected in systematic learning steps, which begin with observing, asking, trying, associating, and communicating [3].

It means that communicating activities require a number of knowledge that can support the success of interpretations and interactions between learners and writers through the text. If that knowledge is not possessed, especially when interacting in written communication, there will be uncertainty and confusion when interpreting the author's ideas. It is proven when the learner will interpret the text, especially the main idea of the author in the text that is read.

Basically, interpreting the author's main ideas is in line with the activities of identifying topic sentences due to the fact that the topic sentence is the main sentence that becomes the key sentence around it and is the embodiment of the writer's main idea. This sentence must be known even mastered by the learner to know clearly the important things conveyed by the author.

Generally, text or paragraph contains the mind of the author, both the topic and supporting detail. Topic is a central idea, the main idea, or also known as the basis of the author composing his writing. Meanwhile, supporting detail are thoughts that try to express as clearly as possible the concept of the main idea of the writer. So, it can be ascertained both the mind of the author, namely the topic and supporting details which express the mind of the author.

In practice, both thoughts are manifested in the topic sentence and supporting sentence. The topic sentence is a sentence arranged in an effort to concretize the main idea of the writer. Whereas, supporting sentences are sentences arranged in order to explain the main thoughts of the writer contained in the main sentence. In the laying, the two sentences take turns. One time the topic sentence is at the beginning of the sentence then followed by the supporting sentence placed at the end of the sentence. At other times in the same text can only be the topic sentence placed at the end of the sentence beginning with the supporting sentence as the opening of the writing. As Akhadiah et al, stated that there are two ways the writer / writer

puts his idea, which is at the beginning or at the end of the sentence. The expert statement can be seen in the following quote.

"In topic sentences, the author sometimes expresses generalizations that require decomposition and proof. This declaration and proof is expressed in long sentences or supporting sentences. The development of paragraphs in this form begins by presenting the main issues or main ideas, then followed by supporting ideas that function as modifier. The topic sentence containing the general statement is at the beginning (beginning) of the paragraph.

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There are also paragraphs that begin with generalizations (conclusion) and conclude with generalization. The first generalization is the topic sentence, while the second generalization (at the end of the paragraph) gives a summary or conclusion of the paragraph. This form of development is often used if the contents of the paragraph are complex, requiring repetition and affirmation.

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Paragraphs can also begin with special events or supporting ideas, then ends with generalization. In this form the topic sentence is at the end of the paragraph (inductively) [4].

However, knowing the two sentences does not mean the learner can easily mark them. Because, text is complex and connected to each other.

For this reason, besides interpreting the text intensively, the instructor should need to develop learning material that can bridge the learner in finding the main thoughts or main ideas of the writer. The material can be used as a sign in knowing the main thoughts and supporting thoughts. The material is termed by reference and the pragmatic context.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Reference terms by Sumarlam et al. said to be a particular lingual unit referring to another lingual unit (or a reference) that precedes or follows it [5]. So, reference is a unit of language that refers to other language expressions or units.

Furthermore, Kushartanti revealed, in pragmatic studies, reference is a way of referring something through the form of language used by a speaker or writer to convey something to a partner or reader [6]. In line with the statement above, the expert said that the reference as a way of referring is used by the writer or speaker in explaining something.

Linguistic expert, Nababan asserts that reference or reference is an expression used to identify (point at) something, process, event, action, or something individual (people, animals, etc.) [7]. So, references are used to identify an object or event. The object can be objects, people, animals, events, actions, and processes.

In its application, references or references can be classified as: place references, time references, individual references, action references, and event references.

*The place reference* is a reference that relates to the location or setting referred to by the author. In referring to it the author usually uses the word there, here, there. *The time reference* is related to the time referenced by the author. The author refers to using the word: *period, yesterday, now, tomorrow, the day after tomorrow, today, as usual, later, then, now*, and so on. All uses of the word time also consider when it was revealed. *Individual references* are references relating to the individual or someone. Commonly used words include: *me, me, he, he, he, you, you, yourself, us, us, them, and you*. For animals and objects often crawl with the word *he, this, and that*. *Action references* are references that are related to the behavior or things done by someone. We often refer to someone's work with words: *like this, so, like this, and like that*. *References to events or events* are references that refer to a phenomenon referred to by the author. The author can just recite an event or event with the title *of this thing, that thing, and that thing*.

The following are sample description of reference:

*"Cigarettes contain thousands of substances where 50% of them have been classified as substances that have adverse effects on human health. These materials include radioactive polonium-201, acetone (ingredients in paint), ammonia (toilet cleaners), naphthalene, ddt (pesticides), and other arsenic poisons. In addition, if burned, cigarettes emit hydrogen cyanide gas which is often used in gas chambers for the death penalty [8]."*

Reviewing the example above, it can be seen that the reference is in the first sentence of the third line '*that*' and the third sentence of the fifth line '*that*'. The word '*said*' refers to the sentence of *thousands of substances in which 50% have been classified as substances that have a negative effect on human health*. Then, the word '*that*' in a phrase *other than that* still refers to the sentence as referred to by the word '*it*'. So, with the use of the second sentence and the third sentence that refers to the first sentence, it can be ascertained that the main sentence which at the same time becomes the main thought of the writer lies in the first sentence. The second sentence and the third sentence explain the concept of *cigarettes containing thousands of substances in which 50% of them have been classified as substances that have adverse effects on human health*.

In addition, the role of context cannot be ruled out in interpreting text. Context is anything that encompasses content or argument. Without context, the reader will experience intimacy in interpreting the text. In fact, Cummings revealed that context plays an important role in the reconstruction of arguments [9]. Then, R. Firth in Lubis also said, in analyzing the language it is not enough with the meaning of the sentence merely (*ansich*) but the context must be determined in advance [10]. So, it can be underlined, to interpret the text properly requires context knowledge.

Hymes cited in Kartomihardjo in PELLBA 6 reveal various types of contexts, namely: participants, places and times, topics, channels, codes, message forms and their contents, events, and codes [11]. *The context of participants* is related to individuals who are involved in communicating activities (speakers, authors, readers). *The context of place and time* relates to space or background that is considered when

communicating. *The topic context* relates to matters discussed or relevant between the content of communication and the topic. *Channel context* is related to the media used to communicate, namely oral, written, telephone, and so on. *Context code* is related to the language used in communication. *The context of the message* is related to how to express something in another form. The form here can be through sermons, poetry, and drama. Different forms, the different packaging messages. *The context of events* is related to a phenomenon with special things that surround it. It could be that in language teaching activities, the teacher or lecturer inserts humorous texts so the message feels more powerful. *The context of the tone* is related to the attitude of the speaker or writer to the listener or reader. The tone in the conversation can be rude, cynical, serious, and so on.

Based on the above knowledge, both the concept and the types, the context needs to be understood first.

However, the concept of context in oral communication and written communication - especially the activities of interpreting texts - needs to be emphasized in order to obtain the boundaries of both. If we observe it, the whole context above emphasizes written communication, only one context that is considered to be applicable in interpreting text, namely the context of the topic. This means, sentences that are mutually united and interrelated are sure to discuss one topic. This topic may be observed carefully by taking into account the sentences around it. In fact, Untung Yuwono provided an explanation of the differences in oral context and writing context.

"The context of oral language includes the narrative situation, namely the participant's speech, place and time, topic of conversation, media events, and tone of conversation. Whereas, the context for the sentence (writing) is the sentence that was before or after [12]."

Separation of the concept of the context above, should be able to give a view to the reader that the context in the reading includes the language or sentence in the existing text. This can be explained through the following example sentence or paragraph.

*"There are several reasons why important entertaining methods are applied to teaching Indonesian. First, Indonesian is often underestimated by others so that it becomes an unattractive subject. Second, with the method of entertaining without being felt the students have learned independently and effectively. Third, a good teaching and learning process is a process that places students as a learning center. Fourth, entertainment methods are important for teaching Indonesian because of the catharsis process, a process of purification and refresher [13]."*

The example above provides us with a knowledge of how the context functions proposed by Yuwono. When it is analyzed in the context of the topic, it can be ascertained that the main mind or sentence topic of the author of the five sentences lies in the first sentence, namely *there are several reasons why important entertaining methods are applied to the teaching of Indonesian*. Due to the fact that the second sentence to the fifth sentence is to discuss, explain, or describe *the argument* (content of the topic sentence).

Not different from the concept of context presented by one expert, namely the following sentence or the previous sentence, the knowledge of the reader will provide the same analysis. If the author does not write *"There are several reasons why an entertaining method is important for teaching Indonesian"*, then the reader will feel confused about the topic presented. Something similar also appeared when he met the phrase *"After being shot 3 times he fell to earth"*, the reader will wonder about who was shot. After being equipped with *"Restu is not strong enough to hold it back"*, then the reader understands.

### III. RESEARCH METHODS

This research is a descriptive qualitative that use content analysis technique. The researcher described the results of the research in the form of words so that an in-depth analysis of an object appears. Moleong suggests that descriptive research emphasizes data in the form of words, images, and not numbers caused by the application of qualitative methods [14].

Based on this, it can be explained that the qualitative research method is descriptive analysis rather than statistical analysis. Data retrieval is done *purposively*, i.e. researchers determine data, analyze data, reduce data, and deduce data. The instrument in this study is the researcher himself. Because, researchers are active in interacting with data. This is as stated by Sugiyono [15].

"Qualitative research methods are studies based on the philosophy of positivism, used to examine natural conditions, (as opposed to experiments) where researchers are key instruments, sampling data sources done by purposive and snowball, data collection techniques with triangulation, data analysis is inductive / qualitative, and the results of qualitative research emphasize more meaning than generalization [15]."

In collecting the data, the researcher used documentation techniques or studies. The researcher tries to collect data by reading comprehensively the text in which contains the main thoughts and thoughts of the writer.

### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The pragmatic nature of science, especially references and context has been discussed above. The question is how to apply pragmatics, especially the application of references and contexts as teaching material in the text? Or, in other words, can the instructor develop teaching material by centering on the approach of the two theories in the classroom and how? Based on this, the application of reference material and context in the text or reading will be explained.

The above has been explained that references are words or words that are used instead of something, be it persona, place, time, event, and so on. Whereas, the context of reading is the previous sentence or the sentence that follows is discussed. References are often used by the author in order to clarify the main thoughts described through the main sentence. Meanwhile, the context is used as a matter that is referred to or as the topic of a discussion. So, it can be said and could be a reference also refers to the context.

Readings that are the work of the author must be made by paying attention to the topic as a binding. The author will first consider the reading topic in each paragraph before he writes all the ideas of his presentation. This is done by the author so that the reader can fully understand the meaning of the writing.

For this reason, the reader or learner must be able to look carefully by linking each sentence in one paragraph or linking one paragraph with the other. This can be done by ensuring substitute words or references and the context of the sentence.

In learning, the teacher or teacher can discuss the reference word or context by asking questions about the *number of sentences in a particular paragraph, things discussed by each sentence, the reference word used by the writer in each sentence, and referring to where the reference is?* So, the focus of learning activities identifies the author's main thoughts directed at 'reference' material.

The following will show how the application of references and contexts as learning teaching material.

"Eating dates when the fasting month is highly recommended. Not without reason, the article dates will provide benefits for the health of our bodies. Dates have a sweet taste and the texture is so soft. The sweet taste of one fruit is believed to be able to restore our energy lost after running fast for a full day. Not only that, eating a few dates will suppress our appetite, preventing us from overeating when breaking fast [16]."

Answering the concept of learning activities above, then: 1) the above paragraph consists of 5 sentences; 2) the first sentence talks about recommending dates, the second sentence discussing dates useful for body health, the third sentence explains that dates are sweet and the texture is soft, the fourth sentence examines that sweetness in dates can restore lost body energy, and sentences fifth gives an analysis of dates that can prevent overeating when breaking the fast; 3) the reference in the paragraph above lies in the third sentence of the reference 'it' in the word texture that refers to the date palm, the reference 'this one' which refers to the date palm, the reference 'that' to the group of words "not only that" refers to the previous sentence, namely the third and fourth sentences; 4) based on this, it can be explained that each sentence, starting from the second sentence to the fifth sentence, explains what the writer discussed in the first sentence. More over the reference in the sentence refers to the previous sentence.

In context, the explanation of the author's main thoughts in the sentence is not much different from the reference analysis. The first sentence is the topic sentence. Because, the next sentence explains systematically how it is recommended to consume dates. The next sentence describes the reasons for recommending dates, the content contained in the fruit, and the various benefits that can be enjoyed by consumers.

Besides that, what should be our concern is when the writer puts his mind primarily at the end of the sentence. It is true, if we observe reference knowledge, then the main sentence is confirmed to be at the beginning of the sentence. However, it is also important for us to compare or strengthen it with the knowledge of context, namely the topic sentence.

The following is an example of the author's main thoughts which are placed at the end of the sentence and become the context of the previous sentence.

"The camel's body has advantages where for days camels can live without water and food and can even travel by carrying the burden of hundreds of kilograms on their backs. The legs have two fingers that are intertwined with flexible pads. This structure consisting of four thick spheres allows the foot to hold firmly on the ground. The knee is protected by a structure called the 'callus' which is very thick and hard so that when the camel sits on hot sand its knees will not be damaged. The exclusive special characteristic of camels is that their body structure is not affected even though they live amidst the harshest conditions [17]."

Based on the analysis: 1) the above paragraph consists of 5 sentences; 2) the first sentence discusses the body of a camel that can survive even though it goes a long way and carries a heavy burden on its back, the second sentence discusses the camel's feet that have flexible pads, also the third sentence still discusses the camel's legs which can hold strong, the fourth sentence talks about the knee camels that can survive in the desert, and the fifth sentence generally discusses the whole body part of the camel in the previous sentence; 3) the reference in the paragraph appears in each sentence, namely 'the' in the word 'back' in the first sentence which refers to the camel animal, 'it' in the word 'leg' in the second sentence which refers to the camel animal, 'its' in the word 'feet' in the third sentence that refers to a camel animal, 'it' in the word 'knee' in the fourth sentence which refers to a camel animal, 'it' in the word 'body' in the third sentence which refers to a camel animal; 4) based on the reference analysis, it can be ascertained that the reference word refers to the camel animal which is called the first time at the beginning of the sentence. However, it does not mean that we rush to conclude that the main thoughts of the writer are at the beginning of the sentence. The reader must be observant in the first sentence until the fourth sentence of each describes the part of the camel's body, starting from the back, legs and knees. Then, each sentence still looks for the context sentence or the main sentence that binds the previous sentence. So, the main mind of the writer lies in the final sentence.

## V. CONCLUSION

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that pragmatic science, especially references and contexts, present a material approach that can be used by learners and instructors to mark the main thoughts of the author. Nevertheless, a discussion about the study would still need to be refined so that the validity of reading analysis is obtained. Because, reading is complex, there are many styles of writers in conveying their thoughts in this one work.

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