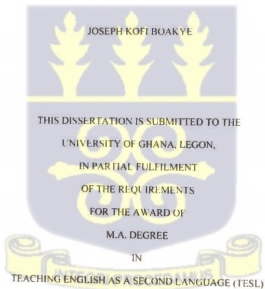


DEVELOPING PARAGRAPH WRITING SKILLS

AT THE JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL:

A CASE STUDY OF THREE SCHOOLS

IN THE KUMASI METROPOLIS



APRIL, 2006

ABSTRACT

Paragraph writing is a *sine qua non* to writing. This premise is based on the fact that however laudable one's ideas may be, and however good the language in which the ideas are crafted, if these *laudable ideas* are poorly organised in that language, they will not be effective.

Often, paragraph writing is underrated so it is not given due attention by teachers, textbook writers and syllabus designers who are major stakeholders of education. With the paragraph being indispensable to writing, it is necessary for it to be given a great deal of attention at the JSS since students may opt to terminate their education at that level.

To help the JSS student to acquire adequate skills in paragraph writing, the process approach concept should be adopted since this concept views writing as an on-going activity involving several phases. This approach does not only focus on the final work, but also on helping students to be skilful at all the phases of writing.

To be able to achieve the objectives of a research work, all available means should be exploited to make respondents answer the research questions well. To attain this in this dissertation, the methods of interview, questionnaire, jumbled paragraph and a take-home composition were adopted. Through these methods it came out that the JSS students have difficulties in developing good paragraphs because they have limited exposure to paragraph writing. This stems from the fact that syllabus writers, text book writers and teachers do not pay attention to it.

Both teachers and students confirmed that they knew much about the paragraph. However, due to the wrong methods of teaching students could not write effective paragraphs. This confirms the view that if knowledge is wrongly imparted, it cannot be effectively used.

It is envisaged that when all stakeholders play their roles as expected in the development of the paragraph, it will go a long way to help language development and education generally, especially, in the area of writing.

*DECLARATION*

I hereby declare that except for reference to other people's works which I have duly acknowledged, this dissertation is the result of my own investigations under the keen supervision of Prof. L. Akosua Anyidoho (Department of Linguistics, University of Ghana). All the shortcomings of the work are completely mine.



**JOSEPH KOFI BOAKYE**  
(CANDIDATE)



**PROF. L. AKOSUA ANYIDHOHO**  
(SUPERVISOR)

*DEDICATION*

To Ama Ago,  
my unlettered mother,  
for her love  
for modern education.



To Mercy,  
my wife,  
and Akwasi, Adomako, Asiama and Serwa,  
my children,  
for their affection  
for me

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*ABBREVIATIONS*

BECE –Basic Education Certificate Examination

CRDD –Curriculum Research Development Division

GES Ghana Education Service

JSS – Junior Secondary School

MOE Ministry of Education

SSS - Senior Secondary School

TED – Teacher Education Division

WAEC – The West African Examinations Council

## CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 Introduction

The paragraph forms a very important component of a written text (refer to figure 1.1). This component, though so important, does not receive as much attention in teaching writing as the others. Consequently, many students do not know as much about the organisation of paragraphs as they should in real terms.

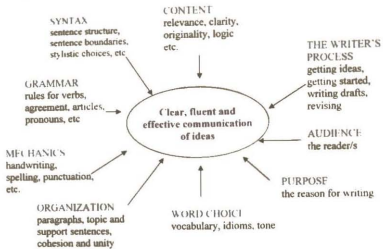
For us to understand what paragraph writing entails, we shall first look at some dimensions of writing in this chapter. We shall then continue with issues related to the dissertation, including the problem of teaching paragraph writing in Ghanaian schools, the approaches that can be used to tackle the problem, the objective of the dissertation, the research questions to be answered, the hypotheses of the research, and the significance of the study.

### 1.1 The Concept of Writing

Writing is defined variously as follows: "A piece of literary work done: a book, article, etc." (Allen 1990:1417); "the art of symbolising particular forms of speech by means of particular visible marks" (Bloomfield 1961:401); "the graphic representation of sound combinations" (Rivers and Temperly 1978:262); "a system of human visual communication using signs and or symbols that are associated by convention with units

of language – meanings or sounds – and are recorded on the surfaces of such substances as paper, stone, clay or wood” (The New Encyclopædia Britannica 2003:774).

Figure 1.1 Components of writing



Source: Johnson and Johnson (1999: 344)

As mentioned already, even though writing is very important in the language learning process, it is not seen and treated as such. This may be due to various reasons. One major problem that writing faces in pedagogy and academia is that because it is a productive skill and occupies the final stage in the language learning process, the majority of language users do not use it. This happens because most people become complacent when they are able to listen and understand the language and they are also able to speak and be understood. In addition, most languages are not in writing yet they are used effectively in communication. This fact does not motivate some people to learn to write.

The next problem is that writing does not develop naturally. It has to be artificially taught, so it is burdensome to learn. This makes the student frustrated and ill-motivated when faced with the added task of consciously writing in paragraphs. This is one of the reasons why paragraph development is poor among students, especially at the junior secondary school (JSS) level.

As Crystal (1995:178) states, writing, though the latest skill to be developed in the language learning process, has held a prominent position for centuries now. It has been a major medium of literature and also a source of standards of linguistic excellence. Since writing is not as transient as speech, it creates permanence for a language. It also provides a source of authority on rules of grammar which are so much revered by users of the language. This makes it very necessary for would-be scholars to learn writing.

In addition to all these, the student learns to read the written language and again reads to learn what is contained in the written language. This is how writing enhances learning. Dead languages like Latin and ancient Greek are learnt through writing even though we do not hear them being spoken. Also in learning a foreign language, most of the learning material, be they rules and overview, or even tape recorded dialogues that are given to the student, can be found in writing.

When the student gets the understanding that these features make "good writing skills essential to academic success and a requirement for many occupations and professions" (Richards 1999:100), s/he will surely be serious with writing and, of course, with paragraph writing. For the writer to be able to communicate a message effectively, s/he must have "knowledge of the conventions of the written code, the precision and nuances which derive from a thorough understanding of the

University of Ghana <http://ugspace.ug.edu>  
syntactic and lexical choices the language offers. [For the writing to be interesting, the writer must have] the ability to vary structures and patterns for rhetorical effect" (Rivers and Temperly, 1978:263).

For the good writer to achieve this, s/he must join Harmer (2003:255) in the understanding that the written text has its own grammar and vocabulary and that "issues of letter, word, and text formation [are] manifested by handwriting, spelling and layout and punctuation."

### 1.2 Writing in Ancient Times

Yule (2004) states that historians are not definite with the time writing began in the world. This is due to the fact that it has not been possible to get information on the writings of ancient times from the rubble of the ruins of ancient cities. These rubbles are not able to tell the story properly because most of these supposed writings are pictures on clay tablets, rocks and caves. Graphologists find it difficult to determine whether these graphic expressions were mere artistic images or writing symbols. These are the gaps that need to be filled and the ambiguities that need to be straightened. What guides the graphologist to decide whether these artefacts have linguistic value or not is the way they are arranged.

According to Crystal (1995:196), when the picture or symbol combines into a recurring system to a point when it can be taken to mean that it portrays accepted values which are "conventional and institutionalised, capable of being understood in the same way by all who are using it," then it can be called writing.

Yule (2004) attempts a date at which writing began. He says that "we may trace human attempts to represent information visually back to ... at least 20,000

years ago." He, however, signals that the writings at that time could be better described as ancient precursors of writing [and that] writing which is based on some kind of alphabetic script can only be traced back to inscriptions dated around 3,000 years ago" (ibid 9). This presupposes that writing has undergone some kinds of metamorphoses. The changes can be properly understood by looking at what we mean by writing systems.

### 1.3 Writing System

From Collinge (ed.) (1990:701) we learn that, "a writing system is a way of writing a language." That is to say, it is a "given set of written marks together with a particular set of conventions for their use." In effect, a writing system is not just a representation of any graphs. It is rather the representation of graphs that are interpretive. In our search for acceptable writing systems, we can give consideration to two main dimensions. They are formal and functional.

#### 1.3.1 Formal Dimension

In looking at writing as one of the stages of learning a language, we must note that most languages are only spoken and they do not have any written form. Most of those that are in writing were put into writing not long ago. In any case, in places like Mesopotamia, China and Egypt, writing has been in existence for centuries now.

Also it is not writing which determines the form of a language. Writing is just one of the means by which language is recorded. It is at this level that writing takes the formal dimension. This record can be taken in many diverse and acceptable



ways and any language which is in writing appears in one or more of these. Some of these means of recording language are pictogram, ideogram, logogram, phonographic, syllabic, alphabetic and shorthand.

### 1.3.2 Functional Dimension

Writing is used in language to perform several functions. The major one is graphic communication, which is widely done through orthography in alphabetic writing. Here it can serve as evidence of successful learning or, as in paedography, as a means of learning. As Richards (1999:100) puts it, writing can “guide the process of understanding and organising ideas during reading or listening.” Another function is that it can be used in organised institutions to protect information from others through sophisticated information security systems with the aid of cryptography. Also, it may be used by people in specialised fields to perform functions effectively through technography. These and other writing systems like stenography, paedography and metagraphy, have been devised to make it easier to communicate in writing.

### 1.4 Writing in Ghana

Even though the literacy rate in Ghana is not so high, writing is used in so many ways, especially for official correspondence, and in schools. Many educated Ghanaians are interested in the written matter and they appreciate good writing. Therefore it is useful to look at the history of writing in Ghana and how writing is treated.

#### 1.4.1 The Emergence of Writing in Ghana

It is not clear, exactly when writing started in Ghana and the type of writing system which was used by the earliest inhabitants of Ghana. Since writing goes with formal education, it is likely that writing started in Ghana with the introduction of formal education from North Africa into the country in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Wilks (1962:3) says that "the movement of Wangara Groups into Ghana ... appears to have begun ... in the late 14th century, during the reign of Mansa Sulaiman." He continues that members of these groups were Moslems and "within this Wangara setting, Islamic learning took root in Ghana" (ibid: 5). Wilks helps to prove that Arabic writing existed in Ghana, at least before the 18<sup>th</sup> century. A Danish trader in Christianborg, Accra, testified that the Danish "received many Arabic books at Accra, which the Ashantis had plundered in an invasion of Dagomba in 1744-5."

The work by a Gonja, al-Hajj Muhammad Ibn Mustaphā, *Isnadu 'l-shaykh wa 'l-ulamā* (*The Chain of Tradition of the Shaikhs and Learned Men*), written in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, also shows that already there existed a well developed tradition of Arabic scholarship in Ghana during the period. It gives "an account of the conversion of the ruling house of Gonja to Islam in C.1585, and provides a ... chronicle of the major events in Gonja history through the 17th ... century" (ibid).

Arabic writing was used in Ashanti in the Moslem schools and in the eighteenth century it came to be used in the Asantehene's palace. "It has been noted that treaties were apparently being drawn up in Arabic in as early as the middle of the century" (Wilks 1975:344). "In the nineteenth century, the Asantehenes came increasingly to conduct their business in writing: in Dutch to Elimina, in English to

Cape Coast, and in Arabic to provincial rulers and imams of the northern hinterland

(ibid: 40). An extract of such writing in Arabic is shown in plate 1.

Plate 1 An Extract of the Asantehene's Writings in Arabic



Source: Wilks (1975: Plate VII)

McWilliam and Kwamena-Poh (1978:17) intimate that western education came to Ghana when “the first real attempt to help [some] children read and write (in Portuguese)” was made in 1529 by the Catholics in the Elmina Castle. This castle was seized by the protestant Dutch in 1637 so obviously reading and writing in Ghana had to be done in Dutch. The Danes established themselves at Christianborg Castle in the second half of the 17th century and it was not until 1722 that they opened their first school. In 1751 the English opened their first school at the Cape Coast Castle.

Western education made inroads into the northern parts of Ghana very late.

The first government schools were opened in Tamale and Kumasi in 1909. By then, the French Catholics, from Ouagadougou, had opened a school at Navrongo in 1907.

Throughout all these periods, there was no attempt to write the vernacular of the people until between 1600 and 1602 when J. P. Marees, a Dutch, compiled a vocabulary of the Fante and Ga-Adangbe languages.

#### 1.4.2 The Writing Situation in Ghana

As is usual with almost all languages, writing occupies the last stage in the language learning process, and writing in Ghana has followed the same trend. Looking at the development of formal education in Ghana, through which writing was formally introduced in Ghana, we realise that the schools were not opened immediately the settlers arrived. They first interacted with the people until months, and in some cases, years after, before the schools were opened to pave way for writing.

From the history we also discover that learning took place, in various languages, at various stages, until the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the English completely took over the administration of Ghana. It was then that English became the official language of Ghana and thus was used in all Ghanaian schools. Consequently, writing in English has become very essential to Ghanaians.

As evidenced by the output of Ghanaian students in class these days, it can be concluded that in Ghana, the standard of writing in English continues to fall. This has been of grave concern to all stakeholders. Unfortunately, the concern is tilted more towards grammar and mechanics than the other components of writing, especially

organisation and syntax. This makes it appear as if when writers can write very good grammar, spell their words correctly and punctuate their writing correctly, then they are on course. But this is an oversimplification since all the other components of writing come together to create a "clear, fluent and effective communication of ideas" (Johnson and Johnson 1999:344).

This neglect is evident even in the way the organisation of writing is handled by examiners of the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) which is the official examining body at the JSS level. The WAEC English language paper consists of an objective paper and a written paper. Obviously the objective paper does not require any writing so organisation cannot be considered. In the written paper, candidates are required to write two compositions, each carrying thirty marks. Out of the thirty marks, ten marks go for content, fifteen marks are meant for expression and mechanics and only five marks are allotted to organisation.

The chief examiners' reports are filled with profuse comments on expression and mechanics while comments on organization are few and they do not suggest remedies to the problem of organisation as they do to the other components. It is not surprising then, why both teachers and students do not pay much attention to organisation, and for that matter, paragraph writing, in their lessons.

### **1.5 Statement of the Problem**

Most student dissertations deal with language use and it is amazing to note that there is no dissertation on the organisation of writing in the Linguistics Department of the University of Ghana. This is so in spite of the fact that writing is a compulsory course for undergraduate students in most departments at the university,

and even at the master's degree level, writing is a course on the TESL programme. This attitude of students and that of the WAEC towards paragraph writing makes it appear as if there is no problem with it or probably it is not very important. This is the more reason why I chose to study this area of writing.

#### **1.6 Scope of Study**

This dissertation looks at paragraph writing at the JSS level by focussing on paragraph structure, topic sentence, paragraph unity, coherence and adequate development. It also delves into the methods of developing a paragraph through exemplification, narration, cause-and-effect analysis and comparison and contrast. The rationale behind the focus on the JSS is explained in the Abstract, paragraphs 9 and 10 of Section 2.5.2 in Chapter Two and paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of Section 3.1 in Chapter Three.

#### **1.7 Research Objective**

The objective of this research is to identify the real problems students at the JSS level face in developing paragraphs and to suggest how they can be remedied.

This objective will be achieved through the following means:

- ❖ by identifying the problems with the methods of teaching paragraph writing at the J.S.S. and suggesting ways of modifying them;
- ❖ by determining students' level of knowledge of paragraph structure and the methods they use to develop the paragraph;
- ❖ by analysing students' exercises to determine their problems with paragraph development; and

- ❖ by recommending solutions to the problems.

### 1.8 Research Questions

The following research questions have been considered in the dissertation:

- ❖ Do both teachers and students know the importance of the paragraph?
- ❖ Are the skills of paragraph writing being developed at the JSS?
- ❖ Can the methods currently used in teaching paragraph writing at the J.S.S. help pupils to write good paragraphs?

### 1.9 Hypotheses of the Research

In answering the theoretical questions, the following hypotheses were tested:

Both teachers and students at the JSS do not know the importance of the paragraph to writing, this is why they fail to develop the skill of paragraph writing.

The results of the test were that

- (i) students and teachers at the J.S.S. know the importance of the paragraph to writing and that they make conscious efforts to develop the paragraph. However, they fail in this attempt because they still rely on the traditional techniques of controlled and guided writing. Some of these techniques are copying, substitution tables, matching, blank filling, jumbled sentences, and sentence completion, all of which fall under controlled writing while questions, sentence combining, parallel writing and re-writing come under guided writing:

(ii) due to this deficient approach to the teaching, students are not able to produce well structured paragraphs which have the qualities of unity, coherence and adequate development.

#### 1.10 Relevance of the Research

The study will be of great importance to the JSS student, language teachers, educational policy makers and textbook writers. From the findings, these stakeholders will realise that language learning does not only involve listening, speaking and reading. It includes writing also and that the learner's ability to write effectively will help him/her to be judged as having a good command of the language.

They will also get to know that writing is not just calligraphy. It is rather about the proper arrangement of words to make meaning, and about the grouping of sentences that express similar ideas into paragraphs. A pupil can communicate effectively in the language if s/he has the knowledge and skills to do so. With this knowledge, stakeholders are likely to give the necessary recognition to paragraph writing and treat it seriously.

Since the application of inappropriate methods of teaching has brought about the inability of most JSS students to write cogent paragraphs, this study will help most language teachers to see the need to modify their methods of teaching writing. Educational policy makers will also be informed through this study, that there is a serious problem with writing and so there is the need to tackle it with the seriousness that it deserves.

In the student's educational pursuits, s/he is evaluated at all levels through writing. This means that the student who knows the subject matter but is not able to communicate it through writing fails. In the formal sector, matters of policy and other crucial issues are put into writing. If this writing is not properly done, we can guess the adverse consequences. It is for these reasons that policies that favour writing have to be formulated so that students will be properly taught, for them not to make unnecessary mistakes when they later get appointed to responsible positions.

Writers of language textbooks, especially at the beginner and intermediate levels, concentrate mainly on the mechanical skills of grammar, spelling, and punctuation and give only a cursory attention to how to organise writing for the reader to understand. This is dangerous to learners for it can make them conclude that writing means merely putting down words and sentences. With this mentality, they may end up not being able to write good paragraphs in their essays and this may gravely affect their future. The problems outlined in this research will go a long way to guide textbook writers and syllabus designers to revise their work to include the organisation of writing.

### 1.11 Approaches

The study seeks to determine whether paragraph writing is being properly developed at the JSS. In the learner's attempt to harmonise the conventions of writing to communicate in an appropriate manner, errors are bound to occur because s/he learns new standards and experiments with new structures which s/he finds in reading. The learner is also used to speech which is extemporaneous and as such the speaker has no chance to rethink and organise what s/he wants to say. In

consideration of this, the right method has to be used to guide learners to use the proper structures and functions of written language and the linguistic and social conventions that affect their use of written language.

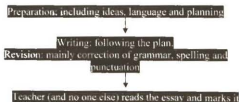
Two main approaches, product and process, can be adopted in the teaching and learning of writing. I intend to analyse these approaches to determine which of them will be more relevant to the development of the paragraph.

### 1.11.1 Product Approach

The product approach is a traditional approach to writing which sees writing as a linear process, as shown in figure 1.2, where the subject matter is treated in stages with one stage directly following the other. Each stage becomes a final stage after the teacher has explained how the stage works and checked the student's draft for errors.

To the product approach, writing is a polished product which focuses "on students recording and documenting their learning rather than gaining insight or elaborating knowledge through the writing process itself" (Ruddell 1997:170).

Figure 1.2 Writing as a Linear Process



Source: G.E.S. (1996. II)

This then does not give the student the chance to produce drafts. Students have "to produce proper texts that will conform to their institutional writing or

personal writing" (Richards 1999:106). In this manner, teaching of writing is reduced to a set of formulas so the means to the creation of the writing is neglected.

To make the approach workable, the teacher emphasises practice in producing different kinds of texts and learners are prevented from making errors with punctuation, spelling, grammar, syntax, etc. and even good handwriting and capitalisation are stressed at the initial stages. Students are rather provided with prefabricated techniques through controlled and guided compositions which they follow in their writings. Using these techniques, students do not have the opportunity to speculate, question and explore ideas with their contemporaries in order to create on their own. This makes the individual students produce uniform content and lexical/syntactic structures. Again since the teacher controls all the phases of writing, the approach becomes teacher-based and so it is likely to kill the initiative of the potential creative writer.

What is good about the product approach is that it equips learners with enough skills for them to be able to write specific types of compositions effectively. Students are able to learn the grammar, mechanics and syntax of the language and this helps them to write good language since they are able to memorise and reproduce at will.

We can deduce from this discussion that as regards the development of the paragraph through this approach, the student learns how to write particular paragraphs but not how to create paragraphs. This makes the student handicapped so when s/he is confronted with the writing of a paragraph which s/he has not learnt how to write on his/her own, it becomes a problem for him/her. It is this approach



that is mostly used in teaching writing at the JSS, thus the inability of the student to write good paragraphs.

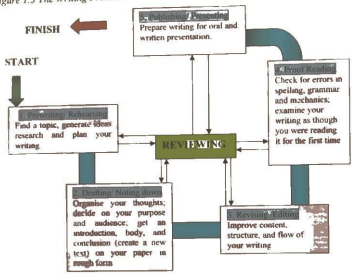
### 1.11.2 Process Approach

The process approach sees writing as a process which the writer goes through to come out with his/her product. Since writing is a productive skill, the process approach applies the interactive mode of learning writing. This means the student is allowed to go through the stages of writing with others. This helps the student to discover his/her own abilities and potentials so as to become more effective and be able to produce acceptable results. Through this, students are groomed to build on their capabilities and handle texts independently. Before the students come out with their product, they go through the cyclical and recursive phases of writing which, in summary, are made up of rehearsing, drafting/writing and revising. The students can evaluate and rewrite several times before they complete the final draft, which can be completely different from the first. The detailed phases in this approach are presented in figure 1.3.

This approach provides feedback to the learner through his/her fellow learners and the teacher. What makes this approach beneficial is that since one person is not a repository of knowledge, all students are able to brainstorm and come out with what is good and acceptable to all. Also as the students ask and answer questions, they discover the gaps in their thinking and get the information to fill in. Again, as they explain the unclear points in their drafts, they improve better than when the draft is solely evaluated by the teacher. In this way, the process approach

sees writing as a medium of learning with the teacher as the moderator but not as the arbiter.

Figure 1.3 The Writing Process



Source: Modification from Glencoe Language Arts (2002:313)

Unlike the product approach where the teacher, in evaluating the learner, is only interested in the language and “secretarial skills”, the teacher in the process approach is as well interested in the ideas so s/he comments on how these are structured. All these come together to help the teacher to determine the meaning of what the learner has written. The teacher sees grammar and mechanical errors as part of the process of writing but not as the main issue in the writing task, for writing goes further than learning and applying linguistic and rhetorical rules. The teacher, in designing his/her instructional activities, offers the student a wide range of

techniques which will help him/her to learn and produce good texts with clear paragraphs. This is what Ruddell (1997:172) calls facilitative learning.

The cyclical and recursive phases help the process approach to provide inputs for facilitative learning. At each stage, certain activities go on to equip the learner with some writing skills. At the rehearsing phase, the student seeks to generate, derive initial stimulus and get motivated to write through activities like free writing, journal keeping, listing, logging, keeping diaries, brainstorming, building spidergrams, classifying values and ranking. Moffet (1989), as quoted in Ruddell (1997:172), agrees that the rehearsing phase is "the foundation of a variety of writing, reading, thinking and learning events." From this stage the student summarises the findings, reviews them and decides on what to write at the drafting/writing phase.

At this drafting/writing phase, the student, through the ideas that were gathered at the rehearsing phase, decides on who the audience is and what to write for them; the purpose of the writing; the form that the writing should take; and what should go into each of the paragraphs of the write-up. The student arrives at these decisions through strategic questioning, time-focused writing, elaboration exercise, reduction exercise, jumbled paragraph, jumbled essay, writing of thesis statements and topic sentences, quick writing and group drafting.

This can be compared to what Moffet (1989), as quoted in Rudell (1997: 172), calls "noting down", where "students create a new text from what they might have read, seen, done, thought about or examined" (ibid: 173). To Moffet, students at this point investigate, review, research and analyse "their own and others' ideas,

actions, attitudes, knowledge and beliefs in relationship to whatever topic is being studied" (ibid: 173).

From this stage the student goes on to revise the composition through peer feedback, group correction activities and rewriting exercises. Moffet labels this, the "thinking over/thinking through" stage where the student integrates new knowledge that is critical for learning and comes up with editorials, personal essays, position papers, comparative analyses, musings, reaction/responses, evaluations, and conclusion.

Moffet adds another dimension called "expressive writing". He says that at this level, the student looks into the way his/her thoughts fall naturally into paragraphs and how s/he uses logical connectives and other transitional or cohesive devices which show the development of thought and cement internal relationships. This stage justifies the importance of paragraph development for it appears to suggest that without the proper consideration of the paragraph, the student's write-up will not be complete.

In evaluating, the teacher must ensure that his/her evaluation goes hand in hand with the student's work. S/he must also note that until the learner comes to the end of the writing process, the evaluation will not be completely useful. Again, s/he must evaluate with the mind that in process writing, the students write for themselves and for others but not for the teacher alone as prevails in the product approach. Francis Bacon, as quoted in Rivers and Temperly (1978:322) says that "reading maketh a full man, conference a ready man, and writing an exact man." It is for this reason that the student has to go through this active correction process since that is

more exact and effective than the idiosyncratic corrections made by the teacher in the product approach which the student is bound to accept passively.

Rivers and Temperly (1978:297) posit that students' aptitudes vary widely in writing so some need to be helped to take off and create interesting patterns of their own. For this reason, the teacher must individualise writing activities through the process approach which helps students to develop according to their preferred styles of writing at their own pace.

All this does not mean that the process approach is a panacea to all the problems related to the teaching and learning of writing skills. One major bleak side of the process approach is that it can make the student too dependent on others to be able to decide on what to write, more especially, when s/he goes through group discussions at each stage of the writing process. By this, the student's creative potentials may get killed. Furthermore, the student takes a lot of time to go through the various stages of this approach. This can be boring, especially when s/he is working alone, hence s/he can lose track of events while writing. When it happens this way, the structure of the paragraph can be adversely affected.

Similarly, since in the process approach, grammar and other categories of language learning are not given special prominence but are considered as part of the writing process, students may be tempted to overlook them and this may affect their performance in the language.

In any case, the process approach, being learner-centred, creates conducive environment for learning and all manner of writers are able to discover themselves and write freely. Teachers, though resource persons, do not impose their wish on the learner. As the writing goes on, the teacher takes pains to investigate the processes to

understand the nature of the learner's written discourse and the strategies employed.

This systematic evaluation helps the teacher to assess the learner fairly. With the process approach being so communicative, when it is used in the JSS class, it can help the student to develop good paragraphs.

#### **1.12 Organisation of the Dissertation Report**

The dissertation is made up of four chapters. Chapter one gives the philosophy behind the research and provides insight into certain aspects of writing. It goes further to explain writing as it appears in Ghana. It also deals with the objective and hypotheses of the research, the questions posed in the research, how relevant the dissertation is and the approaches that can be adopted to teach paragraph writing.

In chapter two, the literature related to the dissertation is dealt with. The sources of the data and methods used in collecting them are discussed in chapter three. In addition to this, the real problems with paragraph writing, as identified in the data collected, are classified and analysed. The observations made, as regards paragraph writing, and the recommendations that go with them have been given in chapter four.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.0 Introduction

This chapter is about the review of some of the literature relevant to paragraph writing generally and those related to the topic specifically. It begins by considering whether the paragraph is meant for aesthetic or discourse purposes. It then continues with what goes in to make a paragraph properly developed. These include the topic sentence and its related sentences, paragraph unity and coherence which are achieved through transitions and other cohesive devices and, finally, adequate development which includes the development and organisation of details in a paragraph. There are different types of paragraphs and these are also looked at. In writing, just as in speech, the audience plays a vital role in communication. This indispensable party to writing is also reviewed in the chapter.

Of immense influence to language learning in formal education are the syllabus and the text book. The basic school syllabi and text books are reviewed to some extent to determine their scope of influence on the development of paragraph writing at the JSS.

For the teaching of paragraph development to be effective in schools, the teacher cannot be sidelined. For this reason, a section of this chapter has been devoted to probing into the impact of the level of training given to the teacher on the development of the paragraph at the JSS.

Given the scope of the dissertation, the junior secondary school student, the details presented on the rules and mechanics of the paragraph in this review may appear too much. However, given the fact that the paragraph cannot be done away with in writing at all levels, the researcher finds it imperative to give as much details on the paragraph as possible for the benefit of students, teachers and researchers. This is why lengthy details on the paragraph have been provided in this work.

### **2.1 The Paragraph: Artistic or Discourse Realisation?**

Through writing, the communicant stores information in genres for use in the future. Generally, each genre has its own idiosyncratic layout. With even letters, the formal and the informal are laid out differently. Newspapers and textbooks may each be prose but the layout for one is different from the other. When prose, poetry and drama appear in writing, the layout for each is different.

In spite of these differences in layout, the writer displays a much greater degree of organisation, impersonality, and explicitness in writing. This is where the paragraph, which applies to prose, becomes important to ensure orderliness in the text. It must be noted that though the paragraph may have artistic features, it is not an artistic unit as we sometimes imagine it to be. It is rather a discourse realisation through which the work is divided into appropriate units according to how they support the thesis statement.

It is also not simply the assembling of any sentences but the grouping of sentences that express the same idea. These units of discourse help the writer to organise and develop properly all the aspects of his/her text. They also help the reader to read the work with ease "because it permits [him/her] to absorb writing in

manageable doses and to pause before the next dose" (Schor and Summerfield 1986:45). In other words, the "paragraphs give readers a visual landing, a place to pause; to use your eye and vary the lengths of your paragraphs" (Wienbroer 2000:18). Again, it is easier for the reader to skim long passages and also revise them with the help of the transitional markers and topic sentences in the paragraphs.

What we have said so far shows that it is not the aesthetic qualities that matter so much in determining the length of a paragraph. It is rather the unit of discourse created that matters. In effect, paragraphs "should be as long as they need to be to make one point. Sometimes one or two strong sentences can be enough. At other times, you might need about eight or more sentences to explain your point" (ibid: 18).

Though the paragraph is not an artistic unit, it has some traits of art and these qualities keep changing. Schor and Summerfield (1986:45) inform us that "a hundred years ago it was fashionable to write paragraphs three times longer than those we write now, and long before that there were no paragraphs at all; [and] today five to eight sentences generally stand together to form a paragraph averaging between 150 and 200 words."

The general practice these days is that in writing, the paragraph is written by indenting the first line from the left margin. Sekyi-Baidoo (2000) suggests other ways of presenting the paragraph artistically. They include:

- ❖ indenting the subsequent lines further than the first (hanging paragraphs);
- ❖ writing the first letter or word with decorative initials (very bold characters which may be raised or dropped);

- ❖ writing the first word in italics; and
- ❖ leaving a line or some such space between one paragraph and the next (line spacing) (132).

This can mislead us into concluding that the paragraph is strictly an artistic unit through which the page of the text is saved “from monotony and unbroken sameness of the structure of lines” (ibid: 131). So, to Sekyi-Baidoo, generally, the paragraph is considered to be a number of lines and the writer becomes conscious of the number of lines s/he must write to get a paragraph.

Wienbroer (2000) appears to suggest other artistic presentations of the paragraph. She says that should a number of points be raised in a single paragraph, the reader can be helped to follow the trend of its development by finding a natural point to break it when it contains more than ten sentences. The break can be made at where there is a sub-topic, a variation or contradiction or the start of an example. The writer can also enumerate the points or break them out with bullets. S/he does not encourage too many short paragraphs since that can make the writer’s thought appear fragmented.

A careful look at these suggestions reveals that the paragraph should be presented as a discourse unit rather than as an artistic one.

## 2.2 Paragraph Structure

According to OWL (2004:1), “a paragraph is a collection of related sentences dealing with a single topic. To be as effective as possible, a paragraph should contain each of the following: Unity, Coherence, Topic Sentence, and Adequate Development.” Langan (1999:13) agrees and adds that “a paragraph typically starts

with a point, and the rest of the paragraph provides specific details to support and develop that point". This is how a paragraph structure looks like.

### 2.2.1 The Topic Sentence

Buscemi et al. (1996) make it known that a paragraph is like a mini essay since "it uses information to develop a central idea ... but its focus is much more limited than an essay's" (52). So in writing, each "specific detail or experiences [that] support, prove, or illustrate the controlling idea, [the] essay, will have a paragraph of its own and sometimes more" (Schor and Summerfield 1986:48).

The central idea is expressed in a topic sentence, usually at the beginning of the paragraph, but it can appear anywhere else in the paragraph. The central idea means the focus, subject or theme of the paragraph. In effect it is the controlling and/or restricting idea of the paragraph. It controls by keeping the theme of the paragraph and it restricts by accepting into the paragraph only sentences that are related to the theme. We must, however, note that where the central idea is clear enough for the reader to point to, the writer may not state it. This happens when the writer makes it clear from the issue s/he wants to address and his/her position on it.

This makes the topic sentence appear like the seed from which the paragraph develops. This sentence is a general statement and it guides the writer to organise and develop the paragraph properly and to remain focused on the point raised in it. It leads the writer to identify the details or facts, reasons and examples that support the generalised idea of the paragraph and use them to develop the paragraph. Through this, s/he sees to it that the paragraph has unity and coherence and does away with unrelated material and also ensures that the theme is developed to the acceptable

level. These revelations tell us that, in an essay, each paragraph is complete in itself but they are dependent on each other to lead the reader systematically through the ideas of the writer.

The topic sentence can be *simple or complex*. It is simple when it presents the theme and leaves out the form of the paragraph. The complex topic sentence, however, states the theme and provides “the skeleton on which the succeeding part of the sentence will be based” (Sekyi-Baidoo 2000:146). The following sentences illustrate these two types of topic sentences.

- i. *In Christianity, churches are divided.* (Simple)
  - ii. *In Christianity, churches are divided into orthodox, and charismatic.* (Complex)
- In sentence *i*, the paragraph can be developed to include any types of Christian churches while in sentence *ii*; the paragraph can deal with only orthodox and charismatic Christian churches.

#### 2.2.1.1 Support Sentences

Pal (1984: EC-16) explains that in conversation, “there is usually a face to face communication between the giver and the receiver. [The speaker] can make his order clear with the help of gesticulation, facial expression and voice modulation. The receiver, if in doubt about any point, can immediately get it clarified.” To Pal, this makes the communicants sure about what is expected of each of them and as such they are in a better position to communicate to the utmost satisfaction of each other.

In writing, however, the writer has to provide the rationale behind his/her opinions and rephrase it until he becomes sure that s/he is able to communicate exactly what s/he wanted to. So "an effective paragraph ... not only must make a point but must support it with *specific evidence* - reasons, examples and other details" (Langan 1999:13).

Sentences that capture these pieces of evidence are called support sentences because it is through their support that the topic sentence achieves its aim of stating the theme. The topic sentence only provides the theme without providing any details and it is the support sentence(s) that are used to further develop the paragraph. The sentence can be a major or minor support sentence, or transitional or concluding sentence, depending upon the extent of its relationship with the theme.

#### 2.2.1.1a Major Support Sentence

This sentence gives "details [that] directly *support, prove, or explain* the main idea" (Monahan 2000:127). It does this by picking a constituent of the topic sentence and expanding it. This is to say that it divides the topic sentence into its separate main ideas. So the major support sentences can help the reader to appreciate the varied divisions contained in the theme of the paragraph. For example, in the topic sentence,

*"The boys teased, frustrated and physically attacked the man."*

there will be three major support sentences; one in each case to prove the acts of *teasing, frustration and physical attack* meted out to the man.

#### 2.2.1.1b Minor Support Sentence

Here, the “details support, explain, and give more information about the major details” (ibid: 13). That is to say that it expands the theme of the major support sentence. It does so “by giving us information that would help us to get a broader view of what the major support sentence has” (Sekyi-Baidoo 2000:147). Sekyi-Baidoo (2000) further explains that it expands, or illustrates analytical presentations; gives details of events in narratives; and provides details of the phenomenon in a descriptive presentation. This sentence invariably supports the topic sentence in an indirect manner.

#### 2.2.1.1c Transitional Sentence

The transitional sentence connects different parts of the central idea or different paragraphs to one another to create unity. To Sekyi-Baidoo (2000), it can occupy the initial position of the paragraph when it is being used to join the current paragraph to the previous paragraph.

When the aim is to join the main parts of the same paragraph to one another, then the transitional sentence is made to occupy the medial position. Where there is no topic sentence, the transitional sentence can function as such by restating the points already made.

#### 2.2.1.1d Concluding Sentence

As the name implies, this sentence appears at the end of the paragraph. It summarises or restates the central idea in the paragraph. Sekyi-Baidoo (2000) iterates that this allows the concluding sentence to function as a topic sentence when there is

none in the paragraph. In addition to this, it can be used to make deductions, determine causes and effects, take a stand, and make suggestions and projections in the paragraph.

### 2.2.2 Unity

Unity means the writer advances one issue and sticks to it in his/her paper. This means that all the details in the writing must "relate directly to its central idea whether or not that idea is expressed formally in a topic" (Buscemi 2002:38). As regards paragraph writing, "the entire paragraph should concern itself with a single focus. If it begins with one focus or major point of discussion, it should not end with another or wander within different ideas" (OWL 2004:1). Rather the writer should make sure that "all points s/he makes in an essay should be connected to the issue under discussion and should always either (a) support, illustrate, explain, elaborate on, or emphasise his/her position on the issue or (b) serve as responses to anticipated objections" (Moore and Noel 2001:40). Where the paragraph lacks unity, it becomes difficult for the reader to determine precisely what the writer is trying to say for the details that help to develop, explain, or support the central idea will be inconsistent with the *levels* of paragraph development.

The paragraph, being a unit of a larger text, be it a chapter, an essay, or a book must help the writer to determine the singular part of the message of the text that s/he wants to present at any material point in the text. This is what will help the reader to identify the writer's purpose in each paragraph.

It is to be noted that unity does not mean unity of subject which implies a single object, incident or person. As has already been said, it means unity of focus

where even if there are different subjects, attention will be directed to a single focus.

For example, two persons can be mentioned in a paragraph as doing different things. However, the different things that they are doing must have only one focus; otherwise, they cannot be captured in one paragraph. So, here, it is what is being done that determines the number of paragraphs needed to contain it but not the number of persons involved in the act.

#### 2.2.2.1 How to Attain Unity

Unity can easily be attained when the writer plans the whole text and identifies the focus of each sentence and paragraph, and then uses connectors to direct the reader to the relationship between various parts of the paragraph and also between different paragraphs. Should some of the information in the paragraph deviate from the central idea, the writer can omit that irrelevant information or expand the central idea to capture it. It is better to broaden the central idea where the added information, even though it does not match the topic sentence, satisfies the intentions of the writer.

Where there are a series of paragraphs of one or two sentences, the writer can combine, expand or omit some of the paragraphs. The combination can be made by joining paragraphs that express the same point; or including examples in the paragraph to illustrate the point; or regrouping the major ideas and making a new paragraph plan.

Where some of the paragraphs have to be expanded, the writer can provide examples, reasons, facts, statistics or evidence to back the point; or give an account

of an incident that is related to the point; or explain appropriate terms related to the point.

The omissions can be made where there are short paragraphs that do not accept combination or expansion. Most of the time, the writer has to decide on the need to combine or expand the paragraph to be able to maintain it or omit it.

### 2.2.3 Coherence

Coherence means the sentences in the paragraph are clearly and logically connected in an order that is easily understandable to the reader to enable him/her follow the train of thoughts of the writer. This means the thought expressed in one sentence leads directly to that expressed in the following sentence without a break. Moore and Noel (2001) intimate that this helps the reader "to discern the relationship between any given sentence and [the] ultimate objective" of the writer, and the reader is "able to move from sentence to sentence and from paragraph to paragraph without becoming lost or confused" (40). Where the paragraph has unity but its ideas are haphazardly arranged, it cannot be considered a good paragraph.

According to Canale (1982:5-6), as quoted in Richards (1999:104), for a text to have coherence, it must consist of the following:

- (i) *Development*: Presentation of ideas must be orderly and convey a sense of direction.
- (ii) *Continuity*: There must be consistency of facts, opinions, and writer perspective, as well as reference to previously mentioned ideas. Newly introduced ideas must be relevant.

(iii) *Balance*: A relative emphasis (main or supportive) must be recorded in each idea.

(iv) *Completeness*: The ideas presented must provide a sufficiently thorough discourse.

Richards (1999:104) states that "different types of writing (e.g. narratives, instructions, reports, business letters) reflect specific kinds of text structures, and will be judged as more or less appropriate and coherent according to the degree of fit between the genre and the text structure expected of the genre". What Richards (1999) appears to say by this is that coherence varies according to the genre under consideration. In effect, what is considered as coherence in one genre may be graded as unrelated in another genre. For this reason, writers must be conversant with the requirements of the genre they may be writing in before they do so.

The reader can determine that the paragraph has coherence when it is structured in one of the following ways: where it moves from the general to the specific or from the specific to the general; when the topics are alternated to enhance comparison and contrast; or when the details are laid out in a chronological or spatial order, or an order that builds to a climax. These have been further explained in section 2.2.4.2.

### 2.2.3.1 Cohesive Devices

Halliday and Hasan (1991) argue that a text is a series of sentences that are arranged strategically to show a degree of mutual dependence. The internal structures of a text can be obvious as found in a list of items, or table or it can be carefully woven, as it appears in a literary work. To them certain linguistic features cause the

sentence sequence to “cohere” such that each feature in the text will depend on another elsewhere

in the sequence. These features or ties that bind the text together are what are normally considered when dealing with *cohesion*, which is the set of linguistic resources that every language uses to link one part of a text to another. This principle has to be applied when dealing with paragraph writing because on critically examining a paragraph it can be taken to be a text.

It must be noted that even though cohesive devices help very much to indicate how far the sentences are bound together, a text with these devices to make it cohesive may not necessarily be coherent, e.g.

*The train arrived late but a train can carry a lot of goods. Since trains are very important, the government will import more of them next year.*

The above paragraph has cohesive devices as underlined, but it lacks coherence. So it is imperative for a paragraph to be both cohesive and coherent, otherwise it may be unintelligible.

The cohesive factors include coreference, ellipsis, conjunctive relations, substitution, repeated forms, lexical relationships, comparison, sequential presentation, parallelism, and periodic sentences.

*(i) Coreference:* These are features that have to be referred to in order to semantically interpret other features in the text. These may involve repetition of words, or variation of words or use of pronouns, or use of synonyms. They include *anaphoric, cataphoric and exophoric* references.

Anaphoric reference means the writer makes reference to something that occurred earlier in the text. When the interpretation is made by a reference forward to

something that will occur later, we have cataphoric reference. Exophoric reference is made from outside the text. Examples of these references are as follows:

- i *We went to the restaurant. There was no food to eat from there.* (anaphoric)
- ii *Have you heard the news? More students have been admitted.* (cataphoric)
- iii *Chapter two of this book deals with fruit juice. Fruit juice is not needed in electricity.* (exophoric)

(ii) **Ellipsis:** This device is used to omit some parts of the sentence already understood by the speaker and the listener or the writer and the reader. The omitted structure can be recovered only from the preceding discourse, e.g.

*I read five books every week. Do you?* (= read five books every week)

(iii) **Conjunctive Relations:** This refers to the explicit relationship between what is about to be said and what has been said before through such notions as contrast, result, time, etc, e.g.

- a. *I have a lot of problems to solve. nevertheless I am not disturbed.* (contrast)
- b. *Kofi and Ama are friends so they plan their itinerary together.* (addition; result)
- c. *You can pass your exams but learn first.* (contrast; time)

(iv) **Substitution:** This is where one feature is made to replace an earlier expression. Here linking pronouns can be used to direct readers' attention to antecedents and help the writer to avoid repeating the same noun, e.g.

*Ananse became ashamed because Aso taught him what he couldn't reasonably perceive.*

(v) **Repeated Forms:** Here, a whole expression or part of it is repeated, e.g.

*My boss is in a meeting. My boss is too busy to meet you.*

(vi) **Lexical Relationships:** With this cohesive device, the writer skillfully makes one lexical item enter into a structural relationship with another, e.g.

*I like everything about the man. I get most attracted to his looks.*

(vii) **Comparison:** This is where a compared expression is assumed in the earlier discourse, e.g.

*John is good at English. Jane far surpasses him.*

(viii) **Sequential Presentation:** This cohesive device helps the writer to present his/her text sequentially by way of time, place and logic. If the writer does not follow the natural sequence (A B C), s/he must use tense variation and signposts to make it meaningful.

When the sequence is shuffled in such a way, it eradicates monotony of presentation in the paragraph so that the paragraph becomes lively to read, e.g.

C. *Many innocent civilians still suffer casualty in the war.*

B. *It has been fought for five years now.*

A. *This war started out of a misunderstanding between two children.*

Note: The use of *this* in stage A, and *has been fought* and *now* in stage B, shows that the war has not stopped so it is true that, consequently, people are *still* suffering from the war as in stage C.

(ix) **Parallelism:** It is with this device that the various parts of the sentence are kept parallel or similar by putting them in the same grammatical form to make the paragraph smooth and easy to read, e.g.

*To fix a new tyre on your hub, remove the nuts, take out the old tyre, fix the new tyre, and tighten the nuts to keep it in place.*

The sentence uses a series of verb phrases with the verbs being in the imperative mood to indicate that instructions are being given. This helps the reader to easily follow the instructions sequentially.

(x) *Periodic Sentences*: In these sentences, the main idea is placed at the end so in reading, their grammatical form and meaning are not complete until the reader gets to the end. This device helps to develop the sentences logically to the final idea, e.g.

*The boy quickly entered the room, asked about his father, pulled a chair to sit down, accepted to drink some water and whispered that he was being chased by the police.*

### 2.2.3.2 Transitions

The cohesive devices explained above cannot work effectively if they are not properly linked in the paragraph. The words and phrases that facilitate these linkages are the transitions. They are the bridges in the text that form logical connections, indicate the relationship between the major and minor ideas, sentences and even paragraphs and provide continuity for the reader for him/her to understand the paragraph or a longer passage. They also provide signals for the shift from one specific thought or idea to the other upon which the writer creates a new paragraph.

At times the “paragraphs will be self-contained [but] they must interlock effectively to produce a strong overall argument. Transitions both between and within paragraphs are essential because they signal changes in direction and help the reader to follow those changes” (U Vic 1995:1).

There are many kinds of transitions but we shall look at a few of them.

(i) *Sequential transitions*: These are used when ideas and events are presented sequentially. The sequence can be time, place, importance and process. Some words which suggest clues to this order can be found in section A of Table 2.1

(ii) *Listing transitions*: These transitions give the clue that a list will follow. Refer to section B of Table 2.1 for examples.

(iii) *Example transitions*: These are used where the writer wants to follow an idea with more specific examples in order to explain a general idea more clearly. Examples of such transitions can be found in section C of Table 2.1.

(iv) *Comparison/contrast transitions*: Where the writer wants to demonstrate the likeness or differences in two or more ideas, s/he brings them together. S/he shows the similarity by comparing them and signifies emphasis by making a contrast with different things. Reference can be made to Table 2.1, section D, for examples of such transitions.

(v) *Cause and effect transitions*: The writer can state an idea, being the cause (why or how something occurs) and go on to discuss its effects (the results of what happens) or, alternatively, s/he can describe the effects before discussing the cause. There can be one cause and several effects and vice versa. Some cause-and-effect signal words are noted in Table 2.1, section E.

(vi) *Conditional transitions*: The main idea in the paragraph can be expressed as a condition. To express such a condition, conditional transitions, examples of which have been given in Table 2.1, section F, can be used.

(vii) *Emphasising transitions*: Where the writer wants to place special emphasis in dilating on an idea, s/he uses emphasising transitions. Examples can be found in Table 2.1, section G.



(ix) *Concluding transitions:* These transitions help to sum up what has been said about the central idea in the paragraph or the thesis statement in the discourse. Reference can be made to Table 2.1, section I, for examples of such transitions.

#### 2.2.4 Adequate Development

As noted in section 2.1, it is not art that determines what a paragraph is or the length of a paragraph. It is rather determined by the extent of paragraph development. This is what adequate development is about. To achieve completeness in the paragraph the topic sentence has to be adequately and fully discussed. There is no guiding principle concerning how long a paragraph should be. The paragraph itself determines its length since the main point being made is in it and this will provide the clue to the kinds and amount of detail needed for the adequate and effective development of that point. At times it may be possible to make a clear point with one or two supporting details but most of the time the writer has to provide many details.

In any case the purpose of writing will determine how many details will be needed to develop the paragraph. The caution is that too many one sentence paragraphs can make the writing choppy, so such paragraphs must be used sparingly. Adequate development does not necessarily mean that the writer has to be exhaustive in treating the issue since many issues may be too large to be handled in a single paragraph.

There are many ways through which the central idea can be developed and Buscemi (2002) hints that each depends on the purpose of the writer, the point s/he wishes to make, and the desired effect of the writing on the readers. To Buscemi

(2002), the “purpose can be descriptive, narrative, explanatory, persuasive or any combination of these” (95).

#### **2.2.4.1 Developing Details in a Paragraph**

The writer always sets out to achieve an objective in his/her writing. To realise this, s/he must support fully and adequately his/her stand on the issue. S/he must as well be able to reasonably foresee possible objections and respond to them. These ideas must be well developed and there are several ways of doing so, but the major ones are through narration, description, exposition and argument. “Each method can be used separately or in combination with any or all of the others. And each allows [the writer] to use various patterns of arrangement” (Buscemi 1996:69).

##### **2.2.4.1a Narration**

The writer uses narration if s/he wants to recollect an event or explain how a process works. Narration is used mainly in narrative essays. However, a report and even literary papers can have narrative paragraphs to introduce or substantiate some analysis. The main feature of this method is that it arranges information or ideas in a chronological order with a corresponding sequence of tenses. It is characterised by action verbs and sequential transitions which carry the story or process along in a systematic manner.

##### **2.2.4.1b Description**

This method is used when the writer wants to discuss the nature or character of people, places, time, and environment and objects being talked about in the text.

The method can also be used to paint a vivid picture of these people, places and things mentioned. The descriptive method can be used in a narrative, expository or argumentative writing. The description can begin with the physical features but the writer should always rely on his/her five senses to determine how his/her subject looks, sounds, feels, smells, or tastes like. The paragraph pattern of this method is normally spatial but the writer has the prerogative of arranging the ideas or information in any acceptable logical manner.

#### 2.2.4.1c Exposition

This method explains, discusses or exposes an idea or fact. It is used where the writer has to support generalisations. The narrative and descriptive methods can be used for expository purposes. There are other techniques which can be applied in the exposition. They include definition; cause, reason and effect; and comparison and contrast. These techniques can be used in the argument method as well.

Definition is used to explain terms in the paragraph. This helps readers to see words, things or ideas for what they are. Through definition, the writer gets the chance to introduce a new subject to readers and at times change or clarify readers' opinions about a subject.

Cause, reason and effect show how something happens, why it happens and the consequences of that happening. They can be used for various purposes in writing but scientists find them more useful in explaining scientific and natural phenomena.

Comparison and contrast explains the similarities and differences in the ideas. Here, the writer compares the ideas to discern how similar they are and goes on to

identify the contrasting issues involved. The results of these procedures will help the writer to give a candid exposure of the idea under discussion.

#### 2.2.4.1d Argument

According to Sekyi-Baidoo (2000), this method aims at persuading the reader to make a particular choice or take a particular line of action. The persuasion takes the form of implicitly or explicitly suggesting that one line of thought or action is more acceptable than the other. The argument is tactically made at the point where the writer is confronted with making a decision or choice so that s/he will sound convincing. Arguments are normally made in the introductory, concluding and transitional parts of the text where decisions and choices are made. Some of the techniques which are used to achieve success in the argument are as follows: examples and illustrations, classification, conclusion and support. The narrative and descriptive methods can also be used here.

Examples and illustrations are used to make the writer's point of view appear true. Through classification, the writer distinguishes and organizes related bits of information or ideas into various groups or categories so as to discuss them logically and systematically. Conclusion and support provide the reader with data in the form of facts, statistics, evidence and details to make the idea, opinion or assumption clear to him/her.

Other techniques which can be used in exposition as well as argument are anecdotes or stories, description and analysis of the topic, and examination of testimony like quotes and paraphrases. All the techniques mentioned help the writer

In the above example, the writer started with all the factors that can cause increases in the prices of goods. S/he then moved on to the price of petroleum products and finally concentrated on how petrol causes increases in the prices of goods and services.

#### 2.2.4.2b Specific to General

In the mainstream or body paragraphs, the writer can begin with specific details in supporting sentences and move on to a general or broad concluding statement in the topic sentence. This is done where s/he wants to create suspense or build the issue to emotional high point. The following is an example:

In law, when the occupier of residential premises negligently refuses to take reasonable care of the occupant, his act amounts to a tort of negligence. This negligence is known as occupier's liability. The tort of negligence can also apply to road users, professionals, offices, shops, and open areas among others.

In this paragraph, the writer began commenting on one of the torts of negligence, being the occupier's liability, before going on to state the other torts of negligence.

#### 2.2.4.2c Question to Answer

Writers have to capture readers' interest. The skilful writer can do this by posing a question at the beginning of the paragraph and providing the answers or discussing the question in the details that follow. This pattern also makes it easier for the writer to arrange information in the paragraph.

#### 2.2.4.2d Order of Importance

Another pattern with which the writer can create suspense or further still make emphasis is the order of importance pattern. Here, the writer begins the paragraph with the least important detail and ends with the most important or startling one. This pattern is usually used by fiction writers to intensify suspense.

### 2.3 Types of Paragraphs

There are several paragraphs and each serves a definite purpose in the discourse. The purpose may be, to “open your essay, close your essay, line up support for your controlling idea, develop ideas, provide transitions between ideas, and single out an important sentence or two for special emphasis” (Schor and Summerfield 1986:53). The most important of these paragraphs are the introductory, mainstream or body, concluding, and transitional paragraphs.

#### 2.3.1 The introductory paragraph

This paragraph is normally the first one or two paragraphs of the text. It usually directs the reader’s attention to the text and sets up expectations in his/her mind due to where it appears and the fact that most of the time, it contains the thesis of the text. This means that the writer will fail if his/her introductory paragraph is bad since readers will not be motivated to continue reading the text.

The introductory paragraph, unlike other paragraphs, is not meant for only one idea in the text. It is rather meant for the whole text; hence the thesis of the text being strategically placed in it. This makes the introductory paragraph more complex than the normal paragraph for it has to state the intentions or subject of the text and

also, in most cases, preview the focus by outlining the various points to be discussed in the text.

### 2.3.2 The Mainstream or Body Paragraphs

These paragraphs normally appear in the middle section of the text. They support the thesis by providing information that will be needed to treat it fully. Most of the time they contain topic sentences which the writer goes on to expand to get readers properly informed about the theme under consideration. The mainstream paragraphs are critical to the text because when they are strong, they make the “easy unique; they increase your readers’ interest and challenge any resistance they might have to your subject” (Schor and Summerfield 1986:54).

### 2.3.3 The Concluding Paragraph

This paragraph marks the end of the writing. Through it the writer satisfies the expectations of the reader by confirming that the promise made through the thesis in the introductory paragraph has been honoured. This is more effective when the writer relates this paragraph to the opening paragraph.

In this paragraph the writer assesses his/her aim of writing and gives his/her impressions about it. The reader then passes judgment on the writing based on what s/he reads in the paragraph in conjunction with the other paragraphs.

A writer can appear amateurish in writing the concluding paragraph. At times s/he may summarise the main points in the text in a 1, 2, 3 ... fashion or introduce a completely new thing. S/he may also suddenly reverse what has been written already or suddenly make what has been written appear irrelevant with any preamble to that

effect. Again s/he may apologise, or complain or make rash promises. Schor and Summerfield (1986) strongly advise that all these should be avoided in the concluding paragraph. It is good to write them in the text but they can fit better in the mainstream or body paragraph and in some few cases, in the introductory paragraph. Conclusions “should be memorable, but don’t make them memorable by rambling on and on until your audience want to conclude your existence. Be concise and to the point when finishing your [writing]...Don’t diminish the effect of a great [writing] with a bloated, aimless conclusion” (Rothwell 2000:376).

#### 2.3.4 The Transitional Paragraph

In writing, coherence is not paramount to only the paragraph. It is indispensable to the whole text since that will help to link up all the central ideas logically and sequentially and make the text more integrated and uniform. As already noted in sections 2.2.3.1 and 2.2.3.2 cohesive devices and transitional words and phrases can be used to link the ideas in the paragraph. A transitional paragraph can also be used for these linkages.

Sekyi-Baidoo (2000) says that this paragraph only provides links between parts of the text. It does not concern itself with stating points about the thesis. It rather shows the changes in the focus of the writer or the trend of the discussions and prepares the reader for the succeeding part of the discourse. These changes and preparations help the reader to understand the writer’s argument better.

Transitional constructions may not necessarily be full paragraphs. They may be placed between the previous paragraph and its succeeding paragraph to be able to provide the linkage between them. To Sekyi-Baidoo (2000), this is more like “the

*introductory paragraph* of the succeeding part of the essay. This part could be seen as a *mini essay* on its own. This is because the transitional paragraph contains the focus of that part of the essay, otherwise called the thesis. "It sometimes...goes further to list the various aspects to be discussed in the subsequent paragraphs (*plan*)" (158).

#### 2.4 Audience

Rivers and Temperly (1978) inform us that much of the concepts of language learned at school are from books. Even when we attempt to bring the oral language into the classroom, we end up producing stilted oral recitations of written forms of the language. To Rivers and Temperly (1978) writing is more abstract than speech and it becomes even more difficult to comprehend because it has no expressive features like facial or body movement, pitch and tone of voice and emotional indicators. It also lacks material context like physical surroundings and immediate feedback from interlocutors.

So, in writing, care needs to be taken to minimise the effects of vagueness and ambiguity.

The audience (reader) may be distant from the writer and both do not usually see each other. The reader waits somewhere in the future while the writer writes in the present. Writing is static and permanent and a piece of writing can be read as soon as it is written or months or even centuries later and it can be read and interpreted by many recipients in a diversity of settings.

All these make it imperative for writers to be concise and precise in their writing in order to achieve the goal of written language which to Richards (1999), is

to convey information accurately, effectively, and appropriately. To achieve this and to make up for the absence of the external contextual elements to writing, writers must employ exploratory details which speakers would omit. They should also include more complicated structures and a wider vocabulary in writing than they would in speech.

This means the writer has to develop a sense of audience by understanding who s/he is writing for, anticipating what the imagined reader already knows, and at what point in the discourse s/he needs to read it. By so doing, the writing will be more interactive than idiosyncratic. It will also be more purposeful, practical and imaginative and consequently, comprehensible to both the writer and the reader.

The audience, in reality, is the main target and one of the most indispensable parts of writing. Some writers, however, unknowingly overlook the audience in their writing and they consequently fail to impress them. This happens because the reader may find their works either too irrelevant to read or too technical to understand.

Those writers commit this blunder because they may not be aware of the influence of the paragraph on writing. They may not know that the paragraph controls the design of the whole discourse. They, probably, may not notice that as they write the paragraph they move back and forth between general and specific ideas and support the general idea with specifics and that through the paragraph the writer is provided with space to fulfil the promise of his/her ideas; and this is what writing is all about.

To solve this problem of some writers neglecting the audience, the process approach can be very useful. This usefulness stems from the fact that through the process approach the student/writer is given the opportunity to craft the writing

independently or in a group with very little control from the teacher/assessor. In this interactive environment, the student/writer will have the presence of mind to include the reader in the discourse since members in the group who will be co-assessors will prompt him/her, unlike the teacher who will just issue edicts to be carried out. Students/writers may also not have the funny feeling that they are writing for the teacher-assessor; the one who, unfortunately, only reads to identify errors, to evaluate, and perhaps to mark to assign a score but not to fish for information or seek entertainment as is done in the world outside the classroom.

### 2.5 The English Teaching Syllabus for the Basic School

As stated in Chapter One, there is a low level of concern for paragraph writing in Ghanaian schools. This is evident in even the WAEC's reaction to this lack of concern and also the lack of interest on the part of university language students to write about it in their dissertations and theses. This situation calls for a probe into the English Syllabus for the basic school, with particular reference to paragraph writing, to help us in our investigations into the problem of paragraph development at the JSS.

There are two syllabi for the Basic School: one for primary and the other for the JSS. Both state the importance of the English Language to education, work and other social life in Ghana for which reason it has become one of the major core subjects studied in Ghanaian Schools. Each of the syllabi has been divided according to the classes. They have been further divided into sections and the sections have been sub divided into units. All these divisions have been made according to how related the bodies of knowledge are.



### 2.5.1 The English Teaching Syllabus for the Primary School

According to Ministry of Education (2001a: ii), the general aims of the English teaching syllabus for the primary school are: to help pupils to

1. lay effective foundation that will facilitate learning the language at higher levels.
2. attain proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and writing English.
3. communicate effectively in English.

To be able to achieve these objectives, the syllabus has been prepared to integrate the receptive and productive skills of English in five sections which are listening and speaking, grammar, reading, writing and composition, and library work. In the syllabus, the suggested time allocation for English is ten (10) periods each of which is of an hour's duration. Out of this, three (30%) is for writing and composition. This is very commendable as writing, being a productive skill, demands a longer period of time to enable the student to have a good grasp of it.

The syllabus has 163 units altogether and out of this 34 (20.96%) have been allotted to writing and composition. This is a fair allocation since there are five sections involved and on the average, each section should be allotted 20% on a proportionate basis. Out of these 34 sections, paragraph writing has two (5.9%). This is rather unbalanced because when we look at writing generally and the paragraph specifically, we realise that all good writing hinges on the paragraph. This is so, for as we have seen already, the paragraph involves a lot of background knowledge and a good command of the technicalities in the language so it is such that by the time the student finishes learning about the paragraph, s/he would have finished learning

almost all that needs to be learnt about writing and composition. Considering this, the 5.9% slot given to the primary school pupil is hardly enough to enable him/her to achieve the aims set out in the syllabus.

Another blow is the length of exposure. According to the syllabus, the pupil gets exposed to paragraph writing only in primary five. Until then, s/he will be writing composition but without any knowledge of composing in paragraphs. This is a major set back to the pupil for, by the fifth year in school, s/he will be used to composing a text without thinking of its appropriate organisation. If it is at this time in the pupil's education that s/he is asked to compose the text in paragraphs, it becomes a challenge to him/her. This, coupled with the short exposure to paragraph writing at the primary school, may be a major reason why the JSS student is not able to write in good paragraphs.

According to the syllabus, paragraph writing appears in units 2 and 3 and the specific objectives for paragraph writing in unit 2 are that the pupil should be able to

- (i) write short paragraphs on given topics; and
- (ii) state main ideas in the paragraph (Ministry of Education 2001a: 108).

The syllabus defines a paragraph as "a group of sentences about one main idea." It goes on to say that "every paragraph begins on a new line [and that] a paragraph should have sentences about the same subject" (ibid 108).

The contents in this unit involve the writing of short paragraphs on given topics. On teaching and learning activities, the syllabus at pages 108 and 109 suggests that pupils should generate sentences around a topic through discussions; the pupils should be guided to reorganise sentences in a logical order in a paragraph; pupils should use connectives to join sentences; the pupils should be grouped or

paired and each member should write on a topic. The group should then put the sentences together to make a paragraph and consequently put the paragraph in good shape. Finally, the pupils should identify main ideas in paragraphs while working in pairs/groups. These activities are then to be evaluated with each pupil writing a short paragraph on a given topic and identifying the main ideas in short paragraphs.

Unit 3 deals with the combination of paragraphs. Its specific objective is to help students to combine paragraphs into full composition pieces. The contents involve combining sentences into short paragraphs and organising paragraphs into full composition pieces. The teaching and learning activities involve revising work on paragraph writing, and putting pupils in groups of three (3) with each pupil writing a short paragraph on a topic. The group should then arrange the paragraphs into a full composition piece. They will evaluate the work by each group writing a three-paragraph composition on a given topic.

The contents of both units are supposed to involve the topic and support sentences and coherence. However, the units do not cover much of the scope of the constituents of a paragraph. This may be due to the late introduction of the paragraph. The problems so far identified with paragraph writing in the primary school English syllabus are the bane of proper paragraph development at the primary level, so they defeat the general aims of the syllabus as spelt out in the preamble to this section. The reason for this assertion is that from the way the syllabus shows how the paragraph should be treated, an effective foundation for paragraph writing cannot be laid. This will consequently have a negative effect on students' writing at the higher level.

### 2.5.2 The English Teaching Syllabus for the JSS

At the JSS, the English syllabus "is designed to help pupils to:

1. develop the habit for reading
2. understand and derive information from materials read
3. communicate effectively in speech and in writing
4. develop the desire to create library materials" (Ministry of Education 2001b:

ii).

The content of this syllabus also has as its scope to integrate the receptive and productive skills in the teaching and learning of English in five sections [in the form of] listening and speaking, grammar, reading, composition, literature" (ibid: iii).

The suggested time allocation for English at the JSS is eight (8) and two (25%), out of this is allotted to composition. There are 93 units in the syllabus and 31 (28.8%) are for composition. Of the 31 units, only one (3.2%) has been allotted to paragraph writing.

According to the syllabus, paragraph writing is to be treated only at JSS one in unit 3 with the specific objectives meant to enable the pupil to

1. write a sentence on a given topic
2. arrange mixed up ideas and events in a logical order
3. combine paragraphs in a full composition (Ministry of Education 2001b:19).

The general objectives for composition at the JSS are that the pupil will

1. generate and organize ideas in logical sequence on specific topics
2. communicate ideas fluently and effectively through writing (Ministry of Education 2001b:18).

The syllabus, at page 19, gives the contents that are to be used to help achieve these objectives. They include the writing of short sentences on given topics, the rearrangement of sentences in a logical order, the writing of paragraphs from outlines, the supplying of links within the paragraph, and finally, the organisation of paragraphs into full composition pieces through the supply of links.

Some of the activities that the student will go through to be able to develop the contents include writing sentences on a central topic and arranging them in a logical order of ideas with connectives, to make paragraphs in full composition pieces.

By way of evaluation, students will arrange a group of mixed up sentences to make a logical paragraph, or compose paragraphs on given topics. They may also write a composition of more than four paragraphs on a given topic and orally state the main ideas in the composition. The teacher is to guide the students to analyse the paragraphs.

All these arrangements in the syllabus appear good but they are not very laudable. This comment is being made on the basis that the time allotted to paragraph writing at the JSS is too short and the contents are too shallow for that level. The situation is even worse with the brief exposure of students to just one unit at JSS One during the student's three-year stay at the JSS.

All the above arrangements are not in the interest of the JSS student for the following reasons: the JSS marks the student's final lap in his/her preparation for the first public examination in his/her educational pursuit. The written paper in this examination carries more marks than that of the objective so it will be necessary to help the student to sharpen his/her writing skills. The JSS is also the first exit point in

the student's formal education. So a student can accept to opt out of school after this level, learn a trade, where writing will not be learnt again, and settle to work.

However, his person may have to communicate in writing from time to time, especially when s/he becomes the director of his/her company. Under these circumstances, such a person will become handicapped where s/he did not get the opportunity to develop writing skills. To forestall any such unfortunate occurrence, students' writing skills, especially those relating to paragraph writing, have to be properly developed at the JSS level.

The syllabus serves as a guide. Consequently, the amount of knowledge the student gets from school is mostly determined by the content of the syllabus. It is based on this premise that we argue that the paragraph writing aspect of the basic school syllabus be highly improved so that the JSS student will be able to communicate much more effectively in writing than s/he is allowed to do in the current syllabus.

## **2.6 The Basic School English Textbooks**

There are many books on the teaching and learning of English at all levels in our schools. These books deal extensively with important topics like tense, concord, sentence formation, parts of speech and the like. However, paragraph writing appears to be dealt with at the highest levels in the school system since not much is found on it in the books for the lower levels. This situation may probably be due to the sequential arrangement of language learning in the order of listening, speaking, and reading with writing occupying the last stage. So the thinking may be that students

can only learn to write better at the tail end of learning the language thus paragraph writing receives attention at those higher levels.

When we look at the Ghana Education Service (GES) approved English course books for basic schools, *English for Primary Schools* and *English for Junior Secondary Schools*, we realise that paragraph writing is not given due attention. At the JSS levels, paragraph writing appears to be mentioned in passing. In the *Pupil's Book 1*, all that we read about the paragraph is as follows: "In the story, the first paragraph talks about the friendship between the tortoise and the partridge" (Adu et al 1999:11).

In the *Pupil's Book 2*, it receives mention in units 5 and 8. Unit 5 has the main heading, *Writing*, with the sub-heading, *Completion of a Paragraph (Short Story)*, followed by the instructions, "study the following paragraph very carefully. Then write two more paragraphs to complete it" (Adu et al 1993:35). In unit 8, the sub-heading of writing is, *Joining Paragraphs*. Then the paragraph is mentioned as follows:

You already know that a paragraph is made up of a sentence or sentences about one main idea. When we write a composition, we write in a paragraph. We have to join the paragraph one to the other to link the ideas and make the composition whole (ibid 1993:47).

These are all that we can find on the paragraph in the three books for the JSS as book 3 does not talk about the paragraph.

From the way paragraph writing is handled in these language course books at the JSS, it may appear that so much work has been done on it at the primary school. This is not the case. The approved course books used in the primary school do not

make mention of paragraphs. From these revelations, we realise that there is no coordination between the syllabi and the textbook writers for the basic schools, so far as paragraph writing is concerned.

## 2.7 The Teacher Training College

It may be assumed that the teachers who teach these students at the JSS have already been taught how to teach paragraph writing at the Teacher Training College, so they can make provision for it and teach it skilfully, even though the pupil's textbooks and syllabi do not say much on paragraphs. But this is not the case. Paragraph writing is taught at the SSS from where the students enter the Training College. Nevertheless, the content is not enough for them to use it to teach at the JSS; hence the expectation is that it will be taught extensively at the training college. However, it is only in the 2004/05 academic year when the certificate 'A' programme at the training college was changed to a diploma programme that paragraph writing was included in the newly introduced communication skills course.

The beneficiaries are now in the second year of their three-year programme so we are yet to see the impact of this newly introduced course on the trained teacher. But, for now, the current JSS students, and in fact, the educated Ghanaians are *taught* by teachers who were not adequately exposed to the skills of paragraph writing at the training college. For this reason, we shall base our assessment on this group. If the current crop of teacher-trainees graduate and start making inroads into teaching at the basic education level in Ghana, we can assess their impact after a reasonable time. From the various handouts prepared at workshops organized by the Ghana Education

we gather that at the training college, the methods of teaching composition taught to students include mechanical skills, controlled composition, guided composition and a little amount of process writing. These are off-shoots of the product approach to writing and they are not exhaustive enough, for they are genre specific. The effect of this is what is now happening to most of our JSS graduates: they are not capable of crafting their texts in good paragraphs.

## CHAPTER THREE METHODOLOGY AND DATA ANALYSES

### 3.0 Introduction

In chapter one of this dissertation, the objective was stated and some research questions posed, out of which some hypotheses were developed. We then examined various works on paragraph writing in chapter two. With the knowledge gained here, these hypotheses will be tested in this chapter.

The chapter looks at the population of the study, the sample that was taken, why it was taken and how the sampling was done. The data that were collected were then analysed.

The tools that were used to analyse the data and the methods, techniques and instruments employed in the analyses have also been considered. This exercise involved extensive analyses of teacher and student responses to the questionnaire administered, student arrangement of sentences in a jumbled paragraph and their responses to a take-home composition. Conclusions were drawn on the basis of the analysis with the aid of tables, graphs and statistical averages.

### 3.1 Sources of Data

The dissertation is on paragraph writing at the JSS in Ghana. Students enter the JSS from the primary school. In these days of wholesale promotion, all calibre of students are eligible to get there without any official mode of screening. It is at the end of this JSS that the student is tested at the BECE administered by WAEC on behalf of the GES. Based on the results of this examination, the student gets admitted

into a senior secondary school (SSS) or technical or vocational institute or learns a trade.

This level of education in Ghana is supposed to be the stage at which the student is to acquire a fair amount of basic practical skills. The rationale behind this is that, should the student opt out of formal education from here, the knowledge gained will help him/her to easily understand and do anything should s/he opt to learn a trade.

Since English is the official language of communication in Ghana and paragraph writing is an indispensable part of it; it has to be taught well at the JSS. The justification here is that the student will badly need it, especially when s/he is able to learn the trade well and set up on his/her own. In this case, should the trade demand that s/he communicate in writing, s/he will be obliged to do so. The paucity of knowledge in paragraph writing skills by such a person will gravely affect his/her performance and, accordingly, that of the organisation. It is for these reasons that the researcher has taken data from the JSS to enable him to determine whether the JSS graduate can overcome the task of writing in the near future.

The specific sources of data for the research were the students and English teachers from three junior secondary schools in the Kumasi metropolis. These schools are Martyrs of Uganda, Opoku Ware and State Experimental. They are similar but different in certain respects. Their similarities lie in the fact that they are:

- ❖ all in the Bantama sub-metro of the Kumasi metropolis;
- ❖ sited within the same vicinity (Martyrs and Opoku Ware are both situated at the Opoku Ware Secondary School compound while State Experimental is at Nhyiaeso, about one kilometre from Opoku Ware);

- ❖ all model schools; and
- ❖ well endowed with teaching and learning materials, good students, and upper and middle class parents.

Some of their differences are that they were established by completely different entities – Martyrs of Uganda by the Roman Catholic Church, Opoku Ware by Staff of Opoku Ware Secondary School and State Experimental, by government.

The major reason why these schools were chosen for the research is that it was not easy getting schools from which to collect the data. The cause is that the prospective researcher had to collect a letter from the sub-metro director and several channels had to be passed through to obtain it; so it was more convenient to collect it from one director. Since it was not easy to move from one end of the city to the other, it became more convenient when the three schools happened to be situated within the same vicinity.

Since all the schools are well endowed, it makes the sample representative and reliable enough. If the paragraph writing skills in these schools are so bad, it will be an indicator that our educational system is in a crisis and as such prompt remedial action will have to be taken by all stakeholders. On the other hand, if they should be so good, then further research will have to be conducted in the less endowed schools to find out how they can compare with the well endowed ones so as to help stakeholders know what action to take to address the problem if there should be any.

### **3.1.1 Martyrs Of Uganda JSS**

This school was established in 1987 in response to the dictates of the new educational reforms. Before its establishment, there was already in existence the

Martyrs of Uganda Primary School which, like the experimental schools, prepared students for the secondary schools through the common entrance examination. This JSS was founded and funded by the Roman Catholic Church with some amount of support from parents. This should have made it qualify to function as a private school but by the dictates of government, all junior secondary schools in existence as at 1987 became public schools, and Martyrs of Uganda accordingly became a public school.

It admits students directly from its primary school which is still private. Its current enrolment is 800. It has a teacher population of 34 with eleven of them being graduates, one diploma holder and the rest of them, post-secondary teachers. Of the number of these teachers, three teach English, one being a university graduate; another, a diplomate; and the other a post-secondary teacher.

Martyrs of Uganda is within the Ashanti Regional Education Directorate. This Directorate annually grades the schools within its jurisdiction. The grading is based on the school's performance at the BECE. Since the grading begun, Martyrs of Uganda has never fallen below the seventh position. For five consecutive years, the worst grade a student of the school had in English at the BECE was grade 2 and the worst aggregate a student has had since it was founded is 20.

### **3.1.2 Opoku Ware JSS**

The school started as a primary school in 1992 at the old annex dining hall of Opoku Ware Secondary School. It was established by the staff of the secondary school in reaction to the difficulties that they had in getting their wards to the Martyrs of Uganda Basic School which is situated on the same compound as Opoku

Ware Secondary School. In 1998, the first batch of students to the JSS section was admitted.

Even though it is a public institution which is managed by the GES, it is financed mainly by the parents. They put up all the buildings in the school and they continue to support the school with other facilities like library, books and even pay extra fees for tuition to motivate the teachers to give of their best to the students.

The school has an average class size of fifty. It has two hundred students and thirteen teachers, six of whom are university graduates, two diplomates, and five post secondary teachers.

The school's worst aggregate at the BECE is 15 and in English a good number of the students score grade one or two. Its worst position at the BECE in the Ashanti Region has been fifth.

### 3.1.3 State Experimental JSS

The school was founded in 1955 to cater for the wards of civil servants on transfer to Kumasi, so it was not open to the public. To enable it to serve this purpose effectively, it was situated at Nhyiaeso, behind the Regional Administration, where the bulk of the civil servants reside. It is a model school and by its status students pay higher fees than they do at other public schools.

It has a serene environment with neat magnificent structures to accommodate the students. Compared to Martyrs and Opoku Ware, State Experimental is the best resourced in terms of buildings and teaching/learning materials and it has the most spacious compound, where students can play and move about freely. It is also the only school among the three with dining hall facilities and a permanent kitchen staff.

With the introduction of the new educational reforms, the school became community based. This gave the heads the mandate to make admissions instead of the Metro Education Directorate which had direct supervision over the school and as such admitted pupils to the kindergarten and primary sections. This was when the fortunes of the school started to decline. It started recording bad grades at the BECE because all manner of students were then admitted and some of them, unlike their predecessors, engaged in delinquent behaviours like truancy, smoking and drinking. The pass rate at the BECE is now 91% instead of the hitherto 100% with the worse aggregate now being 18 instead of 13.

The number on roll is more than 500 with an average class size of 60. It has 20 teachers, three of whom are university graduates, three diploma holders, two specialists and twelve post secondary teachers.

### 3.2 Population and Samples

The target population for this research was all JSS students and teachers in Ghana. However, it would not have been possible to reach each member of this population, so a part of it, the JSS students and teachers in Kumasi, was selected. If each member of this sampled population was considered for the study, it would have been too difficult to manage. Therefore this sample of three schools was taken to help reduce the numbers to a manageable level. This sample was made up of twenty students and two English language teachers from each of the three schools.

The students were all chosen from the JSS 2 class. The rationale behind this choice was that since the teaching of paragraph writing ends in JSS 1, by JSS 2, the students would have had enough practice in it to enable fair observation and justified

comments to be made about their ability to develop the paragraph. Also, the JSS 3 students were too busy preparing for their BECE so it would not have been prudent to disturb them with issues of research. Besides this, it was safer to use the JSS 2 class since the students would be available for one more year to enable any follow-up work to be done, should the need arise.

Considering the target population and the target group, we can conclude that this sample is not representative in any respect. However, it will help stakeholders of education and prospective researchers into language to have an insight into what is happening to writing as regards organisation of ideas. It will then guide them to reconsider assessing the language situation properly and consequently finding out the amount of effort to put into salvaging it, should the condition be that bad, as the results will show.

### 3.3 Sampling of Students

The respondents were randomly selected under careful conditions so as not to influence the results of the research. In order to erase any possible prejudice against the researcher, no constraints were imposed on the selection of respondents. Through this each student within the selected group was given an equal chance of getting picked as a respondent.

In each school, the students were given an hour notice of the task ahead. They were shown a rendezvous and asked to converge there at an appointed time. The first twenty to enter had the opportunity of taking part in the exercise. Some students were very eager to participate and in order not to dampen their spirits, they were allowed to take part but unknown to them, their responses were not taken.

To encourage the respondents to give sincere responses to the questionnaire and tests, they were not made to write their names or anything that would give them out. This was also meant to prevent the researcher from getting influenced by names and other things which would invariably affect the results.

### 3.4 Tools for Data Analyses

The tools that were used to analyse the data included the product and process-focused approaches to language teaching and learning already discussed in chapter 1. Through these approaches, I got to know how far the teachers' methods of teaching writing affected the students' ability to develop the paragraph.

To be able to have a graphic view of the results obtained and also to easily evaluate them scientifically, statistical techniques were employed. These included the tabular and graphical presentation of the data collected, the use of percentages and the statistical averages of mean and mode to analyse and determine the levels of occurrence of the key issues needed in paragraph development in students' writing.

Through this the following were determined:

- i. the level to which students were able to develop paragraphs;
- ii. how the research objective could be achieved;
- iii. what answers to give to the research questions; and
- iv. whether the hypotheses could be true or not.

### 3.5 Data collection Methods and Survey Instruments

To enable the respondents prove their worth in developing the paragraph, the personal interview method in addition to the survey method of using a questionnaire,

a jumbled paragraph, and a take-home composition were adopted. This helped the researcher to have insight into the extent of student and teacher knowledge about the paragraph and students' ability to develop the paragraph.

### 3.5.1 Personal Interviews

Informal oral interviews were conducted to elicit information from the respondents. This method was employed to cater for those who might probably not be able to write with comprehension and yet not disclose this shortcoming and instead attempt to respond to the questionnaire. Upon this other questions, as well as questions in the questionnaire, were asked. These questions were based on the adequacy or otherwise of the allotted time for English, the duration of the JSS programme, and the history of the schools. The interviews were conducted before the questionnaire was administered and they took place at the staff common rooms and outside the classroom.

The general impression got from the interviews was that the time allotted to English at the JSS is very inadequate, and the official three year duration for the JSS programme is not enough for both teachers and students since teachers are not able to cover enough grounds and give more exercises as they may want to. Consequently, students do not gain maximum benefit from what they are supposed to be taught. This is aggravated by the fact that the JSS students write the BECE too early so they are not able to get even the three year tuition they require.

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### 3.5.2 The Questionnaire

A questionnaire seeks answers from respondents to a set of questions on a topic or an issue. It is better to use it when the sample has a large size since it spreads over a large area. Since my sample size was not too large and it was located almost within the same vicinity, it is likely that I did not need to use the questionnaire so I should have relied on the personal interview. However, it was necessary that I used it for obvious reasons. With it, I could cover all the informants within a short period of time. Also, those who felt shy to talk could conveniently write all they knew about paragraph writing, thanks to the anonymity provided by the questionnaire.

#### 3.5.2.1 Analyses of Responses to the Questionnaire

There were two separate sets of questionnaire administered, one for teachers and the other for students. For easy analyses and to aid comprehension of the analyses, the individual questions and a summary of the responses to each were taken one after the other and commented on, after which a general observation was made.

##### 3.5.2.1a Questionnaire for Teachers

The questionnaire for the teachers sought information on student problems in composition writing, paragraph development, and the methods that the teachers used in teaching composition. It also sought information on the remediation measures that could be taken to improve on these methods to help students write good paragraphs. A sample of the responses given to the questionnaire for the teachers has been attached as Appendix I.

**Question 1:** *What do you understand by composition in language learning?*

**Responses:**

- ❖ It is an organized piece of information given on a particular subject.
- ❖ It is continuous prose writing expressing views on an issue, event, etc.
- ❖ It is a piece of writing on a given topic by students to improve upon their skills.

**Comments:**

These responses, especially the last response, showed that JSS teachers knew what composition was.

**Question 2:** *What method do you use when teaching composition writing?*

**Responses:**

- ❖ Discussion method (spidergram)
- ❖ Guided method (substitution table)
- ❖ Role playing
- ❖ Group work
- ❖ Description
- ❖ Narration

**Comments:**

The guided method falls under the product approach to writing while discussion, role playing and group work can be associated with the process approach. Depending upon who is narrating or describing, the narrative and descriptive methods can be regarded as product or process. From the responses, we can deduce that the teachers are using both the product and process approaches to

teach the JSS Students. The use of these approaches is very ideal for they help the students to write good essays with distinct paragraphs.

**Question 3:** *What problems are associated with two of these methods?*

*Responses:*

*(i) Guided Method*

- ❖ It stifles the imagination since it does not give students the opportunity to imagine.
- ❖ Much of the work is done by the teacher so the learner does not do much original thinking.
- ❖ The learner just picks and joins sentences.

*(ii) Discussion Method*

- ❖ It is time consuming.
- ❖ Some students may not have enough information, so they may only depend on others for ideas and will not contribute to the discussion.
- ❖ Students who do not brainstorm become bored.

*(iii) Group Work*

- ❖ Only the good students contribute to the discussions.

*(iv) Role Playing*

- ❖ Students make a lot of noise and that affects its effectiveness.

*(v) Descriptive*

- ❖ Students find it difficult to use appropriate vocabulary.

**Comments:**

These responses show that the JSS teachers know the real problems inherent in these methods of teaching. So we expect them to find solutions to them to make their teaching effective.

These responses help, to a great extent, to achieve the objective of that part of the research which involves identifying the problems with the method of teaching paragraph development at the JSS.

**Question 4:** *How can you modify the two methods in question 3 to make them suitable for teaching and learning composition writing?*

**Responses:**

*(i) Guided method*

- ❖ Students should be allowed to combine their own creativity with teacher's guidance.
- ❖ Teachers should combine substitution table with spidergram to make it more activity based.

*(iii) Discussion*

- ❖ Students should be given the topic early to enable them to gather more facts.
- ❖ Weak students should be involved in the discussion, by the teacher asking their views on the topic being treated.
- ❖ Things should be planned in such a way that the topic would be handled in groups after which the entire class would discuss it before students write the essay in their exercise books.

*Comments*

These are good suggestions which when implemented will help students to write good paragraphs. These suggestions have helped me to achieve the objective of suggesting remediation methods to the problems affecting the teaching of paragraph writing.

**Question 5:** *What category of problems do your pupils face when writing composition?*

*Responses:*

- ❖ Poor paragraphing involving student inability to expand ideas and arrange facts in logical order;
- ❖ Lack of vocabulary;
- ❖ Poor sentence construction;
- ❖ Basic grammatical mistakes;
- ❖ Wrong spelling; and
- ❖ L<sub>1</sub> influence in the form of literal translation

*Comments*

The above shows that the problems of the JSS students permeate all spheres of writing, so immediate and proper solution should be found to them. From what we have here, it could be said that the objective of identifying the problem the JSS student faces with paragraph development has been achieved to a large extent.

**Question 6:** *What do you understand by paragraphing?*

*Responses*

- ❖ The arrangement of similar ideas in one column;
- ❖ The expansion of an idea in continuous writing;

- ❖ The collection of sentences on a given topic;
- ❖ Using a group of sentences to express a main idea; and
- ❖ Organising ideas on a topic such that each paragraph talks about a specific idea and also there is coherence in the presentation.

**Comments**

These responses show that the JSS teachers understand what the paragraph is so it is expected that they will teach their students well enough for them to be able to develop good paragraphs.

**Question 7:** *In what three ways is the paragraph important to composition?*

**Responses:**

- ❖ It helps in the build-up of facts;
- ❖ It helps the writer to switch from one fact to the other without difficulty;
- ❖ It helps the reader to capture thoughts expressed in subsequent paragraphs;
- ❖ It helps to distinguish one idea from the other as opposed to the jumble or writing of ideas en bloc;
- ❖ It helps in sequential arrangement of similar facts;
- ❖ It enables the learner to present ideas in a logical sequence;
- ❖ It helps the writer to give an orderly presentation of ideas;
- ❖ It enables the learner to organise his/her thoughts;
- ❖ It enables the learner to connect ideas in a coherent manner;
- ❖ It makes composition clearer and more understandable;
- ❖ Ideas are clearly explained; and
- ❖ It makes reading easier and simpler.

### Comments

These are responses that can guide teachers to pursue the teaching of paragraph writing. They also help to partially answer the research question: “Do both teachers and students know the importance of the paragraph?” It also partially defeats the hypothesis that *students and teachers do not know the importance of the paragraph to writing*.

**Question 8:** *How do you make pupils develop the paragraphs in their composition?*

### Responses

- ❖ By giving them assignments on topics;
- ❖ By discussing the topic with them in class;
- ❖ By helping them to list the ideas from the topic;
- ❖ By teaching them how to expand the topic sentences;
- ❖ By teaching them to use linking words to separate different ideas;
- ❖ By developing guidelines for them to write on the topic; and
- ❖ By encouraging them to add to what is given them as guidelines.

### Comments

These are very good procedures the teacher can adopt to teach paragraph writing. They will be very helpful to the student if the phrases *by helping them....* and *by teaching them....* do not mean the teacher does virtually everything for them, as it is done in guided composition. These responses help to tackle the research objective through suggesting ways of modifying the teaching methods after identifying the problems associated with teaching.

**Question 9:** *What remediation methods do you take when pupils are not able to write paragraphs as they should?*

**Responses**

- ❖ Individual attention is given;
- ❖ Occasional group work is used;
- ❖ Students are made to group information according to their level of relationship;
- ❖ Students are made to expand given facts;
- ❖ Students are given exercise in single paragraph development;
- ❖ Students are made to go through reading the composition paragraph by paragraph for class discussion; and
- ❖ The topic is again discussed with the class and developed through guided composition during which pupils provide only the appropriate facts.

**Comments**

These are good remediation methods and students are expected to benefit from them. They also provided concrete information which helped me to achieve the research objective.

**3.5.2.1b Questionnaire for students**

On student questionnaire, information was sought on students' knowledge of paragraph writing, the importance of the paragraph to them, and how they develop the paragraph. A sample of the responses has been attached as Appendix 2.

To make communication very effective, every rule of the language must be taken into consideration. For this reason, in the assessment of the student responses

to the questionnaire, every bit of knowledge expected from students was used to determine whether they were good at the language or not. Comments have been given on each set of responses.

The respondents were not given any options from which they were to select their responses. They were rather required to come out with their own responses. This was meant to test whether without any guide they could provide information on the paragraph. Of course, the researcher had it in mind that under such circumstances, individual students may come out with responses which may be different from or similar to that of other students in certain respects. Also since they were to provide the responses on the spur of the moment, they would write what may readily come into their minds. This means that some of them may not get all the expected responses. This would not necessarily mean that they did not know those facts which they did not provide. However, at their level, it is expected that they would be able to exhibit a reasonable amount of knowledge on the paragraph on the spur of the moment.

**Question 1:** *How do you normally write your composition in English?*

**Comments**

From the responses and the number of students to each response as shown in Table 3.1, it can be said that students know how to go about composition writing. With the exception of response C, "I write the composition," all the responses address the question.

It is encouraging that out of the 60 students under consideration, 32 being 53% of them could state on the spur of the moment that they study the topic while 31, which gives 51.7% state that they paragraph their work with 23, representing

38.3% stating that they plan the composition. Only 8 of the students, which represents 13.3%, stated that they write and explain the points and 17 which represents 28.3% simply stated that they write the composition. If these 17 students were given the opportunity to explain what they wrote, it is likely that they would have said that they explain the points which they write.

*Table 3.1 Table of Responses to Question 1*

	Responses	Number of Students Responding			Total
		Martyrs	Opoku Ware	State	
a.	I study the topic.	5	8	19	32
b.	I plan the composition	2	10	11	23
c.	I write the composition	8	6	3	17
d.	I write and explain the points	1	1	6	8
e.	I leave a paragraph.	10	5	16	31
f.	I write in appropriate vocabulary and tenses.	2	3	3	8
g.	I punctuate the composition.	2	2	0	4
h.	The teacher helps us to discuss the topic.	0	4	0	4
	<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>127</b>

Students' responses that they write in the appropriate vocabulary and tenses and also they punctuate the composition are indications that the students actually know how to write the composition. The number of students giving these responses is low anyway. The reason may be that most of them did not find it necessary to give these responses. If some of them have been able to give such responses on the spur of the moment, then the conclusion that students know how to go about their composition writing still holds.

**Question 2:** *Write what you know about the paragraph in composition writing.*

**Comments**

Although the responses given here are not many, the grand total of 66 is a good account of student knowledge of paragraph writing. The responses actually sum up what a good paragraph should be.

38.3% stating that they plan the composition. Only 8 of the students, which represents 13.3%, stated that they write and explain the points and 17 which represents 28.3% simply stated that they write the composition. If these 17 students were given the opportunity to explain what they wrote, it is likely that they would have said that they explain the points which they write.

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e. I leave a paragraph.	10	5	16	31
f. I write in appropriate vocabulary and tenses.	2	3	3	8
g. I punctuate the composition.	2	2	0	4
h. The teacher helps us to discuss the topic.	0	4	1	4
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>127</b>

Students' responses that they write in the appropriate vocabulary and tenses and also they punctuate the composition are indications that the students actually know how to write the composition. The number of students giving these responses is low anyway. The reason may be that most of them did not find it necessary to give these responses. If some of them have been able to give such responses on the spur of the moment, then the conclusion that students know how to go about their composition writing still holds.

**Question 2:** *Write what you know about the paragraph in composition writing.*

**Comments**

Although the responses given here are not many, the grand total of 66 is a good account of student knowledge of paragraph writing. The responses actually sum up what a good paragraph should be.

Table 3.2 Table of Responses to Question 2

	Responses	Number of Students Responding			Total
		Martyrs	Opoku Ware	State	
a.	It is a group of sentences that expresses one idea or thought.	4	11	20	35
b.	We leave a space (paragraph indicator) to begin a new paragraph	9	13	9	31
	<b>Grand Total</b>	13	24	29	66

**Question 3:** Explain three ways in which the paragraph is important to you in writing composition.

#### Comments

The responses to this question go to confirm those of question 2 that students actually know about the paragraph. A similar question was posed to the teachers in question 7 of their questionnaire. Their responses to that question corroborate that of the students. These revelations provide a positive answer to the research question as to whether students and teachers know the importance of the paragraph. It then negates the hypothesis that both teachers and students at the JSS do not know the importance of the paragraph to writing. With this discovery that both parties know about the paragraph and its importance to writing, we shall see from the take-home composition whether students are able to develop the skill of paragraph writing in practical terms or they still fail to do so as conjectured in the other hypothesis.

Table 3.3 Table of Responses to Question 3

	Responses	Number of Students Responding			Total
		Martyrs	Opoku Ware	State	
a.	It helps to break the composition down into different ideas	16	17	12	45
b.	It helps to explain ideas better.	2	7	5	14
c.	It helps to write meaningful composition.	7	8	14	29
d.	It makes the composition appear presentable and easier to read.	18	12	15	45
e.	Lack of paragraph makes composition appear to express one idea.	1	0	2	3
f.	It helps me to gain more marks for my composition.	5	10	0	15
	<b>Grand Total</b>	49	54	48	151

*Question 4: How do you develop your paragraph when writing composition?*

*Comments*

The responses given here were expected to be echoes of those in question 1 since the same principles apply to both composition and paragraph writing. However, contradictory responses were given to both questions. Almost all the students of State Experimental JSS (19) stated in question 1 that they study the topic while eleven (11) of them declared that they plan the composition. However, in answer to question 4, none of them could state that they consider the topic and the points to write. To question 1, (five) 5 students from Martyrs of Uganda JSS said that they study the topic while two (2) said that they plan the composition. However, we have eleven (11) students from the same school stating that they consider the points to write. No student from Opoku Ware JSS said so even though to question 1, eight (8) said they study the topic while ten (10) said they plan the composition. These discoveries make one wonder whether the students understood the questions and the answers they provided.

Since the students said in questions 2 and 3 that they know what the paragraph is and how important it is, we expected them to be able to show how they develop it. It is disheartening for only 26 representing 43.3% of the students to state that they leave paragraph indicators in writing their paragraphs. If no student from Opoku Ware and State could consider the points to write, how come that 10 which is 50% and 18 being 90% of each respectively could write and explain each of the points in a different paragraph while, ironically, only 2 that is 10% from Martyrs stated that they did so. From the contradictory manner in which students reacted to questions 1 and 4, can it be said that they understood the question? If they did

understand it, why then did they give such unreliable answers? In effect, it is doubtful that the questionnaire is a good way of getting genuine information from respondents.

*Table 3.4 Table of Responses to Question 4*

	Responses	Number of Students Responding			Total
		Martyrs	Opoku ware	State	
a.	I consider the topic and the points to write.	11	0	0	11
b.	I leave a paragraph indicator	10	8	8	26
c.	I write and explain each of the points in a different paragraph.	2	10	18	30
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>23</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>67</b>

**Question 5:** *In developing your paragraphs when writing your composition, what help do your teachers give you?*

**Comments**

From Table 3.5, fifteen (15) students from Martyrs, eight (8) from Opoku Ware and twelve (12) from State say that the teachers explain to them how a paragraph looks like. This number of students (35 representing 58.3% of them, in addition to the twelve (12) students from Martyrs) claiming that their teachers ask them to leave paragraph indicators, shows that the teachers have done fairly well. At Opoku Ware and State, two (2) and one (1) student respectively responded likewise.

Question 5 was very crucial to the study, for it was through the responses given here that the researcher could determine whether the student would be able to develop the paragraph properly or not. The responses here must confirm what the students gave for questions 1 and 4, in that the students are more likely to develop their paragraphs and essays based on what their teachers teach them than on what they can imagine. This question also acted as a confirmation test on questions 8 and 9 of the questionnaire for teachers. It was meant to test whether the teachers really

employed the methods which they claimed they used but they did not just write what they knew was supposed to have been done.

From Table 3.5, it can be said that on the other aspects of paragraph writing, it appears the teachers do not do much. Only one (1) student from Opoku Ware responded that the teacher asked them to provide linkages. Two (2) students from State and 4 from Martyrs also wrote that they were asked to raise important points, group them logically and support them with examples. No student from Opoku Ware wrote this.

A response which can create a problem for the students was the claim that the teachers provided them with points, examples, and vocabulary and went on to explain the topic to them. The number of students who gave this response (13) was not that many. It appears that the bulk of them, ten (10), comes from one school, Opoku Ware. However, if what they were saying was true, then the students were being spoon-fed. This would adversely affect their ability to develop the paragraph writing skills independently.

By their responses to questions 8 and 9 of the questionnaire for teachers, those teachers appear to claim that they gave adequate help to the students but the students' responses here negate this notion. The reason for this conclusion is that based on the responses from question 5, the methods which the students claim were being employed by the teachers in teaching paragraph writing could not help in proper paragraph development. This is a partial answer to the following research questions: "Are the skills of paragraph writing being developed at the JSS?" and "Can the methods currently used in teaching paragraph writing at the JSS help

students to write good paragraphs?" The actual truth will be determined through the feedback from the take-home composition.

Table 3.5 Table of Responses to Question 5

	Responses	Number of Students Responding			Total
		Martyrs	Opoku ware	State	
a.	They provide us with points and examples	0	3	0	3
b.	They provide us with vocabulary and teach us how to write sentences and expressions and also how to use tenses, verbs and punctuations.	0	2	2	4
c.	They explain the topic to us and help us to discuss the essay.	1	5	0	6
d.	They explain how a paragraph looks like.	15	8	12	35
e.	They ask us to raise important points, group them logically and support each of them with examples.	4	0	2	6
f.	They ask us to see to it that each paragraph contains a new view.	3	5	0	8
g.	They ask us to leave a reasonable space before starting a point.	12	2	1	15
h.	They ask us to write at least three paragraphs in a composition.	1	1	0	2
i.	They ask us to provide linkages in paragraphs.	0	1	0	1
j.	They go round to inspect what we are doing and direct us to do the right thing.	2	3	0	5
k.	They award marks to each paragraph	1	2	0	3
	<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>88</b>

Question 6: How many compositions have you written this academic year?

Comments:

This survey was conducted during the third term so the figures here are not commendable. With Martyrs of Uganda JSS, it is certain that the students have written 8 essays each since they all say so. At Opoku Ware JSS, the number may be 5 or 6 since 10 students in each case say so. As for State Experimental JSS, the students do not appear to know how many compositions they have written. It appears that each student merely guessed something to write. If the students of Martyrs and Opoku Ware should be relied upon based on their level of certainty, and if we should take their responses for our calculations, then up to the time of the survey, the

students had written about eight (8) compositions. This will translate into the mean of about three (3) compositions a term. This is very low and it may not be of much help to students in their efforts to develop paragraph writing skills.

Table 3.6 Table of Responses to Question 6

Number of Compositions Written	Number of Students Writing Composition			Total
	Martyrs	Opoku Ware	State	
15	..	+	+	2
12	..	+	..	2
11	..	+	..	2
10	..	+	..	4
9	..	+	..	1
8	20	..	..	20
6	..	+	10	11
5	..	+	10	12
4	..	+	..	1
3	..	+	..	1
2	..	+	..	4

#### Overview

The paragraph is not just about leaving paragraph indicators at the beginning of each paragraph. It is rather about the development of ideas contained in an essay. This implies that if students leave paragraph indicators but fail to develop each idea within the paragraph indicator, then that will not constitute a paragraph. It will just be a group of words beginning with a paragraph indicator.

Judging from the results so far, it appears that students see the paragraph more as a unit that expresses one idea developed in an essay than as "a group of words beginning with a paragraph indicator." This is evident in the summary of the responses to the questions in this section as shown in Table 3.7. It confirms the responses and comments to question 2. It is a healthy sign of the students' in-depth knowledge of the paragraph. From the results of the take-home composition, we shall see whether the students know so much about the paragraph in practical terms also.

Table 3.7 Partial Summary of Students' Responses to Questionnaire

(a) The Paragraph as a Paragraph Indicator

Question	Responses	Number of Students Responding			Total
		Martyrs	Opoku Ware	State	
1	I leave a paragraph	10	5	16	31
1	I leave a paragraph indicator	10	8	8	26
2	We leave a space (paragraph indicator) to begin a new paragraph.	9	13	9	31
4	They ask us to leave a reasonable space before starting a point.	12	2	1	15
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>41</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>103</b>

(b) The Paragraph as a Unit that Expresses One Idea

Question	Responses	Number of Students Responding			Total
		Martyrs	Opoku Ware	State	
1	I write and explain the points	1	1	6	8
2	It is a group of sentences that expresses one idea or thought.	4	11	20	35
3	It helps to break composition down into different ideas.	16	17	12	45
3	It helps to explain ideas better.	2	7	5	14
4	I write and explain each of the points in a different paragraph	2	11	18	30
5	They ask us to raise important points, group them logically and support each of them with examples.	4	--	2	6
5	They ask us to see to it that each paragraph contains a new view.	1	5	--	8
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>32</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>146</b>

### 3.5.3 The Jumbled Paragraph

The jumbled paragraph is a teaching learning activity in the process-focused approach to writing which is related to the drafting/writing phase. It is at this phase that the writer considers the overall draft of the composition by concentrating on the audience, the purpose of writing and the form the writing should take. With the jumbled paragraph, learners are given a list of jumbled sentences from a paragraph and they are asked to reorder them. This activity is used under controlled writing at

the primary school where all pupils are encouraged to organise their composition in one direction and in the same sentences. In effect, it should not have been employed at the JSS level. However, since students develop at different rates, the weaker students have to be catered for, hence its use at the JSS. The motive here was to give all manner of JSS students the chance to prove their worth in paragraph development. It was also meant to find out whether they had acquired the fundamental skills of paragraph development at the primary level before entering the JSS.

The paragraph consisted of nine short sentences. Students were required to reorder them in a sequential order. I enhanced this activity by incorporating some sentences that could not belong to this paragraph. Students were, first, to write these sentences separately before reordering those that belonged to the paragraph. The inclusion of these *stray* sentences was meant to find out whether students could actually identify related ideas in a jumbled context and arrange them logically.

Transitions were deliberately left out in the sentences. The reason is that the transitions would have made it too easy for the students to order the sentences. In their absence students would have to think critically to find out which sentence followed which. It is out of this that the students who can think logically can be determined.

The work was done in the classroom under strict supervision. The motive was to ensure that no discussions would take place between students so that the true picture of individual students having acquired the basic skills of paragraph writing could be painted. A copy of this paragraph has been attached as Appendix 3 and a student's solution to it has been added as Appendix 4.

### 3.5.3.1 Analyses of the Jumbled Paragraph

In this section we analyse each of the nine sentences in the jumbled paragraph to justify why it must occupy a particular position in the paragraph. In making the analysis, the process-focused approach has been followed. This is because the jumbled paragraph is an activity in the drafting/writing phase of the process approach. This exercise will help us to know whether the JSS teachers are making effective use of the process approach in teaching paragraph writing.

#### 3.5.3.1a The Topic Sentence

*I always envied being a member of the town library.*

Out of the nine sentences, it is this sentence which, in reality, carried the theme of the paragraph. "Enviied" is used here to mean that the writer was not comfortable for not being a member of the town library, so he was eager to become one. Upon critical analysis, we can say that the six sentences which will be analysed after this rather provide details that go to support the idea expressed in this topic sentence. This sentence also helps us to determine that two of the nine sentences are actually not related to the paragraph. This sentence leaves the following questions unanswered and those six sentences provide the answers:

- ❖ How did the writer react to this envy?
- ❖ What was the outcome of the reaction?
- ❖ What did the writer do to that outcome?
- ❖ Was it worth envying the town library?

### 3.5.3.1b The Support Sentences

There are six support sentences in the jumbled paragraph. Out of these the students were expected to show their understanding of why the writer came out with that topic sentence. The reason for this is that they provided palpable evidence in the form of actions taken by the writer as a result of the envy, the results of the action and whether the writer received positive results to his envy. This paragraph being a narrative, the details of the events are provided through these support sentences.

#### *Support Sentence 1*

*I talked to my class teacher about it.*

This sentence tells us the step the writer took in reaction to the envy, out of the several options left to him/her. It answers the question: "How did the writer react to this envy?" This is the more reason why it follows the topic sentence directly.

#### *Support Sentence 2*

*He encouraged me to be a member.*

In this sentence, we are told about the response that the writer got with regard to the step that s/he took with reference to his/her envy. It provides an answer to the question: "What was the outcome of the writer confiding in the class teacher?" These make this sentence logically follow support sentence 1.

#### *Support Sentence 3*

*I collected a registration form from the library and filled it.*

In this sentence, we learn about how the writer also reacted to the teacher's response. It helps to answer the question: "How did the writer react to the teacher's response?" This is why this sentence must be support sentence 3.

*Support Sentence 4*

*I sent the form back to the library and I was registered.*

This sentence is a sequel to the writer's immediate reaction to the teacher's response. It provides more information on the response, that is to say, the writer did not collect the form for keeps but returned it. Since the library form is not for keeps but has to be returned to get registered after filling it, the sentence that should logically follow support sentence 3 is this sentence.

*Support Sentence 5*

*The library had only torn unattractive books.*

From support sentence 4, the writer has now registered with the library so s/he can borrow books. S/he probably does so and finds, to his/her dismay that the library is filled with torn books. So the question is, "Was being a member of the town library so enviable to merit the registration?" The obvious answer, "no", can be derived from support sentence 5.

*Support Sentence 6*

*My parents had a lot of books on our shelves.*

This support sentence intensifies the writer's disappointment at envying to be a member of the town library and going ahead to register with it. It raises questions like, "Was it worth envying being a member of the town library? Was it worth all the effort at getting registered at the town library? Would it not have been better staying at home to read the parents' books on the shelves?" After the revelation in support sentence 5, the sentence that can best conclude the paragraph is *support sentence 6*.

### 3.5.3.1c The Unrelated Sentences

Out of the nine sentences, seven talk about the library. Based on this we can say that the paragraph is about the library. The two other sentences below do not say anything about the library or even books:

- (i) *There were a few of us children in the house; and*
- (ii) *My friends liked only sports but not reading.*

One is about the number of children in the house and the other is about friends who liked sports but not reading.

Even though the library is about reading, the sentence is not related to the library. The two sentences are therefore out of place. For this reason, they cannot be placed anywhere in the paragraph.

### 3.5.3.2 Analyses of Student Responses to the Jumbled Paragraph

This section of the dissertation analyses the re-arrangement of the jumbled paragraph by each of the students in the three schools. For easy analysis and interpretation, the scripts of each school have been numbered from 1 to 20 and the responses have been codified in jumbled paragraph analysis tables. This table helped to determine how best students were able to arrange sentences logically in a paragraph.

The table is made up of 17 columns and 23 rows for each school. The first column, labelled *s*, represents the individual students who took part in the exercise. Column *t* represents the topic sentence which is, *I always envied being a member of the school library*. The next seven columns, *r1* to *r7*, indicate the seven sentences that

should form the paragraph. These sentences are rearranged according to which position they must occupy in the paragraph. The arrangement is as follows:

- ❖ Sentence r1: *I always envied being a member of the town library;*
- ❖ Sentence r2: *I talked to my class teacher about it.*
- ❖ Sentence r3: *He encouraged me to be a member;*
- ❖ Sentence r4: *I collected a registration form from the library and filled;*
- ❖ Sentence r5: *I sent the form back to the library and I was registered;*
- ❖ Sentence r6: *The library had only torn unattractive books;*
- ❖ Sentence r7: *My Parents had a lot of books on our shelves.*

Column *ca* is for the total number of sentences that students could place in their proper positions and logically arrange in the paragraph. Sentences that belonged to the paragraph and were duly put in the paragraph but were wrongly placed in their arrangement are named as P1, P2, P3 ... to indicate that they were misplaced at position 1, 2, 3 ... In columns *u1* and *u2*, the sentences that did not belong to the paragraph were noted. Column *u1* is for the sentence: *There were a few of us children in the house.* and *u2*: *My friends liked only sports but not reading.*

Column *ms* took care of sentences that were misplaced by individual students. These were sentences that should have been in the paragraph but were not put there or those that could not be part of the paragraph but were placed in it. Each of these sentences was replaced by a cross (x) at where it ought to have been in the analysis table. The position which each of these sentences wrongly occupied in the paragraph is indicated in brackets against it in the *ms* column. For example, *u1* (t) means sentence *u1* was treated as a topic sentence by the student, *u2* (1) means



Table 3.8 shows that Martyrs of Uganda did very well in responding to the jumbled paragraph. It was only one student whose performance was too poor. S/he scored three (3) representing 30% of the ten responses with two other students making the average score of five (5) that is 50% each. The school's pctr of 76% is very commendable.

### 3.5.3.2b Responses from Opoku Ware JSS

Table 3.9 also shows Opoku Ware JSS doing very well. In any case three students scored 30% each, one student 40% and another one 50%. However, the school eventually had a pctr of 71.5% which is not far different from that of Martyrs.

Table 3.9 Responses to Jumbled Paragraph - Opoku Ware JSS

s	T	t1	t2	t3	t4	t5	t6	t7	ca	u1	v1	v2	ms	o	tot	pctr
1	v	X	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	X	0	v	v	v	2	r7	3	30
2	v	v	v	v	v	v	X	X	5	v	v	v	2	r6(u), r7(u)	8	80
3	v	v	v	v	v	v	X	X	5	v	v	v	2	r6(u), r7(u)	8	80
4	v	P3	X	P1	P3	P4	P2	X	0	v	v	v	2	r6(u), r7(u)	3	30
5	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	X	6	v	v	v	2	r7(u)	9	90
6	v	v	v	v	v	v	X	X	5	v	v	v	2	r6(u), r7(u)	8	80
7	v	v	P4	P3	P2	P6	P3	X	1	v	v	v	2	r7(u)	4	40
8	v	v	v	v	v	v	X	X	5	v	v	v	2	r7(u)	8	80
9	v	v	v	v	v	v	X	X	5	v	v	v	2	r6(u), r7(u)	8	80
10	v	v	v	v	v	v	X	X	5	v	v	v	2	r6(u), r7(u)	8	80
11	v	v	v	v	v	v	X	X	5	v	v	v	2	r6(u), r7(u)	8	80
12	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	X	6	v	v	v	2	r7(u)	9	90
13	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	X	6	v	v	v	2	r7(u)	9	90
14	v	v	v	v	v	v	X	X	5	v	v	v	2	r6(u), r7(u)	8	80
15	v	v	v	v	v	v	X	X	5	v	v	v	2	r6(u), r7(u)	8	80
16	v	v	v	v	v	v	X	X	5	v	v	v	2	r6(u), r7(u)	8	80
17	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	X	6	v	v	v	2	r7(u)	9	90
18	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	X	6	v	v	v	2	r7(u)	9	90
19	X	v	v	v	v	X	X	X	4	v	X	1	s2(u), r7(u)	r5, r6	5	50
20	v	X	P4	X	P1	P2	P3	X	0	v	v	v	2	r7(u), r7(u)	3	30
Σ	19	17	16	16	15	5	0	85	20	19	39	31	4	143	71.5	
pctr	95	85	80	80	75	25	0	60.7	100	95	97.5	22.2	2.9	71.5		

### 3.5.3.2c Responses from State Experimental JSS

State Experimental JSS, as shown in Table 3.10, put up a disappointing performance in the jumbled paragraph in spite of their laudable responses to the questionnaire. They had a pctr of 39.5. There were three students who had only one



### 3.5.3.3 Observations

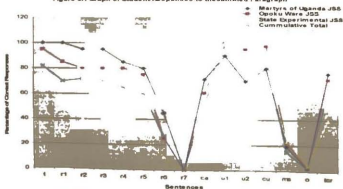
#### Comments

From Table 3.11 and Figure 3.1, we can deduce that the students did well to identify the topic sentence, sentences r1 to r5 and u1 and u2. Sentence r6 was poorly managed and strangely enough, no student could get sentence r7 correct. Not many of the sentences were misplaced or omitted anyway. But for sentence r7, the graphs for Martyrs and Opoku Ware and also that of the cumulative total would have been very close to becoming a straight line. With the cumulative pter of 62.3, we can say that students, of at least these two schools, are good at managing jumbled paragraphs.

Table 3.11 Jumbled Paragraph Analysis Table - Cumulative Scores

	t	r1	r2	r3	r4	r5	r6	r7	ca	u1	u2	cu	ms	o	tot	ptcr
Martyrs	20	20	19	19	17	16	9	0	100	18	14	32	27	3	152	76
Opoku Ware	19	17	16	16	16	15	5	0	85	20	19	39	31	4	143	71.5
State	10	5	8	7	6	5	2	0	33	20	16	36	32	6	79	39.5
Cumulative Total	49	42	43	42	39	36	16	0	218	58	49	107	90	13	374	62.3
Pc	81.7	79	71.7	70	65	60	26.7	0	51.9	96.7	81.7	82.2	15	2.2	62.3	

Figure 3.1 Graph of Student Responses to the Jumbled Paragraph



### 3.5.3.3 Observations

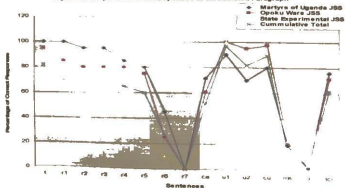
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	t	r1	r2	r3	r4	r5	r6	r7	ca	u1	u2	cu	ms	o	scr	pctr
Martyrs	20	20	19	19	17	16	9	0	100	18	14	32	27	3	152	76
Opoku Ware	19	17	16	16	16	15	5	0	85	20	19	39	31	4	143	71.5
State	19	5	8	7	6	5	2	0	33	20	16	36	32	6	79	39.5
Cumulative Total	49	42	43	42	39	36	16	0	218	58	49	107	90	11	374	62.3
Pc	81.7	70	71.7	70	65	60	26.7	0	51.9	96.7	81.7	82.2	15	2.2	62.3	

Figure 3.1 Graph of Student Responses to the Jumbled Paragraph



From the topic sentence to sentence r6, Figure 3.1 shows the students of State performing far below Martyrs and Opoku Ware. It is only sentences u1 and u2 that they could identify so well. Table 3.12 and Figure 3.2 clearly depict the abysmal performance by State Experimental in the jumbled paragraph as already specified in the comments to Table 3.10. In spite of this, from Table 3.12 and Figure 3.2, it can be noticed that students generally did very well in responding to the jumbled paragraph.

From the cumulative total, 23 representing 8.3% scored up to 50%. This is low enough to merit the above commendation. For now the belief is that the JSS students know what the paragraph is and they are good at reorganising the jumbled paragraph. From this it can be presumed that they would be equally good at developing paragraphs in an essay.

#### *Overview*

Even though the students performed generally well in responding to the jumbled paragraph, it is worth commenting on their enigmatic response to sentence r7. Not even one student could identify it as belonging to the paragraph. One of the attributes of the paragraph is logical reasoning. It is through this that the writer will be able to discern the appropriate explanation to give to the central idea in the paragraph.

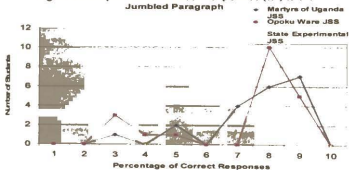
From the sentences in the jumbled paragraph it can be deduced that the writer yearned to be a member of the town library. When he eventually became a member, he discovered, to his disappointment, that the books that his parents had were better than the library books. If the students were not able to make these deductions and support the central idea with sentence r7, then it indicated that the JSS students had a

problem with reasoning. This hypothesis can be tested in further research to determine its validity. For now, we shall examine how the students handled paragraph writing in the take-home composition.

Table 3.12 Total Correct Responses to the Jumbled Paragraph

Percentage Score	Number of Students				Cumulative Total
	Martyrs	Opoku Ware	State	Total	
10	--	--	3	3	3
20	--	--	3	3	6
30	1	3	6	10	16
40	--	1	--	1	17
50	2	1	3	6	23
60	--	--	1	1	24
70	4	--	1	5	29
80	6	10	3	19	48
90	7	5	--	12	60

Figure 3.2 Graph of Total Correct Responses (tcr) to the Jumbled Paragraph



### 3.5.4 Take-Home Composition

The students were given an essay with the topic: *Describe your school in about two hundred words*. They were to send it home, write and submit it the next day. Asking them to write the essay at home was meant to give them the benefit of the doubt that they had not learnt much about paragraph writing, so they could read about it and use the information to develop the essay. Another assumption was that

they would have the opportunity to go through the process approach to come out with good essays.

Asking them to submit it the next day was meant to make them sit up and work fast. If they were given too long a time, they might procrastinate and eventually present shoddy work, or they might succeed in getting somebody to write for them. A copy of a student's essay has been attached as Appendix 5.

The essays were analysed in the following manner. Students' ability to provide the theme and give various topic sentences that related to it was looked at. The support sentences that students gave for the topic sentences were also looked at. Unity and coherence in the essays were then examined and finally the decision was taken as to whether the paragraphs were adequately developed. This analytical procedure was based on the requirements of good paragraph development as discussed in chapter two of this dissertation.

The results of the analysis are shown in Table 3.13 and Figure 3.3. From the table and the figure, it can be seen that the students did very well to provide the theme for the essay and also provide topic sentences and support sentences for the paragraphs. The scores were almost the same in the three schools.

However, the students could not develop the paragraphs with unity and coherence. On unity, they could not stick to one point as expected. They would begin with one idea and end with another. They would also leave a paragraph indicator after one or two sentences as if to start a new paragraph and end up developing the same idea from the previous paragraph in this new paragraph. Some of them also wrote the essay in a jumbled manner. They would begin an idea, follow it up with an

explanation to a different idea, and develop the already mentioned idea elsewhere.

This made most of the essays difficult to read and understand.

The students failed to realise that organisation is crucial to even oral communication which is presumed to involve a spur-of-the moment action. Pal (1984) stresses this importance in his comments on the essentials of oral communication as follows: "If the speaker has given a proper thought to his message, he will be able to arrange the various ideas contained in it in their logical sequence. Jumbled ideas create confusion ... logically arranged ideas make the message forceful" (Pal: 1984, EC-44).

Paragraph coherence in the student essays was equally appalling. The sentences and ideas were not clearly and logically linked; previously mentioned ideas were not referred to; and cohesive devices and transitions were not used to connect the ideas. This lack of coherence in the paragraphs made the reading of the students' essays appear jerky. So it was difficult to follow the train of thought to be able to understand what they were writing about. It came out that only a student each from Martyrs and State could write his/her essay with coherence while five from Opoku Ware were also able to do that.

This inability to write with unity and coherence explains why the students were not able to handle sentence r7 effectively in the jumbled paragraph. The assumption has now been confirmed that students cannot organise paragraphs logically.

The question demanded that students write the essay in about two hundred words. The philosophy behind this was that the students were to be prompted so that they would not end up writing too much about their school. Again, it was believed

that at their level, they were used to writing short essays, so giving them that word limit would help to set their minds at ease. In any case, most of them wrote, on the average, between 250 and 300 words.

With this violation of the word limit, it was expected that the students would be able to develop their paragraphs adequately since they had a lot of room to operate. However, it was never the case. They could not provide enough details to make their points clear. There were a lot of one and two-sentence paragraphs which did not contain enough to explain what the students meant.

In assessing adequate development the researcher overlooked the students' deficiency in unity and coherence. The sentences that were related were, however, identified no matter where they were placed in the essay, whether they followed each other closely in the essay or not. This aspect was handled this way because the students had already proved by their illogical handling of sentence r7 in the jumbled paragraph that they were not able to identify easily the sequential relationships in support sentences in a paragraph. The concern here then was whether students could provide support sentences themselves, irrespective of where they placed them in the composition.

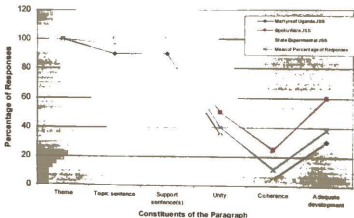
In their responses to questions 8 and 9 of the questionnaire, the teachers claimed that they helped the students to "list the ideas on the topic and expand them [with] linking words ... group the information according to their level of relationship [and then] expand given facts." In spite of this assertion the students were not able to write coherent and adequately developed paragraphs. Students may not always do what they are taught but the poor performance by almost all the students under consideration goes a long way to cast doubt on the veracity in the claims made by the

teachers. This revelation brings to the fore one deficiency in the questionnaire that “the informants do answer all the questions but their answers are not precise and relevant” (Pal 1984: OC-84). So it is likely that the teachers wrote what they knew they had to teach but not what they were actually teaching.

*Table 3.13 Analysis of Take-Home Composition*

Constituents of the Paragraph	Student Responses			Percentage of Responses			Mean of Percentage of Responses
	Martyrs	Opoku Ware	State	Martyrs	Opoku Ware	State	
Theme	20	20	20	100	100	100	100
Topic sentence	18	20	20	90	100	100	96.7
Support sentence(s)	18	20	20	90	100	100	96.7
Unity	7	10	7	35	50	35	55
Coherence	1	5	1	5	25	5	11.7
Adequate Development	6	12	5	30	60	25	46.7

Figure 3.3 Graph of Student Responses to the Take-Home Composition



### *Comments*

It is also likely that the teachers did provide this help but they used an inefficient approach. From their responses to question 2 of the questionnaire, the teachers used both the product and process approaches to teach composition. The students' responses to question 5 of their questionnaire, however, indicated that the stress was more on the product approach than on the process. This may then be the reason why the students were not able to develop their paragraphs so well. In effect, the product approach is not so helpful to students in paragraph development. This discovery brings up another likely area for research, that is, whether the process approach can be more effective in paragraph development or a new approach has to be devised to teach paragraphing at the JSS.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

A problem which is of very grave concern has been identified in this chapter. It begins with both teachers and students providing relevant answers to the questionnaire to prove that they know what the paragraph is and also the level of its importance to writing. The teachers claimed that they knew how to teach paragraph writing and they did teach it but the students exhibited that the teachers did not do as they claimed. The performance in the take-home composition goes to support the stand of the students. So who is telling the truth?

In any case the students were able to respond to the jumbled paragraph very well, except for the placement of one logical sentence, sentence r7, which eluded them. Martyrs of Uganda JSS and Opoku Ware JSS excelled in their responses to the jumbled paragraph while State Experimental JSS flopped.

Thus, one would have thought that the students would generally do well in the take-home composition. Unfortunately, as shown above, all the three schools performed badly. The performance by Martyrs of Uganda JSS was just as appalling as that of State Experimental JSS even though Martyrs performed better than State in responding to the jumbled paragraph. This was in spite of the lenient manner in which the assessment was done. If the rubrics of paragraph writing were strictly followed in assessing the students, Table 3.13 and Figure 3.3 would have shown rather disturbing figures and corresponding uninspiring curves.

How did it come about that the students knew about the paragraph and could give positive responses to a jumbled paragraph but they could not develop good paragraphs on their own? As noted in section 3.2, the three sampled schools are among the elite schools in the Kumasi Metropolis and they have the state-of-the-art teaching/learning resources which the majority of schools in the metropolis lack. If this is how they have performed, then what will be the performance of students from the less endowed schools? This is the puzzle which all stakeholders of education must find answers to.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### CONCLUSIONS

#### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the key issues raised in the dissertation. In the main, it is about the reasons why the JSS students are not able to develop effective paragraphs and how useful this research will be in trying to solve the problem. It also looks at how beneficial this research will be to various stakeholders of education.

#### 4.1 The JSS Student's Inability to Develop the Paragraph

As narrated in section 1.4.1 of this dissertation, formal education, and for that matter, writing, has been with us since the 14<sup>th</sup> century. With this lengthy presence of writing in Ghana, one would have thought that the Ghanaian student would be adept at writing, especially at paragraph writing. Unfortunately, the reverse is the case, at least at the JSS, as we have seen in chapter 3. There are several factors that account for this. They include: lack of attention to writing at the basic school, late introduction of paragraph writing, limited exposure of students to paragraph writing, superficial content of syllabi and textbooks, and the use of inappropriate teaching methods. These are dealt with one after the other in the subsequent sections.

##### 4.1.1 Lack of attention to Writing

As explained in paragraph 1.4.2, writing is not given the attention it deserves even though at the end of a student's education, s/he would be awarded a certificate primarily based on the assessment of what s/he may write. The lack of attention has

come about probably due to the fact that one's academic competence is generally determined through what one is able to say at a point in time but not what one is able to write. It may also be due to the fact that, pedagogically, writing is made to occupy the last stage in the language learning process. Hence, psychologically, both language teachers and learners may have the funny feeling that writing is not so much a pressing issue in language learning and as such it can wait.

This notion is then consolidated by even textbook writers and syllabus designers who stress grammar and mechanics to the detriment of the other components of writing, especially organisation and syntax. The WAEC puts more premium on content, expression and mechanics than it does on organisation.

If the WAEC would put equal emphasis on assessing the components of language, syllabus designers and textbook writers may put the appropriate premium on the various aspects of writing and language teachers would be forced to teach writing as they do the other aspects of language. Through this, the larger community would begin to assess one's academic abilities not through speech alone but writing as well. All these actions would then go a long way to help students to write good paragraphs.

#### 4.1.2 Late Introduction of Paragraph Writing in Schools

From section 2.5.1 of the dissertation, we learn that school children are first exposed to paragraph writing late, at primary 5. By this time, they would already be writing composition but apparently with no knowledge of paragraph writing. When paragraph writing is eventually introduced to them, they obviously become confused.

Should paragraph writing be introduced earlier at the lower primary, students are more likely to excel in writing at the JSS.

#### 4.1.3 Limited Exposure of Students to Paragraph Writing

With students being exposed so late to paragraph writing in their course of study as shown above, one would have thought that they would be given ample time to study paragraph writing to enable them to recover the loss. Unfortunately, this is not the case. From primary 5, when the student is first exposed to paragraph writing, up to JSS 3 when s/he writes the BECE, s/he has fifteen terms of study. Out of these fifteen terms, s/he is given three terms, being 20% of the total, to study paragraph writing. The total number of periods allotted to English at both the primary and JSS is 18. This is made up of one hour per period. Out of this, five (5), which translates into 27.8% of the total has been allotted to writing but given the five divisions of English in the syllabus, each division should have been given 3.6 periods, that is 20%, on the average.

These allocations appear good for paragraph writing because the student has ample time to be exposed to writing. However, few units of study are allotted to this time. From the 256 units of study for English at the basic school, writing has been given 65 being 25.4% of the total. This far exceeds the 20% average for each division of English. However, paragraph writing has been allotted only 3 units which is 4.6% of the 65 units for writing and just 1.17% of the total of 256 units. This is too little. The effect here is that these few units, coupled with the superficial content of paragraph writing in the syllabus as stated in section 4.1.4, will not help the student to learn much within that time. Ultimately the same few items will be repeated over

and over to waste time. Teachers can do well to make up for the deficiency in the syllabus by proactively adding more units to paragraph writing and treating more aspects of it as well, so that the time will not be wasted as it is being done now.

#### 4.1.4 Superficial Content of Syllabus and Textbooks

According to sections 2.5.1 and 2.5.2 of the dissertation, the following are the aspects of the paragraph which are taught at the basic school: topic sentence, support sentences, coherence, re-arrangement of jumbled sentences in a logical order, writing paragraphs from outlines, and supplying of links within the paragraph.

When we look at what generally goes into the paragraph, as explained in Chapter 2, we can say that the contents of the basic school syllabi are no where near what the JSS graduate, especially the one who may opt out of formal education at that level, is supposed to know, as explained in section 2.5.2.

From section 2.6, we also see that the basic school textbooks do not deal adequately with paragraph writing. Paragraph writing does not appear in the primary school books and it is given a cursory mention in the JSS books. Even where the syllabus specifies the class where paragraph writing must be taught, the textbook for that class may not mention it, and when it is mentioned, it does not receive enough attention.

If the basic school syllabi and textbooks are revised to treat paragraph writing to suit the demands on the JSS graduate, and if the contents of these materials are properly synchronised, it will go a long way to improve the paragraph writing skills of the JSS student.

#### 4.1.5 Inappropriate Teaching Methods

The primary school syllabus stresses the process approach to teaching paragraph writing. From sections 3.5.2.1a and 3.5.2.1b, we observed that teachers know of this approach to teaching but they rather use the product approach.

Children are imitative so the product approach which amounts to imitating prefabricated patterns of writing may appear to be good. It must, however, be noted that children engage in a lot of social intercourse, even in their imitation ventures. It is this interactive tendency in them which makes the process-based approach a better option to use to teach paragraph writing at the basic school than the product approach.

Further research should be conducted into the process approach, as well as alternate approaches to confirm whether the product approach is scientifically less viable in teaching paragraph writing at the JSS in Ghana as we have discovered in the research.

#### 4.2 Implications of the Study to Education in Ghana

In chapter 3, we discovered that JSS students and teachers know what the paragraph is. They also know its uses to writing, and the demands expected to be fulfilled in writing the paragraph. Chapter 2 also revealed that students ought to have finished with all they needed to know about paragraph writing by the end of JSS1. The contents of the basic school syllabi include the jumbled paragraph. However, when the sample of the population was given a jumbled paragraph to work on, as shown in chapter 3, the responses were not impressive enough even though from the personal interviews conducted, they had done exercises on that at primary six.

Students' performance on the essay was also far below the acceptable standards, even though the responses to the set of questionnaire showed that they had been taught paragraph writing. The jumbled paragraph is an activity in the process approach. With students doing so well in it we can presuppose that they will do well in writing the composition. The responses from the questionnaire indicate that they did not exploit this approach to the hilt. Can we then say that should the students be taught through the process approach they would be able to develop the paragraph very well? These observations are very critical to JSS students, language teachers, educational policy makers, syllabus designers and textbook writers. Many of the implications to language learning have been given in section 1.10 and a few will be added here.

#### 4.2.1 The JSS Student

In education, the student is at the centre of affairs. This means that the student will directly suffer any adverse consequences of educational misadventure. In effect, the student is ultimately going to suffer the side effects of bad paragraph development. With what the study has brought to the fore about the inability of the JSS student to develop the paragraph, all stakeholders need to devise better means of helping the student to develop the paragraph so that his/her education will be complete.

#### 4.2.2 Language Teachers

The study shows that even though language teachers may not have done much about paragraph writing at the training college, they know much about the

paragraph and how to teach it to help the student to be able to develop it. What they probably do not know is the method to use at a particular point in time and its viability at that material time. From the study, we discover that the teachers are using mainly the product approach in teaching paragraph writing. The researcher recommends the use of the process approach. If teachers should heed this recommendation, the JSS student will stand to benefit.

#### **4.2.3 Educational Policy Makers**

The assumption has usually been that the student's problem with language is mainly in the area of mechanics, grammar and expression. Consequently, that is where much of the effort made to solve the language problem has been geared towards. This is probably the reason why there is profuse research work in that field in our universities. Even WAEC focuses much of its attention on these. The study makes a case for organisation too. It reveals that however relevant a point and no matter how good the language in which it is written, if it is not properly organised, the writer will fail to deliver. This is what makes it so important for educational policy makers to formulate policies that will strike a balance between expression/mechanics/grammar and organisation so that students will have a holistic development in language study.

#### **4.2.4 Syllabus Designers**

The study reveals that the paragraph writing aspect of the basic school syllabi was designed without due regard to student's needs at the end of the JSS programme.

This approach has made the syllabi too shallow to be of significant help to the JSS graduate.

With this revelation, syllabus writers will see the need to determine who and what they are designing the syllabus for, so that they will be able to tailor it to suit the needs of the user. This then calls for an urgent revision of the current basic school syllabi as regards paragraph writing.

#### 4.2.5 Textbook Writers

From the findings of the study, I daresay that the basic school textbooks are not of much use with respect to paragraph writing. They ought to have been written according to the dictates of the syllabi. However, with reference to paragraph writing, the books do not synchronise with the dictates of the syllabi. This is detrimental to the student's ability to develop writing skills. This assertion is based on the fact that the teacher who is not resourceful and relies solely on the text book will have no stuff to teach with. In another light, where the teacher is resourceful but s/he is not able to easily get relevant materials to work with, s/he will not be able to teach effectively.

Armed with this information, textbook writers should do well to write to suit the dictates of the syllabus to avoid any disharmony between their books and the dictates of the syllabus. This will help the teacher and the student to have good reference materials to work with.

#### 4.3 Observations

Throughout this research, we have been able to determine that what has generally appeared to be an ordinary phenomenon, that is, students' inability to develop effective paragraphs, is in reality a canker that hampers language learning so it demands a concerted effort from all stakeholders to be able to overcome it.

Individuals whom I talked to about my research also felt that the JSS was too low on the educational ladder and as such not much should be demanded of its products. From the outcome of the study, we learn that the JSS level is as important as even the university degree level when it comes to paragraph writing. The defence here is that since the JSS can be a terminal point for the student, just as the university degree is also a terminal point, at the end of the day, when both graduates become heads in their respective organisations and they write in connection with their businesses, the two write-ups will be graded from the same perspective. These two graduates may not be present at the grading. Also they may not add information on their education to the write-up to help the recipient to treat them from different perspectives. This is why the JSS student has to learn so much.

All these observations go to prove that this dissertation is very relevant to language learning. If its results are rigorously implemented, they will go a long way to help in language development, especially in the area of writing.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Sample of Responses to the Questionnaire for the Teachers

Department of Linguistics

University of Ghana

Legon

26<sup>th</sup> May 2005

To all Respondents

Dear Sir/Madam,

Request for Respondents to Questionnaire

I am conducting research into paragraph writing at the Junior Secondary Level. To make the research detailed enough, I count on you to respond to the following questionnaire.

You are assured that in connection with this questionnaire, your identity will not be revealed at any forum. By this promise, kindly provide true responses to enable the research reveal the true state of affairs.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

*Signed*

JOSEPH KOFI BOAKYE

(Researcher)

## QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What do you understand by composition in language learning?  
 Composition is the expression and organisation of ideas about something, somebody or a particular issue.
2. What methods do you use when teaching composition writing?  
 Discussion, narrative, description
3. What problems are associated with two of these methods?  
 With discussion method, some pupils do not contribute to the discussion.  
 With the descriptive method the pupils find it difficult to appropriate vocabulary.
4. How can you modify the two methods in question 3 to make them suitable for teaching and learning composition writing?  
 The discussion method could be planned in such a way that the topic is handled by in groups after which the entire class will discuss it again before they write it into their exercise books.  
 With the descriptive method,
5. What category of problems do your pupils face when writing composition?  
 The pupils usually face have problems with L1, literary translation, spelling and tenses.

What do you understand by paragraphing?

Paragraphing refers to the act of organizing ideas about a particular topic in such a way that each paragraph talks about a specific idea and that there is coherence in the presentation.

7. In what three ways is the paragraph important to composition?

- 1) Paragraphing is necessary because it enables the learner to organise his thoughts in logical sequence.
- 2) It enables the learner to present facts and ideas in logical sequence.
- 3) It enables the learner to connect the various ideas in a coherent manner.

8. How do you make pupils develop paragraphs in their composition?

I usually give the topic to my pupils in the form of assignment. They write the facts and ideas in the form of a jam.

We discuss the topic in class and based on the discussion, I develop guide lines for them to write about the topic. They also encourage them to add any relevant information they may have.

What remediation methods do you take when pupils are not able to write paragraphs as they should? When pupils are not able to write about the topic, I discuss the topic with the class again and develop it in the form of a guided composition where pupils will only provide the appropriate facts and thoughts.

## Sample of Responses to the Questionnaire for the Students

## QUESTIONNAIRE

Department of Linguistics

University of Ghana

Legon

26th May 2005

Respondents

Dear Sir/Madam,

## Request for Responses to Questionnaire

I am conducting research into paragraph writing at the Junior Secondary School level. To make the research meaningful enough, I count on you to respond to the following questionnaire and exercises.

You are assured that, in connection with this questionnaire and exercises, your identity will not be revealed at any forum. By this promise, kindly provide true responses to enable the research reveal the true state of affairs.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

Yours

STEPH KOFI BOAKYE

Researcher

## QUESTIONNAIRE

1. How do you normally write your composition in English?

Before I start the whole composition, I plan the work by thinking of the points to enable my composition to be easier for me to write. First I think of the body of the essay and also the conclusion not leaving the introduction. I divided the whole essay by paragraphing the

2. Write what you know about paragraph in composition writing.

I know that paragraph is a group of words in a sentence form which expresses an idea.

And also I know that before you start to write a sentence in let's say composition you would have to leave a space before you write what you are about to write.

3. Explain three ways in which the paragraph is important to you in writing composition?

1: The paragraph is important to me in the way that it makes my work neat, because I leave a paragraph before writing any group of words with a point. So you can see that my work is not mixed up.

2: Also, it makes it easy for me to detect any mistake I've made during the writing because they are in paragraphs and it is not mixed up.

3: Furthermore, it makes it easy when reading and you understand it clearly.

4. How do you develop your paragraphs when writing composition?

In developing my paragraphs, I leave a small space before writing and in each paragraph there is a point and I explain it further for clear explanation.

5. In developing your paragraphs when writing your composition, what help do your teachers give you?

In developing my paragraphs, my teachers tell me to leave a small space before writing. And in order not to mix up my points about the given topic in the composition I am writing, I have to bring each point in a paragraph to make it easy to read.

6. How many compositions have you written?

3 in the year? ~~2~~ I have written 3 academic year.

Appendix 3

Copy of the Jumbled Paragraph

Test 1

Some of the following sentences do not belong to the group of sentences.

i. Identify such sentences and group them separately without ordering them.

ii. Identify the topic sentence.

iii. Rearrange the rest of the sentences in a sequential order.

a. I collected a registration form from the library and filled.

b. The library had only torn unattractive books.

c. I talked to my class teacher about it.

d. My friends liked only sports but not reading.

e. My parents had a lot of books on our shelves.

f. I sent the form back to the library and I was registered.

g. He encouraged me to be a member.

h. There were a few of us children in the house.

i. I always envied being a member of the town library.

Test 2

Describe your school in about two hundred words.

Appendix 4

Sample of Solutions to the Jumbled Paragraph

Test 1

- b. There were a few of us children in the house.
- d. My friends liked only sport, but not reading.
- e. My parents had a lot of books on our shelves.

f.

ii. The topic sentence is: (i) I always envied being a member of the town library.

iii. I always envied being a member of the town library.

c. I talked to my class teacher about it.

g. He encouraged me to be a member.

a. I collected a registration form from the library and filled it.

f. I sent the form back to the library and I was registered.

b. The library had only very unattractive books.

## Sample of Responses to the Take-Home Essay

Describe your school. 200 words  
asic is the

Name of my school is Santasi near U. W. Nare school. The school was established by the Government of Ghana. It is a Catholic and also a Goverment school. It consists of the lower primary, primary and J.S.S. My school is a school.

Opeku Ware Basic school is a two (2) storey building built with blocks and bricks also containing eighteen classrooms, a staff room, a roam, a headmaster's office, a principal's office and also a library. There is also a canteen where pupils buy foods and also eat them and the school is having a store room where basic things like cutlasses and rooms are kept.

The school is painted green and yellow. It uses blackboards. The school has many desks ranging about five-hundred in number. The school is now having a very large compound. The front view of the school is decorated with concrete work. The school is having a football field where sports and trainings are organized.

My school is very disciplined because we are guided by rules and regulations. There are thirteen teachers. The number of the students is one-hundred and eighty.

Academically, my school is among the best schools in our area because there are no failures in the final examinations.

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DEVELOPING PARAGRAPH WRITING SKILLS

AT THE JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL:

A CASE STUDY OF THREE SCHOOLS

IN THE KUMASI METROPOLIS

JOSEPH KOFI BOAKYE

THIS DISSERTATION IS SUBMITTED TO THE

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON,

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IN

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ABSTRACT

Paragraph writing is a *sine qua non* to writing. This premise is based on the fact that however laudable one's ideas may be, and however good the language in which the ideas are crafted, if these *laudable ideas* are poorly organised in that language, they will not be effective.

Often, paragraph writing is underrated so it is not given due attention by teachers, textbook writers and syllabus designers who are major stakeholders of education. With the paragraph being indispensable to writing, it is necessary for it to be given a great deal of attention at the JSS since students may opt to terminate their education at that level.

To help the JSS student to acquire adequate skills in paragraph writing, the process approach concept should be adopted since this concept views writing as an on-going activity involving several phases. This approach does not only focus on the final work, but also on helping students to be skilful at all the phases of writing.

To be able to achieve the objectives of a research work, all available means should be exploited to make respondents answer the research questions well. To attain this in this dissertation, the methods of interview, questionnaire, jumbled paragraph and a take-home composition were adopted. Through these methods it came out that the JSS students have difficulties in developing good paragraphs because they have limited exposure to paragraph writing. This stems from the fact that syllabus writers, text book writers and teachers do not pay attention to it.

Both teachers and students confirmed that they knew much about the paragraph. However, due to the wrong methods of teaching students could not write effective paragraphs. This confirms the view that if knowledge is wrongly imparted, it cannot be effectively used.

It is envisaged that when all stakeholders play their roles as expected in the development of the paragraph, it will go a long way to help language development and education generally, especially, in the area of writing.

*DECLARATION*

I hereby declare that except for reference to other people's works which I have duly acknowledged, this dissertation is the result of my own investigations under the keen supervision of Prof. L. Akosua Anyidoho (Department of Linguistics, University of Ghana). All the shortcomings of the work are completely mine.



**JOSEPH KOFI BOAKYE**  
(CANDIDATE)



**PROF. L. AKOSUA ANYIDHOHO**  
(SUPERVISOR)

*DEDICATION*

To Ama Ago,  
my unlettered mother,  
for her love  
for modern education.



To Mercy,  
my wife,  
and Akwasi, Adomako, Asiama and Serwa,  
my children,  
for their affection  
for me

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*ABBREVIATIONS*

BECE –Basic Education Certificate Examination

CRDD –Curriculum Research Development Division

GES Ghana Education Service

JSS – Junior Secondary School

MOE Ministry of Education

SSS - Senior Secondary School

TED – Teacher Education Division

WAEC – The West African Examinations Council

## CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 Introduction

The paragraph forms a very important component of a written text (refer to figure 1.1). This component, though so important, does not receive as much attention in teaching writing as the others. Consequently, many students do not know as much about the organisation of paragraphs as they should in real terms.

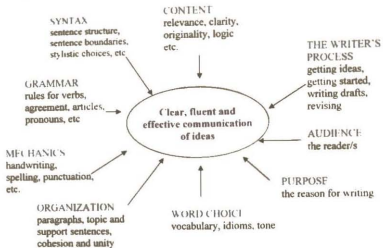
For us to understand what paragraph writing entails, we shall first look at some dimensions of writing in this chapter. We shall then continue with issues related to the dissertation, including the problem of teaching paragraph writing in Ghanaian schools, the approaches that can be used to tackle the problem, the objective of the dissertation, the research questions to be answered, the hypotheses of the research, and the significance of the study.

### 1.1 The Concept of Writing

Writing is defined variously as follows: "A piece of literary work done: a book, article, etc." (Allen 1990:1417); "the art of symbolising particular forms of speech by means of particular visible marks" (Bloomfield 1961:401); "the graphic representation of sound combinations" (Rivers and Temperly 1978:262); "a system of human visual communication using signs and or symbols that are associated by convention with units

of language – meanings or sounds – and are recorded on the surfaces of such substances as paper, stone, clay or wood” (The New Encyclopædia Britannica 2003:774).

Figure 1.1 Components of writing



Source: Johnson and Johnson (1999: 344)

As mentioned already, even though writing is very important in the language learning process, it is not seen and treated as such. This may be due to various reasons. One major problem that writing faces in pedagogy and academia is that because it is a productive skill and occupies the final stage in the language learning process, the majority of language users do not use it. This happens because most people become complacent when they are able to listen and understand the language and they are also able to speak and be understood. In addition, most languages are not in writing yet they are used effectively in communication. This fact does not motivate some people to learn to write.

The next problem is that writing does not develop naturally. It has to be artificially taught, so it is burdensome to learn. This makes the student frustrated and ill-motivated when faced with the added task of consciously writing in paragraphs. This is one of the reasons why paragraph development is poor among students, especially at the junior secondary school (JSS) level.

As Crystal (1995:178) states, writing, though the latest skill to be developed in the language learning process, has held a prominent position for centuries now. It has been a major medium of literature and also a source of standards of linguistic excellence. Since writing is not as transient as speech, it creates permanence for a language. It also provides a source of authority on rules of grammar which are so much revered by users of the language. This makes it very necessary for would-be scholars to learn writing.

In addition to all these, the student learns to read the written language and again reads to learn what is contained in the written language. This is how writing enhances learning. Dead languages like Latin and ancient Greek are learnt through writing even though we do not hear them being spoken. Also in learning a foreign language, most of the learning material, be they rules and overview, or even tape recorded dialogues that are given to the student, can be found in writing.

When the student gets the understanding that these features make "good writing skills essential to academic success and a requirement for many occupations and professions" (Richards 1999:100), s/he will surely be serious with writing and, of course, with paragraph writing. For the writer to be able to communicate a message effectively, s/he must have "knowledge of the conventions of the written code, the precision and nuances which derive from a thorough understanding of the

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syntactic and lexical choices the language offers. [For the writing to be interesting, the writer must have] the ability to vary structures and patterns for rhetorical effect" (Rivers and Temperly, 1978:263).

For the good writer to achieve this, s/he must join Harmer (2003:255) in the understanding that the written text has its own grammar and vocabulary and that "issues of letter, word, and text formation [are] manifested by handwriting, spelling and layout and punctuation."

### 1.2 Writing in Ancient Times

Yule (2004) states that historians are not definite with the time writing began in the world. This is due to the fact that it has not been possible to get information on the writings of ancient times from the rubble of the ruins of ancient cities. These rubbles are not able to tell the story properly because most of these supposed writings are pictures on clay tablets, rocks and caves. Graphologists find it difficult to determine whether these graphic expressions were mere artistic images or writing symbols. These are the gaps that need to be filled and the ambiguities that need to be straightened. What guides the graphologist to decide whether these artefacts have linguistic value or not is the way they are arranged.

According to Crystal (1995:196), when the picture or symbol combines into a recurring system to a point when it can be taken to mean that it portrays accepted values which are "conventional and institutionalised, capable of being understood in the same way by all who are using it," then it can be called writing.

Yule (2004) attempts a date at which writing began. He says that "we may trace human attempts to represent information visually back to ... at least 20,000

years ago." He, however, signals that the writings at that time could be better described as ancient precursors of writing [and that] writing which is based on some kind of alphabetic script can only be traced back to inscriptions dated around 3,000 years ago" (ibid 9). This presupposes that writing has undergone some kinds of metamorphoses. The changes can be properly understood by looking at what we mean by writing systems.

### 1.3 Writing System

From Collinge (ed.) (1990:701) we learn that, "a writing system is a way of writing a language." That is to say, it is a "given set of written marks together with a particular set of conventions for their use." In effect, a writing system is not just a representation of any graphs. It is rather the representation of graphs that are interpretive. In our search for acceptable writing systems, we can give consideration to two main dimensions. They are formal and functional.

#### 1.3.1 Formal Dimension

In looking at writing as one of the stages of learning a language, we must note that most languages are only spoken and they do not have any written form. Most of those that are in writing were put into writing not long ago. In any case, in places like Mesopotamia, China and Egypt, writing has been in existence for centuries now.

Also it is not writing which determines the form of a language. Writing is just one of the means by which language is recorded. It is at this level that writing takes the formal dimension. This record can be taken in many diverse and acceptable



ways and any language which is in writing appears in one or more of these. Some of these means of recording language are pictogram, ideogram, logogram, phonographic, syllabic, alphabetic and shorthand.

### 1.3.2 Functional Dimension

Writing is used in language to perform several functions. The major one is graphic communication, which is widely done through orthography in alphabetic writing. Here it can serve as evidence of successful learning or, as in paedography, as a means of learning. As Richards (1999:100) puts it, writing can “guide the process of understanding and organising ideas during reading or listening.” Another function is that it can be used in organised institutions to protect information from others through sophisticated information security systems with the aid of cryptography. Also, it may be used by people in specialised fields to perform functions effectively through technography. These and other writing systems like stenography, paedography and metagraphy, have been devised to make it easier to communicate in writing.

### 1.4 Writing in Ghana

Even though the literacy rate in Ghana is not so high, writing is used in so many ways, especially for official correspondence, and in schools. Many educated Ghanaians are interested in the written matter and they appreciate good writing. Therefore it is useful to look at the history of writing in Ghana and how writing is treated.

#### 1.4.1 The Emergence of Writing in Ghana

It is not clear, exactly when writing started in Ghana and the type of writing system which was used by the earliest inhabitants of Ghana. Since writing goes with formal education, it is likely that writing started in Ghana with the introduction of formal education from North Africa into the country in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Wilks (1962:3) says that "the movement of Wangara Groups into Ghana ... appears to have begun ... in the late 14th century, during the reign of Mansa Sulaiman." He continues that members of these groups were Moslems and "within this Wangara setting, Islamic learning took root in Ghana" (ibid: 5). Wilks helps to prove that Arabic writing existed in Ghana, at least before the 18<sup>th</sup> century. A Danish trader in Christianborg, Accra, testified that the Danish "received many Arabic books at Accra, which the Ashantis had plundered in an invasion of Dagomba in 1744-5."

The work by a Gonja, al-Hajj Muhammad Ibn Mustaphā, *Isnadu 'l-shaykh wa 'l-ulamā* (*The Chain of Tradition of the Shaikhs and Learned Men*), written in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, also shows that already there existed a well developed tradition of Arabic scholarship in Ghana during the period. It gives "an account of the conversion of the ruling house of Gonja to Islam in C.1585, and provides a ... chronicle of the major events in Gonja history through the 17th ... century" (ibid).

Arabic writing was used in Ashanti in the Moslem schools and in the eighteenth century it came to be used in the Asantehene's palace. "It has been noted that treaties were apparently being drawn up in Arabic in as early as the middle of the century" (Wilks 1975:344). "In the nineteenth century, the Asantehenes came increasingly to conduct their business in writing: in Dutch to Elimina, in English to

Cape Coast, and in Arabic to provincial rulers and imams of the northern hinterland

(ibid: 40). An extract of such writing in Arabic is shown in plate 1.

Plate 1 An Extract of the Asantehene's Writings in Arabic



Source: Wilks (1975: Plate VII)

McWilliam and Kwamena-Poh (1978:17) intimate that western education came to Ghana when “the first real attempt to help [some] children read and write (in Portuguese)” was made in 1529 by the Catholics in the Elmina Castle. This castle was seized by the protestant Dutch in 1637 so obviously reading and writing in Ghana had to be done in Dutch. The Danes established themselves at Christianborg Castle in the second half of the 17th century and it was not until 1722 that they opened their first school. In 1751 the English opened their first school at the Cape Coast Castle.

Western education made inroads into the northern parts of Ghana very late.

The first government schools were opened in Tamale and Kumasi in 1909. By then, the French Catholics, from Ouagadougou, had opened a school at Navrongo in 1907.

Throughout all these periods, there was no attempt to write the vernacular of the people until between 1600 and 1602 when J. P. Marees, a Dutch, compiled a vocabulary of the Fante and Ga-Adangbe languages.

#### 1.4.2 The Writing Situation in Ghana

As is usual with almost all languages, writing occupies the last stage in the language learning process, and writing in Ghana has followed the same trend. Looking at the development of formal education in Ghana, through which writing was formally introduced in Ghana, we realise that the schools were not opened immediately the settlers arrived. They first interacted with the people until months, and in some cases, years after, before the schools were opened to pave way for writing.

From the history we also discover that learning took place, in various languages, at various stages, until the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the English completely took over the administration of Ghana. It was then that English became the official language of Ghana and thus was used in all Ghanaian schools. Consequently, writing in English has become very essential to Ghanaians.

As evidenced by the output of Ghanaian students in class these days, it can be concluded that in Ghana, the standard of writing in English continues to fall. This has been of grave concern to all stakeholders. Unfortunately, the concern is tilted more towards grammar and mechanics than the other components of writing, especially

organisation and syntax. This makes it appear as if when writers can write very good grammar, spell their words correctly and punctuate their writing correctly, then they are on course. But this is an oversimplification since all the other components of writing come together to create a "clear, fluent and effective communication of ideas" (Johnson and Johnson 1999:344).

This neglect is evident even in the way the organisation of writing is handled by examiners of the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) which is the official examining body at the JSS level. The WAEC English language paper consists of an objective paper and a written paper. Obviously the objective paper does not require any writing so organisation cannot be considered. In the written paper, candidates are required to write two compositions, each carrying thirty marks. Out of the thirty marks, ten marks go for content, fifteen marks are meant for expression and mechanics and only five marks are allotted to organisation.

The chief examiners' reports are filled with profuse comments on expression and mechanics while comments on organization are few and they do not suggest remedies to the problem of organisation as they do to the other components. It is not surprising then, why both teachers and students do not pay much attention to organisation, and for that matter, paragraph writing, in their lessons.

### **1.5 Statement of the Problem**

Most student dissertations deal with language use and it is amazing to note that there is no dissertation on the organisation of writing in the Linguistics Department of the University of Ghana. This is so in spite of the fact that writing is a compulsory course for undergraduate students in most departments at the university,

and even at the master's degree level, writing is a course on the TESL programme.

This attitude of students and that of the WAEC towards paragraph writing makes it appear as if there is no problem with it or probably it is not very important. This is the more reason why I chose to study this area of writing.

#### **1.6 Scope of Study**

This dissertation looks at paragraph writing at the JSS level by focussing on paragraph structure, topic sentence, paragraph unity, coherence and adequate development. It also delves into the methods of developing a paragraph through exemplification, narration, cause-and-effect analysis and comparison and contrast. The rationale behind the focus on the JSS is explained in the Abstract, paragraphs 9 and 10 of Section 2.5.2 in Chapter Two and paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of Section 3.1 in Chapter Three.

#### **1.7 Research Objective**

The objective of this research is to identify the real problems students at the JSS level face in developing paragraphs and to suggest how they can be remedied.

This objective will be achieved through the following means:

- ❖ by identifying the problems with the methods of teaching paragraph writing at the J.S.S. and suggesting ways of modifying them;
- ❖ by determining students' level of knowledge of paragraph structure and the methods they use to develop the paragraph;
- ❖ by analysing students' exercises to determine their problems with paragraph development; and

- ❖ by recommending solutions to the problems.

### 1.8 Research Questions

The following research questions have been considered in the dissertation:

- ❖ Do both teachers and students know the importance of the paragraph?
- ❖ Are the skills of paragraph writing being developed at the JSS?
- ❖ Can the methods currently used in teaching paragraph writing at the J.S.S. help pupils to write good paragraphs?

### 1.9 Hypotheses of the Research

In answering the theoretical questions, the following hypotheses were tested:

Both teachers and students at the JSS do not know the importance of the paragraph to writing, this is why they fail to develop the skill of paragraph writing.

The results of the test were that

- (i) students and teachers at the J.S.S. know the importance of the paragraph to writing and that they make conscious efforts to develop the paragraph. However, they fail in this attempt because they still rely on the traditional techniques of controlled and guided writing. Some of these techniques are copying, substitution tables, matching, blank filling, jumbled sentences, and sentence completion, all of which fall under controlled writing while questions, sentence combining, parallel writing and re-writing come under guided writing:

(ii) due to this deficient approach to the teaching, students are not able to produce well structured paragraphs which have the qualities of unity, coherence and adequate development.

#### 1.10 Relevance of the Research

The study will be of great importance to the JSS student, language teachers, educational policy makers and textbook writers. From the findings, these stakeholders will realise that language learning does not only involve listening, speaking and reading. It includes writing also and that the learner's ability to write effectively will help him/her to be judged as having a good command of the language.

They will also get to know that writing is not just calligraphy. It is rather about the proper arrangement of words to make meaning, and about the grouping of sentences that express similar ideas into paragraphs. A pupil can communicate effectively in the language if s/he has the knowledge and skills to do so. With this knowledge, stakeholders are likely to give the necessary recognition to paragraph writing and treat it seriously.

Since the application of inappropriate methods of teaching has brought about the inability of most JSS students to write cogent paragraphs, this study will help most language teachers to see the need to modify their methods of teaching writing. Educational policy makers will also be informed through this study, that there is a serious problem with writing and so there is the need to tackle it with the seriousness that it deserves.

In the student's educational pursuits, s/he is evaluated at all levels through writing. This means that the student who knows the subject matter but is not able to communicate it through writing fails. In the formal sector, matters of policy and other crucial issues are put into writing. If this writing is not properly done, we can guess the adverse consequences. It is for these reasons that policies that favour writing have to be formulated so that students will be properly taught, for them not to make unnecessary mistakes when they later get appointed to responsible positions.

Writers of language textbooks, especially at the beginner and intermediate levels, concentrate mainly on the mechanical skills of grammar, spelling, and punctuation and give only a cursory attention to how to organise writing for the reader to understand. This is dangerous to learners for it can make them conclude that writing means merely putting down words and sentences. With this mentality, they may end up not being able to write good paragraphs in their essays and this may gravely affect their future. The problems outlined in this research will go a long way to guide textbook writers and syllabus designers to revise their work to include the organisation of writing.

### 1.11 Approaches

The study seeks to determine whether paragraph writing is being properly developed at the JSS. In the learner's attempt to harmonise the conventions of writing to communicate in an appropriate manner, errors are bound to occur because s/he learns new standards and experiments with new structures which s/he finds in reading. The learner is also used to speech which is extemporaneous and as such the speaker has no chance to rethink and organise what s/he wants to say. In

consideration of this, the right method has to be used to guide learners to use the proper structures and functions of written language and the linguistic and social conventions that affect their use of written language.

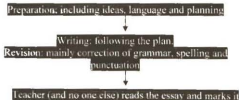
Two main approaches, product and process, can be adopted in the teaching and learning of writing. I intend to analyse these approaches to determine which of them will be more relevant to the development of the paragraph.

### 1.11.1 Product Approach

The product approach is a traditional approach to writing which sees writing as a linear process, as shown in figure 1.2, where the subject matter is treated in stages with one stage directly following the other. Each stage becomes a final stage after the teacher has explained how the stage works and checked the student's draft for errors.

To the product approach, writing is a polished product which focuses "on students recording and documenting their learning rather than gaining insight or elaborating knowledge through the writing process itself" (Ruddell 1997:170).

*Figure 1.2 Writing as a Linear Process*



*Source: G.E.S. (1996. II)*

This then does not give the student the chance to produce drafts. Students have "to produce proper texts that will conform to their institutional writing or

personal writing" (Richards 1999:106). In this manner, teaching of writing is reduced to a set of formulas so the means to the creation of the writing is neglected.

To make the approach workable, the teacher emphasises practice in producing different kinds of texts and learners are prevented from making errors with punctuation, spelling, grammar, syntax, etc. and even good handwriting and capitalisation are stressed at the initial stages. Students are rather provided with prefabricated techniques through controlled and guided compositions which they follow in their writings. Using these techniques, students do not have the opportunity to speculate, question and explore ideas with their contemporaries in order to create on their own. This makes the individual students produce uniform content and lexical/syntactic structures. Again since the teacher controls all the phases of writing, the approach becomes teacher-based and so it is likely to kill the initiative of the potential creative writer.

What is good about the product approach is that it equips learners with enough skills for them to be able to write specific types of compositions effectively. Students are able to learn the grammar, mechanics and syntax of the language and this helps them to write good language since they are able to memorise and reproduce at will.

We can deduce from this discussion that as regards the development of the paragraph through this approach, the student learns how to write particular paragraphs but not how to create paragraphs. This makes the student handicapped so when s/he is confronted with the writing of a paragraph which s/he has not learnt how to write on his/her own, it becomes a problem for him/her. It is this approach



that is mostly used in teaching writing at the JSS, thus the inability of the student to write good paragraphs.

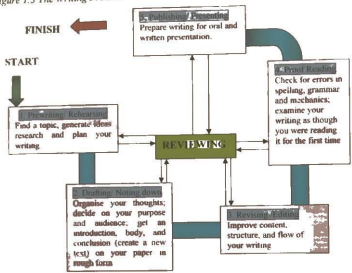
### 1.11.2 Process Approach

The process approach sees writing as a process which the writer goes through to come out with his/her product. Since writing is a productive skill, the process approach applies the interactive mode of learning writing. This means the student is allowed to go through the stages of writing with others. This helps the student to discover his/her own abilities and potentials so as to become more effective and be able to produce acceptable results. Through this, students are groomed to build on their capabilities and handle texts independently. Before the students come out with their product, they go through the cyclical and recursive phases of writing which, in summary, are made up of rehearsing, drafting/writing and revising. The students can evaluate and rewrite several times before they complete the final draft, which can be completely different from the first. The detailed phases in this approach are presented in figure 1.3.

This approach provides feedback to the learner through his/her fellow learners and the teacher. What makes this approach beneficial is that since one person is not a repository of knowledge, all students are able to brainstorm and come out with what is good and acceptable to all. Also as the students ask and answer questions, they discover the gaps in their thinking and get the information to fill in. Again, as they explain the unclear points in their drafts, they improve better than when the draft is solely evaluated by the teacher. In this way, the process approach

sees writing as a medium of learning with the teacher as the moderator but not as the arbiter.

Figure 1.3 The Writing Process



Source: Modification from Glencoe Language Arts (2002:313)

Unlike the product approach where the teacher, in evaluating the learner, is only interested in the language and “secretarial skills”, the teacher in the process approach is as well interested in the ideas so s/he comments on how these are structured. All these come together to help the teacher to determine the meaning of what the learner has written. The teacher sees grammar and mechanical errors as part of the process of writing but not as the main issue in the writing task, for writing goes further than learning and applying linguistic and rhetorical rules. The teacher, in designing his/her instructional activities, offers the student a wide range of

techniques which will help him/her to learn and produce good texts with clear paragraphs. This is what Ruddell (1997:172) calls facilitative learning.

The cyclical and recursive phases help the process approach to provide inputs for facilitative learning. At each stage, certain activities go on to equip the learner with some writing skills. At the rehearsing phase, the student seeks to generate, derive initial stimulus and get motivated to write through activities like free writing, journal keeping, listing, logging, keeping diaries, brainstorming, building spidergrams, classifying values and ranking. Moffet (1989), as quoted in Ruddell (1997:172), agrees that the rehearsing phase is "the foundation of a variety of writing, reading, thinking and learning events." From this stage the student summarises the findings, reviews them and decides on what to write at the drafting/writing phase.

At this drafting/writing phase, the student, through the ideas that were gathered at the rehearsing phase, decides on who the audience is and what to write for them; the purpose of the writing; the form that the writing should take; and what should go into each of the paragraphs of the write-up. The student arrives at these decisions through strategic questioning, time-focused writing, elaboration exercise, reduction exercise, jumbled paragraph, jumbled essay, writing of thesis statements and topic sentences, quick writing and group drafting.

This can be compared to what Moffet (1989), as quoted in Rudell (1997: 172), calls "noting down", where "students create a new text from what they might have read, seen, done, thought about or examined" (ibid: 173). To Moffet, students at this point investigate, review, research and analyse "their own and others' ideas,

actions, attitudes, knowledge and beliefs in relationship to whatever topic is being studied" (ibid: 173).

From this stage the student goes on to revise the composition through peer feedback, group correction activities and rewriting exercises. Moffet labels this, the "thinking over/thinking through" stage where the student integrates new knowledge that is critical for learning and comes up with editorials, personal essays, position papers, comparative analyses, musings, reaction/responses, evaluations, and conclusion.

Moffet adds another dimension called "expressive writing". He says that at this level, the student looks into the way his/her thoughts fall naturally into paragraphs and how s/he uses logical connectives and other transitional or cohesive devices which show the development of thought and cement internal relationships. This stage justifies the importance of paragraph development for it appears to suggest that without the proper consideration of the paragraph, the student's write-up will not be complete.

In evaluating, the teacher must ensure that his/her evaluation goes hand in hand with the student's work. S/he must also note that until the learner comes to the end of the writing process, the evaluation will not be completely useful. Again, s/he must evaluate with the mind that in process writing, the students write for themselves and for others but not for the teacher alone as prevails in the product approach. Francis Bacon, as quoted in Rivers and Temperly (1978:322) says that "reading maketh a full man, conference a ready man, and writing an exact man." It is for this reason that the student has to go through this active correction process since that is

more exact and effective than the idiosyncratic corrections made by the teacher in the product approach which the student is bound to accept passively.

Rivers and Temperly (1978:297) posit that students' aptitudes vary widely in writing so some need to be helped to take off and create interesting patterns of their own. For this reason, the teacher must individualise writing activities through the process approach which helps students to develop according to their preferred styles of writing at their own pace.

All this does not mean that the process approach is a panacea to all the problems related to the teaching and learning of writing skills. One major bleak side of the process approach is that it can make the student too dependent on others to be able to decide on what to write, more especially, when s/he goes through group discussions at each stage of the writing process. By this, the student's creative potentials may get killed. Furthermore, the student takes a lot of time to go through the various stages of this approach. This can be boring, especially when s/he is working alone, hence s/he can lose track of events while writing. When it happens this way, the structure of the paragraph can be adversely affected.

Similarly, since in the process approach, grammar and other categories of language learning are not given special prominence but are considered as part of the writing process, students may be tempted to overlook them and this may affect their performance in the language.

In any case, the process approach, being learner-centred, creates conducive environment for learning and all manner of writers are able to discover themselves and write freely. Teachers, though resource persons, do not impose their wish on the learner. As the writing goes on, the teacher takes pains to investigate the processes to

understand the nature of the learner's written discourse and the strategies employed.

This systematic evaluation helps the teacher to assess the learner fairly. With the process approach being so communicative, when it is used in the JSS class, it can help the student to develop good paragraphs.

#### **1.12 Organisation of the Dissertation Report**

The dissertation is made up of four chapters. Chapter one gives the philosophy behind the research and provides insight into certain aspects of writing. It goes further to explain writing as it appears in Ghana. It also deals with the objective and hypotheses of the research, the questions posed in the research, how relevant the dissertation is and the approaches that can be adopted to teach paragraph writing.

In chapter two, the literature related to the dissertation is dealt with. The sources of the data and methods used in collecting them are discussed in chapter three. In addition to this, the real problems with paragraph writing, as identified in the data collected, are classified and analysed. The observations made, as regards paragraph writing, and the recommendations that go with them have been given in chapter four.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.0 Introduction

This chapter is about the review of some of the literature relevant to paragraph writing generally and those related to the topic specifically. It begins by considering whether the paragraph is meant for aesthetic or discourse purposes. It then continues with what goes in to make a paragraph properly developed. These include the topic sentence and its related sentences, paragraph unity and coherence which are achieved through transitions and other cohesive devices and, finally, adequate development which includes the development and organisation of details in a paragraph. There are different types of paragraphs and these are also looked at. In writing, just as in speech, the audience plays a vital role in communication. This indispensable party to writing is also reviewed in the chapter.

Of immense influence to language learning in formal education are the syllabus and the text book. The basic school syllabi and text books are reviewed to some extent to determine their scope of influence on the development of paragraph writing at the JSS.

For the teaching of paragraph development to be effective in schools, the teacher cannot be sidelined. For this reason, a section of this chapter has been devoted to probing into the impact of the level of training given to the teacher on the development of the paragraph at the JSS.

Given the scope of the dissertation, the junior secondary school student, the details presented on the rules and mechanics of the paragraph in this review may appear too much. However, given the fact that the paragraph cannot be done away with in writing at all levels, the researcher finds it imperative to give as much details on the paragraph as possible for the benefit of students, teachers and researchers. This is why lengthy details on the paragraph have been provided in this work.

### **2.1 The Paragraph: Artistic or Discourse Realisation?**

Through writing, the communicant stores information in genres for use in the future. Generally, each genre has its own idiosyncratic layout. With even letters, the formal and the informal are laid out differently. Newspapers and textbooks may each be prose but the layout for one is different from the other. When prose, poetry and drama appear in writing, the layout for each is different.

In spite of these differences in layout, the writer displays a much greater degree of organisation, impersonality, and explicitness in writing. This is where the paragraph, which applies to prose, becomes important to ensure orderliness in the text. It must be noted that though the paragraph may have artistic features, it is not an artistic unit as we sometimes imagine it to be. It is rather a discourse realisation through which the work is divided into appropriate units according to how they support the thesis statement.

It is also not simply the assembling of any sentences but the grouping of sentences that express the same idea. These units of discourse help the writer to organise and develop properly all the aspects of his/her text. They also help the reader to read the work with ease "because it permits [him/her] to absorb writing in

manageable doses and to pause before the next dose" (Schor and Summerfield 1986:45). In other words, the "paragraphs give readers a visual landing, a place to pause; to use your eye and vary the lengths of your paragraphs" (Wienbroer 2000:18). Again, it is easier for the reader to skim long passages and also revise them with the help of the transitional markers and topic sentences in the paragraphs.

What we have said so far shows that it is not the aesthetic qualities that matter so much in determining the length of a paragraph. It is rather the unit of discourse created that matters. In effect, paragraphs "should be as long as they need to be to make one point. Sometimes one or two strong sentences can be enough. At other times, you might need about eight or more sentences to explain your point" (ibid: 18).

Though the paragraph is not an artistic unit, it has some traits of art and these qualities keep changing. Schor and Summerfield (1986:45) inform us that "a hundred years ago it was fashionable to write paragraphs three times longer than those we write now, and long before that there were no paragraphs at all; [and] today five to eight sentences generally stand together to form a paragraph averaging between 150 and 200 words."

The general practice these days is that in writing, the paragraph is written by indenting the first line from the left margin. Sekyi-Baidoo (2000) suggests other ways of presenting the paragraph artistically. They include:

- ❖ indenting the subsequent lines further than the first (hanging paragraphs);
- ❖ writing the first letter or word with decorative initials (very bold characters which may be raised or dropped);

- ❖ writing the first word in italics; and
- ❖ leaving a line or some such space between one paragraph and the next (line spacing) (132).

This can mislead us into concluding that the paragraph is strictly an artistic unit through which the page of the text is saved “from monotony and unbroken sameness of the structure of lines” (ibid: 131). So, to Sekyi-Baidoo, generally, the paragraph is considered to be a number of lines and the writer becomes conscious of the number of lines s/he must write to get a paragraph.

Wienbroer (2000) appears to suggest other artistic presentations of the paragraph. She says that should a number of points be raised in a single paragraph, the reader can be helped to follow the trend of its development by finding a natural point to break it when it contains more than ten sentences. The break can be made at where there is a sub-topic, a variation or contradiction or the start of an example. The writer can also enumerate the points or break them out with bullets. S/he does not encourage too many short paragraphs since that can make the writer’s thought appear fragmented.

A careful look at these suggestions reveals that the paragraph should be presented as a discourse unit rather than as an artistic one.

## 2.2 Paragraph Structure

According to OWL (2004:1), “a paragraph is a collection of related sentences dealing with a single topic. To be as effective as possible, a paragraph should contain each of the following: Unity, Coherence, Topic Sentence, and Adequate Development.” Langan (1999:13) agrees and adds that “a paragraph typically starts

with a point, and the rest of the paragraph provides specific details to support and develop that point". This is how a paragraph structure looks like.

### 2.2.1 The Topic Sentence

Buscemi et al. (1996) make it known that a paragraph is like a mini essay since "it uses information to develop a central idea ... but its focus is much more limited than an essay's" (52). So in writing, each "specific detail or experiences [that] support, prove, or illustrate the controlling idea, [the] essay, will have a paragraph of its own and sometimes more" (Schor and Summerfield 1986:48).

The central idea is expressed in a topic sentence, usually at the beginning of the paragraph, but it can appear anywhere else in the paragraph. The central idea means the focus, subject or theme of the paragraph. In effect it is the controlling and/or restricting idea of the paragraph. It controls by keeping the theme of the paragraph and it restricts by accepting into the paragraph only sentences that are related to the theme. We must, however, note that where the central idea is clear enough for the reader to point to, the writer may not state it. This happens when the writer makes it clear from the issue s/he wants to address and his/her position on it.

This makes the topic sentence appear like the seed from which the paragraph develops. This sentence is a general statement and it guides the writer to organise and develop the paragraph properly and to remain focused on the point raised in it. It leads the writer to identify the details or facts, reasons and examples that support the generalised idea of the paragraph and use them to develop the paragraph. Through this, s/he sees to it that the paragraph has unity and coherence and does away with unrelated material and also ensures that the theme is developed to the acceptable

level. These revelations tell us that, in an essay, each paragraph is complete in itself but they are dependent on each other to lead the reader systematically through the ideas of the writer.

The topic sentence can be *simple or complex*. It is simple when it presents the theme and leaves out the form of the paragraph. The complex topic sentence, however, states the theme and provides “the skeleton on which the succeeding part of the sentence will be based” (Sekyi-Baidoo 2000:146). The following sentences illustrate these two types of topic sentences.

- i. *In Christianity, churches are divided.* (Simple)
  - ii. *In Christianity, churches are divided into orthodox, and charismatic.* (Complex)
- In sentence *i*, the paragraph can be developed to include any types of Christian churches while in sentence *ii*; the paragraph can deal with only orthodox and charismatic Christian churches.

#### 2.2.1.1 Support Sentences

Pal (1984: EC-16) explains that in conversation, “there is usually a face to face communication between the giver and the receiver. [The speaker] can make his order clear with the help of gesticulation, facial expression and voice modulation. The receiver, if in doubt about any point, can immediately get it clarified.” To Pal, this makes the communicants sure about what is expected of each of them and as such they are in a better position to communicate to the utmost satisfaction of each other.

In writing, however, the writer has to provide the rationale behind his/her opinions and rephrase it until he becomes sure that s/he is able to communicate exactly what s/he wanted to. So "an effective paragraph ... not only must make a point but must support it with *specific evidence* - reasons, examples and other details" (Langan 1999:13).

Sentences that capture these pieces of evidence are called support sentences because it is through their support that the topic sentence achieves its aim of stating the theme. The topic sentence only provides the theme without providing any details and it is the support sentence(s) that are used to further develop the paragraph. The sentence can be a major or minor support sentence, or transitional or concluding sentence, depending upon the extent of its relationship with the theme.

#### 2.2.1.1a Major Support Sentence

This sentence gives "details [that] directly *support, prove, or explain* the main idea" (Monahan 2000:127). It does this by picking a constituent of the topic sentence and expanding it. This is to say that it divides the topic sentence into its separate main ideas. So the major support sentences can help the reader to appreciate the varied divisions contained in the theme of the paragraph. For example, in the topic sentence,

*"The boys teased, frustrated and physically attacked the man."*

there will be three major support sentences; one in each case to prove the acts of *teasing, frustration and physical attack* meted out to the man.

#### 2.2.1.1b Minor Support Sentence

Here, the “details support, explain, and give more information about the major details” (ibid: 13). That is to say that it expands the theme of the major support sentence. It does so “by giving us information that would help us to get a broader view of what the major support sentence has” (Sekyi-Baidoo 2000:147). Sekyi-Baidoo (2000) further explains that it expands, or illustrates analytical presentations; gives details of events in narratives; and provides details of the phenomenon in a descriptive presentation. This sentence invariably supports the topic sentence in an indirect manner.

#### 2.2.1.1c Transitional Sentence

The transitional sentence connects different parts of the central idea or different paragraphs to one another to create unity. To Sekyi-Baidoo (2000), it can occupy the initial position of the paragraph when it is being used to join the current paragraph to the previous paragraph.

When the aim is to join the main parts of the same paragraph to one another, then the transitional sentence is made to occupy the medial position. Where there is no topic sentence, the transitional sentence can function as such by restating the points already made.

#### 2.2.1.1d Concluding Sentence

As the name implies, this sentence appears at the end of the paragraph. It summarises or restates the central idea in the paragraph. Sekyi-Baidoo (2000) iterates that this allows the concluding sentence to function as a topic sentence when there is

none in the paragraph. In addition to this, it can be used to make deductions, determine causes and effects, take a stand, and make suggestions and projections in the paragraph.

### 2.2.2 Unity

Unity means the writer advances one issue and sticks to it in his/her paper. This means that all the details in the writing must "relate directly to its central idea whether or not that idea is expressed formally in a topic" (Buscemi 2002:38). As regards paragraph writing, "the entire paragraph should concern itself with a single focus. If it begins with one focus or major point of discussion, it should not end with another or wander within different ideas" (OWL 2004:1). Rather the writer should make sure that "all points s/he makes in an essay should be connected to the issue under discussion and should always either (a) support, illustrate, explain, elaborate on, or emphasise his/her position on the issue or (b) serve as responses to anticipated objections" (Moore and Noel 2001:40). Where the paragraph lacks unity, it becomes difficult for the reader to determine precisely what the writer is trying to say for the details that help to develop, explain, or support the central idea will be inconsistent with the *levels* of paragraph development.

The paragraph, being a unit of a larger text, be it a chapter, an essay, or a book must help the writer to determine the singular part of the message of the text that s/he wants to present at any material point in the text. This is what will help the reader to identify the writer's purpose in each paragraph.

It is to be noted that unity does not mean unity of subject which implies a single object, incident or person. As has already been said, it means unity of focus

where even if there are different subjects, attention will be directed to a single focus.

For example, two persons can be mentioned in a paragraph as doing different things. However, the different things that they are doing must have only one focus; otherwise, they cannot be captured in one paragraph. So, here, it is what is being done that determines the number of paragraphs needed to contain it but not the number of persons involved in the act.

#### 2.2.2.1 How to Attain Unity

Unity can easily be attained when the writer plans the whole text and identifies the focus of each sentence and paragraph, and then uses connectors to direct the reader to the relationship between various parts of the paragraph and also between different paragraphs. Should some of the information in the paragraph deviate from the central idea, the writer can omit that irrelevant information or expand the central idea to capture it. It is better to broaden the central idea where the added information, even though it does not match the topic sentence, satisfies the intentions of the writer.

Where there are a series of paragraphs of one or two sentences, the writer can combine, expand or omit some of the paragraphs. The combination can be made by joining paragraphs that express the same point; or including examples in the paragraph to illustrate the point; or regrouping the major ideas and making a new paragraph plan.

Where some of the paragraphs have to be expanded, the writer can provide examples, reasons, facts, statistics or evidence to back the point; or give an account

of an incident that is related to the point; or explain appropriate terms related to the point.

The omissions can be made where there are short paragraphs that do not accept combination or expansion. Most of the time, the writer has to decide on the need to combine or expand the paragraph to be able to maintain it or omit it.

### 2.2.3 Coherence

Coherence means the sentences in the paragraph are clearly and logically connected in an order that is easily understandable to the reader to enable him/her follow the train of thoughts of the writer. This means the thought expressed in one sentence leads directly to that expressed in the following sentence without a break. Moore and Noel (2001) intimate that this helps the reader "to discern the relationship between any given sentence and [the] ultimate objective" of the writer, and the reader is "able to move from sentence to sentence and from paragraph to paragraph without becoming lost or confused" (40). Where the paragraph has unity but its ideas are haphazardly arranged, it cannot be considered a good paragraph.

According to Canale (1982:5-6), as quoted in Richards (1999:104), for a text to have coherence, it must consist of the following:

- (i) *Development*: Presentation of ideas must be orderly and convey a sense of direction.
- (ii) *Continuity*: There must be consistency of facts, opinions, and writer perspective, as well as reference to previously mentioned ideas. Newly introduced ideas must be relevant.

(iii) *Balance*: A relative emphasis (main or supportive) must be recorded in each idea.

(iv) *Completeness*: The ideas presented must provide a sufficiently thorough discourse.

Richards (1999:104) states that "different types of writing (e.g. narratives, instructions, reports, business letters) reflect specific kinds of text structures, and will be judged as more or less appropriate and coherent according to the degree of fit between the genre and the text structure expected of the genre". What Richards (1999) appears to say by this is that coherence varies according to the genre under consideration. In effect, what is considered as coherence in one genre may be graded as unrelated in another genre. For this reason, writers must be conversant with the requirements of the genre they may be writing in before they do so.

The reader can determine that the paragraph has coherence when it is structured in one of the following ways: where it moves from the general to the specific or from the specific to the general; when the topics are alternated to enhance comparison and contrast; or when the details are laid out in a chronological or spatial order, or an order that builds to a climax. These have been further explained in section 2.2.4.2.

### 2.2.3.1 Cohesive Devices

Halliday and Hasan (1991) argue that a text is a series of sentences that are arranged strategically to show a degree of mutual dependence. The internal structures of a text can be obvious as found in a list of items, or table or it can be carefully woven, as it appears in a literary work. To them certain linguistic features cause the

sentence sequence to “cohere” such that each feature in the text will depend on another elsewhere

in the sequence. These features or ties that bind the text together are what are normally considered when dealing with *cohesion*, which is the set of linguistic resources that every language uses to link one part of a text to another. This principle has to be applied when dealing with paragraph writing because on critically examining a paragraph it can be taken to be a text.

It must be noted that even though cohesive devices help very much to indicate how far the sentences are bound together, a text with these devices to make it cohesive may not necessarily be coherent, e.g.

*The train arrived late but a train can carry a lot of goods. Since trains are very important, the government will import more of them next year.*

The above paragraph has cohesive devices as underlined, but it lacks coherence. So it is imperative for a paragraph to be both cohesive and coherent, otherwise it may be unintelligible.

The cohesive factors include coreference, ellipsis, conjunctive relations, substitution, repeated forms, lexical relationships, comparison, sequential presentation, parallelism, and periodic sentences.

*(i) Coreference:* These are features that have to be referred to in order to semantically interpret other features in the text. These may involve repetition of words, or variation of words or use of pronouns, or use of synonyms. They include *anaphoric, cataphoric and exophoric* references.

Anaphoric reference means the writer makes reference to something that occurred earlier in the text. When the interpretation is made by a reference forward to

something that will occur later, we have cataphoric reference. Exophoric reference is made from outside the text. Examples of these references are as follows:

- i *We went to the restaurant. There was no food to eat from there.* (anaphoric)
- ii *Have you heard the news? More students have been admitted.* (cataphoric)
- iii *Chapter two of this book deals with fruit juice. Fruit juice is not needed in electricity.* (exophoric)

(ii) **Ellipsis:** This device is used to omit some parts of the sentence already understood by the speaker and the listener or the writer and the reader. The omitted structure can be recovered only from the preceding discourse, e.g.

*I read five books every week. Do you?* (= read five books every week)

(iii) **Conjunctive Relations:** This refers to the explicit relationship between what is about to be said and what has been said before through such notions as contrast, result, time, etc, e.g.

- a. *I have a lot of problems to solve. nevertheless I am not disturbed.* (contrast)
- b. *Kofi and Ama are friends so they plan their itinerary together.* (addition; result)
- c. *You can pass your exams but learn first.* (contrast; time)

(iv) **Substitution:** This is where one feature is made to replace an earlier expression. Here linking pronouns can be used to direct readers' attention to antecedents and help the writer to avoid repeating the same noun, e.g.

*Ananse became ashamed because Aso taught him what he couldn't reasonably perceive.*

(v) **Repeated Forms:** Here, a whole expression or part of it is repeated, e.g.

*My boss is in a meeting. My boss is too busy to meet you.*

(vi) **Lexical Relationships:** With this cohesive device, the writer skillfully makes one lexical item enter into a structural relationship with another, e.g.

*I like everything about the man. I get most attracted to his looks.*

(vii) **Comparison:** This is where a compared expression is assumed in the earlier discourse, e.g.

*John is good at English. Jane far surpasses him.*

(viii) **Sequential Presentation:** This cohesive device helps the writer to present his/her text sequentially by way of time, place and logic. If the writer does not follow the natural sequence (A B C), s/he must use tense variation and signposts to make it meaningful.

When the sequence is shuffled in such a way, it eradicates monotony of presentation in the paragraph so that the paragraph becomes lively to read, e.g.

C. *Many innocent civilians still suffer casualty in the war.*

B. *It has been fought for five years now.*

A. *This war started out of a misunderstanding between two children.*

Note: The use of *this* in stage A, and *has been fought* and *now* in stage B, shows that the war has not stopped so it is true that, consequently, people are *still* suffering from the war as in stage C.

(ix) **Parallelism:** It is with this device that the various parts of the sentence are kept parallel or similar by putting them in the same grammatical form to make the paragraph smooth and easy to read, e.g.

*To fix a new tyre on your hub, remove the nuts, take out the old tyre, fix the new tyre, and tighten the nuts to keep it in place.*

The sentence uses a series of verb phrases with the verbs being in the imperative mood to indicate that instructions are being given. This helps the reader to easily follow the instructions sequentially.

(x) *Periodic Sentences*: In these sentences, the main idea is placed at the end so in reading, their grammatical form and meaning are not complete until the reader gets to the end. This device helps to develop the sentences logically to the final idea, e.g.

*The boy quickly entered the room, asked about his father, pulled a chair to sit down, accepted to drink some water and whispered that he was being chased by the police.*

### 2.2.3.2 Transitions

The cohesive devices explained above cannot work effectively if they are not properly linked in the paragraph. The words and phrases that facilitate these linkages are the transitions. They are the bridges in the text that form logical connections, indicate the relationship between the major and minor ideas, sentences and even paragraphs and provide continuity for the reader for him/her to understand the paragraph or a longer passage. They also provide signals for the shift from one specific thought or idea to the other upon which the writer creates a new paragraph.

At times the “paragraphs will be self-contained [but] they must interlock effectively to produce a strong overall argument. Transitions both between and within paragraphs are essential because they signal changes in direction and help the reader to follow those changes” (U Vic 1995:1).

There are many kinds of transitions but we shall look at a few of them.

(i) *Sequential transitions*: These are used when ideas and events are presented sequentially. The sequence can be time, place, importance and process. Some words which suggest clues to this order can be found in section A of Table 2.1

(ii) *Listing transitions*: These transitions give the clue that a list will follow. Refer to section B of Table 2.1 for examples.

(iii) *Example transitions*: These are used where the writer wants to follow an idea with more specific examples in order to explain a general idea more clearly. Examples of such transitions can be found in section C of Table 2.1.

(iv) *Comparison/contrast transitions*: Where the writer wants to demonstrate the likeness or differences in two or more ideas, s/he brings them together. S/he shows the similarity by comparing them and signifies emphasis by making a contrast with different things. Reference can be made to Table 2.1, section D, for examples of such transitions.

(v) *Cause and effect transitions*: The writer can state an idea, being the cause (why or how something occurs) and go on to discuss its effects (the results of what happens) or, alternatively, s/he can describe the effects before discussing the cause. There can be one cause and several effects and vice versa. Some cause-and-effect signal words are noted in Table 2.1, section E.

(vi) *Conditional transitions*: The main idea in the paragraph can be expressed as a condition. To express such a condition, conditional transitions, examples of which have been given in Table 2.1, section F, can be used.

(vii) *Emphasising transitions*: Where the writer wants to place special emphasis in dilating on an idea, s/he uses emphasising transitions. Examples can be found in Table 2.1, section G.



(ix) *Concluding transitions:* These transitions help to sum up what has been said about the central idea in the paragraph or the thesis statement in the discourse. Reference can be made to Table 2.1, section I, for examples of such transitions.

#### 2.2.4 Adequate Development

As noted in section 2.1, it is not art that determines what a paragraph is or the length of a paragraph. It is rather determined by the extent of paragraph development. This is what adequate development is about. To achieve completeness in the paragraph the topic sentence has to be adequately and fully discussed. There is no guiding principle concerning how long a paragraph should be. The paragraph itself determines its length since the main point being made is in it and this will provide the clue to the kinds and amount of detail needed for the adequate and effective development of that point. At times it may be possible to make a clear point with one or two supporting details but most of the time the writer has to provide many details.

In any case the purpose of writing will determine how many details will be needed to develop the paragraph. The caution is that too many one sentence paragraphs can make the writing choppy, so such paragraphs must be used sparingly. Adequate development does not necessarily mean that the writer has to be exhaustive in treating the issue since many issues may be too large to be handled in a single paragraph.

There are many ways through which the central idea can be developed and Buscemi (2002) hints that each depends on the purpose of the writer, the point s/he wishes to make, and the desired effect of the writing on the readers. To Buscemi

(2002), the “purpose can be descriptive, narrative, explanatory, persuasive or any combination of these” (95).

#### **2.2.4.1 Developing Details in a Paragraph**

The writer always sets out to achieve an objective in his/her writing. To realise this, s/he must support fully and adequately his/her stand on the issue. S/he must as well be able to reasonably foresee possible objections and respond to them. These ideas must be well developed and there are several ways of doing so, but the major ones are through narration, description, exposition and argument. “Each method can be used separately or in combination with any or all of the others. And each allows [the writer] to use various patterns of arrangement” (Buscemi 1996:69).

##### **2.2.4.1a Narration**

The writer uses narration if s/he wants to recollect an event or explain how a process works. Narration is used mainly in narrative essays. However, a report and even literary papers can have narrative paragraphs to introduce or substantiate some analysis. The main feature of this method is that it arranges information or ideas in a chronological order with a corresponding sequence of tenses. It is characterised by action verbs and sequential transitions which carry the story or process along in a systematic manner.

##### **2.2.4.1b Description**

This method is used when the writer wants to discuss the nature or character of people, places, time, and environment and objects being talked about in the text.

The method can also be used to paint a vivid picture of these people, places and things mentioned. The descriptive method can be used in a narrative, expository or argumentative writing. The description can begin with the physical features but the writer should always rely on his/her five senses to determine how his/her subject looks, sounds, feels, smells, or tastes like. The paragraph pattern of this method is normally spatial but the writer has the prerogative of arranging the ideas or information in any acceptable logical manner.

#### 2.2.4.1c Exposition

This method explains, discusses or exposes an idea or fact. It is used where the writer has to support generalisations. The narrative and descriptive methods can be used for expository purposes. There are other techniques which can be applied in the exposition. They include definition; cause, reason and effect; and comparison and contrast. These techniques can be used in the argument method as well.

Definition is used to explain terms in the paragraph. This helps readers to see words, things or ideas for what they are. Through definition, the writer gets the chance to introduce a new subject to readers and at times change or clarify readers' opinions about a subject.

Cause, reason and effect show how something happens, why it happens and the consequences of that happening. They can be used for various purposes in writing but scientists find them more useful in explaining scientific and natural phenomena.

Comparison and contrast explains the similarities and differences in the ideas. Here, the writer compares the ideas to discern how similar they are and goes on to

identify the contrasting issues involved. The results of these procedures will help the writer to give a candid exposure of the idea under discussion.

#### 2.2.4.1d Argument

According to Sekyi-Baidoo (2000), this method aims at persuading the reader to make a particular choice or take a particular line of action. The persuasion takes the form of implicitly or explicitly suggesting that one line of thought or action is more acceptable than the other. The argument is tactically made at the point where the writer is confronted with making a decision or choice so that s/he will sound convincing. Arguments are normally made in the introductory, concluding and transitional parts of the text where decisions and choices are made. Some of the techniques which are used to achieve success in the argument are as follows: examples and illustrations, classification, conclusion and support. The narrative and descriptive methods can also be used here.

Examples and illustrations are used to make the writer's point of view appear true. Through classification, the writer distinguishes and organizes related bits of information or ideas into various groups or categories so as to discuss them logically and systematically. Conclusion and support provide the reader with data in the form of facts, statistics, evidence and details to make the idea, opinion or assumption clear to him/her.

Other techniques which can be used in exposition as well as argument are anecdotes or stories, description and analysis of the topic, and examination of testimony like quotes and paraphrases. All the techniques mentioned help the writer

In the above example, the writer started with all the factors that can cause increases in the prices of goods. S/he then moved on to the price of petroleum products and finally concentrated on how petrol causes increases in the prices of goods and services.

#### 2.2.4.2b Specific to General

In the mainstream or body paragraphs, the writer can begin with specific details in supporting sentences and move on to a general or broad concluding statement in the topic sentence. This is done where s/he wants to create suspense or build the issue to emotional high point. The following is an example:

In law, when the occupier of residential premises negligently refuses to take reasonable care of the occupant, his act amounts to a tort of negligence. This negligence is known as occupier's liability. The tort of negligence can also apply to road users, professionals, offices, shops, and open areas among others.

In this paragraph, the writer began commenting on one of the torts of negligence, being the occupier's liability, before going on to state the other torts of negligence.

#### 2.2.4.2c Question to Answer

Writers have to capture readers' interest. The skilful writer can do this by posing a question at the beginning of the paragraph and providing the answers or discussing the question in the details that follow. This pattern also makes it easier for the writer to arrange information in the paragraph.

#### 2.2.4.2d Order of Importance

Another pattern with which the writer can create suspense or further still make emphasis is the order of importance pattern. Here, the writer begins the paragraph with the least important detail and ends with the most important or startling one. This pattern is usually used by fiction writers to intensify suspense.

### 2.3 Types of Paragraphs

There are several paragraphs and each serves a definite purpose in the discourse. The purpose may be, to “open your essay, close your essay, line up support for your controlling idea, develop ideas, provide transitions between ideas, and single out an important sentence or two for special emphasis” (Schor and Summerfield 1986:53). The most important of these paragraphs are the introductory, mainstream or body, concluding, and transitional paragraphs.

#### 2.3.1 The introductory paragraph

This paragraph is normally the first one or two paragraphs of the text. It usually directs the reader’s attention to the text and sets up expectations in his/her mind due to where it appears and the fact that most of the time, it contains the thesis of the text. This means that the writer will fail if his/her introductory paragraph is bad since readers will not be motivated to continue reading the text.

The introductory paragraph, unlike other paragraphs, is not meant for only one idea in the text. It is rather meant for the whole text; hence the thesis of the text being strategically placed in it. This makes the introductory paragraph more complex than the normal paragraph for it has to state the intentions or subject of the text and

also, in most cases, preview the focus by outlining the various points to be discussed in the text.

### 2.3.2 The Mainstream or Body Paragraphs

These paragraphs normally appear in the middle section of the text. They support the thesis by providing information that will be needed to treat it fully. Most of the time they contain topic sentences which the writer goes on to expand to get readers properly informed about the theme under consideration. The mainstream paragraphs are critical to the text because when they are strong, they make the “easy unique; they increase your readers’ interest and challenge any resistance they might have to your subject” (Schor and Summerfield 1986:54).

### 2.3.3 The Concluding Paragraph

This paragraph marks the end of the writing. Through it the writer satisfies the expectations of the reader by confirming that the promise made through the thesis in the introductory paragraph has been honoured. This is more effective when the writer relates this paragraph to the opening paragraph.

In this paragraph the writer assesses his/her aim of writing and gives his/her impressions about it. The reader then passes judgment on the writing based on what s/he reads in the paragraph in conjunction with the other paragraphs.

A writer can appear amateurish in writing the concluding paragraph. At times s/he may summarise the main points in the text in a 1, 2, 3 ... fashion or introduce a completely new thing. S/he may also suddenly reverse what has been written already or suddenly make what has been written appear irrelevant with any preamble to that

effect. Again s/he may apologise, or complain or make rash promises. Schor and Summerfield (1986) strongly advise that all these should be avoided in the concluding paragraph. It is good to write them in the text but they can fit better in the mainstream or body paragraph and in some few cases, in the introductory paragraph. Conclusions “should be memorable, but don’t make them memorable by rambling on and on until your audience want to conclude your existence. Be concise and to the point when finishing your [writing]...Don’t diminish the effect of a great [writing] with a bloated, aimless conclusion” (Rothwell 2000:376).

#### 2.3.4 The Transitional Paragraph

In writing, coherence is not paramount to only the paragraph. It is indispensable to the whole text since that will help to link up all the central ideas logically and sequentially and make the text more integrated and uniform. As already noted in sections 2.2.3.1 and 2.2.3.2 cohesive devices and transitional words and phrases can be used to link the ideas in the paragraph. A transitional paragraph can also be used for these linkages.

Sekyi-Baidoo (2000) says that this paragraph only provides links between parts of the text. It does not concern itself with stating points about the thesis. It rather shows the changes in the focus of the writer or the trend of the discussions and prepares the reader for the succeeding part of the discourse. These changes and preparations help the reader to understand the writer’s argument better.

Transitional constructions may not necessarily be full paragraphs. They may be placed between the previous paragraph and its succeeding paragraph to be able to provide the linkage between them. To Sekyi-Baidoo (2000), this is more like “the

*introductory paragraph* of the succeeding part of the essay. This part could be seen as a *mini essay* on its own. This is because the transitional paragraph contains the focus of that part of the essay, otherwise called the thesis. "It sometimes...goes further to list the various aspects to be discussed in the subsequent paragraphs (*plan*)" (158).

#### 2.4 Audience

Rivers and Temperly (1978) inform us that much of the concepts of language learned at school are from books. Even when we attempt to bring the oral language into the classroom, we end up producing stilted oral recitations of written forms of the language. To Rivers and Temperly (1978) writing is more abstract than speech and it becomes even more difficult to comprehend because it has no expressive features like facial or body movement, pitch and tone of voice and emotional indicators. It also lacks material context like physical surroundings and immediate feedback from interlocutors.

So, in writing, care needs to be taken to minimise the effects of vagueness and ambiguity.

The audience (reader) may be distant from the writer and both do not usually see each other. The reader waits somewhere in the future while the writer writes in the present. Writing is static and permanent and a piece of writing can be read as soon as it is written or months or even centuries later and it can be read and interpreted by many recipients in a diversity of settings.

All these make it imperative for writers to be concise and precise in their writing in order to achieve the goal of written language which to Richards (1999), is

to convey information accurately, effectively, and appropriately. To achieve this and to make up for the absence of the external contextual elements to writing, writers must employ exploratory details which speakers would omit. They should also include more complicated structures and a wider vocabulary in writing than they would in speech.

This means the writer has to develop a sense of audience by understanding who s/he is writing for, anticipating what the imagined reader already knows, and at what point in the discourse s/he needs to read it. By so doing, the writing will be more interactive than idiosyncratic. It will also be more purposeful, practical and imaginative and consequently, comprehensible to both the writer and the reader.

The audience, in reality, is the main target and one of the most indispensable parts of writing. Some writers, however, unknowingly overlook the audience in their writing and they consequently fail to impress them. This happens because the reader may find their works either too irrelevant to read or too technical to understand.

Those writers commit this blunder because they may not be aware of the influence of the paragraph on writing. They may not know that the paragraph controls the design of the whole discourse. They, probably, may not notice that as they write the paragraph they move back and forth between general and specific ideas and support the general idea with specifics and that through the paragraph the writer is provided with space to fulfil the promise of his/her ideas; and this is what writing is all about.

To solve this problem of some writers neglecting the audience, the process approach can be very useful. This usefulness stems from the fact that through the process approach the student/writer is given the opportunity to craft the writing

independently or in a group with very little control from the teacher/assessor. In this interactive environment, the student/writer will have the presence of mind to include the reader in the discourse since members in the group who will be co-assessors will prompt him/her, unlike the teacher who will just issue edicts to be carried out. Students/writers may also not have the funny feeling that they are writing for the teacher-assessor; the one who, unfortunately, only reads to identify errors, to evaluate, and perhaps to mark to assign a score but not to fish for information or seek entertainment as is done in the world outside the classroom.

### 2.5 The English Teaching Syllabus for the Basic School

As stated in Chapter One, there is a low level of concern for paragraph writing in Ghanaian schools. This is evident in even the WAEC's reaction to this lack of concern and also the lack of interest on the part of university language students to write about it in their dissertations and theses. This situation calls for a probe into the English Syllabus for the basic school, with particular reference to paragraph writing, to help us in our investigations into the problem of paragraph development at the JSS.

There are two syllabi for the Basic School: one for primary and the other for the JSS. Both state the importance of the English Language to education, work and other social life in Ghana for which reason it has become one of the major core subjects studied in Ghanaian Schools. Each of the syllabi has been divided according to the classes. They have been further divided into sections and the sections have been sub divided into units. All these divisions have been made according to how related the bodies of knowledge are.



### 2.5.1 The English Teaching Syllabus for the Primary School

According to Ministry of Education (2001a: ii), the general aims of the English teaching syllabus for the primary school are: to help pupils to

1. lay effective foundation that will facilitate learning the language at higher levels.
2. attain proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and writing English.
3. communicate effectively in English.

To be able to achieve these objectives, the syllabus has been prepared to integrate the receptive and productive skills of English in five sections which are listening and speaking, grammar, reading, writing and composition, and library work. In the syllabus, the suggested time allocation for English is ten (10) periods each of which is of an hour's duration. Out of this, three (30%) is for writing and composition. This is very commendable as writing, being a productive skill, demands a longer period of time to enable the student to have a good grasp of it.

The syllabus has 163 units altogether and out of this 34 (20.96%) have been allotted to writing and composition. This is a fair allocation since there are five sections involved and on the average, each section should be allotted 20% on a proportionate basis. Out of these 34 sections, paragraph writing has two (5.9%). This is rather unbalanced because when we look at writing generally and the paragraph specifically, we realise that all good writing hinges on the paragraph. This is so, for as we have seen already, the paragraph involves a lot of background knowledge and a good command of the technicalities in the language so it is such that by the time the student finishes learning about the paragraph, s/he would have finished learning

almost all that needs to be learnt about writing and composition. Considering this, the 5.9% slot given to the primary school pupil is hardly enough to enable him/her to achieve the aims set out in the syllabus.

Another blow is the length of exposure. According to the syllabus, the pupil gets exposed to paragraph writing only in primary five. Until then, s/he will be writing composition but without any knowledge of composing in paragraphs. This is a major set back to the pupil for, by the fifth year in school, s/he will be used to composing a text without thinking of its appropriate organisation. If it is at this time in the pupil's education that s/he is asked to compose the text in paragraphs, it becomes a challenge to him/her. This, coupled with the short exposure to paragraph writing at the primary school, may be a major reason why the JSS student is not able to write in good paragraphs.

According to the syllabus, paragraph writing appears in units 2 and 3 and the specific objectives for paragraph writing in unit 2 are that the pupil should be able to

- (i) write short paragraphs on given topics; and
- (ii) state main ideas in the paragraph (Ministry of Education 2001a: 108).

The syllabus defines a paragraph as "a group of sentences about one main idea." It goes on to say that "every paragraph begins on a new line [and that] a paragraph should have sentences about the same subject" (ibid 108).

The contents in this unit involve the writing of short paragraphs on given topics. On teaching and learning activities, the syllabus at pages 108 and 109 suggests that pupils should generate sentences around a topic through discussions; the pupils should be guided to reorganise sentences in a logical order in a paragraph; pupils should use connectives to join sentences; the pupils should be grouped or

paired and each member should write on a topic. The group should then put the sentences together to make a paragraph and consequently put the paragraph in good shape. Finally, the pupils should identify main ideas in paragraphs while working in pairs/groups. These activities are then to be evaluated with each pupil writing a short paragraph on a given topic and identifying the main ideas in short paragraphs.

Unit 3 deals with the combination of paragraphs. Its specific objective is to help students to combine paragraphs into full composition pieces. The contents involve combining sentences into short paragraphs and organising paragraphs into full composition pieces. The teaching and learning activities involve revising work on paragraph writing, and putting pupils in groups of three (3) with each pupil writing a short paragraph on a topic. The group should then arrange the paragraphs into a full composition piece. They will evaluate the work by each group writing a three-paragraph composition on a given topic.

The contents of both units are supposed to involve the topic and support sentences and coherence. However, the units do not cover much of the scope of the constituents of a paragraph. This may be due to the late introduction of the paragraph. The problems so far identified with paragraph writing in the primary school English syllabus are the bane of proper paragraph development at the primary level, so they defeat the general aims of the syllabus as spelt out in the preamble to this section. The reason for this assertion is that from the way the syllabus shows how the paragraph should be treated, an effective foundation for paragraph writing cannot be laid. This will consequently have a negative effect on students' writing at the higher level.

### 2.5.2 The English Teaching Syllabus for the JSS

At the JSS, the English syllabus "is designed to help pupils to:

1. develop the habit for reading
2. understand and derive information from materials read
3. communicate effectively in speech and in writing
4. develop the desire to create library materials" (Ministry of Education 2001b:

ii).

The content of this syllabus also has as its scope to integrate the receptive and productive skills in the teaching and learning of English in five sections [in the form of] listening and speaking, grammar, reading, composition, literature" (ibid: iii).

The suggested time allocation for English at the JSS is eight (8) and two (25%), out of this is allotted to composition. There are 93 units in the syllabus and 31 (28.8%) are for composition. Of the 31 units, only one (3.2%) has been allotted to paragraph writing.

According to the syllabus, paragraph writing is to be treated only at JSS one in unit 3 with the specific objectives meant to enable the pupil to

1. write a sentence on a given topic
2. arrange mixed up ideas and events in a logical order
3. combine paragraphs in a full composition (Ministry of Education 2001b:19).

The general objectives for composition at the JSS are that the pupil will

1. generate and organize ideas in logical sequence on specific topics
2. communicate ideas fluently and effectively through writing (Ministry of Education 2001b:18).

The syllabus, at page 19, gives the contents that are to be used to help achieve these objectives. They include the writing of short sentences on given topics, the rearrangement of sentences in a logical order, the writing of paragraphs from outlines, the supplying of links within the paragraph, and finally, the organisation of paragraphs into full composition pieces through the supply of links.

Some of the activities that the student will go through to be able to develop the contents include writing sentences on a central topic and arranging them in a logical order of ideas with connectives, to make paragraphs in full composition pieces.

By way of evaluation, students will arrange a group of mixed up sentences to make a logical paragraph, or compose paragraphs on given topics. They may also write a composition of more than four paragraphs on a given topic and orally state the main ideas in the composition. The teacher is to guide the students to analyse the paragraphs.

All these arrangements in the syllabus appear good but they are not very laudable. This comment is being made on the basis that the time allotted to paragraph writing at the JSS is too short and the contents are too shallow for that level. The situation is even worse with the brief exposure of students to just one unit at JSS One during the student's three-year stay at the JSS.

All the above arrangements are not in the interest of the JSS student for the following reasons: the JSS marks the student's final lap in his/her preparation for the first public examination in his/her educational pursuit. The written paper in this examination carries more marks than that of the objective so it will be necessary to help the student to sharpen his/her writing skills. The JSS is also the first exit point in

the student's formal education. So a student can accept to opt out of school after this level, learn a trade, where writing will not be learnt again, and settle to work.

However, his person may have to communicate in writing from time to time, especially when s/he becomes the director of his/her company. Under these circumstances, such a person will become handicapped where s/he did not get the opportunity to develop writing skills. To forestall any such unfortunate occurrence, students' writing skills, especially those relating to paragraph writing, have to be properly developed at the JSS level.

The syllabus serves as a guide. Consequently, the amount of knowledge the student gets from school is mostly determined by the content of the syllabus. It is based on this premise that we argue that the paragraph writing aspect of the basic school syllabus be highly improved so that the JSS student will be able to communicate much more effectively in writing than s/he is allowed to do in the current syllabus.

## **2.6 The Basic School English Textbooks**

There are many books on the teaching and learning of English at all levels in our schools. These books deal extensively with important topics like tense, concord, sentence formation, parts of speech and the like. However, paragraph writing appears to be dealt with at the highest levels in the school system since not much is found on it in the books for the lower levels. This situation may probably be due to the sequential arrangement of language learning in the order of listening, speaking, and reading with writing occupying the last stage. So the thinking may be that students

can only learn to write better at the tail end of learning the language thus paragraph writing receives attention at those higher levels.

When we look at the Ghana Education Service (GES) approved English course books for basic schools, *English for Primary Schools* and *English for Junior Secondary Schools*, we realise that paragraph writing is not given due attention. At the JSS levels, paragraph writing appears to be mentioned in passing. In the *Pupil's Book 1*, all that we read about the paragraph is as follows: "In the story, the first paragraph talks about the friendship between the tortoise and the partridge" (Adu et al 1999:11).

In the *Pupil's Book 2*, it receives mention in units 5 and 8. Unit 5 has the main heading, *Writing*, with the sub-heading, *Completion of a Paragraph (Short Story)*, followed by the instructions, "study the following paragraph very carefully. Then write two more paragraphs to complete it" (Adu et al 1993:35). In unit 8, the sub-heading of writing is, *Joining Paragraphs*. Then the paragraph is mentioned as follows:

You already know that a paragraph is made up of a sentence or sentences about one main idea. When we write a composition, we write in a paragraph. We have to join the paragraph one to the other to link the ideas and make the composition whole (ibid 1993:47).

These are all that we can find on the paragraph in the three books for the JSS as book 3 does not talk about the paragraph.

From the way paragraph writing is handled in these language course books at the JSS, it may appear that so much work has been done on it at the primary school. This is not the case. The approved course books used in the primary school do not

make mention of paragraphs. From these revelations, we realise that there is no coordination between the syllabi and the textbook writers for the basic schools, so far as paragraph writing is concerned.

## 2.7 The Teacher Training College

It may be assumed that the teachers who teach these students at the JSS have already been taught how to teach paragraph writing at the Teacher Training College, so they can make provision for it and teach it skilfully, even though the pupil's textbooks and syllabi do not say much on paragraphs. But this is not the case. Paragraph writing is taught at the SSS from where the students enter the Training College. Nevertheless, the content is not enough for them to use it to teach at the JSS; hence the expectation is that it will be taught extensively at the training college. However, it is only in the 2004/05 academic year when the certificate 'A' programme at the training college was changed to a diploma programme that paragraph writing was included in the newly introduced communication skills course.

The beneficiaries are now in the second year of their three-year programme so we are yet to see the impact of this newly introduced course on the trained teacher. But, for now, the current JSS students, and in fact, the educated Ghanaians are *taught* by teachers who were not adequately exposed to the skills of paragraph writing at the training college. For this reason, we shall base our assessment on this group. If the current crop of teacher-trainees graduate and start making inroads into teaching at the basic education level in Ghana, we can assess their impact after a reasonable time. From the various handouts prepared at workshops organized by the Ghana Education

we gather that at the training college, the methods of teaching composition taught to students include mechanical skills, controlled composition, guided composition and a little amount of process writing. These are off-shoots of the product approach to writing and they are not exhaustive enough, for they are genre specific. The effect of this is what is now happening to most of our JSS graduates: they are not capable of crafting their texts in good paragraphs.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY AND DATA ANALYSES

#### 3.0 Introduction

In chapter one of this dissertation, the objective was stated and some research questions posed, out of which some hypotheses were developed. We then examined various works on paragraph writing in chapter two. With the knowledge gained here, these hypotheses will be tested in this chapter.

The chapter looks at the population of the study, the sample that was taken, why it was taken and how the sampling was done. The data that were collected were then analysed.

The tools that were used to analyse the data and the methods, techniques and instruments employed in the analyses have also been considered. This exercise involved extensive analyses of teacher and student responses to the questionnaire administered, student arrangement of sentences in a jumbled paragraph and their responses to a take-home composition. Conclusions were drawn on the basis of the analysis with the aid of tables, graphs and statistical averages.

#### 3.1 Sources of Data

The dissertation is on paragraph writing at the JSS in Ghana. Students enter the JSS from the primary school. In these days of wholesale promotion, all calibre of students are eligible to get there without any official mode of screening. It is at the end of this JSS that the student is tested at the BECE administered by WAEC on behalf of the GES. Based on the results of this examination, the student gets admitted

into a senior secondary school (SSS) or technical or vocational institute or learns a trade.

This level of education in Ghana is supposed to be the stage at which the student is to acquire a fair amount of basic practical skills. The rationale behind this is that, should the student opt out of formal education from here, the knowledge gained will help him/her to easily understand and do anything should s/he opt to learn a trade.

Since English is the official language of communication in Ghana and paragraph writing is an indispensable part of it; it has to be taught well at the JSS. The justification here is that the student will badly need it, especially when s/he is able to learn the trade well and set up on his/her own. In this case, should the trade demand that s/he communicate in writing, s/he will be obliged to do so. The paucity of knowledge in paragraph writing skills by such a person will gravely affect his/her performance and, accordingly, that of the organisation. It is for these reasons that the researcher has taken data from the JSS to enable him to determine whether the JSS graduate can overcome the task of writing in the near future.

The specific sources of data for the research were the students and English teachers from three junior secondary schools in the Kumasi metropolis. These schools are Martyrs of Uganda, Opoku Ware and State Experimental. They are similar but different in certain respects. Their similarities lie in the fact that they are:

- ❖ all in the Bantama sub-metro of the Kumasi metropolis;
- ❖ sited within the same vicinity (Martyrs and Opoku Ware are both situated at the Opoku Ware Secondary School compound while State Experimental is at Nhyiaeso, about one kilometre from Opoku Ware);

- ❖ all model schools; and
- ❖ well endowed with teaching and learning materials, good students, and upper and middle class parents.

Some of their differences are that they were established by completely different entities – Martyrs of Uganda by the Roman Catholic Church, Opoku Ware by Staff of Opoku Ware Secondary School and State Experimental, by government.

The major reason why these schools were chosen for the research is that it was not easy getting schools from which to collect the data. The cause is that the prospective researcher had to collect a letter from the sub-metro director and several channels had to be passed through to obtain it; so it was more convenient to collect it from one director. Since it was not easy to move from one end of the city to the other, it became more convenient when the three schools happened to be situated within the same vicinity.

Since all the schools are well endowed, it makes the sample representative and reliable enough. If the paragraph writing skills in these schools are so bad, it will be an indicator that our educational system is in a crisis and as such prompt remedial action will have to be taken by all stakeholders. On the other hand, if they should be so good, then further research will have to be conducted in the less endowed schools to find out how they can compare with the well endowed ones so as to help stakeholders know what action to take to address the problem if there should be any.

### **3.1.1 Martyrs Of Uganda JSS**

This school was established in 1987 in response to the dictates of the new educational reforms. Before its establishment, there was already in existence the

Martyrs of Uganda Primary School which, like the experimental schools, prepared students for the secondary schools through the common entrance examination. This JSS was founded and funded by the Roman Catholic Church with some amount of support from parents. This should have made it qualify to function as a private school but by the dictates of government, all junior secondary schools in existence as at 1987 became public schools, and Martyrs of Uganda accordingly became a public school.

It admits students directly from its primary school which is still private. Its current enrolment is 800. It has a teacher population of 34 with eleven of them being graduates, one diploma holder and the rest of them, post-secondary teachers. Of the number of these teachers, three teach English, one being a university graduate; another, a diplomate; and the other a post-secondary teacher.

Martyrs of Uganda is within the Ashanti Regional Education Directorate. This Directorate annually grades the schools within its jurisdiction. The grading is based on the school's performance at the BECE. Since the grading begun, Martyrs of Uganda has never fallen below the seventh position. For five consecutive years, the worst grade a student of the school had in English at the BECE was grade 2 and the worst aggregate a student has had since it was founded is 20.

### 3.1.2 Opoku Ware JSS

The school started as a primary school in 1992 at the old annex dining hall of Opoku Ware Secondary School. It was established by the staff of the secondary school in reaction to the difficulties that they had in getting their wards to the Martyrs of Uganda Basic School which is situated on the same compound as Opoku

Ware Secondary School. In 1998, the first batch of students to the JSS section was admitted.

Even though it is a public institution which is managed by the GES, it is financed mainly by the parents. They put up all the buildings in the school and they continue to support the school with other facilities like library, books and even pay extra fees for tuition to motivate the teachers to give of their best to the students.

The school has an average class size of fifty. It has two hundred students and thirteen teachers, six of whom are university graduates, two diplomates, and five post secondary teachers.

The school's worst aggregate at the BECE is 15 and in English a good number of the students score grade one or two. Its worst position at the BECE in the Ashanti Region has been fifth.

### 3.1.3 State Experimental JSS

The school was founded in 1955 to cater for the wards of civil servants on transfer to Kumasi, so it was not open to the public. To enable it to serve this purpose effectively, it was situated at Nhyiaeso, behind the Regional Administration, where the bulk of the civil servants reside. It is a model school and by its status students pay higher fees than they do at other public schools.

It has a serene environment with neat magnificent structures to accommodate the students. Compared to Martyrs and Opoku Ware, State Experimental is the best resourced in terms of buildings and teaching/learning materials and it has the most spacious compound, where students can play and move about freely. It is also the only school among the three with dining hall facilities and a permanent kitchen staff.

With the introduction of the new educational reforms, the school became community based. This gave the heads the mandate to make admissions instead of the Metro Education Directorate which had direct supervision over the school and as such admitted pupils to the kindergarten and primary sections. This was when the fortunes of the school started to decline. It started recording bad grades at the BECE because all manner of students were then admitted and some of them, unlike their predecessors, engaged in delinquent behaviours like truancy, smoking and drinking. The pass rate at the BECE is now 91% instead of the hitherto 100% with the worse aggregate now being 18 instead of 13.

The number on roll is more than 500 with an average class size of 60. It has 20 teachers, three of whom are university graduates, three diploma holders, two specialists and twelve post secondary teachers.

### 3.2 Population and Samples

The target population for this research was all JSS students and teachers in Ghana. However, it would not have been possible to reach each member of this population, so a part of it, the JSS students and teachers in Kumasi, was selected. If each member of this sampled population was considered for the study, it would have been too difficult to manage. Therefore this sample of three schools was taken to help reduce the numbers to a manageable level. This sample was made up of twenty students and two English language teachers from each of the three schools.

The students were all chosen from the JSS 2 class. The rationale behind this choice was that since the teaching of paragraph writing ends in JSS 1, by JSS 2, the students would have had enough practice in it to enable fair observation and justified

comments to be made about their ability to develop the paragraph. Also, the JSS 3 students were too busy preparing for their BECE so it would not have been prudent to disturb them with issues of research. Besides this, it was safer to use the JSS 2 class since the students would be available for one more year to enable any follow-up work to be done, should the need arise.

Considering the target population and the target group, we can conclude that this sample is not representative in any respect. However, it will help stakeholders of education and prospective researchers into language to have an insight into what is happening to writing as regards organisation of ideas. It will then guide them to reconsider assessing the language situation properly and consequently finding out the amount of effort to put into salvaging it, should the condition be that bad, as the results will show.

### 3.3 Sampling of Students

The respondents were randomly selected under careful conditions so as not to influence the results of the research. In order to erase any possible prejudice against the researcher, no constraints were imposed on the selection of respondents. Through this each student within the selected group was given an equal chance of getting picked as a respondent.

In each school, the students were given an hour notice of the task ahead. They were shown a rendezvous and asked to converge there at an appointed time. The first twenty to enter had the opportunity of taking part in the exercise. Some students were very eager to participate and in order not to dampen their spirits, they were allowed to take part but unknown to them, their responses were not taken.

To encourage the respondents to give sincere responses to the questionnaire and tests, they were not made to write their names or anything that would give them out. This was also meant to prevent the researcher from getting influenced by names and other things which would invariably affect the results.

### 3.4 Tools for Data Analyses

The tools that were used to analyse the data included the product and process-focused approaches to language teaching and learning already discussed in chapter 1. Through these approaches, I got to know how far the teachers' methods of teaching writing affected the students' ability to develop the paragraph.

To be able to have a graphic view of the results obtained and also to easily evaluate them scientifically, statistical techniques were employed. These included the tabular and graphical presentation of the data collected, the use of percentages and the statistical averages of mean and mode to analyse and determine the levels of occurrence of the key issues needed in paragraph development in students' writing.

Through this the following were determined:

- i. the level to which students were able to develop paragraphs;
- ii. how the research objective could be achieved;
- iii. what answers to give to the research questions; and
- iv. whether the hypotheses could be true or not.

### 3.5 Data collection Methods and Survey Instruments

To enable the respondents prove their worth in developing the paragraph, the personal interview method in addition to the survey method of using a questionnaire,

a jumbled paragraph, and a take-home composition were adopted. This helped the researcher to have insight into the extent of student and teacher knowledge about the paragraph and students' ability to develop the paragraph.

### 3.5.1 Personal Interviews

Informal oral interviews were conducted to elicit information from the respondents. This method was employed to cater for those who might probably not be able to write with comprehension and yet not disclose this shortcoming and instead attempt to respond to the questionnaire. Upon this other questions, as well as questions in the questionnaire, were asked. These questions were based on the adequacy or otherwise of the allotted time for English, the duration of the JSS programme, and the history of the schools. The interviews were conducted before the questionnaire was administered and they took place at the staff common rooms and outside the classroom.

The general impression got from the interviews was that the time allotted to English at the JSS is very inadequate, and the official three year duration for the JSS programme is not enough for both teachers and students since teachers are not able to cover enough grounds and give more exercises as they may want to. Consequently, students do not gain maximum benefit from what they are supposed to be taught. This is aggravated by the fact that the JSS students write the BECE too early so they are not able to get even the three year tuition they require.

a jumbled paragraph, and a take-home composition were adopted. This helped the researcher to have insight into the extent of student and teacher knowledge about the paragraph and students' ability to develop the paragraph.

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### 3.5.2 The Questionnaire

A questionnaire seeks answers from respondents to a set of questions on a topic or an issue. It is better to use it when the sample has a large size since it spreads over a large area. Since my sample size was not too large and it was located almost within the same vicinity, it is likely that I did not need to use the questionnaire so I should have relied on the personal interview. However, it was necessary that I used it for obvious reasons. With it, I could cover all the informants within a short period of time. Also, those who felt shy to talk could conveniently write all they knew about paragraph writing, thanks to the anonymity provided by the questionnaire.

#### 3.5.2.1 Analyses of Responses to the Questionnaire

There were two separate sets of questionnaire administered, one for teachers and the other for students. For easy analyses and to aid comprehension of the analyses, the individual questions and a summary of the responses to each were taken one after the other and commented on, after which a general observation was made.

##### 3.5.2.1a Questionnaire for Teachers

The questionnaire for the teachers sought information on student problems in composition writing, paragraph development, and the methods that the teachers used in teaching composition. It also sought information on the remediation measures that could be taken to improve on these methods to help students write good paragraphs. A sample of the responses given to the questionnaire for the teachers has been attached as Appendix I.

**Question 1:** *What do you understand by composition in language learning?*

**Responses:**

- ❖ It is an organized piece of information given on a particular subject.
- ❖ It is continuous prose writing expressing views on an issue, event, etc.
- ❖ It is a piece of writing on a given topic by students to improve upon their skills.

**Comments:**

These responses, especially the last response, showed that JSS teachers knew what composition was.

**Question 2:** *What method do you use when teaching composition writing?*

**Responses:**

- ❖ Discussion method (spidergram)
- ❖ Guided method (substitution table)
- ❖ Role playing
- ❖ Group work
- ❖ Description
- ❖ Narration

**Comments:**

The guided method falls under the product approach to writing while discussion, role playing and group work can be associated with the process approach. Depending upon who is narrating or describing, the narrative and descriptive methods can be regarded as product or process. From the responses, we can deduce that the teachers are using both the product and process approaches to

teach the JSS Students. The use of these approaches is very ideal for they help the students to write good essays with distinct paragraphs.

**Question 3:** *What problems are associated with two of these methods?*

*Responses:*

*(i) Guided Method*

- ❖ It stifles the imagination since it does not give students the opportunity to imagine.
- ❖ Much of the work is done by the teacher so the learner does not do much original thinking.
- ❖ The learner just picks and joins sentences.

*(ii) Discussion Method*

- ❖ It is time consuming.
- ❖ Some students may not have enough information, so they may only depend on others for ideas and will not contribute to the discussion.
- ❖ Students who do not brainstorm become bored.

*(iii) Group Work*

- ❖ Only the good students contribute to the discussions.

*(iv) Role Playing*

- ❖ Students make a lot of noise and that affects its effectiveness.

*(v) Descriptive*

- ❖ Students find it difficult to use appropriate vocabulary.

**Comments:**

These responses show that the JSS teachers know the real problems inherent in these methods of teaching. So we expect them to find solutions to them to make their teaching effective.

These responses help, to a great extent, to achieve the objective of that part of the research which involves identifying the problems with the method of teaching paragraph development at the JSS.

**Question 4:** *How can you modify the two methods in question 3 to make them suitable for teaching and learning composition writing?*

**Responses:***(i) Guided method*

- ❖ Students should be allowed to combine their own creativity with teacher's guidance.
- ❖ Teachers should combine substitution table with spidergram to make it more activity based.

*(iii) Discussion*

- ❖ Students should be given the topic early to enable them to gather more facts.
- ❖ Weak students should be involved in the discussion, by the teacher asking their views on the topic being treated.
- ❖ Things should be planned in such a way that the topic would be handled in groups after which the entire class would discuss it before students write the essay in their exercise books.

*Comments*

These are good suggestions which when implemented will help students to write good paragraphs. These suggestions have helped me to achieve the objective of suggesting remediation methods to the problems affecting the teaching of paragraph writing.

**Question 5:** *What category of problems do your pupils face when writing composition?*

*Responses:*

- ❖ Poor paragraphing involving student inability to expand ideas and arrange facts in logical order;
- ❖ Lack of vocabulary;
- ❖ Poor sentence construction;
- ❖ Basic grammatical mistakes;
- ❖ Wrong spelling; and
- ❖ L<sub>1</sub> influence in the form of literal translation

*Comments*

The above shows that the problems of the JSS students permeate all spheres of writing, so immediate and proper solution should be found to them. From what we have here, it could be said that the objective of identifying the problem the JSS student faces with paragraph development has been achieved to a large extent.

**Question 6:** *What do you understand by paragraphing?*

*Responses*

- ❖ The arrangement of similar ideas in one column;
- ❖ The expansion of an idea in continuous writing;

- ❖ The collection of sentences on a given topic;
- ❖ Using a group of sentences to express a main idea; and
- ❖ Organising ideas on a topic such that each paragraph talks about a specific idea and also there is coherence in the presentation.

*Comments*

These responses show that the JSS teachers understand what the paragraph is so it is expected that they will teach their students well enough for them to be able to develop good paragraphs.

**Question 7:** *In what three ways is the paragraph important to composition?*

*Responses:*

- ❖ It helps in the build-up of facts;
- ❖ It helps the writer to switch from one fact to the other without difficulty;
- ❖ It helps the reader to capture thoughts expressed in subsequent paragraphs;
- ❖ It helps to distinguish one idea from the other as opposed to the jumble or writing of ideas en bloc;
- ❖ It helps in sequential arrangement of similar facts;
- ❖ It enables the learner to present ideas in a logical sequence;
- ❖ It helps the writer to give an orderly presentation of ideas;
- ❖ It enables the learner to organise his/her thoughts;
- ❖ It enables the learner to connect ideas in a coherent manner;
- ❖ It makes composition clearer and more understandable;
- ❖ Ideas are clearly explained; and
- ❖ It makes reading easier and simpler.

### Comments

These are responses that can guide teachers to pursue the teaching of paragraph writing. They also help to partially answer the research question: “*Do both teachers and students know the importance of the paragraph?*” It also partially defeats the hypothesis that *students and teachers do not know the importance of the paragraph to writing*.

**Question 8:** *How do you make pupils develop the paragraphs in their composition?*

### Responses

- ❖ By giving them assignments on topics;
- ❖ By discussing the topic with them in class;
- ❖ By helping them to list the ideas from the topic;
- ❖ By teaching them how to expand the topic sentences;
- ❖ By teaching them to use linking words to separate different ideas;
- ❖ By developing guidelines for them to write on the topic; and
- ❖ By encouraging them to add to what is given them as guidelines.

### Comments

These are very good procedures the teacher can adopt to teach paragraph writing. They will be very helpful to the student if the phrases *by helping them....* and *by teaching them....* do not mean the teacher does virtually everything for them, as it is done in guided composition. These responses help to tackle the research objective through suggesting ways of modifying the teaching methods after identifying the problems associated with teaching.

**Question 9:** *What remediation methods do you take when pupils are not able to write paragraphs as they should?*

**Responses**

- ❖ Individual attention is given;
- ❖ Occasional group work is used;
- ❖ Students are made to group information according to their level of relationship;
- ❖ Students are made to expand given facts;
- ❖ Students are given exercise in single paragraph development;
- ❖ Students are made to go through reading the composition paragraph by paragraph for class discussion; and
- ❖ The topic is again discussed with the class and developed through guided composition during which pupils provide only the appropriate facts.

**Comments**

These are good remediation methods and students are expected to benefit from them. They also provided concrete information which helped me to achieve the research objective.

**3.5.2.1b Questionnaire for students**

On student questionnaire, information was sought on students' knowledge of paragraph writing, the importance of the paragraph to them, and how they develop the paragraph. A sample of the responses has been attached as Appendix 2.

To make communication very effective, every rule of the language must be taken into consideration. For this reason, in the assessment of the student responses

to the questionnaire, every bit of knowledge expected from students was used to determine whether they were good at the language or not. Comments have been given on each set of responses.

The respondents were not given any options from which they were to select their responses. They were rather required to come out with their own responses. This was meant to test whether without any guide they could provide information on the paragraph. Of course, the researcher had it in mind that under such circumstances, individual students may come out with responses which may be different from or similar to that of other students in certain respects. Also since they were to provide the responses on the spur of the moment, they would write what may readily come into their minds. This means that some of them may not get all the expected responses. This would not necessarily mean that they did not know those facts which they did not provide. However, at their level, it is expected that they would be able to exhibit a reasonable amount of knowledge on the paragraph on the spur of the moment.

**Question 1:** *How do you normally write your composition in English?*

**Comments**

From the responses and the number of students to each response as shown in Table 3.1, it can be said that students know how to go about composition writing. With the exception of response C, "I write the composition," all the responses address the question.

It is encouraging that out of the 60 students under consideration, 32 being 53% of them could state on the spur of the moment that they study the topic while 31, which gives 51.7% state that they paragraph their work with 23, representing

38.3% stating that they plan the composition. Only 8 of the students, which represents 13.3%, stated that they write and explain the points and 17 which represents 28.3% simply stated that they write the composition. If these 17 students were given the opportunity to explain what they wrote, it is likely that they would have said that they explain the points which they write.

*Table 3.1 Table of Responses to Question 1*

	Responses	Number of Students Responding			Total
		Martyrs	Opoku Ware	State	
a.	I study the topic.	5	8	19	32
b.	I plan the composition	2	10	11	23
c.	I write the composition	8	6	3	17
d.	I write and explain the points	1	1	6	8
e.	I leave a paragraph.	10	5	16	31
f.	I write in appropriate vocabulary and tenses.	2	3	3	8
g.	I punctuate the composition.	2	2	0	4
h.	The teacher helps us to discuss the topic.	0	4	0	4
	<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>127</b>

Students' responses that they write in the appropriate vocabulary and tenses and also they punctuate the composition are indications that the students actually know how to write the composition. The number of students giving these responses is low anyway. The reason may be that most of them did not find it necessary to give these responses. If some of them have been able to give such responses on the spur of the moment, then the conclusion that students know how to go about their composition writing still holds.

**Question 2:** *Write what you know about the paragraph in composition writing.*

**Comments**

Although the responses given here are not many, the grand total of 66 is a good account of student knowledge of paragraph writing. The responses actually sum up what a good paragraph should be.

38.3% stating that they plan the composition. Only 8 of the students, which represents 13.3%, stated that they write and explain the points and 17 which represents 28.3% simply stated that they write the composition. If these 17 students were given the opportunity to explain what they wrote, it is likely that they would have said that they explain the points which they write.

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f. I write in appropriate vocabulary and tenses.	2	3	3	8
g. I punctuate the composition.	2	2	0	4
h. The teacher helps us to discuss the topic.	0	4	1	4
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**Comments**

Although the responses given here are not many, the grand total of 66 is a good account of student knowledge of paragraph writing. The responses actually sum up what a good paragraph should be.

Table 3.2 Table of Responses to Question 2

Responses	Number of Students Responding			Total
	Martyrs	Opoku Ware	State	
a. It is a group of sentences that expresses one idea or thought.	4	11	20	35
b. We leave a space (paragraph indicator) to begin a new paragraph.	9	13	9	31
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>66</b>

**Question 3:** Explain three ways in which the paragraph is important to you in writing composition.

#### Comments

The responses to this question go to confirm those of question 2 that students actually know about the paragraph. A similar question was posed to the teachers in question 7 of their questionnaire. Their responses to that question corroborate that of the students. These revelations provide a positive answer to the research question as to whether students and teachers know the importance of the paragraph. It then negates the hypothesis that both teachers and students at the JSS do not know the importance of the paragraph to writing. With this discovery that both parties know about the paragraph and its importance to writing, we shall see from the take-home composition whether students are able to develop the skill of paragraph writing in practical terms or they still fail to do so as conjectured in the other hypothesis.

Table 3.3 Table of Responses to Question 3

Responses	Number of Students Responding			Total
	Martyrs	Opoku Ware	State	
a. It helps to break the composition down into different ideas.	16	17	12	45
b. It helps to explain ideas better.	2	7	5	14
c. It helps to write meaningful composition.	7	8	14	29
d. It makes the composition appear presentable and easier to read.	18	12	15	45
e. Lack of paragraph makes composition appear to express one idea.	1	0	2	3
f. It helps me to gain more marks for my composition.	5	10	0	15
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>151</b>

*Question 4: How do you develop your paragraph when writing composition?*

*Comments*

The responses given here were expected to be echoes of those in question 1 since the same principles apply to both composition and paragraph writing. However, contradictory responses were given to both questions. Almost all the students of State Experimental JSS (19) stated in question 1 that they study the topic while eleven (11) of them declared that they plan the composition. However, in answer to question 4, none of them could state that they consider the topic and the points to write. To question 1, (five) 5 students from Martyrs of Uganda JSS said that they study the topic while two (2) said that they plan the composition. However, we have eleven (11) students from the same school stating that they consider the points to write. No student from Opoku Ware JSS said so even though to question 1, eight (8) said they study the topic while ten (10) said they plan the composition. These discoveries make one wonder whether the students understood the questions and the answers they provided.

Since the students said in questions 2 and 3 that they know what the paragraph is and how important it is, we expected them to be able to show how they develop it. It is disheartening for only 26 representing 43.3% of the students to state that they leave paragraph indicators in writing their paragraphs. If no student from Opoku Ware and State could consider the points to write, how come that 10 which is 50% and 18 being 90% of each respectively could write and explain each of the points in a different paragraph while, ironically, only 2 that is 10% from Martyrs stated that they did so. From the contradictory manner in which students reacted to questions 1 and 4, can it be said that they understood the question? If they did

understand it, why then did they give such unreliable answers? In effect, it is doubtful that the questionnaire is a good way of getting genuine information from respondents.

Table 3.4 Table of Responses to Question 4

	Responses	Number of Students Responding			Total
		Martyrs	Opoku ware	State	
a.	I consider the topic and the points to write.	11	0	0	11
b.	I leave a paragraph indicator	10	8	8	26
c.	I write and explain each of the points in a different paragraph.	2	10	18	30
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>23</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>67</b>

**Question 5:** *In developing your paragraphs when writing your composition, what help do your teachers give you?*

**Comments**

From Table 3.5, fifteen (15) students from Martyrs, eight (8) from Opoku Ware and twelve (12) from State say that the teachers explain to them how a paragraph looks like. This number of students (35 representing 58.3% of them, in addition to the twelve (12) students from Martyrs) claiming that their teachers ask them to leave paragraph indicators, shows that the teachers have done fairly well. At Opoku Ware and State, two (2) and one (1) student respectively responded likewise.

Question 5 was very crucial to the study, for it was through the responses given here that the researcher could determine whether the student would be able to develop the paragraph properly or not. The responses here must confirm what the students gave for questions 1 and 4, in that the students are more likely to develop their paragraphs and essays based on what their teachers teach them than on what they can imagine. This question also acted as a confirmation test on questions 8 and 9 of the questionnaire for teachers. It was meant to test whether the teachers really

employed the methods which they claimed they used but they did not just write what they knew was supposed to have been done.

From Table 3.5, it can be said that on the other aspects of paragraph writing, it appears the teachers do not do much. Only one (1) student from Opoku Ware responded that the teacher asked them to provide linkages. Two (2) students from State and 4 from Martyrs also wrote that they were asked to raise important points, group them logically and support them with examples. No student from Opoku Ware wrote this.

A response which can create a problem for the students was the claim that the teachers provided them with points, examples, and vocabulary and went on to explain the topic to them. The number of students who gave this response (13) was not that many. It appears that the bulk of them, ten (10), comes from one school, Opoku Ware. However, if what they were saying was true, then the students were being spoon-fed. This would adversely affect their ability to develop the paragraph writing skills independently.

By their responses to questions 8 and 9 of the questionnaire for teachers, those teachers appear to claim that they gave adequate help to the students but the students' responses here negate this notion. The reason for this conclusion is that based on the responses from question 5, the methods which the students claim were being employed by the teachers in teaching paragraph writing could not help in proper paragraph development. This is a partial answer to the following research questions: "Are the skills of paragraph writing being developed at the JSS?" and "Can the methods currently used in teaching paragraph writing at the JSS help

students to write good paragraphs?" The actual truth will be determined through the feedback from the take-home composition.

Table 3.5 Table of Responses to Question 5

	Responses	Number of Students Responding			Total
		Martyrs	Opoku ware	State	
a.	They provide us with points and examples	0	3	0	3
b.	They provide us with vocabulary and teach us how to write sentences and expressions and also how to use tenses, verbs and punctuations.	0	2	2	4
c.	They explain the topic to us and help us to discuss the essay.	1	5	0	6
d.	They explain how a paragraph looks like.	15	8	12	35
e.	They ask us to raise important points, group them logically and support each of them with examples.	4	0	2	6
f.	They ask us to see to it that each paragraph contains a new view.	3	5	0	8
g.	They ask us to leave a reasonable space before starting a point.	12	2	1	15
h.	They ask us to write at least three paragraphs in a composition.	1	1	0	2
i.	They ask us to provide linkages in paragraphs.	0	1	0	1
j.	They go round to inspect what we are doing and direct us to do the right thing.	2	3	0	5
k.	They award marks to each paragraph	1	2	0	3
	<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>88</b>

**Question 6:** How many compositions have you written this academic year?

**Comments:**

This survey was conducted during the third term so the figures here are not commendable. With Martyrs of Uganda JSS, it is certain that the students have written 8 essays each since they all say so. At Opoku Ware JSS, the number may be 5 or 6 since 10 students in each case say so. As for State Experimental JSS, the students do not appear to know how many compositions they have written. It appears that each student merely guessed something to write. If the students of Martyrs and Opoku Ware should be relied upon based on their level of certainty, and if we should take their responses for our calculations, then up to the time of the survey, the

students had written about eight (8) compositions. This will translate into the mean of about three (3) compositions a term. This is very low and it may not be of much help to students in their efforts to develop paragraph writing skills.

Table 3.6 Table of Responses to Question 6

Number of Compositions Written	Number of Students Writing Composition			Total
	Martyrs	Opoku Ware	State	
15	..	+	+	2
12	..	+	..	2
11	..	+	..	2
10	..	+	..	4
9	..	+	..	1
8	20	..	..	20
6	..	+	10	11
5	..	+	10	12
4	..	+	..	1
3	..	+	..	1
2	..	+	..	4

#### Overview

The paragraph is not just about leaving paragraph indicators at the beginning of each paragraph. It is rather about the development of ideas contained in an essay. This implies that if students leave paragraph indicators but fail to develop each idea within the paragraph indicator, then that will not constitute a paragraph. It will just be a group of words beginning with a paragraph indicator.

Judging from the results so far, it appears that students see the paragraph more as a unit that expresses one idea developed in an essay than as "a group of words beginning with a paragraph indicator." This is evident in the summary of the responses to the questions in this section as shown in Table 3.7. It confirms the responses and comments to question 2. It is a healthy sign of the students' in-depth knowledge of the paragraph. From the results of the take-home composition, we shall see whether the students know so much about the paragraph in practical terms also.

Table 3.7 Partial Summary of Students' Responses to Questionnaire

(a) The Paragraph as a Paragraph Indicator

Question	Responses	Number of Students Responding			Total
		Martyrs	Opoku Ware	State	
1	I leave a paragraph	10	5	16	31
1	I leave a paragraph indicator	10	8	8	26
2	We leave a space (paragraph indicator) to begin a new paragraph.	9	13	9	31
4	They ask us to leave a reasonable space before starting a point.	12	2	1	15
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>41</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>103</b>

(b) The Paragraph as a Unit that Expresses One Idea

Question	Responses	Number of Students Responding			Total
		Martyrs	Opoku Ware	State	
1	I write and explain the points	1	1	6	8
2	It is a group of sentences that expresses one idea or thought.	4	11	20	35
3	It helps to break composition down into different ideas.	16	17	12	45
3	It helps to explain ideas better.	2	7	5	14
4	I write and explain each of the points in a different paragraph	2	11	18	30
5	They ask us to raise important points, group them logically and support each of them with examples.	4	--	2	6
5	They ask us to see to it that each paragraph contains a new view.	1	5	--	8
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>32</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>146</b>

### 3.5.3 The Jumbled Paragraph

The jumbled paragraph is a teaching learning activity in the process-focused approach to writing which is related to the drafting/writing phase. It is at this phase that the writer considers the overall draft of the composition by concentrating on the audience, the purpose of writing and the form the writing should take. With the jumbled paragraph, learners are given a list of jumbled sentences from a paragraph and they are asked to reorder them. This activity is used under controlled writing at

the primary school where all pupils are encouraged to organise their composition in one direction and in the same sentences. In effect, it should not have been employed at the JSS level. However, since students develop at different rates, the weaker students have to be catered for, hence its use at the JSS. The motive here was to give all manner of JSS students the chance to prove their worth in paragraph development. It was also meant to find out whether they had acquired the fundamental skills of paragraph development at the primary level before entering the JSS.

The paragraph consisted of nine short sentences. Students were required to reorder them in a sequential order. I enhanced this activity by incorporating some sentences that could not belong to this paragraph. Students were, first, to write these sentences separately before reordering those that belonged to the paragraph. The inclusion of these *stray* sentences was meant to find out whether students could actually identify related ideas in a jumbled context and arrange them logically.

Transitions were deliberately left out in the sentences. The reason is that the transitions would have made it too easy for the students to order the sentences. In their absence students would have to think critically to find out which sentence followed which. It is out of this that the students who can think logically can be determined.

The work was done in the classroom under strict supervision. The motive was to ensure that no discussions would take place between students so that the true picture of individual students having acquired the basic skills of paragraph writing could be painted. A copy of this paragraph has been attached as Appendix 3 and a student's solution to it has been added as Appendix 4.

### 3.5.3.1 Analyses of the Jumbled Paragraph

In this section we analyse each of the nine sentences in the jumbled paragraph to justify why it must occupy a particular position in the paragraph. In making the analysis, the process-focused approach has been followed. This is because the jumbled paragraph is an activity in the drafting/writing phase of the process approach. This exercise will help us to know whether the JSS teachers are making effective use of the process approach in teaching paragraph writing.

#### 3.5.3.1a The Topic Sentence

*I always envied being a member of the town library.*

Out of the nine sentences, it is this sentence which, in reality, carried the theme of the paragraph. “Enviied” is used here to mean that the writer was not comfortable for not being a member of the town library, so he was eager to become one. Upon critical analysis, we can say that the six sentences which will be analysed after this rather provide details that go to support the idea expressed in this topic sentence. This sentence also helps us to determine that two of the nine sentences are actually not related to the paragraph. This sentence leaves the following questions unanswered and those six sentences provide the answers:

- ❖ How did the writer react to this envy?
- ❖ What was the outcome of the reaction?
- ❖ What did the writer do to that outcome?
- ❖ Was it worth envying the town library?

### 3.5.3.1b The Support Sentences

There are six support sentences in the jumbled paragraph. Out of these the students were expected to show their understanding of why the writer came out with that topic sentence. The reason for this is that they provided palpable evidence in the form of actions taken by the writer as a result of the envy, the results of the action and whether the writer received positive results to his envy. This paragraph being a narrative, the details of the events are provided through these support sentences.

#### *Support Sentence 1*

*I talked to my class teacher about it.*

This sentence tells us the step the writer took in reaction to the envy, out of the several options left to him/her. It answers the question: "How did the writer react to this envy?" This is the more reason why it follows the topic sentence directly.

#### *Support Sentence 2*

*He encouraged me to be a member.*

In this sentence, we are told about the response that the writer got with regard to the step that s/he took with reference to his/her envy. It provides an answer to the question: "What was the outcome of the writer confiding in the class teacher?" These make this sentence logically follow support sentence 1.

#### *Support Sentence 3*

*I collected a registration form from the library and filled it.*

In this sentence, we learn about how the writer also reacted to the teacher's response. It helps to answer the question: "How did the writer react to the teacher's response?" This is why this sentence must be support sentence 3.

*Support Sentence 4*

*I sent the form back to the library and I was registered.*

This sentence is a sequel to the writer's immediate reaction to the teacher's response. It provides more information on the response, that is to say, the writer did not collect the form for keeps but returned it. Since the library form is not for keeps but has to be returned to get registered after filling it, the sentence that should logically follow support sentence 3 is this sentence.

*Support Sentence 5*

*The library had only torn unattractive books.*

From support sentence 4, the writer has now registered with the library so s/he can borrow books. S/he probably does so and finds, to his/her dismay that the library is filled with torn books. So the question is, "Was being a member of the town library so enviable to merit the registration?" The obvious answer, "no", can be derived from support sentence 5.

*Support Sentence 6*

*My parents had a lot of books on our shelves.*

This support sentence intensifies the writer's disappointment at envying to be a member of the town library and going ahead to register with it. It raises questions like, "Was it worth envying being a member of the town library? Was it worth all the effort at getting registered at the town library? Would it not have been better staying at home to read the parents' books on the shelves?" After the revelation in support sentence 5, the sentence that can best conclude the paragraph is *support sentence 6*.

### 3.5.3.1c The Unrelated Sentences

Out of the nine sentences, seven talk about the library. Based on this we can say that the paragraph is about the library. The two other sentences below do not say anything about the library or even books:

- (i) *There were a few of us children in the house; and*
- (ii) *My friends liked only sports but not reading.*

One is about the number of children in the house and the other is about friends who liked sports but not reading.

Even though the library is about reading, the sentence is not related to the library. The two sentences are therefore out of place. For this reason, they cannot be placed anywhere in the paragraph.

### 3.5.3.2 Analyses of Student Responses to the Jumbled Paragraph

This section of the dissertation analyses the re-arrangement of the jumbled paragraph by each of the students in the three schools. For easy analysis and interpretation, the scripts of each school have been numbered from 1 to 20 and the responses have been codified in jumbled paragraph analysis tables. This table helped to determine how best students were able to arrange sentences logically in a paragraph.

The table is made up of 17 columns and 23 rows for each school. The first column, labelled *s*, represents the individual students who took part in the exercise. Column *t* represents the topic sentence which is, *I always envied being a member of the school library*. The next seven columns, *r1* to *r7*, indicate the seven sentences that

should form the paragraph. These sentences are rearranged according to which position they must occupy in the paragraph. The arrangement is as follows:

- ❖ Sentence r1: *I always envied being a member of the town library;*
- ❖ Sentence r2: *I talked to my class teacher about it.*
- ❖ Sentence r3: *He encouraged me to be a member;*
- ❖ Sentence r4: *I collected a registration form from the library and filled;*
- ❖ Sentence r5: *I sent the form back to the library and I was registered;*
- ❖ Sentence r6: *The library had only torn unattractive books;*
- ❖ Sentence r7: *My Parents had a lot of books on our shelves.*

Column *ca* is for the total number of sentences that students could place in their proper positions and logically arrange in the paragraph. Sentences that belonged to the paragraph and were duly put in the paragraph but were wrongly placed in their arrangement are named as P1, P2, P3 ... to indicate that they were misplaced at position 1, 2, 3 ... In columns *u1* and *u2*, the sentences that did not belong to the paragraph were noted. Column *u1* is for the sentence: *There were a few of us children in the house.* and *u2*: *My friends liked only sports but not reading.*

Column *ms* took care of sentences that were misplaced by individual students. These were sentences that should have been in the paragraph but were not put there or those that could not be part of the paragraph but were placed in it. Each of these sentences was replaced by a cross (x) at where it ought to have been in the analysis table. The position which each of these sentences wrongly occupied in the paragraph is indicated in brackets against it in the *ms* column. For example, *u1* (t) means sentence *u1* was treated as a topic sentence by the student, *u2* (1) means



Table 3.8 shows that Martyrs of Uganda did very well in responding to the jumbled paragraph. It was only one student whose performance was too poor. S/he scored three (3) representing 30% of the ten responses with two other students making the average score of five (5) that is 50% each. The school's pctr of 76% is very commendable.

### 3.5.3.2b Responses from Opoku Ware JSS

Table 3.9 also shows Opoku Ware JSS doing very well. In any case three students scored 30% each, one student 40% and another one 50%. However, the school eventually had a pctr of 71.5% which is not far different from that of Martyrs.

Table 3.9 Responses to Jumbled Paragraph - Opoku Ware JSS

s	T	t1	t2	t3	t4	t5	t6	t7	ca	u1	v1	v2	ms	o	tot	pctr
1	v	X	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	X	0	v	v	v	2	r7	3	30
2	v	v	v	v	v	v	X	X	5	v	v	v	2	r6(u), r7(u)	8	80
3	v	v	v	v	v	v	X	X	5	v	v	v	2	r6(u), r7(u)	8	80
4	v	P3	X	P1	P3	P4	P2	X	0	v	v	v	2	r6(u), r7(u)	3	30
5	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	X	6	v	v	v	2	r7(u)	9	90
6	v	v	v	v	v	v	X	X	5	v	v	v	2	r6(u), r7(u)	8	80
7	v	v	P4	P3	P2	P6	P3	X	1	v	v	v	2	r7(u)	4	40
8	v	v	v	v	v	v	X	X	5	v	v	v	2	r7(u)	8	80
9	v	v	v	v	v	v	X	X	5	v	v	v	2	r6(u), r7(u)	8	80
10	v	v	v	v	v	v	X	X	5	v	v	v	2	r6(u), r7(u)	8	80
11	v	v	v	v	v	v	X	X	5	v	v	v	2	r6(u), r7(u)	8	80
12	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	X	6	v	v	v	2	r7(u)	9	90
13	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	X	6	v	v	v	2	r7(u)	9	90
14	v	v	v	v	v	v	X	X	5	v	v	v	2	r6(u), r7(u)	8	80
15	v	v	v	v	v	v	X	X	5	v	v	v	2	r6(u), r7(u)	8	80
16	v	v	v	v	v	v	X	X	5	v	v	v	2	r6(u), r7(u)	8	80
17	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	X	6	v	v	v	2	r7(u)	9	90
18	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	X	6	v	v	v	2	r7(u)	9	90
19	X	v	v	v	v	X	X	X	4	v	X	1	s2(u), r7(u)	r5, r6	5	50
20	v	X	P4	X	P1	P2	P3	X	0	v	v	v	2	r7(u), r7(u)	3	30
Σ	19	17	16	16	15	5	0	85	20	19	39	31	4	143	71.5	
pctr	95	85	80	80	75	25	0	60.7	100	95	97.5	22.2	2.9	71.5		

### 3.5.3.2c Responses from State Experimental JSS

State Experimental JSS, as shown in Table 3.10, put up a disappointing performance in the jumbled paragraph in spite of their laudable responses to the questionnaire. They had a pctr of 39.5. There were three students who had only one



### 3.5.3.3 Observations

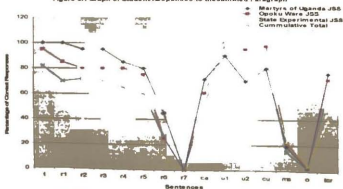
#### Comments

From Table 3.11 and Figure 3.1, we can deduce that the students did well to identify the topic sentence, sentences r1 to r5 and u1 and u2. Sentence r6 was poorly managed and strangely enough, no student could get sentence r7 correct. Not many of the sentences were misplaced or omitted anyway. But for sentence r7, the graphs for Martyrs and Opoku Ware and also that of the cumulative total would have been very close to becoming a straight line. With the cumulative pter of 62.3, we can say that students, of at least these two schools, are good at managing jumbled paragraphs.

Table 3.11 Jumbled Paragraph Analysis Table - Cumulative Scores

	t	r1	r2	r3	r4	r5	r6	r7	ca	u1	u2	cu	ms	o	tot	ptcr
Martyrs	20	20	19	19	17	16	9	0	100	18	14	32	27	3	152	76
Opoku Ware	19	17	16	16	16	15	5	0	85	20	19	39	31	4	143	71.5
State	10	5	8	7	6	5	2	0	33	20	16	36	32	6	79	39.5
Cumulative Total	49	42	43	42	39	36	16	0	218	58	49	107	90	13	374	62.3
Pc	81.7	79	71.7	70	65	60	26.7	0	51.9	96.7	81.7	82.2	15	2.2	62.3	

Figure 3.1 Graph of Student Responses to the Jumbled Paragraph



### 3.5.3.3 Observations

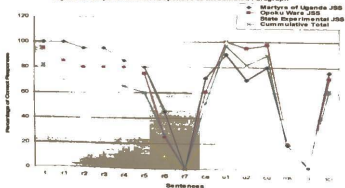
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Martyrs	20	20	19	19	17	16	9	0	100	18	14	32	27	3	152	76
Opoku Ware	19	17	16	16	16	15	5	0	85	20	19	39	31	4	143	71.5
State	19	5	8	7	6	5	2	0	33	20	16	36	32	6	79	39.5
Cumulative Total	49	42	43	42	39	36	16	0	218	58	49	107	90	11	374	62.3
Pc	81.7	70	71.7	70	65	60	26.7	0	51.9	96.7	81.7	82.2	15	2.2	62.3	

Figure 3.1 Graph of Student Responses to the Jumbled Paragraph



From the topic sentence to sentence r6, Figure 3.1 shows the students of State performing far below Martyrs and Opoku Ware. It is only sentences u1 and u2 that they could identify so well. Table 3.12 and Figure 3.2 clearly depict the abysmal performance by State Experimental in the jumbled paragraph as already specified in the comments to Table 3.10. In spite of this, from Table 3.12 and Figure 3.2, it can be noticed that students generally did very well in responding to the jumbled paragraph.

From the cumulative total, 23 representing 8.3% scored up to 50%. This is low enough to merit the above commendation. For now the belief is that the JSS students know what the paragraph is and they are good at reorganising the jumbled paragraph. From this it can be presumed that they would be equally good at developing paragraphs in an essay.

#### *Overview*

Even though the students performed generally well in responding to the jumbled paragraph, it is worth commenting on their enigmatic response to sentence r7. Not even one student could identify it as belonging to the paragraph. One of the attributes of the paragraph is logical reasoning. It is through this that the writer will be able to discern the appropriate explanation to give to the central idea in the paragraph.

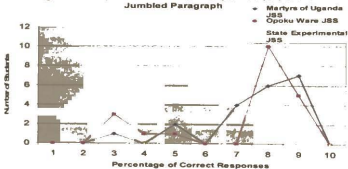
From the sentences in the jumbled paragraph it can be deduced that the writer yearned to be a member of the town library. When he eventually became a member, he discovered, to his disappointment, that the books that his parents had were better than the library books. If the students were not able to make these deductions and support the central idea with sentence r7, then it indicated that the JSS students had a

problem with reasoning. This hypothesis can be tested in further research to determine its validity. For now, we shall examine how the students handled paragraph writing in the take-home composition.

Table 3.12 Total Correct Responses to the Jumbled Paragraph

Percentage Score	Number of Students				Cumulative Total
	Martyrs	Opoku Ware	State	Total	
10	--	--	3	3	3
20	--	--	3	3	6
30	1	3	6	10	16
40	--	1	--	1	17
50	2	1	3	6	23
60	--	--	1	1	24
70	4	--	1	5	29
80	6	10	3	19	48
90	7	5	--	12	60

Figure 3.2 Graph of Total Correct Responses (tcr) to the Jumbled Paragraph



### 3.5.4 Take-Home Composition

The students were given an essay with the topic: *Describe your school in about two hundred words*. They were to send it home, write and submit it the next day. Asking them to write the essay at home was meant to give them the benefit of the doubt that they had not learnt much about paragraph writing, so they could read about it and use the information to develop the essay. Another assumption was that

they would have the opportunity to go through the process approach to come out with good essays.

Asking them to submit it the next day was meant to make them sit up and work fast. If they were given too long a time, they might procrastinate and eventually present shoddy work, or they might succeed in getting somebody to write for them. A copy of a student's essay has been attached as Appendix 5.

The essays were analysed in the following manner. Students' ability to provide the theme and give various topic sentences that related to it was looked at. The support sentences that students gave for the topic sentences were also looked at. Unity and coherence in the essays were then examined and finally the decision was taken as to whether the paragraphs were adequately developed. This analytical procedure was based on the requirements of good paragraph development as discussed in chapter two of this dissertation.

The results of the analysis are shown in Table 3.13 and Figure 3.3. From the table and the figure, it can be seen that the students did very well to provide the theme for the essay and also provide topic sentences and support sentences for the paragraphs. The scores were almost the same in the three schools.

However, the students could not develop the paragraphs with unity and coherence. On unity, they could not stick to one point as expected. They would begin with one idea and end with another. They would also leave a paragraph indicator after one or two sentences as if to start a new paragraph and end up developing the same idea from the previous paragraph in this new paragraph. Some of them also wrote the essay in a jumbled manner. They would begin an idea, follow it up with an

explanation to a different idea, and develop the already mentioned idea elsewhere.

This made most of the essays difficult to read and understand.

The students failed to realise that organisation is crucial to even oral communication which is presumed to involve a spur-of-the moment action. Pal (1984) stresses this importance in his comments on the essentials of oral communication as follows: "If the speaker has given a proper thought to his message, he will be able to arrange the various ideas contained in it in their logical sequence. Jumbled ideas create confusion ... logically arranged ideas make the message forceful" (Pal: 1984, EC-44).

Paragraph coherence in the student essays was equally appalling. The sentences and ideas were not clearly and logically linked; previously mentioned ideas were not referred to; and cohesive devices and transitions were not used to connect the ideas. This lack of coherence in the paragraphs made the reading of the students' essays appear jerky. So it was difficult to follow the train of thought to be able to understand what they were writing about. It came out that only a student each from Martyrs and State could write his/her essay with coherence while five from Opoku Ware were also able to do that.

This inability to write with unity and coherence explains why the students were not able to handle sentence r7 effectively in the jumbled paragraph. The assumption has now been confirmed that students cannot organise paragraphs logically.

The question demanded that students write the essay in about two hundred words. The philosophy behind this was that the students were to be prompted so that they would not end up writing too much about their school. Again, it was believed

that at their level, they were used to writing short essays, so giving them that word limit would help to set their minds at ease. In any case, most of them wrote, on the average, between 250 and 300 words.

With this violation of the word limit, it was expected that the students would be able to develop their paragraphs adequately since they had a lot of room to operate. However, it was never the case. They could not provide enough details to make their points clear. There were a lot of one and two-sentence paragraphs which did not contain enough to explain what the students meant.

In assessing adequate development the researcher overlooked the students' deficiency in unity and coherence. The sentences that were related were, however, identified no matter where they were placed in the essay, whether they followed each other closely in the essay or not. This aspect was handled this way because the students had already proved by their illogical handling of sentence r7 in the jumbled paragraph that they were not able to identify easily the sequential relationships in support sentences in a paragraph. The concern here then was whether students could provide support sentences themselves, irrespective of where they placed them in the composition.

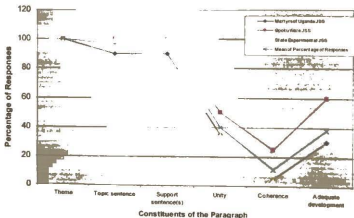
In their responses to questions 8 and 9 of the questionnaire, the teachers claimed that they helped the students to "list the ideas on the topic and expand them [with] linking words ... group the information according to their level of relationship [and then] expand given facts." In spite of this assertion the students were not able to write coherent and adequately developed paragraphs. Students may not always do what they are taught but the poor performance by almost all the students under consideration goes a long way to cast doubt on the veracity in the claims made by the

teachers. This revelation brings to the fore one deficiency in the questionnaire that “the informants do answer all the questions but their answers are not precise and relevant” (Pal 1984: OC-84). So it is likely that the teachers wrote what they knew they had to teach but not what they were actually teaching.

*Table 3.13 Analysis of Take-Home Composition*

Constituents of the Paragraph	Student Responses			Percentage of Responses			Mean of Percentage of Responses
	Martyrs	Opoku Ware	State	Martyrs	Opoku Ware	State	
Theme	20	20	20	100	100	100	100
Topic sentence	18	20	20	90	100	100	96.7
Support sentence(s)	18	20	20	90	100	100	96.7
Unity	7	10	7	35	50	35	55
Coherence	1	5	1	5	25	5	11.7
Adequate Development	6	12	5	30	60	25	46.7

Figure 3.3 Graph of Student Responses to the Take-Home Composition



### *Comments*

It is also likely that the teachers did provide this help but they used an inefficient approach. From their responses to question 2 of the questionnaire, the teachers used both the product and process approaches to teach composition. The students' responses to question 5 of their questionnaire, however, indicated that the stress was more on the product approach than on the process. This may then be the reason why the students were not able to develop their paragraphs so well. In effect, the product approach is not so helpful to students in paragraph development. This discovery brings up another likely area for research, that is, whether the process approach can be more effective in paragraph development or a new approach has to be devised to teach paragraphing at the JSS.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

A problem which is of very grave concern has been identified in this chapter. It begins with both teachers and students providing relevant answers to the questionnaire to prove that they know what the paragraph is and also the level of its importance to writing. The teachers claimed that they knew how to teach paragraph writing and they did teach it but the students exhibited that the teachers did not do as they claimed. The performance in the take-home composition goes to support the stand of the students. So who is telling the truth?

In any case the students were able to respond to the jumbled paragraph very well, except for the placement of one logical sentence, sentence r7, which eluded them. Martyrs of Uganda JSS and Opoku Ware JSS excelled in their responses to the jumbled paragraph while State Experimental JSS flopped.

Thus, one would have thought that the students would generally do well in the take-home composition. Unfortunately, as shown above, all the three schools performed badly. The performance by Martyrs of Uganda JSS was just as appalling as that of State Experimental JSS even though Martyrs performed better than State in responding to the jumbled paragraph. This was in spite of the lenient manner in which the assessment was done. If the rubrics of paragraph writing were strictly followed in assessing the students, Table 3.13 and Figure 3.3 would have shown rather disturbing figures and corresponding uninspiring curves.

How did it come about that the students knew about the paragraph and could give positive responses to a jumbled paragraph but they could not develop good paragraphs on their own? As noted in section 3.2, the three sampled schools are among the elite schools in the Kumasi Metropolis and they have the state-of-the-art teaching/learning resources which the majority of schools in the metropolis lack. If this is how they have performed, then what will be the performance of students from the less endowed schools? This is the puzzle which all stakeholders of education must find answers to.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### CONCLUSIONS

#### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the key issues raised in the dissertation. In the main, it is about the reasons why the JSS students are not able to develop effective paragraphs and how useful this research will be in trying to solve the problem. It also looks at how beneficial this research will be to various stakeholders of education.

#### 4.1 The JSS Student's Inability to Develop the Paragraph

As narrated in section 1.4.1 of this dissertation, formal education, and for that matter, writing, has been with us since the 14<sup>th</sup> century. With this lengthy presence of writing in Ghana, one would have thought that the Ghanaian student would be adept at writing, especially at paragraph writing. Unfortunately, the reverse is the case, at least at the JSS, as we have seen in chapter 3. There are several factors that account for this. They include: lack of attention to writing at the basic school, late introduction of paragraph writing, limited exposure of students to paragraph writing, superficial content of syllabi and textbooks, and the use of inappropriate teaching methods. These are dealt with one after the other in the subsequent sections.

##### 4.1.1 Lack of attention to Writing

As explained in paragraph 1.4.2, writing is not given the attention it deserves even though at the end of a student's education, s/he would be awarded a certificate primarily based on the assessment of what s/he may write. The lack of attention has

come about probably due to the fact that one's academic competence is generally determined through what one is able to say at a point in time but not what one is able to write. It may also be due to the fact that, pedagogically, writing is made to occupy the last stage in the language learning process. Hence, psychologically, both language teachers and learners may have the funny feeling that writing is not so much a pressing issue in language learning and as such it can wait.

This notion is then consolidated by even textbook writers and syllabus designers who stress grammar and mechanics to the detriment of the other components of writing, especially organisation and syntax. The WAEC puts more premium on content, expression and mechanics than it does on organisation.

If the WAEC would put equal emphasis on assessing the components of language, syllabus designers and textbook writers may put the appropriate premium on the various aspects of writing and language teachers would be forced to teach writing as they do the other aspects of language. Through this, the larger community would begin to assess one's academic abilities not through speech alone but writing as well. All these actions would then go a long way to help students to write good paragraphs.

#### 4.1.2 Late Introduction of Paragraph Writing in Schools

From section 2.5.1 of the dissertation, we learn that school children are first exposed to paragraph writing late, at primary 5. By this time, they would already be writing composition but apparently with no knowledge of paragraph writing. When paragraph writing is eventually introduced to them, they obviously become confused.

Should paragraph writing be introduced earlier at the lower primary, students are more likely to excel in writing at the JSS.

#### 4.1.3 Limited Exposure of Students to Paragraph Writing

With students being exposed so late to paragraph writing in their course of study as shown above, one would have thought that they would be given ample time to study paragraph writing to enable them to recover the loss. Unfortunately, this is not the case. From primary 5, when the student is first exposed to paragraph writing, up to JSS 3 when s/he writes the BECE, s/he has fifteen terms of study. Out of these fifteen terms, s/he is given three terms, being 20% of the total, to study paragraph writing. The total number of periods allotted to English at both the primary and JSS is 18. This is made up of one hour per period. Out of this, five (5), which translates into 27.8% of the total has been allotted to writing but given the five divisions of English in the syllabus, each division should have been given 3.6 periods, that is 20%, on the average.

These allocations appear good for paragraph writing because the student has ample time to be exposed to writing. However, few units of study are allotted to this time. From the 256 units of study for English at the basic school, writing has been given 65 being 25.4% of the total. This far exceeds the 20% average for each division of English. However, paragraph writing has been allotted only 3 units which is 4.6% of the 65 units for writing and just 1.17% of the total of 256 units. This is too little. The effect here is that these few units, coupled with the superficial content of paragraph writing in the syllabus as stated in section 4.1.4, will not help the student to learn much within that time. Ultimately the same few items will be repeated over

and over to waste time. Teachers can do well to make up for the deficiency in the syllabus by proactively adding more units to paragraph writing and treating more aspects of it as well, so that the time will not be wasted as it is being done now.

#### 4.1.4 Superficial Content of Syllabus and Textbooks

According to sections 2.5.1 and 2.5.2 of the dissertation, the following are the aspects of the paragraph which are taught at the basic school: topic sentence, support sentences, coherence, re-arrangement of jumbled sentences in a logical order, writing paragraphs from outlines, and supplying of links within the paragraph.

When we look at what generally goes into the paragraph, as explained in Chapter 2, we can say that the contents of the basic school syllabi are no where near what the JSS graduate, especially the one who may opt out of formal education at that level, is supposed to know, as explained in section 2.5.2.

From section 2.6, we also see that the basic school textbooks do not deal adequately with paragraph writing. Paragraph writing does not appear in the primary school books and it is given a cursory mention in the JSS books. Even where the syllabus specifies the class where paragraph writing must be taught, the textbook for that class may not mention it, and when it is mentioned, it does not receive enough attention.

If the basic school syllabi and textbooks are revised to treat paragraph writing to suit the demands on the JSS graduate, and if the contents of these materials are properly synchronised, it will go a long way to improve the paragraph writing skills of the JSS student.

#### 4.1.5 Inappropriate Teaching Methods

The primary school syllabus stresses the process approach to teaching paragraph writing. From sections 3.5.2.1a and 3.5.2.1b, we observed that teachers know of this approach to teaching but they rather use the product approach.

Children are imitative so the product approach which amounts to imitating prefabricated patterns of writing may appear to be good. It must, however, be noted that children engage in a lot of social intercourse, even in their imitation ventures. It is this interactive tendency in them which makes the process-based approach a better option to use to teach paragraph writing at the basic school than the product approach.

Further research should be conducted into the process approach, as well as alternate approaches to confirm whether the product approach is scientifically less viable in teaching paragraph writing at the JSS in Ghana as we have discovered in the research.

#### 4.2 Implications of the Study to Education in Ghana

In chapter 3, we discovered that JSS students and teachers know what the paragraph is. They also know its uses to writing, and the demands expected to be fulfilled in writing the paragraph. Chapter 2 also revealed that students ought to have finished with all they needed to know about paragraph writing by the end of JSS1. The contents of the basic school syllabi include the jumbled paragraph. However, when the sample of the population was given a jumbled paragraph to work on, as shown in chapter 3, the responses were not impressive enough even though from the personal interviews conducted, they had done exercises on that at primary six.

Students' performance on the essay was also far below the acceptable standards, even though the responses to the set of questionnaire showed that they had been taught paragraph writing. The jumbled paragraph is an activity in the process approach. With students doing so well in it we can presuppose that they will do well in writing the composition. The responses from the questionnaire indicate that they did not exploit this approach to the hilt. Can we then say that should the students be taught through the process approach they would be able to develop the paragraph very well? These observations are very critical to JSS students, language teachers, educational policy makers, syllabus designers and textbook writers. Many of the implications to language learning have been given in section 1.10 and a few will be added here.

#### 4.2.1 The JSS Student

In education, the student is at the centre of affairs. This means that the student will directly suffer any adverse consequences of educational misadventure. In effect, the student is ultimately going to suffer the side effects of bad paragraph development. With what the study has brought to the fore about the inability of the JSS student to develop the paragraph, all stakeholders need to devise better means of helping the student to develop the paragraph so that his/her education will be complete.

#### 4.2.2 Language Teachers

The study shows that even though language teachers may not have done much about paragraph writing at the training college, they know much about the

paragraph and how to teach it to help the student to be able to develop it. What they probably do not know is the method to use at a particular point in time and its viability at that material time. From the study, we discover that the teachers are using mainly the product approach in teaching paragraph writing. The researcher recommends the use of the process approach. If teachers should heed this recommendation, the JSS student will stand to benefit.

#### **4.2.3 Educational Policy Makers**

The assumption has usually been that the student's problem with language is mainly in the area of mechanics, grammar and expression. Consequently, that is where much of the effort made to solve the language problem has been geared towards. This is probably the reason why there is profuse research work in that field in our universities. Even WAEC focuses much of its attention on these. The study makes a case for organisation too. It reveals that however relevant a point and no matter how good the language in which it is written, if it is not properly organised, the writer will fail to deliver. This is what makes it so important for educational policy makers to formulate policies that will strike a balance between expression/mechanics/grammar and organisation so that students will have a holistic development in language study.

#### **4.2.4 Syllabus Designers**

The study reveals that the paragraph writing aspect of the basic school syllabi was designed without due regard to student's needs at the end of the JSS programme.

This approach has made the syllabi too shallow to be of significant help to the JSS graduate.

With this revelation, syllabus writers will see the need to determine who and what they are designing the syllabus for, so that they will be able to tailor it to suit the needs of the user. This then calls for an urgent revision of the current basic school syllabi as regards paragraph writing.

#### 4.2.5 Textbook Writers

From the findings of the study, I daresay that the basic school textbooks are not of much use with respect to paragraph writing. They ought to have been written according to the dictates of the syllabi. However, with reference to paragraph writing, the books do not synchronise with the dictates of the syllabi. This is detrimental to the student's ability to develop writing skills. This assertion is based on the fact that the teacher who is not resourceful and relies solely on the text book will have no stuff to teach with. In another light, where the teacher is resourceful but s/he is not able to easily get relevant materials to work with, s/he will not be able to teach effectively.

Armed with this information, textbook writers should do well to write to suit the dictates of the syllabus to avoid any disharmony between their books and the dictates of the syllabus. This will help the teacher and the student to have good reference materials to work with.

#### 4.3 Observations

Throughout this research, we have been able to determine that what has generally appeared to be an ordinary phenomenon, that is, students' inability to develop effective paragraphs, is in reality a canker that hampers language learning so it demands a concerted effort from all stakeholders to be able to overcome it.

Individuals whom I talked to about my research also felt that the JSS was too low on the educational ladder and as such not much should be demanded of its products. From the outcome of the study, we learn that the JSS level is as important as even the university degree level when it comes to paragraph writing. The defence here is that since the JSS can be a terminal point for the student, just as the university degree is also a terminal point, at the end of the day, when both graduates become heads in their respective organisations and they write in connection with their businesses, the two write-ups will be graded from the same perspective. These two graduates may not be present at the grading. Also they may not add information on their education to the write-up to help the recipient to treat them from different perspectives. This is why the JSS student has to learn so much.

All these observations go to prove that this dissertation is very relevant to language learning. If its results are rigorously implemented, they will go a long way to help in language development, especially in the area of writing.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Sample of Responses to the Questionnaire for the Teachers

Department of Linguistics

University of Ghana

Legon

26<sup>th</sup> May 2005

To all Respondents

Dear Sir/Madam,

Request for Respondents to Questionnaire

I am conducting research into paragraph writing at the Junior Secondary Level. To make the research detailed enough, I count on you to respond to the following questionnaire.

You are assured that in connection with this questionnaire, your identity will not be revealed at any forum. By this promise, kindly provide true responses to enable the research reveal the true state of affairs.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

*Signed*

JOSEPH KOFI BOAKYE

(Researcher)

## QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What do you understand by composition in language learning?  
 Composition is the expression and organisation of ideas about something, somebody or a particular issue.
2. What methods do you use when teaching composition writing?  
 Discussion, narrative, description
3. What problems are associated with two of these methods?  
 With discussion method, some pupils do not contribute to the discussion.  
 With the descriptive method the pupils find it difficult to appropriate vocabulary.
4. How can you modify the two methods in question 3 to make them suitable for teaching and learning composition writing?  
 The discussion method could be planned in such a way that the topic is handled by in groups after which the entire class will discuss it again before they write it into their exercise books.  
 With the descriptive method,
5. What category of problems do your pupils face when writing composition?  
 The pupils usually face have problems with L1, literary translation, spelling and tenses.

What do you understand by paragraphing?

Paragraphing refers to the act of organizing ideas about a particular topic in such a way that each paragraph talks about a specific idea and that there is coherence in the presentation.

7. In what three ways is the paragraph important to composition?

- 1) Paragraphing is necessary because it enables the learner to organise his thoughts in logical sequence.
- 2) It enables the learner to present facts and ideas in logical sequence.
- 3) It enables the learner to connect the various ideas in a coherent manner.

8. How do you make pupils develop paragraphs in their composition?

I usually give the topic to my pupils in the form of assignment. They write the facts and ideas in the form of a jam.

We discuss the topic in class and based on the discussion, I develop guide lines for them to write about the topic. They also encourage them to add any relevant information they may have.

What remediation methods do you take when pupils are not able to write paragraphs as they should? When pupils are not able to write about the topic, I discuss the topic with the class again and develop it in the form of a guided composition where pupils will only provide the appropriate facts and thoughts.

## Sample of Responses to the Questionnaire for the Students

## QUESTIONNAIRE

Department of Linguistics

University of Ghana

Legon

26th May 2005

Respondents

Dear Sir/Madam,

## Request for Responses to Questionnaire

I am conducting research into paragraph writing at the Junior Secondary School level. To make the research meaningful enough, I count on you to respond to the following questionnaire and exercises.

You are assured that, in connection with this questionnaire and exercises, your identity will not be revealed at any forum. By this promise, kindly provide true responses to enable the research reveal the true state of affairs.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

Yours

JEFF KOFI BOAKYE

Researcher

## QUESTIONNAIRE

1. How do you normally write your composition in English?

Before I start the whole composition, I plan the work by thinking of the points to enable my composition to be easier for me to write. First I think of the body of the essay and also the conclusion not leaving the introduction. I divided the whole essay by paragraphing the

2. Write what you know about paragraph in composition writing.

I know that paragraph is a group of words in a sentence form which expresses an idea.

And also I know that before you start to write a sentence in let's say composition you would have to leave a space before you write what you are about to write.

3. Explain three ways in which the paragraph is important to you in writing composition?

1: The paragraph is important to me in the way that it makes my work neat, because I leave a paragraph before writing any group of words with a point. So you can see that my work is not mixed up.

2: Also, it makes it easy for me to detect any mistake I've made during the writing because they are in paragraphs and it is not mixed up.

3: Furthermore, it makes it easy when reading and you understand it clearly.

4. How do you develop your paragraphs when writing composition?

In developing my paragraphs, I leave a small space before writing and in each paragraph there is a point and I explain it further for clear explanation.

5. In developing your paragraphs when writing your composition, what help do your teachers give you?

In developing my paragraphs, my teachers tell me to leave a small space before writing. And in order not to mix up my points about the given topic in the composition I am writing, I have to bring each point in a paragraph to make it easy to read.

6. How many compositions have you written?

Jeremie year? ~~two~~ I have written academic year.

Appendix 3

Copy of the Jumbled Paragraph

Test 1

Some of the following sentences do not belong to the group of sentences.

i. Identify such sentences and group them separately without ordering them.

ii. Identify the topic sentence.

iii. Rearrange the rest of the sentences in a sequential order.

a. I collected a registration form from the library and filled.

b. The library had only torn unattractive books.

c. I talked to my class teacher about it.

d. My friends liked only sports but not reading.

e. My parents had a lot of books on our shelves.

f. I sent the form back to the library and I was registered.

g. He encouraged me to be a member.

h. There were a few of us children in the house.

i. I always envied being a member of the town library.

Test 2

Describe your school in about two hundred words.

Appendix 4

Sample of Solutions to the Jumbled Paragraph

Test 1

- b. There were a few of us children in the house.
- d. My friends liked only sport, but not reading.
- e. My parents had a lot of books on our shelves.

f.

ii. The topic sentence is: (i) I always envied being a member of the town library.

iii. I always envied being a member of the town library.

c. I talked to my class teacher about it.

g. He encouraged me to be a member.

a. I collected a registration form from the library and filled it.

f. I sent the form back to the library and I was registered.

b. The library had only very unattractive books.

## Sample of Responses to the Take-Home Essay

Describe your school. 200 words  
asic is the

Name of my school is Santasi near u w stare  
school. The st was esta  
ment o ad. M. not  
atholic and also a Governer  
consists of the lower primary  
primary and J.S.S. My school is a  
school.

Opeku Ware Basic  
is two (2) storey building built  
with blocks and bricks also containing  
eighteen classrooms, a staff room, a roam,  
headmaster's office, in addition to its  
office and also a library. There is also a  
store where pupils buy goods and also  
eat them and the school is having a  
store room where basic things like cutlasses  
rooms are kept.

The school is painted  
green and yellow. It uses blackboards. The  
chore has many desks varying about  
five hundred in number. The school is  
is having a very large compound. The front  
view of the school is decorated with concrete  
work. The school is having a football field  
where sports and trainings are organised

My school is very  
disciplined because we are guided by  
rules and regulations. There are thirteen teachers  
staff. The number of the students is one  
hundred and eighty.

Academically, my  
school is among the best schools in our area  
because there are no failures in the ex  
aminations.

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