

# **Do the National English journals provide clear research gaps? An analysis of published journals**

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## **Abstract**

This study provides a critical review of the nationally published journals, especially in highlighting the research gaps. This focus of the study comes from our interest that there is a policy that obligates lecturers and students to publish a journal article in nationally or internationally indexed journal outlets. This puts so much pressure on them in the academic sector (Arsyad & Adila, 2017). The result of this study will help further researchers in writing their research gaps. We adopt document analysis (Hatch, 2002; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) and theme-rheme analysis to reveal the structure of paragraphs and sentences in the introduction section, especially in deciding the research gap. We analyzed one English-published journal that is indexed in Sinta 1, Sinta 2, Sinta 3, Sinta 4, Sinta 5, and Sinta 6. Findings show that the journals mention the research gap in the introductory paragraph. However, the structural quality needs significant improvement. We suggest to the authors of the journals, editors, and further researchers or practitioners to have a good understanding of how to craft a good introductory paragraph and follow the ethics of doing research. We suggest that further research focus on providing insight into teaching writing for scholarly publication.

**Keywords:** *Document analysis, English journal, research contribution, research gap, theme-rheme analysis, systemic functional linguistics.*

## **Introduction**

In this era, the government and universities produced a policy that puts significant pressure on the lecturers and students, they must write and publish journal articles in international or national indexed journals for various reasons. Arsyad and Adila (2017) emphasizes that policymakers think that publishing journals makes a clear contribution in the specific sectors. From the academic lens, the contribution of the lecturers or students is by showing the percentage of the English published journals in Scopus indexed level (Arsyad & Arono, 2016). There are higher requirements from many aspects to meet the Scopus-indexed journal expectations, for example from the research gaps (Li & Flowerdew, 2020; Riazi, Ghanbar, & Fazel, 2020). Writing gaps look easy, however many researchers were rejected in Scopus-indexed journals. We want to give a critical review in the introduction section of national published journals. This study provides new insight to further researchers into how to craft a clear research gap.

Many prior studies that have discussed writing journals topics. Abodia and Mpiti (2015) reports that increasing authors' ability in English writing needs a great teacher who has a plan or strategies to give clear guidance in writing rules and practices. McMillan (2016) takes a study on her experiences in writing a journal article. Findings show that the crucial parts of creating a journal article are understanding the submission and review processes, using templates from the journal outlet, the timeline of submissions, and the deadlines. The researcher or practitioners need to have good preparation before submitting journal to the journal outlet. Tenopir, Mays, and Wu (2011) and Thyer (2021) find that reading our interest topic in a Scopus-indexed journal provides significant differences in getting new insights to write research gaps in the introductory paragraph. In the similar vein, Wald, Harland, and Daskon (2023) reports that more than 20% of the articles do have not clear gap statements in the introduction sections, and 27% do not provide a significance of the study.

The prior studies mention the crucial needs to do further studies in revealing the gaps in the journal articles. However, there is less study that analyze the research gap in published journals in Indonesia. To fill this urgency, we focus on analyzing one random journal published in Sinta one to six. We adopt theme-rheme analysis as the analytical tool to analyze the data (Fontaine, 2013; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). The following research questions guide the study:

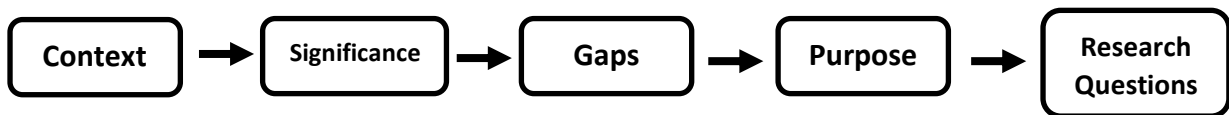
1. Do the national published journals highlight the research gap?
2. How do authors in the journals highlight the research gap?

## Literature Review

### The importance of having clear research gaps

Doing research has a specific purpose, e.g. contributing to the education sector by reporting studies in the teaching and learning process. The result of the study can become a reflection tool for the evaluation process. Wald, Harland, and Daskon (2023) emphasize having such clear research gaps increases the worthy percentage of the manuscript to be published. Crafting a research gap needs more skill and practice, so the researcher can understand their contribution to the study. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) show that there are two steps before the researcher can decide on the research gaps, i.e. (1) context; & (2) significance of the study. By understanding these two key points, we can conclude our research gaps, craft the purpose of the study, and make the research questions. Look at the figure 1 that presents the flow of crafting research gaps.

**Figure 1 Crafting our Gaps**



Research gaps has a function to provide description about something that is missing from the previous studies. Jacobs (2011) emphasizes that there are many types of research gaps. We adopt the parameter of crafting research gaps by Jacobs (2011) as the parameters in this study. Table 1 shows the types of gaps, as follows:

**Table 1 Types of Gaps (Jacobs, 2011)**

Types of Gaps	Descriptions
<b>Evidence Gap</b>	The previous research provides a conclusion that is inconsistent when examined from a different point of view.
<b>Knowledge Gap</b>	The previous research provides a lack of knowledge contribution.
<b>Practical Gap</b>	The previous research shows less practical results.
<b>Methodological Gap</b>	The methodology is always similar to the previous studies.
<b>Evaluation Gap</b>	There are no more critiques or evaluations in the previous studies.
<b>Theoretical Gap</b>	The previous studies have not provided new theories or the implementation of new theories.

The contribution of studies or research gap is important, because it becomes the basic reason to do the study. For example, from the prior study McMillan (2016) takes a study on her experiences in writing a journal article. Findings show that the crucial parts of creating a journal article are understanding the submission and review processes, using templates from the journal outlet, the timeline of submissions, and the deadlines. This prior study shows practical gap, evidence gap, and knowledge gap. We can take further study in the same topic by providing different research gap, for example we can choose to highlight the evaluation gap.

## **Method**

We adopt document analysis in English-published journals in Sinta-indexed levels (Hatch, 2002; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). We take one journal randomly with different topics from Sinta one to six. The analysis focuses on revealing the structure of the introduction section using theme-rheme analysis (Aziz, 1988; Fontaine, 2013; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). We use this technique to open the contextual meaning or purpose of the researcher writing the journal. We present the results of the analysis using Jacobs's (2011) classifications of research gaps. This study gives a critical review in the introduction section of national published journals and provides new insight to further researchers into how to craft a clear research gap.

## **Findings and Discussion**

The purpose of this study is to analyze the introduction section in the English-published journals in Sinta journal. We focus on analyzing one random journal published in Sinta one to six. We present the result of the analysis in two sections, i.e. (1) paragraph structures; & (2) gap statements. Theme-rheme analysis results and classification of the research gap answer the first and the second research questions.

### **Introductory Paragraph Structures**

The result of the paragraph analysis shows unique writing styles at each level. Table 2 presents the result of the paragraph analysis by using theme-rheme analysis (Fontaine, 2013; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

**Table 2 The result of theme-rheme analysis**

<b>Indexed</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Introductory Paragraph Structure</b>
<b>Sinta 1</b>	Indonesian High School Students' Attitudes towards Varieties of English: A Survey Study	2022	Paragraph 1: Context Paragraph 2: Context → Significance Paragraph 3: Significance → <i>Gap</i>
<b>Sinta 2</b>	The Effectiveness of Mind Mapping in Constructing Arguments In Writing an Argumentative Text	2023	Paragraph 1: Context Paragraph 2: Context → <i>Gap</i> Paragraph 3: Context Paragraph 4: Context → Significance Paragraphs 5, 6, 7: Significance Paragraph 8: Significance → <i>Gap</i>
<b>Sinta 3</b>	Enhancing EFL Learner Autonomy through Project-Based Learning: The Case of Secondary School Students	2023	Paragraph 1: Context → Significance Paragraphs 2, 3: Significance Paragraph 4: Significance → Context Paragraph 5: Significance → <i>Gap</i>
<b>Sinta 4</b>	Teacher's and Young Learners' Needs in English Teaching and Learning Environment	2022	Paragraphs 1, 2: Context Paragraph 3: Context → Significance Paragraphs 4, 5, 6: Significance Paragraph 7: Significance → <i>Gap</i>
<b>Sinta 5</b>	Teachers' Challenges in Virtual Learning Process to Maximize The Achievement	2023	Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4: Context Paragraph 5: Significance Paragraph 6: Context Paragraph 7: <i>Gap</i>

	of Junior High School Students in Indonesia		
<b>Sinta 6</b>	The Students' Ability in Pronouncing English Palato Alveolar Fricative ([Σ], [3]): A Case Study Of SMA N 12 Semarang	2023	Paragraph 1: Context Paragraph 2: Context → Significance Paragraphs 3, 4, 5, 6, 7: Context Paragraph 8: <i>Gap</i> Paragraph 9: Steps of doing the research

Table 2 presents different types of stages for deciding the research gap. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) emphasize the process of deciding the research gap is analyzing the context, understanding the significance of the study, and deciding the research gap. Hatch (2002) adds that the art of writing paragraphs is consistent and has a connection with the next sentences or paragraphs.

### Gap Statements

**Table 3 research gap classifications**

Indexed	Introductory Paragraph Structure	Gaps	Research Gap Classifications
<b>Sinta 1</b>	Paragraph 1: Context Paragraph 2: Context → Significance Paragraph 3: Significance → <i>Gap</i>	<b>Paragraph 3:</b> ... Accordingly, based on the rationales, the present study [Theme] seeks to <i>investigate</i> Indonesian senior high school students' <i>attitudes</i> towards varieties of English [Rheme].	Evidence Gap <i>Knowledge Gap</i> <i>Practical Gap</i> Methodological Gap Evaluation Gap Theoretical Gap
<b>Sinta 2</b>	Paragraph 1: Context	<b>Paragraph 2:</b>	Evidence Gap

	Paragraph 2: Context →	...	Knowledge Gap
	<i>Gap</i>	Therefore, this experimental	<b><i>Practical Gap</i></b>
	Paragraph 3: Context	study [Theme] was	<b><i>Methodological</i></b>
	Paragraph 4: Context →	<b><i>conducted in an</i></b>	<b><i>Gap</i></b>
	Significance	<b><i>experimental group</i></b> of 15	Evaluation Gap
	Paragraphs 5, 6, 7:	students and a control group	Theoretical Gap
	Significance	of 9 students to <b><i>determine</i></b> the	
	Paragraph 8:	effectiveness of mind	
	Significance → <i>Gap</i>	mapping as a prewriting	
		strategy [Rheme] when	
		students [Theme] were	
		<b><i>developing argumentative</i></b>	
		<b><i>texts</i></b> [Rheme].	
		...	
		<b>Paragraph 8:</b>	
		...	
		This research [Theme] aimed	
		to <b><i>determine the implication</i></b>	
		of using the mind mapping	
		strategy on the experimental	
		group participants' argument	
		development in composing	
		an argumentative text	
		<b>[Rheme]. ...</b>	
		This study also [Theme]	
		<b><i>revealed</i></b> the participants'	
		perception of mind mapping	
		as an argumentative text	
		prewriting strategy <b>[Rheme].</b>	
		...	
<b>Sinta 3</b>	Paragraph 1: Context →	<b>Paragraph 5:</b>	Evidence Gap
	Significance	...	Knowledge Gap

	Paragraphs 2, 3: Significance Paragraph 4: Significance → Context Paragraph 5: Significance → Gap	Most studies [Theme] are devoted to teachers' <i>perception</i> of learner autonomy while <i>teaching</i> some skills through project-based learning [Rheme]. To fill this gap, this study [Theme] attempts to <i>investigate</i> whether or not project-based learning could enhance the autonomy of learners in a Moroccan EFL context as well as train them to think critically towards the performance of one another [Rheme]. Similarly, this research [Theme] aims at <i>teaching</i> the subject matter content through PBL integrated curriculum [Rheme]. ...	<i>Practical Gap</i> Methodological Gap <i>Evaluation Gap</i> Theoretical Gap
Sinta 4	Paragraphs 1, 2: Context Paragraph 3: Context → Significance Paragraphs 4, 5, 6: Significance Paragraph 7: Significance → Gap	Paragraph 7: ... Because of this, learning materials [Theme] play a critical role in the execution of primary school English instructions [Rheme]. As a result, <i>initiatives to design learning materials</i> [Theme] must be focused on the <i>use of a contextual approach</i> that	Evidence Gap <i>Knowledge Gap</i> Practical Gap Methodological Gap <i>Evaluation Gap</i> Theoretical Gap



		<p>may be used to improve language competency in line with market expectations [Rheme]. Because of this, learning materials play a critical role in the execution of primary school English education. In this study, teachers' [Theme] obstacles and need was investigated [Rheme].</p> <p>...</p>	
<b>Sinta 5</b>	<p>Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4: Context</p> <p>Paragraph 5: Significance</p> <p>Paragraph 6: Context</p> <p>Paragraph 7: <i>Gap</i></p>	<p><b>Paragraph 7:</b></p> <p>...</p> <p>For a clear and further explanation, the writer [Theme] wants to research her school as the measurement for her research that some teachers <i>face any challenges in virtual learning process</i> [Rheme]. To this end, the writer [Theme] <i>intends</i> to do her research in UPT SMPN 1 Duampanua and choose the English teachers as the sample because the writer believes that the teachers mostly prepared their selves to face the challenge and changes of education [Rheme].</p>	<p>Evidence Gap</p> <p><b><i>Knowledge Gap</i></b></p> <p><b><i>Practical Gap</i></b></p> <p>Methodological Gap</p> <p>Evaluation Gap</p> <p>Theoretical Gap</p>

<b>Sinta 6</b>	Paragraph 1: Context	<b>Paragraph 8:</b>	Evidence Gap
	Paragraph 2: Context →	...	<b>Knowledge Gap</b>
	Significance	English palato alveolar	<b>Practical Gap</b>
	Paragraphs 3, 4, 5, 6, 7:	fricative pronunciation	Methodological Gap
	Context	[Theme] has been studied	Evaluation Gap
	Paragraph 8: <i>Gap</i>	[Rheme]. Most past research	Theoretical Gap
	Paragraph 9: Steps of doing the research	[Theme] <i>merely reported</i> pupils' abilities or pronunciation faults [Rheme]. This research [Theme] <i>covers all of it</i> at once, <i>showing students'</i> <i>understanding</i> of English sounds, where they made the most mistakes (beginning, medial, and final locations), and the variables that affect their palato alveolar fricative sound faults [Rheme].	

Table 3 explains the results of research gap classifications. Findings present that the journals clearly mention the research gaps. In response to the findings, the structure needs to be revised. For example, "... the writer [Theme] wants to research her school as the measurement for her research that some teachers *face any challenges in virtual learning process* [Rheme]. To this end, the writer [Theme] *intends* to do her research in UPT SMPN 1 Duampanua and choose the English teachers as the sample...[Rheme]" From this example, we can take note that we are unable to write our data source or place directly, it is not following the ethics of doing research. Therefore, we provide suggestions to the authors of the journals, editors, and other researchers or practitioners for following the ethics of doing research.

The result shows that all journals present research gaps. However, two of the six indexed journals provide clear introductory paragraph structures, those are from Sinta 1 and Sinta 3. Those follow Meriam and Tisdell's (2016) theory to construct our research gap. The other journals have too many paragraphs and inconsistent meanings from one paragraph to

the other. Thus, we suggest to the authors of the journals, editors, and further researchers and practitioners to give more attention to writing and checking the introductory paragraph structure. It is important to have a clear and effective introductory paragraph to make our readership understand the flow of the journal. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) emphasize the process of deciding the research gap is analyzing the context, understanding the significance of the study, and deciding the research gap. Hatch (2002) adds that the art of writing paragraphs is consistent and has a connection with the next sentences or paragraphs.

## **Conclusion**

All in all, the study gives a critical review in the introduction section of national published journals. We focus on providing new insights to further researchers into how to craft a clear research gap. Findings show that the journals mention the research gap in the introductory paragraph. However, the structural quality needs to get a significant improvement. We suggest to the authors of the journals, editors, and further researchers or practitioners to have a good understanding of how to craft a good introductory paragraph and follow the ethics of doing research. Since this study only provide a critical review, the next further research can focus on providing insight into how to teach how to craft or practice a good research gap.

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