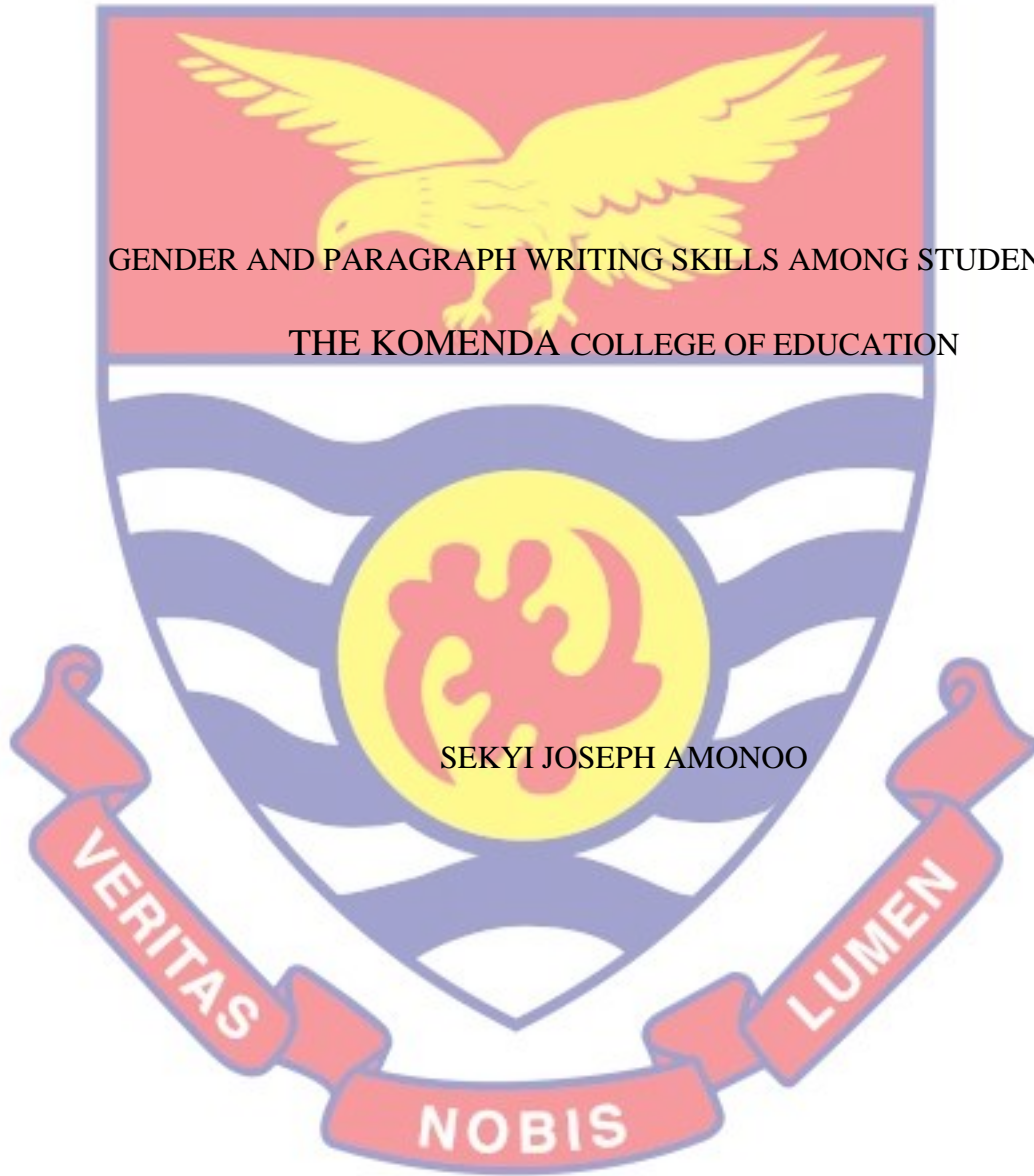


UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

GENDER AND PARAGRAPH WRITING SKILLS AMONG STUDENTS AT  
THE KOMENDA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

SEKYI JOSEPH AMONOO



2022

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THE KOMENDA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

BY

SEKYI JOSEPH AMONOO

Thesis submitted to the Department of English of the Faculty of Arts, College of  
Humanities and Legal Studies, in partial fulfillment for the requirements for the  
award of Master of Philosophy degree in English Language

DECEMBER 2022

## DECLARATION

### Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature..... Date.....

Name: Sekyi Joseph Amonoo

### Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this thesis were supervised under the guidelines on supervision of the thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Supervisor's Signature..... Date.....

Name: Professor Joseph Benjamin Archibald Afful



## ABSTRACT

This study sought to assess how paragraph unity and coherence in writing are achieved among students of the Komenda College of Education, with respect to gender. Lakoff's Theory, Difference Theory and the Performativity Theory underpinned the study. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were employed, and the descriptive design was used. The sample size comprised 60 (40 males and 20 females) Level 200 students from the Department of English of the Komenda College of Education, selected using the census techniques. Paragraphs written by the students were analysed using narratives, and quantitative data analysed using mean, standard deviation and the independent samples t-test. The results revealed that both male and female students introduce a *topic sentence* positioned at the *beginning of the paragraph*, followed by *supporting sentences*, then *illustrations*, all on one idea, in achieving paragraph unity; however, males frequently used *firstly, secondly, etc.; therefore; however, and though* whilst females used *because, for example and again* to achieve the same purpose of paragraph unity. It was also found that both males and females used *repetitions and transitional words* to achieve coherence; however, males frequently used *coordinating conjunctions* as females used *synonyms* frequently. Finally, it was revealed that there is no significant difference between males and females, with respect to achieving unity and coherence. It was concluded that gender has no influence on paragraph writing. It was then recommended that colleges employ the same methods of paragraph writing in training both gender groups. The researcher made suggestions for future studies.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am grateful to the Almighty God for his guidance, protection and mercies all these years; may his name be praised.

I owe it a duty to thank all those who in diverse ways contributed to the successful completion of this work. I particularly extend my warmest and sincere appreciation to Professor J.B.A Afful, under whose tutelage this work saw a successful completion. I say, 'Thank you', Professor.

I would also like to express my profound gratitude to Prof. Owusu Ansah and Dr. Ngula for their encouragement and assistance which contributed immensely to the completion of this work.

To my course mates, I say, 'Thank you' for your insightful comments and contributions during discussion sessions. I benefitted immensely from your depth of knowledge. To Divine and Kwaku, I say, 'God bless you' greatly for serving as inter-rater and proof reading the entire work.

Again, I am highly indebted to the students and staff of the Department of Languages, Komenda College of Education for the roles they played that saw the fruition of this work. I say, 'Thank you' for your assistance during the data collection.

Finally, I owe it a duty to thank my wife, three daughters and my lovely son for their understanding and constant support and love. Your constant positive provocation energised me to complete this work on time. To my mother and siblings, I say 'Thank you' for your support.

## DEDICATION

To my wife, Georgina; my daughters, Kesewaa, Josephine, and Georgette; and  
my son, Jordan



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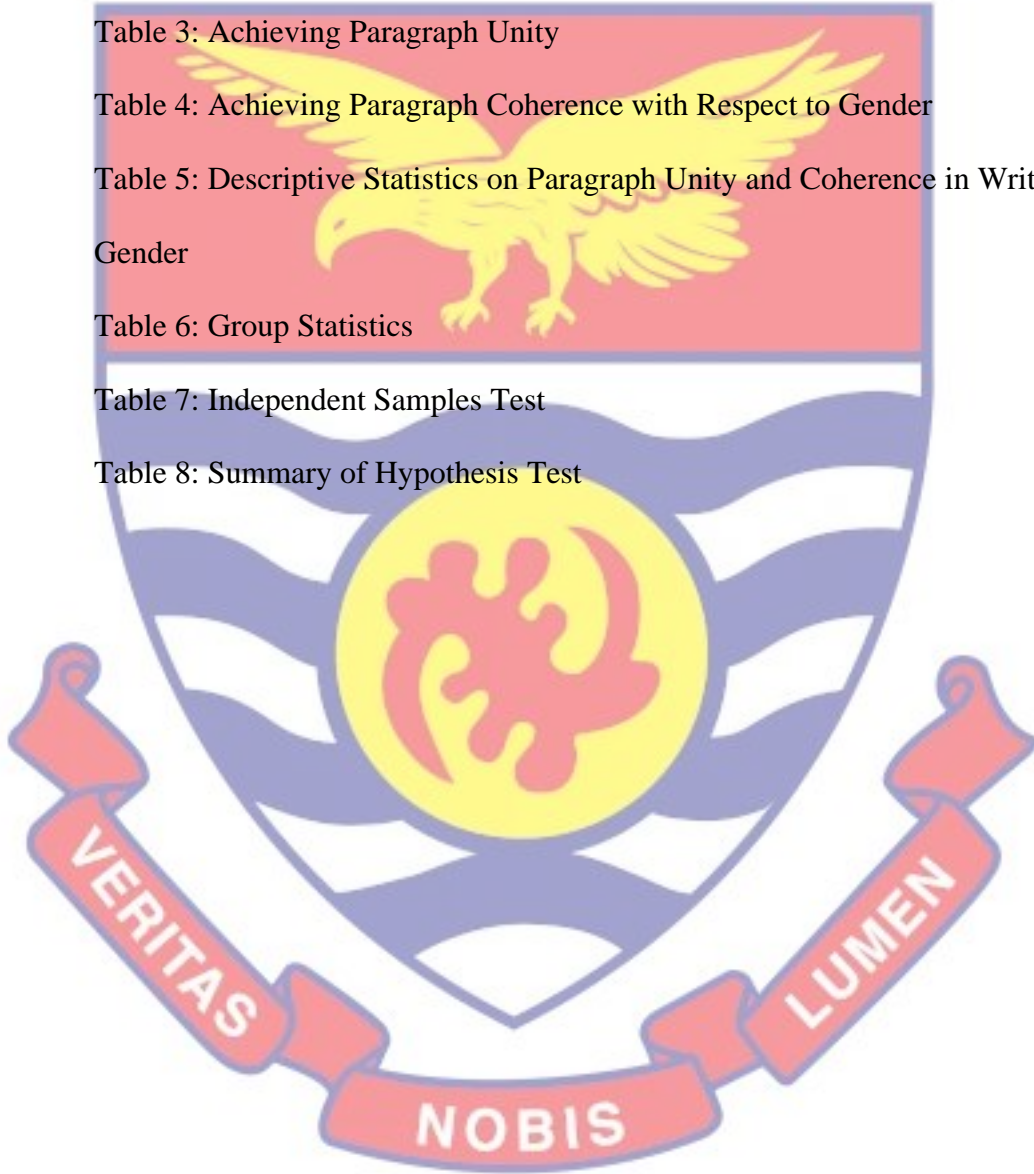
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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

This study aimed at assessing gender and paragraph writing skills among colleges of education students. The aim of this introductory chapter is to create a general context for the study by providing an overview of the study. It presents the background to the study, statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the research objectives, research questions that guided the analyses and discussion of the data, significance of the study, delimitation of the study which focused on scope of the current study, limitations of the study, organisation of the study, and a chapter summary.

#### **Background to the Study**

Gender is the relationship between men and women, both perception and material (Manfre et al., 2013). According to Manfre et al. (2013), gender is neither biological nor has anything to do with sexual characteristics of either men or women. Gender is a social construction which is a central organising principle of society that governs the processes of production and reproduction, consumption and distribution. Gender involves a range of characteristics pertaining to, and differentiates between masculinity and femininity (Latifa, 2018). From these, it can be inferred that gender encompasses the issues of sex. Meaning, the issues of masculinity or femininity is determined by society, and not just the biological status of being male or female – sex.

Since there are gender differences in speech patterns of both sexes, there is therefore the need to note and to understand them in order to avoid unnecessarily

blaming others or damaging the relationships and the effects of contrasting conversational styles (Tannen, 1990). According to Lyons (1981), language is a principal system of communication used by a particular group of human beings within a particular society of which they are members. There are variations in how people use language to present their messages. Language is used differently and for different purposes in life. People, therefore, use varied language according to the message they intend to present, and gender conditions can affect the choices men and women make (Lyons, 1981).

According to Lakoff (1975), women's speech can potentially be distinguished from that of men's in different ways as Lakoff says women hedge their language more often than men do. Further, Lakoff posited that women tend to use phrase like "sort of", "kind of", "seem like" to hedge their language. Women's language tends to have a lot of empty adjectives, apologise more and speak less frequently than the male counterpart. This is to say that women's language lacks specificity compared to men's language. This language style has been one of the obvious differences between women and men (Mwingi, 2014).

Also, language plays important roles in academic life of students in tertiary institutions as it serves as the scholarly medium through which members of the academic community interact. One aspect of language taught in schools is writing. Writing is crucial to English for Academic Purpose (EAP) since it is used to communicate and express the ideas of the learners (Mwingi, 2014; Lightfoot, & Harmer, 2007). As posited by Meyers-Levy and Sternthal (1991), writing is very

important in teaching and learning, and that learners' knowledge in other aspects of the language (e.g., grammar and vocabulary) is tested through writing.

The assertion by Meyers-Levy and Sternthal (1991) that writing plays major roles in academia as far as teaching and learning is concerned, among others, is supported by Dakubu (1999), who also points out that writing of essays help students to display their knowledge of other aspects of English language. Meyers-Levy and Sternthal further observes that one important aspect of writing is "writing for the sake of writing". That is, there are other areas of language such as coherence and unity which are so important in writing. In other words, writing should be holistically done to incorporate coherence and unity.

Writing is the means through which students are examined. Mwingi (2014) is of the view that writing is essential for all the lessons students study because they are examined through writing rather than speech and the more ability students have in terms of writing, the more success they achieve in examination in particular and in their future career in general. Mwingi's assertion is in support of Dakubu's (1999) that, writing as a classroom activity helps instructors to monitor the rate of progress of learners or diagnose their language problems. These show how important writing is, and therefore, a study considering writing is just in the right direction as there will be significant contributions to knowledge and literature.

One aspect of writing which is very essential is paragraphing. The paragraph, according to Zemach and Rumisek (2003), is a group of related sentences that deal with a specific topic. Paragraph is a unit of information unified by a controlling idea as topic sentence (Adika, 2003; Adika, & Borti, 2015;

Asemanyi, 2015). Paragraphs can stand alone or function as part of an essay, but each paragraph covers only one main idea. The most important sentence in a paragraph is the topic sentence, which clearly states the subject of the whole paragraph.

The topic sentence is usually the first sentence of the paragraph because it gives an overview of the sentences to follow. The supporting sentences after the topic sentence help to develop the main idea. Both major and minor supporting sentences give specific details related to the topic sentence. Therefore, a good paragraph has a topic sentence, major and minor supporting details (sentences) as well as a concluding sentence to achieve unity and completeness (Bataineh, Bataineh, & Thabet, 2011). A final or concluding sentence often restates or summarises the main idea of the topic sentence.

In developing ideas, one needs to organise the ideas in such a way to convey the message clearly and sensibly to readers. This is because an essay conveys its intended message if the paragraphs are well written from the introduction, through to the body and to the conclusion. Writers need to present their message in a manner that will help the reader to understand their thought. Muhyidin (1988) notes that sentences in paragraph must be logically arranged and the movement from one sentence to the next sentence must be smooth. This means that a paragraph must have coherence and unity to make movement from one sentence to the next and from one paragraph to another smoothly and logically.

Thus, cohesion and coherence, which refer to intra-text connectedness, and the contextual fitness of the ideas, are the essential properties of the texts in

academic writing so as to make them (the texts) more comprehensible. A good academic writing requires a good combination of cohesive ties and coherent features in the text. According to Halliday (1970), cohesion refers to the relations of meaning that exist within the text, and is expressed through the stratal organisation of the texts. Taboada (2004) also defines cohesion as the internal hanging together of texts. To Waskita (2008), cohesion is the tie and connection that exists within texts. In communication process, cohesion gives insights into how the writer structures what he/she wants to convey.

According to Halliday (1970), cohesion is expressed partly through grammar and partly through vocabulary in texts. It, therefore, means there can be two types of cohesion: grammatical cohesion, and lexical cohesion. Grammatical cohesion is the cohesive tie that is expressed through the grammatical system of a language such as reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction. On the other hand, lexical cohesion focuses on lexical content and background knowledge; it involves how related words are selected to link elements of a text. Lexical cohesion can also be classified into repetition and collocation (Halliday, 1970). Whilst repetition uses the same word, or synonyms, antonyms, among others (e.g., “Which dress is she going to wear tonight?” – “She will wear her green frock”. These statements used the synonyms “dress” and “frock” for lexical cohesion) collocation uses related words.

However, coherence text is formed not only with the structured string of words, but also with the contextual occurrence of the sentences. Coherence, generally, is the contextual appearance of the utterances in the text. More



specifically, it is the contextual fitness in the text that contributes in understanding the meaning or message. According to Taboada (2004), coherence is the hanging together of the text with relation to its context of situation or culture. Waskita (2008) views coherence as everything fitting together well; it is not something that exists in words or structures, but something that exists in people. Coherence is the result of the interpretation of the meaning of the text, and it depends on the relation between the audience and the text.

### **Motivation of the Study**

In the researcher's experience as a language tutor in the college of education, Komenda College of Education, for over six years, the researcher observed that teacher trainees, who are supposed to develop the skill of good paragraphing and teach it to their pupils when they become in-service teachers, find it difficult to write a unified paragraph. Having read some of the essays of these pre-service teachers, the researcher conducted a preliminary analysis of some selected essays to see how unity and coherence is achieved in their writings with respect to gender, as male and female students' performances over the period have not been consistent. This was because teacher trainees (students) should use the language (i.e., English) in a way that will effectively communicate their ideas to their readers.

In making use of language to effectively communicate their ideas to their readers, the students employ a lot of writing that includes paragraph development. However, it appeared that male and female students used different techniques and features in achieving unity and coherence in paragraph. This triggered the

researcher's curiosity to investigate into how each gender achieves unity and coherence in paragraph; since the expectation was both male and female students of the Komenda College of Education should employ similar approaches in their writing as they were taught by same English tutor using same materials and resources. It is in light of this that the present study seeks to examine how male and female students in colleges of education achieve unity and coherence in their writing.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In recent times, the analyses of students writing at the university and the polytechnic levels have attracted the attention of scholars in academia. Some of these studies include Adika (2003), Afful (2007), Mireku-Gyimah (2014), Odamtten, Denkabe and Tsikata (1994), Flor and Beigman (2013), Yankson (1994), Bijami, Kashef and Khaksari (2013), Ellis (2008). However, it appears that no attention has been given to the comparison of paragraphs written by male students and female students of colleges of education since these colleges' attainment of tertiary status in 2012, despite the fact that male and female students at the colleges of education have not been consistent in the way they achieve paragraph unity and coherence; and this, from the researcher's experience as a college tutor, has been influencing students' writings.

Existing studies have mainly focused on features such as concord, spelling and grammar found in essay writing, with no attention given to paragraph writing and how male students achieve coherence and unity in paragraph compares to that of female students, in spite of the fact that concord, spelling and grammar that prior

studies looked at are all required in the construction of coherent and unified paragraphs. It, thus, makes it difficult to ascertain how the findings from those prior studies have been applied to the writing of coherent and unified paragraphs, as well as how the findings have shaped how coherence and unity are achieved in paragraph.

This situation has compelled the researcher to fill the gap created by examining how students compose their paragraphs and the extent to which they achieve unity and coherence in their writing. The study particularly attempts to find out how male and female students in colleges of education write their paragraphs and the extent to which they achieve coherence and unity in their writing. It further looks at how students structure their paragraphs in terms of topic sentence and supporting sentences (major and minor support).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The study sought to assess how paragraph unity and coherence in writing are achieved among students of the Komenda College of Education.

### **Research Objectives**

The specific objectives of the study were as follows.

1. To assess how paragraph unity is achieved in the writings of students at the Komenda College of Education with respect to gender.
2. To examine how paragraph coherence is achieved in the writings of students at the Komenda College of Education with respect to gender.

3. To determine whether there is statistically significant difference between male and female students at Komenda College of Education with regards to achieving paragraph unity and coherence in writing.

### Research Questions

To help achieve the research objectives, the following research questions were formulated.

1. How is paragraph unity achieved in the writings of students at Komenda College of Education with respect to gender?
2. How is paragraph coherence achieved in the writings of students at Komenda College of Education with respect to gender?
3. Is there a statistically significant difference between male and female students at Komenda College of Education with regards to achieving paragraph unity and coherence in writing?

### Research Hypothesis

To help fully achieve the study objectives, the following hypothesis was formulated to statistically analyse whether there are significant differences between male and female students with regards to paragraph unity and coherence in writing.

$H_0^1$ : There is no statistically significant difference between male and female students at Komenda College of Education with regards to achieving paragraph unity and coherence in writing.

### Significance of the Study

The significance of this study could be realised in two folds: theory and pedagogy. In terms of theory, the study contributes to the Lakoff's Theory by

providing insights into how gender influences the attainment of coherence and unity in paragraph writing, through the use of specific language patterns by each gender group. Moreover, this would mean an expansion of the Lakoff's Theory since the gender language is demonstrated through writing instead of oral presentation.

Colleges of education instructors would get to know how each gender approaches paragraph writing. This would ensure that male and female students at the colleges of education in Ghana are given different levels of attention as and when it becomes necessary in order to optimise the writing skills of both genders.

Pedagogically, the study would help inform students and tutors in colleges of education on how to efficiently organise information in paragraphs, by bringing forth the appropriate positions for topic sentences and supporting sentences in a paragraph. Further, the findings of the study would help male as well as female students to be abreast of what constitutes a unified paragraph. Additionally, the findings would guide writing instructors in English language in Ghana as far as gender is concerned to teach unity and coherence in writing lessons.

In addition to having theoretical and pedagogical significance, the findings of this study would provide guidance to writers, researchers, English language instructors and other stakeholders of language and linguistics in their decision making processes as far as paragraph writing and gender at the colleges of education in Ghana are concerned. This would also be beneficial to educational stakeholders in other academic institutions such as the Universities and the Technical Universities.

### Delimitation of the Study

First, the study was concerned with the paragraph writing skills of male and female second year students of Komenda College of Education. In selecting Komenda College of Education for the study, consideration was given to the fact that the college is a mixed institution of learning in terms of gender, and therefore, would afford the researcher the opportunity to have access to both male and female styles of writing. Also, the study considered Komenda College of Education as the study organisation, and more specifically the Department of Languages. This delimitation was informed by proximity as well as the researcher's affiliation with the institution and the department.

Secondly, the study was limited to students' writings, specifically mid-semester examination papers for the 2019/2020 academic year, submitted to the Department of English. This is because the writings of this period were likely to represent a kind of fashion in which there was homogeneity; thus, there was a high likelihood of consistency in terms of behaviour and practice. More specifically, the writings of second year students reading English Language Studies were considered because it was envisaged that this category of students had received adequate tuition on essay writing. Besides, English Language Studies was integral part of their curriculum.

Thirdly, being aware of the numerous studies on student writings, the researcher decided to limit the present study to the comparison of male and female writing with respect to paragraph development. This, the researcher envisaged would distinguish the present work from existing studies and also contribute to

literatures on language and gender as well as English for academic purposes. Also, paragraphs written by students prior to and after the specified academic year, 2019/2020, were not considered in this study. These delimited and defined the scope of the current study.

### **Organisation of the Study**

The study was organised in five chapters. The introduction, which is the Chapter One, highlights the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, research hypotheses, significance of the study, delimitation of the study, limitation of the study, organisation of the study, and finally, the chapter summary. In the Chapter Two, the underpinning theories, concepts and related empirical studies were reviewed, as well as the conceptual framework was presented. Chapter Three discussed the research methods used for the present study. Chapter Four focused on analysis and discussion of results. The final chapter, that is Chapter Five, concluded the thesis by highlighting the key findings of the study, the implications of the findings, recommendations based on the findings and conclusions drawn, and suggestions for further research.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter, which is the introduction, has created a general context for the study by discussing the background that informed the study. The chapter went on to state the problem that the researcher sought to address, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, and research hypotheses, as well as the scope of the study. The chapter also highlighted the significance of the study, and

has presented the organisation of the whole thesis. The next chapter presents the literature review of the study where the theory used for the research and empirical studies related to the study are discussed.





## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Introduction

This chapter presents a review of literature on gender and paragraph writing among colleges of education students. The chapter reviews related theories on gender and academic writings. Also, the study concepts, gender and academic writings are discussed in detail. Empirical review of related studies is done, taking into consideration the study objectives. Further, considering the study objectives and the hypotheses formulated, conceptual framework is constructed to guide the entire work. Finally, the chapter provides a chapter summary.

#### Theoretical Framework

A number of theories or models have been employed to underpin the study. Though some of the theories do not directly refer to the concepts examined in this study, their contents are comprehensibly tuned to accommodate and explain the concepts herein. The proposal put forth by Lakoff (1975) on gender and speech or language in her book, *Language and Women's Place*, was employed. Also, Tannen's (1990) difference theory popularised by her book, *Just Don't Understand*, as well as the performativity theory propounded by Baxter (2008) were used to support the current study. These theories are discussed in detail below.

#### Lakoff's Theory

This theory posited that women's language or speech can be distinguished from men's speech or language in a number of ways (Lakoff, 1975). According to Lakoff, women's speeches are different from that of men in several ways as women tend to use hedges, such as "sort of", "kind of", "it seems like", just to mention a few; empty adjectives, such as "divine", "adorable", "gorgeous", among others; super-polite forms, such as "would you mind...", "...if it's not too much to ask", "Is it okay if...?"; apologise more, "I'm sorry, but..."; speak less frequently; avoid curse expletives; use tag questions, "You don't mind sleeping here, do you?"; use hyper-correct grammar and pronunciation; use indirect requests, such as "Wow, I'm very hungry" – actually asking for food; speak in italics – using tone to stress certain words such as "so", "quite", "very", among others (Lakoff, 1975).

The Lakoff's theory sought to draw a line of difference between men and female's language or speeches, and the theory was used because its assertions are in close relation with the current study's aim. It can, therefore, be inferred that men's writings and women's writings are different in that, to a large extent, the ways of speaking reflect in writings (Fidelia, 2015). This is to say that students at the colleges of education, especially Komenda College of Education, have different writing styles as far as gender is concerned. The difference may be drawn from how male and female students achieve paragraph unity in writings, as well as how coherence is achieved in their writings. Considering the current study objectives and the study hypotheses, these differences might be confirmed or otherwise.

### **Difference Theory**

The difference theory deals with cross-gender communications where male and female are usually presented as two separate cultures (Tannen, 1990). This is to say that male and female are not the same linguistically and in other practical aspects of life – males have their own ways of doing things at a particular time, and females have their own ways of doing things at a particular time period (Sunderland, 2006). This theory is closely related to the dominance, deficit, and the dynamic theories all which contribute to the literature of language and gender (Abe, Talbot, Gellhoed, & Geelhoed, 1998; Gefen, & Straub, 1997).

Generally, the theory, as put forth by Tannen, has six categories. Each category pairs contrasting uses of language by females and males. These categories show how different males and females are from each other, considering their choice of language, ways of communicating, and understanding of issues. These categories are *status versus support*, *advice versus understanding*, *information versus feelings*, *orders versus proposals*, *conflict versus compromise*, and *independence versus intimacy*. Though not very relevant to this study, these categories stating the difference between males and females are further explained as follows.

#### ***Status versus Support***

According to Tannen, men view the world as a competitive place where conversations and speeches are used to build status. On the other hand, females view the world as a network of connections where language is used to seek or offer support (Tannen, 1990). Stating the instance of her husband and herself (Tannen) to support her assertions, she recounted a period when her husband had jobs in different cities, and she took it as sympathy or support whenever someone talked

about it. However, her husband interpreted comments as criticism and a way to impede his progress. She also noticed that men are more likely to interrupt in order to get their points across and thus gain status (Tannen). These, according to Tannen, show the different ways women and men take in terms of status and support (Tannen).

### ***Advice versus Understanding***

According to this category, the difference between men and women regarding how they react to problems is presented. According to Tannen, women usually seek comfort and sympathy when there are problems whilst men seek for solution to problems. This is shown in the way males communicate and understand issues. On the part of women or females, their way of communication or speech usually suggests their need for being comforted and being shown sympathy (Abe et al., 1998). These show women are more understanding compared to men who would normally want to be listened to hence more of the advising type (Gefen, & Straub, 1997).

### ***Information versus Feelings***

Considering this category, Tannen posited that males' conversations are usually message-oriented (i.e., based on communicating information). For women, conversations are much more important for developing or building relationships and strengthening social ties. This means that men do not really focus on emotions and feelings when communicating their messages; their focus is basically on the kind of information they want to put across. However, women tend to be emotional

and hence take into consideration feelings, and usually focus on building lasting relationships (Gefen, & Straub, 1997).

### *Orders versus Proposals*

According to Tannen, men commonly use direct imperatives when talking to others. Direct imperatives used by men may include, for example, “Close the window”, “Put off the light”. On the other hand, women encourage the use of polite forms, or superpolite forms (Zemach, & Rumisek, 2003), such as “Let’s”, “Would you mind if...”, just to mention but few. This shows that men like giving orders whilst women would rather make proposals in most cases. This is not to say men are not polite; this only shows the differences between the two separate cultures, men and women, as put forth by Tannen (Adigun, Onihunwa, Irunokhai, et al., 2015).

### *Conflict versus Compromise*

According to Tannen, in language, women try as much as possible to avoid conflict at all costs; instead, they attempt to settle disagreements without confrontation. This is done in order to maintain relationships and build positive rapport. On the other hand, men are likely to use confrontational language or approach in dealing with and resolving issues and disagreements (Tannen, 1990). This assertion by Tannen correlates with the position in Water J. Ong’s 1981 *Fighting for Life* publication which stated that “expressed adversativeness” is more of men culture than female culture.

### *Independence versus Intimacy*

The difference theory, in general terms, posits that men favour independence whilst women favour intimacy. This assertion was demonstrated by Tannen, citing a husband who makes decisions without consulting his wife because he does not want to lose independence. On the contrary, women like to consult with their partners, as this is considered as a show of intimacy of the relationship. To Tannen, women see the world as a network of connections and relationships; thus, intimacy is considered as a means of achieving these connections and avoiding the temptation of appearing as superior. On the other hand, men view the world in terms of status. It was also clarified by Tannen that though both men and women like independence and intimacy, men focus more on independence as women focus more on intimacy.

Considering the assertions of the difference theory, differences could be inferred from all aspects of life of males and females. In terms of language, men are considered to be more assertive compared to women. This is likely to translate into how both men and women express themselves in writing, as far as achieving paragraph unity and coherence in writings are concerned. It, therefore, will not be surprising if male and female college of education students demonstrate different writing style as regards achievement of paragraph unity and coherence. Since males and females are stated by the difference theory to have been two separate cultures, it can then be said that how male college students achieve paragraph unity and coherence in their writings is likely to be different from how their counterpart female college students achieve paragraph unity and coherence.

### **Performativity Theory**

The performativity theory was propounded by Baxter (2008). The theory suggests that both male and female leaders can draw equally on a linguistic repertoire of resources normatively coded masculine and feminine. Nevertheless, the presence of disempowering, and gendered discourses in organisations can militate against women's access to, and performance of senior roles (Baxter, 2008). Baxter (2018) later argues that women can be empowered to access and perform in more diverse, challenging and dynamic ways. From this theory, it can be drawn that performance in academic writing; more specifically, achievement of unity and coherence in paragraphs, can be said to not have been influenced by gender. This is to say that both male and female students can perform equally, all being equal and in the presence of requisite resources, without influence of gender.

### **Halliday and Hasan's Theory**

Working in the framework of systemic functional linguistics, Halliday and Hasan (1976) focused on textual cohesion to develop this theory – Halliday and Hasan's Theory. In discussing textual cohesion, they presented the basic tools that define whether or not sets of sentences constitute a text. These tools are linguistic features which can be identified in a text. The features contribute to the text's unity and create its texture or its status of being a text. Halliday and Hasan (1976) made the following statement on this point: "A text has texture and this is what distinguishes it from something that is not a text... The texture is provided by the cohesive RELATION that exists between [items of information]."

In this respect, Halliday and Hasan considered cohesion a semantic concept which refers to relations of meaning that exist within a text and define it as a text.

According to Halliday and Hasan, the latter is considered as any spoken or written passage, of whatever length, that forms a unified whole. In this case, the text is thus a semantic unit. It is related to a clause or sentence not by size but by realisation. This means that a text does not consist of sentences but it is realised by, or encoded in, sentences that hang together through cohesive relationships.

In their treatment of cohesion, Halliday and Hasan provided a taxonomy of cohesive devices and, for the first time, made a distinction between grammatical and lexical cohesion. Grammatical cohesion is based on reference, substitution and ellipsis. Lexical cohesion is realised by the selection of vocabulary items. The cohesive device of conjunction is on the borderline between grammatical and lexical cohesion. This also suggests that the two types of cohesion are inextricably intertwined. However, following Lehmann (1985), it may be argued that it is lexical cohesion that greatly contributes to the empirical knowledge of textuality.

In addition to cohesion as conceived of by Halliday and Hasan (1976), it is important to take into account both textual structure and macrostructure. The latter defines the genre or text-type such as a conversation, a novel, a letter or a medical report. The former occurs within a clause and is described in terms of the Functional Sentence Perspective (FSP) discussed earlier Daneš (1974). Halliday and Hasan (1976) implicitly recognised these additional cohesive relations as is evident in the following: There are, of course, other types of semantic relation associated with a text which are not embodied in this concept [of cohesion]; but the one that it does embody is in some ways the most important, since it is common to text of every kind and is, in fact, what makes a text a text.



Finally, although Halliday and Hasan (1976) recognise that there is a distinction between cohesion and coherence, they continued focusing on the presence of cohesive markers as the only factor that matters in the construction of a text. This is one of the limitations of Halliday and Hasan's (1976) theory of cohesion that is rather more descriptive and less formalised. Linking the Halliday and Hasan theory to the research objectives of this study, it could be said that the achievement of coherence and unity in paragraph writing could be done from different perspectives, dependent on the individual (i.e., students of Komenda College of Education) writing the paragraph. Thus, intrinsically, a student may feel he or she is writing coherently, but extrinsically, an audience may not appreciate the coherence and unity in the paragraph written. Considering this, a student should ensure that paragraph coherence and unity are achieved both intrinsically and extrinsically, based on the Halliday and Hasan theory.

### **Academic Writing**

Academic writing, in a broad sense, is any writing accomplished in an academic setting such as writing of books, research paper, conference paper, academic journal, and dissertation and thesis (Iantosca, 2017). More specifically, it is a writing activity performed to fulfill a requirement of a college, university, conference, or publication. According to Iantosca (2017), academic writing is a form of evaluation that asks individuals to demonstrate knowledge and show proficiency with certain disciplinary skills in thinking, interpreting, and presenting.

Also, academic writing is defined as the set of conventions used in publishing a paper, or in writing a thesis in a specific discipline. In academic

writing, the concern is with the aspects such as organisation, style, presentation, and flow of ideas (Murray, 2005; Latifa, 2018). Dividing the writing text into three parts such as introduction, body, and conclusion helps make the writing well organised so that the readers feel comfortable in understanding the text. This shows that, in academic writing, organisation is crucial, as it is always difficult for readers to make the best out of unorganised piece of writing.

Mostly, academic courses or programmes evaluate students through written assignments (Bailey, 2011). These include courseworks which may take students weeks to write, and examinations which are usually written in less or more than an hour, depending on the type of examination and the setting (Bailey, 2011). This means that writing is an integral part of academic activities, since in academia, most of the communication activities are carried out in writing. Thus, writing is indispensable as far as academia is concerned. For instance, circulars, memos, among others, are all done through writing, and these are commonly used in the academic setting.

Writing is not just done for writing sake. There is usually a reason for taking a particular action. In a similar manner, writing is usually done to fulfill a purpose or purposes. Therefore, writers should be clear about why they are writing a piece of write-up. The most common purposes of writing include, reporting on a piece of research work a writer has carried out, answering questions the writer has been given or chosen to answer, discussing a topic or subject of common interest in order to seek the views of the writer, synthesising research works done by others on a given research topic (Fidelia, 2015; Latifa, 2018).

Further, according to Bailey (2011), the most important thing to bear in mind when writing in English is the readers. It is all about being able to communicate, effectively, ideas to readers. It is obvious that academic writing is different from other forms of writings, such as stories or newspapers; academic writing seeks to follow accuracy and objectivity (Monash University, 2020). This is to say that academic writing has peculiar features which set it apart from other forms of writings. These features, usually, revolve around the use of academic language; establishment of the writer's position; writing in one's own "voice" using tentative words; clear communication; writing clear paragraphs; writing clearly, concisely, and precisely; signposting; paraphrasing, summarising and quoting; and editing and proofreading of work (Monash University, 2020). In all, academic writing should exude objectivity, formality, precision and hedging (Baxter, 2018).

There are several types of academic writings. However, the most common types of writings produced by students include notes, reports, undergraduate dissertations or projects, long essays, dissertations or theses, and papers (Ghaith, 2006; Bailey, 2011). Notes are referred to as written records of the major points of texts or lectures for students' personal use (Bailey, 2011). Reports are concerned with description of something students have done, such as a survey carried out by a student (Ghaith, 2006). Undergraduate dissertations or projects, on the hand, are pieces of research done individually or in group, with the topic chosen by the individual student or the group (Ghaith, 2006; Bailey, 2011). Long essays are considered the most common type of academic writing with the topics or titles

usually given to students by their teachers; they are usually made up of between 1000 and 5000 words (Bailey, 2011).

Additionally, dissertations or theses have been considered as the longest academic writing done by students mostly for higher academic degrees, on topics chosen by the students (Bailey, 2011). These are normally made up of 20,000 plus words depending on the academic institution being considered (Bailey, 2011). Finally, papers are considered as a general term used to refer to any form of academic writings; these may include essays, reports, presentations, articles, dissertations and theses, among others (Bailey, 2011). All these forms of academic writings have their own unique formats, and features.

Considering the formats of academic writings, short essays, such as those presented for examination answers, follow patterns such as introduction, main body, and conclusion (Bailey, 2011). On the other hand, longer essays may consider introduction; main body broken down into literature review, case study, discussion; conclusion; references, and appendices (Iantosca, 2017). With regards dissertations or theses, the following presentation may be considered: abstract; list of contents; list of tables; introduction; main body – literature review, case study, findings, and discussion; conclusion; acknowledgements; references, and appendices (Iantosca, 2017). These patterns may be rearranged in different orders, dependent on the academic institution under consideration (Iantosca, 2017).

With regards to the features of academic writing, different schools accept different format. However, some general features apply in most formats (Iantosca, 2017). Often, title, sub-title, heading, sentence, phrase, and paragraph feature in

academic write-ups (Bailey, 2011). Example of title is “A Fish Story”; sub-heading can be “Misleading health claims concerning omega 3-fatty acids”; heading “Introduction”; sentence can be “He has eaten the food”; phrase can take many forms, including noun phrase, verb, gerund, infinitive, appositive, participial, prepositional, and absolute (Predrag, Marijana & Krunoslav, 2014) (e.g., “The lost tourist”). A Paragraph, on the other hand, consists of more than one sentence (Predrag et al., 2014).

From the discussion so far, it is clear that academic writing is a broad concept which incorporates many elements and features. However, the concept is approached differently by different scholars and researchers in English language and academic writing, depending on the affiliate institutions of these individuals. In addition, considering the broad nature of academic writing, which features paragraphs, it is imperative to give a particular attention paragraph unity, as well as coherence in writing. Also, when it comes to writing, individuals are needed to execute it; thus, leading to issues of style of writings, with regards to gender.

### **Gender**

The word “gender” and “sex” have been used interchangeably. The difference between gender and sex has always been a topic for hot debates among researchers and scholars (Bijami, Kashef, & Khaksari, 2013). However, it is common to see people use these two words when filling research questionnaires, medical documents and many other official paper works. This is because these words are simple and easy to use in describing basic characteristics of human (Predrag et al., 2014). Notwithstanding, the word “sex” has come to stay as the

biological characteristics being male or female, whilst “gender” only refers to the behavioural, social, and psychological features that characterise men and women (Predrag et al.). Thus, sex is biological and gender is social characteristics of human being (Pawelczyk, 2007).

According to Muto-Humphrey (2005), gender is one of the social classifications used to determine language used by people. The word “gender” obviously reveals the social and contextual expectations society places on part of each gender – male and female – both culturally and socially (Kamari, Gorjian, & Pazhakh, 2012). Generally, gender has been considered as a social phenomenon (Block, 2002). This is due to the drift from perceiving gender as individual concept to perceiving it as a social construct (Aslan, 2009; Bijami, Kashef, & Khaksari, 2013; Kamari et al., 2012).

From the various definitions and explanations given to the word ‘gender’, it is obvious that it goes beyond just being male and female. This means that it has more to do with masculinity and femininity of an individual. As to whether an individual is considered masculine or feminine, society determines it. However, considering all these, everything still boils down to male and female, or being a man or woman as both the masculine and feminine characteristics are either ascribed to a male or a female depending on how society perceive the individual. Thus, when society perceives a female to have behaved like a male, the masculine gender is ascribed to her, as males are usually perceived to be masculine as opposed to female femininity (Ahmadi, Maftoon & Gholami, 2012).

From the discussion thus far, it appears that whether gender is defined based on femininity and masculinity or male and female, is dependent on the construction by a given society. Whilst some societies have several conceptualisations of gender, others characterise gender to include just male and female (Bijami et al., 2013). Per this study, the latter conceptualisation was adopted due to the fact that in Ghanaian societies, gender and sex are used interchangeably to mean male and female.

### **Paragraph Unity in Writing**

Paragraph can be defined as a group of sentences which are closely related, develop and deal with an idea (Iantosca, 2017). Paragraph is a very important aspect of academic writing. Paragraphs help readers to easily read texts and identify ideas, and also help in smooth transition from one idea to another. The idea is normally introduced by the first sentence, referred to as the topic sentence, of the paragraph. All academic writing of any format or feature, most often than not, is divided into paragraphs. The foremost line of any new paragraph is indented, or spaced out from the preceding paragraph.

From the definition of paragraph, it is clear that sentences forming a paragraph must be related. They must form a particular structure, and this structure is normally determined by the connection of the ideas (Fidelia, 2015). This is to say that properly constructing the paragraphs lead to developing ideas (Ahmadi et al., 2012). For example, when an individual is asked how to solve a quantitative problem, the individual will have to explain the processes involved, giving the steps involved in an orderly manner. In this manner, the last sentence of the explanation

is obviously the last step to solving the problem. Following this approach, a well-organised paragraph can be developed (Iantosca, 2017).

Aside constructing a well-organised paragraph, other crucial qualities of all paragraphs should be considered to construct a complete and unified paragraph.

The qualities include emphasis, coherence, unity, completeness and order (American University Academic Support Centre (AUASC), 2009). The order quality of paragraphs ensures that items within a paragraph are presented in time-order or in chronological order. This is normally important when the paragraph is to outline a process which should naturally follow a particular time order. Order ensures logic. Therefore, paragraphs can be organised from general to particular or particular to general (AUASC). Completeness, on the other hand, ensures that paragraphs are not left hanging; as there should be an opening or topical sentence, there should also be a concluding sentence (Iantosca, 2017; Fidelia, 2015).

Paragraph unity is expected to be achieved in any form of writing. It is difficult to make sound meanings out of a paragraph when unity is lacking. Thus, every good paragraph should have unity (AUASC, 2009). A paragraph with unity builds a single idea comprehensively and connects it to the rest of the write-up. Simply defined, unity refers to “oneness” or “togetherness” (Ghaith, 2006). This is to say that a paragraph must focus on or emphasise only one idea at a time. This means that paragraph unity is broken when a writer, within the same paragraph, introduces a new idea or veers from the idea under discussion to an unrelated idea.

According to the American University Academic Support Centre (2009), paragraph unity can be achieved by taking into consideration the following: one,



develop a paragraph around main idea; two, express the idea in a topic sentence; three, make the link between main idea and thesis of paper clear; four, do not presume the readers will make inferences themselves. Clearly spell things out for them; five, support main idea with details; six, develop separate paragraphs for details exploring the topic from different perspectives; finally, either eliminate sentences not supporting main idea or modify main idea to accommodate these sentences. The following are examples of a paragraph without unity and a paragraph with unity adapted from (AUASC).

Paragraph without unity

P1: Sekyi wrote, “The Ceeland violence illustrates the need for greater control and vigilance.” This is related to the research. Some 10,000 people disappeared from the cities. Financial mismanagement can result in great misfortune. Corruption in the government was exposed repeatedly to no fruition. A police force, under instructions to get rid of suspected terrorists, grabbed political insurgents and their families.

Unified paragraph

P2: The massacre of December 12, 2001 illustrates how foreign grants were appropriated for repressive purposes rather than social development activities. On that day, some 10,000 people were kidnapped from cities, charged as conspirators and instantly executed. Then, governor-for-life, Ceely had recently used five billion Ghana Cedis in aid to create a standing paramilitary police force. Without some restraining control over the aid, human rights organisations were unable to prevent the build-up and easing of this disaster. Sekyi, the director of the Development in

Freedom Organisation, wrote, “The Ceeland violence illustrates the need for greater control and vigilance.”

Obviously, in the first paragraph, it is difficult to make out what the topic sentence is, not to talk about how the rest of the sentences belong together. The reader is not informed who Sekyi is. The words “related to” found in the second sentence do not give the reader any vivid information about what the relationship is. On the other hand, the second paragraph, as can be seen above, provides a topic sentence, “*The massacre of December 12, 2001 illustrates how foreign grants were appropriated for repressive purposes rather than social development activities*”, that relates the main idea of the paragraph to the core argument of the write-up. It deals away with details not related to the topic, and details relevant to the reader’s comprehension of the events are added.

### **Paragraph Coherence in Writing**

Paragraph’s main ideas and supporting sentences do not really make sense to readers unless they are put in a particular order. According to the AUASC (2009), paragraph coherence can be achieved by considering particular orders based on many factors, such as chronological sequence, which is particularly useful for describing a sequence of happenings; modified chronology, which involves presenting major ideas early in a paragraph and augment them with relevant background information; spatial position of different objects, also useful for descriptive purposes; conversation between different experts, where by moving between a series of key positions, a writer can establish a sense of dialogue and

develop a complex argument; logical form of argument, a form of logical proof, such as syllogism, can also serve as a basis for order in paragraph writing.

Thus, as sentences are put in a particular order, connections can be expressed between them, using transitional words or phrases (Block, 2002). These transitional words or phrases guide the readers through the paragraph. The following phrases in italics are examples of transitional phrases:

*After the bicycle broke*, she had to trek for several hours.

*Having danced for several hours*, we were soon exhausted.

*While they wanted to proceed to the village*, they had to rest.

*It was at that moment that* a driver offered us assistance.

Apart from the above transitional phrases, there are many other useful transitions. According to Hacker (2011), to show addition, again, and, also, besides, equally important, first (second, third, etc.), further, furthermore, in addition, in the first place, moreover, next, too, among others are used; to give examples, phrases like for example, for instance, in fact, specifically, that is, to illustrate are used; to compare, although, and yet, at the same time, but, despite, even though, however, in contrast, in spite of, nevertheless, on the contrary, on the other hand, still, though, and yet are usually employed; to summarise or to conclude, transitions such as all in all, in conclusion, in other words, in short, in summary, on the whole, that is, therefore, and to sum up can be used.

Further, to show time, *after*, *afterwards*, *as long as*, *as soon as*, *at last*, *before*, *earlier*, *finally*, *formerly*, *immediately*, *later*, *meanwhile*, *next*, *since*, *shortly*, *subsequently*, *then*, *thereafter*, *until*, *when*, *while*, among others are usually

used. *Above, below, beyond, close, elsewhere, farther on, here, nearby, opposite, to the right (left, north, etc.)* are also transitions used to show direction or place as far as paragraph coherence is concerned. To express logical relationship, transitions such as *accordingly, as a result, because, consequently, for this reason, hence, if, otherwise, since, so, then, therefore, and thus, among others* are used (Hacker, 2011).

The baseline is, in terms of coherent paragraphs, each sentence connects clearly to the topic sentence or the main idea of the paragraph. However, according to the AUASC (2009), paragraph coherence goes beyond just the connection between sentences which support the controlling idea. The AUASC asserts that, for a paragraph to be deemed coherent, each sentence of the paragraph should flow smoothly into the succeeding one without any obvious shifts and jumps. This is to say that a coherent paragraph shows ties between old and new information in order to ensure that the structure of the ideas or arguments are clear to the reader.

Apart from the fact that a coherent paragraph should have sentences flowing smoothly, a paragraph's coherence can also be linked to its length. For instance, when a long very long paragraph is written, it should be checked carefully to see if it has more than one leading or main idea. If it has more than one leading idea, a new paragraph should be started where the original paragraph wanders from its own leading idea (Ghaith, 2006). On the contrary, if a paragraph is very short – only one or two sentences – the leading or the main idea of the paragraph should be more thoroughly developed, or combine it with another paragraph (Ghaith, 2006).

## Relationship between Cohesion and Coherence

Cohesion is derived from the word “cohere”, which means “to stick together”; thus, while framing sentences and phrases, cohesion is how the writer sticks ideas and views collectively together. On the other hand, coherence is referred to as the superset of cohesion which includes cohesive sentences as well as other properties such as consistency and comprehensibility of content and how using logically connected and related sentences as a writer represents ideas and transits from one idea to another. This relationship shows that cohesion is a subset of coherence; therefore, whenever coherence is achieved, cohesion is also achieved.

Also, while repeated words or ideas, reference words, transition signals, substitution, and ellipses are some of the approaches used to achieve cohesion, techniques used in achieving cohesion plus topic sentences as well as thesis statement, among others can be employed to achieve coherence in writing (Eduionic, 2021). Eduionic further intimates that in coherence, words and ideas are so interwoven and stuck together that a reader will be able to perceive the consistent link between these words. This is to say that coherence brings about a rationale in the arrangement of the ideas which are introduced either in a chronological order or in an order of importance.

Additionally, Eduionic (2021) stated some techniques which are used in achieving coherence. These techniques include the use of coordinate conjunctions (e.g., and, yet, but, etc.), topic sentences to create transitions from previous paragraphs, repetition (i.e., repeating key words or phrases to connect and focus idea throughout the essay), correlative conjunctions (e.g., either/or, neither/nor,

as/as, rather/than, etc.), transitional expressions (e.g., however, because, therefore, in addition, etc.), use of pronouns (i.e., to link or connect sentences by referring to preceding nouns and pronouns.), and use of synonyms (i.e., words that have the same or nearly the same meaning as another word.). These examples show that the various words listed in the parentheses herein can be used in achieving coherence in writing, and these words can also be used to achieve cohesion. Thus, in a simple term, coherence can be said to have been achieved where those words are employed to ensure relations within and between ideas or paragraphs.

### **Summary of theoretical review**

Four theories underpinned the study. The Lakoff's Theory which distinguishes between male and female language was employed, as the study sought to compare male and female students in terms of how they achieve paragraph unity and coherence in English language. Realising that the Lakoff's Theory was unable to classify male and female as different cultures capable of employing different means to achieve a given end, the Differences Theory was employed. Both Lakoff's Theory and Difference Theory could not appreciate the performance of individuals when given same opportunity; thus, the Performativity Theory was added, as the study, to some extent, assessed students' performance in achieving paragraph unity and coherence. Finally, Halliday and Hasan's Theory on cohesion and coherence or unity in text was also employed, as the focal point of the study was paragraph unity and coherence.

## Empirical Review

A number of studies have been conducted on writing of paragraphs, achievement of paragraph unity and coherence, and other paragraph related topics. The relationship between gender and academic writing has also been a focus of theoretical and empirical attention in the fields of applied and sociolinguistics for decades (Litosseliti & Sunderland, 2002; Abe et al., 1998; Wodak, 1997), with debates continuing around the extent and specific ways in which language are gendered. This is to say that studies which empirically focused on achievement of paragraph unity and coherence with regards to gender are limited in the literature. Thus, this section reviews studies on paragraph unity and gender, paragraph coherence and gender, and gender difference with respect to paragraph writing.

However, it should be pointed out that prior studies did not consider paragraph unity and gender separately from paragraph coherence and gender, and gender difference with respect to paragraph writing. These studies looked at gender, writing and other related concepts and discussed them together; hence, making it untenable to break this section into the various thematic areas, as doing this would result in duplication of reviews or presenting reviews of a study more than once. Considering this, the various themes have been reviewed together, employing the chronology review approach – building the arguments based on the years the various studies were conducted.

Pajares, Miller and Johnson (1999) focused on the investigation of nature of gender differences in writing self-beliefs of elementary school students. The study used 363 students. Interviews were used, and essays from both boys and girls

from the elementary school analysed. The results showed girls to be superior writers, but there were no significant differences found in gender writing, after controlling for writing aptitude. On the other hand, the girls averred that they were better writers than boys or other girls, to a higher degree than claimed by boys.

Though their study did not specifically talk about paragraph unity and coherence; it focused on academic writing and considered gender differences with regards to academic writing as well. This, in a way, explains some of the characteristic differences in male and female writing skills. This means that their study could provide a good ground for further studies to be carried out. However, the gap in literature as far as gender difference on academic writing, such as paragraph unity and coherence, is concerned still remains.

Thus, to find out the gender differences on the Scholastic Aptitude Test, Mau and Lynn (2001) carried out a study in that regard. Gender differences for a nationally representative sample of graduates, from the American college, drawn from the Baccalaureate and Beyond 1993-1994 study were used on the Scholastic Aptitude Test, taken at the age of about eighteen years, and scores ascertained in college at the ages of about 18-22 years. The results showed that males obtained significantly higher average scores on the two tests for college entrance and females obtained significantly higher average scores whilst in college.

Mau and Lynn's (2001) study took into consideration gender differences, which is one of the main areas of focus of the current study. However, aptitude test was considered instead of academic writing considered by the current study. This just confirms that there is a gap in literature, as far as paragraph unity and paragraph



coherence achievement in writing is concerned. The current study is, therefore, in the right direction as it sought to fill this gap in literature. Mau and Lynn's study too was limited to a specific age group, thereby, excluding participants who might have contributed in a way that influences the overall findings of the study in a positive manner.

Koppel, Argamon and Shimoni (2002) conducted a study on automatically categorising written texts by author gender. The data used included both non-fictional and fictional texts. In all, 566 texts were from the British National Corpus were analysed to identify the linguistic features more commonly used by one or the other gender. All of the non-fictional texts were used, and 75% and remaining 25% of fictional texts used were from 1975-1993 and 1960-1974, respectively. On the overall, the findings revealed that males mostly use specifiers whilst females mostly use negation, pronouns, and particular prepositions. Men used more *that* and *one*, and women used *for*, *with*, *not*, and, *in* more frequently in non-fiction texts.

Their study, just as those reviewed thus far, studied gender differences in writing. However, with regards to writing, both fictional and non-fictional texts were used for their analysis. The current study, on the other hand, focused on paragraph writing, and achievement of paragraph unity and paragraph coherence which Koppel et al.'s study did not consider. This means that the gap in literature, concerning achieving paragraph unity and paragraph coherence, will be filled as the current study purposely focused on academic writing, with a particular focus on paragraph unity achievement and paragraph coherence.

In another study, Argamon, Koppel, Fine and Shimoni (2003) analysed gender, and genre in writing style in formal written texts. The study analysed 604 texts from a wide range of genres in the BNC. The results revealed that women used more pronouns, such as *I, you, she, her, their, myself, yourself, herself*, and men used more noun specifiers, including determiners, such as *a, the, that, these*, and quantifiers, such as *one, two, more, some*. These authors argue that pronouns and specifiers are used in different conditions, although both are used to encode information about the things presented as nominals. Pronouns are used when the identity of the “thing” involved is known to the reader, whereas specifiers are used when the author assumes the reader does not know the “thing” (Argamon et al., 2003).

They claim that the different use of these grammatical categories by females and males indicate that females and males tend to present things in a different way in their writing. This study only confirms that male and female are different in different ways, and one of these differences can be found in the way they write. In similar manner, the current study also sought to determine gender differences in achieving paragraph unity and paragraph coherence which Argamon et al. (2003) did not consider in their study, thereby, causing a gap in literature.

To assess the differences in gender, Dayioglu and Turu-Asik (2007) conducted a study to determine whether there are significant differences in academic performance among undergraduate students in a large public university in Turkey. The analysis was based on indicators such as university entrance scores, performance in English preparatory and the programme the student wants to major.

The results revealed that only a smaller number of females managed to enter the university; even that, they entered with low scores. Nonetheless, and rather surprising, it was also revealed that once they enter the university, they excel and outperform their male counterparts. However, for this result to hold, Dayioglu and Turu-Asik controlled for the field of study and individual characteristics.

Though academic performance as considered by Dayioğlu and Türüt-Aşık (2007), in general, encompasses many activities in academic setting, which may have something to do with academic writing, the measurement approach defers from that of academic writing, and more specifically, paragraph unity and paragraph coherence. This is to say that, academic performance, in its general term, cannot be used as a replacement for academic writing; thus, the current study is imperative in filling this gap in literature, as it focuses specifically on paragraph unity and paragraph coherence achievement in academic writing with respect to gender.

Further, to examine men's and women's ESL academic writing in their assignments at the University of Melbourne, Waskita (2008) carried out a study on the differences in men's and women's ESL academic writing. The methodical procedures used involved analysing the academic writing of three sets of men and women. Features focused in the analysis included syntactic complexity, means of integrating cited information, and methods of presenting arguments. The findings revealed significant differences between men's and women's texts in the aspects analysed. Women's texts structure was found to be more complex, compared to

men's. Women were also found to have presented more organised arguments and, thus, have more advantage for success in academic writing.

Waskita's (2008) study, though considered academic writing and gender differences with regards to academic writing, the study did not specifically take into consideration how men and women achieve unity in paragraph writing. However, the study was able to bring out clearly the differences between men and women academic writing. The current study, therefore, focuses on paragraph writing, taking cognisance of gender differences. This will enable filling of the gap in literature as far as achievement of unity in paragraph writing is concerned.

Again, to analyse gender differences in language use, Newman, Groom, Handleman and Pennebaker (2008) carried out a study. The researchers compiled a large corpus and studied gender differences in language use. The data contained variety of texts which included spoken texts (3%) and fiction written in the 17th century. The results showed that women used more words related to psychological and social processes and more verbs, whilst men discussed current concerns and used more words related to object features and impersonal topics. The results also revealed that women used more pronouns, such as *I, my, me, she, their, them*; social words, such as *sister, friends*; psychological processes, such as *mad, uneasy, remember, nervous*; verbs, negations, and references to the home. Men, on the other hand, seemed to use more numbers, articles, and prepositions, such as *on, to, from*.

As articles and prepositions are normally used with nouns, Newman et al. (2008) concluded that men tend to focus more on conveying information, and women more on social connections. It has become clear that some lexical items

have been identified as linguistic features of female writing in some studies but not in others. However, these studies still miss the elements of paragraph writing. Thus, it is imperative to conduct a study which takes into consideration both gender and paragraph writing, with a specific focus on paragraph unity and paragraph coherence in academic writing.

To find the impact of gender difference on students' academic performance, Mwiigi (2013) carried out a study using five secondary schools in Kenya. The study used 80 participants, which included students, teachers, head teachers and directors. The questionnaires and interviews were employed for data collection. Both quantitative and qualitative research methods were used. The results revealed a significant gender difference by performance, with males doing better than their female counterpart. Also, it was revealed that, on the average, it is possible for males to score higher marks than females involved in the study.

This study considered gender difference but nothing was said about male and female writing strategies. This, again, just like the foregoing reviewed studies, confirmed a gap in literature as far as achieving paragraph coherence with respect to gender is concerned. This shows that studies focused specifically on gender and achievement of paragraph coherence are necessary to fill the gap in literature. Therefore, the current study is relevant to filling this gap in literature, where gender differences would be considered with reference to achievement of paragraph coherence in writing.

Also, to assess gender differences and writing performance, Bijami et al. (2013) carried out a study, using the review approach. The study reviewed prior

studies conducted to assess gender and writing. The results revealed that, though many studies have been conducted to examine gender with respect to language learning and writing, the results showed inconsistencies. The results then showed that as some studies reported females outperforming their counterpart males in writing, others reported males outperforming females in academic writings. Yet, some of the studies reviewed revealed that there is no difference between females and males with regards to writing and language learning. Their study was to have implications for policymakers and curricula developers.

The above study was a synthesis of studies; this means that the study did not focus on any original purpose and specific objectives. Also, their study lacks empirical approach which would make replication difficult for future researchers who might want to make reference their study. However, the current study practically employed research methods which would make it easy for future researchers to be able to reproduce a similar work by following the procedures used. This indicates the significance of the current study to literature.

To evaluate the effect of gender on academic achievement, Dania (2014) conducted a study among secondary school students. The quasi-experimental design, using the 2×2 non-randomised pretest-posttest control group, was employed. One hundred and eighty students made up the sample size for the study. The Social Studies Achievement Test was the instrument used for data collection. The data collected were analysed using the means, standard deviation, and the analysis of covariance (ANCOVA). The findings revealed that gender, defined as male or female in Dania's study, had no statistically significant effect on students'

achievement in Social Studies. However, a significant interaction effect was reported on treatment and gender on students' performance in Social Studies.

In the study, Dania (2014) did not consider paragraph unity and coherence in academic writing. This is to say that studies are obviously needed to close this literature gap. On the other hand, Dania's study was quite interesting as it thoroughly assessed gender difference, as well as considered interaction effects; but, since the discipline focused was Social Studies but not anything related to academic writing – more specifically, paragraph unity and coherence – it is imperative to carry out further studies which will consider achievement of paragraph unity and coherence with respect to gender.

Further, to examine gender differences in general knowledge, Zarevski, Kovac and Matesic (2014) carried out a study on gender differences in general knowledge, with a special focus on residential status and type of school. The study included 817 participants, comprising both males and females. The 110 item version of the General Information Test was adopted. Comparing the results of their study to that of previous studies, their study reported better performance and greater variation of male participants in overall score on the General Information Test compared to female participants.

This study, apart from the fact that it considered gender differences, nothing was said about academic writing. Also, the study did not employ any clear design as it was more of comparing of participants' scores. This calls for a study which focuses on gender and academic writing, with a specific emphasis on paragraph unity and paragraph coherence. Thus, the current study is relevant in this regard as

it focuses on gender and academic writing with specific focus on achieving paragraph unity and paragraph coherence in academic writing. The current study also makes clear the design it has employed in order to make references to it easier for future studies.

In yet another study, Arhin and Offoe (2015) sought to assess the differences in performance students at the Ghana National College in Cape Coast. This study focused on performance in mathematics. The quasi-experimental research design, where experimental and control groups were involved, was used. Forty-two and forty students were used for the experimental group and control group, respectively. Data from the students were collected using an open-ended mathematics test. The findings showed no significant difference between male and female, considering their performances. Arhin and Offoe recommended that performance assessment task be used in lessons by teachers.

This study by Arhin and Offoe (2015), though studied gender differences, did not consider paragraph writing let alone achievement of paragraph unity and coherence. The study focused purposely on mathematics. Despite the fact that Arhin and Offoe's study was conducted within the local context, it focused on the high school students and a discipline different from what the current study focuses on. This means that local literature lacks studies on gender differences and achievement of paragraph unity and coherence in writing. Thus, the current study is imperative as it focused on gender and paragraph unity and coherence in writing.

It appeared that most of the studies, which considered gender difference, focused on performance in disciplines other than what the current study focuses on,



both studies conducted outside the local setting and within the local setting. Nonetheless, they all sought to assess differences in males and females with regards to one discipline or the other, including general academic writing. Apart from studies discussed above, a number of other studies also considered gender differences. For instance, Adigun et al. (2015) conducted a study to examine the effect of gender on students' academic performance in computer studies. The sample size used was 275 students. A questionnaire containing multiple-choice past questions was used. The responses were scored and analysed employing the independent t-test.

The results of the study showed that, on the average, males had a better performance compared to their female counterparts; however, this difference in performance, with regards to gender, was not statistically significant. The study then recommended that parents provide the right education they deemed affordable for their wards regardless of gender. Just as posited earlier, and just as some of the prior studies reviewed thus far showed, Adigun et al. (2015) considered gender, but this was in relation to performance in computer studies instead of academic writing with a special focus on paragraph unity and coherence. This means studies are needed to fill this gap, and the current study is going in just that direction to contribute to filling this gap.

Another study conducted by Unity and Igbudu (2015) sought to provide insight into the influence of gender on students' academic achievement in government subject. A sample size of 412 out of a population of 822 was used for the study. For sampling method, the multistage technique was used. The research

design employed was the ex-post-facto research design. The examination proforma was the main instrument used for the data collection. Frequency counts and percentages were used for data analysis. The findings of the study generally concluded that gender differences exist in academic achievement; however, most of the differences were found to be insignificant.

Just like other prior studies, Unity and Igbudu's (2015) research focused on academic achievement instead of the paragraph unity and paragraph coherence the current study sought to study. Their study was also conducted outside the current study area whose educational and economic environment might be different from the environment in which Unity and Igbudu conducted their study. This is to say that the current study area lacks studies like the current study, thus, the need for the current study to fill gaps in local literature, as well as gaps in literature in general.

A study conducted by Ishikawa (2015) investigated the gender differences in language use in argumentative essays. These essays were written by male and female university students on designated topics under controlled conditions. The study analysed a corpus of written essays by the students involved in the study. The essays comprised 200 texts written by 100 native English-speaking students. The sample size was made up of 56 males and 44 females. The topics considered were "It is important for college students to have a part-time job" and "Smoking should be completely banned at all the restaurants in the country". Each student was given 20-40 minutes to write 200-300 words.

The results of the study revealed that there are truly gender differences in language use in essay writing; male students were found to use more nouns to

convey information and facts about the given topics, whilst females tend to use more pronouns, more intensifiers, and words related to psychological cognitive processes; females used these word so that they might convey their feelings and build good relationships with others. Nevertheless, Ishikawa's study did not specifically test male and female's paragraph writing strategies. This study is still relevant to the current study because it partly considered elements of the current study, such as gender and academic writing.

Fidelia (2015) conducted a study to investigate the effects of gender using collaborative instructional strategy on students' achievement in English essay writing. The study employed the quasi-experimental pretest posttest non-equivalent control group design. A sample size of 191 students from a population of 1,797 Form Two (2) students from four secondary schools was used. The EEAT achievement test was used. Descriptive statistical tools used to analyse the research questions were the mean, standard deviation, and the analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) used to test the hypothesis formulated.

Though Fidelia's (2015) study considered gender difference in writing, the focus was on general essay writing but not specifically on achievement of unity and coherence in paragraph writing. This justifies the significance of this study to literature as it focuses on gender difference in the achievement of paragraph unity and coherence. Also, to ensure triangulation of the research findings, the current study, unlike Fidelia's study, employed the descriptive statistical tools such as the mean and standard deviation, and hypothesis testing tools aside the extensive use of the qualitative research method. Further, his study focused on Secondary School

students whose academic writing skills might be low, compared to the college students being considered by the current study. In all, there is a gap here that needs to be filled and, therefore, the current study is relevant in this regard.

To ascertain the effect of gender and proficiency level on writing strategy used among high school students, Mutar and Nimehchisalem (2017) carried out a study. The study employed the quantitative approach. The sample size was made up of 132 students randomly selected. Writing strategy questionnaire adapted from Petric and Czarl (2003) was used. Though the results showed a low frequency of strategy use, no significant difference was recorded between high and low proficiency strategy used by students. Finally, the findings revealed that there is a statistically significant difference between females and males in their use of writing strategies; females were found to have used more writing strategies than their male counterparts.

This study by Mutar and Nimehchisalem (2017), just as those reviewed earlier, gender difference was considered but paragraph unity and coherence has not been considered. Their study did not really touch on how each gender group developed their paragraphs as far as achieving unity and coherence is concerned. This shows clearly that though studies abound on gender differences with regards to many disciplines, there has, so far, not been any study which specifically studied gender with respect to achievement of unity and coherence in paragraph writing. This study is, therefore, crucial to filling this gap in the existing literature.

In another study, Latifa (2018) sought to investigate whether Moroccan male and female undergraduates use similar or different writing strategies when

composing essays. The essays were focused on narrative and expository genres. The main research tool used was the think-aloud, a questionnaire, and interviews. Data collected pertained to male and female students' use of strategy and cognitive process whilst writing English as a foreign language (EFL). The study used both qualitative and quantitative research approach, where the two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was employed. The result showed, after analysis of sixty-four (64) think-aloud protocols, that the participants use different writing strategies in terms of type and frequency. It was also revealed that each gender group used, more frequently, some writing skills than the other group; nevertheless, the difference in frequency was statistically insignificant.

Additionally, interaction of gender, use of writing strategy, and discourse type used showed a significant difference in the usage of the strategy of language switching. Similarly, a vast difference between males and females in the use of the strategies investigated was found, as well as difference in their overall writing behaviours. This study was a detailed one, employing both qualitative and quantitative approaches; however, the study did not specifically touch on how males and females achieve unity in paragraph writing. Thus, the current study is imperative to filling this lacuna in literature.

In summary, all the studies reviewed considered gender differences with regards to performance or achievement in one discipline or the other. Though some focused on academic writing (Koppel et al., 2002; Ishikawa, 2015), to the best of knowledge of the current researcher, no study has yet been conducted on gender and paragraph writing skills; all related studies were conducted outside the current

study locale and no study has thus far considered institutions of higher education, such as the colleges of education; and most of the prior studies employed only one research method. Thus, this study sought to fill all these gaps identified in literature, by specifically examining gender and paragraph writing skills among college of education students, employing the mixed research method to ensure triangulation of the study findings.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Having reviewed related literature, and taking cognisance of the study objectives, the framework in Figure 1 has been developed. Most of the studies reviewed pointed out a relationship between gender and academic writing. Also, paragraph development has been identified to be an integral part of academic writing as it forms the basis of most write-ups for academic purpose. Further, throughout the literature reviewed for the study, gender has been operationalised as being a male, as masculinity is mostly associated with males, or a female, as femininity is usually associated with the female sex. Literature also showed that writing is a process which involves a lot of skills and strategies acquired through a learning process. In this sense, it is, therefore, in the right direction to say the writing skills and strategies are acquired in an organised teaching environment, such as the classroom which is also resourced by literature.

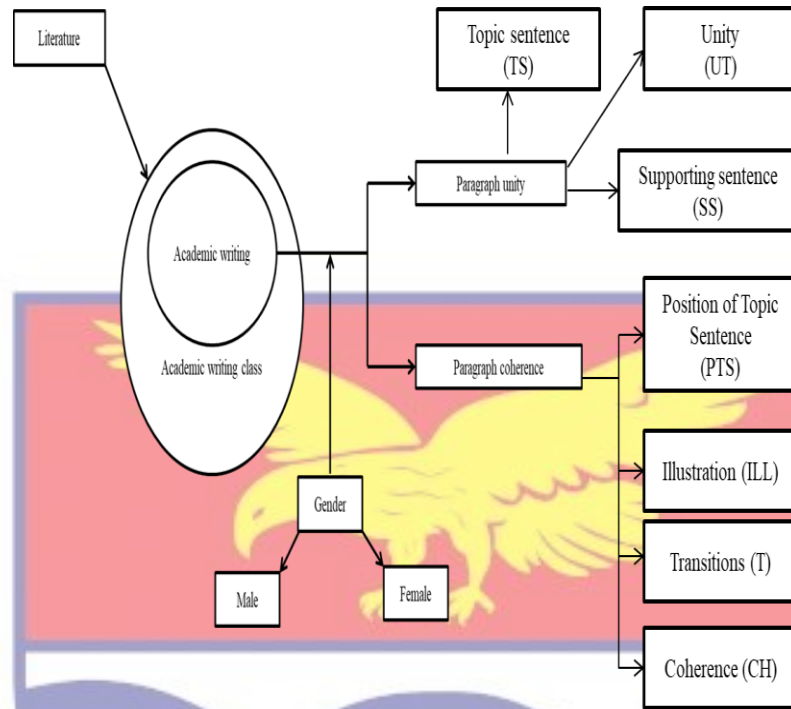


Figure 1: Conceptual framework  
Source: Author’s construct (2022)

In Figure 1, the relationship between gender and paragraph unity and paragraph coherence is displayed. The arrow connecting “literature” to “academic writing class” indicates the source of materials and knowledge used for the teaching of academic writing at the College. Per this study, “literature” includes all the teaching and learning materials used in the delivery of knowledge in the classroom. This may revolve around textbooks, articles on academic writing, as well as theories on writing in general. The academic writing class, on the other hand, represents the setting where the knowledge impartation takes place. Here, both men and women are given the same level of treatment and taught writing skills using the same teaching methods, and are encouraged to apply a similar learning method in order to understand the skills and strategies of academic writing.

Also, the academic writing class is to ensure that no participant in the class is disadvantaged, in terms of access to needed materials to enhance one's writing abilities. This is to ensure that, on the average, both men and women have the same abilities in terms of academic writing. Thus, the position of "academic writing" in the framework indicates where the strategies and skills of academic writing are acquired – academic writing class. Per this study, paragraph writing is placed as a subset of academic writing. More specifically, paragraph writing is focused on achievement of unity and coherence; hence, the bifurcated arrow extending from the "academic writing" oval to the "paragraph unity" and "paragraph coherence" rectangles.

Further, the arrow extending from "gender" meets the bifurcated arrow connecting "academic writing" and "paragraph unity – which is conceptualised as TS, SS and UT" and "paragraph coherence – operationalised as PTS, ILL, T and CH". This indicates the influence of gender on the achievement of paragraph unity and paragraph coherence. In essence, both men and women from the same academic writing class are expected to have the same level of academic writing skills and strategies and, hence, same levels of skills to enable them to achieve both paragraph unity and coherence in writing. However, the current study sought to assess whether the gender of a participant of the academic writing class influences how s/he achieve paragraph unity and paragraph coherence; hence, the arrow from "gender" intercepting the bifurcated arrow.

Additionally, as defined by Fidelia (2015) and Bijami et al. (2013), the current study also defines gender as being a male or a female. These are indicated



by the two arrows extending from “gender” to “male” and “female” in Figure 1. This is to say that achieving paragraph unity and paragraph coherence is expected to be influenced by being a male or a female, and that is the main focus of the current study – to find out how paragraph unity and paragraph coherence are achieved with respect to gender, and whether there is any significant difference in how paragraph unity and coherence is achieved with regards to gender.

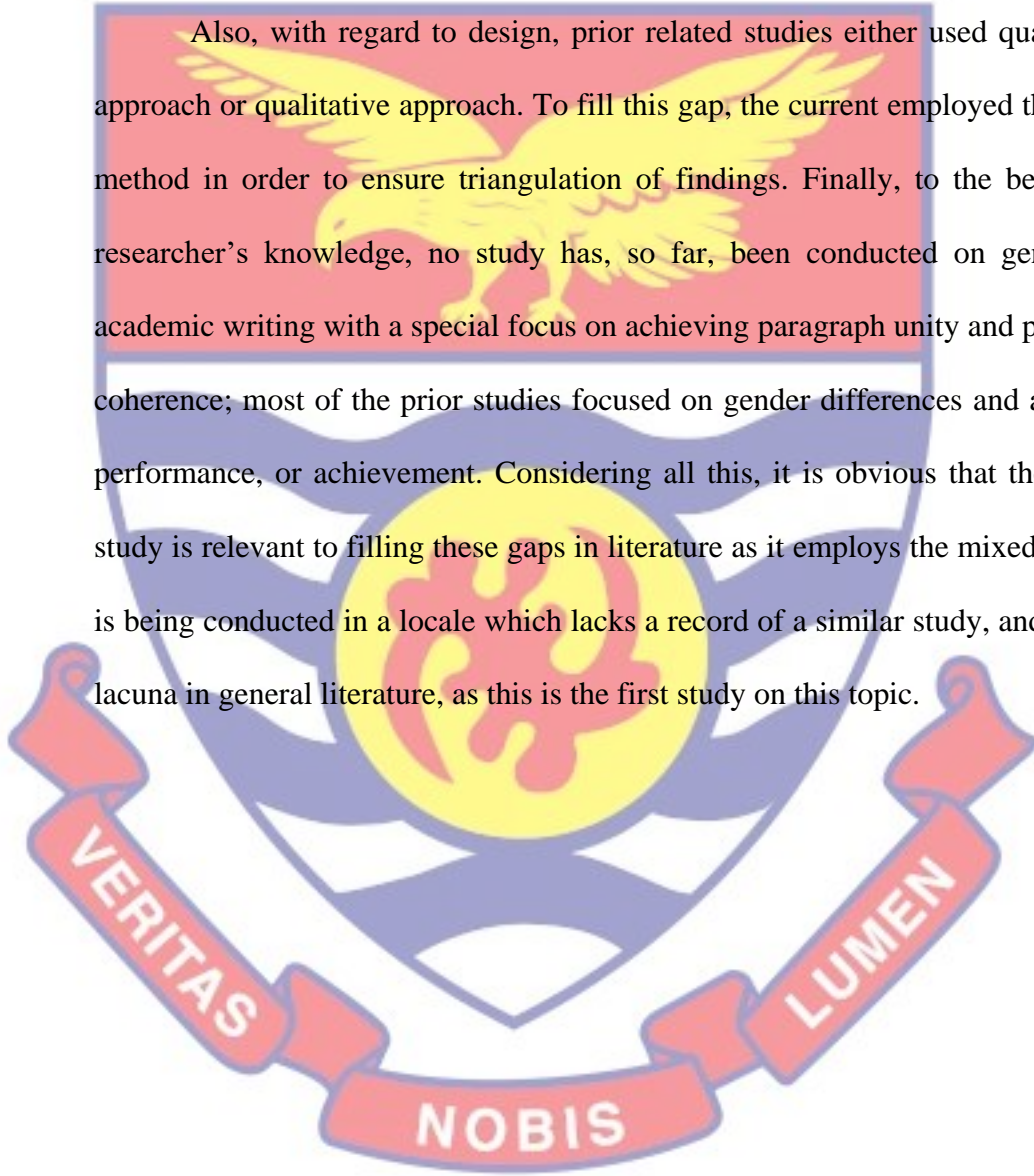
### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter discussed the underpinning theories of this study, concepts, empirical studies relating to the current study, and the conceptual framework. The theories employed are the Lakoff’s (1975), the difference theory by Tannen (1990) and the performativity theory by Baxter (2008). The related empirical studies reviewed showed that relationship exists between gender and academic writing. Aside that, gender has been shown throughout the literature reviewed to have influence on most academic activities of individuals. In some of the studies, females demonstrated superiority in academic writing activities. In others, males showed higher performances. Some also reported no significant difference between males and females with regards to performance, and writing skills and strategies. The researcher also constructed a conceptual framework which sought to define the entire and its direction.

Nevertheless, the empirical review revealed a number of gaps. The researcher identified three main gaps – gap related to location, gap related to design, and an overall non-existence of a study conducted on this topic in literature. With regards to location or geography, no study on this current topic has been carried out

in the current study locale; even those closely related to the current topic were carried outside the current study country, Ghana, and the participants involved in these related studies were mostly high school students, unlike the current study which considered participants from a tertiary institution.

Also, with regard to design, prior related studies either used quantitative approach or qualitative approach. To fill this gap, the current employed the mixed method in order to ensure triangulation of findings. Finally, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, no study has, so far, been conducted on gender and academic writing with a special focus on achieving paragraph unity and paragraph coherence; most of the prior studies focused on gender differences and academic performance, or achievement. Considering all this, it is obvious that the current study is relevant to filling these gaps in literature as it employs the mixed method, is being conducted in a locale which lacks a record of a similar study, and fills the lacuna in general literature, as this is the first study on this topic.



## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODS

#### Introduction

This chapter presents the following: research design, study area, population of the study, sample size and sampling procedure, data sources, data collection instruments, data collection procedure, instrument reliability, instrument validity, data processing and analysis, ethical considerations, challenges encountered, and chapter summary. The design section of the chapter discusses the philosophical stance underlying the study, the research approaches and methods. The study area focuses on the research setting, as the population and sample size consider both the unit of observation and unit of analysis.

#### Research Design

The study employed the post-positivist view which tends to combine elements of both positivism and constructivism. According to the post-positivists, all measurements are fallible so it is important to employ multiple measures and observations in order to compensate for the inherent errors of each method, to ensure triangulation (Smith et al., 2012). The post-positivists advocate the use of both the quantitative and the qualitative research approach (Trevino, Canin, Healy et al., 2020). The researcher employed this paradigm because the study sought to use multiple methods of data collection and analyses in order to produce more reliable findings.

Considering the foregoing philosophical view-point employed, the mixed research approach (quantitative and qualitative) was deemed appropriate for the

study. According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2007), qualitative approach involves the use of general observation, interviews and other forms of qualitative techniques of data collection, and the use of verbal description of data in place of numerical measures used by quantitative approach. Qualitative research, thus, emphasises description or interpretation in non-numerical terms. On the other hand, quantitative approach uses descriptive techniques to measure how people feel, think or react, and seeks to quantify data and apply some statistical analysis (Saunders et al., 2007). The mixed approach was employed because it would help ensure triangulation and corroboration of findings across multiple research techniques, and also to enable generalisation of findings.

Additionally, the researcher employed the descriptive design. Descriptive design helps to accurately and methodically describe a population, situation or phenomenon (Saunders et al., 2007). This design also helps to respond to “what”, “where”, “when” and “how” questions (Smith et al., 2012; Saunders et al.). The researcher employed this design because it has the ability to use a wide variety of research methods to investigate one or more variables. This implies that this design can be used across different studies irrespective of research methods employed; thus, as the current study employed the mixed approach, this design is deemed appropriate. Also, the design is appropriate as the present study sought to describe gender, male and female students, with respect to achieving paragraph unity and coherence in writing.

## Study Area

The study area is Komenda College of Education. Komenda College of Education, hereafter referred to as “the College”, is a co-curricular educational institution located in the Komenda Edina Eguafo Abrem Municipality in the Central Region of the Republic of Ghana. The College was established on the premises of buildings abandoned by British Navy after World War II. The barracks was set on the ‘Assai hills’, a suburb of the town. Through the efforts of Mr A. B Sam, the then regent of Komenda, the legacy was leased to the Methodist Church Ghana in 1947 to be used as a Methodist Teacher Training College.

Later, the Government of Ghana renovated the building to make the old barracks suitable for academic work. Forty men were enrolled on 11<sup>th</sup> March, 1948 to start an initial 2- Year Teachers’ Certificate “B” Course. With the admission of 30 women in 1952, the College became a co-educational institution. It was established as Komenda College of Education per Government Policy to upgrade teacher training colleges into Colleges of Education. The first Principal of the College was Mr. Lawrence Alfred Creedy, a British national. The motto of the College is “Bep)wso Kurow Hyer3n,” ( meaning a city on a hill shines forth). The founding fathers adopted three core values that guide the institution. These are academic excellence, service to God, and service to Mankind. The location of the College, with its closeness to the Atlantic Ocean, gives it a serene atmosphere for academic work.

The College has four halls (Formidable, Illustrious, Victorious and Indomitable, named after the war ships used by the British Navy during the Second

World War) of residence for both male and female students. Each hall accommodates about one hundred and fifty students. The College has both large and small lecture halls to facilitate academic work. The large lectures have 60-80 seating capacity while that of the small halls can contain 30 students. The halls are well furnished and ventilated to provide comfort to our students. Most of the lecture halls have projectors to incorporate ICT in our teaching. The college also has technical workshops which can seat 40 students at a lecture. There is also an administrative block that serves as offices for non-teaching staff of the college.

There are also six academic departments in the College. These are: Departments of Languages, Department of Mathematics and Information Communication Technology, Department of Science, Department of Education, Technical Department, and Department of Social Sciences. Also, the College provides technological and general training to produce competent professional teachers for basic schools in Ghana. To this end, the college offer the following programmes: 3 – year Diploma in Basic Education, 4 – year B. Ed Programmes, B. Ed (ICT / Mathematics), B. Ed (Science/Mathematics), B. Ed (Visual Arts), B. Ed (Agricultural Science), B. Ed (Home Economics), B. Ed (Technical), B. Ed (Primary Education) and B. Ed (Early Childhood Education).

The College was later upgraded to the tertiary status in 2012, following the passage of the Colleges of Education Act (Act 847). The College had its first accreditation in 2007. The first batch of diploma students were matriculated in 2007. The College had its congregation for the first time in 2008. The college has witnessed an improvement in terms of graduation and academic performance ever

since. Komenda College of Education is currently affiliated to University of Education, Winneba.

The Languages Department of the College is made up of two sections – English Language and Ghanaian Languages sections. The English language section offers tuition in English Language Studies and methods of teaching English to Level 100 and Level 200 students. The department also offers tuition in Literature to students who offer literature as an elective course. The department is also responsible for the internal assessment of all students in English Language. The students of the College are awarded Diploma in Basic Education upon completion of all prescribed courses.

Thereafter, most of the students are then posted to basic schools all over the country to teach. The students receive classroom tuition for two years and in the final year they are posted to the nearby communities to commence the out segment of the IN-IN-OUT programme. All the students offer English Language Studies and Methods of Teaching English in addition to their areas of specialisation. At the end of the OUT segment of the programme, the students write two papers – Trends in Education and Guidance and Counselling. A photo of the College's administration block is displayed in appendix.

### **Population**

The population for the study was the Second Year female and male students who read Elective English Language Studies during the 2017/2018 academic year. The total population was 60, consisting of 40 males and 20 females. The researcher considered only the English Language Studies students because they were deemed

to be relatively knowledgeable in academic writing due to their course contents. Also, the Second Year English Language Studies students have had enough training in academic writing, and were readily available for data to be collected from them, unlike the First Year and Third Year students who have not had enough training yet and were not readily available for the data collection process due to their off-campus activities, respectively.

### **Sample Size and Sampling Procedure**

A total of 60 students made up the sample size. This means the entire population for this study made up the sample size. It indicates that from the total of 60 Second Year English Language Studies students, all the 60 students were used. For the reason that all units within the population was included in the sample size, there was no need using sample size formula. Considering this, the study employed the census sampling technique to include all the units, 60 English Language Studies students. The researcher chose the census technique because this study sought to ensure accurate information which is devoid of bias and sampling errors, thus ensuring more reliable findings (Cooper & Schindler, 2014).

### **Data**

The study used solicited primary qualitative and quantitative data from the study respondents. Solicited data were used in order to avoid excess and unnecessary information, 'noise', from the respondents. Also, the researcher used solicited data to ensure that only data relevant and aligned to the processes and purpose of the present study were collected from the respondents. The qualitative data were the paragraphs written by the 60 Second Year English Language Studies



students sampled for the study. The total number of words making up each paragraph was between 200 words and 300 words. The maximum number of paragraphs each student was made to write was three paragraphs made up of 08 – 12 lines each. These words and paragraphs restrictions were based on prior related studies, as it is believed that too lengthy or wordy content may result in students writing off topic (Ishikawa, 2015; Koppel, 2002). Also, salient points are said to have been presented in the early paragraphs of a piece of a write-up (Ishikawa, 2015).

The quantitative data were collected from same respondents. The data were based on the students' knowledge about paragraph unity and paragraph coherence. Thus, they were to read a set of paragraphs and indicate whether they were unified and coherent or not. This approach was used because students who can write unified and coherent paragraphs or know how to achieve paragraph unity and coherence in writing should, under normal circumstance, be able to recognise unified and coherent paragraph. Their responses were then quantified using binary codes of “1” and “0” for right answers, and otherwise, respectively.

#### **Data Collection Instrument**

The tools used for the present study were what the researcher dubbed “Paragraph Writing Achievement Exercise (PWAE)” and the survey questionnaire. The PWAE was on argumentative essay on the topic “SRC Week Celebration Should Be Banned in Colleges of Education.” This instrument was to solicit paragraphs written on the foregoing topic by the English Language Studies students sampled for the study. The instrument was to collect between 200 and 300 words

contained in a maximum of three paragraphs. Each paragraph was made up of between 08 and 12 lines. This instrument followed a similar approach used by Ishikawa (2015).

For the survey questionnaire, the researcher developed an online version using Google form. This was done in order to avoid, as much as possible, physical contact with the student respondents due to the global pandemic, Covid-19. This instrument contained five (5) standard unified and coherent paragraphs adapted from the Collegial Centre for Educational Materials Department's (2010) Preparing for English Exit Exam. Two options were provided: "acceptable" and "unacceptable", in terms of whether a given paragraph is unified and coherent, and respondents were to choose the right answer using their knowledge in how paragraph unity and coherence is achieved. For the purpose of statistical analysis, right answers and wrong answers were scored "1" and "0", respectively. A perfect score would then be five (5) ( $1 \times 5$ ); otherwise, 0 ( $0 \times 5$ ). This means a respondent could score between zero (0) and five (5).

### **Validity and Reliability**

To ensure instrument validity, the instruments were subjected to face and content validation. For the PWAE, the topic used for the argumentative essay was a topic which has been used by the College's English Department before in an English Language test; thus, it was deemed appropriate for this study as it has met the College's standard. Also, prior studies, as mentioned earlier, followed similar approach in collecting text based data from college students. With the online survey instrument, the researcher took time to do a thorough reading to make sure that

nothing was missing, and also all grammatical errors were corrected. Further, since this instrument was adapted, it is obvious that it might have already undergone many validation processes making it suitable for this kind of study.

To ensure the reliability of the instruments, a pretest was carried out. The pretest used 30 respondents randomly selected from the First Year English Language Studies students. The instruments were administered to the respondents to complete. After they were completed by the respondents, they were collected and analysed. The researcher found that there was consistency in the respondents' responses and consistency in their understandings. This implies that the content of the instrument was generally understood by the respondents; therefore, responses and results produced could be deemed reliable.

#### **Data Collection Procedure**

The data collection instruments were made available to the 60 Second Year English Language Studies students of the Department of English. Firstly, the PWAE instrument was administered to the students in a well-organised classroom condition. The students were given a maximum of 40 minutes to complete a maximum of 300 words essay organised in three paragraphs. After the 40 minutes, all the students had completed their essays. The researcher then collected all the completed scripts from the students. It took the researcher about an hour to get all these data together.

The second instrument was administered online. The student respondents were given a Google form link which directed them to the online survey. Each respondent submitted the completed survey online. It should be stated that out of

the 60 respondents who made up the sample, 40 were males whilst 20 were females. The imbalance in the numbers was due to the fact that the population of focus respondents had only 20 female students at the time of the study. To control the impact of this difference on the reliability of results, as well as to ensure fair comparison between the two genders, the Levene's Test for equality of variances was conducted to ensure that, despite the fact that the numbers were different, there was no significant difference between the variance scores of the two genders (Derrick et al., 2018). According to Levene (1960), if two indicators for comparison have different number of units, they should be tested to ensure that their respective variances are not significantly different before further analyses are carried out to compare them.

The researcher, therefore, conducted the Levene's Test to ensure that both genders could be compared despite the fact that they had different number of units, and the results showed a statistically insignificant difference between the two groups – males and females, with respect to their numbers of 40 and 20, respectively. The results can be seen in Table 6 under the Levene's Test for equality of variances. It took the researcher approximately three weeks to get all the 60 respondents to fill the online instrument. After all the respondents had finished responding to the instrument, the researcher harvested the quantitative data produced thereof, by downloading the raw data into an Ms Excel spreadsheet. Anyways, the researcher ensured that the necessary research ethical principles were strictly complied with during the entire data collection process.

## Analysis Procedure

Both the qualitative and quantitative data collected were cleaned, well-managed and organised for analyses. The qualitative data were analysed using narratives after identifying the key elements that unified and coherent paragraphs are made up of. Thus, the content qualitative procedure was used to draw out the various items or variables of interest to the researcher from the paragraphs written by the students. Content qualitative procedure focuses on coding. Hence, coding was used in putting together distinct categories in the qualitative data, which formed the basic units of analysis. In extracting these categories or variables, the researcher carefully read through the paragraphs and selected all variables needed for the analysis.). The categories or variables, with the codes, looked for in the various paragraphs are: Topic sentence (TS), supporting sentence (SS), position of topic sentence (PTS), illustrations (ILL), transitions (T), Coherence (CH) and Unity (UT)

To achieve the first and the second research objectives, the foregoing categories or variables were analysed to find out the strategies used by students to develop paragraphs and achieve unity and coherence with respect to gender. The first research objective focused on achievement of paragraph unity with respect to gender so the researcher thoroughly analysed the paragraphs written by both the male and female students based on the categories stated above. For the second objective, the same procedure was followed to find out how coherence is achieved in paragraphs writing with respect to gender. Apart from using narratives for the qualitative analysis, the researcher employed the descriptive statistical tools, such as percentages and frequencies, to present the distribution of categories identified

in both the male and female students' writings. The distributions were presented using tables and chart.

To achieve the third research objective, the researcher employed descriptive statistical tools such as mean and standard deviation, and two- independent sample t-test to analyse the quantitative data collected. The mean and standard deviation were computed to measure variability in males and females based on the quantitative data collected from them. Further, the two-independent sample t-test was used to assess equality of variances for the variable (paragraph unity and coherence) calculated for the two groups – males and females. This was also to test the hypothesis formulated, and comply with the framework in *Figure 1*. In addition, to corroborate the findings across the diverse methods employed, the researcher presented a point of integration of both the qualitative and quantitative findings; this was to achieve triangulation.

### **Ethical Considerations**

For ethical purpose, a letter was obtained from the Department of English, University of Cape Coast. This letter was presented to the Head of English Department at the Komenda College of Education, for them to appreciate the purpose of the study. Consequently, the Head of the English Department at the Komenda College of Education issued a letter of approval, endorsing the data collection exercise to be carried out on the English language students. These letters are included in appendix.

Moreover, in order to ensure strict compliance with ethical standards of research, a clause was introduced in the introductory paragraph of the data

collection instruments employed which assured the student respondents of anonymity and confidentiality. Specifically, respondents were informed that in the event that anything was published from this research, no information supplied would be identifiable to them since only aggregated data would be reported in this study. In addition, the time required for completing the instruments was mutually agreed between the students and the researcher, and respondents had the liberty to opt out of the survey at will.

### **Limitations of the Study**

No major methodological challenges were encountered. However, minor challenges were encountered in the data collection and organisation activities. For example, in the course of photocopying the selected essays to be used for the analysis and discussion, some of the photocopies were not clear enough. As a result, there was the need for the researcher to re-photocopy them at an additional cost. Also, in extracting the variables needed in the data, the researcher find it difficult in determining whether some helped in achieving coherence and unity or not. However, with the help of some individuals, who served as inter-raters, this problem was resolved, and no major influence was expected on the study results.

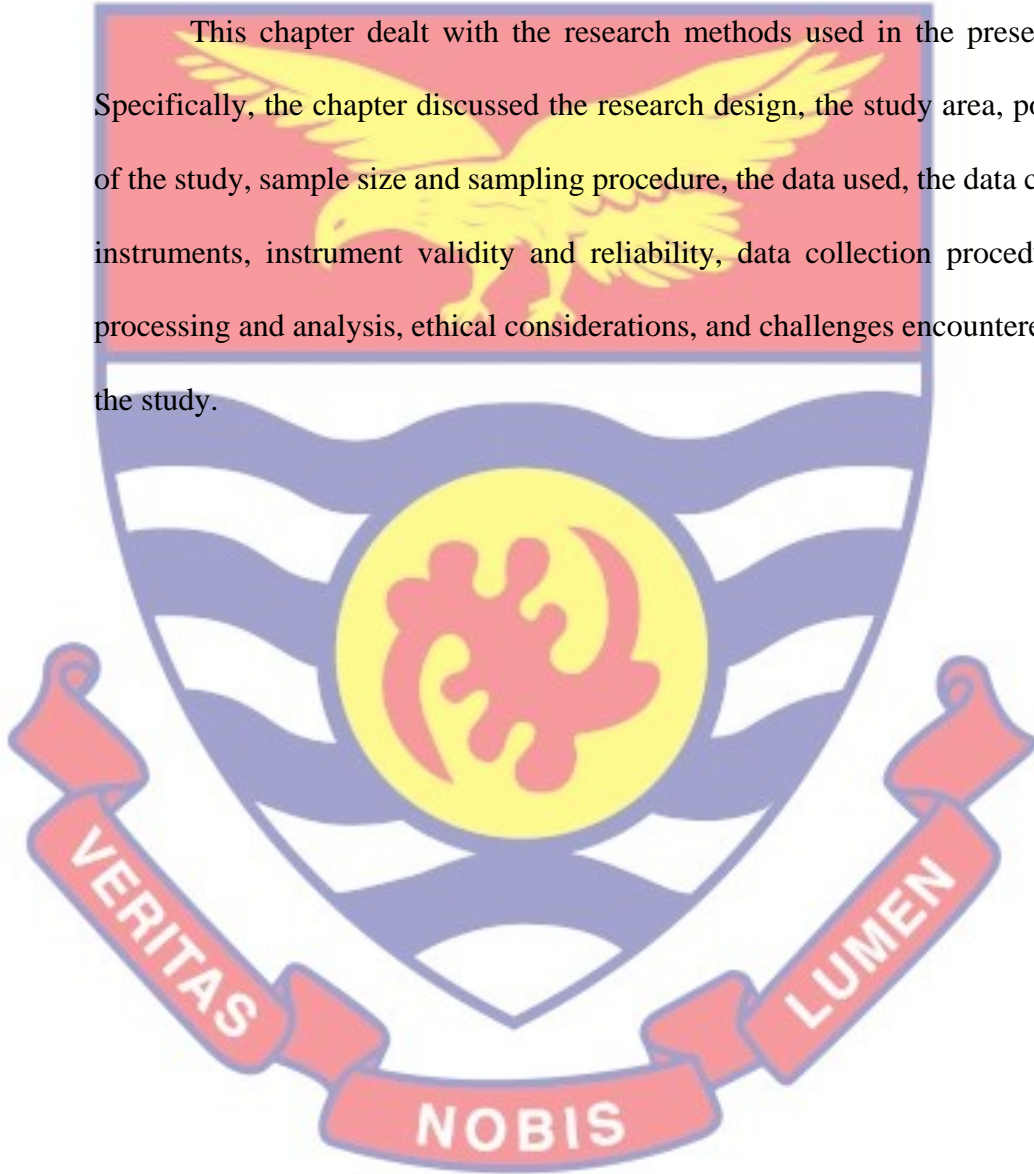
### **Problems Encountered**

The research was conducted without any major challenges. However, minor problems were encountered. For instance, considering the diverse methods of data collection processes employed due to Covid-19, the researcher incurred internet cost as the researcher had to buy data in order to get connected to the internet to access the quantitative data solicited. Also, in collecting the qualitative data, the

researcher had to do a lot of explanations to the students included in the study to get them to fully understand the underpinning concepts of the study so that errors are avoided.

### Chapter Summary

This chapter dealt with the research methods used in the present study. Specifically, the chapter discussed the research design, the study area, population of the study, sample size and sampling procedure, the data used, the data collection instruments, instrument validity and reliability, data collection procedure, data processing and analysis, ethical considerations, and challenges encountered during the study.





## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Introduction

This chapter presents results and discussion of the study. The results are presented and discussed for both the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the study. Demographic information of the respondents is presented in the first section. The second and third parts present results to achieve the first and the second objectives, respectively. The fourth part presents result and discussion in respect of the third research objective. The research hypothesis formulated is also tested and results presented in this chapter. Finally, the chapter summary is presented.

#### Demographic Information of Respondents

With respect to the main purpose of the study, the respondents' demographic information, especially their sex – referred to herein as “gender”, and their levels at the College were deemed necessary and relevant. Table 1, therefore, presents results on the analysis of the respondents' demographic information.

**Table 1: Demographic Information**

Variables		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Female	20	33.3
	Male	40	66.7
Level at College	Level 200	60	100

Source: Field survey (2020) N = 60

From Table 8, 20 (33.3%) of the respondents were females whilst 40 (66.7%) were males. This implies that more male students were involved in the study than their female counterparts. This is also to say that there were more male

students than female students at the Komenda College of Education, especially in the Second Year (Level 200). Considering the level of the respondents at the College, all the 60 students, representing (100%), involved in the study were in their Second Year. This result was not due to chance as the Second Year students were deemed appropriate for the study; therefore, were fully involved in the study.

### Paragraph Unity and Gender

This objective of the study sought to assess how paragraph unity is achieved in the writings of students at the Komenda College of Education with respect to gender. The analysis was based on whether Topic Sentences (TP) were introduced, positions of the Topic Sentences (PT), whether Supporting Sentences (SS) were introduced to support the main idea contained in the topic sentence, whether illustrations were used, whether only one idea was focused in one paragraph, and finally, how, with respect to gender, these elements were connected to produce a unified paragraph. These elements, per this study, define a unified paragraph. Further, the kind of *connectors* and *transition words or phrases* used to ensure achievement of paragraph unity (UT) with respect to gender has also been explored. The results are summarised in Tables 1 and 2.

**Table 2: Achieving Paragraph Unity with Respect to Gender**

Variables	Number of males	%Number of males	Number of females	%Number of females
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Topic Sentence (TP)		37	92.5	14	70.0
	Beginning	37	92.5	14	70.0
Position of Topic Sentence (PT)	End	0	0	0	0
	Elsewhere	0	0	0	0
Supporting Sentence (SS)		37	92.5	13	65.0
Illustrations (IL)		27	67.5	9	45.0
Unified Paragraph (UT)		35	87.5	12	60.0

Source: Field survey (2020)

N = 60

From the results presented in Table 1, it could be seen that the strategies used by males to achieve paragraph unity, to some extent, differ from those used by their female counterparts. This is not surprising as there is not only one way of achieving paragraph unity, especially when it comes to positioning of the topic sentence which usually contains the main idea of the paragraph, as well as how supporting sentences and illustrations are organised to support the topic sentence in order to obtain a unified paragraph (Latifa, 2018). It was revealed that (92.5%) of the male students, at the College, used for the study introduced topic sentences in writing their paragraphs. On the other hand, 70% of their female counterparts introduced topic sentences which are crucial to achieving paragraph unity. Nevertheless, this is not an issue of concern as the majority of both gender seemed to appreciate *topic sentences* in paragraphs.

Apart from the fact that both male and female students showed appreciation for the importance of *topic sentences* in achieving paragraph unity, the position of the topic sentence is also very important, as it contributes to the strategies one may adopt in achieving paragraph unity. A *topic sentence* can be placed anywhere within a paragraph, depending on the individual writing the paragraph. In Table 1, the common positions for a *topic sentence* have been indicated as “beginning”, “end” and “elsewhere”. The results revealed that 92.5% and 70% of male students and female students, respectively, placed *their topic sentences* at the beginning of their paragraphs. Neither a female student nor a male student placed a *topic sentence* at the end of a paragraph or elsewhere in the paragraph. This implies that, with regards to positioning of topic sentences in order to achieve paragraph unity, gender has no real influence.

From the foregoing, it could be inferred that when it comes to paragraph writing, both males and females are aware of the need for a topic sentence; hence, no difference in knowledge of this fact as far as gender is concerned. This was also revealed in the *position of topic sentence* as the same number of male students (37 male students representing 92.5%) who introduced *topic sentences* positioned them at the beginning as well; the strategy was not different from the one employed by their female counterparts as same number of female students (14 female students representing 70%) introducing *topic sentences* placed these sentences at the beginning of their paragraphs.

Further, (92.5%) of the male students supported their topic sentences with supporting sentences. In similar manner, (65%) of the female students supported

their topic sentences. However, the male students showed more consistency compared to their counterpart female students. This is evident in the fall in the percentage of female students who introduced topic sentences in their paragraphs from 70% to 65%. This is to say that both male and female students, by way of achieving paragraph unity, support their topic sentences with *supporting sentences*.

In other words, in writing a unified paragraph, female students after introducing *topic sentence*, support it with *supporting sentences* or sentences which add more elaboration to the topic sentence. Likewise, in writing a unified paragraph, the male students support their introductory idea captured in the topic sentence with other sentences which directly explain or add more enlightenment to the topic sentence.

In addition to introducing *topic sentence* and *supporting sentences*, (67.5%) of the male students further supported their main ideas with illustrations which were directly related to the core idea of the paragraph. However, as shown in Table 1, the number of male students who introduced *illustrations* to further buttress their topic sentences showed a fall from the (92.5%) to (67.5%) of male students who introduced topic and supporting sentences. This implies that, even within the same group of male students, the strategy used in achieving paragraph unity differs. The results were no different for their female counterparts as only (45%) of them used illustrations in their approach to achieving paragraph unity.

Ultimately, (87.5%) of the male students were able to achieve paragraph unity (UT) and (60%) of female students were able to achieve paragraph unity (UT). As to how they achieved overall paragraph unity, though the results showed that both the male and the female students are consistent with the use of paragraph

elements such as topic sentence, positioning of topic sentence, supporting sentence, and illustrations in their strategies, it was further evident that males and females used different writing style to link the various aspects of a paragraph in order to achieve unity. Table 3 below presents a summary of how the foregoing elements of a paragraph are linked to achieve paragraph unity with respect to gender.

**Table 3: Achieving Paragraph Unity**

		Gender	
		Male	Female
	<i>Transition</i>	<i>Connectors</i>	<i>Transition</i> <i>Connectors</i>
	Again	And	For example      Because
Linguistic resources	Also	But	Again
	Secondly, etc.	So	
	Furthermore	Because	
	However		
	Lastly		
	Even though		
	Although		
	As a result of		
	Therefore		
	For example		

Source: Field survey (2020)

As can be seen in Table 3, male and female students use different approaches in achieving paragraph unity. Male students use several transitional words and phrases, as well as some specific connectors, in achieving paragraph unity in their writings. For instance, words such as *again*, *also*, *furthermore*, *however*, and *therefore*, among others were some of the transitional words most frequently used by male students in achieving paragraph unity. Apart from these, the male students also used words such as *firstly*, *secondly*, . . . *lastly*, among others to express sequential relations between supporting ideas to achieve paragraph unity.

Also, *and*, *but*, *so* and *because* were connectors frequently used by males to achieve unity in their paragraph writing. To introduce illustrations, males frequently used the phrase *for example* in transitioning from one point to another within a paragraph.

On the other hand, to achieve paragraph unity, female students frequently used *because* as a connector to link sentences within paragraphs to ensure that all sub sentences support only one topical idea in order to achieve unity. To transition from one supporting idea to another, females commonly used the word *again*, and *for example* to introduce illustrations. An instance captured is “*For example, in Komenda College of Education, . . .*” (Female participant 3). Another showing transition between supporting sentences within a paragraph to ensure that only one idea is considered per paragraph is captured as: “*Again, there should be enforcement of . . .*” (Female participant 5).

Drawing on the foregoing, it can be seen that how paragraph unity is achieved in the writing of the students at the Komenda College of education is not different between male students and female students. Overall, in achieving paragraph unity in writing both genders introduce *topic sentences*, which were placed at the beginning of their paragraphs; *supporting sentences*, which they ensured that stayed on the main idea contained in the topic sentence; *illustrations*, which further added more explanation to the topic sentence. These were the strategies used by both males and females students at the College in achieving their paragraph unity by considering only one main idea per paragraph.

However, differences were seen in the kind of words used to hold aspects of a paragraph together, with respect to gender. Whilst male students used words such as *also*, *furthermore*, *however*, *although*, among others as specified in Table 3, to unify their paragraphs, their female counterpart were used words such as *because*, *again*, and *for example*, to link various aspects in achieving their unified paragraphs. From these results, especially, having females used more frequently the word *because*, it could mean that females like giving more details or explanations to ideas compared to their male counterparts. Thus, in achieving paragraph unity, they –females – sought to use this connector (*because*) to help them throw more light on the core ideas of their paragraphs.

Also, these results could imply that since both male and female students of the College are taught by the same English language course tutors, using the same methods and materials, they are likely to use similar approach in achieving unity in their paragraph writing. Despite the fact that both male and female students of the College followed virtually the same approach to write unified paragraphs, few differences were spotted, which could be linked to gender. These findings are not far different from the findings of Fidelia (2015) which found that how males attain success in academic essay writing is not different from how females attain success in their academic writing. Fidelia also found that, though academic writing strategies, with respect to gender are not different, few discrepancies were identified as females were found to use more of certain words to enrich their writings compared to their male counterparts.



Also, the current finding corroborates the findings of Bijami et al. (2013). Their study actually reviewed prior studies on gender difference with regards to academic writing. It was shown that in some of the studies, females used different approaches in their academic writing, placing them ahead of their counterparts, males; others also reported males outperforming their counterpart females in writing; interestingly, some of the studies reviewed by Bijami et al. showed no difference in how writings are done with respect to gender. The current finding, in various ways, is in line with the findings of Bijami et al. as both genders were found to follow similar ways to achieve paragraph unity on one dimension, and used different connecting words and phrases on another dimension to achieve paragraph unity with respect to gender.

An aspect of the finding is also consistent with the results of Waskita (2008). To find out how academic writing is done with regards to gender, Waskita found that males and females used different texts to organise their writings. Females were found to use more complex text structures and words in their writings compared to their male counterparts. It can then be said that, the current finding that females used certain words more frequently to organise their sentences in order to achieve paragraph unity compared to males, is not by chance. Though the College attended could be a contributory factor to the kind of texts used by males and females, it is possible that there are just some inherent qualities that differentiate the approaches used by males and females in writing.

Further, the finding is consistent with the finding of Latifa (2018) which revealed that males and females use different writing strategies in terms of

frequency of use of certain words, and this is reflected in the current study as females have been found to use certain words more frequently than their counterpart male students. This assertion is also in line with the findings of Koppel et al. (2002). Koppel et al. found that in writing successful academic essays, or any piece requiring writing strategy, males mostly use specifiers whilst females mostly use negation, pronouns and particular prepositions. It was further affirmed that men used more *that* and *one*, and women used *for*, *with*, *not*, and, *in* more frequently in non-fiction texts (Koppel et al., 2002). Their findings simply show that, just as found in the current study, males and females use different word sets in achieving the same purpose.

These prior findings, though did not specifically focus on paragraph unity achievement, the clear and generic picture of how academic writing is done with respect to gender has been presented by most of the study which considered gender and writing. To proceed, Argamon et al. (2003) also found that females use more pronouns such as *I*, *you*, *she*, *her*, *their*, *myself*, *yourself*, *herself*, and men used more noun specifiers, including determiners, such as *a*, *the*, *that*, *these*, and quantifiers, such as *one*, *two*, *more*, and *some*. All these confirm the fact that how females achieve paragraph unity, to some extent, cannot be the same as how males achieve paragraph unity, and this manifested in the kind of connectors and transitional words and phrases males and females used in achieving their paragraph unity in this study.

Another study whose findings the current findings are consistent with is that of Newman et al. (2008). They also found in their study that how males and females

achieve success in a particular academic writing varies. Their findings revealed that women used more pronouns, such as *I, my, me, she, their, them*; social words, such as *sister, friends*; psychological processes, such as *mad, uneasy, remember, nervous*; verbs, negations, and references to the home. Men, on the other hand, seemed to use more numbers, articles, and prepositions, such as *on, to, and from*. Thus, apart from standard procedures both genders follow in achieving success in their writing, male students at the Komenda College of Education tend to use different strategies in terms of word choice, just as exhibited in the paragraphs analysed for this study.

In summary, it has been found that how paragraph unity is achieved in academic writing of students at the Komenda College of Education, with respect to gender, has a point of convergence and a point of divergence. This is to say that both genders, to achieve paragraph unity, introduce a *topic sentence* positioned at the *beginning of the paragraph*, followed by *supporting sentences*, then *illustrations*, and make sure all sub sentences and illustrations are in support of only one core idea contained in the topic sentence of a paragraph, culminating in the achievement of paragraph unity. At the point of divergence, to achieve paragraph unity, male students use words such as *firstly, secondly, etc.; therefore, however, and though* to organise and link all other aspects of a paragraph to the main idea whilst female students use, more frequently, connectors such as *because*, and transitional words such as *for example* and *again* to achieve same purpose of writing a unified paragraph.

### Paragraph Coherence and Gender

This objective of the study sought to assess how paragraph coherence is achieved in the writings of students at the Komenda College of Education with respect to gender. To achieve this objective, paragraphs written by the Second Year (Level 200) College students were analysed, taking into consideration gender. The analysis was based on whether coherence (TT-CH) was achieved within paragraph, between paragraphs, or both, and how these coherences were achieved, with respect to gender. Further, the kind of *words or phrases* used to ensure achievement of paragraph coherence (CH) with respect to gender has also been explored. The results were summarised in Tables 4.

**Table 4: Achieving Paragraph Coherence with Respect to Gender**

Variables	Male		Female		
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	
TT-CH	Within paragraph	1	2.5		
	Between paragraphs	11	27.5	7	35.0
	Both within and between	24	60	7	35.0
CH		36	90.0	14	70.0

Source: Field survey (2020)

N = 60

From Table 4, it could be seen that though 90% of the male students achieved coherence in their paragraph writing, only 2.5%, 27.5% and 60% achieved coherence within paragraphs, between paragraphs and both within and between paragraphs, respectively. This implies that, in terms of achieving coherence in a single paragraph, only one male student was found. With regards to students who

were able to only achieve coherence between two or more paragraphs, 11 male students fell within this category. Finally, 24 male students were found to have achieved coherence both within paragraphs and between paragraphs. Altogether, 36 out of the 40 male students involved in this study were able to achieve coherence in various ways as indicated in Table 4.

With respect to the female students, 70% was able to achieve paragraph coherence at various levels, as indicated in Table 4. According to the results, 35% of the female students only achieved coherence between paragraphs, and 35% was able to achieve coherence both within and between paragraphs. Within paragraphs, various words were used, lexically, by the female students to achieve paragraph coherence. The analysis found that most female students used *repetition* to ensure coherence of texts within their paragraphs. An instance is as follows: “. . . *I am for the view that . . . to my point of view . . .*” (Female participant 20). From this quotation, it can be seen that the word *view* has been repeated. This is to ensure that the writer is connected to the content, and also to ensure that the reader’s attention is not taken away since same word has been repeated.

Apart from the foregoing quotation which confirmed that females use repetitions to achieve coherence within paragraphs, the following have also been captured to buttress this assertion. “. . . *management of this celebration . . . funds for the celebration*” (Female participant 17). Apart from repetition of words within paragraphs to achieve coherence, female students were also found to have used *synonyms* to achieve lexical coherence within paragraphs. Some of these were captured as follows: “. . . *that there are some breaks . . . during these holidays . . .*”

(Female participant 07), and “. . .as well as quizzes . . . and after these tests. . .” (Female participant 03). This finding could mean that females like repeating themselves. This was clear from the fact that, as quoted, most of them either repeated words or used synonyms of the words they had used in previous statements within same paragraphs. This may imply that females like to make emphasis in order to ensure that they are well understood.

On the other hand, male students of the College mostly used *repetitions* and *conjunctions* to achieve coherence within their paragraphs. With regards to the use of repetitions, the analysis showed that words such as ‘*counselling*’, ‘*money*’, ‘*entire student body*’, among others were used by male students of the Komenda College of Education in achieving coherence within their paragraphs. These were captured as follows:

“...*the importance of counselling in most schools . . . but in fact counselling is very important and . . .*” (Male participant 05). “. . . *students pay an amount of money . . .to spend this money . . .*” (Male participant 11). “. . . *council stands for entire student body . . . to hold positions in the name of the entire student body.*” (Male participant 16).

With respect to the use of *coordinating conjunctions*, the male students mostly used words such as ‘*and*’ and ‘*but*’. These conjunctions were used by the male students with paragraphs to link other words, phrases, and clauses together in order to achieve cohesion of texts within their paragraphs. For instance, to link words together within a paragraph, the following were captured from the analysis: “. . . *it would be important to establish and maintain a good counselling system . .*

.” (Male participant 21). It could be seen from this that the two words – *establish* and *maintain* – shared the same structure. This helped the entire statement to read correctly, as the texts have been linked together to ensure coherence. Other examples were as follows: “. . . *who agree to meet privately and regularly for a period . . .*” (Male participant 04). “. . . *students who knew nothing but little about . . .*” (Male participant 09). “. . . *in most schools has been taken for granted but in fact counselling is very important and . . .*” (Male participant 37).

Apart from the use of repetitions, synonyms, and conjunctions by male and female students to link words, phrases, clauses, sentences, and ideas in order to achieve coherence within paragraphs, both male and female students were found to have used transitional expressions to link paragraphs. This is to say that between paragraphs, transitional expressions were used to achieve coherence. Transitional words and phrases used by the study participants to achieve coherence between paragraphs, with respect to gender, were *again, first ( . . . second, third, fourth, etc.), also, furthermore, however*, among others. These were used by both male and female students to achieve paragraph coherence. Excerpts from their writings were as follows:

“First, SRC week celebration . . .” (Female participant 01; Male participant 31). “Again, the SRC week . . .” (Female participant 11; Male participant 01). “Also, educational programmes . . .” (Male participant 40). “Secondly, I know my opponent . . .” (Female participant 06; Male participant 17). “Furthermore, the use of instructional time . . .” (Female participant 08; Male participant 31). “Lastly, we should . . .” (Female participant 16; Male participant 09). “Finally, organising

*fan clubs for students . . .” (Male participant 16; Female participant 13). From these, it could be seen that both male and female students of the College use similar strategies in achieving coherence in their paragraph writing.*

In all, from the analysis, it has become obvious that when it comes to achieving paragraph coherence in the writing of the College students, with respect to gender, both male and female students use repetition and transitional words and phrases. This implies that both male and female students, to some extent, employ similar strategies in achieving paragraph coherence. This finding is in line with the findings of Unity and Igbudu (2015). Unity and Igbudu revealed that males and females usually use similar strategies in their writings. This is to say that males’ way of achieving coherence in paragraph is not entirely different from their counterpart females’ way of achieving coherence in paragraph writing. Also, this finding is consistent with Dania (2014) which found both males and females to have used same strategies in achieving success in their writings. Considering this, it is, thus, not surprising male and female students employ repetition and transitional words to achieve coherence in paragraph.

Also, these results imply that since both male and female students of the Komenda College of Education were taught by the same English language course tutor, using the similar methods and learning and teaching resources, they are likely to use similar approaches, if not same, in achieving coherence in their paragraph writing. Thus, it is not surprising that both male and female students of the College followed practically the same approach to write coherent paragraphs, though few discrepancies were spotted. These discrepancies had to do with females using more



*synonyms* in achieving coherence in their paragraphs as males were found to use *conjunctions* most often to achieve paragraph unity in their writings, as revealed in the analysis above.

These findings are not far different from the findings of Mutar and Nimehchisalem (2017) which found that how males attain success in academic essay writing is not different from how females attain success in their academic writing. Mutar and Nimehchisalem also posited that, though academic writing strategies, with respect to gender, are not different, few differences were identified as females were found to use more of certain words to enrich their writings compared to their male counterparts. This implies that it is possible that females and males can achieve a particular end using different strategies and styles. Thus, in this study, as females used *synonyms* to achieve coherence, their counterpart males used *conjunctions* to achieve paragraph coherence in their academic writings

Further, the current finding upholds the findings of Bijami et al. (2013). Their study actually reviewed prior studies on gender difference with regards to academic writing. It was shown that in some of the studies, females used different approaches in their academic writing, placing them ahead of their counterparts, males; others also reported males outperforming their counterpart females in writing; interestingly, some of the studies reviewed by Bijami et al. revealed no differences in how writings are done, with respect to gender. The current finding, in various ways, is in line with the findings of Bijami et al. as both males and females of the College were found to follow similar ways to achieve paragraph coherence on one dimension, and used different approaches – *synonyms* by females

and *conjunctions* by males – on another dimension to achieve paragraph coherence, with respect to gender.

An aspect of the finding is also consistent with the results of Mwiigi (2013). To find out how academic writing is done with regards to gender, Mwiigi stated that males and females used different texts to organise their writings. Females were found to use more complex text structures and words in their writings compared to their counterparts, males. It can then be said that, the current findings that females used certain words (synonyms) more frequently to link together ideas in their paragraphs and paragraphs in order to achieve paragraph coherence compared to males (conjunctions), is not by chance. Though other factors could contribute to the kind of words used by males and females, it is possible that there are just some innate characteristics that set apart the approaches used by males and females in writing.

Further, the finding is consistent with the finding of Fidelia (2015) and Latifa (2018) which revealed that males and females use different writing strategies in terms of frequency of use of certain words, and this is evident in the current study as females have been found to use certain words more frequently than their counterpart male students. This assertion is also in line with the findings of Koppel et al. (2002). Koppel et al. found that in writing successful academic essays, or any piece requiring writing strategy, males mostly use specifiers whilst females mostly use negation, pronouns and certain prepositions. This then indicates that having found females to use *synonyms* in achieving paragraph coherence and males using

conjunctions is not a novelty as literature has already averred this difference between males and females.

These previous findings; however, did not specifically focus on achievement of paragraph coherence, the general strategy of how academic writing is done with respect to gender has been made clear by most of the prior studies which considered gender and academic writing. Additionally, Argamon et al. (2003) also found that females use more pronouns such as *I, you, she, her, their, myself, yourself, herself*, and men used more noun specifiers, including determiners, such as *a, the, that, these*, and quantifiers, such as *one, two, more, some*. All these confirm the fact that how females achieve paragraph coherence, to some extent, cannot be the same as how males achieve paragraph coherence, and this manifested in the group of words used by males and females in achieving their paragraph coherence in this study.

To proceed, the current findings are also consistent with Newman et al. (2008). Their study revealed that how males and females achieve success in a particular academic writing varies. Their findings revealed that females used more pronouns, such as *I, my, me, she, their, them*; social words, such as *sister, friends*; psychological processes, such as *mad, uneasy, remember, nervous*; verbs, negations, and references to the home. Men, on the other hand, seemed to use more numbers, articles, and prepositions, such as *on, to, from*. Thus, apart from standard procedures both genders follow in achieving success in their writing, male students at the Komenda College of Education tend to use different strategies in terms of word choice, just as revealed in the paragraphs analysed for this study.

In summary, it has been found that how paragraph coherence is achieved in academic writing of students at the Komenda College of Education, with regards to gender, has a point of convergence and a point of divergence, just as how they achieve unity in their paragraphs. This is to say that both males and females, to achieve paragraph coherence, use *repetitions* – repeating same word within a paragraph in order to ensure a link between these words and central idea of the paragraph – and *transitional words and phrases* – such as *again, also, furthermore, firstly, secondly, etc.* At the point of divergence, to achieve paragraph coherence, whilst male students used *coordinating conjunctions* – *and, for, but, etc.* female students used *synonyms* – words which are similar or synonymous to the main word or words used earlier in the paragraph to establish a link between these words – to ensure coherence in their paragraphs.

### **Differences and Similarities Concerning Achieving Paragraph Unity and Coherence in Writing and Gender**

This study objective sought to assess the difference between male and female students, with respect to achieving paragraph unity and coherence. To achieve this objective, the researcher carried out a two independent samples t-test. However, before discussion of the main output of the analysis, it is imperative to discuss the overall distribution of the data in order to provide background to the main analysis. Consistent with this, the researcher, therefore, presented the individual descriptive statistics – mean, standard deviation (SD), maximum (Max.), minimum (Min.) and range – the boxplots, the group statistics, and the independent

samples test (the hypothesis test). These are as presented in Table 4, Figure 3, Table 5 and Table 6, respectively.

**Table 5: Descriptive Statistics on Paragraph Unity and Coherence in Writing and Gender**

Variable	Mean	SD	Max.	Min.	Range	
How paragraph unity and coherence is achieved	Both	1.97	1.008	4	0	4
	Female	1.95	1.050	4	0	4
	Male	1.98	1.000	4	0	4

Source: Field survey (2020)

N = 60

Table 4 provided the mean and standard deviation, maximum, minimum and range for both male and female students together, only the female students and only the male students. From this result, both male and female students together had a mean score and standard deviation of ( $\bar{X}_{mf} = 1.97, \sigma_{mf} = 1.008$ ), maximum of ( $Max._{mf} = 4$ ), minimum of ( $Min._{mf} = 0$ ) and a range score of ( $Range_{mf} = 4$ ), with respect to how paragraph unity and coherence is achieved among both gender.

Also, the mean score and standard deviation, maximum score, minimum score and the range score were ( $\bar{X}_f = 1.95, \sigma_f = 1.050$ ), ( $Max._f = 4$ ), ( $Min._f = 0$ ) and ( $Range_f = 4$ ), respectively. For the male students, the mean and standard deviation were ( $\bar{X}_m = 1.98, \sigma_m = 1.000$ ); the maximum and minimum scores were ( $Max._m = 4$ ) and ( $Min._m = 0$ ), respectively, and a range score of ( $Range_m = 4$ ). With respect to objective three, these results showed that there is a fair difference between male

and female students, in terms of how paragraph unity and coherence is achieved. To further assess the differences, Figure 3 was presented.

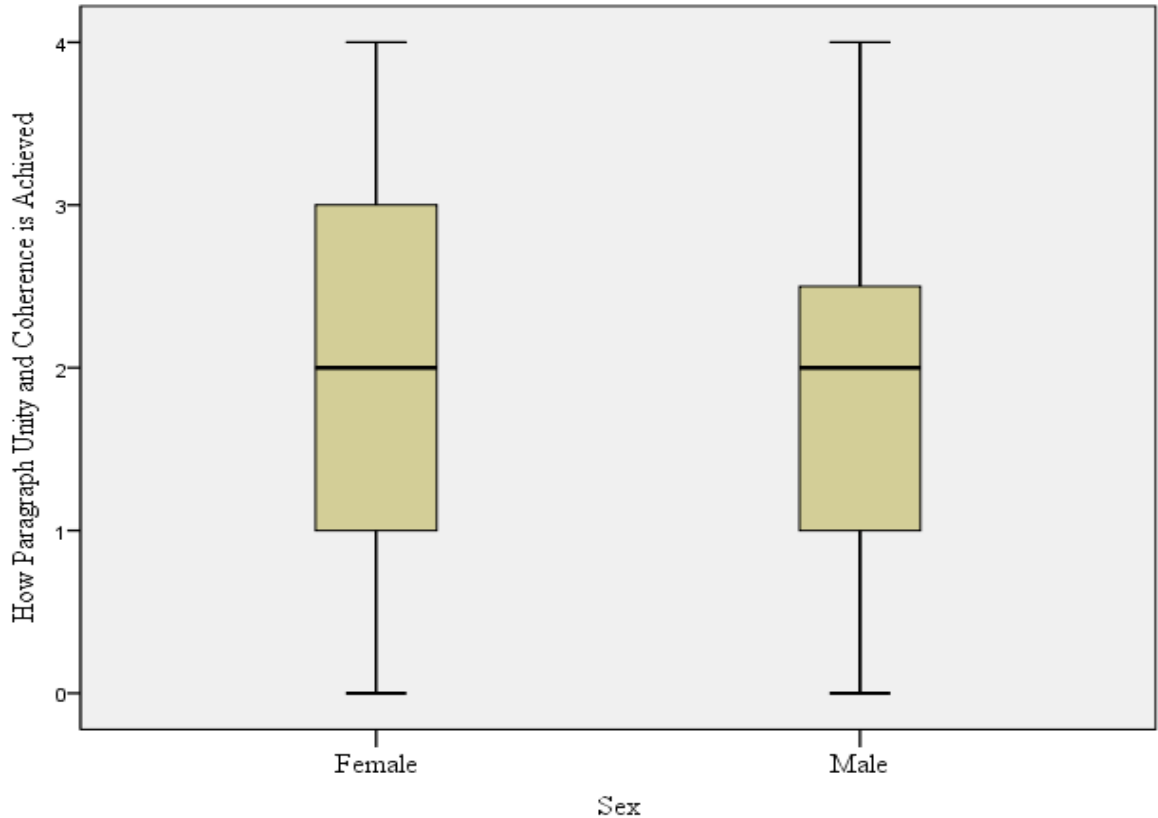


Figure 2: Boxplots

Source: Field survey (2020)

From Figure 3, by simple observation, it could easily be seen from this boxplots that the spread of observations for female students was much greater than the spread of observations for their male counterparts. Already, coupled with the results in Table 5, it could be estimated that the variances for these two groups were quite different; implying that male and female students are different, to some extent, taking into account the third research objective. However, no conclusion can be drawn until the test analysis is performed. Nevertheless, before test analysis is

performed, a summary of the group (male and female) statistics should be presented (Risman, 2021). Table 6, therefore, presented the group statistics.

**Table 6: Group Statistics**

	Sex	Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean
How paragraph unity and coherence is achieved	Female	1.95	1.050	.235
	Male	1.98	1.000	.158
Source: Field survey (2020)		$n_f = 20$	$n_m = 40$	

The group statistics, as shown in Table 6, basically forms part of the main analysis leading to the succeeding test analysis. This summarises, statistically, the overall descriptive results. The results presented in the Table 6 were the basic information about the group comparisons; these included the sample size ( $n$ ), mean ( $\bar{X}$ ), standard deviation ( $\sigma$ ), and the standard error for how paragraph unity and coherence is achieved by group. Beneath the table are number of female students ( $n_f = 20$ ) and number of male students ( $n_m = 40$ ) who made the total sample ( $N = 60$ ) for this study. The mean score for female students was ( $\bar{X}_f = 1.95$ ,  $\sigma_f = 1.050$ ) and that for male students was ( $\bar{X}_m = 1.98$ ,  $\sigma_m = 1.000$ ). From these results, it could be inferred that there was a fair difference between male and female students, with respect to how paragraph unity and coherence is achieved in academic writing. However, the significance of this difference could only be affirmed by the results for the hypothesis test presented in Table 7 below.

**Table 7: Independent Samples Test**

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	t-test for Equality of Means
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		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Dif.	Std. E. Dif.	95% CI of the Dif.		
										Lower	Upper
How paragraph unity and coherence is achieved	Equal variances assumed	.888	.350	-.090	58	.929	-.025	.278	-.582	.532	
	Equal variances not assumed			-.088	36.47	.930	-.025	.283	-.599	.549	

Source: Field survey (2020)

N = 60

Table 7 displayed the results most relevant to the Independent Samples *t* Test. From the Table, two main parts with different pieces of information could be seen. The first part is the Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances, and the second part, *t*-test for Equality of Means. The Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances contains the test results for the Levene’s Test. From the results, the Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances showed a significant value of  $P > 0.05$ ; this implies that the variability in male and female students at the Komenda College of Education with respect to how paragraph unity and coherence is achieved in academic writing is not significantly different. Hence, failure to reject the hypothesis that, ‘*There is no statistically significant difference between male and female students, with respect to how paragraph unity and coherence is achieved in academic writing.*’

Also, looking at the 2-tailed significant value in the first row, the result produced was  $P > 0.05$ . This result further confirmed that there was no statistically significant difference between the means of male and female students, with respect to how paragraph unity and coherence is achieved in academic writing. From these results, it could be stated that the differences between the mean scores of male and female students were likely due to chance and not likely due to the independent samples manipulation. This was also confirmed by the results in Table 6 supported



by results in Table 7 – which, though, showed a slightly lower score in the female group ( $1.95 \pm 1.050$ ) compared to the male group ( $1.98 \pm 1.000$ ), a mean difference of  $-0.025$  (95% CI,  $-0.582$  to  $0.532$ ),  $t(58) = -0.090$ ,  $P = .929$ . It could also be seen that the 95% confidence interval included a zero (0); still implying insignificant difference between male and female.

Drawing from all the results presented thus far, it could be seen that with regards to how to achieve paragraph unity and coherence, male students of the College seemed to have fairly higher knowledge in how to achieve unity and coherence in paragraph writing than their female counterparts. However, this difference was only due to chance as the results also revealed that this difference was insignificant. This is to say that both male and female students of the College are not different when it comes to writing paragraphs and strategies used in achieving unity and coherence in paragraph writing. In other words, gender has no significant influence on how paragraph unity and coherence is achieved in academic writing.

This finding is not surprising as both male and female students involved in the study were taught by the same English tutor, or taught using same teaching materials at the College. This is likely to influence their understanding of paragraph writing, and how to achieve unity and coherence. Also, since there are standard techniques to employ, in most cases, when writing pieces for academic purpose, it could be that these students, males and females, have studied these techniques and, thus, follow them in writing their paragraphs, in order to achieve unity and coherence.

Interestingly, this finding showed consistency with findings of prior studies. For instance, Fidelia's (2015) study revealed that males perform better in academic related activities than their females counterparts; nevertheless, the difference between male and female was found to be insignificant, implying gender is not an impediment to success attainment in education. Juxtaposing Fidelia's findings to the current finding, it could easily be inferred that slight differences are expected when comparing these groups – male and female – only that these differences are mostly not significant, just as found in Bijami et al. (2013). This is to say that Bijami et al. also found insignificant difference between male and female students, with regards to strategies employed in academic writings.

Also, this finding has been found to be in line with the findings of Latifa (2018). Latifa found the study participants, made up of both male and female students, to have used different writing strategies in terms of type and frequency. It was also revealed that each gender group used, more frequently, some writing skills than the other group; nevertheless, the difference in frequency was statistically insignificant. All this goes to explain that gender actually has no remarkable influence on how to achieve paragraph unity and coherence in academic writing among students of the Komenda College of Education.

Further, this finding corroborates the findings of Arhin and Offoe (2015) which focused on difference between male and female students, with respect to performance. Their study showed no significant difference in performance, with respect to gender. In similarly manner, Adigun et al. (2015) showed that, on the average, males perform better than their female counterparts; however, this

difference in performance, with regards to gender, is not statistically significant. Additionally, this current finding shows consistency with the findings of Dania (2014) which revealed that there is no significant difference between males and females, with regards to academic achievements.

Furthermore, this finding is related to the finding of Pajares et al. (1999) which found girls to be superior writers, but there were no significant differences found in gender writing, after controlling for writing aptitude. On the other hand, the girls averred that they were better writers than boys or other girls, to a higher degree than claimed by boys. Their finding shows the typical position of students, where each group – male or female – seems to feel they are better than the other, in terms of activities related to academics; however, findings like the current one has brought to bear the statistical significance of this professed difference. Though the current finding only showed that the difference between male and female, with regards to how to achieve paragraph unity and coherence, was not statistically significant, many other prior studies showed a similar result (Unity, & Igbudu, 2015; Mau, & Lynn, 2001).

To add, this finding shows consistency with the performativity theory (Baxter, 2008) which posits that both male and female can perform equally, given equal opportunity, without any remarkable influence of gender. On the other hand, there were few studies whose findings the current finding is not consistent with. For instance, Waskita (2008) found a statistically significant difference between men's and women's texts in the writings analysed. This contrasting finding is not surprising as it is likely environmental factors could influence performance. Also,

Mwiigi (2013) found a significant difference between males and females, with respect to performance as far as writing strategies are concerned. Further, Mutar and Nimehchisalem (2017) found a statistically significant difference between females and males in their use of writing strategies; females were found to have used more writing strategies than their male counterparts. These differences could be due to chance or other factors beyond the scope of the prior studies.

Besides, Lakoff's (1975) theory distinguished women's language from men's language, just as Tannen (1990) presented male and female as separate cultures, linguistically. These may, to some extent, explain the contrasting findings of some of the prior studies. However, as stated earlier, the fact that the difference between male and female with respect to how to write unified and coherent paragraphs is not significant does not mean the average scores of male and female students, at every point in time, are equal. Just as reported in this study, males have slightly different approach to achieving paragraph unity and coherence from their female counterparts; only that, this difference is not significant, statistically.

In summary, there have been diverse findings as far as significance of the difference between male and female, with respect to academic writing, is concerned. As some of the prior studies found significant difference, others found insignificant difference between males and females, with regards to academic writing and related activities. The current study showed that, statistically, there is no significant difference between male and female students at the Komenda College of Education, with respect to how to achieve paragraph unity and coherence in academic writing; hence, the researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis. In other

words, the alternate hypothesis has been rejected. Table 8 presents the summary of the hypothesis tested, results, decision, and conclusion.

### Summary of Hypothesis Tested, Results and Conclusions

This section presents a summary of the hypothesis tested and the decision made and conclusion drawn by the researcher based on the results. This summary is shown in Table 8 below.

**Table 8: Summary of Hypothesis Test**

Hypothesis statement	Results	Decision	Conclusions
<p><i>H<sub>0</sub>: There is no statistically significant difference between male and female students at the Komenda College of Education with regards to achieving paragraph unity and coherence in writing.</i></p>	<p><i>Independent samples test</i></p> <p><i>F-stats = .888</i>  <i>t(58) = -0.090</i>  <i>p &gt; 0.05</i></p>	<p>Failed to reject H<sub>0</sub></p>	<p>Statistically insignificant difference between male and female students, with respect to how paragraph unity and coherence is achieved in academic writing</p>

Source: Field survey (2020)

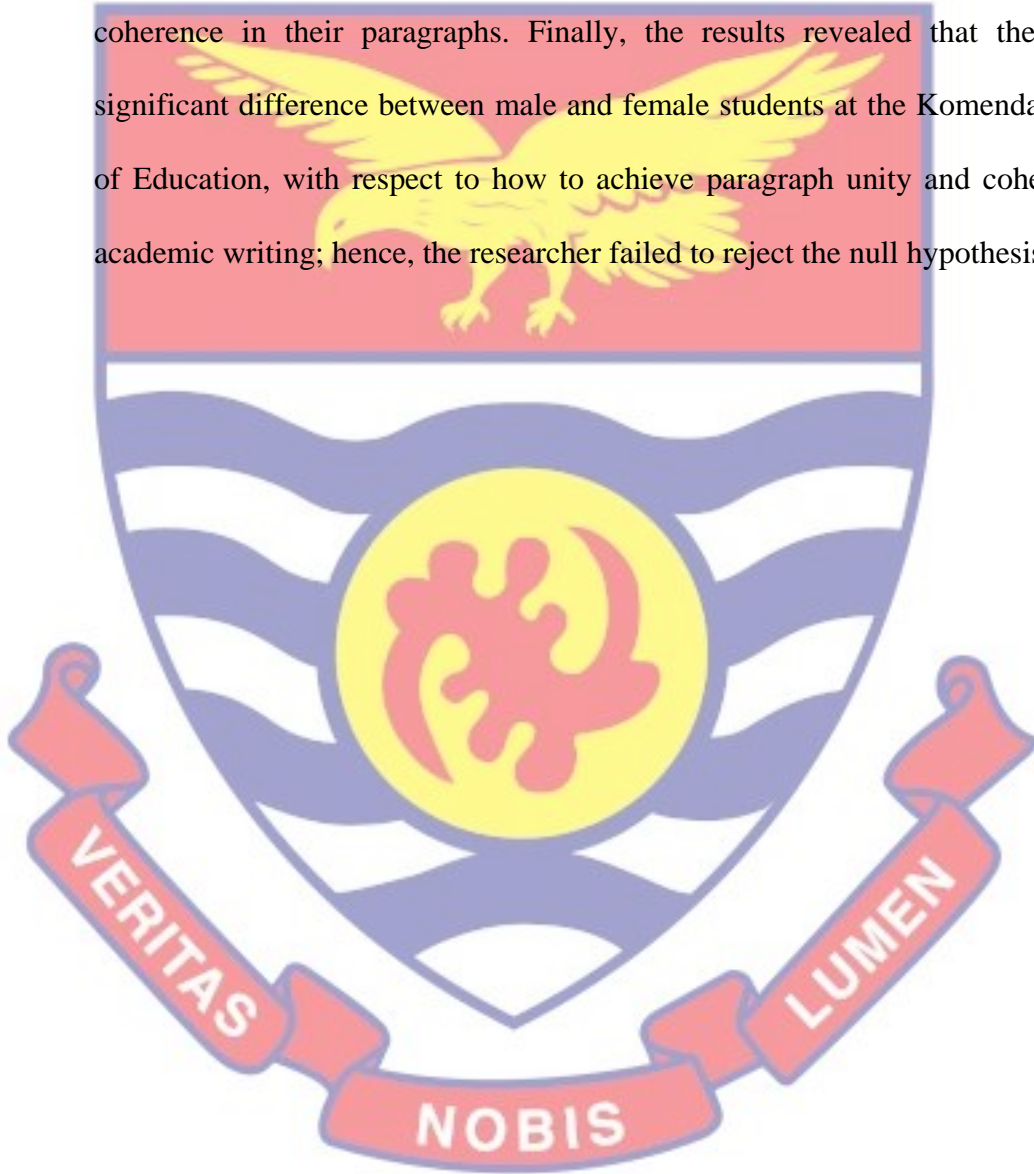
As can be seen in Table 8, the p-value ( $p > 0.05$ ) is greater than the alpha value ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ); thus, the researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis that there is no statistically significant difference between male and female students at the Komenda College of Education with regards to achieving paragraph unity and coherence in writing. This implies that the alternative hypothesis that there is a significant difference between male and female students at the Komenda College of Education, with regards to achieving paragraph unity and coherence in writing is rejected.

### Chapter Summary

This chapter presented results and discussion of the study. The presentation and discussion were done, taking cognisance of the research objectives. However, before the main analysis to achieve the main research objectives, the respondents' demographics were analysed. All the respondents were Level 200 students who included 20 female students and 40 male students. Considering the main findings, it was revealed that to achieve paragraph unity, both males and females introduce a *topic sentence* positioned at the *beginning of the paragraph*, followed by *supporting sentences*, then *illustrations*, and make sure all sub sentences and illustrations are in support of only one core idea contained in the topic sentence of a paragraph, culminating in the achievement of paragraph unity.

Further, to achieve same paragraph unity, male students use words such as *firstly, secondly, etc.; therefore; however, and though* to organise and link all other aspects of a paragraph to the main idea whilst female students use, more frequently, connectors such as *because*, and transitional words such as *for example* and *again*

to achieve same purpose of writing a unified paragraph. Additionally, to achieve paragraph coherence, both males and females used *repetitions* and *transitional words and phrases*. Divergently, male students used *coordinating conjunctions* – *and, for, but, etc.* whilst their female counterparts used *synonyms* to achieve coherence in their paragraphs. Finally, the results revealed that there is no significant difference between male and female students at the Komenda College of Education, with respect to how to achieve paragraph unity and coherence in academic writing; hence, the researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Introduction

This chapter aims at presenting the summary, key findings, implications, and recommendations of this study. The summary presents a brief overview of the problem statement of the study, objectives, research methods and analytical techniques employed, as well as the study findings. Key findings section focuses on the summary of the main findings of the study. On the other hand, the implications of the study draw conclusions and summarise specific implications for policy, practice, science and scholarship regarding the findings of the study with cognisance of the research objectives. The recommendations section present specific workable suggestions for implementation by relevant institutions and individuals involved in education and language. The chapter closes with suggestions for further research in the area of the current topic.

#### Summary

Students' use of English language, especially in writing, has generally not been the best, as prior studies reviewed also posited. Pre-service teachers at the various colleges of education in Ghana are trained and prepared to teach writing, among other things, at the basic schools. All their examinations, both internal and external, are conducted through writing. As well, the pupils these teachers intend to teach need to acquire writing skills. They need to be able to write unified and coherent paragraphs. This will help pupils being taught by these teachers to become good writers, and eventually, teachers of good paragraph writing.



However, it appears no attention seems to be given to the comparison of paragraphs written by male students and female students of colleges of education since these colleges' attainment of tertiary status in 2012. Also, already existing studies have mainly focused on other features such as concord, spelling and grammar found in essay writing. These notwithstanding, it appears there is a paucity of studies on students' writing that focuses on the achievement of coherence and unity in paragraph writing at colleges of education, with respect to gender.

This situation compelled the researcher to fill this literature gap by examining how students compose their paragraphs and the extent to which they achieve unity and coherence in their writing. The study particularly attempts to find out how male and female students in the Komenda College of Education write their paragraphs and the extent to which they achieve coherence and unity in their writing. It further looks at how students structure their paragraphs in terms of topic sentence and supporting sentences (major and minor support) as ways of achieving unity and coherence in paragraphs.

The researcher formulated three research objectives, three research questions, and a hypothesis which was tested. The study objectives included assessment of how paragraph unity is achieved in the writings of students at the Komenda College of Education with respect to gender; examination of how paragraph coherence is achieved in the writings of students at the Komenda College of Education with respect to gender, and finally, determination of whether there is statistically significant difference between male and female students at Komenda College of Education with regards to achieving paragraph unity and coherence in

writing. The hypothesis formulated was in the null statistics; stating that *there is no statistically significant difference between male and female students at the Komenda College of Education, with respect to how paragraph unity and coherence is achieved in academic writing.*

Further, the researcher outlined the significance of the study, delimitations of the study, limitations of the study, as well as how the entire study was organised. The researcher then proceeded to review the relevant theories and empirical studies related to the study, as well as the presentation of the conceptual framework which was informed by the knowledge drawn from the theories and prior studies reviewed, giving cognisance of the study objectives. Furthermore, the third chapter of the study which focused on the methods and techniques employed to achieve the study objectives were presented. With respect to design, the postpositivist paradigm was deemed appropriate for the study as the mixed research approach and the descriptive design was employed. The researcher employed the mixed methods approach as the researcher sought to confirm the statistical significance of the difference between male and female students with respect to how paragraph unity and coherence is achieved in academic writing.

It should also be stated that the study exclusively focused on the Komenda College of Education in the Central Region of Ghana. The Second Year students of the Department of English for the academic year 2017/2018 were involved in the study. A total number of 60 students (40 males and 20 females), selected using the census techniques, were involved in the study. The data for the study were the argumentative essays written by the student participants. There were no missing

data. For the analysis, the content qualitative procedure supported with narratives was used to for the analysis of the paragraphs written by the students. For the quantitative data, the independent samples t test was used to test the hypothesis formulated.

### Key Findings

The first objective of the study sought to assess how paragraph unity is achieved in the writings of students at the Komenda College of Education, with respect to gender. The results revealed two things. One, both male and female students at the College, in order to achieve paragraph unity, introduce a *topic sentence* positioned at the *beginning of the paragraph*, followed by *supporting sentences*, then *illustrations*, and make sure all sub sentences and illustrations are in support of only one core idea introduced in the topic sentence of the paragraph, resulting in the achievement of a unified paragraph. Two, to achieve unity in same paragraph, male students were found to have frequently used words such as *firstly*, *secondly*, *etc.*; *therefore*; *however*, and *though* to organise and link all other aspects of the paragraph to the main idea whilst female students frequently used, connectors such as *because*, and transitional words such as *for example* and *again* to achieve same purpose of writing a unified paragraph.

Further, the second objective of the study was to determine how paragraph coherence is achieved in the writings of students at the Komenda College of Education, with respect to gender. The results showed two main findings, just as revealed under how unity is achieved. One, it was found that, to achieve paragraph coherence, both gender used *repetitions* – repeating same word within a paragraph

in order to ensure a link between these words and the central idea of the paragraph – and *transitional words* – such as *again, also, furthermore, firstly, secondly, etc.* On the other hand, it was found that, to achieve same paragraph coherence, whilst males used *coordinating conjunctions* – *and, for, but, etc.* female students were found to mostly use *synonyms* – words which are similar or synonymous to the main word or words used earlier in the same paragraph to establish a link between these words – to ensure coherence in their paragraphs.

Finally, the third study objective sought to determine whether there is a significant difference between male and female students at Komenda College of Education, with respect to achieving paragraph unity and coherence in writing. Though the results showed male students to have a relatively higher mean score than their female counterparts, it was revealed that there is no significant difference between male and female students, when it comes to achieving paragraph unity and coherence in writings. In other words, gender has no influence on how paragraph unity and coherence is achieved in writings – males and females are, statistically speaking, the same in this regard.

### **Implications of the Study**

The present study can be seen as generally building on existing studies, adding knowledge to the field of academic writing and gender (specifically among college students in Ghanaian context). Specifically, the findings of this study have implications for practice, policy, and theory. This study has shown that there is just a little to be said about the differences between male and female students. Considering the first finding, it is obvious that male and female students have a lot

in common as they use similar approaches in achieving paragraph unity in their writings. This implies that, if chances are put aside, it will be difficult to draw a line of difference between male and female students, as far as writing is concerned, as both can perform effectively in a given environment (Dayioğlu, & Turu-Asik, 2007; Dayioğlu, & Türüt-Aşik, 2007).

This means, college authorities and other stakeholders must create a good environment where male and female students naturally learn from one another; in particular, from colleagues with a higher knowledge in a given aspect. Tutors must also try to assign same responsibilities to both male and female students, giving them a sense of equality as far as academic activities are concerned, rather than perceiving them as separate cultures (Tannen, 1990) which exude efficacies in separate environments. Practising this, there is a high possibility of unleashing the competitive writing prowess in both genders. Also, this will make both male and female college students to consider themselves as capable of achieving greater heights in academic writing, and that no performance level is exclusively associated with a particular gender group.

A second important implication of the study can be derived from the findings on how paragraph coherence is achieved, with respect to gender. The findings pointed to a specific set of ways used by male and female students in achieving coherence in writings; though analysing the data for this present study with a view to identifying and considering factors which could influence the relationship between achievement of coherence in writing and gender goes beyond the remit of this study, the researcher, with assistance of the tutors at the College,

ensured that the students produce the data used for the study under an academic condition and that the impacts of external factors could be said to have been minimised. Considering this finding, tutors could easily adopt a single strategy in teaching both male and female students as far as writing is concerned.

Also, practically, other related subjects can be taught to both male and female students, applying the same approaches and styles. More specifically, subjects which are thought be for only a specific gender group (Unity, & Igbudu, 2015) can now be encouraged among all students, irrespective of gender. This way, issues of gender inequality, even in academia, can be dealt with to boost the confidence levels of, especially, female students to compete favourably with their male counterparts. Notwithstanding, it must also be pointed out that the conclusions drawn from these findings can only be felt in reality if effectual implementations are embarked on.

Taking the foregoing into consideration, it can be seen that the implication stemming out of the third finding of the study does not is not surprising at all. As seen in the analysis, it is safe to conclude that male and female students are the same in terms of how to achieve to unity and coherence in writing. Though it also became clear that, on the average, there could be some level of difference between male and female students with regards to how unity and coherence are achieved in writing, this difference is not anything significant or remarkable to worry about. This goes to say that, practically, tutors or educators could adopt any best strategy, without having to worry about which gender group it fits better, to train or teach all

their students, ignoring gender boundaries. This, to the present researcher, is a great contribution of this study's findings to practice.

In relation to the study's implications for policy, and policy makers, both the qualitative and the quantitative findings pointed to the fact that a single policy, to some extent, could be developed to cater for both male and female students at the colleges of education in Ghana. Throughout the literature review (Argamon et al., 2003; Newman et al., 2008), the researcher did not become aware of any facts that Ghanaian educational agencies, such as the Ghana Education Service (GES), National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE), among the others, have formulated policies which considered both male and female students as a single entity. Usually, the focus is on achieving equality, which only makes it obvious the focus has only been on the age-old perceived gaps (Ishikawa, 2015; Zarevski et al., 2014) between male and female students.

With the current findings, educational stakeholders and policy makers can make clear cut policies which specifically focus on both male and female students together, without having to carve out separate policies for each gender group. Doing this, the issue of inequality is likely to fade out of the educational system as the issue of males are good at 'this' and females are good at 'that' will not be anymore. It is then in the right direction to say that college authorities should ensure that both female and male students are seen to have similar levels of abilities and intellects to perform their academic tasks, including paragraph unity and coherence in writing.

The study has also contributed to knowledge by expanding the assumption of Lakoff's (1975) theory and Tannen's (1990) difference theory. This has been achieved by the findings of the study, establishing that the fact that males and females can be distinguished with respect to language, or be considered as separate cultures which seem not to have much in common do not always mean males and females are different. In fact, these two groups almost always have everything in common in the current dispensation. This implies that all things being equal, both males and females are expected to produce similar results in all endeavours. However, since the condition at a particular time or setting may not favour a particular group due to local boundaries set for males or females, a slight difference may be expected between males and females, with respect to how they do things. Thus, literature should make clear the close relationship between males and females, and not always make more conspicuous the subtle difference, as found in this study.

Further, to some extent, this study contributes to the theories mentioned above by confirming that males and females have some distinct approaches to achieving the same end; this, the researcher found, could be the influence of gender. However, it could be critiqued that these prior theories only focused more on general communication aspect of language, neglecting a special focus on writing approaches used by males and females. In this regard, the current findings on the hypothesis tested can play a major role in future studies as it will serve as a reference point for future researchers seeking to build tested theories in the area of academic writing and gender.



While studies on paragraph writing and gender are generally scanty particularly in African context (Mwingi, 2014; Fidelia, 2014), it is almost non-existing in Ghana. With few exceptions, previous studies on gender have been based on other aspects of the English language (Mwingi, 2014; Fidelia, 2014; Mutar & Nimehchisalem, 2017). Recent research about academic writing and gender has been seriously advocated (Mutar & Nimehchisalem, 2017). The development of a comprehensive model that could relate gender to writing paragraphs is of a particular concern. Here, gender and paragraph writing is analysed by building a comprehensive model based on quantitative and qualitative empirical findings to serve as a springboard for development of writing behaviour among students in Ghana particularly those in the colleges of education. Thus, the present research has contributed to knowledge on paragraph writing and gender.

### **Recommendations**

Having considered the key findings and implications of the studies, it is imperative to make recommendations which may positively influence the writing strategies of students, irrespective of being a male or female. The researcher, therefore, made the following recommendations based on the current findings and conclusions drawn.

1. The Ministry of Education through the principals and the vice-chancellors of colleges of education in Ghana and other authorities and stakeholders in tertiary education should develop and implement policies which are directly focused on developing the writing skills of pre-service teachers in the colleges of education in Ghana. These policies should focus all their aspects

on both male and female students, without specifying a particular aspect for any of these two groups. This will ensure that both male and male students benefit equally from these policies.

2. The principals of the various colleges of education in Ghana should encourage the college tutors and the Student Representative Council (SRC) leaderships to introduce a programme which engages college students in competitive writing, without gender barriers. This programme will ensure that students compete among themselves, by writing academic papers which will demonstrate their knowledge of how to achieve unity and coherence in writing. This programme can be done every academic year, and equal number of males and females presented each academic year.
3. Though the study's focus was not to find out whether students were able to write paragraphs or not, the researcher came across something like that during the analysis as some of the college students could not write paragraphs at all; therefore, it is recommended that college tutors are encouraged by their departmental heads to specifically teach students – both males and females – how to write full paragraphs, and the basic strategies they are expected to know to be successful in their academic writings.

### **Suggestions for Further Studies**

The current study, being descriptive in nature, raises a number of opportunities for future research, both in terms of theory development and concept validation. For instance, the new categories – topic sentence (TS), supporting sentence (SS), position of topic sentence (PTS), illustrations (ILL), transitions (T),

Coherence (CH) and Unity (UT) – developed by the researcher to assess how paragraph unity and coherence is achieved can further be probed into by future researchers. This can be done by using these categories to assess unity and coherence in paragraphs written by high school students in Ghana. Also, the model discussed in *Figure 1* could be used to generate a number of hypotheses for further empirical testing using broader sample and quantitative research methods. Research questions could include the following:

- Is there a statistical correlation between ability to achieve paragraph unity and paragraph coherence among college of education students in Ghana?
- Is there a significant influence of the type of college (public or private) attended on the ability to achieve paragraph unity and coherence among college of education students in Ghana?

### **Conclusion**

From the study, it could be realised that male and female students are not different, in terms of major issues in paragraph writing, such as paragraph unity and paragraph coherence. This was shown in the findings section where an insignificant difference was recorded between male and female students. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that minor issues, such as the choice of connectors, in paragraph writing appeared to be different between the two groups, as females mostly use connectors such as *and, again, etc.*, compared to males who were found to mostly choose as connectors such as *therefore, however, etc.*

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Questionnaire

Dear Respondent,

This survey is meant to collect data for a study on ***GENDER AND PARAGRAPH WRITING SKILLS AMONG COLLEGES OF EDUCATION STUDENTS***. The data collected will be used for research purpose only. Your data will be kept confidential and secure. This will take about 30 minutes to complete.

Thank you.

#### **Instruction**

1. This exercise is to assess how you achieve paragraph unity and coherence in your academic writings. You are required to write your own paragraphs (not more than 3 paragraphs; one paragraph should be made up of 08 to 12 lines) on the topic “*SRC Week Celebration Should be Banned in Colleges of Education.*”; also, follow the subsequent instructions to answer the binary response items on paragraph unity and coherence achievement.
2. Apply your knowledge in paragraph unity and coherence achievement to judge whether the following paragraphs (extracted from “Seven Wonders” by Lewis Thomas) are unified and coherent.
3. Read thoroughly and decide whether or not they are unified and coherent paragraphs. Indicate your choice by selecting either *Acceptable* or *Unacceptable*.
4. Look for problems in:
  - a. unity (one paragraph, one topic)

- b. coherence (sensible ideas, logical sentence sequence, good paragraph flow)
- c. development (sufficient length and/or good organisation)
- d. topic sentence

### Exercise 1

Thomas uses enumeration well in his essay because from the very start he talks of the Seven Wonders of the World, and even mentions this in the title. He then says he will list his seven wonders but then changes from the standard one-to-seven list by saying he will keep number one for the last and start with number two. This change keeps us more interested until the end. Thomas then lists bacteria, a beetle, a virus, a cell, a termite, and ends with a human child. Then he finally goes back to number one, the planet Earth. He also uses excellent description when he talks of the termite.

ACCEPTABLE

UNACCEPTABLE

Source: *Collegial Centre for Educational Materials Department (2010)*

### Exercise 2

In conclusion, we see that Thomas has clearly centered his choices of seven wonders in the scientific world, on cells and a virus for example, on the smallest living things. However, he has also gone to the other end of the scale with his choices of the human child and the planet Earth. Most readers would probably agree with the last two choices, and even with most of the other choices as well, because he is convincing in his arguments. Just thinking of the development of Earth could keep us busy a long time. My choices would likely include the modern automobile

or jet plane, I think. What would your choices include? Just making us think about it all means he has written a successful essay.

ACCEPTABLE

UNACCEPTABLE

Source: *Collegial Centre for Educational Materials Department (2010)*

### Exercise 3

It is true that we like to wonder about the world around us, and this is what Thomas writes about. He contrasts things as great as the planet Earth with bacteria. He clearly thinks we need to be more careful about our environment; if we don't, we are threatening our future. Even a casual dinner party will sometimes find people talking about very scientific things like a virus or beetle.

I had a pet dog that died after a virus attack of some kind. All children grow old and are different from one another because of genetics. That's the way it is.

ACCEPTABLE

UNACCEPTABLE

Source: *Collegial Centre for Educational Materials Department (2010)*

### Exercise 4

Every human likes to wonder by nature. We wonder where our next meal is coming from or whether we have enough money to go out the next weekend. We wonder whether we might all catch a virus or disease if we are not careful, but what can we do? We also need to take care of our environment and car pollution is a major problem. Most large cars are gas guzzlers and the gas is even getting more and more expensive. Who can afford a car anymore? Who needs a car anymore? We must control our natural resources. No wonder we are unhappy.

ACCEPTABLE

UNACCEPTABLE



Source: *Collegial Centre for Educational Materials Department (2010)*

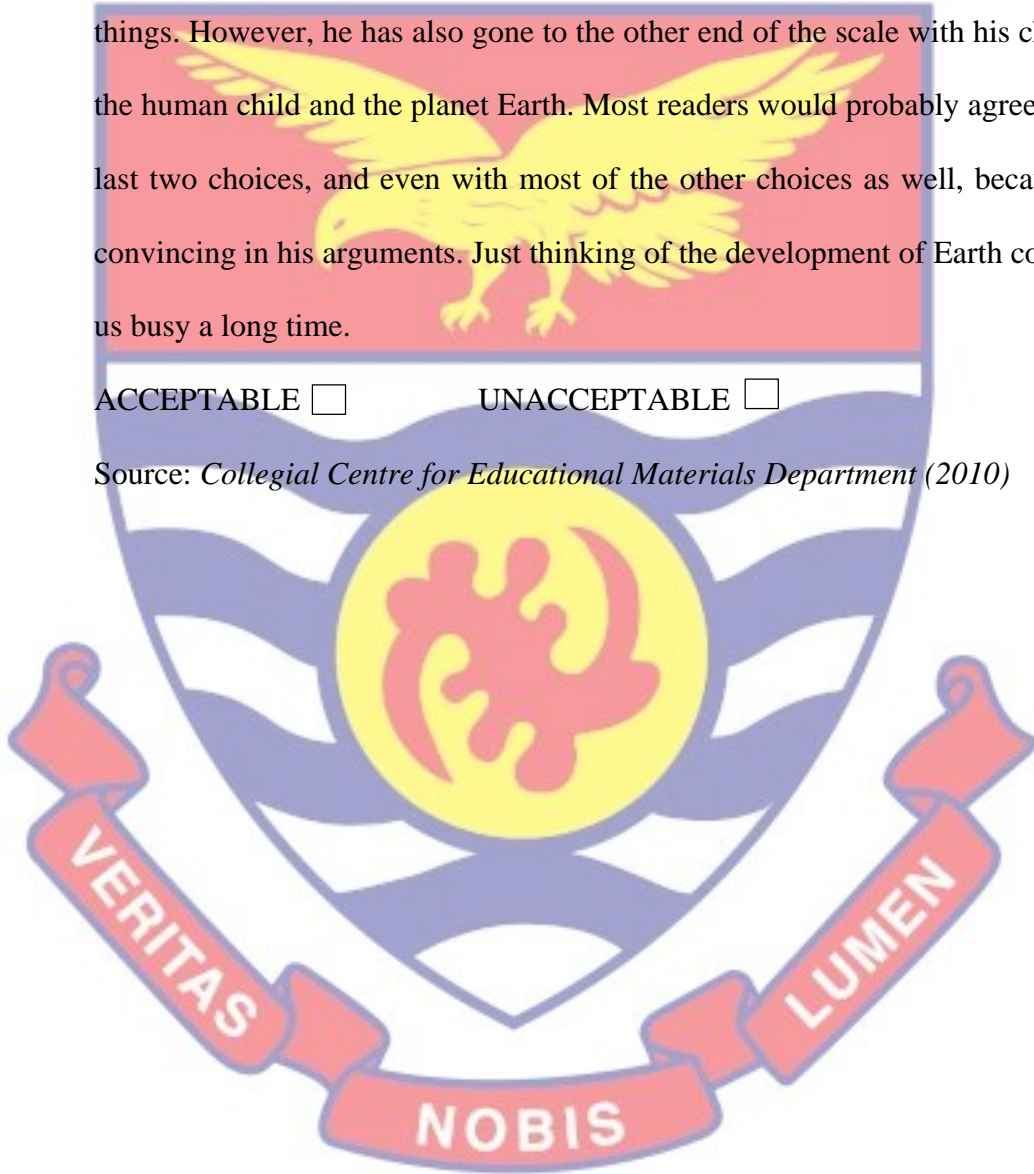
### Exercise 5

In conclusion, we see that Joseph has clearly centered his choices of seven wonders in the scientific world, on cells and a virus for example, on the smallest living things. However, he has also gone to the other end of the scale with his choices of the human child and the planet Earth. Most readers would probably agree with the last two choices, and even with most of the other choices as well, because he is convincing in his arguments. Just thinking of the development of Earth could keep us busy a long time.

ACCEPTABLE

UNACCEPTABLE

Source: *Collegial Centre for Educational Materials Department (2010)*



## Appendix B: Samples of students' paragraphs

### Sample 1

*“... Firstly, SRC Week celebration is a celebration strategically organised to bring the entire student body together as one and create a sense of belongingness to the college. It embarks on programmes to bridge the gap between the student representative council and the student body as a whole as well as the corporate world. When SRC Week is celebrated, it improves the camaraderie among the SRC authority and the entire student body. This promotes close friendship between the administration of the college and entire student body. ...” (Female participant 12)*

### Sample 2

*“... Firstly, it is a waste of money. During SRC Week celebration, a lot of money is wasted. In my college for example, during the week celebration, there will be carnival, dinner, face of Komenco, jams night, buying of lacoste, pens and other souvenirs for every individual – including both teaching and non-teaching staff. During the carnival, we have to hire spinals, DJ and many others. A lot of money is spent, especially on the dinner foods and drinks for everyone at no cost. This money can be used for a big project for the college, and this project will remain in the college than using the money for enjoyment. The SRC fees we pay is even higher than SRC project fees. ...” (Female Participant 11)*

### Sample 3

*“... Again, the SRC is a waste of students' time. The celebration is a week long programme where classes are cut short for the celebration's activities. Some activities like “joke night”, the time can be used for learning. Not to talk about “all*

night” programmes and “Face of the college”. For the body and mind to function properly, it needs rest. Students use the time for learning to sleep because the sleeping time was used for the programme. Again, students’ concentration in class becomes divided. During class hours, they will be thinking about the entertaining programmes in the afternoon and in the evening. . . .” (Male Participant 10)

**Sample 4**

“ . . . To start with, Madam Chairperson, my opponent here will argue that SRC Week celebration should not be banned in the colleges of education because it gives students the opportunity to exhibit their talents in shows like, the “Face of Komenco”, but this activity or programme brings a lot of social vices into the College. Because students are made to dress in their own clothes for the competition, if the person does not have he or she will try everything possible to get those clothes through ways such as prostitution, stealing and others; especially, in a coeducational institution like Komenda College of Education. . . .” (Male Participant 9)

**Sample 5**

“ . . . Mr. Chairman, to begin with, SRC Week celebration promotes fashion competition among the students. During the SRC Week celebration, students are allowed to wear their own choice of dress. They have particular times each cloth is put on. Some students put on expensive cloths and makeups to appear beautiful and handsome of which other students who do not have find means and ways of getting those cloths to compete with their colleagues. Some students involve themselves in immoral act in order to get those cloths and shoes to compete with their colleagues.

*Some girls also involve in prostitution to expensive cloths for the competition. . .  
.”(Female Participant 8)*



### Appendix C: Ethical Clearance Letters

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST  
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND LEGAL STUDIES  
FACULTY OF ARTS  
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH





#### Appendix D: Introductory Letter

Komenda College of Education  
P.O.BOX CK5  
Komenda.

9<sup>th</sup> March 2020



**Appendix E: Approval Letter**



**DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGES**  
**KOMENDA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION**

P.O Box KM 5, Komenda, Central Region, Ghana. Digital Address: CK-1855-3393  
H.O.D: +233 24 326 8464 Email: [nhyiraboadu@gmail.com](mailto:nhyiraboadu@gmail.com)  
Date: 14-11-22



Our Ref: : LGD/PS/2/22

Your Ref:

Mr. Joseph Amonoo Sekyi  
Department of Languages  
Komenda College of Education  
Komenda

17<sup>th</sup> March, 2020

Dear Sir

RE: APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO COLLECT DATA FOR RESEARCH

I acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 3<sup>rd</sup> March, 2020 on the above subject.

The Department has approved your request to collect data from the level two hundred (200) students to support your study.

You are to arrange with the students for the exercise.

Best regards.

Yours faithfully

Benjamin Henry Taylor  
(HOD. Department of Languages)

**Appendix F: Komenda College of Education Administration Block (Left) and Campus (Right)**



Source: Author (2020)

