THE EFFECT OF OUTLINING TO THE ORGANIZATIONAL WRITING SKILLS OF SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

The Effect of Outlining to the Organizational Writing Skills of Senior High School Students

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Abstract

The COVID-19 epidemic has fundamentally changed conventional teaching methods by pushing much of the instruction online. This change has highlighted written examinations for language courses, which begs questions about students' writing skills particularly in terms of structure of ideas. The effect of outlining as a prewriting strategy on senior high school students' organizing writing abilities is examined in this paper. Inspired by Flower and Hayes' (1981) Cognitive Process Theory of Writing, this quasi-experimental research had two groups: an experimental group using outlines prior to writing and a control group employing free writing. Five writing sessions included a sample of twenty Grade 11 University of Saint Louis Tuguegarao students. Descriptive statistics and a paired samples t-test were part of data analysis to ascertain if outlining helped to improve organizational abilities. Results imply that outlining greatly improves students' capacity for organization and structure of their writing, therefore supporting its possible use as a teaching tool in language education. This study offers information for teachers trying to enhance their writing teaching and implies directions for further studies on prewriting techniques.

Keywords: *Writing Skills, Creative Writing, Outlining, Technical Writing, Senior High School Education*

INTRODUCTION

Since the spread of COVID-19 and the pandemic's start, many sectors and aspects of life have been affected. One of the significant changes and adjustments that people went through, mainly the children and the youth, is with the teaching-learning system and norm. Despite that, education must continue, thus, introducing what we call the now average or online class to students and teachers. Even in online classes, assessment is a fundamental part of instruction. In language subjects, the most common type of assessment given are writing activities. A significant portion of online teaching-learning consists of text and written compositions. In the study of Kellogg and Whiteford (as cited in Rijn, 2021), the value of good writing abilities for academic and professional success has been demonstrated. However, with the current situation that we are in, the value and quality of the writing abilities of students have been a matter of educational concern in our department.

In the study of Pablo and Lasaten (2018), they identified and assessed the challenges that Senior High School students face while writing academic essays and the overall quality of the students' academic writing. The results indicate that learners face challenges while writing essays, such as a lack of variation in terms of material and ideas, lack of connectives in terms of organization, incorrect word or idiom and word usage in terms of vocabulary and word choice, poor sentence structures in terms of language use, use of the first-person pronoun in terms of formality and objectivity, and lack of citations in terms of referencing (Pablo & Lasaten, 2018). In addition, the findings in the study of Khadijah (2019) identified students' problems in academic writing, such as plagiarism at 23%, grammatical errors at 25%, lexical difficulties at 25%, and lack of planning at 27%. Moreover, young people, exceptionally high school students aged 15-17, are obviously technologically savvy and have much time for computers and other digital devices and platforms. The study of Aggabao and Gamilo (2019) revealed that technology, specifically social media, has made exemplary contributions to improving students' writing performance. Other factors are self-interest, peers, parents, school administration, and teachers' support. However, even if adolescents are openly introduced to technology that helps them improve, it is still observed that they have remarkably weak points in grammar, paragraph structure, and voice in written composition (Aggabao & Gamilo, 2019). Spending time on writing activities, even in preparing to write and perform prewriting activities, becomes their last option for information as technology evolves and is being integrated into their lives.

Considering the mentioned problem, this study will attempt to find and examine effective writing techniques to strengthen students' written abilities, specifically, using an outline to improve writing organization. Outlining is a planning approach for organizing one's thoughts before writing. It has regularly been found that outlining improves students' writing skills, resulting in quality texts and a reduction in mental effort (De Smet et al., 2014; Kellogg, 1988,

1990; Limpo & Alves, 2018; Isnard & Piolat, 1994, as cited in Rijn, 2021). According to the study of Murtiningsih (2019), outlining significantly improves students' paragraph writing skills. Therefore, it is fair to presume that teaching students writing skills and strategies for planning, revising, and editing their work could effectively improve their writing abilities. The purpose and goal of this study is to give a more comprehensive picture of the impacts of outlining on the writing process.

Framework

Undeniably, writing is an indispensable skill in different contexts of life. It is one of the pivotal components of education. With the advent of the K-12 Basic Education Curriculum, students are confronted with different academic writing tasks through the English for Academic and Professional Purposes and Practical Research courses. Despite the precise efforts of the educational sector to improve students' writing skills, it is apparent that many students still need help in academic writing. Therefore, there is a need to fill the gap and advance an in-depth understanding of students' academic writing difficulties, especially in organizing their thoughts.

This study is grounded in Flower and Hayes' (1981) Cognitive Process Theory of Writing, which emphasizes that writing is a goal-directed thinking process guided by the writer's growing network of goals. Their theory is guided by four hypotheses: (1) writing is best understood as a set of distinctive thinking processes that process that state or organize during the act of composing. (2) These processes have a hierarchical, highly embedded organization in which any given process can be embedded within any other. (3) composing itself is a goal-directed thinking process guided by the writer's ground network of goals. (4) Writers create their own goals in two key ways: by generating high-level goals and supporting sub-goals, and then, at times, by changing primary goals or even establishing entirely new ones based on what has been learned.

In writing, students can easily follow good organization when an outline of ideas is created before starting to write. An outline is like the skeleton of the human body—the latter gives the body form, while the former gives your writing the same thing. The form will make the readers see which are the significant parts and which are the minor parts. An outline can be helpful because it provides a format in which ideas can be arranged in a hierarchy—that is, it distinguishes the general ideas from the specific or subordinating ideas.

Limitations

This study focuses on outlining as a prewriting technique to improve the organizational writing skills of senior high school students in a language subject. The study is limited in scope to Grade 11 students from the University of Saint Louis Tuguegarao, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other grade levels or educational settings. Additionally, the sample size is small, involving only 20 students, which could affect the statistical power of the results.

Potential biases arise from the quasi-experimental design, as it does not include random assignment of participants to groups, which may lead to inherent differences between the control and experimental groups. To mitigate this, pre-assessment scores were used to ensure the two groups had comparable baseline writing skills. Another area for improvement is the reliance on written assessments, which may not fully capture improvements in other aspects of writing, such as creativity or language fluency.

Future studies could address these limitations by increasing the sample size, including students from diverse educational contexts, and using a more comprehensive set of assessments to evaluate the overall impact of prewriting strategies on various facets of writing ability.

Statement of the Problem
Research Questions

This study aimed to determine the effect of outlining on the organizational writing skills of senior high school students. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the performance level of the control and experimental group?
2. Is there a significant difference in the performance level of the control and experimental group?

Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in the performance level of the control and experimental group.

Literature Review
Writing as a Grammatical Organization

Writing has so far been a measurement to test skills in language learning. By and large, students, regardless of gender or background, continue to consider that good and proficient language is a factor in achieving academic recognition (Gamilo & Aggabao,

2019). In this regard, students' learning of this specific skill is mainly attributed to the pedagogical aspects as students are guided, especially at a young age. Writing, therefore, is an elementary skill taught to students to make up ideas and express them unequivocally. Students' reliance on teachers is decorated with the ability of teachers to deliver teaching in such a way that organization is enhanced by writing not only as a skill but also as a means to an end (Hajan & Marasigan, 2019).

Nevertheless, at some points, grammar comes in as a factor or organization. It is a value or numerical measurement that determines the scale of students' learning. In the Philippines, common student mistakes in grammar are the following: subject-verb agreement, proper usage of tenses, organization of thoughts, contracted words, distribution of thoughts per sentence, and mechanics (Hikmah et al., 2019). Not only is writing attributed to teachers' measurement of learning language, but grammatical checking has also been a way for the students themselves to check their pacing in learning as this designates the most interior and exterior difficulties faced by students in script class and the influences of students' understanding of their writing problems in applying writing. In this connection, even supplementary suggestions for sentence construction, the ability to punctuate, and phrasal comprehension still need to be intended in most domestic grammatical organizing (Novariana et al., 2018).

Grammar in the Context of Academic Writing

Academic literacies are often seen in academic writing as they show the significant effects of writing as an integral tool in establishing institutionalized goals in schools (AlMarwani, 2020). Grammar plays a massive role in this track. However, teachers' approach is often centric, which makes learning and using grammar difficult for some students (Siddiqui, 2020). In light of the result of the study of Abderraouf (2016), grammar is seen to be weak in the part of existential learning materials, such that activities made by students are of leveled valuation. However, it is recommended that teaching grammar elicited from writing is a vital tool in enhancing students' learning in the course of institutionalized academic endeavors as indications for grammar learning must be outside the parameters of writing and other English Language Teaching (ELT)-related grounds take up action research to examine the questions they feel worth exploring even when there is a clear understanding that in academic writing, students lack the well-matched ability to recognize that grammar encompasses the ability of students to at least perceive vocabulary, punctuation, spelling and other lingual

occurrences of equal importance (Tuvachit & Soontornwipast, 2018).

Grammar and Language Learning

In most cases, learning English considers the going to historical features of the language itself. In this scenario, the influences of foreign language attributes are considered in terms of its formats and structures, one of which is grammar. This orthodox understanding makes one more intrigued in understanding "literary canon in the academe" (Guinto, 2012). In today's advent of educational technologies, one key factor in grammar learning is mainly shown in students' online and virtual exposures. During the pandemic, students' understanding of academic jargon has lessened because learning has significantly not been adjusted yet, even when there is already exposure to the "internet and online sources" by students (Roxas, 2020). However, conventionally, academic writing stress persisted in students because lexical and planning considerations still needed to be met. Therefore, a congruent analysis of whether students are better when conventional learning or teaching takes place or when online exposure gives the better learning suited to the students is inconsistent because historical factor always goes in when learning and testing grammar is measured (Khadijah, 2019).

Grammar and the Pandemic

Since COVID-19 started to spread, the circumstances facing Philippine schools have drastically changed. Learning and teaching online presents some possibilities as well as difficulties to help to better the circumstances. Writing has advanced thanks to technologies that let learners better arrange their ideas before they write (Eliaga et al., 2022). Using technology and innovative teaching strategies, according to Cariaga et al. (2024), helps one to narrow learning gaps. More general educational trends highlight fresh approaches to instruction based on the needs of learners. Mabborang et al. (2024) also contend that Genyo Day and other activities help to make studying online engaging and enjoyable. Gerodias (2024) advises seeing classes if one wants to really grasp the difficulties teachers deal with. This is true because individuals must also learn how to educate if they are to handle the issues pandemics bring up. Combining old and modern tools—such as ICT tools—has also helped overcome learning gaps, particularly in remote areas (Cariaga, Pospos, & Dagunan, 2024). Cariaga, Futalan, and Macahilo (2024) say that cases where people participate in online video games while working show the necessity of restricting too high usage

of technology. Parents and the community should be involved in the education and social and mental development of their children, according to people like Cariaga, Sabidalas, Cariaga, and Dagunan (2024). These research all come together to provide a whole strategy for addressing the problems the epidemic has brought to light in educational settings. They also created the Philippines' robust and amicable educational system (Cariaga, 2022).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopted a quasi-experimental design to determine the impacts of outlining on the organizational writing skills of students and to analyze the changes within groups in the achievement scores of the participating students. This study involved one experimental group and one control group. In comparison to the control group, participants in the experimental group would be required to create an outline of ideas first before starting to write.

Respondents/Participants

The participants of the study were 20 Grade 11 Senior High School students of the University of Saint Louis Tuguegarao who were currently enrolled in the language subjects of the second semester of the school year 2021-2022.

Instruments of the Study

This study utilized writing to determine the effect of outlining on the organizational writing skills of students. The researchers provided topics in every session and instructed the participants to write an essay about them. The participants in the experimental group were asked to create an outline of their ideas before writing, while those in the control group immediately started writing.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researchers sought permission and approval from concerned persons before conducting the study. After seeking permission, the researchers proceeded to collect the data. The researchers explained the critical pieces of information about the purpose of the study and the like. Participants in the experimental group were required to create an outline of ideas first, while those in the control group underwent free writing. The sessions encompassed five meetings

(approximately 60 minutes each) and were held at the convenience of both the researchers and the researchers.

Ethical Considerations

The researchers gave informed consent to the participants, inviting them to participate. The participants were asked to participate in the five writing sessions voluntarily. Likewise, the participants were given 60 minutes to write, ensuring that all information to be gathered would be exclusively for academic purposes only and was held with the utmost confidentiality.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Performance of the Control and Experimental Group

Groups	Sessions					Mean	Description
	1	2	3	4	5		
Control	3.1	2.3	2.5	2.9	2.7	**2.7**	Good
Experimental	3.7	3.1	3.3	2.7	3.4	**3.24**	Good

1.00 - 1.50 – Poor
1.51 – 2.50 – Average
2.51 – 3.50 – Good
3.51 – 4.00 – Excellent

Table 1 shows that despite having the same description, students in the experimental group performed better than those in the control group. The difference between the two groups is the presence of an outline, which was only required for the experimental group. This proves that having an outline before constructing written outputs helps organize thoughts and ideas.

Table 2: Test of Significant Difference in the Performance of the Control and Experimental Groups

Groups	Mean	t-value	p-value	Decision
Control	**2.70**			
Experimental	**3.24**	-2.475	0.038	Reject Ho

*there is a significant difference

Table 2 reveals that the p-value acquired revealed a significant difference between the means, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This concluded that there is a significant difference in the student's performance. The computed negative t-value further proves that the experimental group performs better than the control group. This implied that the presence of an outline in constructing written outputs yields better performance compared to writing without one.

The main goal of this study is to find and examine effective writing techniques to strengthen students' written abilities, specifically, using an outline

Dumlao et al. (2024)

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to improve writing organization. This highlighted the interaction of two critical factors to consider: determining the performance levels of the control and experimental groups and the significant difference in their performance levels.

Furthermore, the results negate the assumption of this study that there is no significant difference in the performance level of the control and experimental groups. The control group could demonstrate their writing skills and aptitudes but require a guide to articulate themselves clearly. This, then, supports the findings of Pablo, J. & Lasaten, R. (2018) that students have difficulties in writing academic essays, such as a lack of variety of ideas in terms of content and ideas, lack of connectives in terms organization, incorrect word or idiom and word usage in terms vocabulary and word choice, poor sentence structures in terms of language use, use of first-person pronoun in terms of formality and objectivity, and lack of citations in terms of referencing. The experimental group, on the other hand, excelled in both grammar and concept organization owing to the reference statements that allowed them to organize their concepts. Thus, it proves the study of Murtiningsih (2019) that outlining improves students' paragraph writing skills significantly.

The findings of Flower and Hayes' (1981) Cognitive Process Theory of Writing emphasize that writing itself is a goal-directed thinking process, guided by the writer's growing network of goals; therefore, students can easily follow good organization when an outline of ideas before starting to write is created. It also demonstrates that learners already have their ideas in their heads. They write eloquently. Teachers who present students with an outline to use as a writing guide can help them produce their finest work. As a result, students and teachers must collaborate to benefit the students' writing outputs. This supports the findings of Hajan & Marasigan's 2019 study that students' reliance on teachers is decorated with the ability of teachers to deliver teaching in such a way that organization is enhanced by writing not only as a skill but as a means to an end.

Under this study, the language competency of learners is a determining factor in achieving academic recognition in writing as a grammatical arrangement. A related study suggests that supplemental suggestions for sentence building, punctuation skills, and phrasal comprehension, among others, still need to be intended in most domestic grammatical organizations(Novariana et al., 2018).

Grammar is an essential instrument in academic writing for defining important institutional aims, yet students must catch up in mastering the subject due to teachers' centric teaching strategy. In line with the issue, teachers should have a strategic plan for teaching the subject so that the students can grow and understand how writing can be expressed clearly and concisely. This way, the recommendations of Tuvachit & Soontornwipast (2018) that teaching grammar elicited from writing must be outside the parameters of writing and other English Language Teaching (ELT)related grounds.

With all that being said, the result of the study proves that there is a significant difference in the performance level of the control and experimental groups. Outlining as a form of guide to the students' writing journey can significantly improve their writing prowess. This, therefore, proves that outlining improves students' writing skills, resulting in quality texts and a reduction in mental effort (De Smet et al. 2014; Kellogg, 1988 1990 Limpo & Alves, 2018 and Isnard & Piolat, 1994, as cited in Rijn, 2021).

CONCLUSION

This research showed a significant improvement in students' organizational writing skills when creating an outline before writing. It was also noted during this research that most of the students support outlining, giving them a chance to establish first the needed ideas in their essays before writing. Through an outline, their essays became systematic, hierarchical, well-planned, and attuned to the topic sentence. Outlining works to improve the organizational writing skills of students.

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