

Investigating Undergraduate Students' Outline and Essay Writing

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Abstrak - Menulis esai cukup rumit karena membutuhkan lebih dari menuangkan semua ide dalam pengaturan tertulis. Ide-ide tersebut harus dikumpulkan, diorganisir, dan direncanakan untuk disusun dalam sebuah garis besar atau outline tulisan. Tujuan utama studi ini ditujukan untuk memeriksa tulisan outline siswa dan esai mereka. Untuk mengevaluasi hal ini, kerangka kerja didasarkan pada teori dari Zemach & Rumisek (2005). Penelitian ini menggunakan studi kualitatif dan melibatkan 30 mahasiswa semester tiga tahun ajaran 2020/2021 yang terdaftar pada mata kuliah Penulisan Esai, di Jurusan Bahasa Inggris, Fakultas Sastra Universitas Pamulang (Unpam). Hasil penyusunan kerangka menunjukkan bahwa persentase tertinggi (73%) dalam menyusun kerangka berada pada pengorganisasian paragraf dengan urutan yang benar. Sebaliknya, pada dukungan untuk setiap gagasan utama yang terkait dengan pernyataan tesis memiliki persentase terendah (40%). Namun, dari hasil pembuatan karangan berdasarkan outline, terdapat 80% mahasiswa yang berhasil mengikuti outline saat membuat esai. Dapat disimpulkan bahwa sebagian besar mahasiswa ketika mereka menghasilkan kerangka dan mengembangkan ide-ide mereka untuk menulis esai dari kerangka mereka, mereka mengikuti kerangka mereka. Di sisi lain, mereka memiliki tantangan dalam mengembangkan dukungan untuk setiap gagasan utama yang terkait dengan pernyataan tesis.

Kata Kunci: menulis esai, membuat outline, mata kuliah menulis

Abstract - Writing an essay is quite tricky as it needs more than pouring all ideas in written arrangement. Those ideas must be gathered, organized, and planned to be arranged in an outline. The main goal of this study was aimed to examine students' outlines and essay writing. The framework of this study was based on the outline checklist proposed by Zemach & Rumisek (2005). This study employed qualitative study and involved 30 students in the third semester of 2020/2021 academic year enrolled in the Essay Writing course, at English Department, Faculty of Letters, Universitas Pamulang (Unpam). In terms of constructing an outline, it showed that the highest percentage (73%) was found in organization for paragraphs in the right order. On the other hand, in Support for each main idea related to the thesis statement had the lowest percentage (40%). However, in relation to generating essay writing based on their outline, the result indicated that there were 80% students who were successful following their outline when they created their essay. Hence, it can be concluded that Most of the students followed the outlines as it is suggested by Zemach & Rumisek (2005) when they produce an outline and developed their ideas in writing their essays. On the other hand, they had challenge in developing support for each main idea related to the thesis statement.

Key Words: Essay writing, outline, writing course

INTRODUCTION

An essay is a written arrangement which can convey a particular thought. Writing abilities include all information and capabilities related to communicating thoughts through the written words. Moreover, Hidayah (2019) states that an essay is some words that describes a specific opinion from the writer about a certain subject that is tried to be judged. Even though students can come up with writing ideas, there are no many students that can write good essays. It is because the form of this writing is expressing opinion on a particular subject and requires students to offer a detailed and deeper

meaning of a subject. In other words, writing essay involves formal language.

Writing an essay is one of the skills that every student should have, especially for college students in the top semester. At this level, students must be able to master essay writing skills. Essay writing is claimed to develop students' writing skills. In essay writing, it is no longer grammar or vocabulary that becomes the problem, but the content of the essay itself. The students have to develop their essay into five paragraphs, namely one introduction, three body paragraphs, and one conclusion. Moreover, Oshima & Hogue (2006) stated that an essay is a piece of writing that has

several paragraphs long and it is about one topic. Because an essay is long, it is important to organize and plan before you begin to write. One way to do this is to make an outline.

As said by Crème and Lea (2003), it is not easy for a writer to start writing without making framework which is called an outline. Oshima explained that before writing, students should plan a paragraph. This means that an essay outline is a short plan and a way of planning the structure of essay before they start writing. Making an outline in advance supports students' essay by providing its structure (Zemach & Rumisek, 2005). Consequently, outline can help students organize their ideas and give focus on relevant materials as well as organize logical supporting details.

Writing an essay is a bit complicated for students because they need to put all their ideas in written form. All good written work usually comes from a framework; fill or outline. For essay writing, Outlining is one way organizational techniques for preparing paper writing. Additionally, Oshima & Hogue (2006) confirmed that an outline not only organizes students thoughts, but it also keeps students on track once they begin to write. Therefore, writing outlines can make students gather essays coherently and not far from the prearranged topic and easily express ideas that they can put in the essay. Furthermore, crafting an outline help they write more clearly. In the outline, the introduction contents the thesis statement, and conclusion is abbreviated. The body of the essay, however, is developed in detail (Oshima & Hogue, 2006).

Essay writing is learnt by students in the third semester of English Department, Universitas Pamulang. Before students write an essay, they had better write an outline (Zemach & Rumisek, 2005). They also said that writing an outline shows the organization of the essay, tells what ideas students discuss, and shows which ideas will come first, second, and so on. Meanwhile, Taylor (2009) reported that writing too much is often the result of not having examined closely enough the relevance what students say to the essay question or to the answer they are developing.

Considering the importance of constructing an outline before starting writing for students in making an essay, in this paper, the writers are interested in conducting a study to investigate students' outline and their essay.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The current study is descriptive qualitative research, which aims to examine students' outlines

and their essays. More specifically, this study investigates whether or not the respondents construct their essays based on the outline as it is suggested that outlining can be effective and make the essay well-organized (Goose 2001; Crème & Lea, 2003; Davis, 2004; and Donahue, 2007, as quoted in Salija, 2017). This study used guideline from Zemach & Rumisek (2005) who elaborated that to evaluate an essay, before starting writing an essay, check the outline for organization, support and topic development.

Pedagogically, this study is gradually expected to be able to reveal practical implications for second language teaching and learning in writing class, especially for the Essay Writing course. The following subsections, then, provide a brief description on the research participants, the research instruments, and the data analysis procedures.

1. Respondents

The participants of this study involved students in the third semester of 2020/2021 academic year enrolled in the Essay Writing course, at the English Department, Faculty of Letters, Universitas Pamulang (UNPAM), Tangerang Selatan - Banten. There were thirty (30) students participating in this study. These respondents were chosen due to the fact that they are taking the Essay Writing course, and one of the researchers was their lecturer of that course. Thus, it is hoped that it is more efficient to monitor the process of gathering the data.

2. Data collection and data analysis

In collecting the data, there were some stages to be conducted. The first stage was dealing with prewriting process. In this process, the respondents were asked to write an outline based on the selected topics as soon as they learn about "outlining an essay". Their lecturer (one of the researchers), then, gave her feedback for the outlines submitted and asked the respondents to revise their outlines if there were still any mistakes. The second stage was then concerned with writing process. After the respondents finished their final revision, they were asked to start writing their essays based on the outlines they made. From these two stages, thus, the researchers could collect their data to be analyzed to figure out the production of the students' outlines and essay writing.

Furthermore, the framework of the study will be based on the outline checklist proposed by Zemach & Rumisek (2005). This framework is considered suitable in order to achieve the objective of the study, which is analyzing students' essays. To analyze the data, thus, after the students create their outlines and essays, the researchers crosscheck the

students' work to figure out whether their essays are constructed based on their outlines.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This parts explain the results of data analysis and their discussion. The results were the answers of how the students constructed their outlines and essay writing.

FINDINGS

1. Students' Outline and essays

Zemach & Rumisek (2005) elaborated that to evaluate an essay, we have to check (1) the outline for organization, (2) support and (3) topic development. This theory becomes guidelines in analysis and uses as indicators in the table below. The checklist indicates whether the students follow the guidelines or not. The results of this study were presented in Table 1 as follows.

Table 1. Students Outline

Students	ORGANIZATION		SUPPORT			TOPIC DEVELOPMENT		
	Paragraph in the right order	Supporting points & details in the right order	Each main idea related to thesis statement	Each supporting point related to the paragraph's main idea	Each detail related to the paragraph's supporting points	Enough ideas to develop thesis statement	Enough supporting points for each main point	Enough details for every supporting points
1	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
2	-	-	-	√	-	-	√	√
3	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
4	√	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
6	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
9	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
11	√	√	-	√	√	√	√	√
12	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
13	√	√	-	-	-	-	-	-
14	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
15	√	√	-	-	-	-	√	√
16	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
17	√	√	√	√	√	-	√	√
18	√	√	-	√	√	√	√	√
19	√	√	-	√	√	√	-	-
20	-	-	-	√	√	-	-	√
21	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
22	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
23	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
24	√	√	-	√	√	√	√	√
25	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
26	√	√	-	√	√	√	√	√
27	√	√	-	-	-	-	-	-
28	√	√	√	√	√	-	-	-
29	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
30	√	-	-	√	√	-	-	√
TOTAL	22	20	12	18	19	15	17	19
PERCENT AGE	73%	67%	40%	60%	63%	50%	57%	63%

The table above showed the results of students' outline for their essay. The results of the students' outline were divided into 3 (three) aspects: outline for organization, support and topic development.

To begin, the construction of organizing the

paragraph had the highest number at 73% for Paragraphs in the right order. 22 out of 30 students who wrote the paragraph were in a correct organization. Additionally, for supporting points and details in order, there were 67% students that had the right order to do it. These findings revealed that in their outline most students presented the paragraphs and supporting points and details in a right order. Likewise, they arranged the list of their ideas and put them in order.

Table 2. Sample of students outline

Name : M. Miguel Adrian Pasha
NIM : 191010600378
Mata Kuliah : Essay Writing
Fak/Jurusan : Sastra Inggris
Semester/Kelas: III
Dosen : Umi Hani

"Why Buying a House is a Better Option than Buying a Car"

- I. Introduction:
 - A. **Introductory Statement**
 - B. **Thesis Statement:** People should buy a house before a car because *a house price will increase over time, it decreases your worries, and it forces you into saving more money.*
- II. Body:
 - A. **First Supporting Idea:** Housing price always increases over time
 1. Owning a home can be a smart investment.
 2. Price of a house will always go up compared to the price of a car.
 - B. **Second Supporting Idea:** It decreases your worries
 1. You will have no worries of paying rent.
 2. It gives you a sense of ownership and paying the monthly mortgage could be the same as paying monthly rent.
 - C. **Third Supporting Idea:** It forces you into saving more money.
 1. Buying a house is simpler than allocating your money into other investments or your saving accounts.
- III. Conclusions

Even though it would be a challenging decision, I promise you, it would also be worth your hard work. Buying a house of your own preference will be the best choice you make for yourself and the future of your family.

Meanwhile, in the support, from 30 students, there were only 12 students (40%) who were successful in writing the main idea related to the thesis statement. According to the table, it had by far the lowest percentage of the outline components in all aspects which had 40%. Moreover, in Support for Each supporting point related to the paragraph's main idea which was 60% was slightly lower than in Support for Each detail related to the paragraph's supporting points which was 63%. The findings of this study suggested that 40% of students were not successful associating each main idea with the thesis statement.

Moreover, in the topic development, there were 50% students who developed enough ideas from their thesis statement, and there were 57% students who developed enough supporting points for each main idea. Moreover, there were 63% students who developed enough details for each supporting points. The finding proposed that 50% students could develop enough ideas to develop a thesis statement.

2. Students' Essay Writing: Do they create their essay based on their outlines?

This section presents the results of investigating students' writing whether or not the respondents construct their essays based on their outline.

Table 2. Students' Essay Writing

Students			ORGANIZATION		SUPPORT			TOPIC DEVELOPMENT		
	Follow Outline	Did not follow outline	Paragraph in the right order	Supporting points & details in the right order	Each main idea related to thesis statement	Each supporting point related to the paragraph's main idea	Each detail related to the paragraph's supporting points	Enough ideas to develop thesis statement	Enough supporting points for each main point	Enough details for every supporting points
1	√	-	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
2	-	√	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3	√	-	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
4	√	-	√	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5	-	√	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
6	√	-	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
7	√	-	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
8	√	-	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
9	√	-	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
10	-	√	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
11	√	-	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
12	-	√	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
13	√	-	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
14	√	-	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
15	√	-	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
16	√	-	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
17	√	-	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
18	√	-	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
19	√	-	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
20	√	-	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
21	-	√	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
22	√	-	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
23	√	-	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
24	√	-	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
25	√	-	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
26	√	-	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
27	√	-	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
28	√	-	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
29	-	√	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
30	√	-	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
TOTAL	24	6	22	20	12	18	19	15	17	19
PERCENTAGE	80%	20%	73%	67%	40%	60%	63%	50%	57%	63%

The table above represented the results of the totality of students who followed and did not follow their outline they have created to be developed into their essay. From the table shown above, the results revealed that most of the students followed or wrote their essays based on the outline they have produced. It can be said that when the students wrote an essay from their outline, most students followed their outline and were successful in developing paragraph with appropriate order. It can be seen that from 30 students who took part of this study, there were 24 students could develop an outline in their writing, and there were 6 students who did not follow an outline to their writing. It can, thus, be suggested that 80% of students were successful in developing their outline in their writing. Even though they were successful in following their outlines to their writing, the outcomes in their essay revealed that some students were not able to develop their ideas, add some relevant contents, and focus their ideas to their thesis statement.

DISCUSSION

1. Student's Outline

Tardiff & Brizee (2010) mentioned that essay outlines provide structure and guidance. This following guide includes all these components when students make an outline for their essay.

Furthermore, they stated that the number or letter system for a format outline is illustrated in the model outline that follows: I) Introduction ((a). Introduce a topic, (b). State a thesis). II) Body. Paragraph-1 becomes the topic sentence of body paragraph 1 ((a). Write a topic sentence (the argument for your thesis) becomes a support sentence of body paragraph 1, (b). Support this argument: data, facts, and examples, (c). Explain how they relate to your thesis. III) Body Paragraph-2 becomes the topic sentence of body paragraph 2 ((a) Write a topic sentence (another argument for your thesis), (b) Support this argument: data, facts, examples, (c) Explain how they relate to your thesis. IV) Body Paragraph-3 becomes the topic sentence of body paragraph 3 ((a) Write a topic sentence (another argument for your thesis, or a counterargument), (b) Support this argument, or explain why the counterargument doesn't work: data, facts, examples (c) Explain how they relate to your thesis. V) Conclusion ((a) Summarize all main points, (b) Restate your thesis, and (c) Add a call to action: what you want readers to do after reading your essay.

To investigate the students' outline, the framework of the study was based on the outline checklist proposed by Zemach & Rumisek (2005). They elaborated that to evaluate an essay, before starting writing an essay, check the outline for organization, support and topic development. In organization, they are two things to be evaluated; (Paragraphs in the right order, and Supporting points and details in the right order). In Support, there are three things to be checked; (Each main idea related to the thesis statement, each supporting point related to the paragraph's main idea, and each detail related to the paragraph's supporting points). In Topic Development, there are three things to be assessed; (Enough (and not too many) main ideas to develop the thesis statement, Enough (and not too many) supporting points for each main point, and Enough (and not many) details for each supporting point)

The findings on the organization, it had a much higher at 67% for Supporting points and details in the right order. It can be concluded that doing an outline aided students in creating and organizing their thoughts in a sequential way when they begin the composing prepare. In addition, an outline gives students stable base when they started the writing process as Zemach & Rumisek (2005) say, an outline is a list of information that will be put in an essay.

The findings of this study on Support aspect suggested that 40% of students were not successful associating each main idea with the thesis statement. It is a fact that thesis statement is appeared in the essay's introductory paragraph. In the introduction of essay writing contains of general statement and

thesis statement. From the results in this aspect, the percentage was not high and this was attributed to the fact that in their writing. For more detail, it will be told over later in "Students' Essay Writing" discussion part.

Moreover, the finding on topic development suggested that 50% students could develop enough ideas to develop a thesis statement. There were several explanations for this result. An explanation for this, their thesis statement announced developing the topic but some did not write nothing relevant about the topic and could not support with evidence because of having weaknesses of a thesis. Another explanation for this was that in their writing, when they presented their writing prepare an outline with the information they have gathered, they implemented their thought related to the information. Therefore, they could present their writing in an organized way.

2. Students' Essay Writing

The main goal to conduct this study was to examine students' outline and their essay, that is, whether or not they develop their essays based on their outlines. Similarly, Langan (1999) said that outlining develops a quick check on whether the paper is unified.

From the table 2, there were 6 students who did not follow the outline for their writing. As shown in table, it was because when their outline was unsuccessful. In this, the writers concluded that when students constructed an outline, some of them wrote paragraphs or supporting points in no right order. Besides, the students did not follow or wrote their essays based on the outline they have created.

From the results in Support aspect, there were 40% of students who were not successful associating each main idea with the thesis statement. In this aspect, the percentage was not high and this was attributed to the fact that in their writing. Most students did not clarify and explain the topic sentence, and there were no clear introduction of the thesis of their writing. Despite the fact that a thesis statement is crucial and the foundation of everything in their essay, they did not follow everything in the essay based on their thesis statement they generated. Furthermore, in their writing, the writers found that their thesis statement could not be supported with evidence and even was not related with the topic. This finding can be suggested that those happened because of having weaknesses of a thesis statement. This result seems to confirm the finding as in the Topic Development result.

In addition, the finding on topic development suggested that only 50% students could develop enough ideas to develop a thesis statement. It

indicated that they did not write nothing relevant about the topic and could not support with evidence because of having weaknesses of a thesis. Moreover, Tardiff & Brizee (2009) said that there are some parts of an essay that is put them all into an essay outline namely introduction, body, and conclusion. They clarified that in Introduction, students mention the topic of the essay and its thesis. Besides, Essays can't live without a thesis; so, a thesis statement in students' outline will help them support it in each paragraph of your essay body. From the results of their essays, the writers announced that when students wrote in developing a topic, their writing was not enough or too many main ideas to develop a thesis statement, supporting points for each main point, and details for each supporting points. For this, the writers concluded that they might not understand the topic they were going to write and the supporting sentences, clarify and explain the topic sentence, and there were no clear introduction of the thesis of the paper. Subsequently, some students did not follow their essays based on the outline they have produced. Hence, the essays they constructed are not well-organized. The writers pointed to the conclusion for this aspect that some students might have less ignorance or be confused with the function of the outlines.

CONCLUSION

From the results of analyzing of students' outline and essay writing, it was found that the highest percentage (73%) in constructing an outline was in Organization for Paragraphs in the right order. It can be stated that most of students when they produced an outline and developed their ideas to write an essay from their outline, they did what was written on their outline. On the other hand, in Support for each main idea related to the thesis statement (40%) had the lowest percentage. It can be declared that the most challenging aspect which students had in constructing an outline and essay was in Support for Each main idea related to the thesis statement because from 30 students, there were 12 students who were able to make writing the main idea related to the thesis statement. In addition, there were 80% students who followed their outline and were successful in developing paragraph with correct order when they wrote an essay from their outline. On the other hand, In their essay, some students were not capable of cultivating their ideas, enhance some related contents, and emphasis their ideas to their thesis statement, even they were successful in following their outlines to their writing.

Based on research conducted and the conclusion above, the writers would like to give suggestions. For the lecturer who teaches a course

of essay writing, first, it is suggested to guide students properly by using step-by-step procedures so that the students feel comfortable in writing the essay from the outline they made and give explicit explanation related to the revision given is needed. Therefore, the students can organize the ideas in their writing. Moreover, it is also recommended that since the results was about support relates to the thesis statement aspect in getting the lowest percentage, it is important to be noticed to explain more and emphasize about having good thesis statement. Furthermore, for the next researcher who is interested in conducting the same area with this study, it is suggested to analyze and dig more about the essay itself.

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