



LOGICAL ORGANIZATION SKILLS IN PARAGRAPH DEVELOPMENT

Conchita Malenab-Temporal, Ph.D., English Instructor, College of Teacher Education, Cagayan State University, Andrews Campus, Tuguegarao City

Abstract: *Effective writing depends on one's ability to structure and organize words and sentences into a meaningful whole requiring a host of skills in content, organization, and style. Hence, this study investigated the logical organization skills as a higher order thinking skill of sophomore college students in identifying topic sentences and in determining the major and minor ideas using jumbled sentences in seven modes of paragraph development such as details, definition, examples, process, cause and effect, comparison and contrast, and classification. It made use of descriptive-correlational design through a written test and a survey questionnaire. The respondents of the study were second year college students from different colleges/departments and who had taken up the subject Writing in the Discipline. Results show that students have a good performance in identifying topic sentences. However, the results in identifying the major idea show that they have not fully mastered the skill. Similarly, students' performance in sequencing ideas also shows that they have not fully mastered the skill in identifying minor ideas in its proper sequence in order to form a coherent paragraph. On the whole, it was found that overall performance of students in logical organization and their competence in paragraph organization using the seven modes of paragraph development have been found fair.*

Key words: *logical organization skills, paragraph development, modes of paragraph development, topic sentence, major and minor ideas*

INTRODUCTION

Writing, as a language skill, is a power instrument of thinking because it provides learners with a way of gaining control over their thoughts. The learner's understanding of the use of language can lead to writing competence which was opined by Batin (2004) as a vital component of academic success especially at a university level as content courses require more and more of papers that come in the form of case studies, book reports, essays, critiques, term paper, and the like. These writing activities are indicators of increasing demands for higher levels of communicative competence, mastery of content, critical thinking and research skills not only of a globally competitive education but also of an



increasing knowledge-based society. However, this writing competence seems elusive to learners despite the constant and concentrated efforts by teachers to teach composition and the related skills of grammar, usage, and mechanics. Despite seemingly large amount of time devoted to the subject, students perform badly in written English. Students find it difficult to organize and recognize the function word in a given sentence and to perform the twin tasks of putting together sentences to form grammatically. They commit many mistakes organizing ideas in a sentence and sentences into paragraph. Hence, the motivation for the conduct of the study which serves as an achievement-assessment of the logical organization skills of learners if they really developed their writing skills whether these were taught or not taught to them.

METHODOLOGY

The study made use of the descriptive-correlational research design in determining the logical organization skills of college students in paragraph development. It made use of a test that assessed the logical organization skills, specifically in assessing students' ability to identify topic sentences and major idea and their ability to identify minor ideas in proper sequence. The respondents of the study were second year college students who come from different colleges/departments. The written test covered seven types of paragraphs developed by means of details, cause and effect, comparison and contrast, definition, example, classification, and process. Two paragraphs were selected in each type and each paragraph consisted of jumbled sentences. The students were asked to arrange them in order to form a coherent paragraph through the recognition of proper sequence of the paragraph, topic sentences, major idea, and minor ideas.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Performance of Students in Identifying Topic Sentence

The students were asked to identify topic sentences, either explicitly or implicitly stated, to assess their organization skills in paragraph development. The results show that students have good performance and average mastery of the skill in identifying topic sentences. This finding means that majority of the students who were tested have good background training of the identification of topic sentences whether directly or not directly stated in the paragraph. In addition, the students are knowledgeable that in most short paragraphs, topic sentences are usually directly stated at the beginning of the paragraph.



Although students are aware of the absence of the topic sentence in the paragraph, they do not have enough mastery as to how they should state the topic in a sentence.

Performance of Students in Identifying Major and Minor Ideas

Students have not fully mastered the skill of identifying major idea. They could well identify topic sentence but they could not well master the skill in identifying major ideas. This finding shows that students do not have background knowledge that topic sentence also contains the major idea of the paragraph.

Moreover, students were assessed on their performance in identifying minor ideas, especially in sequencing these minor ideas. Results show that students' performance in this skill is not as reliable as that of their skills in identifying topic sentence and major idea. It could be gleaned that they have not mastered the skill in identifying minor ideas in its proper sequence in order to form a coherent paragraph.

On the whole, results of the written test in English administered to students show that the students have fair performance in logical organization.

Performance of Students in the Different Methods of Paragraph Development

The students were assessed on the extent of their performance in organizing major and minor ideas developed by means of details, cause and effect, comparison and contrast, definition, process, examples, and classification.

Of the seven methods of paragraph development, Definition is the easiest for students to master and organize since it is a common method usually employed in developing an idea. Normally, in a paragraph developed by definition, the first sentence is the topic sentence and all other sentences are subordinate to it. Cause and Effect is an easier method for students to organize which explains that students are trained of knowing the reasons and relationships of the existence of an idea as corollary to their knowing of the consequences of their actions. This further means that if a student could well identify the sentence that states the cause, he would know that the other sentences state the effect. Examples, Details, and Process are easy methods for students to develop because these are basic principles in explanation, especially in meeting students' need and exposure to specificity and concreteness of items.

Classification and Comparison and Contrast turned out to be the most difficult methods for students to master and organize. This finding is attributed to the fact that grouping or



categorizing and discussing similarities and differences are activities that involve more analysis since both methods contain two or more items of relatively equal importance to be organized. This is further supported by H. Moore in his book *Effective Writing* where he stated that dealing with two or more ideas is more difficult than dealing with only one outstanding concept.

Overall Competence of Students in Paragraph Development

The students were assessed of their competence in paragraph organization in all seven modes of paragraph development by using a rubric scale. Results show that most of the students are competent in organizing their thoughts or ideas in the different modes which implies that they have a good understanding of how writers organize their ideas. It could also be implied that students have a good training of being aware of the organizational structures inherent in a text which makes a difference in the kind of readers and writers they would become. The performance of the students proves that they make careful observation as to how a text is arranged by the writer from his main idea to his minor ideas. As Olive Niles, a pioneer in literacy education often said that students need to know how to look for organization in everything they read, and to know what to do when they find it. Students are also aware that writers often showcase a text by giving readers a clue or a signal which linguists call connectives, transition devices, or ties that help them figure out the organization.

Relationship between Students' Ability to Identify Topic Sentence and to Organize Supporting Details

The study hypothesized that there is no relationship between students' ability to identify topic sentence and to organize supporting details. Results show that the ability of students to identify topic sentence significantly relates to their ability to identify major idea and is also significantly related to their ability to identify minor ideas. Students' knowledge of the topic sentence is a great factor that also affects their knowledge of the supporting sentences. The topic sentence is normally the key of students in organizing other details in the paragraph, so if a student fails to correctly identify the topic sentence, he will definitely commit error in identifying minor ideas in the paragraph. The findings generally imply that the students' ability to identify topic sentence, major idea, and minor ideas greatly



contributes to the organization performance of the students. Mastery of these skills facilitates the processing of thought in paragraph development.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that sophomore college students are capable of identifying topic sentences and major idea and in organizing minor ideas. Students' ability to logically organize paragraphs has a positive significant relationship to their skills of identifying topic sentence and subordinate ideas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the findings and the conclusions made, the following are recommended:

1. Teachers need to be more emphatic of their discussion of thought organization so as to enhance more students' thinking capabilities. This must be coupled with interesting reading materials to raise the interest level of students to read and process information carefully, and to challenge students of their higher order thinking skills.
2. Students should be more guided of their writing practices and outputs. Rills and exercise in writing English composition provide by teachers should be assessed and feedback of students' performance should be echoed to students.
3. A replicate study is suggested to further validate the data assessed. One technique to be used in validation could be an actual observation to assess how teachers use methods and strategies in their attempt to develop organization skill among students.

REFERENCES

1. Batin, E. 2004. *The process approach to writing: a principled and research-based writing pedagogy.*
2. Khan, Z. 2014. *How to build good writing habits.*
3. Navarro, H.et.al.2009. *An integrated approach to writing.*
4. Pascasio, E. et.al. *Basic English for College.*
5. Pellegrino, V. 2003. *A writer's guide to powerful paragraphs.*
6. Pitt, D. 2012. *Secrets of successful writers.*
7. Robles, F. *Developing English proficiency in college.*
8. Villamin, A. 2001. *Gateways and skyways to developmental reading.*



9. Materials for students: writing the academic paper, <http://www.dartmouth.edu>
10. Writing: considering structure and organization, <http://www.csuohio.edu/writingcenter/organize.html>
11. Crafting paragraphs, <http://www.csuohio.edu/writingcenter/paragraf.html>
12. Paragraph development, <http://www.winona.edu/writingcenter/assessment.htm>