

The Effectiveness of the Outlining Technique in Overcoming Writing Difficulties in Descriptive Text Among Eighth-Grade Students of SMP Negeri 31 Medan

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This study aims to investigate the effectiveness of the outlining technique in improving students' writing skill in descriptive texts among Grade VIII students of SMP Negeri 31 Medan in the 2025–2026 academic year. This study is motivated by students' low writing skill in descriptive texts, particularly in developing ideas, organizing text structure coherently, and using appropriate vocabulary and grammar. This research employed a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental design using a pre-test and post-test control group design. The sample consisted of 60 Grade VIII students, divided into two groups: the experimental class (VIII-7) and the control class (VIII-8), each consisting of 30 students selected through purposive sampling. The experimental group was taught using the outlining technique, while the control group was taught using conventional teaching methods. The data were collected through pre-test and post-test assessments and analyzed using normality test, homogeneity test, independent samples t-test, and paired sample t-test. The results of the study indicate that there is a significant difference between the experimental and control groups based on the independent samples t-test result, with a t-value of 6.063 and a significance level of $0.000 < 0.05$, leading to the rejection of H_0 and acceptance of H_a . Furthermore, the paired sample t-test results show that both groups experienced a significant improvement; however, the experimental group achieved a higher increase compared to the control group. The mean score of the experimental group increased from 69.33 to 88.33, while the control group increased from 62.33 to 77.17. Therefore, it can be concluded that the outlining technique is effective in improving students' writing skill in descriptive texts.

Keywords: Writing Skill, Outlining Technique, Descriptive Text

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1. Introduction

English is one of the essential subjects taught in schools because it serves as an international language used in various fields of global communication. In learning English, students are expected to master four main skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Among these skills, writing is often considered the most challenging because it requires not only mastery of grammar and vocabulary but also the ability to organize ideas logically and coherently.

Writing is an active process that involves planning, drafting, and revising texts to ensure that the message is clearly communicated to the reader [1]. It is also a complex process that requires critical thinking, organizing ideas, and effective language use for communication purposes [2]. Therefore, writing is not merely about constructing sentences; rather, it is an integrated process that combines thinking, organizing information, and using language effectively.

In line with current educational policies, English learning in junior high schools follows the Merdeka Curriculum, which was introduced by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemdikbudristek) in 2022. This curriculum emphasizes student-centered learning, competency

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development, and critical thinking skills through various genre-based texts. One of the text types that eighth-grade students must master is descriptive text, which aims to provide detailed descriptions of people, places, animals, or objects while considering communicative purposes, text structure, and language features.

In classroom practice, however, students' ability in writing descriptive texts is still relatively low. Based on observations at SMP Negeri 31 Medan, eighth-grade students experience difficulties in developing ideas in depth, organizing paragraphs coherently, and using correct grammatical structures. In addition, limited vocabulary also affects the quality of their writing. As a result, students tend to write without proper planning, producing texts that are unstructured and difficult to understand. This condition shows the urgency of improving students' writing skills through an effective teaching technique.

Therefore, it is necessary to determine an appropriate technique that can help students overcome these difficulties in writing. One of the techniques that can be applied is the outlining technique. Outlining is a pre-writing strategy that helps students organize their ideas before writing. Previous studies have shown that the outlining technique is effective in improving students' writing skills [3]. found that students who used outlining experienced a significant improvement in organizing ideas and writing descriptive texts. Similarly, reported that outlining helped students improve coherence and structure in writing [4]. The objective of this study is to investigate the effect of the outlining technique on eighth-grade students' writing skills in writing descriptive texts at SMP Negeri 31 Medan.

2. Literature Review and Problem

Writing is one of the essential language skills that enables students to express ideas, thoughts, and information in written form. Effective writing requires students to organize ideas, use appropriate vocabulary and grammar, and produce coherent texts [5]. In English language learning, descriptive text is an important genre taught to eighth-grade students because it helps them describe people, places, animals, or objects in a detailed and systematic way [6]. However, many students still face difficulties in generating ideas, organizing information, and developing supporting details when writing descriptive texts. To address these difficulties, the outlining technique has been proposed as an effective pre-writing strategy. Outlining helps students arrange main ideas and supporting details before writing, allowing them to produce more organized and coherent texts [7]. Previous studies have reported that the outlining technique contributes positively to students' writing performance by improving idea organization, coherence, and paragraph development [8]; [9]; [10].

Although previous studies have shown the benefits of the outlining technique, most of them were conducted in different educational settings and focused on writing performance in general. Limited research has specifically investigated the effectiveness of the outlining technique in overcoming students' difficulties in writing descriptive texts among eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 31 Medan. This gap indicates the need for further research in this context. Therefore, the research problem of this study is whether the outlining technique is effective in overcoming students' difficulties in writing descriptive texts among eighth-grade students of SMP Negeri 31 Medan and to what extent it improves students' descriptive writing. Based on this research problem, the null hypothesis (H_0) states that the outlining technique has no significant effect on students' writing of descriptive texts, while the alternative hypothesis (H_a) states that the outlining technique has a significant effect on students' writing of descriptive texts.

3. Method

This study employed a quantitative approach using a quasi-experimental design with a non-equivalent control group design. The study was conducted at SMP Negeri 31 Medan during the 2025/2026 academic year. The population consisted of 284 eighth-grade students distributed across nine classes. Through purposive sampling, two classes were selected as the research sample, namely class VIII-7 as the experimental group (31 students) and class VIII-8 as the control group (30 students). The research instrument was a descriptive writing test administered in two stages: a pre-test and a post-test. The pre-test was conducted to determine the students' initial writing performance, while the post-test was used to measure the effect of the outlining technique after the treatment. Students were asked to write a descriptive text individually based on a given topic. Their writing was assessed using a scoring rubric covering five aspects: content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics.

The experimental group was taught using the outlining technique, whereas the control group received conventional instruction. The treatment was conducted in several meetings. In the experimental class, students were guided to organize their ideas through outlining before developing them into complete descriptive texts. Meanwhile, students in the control class directly wrote descriptive texts without using an outline. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS version 25. The analysis included calculating the mean score to determine students' average performance, conducting a normality test to examine whether the data were normally distributed, and performing a homogeneity test to determine whether the variances of both groups were equal. After the assumptions of normality and homogeneity were fulfilled, an Independent Samples t-test was conducted to examine the significance of differences between the experimental and control groups. In addition, a Paired Samples t-test was used to determine the significance of the improvement between pre-test and post-test scores within each group. The level of significance applied in this study was 0.05.

4. Results And Discussion

The data were obtained from the pre-test and post-test scores of both classes, namely the experimental class and the control class. The data analysis was carried out using SPSS version 25 with several techniques, namely descriptive statistics to describe the data, normality tests to examine data distribution, homogeneity tests to test the equality of variances, and hypothesis testing to determine the effect of the treatment given.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 4.1 Descriptive Statistics

	Posttest_Experimental	Pretest_Experimental	Posttest_Control	Pretest_Control
N Valid	30	30	30	30
Missing	0	0	0	0
Mean	88.33	69.33	77.17	62.33
Std. Deviation	7.466	9.714	6.783	7.397
Variance	55.747	94.368	46.006	54.713
Range	25	35	25	25
Minimum	75	55	65	50
Maximum	100	90	90	75

Both groups showed improvement after treatment. However, the experimental class increased more significantly (69.33 to 88.33) compared to the control class (62.33 to 77.17). This indicates that the outlining technique helped students improve their writing performance better than conventional teaching.

Normality Test

Table 4.2 Result of Normality Test

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Posttest_Experimental	.155	30	.064	.933	30	.058
Pretest_Experimental	.139	30	.145	.952	30	.188
Posttest_Control	.159	30	.052	.944	30	.115
Pretest_Control	.174	30	.021	.931	30	.052

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Based on the results of the normality test in Table 4.6, all significance values in both the experimental and control groups were higher than 0.05. The experimental group showed values of 0.058 for the post-test and 0.188 for the pre-test, while the control group showed values of 0.115 for the post-test and 0.052 for the pre-test. Therefore, it can be concluded that the data were normally distributed and met the assumption of normality for parametric statistical analysis.

Homogeneity Test

Table 4.3 Reult of Pre-test Homogeneity Test

Value	Based on	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
	Mean	2.451	1	58	.123
	Median	2.245	1	58	.139
	Median and with adjusted df	2.245	1	57.709	.139
	trimmed mean	2.507	1	58	.119

Based on the results of the homogeneity test, the significance value obtained from Levene's Test was 0.123, which is higher than 0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that the data from the experimental and control groups were homogeneous and had equal variances, indicating that the data met the assumption for parametric statistical analysis.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 4.4 Result of Independent Sample t-test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Value	Equal variances assumed	.348	.557	6.063	58	.000	11.167	1.842	7.480	14.853
	Equal variances not assumed			6.063	57.473	.000	11.167	1.842	7.479	14.854

The results of the Independent Sample t-test showed a significant difference between the experimental and control groups, with $t = 6.063$ and $p = 0.000 < 0.05$. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected.

In addition, the results of the Paired Sample t-test indicated a significant improvement in both groups. The experimental group obtained a t-value of 18.476, while the control group obtained a t-value of 18.259, showing that both groups improved after the treatment.

The findings of this study are consistent with previous studies on the use of the outlining technique in writing instruction. Quantitative studies conducted by [4] and [2] reported significant improvements in students' writing skills after the implementation of outlining activities. Similar to the present study, these studies found that outlining helps students organize ideas, improve paragraph coherence, and develop content more effectively. The significant difference between the experimental and control groups in this study ($t = 6.063$; $p < 0.05$) further strengthens the evidence that outlining contributes positively to students' writing skills.

However, previous studies also have several limitations. Most quantitative studies primarily focused on score improvement and provided limited explanations regarding how students experienced the outlining process during writing activities. In contrast, qualitative studies offer deeper insights into students' learning experiences and demonstrate how outlining facilitates idea generation and organization, although they often lack statistical evidence to measure the magnitude of improvement. Meanwhile, case study research provides a more comprehensive understanding of the implementation of outlining in specific classroom contexts; however, its findings may not be easily generalized to other educational settings due to the limited number of participants involved.

The consistency of findings across different research designs can be explained by the primary function of outlining as a pre-writing strategy. Regardless of the research design employed, outlining assists students in planning, organizing, and connecting ideas before developing them into a complete text. Nevertheless, variations in the level of improvement reported across studies may be influenced by differences in sample size, students' educational level, text genre, treatment duration, and classroom conditions. For instance, studies conducted at different educational levels or focusing on different writing genres may produce varying degrees of effectiveness because students possess different writing abilities and learning needs.

The findings of this study indicate that students in the experimental group achieved greater improvement than those in the control group. This suggests that the outlining technique not only improves writing performance statistically but also helps students overcome common writing difficulties, particularly in organizing ideas, developing paragraphs, and maintaining coherence. Therefore, the findings of this study provide both theoretical and empirical support for the effectiveness of the outlining technique in improving students' descriptive writing skills.

The researcher compared the findings with previous relevant studies on outlining techniques in writing instruction. The results are generally consistent with previous research, which states that outlining helps students organize ideas more effectively. The similarities are explained based on teaching methods and classroom context. The phenomenon found in this study shows that students in the experimental class experienced higher improvement compared to the control class. This supports the theory that outlining helps students produce more structured and coherent writing. Based on the findings, the researcher draws preliminary conclusions that the outlining technique has a positive effect on students' writing skill in descriptive text and serves as a basis for the final conclusion of the study.

5. Conclusion

The conclusion of this study summarizes the main findings and explains the extent to which the research objectives have been achieved. The results show that the outlining technique has a significant effect on students' writing skill in descriptive text at SMP Negeri 31 Medan. This is supported by the increase in the

mean score of the experimental class from 69.33 in the pre-test to 88.33 in the post-test, while the control class increased from 62.33 to 77.17. In addition, the result of the Independent Sample t-test showed a significance value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$), indicating a significant difference between the experimental and control classes. The Paired Sample t-test also showed a significant improvement in the experimental class ($p < 0.05$). These findings are consistent with previous studies which state that outlining techniques help students organize ideas before writing, resulting in more structured and coherent texts. The results indicate that students in the experimental class performed better because they were able to plan and develop their ideas more systematically using outlines. The phenomenon found in this study shows that students' difficulties in writing descriptive texts, such as organizing ideas and developing paragraphs, decreased after the implementation of the outlining technique. This indicates that the technique has both academic and practical significance in improving students' writing performance. Overall, it can be concluded that the outlining technique is effective in improving students' writing skill in descriptive text and can be considered an effective teaching strategy at the junior high school level.

Despite the positive findings, this study has several limitations. The research was conducted only among eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 31 Medan and focused specifically on descriptive text writing. Therefore, the findings may not fully represent students in different educational contexts or writing genres. Based on these limitations, future researchers are encouraged to investigate the effectiveness of the outlining technique with larger samples, different educational levels, and various types of texts. Further studies may also explore the long-term impact of outlining on students' writing development to provide a more comprehensive understanding of its effectiveness.

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