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CREATING MATERIALS FOR TEACHING ESSAY WRITING IN UPPER
SECONDARY SCHOOL

MA Thesis

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ABSTRACT

Writing is often seen as culturally specific, learned behaviour (Brown 2001: 334). A student who is able to write an excellent essay in one's mother tongue might not be able to do it in a foreign language (Kaplan 2001). Thus, essay writing is a skill which needs to be taught consistently. When writing an English essay, one has to consider several aspects; in addition to using appropriate vocabulary and grammar along with correct spelling and punctuation, development of ideas, as well as requirements established to organisation, are to be paid attention to. To foster that students focus on the content rather than just the accuracy of their essays, principles of the process approach could be beneficial.

The purpose of the present thesis is to create teaching materials for writing essays in upper secondary school; the materials are integrated with elements of formative assessment. The latter get students involved in evaluation via self- and peer assessment raising their motivation and enhancing learners' ability to analyse their learning at the same time.

The thesis falls into an introduction, two core chapters and a conclusion. The first chapter lists the requirements for an English essay and gives an overview of how to teach writing it using principles of the process approach. Additionally, the concepts of formative assessment as well as means of it are discussed.

The second chapter focuses on describing the teaching materials compiled as part of the present thesis. The materials were tested and their efficiency analysed. The improved materials can be found in the appendices of the present thesis.

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INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the most important foreign language skills that needs to be developed, yet it tends to be one of the least appealing activities to many school students who study English as a foreign language; hence, challenging to teach. The given claim is mainly based on the author's twenty-one-year-long experience as an English teacher. One reason for that may lie in students' fear to make mistakes while writing; a learner, being too focused on producing a linguistically correct text with an aim to get a good mark for it, is likely to lose creativity and encounter the lack of ideas. On the other hand, writing can be regarded as aversive because it takes more time and requires greater effort to be invested in when compared to any other activity. That might lead students to the loss of motivation and, as a result, to rather weak performance.

The results of the English national examination also demonstrate that writing appears to be one of the most complicated skills to acquire for Estonian learners of English. According to Kriisa (2017), in 2017 the average result for writing was the lowest reaching up to 65,1% compared to listening (66,2%), reading (71,6%), and speaking (78,5%). What is more, quite similar tendencies have been seen over the last four years. However, it is quite likely that today's upper secondary school graduates enter an English-speaking labour-market or an academic institution. Thus, the need for good performance of English writing is regarded as essential. Good writing skills equip students with an ability to communicate effectively not only in the written language but also in speaking. What is more, how good a person is in writing is closely related to their reading performance and is hence, transferrable. Therefore, it is likely that writing needs to be taught consistently in the English classroom.

Regarding writing performance, the national curriculum of Estonia for upper secondary schools (2011 Appendix 2: 17) establishes that school graduates who have reached B2 level in English are able to summarise both oral and written texts, write informal, semi-formal, and formal letters, and produce coherent and cohesive essays which follow logical argument. In the English national examination, students have to perform two tasks: writing a semi-formal or a formal letter and writing a report or an essay. To the author, teaching essay writing tends to be more challenging than the rest of the task types; this is mainly due to the stylistic differences of the given genre in English and Estonian.

Specifically, there are several aspects that students are to consider when they write an English essay. Amongst those are the structure of the given piece of writing, development of ideas and argumentation, appropriate use of vocabulary and grammar as well as correct spelling and punctuation. What is more, the written text is expected to be clear and meaningful. As can be seen, there are several aspects that need to be paid attention to and that probably makes English essay writing rather difficult. Furthermore, the process itself needs much effort; that apparently gives rise to a fairly negative attitude towards writing amongst students.

Kaplan (2001) mentions that a student who can produce a good essay in one's native language is not necessarily able to do it in a foreign language. On the one hand, learners might find writing in a foreign language challenging as they seem not to have enough vocabulary; sentence structure and grammar differ from those in their mother tongue, too. On the other hand, language learners are likely to use "rhetoric and sequence of thought" peculiar to their native language and, as a result, are likely to produce a piece of writing which is indistinct and out of focus if assessed from the perspective of Anglo-American writing tradition, accepted in both Britain and the USA. Students of China, for example, have difficulty in writing English

essays due to their historical and cultural background (Li 1996). Since the educational tradition of the given nation is largely based on memorising, development of creativity tends to be left out of focus. Differences in organisational patterns merely exacerbate the situation (Kaplan 2001).

Studies to prove which problems Estonian students encounter regarding English essay writing could not be found, yet difficulties are likely to occur. The claim derives from the author's personal experience as a teacher of English. One reason why Estonian students might find English essay writing rather demanding can be explained with different requirements established for Estonian and English essays. Maaja Hage (2003: 43), the author of the coursebook used in Estonian upper secondary schools to teach Estonian discourse of text and speech, claims that Estonian essays have no peculiar features. An Estonian essay does state a problem as well as a novel and/or personal perspective, yet it does not have a very strict structure (Merilai et al 2007: 192). Differently from an Anglo-American style, paragraphs in Estonian essays do not necessarily begin with topic sentences; hence, might cause perplexity. The function of the thesis statement and its relationship with body paragraphs also appears to remain quite vague. Considering the established requirements to English essays and using the knowledge received from the author's experience as an English teacher, it can be stated that Estonian learners of English are likely to encounter difficulties in essay writing due to the cultural and stylistic influence of their mother tongue. What is more, English spelling, punctuation, language use, and vocabulary also need great attention. Thus, in order to write an adequate English essay, one has to be aware of the essence of writing in the same language as well as the requirements for the given genre.

The textbooks used by the author to give essay writing instructions tend not to meet the needs of an average Estonian language learner; for example, not enough attention is paid to

writing the thesis statement or topic sentences. Therefore, additional teaching materials need to be found. Clearly, it is not difficult to access the latter in today's computerised era but searching for suitable materials can be rather time-consuming. Furthermore, the necessity to adapt them to the needs of an Estonian student is likely to arise. That instilled the author to create compact materials for teaching essay writing to upper secondary school students.

One way to teach essay writing is to use the process approach. The process approach, which arose out of research in cognitive psychology, was first initiated by Janet Emig in the 1970s (Grabe & Kaplan 1996: 89). She began to view students as creators of a text who, in order to realise how authors actually produce their writings, go through various stages before the final draft is produced. In process writing, students enhance their writing skills through several classroom activities. It means that instead of merely receiving a piece of writing that has been created by themselves and corrected and analysed by their teacher, learners get assisted throughout the writing process and as a result, become more confident in writing step by step.

At each stage of the writing process, students get feedback and are assessed using formative assessment. Formative assessment is defined as “activities undertaken by teachers and by their students in assessing themselves that provide information to be used as feedback to modify teaching and learning activities“ (Black & William 2010). It is used to improve student learning (Shephard 2006; Stiggins 1994) and give learners as well as their parents a better understanding of what the learning goal is and what could be done to achieve it (Black & William 2010; Sadler 1989).

The purpose of the present thesis is to create teaching materials for writing essays in upper secondary school, integrating elements of formative assessment into them. The thesis is divided into two chapters. The first chapter discusses the peculiarities of Anglo-American

essays and presents an overview of teaching essay writing using principles of the process approach. In addition, the concept of formative assessment and means of it are discussed. The second chapter focuses on introducing the teaching materials compiled as part of the present thesis. Additionally, the analysis of the efficiency of the materials is carried out. The improved materials are included in the appendices. In the present thesis, the term ‘English essays’ is occasionally used to refer to those written in Anglo-American style of writing.

1 TEACHING ANGLO-AMERICAN ESSAY WRITING

As stated, there are stylistic differences between Estonian and Anglo-American essays; thus, principles of writing the latter are essential to be taught and the process of writing it needs to be practised. The present chapter gives an overview of the requirements established to an Anglo-American essay. In addition, the process approach as a means to teach essay writing to students of English is discussed. Since the process approach uses formative assessment to enhance student writing, the essence of it is also focused on.

1.1 Requirements of an Anglo-American essay

According to Kaplan (2001), an English essay is “an organised piece of writing that consists of paragraphs“. A paragraph begins with a topic sentence which, in order to prove or argue points successfully, is followed by a series of subdivisions, each supported by examples and illustrations. Thus, in English, an essay is a linear piece of writing that has a central idea which is elaborated and connected with all the other ideas in the whole essay. Another important feature of an English essay is cohesion, the way how sentences and its parts are linked together (FCE exam tips 2018; Kaplan 2001). To achieve it, cohesive devices, words that link individual sentences and parts of them, are used. Inserting such words within one’s writing results in the text which is flowing and enjoyable to read. In addition, coherence, the way of connecting points of an essay, is required to be present. In a coherent piece of writing, points are linked and flow in a straight line following the structure in which the next paragraph relates to the ideas from the previous one and the conclusion reflects on the points and language of the introduction (Kaplan 2001). Another component that influences coherence is

the thesis statement, the main idea of the essay that is put forward to be analysed and/or discussed (Pell 2017). A coherent text not only facilitates reading but is also easier to write (Pell 2017); hence, coherence is requisite for mastering.

Zemach and Rumisek (2005: 56), the authors of *Academic Writing*, claim that an essay has three parts: *the introduction*, *the main body*, and *the conclusion*. They are normally written as separate paragraphs, so an essay usually has at least three of them. The first paragraph of an essay is *the introduction*; it explains the topic with general ideas. It has the thesis statement which is usually presented at or near the end of the paragraph. To catch the reader's attention from the first lines of an essay, a 'hook' could be used (Chin et al 2012: 4); an intriguing piece of information, surprising statistics, or even a joke at the beginning of the introduction ensures that the essay catches attention. The introduction is followed by *the main body*. It consists of one or more paragraphs that explain and support the thesis statement with examples. Each body paragraph starts with a topic sentence which carries the main idea of the given paragraph. The topic sentence is followed by supporting sentences. They explain the topic sentence and contain more detailed ideas to sustain the writer's viewpoint. At the end of the body paragraph, there is a concluding sentence which summarises the main idea of the paragraph or gives the final comment about the topic. The last paragraph of an essay is *the conclusion*. It summarises the main ideas and restates the thesis statement (Chin et al 2012: 4).

Chin et al (2012: 4) have created a diagram to explain the structure of a five-paragraph essay (see Appendix 1). The scheme not only outlines the distinct parts of an essay but also demonstrates the relationship between different components of it. The authors' use of arrows, for instance, aims to show how the ideas listed in the thesis statement function when organising the main body of an essay. The arrows also draw students' attention to the

necessity to restate the thesis statement in the conclusion. The figure is designed to teach writing a five-paragraph essay, yet can be adapted for the shorter and longer ones, too.

In their essays, Estonian upper secondary school students are required to be able to write essays which discuss for and against arguments, outline causes of problems and suggest solutions to them, and express opinion on the given topic (National curriculum 2011, Appendix 2: 17).

According to Evans (2004: 64), *a for and against essay* is a type of an argumentative essay which considers the topic from opposing points of view and lists advantages and disadvantages of the given issue. An essay as such usually has four paragraphs; the introduction states the topic and gives general background information to it; the main body presents points for and against along with examples and justifications in two separate paragraphs. Since the writer's own opinion is not expressed in the introduction or the main body, phrases which reflect personal viewpoints such as *I believe* or *In my opinion* are not allowed to be used in either of them. The author's position is revealed in the conclusion.

Essays providing solutions to problems are pieces of writing in which students are expected to first, present a problem and its causes and then, discuss possible solutions (Zemach & Rumisek 2005: 50) as well as expected results (Evans 2004: 76). The first paragraph explains the problem and presents its causes. To draw readers' attention, either a quotation or a rhetorical question, a question that states a fact rather than expects an answer, could be used. Turning directly to the reader and using the second person singular also facilitates maintaining the interest of the audience. In the main body, suggestions and expected results are discussed. Each suggestion and its result(s) are written in separate paragraphs. In the conclusion, the writer's opinion is summarised (Evans 2004: 76).

An opinion essay presents the writer's personal points of view on a particular subject (Evans 2004: 71). Evans claims that essays as such require the author's opinion to be expressed clearly. To do that, it is necessary for the writer to use facts and examples to support their viewpoint and show why they hold certain beliefs. In the introduction, both the topic of the essay and the author's opinion are presented. The main body of an opinion essay usually consists of three paragraphs. In the second and third paragraph of the particular essay, the audience learns about the author's points of view sustained with facts and examples. In the fourth paragraph, though, the opposing viewpoint with illustrative reasons is presented. In the last paragraph, the author's own opinion is stated once again (Evans 2004: 71).

Next, how the process approach could be used to teach essay writing is discussed.

1.2 Using the process approach to teach Anglo-American essay writing

A teacher's role in helping students produce a coherent and thoughtful essay is significant; it is the tutor who assists learners in becoming good writers and teaches them planning, revising, re-arranging, and re-reading. Naturally, before handing in the final version of an essay, several drafts are likely to be produced. Over the last decades, there have been two most commonly used approaches in teaching writing: *the product approach and the process approach* (Hashemnezhad & Hashemnezad 2012).

In the product approach, students mimic a model text and, going through several stages, write their own text using the latter (Steele 2004). According to Steele (2004), learners, first, read through the model and focus on certain features highlighting them; attention can be paid to paragraphs, opening and/or closing sentences and/or phrases, cohesive devices etc. After that, a controlled practice of highlighted features takes place during which students use

the given language in sentences. This is followed by organising ideas which, according to proponents of the approach, is even more important than the ideas themselves; namely, those favouring the method claim the organisation of ideas to be as crucial as the use of language. Finally, learners choose between comparable writing tasks and produce their own text using the knowledge received from analysing the model (Steele 2004). Since the product approach involves imitating a sample, it is likely to be more beneficial when teaching to write texts which have fixed features and layout; amongst these are formal letters, for instance.

Another way to teach writing is to use the process approach in which students go through several stages: they develop and refine their writing with the help of their teacher and peers (Laksimi 2006) and, as a result, gradually become independent writers (Hyland 2003: 10). Regarding teaching essay writing, the process approach appears to be effective (Hyland 2003: 12; Laksimi 2006). To prove it, Laksimi used Bruner's (1986) ideas of scaffolding. Scaffolding involves giving students aid for writing during the early stages of working with a genre new for them. As a result, in the course of time, learners' need for help decreases as they become abler (Hyland 2003: 139). Laksimi, being the tutor in this process, acted as a "facilitator". Not only did she direct learners through the essay writing process, but also gave feedback on how well they managed to organise ideas and maintain paragraph unity. In addition to getting feedback from their teacher, students learned from each other by receiving comments from their peers. As a result, learners enhanced their writing; they revised and rewrote their drafts before submitting their final versions and became more confident and skilful through it. Moreover, Laksimi noticed that students worked with greater commitment. What is more, there seemed to be no fear of making mistakes as nobody would judge their work as right or wrong.

Yet, the process approach also has its weaknesses. First and foremost, implementing it tends to be more time-consuming compared to the product approach; furthermore, learning tasks which use principles of process writing require sensible preparation from the teacher. Not only is it essential to plan appropriate activities for writing lessons, but also to consider and create assessment tools in order to foster feedback; hence, it requires time and consistency. In addition, since process writing involves peer assessment, activities as such might pose problems (Bae 2011). It is quite likely that amongst learners there are individuals who do not like group work; they can be too shy or reserved to express their opinions and feelings. Besides, some of them might even lack collaboration skills or may not just trust their fellow students and are afraid of receiving incorrect feedback. Bae (2011) states that wishing to alter learners' attitudes towards peer assessment, the teacher could devote time to explain the benefits of working together; clear guidelines about how to cooperate and to what aspects attention needs to be paid become beneficial. Furthermore, students are to be made aware that teacher's help will be available in all peer assessment situations; knowing that the learning process is monitored by the teacher, facilitates learners' motivation to cooperate with each other.

Considering the aspects discussed previously, it can be claimed that students benefit from learning writing through the process approach. To begin with, process writing enables students to receive as much assistance as is needed during the whole process. Second, the approach quite often involves speaking with peers, thus enhancing one's speaking and listening skills. While writing, students are likely to need to refer to instructional books or do some research to develop ideas for their essays; this respectively improves their reading skills and facilitates individual learning. What is more, the approach enables students to learn how to work in collaboration with their peers; learners contributing to each other's writings to make

them better, also learn how to communicate and receive both positive and negative feedback. Furthermore, using the principles of the process approach apparently enables teachers to meet the requirements established in the national curriculum of Estonia (2011: Division 2): to develop students' ability to learn individually and to improve their collaboration skills.

1.2.1 Steps of the writing process

According to Flower and Hayes (1980), there are three stages or processes in learning writing, called planning, translating, and reviewing. The planning stage involves three components: generating ideas, organising information, and setting goals. In the translating process, the ideas, which were collected, are “translated“ into language and are written on the paper; finally, the “translated“ text is reviewed and revised (Grabe & Kaplan 1996: 91). Thus, writing could be seen as a “non-linear, exploratory, and generative process whereby writers discover and reformulate their ideas as they attempt to approximate meaning (Zamel 1983: 165). Graves (1994) developed the idea proposed by Flower and Hayes and viewed writing as a process which comprises five stages: prewriting, drafting, reviewing, editing, and publishing. Next, Laksimi's (2006) description of how Graves' five-stage process could be implemented in a writing classroom is presented:

I. Stage 1: Prewriting

Students start with choosing a topic, collecting and organising ideas.

II. Stage 2: Drafting

Then, students write a rough draft putting more emphasis on content rather than mechanics.

III. Stage 3: Revising

Next, students share what they have written with their teacher or in groups and take part in discussions about their groupmates' writings. Students make changes in their own texts. At this stage, learners are encouraged to improve their writings to a large degree.

IV. Stage 4: Editing

After that, students proofread their own writings to identify and locate mistakes. This is followed by correcting the mistakes. For some students, the latter might pose problems; therefore, teacher's assistance has to be provided.

V. Stage 5: Publishing

Finally, students publish their work in the correct format and share their writings with their teacher.

As can be seen, the description of the writing process suggested by Graves is more thorough and complex compared to that of Flower and Hayes. In general, stages of the writing process distinguished by the authors mentioned previously can be regarded as similar, involving preparation, drafting, and revising of a text. The terms used to refer to the stages are different, though. What is more, Graves identifies five phases in writing whereas the other authors indicate only three; he divides the process of production into revising, editing, and publishing. Thus, it can be claimed that Graves sees revising of one's writing before publishing highly important and worthwhile. Furthermore, Graves' distribution of stages in the writing process is more straightforward and easily understandable for both parties, students and teachers enabling the latter to create additional materials to facilitate learners' writing.

In the handbook by Zemach and Rumisek (2005: 3), writing is described as a four-stage six-step process.

I. Stage 1: Pre-writing

Step 1: Learners begin with choosing a topic. Before students start writing, they either receive a specific topic from their teacher or have to choose one by themselves.

Step 2: Next, students collect ideas. This stage involves thinking what to write about that topic. To have enough thoughts for writing, students could brainstorm ideas to make a list; also, free writing, as well as semantic mapping and graphic organisers, appear to be beneficial (Grabe & Kaplan 1996: 311). Making a list constitutes writing single words, phrases, or sentences that are related to the given topic (Zemach & Rumisek 2005: 6); free writing, though, involves non-stop writing over a short period of time not minding accuracy (correct grammar and/or spelling) or referring to the dictionary to find translations to words that cannot be recalled (Grabe & Kaplan 1996: 311; Zemach & Rumisek 2005: 7). Grabe and Kaplan (1996: 311) propose to use semantic mapping. Semantic mapping begins with generating the words that are related to the topic; ideas are written down and then, organised into groups of words that seem to go together. That is followed by nominating headings to the groups of words. Consequently, more and less important groups of ideas are determined. Graphic organizers, on the other hand, are charts, hierarchical tree structures, figures, maps etc that are used to represent relations between ideas (Grabe & Kaplan 1996: 311). Such visual structures facilitate organisation of ideas and help students plan writing. According to Zemach and Rumisek (2005: 8), to do that, a whole sheet of paper could be used. For mapping, students could be asked to write their topic in the middle and draw a circle around it. It is followed by putting the next idea in a circle below or above the topic. Ideas that are related to each other are connected with lines.

To generate ideas, there is another method proposed by Pell (2018) called 'the five questions method'; it uses question words (who, what, why, where, how) to collect thoughts for writing. Having asked and answered three to five questions using the words given, a student is likely to have enough ideas. However, the method is more suitable for learners who are able to think logically and have some background knowledge of the given topic.

Step 3: Organising. At this stage, students choose the ideas that seem to be most relevant. Also, one has to decide in which order the thoughts will be presented and discussed.

II Stage 2: Drafting

Step 4: Writing. Next, learners write their paragraphs or essays from start to finish, using their notes about their ideas and organisation.

III Stage 3: Reviewing and revising

Step 5: Then students review structure and content. A student reads their text silently or to a friend aiming to detect if any information could be added to or removed from the piece of writing; learners might also exchange their texts. Getting a peer's opinion enables them to know how effective and clear their writing is. What is more, giving opinions on others' work helps students improve their own writing skills.

IV Stage 4: Rewriting

Step 6: Now, students revise structure and content. They rewrite their texts and make improvements on the structure of their writings. Using ideas received at previous stages, changes can be made not only in organisation but also in content. The text might be proofread several times to find grammatical and spelling mistakes.

The activities recommended by Zemach and Rumisek (2005) to teach essay writing are likely to be beneficial in regard to learners' motivation and performance. First and foremost, at the first stages of the writing process, students are enabled to work collaboratively and support their peers encouraging each other to begin writing. On the other hand, learners receive instant feedback from their teacher and peers during the planning stage. Furthermore, they are allowed to see drafts of others and, as a result, learn from their mates' flaws, strengths, and weaknesses. However, process writing not only improves students' understanding of the structure and organisation of essays. There are studies (Hashemnezhad & Hashemnezhad 2012; Muncie 2002) which prove that learners who were taught writing using the process approach produced their final draft in a more coherent manner with more complex sentences and more sophisticated vocabulary; yet, learners who neither learned essay writing via the process approach nor got constant assistance and feedback performed their writing task in a poorer way. Thus, working together in preliminary stages of writing enlarges students' lexicon and facilitates their writing performance.

As claimed, the process approach involves both proofreading one's own text to detect mistakes as well as evaluating that of a partner; hence, in process writing formative assessment takes place. Next, strategies of formative assessment are discussed.

1.3 Assessment of students' performance

Assessment is a systematic gathering of information about the student's development, analysis of such information and providing of feedback (National curriculum 2011: Division 5). According to the national curriculum for upper secondary school (2011), the aim of assessment is (1) to support the student's development; (2) to provide feedback regarding the

student's progress; (3) to encourage and direct the student to study independently; (4) to direct the formation of the student's self-esteem, to guide and support the student in his or her choice of future educational career; (5) to guide the teacher's activities in supporting the student's learning and individual development; (6) to lay a foundation for the decision regarding progression to the next class and graduation from school. Assessment is an integral part of teaching. In addition to providing data to measure student progress, assessment helps identify problems, plan teaching and evaluate its effectiveness (Hyland 2003: 212). Thus, information on how the student progresses in learning is to be collected systematically.

Assessment also affects students' motivation; therefore, its potential should not be underestimated but carefully planned and is to be focused on individual development of a student (Harlen 2006). Learners ought to receive not only numerical feedback on their work but also get comments on their personal progress, strengths and weaknesses. This means that teachers should stop dominating the assessment process as "judges" but become "guides" in order to help students benefit from learning (Harlen 2006). Yet, the traditional practice of assessment in which teachers are merely testers and students testees still seems to be practised more often.

However, Lee (2011) claims that "Assessment is something teachers 'do to' rather than 'with' students, mainly for administrative and reporting purposes". Such assessment focuses on the result rather than student's personal development; therefore, it seems to hold little value for both teachers and learners. The latter, receiving feedback in the form of numbers, are unlikely to be motivated to identify their flaws and, as a result, can make the same mistake over and over again. Consequently, no personal development takes place. Today's approach, though, expects teachers to use assessment that would be useful for both, educators as well as learners, giving feedback on student's progress and facilitating learning (Lee 2011).

Sadler (1998) makes a claim that students benefit from feedback only if they are informed about the following criteria:

- 1) what good performance is (i.e. the student has to know what the goal is and how to achieve it);
- 2) how current performance relates to what is expected (i.e. student must be able to compare his/her and good performance);
- 3) what to do in order to bridge the gap between that of theirs and good performance.

Andrade and Du (2005), however, describe effective assessment as follows:

- 1) assessment criteria should be clear and unequivocal for everybody. Before giving students an assignment, a teacher has to determine the objectives of it, i.e. what is going to be evaluated and on what criteria it is done. Only if students are aware of what is expected from them, are they more motivated to put more effort into their work.
- 2) students should be involved in the assessment process. A common practice for doing that is to implement self- and/or peer assessment when giving feedback on students' work.
- 3) assessment should give students an opportunity to revise and improve their writings. This criterion follows principles of constructivism in teaching and is likely to be related to the standpoints of the process approach in teaching writing. A student who has detected one's weaknesses is more prone to notice and avoid them in the future.
- 4) assessment criteria should be dependent on the individual student's language level. In case the teacher's objective in assessment is to evaluate an individual student's progress, no standardised marking scales should be used.

Similarly, national curriculum for upper secondary schools (2011: Division 5) establishes learners' active involvement in the assessment process. Assessing themselves or

their companions, students are more likely to develop their ability to analyse their learning and set goals for future development.

1.3.1 Types of assessment

As stated, there are two types of assessment used in schools to evaluate students' progress: *summative* and *formative assessment*.

Summative assessment is likely to be more common. Hyland (2003: 213) claims that it is "concerned with 'summing' up how much a student has learned at the end of a course." Summative assessment is seen as high-stake assessment used to give a final grade for the student's knowledge (Gardner et al 2010) at the end of 'segments of instruction' (Dixon & Worrell 2016). Most commonly, it is numerical and its examples are final performances, term papers, state tests, and final exams.

Formative assessment, on the other hand, seems to be practised more rarely in schools. It is defined as "activities undertaken by teachers and by their students in assessing themselves that provide information to be used as feedback to modify teaching and learning activities" (Black & William 2010). It is used to improve learning (Shephard 2006; Stiggins 1994), identify a learner's strengths and weaknesses (Hyland 2003: 213) and give students as well as their parents a better understanding of the learning goal and what could be done to achieve it (Black & William 2010; Sadler 1989).

The main principle of formative assessment is that teachers 'transmit' positive and negative features of a student's work and the latter uses received information to make subsequent improvements (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick 2006). However, not only learners benefit from implementing formative assessment but also teachers. Evaluating students'

learning using the given way provides tutors with valuable data on learners' difficulties and thus helps find measures and take steps to correct problems (Frunza 2014).

The national curriculum for upper secondary schools (2011: Division 5) establishes that summative assessment is to be implemented along with formative assessment which, getting students involved in evaluation via self- and peer assessment, raises their motivation, enhances their ability to set goals and analyse their learning as well as behaviour.

1.3.2 Means of formative assessment

One way to implement formative assessment in the classroom is to use *self-assessment*. The national curriculum of Estonia (2011) sees self-assessment as a means to raise students' motivation, develop their ability to set goals as well as analyse efficiency of the learning process. Thus, self-assessment can be regarded as a key strategy to facilitate student-centred independent learning. In addition, such assessment serves as a useful complement to teacher assessment since it enables students to get continuous and personalised feedback on how they progress in learning.

Another way recommended to be practised regarding giving formative feedback is using *peer assessment*. In peer assessment, students work together, comment on each other's writing in terms of organisation and content, and point out strengths and weaknesses making suggestions for improvement at the same time (Yu & Hu 2017). Being engaged in assessing one's peers, learners improve their critical thinking skills and, while giving and receiving feedback, become more responsible for their own learning. Peer assessment involves making oral and/or written comments in the target language; thus, it serves as a way to establish a dialogue between learners about writing (Grabe & Kaplan 1996: 379); that respectively,

facilitates students' language acquisition. Furthermore, peer assessment promotes collaborative work which, as claimed, is one of the many principles in the national curriculum (National curriculum 2011: Division 2).

The theoretical framework of peer feedback derives from Vygotsky's concept of the zone of proximal development (Hyland 2003: 200) where a student of higher proficiency language level acts as a role model to a less competent learner (Wanchid 2015). As a result, the latter, following the example of and hearing the comments made by their more competent peer, gradually starts performing tasks without any assistance.

However, there are also drawbacks to peer feedback. According to Leki (1990), one aspect which can pose problems when implementing peer feedback is that, while assessing their peers' writing, students might focus too heavily on sentence-level problems and cease to view the text as a whole. As a result, the response received on organisation and ideas of the essay remain rather vague and unhelpful.

Also, it might occur that students are too critical and sarcastic towards each other (Leki 1990) or, on the contrary, are unwilling to make negative remarks on their mates' work; they may not realise the benefits of assessing each other nor feel confident enough for such activities (Bae 2011); that may result in poor feedback. In order to prevent it, students need to be made aware of the aims of peer feedback; rules for it should be established, too. To outline the purposes and advantages of peer feedback, Hyland (2003: 202) proposes to use an introductory information sheet (see Appendix 3). Another way of making sure that the feedback given by students is meaningful is to collect and read all feedback and respond to it with brief comments (Hyland 2003:203). Certainly, it requires time and effort from the teacher, yet it is likely to give the tutor a better understanding of how well students are able to assess each other and whether there are some issues that need to be dealt with; on the other

hand, students knowing that the feedback given to them will be read by the teacher, are more likely to put effort into it.

There is another problem regarding integrating peer assessment. It might occur that higher-proficiency students may refuse to collaborate with those of lower proficiency as such tasks may not seem efficient enough for them. Aiming to prove that students can learn from each other regardless of their language level, Yu and Hu conducted research in 2017. Their aim was to demonstrate that higher-proficiency learners benefit from giving feedback to their lower-proficiency partners. The survey was carried out in a Chinese university. The sample consisted of 12 first-year non-English majors at different language levels. Having received instructions on how to give and receive feedback, the respondents had to write five English essays. Every writing was peer-reviewed in groups; the sessions of feedback were video recorded and analysed. The analysis of recordings demonstrated that higher-proficiency (HP) students benefited from peer feedback given by lower-proficiency (LP) students. Not only did HP improve their own writing by detecting the strengths and weaknesses of LP students but also received valuable assistance on organisation, content, and structure of their own essays. Thus, it can be claimed that peer assessment is worth implementing and it may be beneficial for every learner no matter what their language proficiency level is.

There are different forms of peer and self-assessment that can occur at any stage in the writing process. A common tool to implement both is using *a checklist*. Most likely, checklists, which aim to assess writing, consist of statements or 'Can you/your partner ...?' questions all of which describe criteria established for excellent performance (Harris 1997; Turgut & Kayaoglu 2015). Having completed the checklist, a learner is enabled to evaluate in detail what they or their partners can do in the given topic of the language. Checklists, however, fail to provide very detailed information on student's writing; therefore, they are

more suitable to use with younger learners and those at lower levels of language proficiency (Turgut & Kayaoglu 2015). In the case of peer assessment, intending to make a checklist more informative, a section for commentaries could be added. This would enable students to get more detailed feedback on their writing and to incorporate received information into progress in their studies.

Another tool which can be used to implement peer and self-assessment is using *rubrics*. A rubric or a scoring rubric is 'a descriptive list of the criteria which teachers employ to evaluate their students' work (Turgut & Kayaoglu 2015). According to Hyland (2003: 229), a scoring rubric is regarded as a useful tool because it provides separate scores for different writing features. It includes a list of aspects of writing performance which are subdivided under certain categories such as content, organisation, vocabulary, language use and mechanics (Turgut & Kayaoglu 2015), so scoring rubrics address traits that do not appear in checklists, for instance. The criteria may vary, though, depending on the evaluator's individual choice of what needs to be assessed, whether it be the linguistic structure or persuasiveness of the argument. A rubric is typically used when assessing a broader range of skills and activities (Moskal 2000); thus, it is suitable to employ when assessing writing essays, for instance. Being presented as descriptive scales, a rubric indicates how well the given criteria have been met. Therefore, it not only enables students to get a better understanding of what a good essay is but also gives information on learners' strengths and weaknesses (Andrade & Du 2005; Turgut & Kayaoglu 2015).

To develop a rubric, first, qualities of excellent student performance need to be determined (Moskal 2000). Next, the features of the lowest level of student performance are indicated and finally, criteria of the performance in the middle level(s) are derived. This way each criterion in the rubric would result in three or more score levels which give a detailed

description of performance at each level. So, the top level provides a representation of what is being expected to meet the features of a good essay and enables students to improve their future performance in writing.

Due to its complexity, a rubric might seem to be a tool which is suitable to be used by teachers only, yet it appears to be beneficial in peer and self-assessment, too. First and foremost, a rubric improves learners' achievement in writing (Moskal 2000); being made aware of the qualities of excellent performance, a student gains an opportunity to edit their work so that it meets the given requirements. That respectively increases motivation. Furthermore, in comparison to checklists, rubrics provide more detailed information on learners' strengths and weaknesses, the knowledge of which helps learners improve their writing skills in general. Hence, rubrics can be regarded as effective.

It is likely, though, that creating rubrics can be rather time-consuming for the teacher; not only does such a tool need to list criteria for a piece of work together with the marking scale for assessment, but also meet the requirements regarding reliability. Thus, the quality of rubrics is worth to be considered.

Yet, there are some other concerns in regard to using the given assessment tools. First and foremost, learners might fail to understand the assessment criteria and encounter difficulties in realising the use of them; what is more, students may not have received enough practice and, as a result, are not able to provide valid feedback (Moskal 2000). To prevent it from happening, learners need to be instructed on how to use rubrics; furthermore, criteria of evaluation have to be thoroughly explained and differences between levels of student performance clearly demonstrated (Harris 1997). In addition, enough practice on how to assess oneself or peers with the help of a rubric has to be provided. Training is likely to affect the quality of feedback and diminish contradictions between student and teacher assessment

(Blanche 1990). Thus, to add to the validity of assessment based on the rubric, students are to receive guidance on the evaluation process.

In conclusion, intending to use any of the evaluation tools discussed above, one has to ensure that criteria of the given assessment grid are made clear and understandable for everybody. Yet, not only do students need to realise the content of the tool but also acknowledge the aim of it and be provided with adequate opportunities for practice beforehand. Additionally, beneficence of self- and peer assessment needs to be explained.

The present chapter has attempted to raise awareness of the features of essays written in Anglo-American style, to discuss how essay writing could be taught and to give an overview of what needs to be considered when implementing peer and self-assessment. The following chapter will introduce the teaching materials created as part of the present thesis and analyse the relevance of them.

2 CREATING MATERIALS FOR TEACHING ESSAY WRITING

The previous chapter revealed that besides knowing requirements established to different types of essays, students need to remember that texts as such have to be argumentative, coherent and clearly written in the formal language. Regarding these factors as well as the fact that Estonian essays have no distinctive features (Hage 2003: 43) as Anglo-American essays do, writing essays is a skill which needs to be taught systematically.

The author of the present thesis advocates the use of the combination of the product and process approach to teach essay writing. In addition to enabling learners to write their essays step-by-step and receive support and assistance from the teacher as well as peers, the approach as such helps maintain motivation and improves students' performance. For the author, however, preparing for the writing course using ideas of the process approach in teaching essay writing appeared to be rather challenging since compact ready-made materials that would suit Estonian students could be hardly found. Stemming from the reason above, the goals of the present project are

- 1) to create materials to teach essay writing to upper secondary school students using principles of the process approach;
- 2) to integrate techniques of formative assessment into the teaching materials.

In this chapter, first, the principles of compiling the materials are outlined. Next, the process of testing the relevance of the created materials is described. Finally, deficiencies, as well as merits of the materials are discussed.

2.1 Principles of developing the teaching material

The teaching material has been developed adapting the principles of teaching English essay writing from *Academic Writing* (Zemach and Rumisek 2005) and *Upstream Intermediate* coursebook (Evans & Dooley 2002). The teaching material comes in the form of a workbook that has been compiled using ideas of the process writing, yet ready-made models, which are peculiar to the product approach, are also used in the material. The models are included due to the author's personal belief that samples used within explanations ensure learners' understanding of how particular elements of an essay function. While covering the contents of the workbook, learners create their essays step-by-step from the beginning (collecting ideas) to the end (publishing); meanwhile, continuing assistance as well as formative feedback from the teacher and peers is provided. Having learned each succeeding unit and done the practical exercises included in the workbook, learners gradually write their essays and continue until their work is ready to be published.

The target group of the study were twelve upper secondary school students aged 17-18. The materials were tested in nine academic hour-long English lessons within the period of three weeks at Saaremaa Ühisgümnaasium. One of the topics was assigned to be learnt independently as homework.

Each lesson was followed by carrying out analysis based on students' written feedback and the author's self-reflection. After every lesson students were asked to comment on how effective the materials used in the lesson were; learners spent five minutes at the end of each lesson and wrote what they liked and/or disliked regarding the part of the material they had covered during the lesson; along with the comments, learners' suggestions for improvement of the material were collected. Similarly, the author of the project carried out self-reflection after

every lesson. To do that, students' active involvement in the lesson, as well as the perceived usefulness of tasks and activities in regard to how they facilitated in the achievement of learning goals were considered and corresponding notes were taken. Ultimately, the initial materials were improved and these are included in the appendices of the present thesis (see Appendix 2).

2.2 Overview of the teaching material

The teaching material comes in the form of a workbook which comprises nine units, each discussing how to write a particular part of an essay. The material includes the following topics:

Introduction: What do you think about writing in English?

Unit 1. Types of essays

Unit 2. Get prepared for writing

Unit 3. What is a paragraph

Unit 4. How to develop a paragraph

Unit 5. How to write different types of essays

Unit 6. How to write an introduction and a conclusion

Unit 7. How to write an outline

Unit 8. How to write the first draft

Unit 9. How to revise and edit essays

Besides creating materials for teaching essay writing, the present project aimed to integrate elements of formative assessment (self- and peer assessment) into them. The main goals of including such activities within different subtopics were

- 1) to help learners reflect on their thoughts;
- 2) to enable students to benefit from peers by learning about their ideas.

The first section of the workbook, entitled *What do you think about writing in English?* (see Appendix 2: 70) serves as the introductory part to the course and fuels learners' approach to writing as a language skill in a critical way. This is achieved by having students complete a questionnaire on their relationship with writing. In addition to contemplating their attitudes to the given language skill in general, learners are instigated to carry out self-analysis of their strengths and weaknesses regarding writing. To do that, students are to assess how good they are at grammar, vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, getting ideas, and self-expression. In order to make learners take responsibility for their own learning, the question to detect their weaknesses is followed by the one which calls on students to find ways for improvement of the skills mentioned previously. Thus, not only does the questionnaire aim to make learners take initiative to improve their writing but also helps the teacher map students' needs and facilitates planning teaching.

The list of English national examination writing task types (Inglise keele riigieksami eristuskiiri 2018) establishes that language learners having reached level B2 are able to write opinion essays, essays providing solutions to a problem, and argumentative essays. General requirements of given essay types do not differ much from each other. However, there are some aspects that need to be considered when writing; hence, different essay types are essential to be introduced to learners. To do that, guidelines on writing three different types of essays are given (see Appendix 2: 72). The introductory part to teach each kind of essay starts with a brief explanation of what the given type does. This is followed by introducing the structure of the essay. To make it more obvious, an outline for writing the essay has been included. Finally, a list of linking words that can be used is added.

When writing an essay, the starting point, namely the ideas that are going to be discussed, is needed. Thus, in the second unit of the teaching material (see Appendix 2: 77), students are familiarised with techniques of brainstorming: making a list, mind mapping, and freewriting. In addition, the five questions method is introduced. In the beginning, each technique is defined and the procedure of how to use it is explained. Each explanation is illustrated with a model aiming to give learners a better understanding of the method. Finally, the instructions are followed by the practice which involves students using each technique. That enables them to realise which technique might suit them best and which one would be most effective.

First, students are presented how to make both a list as well as a mind map. The given methods are likely to be known to most learners from their previous studies and thus, might not be challenging for them. Therefore, certain doubts whether there is a need to teach them emerge. Apparently, devoting lesson time to teaching students something they know, is rather questionable and can raise strong arguments against it. Yet, writing something in a foreign language is quite different from that in one's mother tongue. Learners have an inclination to use correct English in writing; that, however, is likely to distract them. Some students' anxiety over making errors might be so severe that it hinders them in producing ideas. That respectively affects their performance in writing. To prevent it from happening, it is absolutely essential for the teacher to take time and teach their students that in brainstorming the only thing that really matters are ideas not language mistakes.

Making a list and mind mapping are introduced as one entity. To the author, it seemed rather wise to follow such a principle since the techniques are likely to be overlapping. Before writing an essay, there are certain stages that need to be gone through: getting ideas and organising them. Making a list can be used to collect thoughts whereas mapping serves as an

excellent way to get a better view of how the ideas are connected to each other. Such a sequence of activities is also used in the present teaching material. First, students are asked to collect ideas on one of the three topics presented in the workbook. To do so, they are supposed to make a list. That is followed by mapping. Learners use the ideas they collected previously and organise them. Besides helping students see which ideas go together, mapping facilitates the organisation of an essay and prevents it from getting vague. However, it is obvious that both making a list and mapping are rather time-consuming techniques and therefore, are unlikely to be used when having to write an essay within a limited period of time. Nevertheless, it would be useful to practise them at early stages of a writing course.

In this unit, students are also demonstrated how to get ideas using free writing. Having been provided with a sample of the latter, learners gain an opportunity to experience the technique themselves by having to write on a given topic. Additionally, the five questions method for collecting ideas is introduced. First, students are provided with an explanation of the aid followed by an example to demonstrate the function of it. Finally, aiming learners to realise the essence of the technique, they practise the method individually.

Regarding formative assessment, there are three discussions in this unit that students participate in. The first task merely involves introducing one's own list and explaining how the ideas are related to the topic. In the second activity, on the other hand, in addition to introducing the map that has been created, learners can comment on and contribute to each other's work; to keep students alert and motivated, a different partner for the first and second pair activity has to be found. In the third activity, learners share their views on the particular topic in small groups.

In unit 3, students are introduced how to write a paragraph (see Appendix 2: 82). Since requirements for writing an English paragraph are rather rigid, enough time has to be devoted

to teaching them. Although the topic of writing a paragraph can be learnt in the class guided by the teacher, it is possible to assign pupils to study it independently as was done during testing the present material. Yet, in this case, students' understanding of terminology needs to be guaranteed; access to online collaboration tools, such as Padlet, for group discussions should also be ensured.

The next unit, entitled *How to develop a paragraph* (Unit 4) aims to teach how to write one paragraph of the essay (see Appendix 2: 85). Learners have already been taught that in order to make the topic sentence strong and straightforward, supporting sentences and examples should be provided. Previously, students learnt how to write the topic sentence; the present unit demonstrates how to support it. To begin with, students are to find support and examples used in the model text. The aim of it is first, to remind learners of paragraph structure; second, make them notice how support is given; and third, demonstrate the function of the concluding sentence. Next, students write one paragraph of their own essay. They begin with studying the ideas they collected in the first unit and choose an idea that is worth using in the essay. Next, the idea is to be developed into a paragraph that meets the requirements, i.e. it has the topic sentence, supporting sentences and concluding remarks. Having written paragraphs, students exchange them and assess their partner's writing by filling in the evaluation sheet in the form of a checklist. This is followed by pair work during which both partners explain their assessment, point out strengths and give advice on how to improve weaknesses. As a result, each learner owns a complete edited paragraph appropriate to be used in the essay; that, respectively, is likely to motivate them to continue their work.

Next, explanations and activities to teach all three types of essays follow (Unit 5) (see Appendix 2: 88). However, only these to teach writing opinion essays were tested. The reason for acting correspondingly was that students would find learning three essay types during a

short period of time quite confusing. Next, the process of teaching to write opinion essays is described.

Opinion essays include both opinions and facts whereas the latter are used to strengthen the claim. Aiming to make students understand how opinions and facts differ from each other, two exercises have been included. First, learners read a paragraph and find the writer's opinion(s) and facts. Doing so, first, improves students' ability to distinguish between opinions and facts as well as provides students with a model for the next task which expects learners to write both an opinion and a fact on given topics. Consequently, students work in pairs. They read each other's sentences and, trying to distinguish opinions and facts, evaluate how successful their partner has been in convincing the reader. Finally, learners give each other oral feedback, point out strengths and weaknesses, and give advice on improvement

Similarly to body paragraphs, the introduction, as well as the conclusion compiled in Anglo-American style of writing, need to conform to certain requirements; they have their own function and certain structure which need to be introduced regarding writing an essay. This is explained in *How to write an introduction and a conclusion* (Unit 6) (see Appendix 2: 94).

To begin with, the created material provides learners with a plan of an essay together with explanations of what each of the three parts of an essay (i.e. introduction, main body, and conclusion) does. The plan supplies students with the knowledge of what needs to be considered when organising essays. What is more, it functions as a starting point for doing the next task, which is finding parts of the essay. To do that, a model essay was compiled. Besides demonstrating the organisation of an essay, the given model provides excellent teaching aid throughout the developed material. It has been created following the principle that would enable to use it in many ways. For instance, as far as the structure of a paragraph is concerned,

the topic sentences, as well as support and concluding remarks, are easily detectable. Similarly, obligatory elements of both introduction and conclusion are observable without difficulty.

Second, learners are presented with the purpose of the introduction. Along with the 'hook', a piece of information used to raise the reader's interest, the essence of the thesis statement is introduced. To do that, Zemach and Rumisek's (2005) idea of comparing the thesis statement with a topic sentence, something that students are already familiar with, seems to be functioning as an excellent aid. To make it clear how important the thesis statement is, what its function is as well as how students could benefit from the thesis statement, a comparison with a backbone is made. That is exemplified with the figure by Chin et al (2012) composed to demonstrate five-paragraph essay structure. With the help of it, students clearly realise that there is a close connection between certain parts of the thesis statement and topic sentences. Having listed the main points in the thesis statement with care, it is much easier to put together topic sentences.

To make students master writing the thesis statement, practical exercises are included. First, aiming to help learners realise that the thesis statement is a compound sentence which consists of at least two different ideas on one topic, the introduction of the model essay is used. Students are to read the introduction, find the main points of the essay and underline them using different colours. Then, the same colours are used to underline the corresponding topic sentences in body paragraphs. The aim of the latter is to demonstrate the relationship between the thesis statement and the topic sentences.

Next, the aspect that the thesis statement reflects the writer's personal viewpoints is clarified. To do that, the technique recommended by Zemach and Rumisek (2005) appears to be useful. According to them, one way to write the thesis statement is first, to put down one's

personal opinions on the given topic and then, write the ideas into one sentence beginning it *I think that*. Finally, having removed the beginning, one receives a possible thesis statement. Subsequently, students can practise writing the thesis statement on their own. They are to write thesis statements to three possible essays on everyday topics. To be sure that the procedure of how the thesis statement is written has been made clear for everybody, the first one could be composed together in the class as was done when testing the material.

The writing task is followed by pair work. It involves sharing the thesis statements and deciding on the most efficient ones. Most importantly, a task like this enables students to learn from their partner and get a different viewpoint on the topic. The writing of a more competent learner functions as a model to that of the less competent one. Besides, one is more likely to detect shortcomings and notice mistakes when being in the role of a reader. As a result, the probability of mistakes present in thesis statements written by students will be diminished.

The last topic that is covered in the present unit is writing the conclusion. In addition to listing what the conclusion aims to do, rather great emphasis is put on restating the thesis sentence. After students have been informed about compulsory elements of the conclusion, they are to refer to those of the model essay and find the corresponding parts. In order to facilitate cooperation, the task can be performed in pairs. However, class discussion is appropriate to be held as well; frontal analysis of the model supports learners in finding the required parts of the conclusion as well as enables the teacher to draw learners' attention to the vocabulary used in the final part of an essay. The conclusion needs to summarise the main points of the essay and restate the thesis statement using different words; class work led by the teacher, in regard to vocabulary use, allows the tutor to carry out analysis of how words are to be replaced with their synonyms. In order to make students notice how restating of the thesis statement is achieved, the vocabulary used in the introduction, body paragraphs as well as the

conclusion of the model essay could be scrutinized. Accordingly, having done so, students are more aware of the requirements regarding the final paragraph of an essay and are more likely to act in the same way when writing the final paragraph of their own.

After learners have been provided with explanations, they are assigned to restate three thesis statements in practice. To do that, those written previously by the students in task 4 are used. Apparently, more eloquent learners are able to perform the task independently; they learn quickly and appreciate working individually. However, it is likely that there are students who might need assistance. Thus, the task could be done either in the class led by the teacher or as pair work.

Next, learners are explained how to write an outline, a list of ideas and explanations and/or examples that are present in an essay (Unit 7) (see Appendix 2: 101); in addition, an outline determines in which order the points are presented. The procedure of writing an outline is as follows: having brainstormed and edited their ideas, students decide on those which are worthwhile expanding. Next, the points are organised and the order in which they are to be presented is set. Writing a detailed outline requires time; therefore, it is unlikely that students are able to do that while taking their examination. Thus, teaching to write an outline might seem irrelevant. In the author's view, though, compiling a thorough outline during the period in which essay writing is being practised, is advantageous. First and foremost, it teaches how to compose one; during the examination, learners might not have time to put together a detailed outline, yet they are definitely able to compile a sketch of it. Besides, composing an outline facilitates learners' ability to organise their ideas for essays and prevents their writing from getting sloppy and vague; hence, it adds to coherence.

Before students start to learn a new skill, they need to be made aware of the practicability of it. To do that, descriptions of two kinds of outlines follow one of which

requires less time and is therefore usable when taking a test or an examination. Another kind of outline needs more time to be compiled: it is thorough and extensive; thus, it is more suitable for using during the learning process.

Next, guidelines on how to write an outline are listed. Using the tips, students have to work in pairs and compile an outline for the model essay of the present material. The task aims to give learners a better understanding of an outline and teach how one is written. Working in pairs, on the other hand, enables them to learn from their peers as well as get some assistance. Having put the outline for the essay together, students find another pair and discuss their outlines in groups. In addition to comparing each other's outlines, learners could be asked to say what they learnt from it as well as whether they have any hesitations. The respondents of the present project performed the task in pairs, yet it can also be done independently in the class or, may be assigned to be completed at home. In this case, students could form pairs for the later discussion that is to be carried out using online collaboration tools.

Having realised what writing an outline involves, students are assigned to write one for their own essay on the topic which they chose in the first unit. To do that, learners already have a bank of edited ideas they intend to use in their essays. In addition, they know how to write the thesis statement and the topic sentence as well as what is needed to develop a paragraph. Writing the outline is followed by pair work which consists of two stages. First, learners present their outlines. They read the thesis statements and introduce the main points of their essays as well as provide explanations and examples to elaborate on their ideas. In case anything remains vague, questions for clarification could be asked from each other. At this stage, students are allowed to make corrections in their outlines. Next, the outline is assessed by a peer. Students exchange their work and evaluate each other using a checklist. Besides detecting the presence of all required elements, learners are encouraged to give

comments on their partner's work as well as make recommendations for improvement. It might seem that devoting so much time to discussing outlines is unnecessary and evaluating a peer's work using the checklist and giving advice would have been enough. However, the reason for including an initial oral presentation of their own outline before handing it over to the partner for assessment serves its own functions. Above all, talking about what has been written facilitates retaining organisation of ideas. Since writing requires great effort and some students might become too worried about accuracy rather than content, it may occur that an idea that seems to be relevant while writing, turns out to be completely irrelevant when read. Second, such discussions are likely to improve the clarity and straightforwardness of the essay. Partner's questions mark the ideas that might remain ambiguous for the reader. What is more, they reveal which viewpoints need to be made stronger by providing them with examples. Last but not least, oral presentations increase the chances to be evaluated by partners more positively at the last stage of the activity. Hence, a presentation as such seems to be acting as a motivator in beginning to write the first draft of the essay which is the next step in the writing process.

In *How to write the first draft* (Unit 8) learners compose their essays from start to finish using an outline, notes about ideas and organisation recorded previously (see Appendix 2: 105). As claimed, the questionnaire aiming to discover students' attitude towards writing was carried out before starting to teach the present material. The analysis of learners' responses revealed that fear of making mistakes as well as that of being assessed by the teacher are most probable factors that distract students from writing. Accordingly, it might lead to poor motivation and affects learners' imagination. Thus, in order to make the writing process more enjoyable and maintain students' creativity, concern about mistakes and grades needs to be reduced.

To do that, students have to be informed about the aim of writing the first draft of an essay; it is written to put together a convincing argument on the given topic which includes explanations and examples to justify one's opinions. Before publishing, the first draft is followed by thorough revision done by the author of the essay as well as their peers. Thus, more emphasis needs to be put on the content rather than mechanics. Students being aware of it, are more likely to focus on organisation and clarity of ideas and follow the requirements established for an Anglo-American essay.

Having finished the first draft, students will be engaged in self-evaluation; they read their essays silently and complete the assessment grid. First and foremost, learners detect whether their essays meet the requirements established on organisation and content. They are called to notice the presence of the thesis statement in the introduction, find the relationship between the thesis statement and topic sentences of body paragraphs as well as check whether the thesis statement has been restated in the conclusion. Besides typical yes-no columns, the grid has the section to leave comments on the elements which the essay seems to be lacking. Having noticed a shortcoming, commentary on what is missing or what can be improved could be left presently to prevent thoughts from being forgotten. After completing the checklist, the student edits their essay and hands it over to their partner for assessment.

The procedure of evaluating one's peer's essay is similar to that of self-assessment: students exchange essays, read them and then assess each other's performance using the grid which again focuses on the content rather than mechanics. Previously, the essay was analysed from the author's viewpoint, yet it is important to be read and assessed from the reader's perspective. Ideas that might seem clear for the author might remain ambiguous for the reader; thus, the second assessment appears to be beneficial. In addition to discovering the presence or

absence of required elements, students have to make comments on appealing aspects as well as on those needing improvements.

After students have completed first drafts, they become engaged in revising them. How it could be done is explained in *How to revise and edit essays* (Unit 9) (see Appendix 2: 109). Above all, the material of this unit aims to help students improve their essays written on the given topics, yet appears to be advantageous in improving their writing skills in general, too. In this chapter, the procedure for revising the essay will be described.

Having made corrections in their first drafts, learners are called to rewrite their essays paying attention to mechanics and vocabulary. Next, peer assessment takes place. It uses a rubric. It is more complex than a grid and therefore, requires giving instructions on how to be used. The rubric was designed using the scale for marking essays in the national examination of English (Kirjutamisosa näidised 2018). Aiming to make learners analyse and self-correct their own mistakes, those made in language structures, punctuation, and vocabulary present in peer's writing are not corrected but underlined; their type is detected and marked in the margin. That requires learners to be familiar with the writing correction code, which can be found in the appendices of the present thesis (see Appendix 4).

As claimed, students first need to be given guidelines on how the rubric should be used. Having reviewed each evaluation criterion in the class, learners are to be provided with specific examples to ensure the clarity of principles. Instruction is followed by peer assessment which involves reading and evaluating partner's writing with care. Meanwhile, an evaluation sheet is to be filled in. In addition to scores, comments are encouraged to be left once again; this aims to guarantee the assessor's effort and make assessment more visible. Finally, pair discussion is held to enable the assessor to justify their evaluation and give the author an opportunity to ask for clarification as well as receive advice for improvement. As a

result, each learner has an essay which has gone through thorough revision and is ready to be rewritten for publishing.

Before writing their final versions of essays, students are again reminded of the importance of paying attention to the requirements regarding layout, accuracy and language features. To do that, they read through the checklist provided for them to use for final assessment. Going through the checklist before writing the final version of writing aims to revise the importance of indented paragraphs as well as the necessity to use full verb forms, for instance. Making learners aware of the requirements listed previously before they start writing, clearly facilitates the quality of the final version since it reduces the number of mistakes. After students have revised the requirements for an essay, the final version of it is written. That is followed by proofreading the essay as well as completing the self-assessment form. Lastly, the essay is handed to the teacher for final evaluation.

2.3. Analysis of the teaching material

As was claimed, the teaching material was tested on twelve upper-secondary school students; it was done to detect drawbacks to it. This chapter discusses the findings of the process.

In the introductory part of the teaching material students were expected to complete a questionnaire (see Appendix 2: 70) the aim of which is first, to raise learners' awareness of their strengths and weaknesses regarding writing and second, to make students take initiative in finding ways to improve their essay writing skills. Furthermore, the analysis of learners' answers in the questionnaire helps the teacher to plan one's teaching and adapt it so that it would appear beneficial for every individual.

The results of the questionnaire revealed, as was expected, that essays tend to be the least appealing form of writing among students. According to them, one of the most aversive factors in regard to writing essays is a numerical assessment given by the teacher. Students claimed that the writing process is most certainly hindered by their fear to use incorrect English. The knowledge of the structure of an Anglo-American essay appeared not to be sufficient either. Another factor that seemed to influence learners' attitude towards essay writing was the lack of imagination and shortage of ideas; having not much to write about is likely to result in a rather poor argument. Some students' comments on essay writing were as follows:

- I don't like writing essays because I will get a mark for it. Essays have their own rules which are difficult to follow.
- Essays are difficult because for me it is hard to get ideas.
- I don't like writing essays because I have to use the correct language and that distracts me while I write.

Students also claimed that essay writing is time-consuming and needs much effort to be put in.

Next, in order to map learners' needs regarding language use and spelling, students were to assess how good they were at grammar, vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, getting ideas, and self-expression. Spelling was revealed to be the easiest for learners: ten students out of twelve claimed it to be 'very easy'. On the contrary, getting ideas appeared to be the most difficult: five of the learners found it 'very difficult' and four reported it to be 'quite difficult'. Regarding punctuation there were no students who would find it 'very difficult', yet it seems to be the next most challenging aspect in writing since ten students found it 'quite difficult'. Similarly, the structure of English, as well as vocabulary, were revealed to be necessary to be practised. As far as language structures are concerned, eight respondents found it 'very difficult' or 'quite difficult'; vocabulary was seen as 'quite difficult' by half of the students.

Thus, it was revealed that the respondents of the project apparently require more assistance on how to get ideas for the essay; however, time needs to be devoted to teaching punctuation, grammatical structures, and vocabulary, too.

To make learners take initiative as well as be responsible for their own learning, the question to detect their weaknesses is followed by the one which calls on students find ways for improvement of the skills mentioned previously. To enhance their ability to use correct punctuation, enlarge vocabulary and succeed in getting ideas, students pointed out the following:

- I would definitely have more ideas if I read books and listened to the news. It also helps me with vocabulary.
- To have more to write about, I should be aware of what's happening in the world. I have to watch news broadcasts and read opinion articles in the newspaper.
- I should learn the rules of punctuation. Sometimes they are different from Estonian.
- I have to read non-fiction and fiction in English. This helps me notice vocabulary and punctuation marks.

In regard to improving one's ability to use correct grammar, no solutions were made.

Finally, students were asked to express their expectations to the module. Some of their comments were as follows:

- I hope I will become more confident in writing English essays.
- I hope that I can practise it (essay writing) so much that it will be easy for me.
- I hope to learn how to express myself better in writing essays.

In addition to students' expectations that attending writing lessons helps them boost their self-confidence; they looked forward to improving their vocabulary and grammar.

After completing the questionnaire, students shared their answers in small groups. Learners claimed that group work was a valuable opportunity to find out that their peers'

concerns in regard to writing do not differ much from their own ones. What is more, talking to their mates enabled students to get some ideas on how to enhance their own writing, too.

To conclude, the questionnaire done at the first stage of the course serves as a springboard for the learner. Above all, it raises self-regulated learning and instigates students to take responsibility for their studies. Having acknowledged one's faults and means of improving them, a learner is more likely to succeed in achieving the set goal. On the other hand, the questionnaire serves as a valuable tool for the teacher in planning teaching since it helps to map learners' needs. A teacher, having identified students' shortcomings and expectations, can alter the material in a most beneficial way so that it meets the given group's needs. The test group of the project, for instance, appeared to have problems with getting ideas for the essay. That instilled the author include more techniques which would prove beneficial for gathering thoughts to discuss in the essay.

The first unit of the material introduces requirements established to different types of essays and lists linking words that could be used in writing (see Appendix 2: 72). Students' feedback revealed that the respondents found the overview of requirements for each essay type to be compact and clearly arranged; claims were made that the material would appear beneficial towards the end of secondary school studies when the need to revise for national English examination arises. Next, some students' comments follow:

- *It is not convenient to find how to write different essays in the coursebook because the topics are scattered in different units. I'm happy that I have this material as a whole.*
- *I'm sure I will use it in the future when I need to write an essay or revise for the writing test.*

Initially, practical tasks were inserted within the explanations but the idea was neglected and exercises for further practice come separately from instructions in one of the further units. The reason for doing so lies in the comments made by the students during the

testing period of the present material. It was revealed that arranging explanations and practical tasks separately enables students to navigate the guidelines more easily. Furthermore, that makes the material more flexible: students can remove explanations of how to write different types of essays from the rest of the material when intending to do so.

Knowledge acquired from *Get prepared for writing* (Unit 2) (see Appendix 2: 77) appeared to be beneficial, too. The respondents claimed to have realised the importance of collecting ideas. Furthermore, they stated to have learned a new technique – the five questions method for collecting ideas. Similarly, freewriting seemed to be novel for them. Having learnt about freewriting, students admitted to having misinterpreted the latter with writing a rough draft. The reason for that seems to be lying in learners' previous writing experience. Namely, classroom discussions revealed that some students, receiving the topic to write on, have no habit to gather and organise ideas. They write the first draft without any preparatory work. That respectively not only affects the quality of the essay but also makes writing challenging and boring. Therefore, the techniques used at the pre-writing stage are certainly worth being taught and their utility is essential to be demonstrated.

The credibility of peer assessment activities used in the present unit was also assessed. Students were asked to state whether they found assessing each other's maps advantageous or not and what they learnt from their peers. According to them, talking about points that had been brainstormed helped to exclude irrelevant ideas and choose those that were worth expanding. They also claimed that introducing their mindmaps improved the organisation of ideas. In addition, feedback received from peers, who acted as possible future readers of the essay, helped them detect shortcomings and mistakes; students stated that pair discussions revealed points which remained vague or were irrelevant. Besides, some of the peers' ideas were adopted for future use.

However, it came out that not every person in the lesson was either brave enough to share their personal views with another student or was motivated to follow their partner's talk. Students' comments to prove it are as follows:

- I didn't want to tell my partner what I think about it. It was embarrassing.
- I didn't get any ideas from my partner. It seemed he wasn't interested in it.

To prevent such circumstances, more modest students could be paired up with those they feel more comfortable to work with. To facilitate students' responsibility to participate in pair discussions, further feedback on received support could be gathered frontally.

Next, the relevance of *What is a paragraph* (see Appendix 2: 82), the part of the material which was to be learnt individually, is discussed. As was claimed, regarding the elements of a paragraph, the function of the topic sentence seemed to have remained unclear; ten respondents out of twelve encountered difficulty in writing topic sentences to the paragraphs present in the material. Next, the procedure of how the essence of the latter was made clear in the class is discussed.

First, students were asked to refer to the first task of the unit and revise the definition of both the topic sentence and the supporting sentence; realising the relationship between them is essential. Having made it clear, students were assigned to work on the paragraphs in task three which were to be completed choosing the most suitable topic sentences on the list. That was followed by reading each passage and answering the following questions:

- 1) What is the main idea of the paragraph?
- 2) What support has been used to explain the main idea?

After discussing the questions in the class, suitable topic sentences were elicited from students and listed on the blackboard. Subsequently, aiming to learn whether each respondent had realised how topic sentences are created, students were asked to work in pairs, answer the

given questions and complete the next paragraph. Finally, the respondents were to work on their own and complete the last paragraph following the procedure described previously. As a result, each student managed to write an appropriate topic sentence. That proves the efficiency of the activity.

In their feedback, the respondents also claimed the concept of a topic sentence initially remained rather ambiguous, yet it became much clearer after they had found the main idea of the paragraph and explanatory support. Next, learners' comments to prove that follow:

- I thought that writing a topic sentence is very easy and I couldn't see the reason why we spend so much time to learn it but when I had to write one by myself, I didn't understand anything. After we did the first text together in the lesson, I understood what is a topic sentence.
- I think it was good that we wrote two topic sentences together. When I started to do it myself, I wasn't quite sure what topic sentence is. But when the teacher helped us with the questions, it didn't seem to be difficult at all.

Consequently, as it was revealed, learners might find the idea of a topic sentence rather vague; therefore it can take them time and effort to understand how to write one. Teacher's help and explanations appear quite beneficial in the given process since some students might not benefit from exploring the material independently. Difficulties in learning might result in loss of motivation and keenness. On the other hand, in case no deficiency in learners' understanding of terminology is detected, individual work regarding how to write a topic sentence can be considered.

Unit 4, *How to develop a paragraph* (see Appendix 2: 85), instructs learners to compile one in Anglo-American style. As a result, each learner owns a complete edited paragraph appropriate to be used in the essay which is likely to motivate them to continue their work. It might remain questionable whether it is necessary to teach how to write one paragraph of an essay, yet the target group of the present thesis seemed to have benefited from it; a rise in

students' motivation to resume writing could be realised from their comments gathered from them after covering the topic:

- It feels good to have one paragraph ready for my essay. I don't know if I'm going to use it or not but if I am, I have to write less next time.
- I'm glad I have already started writing my essay. Now I can see it's not hard to write a paragraph and can continue at home whenever I wish.

Compliance with the requirements to an Anglo-American paragraph was ensured via peer evaluation. According to students, acknowledging that another learner is going to read their paragraph enabled them to learn writing without any fear of being graded by the teacher. Students claimed to have gained useful advice from their peers which adds to the efficiency of peer assessment. Yet, according to learners, they would have benefited from a self-evaluation checklist that could be done beforehand right after finishing the paragraph.

- My paragraph would have been better if I had assessed it before giving it to my partner.

As a result of this remark, the self-evaluation checklist was included to the study material.

To conclude, feedback gathered from the students showed that they felt positive about the content of the given unit. In addition to being able to practise writing a paragraph from the beginning to the end, they claimed to have received a clear understanding of the paragraph structure.

Next, students learned how to write opinion essays (see Appendix 2: 88). The respondents' reactions to the content of the material were positive in general. However, the tasks to improve the distinction between opinions and facts appeared not to be appreciated by everybody. Eight students found neither of the first two exercises beneficial; on the contrary, they were claimed to have been a waste of time; neither did they appreciate the usefulness of peer assessment of the written paragraph. It is quite clear that one having found the task itself

ineffective and not worth doing, is likely to evaluate the following activity in the same way. On the other hand, the respondents for whom opinion and facts tasks seemed helpful enough, appreciated feedback received from the partner more highly. They claimed that writing their own sentences and reading as well as analysing their partner's ones gave them thorough practice of how to present their opinion. Furthermore, comments received from their partner helped them to improve their work.

Consequently, although some parts of the given unit appeared not to be appealing to many students, the created material seems to be helpful regarding writing opinion essays. In addition to lists of appropriate linking words, students are provided with clear and straightforward writing guidance.

Next, the relevance of *How to write an introduction and a conclusion* (Unit 5) (see Appendix 2: 94) was tested. According to the respondents, both the model introduction compiled by the author of the present thesis as well as the figure by Chin et al (2012) present in the given unit appeared to be beneficial; they helped learners realise what the thesis statement is and how it helps them organise their essays. Some of their claims to illustrate it follow:

- The figure helped me to I understand what the thesis statement is. Now that I know how to write the thesis statement, essay writing does not seem to be so hard.
- The figure showed me that English essays have a fixed structure which is quite easy to follow if I know the rules.

However, the method recommended by Zemach and Rumisek (2005) which uses the phrase *I think that* to write the thesis statement did not appear to be appealing to every student. Three respondents admitted that using the phrase *I think that* in the initial position of the sentence helped them organise the thesis statement, yet for seven students the given method

turned out to be of no use. Four respondents out of the latter seemed to have already realised how the thesis statement is written whereas three of them found it irrelevant and even too easy.

- I didn't quite understand why we had to do that. This exercise could have been done by those who had trouble with writing the thesis statement.
- I think the exercise was a waste of time. Why do I have to write 'I think that' at the beginning of the sentence? I can do it in my head and then write the sentence.

Thus, the necessity of including this task in the material could be considered.

Students' feedback also revealed that while writing thesis statements they benefited from the assistance given by the tutor as well as peers. To prove that, some comments follow:

- For me, it was not difficult to write the thesis statements. I understood how it works because I got some help from the teacher and my classmates.
- First, I thought that it (doing the task) takes up so much time. It didn't seem very easy but after we had done the first statement together, I felt better about it.

Similarly, students' need for help regarding restating the thesis statement in the conclusion of an essay was evident. To provide help, the first thesis statement was restated together. In the beginning, the statement itself was written on the blackboard and the main points of the essay were underlined. Second, synonyms, as well as phrases with similar meaning to substitute the underlined ones, were elicited from the class and written down for the future use. To do that, a monolingual dictionary was used. Subsequently, the sentence was composed and the final analysis of the result was carried out.

Although learners claimed to have encountered some difficulty in finding appropriate words for substitution, all of them managed rather successfully. Not only did the respondents point out the value of assistance received before individual work, though. They also found the opportunity to consult a dictionary advantageous. However, it might be argued whether using

any aids to writing is grounded in such situations; on the contrary, students could be encouraged to make an effort to use their ability to paraphrase and find suitable words without any help. No doubt that the latter facilitates learners' thinking and language use, yet it is likely that dictionaries provide students with more formal vocabulary which is necessary to be used in English essays. Furthermore, using new words in writing increases the probability of memorizing them; that respectively affects vocabulary acquisition. So, in order to enable students to benefit from the learning process, assistance could be provided.

Another factor that turned out to be useful in learning how to restate the thesis statement was peer assessment that was carried out to evaluate how successfully rephrasing skills were acquired. Most likely reading sentences written by their mates seemed to have affected learners' ability to paraphrase. Statements which differed in terms of vocabulary from those written by themselves helped the respondents realise that there are several words in the English language which are appropriate to be used for replacement. Two students claimed to have acquired new vocabulary while assessing their partner and one respondent admitted having understood why synonyms are to be learnt. Next, some comments given by the students follow:

- I think it is difficult to find new words instead of original ones and because of that, I was happy to use the dictionary.
- It was not very easy for me to search for different words. I know I have to learn more words.

Regarding the author's observation and feedback gathered from the respondents, it can be claimed that the material is effective for teaching writing the introduction and conclusion of an essay. Yet, in order to ensure that students understand and adopt the material, enough time should be devoted. Assistance given by the teacher and peers facilitates learning, too. Students

having neither time pressure nor the fear of being evaluated feel relaxed; that affects motivation, respectively.

Next, the respondents were asked to comment on the content of the learning material regarding the utility of Unit 7, *How to write an outline?* (see Appendix 2: 101). The analysis of students' feedback to the project revealed that learners found the knowledge of how to write an outline useful and practical. It was also claimed that compiling an outline functions as a motivator in getting started with essay writing. Learners stated that seeing the ideas written down in certain order encouraged them to use their thoughts in sentences. What is more, according to some students, the tips they received regarding compiling a plan for writing an essay are suitable to be transferred to instances of preparing oral presentations. One respondent claimed to start using a similar sketch to put together their monologue, which also constitutes part of the national English examination. Next, some students' comments follow:

- This unit was really enjoyable. It was great to start writing the essay when I had ordered the ideas.
- An outline is a good thing to do when you start writing the essay. It shows me what I will write about and it helps me to plan my essay.
- It was great that I could discuss my outline with my friend. I got some good advice from her. Talking it (*the ideas presented in the outline*) through helped me make my ideas better organised and correct mistakes.

Considering students' comments and the author's viewpoint, compiling an outline is an important skill to be taught regarding essay writing. Serving as an excellent means to organise one's work, an outline also enables to maintain students' motivation to continue writing their first draft of the essay.

The testing of *How to write the first draft* (Unit 8) (see Appendix 2: 106) proved the importance of stressing that at this stage of writing presenting a clear argument is more

important than using correct language; ten respondents out of twelve claimed to have been free of concern about being graded and as a result, felt free in writing. According to them, knowing that this is not the teacher who is the first assessor of their essays but a peer, enabled them to pay more attention to making their personal viewpoint stronger. The respondents stated to have felt ease in finding words when having to pay no attention to their weaknesses. One student who claimed to have a habit of counting words while writing letters and essays did not do that since felt themselves free and confident. Next, some students' comments will be presented:

- It is good to write when I don't have to worry about how I write but what I write.
- Spelling is really difficult for me. Because of that, it's hard for me to write. When I think how to write a word, I tend to forget the ideas that I had in my mind. This is why essays usually take up so much time and effort. This time it was so different. I knew I can check everything several times before my teacher reads my essay.

There were two students who claimed to have benefited from the task regarding the organisation, yet they were still worried about writing mainly due to the fear of being inaccurate. According to them, being aware that their essays would not be graded by the teacher before it had been revised several times, did not reduce their stress. On the one hand, it can be explained with rather basic language skills of the given students. On the other hand, it might be related to their personalities. Both students are rather shy and reserved and tend to lack confidence. Their comments can be read accordingly:

- Writing was not different this time. I don't like to tell others what I think about this topic. I also could not stop thinking about mistakes.
- I feel uncomfortable to show my classmates what I have written. I would like my teacher to read my essay.

It is likely that students with such feelings need to be approached more personally regarding peer assessment of the first draft carried out in the next unit. Additionally, steps should be taken to raise their self-confidence. Belief in oneself is possible to develop, yet it requires time and effort from both the teacher as well as the student. However, the testing period of the present material was too short to accomplish that, hence needs to be dealt with in the future.

Consequently, writing the first draft without the worry of being assessed by the teacher but by a peer appeared to be appealing to most students. However, it cannot be claimed to be a universal method to facilitate writing essays since there were two cases in which students' fear could not be diminished. Thus, each learner should be seen as an individual with one's personal needs.

Having completed first drafts, students become engaged in revising them using peer and self-assessment (see Appendix 2: 110). Learners claimed that editing an essay together with a partner was effective and useful for both parties. The respondents stated that above all, peer assessment enabled them to receive instant feedback in order to produce an edited piece of writing; that respectively facilitated student's performance. Ten students out of twelve stated to have made significant corrections. They appreciated it that they gained an opportunity to revise their writings before handing them over to the teacher:

- It was great I could correct so many mistakes before I gave the essay to my teacher.

Moreover, four students said to have improved their essay writing skills due to having analysed their partner's work. According to them, having to discover mistakes made by their peers, helped them notice their own ones, too. However, there were two students who would have preferred not to have given feedback on their partner's work regarding the content; they claimed it had been irrelevant to evaluate the same aspect of writing twice. Their opinion might be reasoned with the fact that neither of them received advice on what was to be

corrected or got any new ideas from the partner. On the other hand, in case there had been any shortcomings in their essays, the students' viewpoint could have been the opposite.

Students were also asked to comment on the means of assessment used to revise the final draft. Regarding grids and checklists, their simplicity appeared to be most appealing. According to the respondents, assessment forms as such take less time to complete and are clear since there are only two options between which one has to choose. Rubrics, however, need quite much time to be used, yet they are efficient and give more complex information about the strengths and weaknesses of the text. Students claimed that having understood the criteria of the rubric, it was easier for them to give feedback due to having so much to back on. Moreover, learners stated to have learned more from being assessed using the rubric. The last claim does not seem surprising, though. The rubric compiled for the present project assesses more aspects of writing than grids and checklists do which is likely to add to the meaningfulness of the received feedback.

Consequently, the created material appeared to be effective; not only did it enable students to participate actively in the learning process but also provided them with continuous assistance from peers and the teacher. Yet, students' comments, as well as the author's self-reflection, revealed that some improvement could be beneficial. The latter is discussed more closely in the next section.

2.4 Revision of the teaching material

As was noted, the material went through alterations which were made using the feedback received from the students. The author's observations regarding how efficient the material was in relation to achieving the learning goals were considered.

The first improvement was made right after analysing the questionnaires done by the students in the introductory part of the material. It was revealed that the respondents had difficulty in finding ideas for their essays. Thus, the five questions method was decided to be included (see Appendix 2: 79).

Second, the sequence of presenting topics was changed. Initially, writing different types of essays was discussed after students had learnt how to write a paragraph, an introduction, and a conclusion. That did not seem to be wise or logical, though. Therefore, instructions for writing different types of essays are given in the first unit of the present teaching material. Furthermore, in the beginning, there was only one unit dealing with types of essays in which lists of requirements for essays were integrated with practical tasks. Having analysed students' comments, it was revealed that the learners would have appreciated having explanations for different types of essays and practical tasks separate from each other. According to the respondents, that would help them navigate the material more easily. As a result, an overview of requirements along with suitable linking words and a plan for writing an essay is presented in *Types of essays* (see Appendix 2: 72); practical tasks, however, can be found in *How to write different types of essays* (see Appendix 2: 88).

In regard to practical tasks in *How to write different types of essays*, the respondents did not find the exercises which dealt with distinguishing opinions from facts appealing. Despite the fact that this part of the material was not appreciated by a majority of respondents, it was not removed or made optional. The rationale for doing so is that activities as such are likely to be advantageous regarding process writing. Having been provided with a model paragraph containing opinions and facts, students write that of their own expressing personal views on the topic they brainstormed at the pre-writing stage. Although it is likely that the

paragraph will go through some alterations, the experience that students gain from writing is worthwhile.

There was another task that was regarded as not useful by the respondents of the project: the technique which uses *I think that* to compile the thesis statement and according to Zemach and Rumisek (2005), might appear to be beneficial. Initially, it was an obligatory task for everybody to do in the workbook to practise writing the thesis statement. Most respondents, though, found this task to be irrelevant. For this reason, the activity is included as an optional task meant to be used independently by those who need further practice (see Appendix 2: 96).

Finally, in *How to develop a paragraph* (Unit 4), a checklist for self-assessment was included (see Appendix 2: 85). Initially, learners were expected to give their paragraphs to their partners for peer assessment right after completing it. Yet, some students pointed out that they would have benefited from proofreading their pieces of writing before being evaluated by their peers. As a result, the checklist was added.

As could be seen, some minor changes were made to improve the material. However, that does not exclude the need for further alterations since this is the teacher's responsibility to adapt the material in a way which would be most useful for their students' needs.

CONCLUSION

As claimed by Kaplan (2001), a student's ability to write a good essay in one's mother tongue is not necessarily in correlation with their ability to do it in a foreign language. This could be justified by linguistic as well as stylistic differences between writing in a learner's native language and that of the target one. Thus, in order to enhance students' ability to write adequate essays, along with English vocabulary and language structures requirements established to Anglo-American essays should be taught.

English essays are structured pieces of writing which are to comply with certain requirements. In addition to presenting the thesis statement in the introduction and beginning the body paragraphs with topic sentences, Anglo-American essays have to be coherent and cohesive pieces of writing.

Most commonly, writing is taught using principles of the product approach or those of the process approach (Hashemnezhad & Hashemnezhad 2012). In the product approach, students imitate the model and write their own text focusing on the required features of the given genre (Steele 2004). However, in the process approach, learners go through several stages: they start with collecting and organising ideas, go on with drafting and revising, and continue editing their writing until their final versions are ready to be published. According to some authors (Hyland 2003; Munice 2002; Laksimi 2006; Hashemnezhad & Hashemnezhad 2012), a teacher aiming to enhance students' ability to produce coherent English texts, could implement principles of the process approach when teaching writing essays. Hyland (2003) and Laksimi (2006) make a claim that throughout the writing process, students receive continuous assistance from the teacher as well as their peers which respectively, influences

their writing and results in learners becoming gradually independent in it (Laksimi 2006; Hyland 2003).

The process approach, in addition to enabling learners to get help, provides them with continuous feedback throughout the process. To achieve that, formative assessment strategies are used. The main idea of formative assessment involves using feedback to improve students' learning (Stiggins 1994; Shephard 2006) and modify teaching (Sadler 1989; Black and William 2010). Students being engaged in self- and peer assessment activities while working on their drafts, are more likely to produce a version which complies with the requirements for English essays and this way facilitates performance.

The aim of the present project was

- 1) to create materials to teach essay writing to upper-secondary school students combining principles of the product and process approach;
- 2) to integrate techniques of formative assessment into the teaching materials.

The materials were developed adapting principles of teaching English essay writing from *Academic Writing* (Zemach and Rumisek 2005) and *Upstream Intermediate* coursebook (Evans & Dooley 2002). The teaching material comes in the form of a workbook. Covering the units in the material, students compile their essays step-by-step from the beginning to the very end. Not only do the materials provide students with explanations to the elements of an Anglo-American essay but also enable them to put the knowledge into practice.

The relevance of the teaching materials was tested and the contents of it improved considering the author's self-reflection and the feedback received from the respondents. It was revealed that learners found the methods used in the workbook beneficial regarding learning essay writing. Most importantly, students claimed to have learned from collaborative activities. In addition to getting ideas from their peers in the first stage of writing, they

supported each other and received continuous feedback throughout the process. Student conferences, which were carried out in pairs, enabled learners to correct their texts and improve coherence and the structure of their essays; to do that comments made by peers were used. Furthermore, they assisted each other in detecting language mistakes and in some cases even gained new knowledge from their peers. Thus, it could be stated that throughout the writing process, learners acted as role models within in the group; less competent students got ideas for improvement from the more competent ones and the latter learnt from noticing mistakes in the texts produced by the formers.

Learners also claimed that collaborative writing helped them to retain motivation throughout the writing process; according to them, it was encouraging to get started and continue working on the essay after receiving feedback or remarks for improvement. In addition, knowing that their draft will be read and assessed by one of their classmates, not by the teacher, had a positive influence on their writing. Many of them claimed to have felt ease in writing since the fear of making mistakes was diminished. However, some learners found co-operating with peers rather troubling; they felt embarrassed to share their ideas. Thus, activities done in pairs or groups are not universal and should be adopted by the teacher whenever there is a need for that.

There are also some drawbacks to using the present teaching material. To begin with, covering all units in the workbook is rather time-consuming and some students might get bored from working on the same topic for such a long time. Devoting so many lessons to teaching essay writing might also pose problems for teachers since the number of English lessons tends to be rather limited. Second, as mentioned, not every part of the workbook has been tested; thus, before intending to teach writing for and against essays and those providing solutions to problems, alterations to the material might be needed to be made. However, the

analysis carried out while and after the testing period of the material revealed that despite the given limitations, the workbook serves as an efficient teaching aid to teach essay writing to upper-secondary school students.

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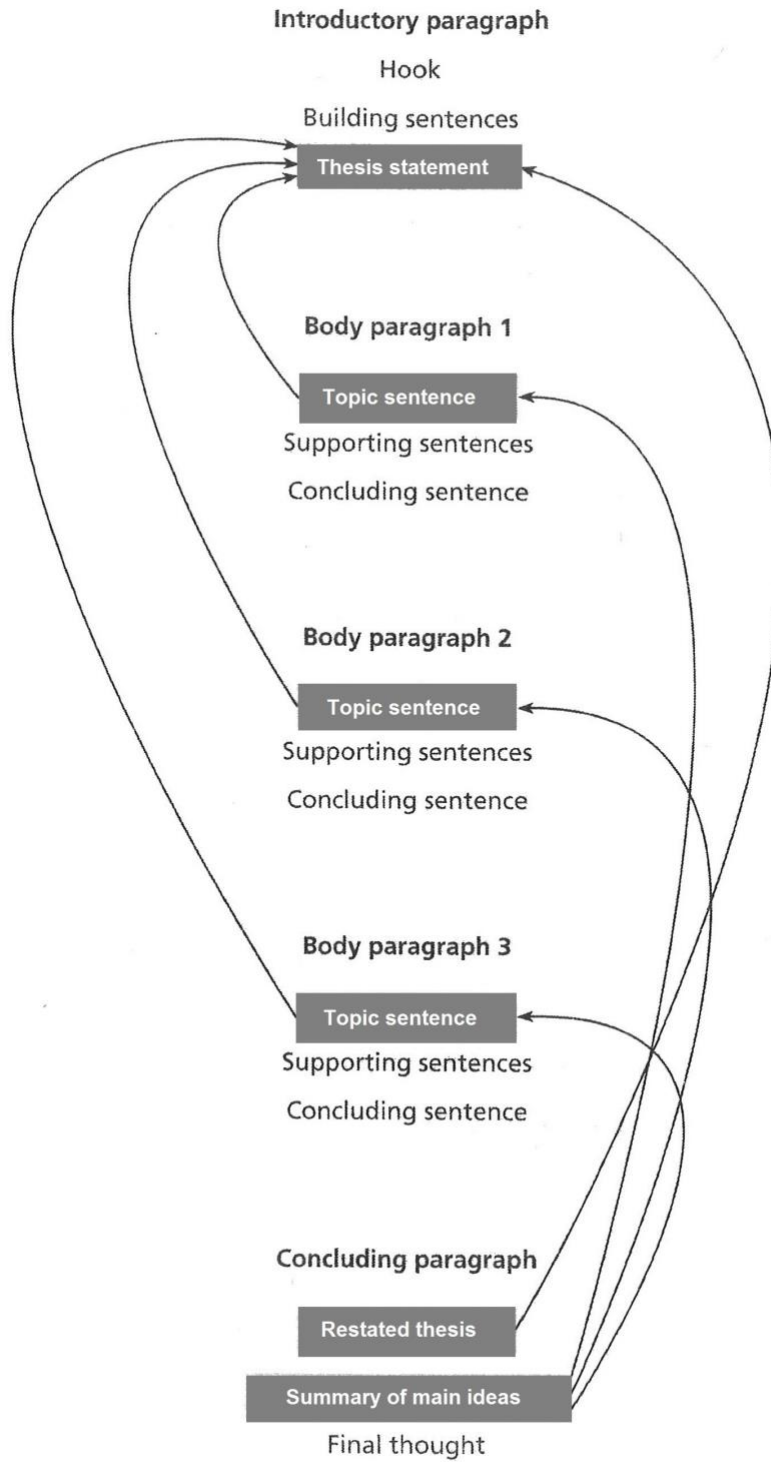
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Appendix 1 – Five-paragraph essay structure (Chin et al 2012)



Appendix 2 – Created teaching material

What Do You Think About Writing in English?

What do you think about writing? Is it necessary to practise writing when learning a foreign language? Do you think writing as a skill can be improved? Do the following questionnaire and find out what you think about writing.

Task 1

Answer the questions.

1) Which of the following have you ever had to write in English? Underline and/or add to the list.

letters	blogs	instant messages (Messenger etc)
lists	essays
emails	poems
diary entries	text messages

2) Which one of those you underlined and/or added do you like best? Why?

3) Which one is least appealing amongst those you have had to write? Why?

4) Do you think writing is easy or difficult? Why?

5) How good do you think you are in writing in English? Underline the most appropriate answer. Comment on your choice.

Very good

Good

Could be better

Not very good

Don't know

6) How easy are the following things when you write in English? Circle the most appropriate number. (1 = very easy, 2 = quite easy, 3 = quite difficult, 4 = very difficult)

getting ideas	1	2	3	4
expressing myself	1	2	3	4
grammar	1	2	3	4
vocabulary	1	2	3	4
spelling	1	2	3	4
punctuation	1	2	3	4

7) Do you think writing could be improved if practised? Why? / Why not?

8) Look at question number 5. What do you need to focus on when wanting to improve your writing?

9) What do you hope to learn from this module?

Share your answers with a partner or in a small group.

Unit 1

Types of essays

1.1. Opinion essays

An **opinion essay** presents the writer's personal beliefs on a certain topic. To state your opinion clearly and be convincing enough, you need to support your viewpoint by giving examples and/or reasons.

The structure of an opinion essay

I Introduction

In the first paragraph, you **present the topic** of the essay and **state your own opinion on it**.

II Main Body

This part of an essay consists of at least two paragraphs. The main body contains **different viewpoints on the topic**. Each viewpoint with reasons and examples is in a separate paragraph. In paragraph(s) 2 (3) you present your personal viewpoints and support them with reasons and/or examples. In paragraph 3 (4) the opposing viewpoint together with illustrative examples and/or facts is presented.

III Conclusion

In the last paragraph, your own **opinion is restated** using different words.

Remember:

Write an opinion essay in formal style. Use appropriate linking words to connect ideas. Do not use short forms (*don't*) or colloquial language. All paragraphs have to be indented.

When writing an opinion essay, you can use the following plan:

Introduction

(Paragraph 1) What is the topic? What is your opinion? (the thesis statement)

Main Body

(Paragraph 2) What is your first viewpoint? What are the reasons and examples?

(Paragraph 3) What is your second viewpoint? What are the reasons and examples?

(Paragraph 4) What is the opposing viewpoint? What are the reasons and examples?

Conclusion

(Paragraph 5) Restate your opinion.

NB!!! Linking words that you can use in an opinion essay:

1. To express your opinion

In my opinion ...; It is clear that ...; I (completely) agree/disagree with...; As I see it ...; As far as I am concerned ...; I am sure/convinced that

2. To give reasons

My/The main/Another reason is ...; It is believed that ...; Many people think/say that ...; Because ...; Due to/because of ...; Since

3. To express facts

It is widely known that ...; It is a well-known fact that ...; It is clear/true that ...; For example/instance

4. To add ideas

What is more ...; Furthermore ...; In addition (to) ...; Besides ...; Firstly/Secondly/Finally

5. To express contrast

However ...; Although ...; Whereas ...; On the one hand ...; On the other hand ...; In contrast

6 To conclude

To conclude ...; To sum up ...; In conclusion ...; It is clear that

1.2. Essays providing solutions to a problem

In **essays providing solutions to a problem**, you are expected to present a problem and its causes and then discuss possible solutions and results.

The structure of an essay

Introduction

In the introductory paragraph, you **present the problem and its causes**. To grab the reader's attention, you can use a quotation (words of a well-known person or a phrase from a book) or a rhetorical question (a question that does not need to be answered but makes a statement i.e. *Is it important to save the earth?*).

Main Body

In the second, third (fourth) paragraphs, you **discuss possible solutions and their expected results**. Each solution and its results are written in separate paragraphs.

Conclusion

In the last paragraph, you **summarise your opinion**.

Remember:

Write the essay providing solutions to a problem in formal style. Use appropriate linking words to connect ideas. Do not use short forms (*don't*) or colloquial language. All paragraphs have to be indented.

When writing an essay providing solutions to a problem, you can use the following plan.

Introduction

(Paragraph 1) What is the problem? Why is it a problem i.e. what are its causes? What happens if the problem is not solved?

Main Body – the solution paragraphs

(Paragraph 2) What do you suggest first? What would the results be?

(Paragraph 3, 4) What do you suggest next? What would the results be?

Conclusion

(Paragraph 5) Summarise your opinion.

NB!!! Linking words that you can use in the essay providing solutions to a problem

To make suggestions

It would help if ...; A/Another good suggestion would be ...; To meet this need; ... One/Another solution is ...; In order to overcome this problem; Measures/Steps should be taken to deal with/solve

To present results and consequences

In this way...; The result/effect of ... would be ...; Then, ...; If ..., would ...; This would...; As a result ...; Consequently

1.3. For and against essays

A **for and against essay** discusses both **negative and positive sides** of the argument in order to give a balanced view. Before you start writing your essay, you should make a list of the points for and against.

The structure of an essay

Introduction

The introduction **presents the topic** but **does not reveal the author's opinion**.

Main Body

In the second, third, (and fourth) paragraph you **give arguments for the topic together with supporting evidence and examples**. You should make sure that you discuss the advantages and disadvantages in separate paragraphs.

Conclusion

In the last paragraph, you **express your personal opinion** on the topic and/or **summarise the main for and against arguments** using other words.

Remember:

Write your essay in formal style. Use appropriate linking words to connect ideas. Do not use short forms (*don't*) or colloquial language. All paragraphs have to be indented. Start each paragraph in the main body with the appropriate topic sentence.

When writing a for and against essay, you may use the following plan:

Introduction

(Paragraph 1) Present the topic. Give some background information and make general remarks. The thesis statement.

Main Body

(Paragraph 2) List advantages. Give examples to illustrate them.

(Paragraph 3) List advantages. Give examples to illustrate them.

(Paragraph 4) List disadvantages. Give examples to illustrate them.

Conclusion

(Paragraph 4) Give your opinion. / Summarise the main arguments.

NB!!! Linking words that you can use in argumentative essays:**To list points**

Firstly, ...; First of all ...; To begin with ...; Secondly ...; Thirdly ...; Finally

To list advantages

The main/greatest/major advantage of ... is ...; Another advantage of ... is.

To list disadvantages

The main/greatest/most serious/first disadvantage is ...; Another negative aspect of

To add more points

In addition (to this), ...; Furthermore, ...; Moreover, ...; What is more, ...; Apart from this, ...; There is another side to the issue

To make contrasting points

Nevertheless, ...; However..., On the other hand, ...; yet, but.

To introduce examples

For example /instance ...; A clear example of ... is

To make general statements

As a general rule ...; Generally ...; In most cases ...; In general...

To conclude your essay

In conclusion, ...; To conclude, ...; To sum up, ...; All in all,

Unit 2

Get Prepared for Writing

Think: Your teacher has assigned you to write an essay on a certain topic. What do you do to get started? How do you proceed?

When you need to write on a given topic, the first thing you do is gather ideas. You start with deciding on the issues you want to discuss and then establish the order in which you present them. This process is known as **pre-writing**.

In order to have a variety of ideas to choose from, try **brainstorming**. When you brainstorm, you should not worry about whether the ideas are good or not, you can change or delete them later. Your goal is to gather as many ideas as possible. Also, do not worry whether your ideas are interesting or not. Everybody has their own opinion and it does not have to coincide with that of the reader. Yet, the ideas have to be relevant and must support your claim.

Next, you will learn about three ways of brainstorming: **making a list, mind mapping, and freewriting**.

2.1. Making a list

Making a list involves taking down every word and phrase that is related to your topic.

Below, you can find a list. Read it through and think what the topic of the essay might be.

- body and mind
- no junk food
- less carbs, more proteins
- vitamins and fibre: fruit, vegetables
- healthy mind – yoga, sauna
- expensive. Really? – you can go jogging for free
- fish and poultry
- exercising at least 60 minutes a day
- less TV and computer games

Task 1

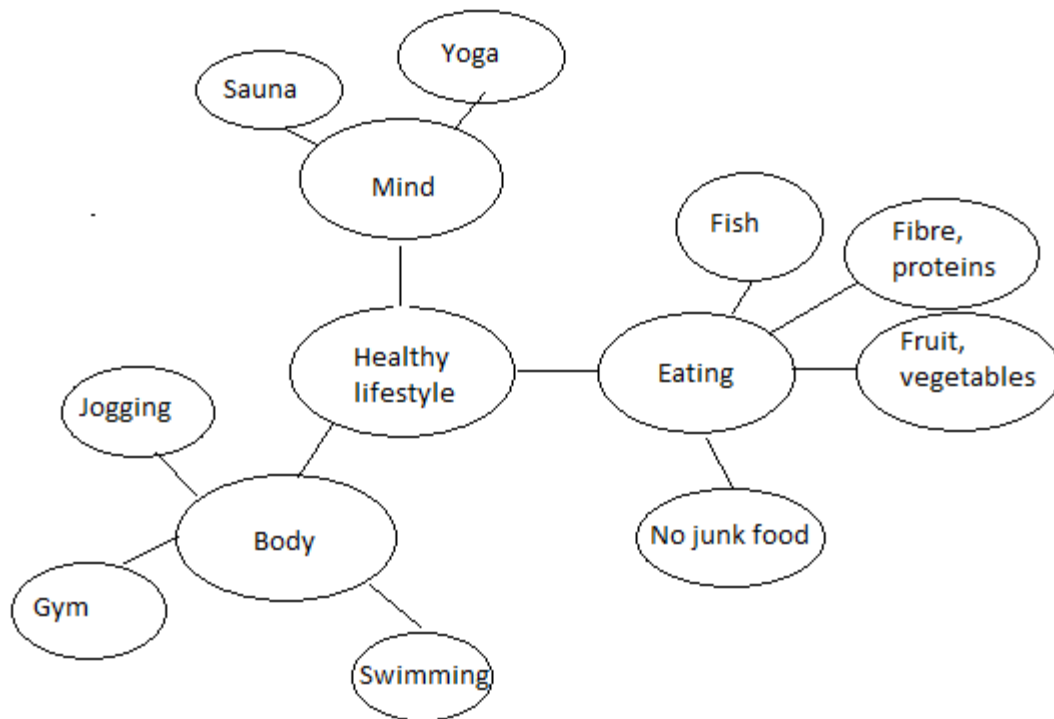
a) Choose one of the following topics. Write as many ideas as you can in five minutes on a separate sheet of paper. Try to find some counterarguments

1. Why do some students decide to take a gap year?
2. What is good about living in the countryside?
3. How can smartphones be useful in schoolwork?

b) Share your ideas with a partner.

2.2. Mind mapping

Mapping helps you organise ideas and see the relationship between them. You need a whole sheet of paper to make a map. First, write your topic in the middle and surround it with a circle. Then, add the next idea that is related to the topic, draw a circle around it and connect the circles with a line. Continue, until there are no more ideas to add.



Task 2

- a) Look at the ideas you brainstormed in task 1 and make a map using them. Share your map with a partner. Explain how the ideas relate to each other.
- b) Comment on your partner's map. Listen to your mate's comments. Think, what you learned and improve your own map.

2.3. Freewriting

Freewriting means writing down everything that comes to your mind in relation to the topic. You may give yourself 5-10 minutes for that. Most important is that you do not stop. In case you make a mistake, just cross it out and go on writing.

Below you can see an example of free writing.

People who lead a healthy ~~lifestyle~~ life do sport, eat healthy food and take care of ~~the state of~~ their mind. Eating – the easiest way to start living healthily is to change your eating habits. This involves cutting out foods ~~having~~ containing too much fat and carbs from you diet and eating more fruit and vegetables instead; they give you the necessary vitamins and fibre. You should also prefer food that is high in proteins such as meat and ~~milk~~ dairy products; when it comes to meat, poultry is healthier than pork. Eating fish is important too as it contains oil which is useful for the brain. Sport – your body needs exercise. Don't just sit in front of the TV or computer screen in the evening but go to the gym, swim in the pool or jog in the park; the latter is especially good as it is free. There are also outdoor ~~gyms~~ fitness machines put up in the park and on the beach; you don't have to pay for them either. In order to be healthy, we must take care of our minds too. Stress – relaxing in the sauna or joining a yoga club help you to unwind and achieve a balance between your body and mind.

Task 3

- a) Choose a new topic from task 1. Practise freewriting in five minutes. Remember, do not stop. You can edit your work later and remove unnecessary or wrong words after you have finished.

b) How did you like freewriting? Was it easy or difficult? Why? Discuss in pairs.

2.4. The five questions method

In addition to brainstorming, there is another effective way of getting ideas: **the five questions method**.

This method involves asking who/what/why/where/how question words to generate ideas. For example, you are asked to write on the topic *People should restrict using social networks*. To get ideas, you ask and answer the following questions:

Why (should using social networks be restricted?) – risk of losing privacy and safety, it is harmful to mental health, cyberbullying

Who (is threatened in case no steps will be taken?) – threats all age groups, especially teenagers and children

How (can it be achieved?)– parental supervision helps limit chances of being bullied or abused, limit the daily time online, remove cellphone apps, delete people you do not regard as your real friends from your friend list

What is good (about restricting using social networks?) – connects people, transparent, live updates

You see, it is possible to get many ideas in a couple of minutes. There are even more than you need, so you have to choose the ones you feel comfortable writing about.

Task 4

a) The essay is entitled *What are environmental consequences of deforestation?* Generate ideas using the 5-question method.

b) Share the ideas in a small group.

Revision

Answer the questions.

1. Which techniques to generate ideas can you name?
2. Which of them do you find most appealing? Why?
3. What did you learn in this unit?

Home assignment

Choose one of the topics on which you have ideas that you like. Now that you have enough thoughts, you need to go back and edit them. To do that, you should decide which ideas are the most interesting and necessary for the topic and which are those you do not want to use; the latter can be just crossed out. You may also want to add some new ideas. Edit your work.

Unit 3

What is a paragraph

In this unit, you will find out what a **paragraph** is and how to write a **topic sentence**.

A **paragraph** consists of sentences which convey the writer's ideas on a single topic. A paragraph has a certain structure. It starts with a **topic sentence** which is followed by **supporting sentences** and **concluding remarks**. The first sentence of a paragraph is usually indented.

Task 1

Read the paragraph and answer the questions.

Working during the summer is beneficial for every student. First and foremost, it enables young people to get some work experience and raise responsibility. Having to go to work five days a week and eight hours a day, young people realise what it means to follow the routine. Moreover, summer jobs might help schoolchildren understand what kind of work they would like to do in the future. Thus, having a job during summer vacation is useful and highly recommended for all youngsters.

1. What is the topic of the paragraph?
2. What is the main idea of the paragraph?
3. Which ideas have been used to support the main idea of the paragraph?

The structure of a paragraph is as follows:

THE TOPIC SENTENCE carries the main idea of the paragraph.

THE SUPPORTING SENTENCES explain the topic sentence and illustrate it with examples.

THE CONCLUDING SENTENCE is the last sentence of the paragraph. It finishes the paragraph by rephrasing the topic sentence or giving final comments about it. No new information is introduced here.

Task 2

Look at the text in task 1. Underline the topic sentence using the red highlighter, supporting sentences using the green highlighter, and concluding remarks using the blue one. Compare with your partner.

Task 3

Read the paragraph below. Choose the sentence from the list that would make the best topic sentence.

Tip: To make it clear, underline supporting sentences first.

_____ The number of families that depend on both parents going out to work, or where there is one parent raising the children alone, is much greater than it used to be. Also, many more people move away from their families than ever before. Besides these changes, most people still think of their family as one of the most significant parts of their lives. This was not like that during our grandparents were children. So, it can be claimed that people's attitude towards family life has changed a great deal.

(Adapted from *Upstream Intermediate*)

1. The majority of contemporary young people think that family is more important than work.
2. The typical family does not follow the traditional model today.
3. In Western Europe and the USA, family life has changed dramatically over the last forty years.

Task 4

Write a suitable topic sentence for the following paragraphs.

1. _____
 The rain made it difficult to see where we were going. There was a flash of lightning followed by a crash of thunder. A tree fell onto the road in front of us. Dad stopped the engine. Due to the harsh weather conditions it was not possible to continue our journey. What were we going to do now?

2. _____
 Such areas would allow wild animals to live and breed safely in their natural habitats. Wildlife would not be threatened by poachers who kill animals to get their skin or body parts; nor would they be hunted illegally since national parks are closely guarded. Today our forests are not safe enough for the wildlife and measures should be taken to put an end to killing them.

3. _____
 First, exercise helps your body stay strong and healthy. As a result, you are less likely to catch viral diseases. In addition, keeping fit prevents stress-related health problems such as heart

attacks and cancer. Physical exercise also helps you to reduce anger since it produces hormones called endorphins which make us feel good. Thus, the sport is of foremost importance if one wants to stay healthy.

Revision

Fill in the gaps with suitable words.

A paragraph has three components: the _____ sentence which is usually the first sentence of a paragraph and explains the main idea of the writer; the _____ sentences which explain the topic sentence and/or give examples; the _____ sentence which comes at the end of the paragraph.

Unit 4

How to develop a paragraph

In this unit, you will learn how to support your topic sentence by giving details and examples.

Task 1

Read the paragraph. Underline the topic sentence. Which explanations and examples has the writer given to support the topic sentence. List them below. Share them with your partner.

The internet is beneficial for young people since it broadens their minds. Above all, it helps them do research for their schoolwork. Having so much useful information available, the internet widens students' knowledge and improves their grades. Another positive aspect of the internet is that students can practise foreign languages and chat with friends from all over the world. What is more, there are several language learning apps available which give young people great opportunities to learn languages wherever they are. To conclude it, the internet serves as a valuable source for students since it widens their knowledge and helps learn languages.

Explanation 1: _____

Examples: _____

Explanation2: _____

Examples: _____

Task 2

A paragraph ends with a concluding sentence which restates the main idea using other words or sums up the content of the paragraph.

Look at the paragraph in task 1. Find the concluding sentence. Does it restate the main idea of the paragraph or does it sum up what was being said?

Now, exchange your paragraphs with a partner. Evaluate your partner's work using the following assessment form. Tick The appropriate box (YES/NO) and add comments. Then, share your ideas in pairs.

	YES	NO	COMMENTS
The topic sentence is present			
The topic sentence is supported using ideas.			
The ideas are illustrated with examples.			
The concluding sentence is present.			

Revision

Think: How to develop a paragraph? How to organise a paragraph to make it a single unit?

Unit 5

How to write different types of essays

5.1. How to write opinion essays

As you already know, opinion essays contain opinions. In case you want to make your opinion stronger, you can include facts. To make your opinion stronger, you can include facts.

A fact is a piece of information that is true, e.g. *Students have to wear a uniform in our school.* **An opinion** is a belief about a particular issue. *The uniform is rather uncomfortable.*

Task 1

Read the body paragraphs of the essay *What could be done to stay healthy?* Find sentences which present writer's opinion(s) and these that present facts. Use green to mark opinions and blue to mark facts.

It is clear that to stay healthy our bodies need good quality food with nutrients in them and without carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins, and minerals our bodies would not survive. A diet which is rich in vitamins and consists only of fruit and vegetables does not let the body grow and develop normally. A human brain, for example, functions much better if it gets fats from fish and nuts. Milk products and meat are essential for bones and muscles. So, in order to stay healthy, nutritious food is needed.

Another means of being healthy is exercising. Doing sport enables people to be slim and fit. Besides, it gives them more energy and prevents heart diseases. According to experts, thirty minutes of exercise every day is considered to be enough for good looks and health. What is more, exercising affects a good night's rest. Having been walking in the park or exercising in the gym, helps people fall asleep. Thus, it could be claimed that doing sport is the easiest way to keep the body going.

Task 2

Write one sentence which presents a fact and another which presents your opinion.

- 1)
- 2)

Share the sentences with your partner. Decide which of your partner's sentences are facts and which are opinions.

Task 3

Write your own opinion paragraph. Find the topic you have decided to write your essay on. Look at the ideas you brainstormed in unit 1, tasks 1-4.

- Choose one idea that you would like to develop into an opinion paragraph.
- Write a topic sentence (your opinion) using the idea.
- Choose facts and give examples to make your opinion stronger.
- Conclude the paragraph with closing remarks.

1) Why do some students decide to take a gap year?

2) What is good about living in the countryside?

3) How can smartphones be useful in schoolwork?

4) What are environmental consequences of deforestation?

Now exchange what you wrote with your partner. Find opinions and facts. Do you think your partner has given enough reasons and facts to make the claim stronger?

5.2. How to write an essay providing solutions to a problem

Task 1

Work with a partner. Think, why are the following ... problems? What happens if people do not try to solve them?

1) Air pollution in the world

2) Dropping out of school

Task 2

Now, choose one of the issues and write the introduction to the essay. Share the paragraph with your partner.

Evaluate your partner's problem paragraph. Fill in the assessment grid. Discuss it.

	YES	NO
There is a hook at the beginning of the paragraph.		
The problem is present in the paragraph		
Causes of the problem have been listed.		
The result of the problem is discussed.		

How to write the main body – solution paragraphs

The introduction of the essay introduces the problem. The main body suggests possible solutions and explains how these solutions help to solve the problem.

When you write the main body:

- Make sure that the solutions are directly linked to the problem.
- Do not simply list the solutions but also expand them by giving specific examples.

Task 3

Look at the problem you chose to write about in task 1. Pretend that your friend has asked you to provide possible solutions the problem and what results each solution brings. Now, choose one solution that you know most about. Write sentences introducing the solution using any of the phrases suggested previously. Add direct examples of expected results.

Now, share your work with another student. Read the paragraphs that your partner has written. Comment on his /her work using the following questions:

- 1) Are advantages and disadvantages listed in separate paragraphs?
- 2) Have the claims been supported with evidence and examples?
- 3) Which linking devices have been used?
- 4) What did you like about the paragraphs? Give examples.
- 5) What could be improved?

Unit 6

How to write an introduction and a conclusion

An essay consists of three parts:

I The introduction

The introduction is the first paragraph of an essay which explains the topic of the essay.

II The main body

The main body consists of paragraphs that explain the topic. Each paragraph in the main body starts with a topic sentence which is followed by details and examples that support the main idea of the paragraph.

III The conclusion

The conclusion is the last paragraph of an essay. It summarises the main idea and restates the thesis statement.

Task 1

Label the parts of an essay: Introduction, Main body, Conclusion.

_____ One fourth of Estonian first-year students are not in good health: they are overweight or even obese. Such intriguing information emerged in the media after Estonian National Institute for Health Development had revealed the results of research. In my opinion, one of the major problems seems to be people's eating habits. Students tend to skip meals and grab unhealthy snacks to relieve hunger. However, this is not only healthy eating that help us stay well but also sport and exercise which, in addition to enhancing the appearance, facilitates positive thinking.

_____ It is clear that to stay healthy our bodies need good quality food with nutrients in them and without carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins, and minerals our bodies would not survive A diet which is rich in vitamins and consists only of fruit and vegetables does not let the body grow and develop normally. A human brain, for example, functions much better if it gets fats from fish and nuts. Milk products and meat are essential for bones and muscles. So, in order to stay healthy, nutritious food is needed.

Another means of being healthy is exercising. Doing sport enables people to be slim and fit. Besides, it gives them more energy and prevents heart diseases. According to experts, thirty minutes of exercise every day is considered to be enough for good looks and health. What is more, exercising affects a good night's rest. Having been walking in the park or

exercising in the gym, helps people fall asleep. Thus, it could be claimed that doing sport is the easiest way to keep the body going.

Yet, there are people who say that leading a healthy lifestyle is expensive and therefore, not affordable for everybody. It is true that high-quality food can be rather expensive. Going to the fitness club and participating aerobics or yoga classes is not cheap either. However, instead of buying ready-made food, which tends to be high in calories and preservatives, one has to find time for cooking at home. This lowers the price of the meal. Besides, sport does not have to be practised in fitness centres; jogging in the park or walking in the woods is free of charge. So, the view that a healthy lifestyle is costly is debatable.

_____ Why is it that there are many people among Estonians who suffer from obesity and heart diseases? On the one hand, it is the busy life that has made people give up on proper meals and have a quick bite of unhealthy food. People do not have time for eating let alone doing exercise. To keep the body healthy, a combination of balanced diet and enough exercise is needed. Eating nutritious food and going walking for at least half an hour a day leads to a better and much happier life.

6.1. Writing the introduction

What is a good introduction like? The introduction...

- catches the reader's interest;
- presents the general topic of the essay;
- gives background information about the topic;
- states the thesis statement (the main point) of the essay.

To catch the reader's interest 'a hook' – an intriguing piece of information, surprising data, a quotation or even a joke – could be used. The 'hook' is followed by presenting the general topic of the essay as well as some background information about the topic. The thesis statement comes at the end of the introduction.

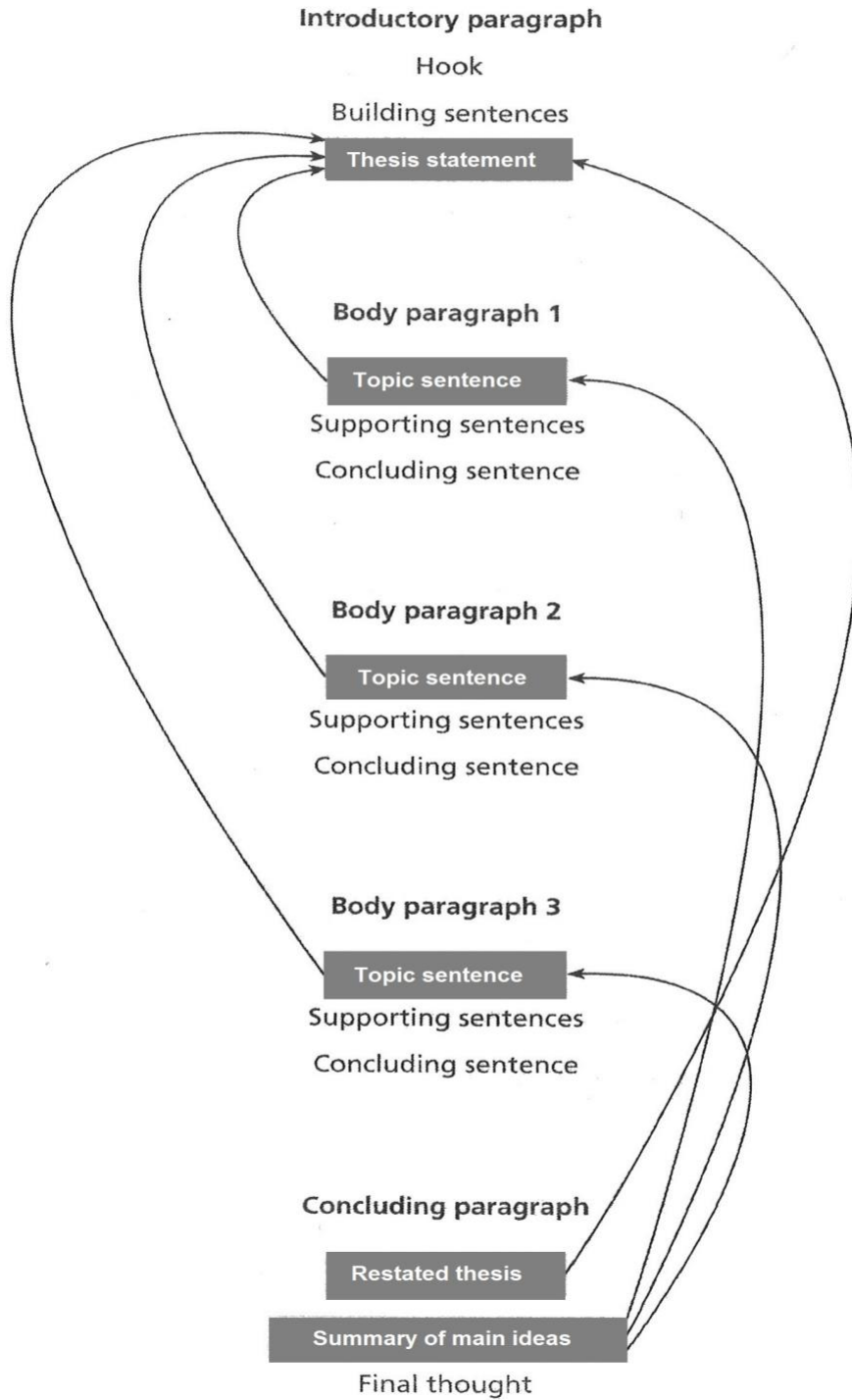
What is a thesis statement?

The thesis statement can be compared with a topic sentence which explains the main idea of a single paragraph. The thesis statement carries the main idea of the whole essay; it lists the main points of the essay which are represented in the topic sentences in body paragraphs.

A thesis statement is explained in the main body of an essay; it means that each body paragraph discusses one part of the thesis statement. Thus, a thesis statement is the backbone of the essay.

Next, see the figure (created by Chin et al 2012) to realise how the thesis statement works.

Five-paragraph essay structure



Task 2

Read the introduction of the essay in task 1 and find the 'hook', and the thesis statement. Write them below.

Task 3

Look at the essay in task 1. Underline the parts of the thesis statement using different colours and the corresponding topic sentences in the main body.

How to write a thesis statement?

One way to make writing a thesis statement easier is to write down two or three different opinions about the topic. You may begin each sentence *I think that ...* and complete it with your viewpoint. After having removed *I think that ...* and organising your ideas into one sentence, you receive a possible thesis statement.

Topic: Why people keep pets

I think that people get themselves pets to keep them company.

I think that people keep pets to have somebody to take care of.

A thesis statement: People get themselves a pet to keep them company and have somebody to take care of.

Task 4 (optional)

Write the thesis statement to the essay *People should use less plastic*. Write two or three opinions you have. Start your sentences *I think that*. Now, cross out the *I think that* in the statements and put together your thesis statement.

Look at the thesis statement written by your partner. How many ideas does it have? Do you think it is an effective thesis statement? Could it be improved?

Task 5

Write thesis statements to the following essays. Remember, first write two or three ideas you have on each topic. Then, write the thesis statements.

Topic: Why is yoga so popular?

Topic: School uniform – good or bad?

Topic: Why should recycling be promoted?

Share the thesis statements you wrote with your partner. Which one(s) do you like? Why?

6.2. Writing the conclusion

The conclusion is the final paragraph of an essay.

The conclusion ...

- summarises the main points of the essay;
- restates the thesis statement using different words;
- makes a final comment on the main idea of the essay.

NB!!! New ideas are not introduced in the conclusion.

Task 6

Look at the essay in task 1 and answer the questions.

1. Which sentence in the conclusion restates the thesis statement?
2. Which points of the essay are summarised in the conclusion?

Task 7

Look at the thesis statements in task 5. Restate them.

Topic: Why is yoga so popular?

Topic: School uniform – good or bad?

Topic: Why should recycling be promoted?

Revision

Fill in the gaps.

An essay has three parts: _____, _____,
_____.

At the beginning of the introduction, there is an interesting piece of information called a _____. It is followed by background information and the thesis statement. The thesis statement carries the main idea of the essay and is explained in the main body. The conclusion

sums up the main idea of the essay and _____ the thesis statement using different words.

Unit 7

How to write an outline

You have gathered enough ideas for the essay and you know how to develop them into a paragraph. You are also aware of the structure of an English essay and you have mastered writing the thesis statement. Next, you need to compile the outline.

An outline is a list of ideas and explanations and/or examples you will put in your essay. It also determines the order in which you are going to present the points.

Why should you write an outline?

Writing an outline before getting down to your essay is really beneficial as it:

- gives you a good understanding of what exactly you will write about;
- helps you make the essay well-organised;
- helps you remember the important points.

How to write an outline?

1. Brainstorm ideas to have something to write about.
2. Edit the ideas to see which ones go together. Find support and examples to sustain your viewpoint. Use markers such as numbers or letters to show which ideas go together and in which order you want to present them.
3. Now, your ideas are ready to be used in the essay Proceed choosing between two options.

Option 1: In case you have plenty of time, you may write your outline on a separate paper.

1) Start with writing Roman numerals (I, II, III, IV etc) to refer to the structure of the essay: the introduction and the thesis statement, body paragraphs with their main ideas, and the conclusion.

- I. Introduction
- II. First main idea
- III. Second main idea
- IV. Third main idea
- V. Conclusion

2) Now write your thesis statement using the main ideas you have brainstormed.

3) Write supporting points and examples for the paragraphs in the main body; use capital letters to show supporting sentences and Arabic numbers (1, 2...) to denote examples and

details to expand supporting points. In the end, your outline should look like this:

I. Introduction: the thesis statement

II Main body:

First main idea

A. First supporting point

B. Second supporting point

...

III Second main idea

A. First supporting point

B. Second supporting point

...

IV Third main idea

A. First supporting point

B. Second supporting point

...

V Conclusion

Option 2: In case you are taking a writing test or an examination and the essay writing time is limited you could just cross out the points you have used and move on to the next ones. Make sure that the ideas and examples you put into one paragraph are connected.

Task 1

Work in pairs. Fill in the outline for the essay *Healthy Lifestyle* in unit 4. Use a separate sheet of paper. Discuss with another group.

Healthy Lifestyle

I The thesis statement

II First main idea:

A:

B:

C:

III Second main idea:

A:

B:

C:

IV Third main idea:

A:

B:

C:

V Conclusion:

Task 2

Make the outline to the essay on the topic you have chosen:

- *How can smartphones be useful in schoolwork?*
- *Why do people choose to live in the countryside?*
- *Why do some students decide to take a gap year after finishing secondary school?*
- *What are the environmental consequences of deforestation?*

Find the ideas you brainstormed and edited in unit 1. Choose three main ideas you want to use in your essay and put together a thesis statement. Then, write the outline to your essay on a separate paper.

Task 3

Find another student. Present your outline. You can make corrections if you wish.

Now, exchange your outlines. Assess your partner's outline using the following criteria:

	YES	NO	POSITIVE / NEGATIVE COMMENTS
Paragraphs are in the logical order.			
There are three main ideas present in the outline one of which is an opposing argument.			
Each main idea is related to the thesis statement.			
Each supporting point is related to the main idea.			
There are examples and details to explain supporting points.			

Talk to your partner. Say what you think about his /her outline, what could be improved. Do you agree with your partner's comments?

Now, you are ready to write the first draft of your essay.

Unit 8

How to write the first draft

Having finished the outline, you can start writing the first draft of your essay.

- First, go through the outline once again and write the essay from start to finish.
- Put more emphasis on the content of the essay and don't worry so much about grammar, spelling and punctuation. You will have time to edit your essay later.
- Check that you include all important elements (i.e. the thesis statement, topic sentences, counter argument). Make sure that you relate the thesis statement to the topic sentences of body paragraphs. Do not forget to illustrate your opinion with examples.
- Having finished the essay, read it through once again to check that it meets the requirements to an English essay.

Task 1

Write the essay paying attention to the guidelines above. Next, evaluate your essay using the following assessment grid. Then, look at the grid that you just filled in? Make corrections in your essay in case there is something to improve.

	YES	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	COMMENTS
ORGANISATION: Are paragraphs in the logical order?			
INTRODUCTION: Is the thesis statement present?			
Have you included some background information to the topic?			
TOPIC SENTENCE, SUPPORT			
Is the first main idea related to the thesis?			
Is the second main idea related to the thesis?			
Have you expanded the second main idea with supporting points and examples			
Have you included an opposing argument?			
Have you expanded it with supporting points and examples?			
CONCLUSION: Have you restated the thesis statement?			

Task 2

Find a partner and exchange your essays. Read your mate's writing and evaluate its content and organisation. Use the following grid ticking the appropriate column. Make comments on what you liked or did not like and give advice for improvement.

	YES	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	COMMENTS AND ADVICE
ORGANISATION: Paragraphs are in the logical order.			
INTRODUCTION: The thesis statement and background information are present.			
TOPIC SENTENCE, SUPPORT	—	—	—
The first main idea is related to the thesis statement.			
The first main idea is expanded with support and examples.			
The second main idea is related to the thesis statement.			
The second main idea is expanded with support and examples.			
The opposing argument is present.			
The opposing argument is expanded with support and examples.			

CONCLUSION: The thesis statement is restated.			
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Now, work in pairs and discuss the grid. Say, what you liked and point out the elements that are not present in the essay. Advise your mate on how the essay could be improved.

Unit 9

How to revise and edit your essay

Now your essay has gone through self-assessment and peer assessment. Next, you need to pay attention to vocabulary and mechanics.

Task 1

Make corrections in your essay using the comments and advice that you received from your partner. In case there are many mistakes in your writing, you need to rewrite your essay.

Don't forget to check your essay to improve mechanics and vocabulary. Consult different sources (e.g. dictionaries, thesaurus, grammar books).

Now, exchange your essays with partner. Read your partner's essay. Evaluate it using the rubric. Say, what you liked about the essay and what could be improved.

ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

	Introduction and conclusion	Content	Organisation	Vocabulary	Grammar
4	<u>Very good</u> Both introduction and conclusion appropriate. Introduction has all required elements (hook, background information, thesis) present. Conclusion restates the thesis.	<u>Very good</u> Essay related to the topic. Thesis statement developed, all ideas expanded and supported.	<u>Very good</u> Ideas are presented logically. Paragraphs are clear. Topic sentences present. Linking devices used naturally.	<u>Very good</u> Wide and appropriate vocabulary makes the essay enjoyable to read. Spelling is correct.	<u>Very good</u> Grammar correct. Punctuation well managed.
3	<u>Average</u> Introduction has all required elements present but the thesis needs improvement. Conclusion restates the thesis.	<u>Average</u> Essay mostly related to the topic. One idea not expanded and/or supported.	<u>Average</u> Paragraphs logical. Topic sentences not always present. At times linking devices not used naturally.	<u>Average</u> Vocabulary conveys the meaning. There are 3-5 errors regarding spelling, word form and / or choice.	<u>Average</u> A few (1-4) grammatical errors. A few (1-4) punctuation mistakes.
2	<u>Fair</u> Either introduction or conclusion do not comply with requirements.	<u>Fair</u> Essay only partly relates to the topic. Some ideas remain unclear. Two ideas not expanded and/or supported.	<u>Fair</u> Ideas are sometimes illogical. Linking devices limited.	<u>Fair</u> Meaning is confusing due to frequent errors (6-8) of word form and/or choice. Six or more spelling mistakes	<u>Fair</u> Several (5-9) grammatical errors. Several (5-9) punctuation mistakes.
1	<u>Needs much improvement</u> Both introduction and conclusion inappropriate. Introduction and/or conclusion missing.	<u>Needs much improvement</u> Essay only partly relates to the topic. No ideas are expanded and/or supported.	<u>Needs much improvement</u> Ideas are disconnected. Linking devices missing or overused.	<u>Needs much improvement</u> More than 9 errors of word form and/or choice. More than 9 spelling mistakes. Contracted forms used.	<u>Needs much improvement</u> Ten or more mistakes in grammar and punctuation.

	<u>COMMENTS</u>	<u>COMMENTS</u>	<u>COMMENTS</u>	<u>COMMENTS</u>	<u>COMMENTS</u>

Now, your essay is ready to be rewritten and published. Before you start writing, look at the checklist in task 2. It helps you remember what you should keep in mind.

Task 2

Assess the final version of your essay using the following checklist. Answer the questions: YES/NO.

Layout

Have you organised the essay into paragraphs?

Are each of your viewpoints along with examples discussed in a separate paragraph?

Have you used only full verb forms in the essay?

Accuracy

Have you checked for spelling mistakes?

Have you checked for grammatical mistakes?

Have you checked for punctuation mistakes (capital letters, commas and full stops, apostrophes)?

Language features

Have you used appropriate language?

Have you used appropriate linking words?

Now rewrite your essay.

Appendix 3 – A peer review introduction sheet (Hyland 2003: 202)

What is peer editing?

Peer editing means responding with appreciation and positive criticism to your classmates' writing. It is an important part of this course because it can:

- Help you become more aware of your reader when writing and revising
- Help you become more sensitive to problems in your writing and more confident in correcting them.

Rules for peer responding:

- Be respectful of your classmate's work
- Be conscientious – read carefully and think about what the writer is trying to say
- Be tidy and legible in your comments
- Be encouraging and make suggestions
- Be specific with comments

Remember: You do not need to be an expert at grammar. Your best help is as a reader and that you know when you have been interested, entertained, persuaded, or confused.

Appendix 4 – Writing correction code for written assignments (adapted from Kaye 2007)

Code	Use	Example
WW	Wrong word	I was walking <u>on</u> the field when I heard somebody calling.
WT	Wrong time	Look! It <u>was</u> snowing.
WF	Wrong form	I was walking in the park as it <u>was starting</u> to snow.
WO	Wrong order	As our plane over the mountain <u>flew</u> we saw snow.
SP	Spelling	I will <u>defenitely</u> go there.
P	Punctuation	I was walking in the park; when I met Andy.
X	Extra word	I was walking when Ruth called <u>to</u> me.
M	Missing word	I was walking when _ met Ruth.
R	Register	In my free time, I <u>observe</u> TV.
!	Silly mistake!	Last night I <u>seed</u> an interesting film.
RW	Try re-writing	<u>I walk in the park, I Ruth saw.</u>

RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL
ANGLISTIKA OSAKOND

Liina Truu

Creating materials for teaching essay writing in upper secondary school [Õppematerjali koostamine essee kirjutamise õpetamiseks keskkoolis]

Magistritöö

2019

Lehekülgede arv: 114

Käesoleva töö eesmärgiks seati: 1) koostada õppematerjal ingliskeelse essee kirjutamise õpetamiseks keskkoolis; 2) integreerida õppematerjali omandamise protsessi kujundava hindamise elemente.

Antud töö koosneb sissejuhatausest, kahest peatükist ja kokkuvõttest. Töö sissejuhatavas osas tuuakse välja need aspektid, mis Eesti kooli õpilastele ingliskeelse essee kirjutamisel enim raskusi valmistavad ning arutletakse kirjutamisoskuse vajalikkuse üle. Esimene peatükk annab ülevaate ingliskeelsele essele omastest elementidest ja neile esitavatest nõuetest. Lisaks sellele kirjeldatakse protsesskirjutamist: viisi, mida kirjutamisoskuse arendamiseks kasutatakse. Kuna protsesskirjutamine on tihedalt seotud kujundava hindamisega, antakse esimeses peatükis ülevaade ka enese- ja kaaslaste hindamisest ning sellega seotud ohtudest. Töö teises peatükis kirjeldatakse ja analüüsitakse koostatud õppematerjali. Õppematerjal on koostatud tuginedes õpikus *Academic Writing* (Zemach & Rumisek 2005) esitatud meetoditele ning integreerides protsesskirjutamise põhimõtteid mudelkirjutamisega: õpilased, olles valinud neile sobiva teema, kirjutavad ühisõppe käigus oma esseed tuginedes ette antud mudelitele samm-sammult etappide kaupa, alustades ideede genereerimisest ja organiseerimisest lõpetades kirjutiste esitamisega hindamiseks. Kogu kirjutamisprotsessi vältel on õppuritel võimalik hinnata end ise ning saada igakülgselt abi ning tagasisidet nii õpetajalt kui ka oma kaaslastelt. Koostatud õppematerjali tõhusust katsetati kaheteistkümne Saaremaa Ühisgümnaasiumi õpilase seas. Materjali hindamiseks paluti õpilastel iga õppetunni lõpus tunnis käsitletud õppematerjali tõhusust ja harjutuste valikut kirjalikult kommenteerida. Õpilaste vastused analüüsiti. Samuti viis töö autor iga tunni järel läbi eneserefleksiooni, et hinnata õppe-eesmärkide täitmist ning tunnis tehtud harjutuste tõhusust. Kogutud mõtteid võrreldi õpilaste omadega ning korrektuuri vajavad osad parandati. Korrigeeritud õppematerjal on leitav antud töö lisades.

Märksõnad:

Inglise keel, gümnaasiumi riiklik õppekava, essee, protsesskirjutamine, kujundav hindamine, enesehindamine, kaaslaste hindamine.

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