

THE USE OF MIND MAPPING TO IMPROVE STUDENT'S ABILITY IN WRITING DESCRIPTIVE TEXTS FOR SEVENTH GRADERS

Khusnul Harsul Lisan

khusnulharsul@unu-jogja.ac.id

Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan, Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Yogyakarta

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to help seventh graders write descriptive writings more effectively by using mind mapping. Action research was used to describe this study. Two cycles of execution were used for the actions. The seventh graders from SMP Negeri 2 Gamping Sleman Yogyakarta served as the study's subjects. Both qualitative and quantitative data were used in the study. The students, the English teacher, and the collaborator were all interviewed after watching the teaching and learning process in action. The information was presented as field notes, interview transcripts, and pictures. While this was going on, the quantitative data were gathered by conducting pre- and post-tests following Cycle I and Cycle II. By using democratic validity, dialogic validity, catalytic validity, and result validity, the validity of the data was established. The results of the study demonstrated that using mind maps to show students how to write descriptive texts could enhance their writing abilities. Additionally, employing mind maps to teach students how to write descriptive texts might grab their interest and motivate them. According to the quantitative data, the students' mean pre-test score was 9.970, and their post-test scores for Cycle I and Cycle II were 11.191 and 13.191, respectively. The gain score at that time was 3.221. It showed that the students' writing of descriptive paragraphs significantly improved.

Keywords: *Mind mapping, descriptive texts, writing skill.*

INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the skills which should be learned by English learners especially students in junior high schools. However, according to Richard and Renandya (2002:303), writing is the most challenging talent to learn. The reason for this is that writing requires knowledge of how to write words as well as how to put them together correctly and by grammatical norms. Writing abilities are generally viewed as more active than receptive abilities (Harmer, 2007: 265). To create a work that complies with English grammar norms, the writer will have to put in more work. They should also be able to refine their thoughts to produce a well-written result that is pertinent to the subject at hand. Then, writing includes a process and a product,

claims Linse (2005: 98). It is meant to be a process for coming up with ideas and accumulating information that will then be used to produce writing that the audience, or the readers, can understand.

According to Brown (2000: 335), writing is the result of thinking, drafting, and revising. It requires specialized skills to generate ideas, organize them coherently, incorporate them into written texts using discourse markers and rhetorical conventions, revise texts for clarity, edit texts for appropriate grammar, and produce a final product at the end of the activity.

Harmer defines four basic stages of writing (2004). Planning, drafting, editing, and final draft are the stages. During the planning stage, the writers must consider an idea pertinent to the topic. Planning or pre-

writing step is critical in the process of writing and should consume 70% of the writing time (Murray, 1982). The teacher instructed the students to think about and decide on a topic at this stage. Following that, the students brainstorm ideas for how to develop the topic in their writing. After planning, they should begin writing their first draft version. The goal is to get their thoughts down on paper. Students are taught to concentrate on expressing ideas and presenting those ideas in a coherent and cohesive text. Furthermore, students are advised not to concern themselves with spelling and mechanics at this time since these will be revised later. After the students have completed their draft, they usually move on to the editing stage. They should choose which sections to keep and which to add and replace with other suitable words or sentences to make sure that their draft outcome is accurate. To achieve a good and correct writing result, the teacher should assist students in correcting their grammar. After editing their draft, writers would create their final version or draft. The emphasis is on ensuring that everything goes as planned and checking grammatical usage to ensure students' correctness to achieve good writing. Once they have finished editing and completing the prior stage, the students can share the final draft.

The teacher's role is crucial in the students' activity of writing texts. There are three roles, according to Harmer (2007: 261). The first function is as a motivator. An English teacher should be able to inspire their pupils to pay attention to their explanations and finish the work given to them in writing class. As a result, when composing texts, pupils will find it simpler to come up with ideas and express their originality. The instructor ought to motivate

them to join and to write without inhibition. The following is a resource. The teacher must be prepared to provide students with the information and language they need to write their texts. For example, the teacher should help pupils who are having trouble choosing the right word to utilize in their writing. He or she must be readily available, well-prepared, and attentive to monitor the students' development and provide helpful, diplomatic advice and ideas. A supplier of feedback is the third role. The English teacher should give the students constructive criticism of their writing. Based on the problems the students still don't comprehend, the teacher should decide how much emphasis to give the pupils when giving corrections. To give children confidence in their writing ability, teachers don't have to constantly direct them.

According to the junior high school's English curriculum, students should be able to compose a variety of texts. Descriptive texts are one of them. According to Gerot and Wignell (1995), For students who wish to describe a person, place, or thing, descriptive text is primarily required. Of course, the five senses of humans are involved. Therefore, it is crucial to try to discover a decent technique to train students' senses to produce high-quality English writing to put them at ease and make them love writing descriptive writings. Furthermore, Hammond (1992) stated that in the end, students would find it easier to describe physical appearances, attitudes, or characteristics of people, places, or things.

According to the findings of a class observation conducted with SMPN 2 Gamping seventh graders, there were some issues with the teaching writing process. The researcher then classified it into three major issues. The first is concerned with students'

ability to write descriptive texts, which was deemed to be very low. The students struggle in coming up with and developing ideas. They have trouble sorting the texts as well. Furthermore, they struggle with correct grammar, such as not being able to use auxiliary and the simple present tense. Furthermore, they lack vocabulary. As a result, they couldn't write descriptive texts correctly or accurately. The second issue is dealing with the motivation of students. They are uninterested in writing. As a result, during the teaching and learning process, the students tend to engage in activities that divert their attention away from the lesson, such as playing with their friends, asking permission to go outside, failing to complete assigned tasks, and even sleeping in class. The final major issue is dealing with the English teacher himself. He is unable to provide engaging materials or media for the writing class. He is only interested in reading and reading. Furthermore, no activity engages students in the classroom. As a result, the explanation bores the students.

To enhance students' ability to produce descriptive texts, the researcher felt that it was essential to find a suitable solution to the issues faced during the teaching and learning process. The researcher used Buzan's mind mapping technique to teach descriptive writing after consulting the English teacher. Mind mapping is a creative note-taking method that employs visuals and images to help people feel more at ease entering information into their brains, retaining information for longer periods, and quickly retrieving information from their minds by using association and creativity (Buzan, 2006:6).

The mind mapping working principle is in line with how the brain naturally functions (Windura, 2008: 17). It implies

that they can collaborate. It suggests that they can work together. To effectively learn, retain information in the brain, and recall it later, pupils must be able to manage either their left or right brain. Children, in particular, find it easier to remember and memorize anything related to pictures, symbols, and colors than any verbal or spoken language. Thus, using mind mapping in the teaching and learning process benefits both the teacher and the students. The process is analogous to writing down information using symbols, images, emotional connotations, and colors. Similar to how the human brain processes information, symbols, visuals, emotional connotations, and colors are used to record information. In nature, visual or auditory information is processed by the brain more quickly than verbal or spoken information.

Mind mapping has distinct qualities that have been regarded as a creative approach to teaching students, particularly children. The first is to use images. It is an interesting thing for students to draw their interest in studying. Both sides of the brain are stimulated when letters and pictures are combined, which makes it easier for kids to focus and study. (Buzan, 2006:22-23; Windura, 2008:17, 21, 85). The next step is to use a variety of colors. Because of the characteristics of each color, students would be able to distinguish and remember what they had previously learned. Because it leads the students' learning experience more entertaining, it makes the instructional materials simpler to comprehend and remember (Windura, 2008:21, 84, 85; Buzan, 2006:22). The following step is to present ideas using keywords. One key word in each line empowers students to readily come up with new concepts and helps with memory retention (Windura, 2008: 23; 80-

81). Long sentences or paragraphs will be challenging for children to recall, but if they merely memorize the main word and then develop it in their way, the situation will be different. Thus, using key terms will facilitate students' presentations of their ideas. The final step is to apply information classification. To learn more effectively, students should divide the information into sections. Mind mapping organizes information into distinct classifications.

Here are a few procedures for making a mind map (Buzan, 2011: 10). (1) To start, gather a few colored pens and a blank sheet of unlined paper. Make sure the paper is positioned sideways. (2) Draw a graphic that encapsulates your key point in the center of the page. The picture represents your primary point; (3) Draw some substantial curves, connected lines extending forth from the page's core image. One for each of your key arguments on your subject. The central branches reflect your primary subtopic. (4) Give each of these ideas a name and, if you'd like, depicting each branch in a little drawing. Both sides of the brain must be used for this. In a mind map, words are underlined throughout. This is because they are important terms, and the underlying, like in typical notes, highlights their relevance; (5) from each of these concepts, you can construct further connected lines that expand like tree branches. Your thoughts on each of these concepts should be filled in the gaps. These additional branches serve as a representation of the specifics.

DePorter and Hernacki (2008:172) list the following advantages of mind maps as follows:(1) Flexible. If readers need to convey and explain something about the thought quickly, they can do so in the appropriate place; (2) Concentrating on the point. It can be said that students should

focus on the ideas rather than recording what has been said; (3) Improving our understanding. Mind mapping will facilitate and improve understanding and provide a record of a significant review in the future; (4) It will be enjoyable. The learning process will be enjoyable if you use your imagination and creativity when mind mapping.

Following up on the previous explanation, it was demonstrated that using mind mapping in writing descriptive texts could assist students in generating and developing their ideas because they could brainstorm ideas and use key topics in developing them through the simple method of mind mapping. They would also be able to organize the text effectively. Furthermore, they would be able to enrich their vocabularies because, when mind mapping, students could use key vocabularies to make it easier for them to remember and recall the words. Furthermore, using images, colors, and lines with branches would draw students' attention and motivate them to write descriptive texts. As a result, the students will be able to improve their writing skills by using mind mapping.

RESEARCH METHOD

According to the research objective, the main purpose of this study is to enhance seventh graders' ability to write descriptive texts through the mind mapping technique. The study was carried out in SMPN 2 Gamping. The students of VII of SMPN 2 Gamping are the focus of the study. This study is an example of action research. Burns, as suggested by Kemmis and McTaggart (2010).

The research was not carried out alone because action research is a team process or it is collaborative. Together with the

collaborator and the English teacher, he conducted the research. The researcher identified some problems, devised some solutions to the problems, carried out the solutions, and reported on the outcomes. He employed the mind mapping method to aid in teaching and learning during the action phase. Additionally, he actively took part in research on problem-solving. Each of those cycles was supposed to help students' capacity to compose and write descriptive texts.

In this study, two types of data were collected. The first type of data is qualitative data, which is collected through observation and interviews. The second type of data is quantitative data, which comes in the form of a writing test. When it comes to observation, the instrument used to collect data is an observation checklist, and the information obtained is in the form of field notes. The instrument used to collect data for interviews is interview guidelines, and the data obtained is in the form of interview transcripts. When it comes to writing tests, the instrument used to collect data is by administering the pre-test, the post-test of Cycle I, and the post-test of Cycle II. The data obtained is then the students' writing scores.

The researcher used the steps proposed by Burns (2010) to analyze the qualitative data, which are assembling the data, coding the data, comparing the data, building meaning and interpretations, and reporting the results. Meanwhile, to analyze the quantitative data, the researchers compared the students' pre-test, post-test, and Cycle I and Cycle II scores. He compared the mean scores to determine whether the students' writing ability improved in each cycle. He used five validity criteria proposed by Anderson in Burns (1999) to support the

data's validity: democratic validity, outcome validity, process validity, catalytic validity, and dialog validity. Meanwhile, trustworthiness was obtained through the triangulation technique, which seeks to collect multiple perspectives on the situation under investigation. There are three types of triangulation: time triangulation, investigator triangulation, and theoretical triangulation.

This action research procedure includes reconnaissance, planning, action, observing the action, and reflection. To identify problems during writing activities in class, the researcher conducted observations and interviews with the English teacher and some students. During planning, he collaborated with the teacher and the collaborator to find a feasible solution to be implemented in the classroom. The researcher then acted as the researcher while the English teacher and collaborator acted as observers in the classroom. In the final step, reflection, he and the collaborator reflected on the actions taken, whether they were successful or not. He also sought the teacher's advice on how to conduct the reflection. The successful actions were carried over to the following teaching and learning process. Those actions that were not successful were modified into more appropriate actions to improve the teaching and learning process.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This research was conducted in cycles. In the first cycle, the researcher provided three meetings and two meetings in cycle II. After discussing with the English teacher and the collaborator, mind mapping was chosen as the media to teach students' ability in writing descriptive texts. Through mind mapping, the students were able to improve

their ability in writing and also had the motivation to write. Furthermore, they would be able to follow the lesson well.

After conducting Cycle I, the students showed some improvements. It can be seen that after implementing mind mapping, the students showed their interest in following the lesson well. They also could focus on the lesson without feeling bored or sleepy. In terms of ability, the students also made some improvements; being able to use auxiliary such as *To be* and *Has/Have*, starting able to generate and develop ideas, starting to be able to organize the text, and being able to enrich their vocabulary. However, there were still problems found that needed to be improved in the next cycle. After conducting the post-test of Cycle I, the researcher found in students' work that most of the students could not be able to use the simple present tense. They also could not be able to use punctuation and capitalization correctly because many students made errors there. Then, in terms of applying mind mapping in the writing activities, the students took much time only focusing on drawing rather than writing their texts. Therefore, the researcher did some discussions with the teacher and the collaborator dealing with the problems. It aimed to make some improvements in the next cycle.

After conducting Cycle II which was done based on the problems found in Cycle I, the students showed some improvements. Dealing with students' ability in writing descriptive texts, the students were able to generate, develop and organize a text well. The students were also able to use correct and appropriate words. They also were able to use the simple present tense. Then, they were able to use punctuation and capitalization appropriately. Dealing with students' motivation, they got enthusiastic to

write descriptive texts using mind mapping so that they could follow and focus on the lesson well.

The students' progress can also be seen by comparing their pre-test, post-test, and cycle I and cycle II scores. The researcher used a writing rubric by Jacob et al to evaluate students' scores. They are divided into five categories: content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics.

This section discusses the results of the students' pre-test and post-test scores from Cycle I and Cycle II. The tables below show the mean score in each of the rubric's five aspects. The mean score of the content aspect increased following the action during the mind mapping implementation. The gain score is 0.014 after the Cycle I post-test and increases to 2.941 after the Cycle II post-test. The score for gain is 0.750. The students then improved in Cycle I in terms of organization, with a gain score of 0.324. The mean score after completing Cycle II's post-test is 2.911. As a result, the gain score is 0.853. While improving their vocabulary, the students also improve their writing skills. The mean score in the pre-test is 1.970. The mean score improves to 2.338 after acting in the Cycle I post-test. Then, in the Cycle II post-test, it continues to improve. It is multiplied by 2.691. The obtained gain score is 0.721. The mean score in the language use aspect, as shown in the table, has also improved significantly. The mean score in the pre-test is 1.911. It improved in the Cycle I post-test, with a mean score of 2.058. The mean score after completing the Cycle II post-test is 2.323. The obtained gain score is 0.412. The final point is in terms of mechanics. The gain score of Cycle I's post-test is 0.147. The mean score then rises to 2.279 after the Cycle II post-test. As a result, the gain score is 0.412.

The chart below depicts the overall improvements made by first-grade students in SMP N 2 Gamping:

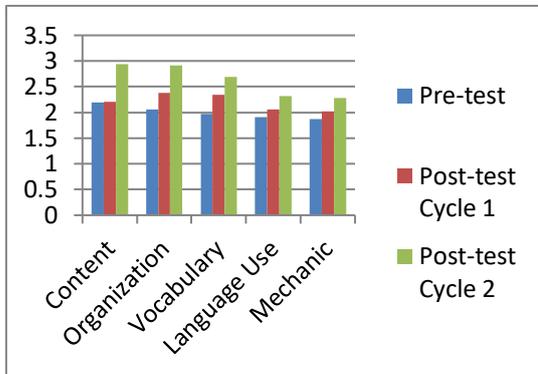


Figure 1: The Students' Improvement Based on the Rubric in Five Aspects

The score is calculated by adding the students' scores in all five aspects of writing according to the rubric. In the pre-test, the mean score was 9.970. In the post-test of Cycle I, it rises to 11.191. In the Cycle II post-test, it rises to 13.191. The gain score is then 3.221. It can be seen in the chart below:

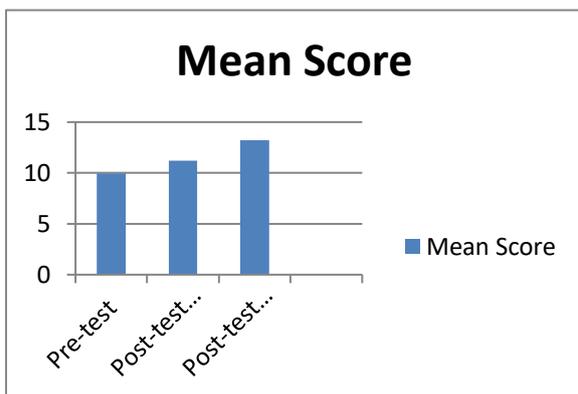


Figure 2: The Mean Score of Students' Writing Test

Based on the above score, the use of mind mapping to improve students' ability to write descriptive texts has been well implemented. It is clear from the students' grades, which have improved during the teaching and learning process.

Using the mind mapping technique in writing descriptive texts demonstrated that students' ability in five rubric areas, including content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanic, improved significantly during the research.

The students' enjoyment of the learning process while producing descriptive texts was also shown through mind mapping. They are now inspired to write because of the cutting-edge and uniqueness of mind mapping techniques. Additionally, they use a different method of learning English, particularly in writing. Many students have also modified their study habits to focus more on the teacher's explanation and to prioritize completing their assignments above playing or chit-chatting with other students.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrated that using mind mapping could improve students' ability to write descriptive texts. It showed that mind mapping could help them in composing the texts. After completing Cycle I and II, the students improved their abilities in areas such as content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. The teaching and learning method was well-liked by the students as well. They enjoyed the lesson and even seemed enthusiastic about it because mind mapping allowed them to use their imagination and creativity while writing descriptive texts. Even though it was a novel approach for the students to learn English, they enjoyed it. The final score also demonstrated how students'

scores improved while using mind mapping to teach writing descriptive texts.

The usage of mind mapping, specifically planning, drafting, editing, and final version assisted students in the writing process, as stated in the conclusion above. Students' ability to come up with ideas, arrange texts, master vocabulary, and utilize language by grammatical rules and mechanics improved as a result of using mind mapping to teach them how to write descriptive texts. Additionally, while writing, the children were allowed to exercise their imagination and creativity.

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