

DEVELOPING STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS WITH "MIND MAP": A CLASSROOM ACTION RESEARCH AT SMP N 1 MANISRENGGO

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to describe the use of mind mapping to improve the writing abilities of Grade VIII C students at SMP N 1 Manisrenggo. The study involved 32 students, consisting of 12 male and 20 female students, as well as a collaborator and the English teacher. The research was conducted in two cycles involving preparation, action and observation, reflection, and reconnaissance. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected. Qualitative data from classroom observations and interviews were analyzed descriptively to describe the teaching and learning process, while quantitative data from students' writing scores were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The findings showed improvements in students' ability to organize ideas, develop paragraphs coherently, and provide more detailed information. The mean score increased from 74.50 in the pre-test to 77.12 in the post-test. Thus, the improvement was 2.62 points, indicating that mind mapping supported students' writing development.

Keywords: Mind Mapping Technique, Improvement, Writing Skills, Descriptive Text.

Abstrak

Tujuan penelitian ini adalah mendeskripsikan penggunaan mind mapping untuk meningkatkan kemampuan menulis siswa kelas VIII C SMP N 1 Manisrenggo. Penelitian melibatkan 32 siswa yang terdiri atas 12 siswa laki-laki dan 20 siswa perempuan, serta seorang kolaborator dan guru bahasa Inggris. Penelitian dilaksanakan dalam dua siklus yang meliputi tahap persiapan, tindakan dan observasi, refleksi, serta pengenalan kembali (reconnaissance). Data yang dikumpulkan terdiri atas data kualitatif dan kuantitatif. Data kualitatif dari observasi kelas dan wawancara dianalisis secara deskriptif untuk menggambarkan proses pembelajaran, sedangkan data kuantitatif dari nilai menulis siswa dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya peningkatan kemampuan siswa dalam mengorganisasi ide, mengembangkan paragraf secara koheren, dan memberikan informasi yang lebih rinci. Nilai rata-rata meningkat dari 74,50 pada pre-test menjadi 77,12 pada post-test, atau meningkat sebesar 2,62 poin. Dengan demikian, mind mapping dapat mendukung perkembangan kemampuan menulis siswa.

Kata Kunci: Teknik Mind Mapping, Peningkatan, Keterampilan Menulis, Teks Deskriptif.

INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the most important skills for children to learn since it enables them to communicate ideas, feelings, and information in writing. The descriptive text is one type of text

that requires junior high school students to present a person, place, animal, or object in a clear and methodical manner.

Recent studies have emphasized the importance of structured help in writing

instruction. While Laila et al. (2023) found that mind mapping improved students' writing skills, Mardiani (2022) found that it helped students organize and formulate thoughts when writing descriptive prose. Additionally, Putri (2023) found that mind mapping improved the relationships between concepts that eighth-grade students wrote. Students can arrange material in descriptive writing based on traits like appearance, personality, activities, or other pertinent data. After that, these arranged keywords can be turned into sentences and joined to create logical paragraphs.

Previous studies have demonstrated that mind mapping enhances writing. Sakkir et al. (2022) found that students' descriptive writing improved when they employed mind mapping. Laila et al. (2023) likewise reported improved writing performance after using the method. Additionally, Nuraeni (2022) reported that students responded positively to the use of mind mapping in writing descriptive texts, as the technique helped them organize their ideas and made the writing process more engaging. These findings provide a basis for exploring the use of mind mapping in a different educational context.

In contrast to earlier research, this study focuses on Grade VIII C students at SMP N 1 Manisrenggo and tackles their unique challenges with concept generation, organization, and development into descriptive paragraphs. Combining the assessment of writing progress with the examination of students' involvement and reactions via classroom observations and interviews is another aspect of its distinctiveness. This study, which was carried out as a two-cycle classroom action research, enables the application of mind mapping to be modified in accordance with the challenges faced by students in each

cycle. As a result, the study offers contextual proof of mind mapping's application as a guided pre-writing technique in a junior high school in Indonesia. However, this study differs from previous research because it specifically focuses on Grade VIII C students at SMP N 1 Manisrenggo and examines not only students' writing achievement but also their participation and responses during a two-cycle Classroom Action Research process.

However, the findings of previous studies cannot be directly generalized to all EFL classrooms because the effectiveness of mind mapping may be influenced by students' characteristics and classroom contexts. Therefore, this study was important to be conducted at SMP N 1 Manisrenggo, particularly in Grade VIII C, because the students in this class experienced difficulties in generating, organizing, and developing ideas into descriptive paragraphs. These difficulties were observed in their writing activities, particularly in organizing ideas, developing supporting details, and producing coherent texts.

There was little proof that Grade VIII students at SMP N 1 Manisrenggo used mind mapping, despite earlier research showing its advantages in other educational settings. This particular educational setting made it necessary to investigate whether mind mapping may help students with their unique writing challenges and enhance their descriptive writing abilities.

Descriptive text is a type of text used to describe a person, place, animal, or thing in detail so that readers can clearly imagine the object being described. Generally, descriptive text consists of two main components: identification and description.

1. Identification

Identification introduces the subject or object being described. This part gives general information about the topic of the text.

2. Description

Description explains the characteristics, qualities, appearances, or specific features of the subject in detail. This part helps readers understand and visualize the object clearly.

In writing descriptive texts, students should also pay attention to the use of simple present tense, appropriate adjectives, correct grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, and paragraph organization to produce a clear and meaningful text.

Descriptive texts are one kind of text that English language learners must master. The eighth-grade junior high school syllabus lists descriptive text as one of the tools that teachers might use to help students learn. Another term for descriptive writing is a descriptive paragraph. An object (alive or non-living) is the subject of a description paragraph, a particular kind of written text paragraph.

Because students must arrange and convey their ideas in writing, writing is a crucial component of learning English. However, junior high school pupils may find it difficult to write detailed texts. Developing ideas, organizing material, utilizing proper syntax and language, and applying proper writing mechanics can all be challenging for students. Students may find it challenging to write descriptive texts that are cohesive and understandable as a result of these challenges (Nuralisaputri & Megawati, 2023). Therefore, before producing a whole text, students need a suitable pre-writing method that can assist them in coming up with, organizing, and developing their thoughts.

In addition, this study aimed to investigate the students' responses toward the use of the mind mapping technique in writing descriptive texts. The researcher examined how the students reacted to the implementation

of mind mapping during the writing process, including their participation, interest, and engagement in classroom activities. Examining how students reacted when writing a descriptive essay using the mind mapping approach is another goal of this study.

Mind mapping is a useful technique that helps students organize and develop their ideas before writing. By using keywords, branches, and visual connections, students can arrange their thoughts more clearly and systematically. Mind mapping also encourages creativity and makes it easier for students to generate ideas, especially in writing descriptive texts. Therefore, mind mapping can support students in improving the content, organization, and coherence of their writing.

METHODS

Two cycles of Classroom Action Research (CAR) were used in this study. There were planning, acting, observing, and reflecting phases in each cycle. Using mind mapping techniques in descriptive text writing exercises, the researcher and the English teacher worked together to enhance the students' writing abilities.

The subjects of this study were 32 students of class VIII C at SMP N 1 Manisrenggo in the academic year 2023/2024, consisting of 12 male students and 20 female students. The research was conducted from January to May 2024.

The researcher collected the data through observation, writing tests, and documentation. Observation was conducted to investigate the students' responses toward the implementation of mind mapping in writing descriptive texts, including their participation, interest, and engagement during classroom activities. Writing tests were used to measure the improvement of

students' ability in writing descriptive texts before and after the implementation of mind mapping. Meanwhile, documentation was used to collect supporting data related to the teaching and learning process.

The instruments used in this study were observation checklists, writing tests, and documentation sheets. The observation checklist was used to record students' activities and responses during the teaching and learning process. The writing test was used to assess students' descriptive writing skills. Meanwhile, the documentation sheets were used to collect supporting data, such as students' attendance lists, photographs of classroom activities, and students' writing results during the implementation of mind mapping.

The students' writing was analyzed using four aspects adapted from Brown (2004): organization, content, grammar, and mechanics. The researcher compared the students' pre-test and post-test scores to identify their improvement in writing descriptive texts. Qualitative data from classroom observations were analyzed descriptively to explain students' participation, engagement, and responses during the learning process. Meanwhile, the documentation data, such as photographs, students' writing products, and classroom records, were used to support and strengthen the findings of the study.

Findings and Discussion

The results demonstrated that using mind mapping helped pupils improve their descriptive writing abilities. The students' average pre-test score prior to the technique's application was 74.50. The students had trouble structuring their thoughts, creating descriptive paragraphs, and correctly using language and mechanics.

During the classroom action research, the researcher used mind

mapping exercises to address these challenges. After being exposed to descriptive writings, students were assisted in making mind maps centered around a primary subject. They produced keywords and arranged them into pertinent categories, including traits, activities, personality, and physical appearance. The students then developed phrases and descriptive paragraphs using the arranged keywords as a framework.

Students' writing performance improved, according to the post-test results. The mean score improved by 2.62 points, from 74.50 in the pre-test to 77.12 in the post-test. Furthermore, 85% of the pupils met the required minimum level of expertise. These findings show that mind mapping helped students organize and develop their descriptive writing ideas.

The pre-test scores varied from 61 to 85, as shown in Table 4.2. Eight students scored in the 81–85 range, four in the 71–80 range, and twenty in the 61–70 range, according to the frequency distribution. The 32 students received a mean score of 74.50 out of a total score of 2,384.

The mean score was calculated using the following formula:

$$X = \Sigma X / N$$

$$X = 2,384 / 32$$

$$X = 74.50$$

Prior to the use of mind mapping, the pre-test results showed that pupils were still having trouble organizing and developing thoughts into descriptive sentences.

The post-test results varied from 67 to 84, as shown in Table 4.3. While some students received scores in the 61–70 and 81–85 intervals, the majority of pupils received scores in the 71–80 range. The students' mean score was 77.12 out of a total score of 2,468.

The mean post-test score was calculated as follows:

$$X = \Sigma X / N$$

$$X = 2,468 / 32$$

$$X = 77.12$$

As a result, after using mind mapping, the students' mean writing score improved by 2.62 points, going from 74.50 to 77.12.

The quantitative results were corroborated by the observation and documentation data. Students became increasingly involved in coming up with keywords, talking about concepts, making mind maps, and turning their ideas into phrases and paragraphs throughout the learning exercises. The students' writing outputs demonstrated their ability to include more pertinent facts in their descriptive texts and arrange material more methodically. The improvement in the writing test outcomes is corroborated by these qualitative findings.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study show that mind mapping helped pupils improve their descriptive writing abilities. Together with 85% classical mastery, the approach appears to have assisted students in organizing and developing their ideas prior to turning them into written texts, as seen by the 2.62-point rise in mean score from 74.50 in the pre-test to 77.12 in the post-test.

The results align with earlier studies on the application of mind mapping in writing education. Mind mapping helped pupils write descriptive prose, according to Sakkir et al. (2022). In a similar vein, Mardiani (2022) discovered that mind mapping assisted pupils in structuring and developing their ideas for descriptive prose. These results are consistent with the current study, where students organized knowledge on the subject using keywords and branches before constructing phrases and paragraphs.

The results align with the findings of Laila et al. (2023), who found that mind

mapping enhanced students' writing abilities. The visual arrangement of keywords in the current study assisted students in locating pertinent material prior to starting the writing process. Rather than writing paragraphs right away, pupils used a mind map to generate and organize thoughts. This made it easier to build the content of their descriptive texts.

These results are further corroborated by the qualitative findings. Students became more engaged and active during the learning activities, according to observations made in the classroom. They took part in creating their mind maps, talking about concepts, and coming up with keywords. This result is in line with that of Nuraeni (2022), who discovered that students' experiences writing descriptive essays with mind mapping were favorable. Students' enhanced confidence and participation in the current study were especially evident when they developed sentences using their completed mind maps as a reference.

The use of mind mapping as a guided pre-writing technique can also account for the improvement. While the branches enable students to develop the issue into adjacent categories and supporting elements, the fundamental topic serves as a starting point. Students can categorize material into elements like appearance, personality, activities, and qualities for descriptive writing. After that, the arranged keywords can be turned into whole phrases and joined to create paragraphs. As a result, mind mapping serves as a link between idea generation and the creation of a cohesive text.

The results, however, also showed that mind mapping did not instantly solve every writing challenge. Some students continued to struggle with turning keywords into grammatically correct phrases and creating whole paragraphs during the first

implementation. This suggests that while students may still need teacher assistance with grammar, vocabulary, sentence construction, and paragraph development, mind mapping primarily aids in the formation and structuring of ideas.

In its particular context, the current study differs from earlier research as well. While earlier studies have looked at mind mapping in a variety of educational contexts, this study concentrated on 32 Grade VIII C students at SMP N 1 Manisrenggo and examined the application of mind mapping through Classroom Action Research while taking into account both students' writing performance and classroom participation. As a result, the study offers contextual proof of how mind mapping can be used as a guided pre-writing method in this specific school's descriptive writing education.

Overall, rather than being at odds with earlier research, the results are in line with it. Together, the qualitative findings and quantitative improvement indicate that mind mapping can give students a useful framework for coming up with, arranging, and refining ideas for descriptive writing. However, the very little improvement of 2.62 points suggests that mind mapping is not the only way to overcome writing challenges. Combining it with opportunities for review, teacher advice, vocabulary support, and explicit instruction may increase its efficacy.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that English teachers employ mind mapping as a guided pre-writing method while teaching descriptive writing in light of the study's findings. By beginning with a main idea and developing it into related keywords and supporting information, mind mapping can assist students in coming up with ideas. After that, the concepts can be organized into

pertinent categories including traits, activities, personality, and physical appearance. Before they start writing, pupils can choose pertinent material and notice connections between concepts thanks to this organization.

After then, students can turn the arranged keywords into sentences and make connections between them to create descriptive paragraphs that make sense. Teachers should therefore offer assistance when students go from mind maps to written texts, especially if they struggle to turn keywords into whole sentences. Additionally, when planning their work, students can be encouraged to employ mind mapping on their own. To give more comprehensive evidence of its efficacy, future researchers are advised to investigate its use with various text types, student levels, and learning scenarios.

CONCLUSION

This study found that the use of mind mapping helped students in Grade VIII C at SMP N 1 Manisrenggo improve their descriptive writing abilities. The mean writing score of the pupils improved by 2.62 points, from 74.50 in the pre-test to 77.12 in the post-test. Furthermore, 85% of the pupils met the required minimum level of expertise. During writing exercises, students became more active and involved in coming up with, organizing, and developing ideas, according to classroom observations and documentation. Students were able to organize keywords into pertinent categories and utilize them as a framework for creating sentences and descriptive paragraphs with the aid of mind mapping. Some pupils still needed teacher assistance, nonetheless, in order to convert keywords into grammatically sound phrases. In order to help students organize and develop ideas for descriptive writing, mind mapping can be utilized as a guided pre-writing

technique. Its application with various text types, student levels, and learning environments may be the subject of future research.

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