



Enhancing Students' Writing Skills using Mind Mapping Strategy

Izzatul Laila¹, Teguh Sulistyo^{1*}, Irma Lusia Apriliani²

¹Universitas PGRI Kanjuruhan Malang, Jl. S. Supriadi No. 48, Malang, Jawa Timur, 65148, Indonesia

²SMPN 1 Kediri, Jl. Diponegoro, Kediri, Jawa Timur, 64129, Indonesia

*Corresponding author, Email: sulistyoteguh@unikama.ac.id

Abstract

This study aimed to enhance students' writing skills by using mind mapping strategy. In order to enhance students' writing skills, teachers need to realize a strategy that is suitable with students' needs. A Collaborative Classroom Action Research (CAR), which was conducted in two cycles, was used in this study. Each cycle included the step of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. The population of this research was the seventh-grade students of junior high school in the academic year of 2022/2023 consisting of 34 students. The average score of the preliminary study was 61, which was very low and below the expectations of the teacher and the students. After the implementation of the mind mapping strategy in two cycles, the students' writing scores improved. It can be seen from the average score of the students, which was 75 in the first cycle and 89 in the second cycle. In addition, the implementation of this strategy also received a positive response from the students based on the results of the attitude scale. It can be concluded mind mapping strategy can be used as a strategy to improve students' writing skills and students have a positive insight on this strategy.

Keywords: writing skill; mind mapping; descriptive texts

1. Introduction

Four skills should be taught in English: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and speaking. Reading and listening are included in receptive skills, while writing and speaking are included in productive skills. As a productive skill, writing is one of the basic skills taught at every school level, from elementary to high school. These days, following rapid global development, students can do writing activities not only on a piece of paper or manually but also in a modern way, such as through digital applications. Students must have the appropriate writing ability to convey their knowledge to others or to list what they know. Writing activity is suitable for students who have a kinesthetic learning preference since it requires the whole way to be self-regulated such as the speed of writing, holding the pencil, and motor movements (Sundem, 2007). People spend the least time writing since they would rather speak than write. People spend an average of 45% of their time listening, 30% speaking, 16% reading, and 9% writing, according to Rankin, a former Director of Research Monitoring and Adjustment at Detroit Public Schools (Iwankovitsch, 2001). Writing has the lowest preference rate, showing that some people want to write less since they think it is challenging. According to Cer (2019), writing is a tricky activity as it is one of the essential skills to deliver the students' emotions and thoughts through a written form. This statement is supported by Nunan (1989), who declares that writing is a complicated cognitive process that demands that students manage a lot of several competencies, such as grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, generic structure, and language features from the text they are going to produce. In other words, to construct a proper text, the students must master those competencies, which is the most challenging thing to acquire.

Based on the data collected by the researchers during the preliminary study, it was found that there were still many students who scored below standard in writing a descriptive text. Although the students may have some ideas for writing, they have yet to be able to compose them into proper paragraphs. English time, placed in the last hours, often makes the students lazy and bored. In order to minimize this problem, the writer, as a model teacher at that time, applied ice-breaking in pre-activity to make the class atmosphere more fun so that they could improve their concentration. In addition, the use of a learning strategy that is not suitable is also one of the reasons why their writing skill still needs to improve. According to this problem, teachers need to be more creative in learning and teaching activities by applying various strategies to improve students' writing skills. Therefore, the researchers seek an effective strategy to enhance students' writing skills.

In this case, the researchers decided to apply the mind mapping strategy. The mind mapping strategy is one of the appropriate strategies in teaching writing. Mind mapping connects words, ideas, tasks, Etc., linked around a keyword or main idea (Desshaty & Mokashi, 2013). Buzan (2006) says this strategy helps students unite ideas, improve creative thinking, and build meaningful relationships among ideas. Because of that, this is an effective strategy to organize information before changing them into written form. According to the research from Khusniyah (2019), the use of mind mapping strategy at the University level can improve the student's ability to write a descriptive text. Another research comes from Salem (2017); the research at Senior High School claimed that applying the mind mapping strategy in writing the descriptive text was a huge success. Those two improvements could be seen from the value before and after the treatment. Those two studies were conducted at the high school and university levels, and this research tries to apply the strategy at the Junior High School level. Thus, the research question was formulated as follows: "How can mind mapping strategy enhance the students' writing skills?".

2. Method

This research used Classroom Action Research (CAR) as the research design to enhance the students' writing skills. There are four stages to apply this research: plan, action, observation, and reflection (Kemmis & Taggart, 1988). The researchers implemented two cycles in this research. The researchers used test and non-test as the data collection technique. According to (Adom et al., 2020) test is a tool used in educational practice to measure students' ability to execute a certain activity, exhibit mastery of a skill, or understanding of a material. The test used in this research was to measure students' initial writing skills and how they progressed after the treatment was given. In this test, the students were asked to construct a descriptive text with the theme "school buildings". For non-test, the writer used attitude scale of the semantic differentiation by Osgood to record students' attitude toward the teaching and learning process (Haryanto, 2020). The researchers analyzed the students' writing test data using an analytical scoring rubric. This scoring rubric consists of five components, i.e., content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics (Weigle, 2002).

3. Results and Discussion

The researchers employed a writing test in both pre and post activity in order to see if the students' writing skill have enhanced after the treatment (mind mapping strategy) was given. The preliminary test was carried out before giving the treatment or before the first cycle. While post-test was carried out twice at the end of the first cycle and second cycle.

3.1. Pre-test

The pre-test results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Preliminary Test Score

No.	Criteria	Scores
1.	Highest score	79
2.	Lowest score	50
3.	Average score	61

The results of the preliminary test revealed that the class average score was 61. The data taken revealed that 30 out of 34 students had not yet reached the Minimum Completeness Criteria (KKM). The KKM determined by the school was 75. One of the factors that influenced the result was because most of the students still had difficulties to express their ideas well in a complete descriptive paragraph and fulfilled the requirements for a good and correct descriptive text's generic structure which generally consisted of identification and description. Identification usually consists of only one paragraph while description can be more than one paragraph.

3.2. Cycle 1 and post-test 1

In Cycle 1, the researchers applied a treatment of mind mapping strategy and carried out learning activity according to the lesson plan that have been prepared at the planning stage. The researchers also simultaneously noted several important events that occurred during the teaching and learning process. These notes were used for reflection so that it could increase the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process in the next cycle.

Table 2 was the results of the students' writing test in Cycle 1:

Table 2. Post-test 1 Score

No.	Criteria	Scores
1.	Highest score	84
2.	Lowest score	69
3.	Average score	75

Based on the scores obtained during post-test 1, it can be concluded that after the treatment in the form of a mind mapping strategy for the students' writing activities, there was an improvement in the average class score by 14 points. The average score showed that half of the students already passed the KKM. A total of 17 students succeeded in exceeding the KKM in Cycle 1. This improvement can be influenced by several factors, including students beginning to be able to organize sentences and paragraphs properly, and the vocabulary used starts to vary according to the topic chosen. Somehow, Cycle 2 was still badly needed due to the fact that students had not achieved the criteria of success yet.

3.3. Cycle 2 and post-test 2

In Cycle 2, the researchers gave more various topics to train the students in order to use mind mapping. In the last activity of this cycle, the writer also asks the students to fill in an attitude scale towards the implementation of mind mapping as a strategy to improve students' writing skills.

The post-test 2 results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Post-test 2 Score

No.	Criteria	Scores
1.	Highest score	95
2.	Lowest score	80
3.	Average score	89

Based on the data shown in Table 3, the class average has exceeded the KKM. In this cycle, all students passed the KKM. The descriptive text they constructed in Cycle 2 met the standards for good content selection, the structure between paragraphs was continuous, and under the generic structures of descriptive text, the use of vocabulary was also very varied but still did not depart from the topic that had been chosen. The punctuation used already met the general standard.

The study indicated that mind mapping strategy is beneficial to enhance students' writing skills because mind mapping helps students how to organize their ideas before writing a draft. Some studies also showed similar findings. Other studies found the mind mapping software was fun and helpful in organizing ideas in a text (Sulistyo & Ningsih, 2013; Al-Jarf, 2021). Gunduzalp (2023) proved that mind mapping was useful to empower the students with self-learning skill levels. The previous studies indicated that mind mapping is beneficial to help students energizes their ideas in learning tasks.

Mind mapping strategy can provide students to connect ideas that they have to write because it allows students to make a list of keywords related to the topic they are going to write. This finding is similar to some other studies. For example, Zhang (2018) found that mind mapping is a useful tool for planning students' writing activities, and Alderbashi and Moussa (2022) claim that it improves students' ability to do writing-related tasks. Also, Arulselvi (2017) revealed that mind map is that it literally "maps" the way a person's brain sees and creates connections. The use of mind mapping as a strategy to develop the students' writing ability in this research is also in line with (Salem, 2017; Khusniyah, 2019) who proved the power of mind mapping in writing activities. Thus, it is clear that mind mapping enhances students' writing skills.

In addition to the students' writing skills, the students' attitude on semantic mapping scale result was shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Attitude Scale Result

No.	Criteria	Scores
1.	Positive	26
2.	Negative	5
3.	Neutral	3

On the first scale, which is interesting – boring, most students are in a neutral position. The second scale, important – not important, most students consider that the application of mind mapping in writing activity is important. This means that they are aware that the use of this strategy could improve their writing ability. It is also supported by the score of their writing test that continues to increase from pre-test, post-test 1, and post-test 2. The third scale, fun – not fun, most students are in a neutral position related to the teaching and learning process during the last two cycles. The fourth scale, easy to do - difficult, most students think that using mind mapping strategy is easy to do. This is because, in mind mapping, there are branches that show the relationship between the ideas they write down. Some studies also found similar findings, for instance, Pribadi and Susilana (2021) showed that mind mapping as learning strategy increased the students' learning motivation. Gunduzalp (2023) proved that students generally had positive opinions about the mind mapping method.

4. Conclusion

This study focuses on enhancing students' writing skills in the first grade of Junior High School. A total of 34 students were involved in using the mind map strategy. The study proved that mind mapping strategy can help the students to enhance their writing skills. This statement supported by the development in students' average writing score from 61 in preliminary study to 75 in first cycle and 89 during the last or second cycle.

After conducting the research on the use of mind mapping strategies to improve students' writing skills, the writer can conclude several things (1) mind mapping facilitates the students to write down the relationship between the main topics and sub-topics that they will arrange into a text. In writing, of course, a logical order is needed between words, sentences, and paragraphs so that the reader can understand what the author wants to convey, (2) the sub-topics that are branched are also used by the students to write as much vocabulary that supports the sub-topics. The written vocabulary must be in accordance with the chosen topic and can support an explanation of the topic, (3) mind mapping acts as an outline before students start writing. They can branch out mind mapping according to the paragraphs they will make, and in the branches of each paragraph, they can write down several topics that will be written so that it is easier for them to remember or if they just want to see what their ideas again when they start writing. (4) mind mapping helps students to organize, remember, and connect ideas. Furthermore, the implementation of this strategy received a positive response based on the results of the attitude scale that had been implemented in the last cycle. In addition, the students have a positive insight about the strategy.

However, this study may suffer from some limitations, such as the length of the study, so further research still needs to be conducted so that the students are more interested and enjoy the process of teaching and learning activities when this strategy is used.

References

- Adom, D., Adu-Mensah, J., & Dake, D. A. (2020). Test, measurement, and evaluation: Understanding and use of the concepts in education. *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education (IJERE)*, 9(1), 109. <https://doi.org/10.11591/ijere.v9i1.20457>
- Aldbashi, K. Y., & Moussa, M. K. (2022). Effectiveness of Employing the E-mind Mapping Strategy in Scientific Courses: Adopting the Blended Learning Approach at Emirati Private Preparatory Schools. *Journal of Curriculum and Teaching*, 11(4), 159–170. <https://doi.org/10.5430/jct.v11n4p159>.
- Alice Oshima and Ann Hogue. *Introduction to Academic Writing*, third edition, New York: Pearson Education, Inc. 2007.
- Al-Jarf, R. (2021). Teaching Reading to EFL Freshman Students with Mind Mapping Software. *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 5(24). <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3825817>.
- Arulselvi, E. (2017). Mind Maps in Classroom Teaching and Learning Evangelin Arulselvi. *The Excellence in Education Journal*, 6(2), 50–65. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1210135.pdf>.
- Axelrod, R. B. & Cooper, C. S. (2010). *The St. Martin's Guide to Writing*. New York: Berford / St. Martin's
- Buzan, T. (2006). *Learning Skills: Mind Mapping: Mind Mapping, Whole Brain Note Taking, Uses Both Sides of Your Brain to Study Subjects Usually Only Studies with Your Left Brain*.
- Cer, E. (2019). The Instruction of Writing Strategies: The Effect of the Metacognitive Strategy on the Writing Skills of Pupils in Secondary Education. *SAGE Open*, 9(2), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244019842681>
- Deshatty, D. D., & Mokashi, V. (2013). Mind Maps as a Learning Tool in Anatomy. *International Journal of Anatomy and Research*, 1, 100-103.
- Gunduzalp, C. (2023). Using the Mind Mapping Method in Web-Based Teaching: Pre- Service Teachers' Metacognitive Learning Strategies and Self- Directed Learning Skills. *Journal of Theoretical Educational Science*, 16(January), 218–241.
- Haryanto. (2020). *EVALUASI PEMBELAJARAN (KONSEP DAN MANAJEMEN)*. UNY Press.
- Frangelina Pajolia Salem. (2017). "IMPROVING STUDENTS' WRITING DESCRIPTIVE TEXT USING MIND MAPPING TEACHING STRATEGY OF THE TENTH GRADE STUDENTS OF SMA NEGERI 4 KUPANG IN ACADEMIC YEAR 2017/2018." *International Journal of Research - Granthaalayah*, 5(12), 147-154. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1133832>
- Harmer, Jeremy. *How to Teach Writing*, London: Pearson Education Limited. 2004.
- Iwankovitsch, R. (2001). The Importance of Listening. *Language Arts Journal of Michigan*, 17(2).
- Kemmis, S., McTaggart, M. 1988 *The Action Research Planner* (3rd ed). Victoria: Deakin University.
- Khusniyah, N. L. (2019). IMPROVING DESCRIPTIVE WRITING ABILITY THROUGH MIND MAPPING. *Research and Innovation in Language Learning*, 2(1), 75. <https://doi.org/10.33603/rill.v2i1.1735>
- Meiranti, R. (2012). IMPROVING STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH FIELD TRIP METHOD. *English Review: Journal of English Education*, 1(1), 89–96.
- Mertler, C. A. (2019). *Action research: Improving schools and empowering educators*. SAGE Publications, Incorporated.
- Nunan, D (1989) "Designing tasks for the communicative classroom. Cambridge University press. United Kingdom.
- Pribadi, B. A., & Susilana, R. (2021). The use of mind mapping approach to facilitate students' distance learning in writing modular based on printed learning materials. *European Journal of Educational Research*, 10(2), 907–917. <https://doi.org/10.12973/EU-JER.10.2.907>.
- Siburian, T. A. (2013) Improving Students' Achievement on Writing Descriptive Text Through Think Pair Share. *International Journal of Language Learning and Applied Linguistics World (IJLLALW)*, Vol. 3 No. 3, 33.
- Sundem G. (2007). *Improving student writing skills* (1st ed.). Huntington Beach, CA: Shell Education.
- Sulistyo, T., & Ningsih, M. G. S. (2013). Encouraging students to write a paragraph by using semantic mapping strategy. *Journal on English as a Foreign Language*, 3(1), 41–48.

- Suprijadi, D. & Masitoh, S. (2015). Improving Students' Ability in Writing Descriptive Text Using Genre Based Approach (GBA) at the Eight Grade Students of SMP Islam Terpadu Insani. *ELTIN Journal, Vol. 3 No. 1*, 40.
- Tee, T. K. Azman, M. N. A., Mohamed, S., Muhamad, M., Yunos, J., Yee, M. H., Othman, W. (2014). Mind Mapping: An Efficient Technique for Note-Taking. *International Scholarly and Scientific Research and Innovation*, 8, 28-31.
- Weigle, S. C. (2002) *Assessing writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Young, D. J. (2009). *The Mechanics of Writing*. Indiana: Writer's Toolkit Publishing LLC.
- Zhang, Y. (2018). A Contrastive Study on the Application of Mind Maps in Argumentative Writing Instruction for EFL Learners. *English Language Teaching*, 11(12), 93. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v11n12p93>