

THE USE OF MIND MAPPING TECHNIQUE IN WRITING DESCRIPTIVE TEXT

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Abstract: This paper will discuss the result of a study on the effectiveness of mind mapping technique in teaching writing Descriptive texts to seventh-graders in a Junior High School in Bandung. This research used a mixed method between pre-experimental design particularly one group pretest-posttest design and questionnaire and interview techniques. The results indicate that there is a significant improvement in students' writing ability, as can be seen from the results of the t-test, in that the t_{obt} is higher than the t_{crit} ($7.821 > 2.021$) at the level significance 0.05 (two-tailed). Furthermore, the results of questionnaires show that most students (86.1%) gave positive responses toward the use of mind mapping technique in writing Descriptive text. Finally, the results of interviews suggest that the students loved this technique because it successfully motivated them to write Descriptive texts in an enjoyable way, to improve their writing Descriptive texts, to increase vocabulary and creativity, to arrange sentences and organize ideas. It is then recommended that mind mapping technique be used in teaching writing in different text types and levels of schooling.

Keywords: *Mind mapping technique, writing, descriptive texts*

Introduction

Writing is the way to express ideas in written form using letters, words, art or media, and it requires mental process in order to express the ideas (Usen, 2009). Westwood (2008, p. 56) said that "Written language is perhaps the most difficult of all skills to acquire because its development involves the effective coordination of many different cognitive, linguistic and psychomotor processes". In Indonesian curriculum, students in Junior High School are demanded to write various text types, one of which is Descriptive texts (Depdiknas, 2006). Over the conduct of the teaching practicum in a Junior High School in Bandung, the researcher found out that some students had difficulties to write a Descriptive text.

To solve the students' problem in writing Descriptive texts, in the literature, one technique that can be used to help students' write is mind mapping (Buzan,

1993). According to Murley (2007), mind mapping can maximize brain's ability in associating number with visual qualities (space, image, color) and as the result, the memory will be able to store more fact.

Based on the explanation above, the research aims to investigate the effectiveness of mind mapping technique to help students' writing ability particularly in writing Descriptive texts. The study also aims to find out the students' responses toward the use of mind mapping technique in writing class. The study attempts to address the following research questions:

1. Can main mapping technique help students improve their writing ability in writing Descriptive texts?
2. What are students' responses toward mind mapping technique in writing classroom?

Literature Review

The study has been given shape by the theory of mind mapping and text types, especially Descriptive text.

- **Mind Mapping Technique**

Mind mapping is a diagram that has functions as a way to organize ideas and represent words, tasks, or another links that arranged a central keyword by branches and typically it contains words, colors, short phrase and picture Buzan (2006). Buzan also says that mind mapping is a primary tool used for stimulating thought that shows ideas which are generated around a central theme and how they are interlinked. According to Buzan, the education system primarily focuses on the left and brain strength which includes the use of language, logic, numbers, sequence, looks at detail, linier, symbolic representation and judgmental characteristics.

The benefits of mind mapping have been discussed by several writers (McGriff, 2000; Buzan, 2007; Edward, 2011). They believe that mind mapping can balancing the brain, help to organize thoughts, improve the creativity, speed of learning and memory.

Dawson et al. (2005) state that mind mapping is a type of prewriting method as the first stage of the writing process and as the point at to discover and explore

our initial ideas about a subject. “Prewriting helps us to get our ideas on paper, though not usually in an organized form, and brainstorm thoughts that might eventually make their way into our writing” (Dawson et al., 2005).

Some people, including students who claim writing is difficult may have a difficulty in terms of expressing their ideas into a paper so that they have to search a keyword first. Mind mapping can become the way to solve this problem. In applying this technique, teachers can ask the students to make a mind map before they write to stimulate students’ mind and give some ideas in form of outline, so, students can see their outline when they start to write.

- **Descriptive Text**

Since the mind mapping technique is trusted as the writing strategy, it will be suitable to use this technique in several kinds of texts. One of which is Descriptive text. As stated by Emilia (2011), Descriptive text is a kind of text that has a purpose to give the information about something or someone. In Descriptive text, writers describe person, object, appearances, landscape or phenomenon naturally so they can make the reader imagine and feel it (Alwasilah and Alwasilah: 2007).

The generic structure of Descriptive text consists of two elements; namely identification that gives the topic that can be described and description that clarifies the topic, it can be appearances, quality, or phenomenon (Gerot & Wignell, 2004; Alwasilah & Alwasilah, 2007; Emilia, 2011).

Writing Descriptive text vividly explains about a person, place or thing which can make the reader imagine what is described. In writing Descriptive text, Alwasilah&Alwasilah (2007) mention four kinds of Descriptive text that can be explored. First, historical profile that provides an interesting accurate report of places, times or events. Second, venture profile which deeply reports about occupation or business. Third, reporting from interview, field observation, and other research. Fourth, a case study which tells about someone’s experience in representing a cluster, such as sacrifice of disaster, immigrant community, and a personal research report that serves the story specifically about an observation which entertains the reader. Descriptive text can also be about an usual hobby, new technology, etc.

In the literature it is mentioned that there are five significant lexicogrammatical features of Descriptive text. They are the focus on specific participant, the use of simple present tense, and the adjective that describing, numbering, or classifying something (Gerot & Wignell, 2004; Emilia, 2011). Sometimes the texts use adverbs to tell how the action should be done (Anderson & Anderson, 1997).

Methodology

This research used a mixed method between quantitative and qualitative research. The quantitative research was used to find out whether or not the use of mind mapping can help students improve their writing ability. In this research, the researcher applied one group pretest-posttest design of pre-experimental research. The effects of the treatment were obtained from the difference between the pretest and posttest score. Moreover, this study used qualitative descriptive research by using questionnaire and interview techniques to describe students' responses toward this technique. The participants in this study were one class consisting of 36 students in the seventh grade of a Junior High School in Bandung.

In this research, the researcher states the hypothesis as follows:

H_A : There is a significant influence mind mapping technique on students' ability in writing Descriptive text.

To obtain valid score of students' writing ability, the criteria to assess their work were needed. Thus, this study used a scoring rubric that, adapted from Rose (2007, p. 9-30), cited in Emilia (2011). In this rubric, the scoring system was divided into five aspects: genre, register, discourse, grammar, and graphic feature. The point of each criterion was in range one up 20, the maximum total score was 100.

The scores of pilot test, normal distribution test, and dependent *t*-test were then analyzed by using SPSS 16.0 for Windows.

Data Presentation and Discussion

The data indicate that the use of mind mapping technique was effective to improve students' scores in writing Descriptive texts. This is proven by the mean of posttest which is higher than the mean of pretest (mean of pretest was 45.83 while the posttest was 58.53). This finding is also supported by the qualitative result of data analysis from the questionnaire and interview that show most students responded positively to this technique. Nevertheless, there were small numbers of students who responded negatively to the use of mind mapping technique in writing Descriptive texts.

Mind mapping technique contributes to help students' writing ability in writing Descriptive texts in terms of enriching vocabularies, improving creativity, arranging sentences and organizing ideas. Nevertheless, mind mapping has disadvantages too. The mind mapping technique has been considered somewhat time consuming. This is relevant to the finding of (Buzan, 1993). Moreover, according to McGriff (2000), this could be true when using this strategy in an exam situation where students are not familiar with the concept of the mind mapping strategy in such conditions.

Students assumed that they need a long time to make a mind mapping, especially for students who have difficulties to draw. The students usually focused more only to make a good mind map with good picture and harmonized colors without estimated time to make a good writing product. This is different from Edward (2011) who said mind mapping technique is a faster process compared to laboriously writing down lines of notes. Moreover, students need more time because they still have to open the dictionary to make a list of keyword and sometimes confused to determine the categorization in every branch. Furthermore, applying this technique is quite new for the students.

In addition, in this research, it was found that to be able to write Descriptive texts, lower secondary level learners could learn better if they had a specific topic.. In fact, when the researcher gave the topic of Descriptive text about "Pet" and asked the students to make mind mapping first, they felt confused. They did not know what kind of pet that should be described. It took them a long time to

think about a topic. To solve this problem, the teacher should make it more specific, as shown in this research when the researcher made the topic more specific, from “Pet” to “Cat”.

However, teachers who would like to apply this technique should be aware of the caveat of mind mapping’s time constraint. Therefore, this problem may be prevented by the teachers in giving clear instructions and give time limitation to the students in making a mind map.

Conclusions

Based on the research findings and discussion, it can be drawn that mind mapping technique was effective to help students in writing Descriptive texts in enjoyable way. Mind mapping could help students to improve their writing skill in writing Descriptive text in terms of enriching vocabularies, increasing creativity, arranging sentences and organizing ideas. As a result, the mind mapping technique would seem to be particularly suited to help students in planning their writing as the approach encourages students to reach for and adapt a deeper level of understanding of the writing topics.

However one disadvantage of mind mapping was found in the study, that is that the students took a long time to finish their writing because they focused more on listing down their ideas from their maps rather than focusing on the structure of their writing. Nevertheless, this weakness can be solved by the teachers giving clear instructions and time limitation to the students in making mind map.

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