EMPOWERING MIND MAPPING STRATEGY TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS IN THE EFL CLASSROOM

Ida Bagus Nyoman Mantra[*], Nengah Dwi Handayani, Ida Ayu Made Sri Widiastuti
University of Mahasaraswati Denpasar, Jalan Kamboja 11A, Denpasar, Bali, Indonesia
bagusmantra@unmas.ac.id[*]

ABSTRACT

Writing is one of the important language skills to communicate in written forms. Therefore, the improvement of writing skills is absolutely essential to be continually carried out. This study aims at developing writing skills by implementing a mind mapping strategy in the EFL classroom. There two cyclic learning sessions comprising planning, action, observation, and reflection were conducted in this study. The data were collected through administering pre-test, post-test, and questionnaires to the students who participated in this study. Based on the results of data analysis, this study revealed that students' writing skills could be improved through implementing a mind mapping strategy. Therefore, this study implies that teachers should consider using mind mapping in teaching writing.

Keywords: Mind Mapping; Improvement; Writing; Skill

I. Introduction

In modern life where digital technology dominates the communication systems, communication skills are highly important to be mastered. There are two main ways of communicating, namely verbal and nonverbal. In verbal communication, speaking skill is crucially necessary. It is, however, in nonverbal communication, writing skill is vividly important to be nurtured (Widiastuti, 2018). Since nowadays most digital information is transferred in a written way, therefore the mastery of writing skills is really needed. Consequently, this skill should be taught from the beginning of language learning.

It is undatable that writing is important to be learned by all students because writing can be a means to find something, generate new ideas, train the ability to organize and clarify various concepts or ideas, train someone's objective attitude, help students gain information, and it is, more importantly, train to think actively (Exposition et al., 2015). Thus, it is clear that writing is very useful, even though behind it the writing process seems still difficult. The real benefit of writing skills is as a communication tool that is widely used in today's digital era where many communication processes are carried out in writing to convey various things to others (Adas &

Bakir, 2013). Students who have poorly mastered the writing skills, certainly find it difficult to express themselves digitally.

As a matter of fact, the ability to write is one aspect of language skills that is very important in human life. Through writing ability, a person can express ideas, thoughts, feelings and opinions to others. They can communicate in writing with other people without having to face to face with the person they are talking to. It can be said that morals, science and technology to their current level of development are one of the results of the writing ability possessed by humans (Karim, 2018). Having the ability to write, students are able to make a landmark of their life by writing stories, book, novel and other forms of literature which may enrich the future life of human beings. It is at least by mastering writing skills, nowadays students can compete with the development of science and technology (DiZhang, 2009).

In modern life, by having writing skills, a person can record, convince, report, inform, and influence others. All these goals can only be achieved by people who can organize their thoughts and convey them clearly (Muslim, 2014). Understanding the great benefits of writing skills for human life, the development of science and technology as well as for the development of thinking is a certain essential thing for nowadays life. Writing skill is an activity that cannot be separated from the teaching and learning activities of students at school. Writing activities make students active in learning activities and stimulate students' skills in stringing words (Uysal & Sidekli, 2020). However, in its application, many people have difficulty getting students used to learning to write. The reason is an error in teaching that is too rigid, giving the impression that writing is difficult.

Through the practice of writing, students gain knowledge that is very useful for growth and social development and emotional power. In teaching writing, students should be involved in various writing activities, they do not like to learn the theories only, but they need to practice those theories in a real activity (Mantra, 2017; Adas & Bakir, 2013). Additionally, the weakness of students in writing descriptive text is due to lack of interest in learning to write, low mastery of the material in writing, students feel bored if a lot of material is given, less motivated by the media provided by the teacher.

The lack of students' interest in writing classes was mainly caused by the conventional teaching strategies conducted by the teachers in writing classes. Teachers are unable to choose appropriate learning methods in which teachers only teach through the lecturing method so learning became very boring for the students (Cahyani et al., 2018). To overcome this problem, researchers feel the need to use a mind mapping strategy to increase students' interest and motivation in participating in the writing classes. The use of mind mapping strategy in the teaching and learning process can generate new desires and interests, generate motivation and stimulation of learning activities, and even bring psychological effects on students (Abdul Karim & Abu, 2018). The use of a mind mapping strategy during learning greatly helped the

effectiveness of the learning process and delivery of messages and lesson content at that time (Shraddha et al., 2015). In addition to arousing students' motivation and interest, appropriate learning methods can also help students improve understanding, present data in an attractive and reliable way, facilitate data interpretation, and condense information (Bukhari, 2016).

By using mind mapping, it is easier for students to develop their ideas so that students will more easily improve their creativity in writing. Mind mapping makes a significant contribution to students' success in writing, especially because mid mapping helps students connect their ideas into a written work that is directed and easily understood by readers (Khusniyah, 2019). By using mind mapping, all ideas are summarized into a written work that shows the relationship between the parts of the information, gives a clear picture of the whole idea into a unified and coordinated writing (Nurlaila, 2013). Mind mapping has the benefit of making it easier for students to write down their ideas that are in their minds into a written work that is useful for readers to know what is on their minds.

Understanding the phenomena concerning the importance of writing skill and the opportunity to develop students' writing skills through mind mapping, therefore this study focused on improving students' descriptive text writing skills through the implementation of mind mapping. Through mind mapping students find it easier to organize their ideas into writing forms, because mind mapping helps students to develop and organize their ideas. Therefore, this study is important to be conducted to reveal the effectiveness of mind mapping in enhancing students' writing skills.

II. Methods

To accomplish this research study, the researcher used Classroom Action Research (CAR) design. This design was chosen due to the fact that CAR was used concerning the improvement of linguistic competence by applying the mind mapping strategy in teaching by using two kinds of tests, they were, initial reflection or pre-test and reflection or post-test. Furthermore, initial reflection or pre-test (IR) was intended to evaluate the pre-existing linguistic competence of the students, while reflection or post-test (R) was meant to reveal the expected increase in the students' writing skills through mind mapping.

In this present study, the teaching-learning processes were divided into two cycles in which each cycle consisted of four interconnected sessions. Each session consisted of four systematical activities, namely: Planning (P), action (A), Observation (O), and Reflection (R). It was compulsory to note that IR (Initial Reflection) was a term usually used in classroom action research which referred to pre-test in descriptive text.

Basically, this study was held to find out the effectiveness of teaching descriptive text through mind mapping. The degree of the effectiveness of mind mapping strategy in improving students' writing skills was figured out by comparing the mean score gained by the students with

their corresponding mean scores of the reflections or post-test of both the first cycle and second cycle. The most required data to answer the research question under study was gathered through administering pre-test and post-test, some supporting data were collected through administering a questionnaire to the subjects under study. Therefore, there were three kinds of raw scores obtained for the present class action study, they were, (1) scores showing the subjects' pre-existing linguistic competence, (2) scores showing the subjects' progress achievement in writing skills, (3) scores showing the subjects' changing learning behaviors.

III. Findings and Discussion

In this study, mind mapping was conducted to improve students' writing skills by conducting two learning cycles. Before the implementation of mind mapping, a pre-cycle was conducted to figure out students' pre-existing abilities. To know the students' improvement after each teaching session, a post-test was administered. There were two learning cycles in this study, consequently, two post-tests were conducted. The findings based on the test administration could be presented as the Table 1.

Table 1. The findings based on the test administration

Cycle	Score	Number of Students	Percentage
Pre-Cycle	< 7.0	32	80%
	≥ 7.0	8	20%
Cycle I	<7.0	15	37.50%
	≥7.0	25	62.50%
Cycle II	<7.0	5	12.5%
	≥7.0	35	87.50%

This classroom action research showed an increasing score achieved by the students after the implementation of mind mapping. The increasing achievement can be seen from the percentage of students the minimum passing grade in which there were 20% of the students achieved the minimum passing grade in pre-cycle, there were 62.50% of the students achieved the minimum passing grade in cycle II, and there 87.50% of the students achieved the minimum passing grade in cycle II.

The data analysis led to the establishment of the finding of the present class action study which investigated the effectiveness of the mind mapping strategy method in improving the descriptive text writing skill. In pre-cycle, there were 32 students or 80% of the students still had poor ability in descriptive text writing. They were still could not write coherent and unified descriptive text because of their poor ability in vocabulary and grammar. However, There were 32 students or 20% of the students passed the minimum passing grade or achieving a score of

≥7.0. This indicated that only 8 students or 20% of the students had a good ability in descriptive text writing, meanwhile, 32 students or 80% of the students still needed serious treatment in how to write good descriptive text writing.

In cycle I, there was 15 students or 37.50% of the students still had poor ability in descriptive text writing. They were still could not write coherent and unified descriptive text because of their poor ability in vocabulary and grammar. However, there were 25 students or 62.50% of the students who passed the minimum passing grade or achieving a score of ≥7.0. This indicated that 25 students or 62.50% of the students had a good ability in descriptive text writing, meanwhile, 15 students or 37.50% of the students still needed further treatment in how to write good descriptive text writing. This cycle indicated that there was an increase of 42% of the students passed the minimum passing grade or achieving the score of ≥7.0 after the students taught using mind mapping if it was calculated its increase from the students' achievement in pre-cycle.

In cycle II, there were 5 students or 12.5% of the students still had poor ability in descriptive text writing. They were still could not write coherent and unified descriptive text because of their poor ability in vocabulary and grammar. However, There were 35 students or 87.50% of the students passed the minimum passing grade or achieving a score of ≥7.0. This indicated that 35 students or 87.50% of the students had a good ability in descriptive text writing, meanwhile, 15 students or 12.5% of the students still needed further treatment in how to write good descriptive text writing. This cycle indicated that there was an increase of 25% of the students passed the minimum passing grade or achieving the score of ≥7.0 after the students taught using mind mapping if it was calculated its increase from the students' achievement in cycle I and there was an increase of 67% of the students passed the minimum passing grade or achieving the score of ≥7.0 after the students taught using mind mapping if it was calculated its increase from the students' achievement in pre-cycle. This showed that mind mapping is an effective strategy to improve students' descriptive text writing.

Additionally, based on the analysis of the questionnaire data, it could be found that the responses of the subjects toward the implementation of mind mapping were significantly positive during the learning process in a writing classroom. It could be seen from the amount of the subjects after the implementation of mind mapping that there were 38.44% of the responses that showed strongly agree; 57.51% of the responses, agree; 4.05% of the responses, undecided; and none of the responses that showed disagree and strongly disagree. From the questionnaire results, it could be stated that most of the subjects agreed that mind mapping is an effective teaching strategy to improve their ability in descriptive text writing.

The mind mapping model is a learning model for recording material, information, data, knowledge, etc. Mind mapping is a tool that can make it easier for students to remember, gather knowledge, create ideas and categorize things so that students can become better thinkers

(Vijayavalsalan, 2016). This model when practiced in daily life is by writing a certain object creatively and then linking it with related objects as well. In the process, the written notes are summarized in the form of interrelated main ideas where the main idea is in the middle and the sub-main ideas become branches by being connected by lines. Branches of sub-topics can be developed into more detail to the smallest (Nurlaila, 2013). This can be analogous to branches on a tree. Furthermore, so that readers can imagine more easily about the form of mind mapping, below are steps and illustrations of mind mapping.

Through the experiences in implementing mind mapping strategy in this study, the basic mind mapping implementation in writing classes can be elaborated as the following: (1) at the beginning of learning the teacher expresses the competencies that must be achieved by students, (2) students are expected to be able to find solutions to the problem concepts expressed by the teacher, (3) the teacher makes small groups with a total of 2 to 3 students, (4) groups can freely discuss with their respective groups about the problem material given by the teacher, (5) each group was asked to write down all the answer ideas that existed during the discussion without having to be afraid of being wrong (brainstorming), (6) the results of the discussion are presented by each group by drawing lots, (7) during student presentations, the teacher writes down all the answers based on the criteria that have been prepared, and (7) the teacher and students draw conclusions from the results of the discussions that have been recorded by the teacher on the blackboard, and then (9) students are asked to write a descriptive text based on the mind mapping that have discussed and constructed, (10) classroom discussion on the text written by all students.

Therefore, considering the importance and usefulness of the mind mapping strategy to improve descriptive text writing skills, this study suggests that teachers should use mind mapping to improve students' writing. Furthermore, other researchers should intensify further study to investigate the benefits of mind mapping in writing classes and further development and modification of mind mapping strategy to enhance writing skills.

IV. Conclusion

The present class action study dealt with improving descriptive writing skills through mind mapping conducted through a classroom action study consisted of two teaching cycles, where each cycle consisted of four successive sessions. Students' achievement in the recycle showed very low achievement of the students in descriptive text writing skills. It is, however, through intensive teaching process by carrying out mind mapping strategy, the students' achievement improved dramatically. This can be seen clearly from the results of the first post-test and the second post-test. Moreover, the results of the questionnaire showed that students' motivation in learning writing through mind mapping strategy was improved positively after they were taught writing through mind mapping. This study convinced that mind mapping is an

effective strategy to be implemented in writing classes. Therefore, this study suggested that teachers should consider intensifying mind mapping strategies to improve students' writing.

V. Acknowledgement

References

[1]   Abdul Karim, R., & Abu, A. G. (2018). Using Mobile-Assisted Mind Mapping Technique (MAMMAT) to Improve Writing Skills of ESL Students. *Journal of Social Science and Humanities*, *1*(2), 1–6. https://doi.org/10.26666/rmp.jssh.2018.2.1

[2]   Adas, D., & Bakir, A. (2013). Writing Difficulties and New Solutions : Blended Learning as an Approach to Improve Writing Abilities PhD in teaching English Language Methods , AL-Quds Open University ,. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, *3*(9), 254–266.

[3]   Bukhari, S. S. F. (2016). Mind Mapping Techniques to Enhance EFL Writing Skill. *International Journal of Linguistics and Communication*, *4*(1). https://doi.org/10.15640/ijlc.v4n1a7

[4]   Cahyani, I. A. M., Mantra, I. B. N., & Wirastuti, I. G. A. P. (2018). Employing Picture Description to Assess the Students' Descriptive Paragraph Writing. *Soshum : Jurnal Sosial Dan Humaniora*, *8*(1), 86. https://doi.org/10.31940/soshum.v8i1.797

[5]   DiZhang. (2009). The application of blog in english writing. *Journal of Cambridge Studies*, *14*(1), 64–72. http://journal.acs-cam.org.uk/data/archive/2009/200901-article8.pdf%0A

[6]   Exposition, A., With, T., & Mapping, M. (2015). Improving Students' Organizing Ideas in Writing Analytical Exposition Text With Mind Mapping Technique. *English Education Journal (Program Pascasarjana Universitas Negeri Semarang)*, *5*(1), 1–5.

[7]   Karim, R. A. (2018). Technology-Assisted Mind Mapping Technique in Writing Classrooms: An Innovative Approach. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, *8*(4). https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarbss/v8-i4/4146

[8]   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

[9]   Mantra, I. B. N. (2017). Promoting the students ' writing skill through folktales based learning activities. *International Seminar on Language, Education, and Culture*, *October 2017*, 78–82.

[10]   Muslim, I. M. (2014). *Helping EFL Students Improve their Writing*. *4*(2), 105–112.

[11]   Nurlaila, P. A. (2013). The use of mind mapping technique in writing descriptive text. *Journal of English and Education*, *1*(2), 9–15. ejournal.upi.edu

[12] Shraddha, B., Raghavendra, S., Nikita, P., Iye, N., & Ajit, S. (2015). Mind Mapping : An useful Technique for Effective Learning in Large Classroom. *Journal of Engineering Education Transformations*, *28*(2), 19–24.

[13] Uysal, H., & Sidekli, S. (2020). Developing Story Writing Skills with Fourth Grade Students' Mind Mapping Method. *TeEğitim VBilim*, *45*(204), 2020. https://doi.org/10.15390/eb.2020.8848

[14] Vijayavalsalan, B. (2016). Mind mapping as a strategy for enhancing essay writing skills. *New Educational Review*, *45*(3), 137–150. https://doi.org/10.15804/tner.2016.45.3.11

[15] Widiastuti, I. A. M. S. (2018). EFL students' writing interactions through weblog and self-assessment. *International Journal of Humanities, Literature & Arts*, *1*, 38–45. https://doi.org/10.31295/ijhla.v1n1.32