

## **Increasing the Students' Writing Skill through Mind Mapping Technique**

**By: Khoiriyah**

The Lecturer of English Department FKIP UNP Kediri

### **ABSTRACT**

This study is classroom action research implementing the use of mind mapping technique to improve the students' writing skill. The aim of this study is to identify whether mind mapping technique can improve students' writing skill and describe the classroom situation when mind mapping is used in teaching and learning process of writing skill. The data were collected from 44 students of the first year students of English department at Nusantara PGRI Kediri University.

The data compiled from the observation sheets on the lecturer's and students' performance done by the collaborator, field note made by the lecturer, questionnaire on the students and mainly the students' achievement at the cycle test proved the mind mapping technique to be effective in improving the students' writing skill.

This study has been done into two cycles. The result of the study shows that the students' mean score improved from the first cycle (70.95) to the second cycle (76.68). And out of 65.91% of the subjects got the target scores 75 in cycle I and it had been reached by 84.08% of the students in cycle II. In short, it can be concluded that in the last cycle, students had really made significant progress. The analyses resulted in the findings that mind mapping technique could improve the students' writing skill

Key Words: Writing Skill, Mind Mapping.

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

Writing is important skill to be taught to the students in the English as a foreign language context. In line with this view, Raimes (1983) states that writing is an important skill for students because of some reasons. First, writing strengthens the students' grammatical structure, idioms, and vocabulary. Second, writing gives a chance to students to apply the language they have learned. Third, writing reinforces students to express their ideas in correct words and sentences. Therefore, students will be involved both in writing and thinking process.

Furthermore, writing is one of the skills that should be mastered to communicate in written form. However, students tend to consider that writing is the most difficult skill. In addition, Richards and Renandya (2002:303) states that the difficulty in writing lies not only generating and organizing ideas, but also in translating these ideas into readable text. Those difficulties make the students not to be confident in writing. In other words, writing does not only involve physical activity but also mental activity. Thus, it is important to think and plan what ideas will be written and how to write them. However, it is not an easy work because exposing idea in written form should concern some writing

aspects such as grammar, vocabulary, mechanics, fluency and organization. Bram (1995:25) states that for beginning writers, expressing what they intend is usually difficult. Sometimes the grammar is correct, but the vocabulary used is not appropriate.

The case of failure in writing skill likely happens to the first year students of English Department at Nusantara PGRI Kediri University. Based on the preliminary study, it was found that many students still had difficulties in writing English in term of generating and developing their ideas, expanding their vocabularies and tense mastery. When the students were asked to write, they often got difficulties to begin their writing, and they were confused what should they write. They took a long time before they started to write. Consequently, they tend to concern much on how to finish their writing soon rather than they made a good composition. Additionally, the scores of the daily English writing test of the students are still low. Besides, the students found some difficulties in writing of this kind of descriptive text. One of the difficulties that are faced by the students, for instance, appeared in grammar component in making noun phrases such as “girl beautiful” instead of “beautiful girl”. This is because of Indonesian has different language rules from English. Another difficulty was in the use of mechanic of writing such as: they did not use capital letter, comma, or punctuation properly.

In addition, it was also found that the students have less motivation in learning English, especially in writing text in the form of descriptive. The students tended to be passive in chances for the students to collaborate and share their knowledge to each other, because most of the time the teacher explains and asks questions only or assigns with tasks and let them make composition by themselves. The last , based on the observation that was done by the reseacher, a basic problem voiced by the students is the lack of vocabulary to write a good descriptive text.

Knowing the problems above, this research applies a mind mapping technique as one of the pre-writing technique to help the students in generating and developing their ideas and to increase their vocabularies. Mind mapping is the first step to make an idea becomes paragraph or story. It can help the students in writing process because mind mapping is the easiest and the most qualified strategy to help the students in writing process. When students create mind mapping, they begin with an ideas at the top or center of the blank piece of paper. Then they think of the related ideas or words and draw relationships with a series of boxes, circles, and arrows. Nunan (2003:97) explains that mind mapping is more visual form of brainstorming. When students create mind maps, they begin with an idea at the top or center of a blank piece of paper. Then think of related ideas or word and draw relationships with a series of boxes, circles, and arrow.

## B. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### The Concept of Writing

Writing is one of the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing has always formed part of the syllabus in teaching of English. However, writing can be used for a variety of purposes, ranging from being merely a 'backup' for grammar teaching to major syllabus strand in its own right, where mastering the ability to write effectively is seen as key objective for learners, Harmer (2004:31).

Moreover, according to Mayers (2005:2), writing is also an action a process of discovering and organizing your idea, putting them on paper and reshaping and revising them. It means that writing can be used to express ideas or thoughts on a paper.

Whereas, to produce a good written product needs accuracy, i.e. using the correct forms of language. Writing accurately involves spelling correctly, forming letters correctly, writing legibly, punctuation correctly, using correct layouts, choosing the right vocabulary, using grammar correctly, joining sentences correctly and composing paragraph correctly.

In addition, Chaffee et. al. (1999:5) writing is an active, purposeful process that uses a system of written symbols for thinking and communicating.

From explanation above, the researcher concludes that writing is a way to produce language that comes from our thought. By using writing, students can share their ideas, feel something that exist in their mind. It is written on paper or a computer screen. It is influenced both by personal attitudes and social experiences that the writer brings for writing. It is also a process of what students write is influenced by constraints of genre and has to be presented in learning activities.

### **Approaches in Teaching Writing**

In the teaching of writing the teacher can focus on the product of that writing or on the writing process itself. When concentrating on the product teacher are only interested in the aim of task and in the end product. Those who advocate a process approach to writing, however pay attention to the various stages that any piece of writing goes through. By spending time with learners on pre-writing phases, editing, redrafting, and finally 'publishing' their work, a process approach aims to get to the heart of the various skills that should be employed when writing Harmer (2007:257-259) cited that writing approach consisting of process and product.

#### *a. Product Approach in Teaching Writing*

Product approach views writing activity as a linear process, starting from planning, writing the plan, and ending with the product (finished composition). In the linear process, writing is viewed as finished product that is free from errors: the language is grammatically correct and the ideas are well organized. As the product is expected to be perfect, in developing writing skill, the proponents of product approach believe that accuracy must be prioritized rather than fluency. Accuracy relates to students'

ability to produce correct language but fluency relates to the ease of producing the ideas. As accuracy becomes the first target, in teaching learning process, a lot of time is devoted to improve students' ability to produce correct language, rather than train students to use strategies in developing topic and organizing ideas. In such monotonous activities, the time to do planning, drafting, and revising is very limited.

b. *Process Approach in Teaching Writing*

By understanding the complex process in writing, it is not adequate to give students assignments, to let students write, and then to evaluate the product of their work. The process approach in teaching writing believe that writing is a messy process, i.e. a process of making meaning through the act prewriting, drafting, and revising according to (Gorel: 1991; Ede :1992). In prewriting, the students discover and explore what they want to write about. In drafting, they create more than one rough draft of what they want to say about the topic. In revising, students craft their writing by focusing on contents and organization by adding, deleting, and moving sections, and polishing their writing to produce a final version. Another writer, Tomkins, (1994) adds two other writing processes: editing and publishing. In editing, students proofread to identify and correct mechanics of writing. Lastly, in publishing students make final copies of their compositions. The final copy might be compiled into books or printed from a computer.

**The Concept of Mind Mapping Technique**

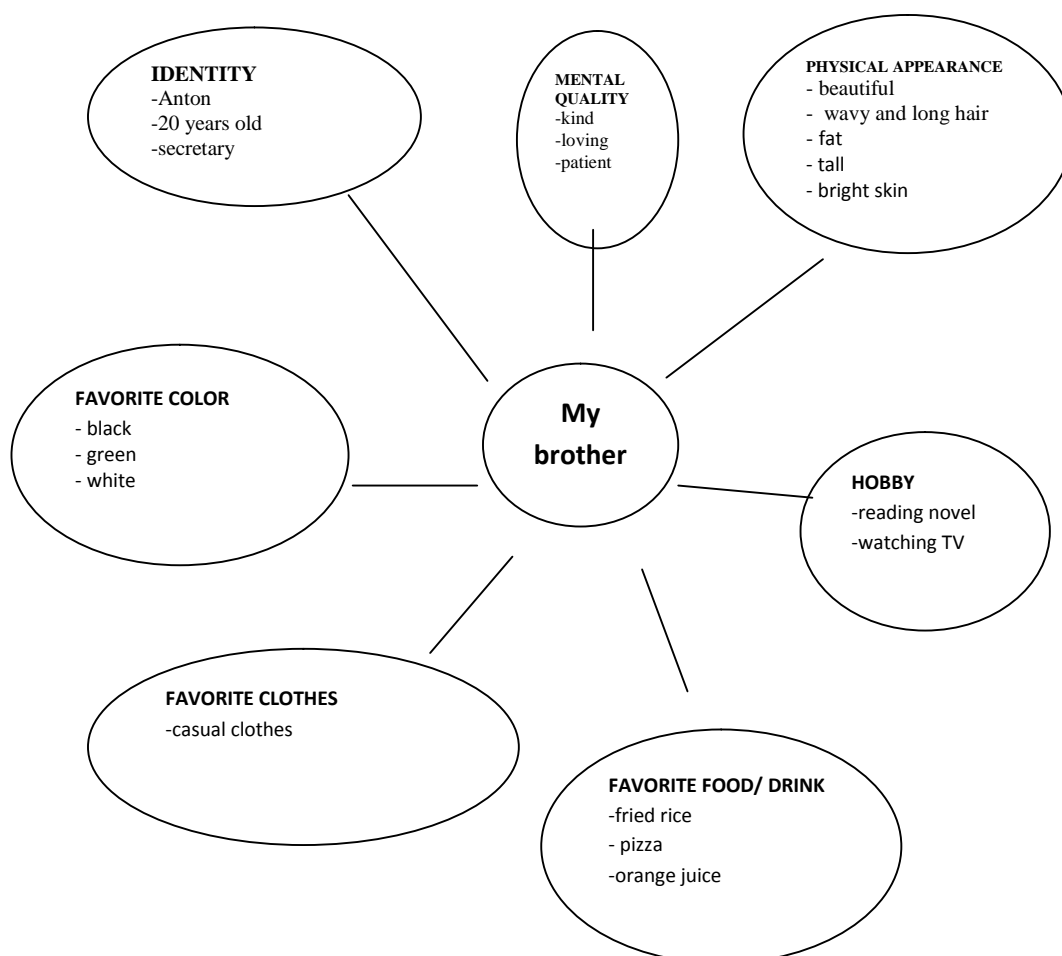
Buzan (1993:59) explains that mind mapping is expression of radiant thinking and is therefore a natural function of human mind. It is a powerful graphic technique which provides a universal key to unlocking the potential of technique which provides a universal key to unlocking the potential of brain. It means that mind mapping is media to help pour thoughts or ideas naturally. It is a powerful graphic technique which provides a universal key to unlocking the potential of brain. The mind mapping can be applied to every aspect of life where improved learning and clearer thinking will enhance human performance.

In line with this view, Vogt (1983); Irwin (1990) state that mind/ semantic mapping is a process for constructing visual displays of categories and their relationships. It is a categorical structuring of information in graphic form. It is an "individualized" content approach which allows students to relate new words to their own experiences and prior knowledge. Semantic maps can be formed from individual or group contributions or through teacher directed or independent activities. In addition, Oxford (1988) stated that as an instructional strategy, semantic mapping involves a variety of basic memory and comprehension techniques (such as making associations, grouping, and using visual memory of the semantic map) that incorporate relating old knowledge to new.

In addition, mind mapping is used to generate, visualize structure, and classify ideas, and as an aid to studying and organizing information, solving problems and making decisions and writing. It has four characteristics:

- The subject of attention is crystalistic in central image.
- The main themes of subject radiate from the central image as branches.
- Branches comprise a key image or key word printed on an associated line. Topics of lesser importance are also represented as branches attached to higher level branches.
- The branches form a connected nodal structure.

### Example of Mind Mapping



### C. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research was intended to give actions to improve the students' writing skill of the first year students of English Department at Nusantara PGRI Kediri University through mind mapping technique. It was participated by 44 students consisting of 28 female students and 12 male students. Therefore, the classroom action research with the cycle model was applied. This classroom action research was conducted in two cycles in which each cycle covered four stages of activities, namely the planning of the

action, the implementing the plan, observing the action, and the reflecting the action. The data are collected through some techniques including observation, questionnaire, and test.

The observation activity is carried out to observe the teacher's and the students' activities during teaching learning process. It is expected to know the suitability between the planning and the implementation of the action and to collect data of the students' activities. Questionnaire is done in the end of the research to know the students' view of teaching learning process, especially the use of mind mapping technique in teaching writing of descriptive text. Meanwhile, the test was administered to the students to investigate the improvement of the students' writing skill in descriptive text after applying mind mapping technique.

The qualitative data was about the teacher's and students' activities during the process of implementing mind mapping technique was administered besides the quantitative data about the students' achievement in doing the test at the end of each cycle.

To achieve the purpose of this classroom action research, the researcher then set up the target or criteria of success used to evaluate the success of the actions were as follows:

- (1) The mean score of the students' writing test result fulfills the target mean score at least 75;
- (2) 75% of the research subjects achieved writing test score at least 75.
- (3) 75% of the research subjects were actively involved in the teaching learning process of writing by using mind mapping technique with high motivation and interest.

## **D. RESEARCH FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

### **THE FINDING**

#### **The result of the first cycle**

Based on the questionnaires given to the students, they enjoyed, were interested in and had high motivation to the teaching learning process of writing by using mind mapping. There were 36 of 44 students or 81.81% of the students are interested in the mind mapping technique, 77.27% of the students could comprehend the material of writing with mind mapping technique, and 75.00% of the students answered that it was necessary to use the mind mapping technique in writing.

The result of the first cycle showed that based on the observation, the researcher took some conclusions are firstly, some students participated in the implementation of mind mapping enthusiastically. They expressed whatever they knew about the topic although some students still used some words in their mother tongue because they have limited vocabulary of English words. Most of them were happy seeing the new technique and they tried to express their ideas although only a word or two words. Secondly, it could be seen that by implementing mind mapping technique students were feeling free, relax, and they enjoyed of involving the discussion. They were more confident in expressing

their ideas together with the class. However, many students did not know in putting the name of categories.

Moreover, based on the process of evaluation, the result of class observation revealed that there were 29 students or (65.90% of 44 students) were actively involved in the teaching learning process. They had fulfilled the indicators of being active in the class, by answering the teacher's oral questions, making mind mapping, developing mind mapping into text writing, and revising and rewriting their writing into final draft. There were 22 students or 50% of 44 students could answer the teacher's oral questions but the rest (22) tended to be reluctant to answer the teacher's oral questions. There were (31 students) able to make mind mapping with the appropriate steps, but 13 students found difficulties in making semantic mapping. On the other hand, the researcher found a student who made the mind mapping very creatively. In addition, all of the students (44 students) tried to develop their mind mapping into text writing whatever the results, however there were 4 students who did not revise or rewrite their writing. They still had difficulties to dig up the more ideas. They just wrote down the topic and categories but did not develop it into a good paragraph and text writing.

Meanwhile, based on product evaluation, the results of the test showed that some of the students' writing was still not understandable or not communicative. The students still made errors mainly in organizing and developing their ideas. Most of them included irrelevant information and repetition of ideas about the topic they have written. Besides, most of the students wrote sentences with simple present tense and noun phrases incorrectly. The scores of the students' writing in Cycle 1 showed that there were 29 students of 44 students who got score over 75, and 15 students got score under 75. It means that only 65.91% of the students who reached the mastery level. Thus, it still did not meet 75% from the number of students to get minimum 75. It was found that the mean score of the students' writing achievement test in Cycle I was 70.95. It means that the target mean score requirement in this research had not been achieved yet. In other words, the action cycle in Cycle I had not been successful yet.

### **The result of the Second Cycle**

The result of the second cycle could be seen as follows. Based on the questionnaires given to the students, they enjoyed and were interested in mind mapping and had high motivation to the teaching learning process of writing so that they could involve in the teaching process. There were 38 of 44 students or 86.36% of the students felt enjoy and interested in the mind mapping technique, 81.81% of the students could comprehend the material of writing with mind mapping technique, and 86.36% students answered that it was necessary to use the mind mapping technique in writing.

Meanwhile, based on the observation, the researcher found that firstly, most students participated in the implementation of mind mapping enthusiastically. They expressed whatever they

knew about the topic. It proved that they responded the mind mapping technique for writing actively. They were competing to get the teacher's attention and wanted the teacher to write their ideas. Secondly, it could be seen that by implementing mind mapping technique students were feeling free, relax, and they enjoyed of involving the discussion. They were more confident in expressing their ideas together with the class. However, many students did not know in putting the name of categories. Most of them paid attention in discussing the errors and mistakes after their friends making sentences on the whiteboard.

Furthermore, based on the process evaluation, the result of class observation revealed that there were 33 students or (75.00% of 44 students) were actively involved in the teaching learning process. They had fulfilled the indicators of being active in the class, by answering the teacher's oral questions, making mind mapping, developing mind mapping into text writing, and revising and rewriting their writing into final draft. It means that most of the students gave better responses toward mind mapping technique. In other words, the students' active participation in joining the writing lesson had met the standard requirement of process evaluation that was 75% of the students are actively involved in the teaching learning process of writing by using mind mapping technique.

Moreover, based on product evaluation, the students writing achievement increasingly improved. It showed that there were 37 students of 44 students who got score over 75, and only 7 students got score under 75. It could be seen that on the average, the students' writing achievement test was 76.68. There were 84.09% of the students got score above 75. It means that the mean score of writing test in cycle II has achieved the target mean score that was 75 and more. Thus, the action was stopped or not continued. Besides, from the students' writing, it was found that most of the students made improvement. Most of their writings were understandable and communicative. Only some errors could be found.

## DISCUSSION

Out of the application of mind mapping technique in the writing skill, it could be seen that mind mapping technique could motivate the students to be actively involved in the teaching learning process of writing subject. They could contribute information, knowledge, and experience they already have to generate and develop ideas and concept related or associated with the topic. It is in line with (Buzan 2000) in Al-Jarf (2008) opinion that mind mapping is a graphic organizer in which the major categories radiate from a central idea and sub categories are represented as branches of larger branches. It is a visual tool that can be used to generate ideas, take notes, organize thinking and develop concepts

In addition, by using mind mapping during prewriting stage, the students could generate and develop the ideas and information into a map that shows meaningful relationship. After the words and



ideas were generated and organized, then the words are grouped into its categories. Thus, the ideas could be developed easily and more completely. As a prewriting technique, mind mapping can be used for general vocabulary development. It can help students build and establish background knowledge and brainstorm to generate words and ideas related to the topic.

Based on the above findings, it could be concluded that the use of mind mapping technique could improve the students' writing achievement. Hence, the results of this classroom action research in two cycles proved that the application of mind mapping technique can improve the students' writing skill of the first year students of English Department at Nusantara PGRI Kediri University.

## **E. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS**

### **CONCLUSION**

From the implementation of the two cycles, it is clearly seen that building knowledge of field or the subject is essential to activate the students' background knowledge and brainstorming enriches and elaborates the students' schemata for further development of ideas. Mind mapping as a prewriting technique is useful for the students who are still struggling with the basic structures in the language. Also, complaint about lack of ideas and lack of vocabulary has found some practical solution through this technique. Finally, through this session of brainstorming and mind mapping, composition writing can become more lively and adventurous.

There is a significant improvement from the prior research i.e. among 44 participants only 8 or 20.45% of them can achieve the minimum mastery level of the writing skill. In Cycle1, after having brainstorming using semantic mapping technique, there is a slight increase i.e. from the average score of 67.00 into 70.95 and in the Cycle 2 the average score becomes 76.68.

The grateful effect is that the class situation is less restless and become lively and enjoyable. The mutual cooperation among students is also enhanced in when they are involved in mutual process of sharing ideas and editing their own mistakes or imperfections after the discussion.

### **SUGGESTIONS**

Considering the results of the research that showed the use of mind mapping technique could improve the students' writing skill of the first year students of English department of Nusantara PGRI Kediri University, some suggestions were given.

First, it is suggested that writing lecturers use mind mapping as an alternative technique in teaching writing. Since the research findings revealed that mind mapping as a prewriting technique and a planning phase is a very important part of writing process. It is useful to help students to generate and organize ideas before they begin writing.

Second, it is also suggested that interesting topics along the same lines should be chosen.

Therefore, to ensure that the students explore the subject as fully as possible, a few excellent topics of interest should be found and whole series of assignments should be built around them. The more the students practice writing, the more fluency their writing will be.

## REFERENCES

- Chaffee, J., McMahon., Stout, B. 1999. *Critical Thinking Thoughtful Writing: A Rhetoric with Reading*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers.
- Fairbrain, G. J. and Winch, C. 1996. *Reading, Writing and Reasoning: A Guide for Students (Second Edition)*. Philadelphia: Open University Press.
- Gorel, D.1991. *The Purposeful Writer. A Rhetoric with Readings*. Boston:Sage Publications, Inc.
- Oxford, Rebecca. 1988. *Problems and Solutions in Foreign/Second Language Vocabulary Learning: The Potential Role of Semantic Mapping*. Alexandria, VA: U.S.Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences.
- Raimes, A. 1983. *Techniques in Teaching Writing*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Vogt, Darlene. 1983. "Semantic Mapping as a Vocabulary Teaching Technique to Improve Recall of Word Meaning." M.Ed. Thesis, Eastern Montana College ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 258 150.
- Vasiljevic, Z. "Semantic Mapping in Communicative Language Teaching." [Online],(<http://www.britishcouncil.org/serbia-academic-comeer-vasiljevic.doc>, retrieved July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2008).
- Al-jarf, Reima. 2008. *Teaching Spelling Skills with a Mind-Mapping Software*. Riyadh: Asian EFL Journal.
- Buzan, Tony. 1993. *The Mind Map Book*. New York: The Penguin Group.
- Crimmon, Mc. 1984. *Writing With a Purpose*. USA: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Harmer, Jeremy. 2004. *How to Teach Writing*. London: Longman.
- Meyers, Allan. 2005. *Gateway to Academic Writing: Effective Sentences, Paragraph and Essays*. New York: Longman.
- Nunan, David. 2003. *Practical Language Teaching*. New York: McGraw Hill Company.
- Richards, C. Jack and Renandya A. Willy. 2002. *Methodology in Language Teaching: An Anthology of Current Practice*. New York: Cambridge University Press.