

Lifting eighth-grade students' recount text writing skills through mind mapping

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ABSTRACT

This research was conducted at SMP Al Kamal Wonodadi Blitar to lift the personal recount writing skills of eighth-grade students, totaling 29 students, especially on the topic of personal recount by integrating mind mapping. The researchers implemented classroom action research based on Kemmis and Taggart's model with four main steps: planning, acting, observing, and evaluating, as well as reflecting. Data were collected through tests. The results of this study showed a significant transformation in students' writing abilities after using mind mapping, increasing from 55.66 in the pre-test to 81.14 in the post-test. This improvement involved various aspects of writing such as grammar usage, vocabulary selection, idea development, content quality, and mechanical accuracy in the context of personal recount texts. Based on these results, the researchers recommend that English teachers integrate mind mapping as an alternative tool to develop students' writing skills.

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1. Introduction

English serves as a universal language, bridging communication gaps across borders and playing an indispensable role in education (Hapsari, 2016). In Indonesian Education plays an indispensable role in education (Hapsari, 2016). In Indonesian Education, English as a foreign language is mandated to be learned by the government starting from elementary until higher education (Maduwu, 2016; Silalahi, 2016). In the pursuit of English language proficiency, Indonesian students are required to master four fundamental language skills: speaking, reading, writing, and listening, those skills constitute the cornerstone of effective communication both oral and written (Wulandari & Fadhilawati, 2019). Among the four language competencies discussed earlier, the art of writing emerges as paramount in the hierarchy of skills to acquire in both higher education and professional settings for instance, to craft succinct summaries, comprehensive reports, compelling narratives, effective emails, persuasive proposals, meticulous applications, and various other forms of written correspondence within the professional sphere (Klimova, 2012). Without a proficient grasp of this skill, students inevitably not only encounter formidable hurdles when attempting to convey their thoughts and ideas in written form but also erect formidable barriers to effective communication within educational environments and the complexities of the professional world (Klimova, 2012).

Despite the pivotal roles of writing in the educational and professional world, writing poses a significant challenge for students (Klimova, 2012; Khoiriyah, 2014 Pratiwi, 2016; & Fitriani & Fadhilawati, 2022; Fadhilawati et al., 2020). Writing is a multifaceted skill that demands more than just a rich vocabulary; it requires mastery of grammar, syntax, mechanics, and the ability to convey thoughts and ideas coherently (Karminah et al., 2017; Supiah, 2018; & Fadhilawati &

Sari, 2018). In addition, the process of writing spans from conceiving and structuring ideas to their final manifestation on paper which needs a lot of reading (Humairoh, 2021; Fadhilawati, Rachmawati, and Mansur, 2020). Therefore, without enough reading, the students find it difficult to convey their ideas in written form.

The challenges in learning writing were also encountered by the eighth-grade students at SMP Al Kamal Blitar, notably in the realm of personal recount text. As evident from a writing assessment conducted in May 2022, the students of VIII-B demonstrated limited proficiency in composing personal recount texts. Struggled with grammar, vocabulary selection, idea development, and the application of mechanics were palpable, resulting in an average score of 55.66 on the pre-test. That average score was below the school's English proficiency threshold of 75.00. Furthermore, Observations within the classroom environment accentuated the difficulties encountered by the students. A lack of enthusiasm, passivity, and minimal engagement levels during writing lessons underscored concerns regarding the effectiveness of instructional methods.

Acknowledging the need for a more engaging and efficacious approach, this research embarks on a quest to address the challenges associated with enhancing the writing abilities of eighth-grade students. Specifically, it explored the utilization of mind mapping as an instructional tool to amplify students' prowess in composing recount texts, particularly personal recounts. Mind mapping, a graphical technique mirroring the cognitive thinking process, emerges as a promising remedy. It facilitates idea generation, organization, and creative linkages while simplifying the retrieval of knowledge (Buzan, 2008). Furthermore, the Mind map aligns seamlessly with the principles of effective pedagogy, as it has been shown to engender enthusiasm among both students and educators, surmount learning hurdles, and adapt to a variety of subjects (Fadhilawati, 2013). In addition, Sasongko, (2017) reported that Mind mapping is a powerful technique that blends imagery, color, and visual-spatial organization. It has been demonstrated to enhance information retention substantially when compared to traditional note-taking and learning methods. Then, Silalahi, (2016) argued that mind mapping was effective in enhancing students' writing skills.

There were numerous previous research which have underscored the efficacy of mind mapping in augmenting various English language skills or sub-skills, For example, Fadhilawati, (2013) revealed that the utilization of mind mapping could enhance the students' vocabulary in MAN Kota Blitar. Further, Nurlaila, (2013) stated that mind mapping the mind mapping technique proved to be highly effective in enhancing students' writing abilities, particularly in writing descriptive texts engagingly and enjoyably. Mind mapping played a pivotal role in elevating students' writing skills for descriptive texts, notably in expanding their vocabulary, fostering creativity, structuring sentences, and organizing their ideas cohesively. Consequently, the application of the mind-mapping technique yielded significant improvements in the students' descriptive writing proficiency. Khoiriyah, (2014) reported that the use of mind mapping was able to improve the student's writing skills in descriptive text in the first semester students of the English Education Department at Universitas PGRI Kediri, Moreover, Waloyo, (2017) stated that the use of mind mapping significantly enhances students' writing skills. Mind mapping serves as a valuable tool that empowers students by providing them with a structured framework for their writing tasks. It encourages students to think freely and foster their creativity in the writing process. Through mind mapping, students gain a better grasp of narrative text organization, understand how to use appropriate tenses in narrative writing, and learn how to establish the sequence of events in their stories based on the mapping and key concepts provided. Furthermore, (Kamelia et al., 2018) revealed that the mind map implementation had a positive effect on the students' writing recount text in SMAN 7 Kota Tangerang. In addition

Lisan, (2022) claimed that the mind was significant in enhancing students' writing descriptive text in class seven in SMPN 2 Gamping, Selemang, Yogyakarta.

However, a notable research gap persists. Despite these promising findings, there remains a paucity of comprehensive studies that explore the specific application of mind mapping as a pedagogical approach to address writing challenges encountered by eighth-grade students, particularly in the domain of personal recount writing. Therefore, the researchers were motivated to conduct a study under the title "Lifting Eighth-Grade Students' Recount Text Writing Skills through Mind Mapping", specifically, this study tried to determine the improvement of eighth grade students' learning outcomes in writing personal recount by applying mind mapping at SMP Al Kamal Wonodadi Blitar.

2. Method

The study adopted a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design. CAR is a valuable and suitable approach aimed at enhancing teacher performance and elevating students' learning achievements within the classroom (Fadhilawati, 2013). Further, argued that CAR serves as a research method designed to address genuine issues that arise during the teaching and learning process in the classroom. The rationale for employing CAR in this study was rooted in the specific challenges observed within the researcher's classroom, VIII B at SMP Al Kamal Wonodadi Blitar. The prominent issue at hand was the Twenty-nine eighth-grade students' proficiency in composing recount texts, particularly their lack of personal experience, reflected in an average score of 55.66. CAR offered a structured framework to systematically identify, address, and rectify this critical problem within the educational context. Furthermore, the research was conducted within a single action research cycle aimed at enhancing the writing abilities of eighth-grade students, specifically in crafting recount texts, at SMP Al Kamal Wonodadi Blitar. This cycle comprised four crucial phases: planning, acting, observing and evaluating, and reflecting (Kemmis et al., 2014).

Planning

In this initial phase, the researchers meticulously planned the research action, which encompassed the preparation of a comprehensive lesson plan, the compilation of recount text materials and mind-mapping resources, the creation of a post-test, and the establishment of criteria for research success. The measure of the success of the research was based on the minimum standard of achievement stated by the school (75.00).

Acting

The acting phase comprised five teaching and learning sessions, primarily focused on personal recount writing using mind mapping. These sessions spanned from the introduction of key concepts on Wednesday, 29th June 2022, covering the definition, generic structures, language features, and types of recount texts via mind mapping. Meeting 2 was done on Monday, 4th July 2022, it was used for learning what personal recount is by using mind mapping, Meeting 3 was conducted on Wednesday, 6th July 2022, it was aimed at learning material and practicing writing about "My Bad Day" by using mind mapping, Meeting 4 was held on Monday, 11th July 2022, this meeting was used for learning material and practice writing about "My First Day in school" by using mind mapping and Meeting 5 was done on Wednesday, 13th July 2022, it was intended for the students learned and practiced writing about "My first trip with My Sister" by using mind Mapping. The following is an example of mind mapping for helping students write personal recount text;



Picture 1. Mind Mapping of My First Trip Vacation with My Sister

Observing and Evaluating

To gauge the impact of the research intervention, a post-test was administered on Monday, 18th July 2022, it was intended to assess the student's proficiency in writing personal recount texts by using mind mapping. This evaluation utilized a scoring rubric covering five criteria of evaluation; content, mechanics, vocabulary, organization, and grammar.

Reflecting

Reflection plays a pivotal role in this research endeavor. The necessity of the subsequent cycle cannot be ascertained until a comprehensive analysis of the initial outcomes has been undertaken. In this context, the results of cycle 1 will be juxtaposed against the predefined research success criteria established during the planning phase. Should the learners successfully meet these criteria, a single cycle of action will suffice. However, if the learning outcomes fall short of our expectations, it is incumbent upon the researcher to revise the lesson plan and persist in its enhancement until the desired outcomes are achieved (Mansur & Fadhilawati, 2021).

3. Result and Discussion

In this critical section, we unveil the culmination of our research endeavors through a meticulous presentation of results and a comprehensive discussion that delves into the intricacies of our findings.

Result

After enacting the action, the researchers conducted a post-test to assess the impact of the implemented strategies. The subsequent presentation provides a side-by-side comparison of students' scores before and after the incorporation of mind-mapping techniques.

Table 1. The Students' Achievement before and after the utilization of Mind Mapping in Learning Writing of Recount Text

No	Respondents' Initial Name	Pre-Test Score	Post-Test Score
1	AMA	60.00	79.00
2	AFA	49.00	83.00
3	AAF	58.00	87.00
4	ADFI	65.00	78.00
5	AFAN	66.00	76.00
6	AIB	60.00	80.00
7	AH	59.00	82.00
8	AS	61.00	84.00
9	A	60.00	81.00
10	AASN	61.00	84.00
11	ACS	53.00	84.00
12	CADH	52.00	85.00
13	DPH	53.00	78.00
14	DK	55.00	78.00
15	HCS	52.00	81.00
16	HHA	55.00	81.00
17	IHMNR	51.00	82.00
18	IWJ	52.00	84.00
19	ISM	53.00	80.00
20	KMAB	50.00	80.00
21	KN	50.00	86.00
22	LRS	60.00	79.00
23	MLIY	53.00	77.00
24	MNAA	48.00	79.00
25	MRAF	56.00	81.00
26	MDAA	59.00	83.00
27	MAM	58.00	81.00
28	MRP	58.00	79.00
29	S	47.00	81.00
Average Score		55.66	81.14

From the result presented in the table above, we may infer that the utilization of mind-mapping techniques in one cycle of action could improve the student's learning outcomes in writing personal recount text. The majority of students show an improvement in their post-test scores compared to their pre-test scores. The average post-test score (81.14) is notably higher than the average pre-test score (55.66), indicating an overall enhancement in students' writing skill of recount text after the incorporation of Mind Mapping in the learning process. Because the research target had been achieved in the first cycle, it was not needed for researchers to continue the process of improvement to cycle two.

Discussion

This study focusing on the utilization of Mind Mapping techniques to enhance eighth-grade students' personal recount writing skills, is in tandem with previous research highlighting the efficacy of Mind Mapping in various English language skills. This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge, specifically addressing the writing challenges faced by students. Numerous prior on the utilization of Mind mapping as a tool to enhance learning outcomes for example; (Fadhilawati, (2013); Nurlaila, (2013); Khoiriyah, (2014); Waloyo, (2017); (Kamelia et al., 2018) and Lisan, (2022)) have emphasized the positive impact of Mind Mapping on different aspects of language learning, including vocabulary enhancement, descriptive writing skills, and overall proficiency. The result of this study aligns with those findings, demonstrating

that the application of mind-mapping techniques resulted in a significant improvement in students' ability to write personal recount texts.

Moreover, writing, as a multifaceted skill, poses challenges beyond a rich vocabulary. Grammar mastery, syntax, mechanics, and coherent expression are vital components. The literature review emphasized that Mind Mapping aids in idea generation, organization, and creative linkages. In our study, the observed improvement in post-test scores suggests that Mind Mapping effectively addresses these specific challenges, fostering a more holistic development of writing skills.

In addition, Mind Mapping mirrors the cognitive thinking process, encouraging students to visualize and organize their thoughts spatially. The graphical representation of ideas helps in conceptualizing the structure of a recount text. This visual-spatial organization, as reported by Sasongko, (2017) and Silalahi (2016), aligns with cognitive theories that posit enhanced information retention through visual aids. In our context, the improvement in students' scores implies that Mind Mapping aids in the cognitive processes involved in writing.

Further, the studies by Khoiriyah, (2014) and Waloyo, (2017) highlighted the role of Mind Mapping in fostering creativity and engagement in the writing process. This result resonates with these claims, as observed in the enhanced enthusiasm and engagement levels during the writing process by applying Mind Mapping sessions. The visually stimulating nature of Mind Mapping potentially mitigated the observed lack of enthusiasm in conventional writing lessons, leading to a more participatory learning experience.

Mind Mapping's adaptability to various subjects and its versatility, as discussed by Fadhilawati, (2013) position it as an adaptable instructional tool. This study specifically applies Mind Mapping to the domain of personal recount writing, showcasing its versatility and suggesting that it can be tailored to address specific language learning objectives. This study builds upon the foundations laid by previous research, reinforcing the notion that Mind Mapping is not a one-size-fits-all solution but rather a flexible and effective tool that can be strategically employed to enhance specific language skills. In summary, the success of Mind Mapping in improving students' recount writing skills can be attributed to its alignment with cognitive processes, its ability to address specific writing challenges, and its adaptability to engage students creatively. The findings from this study contribute to the ongoing discourse on innovative pedagogical approaches, emphasizing the practical application of Mind Mapping in improving language proficiency, particularly in writing skills.

4. Conclusion

The findings of the Classroom Action Research (CAR) conducted with eighth-grade students at SMP Al Kamal Wonodadi Blitar, demonstrating the significant improvement in personal recount text writing abilities through the use of mind mapping, hold important implications for both educators and curriculum developers. It is recommended that educators integrate mind-mapping techniques into their writing instruction strategies, fostering a more dynamic and engaging learning environment that supports students in mastering key aspects of writing, such as grammar, vocabulary, idea development, text structure, and mechanics. Additionally, it is suggested that schools consider providing professional development opportunities for teachers to enhance their proficiency in utilizing mind mapping effectively. Furthermore, curriculum developers may consider incorporating mind mapping as a formal component of the writing curriculum, recognizing its potential to improve students' writing skills and overall academic performance. This research underscores the value of innovative teaching methods and their potential to empower students with the essential skills needed for effective communication and expression in modern education.

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