

THE USE OF CLUSTERING TECHNIQUE TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' WRITING ABILITY IN RECOUNT TEXT AT GRADE X SMAN 2 SUNGAI LALA

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to find out whether the use of clustering technique can improve students' writing ability in recount text at Grade X SMAN 2 Sungai Lala. This study employed Classroom Action Research (CAR) design conducted in two cycles. The subjects were 30 students of Grade X at SMAN 2 Sungai Lala. Data were collected through writing tests, observation sheets, and field notes. The results showed that the use of clustering technique significantly improved students' writing ability in recount text. The mean score in the pre-test was 58.3, which increased to 71.6 in Cycle I and 80.4 in Cycle II. The percentage of students passing the KKM (75) also increased from 20% in the pre-test to 46.67% in Cycle I and 80% in Cycle II. These findings indicate that clustering technique is an effective pre-writing strategy that helps students generate and organize their ideas, thereby improving the quality of their recount texts in terms of content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics.

Keywords: *Clustering Technique, Writing Ability, Recount Text, Classroom Action Research, Senior High School*

INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the four language skills that plays an important role in English language learning. Through writing, students are able to express their ideas, feelings, and thoughts in written form. Writing is considered as one of the most complex skills because it involves not only the knowledge of language components such as vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics, but also the ability to organize and present ideas in a clear and coherent manner (Harmer, 2004). The introduction aims at introducing the reasons for writing an issue. It introduces the issue to the readers, gives a related literature overview of the same, and identifies your hypothesis, research, or study. The manuscript should be organized and identifies the issue to the readers.

Recount text is one of the text types taught at the Senior High School level based on the Indonesian curriculum. A recount text retells past events or experiences for the purpose of informing or entertaining the readers. Its generic structure includes orientation, events, and re-orientation. However, many students still face difficulties in writing recount text, especially in generating ideas and organizing them into a well-structured paragraph.

Based on the preliminary observation conducted at SMAN 2 Sungai Lala, Grade X students had difficulties in writing recount text. The students' mean score in writing was below the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM) of 75. Most students complained that they did not know how to start writing, had limited vocabulary, and could not organize their ideas well. This situation demands the teacher to apply an appropriate and innovative technique in teaching writing.

Clustering technique is a pre-writing strategy that helps students generate and organize ideas before writing. Clustering technique, also known as mind mapping or webbing, involves writing a key word or phrase in the center of a page and then drawing lines to related ideas, creating a visual web of associations (Rico, 1983). This technique allows students to explore their ideas freely without worrying about grammar or spelling initially, which can reduce writing anxiety and stimulate creative thinking.

Based on the background above, this Classroom Action Research (CAR) was conducted to investigate whether clustering technique can improve students' writing ability in recount text at Grade X SMAN 2 Sungai Lala. The research questions are: (1) Can clustering technique improve students' writing ability in recount text at Grade X SMAN 2 Sungai Lala? (2) How is the improvement of students' writing ability after being taught using clustering technique?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Writing Ability

Writing is a productive language skill that requires the writer to communicate ideas, information, or feelings in written form. According to Harmer (2004), writing involves several stages: planning, drafting, editing, and producing

a final version. Writing ability refers to the competence of a person to express ideas clearly and effectively in written form using proper language components.

In the context of EFL teaching, writing ability is often assessed based on five components: content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics (Jacobs et al., 1981). Content refers to the relevance and development of ideas. Organization refers to the logical sequencing and coherence of ideas. Vocabulary refers to the range and accuracy of word choice. Language use refers to grammatical accuracy and sentence structure. Mechanics refers to the use of punctuation, spelling, and capitalization.

Recount Text

Recount text is a type of text that retells past events or experiences for the purpose of informing or entertaining the audience. According to Anderson and Anderson (1997), recount text has three generic structures: (1) orientation, which provides background information about who, what, where, and when; (2) events, which describes a series of events in chronological order; and (3) re-orientation, which provides a closing statement or personal comment.

The language features of recount text include the use of simple past tense, specific participants, action verbs, and time connectives such as first, then, next, after that, and finally. Recount text is commonly taught at Senior High School because it relates to students' personal experiences, making it a suitable text type for developing writing ability.

Clustering Technique

Clustering technique is a pre-writing strategy developed by Gabriele Rico (1983). The technique begins with writing a nucleus word or phrase in the center of a blank page, and then drawing lines to connect related words, phrases, or ideas. The result is a visual cluster or web of associations that can serve as an outline for writing.

According to Rico (1983), clustering technique activates both the left brain (logical, sequential thinking) and the right brain (creative, associative thinking), allowing writers to access a wider range of ideas and make unexpected connections. Mlynarczyk and Haber (2005) noted several advantages: it encourages

brainstorming, helps students discover what they know about a topic, reduces writing anxiety, promotes creativity, and helps plan and organize writing.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research used Classroom Action Research (CAR) design following Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), which consists of four stages in each cycle: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. The research was conducted in two cycles at SMAN 2 Sungai Lala, Indragiri Hulu Regency, Riau Province.

The subjects of this research were 30 students of Grade X IPA 1 at SMAN 2 Sungai Lala in the academic year 2025/2026. This class was selected because the students had the lowest mean score in writing based on the preliminary observation and interview with the English teacher.

The instruments used were: (1) writing test, to measure students' writing ability in recount text; (2) observation sheet, to observe the teaching and learning process; and (3) field notes, to record important events during the research. The writing test was scored using an analytical scoring rubric adapted from Jacobs et al. (1981) covering five components: content (30 points), organization (20 points), vocabulary (20 points), language use (25 points), and mechanics (5 points).

Data analysis was conducted both quantitatively and qualitatively. Quantitative data were analyzed by calculating the mean score and the percentage of students who passed the KKM (75). Qualitative data from observation sheets and field notes were analyzed descriptively. The success criterion was when at least 75% of students achieved the KKM score of 75.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

This part explains the rationale for the application of specific procedures (population, and sample), data collection technique (research instrument), and data analysis technique.

Pre-Test Results

Before implementing the clustering technique, a pre-test was administered to measure students' initial writing ability. The results showed a mean score of 58.3, with only 6 students (20%) passing the KKM of 75. Most students had difficulties in generating ideas, organizing their writing, and using proper vocabulary and grammar. These results confirmed the need for an intervention to improve students' writing ability.

Cycle I Results

In Cycle I, the clustering technique was introduced. The researcher demonstrated how to create a cluster map using a key word related to a past experience. Students then created their own cluster maps before writing recount texts on topics such as 'My Unforgettable Holiday' and 'My First Day at School'. The mean score increased to 71.6, and 14 students (46.67%) passed the KKM. Although improvement was observed, some students still had difficulties in developing cluster maps and organizing coherent paragraphs.

Cycle II Results

In Cycle II, improvements were made based on reflection from Cycle I. The researcher provided more explicit modeling, additional vocabulary support, and structured feedback. Topics in Cycle II included 'A Memorable Trip' and 'An Interesting Event I Attended'. The mean score increased significantly to 80.4, and 24 students (80%) passed the KKM, exceeding the success criterion of 75%.

Table 1. Summary of Students' Writing Score Improvement

Assessment	Mean Score	Students Passed KKM	Percentage (%)
Pre-Test	58.3	6 students	20%
Cycle I	71.6	14 students	46.67%
Cycle II	80.4	24 students	80%

Note: KKM = Minimum Mastery Criterion (75)

Discussion

The progressive improvement from pre-test to Cycle II demonstrates the positive impact of clustering technique on students' writing performance. The technique helped students overcome writer's block by providing a structured way

to brainstorm before writing. The visual representation of ideas helped students see relationships between concepts and select relevant ones. The cluster map also served as a pre-writing plan that resulted in more structured and coherent recount texts.

These findings are consistent with previous studies. Fatimah and Santiana (2017) found that clustering technique significantly improved students' writing ability in recount text at a Senior High School in West Java. Koçak and Öz (2017) reported similar results in a Turkish EFL context, where clustering technique helped students generate more ideas and write longer, more coherent texts. The consistency across different contexts suggests that clustering technique is a robust strategy for teaching writing.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that the use of clustering technique can improve students' writing ability in recount text at Grade X SMAN 2 Sungai Lala. The mean score improved from 58.3 in the pre-test to 71.6 in Cycle I and 80.4 in Cycle II. The percentage of students passing the KKM also increased from 20% in the pre-test to 46.67% in Cycle I and 80% in Cycle II, exceeding the success criterion of 75%.

The article is not only to summarize the research should report to them after they have read the research problem, but also to synthesize the key points and, if applicable, where the author recommends new areas for future research. This research recommends that clustering technique be implemented in English writing classes, particularly for text types that require students to recall and sequence events. Future researchers may investigate the application of clustering technique for other text types or with larger samples to further validate its effectiveness.

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