

# Implementing Clustering Technique in Teaching Descriptive Writing

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**Abstrak:** Tujuan penelitaian ini adalah untuk mengetahui 1) apakah ada peningkatan yang signifikan pada kemampuan siswa dalam menulis teks deskriptif dengan menggunakan teknik *clustering*, dan 2) kesulitan apa saja yang dihadapi oleh siswa dalam menggunakan teknik *clustering*. Tes yang digunakan adalah tes menulis teks deskriptif dan kuisioner. Metode dalam penelitian ini adalah *One Group Pre-test Post-test Design*. Desain penelitian menggunakan satu kelas sebagai kelas eksperimen yang mendapatkan dua kali perlakuan menggunakan teknik *Clustering*. Sampel yang digunakan adalah 25 siswa/i kelas VIII K SMPN 22 Bandar Lampung. Data penelitian dikumpulkan melalui *pre-test*, *post-test* dan kuisioner. Data dianalisis dari hasil *pre-test*, *post-test*, dan kuisioner menggunakan SPSS 16.0. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terdapat perbedaan yang signifikan secara statistik antara *pre-test* dan *post-test* setelah penerapan teknik *clustering* dengan nilai signifikansi 0.05. Selanjutnya, kebanyakan siswa mengalami kesulitan dalam penggunaan kata sifat dan mengembangkan topik utama pada saat menggunakan teknik *clustering* untuk menulis paragraf deskriptifnya. Hal ini menunjukkan bahwa teknik *clustering* memfasilitasi siswa untuk meningkatkan kemampuan menulis mereka.

**Abstract:** The aims of this study were to investigate 1) if there was a statistically significant increase of the students' ability in writing descriptive paragraphs by using clustering technique, and 2) the difficulties the students encountered in using the clustering technique. The writing test and questionnaires were used to collect the data. The design is One Group Pre-test Post-test. The research used one class, as the experimental class which received two times treatments of clustering technique. The subjects were 25 students at the second grade of SMPN 22 Bandar Lampung in VIII K. The data were collected by administering the pre-test, the post-test, and questionnaires. The data were analyzed from the result of the pre-test and the post-test by using SPSS 16.0. The result showed that there was a statistically significant increase of writing ability between the pre-test and the post-test after the implementing clustering technique with the significant level 0.05. Furthermore, the students most found it difficult to identify adjective and to develop the main idea in clustering the the topic for their descriptive writing. This suggests that clustering technique facilitates the students to improve their writing.

**Keywords:** clustering technique, descriptive, writing.

## INTRODUCTION

Writing skill is the one skill which has to be mastered by students. Writing is a means of communication, to convey message, ideas, and feeling in a written form. Raimes (1983: 76) states that writing is a skill in which we express ideas, feeling and thought which is to be arranged in words, sentences and paragraph. According to Harris (1979: 68-89) there are five aspects of writing skills needed to be taken into serious attention. Writing is a very complex language skill to study because there are many components to be mastered by the students, such as content, grammar, vocabulary, organization and mechanic.

Writing is the most difficult language skills because it is also considered as the most complicated language skill to be learned, compared to other language skills. Byrne (1988:4) says that writing is difficult for most people both in mother tongue and in foreign language. In writing process, learners always deal with the process of arranging words into sentences and the putting sentences into paragraph until they can create a piece of written text. Learners also have a difficulty when they want to convert their ideas into a text. Since it is believed as the last skills of the language that is learned, a good writing skill can be an indicator of successful language learning. Therefore, improving learners' writing skills is important in teaching English.

Considering the problem above, this study proposes Clustering Technique to be one of the techniques that can be used to improve students' descriptive writing ability. Clustering is the way to classify the ideas and share into a piece of paper by making the connection with the core of the idea. This idea is supported by (DePorter and Hernacki, 1999:181) who confirms that this technique is a creative activity because when creating a clustering, the learners try to find things related to the topic using a visual scheme or chart and helps the learners understand the relationships among the parts of broad topic and develop subtopic.

Clustering requires a brief period of initial planning. Meanwhile, Oshima and Hogue (1999:8) say that clustering is brainstorming activity that can be used to generate the ideas. Buscemi (2002:14) says that clustering is a good way to turn a broad subject into a limited and more manageable topic for a short essay. Also called *mapping*, and *diagramming*, it is another effective way to gather information for an essay.

This research was conducted to find out the improvement of students' ability in writing descriptive text by using Clustering Technique and also to find out the difficulties faced by the most students in using Clustering Technique for their descriptive writing. The sample of this research was at the Second Grade of SMP N 22 Bandar Lampung, especially VIII K class.

## METHOD

This research used One Group Pre-test Post-test. The subjects of this research were 25 students of VIII K at SMPN 22 Bandar Lampung in 2017/2018 academic year.. This research was conducted in four meetings. The first meeting was for pre-test. The second and third meetings were for the treatment. The last meeting was for post-test and questionnaires. To collect the data, the researcher used writing test and questionnaires as the instruments. This research also provided content and construct validity, also inter-rater reliability to measure the consistency of test. Students' writing was scored from their writing test by two raters in terms of five aspects of writing by Jacob et al (1981) which concerns of

the five aspects of writing; content, organization, vocabulary, grammar and mechanic. The difficulty faced by most of the students were known from the analysis of the questionnaires. The questionnaires were analyzed based on the five aspects of writing (Jacob et al, 1981) and the steps of clustering (Blanchard and Root, 2003:42).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the pre-test and the post-test implied that clustering technique increased the students' writing ability. This can be seen from the mean score of the pre-test and the post-test which improved from 68.68 up to 84.28.

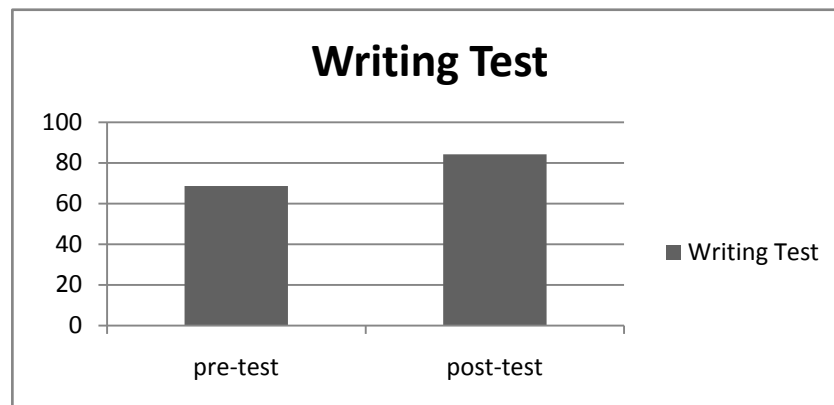


Figure 1. The Improvement of Students' Score Writing test

In addition, the result of *Paired Sample T-test* shows that the alpha level is 0.00. Therefore, it can be stated that the alpha level is lower than 0.05 ( $0.00 < 0.05$ ). In addition, it can also be seen that  $T_{\text{-count}}$  is 10.917 and  $T_{\text{-table}}$  is 2.030. In brief, it can be said that  $T_{\text{-count}}$  is higher than  $T_{\text{-table}}$  ( $10.917 > 2.030$ ). After all, it can be concluded that there is a significant improvement of the students' writing ability after being taught using clustering technique.

Futhemoe, the improvement of each aspects of writing is presented in the table below.

Table 1. Improvement of the Students' Achievement in Writing Descriptive Texts

Aspect of Writing	Pre-test Score (PrS)	Post-test Score (PoS)	Maximum Score (Ms)	Aspects Improvement (PoS – PrS)	Improvement $(25/Ms) \times (PoS - PrS)$
Content	21.82	26.46	30	5.64	4.7
Organization	14.90	18.02	20	3.12	3.9
Vocabulary	14.22	17.38	20	3.16	3.95
Language Use	14.06	18.46	25	4.46	4.46
Mechanic	3.68	3.96	5	0.28	1.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>68.68</b>	<b>84.28</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>16.66</b>	<b>18.41</b>

The first aspect that improved was content. According to Table 1, the score increased 21.82 up to 26.46. It was the highest improvement in this research. This result has proved what has been said by (DePorter and Hernacki, 1999:181) that clustering is a creative activity because when creating a clustering, the learners try to find things related to the

topic using a visual scheme or chart. This technique helps the learners understand the relationships among the parts of broad topic and develop subtopic.

The second improvement occurred in organization. It can be seen from Table 1. The table showed the score was improved from 14.9 up to 18.02. This result confirmed the result of previous study by Inal (2014) who has found that this technique encouraged the students to think creatively since they can group the words, link the ideas generated, and expand the topic.

The third aspect that improved was vocabulary. It can be seen from Table 1. The table showed the score improved from 14.22 up to 17.38. This finding was still in line with those of Hapsari (2013) who has found that this technique can increase students' achievement of vocabulary of real object, sport, and occupation.

The fourth improvement occurred in language use aspect. It can be seen from Table 1. The table showed that the score was 14.06 up to 18.46. This result has proved what Sugiarti (2012) found that clustering technique was effectively increase students' writing ability.

The last improvement came from mechanic aspect. From Table 1 above, the score improved from 3.68 up to 3.96. This still in line with Alawi (2011) who has found that improvement of the students' ability in writing descriptive texts after being taught by using clustering technique. It was the lowest improvement in this research since the students already understand how to put the punctuation and capitalization properly. They only bad in handwriting because some of their handwriting really hard to read.

The results of the questionnaires can be seen from the table below:

**Table 2. The Distribution of Questionnaires**

No	Questions	Yes	No
1.	Apakah Anda merasa kesulitan dalam mengembangkan ide pokok untuk tulisan deskriptif? ( <i>Do you faced the difficulty in developing the main idea for your descriptive witing?</i> )	12	13
2.	Apakah Anda mengalami kesulitan untuk menentukan kosakata yang akan digunakan dalam menulis? ( <i>Do you faced the difficulty in vocabulary while you are writing</i> )	11	14
3.	Apakah Anda masih bingung bagaimana menggunakan kata ganti ( <i>she,he,it</i> )? ( <i>Are you still confuse in using pronoun?</i> )	9	16
4.	Apakah Anda mengalami kesulitan dalam menentukan penggunaan kata sifat ( <i>adjective</i> ) dalam menulis paragraf deskriptif? ( <i>Do you faced the difficuty in using adjective while you are writing?</i> )	19	6
5.	Menurut Anda, sulitkah menggunakan <i>Present Tense</i> dalam menulis paragraf deskripsi ini? ( <i>In your opinion, is it difficult to use Present Tense in writing descriptive texts?</i> )	5	20
6.	Menurut Anda, penggunaan <i>Clustering Technique</i> sangat membantu Anda dalam membuat deskriptif paragraf atau tidak? ( <i>In your opinion, do Clustering Technique help you to write descriptive paragraph?</i> )	15	10
7.	Diantara tahapan-tahapan penggunaan <i>Clustering Technique</i> , tahapan mana yang Anda rasa sulit: ( <i>Which steps of Clustering Technique is difficult for you?</i> ): a. Menentukan topik yang hendak Anda kembangkan. ( <i>Determine the topic</i> ) b. Mengembangkan topik menjadi beberapa topik pendukung. ( <i>Developing the main topic into the next sub-topics</i> ). c. Menyatukan topik utama dan topik pendukung agar menjadi kalimat yang padu untuk paragraf deskriptif Anda. ( <i>Linking the main topic with sub-topics into a good sentence</i> )	18	7

	d. Setelah mendapat topik pendukung, sulitkah Anda untuk mengembangkannya menjadi beberapa topik selanjutnya? ( <i>Is it difficult to develop sub-topic into sub-subtopic?</i> )		
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For question 1 there are 12 students who answered “Yes” and 13 students answered “No”. It means that almost all of the students did not get the difficulty to develop the topic for their descriptive text.

For question 2 there are 11 students who answered “Yes” and 14 students answered “No”. It means that all of them had a good vocabulary for their writing and they did not feel difficult to use it.

For question 3, 9 students answered “Yes” and 16 answered “No”. It means that they did not face the difficulty in using pronoun for their writing.

Meanwhile for question 4, 19 students who answered “Yes” and 6 students answered “No”. It means that they were faced the difficulties in using adjective for their writing. Some of them stated that they were still do not understand how to use adjective properly in a sentence. While the other said that they did not know what are the adjectives is. And this was the difficulty faced by the most students for their writing skill.

Next, in question 5 there are 5 students who answered “Yes” and 20 answered “No”. This indicated that they were easy to use the simple present tense in their descriptive writing. One of them stated that the simple present tense was the easiest tense among the other tenses they already know.

In question 6, 15 students who answered “Yes” and 10 answered “No”. This indicate that clustering technique really helped them to write their descriptive text.

The last question there are 4 choices which are related to the difficulties faced by the most students in using clustering technique. There are 18 students who answered option “b”. It means that they were still difficult to develop the main topic into the next sub-topics. One of their reason was they were still confused to choose the sub-topics which were related to their main topic.

The results of the questionnaires was still in line with Alawi (2011) who has found that most of the students faced the difficulty in using adjective properly for their writing in terms of aspects of writing; especially language use. While the difficulty in using clustering technique, he found that the students faced the difficulty about developing their main topic into the next sub-topics for their descriptive writing.

## CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

### Conclusions

The students’ ability in writing descriptive paragraph will improve if the teacher applies Clustering Technique in teaching writing. Consider to the conclusion, this study showed the mean score of the pre-test and post-test; they are (66.68) up to (84.28). Thus, this technique also improved all aspects of descriptive paragraph writing in terms of vocabulary, grammar, and mechanic.

The difficulty faced by the most students in aspects of writing was using adjective for descriptive text which belongs to language use aspect. There are some reasons from them. Some of them said that they did not understand how to use adjective properly. While the other thought that it was difficult to use adjective in a sentence because their teacher did not explain them briefly about it.

Then, the difficulty faced by the most students in case of using clustering technique was they are still difficult to develop the main topic into the next sub –topics. This happened because they had minimum information about their topic. Therefore, the researcher advised them to read more books or e-books and also they should getting more information from TV, newspaper or internet. So that, their knowledge about everything will increase.

### Suggestions

Some suggestions are provided for the teachers and further research. English teachers are suggested :(a) to use clustering technique as a technique that can be used to improve students descriptive writing ability. (b) Based on the difficulty faced by the most students, to make the students familiar with clustering technique, the teacher should be consistent to develop the route of the sub-topics. English teacher may start the subtopics from the right to the left or on the contrary. So that, the students will be easier to develop their topic into the next sub-topics and connect them into a good sentence for their descriptive text.

There are also some suggestions for further research. Further research needs suggested to: (a) apply this technique to another kind of text, e.g. procedure, analytical exposition, or transactional text. Also, another English skills; reading, speaking, and may be listening can be use to apply this technique.(b) Further research can apply this technique in different levels, for example in kinder garden, elementary school or senior high school. (c) Future research should be more attention with the steps of clustering technique espically the route nex sub-topics. Thus, in doing the research and treating the students, the steps of developing the main idea will be more structured.

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