

Enhancing Students' Writing Ability Using Clustering Methodology

Cucu Mida Sari¹, Hajjah Zulianti², Tommy Hastomo³

STKIP PGRI Bandar Lampung, Bandar Lampung, Indonesia

Correspondence Author: tomhas182@gmail.com

Received: 18 July 2023

Accepted: 16 August 2023

Published: 12 September 2023

Abstract

The clustering technique is a technique that aims to change a broad subject into a limited topic in order that it is easier to develop in writing short texts or essays. According to the researchers' observation, it is evident that the student's writing ability needs improvement to master English proficiency. This research aims to improve students' writing skills and students' learning activities at SMP Negeri 15 Bandar Lampung by using the Clustering technique. The participants of this research were the eighth grade students. The total numbers of students were 33 students. Employing classroom action research, this study was carried out for two cycles. The findings show the clustering technique can make the classroom environment more engaging and enjoyable in order to improve students' learning activities. This statement was supported by the improvement in the findings of students' learning activities in cycle 1 (6.53) and cycle 2 (7.50). Nonetheless, the clustering technique can help students learn English more effectively, especially in writing. It is supported by comparing the writing exam's mean scores from cycles 1 and 2. Cycle 1 mean score was 64.81 and the mean score for cycle 2 was 77.39. From the data shown, it could be concluded that classroom action research using the Clustering technique can improve students' learning activities and writing skills. The research findings indicate that the application of clustering techniques can lead to increased learning activities and writing skills for students thereby serving as a valuable tool for educators to improve students' writing skills and the learning experience.

Keywords: Action Research, Clustering Technique, Students' Writing Skill

Introduction

English is a subject included in Junior High School. According to Nur & Madkur (2014: 122), teaching and learning English aims to achieve communicative and meaningfulness functions. Students must be able to grasp and produce language

to accomplish this goal. Writing is one of the four language skills that must be learned to communicate with others.

Writing is an essential skill for students learning English to develop. The act of putting ideas or thoughts into legible language is referred to as writing. Writing is a crucial skill for students since it allows them to demonstrate, articulate, and write about what they know, circumstances, thinking, and views. Writing may be simple and joyful as long as they have the motivation and resources to do it. Students accustomed to writing regularly can get high critical thinking performance (Quitadamo & Kurtz, 2007: 142).

Based on preliminary research, students' writing skills can be deemed unsatisfactory. There are still a lot of students that have trouble writing. Most students have trouble finding suitable words to employ. They also have difficulties developing their ideas based on the themes provided by the teacher because they do not have sufficient vocabulary knowledge and do not master grammar rules properly (Alisha et al., 2019: 23-24). Another problem is related to the techniques and activities of teaching writing, which sometimes do not follow students' learning needs. The method used is usually monotonous, and students are less motivated to participate in the learning process because there are no fun activities while the manner of teaching and the technique's confined use in learning to write in English.

Furthermore, most students could not participate in classroom action, which limited their involvement throughout the teaching-learning process. It makes students look so bored to attend writing lessons. As it relates to this situation, the teacher's role is crucial in motivating students to write by developing a variety of attractive and familiar writing tasks with recognizable topics. This situation is critical to creating a positive motivation for the learners (Alisha et al., 2019: 76).

To motivate students to write, several techniques can help students write carefully. One of them is the clustering technique. The clustering technique effectively creates a picture map of ideas, allowing students to think creatively. It is supported by Langan (2011: 28), who states that the clustering technique is another method that students might use to produce topics for their research papers. This method is similar to a brainstorming session. It is consistent with Baroudy (2008: 7), who said that Clustering is defined as a nonlinear brainstorming procedure for generating thoughts, pictures, also feelings within a stimulus word until a pattern emerges. Students who prefer to think visually may find the clustering valuable technique since it allows them to utilize their ideas to develop in paragraph writing. In this situation, students can organize their thoughts before turning them into a paragraph using the clustering technique. Additionally, employing the Clustering technique to teach writing

can inspire others to start writing. This technique allows students to explore their thoughts before writing a paragraph in a fun and challenging environment.

The researchers applied the Clustering technique for the present research because it can influence the English learning process, notably in the writing element. Furthermore, this study has various research objectives. 1) To determine whether employing the Clustering Technique at SMPN 15 Bandar Lampung in the eighth grade in 2022/2023 improves students' learning activities, particularly in writing. 2) To determine whether applying the Clustering Technique to the eighth grade of SMPN 15 Bandar Lampung in 2022/2023 may enhance students' writing skills.

Methods

This current study used the Clustering technique to enhance students' writing skills. Classroom Action Research (CAR) was used in this research. Meanwhile, the Clustering technique is used in this study to improve students' writing skills. Classroom Action Research, a study method used in a classroom by teachers through self-reflection, aims to enhance teachers' performance to enhance students' learning activities. According to Elliot (1991), cited in Burns (2010: 5), Classroom Action Research is research about the social condition to increase the quality of action through planning, action, observation and reflection. Therefore, it follows that classroom action research is a technique utilized to enhance the effectiveness of teaching and learning by putting some processes into practice, such as planning, taking action, observing, and reflecting.

Participants

The study was carried out at SMP Negeri 15 in Bandar Lampung. It is situated in Kota Bandar Lampung, Provinsi Lampung, at Jl. Banten No. 18 Teluk Betung Barat. Telp (0721) 489627. The study was carried out during the 2022/2023 second semester. The study's participants are eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 15 Bandar Lampung in the second semester of 2022/2023. The total number of students, including male and female students, is 33.

Instruments

The researchers use tests and non-tests for research instruments in this current study. The test is employed for collecting data from students' writing abilities. Grammar, punctuation, vocabulary, organization, and content are scoring rubrics for grading students' writing ability. The researchers asked the students to write a recount text based on the material they had studied in the action research. This writing test is an instrument for collecting data to improve students' writing ability. Meanwhile, this current study utilized documentation,

field notes, and observation sheet for collecting data for students' learning activities.

Data analysis

This current study collected qualitative data and quantitative data before conducting data analysis. The researchers employed mean statistical formula for analyzing quantitative data and utilized a qualitative method for analyzing qualitative data. This present research used both ways to determine whether the students need another cycle. If there are no improvements in students learning activity and writing ability, the researchers will utilize another cycle because CAR is the research design in this current study.

Results

The Improvement of Students' Learning Activities

Poor participation on the part of the students was evident in their responses to the teacher's questions, as evidenced by their mean student score of 6.58. Their poor participation in asking questions about the material they were given was indicated by their mean student score of 6.42. The students poorly completed individual assignments due to their lack of engagement. The mean student score, which was 6.48, revealed this case. Poor student engagement in the assignment (group) was evident based on the mean student score (6.52). The students made a poor effort to find learning resources based on the mean student score (6.64).

The students showed good initiative in responding to the teacher's inquiry. It was evident from the student's 7.55 mean score, which was the result. It was a good sign that the students were actively asking questions regarding the topic. It was evident from the student's mean score, which was 7.52. Individual assignments were completed with good student engagement. The mean student score, which was 7.52, revealed this case. It was fair how involved the students were in their group's assignment. The mean student score of 7.42 indicated this situation, as can be seen from the results. Finding resources for learning was good pursued by the students. The mean student score, which was 7.52, revealed this.

The first objective is that the Clustering technique improves students' learning activities. Students put a lot of effort into finishing their writing tasks throughout instruction and learning. They showed an interest in taking part in the lesson being taught. Furthermore, the students wanted to be involved in classroom activities. They followed the instruction effectively and enjoyed the lesson after conducting two research cycles and doing exciting learning activities

through the Clustering technique. Finally, the learning activities for students can be enhanced.

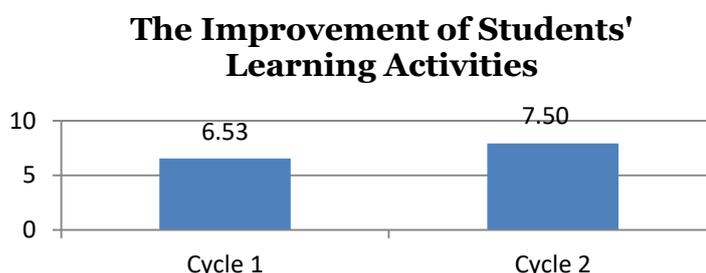


Figure 1. The Improvement of Students' Learning Activities

The results of the observation sheet can be utilized to show the first hypothesis. Cycle 2 student learning activities had a mean score higher than cycle one students' learning activities. It improved from 6.53 to 7.50. The observation sheet's findings led the researchers to conclude that students' learning activities improved, moving from the "poor" category to "good." Figure 1 above shows how the students' learning activities have improved.

The Improvement of Students' Writing Ability

Cycle 1 of the writing test was administered on April 5, 2023. After obtaining the writing exam results, the writer analyzed the mean score and the percentage of students' learning that satisfied the Minimum Mastery Criteria (70).

Table 1. Analysis of Writing Test Cycle 1 Score

No	Indicator	Total Students	Completeness (%)	Information
1	≥70	16	48.48%	Complete
2	<70	17	51.52%	Incomplete
Total		33	100%	100%

The results of the data writing test from the first cycle result showed a mean score for the cycle one writing test was 64.81. 48.48% of the students, or 16, scored above the Minimum Mastery Criteria. In the meantime, 17 students, or 51.52%, failed to meet the Minimum Mastery Criteria's target score. Therefore, it was concluded the category of students' scores from writing tests in cycle one at SMP Negeri 15 Bandar Lampung was poor. Table 1 above shows the results of the students' cycle one writing scores.

Cycle 2 of the writing test was administered on May 19, 2023. After obtaining the writing exam results, the writer analyzed the mean score and the percentage of students' learning that satisfied the Minimum Mastery Criteria (70).

Table 2. Analysis of Writing Test Cycle 2 Scores

No	Indicator	Total Students	Completeness (%)	Information
1	≥ 70	27	81.82%	Complete
2	< 70	6	18.18%	Incomplete
Total		33	100%	100%

The second cycle's data writing test showed a mean score of 77.39. A score above the Minimum Mastery Criteria was achieved by 27 students, representing 81.82% of the class. In the meantime, six students, or 18.18%, failed to meet the Minimum Mastery Criteria's target score. As a result, it was determined that the category of students' writing test scores at SMP Negeri 15 Bandar Lampung in cycle 2 was good. The result of students' writing scores for cycle two can be seen in Table 2 above.

From cycle one to cycle two, it is evident from the data above that students' writing skills had improved. The researchers used just two cycles in this study. It occurred as a result of the fact that more than 75% of students in cycle 2 achieved the Minimum Mastery Criteria. It has fulfilled the requirements. Thus, it can be stated that the clustering technique's deployment at SMP Negeri 15 Bandar Lampung in 2022/2023 improved students' writing skills.

The second research goal was to determine whether the Clustering technique can improve students' writing skills. During the writing process, students seemed bored at first because their motivation for writing was low. They also had problems in generating their idea, grammar, and vocab. However, the researchers improved their writing by implementing the Clustering technique after passing specific steps of the Clustering technique and doing certain writing activities. Finally, students' writing skills can improve.

The writing test results can be utilized to show the second hypothesis. In cycle 2, the mean writing test score was more significant than the mean writing test score in cycle one. It became better, going from 64.81 to 77.39. In total, 16 students, or 48.48% of the class, in cycle 1 met the minimum criterion of 70; in cycle 2, 27 students, or 81.82% of the class, met the Minimum Mastery Criteria of 70. As a result, the student's writing skills in this study increased from cycle 1 to cycle 2.

Based on the facts above, the researchers decided to stop in cycle two because the criterion had been achieved. There were more than 75% of students who got grades more than ≥ 70 . Therefore, this research is sufficiently good and can be deemed successful.

Discussion

The Improvement of Students' Learning Activities Using Clustering Technique

Based on preliminary research conducted at SMP Negeri 15 Bandar Lampung, the lack of engaging activities during teaching and learning decreased the students' motivation to participate in the writing process. In learning activities, the teacher never applied the clustering technique. Without providing feedback on the student's work, she just instructed them to complete a particular text and turn it in. Additionally, most students could not participate in class activities, reducing their involvement in teaching and learning. They are so disinterested in writing learning.

As a result, the teacher's engagement is critical in promoting students' enthusiasm to write through designing engaging learning activities. It is essential for instilling good motivation in the students. Without strong motivation, students will be challenged to do writing activities (Aryanika, 2016: 217). The researchers concluded that the teacher should use an appropriate teaching technique to improve students' learning activities. To enhance students' instruction, the researchers applied the Clustering Technique.

The Clustering Technique can decrease laziness and improve students' learning activities, especially in learning writing. They can feel confident and brave to deliver their knowledge. In the clustering technique, students are in charge of their learning. They cooperate to find solutions to issues. The Clustering technique concerns the learning activity based on real-world problems and challenges that require students to work as a team through meaningful activities and result in a final product (Simpson, 2011: 39-40). In addition, Baroudy (2008: 7) said that Clustering is defined as a nonlinear brainstorming procedure for generating thoughts, pictures, and feelings within a stimulus word until a pattern emerges. It enables students to work independently, in small groups, or as a class. Students contribute their thoughts, resources, and skills in the process.

In the first cycle of implementing the Clustering Technique, the students' learning activities did not significantly improve. This finding is in contrast with the finding from Hendrawaty & Ambarwati (2017: 355) which stated that Clustering is another effective technique that students could use to narrow the subject for improvement in students' learning activities. The students can find new things, and they can learn independently. However, this theory did not work in this cycle. In this cycle, some students ignored the teacher's explanations because they were preoccupied with their activities. They were shy to ask and answer questions. Some students were still confused about finishing their tasks and sometimes felt lazy, so they needed more attention from the

researchers. In this part, the researchers employed an approach to the students. This approach was made to assist students in facing their issues in finishing their tasks and make a good relationship between teacher and students.

On the other hand, students' learning activities improved in cycle 2. It improved from the category 'poor' to the class 'good'. At this stage, the students were enthusiastic about doing learning activities. They were also active in finishing their writing task. They showed interest in participating in the lesson and wanted to participate in classroom activities. The teacher just gave instructions, and the students did the activity themselves. This finding is also supported by Zadina & Halter (2003: 13) who stated clustering technique can improve students' writing ability because it enables the students to create stimuli of ideas to start writing. Thus, clustering is a technique that allows them to investigate and ascertain the relationship between ideas.

The eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 15 Bandar Lampung can benefit from using the Clustering Technique to enhance their learning activities, which can be inferred from the previous explanation. It can be shown by looking at how many of the students' learning activities had improved from 6.53 in cycle 1 to 7.50 in cycle 2.

The Improvement of Students' Writing Skills Using Clustering Technique

Based on the preliminary research at SMP Negeri 15 Bandar Lampung, students faced some difficulties in learning writing. First, the students had a problem choosing appropriate vocabulary. A lack of vocabulary makes the students cannot produce writing. Second, they took too much time to generate ideas and organize thoughts onto paper. Third, the students were confused about using the right grammar sentence structure. In this case, an appropriate technique in teaching writing might be a solution for the students to make good achievements in writing (Alisha et al., 2019: 23-24). Therefore, the researchers used Clustering Technique to improve students' writing skills.

The Clustering Technique is an effective way to make a visual map of ideas, allowing students to think creatively. It involves completing complex tasks that produce the ideas and knowledge that spring to mind or presentation to the audience. The teacher gave feedback on students' writing, and they used the feedback to revise and improve their writing. It was supported by Kalandadze (2007: 6), who stated that a technique used to see a picture map of our ideas and able to create us think creatively in making a new association is Clustering. The students could use any combination of arrows, lines, and boxes to help them develop ideas. This statement was supported by Langan (2011: 28), who stated that this technique can facilitate the students in improving students' writing ability. Applying the clustering technique will assist students in

identifying the writing's strengths, errors, and any discrepancies in order that they can revise and enhance it.

The writing process was significantly improved using the Clustering technique for writing lessons. Students that used the Clustering Technique while learning to write seemed more enthusiastic and engaged. It helped students write with clarity. The Clustering Technique also has the potential to involve students in the learning process. The students could reduce apprehension about writing, especially the students who could do communicative context. It is also supported by Lunsford (2010: 57) who stated that Clustering is a prewriting technique writers use to produce ideas using a visual scheme or chart in order that students can think creatively by using a pictorial diagram or scheme to identify ideas connected to the topic when creating the clustering. Therefore, this technique can improve students' writing ability. In addition, Farnia and Sri (2018: 168) stated that students write a subject in the centre of a sheet of paper, then write ideas inspired by the theme throughout it, linking them with lines and subtopics in Clustering activity.

In the first cycle of employing the Clustering Technique to teach writing, vocabulary knowledge was the main problem with the writing process. The majority of students still have trouble mastering vocabulary. They often asked the writer about the difficult word that they wanted to write. For that reason, students should have good vocabulary mastery because it is an essential component of writing. Through the Clustering technique, students can improve their vocabulary mastery, and their writing skills can also improve. This statement is supported by Hayati (2017) who said that the Clustering technique is an appropriate and effective technique for teaching and learning writing. Furthermore, the students also had problems writing with excellent grammatical patterns. They sometimes used the wrong tense. The next is about content, and the students had difficulties developing their writing which consisted of a fantastic range. Besides, the students struggled to create content and were confused about organizing the text. Sometimes they put a random event in the text without coherence. The last is about mechanics, this aspect looked simple, but sometimes students made mistakes in using capital letters and punctuation.

However, in the second cycle, there was a good improvement in students' writing due to implementation of the Clustering Technique. This finding is similar to Megawati (2019), who said that the Clustering technique was an effective technique used to improve the writing skill of the students. In this cycle, the students already dared to use new vocabulary. They started to use new words. Sometimes, they also asked other students to help to find words in writing. The students also improved better than in the first cycle about grammar. They used proper tense in writing their recount text. The content of

their writing also looked good. But they should do more practice day by day in developing their writing. The next is about organization; the students organized the text effectively. It was better than the previous cycle. The last is about mechanics; the students used good punctuation and capital letters. In this cycle, the students were aware of the importance of paying attention to writing components.

It is clear from the explanation above that the eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 15 Bandar Lampung can improve their writing skills by employing the Clustering Technique. It can be demonstrated by looking at the results of students' writing tests—both cycles 1 and 2. The mean student writing test score in cycle 1 was 64.81, while it increased to 77.39 in cycle 2. In cycle 1, 48.48% of students passed the Minimum Mastery Criteria score, which improved to 81.82% in cycle 2.

Conclusion

According to the finding and discussion above, the implementation of clustering technique can improve students' learning activities and writing ability. The clustering technique can make the classroom environment more engaging and enjoyable in order to improve students' learning activities. Students were more engaged, active, passionate, self-assured, and eager to participate in the lesson during the learning process. This statement was supported by the improvement in the findings of students' learning activities in cycle 1 (6.53) and cycle 2 (7.50). Nonetheless, the clustering technique can help students learn English more effectively, especially in writing. It is supported by comparing the writing exam's mean scores from cycles 1 and 2. Cycle 1 mean score was 64.81. The mean score for cycle 2 was 77.39. Therefore, the implementation of clustering technique can improve students' learning activities and writing ability at SMP Negeri 15 Bandar Lampung in 2022/2023 academic year.

The research findings indicate that the application of clustering techniques can lead to increased learning activities and writing skills for students thereby serving as a valuable tool for educators to improve students' writing skills and the learning experience. Furthermore, this research concentrated just on the improvement of students' learning activities and students' writing skills in writing. There are some research recommendations for future studies, such as incorporating additional independent variables, modifying the research design, and expanding the study to include a broader population

References

- Alisha, F., Safitri, N., & Santoso, I. (2019). Students' Difficulties in Writing EFL. *Professional Journal of English Education*, 2(1964), 20–25.

- Aryanika, S. (2016). The Correlation Between the Students' Writing Motivation and the Writing Ability. *English Education: Jurnal Tadris Bahasa Inggris*, 9(1), 215–232. <https://media.neliti.com/media/publications/60527-EN-the-correlation-between-the-students-wri.pdf>
- Baroudy, I. (2008). A Procedural Approach to Process Theory of Writing: Pre-writing Techniques. *The International Journal of Language Society and Culture*, 24, 1–10.
- Burns, A. (2010). Doing action research in english language teaching: A guide for practitioners. In *Doing Action Research in English Language Teaching: A Guide for Practitioners*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203863466>
- Hendrawaty, N., & Ambarwati, N. (2017). Using Clustering Technique Towards Students' Writing Skill in Recount Text. *Deiksis*, 9(03), 359. <https://doi.org/10.30998/deiksis.v9i03.1843>
- Kalandadze, M. (2007). *English Academic Writing*. Budapest Tbilisi: Tbilisi.
- Langan, J. (2011). *College Writing Skills with Readings (eighth edit)*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Lunsford, A. (2010). *The St. Martin's Handbook*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's.
- Megawati. (2019). Clustering as the technique to students' writing skill on STKIP Kusuma Negara. *Inovasi Pendidikan MH Thamrin*, 3(2). [file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/by Megawati Clustering as the technique to students' writing skill on STKIP Kusuma Negara..html](file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/by%20Megawati%20Clustering%20as%20the%20technique%20to%20students'%20writing%20skill%20on%20STKIP%20Kusuma%20Negara..html)
- Novela Hayati. (2017). *The use of clustering technique to improve students achievement in writing recount text at class XI IPA 1 PAB Sampali*. <http://repository.uinsu.ac.id/2672/>
- Nur, M. R., & Madkur, A. (2014). Teachers' Voices on the 2013 Curriculum for English Instructional Activities. *IJEE (Indonesian Journal of English Education)*, 1(2), 119–134. <https://doi.org/10.15408/ijee.v1i2.1340>
- Quitadamo, I. J., & Kurtz, M. J. (2007). Learning to improve: Using writing to increase critical thinking performance in general education biology. In *CBE Life Sciences Education* (Vol. 6, Issue 2, pp. 140–154). <https://doi.org/10.1187/cbe.06-11-0203>
- Sari, Farnia and Wahyuni, S. (2018). The Use Of Clustering Technique to improve The Students' Skill in Writing Descriptive Paragraph. *English Community Journal*, 2(1), 167–174.
- Simpson, J. (2011). *Integrating project-based learning in an English language tourism classroom in a Thai University (Issue May)*.
- Zadina, J. N., & Halter, S. (2003). *Writing Now*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.