

**IMPLEMENTING CLUSTERING TECHNIQUE TO IMPROVE
 STUDENTS' ABILITY IN WRITING PARAGRAPH
 AT JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL 4 SIPIROK**

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini membahas tentang implementasi teknik clustering untuk meningkatkan kemampuan siswa dalam menulis paragraf di SMP Negeri 4 Sipirok. Atas dasar keterbatasan teknik guru bahasa Inggris, minimnya kosa kata yang dikuasai siswa, dan faktor motivasi siswa tersebut di SMP Negeri 4 Sipirok, maka dibutuhkan teknik baru untuk meningkatkan kemampuan menulis paragraf siswa. Oleh karena itu, teknik clustering merupakan ide baru yang sangat menarik untuk diaplikasikan di kelas menulis paragraf terutama dalam mengeluarkan ide-ide siswa dalam menggagas bahasa yang sesuai standar tata bahasa menulis paragraf.

Kata Kunci: *Teknik Clustering, Kemampuan Siswa, dan Menulis Paragraf.*

A. INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the important aspects in the life of human beings. In Indonesia, the realization of national education is aimed at making the Indonesian citizen smart with good personality to improve them by accelerating the development of the country. Besides that, Islam laid a great deal of stress on educational aspect from beginning, because of its importance in the life of human beings. Innovations in English language teaching in Indonesia usually receive considerable attention. One of the innovations is the implementation of new regulation in education.

Another innovation is the issue related with the new curriculum. However, the most prominent one between two innovations is the application of new curriculum in English classroom. The application of the new curriculum is regarded important in English language teaching.

Writing as a process to get product is influenced by some elements such as vocabularies, grammar, organization, spelling, and punctuation. In the second year of Junior High School, the basic competency that should be achieved in the writing English subject is the students have ability to develop and produce written simple

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functional text in the recount text, narrative text, news items, procedures, and descriptive text. They can use right diction, grammar, punctuation, spelling, and organization. However, most of Junior High Students have problem in doing the writing task. They do not know how to start writing. The students cannot generate their ideas, opinions, or thoughts since they are not familiar with vocabularies and structural rules, but also do not understand the rhetoric style the way of delivering message and idea).

As a problem solving, teachers have to find the other ways to improve student's ability in creating an acceptable writing. For instance, strategy, technique, method or approach in teaching process should be changed to more creative one. Based on the above phenomenon, it is certain that the students have lack of skill in writing in which:

1. They cannot generate ideas. They cannot generate ideas in term of generic structure.
2. They cannot use appropriate tense.
3. They did not have much vocabulary which is essential factor in developing paragraph.

One of the useful strategies that will be helpful in generating ideas in writing is clustering. Clustering is a graphic arrangement showing the major ideas and relationships in text or among word meanings.

B. THEORETICAL DESCRIPTION

1. The Nature of Writing

Writing is a skill in organizing statement in order to make consistent with the purpose for which the statement is made. It can be defined that writing ideals with organizing ideas in good order to reach the purpose of writing itself. Writing also can be defined as a tool for communication and it is a most important factor in teaching a language as well. Besides that, writing is the activity of presenting of thought or idea in correct sentences.

Writing activity is regarded as the most complex processes of cognitive involvement.² Writing encourages thinking and learning for it motivates communication and makes thought available for reflection. When thought is written down, ideas can be

²Besral, *Developing Student's Competence in Writing through Pair Collaboration*. (Padang: Unpublished Report, 2006), p. 6.

examined, reconsidered, added to, rearranged, and changed. Writing is most likely to encourage thinking and learning when students view writing as a process.

Writing is the most difficult competence to be achieved in language learning, since it requires the writers to involve higher cognitive competences in which they have to analyze, construct, edit, and revise ideas to produce good and qualified writing. It is a creative process since one is trying to negotiate meanings, influence the readers by offering something, and eliminating readers' misconception through writing. Therefore, to develop students' competent writers, instructor must be able to facilitate learners with conducive learning that expand their views about certain matters, challenge them with extra rewards, and most importantly, show them the right procedures.

Most common process of writing includes planning or drafting, writing, and revising stated by Reid.³ While students write independently, they should share their planning with their pairs and show revisions to the instructor. Some students take benefits from their collaborations; however, others considered it has a hindrance toward their achievement. This phenomenon suggests that instructor should try a new approach and strategy to reveal the problems. It is supported by Nunan says that writing is clearly a complex process, and competent writing is frequently accepted as being the last language skill to be acquired.⁴ Writing is commonly seen as three-stages process; pre-writing, writing and re-writing.

The Instructor or writer should be able to differentiate between process and product in writing activities as Harmer states:

In the teaching of writing we can focus on the product of that writing or on the writing process itself. When concentrating on the product we are only interested in the aim of a 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.⁵

In Addition, Harris states that writing is a complex skill for learners, consequently they find it difficult to express their opinion, feeling, emotion, ideas, and

³Reid, Joy M, *The Process of Composition*, (New Jersey: Prentice Hall. Inc. 1988), p. 68.

⁴David Nunan, *Language Teaching Methodology; A Textbook for Teachers*, (United Kingdom: Prentice Hall International, 1991), p. 91.

⁵Jeremy Harmer, *The Practice of English Language Teaching*, (England: Longman, 2001), p. 257.

estimation as well.⁶ He adds that the writing process has been analyzed in many different ways, most teachers would probably agree in recognizing at least the following five general components in writing, namely: content, form, grammar, style, and mechanics. *Content* is the substance of writing, the ideas expressed. *Form* is the organization of content. *Grammar* is the employment of grammatical forms and syntactic patterns. *Style* is the choice of structures and lexical items to give a particular tone or flavor to the writing. *Mechanics* are the use of the graphic conventions of the language.

In this connection, Harmer stressed that writing is re-writing that revision-seeing with new eyes-has a central role to play in the act of creating text.⁷ In their model, process of writing is an interrelated set of recursive stages that include: drafting (focused on the fluency of writing and are not preoccupied with grammatical accuracy or the neatness of the draft; structuring (ordering information and experimenting with arrangement); reviewing (checking context, connections, assessing impact, and editing); focusing (that is making sure you are getting the message across you want to get across); generating ideas /evaluation (assessing the draft and / or subsequent drafts). white and Arndt's model can be represented diagrammatically below:

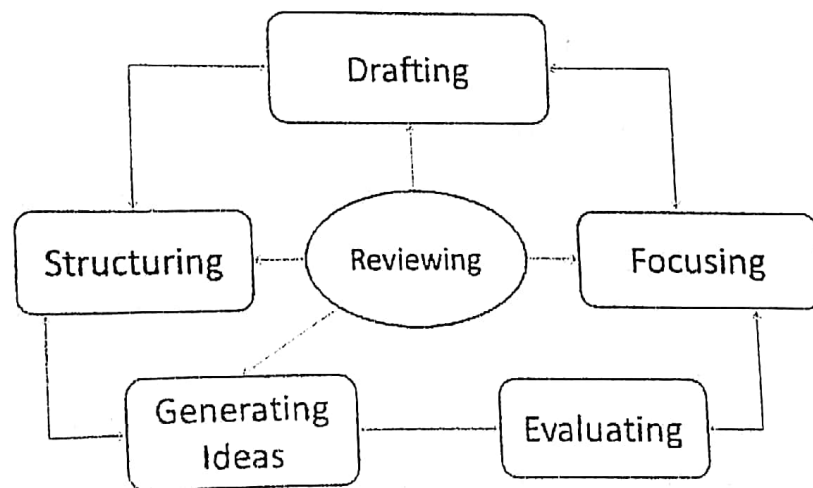


Figure: White and Arndt's Process Writing Model

⁶D. Harris, *Testing English as a Second Language*. (Georgetown University: Mc. Grow Hill Book Company, 1969), p. 68.
⁷*Ibid.*, p. 258-260.

Moreover, Harmer explains that writing is a complex cognitive process that sustained intellectual effort over a considerable period.⁸ They suggest that producing text involves recursive procedures. These procedures can be realized in the classroom in a number of different ways.

In addition, Brown states that there are many categories of writing.⁹ *First*, Content that contains thesis statement; related ideas; development of ideas through personal experience, illustration, and facts opinion; use of description, cause/effect, comparison/contrast; consistent focus. *Second*, organization that involves effectiveness of Introduction; logical sequence of ideas; conclusion; appropriate length. *Third*, discourse that contains topic sentences; paragraph unity; transitions; discourse markers; cohesion; rhetorical conventions; reference; fluency; economy; variation. *The others categories* are syntax, vocabulary, and mechanics (spelling, punctuation, citation of references, neatness and appearance).

Based on the explanation above, it is concluded that writing was the ability to use the structure lexical item and their conventional representations ordinary matter of act language. Besides, through the writing, the students could interact with their ideas and developed them in the writing activities to be a good text. At least, there are five components that should be considered for a good writing such as: Content, Organization, Vocabulary, Language Use, and Mechanic.

2. The Concept of Teaching Writing

To make clear the teaching writing, there are five types of classroom writing performance are guided that govern teacher's behavior. They listed here are one that we believe to be most useful in guiding teachers in planning writing instruction. Brown (1994:343) states as follow¹⁰:

a. *Imitative or Writing Down*

At the beginning level of learning to write, students will simply "write down" English letters, words, and possibly sentences in order to learn the conventions of the orthographic code. Some forms of dictation fall into this

⁸Jeremy Harmer, *How to Teach English: An Introduction to Practice of English Language Teaching*, (London: Longman, 1998), p. 73.

⁹H. Douglas Brown, *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy*, (San Francisco: San Francisco State University, 1994), p. 357.

¹⁰Op.cit p.343

category, although dictations can serve to teach and test higher-order processing as well.

b. Intensive or Controlled

Writing is used as a production mode for learning, reinforcing or testing grammatical concepts. This intensive writing typically appears in controlled, written grammar exercise.

A common form of a controlled writing is to present a paragraph to students in which they have to alter a given structure throughout. The other form of controlled writing is a dicto-comp. Here, a paragraph is read at normal speed, usually two or three times; then the teacher asks the students to re-write the paragraph to the best of their recollection of reading.

c. Self-Writing

It is the writing with only the self in mind as an audience. The most salient instance of this category in classrooms is note-taking, where students take notes during a lecture for the purposes of later recall. Diary or journal writing also fall into this category, in which a student's records thoughts, feelings, and reactions and which an instructor reads and responds to.

d. Display Writing

It was noted earlier that writing within the school curricular context is a way of life. Short answer exercises, essay examinations, and even research reports will involve an element of display.

e. Real Writing

Some classroom writing aims at the genuine communication of messages to an audience in need of those messages. The two categories of real and display writing are actually two ends of a continuum. Three subcategories illustrate how reality can be injected:

- 1) Academic, the language experience approach gives groups of students' opportunities to convey genuine information to each other. Group problem-solving tasks, especially those that relate to current issues and other personally relevant topics, may have a writing component in which information is genuinely sought and conveyed.

- 2) Vocational/technical, quite a variety of real writing can take place in classes of students studying English for advancement in their occupation.
- 3) Personal, in virtually any ESL class, diaries, letters, post cards, notes, personal messages, and other informal writing can take place, especially within the context of an interactive classroom.

3. The Concept of Paragraph

A paragraph is a basic unit of organization in writing in which a group of related sentences develops one main idea. Before writing a paragraph, we have to know the part of the paragraph first. Reid notes that the process of writing a paragraphs are choose a subject that you know about, identify your audience, narrow your subject to a topic that will interest your audience, collect some ideas about your topic, list details about some of your ideas, limits the ideas to the most important ones that you want to communicate, state the main idea of the paragraph in your topic sentence, the point paragraph and write the paragraph.¹¹

Expressing ideas in well-organized paragraph is essential thing of your success in your study. Through a good paragraph, you can make your thought clear to the readers. To be able to compose a good paragraph, however, you need some knowledge of what a paragraph is, and later you must able to write one.

Oshima and Hogue defines that paragraph is a basic unit of organization in writing in which a group of related develops one main idea.¹² A paragraph can be as short as one sentence or as long as ten sentences. The number of sentence is unimportant. However, the paragraph should be long enough to develop the main idea clearly. In Paragraph consist some sentences; a complete sentence has a subject (the person or things are you writing about) and main verb (the word that describes what is the subject doing or what is to the subject). Remember that when you are writing a complete sentence, you are saying something about the subject.

Based on the opinion some experts above, the writer can conclude a paragraph is a unit of thought with one central idea. Basically, a paragraph consists of topic sentence, supporting sentence, and concluding sentence.

¹¹Joy M. Reid, *The Process of Composition*, (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc, 1988), p. 8.

¹²Oshima and Hogue, *Writing Academic English*, (A writing and Sentence Handbook, 1991), p.

4. The Concept of Clustering

Based on Chamot says that strategy in teaching learning is techniques, approaches, or deliberate actions that teacher and students take in order to facilitate the learning and recall of both linguistic and content area information.¹³ In order to help the students in generating ideas in written form, they can be guided through some generating strategies. Moreover, Dean says that there are many methods for getting started writing such as: free writing, brainstorming, clustering, etc. He states that clustering; help you visualize your writing.¹⁴ Draw a circle in which you write the subject of the essay. Then draw lines going out from the circle with words on the subject. These secondary words will result in further lines and words. Eventually one part, or cluster, will be more elaborate and will probably make a good topic for the essay. Based on the idea of procedure of semantic mapping that is stated by Zaid, therefore, the procedure use of clustering in the classroom is broken down into four phases:

- a. **Introducing the topic.** The teacher studies a unit in the syllabus and determines that clustering can be useful. The teacher announces the topic of the unit by drawing a large oval on the chalkboard-an overhead projector can also be used-writing the topic inside of it. Some teachers display a picture relating to the topic to stimulate students' thoughts and get the brainstorming procedure going.
- b. **Brainstorming.** The teacher asks the students to think of ideas that might be related to this topic. This brainstorming phase allows students to make use of their prior knowledge or experiences. Brainstorming is an application of the schema theory, which attempts to explain how people integrate new information with their existing framework of knowledge. The theory posits that information is stored in the brain in networks, called schemata. When a person encounters new information, s/he tends to link this new information to appropriate schemata.
- c. **Categorization.** The teacher encourages the students to see relationships among their suggestions. The map is modified as the class begins to organize and integrate the individual suggestions. This "pulling together" phase allows students, as they

¹³A. U. Chamot, *Identification of ESL Learning Strategies*, (Texas: Houston, 1984), p. 71.

¹⁴K. C. Dean, *Essentials of Essay: Writing, Reading, and Grammar*, (London: Nassau Community College, 1995), p. 3.

begin to relate ideas, to see the connections between their suggestions. During categorization, the teacher can also introduce vocabulary words which students might need during the next phase of the activity. In this phase, the students gain experience in practicing some valuable cognitive skills, particularly categorization and exemplifying, but also (depending on the topic) comparing and contrasting, cause and effect, inference making, and forming judgments.

d. Post-assignment synthesis. The last part of the class period is used to record the students' suggestions from their personal maps on the pre- assignment, chalkboard version of the map. The teacher should state that all personal versions have validity and that even when a suggestion for modifying the chalkboard version of the map. The map-either in its final chalkboard form or in the personalized version made by each student-can serve as a springboard for other language activities. The map can be an outline for the writing of a short essay on the topic, or one segment of the map can be used in the writing of a paragraph.

CONCLUSION

Implementation of clustering technique in Junior High School, particularly in teaching and learning writing, has some obstacles. The limitation of the time for English class becomes the first reason. There is only 80 minutes of English class a week. In this time, the English teachers have to teach four skills of English (listening, speaking, reading and writing). It means that the teachers only have 40 minutes to teach each skill. And it is impossible to apply clustering in writing class at that short time.

In addition, the teachers and the students still have restricted knowledge about several techniques that, certainly will give a new color in the process of teaching and learning English. It caused the attractive English class atmosphere could not be created. The old and uninteresting technique still becomes the only one choice in conducting the English (writing) instruction. In this case, clustering that presents as a new technique in teaching and learning writing still left a thousand of question marks in teachers' and student' mind.

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