

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CLUSTERING TECHNIQUE IN LEARNING WRITING DESCRIPTIVE TEXT AT 8TH GRADE OF SMP N 5 RANOYAPO

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to find out 1) whether there is a significant increase in students' ability to write texts with clustering techniques, and 2) any difficulties that are associated with students in using clustering techniques. The test used is a test writing descriptive text and questionnaires. The method in this research is Post-Test Pre-Test Unit Design. The research design uses one class as an experimental class which gets two consultations using the Clustering technique. The sample used was 20 students in class VIII SMP N 5 Ranoyapo. Research data were collected through pre-test, post-test and questionnaire. The results showed a difference between pre-test and post-test statistics after the application of clustering techniques with significance values. Furthermore, most students find it difficult to use adjectives and develop main topics when using grouping techniques to write descriptive paragraphs. This shows the grouping technique makes it easy for students to improve their writing skills.

Keywords:

Writing,
 Text,
 Clustering Techniques,
 Ranoyapo

INTRODUCTION

Language serves as a fundamental tool for communication, enabling individuals to connect and establish relationships. Without language, meaningful communication and relationship-building among people would be impossible. English, as an international language, plays a significant role in global communication and is recognized as the first foreign language taught in schools worldwide. The acquisition of English involves mastering four key skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Among these, writing is often perceived as the most challenging due to the cognitive demands required to construct coherent sentences and paragraphs. Brown (2001) emphasizes that writing is a complex thinking process, allowing for planning and multiple revisions before the final product is achieved.

In junior high schools, students are introduced to various text genres, including procedure, recount, narrative, and descriptive texts. Descriptive text, which aims to depict specific people, places, or objects, is a particular focus. However, students frequently encounter difficulties in organizing their ideas and accurately describing subjects in descriptive texts. These challenges often result in errors and a lack of clarity in their writing. Achieving a minimum standard of competence (KKM) of 75 in writing descriptive texts is a requirement for junior high school students, necessitating effective instructional strategies to help them meet this benchmark.

Given the complexities of teaching descriptive writing, educators must carefully select engaging methods and techniques that maintain student interest and facilitate understanding. Ineffective teaching strategies can hinder student progress, making it crucial to employ methods that

address their difficulties in writing descriptive texts. One such approach is the clustering technique, which has been identified as a beneficial tool for organizing ideas visually, thus helping students develop their thoughts before writing. Langan (2001) suggests that clustering is particularly effective for visual learners, as it employs lines, boxes, arrows, and circles to illustrate relationships between ideas.

Reflecting on teaching experiences at SMP N. 5 Ranoyapo, it was found that students faced challenges in understanding and applying descriptive writing concepts. These difficulties were further compounded by traditional teaching methods, which failed to fully engage the students. This prompted a study aimed at investigating the effects of clustering techniques on enhancing students' descriptive writing skills. Specifically targeting eighth-grade students at SMP N. 5 Ranoyapo, the research employed Classroom Action Research (CAR) to evaluate the effectiveness of this technique.

The Process of Writing

The study's goals are twofold. First, it seeks to describe how the clustering technique is implemented in teaching descriptive writing. Second, it aims to measure the improvement in students' writing abilities after **using** this method. The results are expected to contribute to the current understanding of educational strategies, offering practical recommendations for teachers to help improve students' writing skills and establishing a foundation for further research on this topic.

Purpose of writing

According to Murcia (1991:233), writing in a second or foreign language involves the ability to express ideas in written form. Writing is, therefore, an activity in which ideas are communicated through writing. Similarly, Barnet and Stubbs (1983:3) describe writing as a physical act that requires materials and energy. Like most physical activities, writing can bring enjoyment to both the writer and the reader when performed skillfully. It also requires practice. From these definitions, it can be concluded that writing is often regarded as the most challenging skill, due to its reliance on grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, and spelling, all of which must be integrated into a coherent paragraph. Regarding the writing process, Blanchard and Root (2003:41) outline three main steps:

1. Prewriting: This involves brainstorming and organizing ideas before writing.
2. Writing: Using those ideas to produce a first draft.
3. Revising: Making improvements to the draft to enhance the quality of writing.

By following these steps and practicing regularly, writers will find it easier to write coherent paragraphs and improve their overall writing skills.

In terms of the purpose of writing, Penny Ur (1996:163) emphasizes that writing primarily serves as a means of expressing ideas and conveying messages to the reader. The ideas themselves are crucial, as they shape the type of text, the language used, and the information included. Writers need to carefully consider their purpose, as it will influence the overall outcome of their writing.

Definition of Descriptive Text

Descriptive text belongs to the factual genres of writing. Its main purpose is to describe a specific person, place, or object (Wardiman, 2008:122). In writing, description involves creating vivid images and sensory impressions using words. As Woodson (1982:73) explains, description is often part of a larger text and serves to either inform the audience about the appearance of something or someone or to persuade the audience to perceive things from the writer's perspective. Descriptive writing captures sensory impressions—such as how things feel, sound, taste, smell, and look—and conveys these through words. Emotions like joy, fear, loneliness, and happiness can also be expressed through description. Ultimately, descriptive text helps readers visualize a scene, person, or emotion by engaging their imagination and evoking sensory experiences.

Purpose of Descriptive Text

Descriptive text has a clear purpose. According to Gerot and Wignel (1995:208), its aim is to describe a specific person, place, or thing. The overall objective is to provide detailed descriptions that allow the reader to fully grasp the characteristics of what is being described.

Types of Descriptive Text

Descriptive text can be categorized into three main forms, typically describing people, places, or objects.

Description of People

Describing people can take three main forms: identification, impression, and character sketch.

a) **Identification**

Adelstein and Pival (1976:149) define identification as focusing on statistical details such as height, weight, age, and visible features like hair, skin, and eye color, along with distinctive markings like scars or birthmarks. This method allows students to describe individuals based on visible traits that are easily observed.

b) **Impression**

Unlike identification, impression does not focus on specific details about a person but instead conveys an overall idea or feeling about them. Even though many specifics may be left out, the student can still give a general sense of the person through a broad yet impactful description. While impressions are often less detailed than identification, they can be more effective in capturing distinctive traits (Adelstein and Pival, 1976:150).

c) **Character Sketch**

A character sketch offers a more complete description of a person, often referred to as a profile, literary portrait, or biographical sketch. Rather than focusing on an individual, character sketches can describe a type of person, such as a "campus jock," "art student," or "religious fanatic" (Adelstein and Pival, 1976:151). Character sketches go beyond physical descriptions and impressions, offering insight into a person's true nature by showing what they are like, not just what they look like.

Description of a Place

In contrast to a paragraph that is developed chronologically, there is no fixed structure for organizing sentences in descriptive text. However, the sentences should not be arranged haphazardly. Smalley and Ruetten (2001:69) explain that to make a paragraph more engaging, a controlling idea can be added to convey a certain attitude or impression about the place being described. The way the details are organized in the description depends on the subject and the purpose of the writing. The description must be structured in such a way that the reader can vividly imagine the scene being depicted.

Description of Things

When describing an object, students need to have a clear mental image of the object they intend to describe. To make their descriptions more interesting and vivid for the reader, students can use proper nouns and strong verbs.

a) **Using Proper Nouns**

Along with including concrete details and figures of speech in descriptive text, students should also incorporate proper nouns, which refer to specific names of people, places, or things. Examples include names like Arizona or the University of Tennessee. Including recognizable proper nouns helps make the description more relatable and familiar to the reader.

b) **Using Effective Verbs**

Verbs are crucial in narratives, but they also play an important role in descriptive writing. The use of precise, effective verbs enhances the vividness of the description. For instance,

using the verb "chiseled" gives a clearer image of how the wind affects an object compared to the more generic verb "made" (Anderson and Anderson, 1998:27).

Definition of the Clustering Technique

In the writing process, one important prewriting step is clustering. Several experts have provided definitions of this technique. According to Langan (2006:25), clustering, also referred to as diagramming or mapping, is a strategy used to generate material for writing. It is particularly helpful for individuals who prefer to think visually. Essentially, clustering is a technique that assists students in narrowing down broad subjects, especially those who are visual learners. Buscemi (2002:14) describes clustering as an effective way to refine a broad topic into a more focused and manageable subject for a short essay. It is also called mapping or diagramming and serves as a useful tool for gathering information.

To start clustering, one begins with a blank piece of paper and writes the central subject or theme in the middle, circling it. Next, related ideas and details are added around the central word, also circled. This method aids students in organizing their thoughts before developing their ideas into paragraphs for descriptive writing. Clustering also activates the creative, non-verbal right side of the brain, making it a unique tool in the writing process. Dietsch (2003:26) explains that clustering is a form of brainstorming combined with doodling, helping students develop an overview of the subject, suggest specific topics, and generate related details.

The Application of the Clustering Technique in Writing Descriptive Text

From the previous explanation, it is clear that clustering is a technique used to generate content for writing. This method is especially useful for writers who prefer visual thinking. In clustering, students use lines, boxes, arrows, and circles to represent the relationships between ideas and details that come to mind. It allows them to visually map out how different concepts and details are connected (Langan, 2006:25). In this process, the writer places the main topic at the center of a sheet of paper and surrounds it with related ideas, connecting them with lines. The same steps are then followed for subtopics.

Blanchard and Root (2003:42) describe clustering as another prewriting technique that visually displays how certain ideas are interconnected by using circles and lines. Students draw a diagram based on their understanding of the topic. The steps to create a cluster are as follows:

1. Write the main topic in the center of a blank page and encircle it.
2. Around the main circle, write down any ideas that come to mind regarding the topic, placing each in its own circle.
3. Connect each idea to the central topic using lines.
4. Reflect on each new idea, writing down more related ideas in circles close to the initial ideas, and connect them as well.
5. Continue this process until no more ideas come up.

In teaching, the clustering technique starts with a central word or key idea placed in the middle of the page. From this, the student quickly writes down all the related thoughts or associations that are triggered by the central idea, using short words or phrases. Unlike linear note-taking, the words or phrases are organized on the page or board in a pattern that forms based on the connections the student identifies as new ideas emerge. A completed cluster may resemble spokes on a wheel or take on any other form of interconnected lines, depending on how the individual associations are drawn to show their relationships.

METHODOLOGY

This research utilized Classroom Action Research (CAR) with a quantitative approach. According to Isaac and Michael (1980:27), the primary aim of action research is to develop new skills or approaches and to address specific problems that can be directly applied within the classroom environment or workplace. The study was carried out in July 2018 at SMP Negeri 5 Ranoyapo, located in Powalutan Village.

The participants in this research were 20 students, consisting of 11 male students and 9 female students. The selection of participants was based on purposive sampling, focusing on students who demonstrated difficulties in descriptive writing.

The research was conducted in two cycles, with each cycle consisting of planning, action, observation, and reflection stages. This cyclical process allowed for continuous improvement based on the observations and feedback gathered after each cycle. The main objective was to improve students' descriptive writing skills by applying the clustering technique as a prewriting strategy. Data were collected through tests, observations, and field notes, while the analysis was performed using both descriptive statistics and qualitative analysis to measure the students' progress throughout the intervention.

By employing both quantitative data from the tests and qualitative insights from the observations, this methodology ensured a comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of the clustering technique in enhancing the students' writing abilities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This research was carried out using Classroom Action Research (CAR), which involved two cycles. Before starting the first cycle, the researcher conducted a pre-test to assess the students' ability to write descriptive texts prior to any intervention. The pre-test was done using conventional teaching methods to establish a baseline of the students' skills. The results of this pre-test are presented in the table below, which highlights the students' performance in various aspects of writing.

Students' Pre-test Results

Students	Content	Organization	Grammar	vocabulary	Mechanic	Total
Ariel	3	4	3	3	4	17
Aurel	2	3	2	3	3	13
Esra	2	2	3	2	3	12
Christia	2	3	3	3	2	13
Fabio	3	2	2	3	3	13
Fredrik	2	3	3	2	2	12
Gabriel	4	3	3	3	4	17
Gabriela	2	3	1	1	3	10
John	2	3	3	2	2	12
Ruhama	3	2	3	3	2	13
Mariel	2	2	3	3	3	13
Meidy	2	3	2	2	2	12
Nikita	2	2	3	3	2	13
Noval	2	3	3	2	2	12
Philip	3	2	3	1	2	12
Pingkan	3	3	3	2	2	13
Rinaldi	4	3	3	3	3	16
Thimoty	2	4	2	3	3	14
Veroni	2	2	3	3	3	12
Hanna	3	4	2	2	2	13

The table shows the students' scores in five categories: content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. These categories represent the different aspects of writing that the researcher evaluated to identify areas where students needed improvement. After analyzing the results, the researcher implemented the clustering technique as a treatment in the next cycle to help improve the students' performance in descriptive writing.

After analyzing the results of the students' pre-test, the researcher implemented the clustering technique in teaching descriptive writing through a series of cycles. Each cycle consisted

of four steps: planning, action, observation, and reflection. The implementation of each cycle is detailed as follows:

First Cycle

1. Planning

The planning phase was conducted in February 2018. In this cycle, the teaching process was divided into two meetings, with each session lasting 2x40 minutes. During this phase, the researcher designed two lesson plans and selected appropriate materials for teaching descriptive text using the clustering technique. The model of clustering involved using shapes and lines to visually represent ideas. Additionally, the researcher prepared materials on descriptive text and set the criteria for success, which was for 75% of the students to achieve a score meeting the Minimum Mastery Criteria (Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal or KKM).

2. Action

The researcher implemented the teaching-learning process according to the lesson plans. In the first meeting, the researcher introduced the concept of descriptive writing, focusing on its generic structure, and then introduced the clustering technique. During the second meeting, students were tasked with creating a paragraph on a given topic using the clustering technique. The researcher provided key words related to the topic, and the students developed their ideas through clustering.

3. Observation

During this step, the researcher observed the students' engagement in the learning process and monitored their activities throughout the cycle. It was observed that many students were confused and struggled to translate their ideas into coherent descriptive texts. The clustering technique, while introduced, did not seem to fully aid them in organizing their thoughts effectively.

4. Reflection

After evaluating the students' written work, it was concluded that the implementation of the clustering technique in this first cycle did not produce satisfactory results. Most students did not meet the Minimum Mastery Criteria (KKM) in their writing. Based on this, the researcher determined that revisions were necessary for the next cycle to ensure that the students could achieve the desired improvement in their writing abilities and meet the criteria for success.

Students' Results Post-Test for the First Cycle

The table below presents the results of the post-test conducted after the first cycle of implementing the clustering technique.

Students' Post-Test Results for the First Cycle

Students	Content	Organization	Grammar	Vocabulary	Mechanic
Total					
Ariel	3	4	3	3	16
Aurel	4	4	3	3	17
Esra	4	4	3	4	18
Fabio	3	4	3	2	16
Christia	3	4	3	3	16
Frederik	2	4	3	3	16
Gabriel	4	4	4	2	17
Gabriel	2	3	1	1	10
Hanna	2	3	3	2	12
John	3	2	3	3	13
Ruhama	2	2	3	3	13
Mariel	2	3	2	2	12

Meidy	2	2	3	3	2	13
Nikita	2	3	3	2	2	12
Noval	3	2	3	1	2	12
Philip	3	3	3	2	2	13
Phingkan	4	3	3	3	3	16
Rinaldi	2	4	2	3	3	14
Thimoty	2	2	3	3	3	12
Veronica	3	4	2	2	2	13

Second Cycle

1. Planning

After analyzing the results from the first cycle, where students' writing abilities did not meet expectations, the researcher revised the lesson plan for the second cycle. Although the new plan was similar to the previous one, it focused more specifically on descriptive writing with an example such as a rabbit. The second cycle aimed to address the issues identified in the first cycle, particularly the difficulties students faced in generating and organizing their ideas into coherent descriptive paragraphs.

2. Acting

During the implementation phase of the second cycle, the researcher aimed to improve the effectiveness of the clustering technique to enhance students' descriptive writing skills. The actions in this cycle were conducted in July 2016. At the beginning of the cycle, the researcher briefly reviewed the generic structure of descriptive texts and the clustering technique to refresh students' memories. Students then created a draft using clustering, assisted by a dictionary, based on the given topic. After completing their drafts, students submitted them for review. In the second meeting, students used their clustered key words to develop a first draft, which they then edited before submitting the final version. This final draft was used for the post-test evaluation.

3. Observation

The researcher observed the students' engagement and monitored their activities throughout the second cycle. It was noted that students' writing improved compared to the first cycle. At the end of this cycle, a post-test was administered based on the students' final drafts. The results from the second cycle post-test are presented in the table below.

Students' Post-Test Results for the Second Cycle

The students result post-test second cycles

Students	Content	Organization	Grammar	Vocabulary	Mechanic	Total
Ariel	4	4	5	3	3	19
Aurel	3	3	5	5	5	21
Esra	4	4	3	3	5	19
Fabio	4	4	5	5	3	21
Christia	3	4	5	3	5	20
Frederik	4	4	3	5	3	19
Gabriel	4	4	3	4	3	19
Gabriela	4	4	3	4	5	20
Hanna	5	5	4	3	4	21
John	4	4	4	3	4	19
Ruhama	4	3	5	4	4	20
Mariel	4	3	5	5	4	21
Meidy	5	4	3	3	4	19
Nikita	5	4	3	3	5	20
Noval	4	5	3	4	5	21
Philip	5	4	3	3	5	20
Phingkan	4	3	5	4	5	21

Thimoty	4	5	3	3	5	21
Veronica	5	4	3	4	5	21

Discussion

In this research, Classroom Action Research (CAR) was employed to determine whether the clustering technique improved students' ability to write descriptive texts. The research involved three stages of testing: a pre-test before any treatment, a post-test after the first cycle, and a post-test following the second cycle. Below is a detailed analysis of each stage:

Analysis of the Pre-Test

The pre-test aimed to evaluate students' initial capabilities in writing descriptive texts. Students were required to write a descriptive text based on their own ideas. Observations indicated that most students faced challenges in this task, as evidenced by their writing results. The average score from the pre-test was 52.2%, which indicates that students' writing abilities were still below expectations. The results suggested that students struggled with appropriate word choice and overall writing quality.

Analysis of the First Cycle

In the first cycle, the clustering technique was introduced as a method to improve descriptive writing. The teaching involved using clustering to help students organize their ideas. After the implementation, a post-test was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the technique. The average score from the first cycle's post-test was 64.6%. This score reflects a modest improvement, but the results still indicated that many students were struggling with descriptive writing. The percentage of students meeting the Minimum Mastery Criteria (Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal or KKM) was not satisfactory, prompting the need for further intervention.

Analysis of the Second Cycle

In the second cycle, the researcher refined the use of the clustering technique based on observations and feedback from the first cycle. Students received additional support with vocabulary and were guided more effectively in using key words to develop their descriptive texts. The average score from the second cycle's post-test significantly improved to 80.2%. This score indicates a substantial enhancement in students' descriptive writing abilities. Most students were able to write more effectively and with greater ease, utilizing the key words provided to organize their ideas. The results showed that students' performance levels ranged from 76% to 84%, with a significant number reaching the KKM.

Comparison of Results

The comparison of average scores across the three testing stages is as follows:

No	Cycle	Mean
1	Pre-test	52.2%
2	First Cycle	64.6%
3	Second Cycle	80.2%

This comparison highlights a clear progression in students' writing abilities. The average score improved from 52.2% in the pre-test to 80.2% in the second cycle's post-test. This increase indicates that the clustering technique effectively enhanced students' descriptive writing skills over the course of the research.

CONCLUSION

This research utilized Classroom Action Research (CAR), structured into two cycles, each comprising four phases: planning, action, observation, and reflection. The study aimed to evaluate whether the clustering technique could enhance students' abilities in writing descriptive texts. Initially, a pre-test was conducted to assess students' descriptive writing skills before any intervention. The results of this pre-test served as a benchmark for comparing subsequent post-test results.

The research findings indicate that the clustering technique significantly improved students' writing abilities. The pre-test results showed an average score of 52.2%, reflecting poor performance. After implementing the clustering technique during the first cycle, the average score increased to 64.6%, indicating a fair improvement but still below the desired level. The second cycle showed a further improvement, with the average score reaching 80.2%, which is considered very good. This progression demonstrates that the clustering technique helped students better organize their ideas, expand their vocabulary, and enhance their overall writing skills.

The significant increase in scores from the pre-test to the second cycle's post-test confirms that the clustering technique effectively improves students' ability to write descriptive texts. The final results met the *Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal (KKM)*, suggesting that the intervention was successful in achieving the desired educational outcomes.

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