

THE USE OF MIMIND APP TO SUPPORT THE WRITING PERFORMANCE OF SECONDARY STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The present study explores how Mimind app is implemented and what strengths and challenges this app brings to the writing class of the seventh-grade students of a secondary school in Kroya. This is an Action Research involving 16 seventh-grade students. Documentation, observations, and interviews were used to gain the necessary data. The collected data were analyzed using a qualitative analysis model from Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014). The results indicate that: (1) The implementation of Mimind App in teaching-learning activities was executed through the five stages of the Scientific Approach and there were some activities such as giving picture, giving model text, giving individual work, group work, completing and developing a mind map, and creating a descriptive text. (2) Several strengths of using Mimind App as an online learning medium are: (a) an increase in motivation through the level of participation and activeness of students in online learning process, (b) the creation of an interesting and fun learning atmosphere for students, (c) and an increase in students writing performance, i.e., students' writing ability. However, challenges deal with sufficient time management to explore the richly-provided features of the application.

Keywords: *Writing, Description Text, Mimind App.*

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INTRODUCTION

Writing is a kind of integrative skill, as well as a meaningful, constructive, and complex process (Maharani et al, 2018). Writing is considered one of the most valuable skills students can learn because it will convey who they are as individuals and retain their thoughts and memories. In other words, writing plays a major role in expressing one's ideas, thoughts, opinions and attitudes.

In writing context, learners are trained to practice writing skills so that they are able to write better. This needs a complex process. During the process, students may encounter many problems. The writers' observation on the class in a secondary school investigated some students' difficulties such as grammatical aspects, mechanical aspects, sentence structure, and word choice. The students claimed how difficult it is to write in a second language. They always struggled to

compose a good writing that can include appropriate and varied range of vocabularies along with proper grammar and varied range of sentence structures. Another problem dealt with one of the most fundamental aspects in successful learning i.e., motivation. The students said they would be encouraged to write if the writing tasks motivate them and keep them interested. When talking on motivation, it is about someone's desire. The desire on the part of the writer to communicate something is very important because it is much more difficult for students to write about something they have no interest in. The writing activities that they had been joining provided them less motivating atmosphere. They hoped for a better quality of writing by getting allowed to make decisions about their topics. The English teacher also informed similar point when he said almost all of his students wrote less well if they were obliged to write about something that they did not want to write about.

The writers in collaboration with the teacher then planned to improve the writing processes. The learning tool turned out to be the most crucial component to be improved. Paper-based writing activities were considered to be less engaging. Therefore, as an effort to help the students overcome the problems in writing, the writers offered a writing tool named Mimind. This application brings mind mapping concept in digital form. Even though mind maps are typically provided on paper, growing attention has been paid to the application of the computerized forms of this technique, along with other digital educational technologies (Chalak & Ratsgoo, 2021). In digital form, mind mapping will draw students' bigger attention as it allows them to use shapes, images, colors, graphs, etc.

The concept of mind mapping has attracted English teachers. Instructors have always shown interest in establishing contexts that motivate and encourage learners to be more enthusiastic in their learning process. Mind mapping is among the teaching and learning techniques evolved in this regard. It is considered as efficient and effective way used in analyzing the ideas and their related topics. It is characterized by beneficial strategies to facilitate students' development of critical thinking skills (Tsirkunova, 2013). Digital mind maps present higher effectiveness and attraction compared to traditional ones as they rely on the use of professionally fast and specialized computer software providing photos, colors, and drawings which can be attractive for the readers (Abdulbaset, 2016).

Mind maps also provide teachers with insight into their students' thought process regarding a specific topic. By asking students to create mind maps demonstrating their comprehension of a concept, teachers are able to understand what a student's prior knowledge was and how well the student understands the assignment or the material being taught. This is a very effective way of evaluating students' understanding. Mind mapping is also recognized as an assistive tool where for instance will benefitted. Mingili (2019) proposes similar idea by pointing out that the application of mind mapping in essay writing from word level to whole essay structure by visual mind maps to stimulate the students' creativity in English essay writing effectively.

This study explores how the application is used in writing activities to improve the learning process of the observed class. The writers also investigate the strengths and limitations that the application brings. The results are hoped to

encourage and empower teachers to consider alternative methods or techniques tailored to their teaching consciously.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teaching Writing

Brown (2001) draws analogies between writing problems and swimming. Although someone can learn to swim and write, this does not mean that he has the skills, even if he is a language expert. According to Hedge (2005), ideas or information must be organized, ambiguity in meaning must be avoided by accuracy, the author must choose from complex grammatical devices for emphasis or focus, and finally, the choice of vocabulary, grammatical patterns, and phrase structures should be observed to create an appropriate meaning and style for the subject and the reader. It can be concluded from the above statement that writing is a kind of long and complex language learning process.

A writer will never construct a perfect final product without the process. However, “process is not the end, it is the means to the end” (Brown, 2001:337). That is why the current emphasis on the process of writing must be seen in the perspective of a balance between process and product. Writing involves the delivery of a writer’s message and making it clear to the readers. It is also a continuing process of discovering the way to find the most effective language for communicating someone’s feelings and thoughts.

At a secondary school level, ideally, learners are hoped to produce short functional texts and essays covering procedure, descriptive, narrative, and recount (Depdiknas, 2006). Writing in Junior High School focuses on daily life topics. It means that the students are expected to be able to write short functional texts and simple essays, such as narrative, recount, descriptive, etc. Because English is one of the scope compulsory subjects for this level, the students should reach the functional level that is to communicate written and orally in solving daily problems.

Mind Mapping

Educators and students have been drawing concept maps and mind maps on paper for many years. Visual software applications, in particular mind mapping tools, have offered automation of the process, making it more efficient to brainstorm concepts as ideas or branches. This promotes much larger mind maps, and the ability to easily reorganized branches by dragging and dropping them around the map. Furthermore, some mind mapping software applications integrate with MS Office, allowing students to convert their ideas into other documents such as Word or PowerPoint.

Even though mind maps are typically provided on paper, growing attention has been paid to the application of the computerized forms of this technique, along with other digital educational technologies. Furthermore, it is also possible to edit or move the ideas while adding or moving images and symbols. E-mind maps are applied to represent correlations between ideas and information and need simultaneous thinking on creation of items (Abdulbaset, 2016). Digital mind maps present higher effectiveness and attraction compared to traditional ones as they rely on the use of professionally fast and specialized

computer software providing photos, colors, and drawings which can be attractive for the readers

Mimind is an online mind mapping that can capture, and develop ideas. This app can be downloaded in the Play Store for free and can be operated via mobile phones. In addition, the Mimind App can be used as learning support and provides innovation so the students do not get bored in learning. Mimind is a powerful mind mapping tool designed to create and share ideas and activities, such as project planning, brainstorming ideas, designing, thought structuring, summarizing ideas, discussions, poster presentation, project demonstrations, and many other creative applications.

Buzan (2007) contends that “Mind Mapping is a creative thinking instrument which reflects natural work brain. Mind map enables the brain to use all pictures and their association in a radial design”. Moreover, we are able to lose our thoughts to generate the entirety in our mind in order that masses of thoughts may be routinely increasingly more improved. Therefore it might make us less complicated in building textual content from the ones associated thoughts.

All mind maps begin with a main concept or idea that the rest of the map moves around, so choosing that idea or topic is the first step. Begin by creating an image or writing a word that represents that first main idea. From that main idea, create branches (as many as needed), that each represent a single word that relates to the main topic. It’s helpful to use different colors and images to differentiate the branches and sub-topics. Then, create sub-branches that stem from the main branches to further expand on ideas and concepts. These subbranches will also contain words that elaborate on the topic of the branch it stems from. This helps develop and elaborate on the overall theme of the mind map. Including images and sketches can also be helpful in brainstorming and creating the sub-branch topics.

A mind map is considered as a graphical way to represent ideas and concepts. It forms a non- linear media to expose in correlating between ideas to ideas by the context in number (Onkas, 2015). It can be in the form of diagram to assist them in relating information and ideas into new construction (Brandner, 2020). It is characterized by beneficial strategies to facilitate students’ development of critical thinking skills (Tsirkunova, 2013).

RESEARCH METHOD

This is an Action Research (AR) involving students of seventh grade in a Junior High School in Kroya, Central Java. The English teacher collaboratively with the writers sought to improve the practice of writing process. AR is a way of reflecting on teaching done by the teacher in the classroom for getting a solution to the problem until it can be solved. AR includes a set of procedures that can be done by teachers who want to improve all aspects of teaching to assess the success or suitability of activities and procedures Harmer (2001). Two cycles were done. Observations, interviews, and document analysis were used as the data collection techniques. Observation sheets which indicate the ideal activities of Scientific Approach (SA) were used during the classroom observation to see if all the suggested phases were executed. After conducting the class observation, the writers interviewed the teacher and some students. Guiding questions on how the English teacher used the app in the teaching practice were used to get answers for

the first research question. They were also given questions about how the app was helpful as well as the insufficiency of the app or the features which did not really support the learning. As the data were mainly in the form of non-numerical data, Miles, Huberman, and Saldana's (2014) qualitative analysis model was employed. The model of analysis included data collection, data reduction, and data display.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The Implementation of Mimind App in Writing Descriptive Text

There are some activities executed during the implementation of Mimind app. It was integrated in the five stages of the Scientific Approach (SA). The activities were:

Observing

In this very first stage, the activities were giving picture of a public figure and giving a model text describing the person. In the second meeting, similar activities were done with different picture. It was a picture of a cat as someone's favorite pet.

Questioning

After observing the picture and text in previous stage, the students were given chances to share their thoughts in the forms of questions, seeking clarification on what they had read. Mostly they asked for a further explanation on the parts of the text such as the social function, generic structure or linguistic elements.

Exploring

This stage brought the students to get involved in both individual and group works. Independently, each student worked on 10 comprehension questions, while in groups they wrote down physical appearances and personality traits of the public figure.

Associating

This is the stage where mind mapping strategy was executed through completing and developing a mind map of a new text. Working on Mimind application, the students were asked to complete a mind map of a text entitled "My House" and and develop it into a full descriptive text with the templates that had been provided. Meanwhile, in Cycle 2, similar activity took place with two different texts titled "Raja Ampat" and "My School".

Communicating

This last phase of SA enabled the students to develop their own descriptive text. Picking one of some given topics, they put the chosen one at the top of the mind map figure. They continued to work on sub-topics and other keywords to compose sentences in the developed text.

The Strengths and Challenges of Mimind App in Improving Students' Writing Skills

The strengths of using Mimind App as an online learning medium include: (1) An increase in motivation through the level of participation and engagement of students in the online learning process; (2) The creation of an interesting and fun learning atmosphere, and (3) An increase in students' writing performance. Another interesting feature of this application is that it offers offline mode usage.

However, there is a limitation when this application is used in learning. While it has friendly and understandable interface, advanced use of the rich features needs relatively extra time. Thus, when teachers desire to create engaging writing using such tool, time management is definitely a serious consideration because students need to focus on their pieces of writing and at the same time, they may need to change the shape, add, subtract, or change the background of the mind map chart.

Discussion

The results observed in cycle I indicate a change in students' behavior who initially tend to get confused and less enthusiastic. Gradually they showed eagerness in writing on the Mimind App. They began to easily find words choices to use in arranging sentences. Using the writing app, students expanded and extended the map as long as the themes and keywords were determined. This way, students also experienced a dynamic process of thinking in a visual and intuitive form. Mind mapping is believed to be able to improve the students' creative thinking skill. When sufficiently implemented, the model is likely to stimulate students' to minds to do imagination, to express ideas, and to facilitate them in expressing concepts or ideas in their minds. In other words, the students understand the interconnection of concepts that are learned (Widiana & Jampel, 2016).

The implementation of cycle II focused on helping the students in improving language use and organization in order to construct effective sentences and communicative language. In addition, the writers tried to help the students to be able to compose cohesive and coherent paragraphs. This took a great deal of time allocation. However, significant and positive results could be clearly seen from the students' improved text. Reflection on the online learning process and students' writing products in cycle I would be the basis for improvement in cycle II as it was supposed to increase the success of the process of the previous cycle. Below is a sample of how an excellent map of text is constructed.

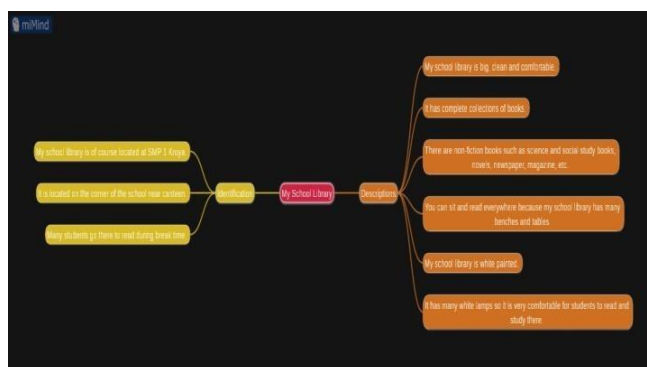


Figure 1. *Sampl of the Student's Mind Map*

From figure 1 it is evident than the students started their writing product with stimuli or brainstorming in the form of phrases. Next, they were able to find the vivid words to develop correct sentences with proper spelling. It could be said the students now know what they want to write. If the teachers apply the process approach of mind mapping sufficiently, the students will be able to apply it more, and their writing will improve (Suriyanti & Yaacob, 2016)

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The reflection stage yielded positive indicators of improved learning experiences. Students were more enthusiastic in participating in online learning. They turned the camera on. Some of them threw questions without being asked. In addition, aspects of writing increased. They said it was such a fun writing as the app provides step-by-step procedure to write text since it starts from several keywords become mind map and become topic of a specific text. The following text sample supports such finding.

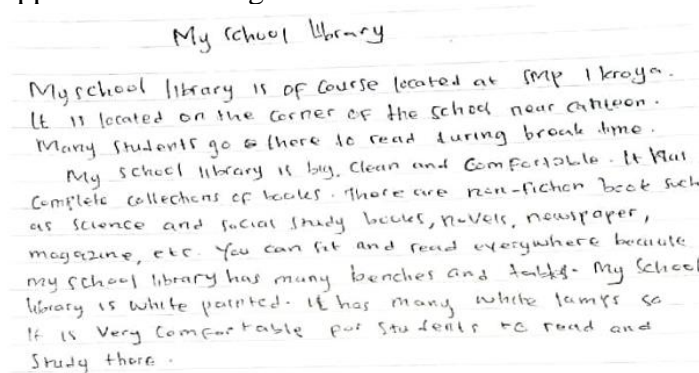


Figure 2. Student's Improved Writing Performance

Figure 2 becomes another evidence that when mind mapping concept is applied in the writing process, it helps the learners to not only organize their ideas in a hierarchal structure but also make them enable to produce linked and better-connected concepts. The group of the major and minor ideas with the central theme to make an overall coherent structure of their writing are clear in writings. The structure reflects that the learners are on the track leading to the development of thoughts and supporting details (Bukhari, 2016). The extract of the interview with the English teacher below supports such finding.

“Aplikasi ini kehadirannya sangat membantu meningkatkan motivasi siswa. Jika biasanya mereka malas membuat konsep sebuah teks, dengan aplikasi ini mereka lebih bersemangat karena bentuknya digital, banyak menu yang mudah diaplikasikan dan ini memang sesuai dengan dunia mereka saat ini. Dengan menu shapes berwarna warni dan garis yang bervariasi mereka dapat membuat awal yang jelas dari sebuah teks kemudian dikembangkan sesuai generic structure dari teks yang dibuat.” (*The application is quite helpful in boosting the students' motivation. The students used to be unmotivated in making a text layout on a paper, Mimind app offers digital interface that is easy to use and this is their world right now (to deal with digital media). The shapes, colors, lines etc. help the students to construct a clear start of a text before it is developed according to the appropriate generic structure of the text.*)

Another source, interview, provides information on the strengths and limitation of the app. The answers were elicited from some students who were involved in the interview. From what they shared, Mimind application is worth-using as it provides offline mode use. This characteristic is really helpful as some students may have barriers when they have to go online all the time. As it is mentioned in the second research question, the app limitation was also discussed in the interview. While the app can be accessed offline, the many features in one menu seems to require ample of time to explore. This implies that the use of the app can be very time-consuming and requires excellent classroom management. the following is the extract of the student's answer in the interview.

“Kelebihannya saya merasa tertarik dan senang, terus aplikasinya offline jadi ga perlu make kuota. Kekurangannya saat memahami fiturnya membutuhkan waktu baru bisa paham karna banyak fitur yang ingin saya coba.” (I am interested in the app because it is fun to use and can be operated in offline mode. The limitation is that I needed more time to understand the other features that I want to try at the same time I construct the text).

In the light of the above findings and discussion, it can be said that mind mapping is a quite practical and effective learning tool for learner-centered active learning environments. Mind maps can usually eliminate misconceptions and facilitate learning and reinforcement (Debbag, et al, 2021). In line with the increase in online learning solutions and applications, the observable advancement in technology is very clear and growing rapidly. Teachers can make use of the open, intuitive, and dynamic characteristics of multimedia to make students gradually form abstract thinking and have a better understanding of knowledge (Guo, 2021). The schools and the teachers should work together in implementing these technologies in their curriculum to provide the students with rich, extraordinary learning experience through excellent features and upgradations especially when the class is on the blended learning setting.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the findings and discussions, Mimind has helped the students organize their texts. It offers suitability to assist students plan their English writing, since the technique stimulates them to obtain and establish a deeper understanding of the writing topics. This underlines that digital mapping concept outperformed better on writing achievement than free writing, as strengthened by El-Muslimah et al (2021). Considering the positive finding in this investigation, therefore, Mimind map should be regarded as an alternative writing tool to improve learners' writing skills. The results, ideally, should arouse motivation for both teachers and learners in incorporating mind map in writing class. Finally, it is recommended that there should be necessary improvement and innovation dealing with the implementation of mind mapping strategy. Some different techniques as an alternative idea and modification of mind mapping concept can benefit the learners according to their learning preferences. Future research may also be commenced in the direction of the further identification of the advantages of the mind mapping strategy to promote the other language skills.

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