

MIND MAPPING TO ENHANCE STUDENTS' WRITING PERFORMANCE

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Article History:

Received: 3rd July 2018

Accepted: 1st August 2018

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Keywords

Mind Mapping,
Enhance Student,
Writing.

Abstract English is a popular language currently, it is being taught according to the needs of students. . This situation has contributed to the development of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). Due to the fact that ESP students have underlying conference repertoire, their language skills are affected by them. Among these skills, writing is considered difficult to get success due to the difficulties faced especially by the EFL students in ESP class. This research is formulated to investigate how mind mapping can enhance students' writing performance in ESP class. This research implements Collaborative Action Research (CAR). It is done in the form of cycles. It also comprises four steps; planning, acting, developing, and reflecting which are adapted from Mertler's model (2012). Based on the data analyzed, it could be concluded that mind mapping could be implemented to enhance students' performance in writing procedure text and solve the problem to generate and organize their ideas before writing. it also brought positive attitude in teaching and learning..

INTRODUCTION

English, which is defined as international foreign language, is fundamental for the interaction with the rest of the world and to access all kinds of knowledge needed. English is a popular language currently, it is being taught according to the needs of students. This situation has contributed to the development of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). Hutchinson & Waters (1987) describe the basis of ESP curriculum as underlying conference and target

conference repertoire. Due to the fact that ESP students have underlying conference repertoire, their language skills are affected by them. Among these skills, Kroll (2001) points out the importance of writing skill, and emphasizes that writing is the hardest one to get success when compared with other skills like reading, comprehending and speaking.

Specifically, there are many areas that the writing process gets hindered or failed due to the difficulties faced especially by the EFL students in ESP class who learn writing or the educator who teach them writing. There is a need to identify the underlying problems which create complications in teaching-learning writing skill. Organization of the composition depends on structure and content.

As an example, when the students are assigned to write, most of them are usually confused in between what to write and how to start to create an appropriate length, and organization of the structure and paragraphs. Many of them also think or say that they cannot, or do not want to write because they lack confidence, think it is boring or believe they have 'nothing to say' or write. Unity in Organization demands that the text is free from the irrelevant details of thought related to the topic. The problem arises when the students produce exaggerated ideas along with the elaboration of unnecessary and looped details which break the whole text as one piece of writing and disconnect the thoughts from the central idea. Keeping the track of cohesion and coherence is another problem related faced by the students during the writing process. Students' texts lack the use of connectors, sequence, consequence, and contrast with a lack of signal words to guide towards arguments.

Moreover, one of crucial decision about what to get the students to write depends on what genres they need to write in or be useful to them. As their language level improves, it needs to make sure that their writing begins to express their own creativity within a genre, rather than merely imitating it. It needs to engage them, from early levels, with activities which are easy and enjoyable to take part in, so that writing activities not only become a normal part of classroom life but also present opportunities for students to achieve almost instant success. It is when students have acquired this writing process with enthusiasm.

Mind mapping technique can be an alternative which is used to solve the problems. It is the easiest way to develop information in a human mind and take information from out of brain. It is used as a graphic organizer in which major categories related to the main theme radiate from the central idea, and sub-categories are to be presented as branches coming out of the larger branches. Mind maps work similar to human brain and include keywords which are easy to remember. Use of lines, arrows, color-coding, pictures, and symbols in mind maps not only makes the process of writing interesting but also suits the learning profile of individual learner.

It is a creative and an effective way that map our ideas (Buzan, 2002). Maps are easier to follow than the long tardy note taking or listing techniques where ideas are kept in a top down sequence and it becomes difficult to make connection of the last idea to the first in the list. Mind maps can work as tool to facilitate the students to plan ideas in the pre-writing process. Students can be provided with examples to prepare a step wise pattern in hierarchy that would help them retain ideas till the whole of the essay is written.

Mind maps can be also tools which help to think and learn. Mind mapping is an effective means to take notes and brainstorm essay topics. A mind map involves writing down a central theme and thinking of new and related ideas which radiate out from the center. By focusing on key ideas written down and looking for connections between them, the learner can map knowledge in a way that will help them to better understand and retain information. In order to create a mind map, it usually starts in the middle of the page with the central theme/main idea and from that point it works outward in all directions to create a growing diagram composed of keywords, phrases, concepts, and facts and figures. It can be used for assignments and essay writing especially in the initial stages, where it is an ideal strategy to use for the 'thinking'. Mind mapping can be used for generating, visualizing, organizing, note-taking, problem-solving, decision-making, revising and clarifying your university topic, so that you can get started with assessment tasks. Essentially, a mind map is used to 'brainstorm' a topic and is a great strategy for students.

Moreover, it gives students an overview of a large subject/broad topic and allowing you to represent it in a more concise fashion. It encourages students to see the bigger picture and creative pathways. Also, it enables students to plan/make choices about the selection of resource material you have for an assignment and where you are going to place it. It provides with a more attractive and enjoyable format for your eye/brain to look at, muse over and remember.

Using mind maps – Think © BBC | British Council 2005

Using mind maps to develop writing



Figure 1. Model of Mind Maps Adopted from BBC (2015)

As written by Steele (BBC, 2015) and cited from Writing Centre Learning Guide of the University of Adelaide, several steps can be followed to use mind map. First step is choosing a topic. Students may prefer to nominate the topic themselves. This can lead to greater interest in the task on the part of the student, as well as, perhaps, greater knowledge of the topic under study. The mind map strategy can be used to explore almost any topic, though discursive essays and narrative work particularly well as they front students' ideas and lend them to discussing ideas in groups. However it is carried out, it is important to provide a context and audience. Having an audience in mind helps students to decide which ideas are most important, and also helps students to choose the appropriate style.

The student can start placing the central theme/main idea or controlling point in the center of the page. It will be easier to place in landscape orientation, which is easier for drawing purposes. It also gives the brain freedom to spread out in all directions and to express itself more freely and naturally. Additionally, it needs to leave some space on the page. The reason for this is that the students can continue to add to the diagram over a period of time. A3 paper is enough for drawing mind maps.

The last is writing. Students should then begin to write their compositions, working in pairs if they wish. After two paragraphs, they should exchange their compositions, so they become readers of each other's work. This allows for feedback, and possible re-writing. Once they have finished, they should again exchange their texts. This gives their texts a communicative purpose, as well as developing an awareness of the fact that a writer is always producing something to be read by someone else, rather than for the display of writing alone.

Once students are familiar with the idea of making mind maps, they can be encouraged to use this skill for further writing activities. It is a useful technique and often improves the clarity and organization of student texts.

METHOD

This research implements Collaborative Action Research (CAR). Action research focuses on personal/individual reflection while CAR is more useful because it involves participation from all the members of the educational community, starting with the teacher's own reflection and expanding their knowledge for a bigger cause (Banegas, 2012).

CAR encourages teachers to work in a cooperative way in fact, "The value of having teachers connect, talk about their own classroom experiences, and grow together professionally has gained ground over the last two decades" (Pellerin and Nogués, 2015, p. 49). Therefore, teachers who are willing to collaborate with their colleagues are capable of recognizing their weak aspects of teaching and of finding solutions for improvement. Shortly, CAR is a process that enables teachers to: a) improve their own practices, b) contribute to their professional development, c) improve students' learning, and d) overcome the isolation

commonly experienced by teachers (Espina, Lagos, Medina, and Pilquinao, 2017:16). It deals with the classroom setting and is intended to develop a strategy to solve the problem found.

Teachers who participate in CAR are able to receive feedback from their peers so that they can improve their weaknesses and strengths, but also teachers who actively participate in research find a significant influence in their teaching strategies. Teachers are capable of modifying their curriculum design and learning how to use different approaches through collaboration with their colleagues (Chow, Chu, Tavares, and Lee, 2015).

In this research, it is done in the form of cycles. It comprises four steps; planning, acting, developing, and reflecting. It is adapted from Mertler's model (2012).

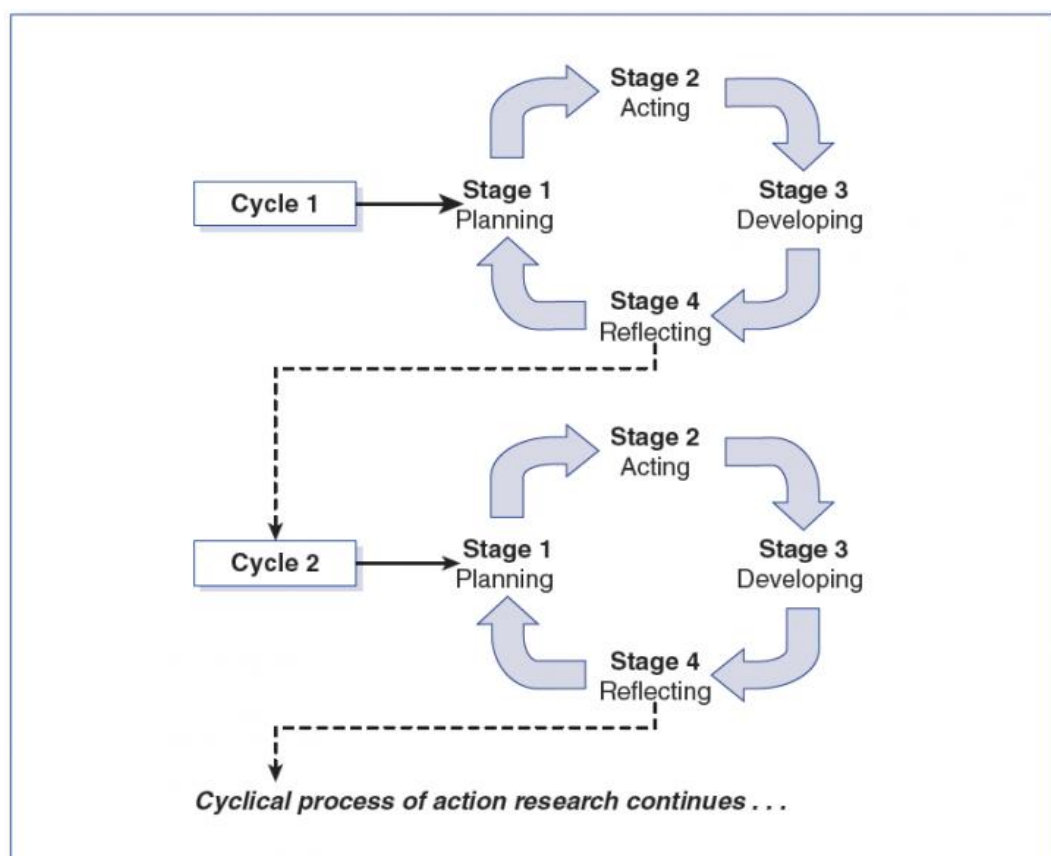


Figure 2. The cyclical process of action research (Mertler, 2012: 38)

DISCUSSION

Based on the data gathered from preliminary, it could be stated that more than a half of the students were not interested in writing composition, including procedure text although they were aware enough that writing is beneficial for them. Some reasons such as generating, developing, organizing the ideas, vocabulary, grammatical structure, and punctuation made them hard to start writing. They got confused on what and how write a text. Consequently, they were not confident enough to produce a piece of writing.

The data was analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. The quantitative data were taken from the mean of the students' score in taking writing announcement test. The qualitative data were taken from questionnaire and photography evidence. This research was conducted in one of the computer science class with 30 students. This research was accomplished in two cycles. Each cycle consisted of four steps of action research (planning, acting, observing, and reflecting). The first cycle including pre-test conducted in two meetings. The second cycle was conducted in two meetings. In the last meeting of each cycle, the students were taken the test as the post test.

To know further students' performance in writing, the students were assigned to write a procedure text based on the topic given. The topic was about how to set up a new computer. It used a scoring rubric to score students' writing in term of its content, organization, and language used.

The score of students work showed many students still had score under 50. The mean score of their writing in terms of content was only 22.5. There are 26 out of 30 students still produced a composition with unclear content. In terms of organization, the mean score of students obtained was 15.7. There were only 2 students who achieved above 16 which is categorized as "Good to average" level. Moreover, the mean score students gained in terms of language use was only 17. There were 23 students got 13 which was considered low.

In cycle 1, the students writing performance showed improvement compared to the previous result in preliminary stage as the base line in this research. In term of content, the highest score achieved is 31 ("good to average" level) and the lowest score is 19. The main score of the student's writing is 24.8.

there was no student produced procedure text categorized as either “excellent to very good” or “very poor”. Still, 13 students produced “fair to poor” composition. The remaining 17 students were able to make procedure writing categorized as good to average.

Because there were still some students producing procedure writing below the standard level, the implementation of the action in cycle 1 was not fully successful. This might be because the students had not fully understood the mind mapping yet therefore it was decided to continue to cycle 2 by doing some revisions and improvement in the implementation of the action.

The revisions were on the teaching strategy. The topic and strategy were considered more familiar for the students such as how to install windows, how to set up a new computer, or how to design a simple calculator. It was expected that the students would do better in writing.

Fortunately, in cycle 2 the students writing performance in this cycle showed a significant improvement compared to the previous one. In term of content, the highest score achieved was 34 (“excellent to very good” level) and the lowest score reached 26 (“good to average” level). The average students writing score was 28.8. The average score increased 4 point from the previous cycle. There were 7 students producing procedure writing categorized as “excellent to very good” which was a good result. The remaining 23 students were able to compose procedure text categorized as “good to average”. Fortunately, none of students made the composition categorized ‘fair to poor’. The students from previous cycle who produced ‘fair to poor’ level of procedure writing had made improvement their writing quality in term of content.

The next is students writing achievement in term of organization. The highest score achieved by the students was 25 (“excellent to very good” level) and the lowest score reached 18 (“good to average: level). The students writing mean score increased 3 points and reached 21.7. There were 5 students producing “excellent to very good” level of writing. Also, the level increased by 5 students who produced “good to average” level.

The last is students score in terms of language use. It was showed that the means score of students writing reached 22 which showed improvement 3 points.

The highest score achieved was 26 (“excellent to very good” level) and the lowest score was 22 (“good to average” level). Numbers of student who composed procedure text categorized “excellent to very good” level increased by 8 students and 22 students improved their level ‘good to average’. Just the same as two previous categories, there was no students who produce ‘fair to poor’ level of procedure writing.

In brief, it was concluded that the implementation of mind mapping technique during the process of writing procedure text not only improved students’ writing performance in term of content, organization, and language use, but also brought students positive attitude in learning process. Overall, mind mapping technique can be implemented in ESP class at the State Polytechnic of Ketapang.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the data analyzed, it could be concluded that mind mapping could be implemented to enhance students’ performance in writing procedure text and solve the problem to generate and organize their ideas before writing. It also brought positive attitude in teaching and learning.

To implement mind mapping, Classroom Action Research (CAR) covering four stages, namely planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting. Planning included the preparation of plan and media, developing mapping, preparing research instrument, and preparing criteria of success. Implementing stage involved the implementation of mind mapping in teaching and learning process. The process of implementation was observed to consider whether it was done successfully or not.

Based on the result showed in cycle 1, the implementation of mind map was successfully improved the performance of some students in writing. However, there were some other students who did not reach the criteria of success yet. Therefore, it needed to continue to the second cycle. Before conducting next cycle, all aspects that were considered needed to be revised in reflecting stage to maximize the implementation of mind mapping.

In the second cycle, students' mean score in terms of content, organization, and language use improve significantly. It could be said that most of the students were able to write a good procedure composition. Based on the analysis on the teaching and learning process, it was found that the class was well-managed, under controlled, and the students were attracted. Moreover, students were more independent by trying to not look at others' work, so they could have their own writing style.

The last, it contains some suggestions for English teachers and further researchers. For English teachers, it is suggested to overcome student problems besides to have teaching practice better such as preparing learning process, implementing suitable technique such as mind mapping, appropriate media, and good textbook. It is also suggested that this study can be used as reference on how to implement concept mapping to teach procedure writing. the teacher can also implement mind mapping to teach other kinds of text type.

For further researcher, they are highly recommended to use mind mapping technique on different grades and education level, to see if mind mapping can be implemented effectively to solve student problems in generating and organizing ideas in writing compositions.

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