



# The Role of Semantic Mapping Strategy in Helping the Students to Write Descriptive Text

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## **ABSTRACT**

Semantic mapping strategy is an effective strategy in helping the students to start their writing. This strategy is applied in the beginning of writing. The aim of this study was to find out the significant difference in writing achievement of the 10<sup>th</sup> graders at SMA Islam Al-Amalul Khair in academic year 2020-2021 before and after this strategy was applied. The pre-experimental method was used in this study. The population and sample in this study was all of 10<sup>th</sup> graders at SMA Al-Amalul Khair Palembang in academic year 2020-2021. The total number of them was 61 students. The test was administered twice as pre-test and post-test. The results of the tests were analyzed by using t-test through SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) program. The result of the study showed that there was a significant difference in writing achievement of 10<sup>th</sup> graders at SMA Al-Amalul Khair Palembang before and after semantic mapping strategy was applied and there was also an improvement.

**Keywords:** descriptive text ; semantic mapping

## **Introduction**

Writing is one of English skills that should be mastered by the students. The complex process in doing writing such as expressing ideas and thoughts, drafting, revising, editing sometimes trap the students in the stuck situation. This situation then brings the idea that writing is the most complicated skill to be learned compared to other skills. The time when the student begin to express the idea into

paragraphs, how the student choose the appropriate words then create them into paragraphs, or how the student use Since the principle of writing is bringing the message to the reader (Ur, 1991), the writer, in this case the student, should deeply pay attention to the process of writing itself.

Descriptive text is a text functions to describe a place, a person, or things by visual experience (Gerot and Wignell, 1995). In addition, Budiyan (2013) asserts that the descriptive text is composed based on generic structure which contains identification and description. It is a text describes the characteristics of things, place, animal, or human specifically.

The person or thing could be described through physical description and non-physical description (Purwanti, 2013). The example of physical description is the color of human skin (black, brown, blonde, etc), their looks (clean, beautiful, handsome, etc), and so on. The example of non-physical description is the human personality (labile, kind, assertive, etc), their character (emotional, calm, etc), and so on.

The fact that the students need to be serious in doing writing becomes a reason why the students consider that writing is a hard skill to be mastered. Some processes in doing writing actually help the students to produce their writing easily and understandable for the reader. As Hogue (2003) describes, when the writer do writing means that the writer should do the process of creating the whole words in general, organizing them into some sentences and paragraphs, writing the whole sentences and paragraphs, and finally polishing the whole text.

Teaching writing to the students means teaching all stages in writing including generating ideas, drafting, reviewing, and so on. Those stages could not be separated and must be taught and guided one by one until the students produce the final product of the text. Therefore, the teacher should use the appropriate technique for the appropriate students regarding the condition and situation of the students.

Students could be a good writer if the teacher uses an appropriate technique for them. In the other hand, they could be failing in writing if the technique was not appropriate for them. The teacher should prepare many techniques so that the teacher could have plan b or plan c in the process of teaching and learning process. Once the plan a does not work as expected, the other plan should be used.

Some problems faced in the field of this research were that the students tend to write by focusing to the material in the English text book provided from the school and digital dictionary, lack of vocabularies, unable to use the grammatically sentences, and inappropriate technique used by the teacher. The combination of those problems, then produce bad result in English subject especially in writing

skill.

There are many techniques in teaching writing that are possibly offered to the students such as games, collaborative writing, song, jigsaw, and so on. A certain technique could be appropriate for some groups of students but it would not work for another group of the students depends on the situation and condition of the students.

One of the simple techniques which could be used for the students of SMA Islam Al-Amalul Khair Palembang is Semantic Mapping Technique. Khoii and Sharifafar (2013) states that Semantic Mapping technique is a kind of strategy for the students to develop the vocabularies and knowledge by relating some words to another word so that the students easily combining those words each other.

According to Dilek and Yuruk (2013), Semantic Mapping is the activity to build a visual display of some words or ideas and their connectivity each other. It is a very effective technique to draw the ideas and connect those ideas so that the ideas could be composed in some sentences. Zaid (1995) describes semantic mapping is a graphic arrangement showing the major ideas and relationships in text or among word meaning.

Yih (2011) asserts that semantic mapping is a graphical concept which is effectively helps the learner to connect the some words. This technique graphically describes some words that exist on the writer's mind. When the students try to brainstorm at the beginning of the first stage in writing process by using this technique, they can directly connect the first word to the next word which has a connection with that word so that every word could be connected each other depends on the theme.

Moreover, he explains that semantic mapping is used at the beginning of the teaching and learning writing activity or as the pre-writing. In line with this explanation, Hague (1987) states the semantic mapping is modeled by the teacher at the beginning of teaching and learning process. In this stage, the teacher can use some questions to get some keywords to construct students map so that the students can connect those words into the sentence.

There were some studies that have strongly relationship with this study. The first study was done by Fauzan, Jufriзал, & Amri in 2018. In their study entitled the effect of Semantic Mapping in teaching writing skill on seventh grade students of SMPN 3 Batu Sangkar they reported that the aim of the study was to see the effectiveness of semantic mapping technique in improving students' writing skill. The method of the study was a quasi-experimental study. Based on their study, it was found that the result of the students' writing test in the posttest in the experimental group was higher than of those in the control group. The students' mean score of the posttest in the experimental group was 72,89 while the students'

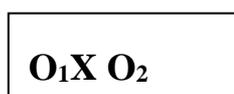
mean score in the control group was 67,21. The conclusion of this study was that semantic mapping technique is effective in teaching writing.

Another study that was done by Nofriati was entitled encouraging students to write a paragraph by using semantic mapping strategy in 2017. The study aimed to identify whether the semantic mapping technique be used to improve the students' ability in learning essay writing. The study was a classroom action research with the subject study was 4th semester students of English department at Almuslim University. The result of his study showed that the students' average score in cycle 1 was 60 and it was increased to 75 in cycle 2. The percentage of the writer's performance was 75% (level good) and in the second cycle was 88% (level very good). The percentage of the students' activities was 57% (enough) while in the second cycle it was increased to 79% (level good). Finally, the questionnaire showed the positive response (4.62) from the students in using the semantic mapping technique for learning essay writing.

The problems of the study were to find out whether or not there was a significant difference in writing achievement between the 10th graders at SMA Al-Amalul Khair Palembang who were taught using Semantic Mapping Strategy and that of those who were not and to find out whether or not there was an improvement of the 10th graders at SMA Al-Amalul Khair Palembang after they were taught using Semantic Mapping strategy.

## Method

In this study, the writer applied pre-experimental design because there should be another variable influenced the dependent variable (Sugiyono, 2016). The one-group pretest-posttest design was used to find out the difference before and after the treatment was given. The figure below is the design of one-group pretest-posttest;



**O<sub>1</sub> = pre-test result**

**O<sub>2</sub> = post-test result**

**X = treatment**

**Figure 1. One-group Pretest-posttest design**

The study was done to 10<sup>th</sup> graders at SMA Islam Al-Amalul Khair Palembang in academic year 2020-2021. The total number of the students was 40. The writer selected all of the students as the sample in this study. Since the study

was done in pandemic period, it was done through zoom application. The study was done from August to September 2021.

The writing test was used to collect the data. This test was given twice as a pretest and a posttest. It was given before and after the treatment. The writing test in the pretest was the same as given in the posttest. At the beginning of the study, the pretest was given. The treatment then was given and finally the posttest was given to the sample.

The students' scores then collected by using modified rubric from Heaton (1998). The content of the rubric is shown as below;

Table 1. Scoring Rubric for Writing Test

<b>Components of Writing</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Indicators</b>
<b>Content</b>	4	Excellent	Present the information well chosen details across the paragraph
	3	Good	Present the information with details in parts of the paragraph
	2	Fair	Present the information with some details
	1	Poor	Present no clear information
<b>Vocabulary</b>	4	Excellent	Good in vocabulary choice
	3	Good	Error in vocabulary choice are few and do not interfere with understanding
	2	Fair	Error in vocabulary choice are and sometimes they interfere with understanding
	1	Poor	Many error in vocabulary choice that severally interfere with understanding
<b>Grammar</b>	4	Excellent	Good in grammar
	3	Good	Error in grammar choice are few and do not interfere with understanding
	2	Fair	Error in grammar choice are and sometimes they interfere with understanding
	1	Poor	Many error in grammar choice that

			severally interfere with understanding
<b>Mechanics</b>	4	Excellent	Good in spelling, punctuation and capitalization
	3	Good	Error in spelling, punctuation and capitalization are few
	2	Fair	Error in spelling, punctuation and capitalization, and sometimes interfere with understanding
	1	Poor	Error in spelling, punctuation and capitalization and severely interfere with understanding

The result of the pretest and posttest then analyzed. There were three steps in analyzing the result of the tests. Students' result was firstly scored. After scoring the result, those scores were analyzed to find the means and finally both means in the pretest and posttest were compared. The SPSS was used in the process of analyzing the scores.

**Discussion**

**Findings**

Basically, the implementation of semantic mapping was done at the first step of writing as pre-writing. Based on this implementation, some findings were found in this study. It can be seen from the students' final product. The composition of the students' final product was better than their text before implementing the semantic mapping technique. It can be seen that the average score of the students in the pretest was 6.6 while in the posttest was 7.7

Both pretest and posttest were given before the treatment was implemented. While pretest was given before the implementation of the treatment, posttest was given after the implementation of the treatment. The treatment was implemented 6 times. Yet, the result of the test was presented in form of scores. The result of pre-test showed that the lowest score was 4 and the highest score was 10. The average score was 6.6. The result of the post-test showed that the lowest score was 4 and the highest score was 13. The average score was 7.7. The table 2 describes the students score in pre-test and posttest.

Table 2. Students' pretest-posttest score

Students	Pretest score	Level	Posttest score	Level
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1	6	Fair	8	Fair
2	6	Fair	9	Good
3	8	Fair	9	Good
4	6	Fair	6	Fair
5	4	Poor	5	Fair
6	10	Good	12	Good
7	7	Fair	6	Fair
8	7	Fair	7	Fair
9	6	Fair	6	Fair
10	6	Fair	8	Fair
11	8	Fair	8	Fair
12	6	Fair	5	Fair
13	5	Fair	5	Fair
14	6	Fair	7	Fair
15	5	Fair	7	Fair
16	5	Fair	8	Fair
17	9	Good	11	Good
18	4	Poor	4	Poor
19	6	Fair	7	Fair
20	7	Fair	7	Fair
21	4	Poor	6	Fair
22	6	Fair	8	Fair
23	7	Fair	8	Fair
24	6	Fair	8	Fair
25	9	Good	11	Good
26	8	Fair	10	Good
27	7	Fair	8	Fair
28	7	Fair	9	Good
29	7	Fair	6	Fair
30	6	Fair	8	Fair
31	10	Good	13	Excellent
32	6	Fair	7	Fair
33	5	Fair	7	Fair
34	6	Fair	6	Fair
35	5	Fair	7	Fair
36	5	Fair	6	Fair
37	10	Good	13	Excellent

38	7	Fair	8	Fair
39	7	Fair	9	Good
40	8	Fair	8	Fair
<b>Average</b>	<b>6.6</b>		<b>7.7</b>	

Since the students' average score in the posttest was higher than those in the pretest, it can be inferred that semantic mapping was effective. The table 2 shows the paired sample test of this study.

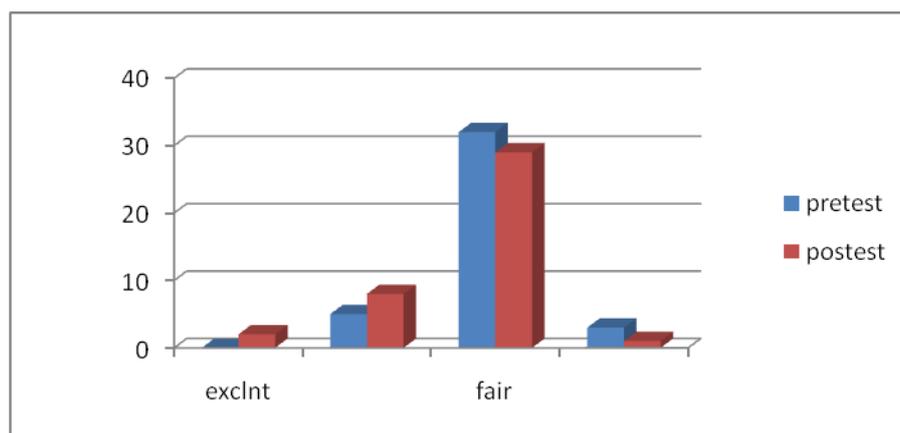
Table 3. Paired Sample test of the Study

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	pre test - posttest	-1,200	1,137	,180	-1,564	-,836	-6,676	39	,000

The paired sample test showed that the mean was 1.200 and sig. (2 tailed) was 0.00. It means that the mean score of the students' improvement was 1.2 and there was a significant difference before and after the treatment was conducted since p value was > 0.05.

**Interpretations of the Study**

The data showed that there was progress from the total scores of pre-test to post-test of the students. The progress can be seen from the mean result of the students after pre-test and post-test. The result in the posttest was higher than the result in the pretest. The students got a better writing achievement in posttest than in the pretest. The diagram bellow describes the result in the pretest and posttest.



**Figure 2. Students pretest and posttest grade result**

Most of the students' in the pretest at fair level, three students at poor level and no student at excellent level while in the posttest only single of them at poor level, two of them at excellent, only one of them at poor level. However, most of the students both in the pretest and posttest were at fair level.

There should be some reasons that cause this improvement. Such reasons could be from the internal or external factors. One of the examples is that most of the students at SMA Al-Amalul Khair should stay at the dormitory. Since they stay at the dormitory, they should practice both English and Arabic written or spoken. The students also can explore their language skills because their friends also need to practice their language skills. This situation could affect them in learning competitively. This reason also could be the reason of the students' score improvement in writing.

### **Conclusion**

From above study, it can be concluded that the semantic mapping strategy was effective in helping the students to write descriptive paragraph easily especially to 10th graders at SMA Islam Al-Amalul Khair Palembang. Additionally, the students' average in the posttest was higher than those in the pretest. It means that there was an improvement before and after they taught using semantic mapping strategy. However, not all of the students got a progress but most of the students got a better and higher scores if compared to those in the pretest scores. There should be other factors that affect those improvements. The environmental factor could be an external variable which contributes the students' progress. Every student could practice whenever they want to his friends.

Some suggestions come after this study was done. The suggestions were offered to the teachers and the students. The first is for English teacher especially

at SMA Islam Al-Amalul khair Palembang. The English teacher should stimulate the students by motivating them to be brave in starting writing, no matter they understand to the structure or not. In addition, the English teacher should have some strategies in teaching English especially writing skill.

Another suggestion is offered for the students. The students must be brave to develop ideas in doing writing. The students also should motivate themselves in improving their skills especially writing skill.

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