

# THE TEACHING OF WRITING A DESCRIPTIVE TEXT USING CLUSTERING TECHNIQUE FOR BUNG HATTA UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Yogi Exdriko<sup>1</sup>, Lisa Tavriyanti<sup>2</sup>, Lely Refnita<sup>2</sup>

1) The student of English education department

[yogiexdriko@gmail.com](mailto:yogiexdriko@gmail.com)

2) The lecturer of English education department

English Department The Faculty of Teacher Training and Education  
Bung Hatta University

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of writing this paper is to discuss the implementation of clustering technique in teaching descriptive text. The low students' ability in writing descriptive text is caused by the students are unable to develop their idea in writing descriptive text. The descriptive text is a kind of factual text which consists of generic structure and language features. The descriptive text is used to describe a person, place or thing that describe the detail of the person, place or thing in term of shape, taste, smell, sound. Thus, the reader can imagine the object which is described in the text. There are three phases in teaching descriptive text in using clustering technique; they are pre-teaching, whilst-teaching, and post-teaching activity. Pre-teaching activity is the lecturer's activity before teaching the instructional material. Whilst-teaching activity is the main activity in teaching process, the lecturer teaches the instructional material by elaborating the students' opinion about the topic of instructional material which their opinion is collected through clustering technique, the students are involved in teaching and learning process and asked to write descriptive text based on the topic given. Moreover, post-teaching activity is the final phase which the lecturer directs the students to conclude the instructional material which has been taught. The writer hopes this paper will give significance for lecturer in teaching descriptive text by using clustering technique so it can enhance the students' ability in writing descriptive text.

**Key Words: Teaching Writing, Descriptive Text, Clustering Technique**

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## INTRODUCTION

Writing is categorized as a productive skill; it might be a problem for some students in learning English because there are many aspects which should be considered, such as content, grammar, vocabularies, organizing idea, mechanic and styles. Besides, they should consider other important components in writing, such as coherence, cohesion, topic sentence, supporting details, etc. All of them are essential aspects that should be

considered in producing good writing (Butt *et. al*: 11). Moreover, Kay (2003) observes that writing is a highly complex process involving multiple brain mechanisms and specific abilities. The act of writing requires the writer to formulate ideas, organize and sequence points in logical order, select vocabulary, check for grammatical correctness, spell words correctly, punctuate, and write legibly. It requires the simultaneous and sequential integration of attention, language, long-

term memory and working memory, motor skills, higher-order thinking.

Generally, it can be stated that problems in writing can be seen in technical writing, such as, the use of language, punctuation, quotation and lay out. Besides, it can be seen in content organization, such as, cohesion, coherence, and unity. In addition, students need to know the audiences of their writing, and why they have to write. It means that writing is communicative since it is an interactive activity. A writer should know to express his/ her ideas and how to convey his/ her messages in their writing. Yet, not all students can write well. They often find difficulties in writing. In short, writing is not an easy skill for many students since there are many components that should be considered.

Based on the English Department of Bung Hatta curriculum, the third year English Department students of Bung Hatta University have to take Writing III that is related to kinds of text (narrative text, descriptive text, argumentative text, Expository text and procedure text). Thus, they have to be able to express their ideas in written form by considering the linguistics conventions, such as content and organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics.

Based on the writer's experience in taking Writing III, most of the third year students of English Department of Bung Hatta University still had problems in writing. For example, when the lecturer asked them to write descriptive texts for several meetings in the writing class, most of them did not understand the structures of descriptive texts (lexicogrammatical and generic structures). The students found problems in order to organize their ideas to describe person, thing, or place that is asked by the teacher as their writing task.

From the description above, it can be seen some problems which are faced by the third year students in writing descriptive texts. Those problems can be

stated as the factors which influence the students' writing technique in developing their idea. The students still use the conventional technique in pre-writing activities; some of them also absolutely spend a lot of time to look up words in dictionary because they have lack of vocabulary in developing their idea. Moreover, they seem to find the difficulties in developing their ideas. In other words, they have difficulties in expressing ideas to be written. The students also get problems in organizing their ideas, in terms of cohesion, coherence and unity in writing. It seems that it derives from the fact that they do not use the prewriting techniques to express their ideas before the real writing takes place. It can be concluded from their statement that they do not know how to develop their idea to be a good text.

The other problem is technique of the lecturer which still uses conventional technique in writing teaching and learning process. The lecturer only focuses on teaching the generic structure of descriptive text and other texts. This conventional technique made learning and teaching process to be a teacher-centered activity, in which students could not expand their imagination and their linguistic knowledge. This strategy made the learning and teaching process was uncommunicative, friendly and open-minded. Therefore, most of the students are not interested and bored in learning writing.

For those reasons, the use of clustering technique will help the students to express their ideas in writing forms. This technique provide some advantages based on a number of studies on writing have been conducted; Debra and Amer (1990) had conducted a research entitled "The Impact of Invention Technique upon Egyptian Students' Compositional Writing in EFL". They found that students are more motivated to write, and write more effectively, when they have been prepared

for the writing tasks through clustering technique in pre-writing activity.

In addition, Chamot (1984:71) says that a strategy in teaching learning are 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. One of the useful techniques that will be helpful in generating ideas in writing is clustering. Clustering is a technique to generate ideas and to explore the relationships between those ideas

(<http://www.eienglish.udel.edu/dbaer/pre-writing.html>). However, a personal classroom illustration is probably the best way to gain an understanding of clustering. The teacher will direct the students to focus on the structure of a text and not just focus on the individual details. So, the writer feels that clustering strategy might help in the conceptualization of paragraph and short-essay structure.

Because clustering is categorized as pre-writing techniques, it will help students to organize their idea in writing text. It is supported by Marliasari (2007: 76) who states that clustering technique could increase the students' participation and the student's achievement in writing. Then, Mahaputri (2007:50) has conducted a research using clustering technique in writing.

After considering the problems above, the writer tries to provide a scientific paper by applying clustering technique in teaching writing descriptive text, it is assumed to be able to help students in writing descriptive text.

### **The Nature of Writing**

Writing is one of the English skills that should be mastered by students. According to Chaedar (2001: 3), the language skill that is often wanted by our students from junior high school level up

to university level is writing. It means that we need to have the skill in writing, and it is taught from junior high school. Compared with other skills, writing is perceived as the most difficult one to acquire for some reasons; first, writing is acquired later than speaking. For example: a newborn baby cries not writes. Expressing thought in writing is not easy for most people, and it plays an important role in learning because writers are able to explore their own ideas and thoughts. Moreover, writing is not natural and it must be learned. Writing is also one of the communication instruments, it is a language skill used to communicate indirectly, whether they cannot face to face. According to Matthews (2000: 1560), the definition of writing is to produce something in written form so that people can read, perform or use it. Furthermore, writing has long been linked to the capacity for critical thinking. In order to write well, students need to form intellectual habits and develop skills for inquiry that are both formed by writing and necessary for writing to be logical, coherent, and well-reasoned. In addition, writing appears to enhance learning by engaging students more actively in processing, interpreting, and evaluating information. For this reason, particularly in the freshman year, cultivate writing that does not necessarily lead students to finished texts, but is simply the adjunct to everything they do, a pervasive and lifelong feature of literate lives.

According to Oshima and Hogue (2007:3), writing is a skill that people can write their daily activities. Based on the statement of the expert above there are two reasons of writing. First, writing can help us to express our ideas in written form in English. Second, writing is used for communication. In writing if the learner has the ability to express their ideas into a sentence grammatically and effectively, writing can be enjoyable for them. So, the writer should use good grammar and

adequate vocabulary in making good writing.

Writing involves more than just producing words and sentences. To be able to produce a piece of writing, we should be able to write a connected series of word and sentences grammatically and logically linked, so that the purpose we have in our mind will suit the intended readers. The close relationship between writing and thinking makes writing a valuable part of any language course. Through writing we can express our ideas and thought in our attempt to make meanings. Writing is a complex skill because there are many aspects to be considered like the content, the form, grammar, style and coherence.

Writing is the most complex human activities. It includes the development of organizing idea, the capture of mental representations of knowledge, and of experience with subject.

### **The Criteria of Good Writing**

According to Peha (2003), a good writing would definitely have to include things like proper grammar, use of punctuation marks and capitalization, and spelling. A good writing makes the readers easily understand about the ideas in the written text. Here are the criteria of good writing, they are as follow:

- Ideas that are interesting and important.  
Ideas are the heart of the piece - what the writer is writing about and the information he or she chooses to write about it.
- Organization that is logical and effective.  
Organization refers to the order of ideas and the way the writer moves from one idea to the next.
- Voice that is individual and appropriate.  
Voice is how the writing feels to someone when they read it. Is it

formal or casual? Is it friendly and inviting or reserved and standoffish? Voice is the expression of the writer's personality through words.

- Word choice that is specific and memorable.  
Good writing uses just the right words to say just the right things.
- Sentence fluency that is smooth and expressive.  
Fluent sentences are easy to understand and fun to read with expression.
- Conventions which are correct and communicative.  
Conventions are the ways we all agree to use punctuation, spelling, grammar, and other things that make writing consistent and easy to read.

The conclusion that we get from the explanation above is that there are some criteria in writing that can be classified into a good writing; it has interesting and logical idea, it uses an appropriate and memorable word, the use of expressions in writing can be understood and also it has a good grammar.

### **The Component of Writing**

According to Byrne in Roza (2011: 23), there are five components of writing that should be considered in writing text. They are as follows:

1. Organizing Idea  
Ideas are the most important factors in writing because nobody can write meaningfully if she/he does not have anything in mind yet. In a composition class, topic is often given in order to help students concentrate in a certain set of ideas to be explained. For example, the ideas are arranged in order of time, in order of space and in a logical order.
2. Grammar  
The grammar of language is a description of way that the language

behaves. Without having knowledge of grammar the writer cannot make his/her language communicative to a great variety of readers from different situations.

### 3. Vocabulary

Vocabulary is important in writing because by having many vocabularies a writer can make readers explore more deeply in what he/she is telling about. Having a good vocabulary which is known as idiom gives literary or cultural values to any composition.

### 4. Mechanics

- Punctuation

Punctuation plays an important role in helping reader to establish intonation. In other words, punctuation is a command for the reader to raise his/her voice or drop his/her speech and because he/she is going to stop. Punctuation can also help readers to understand the state of mind of the writer.

- Capitalization

The capitalization rules are as follow:

- a. Capitalize the first word of sentence, example:  
*We live in apartment*
- b. Capitalize the pronoun I, example:  
*You will not know what I am supposed to do.*
- c. Capitalize the titles of composition. In the title, the first and the more important words are capitalized except short preposition and short coordinating conjunction, example:  
*Name of specific organization (business, clubs, schools)*
- d. Capitalize all of proper noun.
- e. Capitalize of detail: *God, Allah, etc.*

- f. Capitalize of people and their title: *Dr. Jhon, Mc. Donald, etc.*

- g. Capitalize of specific places: *Lake Maninjau, River Nil, etc.*

- h. Capitalize of day, month, and special day: *Sunday, January, Lebaran day, etc.*

- i. Capitalize of specific group of people (nationality, races, ethnic groups), language, and religion: *Asian, American, Moslem, Aborigine, English, etc.*

- j. Capitalize of geographic areas: *The Middles East, The North, etc.*

- k. Capitalize of specific structure such as buildings and bridges:

*Golden Gate Bridge*

### 5. Content

Content is how the writer develops his/her idea related with the topic.

Based on the description above, it can be concluded that in writing a text there are five components that must be considered, they are organizing ideas, grammar, vocabulary, mechanics (punctuation and capitalization), and content.

#### **Descriptive Text**

Blaylock (2006:1) says that in a descriptive text, is writing about what a person, place, or thing is like. Sometimes you may describe where a place is located. Pardiyono (2006:163) says that a descriptive text is about the description of something or someone that consists of characteristics, something special, quality and quantity.

Oshima and Hogue (2007: 61) define that descriptive writing appeals to the senses, so it tells how something looks,

feels, smells, tastes and/or sound. A good description is a word picture; the reader can imagine the object, place, or person in his or her mind.

Based on the definition in the previous paragraph, it can be concluded that a descriptive text is the text that has a purpose to describe a person, place or thing that tells how something looks, feels, smells, tastes and/ or sounds, so the reader is able to imagine the object that is described in the descriptive text. It is factual types of text which consists of generic structure and lexicogrammatical features.

#### **a. The Generic Structure of Descriptive text**

Descriptive text is a type of texts which has function to describe particular person, place, or thing. The students can use simple present and adjective clause in a writing descriptive text.

According to Mukarto (2006:15), a descriptive writing or text is usually also used to help writer develop an aspect of their work, e.g. to create a particular mood, atmosphere or describe a place so that the reader can create vivid pictures of characters, places, objects etc. The purpose of the descriptive text above that description is used in all forms of writing to create a vivid impression of a person, place, object or event e.g. to:

- Describe a special place and explain why it is special.
- Describe the most important person in your life.
- Describe the animal's habit in your report.

In simple words, descriptive text has generic structures as identification and description. Mukarto (2006: 19)

states that descriptive text has two generic structures as follows:

- a. Identification: identifies phenomenon to be described.
- b. Description: describes parts, qualities and characteristics.

#### **b. The Lexicogrammatical features of Descriptive Text**

According to Mukarto (2006: 19), in describing a particular object, the descriptive text has to use some language features as follows:

- a. Focus on a specific participant.
- b. Use of attributive and identifying process.
- c. Frequent use of epithets and classifiers in nominal groups.
- d. Use of simple presents tense.

#### **The Definition of Clustering Technique**

Chamot (1934) 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. In order to help the students in generating ideas in written form, they can be guided through some generating strategies. It is more explained by Dawson (2001: 37). He states that there are many methods for getting started writing such as: Free writing, brainstorming, clustering, etc. Moreover, he states that clustering will be helpful to visualize the writing. So it is very useful to be implemented in whilst teaching. The procedures are: drawing a circle in which we write the subject of the essay, then drawing 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.

Dawson (2001: 39) says that the strategies used by the writer for developing ideas to write about and for coming up with details to support the ideas are clustering, brainstorming lists, free-writing. Clustering is also called mind mapping or idea mapping, is a technique to generate ideas and to explore the relationships between those ideas (<http://www.english.udel.edu/dbaer/rewriting.html>). It is supported by Protect and Gill in Brown (1994: 75), clustering is a simple yet powerful strategy. Its visual character seems to stimulate the flow of association and is particularly good for students who know what they want to say but just can't say it. Students' form word related to a stimulus supplied by the teacher. The words are circled and then linked by lines to show discernible clusters. Besides, Oshima (2007: 47) says that clustering is another brainstorming activity that can be used to generate ideas. Moreover, Prayudi (<http://prayudi.staff.uui.ac.id/>, retrieved 17 November. 2013 at 14.30) states that clustering is just a start to organize the ideas; Clustering, a technique for grouping similar items, collecting the ideas and focusing the thinking of the writer.

Based on the idea of procedure of clustering that is stated by Dawson (2001), the procedure of clustering in the classroom is broken down into five phases:

1. *Introducing the topic.*
2. *Brainstorming.*
3. *Categorizing.*
4. *Personalizing the map.*
5. *Post-assignment synthesis.*

#### **Pre- Teaching Activities**

The teacher greets the whole class

1. The teacher encourages the students to pray before starting the teaching and learning process.

2. The teacher gives illustration which leads students to the main activities.
3. The teacher prepares topic that will be developed into the descriptive text by the students such as describing famous person (Sharuk Khan), Borobudur Temple, and Padang City
4. The teacher tries to brainstorm students' schemata through well known topic given. For example:
5. The teacher elaborates students' answers and attention to develop their idea by asking WH- question or phrase in order to stimulate them.
6. The teacher writes down some of students' opinion into some points about the picture which is asked.

#### **Whilst- Teaching**

##### **a. Exploration**

1. The teacher leads the students to categorize and personalize that points into a mapping idea.
2. The teacher encourages students to develop the personal map into some sentences
3. Before asking the students to write the text, the teacher gives a model how to organize the idea based on the generic structure and language features of descriptive text.

##### **b. The teacher shows an example of descriptive text which is written by clustering techniques.**

##### **c. Elaboration**

1. The teacher gives the students a chance to ask about the material which explained in order to make the class atmosphere becomes communicative.
2. Then, the teacher asks the students about the material; do you understand how to organize idea? If they had not understood yet, the teacher would have explained it to them.
3. The teacher gives a chance for the

students to re-write the whole text individually on the white board, for about 5 minutes, and then asks them to discuss the text in pair..

4. The teacher points the students randomly to give argument about the text presented, in order to see the understanding of the students.
5. The teacher leads the students to find the grammatical errors, to revise the text if the text is not cohesion and unity, to revise the inappropriate vocabulary use, and the generic structure of the text.

#### **d. Confirmation**

This phase is the step of making sure whether the students have understood about the material taught to the students. If the students still do not understand, the teacher has responsible to re- explain it.

1. The teacher re-explains about the text that has been written; it included the genre of the text, the text organization, the communicative purpose of the text, and the tense that is mostly used in that text.
2. The teacher asks the students to exchange their work with their friends' work and lead them to identify generic structure, language features and find some errors.
3. The teacher invites the students to give suggestion toward his/ her friend's work.

#### **Post- Teaching**

1. The teachers leads the students to conclude the material that they have studied.
2. The teacher asks students to give opinion about the advantage of writing descriptive text using clustering.
3. The teacher asks the students to rewrite the revision of their descriptive text using clustering as their homework.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESSTIONS**

### **Conclusion**

Based on the experts' point of views, the writer concludes that writing is very important in language learning. The English teacher should use an appropriate teaching technique to help the students to develop their idea in writing. When the teacher uses the appropriate technique, it is possible that the result of teaching writing hopefully can be achieved. When a teacher teach writing, such as descriptive text as one of genre text which is the common text taught in university level, she/ he can use clustering teachnique to stimulate students' attention and motivate them to explore their idea in writen form. Technique is used to stimulate students' prior knowledge through giving question or picture based on the topic which is discussed in writing class.

Moreover, the teaching of writing by using clustering technique is one of the teaching techniques to have learning of writing more interesting for students. Students will be attracted and communicative to follow the learning process if the teachers use both of technique. Furthermore, by using clustering the teacher can show to the students how to arrange their writing creatively. Applying clustering can also makes students write better and enjoy the learning of writing very much with a good product writing.

### **Suggestion**

1. It is suggested to English teacher to make consideration of using clustering technique in teaching writing descriptive text, because there are several benefits that can be taken by English teacher and students.
2. The teacher is suggested to choose an interesting technique for the students. Using clustering



technique, the students will be led to organize their idea to write a good text.

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