

The Application of Clustering Technique to Improve Students' Writing Ability of Recount Text of Class VIII E SMP Negeri 36 Semarang Academic Year 2023/2024

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian tindakan kelas ini bertujuan untuk mengamati penerapan teknik clustering dalam meningkatkan kemampuan menulis siswa. Subjek pada penelitian ini adalah 30 siswa dari kelas VIII E SMP N 36 Semarang tahun pelajaran 2023/2024. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah penelitian tindakan kelas kolaboratif yang dilakukan dalam dua siklus dan masing-masing siklus terdiri dari perencanaan, pelaksanaan, pengamatan dan refleksi. Teknik pengumpulan data dalam penelitian ini adalah tes tertulis dan observasi. Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa di siklus pertama 56.67% siswa memenuhi Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal (KKM) dengan nilai rata-rata 74,67. Pada siklus kedua lebih dari 75% siswa, yaitu 86,67% siswa berhasil mencapai Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal (KKM) dengan nilai rata-rata 79,50. Berdasarkan data yang diperoleh, dapat disimpulkan bahwa penerapan teknik Clustering dapat meningkatkan kemampuan menulis teks recount siswa.

Kata kunci: menulis, teknik clustering, teks recount

ABSTRACT

This classroom action research aims to observe the application of the clustering technique in improving students' writing skills. The subjects in this study were 30 students of class VIII E SMP N 36 Semarang in the academic year 2023/2024. The research method used was Collaborative Classroom Action Research (CCAR) conducted in two cycles and each cycle consisted of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. The data collection techniques in this study were written tests and observation. The results of this study showed that in the first cycle 56.67% of students met the Minimum Completion Criteria (KKM) with an average score of 74.67. In the second cycle more than 75% of students, that is, 86.67% of students managed to reach the Minimum Completion Criteria (KKM) with an average score of 79.50. Based on these data, it can be concluded that the implementation of the clustering technique can improve students' writing skills of recount text.

Keywords: writing, clustering technique, recount text

1. INTRODUCTION

In the modern era, English is a universal language that is crucial to people's daily lives. To communicate with diverse people in different parts of the world, many English skills are used. English serves as a bridge for communication between people from various cultural backgrounds and geographical locations. In Indonesia, starting in junior high school and continuing through high school and further education, English has been regarded as a

required subject in the curriculum (Farhana, 2019). As an integral part of language education, English proficiency encompasses four essential skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These skills are interlinked, contributing to a comprehensive command of the language. Harmer (as cited in Perwitasari, 2014) underlines the importance of these fundamental skills in English education. Although the four skills are distinct from one another, they are related to one another and can even be combined.

However, among these skills, writing often presents a unique set of challenges for learners. Richard and Renandya (as cited in Hijriyanti, 2020) stated that writing is the hardest skill to develop since it requires students to come up with ideas and arrange them into an understandable and readable text. Writing is also stated as the most difficult thing because students do not get a clear understanding of what to write in each paragraph (Made et al., 2023). Writing proficiency involves not only constructing grammatically accurate sentences but also effectively conveying ideas, organizing thoughts, and adhering to proper text structures. As we all know, writing in particular is utilized in many facets of world literature, including advertisements, business transactions, legal documents, newspapers, and agreements in politics and the military. Compared to other talents, writing can be thought of as one of the essential skills. Because writing is a fundamental skill for anyone who want to learn English.

It has been recognized that students' writing abilities need to be improved in the context of Indonesia's English education system. Writing abilities are commonly required for academic tasks, tests, and eventually professional activities, thus there is a practical need for them. Therefore, it is essential for educators to examine innovative and effective techniques to enhance students' skills in writing. The issue that arises in the classroom is that occasionally students struggle with idea development, grammatical use, and writing coherence. Therefore, they will find it challenging to structure ideas into a paragraph (Hijriyanti, 2020). Regardless of the fact that ideas are crucial components of writing, students struggle with knowing where to begin and from what. Ideas are important for writing, in reality. It is impossible to write without an idea in mind. Another problem is that students who do not have enough writing practice and lack vocabulary mastery. A limited vocabulary can lead to repetitive language use and a monotonous tone in their writing. Additionally, grammatical errors can

disrupt the flow of ideas, impacting the readability and overall quality of the text.

Based on observation and discussion with one of the English teachers at SMP N 36 Semarang as the collaborator in this study, it can be seen that the difficulties experienced by students in writing a text are caused by a lack of basic knowledge, poor vocabulary and not knowing how to start writing by developing and organizing their ideas. Therefore, efforts are needed to create a learning environment that encourages the development of good writing skills.

The application of clustering techniques in writing instruction has the potential to address these challenges. Findings from previous researchers have shown that using clustering techniques can help students learn to write texts more effectively (Nur, 2022). By using clustering as a pre-writing strategy, students can organize their thoughts systematically and form a coherent writing outline. This technique encourages students to generate ideas, group related concepts, and establish relationships between them, thus helping the process of developing writing content. Students can convey their ideas through writing by arranging words or sentences into circles or bubbles using clustering techniques (Azizah, 2021). In addition, the application of the clustering technique can also enrich students' vocabulary acquisition. When students explore different aspects of the chosen topic during clustering, they can find new words that can be applied in writing.

By organizing ideas into clusters, students can also better understand how to create coherent and varied writing, thus reducing the use of monotonous language. Clustering techniques and vocabulary mastery have an interactive impact on students' writing ability (Fitriani, 2018). As students explore various facets of their chosen topic during clustering, they may encounter new words and expressions, thereby enriching their lexical repertoire. Additionally, by organizing ideas into clusters, students could gain a better understanding of how to structure their writing, enhancing overall coherence and reducing the risk of repetitive language use.

In conclusion, the challenges in writing faced by students, including at SMP N 36 Semarang, underline the need for effective teaching techniques. The application of clustering techniques offers a promising way to address these challenges and improve students' writing ability by encouraging the development of ideas, supporting grammatical accuracy, and promoting writing coherence. The use of clustering techniques in writing learning could promote students' creativity while helping the development of ideas (Utami et al., 2017). Therefore, this is what led the author to conduct a study entitled "The Application of Clustering Technique to Improve Students' Writing Ability in Recount Text Learning in Class VIII E SMP N 36 Semarang Academic Year 2023/2024." This study attempts to investigate the application of clustering techniques in improving students' recount text writing ability.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research is a Collaborative Classroom Action Research (CCAR) which aims to apply clustering techniques to improve students' writing ability in recount text learning. The research was conducted from August to September 2023 in class VIII E which experienced challenges in writing skills. The number of students in this class is 32. However, the subjects in this study were only 30 students because 2 other students did not participate in one of the learning activities in the study.

In this study, there were three types of instruments used to collect data. First, the observation sheet used to observe students' learning activities during the learning process. Second, pretest-posttest in the form of writing tasks which used to measure student learning outcomes before and after going through the learning process. Third, field notes were used to record events that occurred during the learning process in each cycle.

Data were obtained through direct observation of activities carried out by teachers and students during the learning process. This technique involves direct observation of activities carried out by teachers and students during the learning

process. Thus, researchers can obtain accurate and contextualized data about the dynamics of learning.

This classroom action research consisted of 2 cycles. According to action research experts Kemmis and McTaggart (as cited in Lubis et al., 2017) research activities usually include four main phases in a research cycle: planning, acting, observation, and reflection.

- The planning stage in each cycle involves the preparation of a Learning Implementation Plan (lesson plan), LKPD, Observation Sheet, and other evaluation tools.
- Implementation Stage or acting stage, the second stage is implementation, which involves the implementation of what has been planned in the previous stage. This means that research teachers have to take concrete actions in the classroom. It is important for them to remember that at this stage, the actions taken must be in accordance with the plans that have been made before.
- The observation stage is carried out by observing the implementation of the action, especially in learning activities, using an observation sheet filled in by the observer. This stage provides constructive feedback to the researcher to identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement in their teaching methods.
- The reflection stage involves analyzing the observation data quantitatively and qualitatively, the data is presented in the form of tables or diagrams. Reflection process was conducted by the practicing teacher and the real English subject teacher as a collaborator in the study.

The results of student's writing were assessed by using a writing assessment rubric that has been adapted from the guidelines compiled by Brown. From the assessment rubric used, data on learning outcomes are obtained to determine the percentage increase in learning outcomes in each cycle which are then described to draw conclusions. The assessment criteria encompass various aspects, including

grammar, mechanics, vocabulary, organization, and content. To facilitate the evaluation process, a writing assessment rubric is employed, which is comprised of five distinct categories: content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. Each of these categories is rated on a scale ranging from 5 to 20. As a result, the highest possible score achievable is 100, while the lowest attainable score is 25 (Kumala et al., 2023).

The analysis of learning outcomes involved the calculation of the average pretest and posttest scores in both cycle I and cycle II. The pretest and posttest scores were calculated using the writing assessment rubric, then the calculation of the average score of students' writing tests was carried out using the following formula:

$$x = (\sum x) / N$$

Notes:

X = Mean

$\sum x$ = Total of students' score

N = Total of students

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The first cycle was conducted in two meetings. The research was conducted by implementing clustering techniques which were used as a guide to generate students' writing recount text.

In the initial phase of this study, the teacher provided a clear explanation of recount texts along with examples. Next, the teacher explained what clustering technique is and how to apply it during the prewriting stage. Once the students had a good understanding of both the material and the implementation of clustering, the teacher engaged them in a group activity. This initial activity served as preparation for the students to write their own texts as the post-test in this learning process. Group activities integrated allow learners to work together in completing the tasks in the worksheet. This collaboration aims to improve understanding of the subject matter and develop social skills such as cooperation, communication and joint problem solving. Through this collaboration, learners can provide support

and motivation to each other during the learning process. Once they feel comfortable and have experience in working in groups, students will be better equipped to handle tasks independently. This could potentially result in better independent performance compared to if they went straight to the task without involving group work.

Overall, the implementation of actions in cycle I went well. The researcher managed to apply the clustering technique in accordance with the plan that had been prepared. However, there were some findings that needed to be improved in the next cycle including:

- a. Students are still unfamiliar with the clustering technique applied. The researcher will explain the clustering technique again.
- b. Students still often make mistakes in composing past tense correctly and have difficulty in translating words/phrases into English. Therefore, in cycle II, the researcher will provide further explanation about the preparation of past tense sentences in English and give them a handout.
- c. Students are still unable to use the right words in sentences, so the researcher will encourage students to be more active in utilizing available learning resources, especially online dictionaries.
- d. Large groups are less effective because it results in some members being less active.

Based on the findings in cycle I, the researcher made improvements to the learning activities in cycle II. The improvements made by researchers in cycle II were to provide reinforcement related to concepts or materials that had been built so as to minimize misunderstandings in learning activities. In addition, the researcher also provided reinforcement regarding the use of simple past tense and how to form correct sentences to express past experiences. In organizing students to learn such as grouping students, in cycle II researcher divided students into smaller groups so that no students were less involved in learning. This is done to obtain

more optimal learning outcomes. Optimal learning outcomes are marked by an increase in students' writing ability and the percentage of students who achieve learning completeness.

The second cycle was also conducted in two meetings. In the second cycle, the researcher directed their attention to the problems that emerged in the first cycle. Researchers developed an improved or revised lesson plan and implemented it in the second cycle to resolve the problems that arose in the previous cycle. The purpose of this action is to ensure that the necessary improvements are achieved.

In the second cycle, students began to understand the application of the clustering technique better than the previous cycle. This was because the researcher explained the technique again with a simpler explanation so that it was easily understood by students. In addition, the researcher also distributed PPT slides of recount text material and clustering technique explanation material, so that they could read the material independently other than from the explanation given. They also used PPT slides as a helpful resource to go to whenever they required a fast review or a deeper comprehension of the material and clustering technique. PPT slide distribution made it easy for students to learn at their own pace and in their preferred environment. This flexibility is essential to accommodate different learning styles and schedules. This strategy provided students with the material they needed in addition to the material obtained from books or internet sources. The students had access to the materials, so that they could explore topics further based on their individual needs. This increased their engagement with the subject matter.

The combination of simplified explanations and the distribution of PPT slides encouraging students to self-study was a well-rounded approach to improving students' understanding of the material. This strategy not only addressed the immediate challenge of comprehension, but also encouraged a more student-centered and adaptive learning environment, ultimately benefiting students' overall educational experience.

This strategy is proven to be more effective in building students' understanding of the material better. This can be seen from the learning outcomes achieved by students in this second cycle. It helped to resolve the problem that arose in the first cycle.

Another step taken as an improvement from the shortcomings in cycle I was to provide further explanation regarding the use of language features in writing recount texts, especially the use of simple past tense. Students were still confused about how to write sentences in the past tense during the learning process of cycle I. This made some students make mistakes in writing the text on the posttest I. In the second cycle students were given more practice to form sentences in the past tense. Moreover, the researcher made handouts which contain recount text material, simple past tense formulas and some examples of verbs in the past form. The use of handouts helped students in writing the recount text. They could easily open the material and find some action verbs in past form. The researcher also encouraged students to be more active in utilizing available learning resources, such as online dictionaries.

Group activities also went better as students were divided into pairs to complete the tasks in the worksheets given in the collaboration activities. Recently, the usage of pairs has dominated education, particularly the teaching of second languages (Susanti et al., 2020). When working in pairs, students wrote better when their collaborators were either higher or lower than them. The results of the current research suggest that even young learners who are in the early stages of acquiring a foreign language can provide varying levels of support to one another (Ahmadian et al., 2017). As a result, educators can leverage this capability and involve young students in collaborative problem-solving activities. This type of group work can be advantageous in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings, particularly when opportunities for using the language outside the classroom are limited.

In small groups, students looked more conducive and there were no students

who did not contribute to the group. Everyone was more likely to contribute. Anxiety decreased and motivation was raised through this collaborative strategy. It also encouraged peer support where students helped one another and spreading the workload, they made assignments seem less difficult. Students were seen to be more actively engaged in active communication and participate in meaningful discussions, in the learning activity during the implementation of the clustering technique in the second cycle of this research.

In addition, collaborating in pairs with individuals of different ability levels also has benefits. Students tended to write better when collaborating with peers who were more proficient or less proficient than them. This concept highlights the advantages of working with partners who have different skill levels. When paired with someone more advanced, students could learn from their peers, while those with higher abilities could find satisfaction in helping their peers to improve. The task given in this cycle was done by the students better than in a bigger group. The result of their work also showed better than in the first cycle. The students finished the task they were given in this cycle better as a small group than as a larger one. Their efforts contributed to results that were significantly better. The switch to pair works enhanced students' writing abilities while also promoting peer-to-peer learning and support. As they began to see the advantages of working together with peers who had different levels of ability, students were more involved and motivated. Additionally, this modification in the teaching strategy might be seen as a positive response to the difficulties encountered in the previous cycle.

The way students learn has been improved by identifying the benefits of pair work and successfully adopting it, leading to improved student performance and a more favorable learning environment. This emphasized the significance of adaptability and flexibility in teaching where educators needed to experiment with different strategies to optimize the learning experience for their students.

The researcher, English teacher, and colleagues jointly evaluated the results of cycle II as an indicator of the success of this study, in which more than 75% of students had successfully reached the target. Basically, students' active participation during this cycle can be categorized as good. Students have shown a willingness to focus when the teacher reviews the material, are able to ask questions relevant to learning, dare to contribute with ideas and thoughts, and are able to use learning resources effectively. This indicates that the quality of student interaction and student engagement during the learning process by applying the clustering technique has improved significantly.

The research is said to be successful if more than 75% of the total number of students have reached or exceeded the set standard of completeness (KKM). This concept is in accordance with Arikunto's opinion (as cited in Febriani, 2014) which states that the expected level of completeness in applying the principle of complete learning is at least 75%, and if the percentage is less than 75%, it is considered not to have reached the standard of completeness. The acquisition of student scores that have not reached the minimum completeness criteria and those that have reached the minimum completeness in each cycle are presented in the table below.

Table 2. Results of Each Cycle

Result	Cycle I	Cycle II
Average Score	74,67	79,50
Completed	17	26
Not completed	13	4
Percentage of Classical Completeness	56,67%	86,67%

Based on the data in the table above, in cycle I the percentage of classical completeness only reached 56.67%. From 30 students there are only 17 students who meet the criteria for completeness. Whereas 13 students (43,33%) have not yet completed their score, whose score have not reached the minimum completion criteria. It shows that the expected goal of

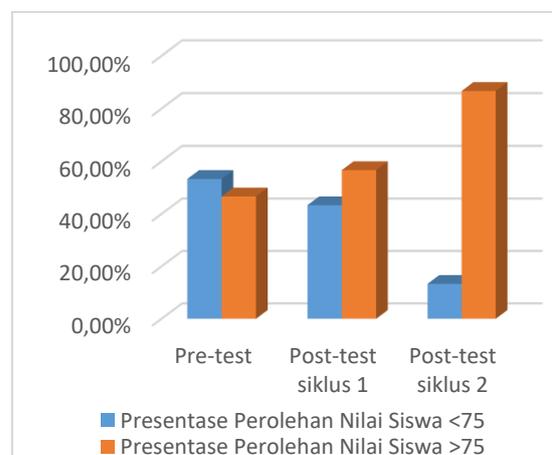
classical completeness has not been achieved yet. In the second cycle, there was a noticeable rise in student learning outcomes, with 86,67% of students successfully completing their requirements. This achievement surpasses the classical completion standards, which dictate an 75% threshold. There are only 4 students who have not reached the minimum completion criteria.

Upon reflection on the implementation of clustering techniques in cycle I, several weaknesses were identified. Students were found to be unfamiliar with the clustering technique in learning recount text, which hindered the optimal progression of the learning process. Additionally, there was a deficiency in students' ability to construct sentences in the past tense, highlighting the need for further instruction on grammatical structures and past tense verb usage. Punctuation and capitalization errors were widespread, impacting the mechanics of their writing and resulting in low scores. Lastly, the organization of students' writing received low marks, indicating the importance of teaching effective organizational strategies for recount texts. To address these weaknesses in the cycle II, it is essential to provide focused instruction, practice, and interventions in these specific areas to improve classical completeness and enhance the overall quality of students' recount texts.

According to the findings of the weaknesses found in cycle I, the researcher made the improvements to the learning activities in the second cycle. The improvements made by researchers in the second cycle were to provide reinforcement related to the concept or material that has been built so as to minimize misunderstandings in learning activities. In addition, the researcher also provided reinforcement on the use of simple past tense and how to form a correct sentence to express past experiences. This strategy is used to address the issue of students struggling with constructing sentences in the simple past tense; the researcher placed a greater emphasis on this grammatical aspect. This likely involved dedicated lessons and exercises to help students form

sentences correctly and express past experiences with confidence. The researcher also shared the PPT of the material and a handout for each student as the strategies to foster student understanding about the materials and the technique used. Researchers also formed groups with fewer members in the second cycle, each group consisting of 2 learners so that the division of tasks and responsibilities could be balanced and contribute to the task. Working in pairs made them actively involved in learning and doing the task given. This adjustment was made to ensure a more balanced distribution of tasks and responsibilities among the students. Working in pairs allowed them to collaborate effectively.

The evident improvement in student learning outcomes, marked by an increased number of students reaching the minimum completion score, indicates the success of applying clustering techniques to improve students' recount text writing skills. Therefore, based on the reflection in the second cycle, there is no need to continue to the next cycle (cycle III). The students are considered to have completed the recount text material well, particularly in terms of their writing skill. This achievement is supported by the statistical data comparing the percentage of students who met or exceeded the minimum criteria in the first and second cycles. The graphical representation illustrating the comparison of classical completeness percentages in each cycle is provided below for reference.



Picture 1. The Comparison of Percentage of Classical Completion for Each Cycle

From the graph presented, it can be seen that the percentage of students who reached the minimum completeness criteria increased, while the number of students who did not reach the minimum completeness criteria steadily decreased from cycle I to cycle II. This can be interpreted that the application of the clustering technique really helps students in improving their ability to write recount texts.

The results achieved in the second cycle concerning classical learning completeness were notably positive and better than cycle I, with an attainment of 86.67%. This reflects a substantial increase of 30% from the first cycle. The high percentage of learning completeness among students in the second cycle, reaching 86.67%, indicates that the anticipated learning completeness goal has been successfully met, surpassing the 75% target.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the classroom action research that has been conducted, it can be concluded that the application of the clustering technique in learning to write recount text for students of class VIII E SMP N 36 Semarang in the academic year 2023/2024 has given positive results. From the beginning with an average pretest score of 67.50, students' writing ability has increased significantly. In cycle I, the average score increased to 74.67, and in cycle II it reached an average of 79.50. This shows a consistent increase in student achievement along with the application of the Clustering technique.

In addition, the classical completeness rate also showed a significant increase. In the first cycle stage, only around 56.67% of students achieved classical completeness, but in cycle II, the classical completeness rate increased sharply to around 86.67%. Although there were still some students who had not reached the completion, this showed the effectiveness of the Clustering technique in improving students' understanding of the writing material. The level of classical completeness also showed an increase from pre-test to post-test which was 86.67%. The percentage shows that more than 75% of

students have reached the Minimum Completion Criteria (KKM) value that has been determined in English lessons. Therefore, it can be concluded that the use of Clustering technique can effectively improve students' writing skills especially in writing a recount text.

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