



05-4506832



pustaka.upsi.edu.my



Perpustakaan Tuanku Bainun
Kampus Sultan Abdul Jalil Shah



PustakaTBainun



ptbupsi

**THE USE OF MIND MAPPING AS A PRE-WRITING ACTIVITY IN
WRITING FACTUAL ESSAYS.
A CASE STUDY**

GOURIKUTTY A/P SARACHANDRA PANICKER



05-4506832



pustaka.upsi.edu.my



Perpustakaan Tuanku Bainun
Kampus Sultan Abdul Jalil Shah



PustakaTBainun



ptbupsi

**A PROJECT PAPER SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF EDUCATION**

**LANGUAGE FACULTY
UNIVERSITI PENDIDIKAN SULTAN IDRIS**

2009



05-4506832



pustaka.upsi.edu.my



Perpustakaan Tuanku Bainun
Kampus Sultan Abdul Jalil Shah



PustakaTBainun



ptbupsi



DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work in this project paper is my own except for quotations and summaries which have been duly acknowledged.

09.09.2009

Gourikutty A/p Sarachandra Panicker
M20072000569



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like and contented to convey and express my deepest gratitude and appreciation to a number of people who had helped directly or indirectly in this study.

Firstly, I would like to express my earnest appreciation and admiration to my supervisor, Dr. Che Ton binti Mahmud, the Head of English Language Department of Faculty of Languages, University Pendidikan Sultan Idris, Tanjong Malim, for her time, guidance and most of all her patience throughout the period of completing this study. Sincerely, this study would have not been accomplished successfully without her contribution and genuine participation.

Special gratitude to my beloved husband, Rabindra Dev Prasad, my dearest parents, mother-in-law, family members and close associates for their constant encouragement, support and assistance in the completion of this study.

Finally, I am also grateful to the principal, teachers and Form Four students of SMK Putrajaya for their help and kindness in granting me access and aid to conduct this study effectively and successfully.

From the bottom of my heart, thank you once again and God bless.

ABSTRACT

Thinking Skills are greatly emphasized in the Malaysian education system. Both critical and creative thinking skills are clearly outlined in the curriculum document prepared by the Ministry of Education. These skills are incorporated in the learning outcomes to enable learners to solve problems, make important decision and to express themselves creatively. Some of these thinking skills are well practised during pre-writing session. A number of pre-writing techniques are developed to enhance the thinking skills in order to facilitate writing skills. One of the pre-writing techniques often used in teaching writing skills is mind maps. How effective is mind mapping in helping students to write good essays? This study is designed to answer the question. Therefore, this study investigates on the use of mind mapping as a pre-writing technique in writing factual essays. A total of 60 Form Four students from a school in Putrajaya were selected and divided into an experimental group and a control group. The two groups were given a pre test and a post test on the same topic. Their essays were marked and analyzed based on the content and organization of ideas. The score for the content followed the guidelines of the marking scheme specially designed for this study. The outcome of this study indicated that mind-mapping is an excellent pre-writing activity and a vey useful tool to help students to elicit ideas and related information in order to write good factual essays.



ABSTRAK

Kemahiran Berfikir diberi penekanan yang berfokus di dalam sistem pendidikan Malaysia. Ini dapat dilihat apabila kemahiran berfikir secara kritis dan kreatif turut digariskan sebagai satu elemen yang penting di dalam dokumen kurikulum yang telah disediakan oleh Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia. Kemahiran-kemahiran tersebut digabungkan di dalam hasil-hasil pembelajaran bagi membantu pelajar untuk menyelesaikan masalah, membuat keputusan serta meluahkan perasaan mereka secara kreatif. Kebanyakan kemahiran berfikir tersebut sering digunapakai semasa sesi prapenulisan. Teknik-teknik yang dipraktikkan semasa sesi prapenulisan dibangunkan untuk mempertingkatkan kemahiran berfikir bagi membantu penguasaan kemahiran menulis. Salah satu teknik prapenulisan yang sering digunakan di dalam pengajaran penulisan ialah peta minda. Persoalannya di sini, dapatkah peta minda membantu para pelajar untuk menulis sebuah karangan yang baik? Kajian ini direkabentuk untuk menjawab persoalan tersebut. Oleh itu, kajian ini adalah bertujuan untuk menyiasat keberkesanan penggunaan peta minda sebagai satu teknik prapenulisan dalam penulisan karangan berjenis fakta. Sejumlah 60 orang pelajar Tingkatan Empat daripada sebuah sekolah di Putrajaya telah dipilih untuk kajian ini. Mereka telah dibahagikan kepada dua kumpulan iaitu kumpulan eksperimental dan kumpulan kawalan. Kedua-dua kumpulan ini diberi praujian dan pasca ujian di atas topik yang sama. Karangan-karangan mereka telah disemak dan dianalisis berdasarkan kandungan dan organisasi idea-idea. Skor bagi kandungan idea adalah berdasarkan garispanduan yang telah ditetapkan di dalam skema pemarkahan yang digubal khusus untuk kajian ini. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa peta minda merupakan sebuah aktiviti prapenulisan yang amat berkesan serta membolehkan pelajar mencerna idea baru dan informasi yang berkaitan untuk menghasilkan karangan berjenis fakta yang baik.



CONTENT

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	ii
DECLARATION	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
ABSTRAK	v
CONTENT	vi
LIST OF TABLES	ix
LIST OF FIGURES	x

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1	Background of the Study	1
1.2	Objective of the Study	4
1.3	Purpose of the Study	5
1.4	Aim of the Study	5
1.5	Need for the Study	5
1.6	Research Question	9
1.7	Hypothesis	9
1.8	Limitations of the Study	10
1.9	Definition of Terms	10
1.10	Summary	12

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1	Introduction	14
2.2	Related Literature Review	15
2.3	Writing	16
2.4	Factual /Expository Essay	16



2.5	Pre-writing Techniques and Activities	19
2.5.1	Brainstorming	20
2.5.2	Free writing	21
2.5.3	Cubing	21
2.5.4	Journalists' Questions	22
2.5.5	Mind Mapping	22
2.6	Role of ESL Teachers	25
2.7	Process Writing Approach	25
2.8	Related Studies	28
2.9	Summary	29

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1	Introduction	31
3.2	Research Design	32
3.3	Sampling and Sampling Procedures	34
3.4	Research Instrument	35
3.5	Data Collection Procedure	35
3.6	Marking Method	37
3.7	Data Analysis Procedures	39
3.8	Summary	40



CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

4.1	Introduction	41
4.2	Demographic Profile of Research Participants	42
4.3	Results	42
4.3.1	Writing Ability of Students from Both Control and Experimental Groups	44
4.3.2	Effectiveness of Mind mapping in Writing Factual Essay	46
4.3.2.1	Hypothesis	47
4.4	Summary	50

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1	Introduction	51
5.2	Research Summary	51
5.3	Discussion	53
5.4	Implication of the Study	54
5.4.1	Pedagogical Implications	55
5.4.2	Implications for Future Research	57



5.5	Suggestions for Future Research	57
5.6	Recommendations	60
5.6.1	Teachers	60
5.6.2	Students	61
5.6.3	Planners and Writers	62
5.7.	Conclusion	63

REFERENCES	66
-------------------	-----------

APPENDICES

A	Pre-test and Post-test Question	69
B	Assessment Guide	70
C	Lesson Plans for the Experimental Group Session 1	71
	Lesson Plans for the Experimental Group Session 2	75
	Lesson Plans for the Experimental Group Session 3	79
	Lesson Plans for the Experimental Group Session 4	83
D	Sample Essays	
	Sample Essay 1	87
	Sample Essay 2	92
	Sample Essay 3	95
	Sample Essay 4	98
	Sample Essay 5	103

LIST OF TABLES

No.		Page
4.1	Raw Scores for the Control And Experimental Groups	41
4.2a	Group Statistics for Pre-Test	42
4.2b	Independent Samples T-Test Results Of The Pre-Test Data for Both Control and Experimental Groups	42
4.3a	Group Statistics for Post-Test	44
4.3b	Independent Samples T-Test Results Of The Pre-Test/Post-Test Data For Both Control and Experimental Groups	45



LIST OF FIGURES

No.		Page
2.1	Framework of a Factual Essay	18
2.2	Stages in Writing Process	26
3.1	Diagram of the Research Design	32
3.2	Organization of Lesson	35





LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ESL	English as a Second Language
GCE	General Certificate of Education
KBSM	Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah
KBSR	Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Rendah
PMR	Penilaian Menengah Rendah
RQ	Research Question
SPM	Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In our National System of Education, English is taught as a second language to all students, right from their first year in preschool and throughout their primary and secondary education. As a subject in the school curriculum, English has undergone many changes from a one-time compulsory subject to a subject that students must learn but need not pass in order to obtain a certificate.

In view of these developments, the English Language syllabus has changed since independence. During the early seventies, Malaysians were taught with a structural-based syllabus. The emphasis was to master the underlying rules forming sentences from lower-level grammatical units as phrases and clauses, and to practice using them as the basis for written and spoken communication. Then, the communicational syllabus was introduced

in which meaning or function was given priority with fluency taking the forefront, while accuracy played a secondary role.

In 1983 and 1987, KBSR and KBSM were implemented respectively. A skill based syllabus which emphasized on themes was introduced. In this syllabus, oracy skills and literacy skills were highlighted. In tandem to new changes and challenges in the field of communication and technology, a Language Use syllabus was introduced in 2003. This present syllabus, which also looked at themes, saw the levelling of skills being introduced. In this sense, learners have to master the first level of a skill before moving on to the next.

The present secondary school syllabus aims to equip students with the appropriate level of proficiency in English in order for them to perform effectively in their academic pursuits. The syllabus attempts to link the gap in language needs between the secondary and tertiary education by enhancing communicative competence and developing critical thinking through the use of the language.

There are altogether four language skills to be mastered by the students, namely Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing under the three main domains of Language for Interpersonal Use, Language for Informational Use and Language for Aesthetic Use.

English Language is one of the core subjects tested in the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) examination. The English examination consists of Paper 1 and Paper 2. The Writing skills in Paper 1 are evaluated in the form of a One Hour and Forty five minutes test which comprises two sections; Section A on Directed Writing and Section B on Continuous Writing. Students are advised to spend 35 minutes on Section A as it is guided with notes and an hour for Section B. Section A carries 35 marks while Section B



carries 50 marks. Section B tests the students' ability to write a continuous prose of different genres in accurate English. Therefore, students need to be familiar with different genres of writing.

The current state of affairs dealing with the decline of English proficiency amongst students in Malaysian schools has triggered an alarm cum warning to many a concerned educator. In the midst of this deterioration being publicized, the usual phenomenon of finger pointing and accusing each other had submerged. The English Language Curriculum though having undergone major technical and cosmetic changes in the recent years has not been able to provide a positive remedy for this conundrum. The intent of this study is to provide one of many solutions to overcome the decline in English proficiency.



The focus of this study is on factual essay as it is frequently tested in the continuous writing section of Paper 2 of the SPM English Examination. It requires students to explain in writing with facts and clarification of ideas. In this context, students are tested on their ability to organize their thoughts logically, coherently and cohesively. This study looks into the students' ability in writing the 350-word factual essay for the continuous writing assessment section in Section B. The SPM English examination requires students to write on a particular topic based on a given stimulus. In this sense, they are required to generate and develop ideas using the given parameters whilst ensuring the mechanics of writing and the use of appropriate language are well adhered to. Hence, the students face an uphill task of presenting a 350-word essay in an hour based on the given scope but with their own generated ideas.



Based on the readings and the experiences of the researcher as a teacher, this study entails how the fourth formers could produce a good quality essay with all the necessary requirements intact.

1.2 Objective of this Study

In the teaching of English as a second language, the main aspects emphasized upon are the teaching of basic skills such as the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Writing is an important skill that should be mastered by students. It serves as an important medium to express one's ideas and thoughts. Nevertheless, writing is a difficult skill that needs to be taught. Hence, language teachers play a very important role in teaching writing, especially its techniques and methods.

Rivers (1975) believes that, writing gives the students practice in manipulating structural variants by adding the reinforcement of the kinaesthetic image to the auditory and visual skills.

A purposeful selection and organization of experience requires active thought. When writing, the students have to keep in mind their purpose, think about how to organize those facts in a coherent fashion. The process of learning to write is thus largely a process of learning to think more clearly. Thus, the need to have a tool or medium to organize the thinking processes is required. In this respect, the researcher would like to propose the mind mapping technique as a tool or medium to achieve the above.



1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to clearly appraise the problems faced by the Form Four students and to investigate whether mind mapping as the selected pre-writing activity would help the Form Four students sustain a considerable good score in their writing assessment. This study seeks to determine the effectiveness of mind mapping in helping the students organize their thoughts systematically before writing a factual essay.

1.4 Aim of the study



The study aims to provide data concerning the effectiveness of mind mapping in pre-writing amongst the form four students. It is hoped that the findings of the research would encourage more English teachers in schools to incorporate the mind mapping technique especially in essay writing.

1.5 Need for the Study

In the borderless world of globalization, English Language stands tall as the lingua franca of the world. Therefore, it is unquestionable that English is a vital component of education in Malaysia. Being acknowledged as the second language of this country, it is





inevitable that everyone should have a certain degree of competence in this language. However, the present hue and cry on the deteriorating standards of English especially in the local media has brought about significant views on this issue. The authorities and the educators have been taken to task for the occurrence of this phenomenon. Remedies have been suggested but each year the issue explodes even further.

As mentioned earlier, this study plans to look at the writing paper, specifically the factual essay writing task. Our students are products of more than ten years of a specifically choreographed English language syllabus that places communicative competence as one of its main objectives. Their achievements in the English paper so far are nothing to be proud of. According to the Director General of Education, Datuk Alimuddin Mohd Dom in Berita Harian Online, 13 March 2008, the overall national passes for the 2007 SPM English language paper is about 75.3%, and 47.1% of these students managed to obtain 1A – 8E GCE O'level passes. The GCE O'level of 47.1% is nothing to be proud of as the status of English in Malaysia is the second most important language. This clearly proves that students who enter the fifth form are also not fully competent in this language. One of the notable causes of this dismal performance is the inability of the students to compose a good essay to suit the requirements set by the examination governing body. Hence, these students have to be taught the techniques of developing and organizing ideas to write a 350-word essay.

Furthermore, a simple analysis was conducted by the researcher on the results obtained by her students (in a secondary school in Putrajaya) who sat for the SPM paper in 2007. The number of students who sat for the SPM examination in 2007 was 186 students. The analysis revealed that only 8.60% of the students obtained 1A; 8.60%



obtained 2A; 7.53% obtained 3B; 12.37% obtained 4B; 8.60% obtained 5C; 8.60% obtained 6C; 20.43% obtained 7D and 10.22% obtained 8E. The percentage of failures was 15.05%. The overall number of passes in the SPM English paper was 84.95%. Although the number of passes was high but it was nothing to be proud of as only 37.1% of the students managed to get strong credits (which is from 1A to 4B).

There was a decline of 6.0% in the percentage of passes in the English SPM examination in this school in 2007 compared to 2006. The percentage of passes in 2006 was 90.9% compared to only 84.95% in 2007.

The results of the Form Four English Mid Year Examination 2008 held in May 2008 showed only 12.26% of the 155 students obtained Grade 1A and 2A, while 32.90% of the students managed to obtain a credit. The percentage of students who managed to get only 7D and 8E was 23.87%. The overall number of students who passed the test was only 69.03%. The examination post mortem revealed that 56.25% of the number of students who failed the examination could not complete the continuous writing section in the English Paper 1. The same problem is also the main cause of students being unable to obtain grade A. The continuous writing section clearly indicates a major problem for students in the upper forms that are forms four and five.

Based on the analysis given above, the researcher believes that there is a serious need to review and analyze the results achieved by the students in the writing paper. The factual essay is one of the genres of writing emphasized in continuous writing. The researcher regards the failure of the students to produce a good essay contributes to lower grades in the SPM English paper. On top of that, the researcher views this problem as due to the inability of the students to brainstorm ideas in a form of mind maps, which in turn

would facilitate them to generate ideas. Furthermore, these students are also unable to elaborate their ideas systematically. This results in them not being able to produce a good piece of factual essay.

The researcher believes that activities conducted during the pre-writing stage are shallow in nature. This is based on the statement made by Sommers (1994) (cited in Tompkins, 2000), that at present the focus of the pre-writing stage is more to polishing the students' writing rather than developing excellent ideas.

Furthermore, Daly (1977) noted that students, who are deemed as poor writers, are also unable to present their ideas critically and fail to ensure the cohesiveness of each piece of work. The problems mentioned here show the importance of one particular stage in the writing process, which is the pre-writing stage. Therefore, based on this fact the researcher believes that serious thoughts should be given to this stage of writing in order to facilitate students to produce good and well organized essays. There are a few reasons that obstruct the pre-writing stage in a writing lesson.

Tompkins (2000) stressed that even though the pre-writing stage is the getting-ready-to-write-stage, it is probably the most neglected stage in the writing process. At most times, this stage is converted into a group brainstorming session where the students are required to think of ideas that are related to the task. At present, lesson plans for the process writing are quite rigid and provide only five to ten minutes for pre-writing.

Therefore, the researcher believes teachers should give more emphasis in this stage of writing as this stage is the vital turning point for their students in visualizing their thoughts into writing.



1.6 Research Question

The researcher plans to optimize the use of mind maps at the pre-writing stage in order to solve the problem before hand. Based on this submission, the following research question has been derived to pave the way for this study.

RQ 1: How effective is the mind mapping technique in helping Form Four students to score higher marks in factual essays?



1.7 Hypothesis

Based on the Research Question mentioned above, the following is the null hypothesis for this study:

The Null Hypothesis (H_0 1)

There will be no statistically significant difference between students who undergo the mind mapping technique and the students who do not undergo the mind mapping technique.





1.8 Limitations of the Study

Firstly, the group of students chosen for this study does not represent the whole populace of upper form students in Malaysia. Therefore the results of this study do not represent the country's upper form students' samples.

Secondly, this study looks into the ability of these students in acquiring the language. All other aspects such as learning disabilities and their surroundings have been totally ignored.

Thirdly, the short time frame involved in this study does not illustrate the actual recognition and acceptance of the mind mapping technique in helping the students to write better essays. The actual significance of this study can only be seen once the targeted students have undergone a series of lessons over a longer period of time.

Finally, due to the short time frame of the nature of this study, the researcher could only choose one technique from the various pre-writing techniques available as the main focus of this study.





1.9 Definitions of Terms

i. Use

The term 'use' means utilizing a particular activity in solving the problem at hand. 'Use' is defined in the Dictionary.com as the act of employing, using or putting something into service. In this study, 'use' represents the utilization of mind mapping as a pre-writing activity to produce good essays.

ii. Mind Mapping

Mind mapping is a knowledge organization tool used to elicit ideas from one or more users by placing a topic in the centre of a blank space and branching out with related ideas. Mind map is similar to a semantic network or cognitive map. It is a diagram used to represent words, ideas, tasks or other items linked and arranged around a central key word or idea. It is used to generate, visualize, structure and classify ideas and as an aid to writing. In this study, mind mapping is used as a pre-writing tool to enhance students' writing ability.





iii. Essay

The term essay is a written composition in prose that discusses a subject or proposes an argument without claiming to be a complete or thorough exposition. In this study, essay is a written composition of about 350 words produced by students based on a given topic.

iv. Factual Essay

The term factual essays refer to essays written based on facts. It is also termed as an expository essay. It is informative writing because it seeks to give information and to explain. Informative writing includes reports of observations, ideas, scientific data, facts and statistics. Troyka (1999) refers to it as expository writing. According to Nesamalar, Saratha and Teh Soo Choon (1995), expository writing is presentation of facts, and information and explanations of things as they are.

1.10 Summary

In conclusion, this study believes that the use of mind mapping as a pre-writing activity is the best possible method to assist students to develop a good factual essay. It is undeniable that there is a necessity for this study due to the deficiency of writing skills especially in factual essays among students nowadays. Therefore, by exposing students to





pre-writing activities such as mind mapping, it is hoped that the problems faced by many Malaysian students to write a proper factual essay could be tackled. Finally, this study intends to prove that mind mapping as a pre-writing activity can be used to facilitate students to produce a good and well organized factual essay.

