

# THE EFFECT OF BUBBLE MAPS ON STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE IN DESCRIPTIVE WRITING AT THE SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL

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DESCRIPTIVE WRITING AT THE SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL**

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## ABSTRAK

Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk menentukan kesan peta gelembung pada prestasi penulisan pelajar dan juga untuk melihat pandangan mereka tentang penggunaan peta gelembung dalam menulis karangan deskriptif di peringkat sekolah menengah. Kaedah campuran digunakan untuk menjawab dua soalan penyelidikan dan dua hipotesis. Secara kuantitatif seorang penyelidik menggunakan kuasi eksperimen dan secara kualitatif dia menggunakan wawancara separuh berstruktur. Kajian ini dijalankan di Sekolah Menengah Islam di Indonesia. Lima puluh pelajar dipilih secara rawak dan ditugaskan kepada kumpulan kawalan ( $n = 25$ ) dan kepada kumpulan eksperimen ( $n = 25$ ). Data kuantitatif dianalisis menggunakan ujian  $t$  dan data kualitatif menggunakan analisis tematik seperti yang dikemukakan oleh Braun dan Clarke. Analisis ujian  $t$  menunjukkan terdapat perbezaan yang signifikan dalam skor min bagi kumpulan kawalan ( $M = 2.0$ ,  $SD = 4.0$ ) dan kumpulan rawatan ( $M = 9.6$ ,  $SD = 4.9$ ); [ $t(48) = 9.6$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ]. Ini menunjukkan bahawa penggunaan peta gelembung meningkatkan prestasi pelajar dalam penulisan deskriptif. Analisis wawancara separa berstruktur juga menunjukkan bahawa pelajar melihat peta gelembung sebagai alat yang berguna dalam menghasilkan idea, menyusun idea, merancang penulisan, dan meningkatkan struktur penulisan. Peta gelembung juga meningkatkan keseronokan dalam penulisan, kefahaman kandungan penulisan dan prestasi penulisan. Ini membawa kepada peningkatan struktur esei deskriptif mereka. Kesimpulannya, kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa penggunaan peta gelembung meningkatkan prestasi pelajar dalam menulis karangan deskriptif. Implikasi kajian ini mencadangkan bahawa peta gelembung dapat memberi manfaat kepada guru dan pelajar. Guru boleh menggunakan peta gelembung sebagai alat pengajaran untuk mengajar penulisan dan untuk pelajar peta gelembung boleh digunakan untuk membantu mereka dalam menghasilkan dan menyusun idea utama dan sokongan dalam mana-mana jenis teks.

## **THE EFFECT OF BUBBLE MAPS ON STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE IN DESCRIPTIVE WRITING AT THE SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL**

### **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of bubble maps on students' writing performance and also to explore their views on the use of bubble maps in writing descriptive essays at the secondary school level. A mixed method was employed to answer two research questions and two hypotheses. Quantitatively a researcher used quasi-experimental and qualitatively he used a semi structured interview. The study was conducted in a secondary Islamic Boarding School in Indonesia. Fifty students were randomly selected and assigned to a control group (n=25) and to an experimental group (n=25). The quantitative data were analysed using t-test and the qualitative data used thematic analysis as put forward by Braun and Clarke. The t-test result showed that there was a significant difference in the mean scores for control group (M= 2.0, SD= 4.0) and the experimental group (M= 9.6, SD= 4.9) [ $t(48) = 9.6, p = 0.000$ ]. This indicates that the use of bubble maps improved students' performance in descriptive writing. The thematic analysis of the semi-structured interviews also showed that the students viewed bubble maps as a helpful tool in generating ideas, arranging ideas, planning the writing, dealing with writing element, creating an enjoyable way, understanding the writing content, and improving their writing performance. In conclusion, this study has revealed that the use of bubble maps improved students' performance in writing descriptive essay. The implication of this study suggested that bubble maps can benefit teachers and students. Teachers can use bubble maps as an instructional tool to teach writing or any subjects and for students the bubble maps can be applied to help them in arranging the main and supporting points in any types of texts.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION



This study aims to improve the students' writing skills through the use of bubble maps strategy, focusing on writing descriptive essay. This chapter presents the background of the study, the problem statement, the objectives of the study, the research questions, the significance of the study, limitation of the study, and definition of key terms in the study.





## 1.1 Background of the Study

In Indonesia, the teaching of English as a foreign language became important as it is the main foreign language in Indonesia. It is a compulsory subject to be taught starting from primary school, junior high school, and senior high school (Mattarima & Hamdan, 2016). According to Mattarima and Hamdan (2016) English teaching in Indonesia has a number of general standard objectives for senior high school which is regulated as follows: (1) develop communicative competence both in oral and written in order to achieve the level of informational literacy; (2) levitate awareness of the nature and significance of English as a foreign language in order to participate with other countries in the global community; and (3) develop students comprehension on the relation between language and culture.



It is hoped that after nine years learning English, the students will have the ability to communicate using English language and have knowledge of the language both spoken and written. In learning English, students in Indonesia are required to master English language skill at a young age. Therefore, they need to acquire the English language skill; reading, speaking, listening, writing.

Among the four language skills, writing plays an important role in our personal and professional lives. We need to write for various purposes such as to report events, compose academic essays, business letters, and application letters. Writing is one of the important language skills that students need to master. Through writing, students can develop their capability in communicating with people in a written form. Rozimela (2004) states that learning to write is useful not only for the





sake of developing students' writing skill but also improving their English language skills as a whole.

The realities that numerous students experienced problems to generate ideas and lack of content indicated that teacher needs to address the issue by presenting an alternative teaching strategy that can improve students' performance in descriptive writing (Siddiq, 2013). One of the strategies that has been highlighted as a tool that can improve students' performance to write descriptive essay is the use of bubble maps. It is initially introduced by David Hyerle in 1990. He believed that students love looking at visual images, because the brain is stimulated by images (Hyerle & Yeager, 2007). Similar to the concept maps and graphic organizer, bubble maps is one type of eight thinking maps that functions to help students construct meaning from a concept to be a clear meaning (Hyerle, 2000). In addition, thinking maps support the learners to develop the ability to think, scaffold, and comprehend (Hyerle, 2011). Thinking maps are able to be employed in assisting the teachers to observe process of the students' writing activities. Moreover, it creates a typical visual language and can be utilized to sort out the students' thinking to deliver thoughts and substance in producing an effective writing product (Hyerle & Yeager, 2007)

Thinking Maps are suggested to be a good strategy to improve students' writing since it aids the learners to generate and classify ideas, organize paragraph and write good content (Cooks & Sunseri, 2014). Following the advantages of thinking maps to improve the students' performance in writing, the researcher will use one of the eight thinking maps. The bubble map will be used to improve students'





performance in writing descriptive essay such as generating ideas and writing relevant content.

Hyerle (2011) mentioned that the bubble map is used to depict things by applying the adjectives. It helps the students to improve their performance in writing descriptive essay, their skill to classify qualities, categorize ideas and utilize descriptive words. Therefore, looking at the function of bubble maps the researcher decided to use bubble maps to improve students' performance in writing descriptive essay.

### 1.3 Problem Statement



Sharples (1999) argued that writing is a chance that offers and provides students a way to present, express and explore thoughts about any personalities and events systematically. Therefore, writing is an important ability to be owned by students to communicate effectively.

However many studies highlighted that writing skill is considered as one of the most challenging skills to be learned compared to other skills (Kadariyah, 2014; Nguyen and Litman, 2015; Maharani, 2017). The studies reported that writing requires students to have knowledge about vocabulary, grammar, and organization of ideas (Kadariyah, 2014; Nguyen and Litman, 2015; Maharani, 2017).





In the context of Indonesia, although most of the Indonesian students have learnt English since elementary school yet they still face difficulties to express ideas in writing particularly descriptive essays (Abbas and Azis, 2016). This is because, in writing descriptive essays, the students need to have the ability to generate ideas and need to master the language if they want to write well. Therefore, it is crucial to teach the writing process to the students.

In Indonesia, before the government used the 2013 curriculum, the teaching of writing only focuses on the product of the writing than the process. The 2013 curriculum for the teaching of writing did not provide any formal instructions on how to teach writing to the students. However, a revision was made in the 2013 curriculum whereby emphasized was made on the process as an important aspect of teaching



According to Ariyanti (2016), before the 2013 curriculum was introduced, many teachers would just provide a topic for students such as ‘My Hobby’, ‘My School’ without giving any guidance on how to develop the paragraphs. There were no drafting exercise for the writing and the teachers just gave the score to the students’ writing without any feedbacks. In addition, the teaching of writing focused more on memorizing formula on how to write without any pre-writing process. Hence, many students were reported to have difficulties in writing descriptive essays (Ariyanti, 2016; Maharani, 2017).





Past studies have also shown that many Indonesian instructors faced a few issues to teach descriptive writing. For example, educators focused too much on the linguistic structures and gave less consideration on the process of writing (Wahyuni, 2003; Ariyanti, 2010). Furthermore, Rozimela (2004) said that instructing writing was troublesome and it is one of the most complex skills; hence, it was frequently set aside or disregarded by teachers. She repeated that students were given example writings to duplicate and were not given steps on the best way to write successfully.

Hami (2011) also stated that the teachers just provide the students with explanations about the generic structure and the ways of writing descriptive essay and let the students write without any feedbacks. This resulted in the students' lack of ability to describe things and they got easily bored with the writing lesson (Hami,



Suriyanti and Yaacob (2016) stressed that writing approaches used by teachers will also influence how the writing skill is taught in the classroom. Some teachers spent too much time to teach grammatical structures or edit the mistakes made by the students rather than on the process of writing. Furthermore, the lack of knowledge, skills and appropriate training in teaching EFL writing caused the teachers to transfer the knowledge using the traditional product approach model with a heavy reliance on the textbook (Foo, 2007; Adeyemi, 2008; Wong et al., 2009; Ariyanti, 2010; Zeng, 2010; Akinwamide, 2011; Alnufalie & Grenfell, 2012). As a result, students became passive and dependent on the teachers and the approach neglected the processes involved during writing descriptive essays, such as how the students generate ideas and produce a good content in their descriptive writing (Raimes, 1983; Tribble, 1996).





Siddiq (2013) said that the students in his school experienced difficulties to write a descriptive essay because they did not know what they should write and most of them did not know how to generate and organize ideas in writing a descriptive essay. They were only asked by the teacher to translate and fill in the blanks in their exercise book.

The researcher found out that similar problem occurred in Islamic Boarding School, South Kalimantan, Indonesia where the students there communicate more with their native language (Banjarese). It affected the English competency of the students. According to their language English teacher, the students had difficulties to generate ideas and arrange good content to write descriptive essay which really affect their scores in writing. Hence, the researcher decided to conduct the study on the usage of bubble maps as a tool to stimulate the students' development of ideas during the pre-writing stages. This supports the process approach writing that is being highlighted in the 2013 curriculum.

#### **1.4 Purposes of the Study**

The purposes of this study are as follows:

1. To investigate the effects of the implementation of bubble maps in improving students' performance to generate ideas in descriptive writing
2. To explore the students' views towards the use of bubble maps in writing descriptive essay





This study examines the effects of bubble maps in improving students' descriptive writing skill. It also explores the students' viewpoints on their experience using bubble maps in developing their descriptive writing essay. The feedback and responses from participants and input from the document reviewed are the sources of the data that lead to the findings of the effects in implementing bubble maps in improving students' performance in writing descriptive essay.

### 1.5 Research Questions

The research questions of the study are as follows:

1. To what extent does the use of bubble maps affect the students' descriptive writing performance to generate ideas?
2. What are the students' views towards the use of bubble maps in descriptive writing?

### 1.6 Hypotheses

Based on the research question mentioned above, the following are the hypotheses for this study;

#### Null Hypotheses (H<sub>0</sub>1)

There is no significant difference in the post-test scores between the control and experimental group.





### **Alternative Hypotheses (H<sub>a1</sub>)**

There is significant difference in the post-test scores between the control and experimental group.

### **1.7 Significance of the Study**

The researcher expects that the results of the study will significantly contribute to the body of literature on issues and challenges faced by the students' in writing in a second or foreign language. The significance of the study can be seen from providing a new descriptive writing experience during the practice of bubble maps in the teaching and learning process focusing on the development of students' descriptive writing in generating and organizing ideas with bubble maps.

It is also expected that the study will be beneficial to English language teachers and students. The findings of this study will provide a new alternative in teaching writing. Teachers can implement the Thinking Maps strategy using bubble maps in other types of essays or to promote other skills. Furthermore, this study is expected to motivate the students in learning English and improve the students' descriptive writing skills such as generating ideas, expressing ideas in a good structure, and expand their ideas then express them orally. In addition, for researchers who want to conduct a similar study but with different subjects or skills, the results of this study will provide information and can be used as a reference.





Apart from that, English Teacher Association Committee and English teachers can also apply this strategy in their instructional setting and to the implementation of English language teaching. The usage of bubble maps can be explored further in other contexts of teaching and learning to enhance the teaching of English language.

### **1.8 Limitation of the study**

There are several limitations of the study. Firstly, the population in this study is limited to secondary level in Islamic Boarding School, South Borneo, Indonesia. Hence, the result cannot be generalized to represent the general population. Secondly, the time factor is also a limitation, because the students are in secondary level who have examination every semester and their focus is mostly on the main Islamic studies subject. Moreover, in the examination they are not prone to use bubble maps due to the time constraint in using bubble maps as a writing strategy in doing every question, especially in enhancing their descriptive writing.

### **1.9 Definition of Key Terms in the Study**

The following are the definitions of the key terms used in this study. The general definitions as well as the specific definitions referring to the context of this study are presented and discussed.





### 1.9.1 Thinking Maps

Thinking maps are an arrangement of eight maps that individuals can use to compose their contemplations. The maps are intended to help students produce ideas through the usage of images that can promote their reasoning skills (Hyerle, 1995). Each guide has a particular aim and can be utilized individually or together. In his research Hyerle (2000) underlined that Thinking Maps are graphic organizers that help students to organize, analyse, and evaluate what one reads, writes, or think about. In this study, thinking maps refer to the bubble map which is used to enhance students' performance in writing descriptive essay such as generating ideas and writing good content.



### 1.9.2 Bubble Maps

Bubble map is one of eight Thinking maps strategies that can be used as a tool to stimulate students' thinking skill. A bubble map describes emotional, sensory, and logical qualities which are used to classify and categorize the ideas to write a type of writing (Hyerle, 1995). In this study bubble map is used to help students generate ideas in their descriptive writing.





### 1.9.3 Writing

Gholaminejad et al (2010) stated “writing is the expression of feelings, thoughts, desires and plans in black and white”. Moreover, writing plays a crucial role in the instructional learning process because it is the way to assess and evaluate learners’ progress. Writing is the most difficult skill for student among the four English language skills.

Writing is described as a complex skill. Students in English as a foreign language setting need English writing skills to use in their daily life such as writing a simple descriptive text and summary as well as to write essays and academic articles. As students enter the workforce, they will be asked to convey ideas and information in a clear manner. If students’ writing skill is enhanced, it will allow the students to graduate with a skill that will benefit them for life (Ahmed, 2016).

Good EFL writing, as Lee (2003) stated, is crucial for some parties such as teachers, researchers, textbook writers, and program designers in the field of foreign language teaching. Researchers stated that writing is a challenging process to be done by native and non-native speakers as it contains specific element to be mastered such as identifying the thesis statement, writing supporting details, reviewing, editing, and mastering multiple issues such as organization, content, purpose, vocabulary, audience, punctuation, predicting, and procedure (Abu-Rass, 2001 & Alsamadani, 2010).





### 1.9.4 Descriptive Writing

A descriptive writing refers to a writing product that is aimed to tell the reader about the description of events, people, and things through sensory detail. Oshima and Hogue (1997) said that descriptive writing appeals to the senses, so it tells how something looks, feels, smells, tastes, and or sounds. In this study, the descriptive essay refers to the text that describes a particular person, place or event. Descriptive writing vividly portrays a person, place, or things in such a way that the reader can visualize the topic and enter into the writer's experience. In this study descriptive writing refers to a paragraph of about 200 words on a given topic.

