

## IMPLEMENTING SEMANTIC MAPPING STRATEGY TO ENHANCE ELEVENTH GRADERS' ORGANIZATION ASPECT OF THE WRITING SKILL

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**Abstract:** Teaching writing skill to Indonesian secondary students encounters many obstacles since English in Indonesia is a foreign language. Elaborating and organizing the ideas in pre-writing activity is one of the problems faced by students. The objective of this study was to examine how the implementation of semantic mapping strategy could enhance the eleventh graders' writing skill, especially the organization aspect. Semantic mapping strategy was implemented in pre-writing activity since this strategy provides the visual concept of relations of the ideas. Classroom Action Research (CAR) was used as the research design in this study, and the implementation was carried out in three meetings for one cycle through the *WhatsApp* group. The research subjects were students of XI Science 4 class at SMA Negeri 4 Malang which consisted of 34 students. The results showed that this strategy succeeded in enhancing students' writing scores in one cycle. The average score before the implementation was 69.9, and it became 86.8 after the implementation. Besides, the students' organization aspect also increased significantly. In brief, this study offers a teaching strategy to overcome the problems in writing class by implementing semantic mapping strategy.

**Keywords:** *semantic mapping strategy; writing skill; organization aspect*

Writing is considered the most difficult skill among other language skills since it involves a complex process: it reflects things in the mind, and it must be clearly represented to the readers. This is an activity where the author states their ideas into the paper from a word to turn into a sentence, a paragraph, and a complete text (Kroma, 1988). The appropriate written language is required to transmit the ideas and facts clearly and accurately from a writer to a reader through a text (Mohammad & Hazarika, 2016). The appropriate written language itself is the product of brainstorming, organizing, and polishing process that require particular abilities which cannot be naturally grown (Brown & Lee, 2015). Therefore, to convey the ideas in mind to become a qualified writing requires the complex process of brainstorming, organizing, and polishing so that the ideas can be obviously represented to the readers.

Teaching EFL writing in the Indonesian context is challenging because there are some obstacles faced by teachers, i.e., the lack of students' vocabulary, grammatical errors, and the difficulty in elaborating and organizing the ideas. Even though there are some obstacles, teachers must teach students how to write a good paragraph so that it can be meaningful for everyone who reads it. Besides the lack of vocabulary and grammatical errors, in writing skill, elaborating and organizing the ideas is also considered as the most challenging aspect. Most students have low abilities in developing and organizing the ideas to become a well-written product because many teachers only give a prompt to be done by the students without guiding them. It happens since most of the teachers are lacking in techniques of teaching writing, so they use the traditional product approach model which only assesses the error-free text produced by students (Nunan, 1999). Therefore, students' writing skill, especially in elaborating and organizing ideas, cannot improve because teachers do not teach them how to do it, and they only accept the error-free products produced by students.

A preliminary study was conducted at SMAN 4 Malang involving students of XI Science 4 class as the subjects of this study. In this stage, a test was administered to the students of XI Science 4 class. The

test was in the form of a prompt to write an analytical exposition text, and it was used to check students' writing ability, to find out in which aspect they lacked. The topic used in this test was "The School Zoning System," the hottest issue among students back then. Students were given 60 minutes to write down their analytical exposition texts. Students' overall mean score of writing was 69.9. In this writing test, the researcher used five aspects in this scoring system, specifically: content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. The mean score of those five writing aspects that students got were 72.4 for content; 64.2 for organization; 68.7 for vocabulary; 72 for grammar; and 80.6 for mechanics. From that scoring system, it can be concluded that students lacked in the organization aspect because that aspect showed the lowest score among other aspects of writing that were assessed. Therefore, the scores students got in this preliminary study indicated that the problems encountered by the students of XI Science 4 class were elaborating and organizing their ideas.

Considering the problem encountered by the students of XI Science 4 class in writing skill, the researcher proposed a teaching writing strategy called semantic mapping strategy to help teachers teach students writing skill. Semantic mapping strategy is a graphical strategy which visually displays a significant idea of a specific topic and how they are connected, to enhance student's writing skill, especially in elaborating and organizing the ideas. Semantic map itself is a chart of the relationship between words that were connected based on their use in a specific text, and it is a valuable strategy to be presented at any proficiency level (Stahl & Vancil, 1986; Zahedi & Abdi, 2012). Similarly, other theories explained that this strategy frames how ideas dovetail by incorporating an assortment of memory strategies such as grouping, visualizing, combining, and elaborating the ideas using a chart presentation which represents words and ideas connections to the learners visually (Ahour & Sakhaei, 2015; Oxford, 1990). Therefore, semantic mapping strategy was selected to be implemented since this strategy could solve the problem of elaborating and organizing the ideas faced by students of XI Science 4 class in writing texts by giving a visual representation of relations between words and their use in a particular topic. Semantic mapping strategy was implemented in the pre-writing activity since the main problem to be solved was elaborating and organizing the ideas. Hence, semantic mapping strategy should be implemented before the main writing activity to improve students' comprehension of a topic and to connect the main idea with supporting details logically (Mah, 2011).

Several previous studies regarding semantic mapping strategy had been conducted to enhance student's writing skill. Sari (2015) and Nofriati (2017) conducted their research using Classroom Action Research as the research design in implementing the strategy to improve student's writing narrative text and argumentative essay. Wibowo et al. (2017) used Research and Development as their research design to develop teaching material focusing on poetry. Meanwhile, Fauzan et al. (2019) conducted their research using quasi-experimental research design to analyze the effectiveness of semantic mapping strategy in writing descriptive text.

Differ from the previous studies mentioned above which focused on those types of text, this study implemented the semantic map in teaching writing explanation text to eleventh-grade students. Besides, this study focused not only on the elaboration of the ideas but also on the organization of the ideas whilst previous studies mostly focused on developing or elaborating the ideas only.

According to the brief explanation about the research gap above, this study aimed to examine how the implementation of semantic mapping strategy could improve eleventh graders' organization aspect of writing skill at SMAN 4 Malang. Therefore, the findings obtained in this research are practically expected to give the English teacher some information regarding the implementation of semantic mapping strategy to overcome the problem encountered by the teachers in teaching writing skill. Besides, the findings of this study are theoretically expected to be a valuable reference for future researchers who are willing to conduct research in implementing semantic mapping strategy.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design**

Classroom Action Research (CAR) was used as the research design since the aim of this research design is appropriate with the aim of this study is solving a practical instructional problem encountered by teachers in the learning and teaching process by developing an accomplished instructional strategy. Classroom Action Research can be defined as an effective research design to enhance the English teachers' quality in teaching and students' achievements in learning English (Latief, 2017). Additionally, Classroom Action Research involves repeated cycles which consist of four stages: (1) planning, (2) implementing, (3) observing, and (4) reflecting (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). This research design is described in Figure 1.

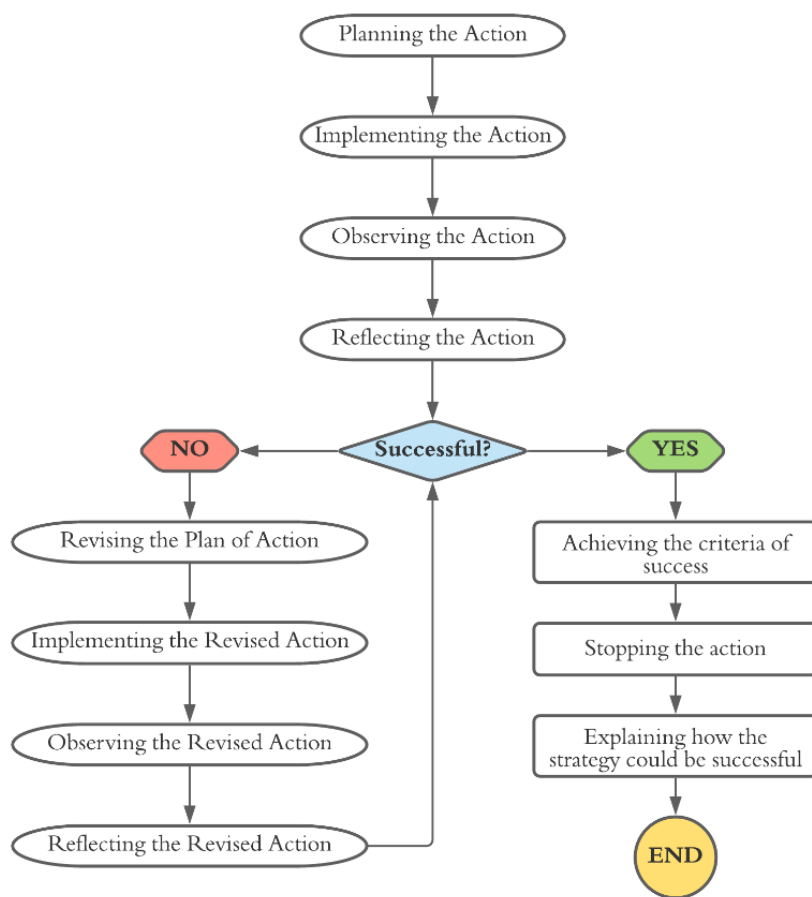


Figure 1. Classroom Action Research Cycle

In *planning* the action, the researcher had planned some actions to overcome the students' problems in writing tests. Those actions were arranging the teaching strategy, designing the lesson plans, setting up the instructional media and materials, developing the instruments for data collection, and determining the criteria of success.

Semantic mapping strategy was applied as the teaching strategy in this study since it aimed to help students elaborate and organize the ideas before writing a text. The lesson plans designed in this study were for teaching writing explanation text. The implementation of the strategy was carried out online through the *WhatsApp* group so that the media utilized were gadgets and the Internet connection. Moreover, the materials taught during the implementation of the strategy were adopted and adapted from English textbooks and other relevant sources. The instruments for data collection in this study were writing tests, assessment rubrics, and observation sheets. Besides, two criteria of success were set in this study. The first criterion of success was achieved when 85% of students could get 80 points or above in their overall writing scores. Moreover, the second criterion was achieved when 85% of students could get 75 points or above in the organization aspect.

The collaboration between the researcher and the real English teacher of XI Science 4 class happened in the *implementing* stage. The researcher implemented the strategy, whilst the real English teacher observed the learning and teaching process. The implementation was based on the teaching scenario that had been designed in the planning stage. Moreover, the use of teaching scenarios was to give a significant guideline in teaching writing skill with the help of semantic map as a teaching strategy.

As the researcher explained in the planning stage before, implementing semantic mapping strategy took three meetings for one cycle. The meetings were done online through the *WhatsApp* group. The researcher used the *WhatsApp* group to teach students online since the condition was impossible to do it offline or in-class teaching. The first meeting was held on April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2020; followed by the second meeting on April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020; and ended by the third meeting on May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020. The activities done in every meeting were different. The first meeting was used by the researcher to introduce the explanation text and how to use semantic maps in writing an explanation text. In the second and third meetings, students were asked to write their explanation texts by using a semantic map as the guidance of their writing.

The *observing* stage aimed to observe how well the semantic mapping strategy solved the writing problem encountered in XI Science 4 class. Since the problem was about writing performance, especially

in organizing the ideas, the success of the strategy in tackling the issue could be seen from the students' writing scores. Besides observing students' writing improvement, the researcher also wanted to observe the learning and teaching process while the strategy was implemented. It aimed to help the researcher analyze the success of implementing the strategy in the reflecting stage. In observing the learning and teaching process, the real English teacher helped the researcher to observe the process.

The *reflecting* stage in Classroom Action Research aims at evaluating the data collected to decide how far the data collected have revealed the success of the strategy in tackling the issue by comparing the data collected with the criteria of success (Latief, 2017). The researcher, therefore, analyzed the data obtained by comparing those data with the criteria set in the planning stage to see the outcomes could pass the measurement or not.

In the reflecting stage, the researcher also analyzed the observation sheets to reveal the factors that supported the success or unsuccess of the study since the observation sheets recorded everything done during the implementation of the strategy.

### Research Subjects

34 students from XI Science 4 class from SMA Negeri 4 Malang academic year 2019/2020 were involved in this study. The students had done the writing test administered by the researcher in the preliminary study.

### Instruments

Two instruments were utilized for data collection in this study. Two writing tests were administered by the researcher to get the results of students' writing skill in writing explanation texts. The writing tests were in the form of prompts to write explanation texts based on the topic given. Besides, the observation sheet was also distributed to the observer. It aimed to record detailed information while semantic mapping strategy was implemented.

### Data Analysis

For data analysis, a writing assessment rubric was utilized to evaluate students' written text. The writing assessment rubric was adapted from Jacobs (1981) for the levels and the percentage of the writing aspects and Brown (2004) for the description of the levels. There were five writing aspects assessed based on this rubric; they were content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. Each aspect had different percentages, 25% for the content, 25% for the organization, 20% for the vocabulary, 25% for the grammar, and 5% for mechanics.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Writing scores students obtained in Writing Test I and Writing Test II that were administered by the researcher in the second and third meetings indicated the results of students' writing skill after getting the treatment.

The results of Writing Test I and Writing Test II were compared to see the gradual improvement students obtained in their writing skill since the tests were administered after the strategy was implemented in the teaching and learning process. The results are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. The Results of Students' Writing Skill**

No	Aspect	Writing Test I	Writing Test II
1.	Highest score	91	94
2.	Lowest score	72	75
3	Number of students who passed the minimum score set by the school (75)	31	34
4.	Number of students who failed to pass the minimum score set by the school (75)	3	0
5.	Number of students who passed the minimum score set by the researcher (80)	25	29
6.	Number of students who failed to pass the minimum score set by the researcher (80)	9	5
7.	Average score	83.2	86.8

Here, the researcher had set a standard to see whether the first criterion set by him has been reached or not. The first criterion could be achieved when 85% of the students could pass the minimum

score determined by the researcher. The minimum score set by the researcher was 80. Based on the information shown in Table 1, there were 29 students or 85.3% of students who passed the passing grade set by the researcher. Therefore, it can be concluded that the first criterion of success set by the researcher was successfully achieved.

Besides comparing the overall results of writing tests students obtained in Writing Test I and Writing Test II, the researcher analyzed the improvement of every writing aspect. The improvement of every writing aspect obtained by students is presented in Figure 2.

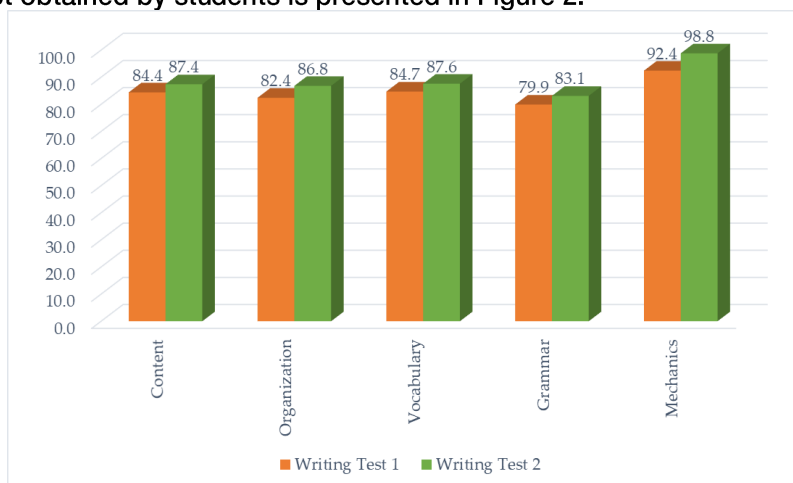


Figure 2. The Improvement of Writing Aspect

Figure 2 shows the improvement of writing aspects students obtained after getting the treatment. From that figure, the gradual improvement of the five writing aspects that were assessed from the first and second writing tests are clearly represented. The first aspect which is content increased by 3 points from 84.4 points to 87.4 points. The second aspect, organization, increased by 4.4 points from 82.4 points to 86.8 points. The vocabulary aspect increased by 2.9 points from 84.7 points to 87.6 points. Moreover, the fourth aspect, grammar, increased by 3.2 points from 79.9 points to 83.1 points. The last aspect, mechanics, increased by 6.4 points from 92.4 points to 98.8 points. In conclusion, all of the writing aspects showed a better improvement after students were taught using semantic mapping strategy.

Since the focus of implementing this teaching strategy was to overcome students' problems in the organization aspect, the researcher analyzed the improvement of the organization aspect deeply by counting the increasing points of the organization aspect from each students' scores obtained in Writing Test I and Writing Test II. It aimed at knowing the exact point of improvement students could get in the organization aspect since they had been taught using the strategy. The result of the students' points of improvement in the organization aspect was summarized in Figure 3.

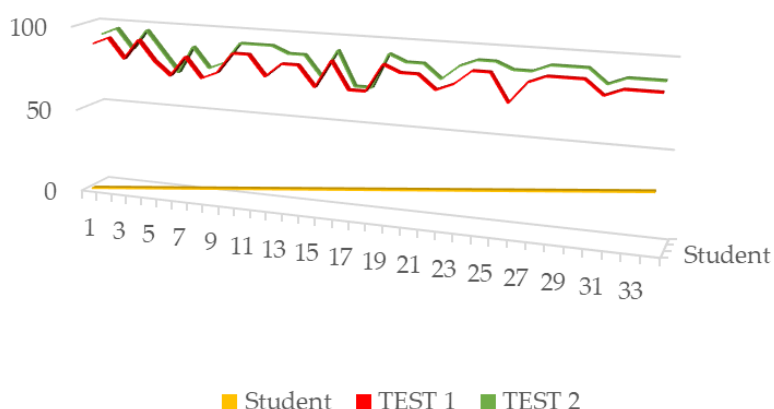


Figure 3. Students' Points Improvement in Organization Aspect

Figure 3 above shows that almost all students of XI Science 4 class had passed the minimum score set by the researcher since their scores were above 75 in Writing Test II. There are only three students who failed to pass this minimum writing score. It means that there were 31 students or 91.2% of students whose organization aspect points more than 75 points in Writing Test II. Therefore, it can be concluded that the second criterion of success set by the researcher was successfully achieved.

The study revealed that semantic mapping strategy facilitated students to broaden and organize their knowledge regarding a certain topic. This result is in line with the findings of Nofriati (2017) and Fauzan et al. (2019), which confirmed that semantic mapping strategy provided more opportunities for students to develop their writing ability by encouraging them to investigate a lot of correlated words, ideas, or concepts to a certain topic and arrange it systematically. In congruence with the findings of Wibowo et al. (2017), which confirmed that mapping strategy done before writing activity could accustom students to encourage their creativity in thinking hierarchically and systematically, the findings in this study also proved that mapping strategy really helped students encourage their creativity in hierarchical thinking and apply it in their writing.

The findings of this study really fit with the theories from the preceding studies which confirmed that semantic mapping strategy could enhance students' writing skill. This study gave empirical evidence that this teaching strategy had improved students' writing skill by broadening students' knowledge regarding the topic given and accustoming students to encourage their creativity in thinking hierarchically and systematically.

Besides, the findings in this study also strengthened the existing theories that confirmed the use of semantic maps in assisting students to organize their writing ideas. Semantic map could help students organize their writing by showing a visual relation between ideas and the topic being discussed and providing good scaffolding before writing a text so that they could produce a well-organized written text.

The first writing theory regarding semantic mapping strategy confirmed that students could organize their writing well when they became familiar with how a semantic map worked (Wells & Reid, 2004). Similarly, Bowers and Keisler's (2011) theory explained that semantic mapping strategy challenged students to organize words into categories and subcategories that showed the construction of relationships among concepts which provided necessary scaffolding for students to write in more purposeful ways so that their writing became well organized (Guzzetti, 2002). Moreover, in line with the findings of Sari (2015), this study proved that the use of semantic map enabled students to arrange the ideas into good paragraphs so that semantic mapping strategy could be defined as a well-known strategy for discovering and arranging the ideas, then, elaborating those ideas to compose an effective written text (Grabe & Kaplan, 2014).

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The researcher found some facts that semantic mapping strategy could enhance students' writing skill by broadening students' knowledge regarding the topic given and accustoming students to encourage their creativity in thinking hierarchically and systematically. Besides, this strategy also facilitated students to organize their writing by showing a visual relation between ideas and the topic being discussed and providing good scaffolding before writing a text so that they could produce a well-organized written text. Combining this strategy with some fun learning activities, the researcher expects that students will produce better writing which not only improves the organization aspect but also improves other writing aspects.

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