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THE EFFECT OF THE MIND MAPPING LEARNING METHOD ON STUDENTS' NARRATIVE WRITING SKILLS IN GRADE VII OF SMP AL-ULUM MEDAN

Sakdiani Lubis¹⁾, Riris Nurkholidah Rambe²⁾

^{1,2}Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara

Jalan Sisingamangaraja, Kelurahan Teladan, Medan Kota, Teladan Bar., Medan Kota, Kota Medan, Sumatera Utara 20216, Indonesia

¹E-mail: Sakdiani@0314223043uinsu.ac.id

²E-mail: ririsnurkholida@uinsu.ac.id

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh penerapan metode Mind Mapping terhadap keterampilan menulis teks narasi siswa kelas VII SMP Al-Ulum Medan. Latar belakang penelitian ini didasarkan pada rendahnya kemampuan menulis siswa yang ditandai dengan kurangnya motivasi, kesulitan dalam memulai tulisan (blank page syndrome), serta lemahnya kemampuan menyusun alur cerita secara kronologis akibat dominasi pembelajaran konvensional berbasis ceramah. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain eksperimen semu (quasi-experimental) tipe Pretest-Posttest Non-Equivalent Control Group. Populasi penelitian adalah seluruh siswa kelas VII, dengan sampel terdiri atas kelas VII-A (25 siswa) sebagai kelompok eksperimen yang diberi perlakuan Mind Mapping dan kelas VII-B (25 siswa) sebagai kelompok kontrol yang menggunakan metode pembelajaran konvensional. Instrumen penelitian berupa tes unjuk kerja menulis teks narasi yang dinilai menggunakan rubrik analitik berdasarkan aspek isi, organisasi, kosakata, tata bahasa, dan mekanik. Data dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif dan uji inferensial Independent Samples t-Test. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terdapat peningkatan yang signifikan pada kelompok eksperimen dengan rata-rata nilai pretest 62,40 meningkat menjadi 82,80, sedangkan kelompok kontrol hanya meningkat dari 61,60 menjadi 70,20. Hasil uji hipotesis menunjukkan nilai signifikansi $0,000 < 0,05$, yang berarti terdapat pengaruh signifikan metode Mind Mapping terhadap keterampilan menulis teks narasi siswa.

Kata Kunci: Mind Mapping, keterampilan menulis, teks narasi, eksperimen semu

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the effect of the Mind Mapping method on students' narrative writing skills in Grade VII at SMP Al-Ulum Medan. The background of this research is the low level of students' writing ability, characterized by limited motivation, difficulty in initiating writing (blank page syndrome), and weak ability to organize chronological storylines due to the dominance of conventional lecture-based instruction. This study employed a quantitative approach using a quasi-experimental design with a Pretest-Posttest Non-Equivalent Control Group design. The population consisted of all Grade VII students, while the sample included Class VII-A (25 students) as the experimental group taught using the Mind Mapping method and Class VII-B (25 students) as the control group taught using conventional instruction. The research instrument was a narrative writing performance test assessed using an analytical rubric covering content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential analysis through an Independent Samples t-Test. The results revealed a significant improvement in the experimental group, with the mean score increasing from 62.40 in the pretest to 82.80 in the posttest, while the control group increased from 61.60 to 70.20. The hypothesis testing showed a significance value of $0.000 < 0.05$, indicating that the Mind Mapping method has a significant effect on students' narrative writing skills.

Keywords: Mind Mapping, writing skills, narrative text, quasi-experimental design

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesian language learning in formal education plays a strategic role as a foundational pillar for students' literacy development, encompassing the abilities to communicate effectively, think critically, and express ideas in a systematic and meaningful way. Language is not merely a communication tool but also a cognitive instrument that enables learners to construct knowledge, organize thoughts, and reflect on experiences in a structured manner. In this regard, language skills consist of four interrelated components: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Ali, 2022; Wahid & Amarwanti, 2015; Newton & Nation, 2020; Astuti & Rambe, 2024). These skills form an integrated system that supports effective language acquisition and use.

Among these four skills, writing is considered the most complex productive skill as it requires higher-order cognitive processes. Writing involves not only expressing ideas but also organizing them logically, selecting appropriate vocabulary, and constructing coherent and meaningful text structures (Wahid, Suyitno, & Suyono, 2020; Hyland, 2015, 2019; Dragomir & Niculescu, 2020). Therefore, writing is not a mechanical activity but a cognitive process involving the simultaneous processes of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of information.

Within the Phase D Indonesian language curriculum, narrative writing is identified as one of the essential competencies that Grade VII junior high school students must master. A narrative text presents a sequence of events, either fictional or non-fictional, in chronological order while emphasizing intrinsic elements such as characters, setting, plot, and conflict (Munslow, 2018; Mani, 2022). Mastering narrative writing requires students not only to understand textual structure but also to construct coherent, engaging, and logically connected storylines.

However, empirical findings indicate that students' narrative writing skills remain at a low level. Writing activities are often perceived as difficult, boring, and burdensome tasks (Pham & Truong, 2021; Aydın Yıldız, 2025; Taye & Mengesha, 2024). This is supported by Suhayati (2025), whose findings reveal low affective engagement in writing instruction, particularly in terms of students' motivation, interest, and active participation. These data suggest that writing instruction has not yet provided meaningful, engaging, and student-centered learning experiences (Greer & Harris, 2018).

A similar situation was observed at SMP Al-Ulum Medan based on preliminary observations. Several key problems were identified: (1) low interest in writing, as students tend to prefer multiple-choice tasks over writing assignments; (2) blank page syndrome, where students struggle to begin writing; (3) difficulties in organizing chronological storylines, resulting in incoherent narratives; and (4) limited mastery of linguistic aspects, such as restricted vocabulary use and frequent errors in Indonesian spelling conventions (PUEBI).

These issues are closely related to pedagogical practices in classroom instruction. Writing instruction is still dominated by conventional teacher-centered approaches. Teachers tend to explain theoretical concepts through lectures and then immediately assign writing tasks without adequate scaffolding or structured guidance. In addition, the lack of visual learning media reduces students' opportunities to develop imagination and creative thinking (Oktaviani, Sutardi, & Mustofa, 2025; Afrizal, 2020; Saragih & Situmorang, 2022). Consequently, students struggle to organize ideas and develop coherent texts.

In the context of 21st-century learning, writing skills require not only linguistic competence but also critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication skills (Pratama, 2020; Shadiev & Wang, 2022).

Therefore, an innovative instructional approach that integrates cognitive and visual dimensions is required. One promising approach is the Mind Mapping method developed by Tony Buzan (Buzan, 2024). Mind Mapping is a visual note-taking technique that utilizes keywords, colors, symbols, and branching structures to optimize the balanced use of both hemispheres of the brain (Buzan, 2024; Hidayat, 2021).

Through Mind Mapping, students are guided to construct story frameworks before writing complete narrative texts. Elements such as characters, settings, conflicts, and plot structures are visually organized, helping students understand relationships among narrative components more clearly. This enables students to systematically develop ideas, reduce writing anxiety, and improve fluency in paragraph development (Rohita & Fitria, 2020).

Previous studies have shown that Mind Mapping enhances students' creativity, motivation, and writing quality (Akbar, 2024; Ardiana et al., 2025). It also increases students' confidence by providing a clear conceptual framework before writing begins. However, studies specifically examining the effect of Mind Mapping on narrative writing skills in relation to critical thinking development at the junior high school level remain limited.

Based on these considerations, there is a clear gap between the ideal condition of writing instruction, which emphasizes higher-order thinking skills, and the actual classroom practice, which is still dominated by conventional methods. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the effect of the Mind Mapping method on students' narrative writing skills in Grade VII of SMP Al-Ulum Medan, contributing both theoretically and practically to the development of innovative and effective Indonesian language teaching strategies.

2. METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach using a quasi-experimental design. This design was chosen because the participants were naturally assigned to intact classroom groups, making it impossible to apply individual random assignment (Sugiyono, 2022). The experimental design adopted was a pretest-posttest non-equivalent control group design, involving an experimental group and a control group.

The population of this study consisted of all Grade VII students at SMP Al-Ulum Medan, distributed across several classes with a total of 75 students. The sample was selected using purposive sampling, resulting in two intact classes as research samples. Class VII-A (25 students) was assigned as the experimental group, which was taught using the Mind Mapping method, while Class VII-B (25 students) served as the control group and was taught using conventional instruction, namely lecture-based teaching and direct assignment.

The research instrument was a performance test in the form of a narrative writing task. Students were asked to produce a narrative text based on a given stimulus provided by the researcher. The students' writing outputs from both the pretest and posttest were assessed using an analytic scoring rubric consisting of five criteria: (1) content, (2) text organization, (3) vocabulary usage, (4) grammar/syntax, and (5) mechanics (Indonesian spelling conventions/PUEBI). Each criterion was rated on a scale of 1 to 5.

Data analysis was conducted in two stages. First, descriptive statistics were used to determine the mean scores, standard deviations, and score distributions for both groups. Second, inferential statistics were applied using the Independent Samples t-test to examine whether there was a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups. Prior to hypothesis testing, assumption tests including normality and homogeneity of variance tests were conducted to ensure that the data met

the requirements for parametric analysis. All statistical analyses were performed using statistical software.

3. HASIL DAN PEMBAHASAN

The findings of this study were derived from a systematic analysis of pretest and posttest scores measuring students' narrative writing skills in both the experimental group (Mind Mapping instruction) and the control group (conventional teaching method). The data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques to determine the effectiveness and significance of the instructional treatment.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Narrative Writing Scores

| Group | N | Pretest Mean | Posttest Mean | Gain Score | Posttest Std. Dev. |
|-----------------------------|----|--------------|---------------|------------|--------------------|
| Experimental (Mind Mapping) | 25 | 62.4 | 82.8 | 20.4 | 6.12 |
| Control (Conventional) | 25 | 61.6 | 70.2 | 8.6 | 7.45 |

As presented in Table 1, both groups demonstrated nearly identical baseline performance in the pretest stage, with mean scores of 62.4 for the experimental group and 61.6 for the control group. This indicates that both groups started from a comparable level of narrative writing ability, thereby ensuring initial equivalence prior to treatment implementation.

Following the instructional intervention, both groups exhibited improvement in their writing performance; however, the magnitude of improvement differed substantially. The experimental group, which was taught using the Mind Mapping strategy, achieved a posttest mean score of 82.8, reflecting a significant improvement with a gain score of 20.4 points. In contrast, the control group, which received conventional instruction, attained a posttest mean of 70.2 with a considerably lower gain score of 8.6 points.

The difference in gain scores suggests that Mind Mapping had a more substantial impact on enhancing students' narrative writing performance. This improvement can be attributed to the role of Mind Mapping as a visual-cognitive learning strategy that facilitates idea organization, supports hierarchical structuring of narrative elements, and reduces cognitive load during the writing process. Consequently, students in the experimental group were better able to develop coherent storylines, expand ideas more systematically, and maintain logical sequencing in their narratives.

Table 2. Homogeneity of Variance Test (Levene's Test)

| Variable | Levene Statistic | df1 | df2 | Sig. (p) | Decision |
|-------------------------|------------------|-----|-----|----------|-------------|
| Narrative Writing Score | 0.842 | 1 | 84 | 0.364 | Homogeneous |

The results of Levene's Test confirmed that the assumption of homogeneity of variance was satisfied, as indicated by a significance value of 0.364, which is greater than the threshold of

0.05. This finding suggests that the variability of scores in both the experimental and control groups was statistically equivalent, thereby

validating the appropriateness of parametric testing using the Independent Samples t-test.

Table 3. Independent Samples t-Test Results

| Group | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | t-value | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Decision |
|--------------|----|------|----------------|---------|----|-----------------|-------------|
| Experimental | 25 | 82.8 | 6.12 | 6.784 | 48 | 0.000 | Significant |
| Control | 25 | 70.2 | 7.45 | 6.784 | 48 | 0.000 | Significant |

The results of the Independent Samples t-test revealed a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups, with a t-value of 6.784 and a significance level of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). Accordingly, the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) was accepted.

This finding confirms that the Mind Mapping instructional method had a significant positive effect on students' narrative writing skills. The higher performance of the experimental group suggests that the integration of visual mapping techniques into writing instruction enhances students' ability to generate ideas, structure narratives coherently, and improve linguistic expression.

From a pedagogical perspective, the effectiveness of Mind Mapping can be explained by its capacity to activate both analytical and creative thinking processes. By visually mapping narrative components such as characters, settings, conflicts, and plot structure, students are provided with a clear conceptual framework that guides them through the writing process. This reduces cognitive overload and supports smoother transitions between ideas, ultimately leading to more organized and higher-quality written texts.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the Mind Mapping method significantly

improves students' narrative writing skills compared to conventional instruction. The superior performance of the experimental group indicates that visual-cognitive scaffolding plays a central role in supporting students' writing development. This aligns with the view that language learning involves integrated skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening that must be developed holistically (Humanities & Natural Sciences Journal, n.d.).

First, the effectiveness of Mind Mapping can be understood through the cognitive complexity of writing as a productive skill. Writing requires learners to organize, analyze, and synthesize ideas into coherent texts (Hyland, 2015; Hyland, 2019; Dragomir & Niculescu, 2020). In this study, Mind Mapping facilitated the planning stage of writing by allowing students to visually structure narrative components such as characters, setting, and plot. This supports the argument that writing development requires structured cognitive scaffolding to reduce processing load and improve coherence.

Second, the findings are consistent with Wahid and Amarwanti (2015), who emphasize that structured instructional methods improve comprehension and learning outcomes in Indonesian language education. Similarly, Wahid, Suyitno, and Suyono (2020) highlight the importance of discourse markers in developing coherent essays. The use of Mind Mapping in this

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study helped students organize discourse elements more systematically, resulting in more logically structured narrative texts.

47 Third, the results are supported by Newton and Nation (2020), who argue that language production requires the integration of cognitive and linguistic processes. Mind Mapping supports this integration by providing learners with a visual framework that connects ideas before writing, thereby improving fluency and coherence.

24 Furthermore, the improvement in students' writing performance is in line with Buzan (2024), who explains that Mind Mapping enhances whole-brain thinking by combining visual, spatial, and verbal processing. This facilitates idea generation and memory retention. Similar findings are reported by Hidayat (2021), who found that visual-based learning strategies significantly improve students' narrative writing ability.

22 In addition, the present findings are consistent with Akbar (2024), Ardiana et al. (2025), Batara (2022), and Oktaviani et al. (2025), who report that Mind Mapping improves students' writing performance, creativity, and engagement. These studies suggest that Mind Mapping reduces writing anxiety and helps students overcome difficulties in initiating writing tasks.

Moreover, the findings support Astuti and Rambe (2024), Afrizal (2020), and Saragih and Situmorang (2022), who emphasize the importance of visual media and structured models in improving writing skills. These studies show that students often struggle in writing when instructional media are limited, while visual tools such as Mind Mapping enhance idea development and textual organization.

20 The results also align with Pham and Truong (2021), Taye and Mengesha (2024), and Suhayati (2025), who report that students commonly face difficulties in writing due to low

motivation, lack of engagement, and insufficient instructional support. The present study addresses these issues by demonstrating that Mind Mapping creates a more engaging, student-centered learning environment that improves both motivation and performance.

Furthermore, Greer and Harris (2018) emphasize that effective writing instruction should be student-centered. Mind Mapping supports this principle by shifting learning from teacher-centered instruction to learner-centered knowledge construction, where students actively organize and develop their own ideas.

The findings are also supported by Pratama (2020) and Shadiev and Wang (2022), who highlight the importance of 21st-century skills such as creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration in language learning. Mind Mapping facilitates these competencies by encouraging students to think critically, generate creative ideas, and communicate them through structured visual planning.

Additionally, Munslow (2018) and Mani (2022) emphasize the role of narrative structure in understanding and constructing stories. Mind Mapping directly supports narrative construction by helping students visualize and organize narrative sequences more effectively.

Finally, this study extends the findings of Rakhmawati et al. (2019) and Rohita and Fitria (2020), who demonstrate that visual and structured learning models significantly improve writing-related skills. This study specifically contributes by showing that Mind Mapping is effective not only for descriptive or biographical writing but also for narrative writing at the junior high school level, particularly in improving idea organization, coherence, and logical sequencing.

Overall, the integration of Mind Mapping into writing instruction provides strong empirical evidence that visual-cognitive learning strategies significantly enhance students' narrative writing performance. It bridges the gap between

traditional skill-based instruction and modern, student-centered, process-oriented language learning approaches.

5. CONCLUSION

The results of this study provide strong empirical evidence that the Mind Mapping method has a significant positive effect on students' narrative writing skills. The statistical analysis revealed that students in the experimental group achieved substantially higher posttest and gain scores compared to those in the control group. This difference was confirmed as statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), indicating that the Mind Mapping strategy is more effective than conventional instruction in enhancing students' writing performance. These findings highlight the importance of integrating structured and visual-based instructional strategies in language learning.

Furthermore, Mind Mapping contributes not only to improved writing scores but also to the development of essential cognitive processes involved in writing. By providing a visual framework, it helps students organize ideas, sequence narrative elements, and construct coherent and logically structured texts. This approach reduces cognitive overload during the writing process, allowing learners to focus more effectively on idea generation, language use, and textual coherence. In addition, the method fosters higher levels of creativity, motivation, and active engagement in writing activities, which are essential components of effective learning.

Overall, this study concludes that Mind Mapping is an effective visual-cognitive instructional strategy for improving narrative writing skills at the junior high school level. It offers a pedagogically meaningful alternative to traditional teacher-centered instruction by promoting learner autonomy, structured thinking, and process-oriented writing development. Therefore, Mind Mapping can be recommended as an innovative approach to enhance both the

quality of students' writing outcomes and their learning experience in language education.

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