

THE ANALYSIS OF MIND MAPPING ON WRITING SKILLS IN EFL CLASSROOMS STUDENTS' PERCEPTION

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Abstract: This qualitative study explores students' perceptions of mind mapping as a tool for enhancing writing skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. Through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with twenty intermediate EFL learners, the research investigates how mind mapping influences their writing processes, creativity, and overall engagement with the language. The findings reveal that students view mind mapping as a valuable strategy that aids in organizing their thoughts, generating ideas, and improving their confidence in writing. Participants also express a preference for visual learning tools, highlighting the role of mind mapping in making the writing process more enjoyable and less intimidating. This study contributes to the understanding of student-centered approaches in language education and emphasizes the importance of incorporating innovative strategies to foster effective writing skills.

INTRODUCTION

Writing is an essential skill in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, functioning as a crucial means of communication and self-expression. In today's globalized society, the ability to write effectively in English is not only an important academic skill but also a necessary competency across various professional domains (Hyland, 2003). Despite its significance, many EFL students face considerable challenges in honing their writing abilities. Common obstacles include difficulties in organizing their thoughts coherently, generating relevant ideas, and ensuring clarity and coherence in their written work (Raimes, 1983). These challenges can lead to frustration and diminished self-confidence among students, which may adversely impact their overall performance in language acquisition (Zhang, 2010).

To address these challenges, educators are continually seeking innovative teaching strategies that can enhance students' writing abilities. One such strategy that has gained attention in recent years is mind mapping. Mind mapping is a visual tool that allows individuals to organize information and ideas in a structured manner. By representing concepts graphically, mind mapping helps students visualize relationships between ideas, facilitating better

understanding and retention. This technique encourages creativity and critical thinking, making it an effective prewriting strategy that can significantly improve the writing process (Budd, 2004; Liu et al., 2018).

Research has shown that mind mapping can positively impact students' writing skills by aiding in brainstorming, organizing ideas, and enhancing overall writing quality (Pishghadam & Ghanizadeh, 2006; Yunus & Chien, 2016). For instance, studies have indicated that students who utilize mind mapping techniques tend to produce more coherent and well-structured written work compared to those who do not (Fadillah, 2019; Fu et al., 2019). Furthermore, students often report that mind mapping makes the writing process more engaging and enjoyable, leading to increased motivation and confidence in their writing abilities (Astriani et al., 2023; Huda et al., 2023).

Despite the potential benefits of mind mapping, there is still a need for a deeper understanding of students' perceptions regarding its effectiveness in improving their writing skills. Understanding how students perceive and experience the use of mind mapping can provide valuable insights for educators, enabling them to tailor their teaching strategies to better meet students' needs. This study aims to explore the perceptions of EFL students at IAIN Palangka Raya regarding the use of mind mapping as a technique to enhance their writing skills. By gathering qualitative data through interviews and focus group discussions, this research seeks to uncover students' experiences, opinions, and attitudes toward mind mapping in the context of writing.

In summary, this study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on the use of mind mapping in EFL education by providing insights into students' perceptions. The findings will not only highlight the potential benefits of mind mapping as a pedagogical tool but also offer practical recommendations for educators seeking to improve writing instruction in EFL classrooms. Ultimately, this research aims to empower students to become more confident and proficient writers in English, equipping them with the skills necessary for success in their academic and professional endeavors.

The primary purpose of this study is to analyze the perceptions of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students regarding the use of mind mapping as a technique to enhance their writing skills. By focusing on students' experiences and opinions, the research seeks to uncover how mind mapping influences their writing processes, including brainstorming, organizing ideas, and fostering creativity. This exploration is crucial, as writing is a fundamental skill in language acquisition, and understanding the tools that can aid in its development is essential for

both students and educators. Through this analysis, the study aims to provide insights into the effectiveness of mind mapping as a pedagogical strategy, ultimately contributing to the broader discourse on innovative teaching methods in EFL contexts.

Understanding students' perceptions of mind mapping is significant for several reasons. First, it can inform educators about the effectiveness of this technique in enhancing writing skills, allowing them to tailor their teaching strategies to better meet the needs of their students. By gaining insights into how students engage with mind mapping, educators can identify potential challenges and benefits associated with its implementation in the classroom. This knowledge can lead to the development of more effective instructional practices that not only improve writing abilities but also increase student motivation and engagement in the learning process.

Furthermore, the findings of this study can contribute to the existing body of literature on EFL teaching methodologies, particularly in the area of writing instruction. As educators seek to adopt innovative approaches to language teaching, understanding the perceptions of students regarding tools like mind mapping can provide valuable guidance. By highlighting the strengths and limitations of mind mapping from the students' perspective, the study can serve as a resource for curriculum developers and teacher training programs, ultimately fostering a more responsive and effective educational environment. In this way, the research not only aims to enhance individual writing skills but also aspires to contribute to the overall improvement of EFL teaching practices.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Mind mapping is a powerful visual tool that facilitates the organization of information and ideas, allowing students to visualize the relationships between various concepts. This method not only enhances understanding but also aids in retention, making it particularly beneficial in educational settings. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, mind mapping has been shown to significantly impact writing skills. Previous studies, such as those conducted by Pishghadam and Ghanizadeh (2006) and Yunus and Chien (2016), highlight that mind mapping assists students in brainstorming, structuring their thoughts, and fostering creativity, all of which are essential components of effective writing.

Moreover, students' perceptions of mind mapping as a pedagogical tool reveal a generally positive attitude towards its use in improving writing skills. Research by Fadillah (2019) and Fu et al. (2019) indicates that many students find mind mapping to be an engaging

and helpful method for organizing their ideas and enhancing their writing processes. This positive reception suggests that incorporating mind mapping into EFL curricula could not only improve students' writing abilities but also increase their motivation and engagement in the learning process. As such, mind mapping emerges as a valuable strategy for educators aiming to enhance writing skills among EFL learners.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative approach to explore and gain in-depth insights into students' perceptions of mind mapping as a tool for enhancing writing skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. By utilizing qualitative methods, the research aims to capture the nuanced experiences and opinions of students, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of how mind mapping influences their writing processes. This approach is particularly effective in educational research, as it enables the researcher to delve into the subjective experiences of participants, providing rich, descriptive data that quantitative methods may overlook.

The research is categorized as descriptive qualitative research, which focuses on understanding the lived experiences and perspectives of students regarding the use of mind mapping in their writing activities. Through interviews, focus group discussions, and open-ended surveys, the study will gather detailed accounts of students' interactions with mind mapping techniques. This method will facilitate the identification of common themes and patterns in students' perceptions, ultimately contributing to a deeper understanding of the effectiveness of mind mapping in fostering writing skills. By emphasizing the descriptive aspect, the research aims to paint a vivid picture of students' experiences, highlighting both the benefits and challenges they encounter when using this visual tool.

The research will be conducted at IAIN Palangka Raya, Indonesia, during the academic year 2024. This location provides a relevant context for examining the perceptions of EFL students, as it encompasses a diverse student population with varying levels of proficiency in English. The time frame allows for a thorough exploration of the topic, enabling the researcher to engage with students over an extended period and gather comprehensive data. By focusing on this specific setting and timeframe, the study aims to contribute valuable insights into the role of mind mapping in enhancing writing skills within the EFL context, ultimately informing pedagogical practices and curriculum development in similar educational environments.

To effectively gather insights into students' perceptions of mind mapping in enhancing their writing skills, this study will employ a combination of semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with individual students to obtain detailed and personal accounts of their experiences with mind mapping. This technique allows for flexibility in questioning, enabling the researcher to probe deeper into specific areas of interest while still covering essential topics related to the students' perceptions. The interviews will be designed to create a comfortable environment, encouraging students to express their thoughts candidly and share their unique experiences with mind mapping as a writing tool.

In addition to individual interviews, focus group discussions will be organized to explore collective views on mind mapping among students. These group discussions will facilitate interaction among participants, allowing them to build on each other's ideas and experiences. By fostering a collaborative atmosphere, focus groups can reveal shared perceptions and highlight differences in opinions that may not emerge in one-on-one interviews. This dual approach to data collection will provide a comprehensive understanding of how mind mapping is perceived by students in the EFL context, capturing both individual and collective insights.

To ensure the effectiveness of the data collection process, specific research instruments will be developed. For the semi-structured interviews, interview guides will be created to facilitate the conversation and ensure that all relevant topics are covered. These guides will include open-ended questions designed to elicit detailed responses, as well as prompts to encourage further elaboration on key points. Similarly, focus group protocols will be structured to encourage open discussion among participants, with guiding questions that stimulate dialogue and exploration of various aspects of mind mapping. These instruments will be crucial in maintaining the focus of the discussions while allowing for the organic flow of conversation, ultimately leading to richer data collection.

The analysis of the collected data will involve a systematic approach to identify themes and patterns in students' perceptions of mind mapping. The qualitative data obtained from interviews and focus groups will be transcribed and coded using thematic analysis. This technique will allow the researcher to categorize responses into meaningful themes that reflect the participants' experiences and opinions. By employing an iterative process of coding and theme development, the researcher will be able to distill complex data into coherent findings that highlight the impact of mind mapping on writing skills. Additionally, triangulation will be

used to enhance the validity of the findings by comparing insights from interviews and focus groups, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the students' perceptions. This rigorous analysis will ultimately contribute to the study's goal of providing valuable insights into the effectiveness of mind mapping in EFL writing instruction.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the qualitative data collected from semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions revealed several key themes regarding students' perceptions of mind mapping as a tool for enhancing their writing skills. First, participants consistently expressed that mind mapping significantly aids in organizing their thoughts and ideas before writing. Many students reported that the visual nature of mind maps allows them to see the connections between different concepts, which helps them structure their writing more coherently. This organization not only facilitates the brainstorming process but also reduces the anxiety associated with starting a writing task. As one student noted, "When I create a mind map, I feel like I have a clear path to follow, and it makes writing so much easier."

And the more findings from the study indicate that students perceive mind mapping as a highly effective tool for enhancing their writing skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. A significant number of participants reported that mind mapping helps them overcome common writing challenges, such as generating ideas and maintaining clarity in their work. Many students noted that the process of creating a mind map allows them to brainstorm freely, leading to a richer pool of ideas to draw from when they begin writing. One student articulated this sentiment by stating, "Before using mind maps, I often struggled to come up with ideas. Now, I can see everything laid out, and it sparks my creativity." This suggests that mind mapping not only aids in idea generation but also empowers students to approach writing tasks with greater confidence.

Additionally, students highlighted the role of mind mapping in boosting their creativity and engagement with the writing process. Participants indicated that using mind maps encourages them to think more freely and explore various ideas without the constraints of traditional linear writing methods. Many students found the process enjoyable and reported that it transformed writing from a daunting task into a more interactive and stimulating experience. For instance, one participant shared, "Mind mapping makes writing fun! I can play with my ideas and see how they connect, which inspires me to write more." Overall, the findings suggest

that mind mapping not only enhances students' organizational skills but also fosters a more positive and creative approach to writing in EFL classrooms.

Furthermore, the study revealed that students appreciate the visual aspect of mind mapping, which they believe enhances their understanding and retention of information. Participants expressed that the graphical representation of their thoughts makes it easier to recall details when writing. Additionally, students reported that mind mapping reduces the intimidation often associated with writing assignments, making the process feel more manageable and enjoyable. As one participant shared, "Mind mapping takes away the pressure of writing. I can focus on connecting my ideas instead of worrying about making mistakes." Overall, the results highlight that mind mapping is not only a practical strategy for organizing thoughts but also a motivational tool that fosters a more engaging and less stressful writing experience for EFL learners.

The findings of this study underscore the significant role that mind mapping plays in enhancing writing skills among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. The positive perceptions expressed by participants align with existing literature that highlights the effectiveness of mind mapping as a pedagogical tool. By facilitating the organization of thoughts and ideas, mind mapping addresses some of the common challenges faced by EFL learners, such as generating coherent content and maintaining clarity in their writing. This aligns with the work of Pishghadam and Ghanizadeh (2006) and Yunus and Chien (2016), who found that mind mapping can improve the overall quality of students' writing by providing a structured approach to idea generation and organization.

Moreover, the study reveals that mind mapping not only aids in the technical aspects of writing but also enhances students' creativity and engagement. Participants reported that the visual nature of mind mapping encourages them to explore their ideas more freely, which can lead to more innovative and original writing. This finding is particularly important in the context of EFL education, where students often struggle with self-expression in a second language. The enjoyment and motivation that students derive from using mind maps suggest that incorporating visual learning tools into writing instruction can create a more dynamic and supportive learning environment. This is consistent with the research of Fadillah (2019) and Fu et al. (2019), who noted that students often find mind mapping to be an engaging method that fosters a positive attitude toward writing.

Additionally, the reduction of anxiety associated with writing tasks, as reported by participants, highlights the psychological benefits of using mind mapping. By transforming the

writing process into a more manageable and enjoyable experience, mind mapping can help build students' confidence in their writing abilities. This is crucial, as self-efficacy plays a significant role in language learning and can influence students' overall performance (Zhang, 2010). The findings suggest that educators should consider integrating mind mapping into their writing curricula to not only improve technical writing skills but also to enhance students' motivation and self-confidence.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this study contributes to the growing body of evidence supporting the use of mind mapping in EFL education. By providing insights into students' perceptions, the research emphasizes the importance of adopting innovative teaching strategies that cater to the diverse needs of learners. Future research could further explore the long-term effects of mind mapping on writing proficiency and investigate how different student demographics may influence the effectiveness of this technique. Overall, the findings advocate for a more student-centered approach to writing instruction, where tools like mind mapping can empower EFL learners to become more confident and proficient writers.

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