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Contextual Approach Through Mind Mapping Technique: A Case in EFL/ESL Writing Class

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Abstract: The aim of this research was to investigate the effectiveness of learning to write friendship short stories using a contextual approach through mind map techniques. Specifically, it aimed to describe the planning, implementation and evaluation process of learning to write friendship short stories using a contextual approach through a mind mapping model and to examine its effectiveness. This qualitative descriptive research used several methods. The documentation method was used to collect data in the form of documents, both primary and secondary documents that supported the learning process in class such as lesson plans. Observation method was undertaken to find out how learning activities to write short stories used a contextual approach through mind map techniques. The testing method was used to find out the results of students' writing in the form of short story texts through the mind mapping technique that had been created, and the interview was carried out to find out the application of the contextual approach in the learning to write short stories, and to find out students' responses upon the application of a contextual approach through the mind map technique. The subjects in this research were class IX Indonesian language students at Pelangi Dharma Nusantara junior high school with a total of 28 students per class. Results of the study revealed that the implemented technique was evident from students' achievements. In addition, students' responses through interviews were strongly supportive to yield that this approach was successful.

Keywords: Contextual approach, mind mapping, writing, short story writing

1. Introduction

Writing is an activity carried out by someone in pouring out ideas or thoughts in the media. According to Tarigan, (2008) writing is to derive or depict graphic symbols that describe a language understood by someone so that other people can read the graphic symbols if they understand the language and graphic images. In learning to write, it has long been done using several methods, both in writing scientific papers or writing literature. Because basically writing is said to be a productive and expressive activity. Literature writing covers a number of different activities. One of the productive and expressive activities is the literary works, including poetry, short stories, and novels writing. (Rahmanto, 1988). In line with this understanding, one of these different activities is writing short stories. Short stories are fictional works in the form of stories about humans and their ins and outs through short story writing (Shalima, Irsyadi, 2014). The length of short stories usually ranges from 500 to 10,000 words.

Writing a short story typically involves using fairly simple sentences, but the difficulty is in creating an appropriate structure. The essential component in developing the story is determining the structure of this short story writing. The structure of a short story generally includes, abstract, orientation, complication, evaluation, resolution, and codification (Mas, 2021).

The right technique in determining writing is a technique that can be the main idea of the story which can be developed by the author into a more complex story. One effective solution to facilitate short story writing is using a mind map. A mind map is an effective way to encode and retrieve information from the brain. Mind Map is a creative, effective way of taking notes, and literally "maps" our thoughts (Buzan, 2020). According to Windura (2016) a mind map is a graphic technique that allows us to explore all the capabilities of our brain for thinking and learning purposes.

In writing creative short stories, in order for the process to be effective, a general mapping is needed first so that the core of the story can be developed from the mapping we make. Having a mind map can make it easier for us to write, because according to Buzan (2020), the use of mind maps helps us in several ways, namely: planning, communicating, being more creative, saving time, solving problems, focusing, organizing and explaining thoughts, remembering better, learning faster and more efficiently, seeing the "whole picture", and saving trees.

Writing a short story is writing what we feel, encounter, and observe in the environment, which can be transformed into literary work. In line with Har (2011) in his book, writing a story should not be difficult because we often tell stories verbally. Learning from school associated with the surrounding environment is the learning which is easier for students to do.

In order for writing to be meaningful and expressive, it is necessary to apply an appropriate approach in writing learning. The results of interviews with grade IX students at Pelangi Dharma Nusantara junior high school, as objects of observation, showed the low level of students' ability to express ideas into writing a story. Many students have difficulty in writing short stories due to monotonous learning, short story writing themes that are too difficult to raise, and learning techniques that are less efficient in their application. Learners can apply new concepts such as linking the material given with real examples, especially the use of a contextual approach. According to Aqib (2013), the contextual approach (Contextual Teaching and Learning/CTL) is a learning concept that helps teachers link the materials taught with students' real-world situations and encourages students to make connections between the knowledge they have and its application in their lives as family members and society. In CTL there are 7 components as the basis for implementing learning, including: Constructivism, Inquiry, Questioning, Learning Community, Modeling, Reflection, and Authentic Assessment. Thus, in its application, writing literature, especially short stories with the theme of friendship with a contextual approach through the mind mapping technique is an alternative in writing stories, especially short stories writing. Because it is the closest thing to everyone's environment, the chosen theme "friendship" is the closest theme from our environment to be raised into a short story.

Studies on writing short stories with several approaches have been carried out by previous researchers. Rembang (2018) carried out research entitled "Improving the Short Story Writing Ability of Vocational High School Students with the Recitation Method Based on Personal Experience". The study discussed the ability to write short stories using the same approach, namely contextual. The difference between this study and Endah's study is the method used. The use of the recitation method based on personal experience was the method applied in the study. The results of the assessment from the aspects of title, plot, characters, setting, diction, message, and cohesion between elements got an increased value being compared to the method used previously.

Siki Ferdinandus et al., (2016) studied "Efforts to Improve Short Story Writing Skills Based on Personal Experience with Modeling Strategy". Its similarity with this study was from the efforts to improve short story writing skills, while the difference was the method used, that was modeling.

Bunga (2018) did a work "Application of Mind Map Learning Model to Improve Short Story Writing Skills of Vocational High School Students". That study aligned with this study in the case of learning to write short stories using the mind map learning model. Conversely, this study focused on using 'friendship short story' as the theme of the writing.

Aprelia, Dea Ayu., Sunan Baedowi., (2019) investigated "The Effect of Contextual Approach in Improving Narrative Writing Skills". Despite the contextual approach, interview-driven, test and documentation-based data collection techniques, the previous research focused on narrative writing while this study focused on writing short stories with the theme of friendship. The former implemented quantitative methods, while this study used mixed methods.

Widya & Yogyakarta, (2017) observed "Efforts to Improve Learning Outcomes in Writing Stories with a Contextual Approach". That study and the current study both investigated the improvement of short story writing skills with a contextual approach, however, this current study, conversely, used both qualitative and quantitative methods for collecting data.

Sitawati (2022), developed task-based language teaching (TBLT) combined with blended learning to improve students' writing skill in the Administration Business department of Politeknik Negeri Bali. The materials of the International Business Correspondence subject were developed prior to its implementation in the class lesson. As writing letters in the subject of International Business Correspondence such as writing letter of inquiry, letter of response to inquiry, letter of information on products were found struggling and required complex skill, the materials were seen to be one of determining aspects to develop. Thus, the writing materials were designed in such a way that they could trigger students' eagerness and awareness to learn. Using blended learning with the TBLT model, writing activity in each unit was initiated with speaking activity. Students were given a chance to raise, to explore, discuss and map their ideas through speaking activity. Inserting speaking activity prior to students' production of composition seemed to be meaningful. They could be more insightful to develop their ideas to produce letters of inquiry, to respond to the letter, and to give information about products.

From several previous studies, it could be concluded that the research participants' ability to write short stories have increased. However, from the many studies, none have examined learning to write short stories on the theme of friendship with a contextual approach through the mind map technique. Concerning the above issue, this study focused to discuss two research questions: (1) How is the contextual approach through the mind map technique implemented; (2) How effective was the approach and what were the students' perception of the approach?

2. Data and Methods

This research is qualitative descriptive research interpreting and narrating data related to the current situation. Therefore, the researcher draws conclusions based on the data obtained regarding learning to write friendship short story writing with a contextual approach through the mind map technique. The data were collected with documentation, observation, test, and interview methods. The documentation method was designed in the form of documents, both primary and secondary documents that supported the learning process in the classroom (Ermalinda., 2013). In line with this understanding, the documentation method was used to find data in the form of written documents in the learning process used by teachers.

Observation technique was used to raise research data affixed with recording of the condition or behavior of the target object (Fathoni, 2011). This method was used to examine how short story writing activities were conducted using a contextual approach and mind mapping techniques. The test in the form of a writing exercise was administered to the research participants. The test was used to determine the results of students' writing in the form of short story texts through the mind map technique. The results were used as data to assess the effectiveness of short story writing.

Meanwhile, the interview method was used to determine the implementation of the contextual approach in learning to write short stories. The researcher prepared a questionnaire along with a scoring rubric before being delivered to and being completed by the students. The questions focused on getting students' perspective about the implementation of the mind mapping technique and its effectiveness.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 Implementation of contextual approach with mind mapping

The documentation method used to find data was the lesson plans. Those lesson plans were designed by teachers prior to their use in teaching short story writing using contextual approach through mind mapping techniques. The short story writing lesson plans reflected the implementation of the contextual approach, covering a number of stages. First, students were guided to be able to build their own understanding of short stories (constructivism). Second, students were invited to find ideas closest to determining the theme of friendship (inquiry). Third, the teachers invited students to do questions and answers sessions related to short story writing (asking). Fourth, students were grouped heterogeneously so that they could exchange ideas and opinions with each other (learning community). Fifth, the teacher provided examples of short story writing via an LCD projector in front of the class (modeling). Sixth, students and teachers did a questions and answers stages related to the obstacles faced during the learning process (reflection). Seventh, the teacher carried out an assessment of the process and results that have been done (authentic assessment). The stages are shown below.
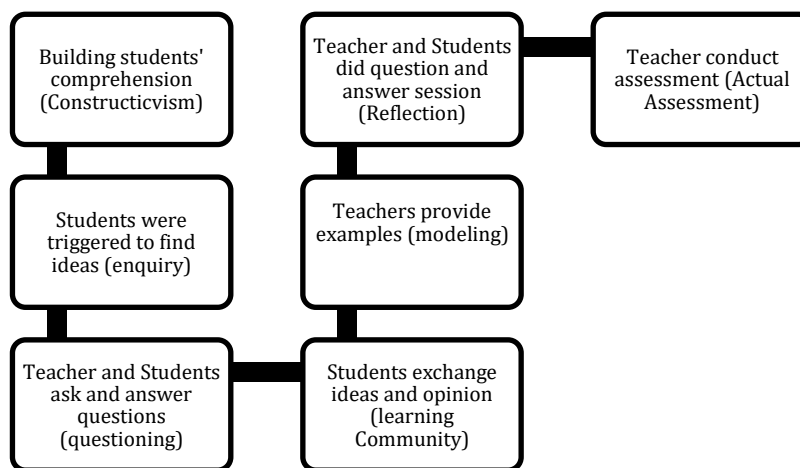
Figure 1. Stages of Teaching Writing Using CTL

As seen in the chart above, mind mapping, the model based on which the CTL technique was affixed, was inserted in one of the CTL stages. Specifically, students were invited to visualize their inquiry activity through a mind map. Hence, students successfully made an outlined idea in the form of a map consisting of key words based on which sentences or expressions were written. In order to assure students' comprehension about their mind map, teachers rechecked by asking questions ascertaining that the students were clear about what they had in their mind. To enrich their ideas to express in the writing, they were then given a chance to share and exchange their ideas to some friends in the learning community stage. Then, writing a paragraph about the topic was carried out prior to students' reflection and assessment.

In its implementation, students were given a chance to draw their ideas about what to write. Each student drew a web consisting of a number of pointers in the form of key words in Indonesian language. In the middle of a piece of paper, the students were requested to print a word or a phrase which were bubbled or circled to be the theme or topic of the writing. Then, they had to write some related words or phrases around the circle. Each circled word or phrase was used as the keyword to build a sentence. Then, each bubbled word was broken down into two more bubbled words or phrases made to be branches. The more branches they could make the more possible sentences they could construct and the longer writing they would be able to produce. Below is one of the students' sample works of bubble mind map using the topic of 'sahabat' or close friend.

Figure 2. Example of the students' bubblemap using topic 'sahabat' or close friend

3.2 Writing Outcome and Impacts

Upon the writing assessment, the teacher then evaluated and scored the students' work. The result of the evaluation revealed that the ninth-grade students at Pelangi Dharma Nusantara junior high school could produce compositions which meet the criteria. The students showed significant improvement when implementing short story writing teaching using a contextual approach through the mind map technique. The mind maps created by the students were engaging, effective, and potential to develop sentences for the composition. By making mind maps in the form of trees, circles, squares, and abstracts, they were able to develop their ideas more effectively to write various sentences related to the topic. From the structure of short story writing, orientation, complications, resolution, and codification had been fulfilled.

In the closing activity, the teachers evaluated the completed learning outcomes. The results of the tests and interviews after the teachers gave directions related to writing short stories using a contextual approach through the mind map technique revealed that students found it easier to create short stories. The stories presented became more focused and organized since the points of the story had been determined previously through mind maps. The evaluation results obtained were that 20 people got a score above 85, and 8 people got a score less than 85.

Concerning students' learning activities and achievement, the CTL and the mind mapping technique clearly fostered several positive outcomes. The techniques were positively essential and meaningful in a number of points, including students' creativity, students' writing structure, engagement, critical thinking, collaboration, language development, anxiety and students' independence in learning. First, mind mapping and CTL could make students more creative through brainstorming to connect their ideas with real-life-situation encouraging them to generate relevant and creative ideas. Second, students' structure of writing and coherence could be improved. The techniques were able to provide a clear outline they used in writing, helping them logically arrange their arguments. The technique also assured them to understand purpose and audience leading to more coherent and well-structured essays. Third, students' engagement and motivation were boosted by the nature of mind mapping. Visualization and interactive feature the mind mapping foster brainstormed students to make better writing. CTL moreover could relate lessons to students' experience, increasing their interest and participation. Fourth, both techniques successfully enhanced students' hierarchical and associative thinking, helping students to analyze topics more deeply, and promoting real-world problem solving, making their writing task more meaningful. Fifth, students' sense of collaboration also increased due to the learning community that fosters togetherness and mutual work as well as peer discussion and feedback. Through CTL students were also able to socialize helping them refine ideas through collaboration. Sixth, students' vocabulary and language were also developed. Authentic context was encouraged by CTL which could improve students' language use in writing. Seventh, the stages exhibited by CTL and mind mapping techniques amused students via pair and group work reducing their anxiety and increasing their confidence instead. Finally, students' sense of independence and activeness in learning was increased, promoting self-directed learning (SDL). Connecting the lesson to personal experience could foster their deeper comprehension of the lesson. In conclusion, combining both techniques led to more organized, creative, and meaningful writing, enhancing critical thinking, collaboration and motivation, making the writing process more enjoyable and effective for students.

Some mind map techniques used by students in writing short stories refer to popular types according to Hyerle (2004), including **circle map, flow map, bubble map, multi flow map, tree map, bridge map, brace map, and fishbone map. Circle map d**escribes concepts in general based on prior knowledge, suitable for understanding one theme. **Flow**

map arranges a sequence of events logically, useful in scientific processes and systematic analysis. And b**ubble maps** use adjectives to describe ideas, and help expand vocabulary. **Double Bubble map c**ompares two concepts by showing similarities and differences. **Multi flow map e**xplains the cause-effect relationship of an event. **Tree map g**roups ideas hierarchically, effective for classifying information. B**ridge map s**hows analogies between concepts, useful for comparing meaning or function. **Brace map b**reaks down ideas into their constituent parts, used for structural analysis. And a fishbone **map is m**apping the causes of problems visually, facilitating root cause analysis.

In its application, it was found that students tended to use bubble map and treemap techniques. This makes it easier for students to develop ideas in their heads and pour them into the mind map concept. Here is an example of a mind map made by students. Like a bubble style, students were also keen on using treemap style. When using treemap, students were directed to draw a main tree consisting of trunk and main branch. On the trunk, they wrote the theme of the topic of the composition. Then they had to break it down into a number of supporting keywords or keyphrases on its twigs. The twigs were also broken down into some sub-twigs depending on to what extent were the supporting keywords or keyphrases developed. Beneath are sample treemap style and bubble style of mind map.
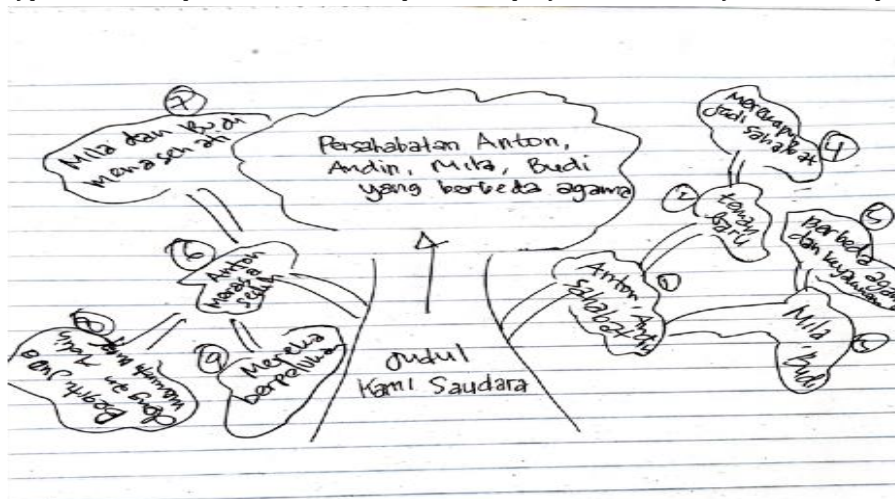

Figure 3. Example of the students' treemap using topic Kami Saudara (we are family)
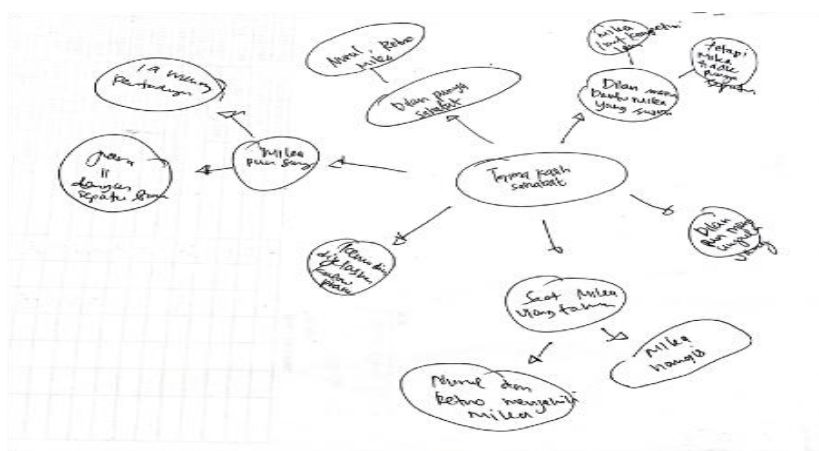

Figure 4. Example of the students' tree map using topic 'Terima Kasih Sahabat' (Thank you my close friend)

These two techniques are easier for students to use because they are in the form of neatly structured images. The key to developing a short story is the keywords given to each point of the image. From these points, students can develop the story according to its flow. Mind maps help students to focus more on developing short stories with the theme of friends. This is in line with Paivio (1986) theory which states that this technique is effective in writing because it meets several indicators, namely: a**rranged a logical framework, improved interconceptual understanding, made it easier to remember information, supported the brainstorm process, and reduced cognitive load. The mind mapping technique positively helped s**tudents find it easier to arrange a writing framework using keywords which

are then developed systematically. The visualization helped them understand the relationship between the main concept and others such as writing that is in a circle so that writing becomes focused. **In addition, t**his technique helps students remember and create ideas more focused and reduces dependence on many notes. It made it easier for students to express ideas quickly and coherently, which can then be developed according to the writing flow. By simplifying complex information or ideas, mindmaps reduce mental stress in composing short stories with the theme of friendship, so that the writing process becomes more efficient.

The implementation of mind map technique in teaching writing using contextual teaching learning succeeded and resulted in students' better comprehension on how to develop ideas and better writing achievement. Using the CLT approach, students were found active and rome creative in developing their ideas and vocabularies. This issue is in line with Rembang (2018), Aprelia et al., (2019), and Widya and Yogyakarta (2017). Mind map technique was found to be effective to trigger students' engagement on learning. They found the learning much easier and more interesting to follow, which is in line with the mindmap which could encourage students to perform speaking prior to writing lessons (Sitawati, 2022) being compared to the conventional learning.

4. Conclusion

The planning of short story writing learning in the form of lesson plans already reflects the application of a contextual approach, namely constructivism, inquiry, questioning, learning community, modeling, reflection, assessment was highly effective in helping students develop their ideas. The seven stages including: (1) students were guided to be able to build their own understanding of short stories writing; (2) students were invited to find ideas closest to determining the theme of friendship; (3) the teacher invited students to ask questions related to short story writing; (4) students were grouped heterogeneously so that they can exchange ideas and opinions with each other; (5) the teacher provides examples of short story writing via an LCD projector in front of the class; (6) students and teachers together asked questions related to the obstacles faced during the learning process; and (7) teacher carry out assessments of the process and results that have been done.

In the application of learning to write friendship short stories with a contextual approach through the mind map technique, students are first introduced to short stories, then the teacher gives an example of a mind map that will be used to create a short story writing with the theme of friendship, and the teacher displays an example of a short story writing that is developed through a mind map that has been made. Students were then instructed to first create a mind map, followed by developing a short story based on its structure, namely abstract, orientation, complication, evaluation, resolution, coda.

During the closing activity, the teacher evaluated the learning outcomes. The results of the tests and interviews indicated that students could increase very well. They appeared highly engaged and enthusiastic during the lesson because they felt that learning using this new technique made them understand and be more enthusiastic about learning. Based on the evaluation results, there was an increase in learning to write short stories for class IX students at Pelangi Dharma Nusantara junior high school with the results that out of 28 students, 20 scored above 85, while 8 scored below. Learning to write short stories about friendship with a contextual approach through the mind mapping technique is a learning method that is very suitable for students and can be used as a reference for teachers in learning to write short stories.

5. Implication

Considering the investigation result on the research participants' learning activities, mindmap can effectively be used to enhance students' ideas development. The technique can be modified and developed for teaching the productive skill of speaking. Students frequently get stuck when faced with the impromptu speaking exercise, as they have to be given time to build their ideas before speaking. This technique would be effectively implemented to train students before taking a speaking test, for instance IELTS speaking test.

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