



INNOVATIVE: Journal Of Social Science Research

Volume 5 Nomor 4 Tahun 2025 Page 8818-8836

E-ISSN 2807-4238 and P-ISSN 2807-4246

Website: <https://j-innovative.org/index.php/Innovative>

Using Mind Mapping Strategy in Teaching Descriptive Writing to The Tenth Grade Students of SMK Budi Mulia Utama

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Abstrak

Studi ini menggunakan pendekatan qualitative dan desain penelitian observasional. Tujuan dari penelitian ini diantaranya: (1) untuk menginvestigasi bagaimana guru mengimplementasikan strategi Mind Mapping dalam pengajaran teks deskriptif, dan (2) untuk menilai kemampuan siswa dalam menulis deskriptif teks menggunakan strategi mind mapping. Hasil dari penelitian ini mengemukakan dua point utama. Pertama, guru mengimplementasi pengajaran deskriptif teks menggunakan strategi mind mapping sesuai dengan prinsip pedagogik secara efektif. Kedua, kinerja siswa dalam menulis deskriptif teks menggunakan strategi mind mapping sangat kurang. Hampir seluruh siswa gagal dalam membangun mind map mengikuti struktur dan contoh yang didemonstrasikan oleh guru. Hanya satu atau dua siswa yang berhasil membuat mind map yang mencerminkan format dan ketentuan yang semestinya. Kebanyakan siswa membuat visual yang tidak teratur yang menunjukkan beberapa faktor yang berkontribusi diantaranya pengetahuan awal yang terbatas, latihan menulis yang kurang memadai, motivasi yang rendah, atau kesulitan memindahkan ide dari visual mind map menjadi teks tertulis yang koheren.

Kata Kunci: *Menulis, Mind Mapping, Teks Deskriptif*

Abstract

This study adopts a qualitative approach and employs an observational research design. The objectives of this research are: (1) to investigate how the teacher implements the mind mapping strategy in teaching descriptive texts, and (2) to assess students' abilities in writing descriptive texts using the mind mapping strategy. The findings of this study reveal two main points. First, the teacher effectively implemented the teaching of descriptive texts using the mind mapping strategy in alignment with pedagogical principles. Second, the students' performance in writing descriptive texts using the mind mapping strategy was considerably lacking. Nearly all students failed to construct mind maps that adhered to the structure and examples demonstrated by the teacher. Only one or two students successfully created mind maps that reflected the proper format and conventions. Most students produced disorganized visuals, which suggests several possible contributing factors, such as limited prior knowledge, inadequate writing practice, low motivation, or difficulty transferring ideas from visual mind maps into coherent written texts.

Keywords: *Descriptive Text, Mind Mapping, Writing*

INTRODUCTION

To meet the growing demand for schools capable of educating and training students to face future challenges and to be ready to enter the workforce immediately after graduation, vocational high schools (SMK) have become an essential educational pathway. SMK is an educational institution that prepares its graduates to have knowledge, expertise, and skills that will become provisions after completing education. SMKs are expected to provide adequate knowledge and skills that are relevant to the demands of the labor market, so that graduates can easily find jobs or start their own businesses. Not only that, SMKs are also expected to be able to develop skills needed in today's digital era, such as technology skills, communication skills, and critical thinking skills.

One essential skill that SMK students must master is English specifically, English for office and business contexts, in accordance with their chosen field of study. To support students in mastering English that is relevant to the knowledge, skills, and competencies offered by vocational education, the researcher aims to implement the Mind Mapping strategy in English language instruction.

There are several reasons why Mind Mapping is considered a suitable strategy for SMK classrooms. Mind Mapping lends itself well to subject matter in administrative procedures, such as document workflow, the management of incoming and outgoing correspondence, and financial administration topics such as transaction recording, preparation of basic financial reports, and budgeting.

Furthermore, Mind Mapping is applicable to content in human resource management, including recruitment processes, employee training, and performance evaluation. It is also highly suitable for business communication materials, such as writing business letters, delivering presentations, and conducting negotiations. Additionally, it aligns well with information management content, where students learn how to create and manage customer databases, inventory lists, and vendor data.

There are numerous studies that explore the use of the mind mapping method, some of which have been published in reputable academic journals. First example is a journal article by Sari (2025) titled "The Effectiveness of the Mind Mapping Method in Improving Students' Writing Skills", which discusses the effectiveness of using mind mapping to enhance students' writing abilities. Second relevant study is by Annisa (2022), entitled "The Use of the Mind Mapping Method to Improve the Quality of Learning among Vocational School Students", which analyzes the implications of implementing mind mapping on learning quality in vocational schools.

The third study is an article by Syaputra (2021) entitled "The Role of Mind Mapping in Developing the Creativity of Indonesian Language Students in the Morphology Course", which aims to investigate the level of creativity among students of the Indonesian Language and Literature Education Program when using the mind mapping method in a morphology course. The fourth study, written by Saragih (2022), entitled "The Influence of the Mind Mapping Method on the Ability to Write Argumentative Texts in Grade VIII Students at Wiraswasta Private Junior High School in Batang Kuis", and it aims to determine whether the use of mind mapping has an effect on students' ability to write argumentative texts.

Unlike previous studies that focused on writing skills in general, overall learning quality, or were conducted in universities and junior high schools, this study specifically examines how the mind mapping strategy is applied in the Office Management and Business Services department at a vocational high school, particularly at SMK Budi Mulia Utama. Based on the above background of the research, the research questions for this study are:

1. How does teacher teach descriptive text using the mind mapping strategy?
2. How are students' abilities in writing descriptive texts using the mind mapping strategy?.

RESEARCH METHOD

A. Research Design

This study is qualitative, employing an observational approach as its research design. An observational study refers to a type of research in which the researcher observes and records data about a subject or group without manipulating or controlling any variables. Kumaravadivelu (1993) defined, an observational study presents the interaction in the classroom to inform how the teaching-learning process is done.

In this research, the event study approach was also employed. An event study is a method used to analyze the impact of a specific event on a particular variable. Originally, this approach was based on the concept developed by Hartono (1998), which was used in the field of finance to assess the effect of an event on a certain variable in that case, the market value of a stock. However, the core concept can be adapted to educational research, especially when aiming to examine the influence of a particular treatment, in this case, the mind mapping learning strategy on students' ability to write descriptive texts.

B. Site and Participants

The research took place at SMK Budi Mulia Utama and the participants were the English teachers and the 10th grade students of Office Management and Business Service of SMK Budi Mulia Utama. The class consists of 19 students, 3 males and 16 females.

C. Data Collection Technique

The data for the research were obtained from observation and students' text analysis. Observation was a research method employed to gather data pertinent to research questions through direct observation in the field, aiming to collect valid evidence for the final report. It involved researchers recording the information they observed during the study (Gulo, 2002). The researcher also uses interview to delve deeper into the use of the mind mapping method in English lessons for the OMBS program. Interviews will only be conducted with teachers. Furthermore, documentation technique is also employed to gather data that may have been overlooked by the researcher.

D. Instruments

The instruments used in this research were observation sheets, interview questions, and documentation, which were adapted from Srifiyani (2019). The observation sheets were used to record teacher's activity during the teaching of descriptive writing using a mind mapping strategy. Students' texts were used to determine the students' ability to write

descriptive texts using the mind mapping strategy. Documentation is very useful for collecting documents related to the use of mind mapping, such as lesson plans, teaching media, and photos taken during classroom activities.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results

a. Observation of the Teacher's Teaching Process

The English subject at SMK Budi Mulia Utama is allocated four instructional hours per week, with each session lasting 45 minutes. As a result, English lessons are divided into two meetings per week, each comprising two instructional hours or approximately 90 minutes. This research was conducted in the Office Management and Business Service (OMBS) department. Based on the classroom observation, the following is a description of the teaching and learning process using the mind mapping strategy.

1) First Meeting

The first meeting was held in the language laboratory of SMK Budi Mulia Utama and had been announced to the students one week in advance to ensure they did not mistakenly go to their regular classroom. The language laboratory was chosen for the first session because it is equipped with multimedia facilities such as an overhead projector, a large screen, computers with headsets and microphones, and Wi-Fi access. These facilities were highly beneficial for conducting descriptive writing lessons using the mind mapping strategy.

a) Pre-Activity

Before the lesson began, the teacher opened the class by greeting the students. The teacher welcomed the students, and they responded positively. The teacher used both English and Indonesian throughout the lesson. The teacher asked the students what type of text they would be learning in that day's English lesson. Some of them correctly answered "descriptive text." Before introducing descriptive text through the mind mapping technique, the teacher conducted a few ice-breaking activities in the form of a game to create a relaxed and enjoyable classroom atmosphere. This activity helped the students feel enthusiastic and eager to engage in the learning process.

b) Activity

During the whilst activity, the teacher engaged in frequent interaction with the students to stimulate their curiosity and to assess their level of understanding

regarding descriptive texts. The teacher then explained that they would be learning something new related to writing descriptive texts. Before starting the explanation, the teacher displayed a prepared presentation slide, and the students paid close attention to it.

The slide presented by the teacher contained the definition of descriptive text, its language features, and several examples of short texts. The teacher asked the students to identify which of the examples could be categorized as descriptive texts. The teacher then called on several students to create sentences that function to describe something. After that, the teacher continued by explaining the purpose and function of descriptive texts in greater detail using several slides and by providing feedback to the students.

Furthermore, the teacher explained the relevance of descriptive texts to the skills the students need in order to succeed in the professional world. The teacher connected the concept of descriptive writing to the students' current major, which is Office Management and Business Service. After graduation, the students are expected to be ready to enter the workforce in fields related to office management and business service. Career paths that typically await graduates of this department include becoming a secretary, receptionist, administrative staff, archivist, office staff, and similar positions.

The teacher explained that in order to enter the workforce, students must first understand their career aspirations and the strategies needed to achieve them. The teacher emphasized that mind mapping could help students reach their goals. He explained that mind mapping is a method designed to organize information graphically. A mind map can be created using branching lines, images, or keywords that are interconnected with a central concept or main idea.

Mind mapping assists individuals in a variety of ways, such as planning, communicating, remembering information more effectively, becoming more creative in problem-solving, focusing attention, organizing and expressing thoughts clearly, and learning more efficiently and quickly. In summary, the teacher stated that mind mapping helps students plan and develop strategies to achieve their career goals in a fast and efficient manner.

The teacher then proceeded to explain the generic structure and language features of descriptive texts. He explained that the generic structure of a descriptive text consists of two main parts: identification and description. He then continued with the explanation of the language features, stating that descriptive texts commonly use the simple present tense, nouns, adjectives, and active verbs.

To facilitate students' understanding, the teacher provided an example profession secretary as the title for a descriptive text. The teacher then illustrated on the whiteboard that in order to become a secretary, there are several important aspects students need to consider and understand. These include the duties of a secretary, the educational background required, the necessary skills, and the qualifications needed for the profession.

The teacher broke down these components by drawing lines radiating from the word "secretary", which was written in the center of the whiteboard. While writing on the board, the teacher explained each of these points in detail. Once the drawing was complete, he emphasized to the students that what he had just created was an example of mind mapping, a highly useful technique to help students in planning for their future careers.

The teacher patiently demonstrated the content on the whiteboard while posing several questions to check the students' understanding of the explanation provided. The teacher then provided several additional examples of how mind mapping can be used in relation to various professions. He repeatedly asked whether any students were still confused about the concept of mind mapping and its application in writing a descriptive text with a professional theme. After confirming that there were no further questions, the teacher instructed the students to practice by creating a mind map on a sheet of paper, illustrating their future career aspirations.

Once the initial drafts were completed on paper, the teacher invited the students to transfer their mind map designs into digital form. Students were asked to create their mind maps using the free version of Canva, accessed through their official belajar.id education accounts. Some students accessed Canva via their smartphones, while others chose to use their laptops.

The students began working with their phones and laptops. It was evident that they experienced no significant difficulties or awkwardness while practicing how to create mind maps using their devices. This was largely due to the school's strong emphasis on digital literacy. SMK Budi Mulia Utama actively encourages students to become digitally literate, ensuring that they are at least familiar and comfortable with using information and digital technologies such as Canva, Capcut, social media platforms, and similar tools. During the activity, the teacher walked around the classroom to observe the students as they worked on their devices. From time to time, the teacher offered suggestions or responded to students' questions.

2) Second Meeting

a) Pre-activity

The second classroom observation was conducted in class 10-OMBS-1. Before the lesson began, the teacher opened the class by greeting the students. The students responded positively to the greeting. After the class leader led a prayer and the teacher took attendance, the teacher asked whether anyone remembered the previous day's lesson. The students promptly answered, "Descriptive text, Miss." The teacher then asked, "Does anyone still remember the parts of a descriptive text?" A few students quietly responded, "Identification and description, Miss."

b) Activity

The teacher then walked to the whiteboard and wrote a paragraph containing a descriptive text. He rewrote the same text that had been studied the previous day, which was about "A Secretary".

The teacher conducted a recall session to help students remember the material on descriptive text that had been taught the previous day. Some students had forgotten the language features and generic structure of a descriptive text, so the teacher had to repeat the explanation previously delivered during the lesson in the language laboratory.

After a brief review, the teacher assigned the students a task to write a descriptive text about their dream profession using the mind mapping technique. Students were instructed to first create a mind map using the Canva application on their phones or laptops. The teacher walked around the classroom, responding to questions and offering constructive suggestions. It appeared that most students encountered little to no difficulty in creating their mind maps. Once all students had completed their mind maps, the teacher instructed them to convert their mind maps into descriptive texts.

The students were instructed to compose their descriptive texts in Canva and to decorate them as well. They showed great enthusiasm in creating their descriptive texts, as they felt confident in their ability to complete the task. They were also excited to embellish their work with colorful frames and various images. Moreover, both the mind map and the descriptive text they produced would later be submitted and assessed by the teacher. Since both the mind map and the descriptive text were created using the Canva application, the students were instructed to submit their work via WhatsApp or email.

c) Closing

The teacher announced that only five minutes remained before the end-of-class bell would ring and asked the students to submit their mind map images along with the descriptive texts they had written. After the bell rang, the teacher concluded the lesson with a farewell and left the classroom.

b. Students' Ability in Writing Descriptive Text Using Mind Mapping Strategy

The students were asked to create their own mind maps and to write descriptive texts. The researcher found that most of the students had already understood how to apply the mind mapping technique in creating group descriptive texts. This was indicated by the timely submission of their assignments and the quality of their descriptive text compositions. The actual amount of student Mind Maps and Descriptive Texts were 19, 3 were reflected the proper format and conventions, and 16 were considerably lacking. The students' performance would show in ratio 5:1. The following are the mind maps and descriptive texts produced by the students:

1) Student 1

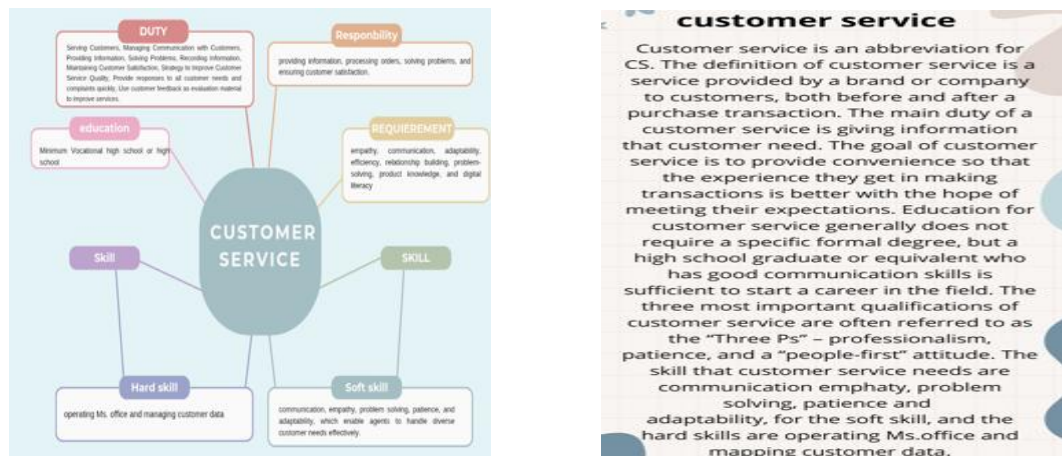


Figure 2.1. Mind Map and Descriptive Text by Student 1

- The Mind Map
Student's 1 mind map is fairly well-constructed, featuring a central focus word placed in the middle of the page, which is then elaborated through eight branching keywords. Each word that describes the main idea branches out from the central image or term and is connected by lines, which aligns with the standard principles of effective mind mapping. Furthermore, a notable weakness is the inclusion of explanatory notes below

the branch keywords, which deviates from mind mapping guidelines that emphasize brevity by avoiding lengthy text or complete sentences on the branches.

- The Text

In the descriptive text written by Student 1, unfortunately, the structure does not follow the proper format of a paragraph. The text resembles a poem, as it is center-aligned and lacks indentation typically found in standard paragraphs. Despite the inappropriate paragraph formatting, Student 1 demonstrates excellent micro skills in her writing. The descriptive text contains minimal grammatical, punctuation, and spelling errors. From the perspective of macro skills, the descriptive text written by Student 1 has not yet fully succeeded in identifying and describing the main topic student 1 selected, namely "Customer Service." Student 1 has not effectively developed the content of her text, as not all of the branch words from the mind map are elaborated upon in the writing. In short, Student 1's paragraph lacks a logical progression of ideas and suffers from weak cohesion between sentences and between paragraphs.

2) Student 2

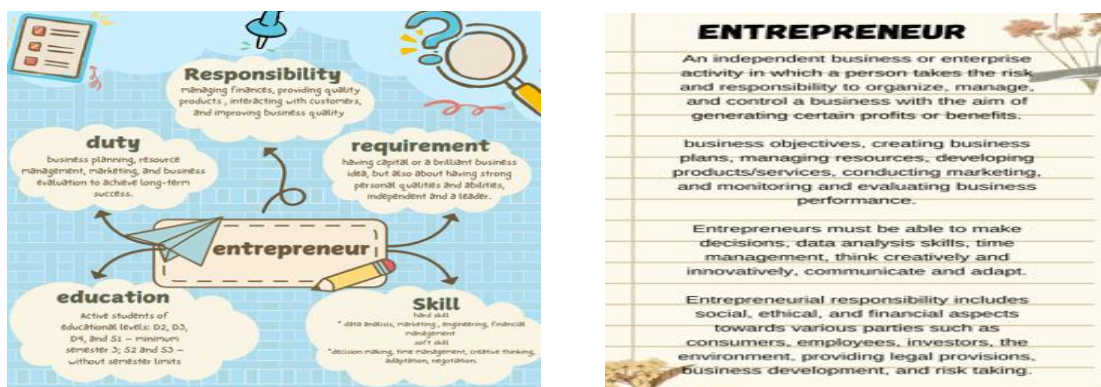


Figure 2.2. Mind Map and Descriptive Text by Student 2

- The Mind Map

The mind map created by Student 2 is very well-executed. She began with a central image accompanied by a clearly written main keyword, "Entrepreneur," which was boldly emphasized. Student 2 also added several subtopics or branch words that extend directly from the central image. These branch words are positioned around the main image with varied spacing, creating a visually appealing and well-balanced layout for the mind map. However, it is worth noting that she placed explanatory sentences

beneath each branch word, which is not appropriate for a mind map, as each branch should ideally contain only a single keyword without additional explanation.

- The Text

Unfortunately, Student 2 was unable to develop her mind map into a well-structured paragraph. The paragraph she wrote was center-aligned and lacked indentation, making it difficult to recognize as a proper paragraph at first glance. Moreover, the descriptive text Student 2 produced did not clearly demonstrate the elements of identification and description. In both the first and second paragraphs, there is no clear main idea, indicating that Student 2 has not yet mastered macro skills in writing. Student 2 struggled to construct coherent sentences due to the absence of clarity and logical progression of ideas. Additionally, there is a lack of cohesion both between sentences and between paragraphs.

3) Student 3

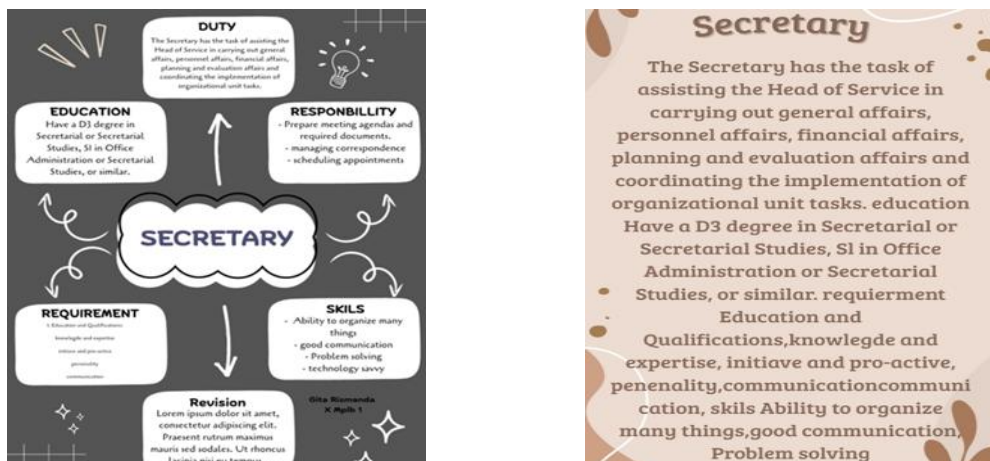


Figure 2.3. Mind Map and Descriptive Text by Student 3

- The Mind Map

The overall design of Student 3's mind map closely adheres to the generic structure of a proper mind map, beginning with a central keyword placed in the middle, followed by subtopics arranged around it. Student 3 constructed her mind map with careful attention to detail, particularly in terms of spacing between words. Each subtopic is connected to the main topic through well-drawn lines that clearly illustrate the relationships among the ideas. Unfortunately, as with all other students, Student 3 added explanatory notes to each subtopic something that should be reserved for the written text rather than included in the mind map itself. Additionally, Student 3 forgot to remove a default placeholder text from Canva at the bottom of her design.

- The Text

Student 3 developed the mind map into a descriptive text with the title “Secretary.” Like many other students, Student 3 formatted the paragraph with center alignment and did not use indentation at the beginning of the paragraph. In addition, Student 3 struggled to expand upon the ideas related to the subtopics in the mind map. Many of the main ideas were left undeveloped, and this issue was further compounded by several errors in punctuation and grammar.

4) Student 4



Figure 2.4. Mind Map and Descriptive Text by Student 4

- The Mind Map

Student 4’s design can also be considered a mind map, as there are many possible variations in form. However, the design Student 4 created more closely resembles a structural diagram, which differs from the example provided by the teacher during the session in the language lab. Although the design is visually attractive, it lacks meaningful content. The topics included do not show any significant or logical connection to one another.

- The Text

The descriptive text written by Student 4 also fails to demonstrate any substantial content quality. It appears to have been written hastily and without much effort. Student 4 did not adhere to grammatical rules, as evidenced by numerous grammar errors throughout the text. Even the main idea was not properly developed; Student 4 merely listed short words or phrases without providing sufficient explanation or elaboration. Overall, Student 4’s paragraph lacks both coherence and cohesion.

5) Student 5

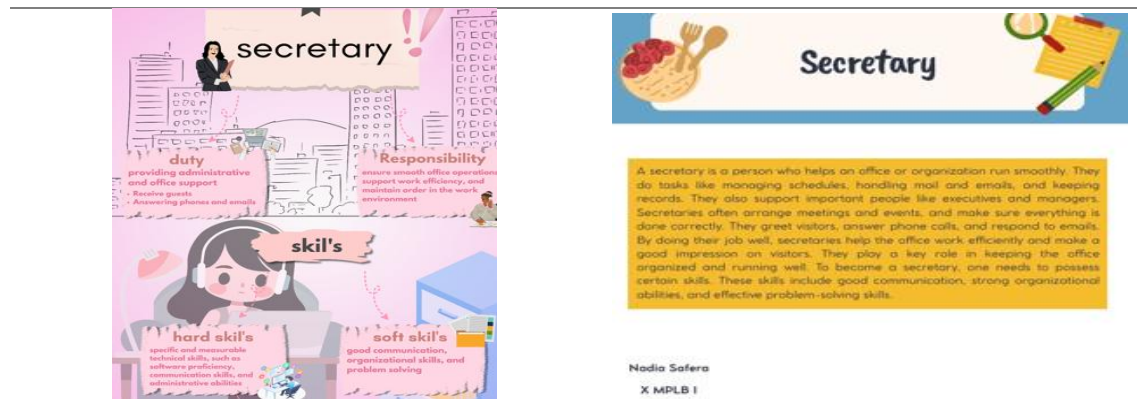


Figure 2.5. Mind Map and Descriptive Text by Student 5

- The Mind Map
The mind map created by Student 5 does not follow the basic principles of proper mind mapping. Student 5 used two main topics “secretary” and “skill’s” the latter of which is a misspelling of “skills.” The overall design is monotonous and unengaging, with both the background and foreground in shades of pink. There is no interconnected structure, no use of images to emphasize or visually represent the main topic, and no indication of the personal style in the design.
- The Text
Student 5 produced a fairly strong descriptive text when Student 5 developed the mind map. Student 5 successfully expanded on the ideas by presenting clear and relevant information, showing a good command of grammar, punctuation, spelling, and vocabulary. The paragraph followed a logical flow, beginning with the main idea and maintaining justified alignment throughout. However, the choice to write only a single paragraph limited the depth and detail of the content. If Student 5 had divided the explanation of the secretary role into several well-structured paragraphs, the overall piece would have been more informative and engaging.

6) Student 6

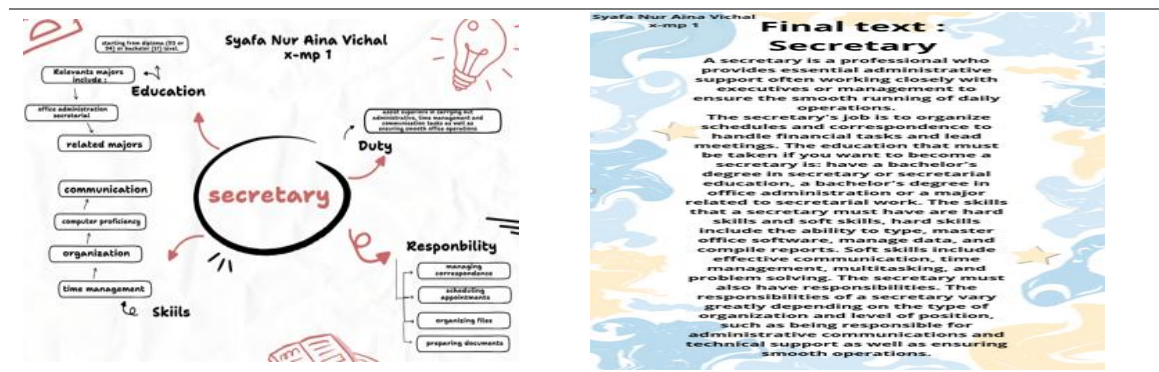


Figure 2.6. Mind Map and Descriptive Text by Student 6

- The Mind Map
Student 6's mind map is thoughtfully organized and well-executed. It starts with a central image labeled "secretary," from which four main subtopics education, duty, skill, and responsibility branch out. These subtopics are linked to the central idea with curved lines, clearly illustrating their connection. Unlike many of the peers who placed explanations directly beneath each subtopic, Student 6 opted for separate boxes with bullet points to elaborate on each area, using additional lines to link them, independent of the main branches. Student 6's work stands out as the most closely aligned with the core principles of effective mind mapping among all the students.
- The Text
Student 6 was able to elaborate on each subtopic effectively, adding relevant information that enriched the overall content without straying from the central theme. The ability to expand on key ideas while maintaining coherence throughout the text highlights the strong grasp of both the subject matter and the writing process. In addition to the content, the technical accuracy of the writing was impressive. Student 6 made very few mistakes in grammar, spelling, or punctuation, which contributed to the clarity and professionalism of the work. Overall, Student 6's descriptive text not only fulfilled the assignment requirements but also showcased the writing skills and attention to detail.

Discussion

1. Teachers' Teaching Descriptive Text Using Mind Mapping Strategy

Based on the observations, it was evident that the teacher had a strong grasp of using mind mapping as a teaching strategy in the classroom. This study showed that the teacher had prepared a comprehensive lesson plan prior to teaching. The plan included the targeted competencies, indicators of basic competency achievement, learning objectives, teaching

methods, and a detailed outline of the learning steps to be carried out. It is in line to what Yutisanto (2023) points out that teachers often try to make lessons more interesting by choosing topics related to students' majors.

The observation findings revealed that the teacher placed great emphasis on the learning process of writing descriptive texts by encouraging students to begin with drafting their work as suggested by experts. The initial draft took the form of a mind map designed by the students. Based on the mind map, the teacher instructed students to write a paragraph draft, which was then revised and edited to produce a well-developed descriptive text.

From the elaboration above, it can be concluded that the teacher's approach to teaching descriptive writing through the use of mind mapping was aligned with the principles of teaching writing proposed by Brown and Abeywickrama (2019). These principles include emphasizing the importance of interaction, adopting a process-oriented approach, implementing contextualized tasks, integrating language skills, and acknowledging the essential role of feedback throughout the writing process.

The teacher carried out their duties effectively during the writing lesson, particularly in teaching descriptive text writing. As stated by experts, teachers have several key responsibilities in the classroom when teaching writing, including demonstrating, motivating and provoking, supporting, responding, and evaluating. In this context, the teacher successfully fulfilled these roles. Furthermore, the teacher effectively acted as a motivator, fostering a positive learning environment, emphasizing the value of the writing activity, and encouraging students to make their best effort in order to achieve optimal results.

2. Students' Ability in Writing Descriptive Texts Using the Mind Mapping Strategy

The students' ability in writing descriptive texts using the mind mapping strategy was rather disappointing. Although the teacher had delivered the lesson to the best of their ability and followed the lesson plan accordingly, the students still struggled to grasp the material effectively.

During the observation process, nearly all students failed to produce mind maps that conformed to the structure and examples provided by the teacher. Only one or two students were able to create a mind map design that adhered to the proper principles, namely: placing a single word or phrase at the center as the main focus of the subject; branching out main themes from the central topic; ensuring each branch contains a key image or word

connected by a line; representing subtopics as branches linked to higher-level branches; and forming an interconnected structure throughout the map.

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that the students lacked the ability to compose a well-structured descriptive text using the mind map strategy. Despite the teacher's considerable effort in preparing and implementing a well-designed lesson plan, multiple factors contributed to the students' inability to fully grasp the material. These factors may include limited prior knowledge, insufficient writing practice, lack of motivation, or difficulties in transferring information from visual planning (mind map) to structured written form.

The result of the study somewhat differs from all the results of a previous study conducted by Nurani (2020), Sulastri and Purnamaningsih (2022), Anggraeni and Marlianingsih (2017), and by Silulu and Nasir (2022), which all have conclusion that the mind mapping technique is effective in improving learning outcomes in writing descriptive texts. However, since this study is observational research, the researcher was not in a position to intervene or take any action to improve the situation.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis, the teacher successfully implemented the teaching of descriptive text using the mind mapping strategy in accordance with pedagogical principles. The teacher designed and followed a well-structured lesson plan and consistently applied the principles of teaching writing. Furthermore, the teacher fulfilled their role effectively by performing essential tasks before, during, and after writing activities, including demonstrating, motivating and provoking, supporting, responding, and evaluating. In addition, the teacher acted as a motivator by fostering a positive learning environment, emphasizing the value of the activity, and encouraging students to engage with effort and commitment in order to achieve optimal learning outcomes.

Second, the students' ability in writing descriptive texts using the mind mapping strategy was notably inadequate. Nearly all students failed to produce mind maps that conformed to the structure and examples provided by the teacher. Only one or two students managed to design a mind map that adhered to the proper principles, while the majority created disorganized visuals. This outcome may be attributed to several contributing factors, including limited prior knowledge, insufficient writing practice, lack of motivation, or difficulties in transferring information from the mind map to a well-organized written text.

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