

TEACHING RECOUNT TEXT USING STORY MAPPING TECHNIQUE TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' WRITING ABILITY

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Abstract

Writing is widely acknowledged as one of the most complex skills for learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), particularly in producing recount texts that require clear organization and grammatical accuracy. Preliminary observations at SMP Negeri 3 Pematangsiantar showed that many ninth-grade students experienced difficulties in organizing ideas, applying appropriate grammatical features, and understanding the generic structure of recount texts. This study aimed to improve students' recount text writing ability through the Story Mapping Technique (SMT), grounded in genre-based pedagogy and instructional scaffolding theory. A Classroom Action Research design based on Kemmis and McTaggart's model was conducted in two cycles involving 32 ninth-grade students. Data were collected through writing tests and classroom observations and analyzed using quantitative and qualitative approaches. The findings revealed a significant improvement in students' writing performance, with the mean score increasing from 65.10 in the pre-test to 81.45 in Cycle II, and the percentage of students achieving the minimum competency standard rising from 37.5% to 84.3%. The study concludes that the Story Mapping Technique is effective in enhancing students' recount text writing ability in junior high school English classrooms.

Keywords : writing ability; recount text; story mapping technique; classroom action research; EFL students

INTRODUCTION

Writing is an essential language skill that plays a crucial role in students' academic success and overall communicative competence. Unlike speaking, writing requires learners to generate ideas, organize them logically, and express them accurately through appropriate linguistic forms. For learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), writing is often perceived as the most challenging skill because it involves complex cognitive processes, limited vocabulary resources, and insufficient mastery of grammatical structures. Hyland (2007) emphasizes that writing is not merely a cognitive activity but also a social practice, as writers

must understand how language is used to achieve specific purposes within particular cultural and academic contexts.

In the Indonesian junior high school context, English writing instruction is strongly influenced by genre-based pedagogy, which is mandated by the national curriculum. Genre-based instruction emphasizes students' ability to understand and produce different types of texts, such as descriptive, narrative, procedure, and recount texts. Among these genres, recount text is considered fundamental because it enables students to retell past experiences or events in a chronological order, focusing on orientation, series of events, and reorientation (Gerot & Wignell, 1994). Through recount texts, students are expected to demonstrate their understanding of text organization, temporal sequencing, and grammatical features, particularly the use of the simple past tense.

However, despite its importance, writing recount texts remains problematic for many junior high school students. Based on preliminary observations conducted at SMP Negeri 3 Pematangsiantar, students encountered several difficulties in writing recount texts. These difficulties included limited ability to generate ideas, lack of coherence between sentences, inappropriate use of tenses, and insufficient understanding of generic structure. As a result, students' written texts were often fragmented, repetitive, and unclear in conveying meaning. Similar problems have also been reported in previous studies, indicating that writing difficulties among EFL learners are a widespread issue rather than an isolated case (Harmer, 2004; Derewianka, 2004).

One contributing factor to these difficulties is the dominance of conventional teaching methods that emphasize the final written product rather than the writing process. In many classrooms, students are asked to write a text without sufficient guidance during the pre-writing and planning stages. Consequently, students struggle to organize their ideas and develop coherent texts. Harmer (2004) argues that effective writing instruction should involve process-oriented approaches, including brainstorming, outlining, drafting, revising, and editing, to support learners in developing their writing competence gradually.

To address these challenges, teachers need to employ instructional strategies that can guide students during the writing process and help them organize ideas more effectively. One such strategy is the Story Mapping Technique (SMT). Story mapping is a visual organizer that enables learners to identify key elements of a text and arrange them systematically before writing. By using story maps, students can plan the orientation, sequence of events, and

conclusion of a text in a structured manner. This visual support is particularly beneficial for EFL learners, as it reduces cognitive load and allows students to focus on language use during the writing process.

Previous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of story mapping in improving students' reading comprehension and writing ability. Idol (1987) found that story mapping helped students identify important information and improve their understanding of narrative texts. More recent studies in the Indonesian context have also reported positive effects of story mapping on students' writing performance, particularly in narrative and recount texts (Usman, 2020; Harahap & Lubis, 2021). These studies indicate that story mapping can enhance students' ability to organize ideas, develop coherent texts, and increase motivation in writing activities.

Nevertheless, most existing studies have employed experimental or quasi-experimental research designs, focusing primarily on measuring learning outcomes rather than improving classroom practices. Limited research has explored the implementation of the Story Mapping Technique through Classroom Action Research (CAR), especially in authentic junior high school classroom settings. CAR is particularly relevant for teachers because it allows them to reflect on their instructional practices and make continuous improvements based on classroom realities. Therefore, there is a clear research gap regarding how story mapping can be integrated into writing instruction through a CAR framework.

Based on this gap, the present study aims to investigate the implementation of the Story Mapping Technique to enhance students' recount text writing ability at SMP Negeri 3 Pematangsiantar through Classroom Action Research. The novelty of this study lies in its focus on the use of story mapping as a pre-writing strategy within a cyclical CAR design, supported by both quantitative and qualitative data. By examining both learning outcomes and classroom processes, this study is expected to contribute to the development of effective writing instruction strategies in EFL junior high school contexts.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design, which is appropriate for improving instructional practices and addressing learning problems in real classroom contexts. CAR allows teachers and researchers to identify problems, implement instructional actions, observe the effects, and reflect on the outcomes systematically (Kemmis & McTaggart,

1988). In this research, CAR was utilized to improve students' recount text writing ability through the implementation of the Story Mapping Technique.

Research Design

This research follows the framework proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), where each cycle is a series of activities designed to diagnose, follow up, and reflect on the teaching and learning process.

1. **Planning:**

In this stage, the researcher identified students' writing problems through observations and pre-tests. A lesson plan was designed to incorporate the Story Mapping Technique into the teaching of recount texts. Teaching materials, worksheets, and assessment rubrics were prepared.

2. **Implementation:**

The researcher implemented the lesson plan in collaboration with the English teacher in the classroom. During this stage, students were introduced to the concept of recount text and its generic structure. They were guided to create a story map that visually represented the orientation, events, and reorientation of their own experiences before writing a complete recount text.

3. **Observation:**

In this stage, the researcher and collaborators observed the teaching and learning process to record student participation, engagement, and difficulties. Observation sheets, field notes, and student writing were collected as data to evaluate the impact of the SMT implementation.

4. **Reflection:**

The researcher and collaborators analyzed observations and student work to identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement. Based on the reflection, the lesson plan and learning steps for the next cycle were revised. The second cycle was then implemented with necessary improvements to strengthen students' understanding and writing skills.

The cyclical nature of CAR design allows for continuous refinement of teaching strategies and better adaptation to student needs.

Research Participants or Population and Sample

The participants of this study were students of Class IX-2 of SMP Negeri 3 Pematang Siantar in the 2024/2025 academic year. The class consisted of 32 students aged 14 to 15 years, consisting of 14 male students and 18 female students. They were selected because their recount text writing results, based on initial assessments, were relatively low compared to other classes. The researcher selected this class through purposive sampling, which is appropriate for classroom action research because it focuses on specific groups that need improvement (Creswell, 2012). The researcher acted as a collaborator, assisting in the implementation of learning and data collection.

Instruments

Several instruments were used to collect data in this study:

1. Writing Test:

A pre-test and post-test were administered to measure students' improvement in recount text writing skills. This test required students to write a recount about their personal experiences using the Story Mapping Technique as a pre-writing tool. The writing was assessed based on five criteria: content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics (adapted from Jacobs et al., 1981).

2. Observation Sheet:

An observation sheet was used to document classroom activities, student engagement, and teacher performance during the implementation of SMT. This instrument helped the researcher monitor student behavior, participation, and learning progress throughout each cycle.

Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis in this study was Quantitative data were obtained from pre-test and post-test scores, while qualitative data were obtained from observations, field notes, and questionnaires.

For quantitative analysis, students' writing scores were calculated and compared between the pre-test and post-test for each cycle. Improvement was measured using average scores and percentage analysis. The formula proposed by Nurgiyantoro (2010) was used to calculate the average and percentage improvement:

$$\text{Mean} = \frac{\Sigma x}{N}$$

Where Σx = total scores, and N = number of students. Improvement percentage was calculated as:

$$P = \frac{(M_2 - M_1)}{M_1} \times 100\%$$

Where M_1 = mean score of the pre-test, and M_2 = mean score of the post-test.

Qualitative data from observations and field notes were analyzed through descriptive interpretation to identify patterns of student engagement, participation, and response to SMT. Questionnaire results were tabulated to identify student perceptions in percentages. Data triangulation was performed by comparing quantitative and qualitative findings to increase the validity and reliability of the research results.

This Classroom Action Research (CAR) was systematically designed to improve students' writing skills in recount texts through the Story Mapping Technique. The combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches allowed researchers to evaluate measurable improvements in writing performance as well as qualitative changes in classroom participation and motivation. This research design ensured that the implementation of CAR was continuously refined through reflection, thus aligning with the objectives of the action research to improve teaching practices and learning achievement in real classrooms.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result:

Students' Writing Achievement Before and After the Implementation of Story Mapping Technique

The main findings of this study were derived from primary data collected through students' writing tests administered before and after the implementation of the Story Mapping Technique (SMT). The pre-test results indicated that students' ability to write recount texts was relatively low. Many students had difficulties in organizing ideas chronologically, applying appropriate grammatical structures especially the simple past tense and completing the generic

structure of recount texts. The improvement in students' writing achievement can be clearly seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Students' Writing Achievement Before and After SMT Implementation:

Test Type	Mean Score	Students \geq KKM (75)	Percentage (%)
Pre-Test	65.10	12 students	37.5%
Post-Test	81.45	27 students	84.3%

As shown in Table 1, students' writing performance improved significantly after the application of the Story Mapping Technique. The mean score increased from 65.10 in the pre-test to 81.45 in the post-test, indicating an improvement of 16.35 points. Furthermore, the percentage of students who achieved the Minimum Competency Standard (KKM = 75) increased substantially from 37.5% to 84.3%. This improvement demonstrates that SMT effectively supported students in planning and organizing their writing before producing complete recount texts.

The improvement occurred because SMT provided a clear visual framework that guided students in identifying the main elements of recount texts. By completing the story map prior to writing, students were able to structure their ideas logically and reduce confusion during the writing process. This finding indicates that SMT functioned as an effective pre-writing strategy that bridged the gap between students' ideas and written expression.

Improvement of Writing Components Through Story Mapping Technique

A closer analysis of students' writing results showed improvements across all assessed writing components, including content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. The most significant improvement was found in the organization component, where students demonstrated a clearer understanding of the generic structure of recount texts. Students were able to write a proper orientation that introduced the context of the story, followed by a sequence of events arranged chronologically, and concluded with a reorientation that reflected their experiences.

This improvement supports Gerot and Wignell's (1994) theory, which states that genre mastery requires students to understand and apply the structural patterns of a text. Before the implementation of SMT, many students omitted one or more structural elements. After using

story maps, students consistently included all required components, indicating better genre awareness.

In terms of grammar, students showed improved control of the simple past tense and sentence structure. Although grammatical errors were still present, especially in irregular verb forms, the frequency of errors decreased in the post-test. This improvement suggests that organizing ideas through story maps helped students focus more on language accuracy during the writing stage. Harmer (2004) explains that effective pre-writing activities can reduce students' cognitive load, allowing them to allocate more attention to grammar and vocabulary use.

Regarding content and vocabulary, students were able to develop their ideas more clearly and express their experiences using more appropriate word choices. The story mapping process helped students recall events in detail and expand them into meaningful paragraphs. As a result, students' writing became more coherent and elaborated compared to their initial performance.

Students' Engagement and Learning Response During the Implementation of SMT

Qualitative data obtained from classroom observations revealed positive changes in students' engagement and participation during the learning process. Prior to the implementation of SMT, many students were hesitant to start writing and often relied heavily on teacher guidance. During the SMT implementation, students became more active in brainstorming activities and demonstrated greater confidence in developing their ideas.

Students showed enthusiasm when completing story maps, as the visual format made the writing process more accessible and less intimidating. This increased engagement indicates that SMT created a more student-centered learning environment, where students were actively involved in constructing their own texts rather than passively following instructions.

These findings align with Idol's (1987) assertion that story mapping enhances learners' comprehension and engagement by making text structures more explicit. Furthermore, the results support Vygotsky's (1978) concept of scaffolding, which emphasizes the role of instructional support in enabling learners to perform tasks beyond their initial ability. In this study, story maps functioned as temporary scaffolds that guided students toward independent writing.

Discussion of Findings in Relation to Previous Studies:

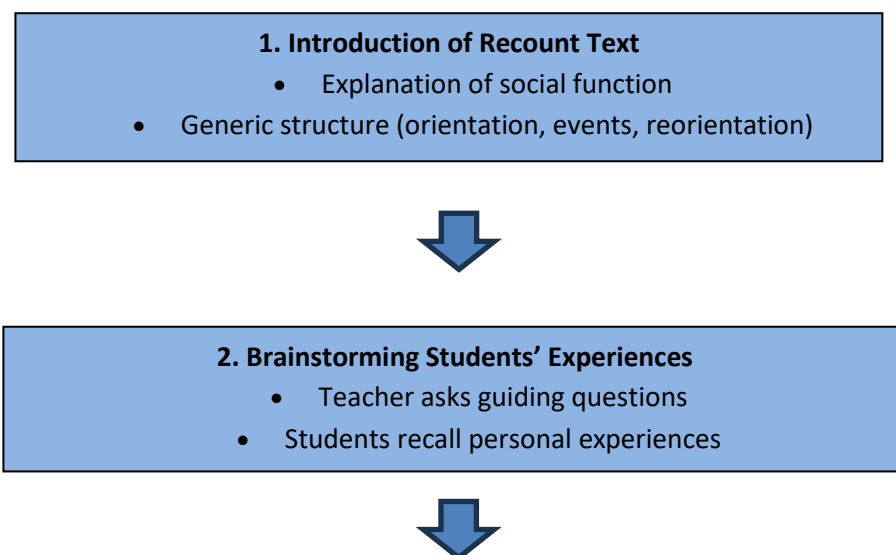
The findings of this study are consistent with previous research highlighting the effectiveness of the Story Mapping Technique in improving students' writing skills. Studies by Usman (2020) and Harahap and Lubis (2021) reported that students taught using story mapping achieved higher writing scores and demonstrated increased motivation and confidence. Similarly, this study found that SMT significantly improved students' writing performance and classroom engagement.

However, the novelty of this study lies in its focus on recount text writing within a Classroom Action Research framework in a real junior high school classroom context. Unlike previous studies that mainly examined story mapping in narrative texts or reading comprehension, this research provides empirical evidence that SMT is highly effective for teaching recount texts through reflective teaching cycles.

By integrating SMT into CAR, this study demonstrates how continuous reflection and revision of teaching strategies can lead to meaningful improvements in students' writing skills. Therefore, this research contributes to the existing literature by extending the application of story mapping to recount text writing and reinforcing its pedagogical value in EFL classrooms.

Figure

Figure 1: The Implementation Flow of Story Mapping Technique in Teaching Recount Text



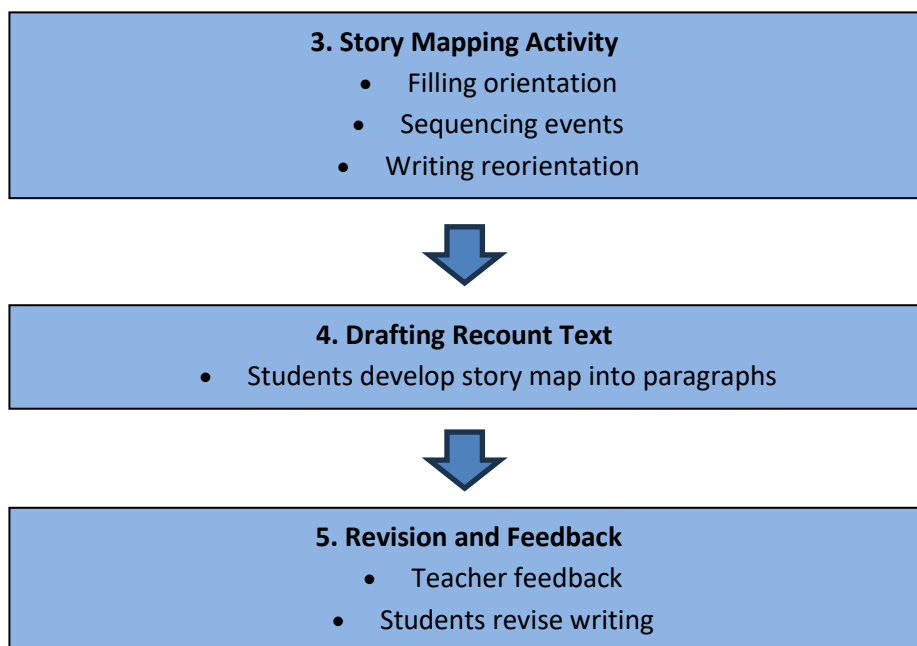


Figure 1 illustrates the instructional flow of the Story Mapping Technique applied in this study. The process begins with the introduction of recount text, including its social function and generic structure. Students are then guided to brainstorm their personal experiences through teacher-led questions. Next, students complete a story map consisting of orientation, sequence of events, and reorientation as a pre-writing activity. The completed story map serves as a guide for drafting a recount text. Finally, students receive feedback from the teacher and revise their writing. This figure demonstrates how the Story Mapping Technique functions as a visual scaffold to support students in organizing ideas and producing coherent recount texts.

Figure 2: Comparison of Students' Writing Achievement Before and After SMT Implementation

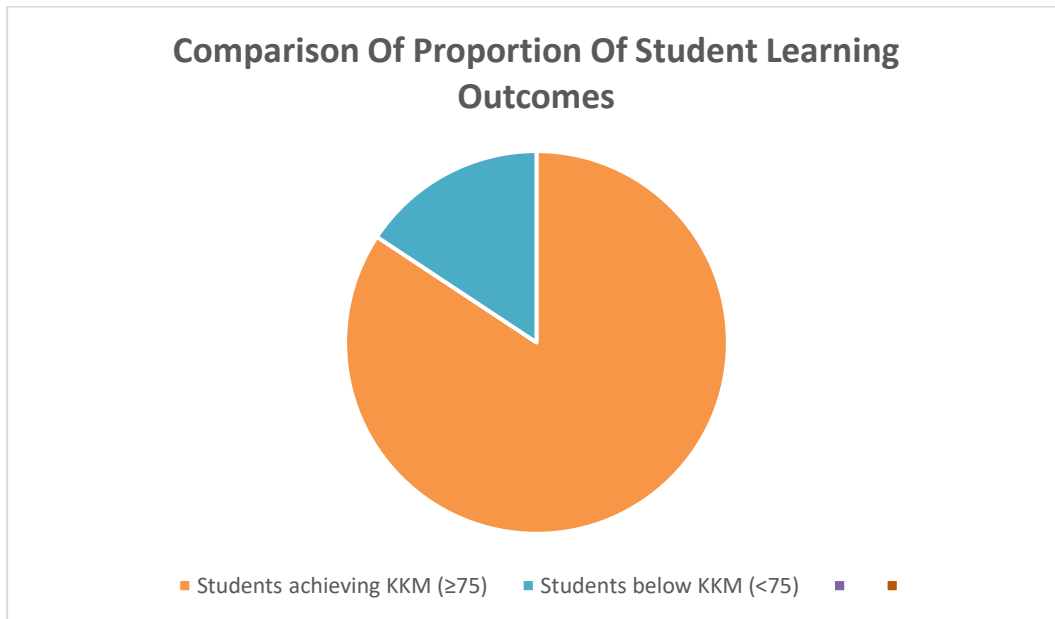


Figure 2 presents the percentage distribution of students' writing achievement after the implementation of the Story Mapping Technique. The figure shows that 84.3% of students achieved the minimum competency standard (KKM), while 15.7% of students remained below the standard. This visual representation reinforces the quantitative results presented in Table 1 and indicates that the Story Mapping Technique effectively improved students' writing performance in recount texts.

CONCLUSIONS

This study investigated the use of the Story Mapping Technique to improve students' writing ability in recount texts at SMP Negeri 3 Pematangsiantar through a Classroom Action Research design. The findings indicate that the implementation of the Story Mapping Technique effectively addressed students' difficulties in organizing ideas, applying appropriate grammatical structures, and understanding the generic structure of recount texts.

The quantitative results showed a significant improvement in students' writing achievement. The mean score increased from 65.10 in the pre-test to 81.45 in the post-test, and the percentage of students who achieved the minimum competency standard (KKM = 75) rose from 37.5% to 84.3%. These results demonstrate that the Story Mapping Technique provided

effective scaffolding during the pre-writing stage, enabling students to develop more coherent and well-structured recount texts.

Qualitative findings from classroom observations also revealed positive changes in students' learning behavior. Students became more active, confident, and motivated during writing activities after the implementation of the Story Mapping Technique. The visual nature of story mapping helped students plan their ideas systematically and reduced difficulties during the writing process.

In conclusion, the Story Mapping Technique is an effective instructional strategy for teaching recount text writing in junior high school contexts. The results of this study contribute to the discussion on genre based writing instruction by providing empirical evidence that visual scaffolding techniques can enhance students' writing performance and classroom engagement.

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