

FOSTERING ENGLISH LITERACY DEVELOPMENT IN WRITING CLASS THROUGH MIND MAPPING INTEGRATED WITH CHARACTER BUILDING AND LOCAL WISDOM

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Abstract

The need of English Literacy today increases sharply particularly in the time when Indonesia is preparing to face AEC 2018 (ASEAN Economic Community) or MEA (*Masyarakat Ekonomi ASEAN*). For English teachers, introducing English literacy in writing class is not always easy as they need to find interesting methods. It is commonly believed that English language teaching is often accompanied by introducing foreign cultural values that are not always appropriate with that of Indonesian. In line with the national education goals, it seems that the possible way of promoting character building is by integrating local wisdom in Foreign language teaching. The aim of character building is to build the students character which can be supported by the local wisdom. An example of local wisdom that is discussed in this paper is 'Nyadran' ceremony. Nowadays, most students are not interested in local wisdom. To attract their interest in learning character through local wisdom is probably by applying mind mapping as the media. Mind Mapping can be an attractive method for writing class. In this case, the teacher can start discussing the example of local wisdom in a reading text then assigns the students to work in small group to prepare mind mapping. The second step is assigning them to present their mind mapping. Next, they write a descriptive essay based on their mind mapping. The result show that they can write the points which are related to character building in their essay and develop their English literacy ability using local wisdom.

Keywords: English literacy, mind mapping, character building, local wisdom.

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, Indonesia is preparing to welcome AEC (ASEAN Economic Community) or commonly called as MEA (*Masyarakat Ekonomi ASEAN*) in 2018. In this case, the government announces that Indonesians especially students have to master English as International language. It is believed that that English literacy has an important role in global communication and therefore people have to learn English literacy that can be applied in every field. We cannot deny that the number of Indonesian people who learn English literacy have increased year by year.

Literacy has many definitions and these definition are continually developed. According to Cambridge Assesment (2013) the term 'literacy' refers only to reading, but sometimes it relates to reading and writing, and often to reading, writing, speaking and listening. In fact, many definitions of literacy focus on the ability to read and write in appropriate level (Blake and Hanley, 1995). This present research focuses on literacy in writing skill that is taught to the second semester students of English department in Nahdlatul Ulama University of Sidoarjo.

Barkaoui (2007) states that writing is one of the most difficult skills that second language learners are expected to master it well. Moreover, teachers have to think of the best way to teach writing well. They can use many strategies and techniques to make a writing classroom more interesting. Williams (2003) suggests that teachers should identify and discuss learners' writing experiences, beliefs, need, and goals to avoid misconception of the learning purpose. Here, the present research

shows how to teach writing through mind mapping integrated with character building and local wisdom.

Students in writing class have to master large number of vocabularies in order to write an essay. There are some ways to develop vocabularies and one of them is mind mapping. This strategy can be an effective way to make students recognize vocabularies easily. Students often use repetition as an important technique for vocabulary acquisition (Ellis & Beaton in Pua, 2015). Although, memorizing vocabulary by reciting words is painful and ineffective (Li Yang & Chen, 2010). Mind mapping can be used in different learning and thinking process. Buzan (2011) explains that mind mapping is a powerful graphic technique which provides a universal key to unlock the potential of the brain. It can increase productivity and memory retention.

This research integrated the writing material with character building and local wisdom. The students who took part in the present study have the same cultural background as most of them live in Sidoarjo. There are many kinds of local wisdom of Sidoarjo that were explored by the students through mind mapping. Through the strategy, the students were challenged to develop their writing skills. .

Sixteen students participated in the study and they were interested in learning writing through mind mapping. Prior to developing their own writing, they obtained an example of a descriptive essay and then they had to write their own descriptive essay with the topic relating to local wisdom of Sidoarjo. Before writing their essay, they had to write an outline using mind mapping. In this activity they had to determine the local wisdom relating to an interesting educational character. This assignment was conducted by each student.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

As it has been believed that literacy class begins at home. It means that children will learn to read and write from their parents and people in their home. How far they learn about literacy at home will commonly determine how deep they can develop their language skill. Due to the reason parents should introduce literacy early to their children. However, parents often do not ever try to teach literacy to their children because they believe that school will teach their children about literacy better.

Language teaching has historically alternated between scholarly and pragmatic approaches (Kern, 2002). A language class commonly focused on grammatical analysis only. Especially in English class the students learned more about grammatical errors than the English language skills. Widdowson (in Kern, 2002) stated that the language learners need to know how to compose in the act of writing, comprehend in the act of reading, and to learn techniques of reading by writing and techniques writing by reading. It means that in language class, to master the language students have to know the reading and writing techniques.

In a writing class the students learn how to write an outline of their essay and it will be an effective way to learn English literacy. However, before they write, they have to read more references to develop their essay. The Second semester of English department students in Nahdlatul Ulama University of Sidoarjo (UNUSIDA) take a writing class with the subject '*Essay Writing: Descriptive and Narrative*'. In this writing class the researcher used a mind mapping technique to help students writing descriptive essay. Sixteen students were in the writing class and each of them received the writing assignment using mind mapping. *Descriptive qualitative method* was used in conducting this research.

This research is aimed to develop the students' English literacy and make students realize that they can learn about character through local wisdom. This research shows that writing can be an interesting activity when teachers can apply some interesting teaching methods or strategies. However, the students got bored at first, but at the next activity they found that writing was easy and fun. Besides using mind mapping techniques the researcher employed the writing strategy

for generating and maintaining students motivation in the L2 writing class. For example using the strategy of 'Process Modelling' as proposed by Barkaoui (2007). This strategy could help the students become more competent in writing as it helped them in generating ideas, planning, drafting, and revising. Through this strategy the teacher provides the students with feedback on their writing until they are able to apply these process independently.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 *The Power of Mind Mapping in Language Learning*

The term Mind Maps are originated by Tony Buzan, a BBC TV host in the late 1960s as explained in Djuita (2015). Now, that term has been used by people in the world to develop ideas, information, etc in the form of visual diagram. Mind mapping is known as a visual diagram used to record and organize information in a way which the brain finds captivating and easy to process (Buzan in Djuita, 2015). It is believed that Mind Maps are useful and important for presenting and explaining ideas and information.

Mind mapping strategy has proven to be a good technique for memorizing, creative thinking, reading comprehension, and learning (Buzan in Fortheringham, 2015). Buzan claims that a mind map is a powerful graphic technique which provides a universal key to unlock the potential of the brain. It uses word, image, number, logic, rhythm, colour, and spatial awareness which help us to improve our learning and clearer thinking. Buzan (2011) explains that there are seven steps to do Mind Map as follows:

- a. Start in the CENTRE of a blank page turned sideways. Why? Because starting in the centre gives your brain freedom to spread out in all directions and express itself more freely and naturally.
- b. Use an IMAGE or PICTURE for your central idea. Why? Because an image is worth a thousand words and helps us use our Imagination. A central image is more interesting, keeps us focussed, and helps us cocentrate.
- c. Use COLOURS throughout. Why? Because colours are as exciting to our brain as are images. Colours adds extra vibrancy and life to your Mind Map and give more energy to our creative thinking.
- d. CONNECT your MAIN BRANCHES to the central image and connect your second and third level branches to the first and second leve, etc. Why? Because our brain works by association. It likes to link two or three, or four things together. If we connect the branches, we will understand and remember a lot more easily.
- e. Make our branches CURVED rather than straight-lined. Why? Because having nothing but straight lines is boring to our brain.
- f. Use ONE KEY WORD PER LINE. Why? Because single key words give our Mind Map more power and flexibility.
- g. Use IMAGES throught. Why? Because each image, like like the central image, is also worth a thousand words. If we have only 10 images in our Mind Map, it's already the equal of 10,000 words of notes(<http://www.tonybuzan.com/about/mind/-mapping>).

The explanation above shows that the concept of Mind Map is based on the human brain's concept that can be seen in the rule to connect branches, color and image are purposed to stimulate the human brain beside it can develop brain creativity. In addition, a Mind Map can help the language learners to present their ideas in a structured way starting from the main idea followed by supporting ideas.

According to Fortheringham (2015) Mind Maps are extremely useful for three main purposes in language learning, they are; learning vocabulary, building a clear context before, during and after study sessions, and organizing one's thoughts before writing. It supports the reseacher's idea that

Mind Map is very effective to used in writing class because it help the students to generate new ideas, analyze and synthesize in writing an outline of their essay.

Figure 1. The Process how to Make Mind Map

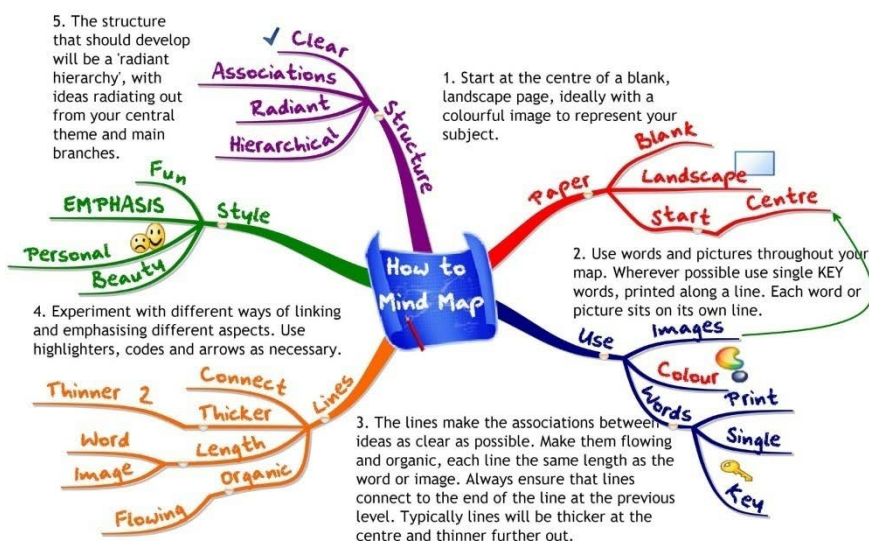
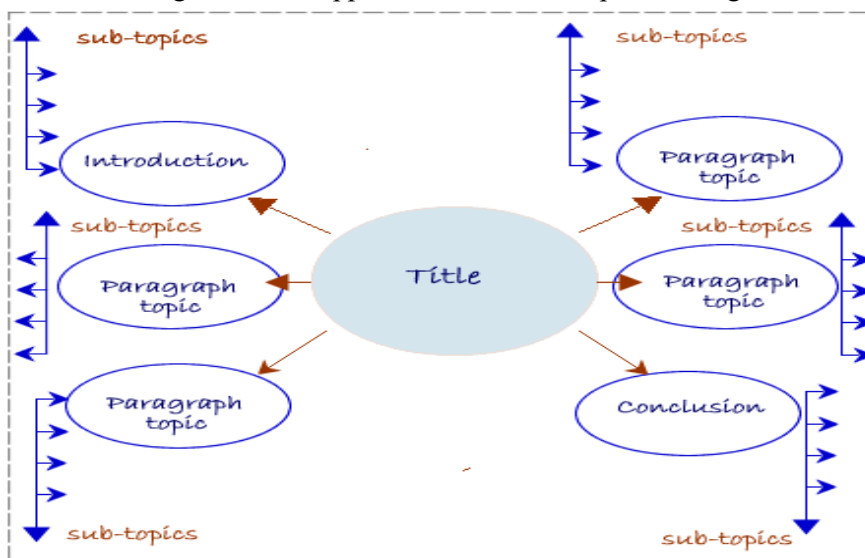


Figure 2. The Application of Mind Map in Writing



3.2 Local Wisdom for Students' Character Building

Local wisdom relates to the community's ability to understand the surrounding condition and the environment which is then adapted to the existing situation. Local wisdom contributes to the way of living, knowledge and life strategies in the form of actions done by local community to respond various problems and meet their needs in life. This term also refers to "local knowledge" or "local genius" (Rajab, in Alfitri and Hambali, 2013). In addition, according to Wagiran (in Alfitri and Hambali, 2013) the values of local wisdom are always inherent with the values of character education. In his study, Wagiran (in Alfitri and Hambali, 2013) stated that philosophically, the local wisdom contains a comprehensive dimension of character. Some explanations above show

that local wisdom contains of the character values. The researcher believes that local wisdom can support the character building.

Character building is needed by young generation as there are many negative aspects that can influence their personality. It means that character building should be taught at school. Character building has been a topic of discussion among academicians and educational practitioners in Indonesia. The nature of character building education has similar meaning to morality and moral education. The objective of character building basically is to form children's personalities in order to develop them as good human beings and citizens. The nature of character education in the context of education in Indonesia is developing the value of education and the educational noble values from Indonesia's own national culture with the purpose of nurturing young generation personality.

Lickona (1996) explains that character building education can shape someone's personality which results in concrete actions. In addition, according to Ramli as cited in Alfitri and Hambali (2013), character building education means moral education which aims to establish a child's personality to be a good human being and a good member of society. The concepts above show that character education is a process of forming a good personality, caring and responsive, through socialization and internalization.

The relation between local wisdom and character building is close. The local wisdom can support the character building as it can shape identity. The role of local wisdom in shaping students' identity is very important too (Maley, 2014). Through this research, local wisdom and character building were integrated in developing students' writing skill through mind mapping. The local wisdom which was explored in the writing class is 'Nyadran' ceremony.

3.3 'Nyadran' Ceremony as the Character Reflection of Sidoarjo People

The word 'Nyadran' is derived from Javanese language 'Sadran' that means Ruwah, Sya'ban. Gradually the word is defined as 'kenduri' ceremony held in a mosque, a house, and holy places (Fachruddin, 2010). In Sidoarjo, 'Nyadran' ceremony is defined as a traditional ceremony to thank to the God for His blessing to the 'Kupang', sea creatures, and fishermen. It is also well known as 'Petik Laut' ceremony in other areas.

'Nyadran' ceremony is held by Balongdowo people who are fishermen. It starts by visiting Dewi Sekardadu's grave yard located in Kepetingan, Sawohan village, Buduran, Sidoarjo. Dewi Sekardadu is Sunan Giri's mother. During the ceremony, each fisherman's house provides many kind of foods, such as; rice, chicken, fruits, and cakes that served in a special container called 'Tomblok'. The foods are then carried to Madura strait where the 'Nyadran' ceremony will be held. All of people, young or old, come to Balongdowo river and they decorate their boats. They begin the ceremony at night and each boat brings the food called 'Sajen' to the Madura strait. The situation of the ceremony is often very crowded and noisy as each the fisherman will play a loud music during the journey to the Madura strait.

From the ceremony people will learn about how to thank to the God, how to work together and how to care the ancestors heritages. Based on this traditional event the students can learn about good character needed to shape their identity.

3.4 The Implementation

There are many ways to develop character through teaching media. The present study used mind mapping as it can be a more interesting as compared to common media such as a reading text. After teaching the concept of descriptive essay, the teacher chose a traditional event to be described by the students. In this activity, the students will use a mind map when outlining the ideas to be included in the writing. The following are the procedures.

Firstly, the teacher assigned the students to work in small group consisting of 3-4 students to find out a traditional event in Sidoarjo as the topic of their descriptive essay. In this step, the students had to search information about topic related to character building. The teacher let them decide the references or sources to discuss the topic.

The next step was drafting a mind map as the basic step to write an outline. The students had to decide some important points to be included in their descriptive essay. They had to think good character that can be learned from the traditional events and thus their mind map had to show the relationship between the traditional events and the character building.

After the students had finished their mind map, they had to write an outline based on their mind map. The outline had to be suitable with a generic structure of a descriptive essay. The structure consisted of drafting an introduction, drafting the body and drafting a conclusion.

In the following step each group had to write their descriptive essay and present the essay in front of the class by referring to their mind mapping too. They had to present the process of the writing beginning from the choosing the topic to the character that was included in their essay. Each group is given enough time to present their essay. In this step, classroom discussion would develop the students' understanding about the local wisdom and character education. Some questions might come from other groups and the teacher paid attention to the discussion. This classroom discussion gave the presenters a freedom to develop their ideas in explaining their mind map and essay. From this activity the students could elaborate their ideas by giving examples, giving details, etc to develop their descriptive essay.

The last step was that each group had to check their essay to the teacher and other groups. The checking process included some points, such as topic, spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, logical order, and tense. The teacher gave each group feedback and they had to revise their essay if necessary.

4. CONCLUSION

Character building education is very necessary in preparing the young generation future of a country which is the reason schools and universities curriculum always incorporate some values in order to strengthen the students identity. However, character education is not set as an independent subject to be taught in class but it can be integrated in other aspect in the classroom teaching. One of the aspects that can be integrated with character education is local wisdom with the aim to develop English literacy in a writing class.

Local wisdom basically can support the character building education especially in writing skill. The students can learn about character through the local wisdom of their hometown. It can be their topic in their descriptive essay and it will build the students' character automatically. Besides, they learn how to write a descriptive essay they will get additional knowledge about kind of local wisdom that they never know before.

An interesting way to integrate both of character education and local wisdom is through mind mapping. Through mind mapping, students can present their ideas and they can write an essay outline easily. Moreover, it can help students to elaborate their explanation about the points in their mind mapping. A mind map which is colorful and completed with images and symbols can be an interesting way to build the students' creativity. Another benefit of mind mapping in integrating local wisdom and character building in a writing class is that it could develop the students' English literacy and character at the same time.

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