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The Effect of Clustering Technique on Students' Achievement in Writing Skill Recount Text at the Ninth grades Students of SMPN 5 Masbagik

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Abstract

This research aims to know the effect of the Clustering Technique on students' achievement in writing recount texts at the ninth grade of *SMPN 5 Masbagik* in the school year 2025–2026. The study applied a true experimental design with a pre-test and post-test control group. The sample consisted of 60 students selected through simple random sampling, with 30 students in the experimental group and 30 in the control group. The instrument used was a writing test assessed on content, organization, vocabulary, and language use, with proven validity and high reliability (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.936). The experimental group was taught recount text writing using the clustering technique, while the control group received conventional instruction. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, normality and homogeneity tests, and an independent sample t-test. The results revealed that the experimental group's mean score improved from 56.33 (SD = 6.52) in the pre-test to 71.40 (SD = 7.38) in the post-test, while the control group's mean score increased from 49.87 (SD = 5.20) to 53.40 (SD = 5.78). The independent sample t-test indicated a significant difference between the post-test scores of the two groups ($t = 10.513$, $p < 0.05$), confirming that the clustering technique significantly enhanced students' writing achievement. Based on the data analysis, the researcher concluded that clustering is an effective pre-writing strategy to improve the ability to generate and organize ideas, leading to better recount text writing performance.

Keywords: *Clustering Technique, Writing Achievement, Recount Text, Experimental Study, Junior High School Students.*

Introduction

Writing is one of the most essential skills in English learning because it allows students to express their thoughts and ideas in a structured form. Despite its importance, writing remains a challenging skill for most students, particularly in the Indonesian context where English is taught as a foreign language. Students often struggle with generating ideas, organizing paragraphs, and applying correct grammar. These challenges are especially evident when composing recount texts, a genre required in the junior high school curriculum. Furthermore, the difficulties in writing recount texts are compounded by limited exposure to authentic English language use outside the classroom. Many students have fewer opportunities to practice English writing in meaningful contexts, which affects their ability to develop fluency and coherence. As a result, they tend to produce texts that lack detail, proper sequencing, and logical flow. Moreover, the anxiety associated with writing in a second language can reduce students' motivation and confidence, further hindering their overall writing proficiency.

In addition, traditional teaching methods that focus heavily on grammar and vocabulary memorization often neglect the development of students' critical writing skills, such as idea

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generation and text organization. Without guidance on how to plan and structure their writing effectively, students frequently experience frustration and weak writing outcomes. Therefore, introducing strategies like clustering as a pre-writing technique is crucial to help students overcome these obstacles (Keith & Denny, 2024). By organizing their thoughts visually before writing, students can better manage the complexities of recount writing, ultimately improving their writing performance and encouraging a more positive attitude towards English writing tasks (Ambarwati & Saragih, 2021).

Effective writing instruction should therefore encompass not only the mastery of language mechanics, such as grammar, vocabulary, and punctuation, but also the development of strategies that foster creativity, critical thinking, and logical organization. One of the most effective strategies in this regard is the use of pre-writing techniques. For example, clustering allows students to map out their ideas visually, thereby reducing the cognitive burden of organizing thoughts during the drafting stage (Kartini, 2023). By creating a visual representation of ideas, students can freely brainstorm, identify meaningful connections between concepts, and arrange them into a logical sequence before transforming them into well-developed paragraphs. This process not only makes writing more manageable and less overwhelming but also cultivates planning skills that are essential for producing coherent and purposeful texts (Dewi & Ayunisa, 2020).

In the context of teaching recount texts, pre-writing strategies hold particular importance. A recount text is a genre of writing that aims to retell past experiences or events in chronological order, typically with the purpose of informing or entertaining the reader. Its generic structure consists of three main elements: orientation, which provides background information about the event; events, which present the sequence of actions or happenings; and re-orientation, which concludes the narrative with a reflection or closing statement. Despite the relative simplicity of this genre, many students encounter significant challenges in writing recount texts (Enighe et al., 2021). Common difficulties include the inability to generate initial ideas, hesitation in starting the writing process, and struggles in selecting appropriate linguistic features such as past tense verbs, time connectives, and descriptive vocabulary. Furthermore, students often fail to apply the generic structure of recount texts effectively in their compositions. Studies have shown that learners tend to omit one or more structural components, such as the orientation or re-orientation, which results in incomplete or fragmented narratives (Simanjorang & Pulungan, 2021). This suggests that without proper scaffolding and instructional strategies, students may remain unable to produce well-structured recounts. Therefore, integrating pre-writing techniques into writing instruction offers a promising solution, as it provides students with the cognitive and organizational tools they need to generate ideas, plan systematically, and adhere to the structural conventions of recount texts. Ultimately, such an approach not only improves the quality of students' writing but also strengthens their confidence and motivation to engage in the writing process.To address these issues, innovative teaching strategies are needed. One promising approach is the clustering technique, a pre-writing strategy that visually maps related ideas into diagrams or mind maps.

Clustering helps students develop, categorize, and organize their ideas before drafting. This technique has been shown to increase learners' creativity, motivation, and ability to generate coherent writing (Simorangkir et al., 2022). By using clustering, students are guided to connect related concepts, which reduces the difficulty of starting to write and supports the production of more structured recount texts (Ningsih, 2021). Previous research has consistently suggested the effectiveness of clustering as a pre-writing strategy across various genres of writing. For instanc demonstrated that clustering significantly improved students' descriptive writing by

helping them organize their ideas more coherently and enrich their use of details (Farnia & Wahyuni, 2018). The technique of clustering enhanced writing fluency, enabling students to generate ideas more quickly and write more confidently (Yulvia, 2024). Despite these promising findings, there has been relatively little attention paid to the specific application of clustering in the context of recount texts, especially at the junior high school level (Hidayatullah et al., 2025). This omission is notable given that recount writing is considered a fundamental skill within the school curriculum, essential for helping students narrate past experiences clearly and sequentially. Recognizing this gap, the present study aims to investigate the effect of clustering on students' achievement in writing recount texts (Fitriyani, 2020). By focusing on this specific genre and educational level, the study hopes to provide more targeted insights and practical implications for teaching strategies that can better support junior high school students in mastering recount writing.

The significance of this study can be viewed from both theoretical and practical perspectives. From a theoretical standpoint, this research contributes to the existing literature on language learning by emphasizing the pivotal role of pre-writing strategies in enhancing students' writing performance. It not only confirms previous findings but also expands the discussion by analyzing the extent to which different cognitive and preparatory techniques can be effectively integrated into the writing process. This allows for a more comprehensive understanding of how learners can activate their prior knowledge, organize their thoughts, and structure their ideas before engaging in actual writing activities. In doing so, the study enriches academic discourse on second language acquisition and written composition, while also providing a reference point for future research that seeks to explore innovative approaches to improving students' literacy skills (Dewi, 2020). On a practical level, the outcomes of this study offer meaningful implications for English language teachers, curriculum developers, and educational practitioners. By presenting an evidence-based framework for applying pre-writing strategies, the research equips teachers with practical tools that can be directly implemented in classroom instruction. These strategies not only promote active student engagement and participation but also enhance learners' ability to produce more coherent, organized, and contextually appropriate texts. As a result, students are more likely to experience greater confidence in expressing their ideas in writing, thereby reducing writing anxiety and fostering a more positive attitude toward the writing process.

Moreover, the findings serve as a valuable reference for teacher training programs by encouraging the incorporation of pre-writing activities into professional development initiatives. Schools and educational institutions can also benefit from these insights by integrating such strategies into their teaching practices, ultimately leading to improved learning outcomes and higher academic achievement. In the broader educational context, this study supports the creation of a more dynamic and supportive learning environment that empowers students to develop essential communication skills, which are crucial not only for academic success but also for their future professional endeavors (Marpaung, 2020).Based on this background, the study was conducted to answer the following statement of the problem: to know the effect of clustering technique on students' achievement in writing recount texts at the ninth grade of SMPN 5 Masbagik in the academic year 2025/2026. This study aims to investigate the effect of the clustering technique on students' achievement in writing recount texts among ninth-grade students at SMPN 5 Masbagik during the 2025-2026 academic year.

The primary goal is to determine whether the implementation of clustering as a pre-writing strategy can significantly enhance students' ability to generate and organize ideas effectively before composing their texts (Hidayatullah & Minarni, 2023). By providing a visual and

structured method for brainstorming, clustering is expected to support students in overcoming common challenges such as idea fragmentation and lack of coherence in their writing. Specifically, this research seeks to measure the extent to which clustering improves key aspects of recount writing, including the logical sequencing of events, the richness of detail, and the clarity of expression. Furthermore, the study compares the outcomes of teaching recount writing using the clustering technique with those of more traditional, conventional teaching methods to evaluate the relative effectiveness of clustering in promoting better writing performance. Ultimately, this research hopes to offer practical insights for English teachers at SMPN 5 Masbagik and similar educational settings by validating clustering as an effective instructional tool that not only increases students' writing competence but also boosts their confidence and motivation in learning English writing skills.

The novelty of this study lies in its specific focus on the application of the clustering technique to enhance recount writing skills at the junior high school level, particularly among ninth graders at SMPN 5 Masbagik. While clustering has been widely researched across various writing genres and educational levels, studies emphasizing its use for recount texts in junior high schools especially within the Indonesian context and a particular school setting remain limited. Therefore, this research contributes new empirical evidence that is contextually relevant, offering valuable insights for educators and researchers on the effectiveness of clustering as a teaching strategy to improve students' recount writing skills in Indonesian junior high schools

Method

This study employed a true experimental design with a pre-test and post-test control group design (Sugiyono, 2021). The experimental group received treatment through the application of the clustering technique in learning to write recount texts, while the control group was taught without the technique (). The design was selected because it allowed the researcher to compare students' writing performance befire and after the treatment as well as between the experimental and control group. Both groups were assessed twice, before and after the treatment, to determine the effect of the clustering technique on students' writing achievement. The research was conducted at SMPN 5 Masbagik from August 6 to September 6, 2025, involving ninth-grade students in the academic year 2025–2026. The total population consisted of 126 students from four classes (IXA = 34, IXB = 30, IXC = 30, IXD = 32). Using simple random sampling, two classes were selected: class IXC (30 students) as the experimental group and class IXB (30 students) as the control group.

The main instrument used was a writing test in the form of an essay recount text, aimed at measuring students' achievement in writing. The test was evaluated based on four main aspects, namely content, organization, vocabulary, and language. To ensure the quality of the instrument, validity was established through expert judgment and reliability testing produced cronbach's Alpha. prior to administration, the test was tried out in class IXA to examine its validity and reliability. Validity was determined through item-total correlation analysis, while reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha in SPSS 22 for Windows, ensuring the instrument consistently measured the intended construct. Independent variable in this study was the clustering technique, while the dependent variable was students' achievement in writing recount texts. Data collection was conducted through a pre-test, treatment, and post-test. The pre-test measured students' initial writing ability, the treatment applied the clustering technique in the experimental class, and the post-test was administered to both groups to assess improvement after the intervention. First, both groups were given a pre-test to measure their initial ability in writing recount texts. Second, the experimental group received instruction through the

clustering technique, in which students generated and organized ideas using diagrams before drafting their texts. Meanwhile, the control group was taught using conventional methods without clustering.

Finally, both groups were given a post-test to assess their progress after the treatment.The data obtained were analyzed quantitatively using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive analysis was used to calculate the mean and standard deviation of students' scores, while inferential analysis consisted of normality and homogeneity tests to check the assumptions for parametric testing. An independent sample t-test was then conducted to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference in writing achievement between the experimental and control groups. Data analysis involved both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data in terms of frequency, mean, and standard deviation. Before testing the hypothesis, assumptions of normality and homogeneity were checked using the Shapiro–Wilk test and Levene's test, respectively, through SPSS 22. To test the hypothesis, an independent samples t-test was employed to examine whether there was a significant difference in post-test scores between the experimental and control groups.

Results

The findings of this study are presented in three parts: descriptive statistics, prerequisite testing (normality and homogeneity), and hypothesis testing using the independent sample t-test.

Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive analysis provides information about the mean and standard deviation of students' writing scores in both groups. Table 1 shows the comparison between the pre-test and post-test results.

Tabel 1. *The result of the Mean Score and the Standard Deviation*

Class	Mean Pre-Test	SD Pre-Test	Mean Post-Test	SD Post-Test
Experimental	56,33	6,52	71,40	7,38
Control	49,87	5,20	53,40	5,78

The table indicates that students in the experimental group, who were taught using the clustering technique, experienced a substantial improvement in their writing scores. Their mean score increased from 56.33 in the pre-test to 71.40 in the post-test, showing a gain of 15.07 points. On the other hand, the control group, which was taught using conventional instruction, only showed a minor improvement, with the mean score rising from 49.87 to 53.40, or a gain of 3.53 points. These results suggest that clustering contributed more effectively to the development of students' writing achievement than the traditional approach.

Normality Test

Tabel 2. *Tests of Normality*

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	D f	Sig.	Statistic	D f	Sig.
Pre Ex	,130	30	,200*	,952	30	,197
Post Ex	,099	30	,200*	,974	30	,659
Pre control	,114	30	,200*	,970	30	,526
Post Control	,110	30	,200*	,963	30	,370

a. Test Distribution is normal
b. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Based on the result of the normality test presented in the test above, the analysis was conducted using two methods: Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test shows significance values for VAR0001-VAR0004 of 0.200 each. Meanwhile, the Shapiro-Wilk test produces significance values of 0.197, 0.659, 0.526, and 0.370, respectively. Since all significance values from both tests are above 0.05, it can be concluded that the data from all four variables are normally distributed. Therefore, the analysis can proceed using the t-test. The significance values for all tests were greater than 0.05, indicating that the data were normally distributed.

Homogeneity Test

To ensure the assumption of equal variances was met, Levene's Test of Equality of Variance was conducted. Based on the results of the homogeneity test (Levene's Test for Equality of Variances), the sig. value was obtained = 0.312. than 0.05 (0.312>0.05), it can be concluded that post-test data in the experimental class and the control class have the same variance or are homogeneous. Since the significance value (0.312) was greater than 0.05, the data were considered homogeneous, which allowed for further analysis using parametric tests.

Hypothesis Testing (Independent Sample t-test)

An independent sample t-test was employed to examine whether there was a significant difference between the experimental and control groups' post-test scores. Based on the results of the independent Samples t-test in the Equal variances assumed row, the calculated t-value was 10.513 with degrees of freedom (df) = 58 and a significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) of 0.000. Since the significance value is less than 0.05 (0.000< 0.05), it can be concluded that Ho is rejected, and Hα is accepted. This means there is a significant difference between the post-test results of students in the experimental and control classes. Thus, the use of the Clustering Technique has a significant impact on students' achievement in writing a recount text. This indicates that there was a statistically significant difference between the post-test scores of the experimental and control groups. Therefore, it can be concluded that the clustering technique had a significant effect on students' achievement in writing recount texts.

Summary of Findings

Overall, the results demonstrate that the experimental group achieved considerably better performance in writing recount texts than the control group. The descriptive data show a notable improvement in the experimental group's mean score compared to the control group. Additionally, the statistical tests confirmed that the data met the assumptions of normality and homogeneity, and the independent sample t-test validated the hypothesis that clustering significantly improves students' writing performance.

Discussion

The results of this study provide clear evidence that the clustering technique significantly improved students' achievement in writing recount texts. The experimental group demonstrated a substantial increase in their post-test mean score compared to the control group, and the independent sample t-test confirmed that the difference was statistically significant. These findings indicate that clustering is not only an effective pre-writing strategy but also a practical teaching technique that can enhance students' ability to generate and organize ideas systematically. One of the major challenges faced by students in writing, particularly in recount texts, is the difficulty of starting the writing process. Many students lack the ability to generate relevant ideas and to connect them in a logical sequence. Writing is not an automatic skill but a

process that involves planning, drafting, revising, and editing. Without proper support in the planning stage, students often feel demotivated and produce writing that lacks coherence. The clustering technique directly addresses this issue by providing students with a visual method to brainstorm and categorize their ideas before drafting, which in turn helps them to write more structured and coherent texts.

The findings of this research are consistent with previous studies that have highlighted the positive impact of clustering on students' writing performance. Clustering significantly facilitated students' ability to generate ideas in descriptive writing, which in turn resulted in notable improvements in both the content quality and organizational structure of their texts (Sari & Wahyuni, 2018). Their study emphasized that by visually mapping out ideas, students were able to overcome common obstacles such as writer's block and disorganized thoughts, leading to more coherent and detailed descriptions. Reported that clustering played a crucial role in helping students construct effective recount texts, especially in adhering to the generic structure that includes orientation, events, and re-orientation (Simanjorang & Pulungan, 2021). Their findings suggested that clustering assists students in sequencing events logically and maintaining clarity throughout their narratives. The results of this current study further strengthen and expand these previous findings by confirming that clustering not only enhances students' capacity for idea generation but also translates into measurable gains in overall writing achievement, including accuracy, fluency, and cohesiveness.

By reinforcing the role of clustering as a strategic tool in the writing process, this research contributes compelling evidence to support its integration as an essential technique in teaching writing, particularly in narrative genres such as recount texts. In addition to supporting earlier findings, this study makes a unique contribution by focusing on ninth-grade students, a group that has not been widely studied in relation to clustering. Junior high school students are at a developmental stage where they are still building foundational literacy skills in English. For these learners, strategies that encourage active participation and creativity are essential. The clustering technique proved to be particularly suitable because it aligns with their cognitive development, offering a concrete and engaging way to approach writing tasks. This suggests that clustering is not only effective for advanced learners, as shown in earlier research, but also highly beneficial for younger students who are still developing their proficiency in English. Another important implication of this study is related to motivation. Students in the experimental group showed more enthusiasm during the writing lessons compared to those in the control group. Who observed that clustering helps students to enjoy writing activities by reducing anxiety and making the process more interactive (Yulvia, 2024). By visually mapping their thoughts, students feel less pressure when starting to write, and this sense of confidence positively influences their writing outcomes. Thus, clustering can be seen as both a cognitive and an affective strategy, improving not only the technical quality of writing but also students' attitudes toward writing.

Despite its effectiveness, clustering is not without limitations. Clustering may not be the most appropriate strategy for writing tasks that require extended essays or highly academic pieces, as it primarily focuses on the initial stage of idea generation rather than fostering deeper critical thinking or comprehensive analysis (Verganti, 2021). In complex writing assignments that demand extensive argument development, evidence integration, and sophisticated reasoning, other techniques might be more suitable to guide students through the drafting and revising processes. However, when it comes to recount texts and other narrative genres that emphasize chronological sequencing and overall coherence, clustering proves to be a particularly valuable tool. It helps students organize their thoughts visually and logically, making

it easier to maintain the flow of events and ensure clarity in their storytelling. By addressing specific challenges related to idea organization and content structure, clustering effectively meets the needs of students working within these genres, enhancing both their confidence and their writing outcomes. Thus, while clustering may not be universally applicable across all types of writing, its targeted use in narrative contexts makes it an important and practical strategy in language teaching.

Taken together, the discussion confirms that clustering is an effective strategy for improving students' Taken together, the discussion confirms that clustering is an effective and reliable strategy for improving students' achievement in writing recount texts. This finding aligns well with the theoretical perspective that pre-writing activities constitute a critical phase in the overall writing process, as emphasized by scholars such as (Nunan & Choi, 2023). These pre-writing techniques help students to engage actively with their ideas, organize their thoughts, and build a solid foundation before the drafting stage begins, which ultimately leads to clearer, more coherent, and well-structured compositions. Moreover, the empirical evidence gathered through classroom-based research demonstrates that clustering is not only theoretically sound but also practically feasible and impactful when implemented in real educational settings. By offering a student-centered approach, clustering empowers learners to take ownership of their writing process, encouraging them to explore and connect ideas creatively while reducing the anxiety often associated with starting a writing task. This approach allows students to generate ideas more freely, arrange them systematically, and apply the generic structure of recount texts with greater accuracy. Consequently, students show increased motivation, confidence, and persistence, which are essential factors in sustaining their interest and performance in writing activities. In addition to cognitive benefits, clustering also enhances the affective domain of learning.

Students who practice clustering tend to feel more motivated and less anxious about writing, which creates a more positive learning atmosphere. Such affective improvements not only contribute to better immediate outcomes but also foster long-term positive attitudes toward writing. For teachers, this suggests that clustering can be used as a versatile instructional strategy that simultaneously develops technical writing skills and nurtures students' emotional readiness for learning. Therefore, this study makes a meaningful contribution to both theory and educational practice by validating clustering as a versatile and effective tool that supports idea development and promotes a positive learning experience in writing recount texts. The findings underscore the importance of integrating structured pre-writing activities into the teaching of writing in order to equip students with the necessary skills and confidence to become more competent and independent writers.

Conclusion

This study found that the clustering technique significantly improved students' achievement in writing recount texts. The experimental group taught with clustering outperformed the control group that received conventional instruction, as confirmed by the statistical analysis of post-test scores. These results answer the research question by showing that clustering is effective as a pre-writing strategy, particularly in enhancing content development, organization, and coherence. The findings imply that clustering not only supports students' cognitive processes by helping them generate and organize ideas systematically but also addresses affective factors, such as reducing writing anxiety and increasing motivation. This dual contribution makes clustering a valuable instructional technique for junior high school writing classes, especially in

teaching recount texts. Teachers can apply clustering to guide students in planning and structuring their ideas, leading to more engaging and well-constructed compositions.

However, this study is limited to a specific context: junior high school students and the recount text genre. The findings may not fully generalize to other text types, age groups, or learning environments. Additionally, the study focused primarily on students' writing products without exploring in depth the long-term impact of clustering on writing habits or overall language proficiency. Future research is recommended to examine the effectiveness of clustering across different genres, such as narrative, descriptive, or argumentative texts, as well as in various educational settings and levels. Researchers could also investigate how clustering interacts with other instructional strategies, and whether its benefits extend to long-term writing performance and student autonomy. Such studies would broaden the understanding of clustering as a pedagogical tool and strengthen its role in improving writing instruction.

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