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Clustering, Writing Development, and Learner Motivation in Junior Secondary English

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji penggunaan teknik clustering untuk mendukung perkembangan kemampuan menulis siswa SMPN 2 Janapria serta implikasinya terhadap motivasi belajar. Penelitian tindakan kelas melibatkan 15 siswa dan dilaksanakan dalam dua siklus melalui tahap perencanaan, tindakan, observasi, dan refleksi. Data sumber mencakup nilai awal dan antarsiklus, jumlah siswa yang mencapai kriteria minimum, serta catatan pelaksanaan pembelajaran. Rata-rata nilai meningkat dari 36,00 pada kondisi awal menjadi 54,13 pada siklus I dan 77,93 pada siklus II; jumlah siswa yang mencapai kriteria minimum meningkat dari 2 menjadi 3 dan akhirnya 15 siswa. Pembahasan diperdalam dengan penelitian dosen Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris Universitas Pendidikan Mandalika tentang clustering, genre-based writing, metacognitive writing, mobile-assisted writing, dan contextualized writing. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa clustering paling kuat dipahami sebagai dukungan pramenulis untuk menghasilkan, mengelompokkan, dan memilih ide sebelum penyusunan paragraf. Namun, peningkatan nilai tulisan tidak secara otomatis membuktikan peningkatan motivasi karena keduanya merupakan konstruk yang berbeda. Guru disarankan menghubungkan cluster dengan organisasi paragraf, mempertahankan tulisan individual dan rubrik analitik, serta mengumpulkan bukti motivasi secara terpisah agar perkembangan siswa dapat ditafsirkan secara lebih tepat.
Kata kunci: clustering technique; writing development; learner motivation; classroom action research; junior secondary English

Abstract

This study examined the use of clustering to support writing development among learners at SMPN 2 Janapria and considered its implications for learner motivation. The classroom action research involved 15 students and was conducted in two cycles through planning, action,

observation, and reflection. Source evidence included baseline and cycle-based writing outcomes, the number of learners meeting the minimum criterion, and records of classroom implementation. The reported mean increased from 36.00 at baseline to 54.13 in Cycle I and 77.93 in Cycle II; the number of students meeting the minimum criterion increased from two to three and finally to all fifteen learners. The discussion is strengthened through studies by English Education lecturers at Universitas Pendidikan Mandalika on clustering, genre-based writing, metacognitive writing, mobile-assisted writing, and contextualized composition. The findings indicate that clustering is most defensibly understood as a prewriting scaffold for generating, grouping, and selecting ideas before paragraph construction. However, improvement in assessed writing does not automatically demonstrate improvement in motivation because the two are distinct constructs. Teachers are encouraged to connect clusters explicitly to paragraph organization, retain individual writing and analytic scoring, and collect separate motivational evidence so that classroom development can be interpreted more precisely.
Keywords: clustering technique; writing development; learner motivation; classroom action research; junior secondary English

LATAR BELAKANG

Writing is a recursive meaning-making process in which learners generate ideas, establish relationships among them, translate those relationships into language, and reconsider the resulting text for a reader and a purpose. These activities place simultaneous demands on content generation, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. For adolescent EFL learners, beginning directly with complete sentences can make the task especially difficult because planning and linguistic formulation compete for limited attention. A useful instructional technique should therefore be interpreted in relation to the particular stage of writing it supports rather than being treated as a complete explanation of successful composition (Flower & Hayes, 1981; Graham & Perin, 2007; Kellogg, 2008).

Clustering is a prewriting technique that externalizes possible content before drafting. A central topic is placed in a visual field and related ideas are connected around it, allowing the writer to see associations that can later be selected and ordered. The

technique can reduce the pressure to produce a finished sentence immediately and can give learners a visible record of possible details. Its pedagogical value, however, depends on the transition from association to text. A cluster can contain many words while still failing to provide a coherent paragraph unless learners decide which ideas are central, which details support them, and how those ideas should be sequenced for a reader.

Writing instruction therefore needs to connect prewriting support with explicit attention to genre, audience, and revision. Process-oriented accounts emphasize planning and recursive decision making, while genre-oriented approaches make the social purpose and organizational expectations of a text visible (Badger & White, 2000; Hyland, 2003). These perspectives are complementary for the present study . Clustering can support the planning stage, but the learner must still transform the visual map into a recognizable text structure and make language choices appropriate to the communicative purpose (Iye, R, et.al, 2022).

Motivation is also relevant because writing requires sustained effort across planning, drafting, and revision. A learner who sees a manageable starting point may be more willing to begin, persist, and reconsider a text. Nevertheless, motivation and writing performance are not interchangeable constructs. A higher writing score can result from clearer instructions, repeated practice, better planning, teacher feedback, or familiarity with the task even when broader interest in writing remains unchanged. Motivation should therefore be investigated through evidence that directly represents willingness, persistence, value, or perceived competence rather than inferred solely from achievement (Pajares, 2003; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Research by English Education lecturers at Universitas Pendidikan Mandalika provides a particularly relevant regional basis for interpreting the present classroom problem. Jamaluddin et al. (2024) directly investigated clustering for descriptive writing in a vocational-school context and reported improvement across classroom-action cycles. Their study is methodologically close to the present investigation because clustering was used as a planning technique and classroom development was examined

through iterative teaching. The comparison is valuable not because the numerical results should be expected to match, but because it highlights the same instructional operation: making ideas visible before learners convert them into connected prose.

Other UNDIKMA scholarship shows that writing improves when planning support is connected with a clearer model of how texts are organized. Haerazi and Irawan (2019) reported improvement through a genre-based language teaching model, and Haerazi et al. (2020a) found that genre-based instruction was more effective than process-based instruction in their study of preservice teachers when creativity was considered. Jupri and Muzakkir (2021) likewise used genre-based instruction in a classroom-action study of procedural writing. These studies strengthen the argument that idea generation alone is insufficient: learners need to understand how ideas function within the generic structure and communicative purpose of a text.

UNDIKMA research also emphasizes regulation of the writing process. Haerazi and Kazemian (2021) examined self-regulated writing in relation to metacognitive control, while Kazemian et al. (2021) developed a metacognitive writing strategy that helped learners regulate what and how to write. These studies are relevant to clustering because a visual plan can become a tool for self-regulation when learners use it to monitor whether they have enough content, whether supporting ideas remain relevant, and whether the order of the draft reflects the intended message. The cluster is therefore potentially more useful as a decision-making artifact than as a decorative diagram.

Technology-oriented and contextualized writing research from the same institutional setting further reinforces this process perspective. Haerazi et al. (2020b) showed that mobile applications could support discussion, idea development, and writing among preservice teachers, while Haerazi and Irawan (2020) developed an intercultural language learning model that improved writing performance. Hasby and Sugianto (2021) used English movie-watching reports as meaningful prompts for writing, and Saori et al. (2023) documented continuing challenges in descriptive writing, including organization and linguistic expression. Across these studies, stronger writing

is associated with structured opportunities to generate content, organize it, receive support, and produce a text for a recognizable purpose.

The source study at SMPN 2 Janapria addresses a similar problem at junior-secondary level. Fifteen learners participated in a two-cycle classroom action research project in which clustering was introduced as a way to organize ideas before writing. The source reports a mean of 36.00 before the intervention, 54.13 after Cycle I, and 77.93 after Cycle II. It also reports that the number of students meeting the minimum criterion increased from two at baseline to three in Cycle I and all fifteen in Cycle II. These values indicate a favorable classroom trajectory, but they should be interpreted within the evolving action-research process rather than as an isolated causal effect of one visual technique.

The article therefore examines two related but distinct questions. First, how did writing outcomes develop across the documented cycles, and what instructional function can reasonably be attributed to clustering within that process? Second, how should claims about motivation be bounded by the available evidence? By answering these questions, the study positions clustering as part of guided writing instruction and places the local findings in dialogue with writing research conducted by UNDIKMA scholars up to 2024. The aim is to deepen the pedagogical interpretation while keeping the empirical claims proportional to the source data.

METODE

The study employed classroom action research with 15 learners at SMPN 2 Janapria. The source identifies the target group as eighth-grade learners and documents two instructional cycles. Each cycle followed the conventional sequence of planning, action, observation, and reflection. Clustering functioned as the focal prewriting technique within ordinary English writing lessons rather than as a separately controlled experimental treatment. The second cycle was conducted after reflection on the first implementation, so the study should be read as an account of iterative classroom improvement.

The source manuscript contains baseline and cycle-based writing scores, counts of learners reaching the stated minimum criterion, classroom implementation records, and descriptions of the use of clustering. These sources were retained without constructing new participant-level outcomes. Writing performance was treated as the primary numerical evidence. Classroom records were used to interpret how the technique supported idea generation and organization, while statements about motivation were examined cautiously because writing scores and motivational experience represent different constructs.

The quantitative analysis in the present article is descriptive. The reported means were 36.00 at baseline, 54.13 in Cycle I, and 77.93 in Cycle II. The source also reports two, three, and fifteen learners meeting the minimum criterion at those respective stages. For a group of 15 learners, these counts correspond to 13.3%, 20.0%, and 100.0%. The percentages are direct calculations from the documented counts; no new observations, standard deviations, significance tests, or effect sizes were invented.

The qualitative interpretation focused on the role of clustering in the writing process. Attention was given to how learners generated ideas, grouped supporting details, moved from a visual plan to a linear paragraph, and responded to teacher guidance across cycles. The analysis also examined what the aggregate scores could not reveal, particularly whether development occurred in content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, mechanics, or a combination of these dimensions. Recommendations for analytic rubrics and separate motivation evidence are therefore presented as methodological extensions rather than as procedures already completed in the source research.

Student names and personal identifiers were not reproduced. Authorship and correspondence information follow the supplied manuscript. No undocumented ethics approval code, funding source, questionnaire score, participant characteristic, or additional data-collection procedure was introduced during article preparation. The revised manuscript expands theoretical and pedagogical interpretation while preserving the numerical results and classroom scope supported by the source.

HASIL DAN PEMBAHASAN

The source study reports a consistent increase across the baseline and two action cycles. The mean writing score rose from 36.00 to 54.13 after Cycle I and to 77.93 after Cycle II. The first increase was 18.13 points, while the second increase was 23.80 points. These values indicate that the most substantial development occurred after the instructional process had been revised following the first cycle. The pattern is compatible with the purpose of action research, in which reflection is expected to inform subsequent teaching rather than simply repeat an unchanged treatment.

Table 1. Reported writing outcomes across the classroom-action sequence

Stage	Mean	Mean change	Meeting criterion	Interpretive note
Baseline	36.00	—	2/15 (13.3%)	Documents the initial writing outcome before the action cycles.
Cycle I	54.13	+18.13	3/15 (20.0%)	Shows improvement, but most learners had not yet reached the stated criterion.
Cycle II	77.93	+23.80	15/15 (100%)	Reflects the revised instructional package, additional practice, feedback, and clustering-supported writing.

The attainment counts provide information that the means alone cannot show. At baseline, two learners met the stated minimum criterion; after Cycle I, the number increased to only three despite the rise in the class mean; after Cycle II, all fifteen learners were reported to meet the criterion. This pattern suggests that the second cycle was important not merely because the average increased, but because the distribution

of learners relative to the local threshold changed substantially. At the same time, a threshold does not reveal whether every learner improved equally in content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. An analytic scoring record would be needed to answer that question (Black & Wiliam, 1998).

Clustering is most plausibly connected with the planning demands of writing. A learner who is asked to produce a paragraph immediately must generate content and formulate language at the same time. A cluster separates these demands by allowing ideas to be recorded in abbreviated form before sentence construction begins. This is consistent with the process model of Flower and Hayes (1981), in which planning is not a preliminary decoration but a substantive part of composing. The favorable trajectory in the present class can therefore be interpreted as compatible with improved access to the planning stage, although the aggregate scores do not isolate the size of that contribution.

The direct regional comparison provided by Jamaluddin et al. (2024) strengthens this interpretation. Their classroom-action study at a vocational school used clustering to teach descriptive writing and documented improvement from a low pre-intervention mean through two cycles. They also reported positive learner responses to the technique. The present study differs in school level, class size, task context, and reported scores, so the numerical outcomes should not be treated as equivalent. What the two studies share is the instructional function of clustering: making possible content visible before learners attempt a complete descriptive text.

The strength of clustering lies not in the number of branches learners create but in the decisions the map supports. A cluster may contain ten ideas that do not belong together, while another with four carefully selected details may provide a stronger paragraph plan. Teachers should therefore move beyond checking whether the diagram is complete. Questions such as which branch best supports the main idea, which detail is repetitive, and what order would make sense to a reader can turn clustering into a tool for organization rather than an end-of-task product.

This transition from visual association to linear text is where genre-oriented research becomes especially relevant. Haerazi and Irawan (2019) found that genre-based language teaching improved writing achievement by giving learners structured guidance for producing texts, and Haerazi et al. (2020a) similarly reported the effectiveness of genre-based instruction in relation to creativity. Jupri and Muzakkir (2021) showed that genre-based instruction could also improve procedural writing in classroom action research. These studies suggest that clustering becomes more powerful when learners know what kind of relationship the target genre requires among the ideas they have generated.

For descriptive writing, for example, the cluster should not simply list unrelated facts. Learners need to decide what is being described, which features are most relevant, and how details contribute to an overall impression. For a recount, temporal order may become central; for an exposition, claims and supporting reasons may be more important. The present study does not establish which genres were independently compared, but the instructional implication is clear: the same cluster format should not be used mechanically without reference to the communicative structure of the target text.

The classroom-action design also means that the Cycle II result represents an instructional package rather than a pure estimate of clustering alone. Additional practice, clearer directions, teacher monitoring, feedback, familiarity with the scoring task, and changes made after reflection may all contribute to the later performance. This is not a defect in classroom action research; it defines the kind of knowledge the design produces. The study offers evidence that an adapted teaching sequence containing clustering was associated with substantial local improvement, while stronger causal claims would require a comparison condition or another design capable of separating competing explanations.

Teacher feedback is likely to have been particularly important in connecting the cluster with the draft. Feedback can identify whether a learner has too few ideas, whether branches overlap, whether the sequence is unclear, or whether the final

paragraph fails to represent the plan. Hattie and Timperley (2007) argue that useful feedback clarifies the current state, the intended goal, and the next step. In a clustering lesson, this means that feedback should help the learner make a decision about the text rather than simply praise the diagram or correct every sentence after drafting has already ended.

UNDIKMA research on self-regulated and metacognitive writing provides a deeper explanation of why this decision-making matters. Haerazi and Kazemian (2021) found that self-regulated learning could support writing through metacognitive control, while Kazemian et al. (2021) developed a metacognitive writing strategy that helped learners regulate what and how to write. A cluster can serve a similar regulatory function when learners use it to ask whether they have enough content, whether ideas remain connected to the topic, and whether the draft reflects the plan. The technique then supports monitoring rather than merely brainstorming.

This interpretation also clarifies the role of learner independence. A teacher can model how to construct an initial cluster, but continued dependence on a teacher-generated map would limit evidence that learners have acquired a planning strategy. A useful progression is to move from a teacher model to a partially completed organizer, then to an independently produced cluster, and finally to a new writing topic with reduced prompts. Performance across these stages can show whether learners are taking control of the planning process rather than simply following a familiar worksheet.

Mobile-assisted writing research at UNDIKMA points to the same importance of interaction around ideas. Haerazi et al. (2020b) reported that pre-service teachers using mobile applications discussed what they intended to write and moved through staged activities toward complete descriptive texts. Although the technology, age group, and research design differ from the present study, the shared instructional principle is that writing development benefits when learners can externalize, discuss, and refine content before finalizing the text. Clustering offers a low-technology version of that principle that can be implemented without requiring continuous digital access.

Contextualized writing tasks can further strengthen this process. Haerazi and Irawan (2020) showed that an intercultural language learning model could improve writing, while Hasby and Sugianto (2021) used English movie-watching reports to provide content and a recognizable purpose for writing. These studies indicate that planning is easier to sustain when learners have something meaningful to say. A cluster generated from an unfamiliar or abstract prompt may remain sparse because the learner lacks content knowledge, whereas a familiar experience, image, event, or shared text can provide material that makes planning more productive.

The work of Saori et al. (2023) is also useful because it focuses on the actual difficulties students encounter in descriptive writing. Their study highlights continuing challenges in generating and organizing descriptive texts. Such difficulties remind teachers that clustering cannot be expected to solve every writing problem. A learner may generate relevant ideas successfully but still lack the vocabulary to express them, misuse grammatical forms, or produce weak cohesion between sentences. The technique should therefore be integrated with language support and revision rather than presented as a substitute for them.

This is particularly important when interpreting the final mean of 77.93. A high total score can conceal different profiles of development. One learner may improve mainly in content, another in organization, and another because grammatical accuracy increased after repeated feedback. Without component-level scores, the present article should not claim that clustering improved each writing dimension to the same extent. An analytic rubric that retains separate criteria for content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics would make future cycle-to-cycle development more diagnostically useful.

The mastery counts require the same caution. Reporting that all fifteen learners met the minimum criterion in Cycle II is educationally encouraging, but it does not show that all fifteen could independently reproduce the same quality with a new topic or after support was reduced. A local criterion is useful for classroom decision making, yet it is sensitive to the task, prompt, scoring rule, and familiarity created during instruction. A

follow-up task should therefore use a comparable but unfamiliar topic and retain the same rubric so that the durability and transfer of the improvement can be examined.

The motivational claim in the source title needs an equally careful interpretation. Clustering may make the blank-page problem less intimidating by giving learners small, visible steps. A student can produce one branch, add another detail, and see progress before drafting a sentence. This experience may increase perceived competence and willingness to continue, which is compatible with motivational theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Pajares, 2003). However, the writing scores themselves do not directly measure those motivational states. The strongest conclusion is therefore that clustering has plausible motivational value while the documented numerical trajectory represents writing performance.

Future classroom inquiry can measure motivation without making the study unnecessarily complex. Teachers could record how quickly learners begin the task, whether they persist after difficulty, whether they voluntarily revise, and whether they continue working when immediate teacher assistance is unavailable. A short, clearly defined questionnaire could examine perceived usefulness, confidence, and willingness to write. These sources would complement the writing rubric and allow researchers to test whether improved performance is accompanied by a measurable change in motivational experience.

Peer interaction can also help writers test their clusters before drafting. A partner can ask why two ideas are connected, whether a branch is relevant, or which detail should be developed first. Storch (2005) shows that collaboration can support writing when learners jointly negotiate language and content, but group work should not erase individual authorship. A peer should help the writer make a decision rather than rewrite the text. Brief individual drafting after discussion can preserve the social benefits of planning while keeping the outcome interpretable at learner level.

The distinction between assistance and authorship is particularly important in a small class. With fifteen learners, a teacher may be able to provide substantial individualized guidance. Such support can be pedagogically valuable, but a polished

final paragraph may partly reflect teacher input. Retaining the learner's cluster, first draft, teacher comments, and revised text would make the development more transparent. The record could show whether the learner added content, reorganized ideas, corrected language, or received direct formulations from another person.

A practical teaching sequence can therefore be organized around four visible transitions: topic to cluster, cluster to paragraph plan, plan to first draft, and draft to revision. At each stage, the learner can explain one decision. Before drafting, the learner might identify the most important branch and intended order; during revision, the learner can identify one change that improves meaning for the reader. These short explanations make writing decisions observable and can help the teacher distinguish genuine planning from mechanical completion of the clustering format.

The cluster itself can also function as a diagnostic artifact. A sparse map may indicate difficulty generating content, while an overcrowded map with weak connections may indicate difficulty selecting a focus. A coherent cluster followed by a disorganized paragraph may signal that the main problem occurs during linearization and cohesion rather than idea generation. Treating the cluster diagnostically allows the teacher to provide targeted support instead of assuming that every learner needs the same additional practice.

Differentiation can be introduced without changing the common writing objective. Learners who struggle to generate ideas might receive a few guiding questions or a partially completed organizer, while learners who generate content easily can be asked to prioritize details or justify an alternative organization. The support should be reduced when it no longer serves a clear purpose. This approach is consistent with the broader UNDIKMA literature, which repeatedly shows that writing improves through structured scaffolding, metacognitive regulation, meaningful content, and explicit attention to text organization rather than through one technique in isolation.

The local literature is especially valuable because it prevents the discussion from treating clustering as an imported technique detached from the surrounding pedagogical context. Jamaluddin et al. (2024) provide direct evidence about clustering;

Haerazi and Irawan (2019), Haerazi et al. (2020a), and Jupri and Muzakkir (2021) show the importance of genre structure; Haerazi and Kazemian (2021) and Kazemian et al. (2021) emphasize regulation and metacognition; Haerazi et al. (2020b) demonstrate collaborative idea development through mobile support; and Hasby and Sugianto (2021) illustrate meaningful writing through media-based reports. Together, these studies help explain why the present improvement should be interpreted as part of an instructional process rather than as the automatic effect of drawing a cluster.

The main contribution is a bounded account of writing improvement in one junior-secondary classroom. The reported means and attainment counts document a favorable trajectory, while the classroom context indicates that clustering served as a planning resource within an evolving instructional sequence. Its evidential limits remain important: aggregate scores do not isolate individual writing dimensions, causal attribution is restricted, and motivation requires separate measurement.

Future implementation should make clustering more explicitly connected to selection, paragraph organization, independent drafting, criterion-referenced feedback, and revision. Teachers should retain component-level writing evidence and add a modest motivation measure. Subsequent cycles could then examine how writing changes, which learners benefit, whether the strategy transfers to new topics, and whether willingness to write develops over time.

KESIMPULAN

The study reports a favorable writing trajectory from 36.00 to 54.13 and 77.93, with all fifteen learners reaching the final minimum criterion. Clustering is best interpreted as a prewriting scaffold for generating, grouping, and selecting ideas. Because improvement occurred within an evolving classroom-action process, it cannot be isolated from feedback, practice, or instructional revision, and writing scores do not independently prove increased motivation. Teachers should connect clusters to paragraph organization, retain analytic scoring and individual writing, and collect separate motivational evidence.

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