



THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MIND MAPPING STRATEGY TO TEACH WRITING IN IELTS PREPARATION CLASS

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Abstrak

This study is aimed to investigate the implementation of mind mapping strategy to teach writing in IELTS preparation class. It was a descriptive qualitative study on 20 students of IELTS preparation classes. Those students were divided into 6 classes based on their level after taking IELTS placement test. There were 3 teachers who taught 2 classes each. The data were collected by using classroom observations, students' questionnaire, teachers' interview, and document analysis. The present study revealed four results. First, mind mapping strategy was implemented by grouping the visual data to find out main trends, large increase or decrease, consistent direction and the relationship between modes and percentages in task 1; whereas in task 2, it was implemented by building students' critical thinking to list main ideas which later on give supporting details for each main idea. Second, the students enjoyed teaching learning process through mind mapping strategy which resulted in passing guarantee program of having score improvement minimum 1 point, improved their analysis of data, enlarged their knowledge in academic writing topic, built their critical thinking and managed time well. Third, the problems during the implementation of those two strategies were teachers' schedule, students' activities at school before joining IELTS preparation class, time management, repetition ideas and phrases, laziness and boredom, and also illegible hand writing. Fourth, the solutions were: managing teachers' and students' schedule well, doing the test in time as instructions, reading many articles related with IELTS writing to broaden students' knowledge, giving free writing, and practicing more.

INTRODUCTION

English is the most language spoken throughout the world. With the acceleration of globalization in the world, the mastery of English has proven to be a prerequisite to success in the new global marketplace as well as in scientific research and technology (Schultz, 2011:13). Accordingly, governments and educational institutions in many Asian countries considered English as the primary foreign language to be taught and have implemented language education reform so that students can successfully participate in the globalizing world (Su, 2006:3). Amid growing demand for developing English communication skills in the rapidly globalizing world, the emergence of new varieties of English in the world today affected the perceptions towards the standard varieties of English.

IELTS (International English Language Testing System) is a kind of test for standard

English. It is designed to measure the ability to communicate in standard English across four language skills – listening, reading, writing and speaking – for people who intend to study or work where English was the language of communication (Davies, 2008:58). Furthermore, Brown (2004:85) explained that the objective of IELTS is to test overall proficiency (language ability) of standard English. Nowadays, IELTS is recognized as a prerequisite for English-medium study in higher education in most countries as well. In addition, Green (2007:5) stated that IELTS is a very high-stakes examination, providing access to higher education in Anglophone countries. Many Indonesian learners take IELTS examination each year to fulfil the requirement of higher overseas education in those countries. Meanwhile, they usually take IELTS preparation program to maintain their score achievement because it affects their life trajectories, for example, IELTS

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score needs to be maintained for getting scholarship.

Nowadays, it is no wonder that the development of IELTS courses in Semarang is increasing significantly as an answer for public's demand to have of qualify IELTS score. Hence, there is one language centre in Semarang named SUN English which is well known for its IELTS preparation program among students whether they are senior high school students or university students. Not only students from Semarang, but also many students out of town attracted also to join in this language centre. This language centre guarantees to get score improvement minimum 1 (one) point for all of its students.

The IELTS preparation program in SUN English is divided into two packages; those are skills booster and IELTS academic. The skills booster package only such kind of IELTS practices to make the students accustomed to IELTS test. In the other hand, IELTS academic package focuses on giving strategies in order to make improvement of all skills tested in IELTS including writing section. Hence, this study concerns with the second package as Oshima and Hogue (2006:142) stated that the biggest learners' problems of writing test is that they lack sufficient knowledge about writing strategies and writing skills. Nevertheless, the IELTS academic package provided by SUN English stresses on the writing strategies given by the IELTS instructors. Mind mapping strategy helps learners very much in improving their IELTS score.

In general, this study focused on examining the implementation of mind mapping strategy to teach writing in IELTS preparation class. This was a case study in SUN English Semarang. Specifically, this study was aimed to describe the implementation of mind mapping strategy to teach writing in IELTS preparation class; to analyze the students' responses to the mind mapping strategy; to examine the problems of implementing the strategy; and to explain the solutions to the problems.

There were 6 studies regarding with the topic of mind mapping concept and IELTS preparation practice. However, all of those studies conducted in overseas context, there was none research using Indonesian context because there was still limited study about mind mapping concept in Indonesian's IELTS writing class. Meanwhile, I used those studies as my references in Indonesian context.

Mickan and Motteram (2008) wrote in IELTS research report volume 8 about "an ethnographic study of classroom instruction in an

IELTS preparation program". They envisaged practices in an IELTS preparation class to investigate which features characterize instruction and to explore the implications for IELTS preparation programs. This study documented the pedagogy of an IELTS preparation class managed in an ELICOS adult education centre. The analysis of classroom instruction showed an eclectic teaching approach that covered information about the test format, practicing the test tasks, awareness-raising of the constituent parts of the tasks, practical hints and strategies for doing the test tasks, and recommendations for independent learning.

Mickan and Motteram investigated "the preparation practices of IELTS candidates: case studies" which was published in IELTS research reports volume 10 (2009). They investigated the practices of candidates preparing for the IELTS examination in Adelaide, South Australia. The main aim was to describe candidates' activities as they prepared to sit for an IELTS test. It was carried out in two stages. In stage 1, candidates leaving an IELTS test centre were surveyed to find out general biographical and test preparation information. This information was used to create target profiles for case study participants in stage 2. The stage 1 survey revealed that most respondents sat for the IELTS General Training module and that few had enrolled in a preparatory program. The analysis of stage 2 data focused on what case study candidates did to prepare for an IELTS test. Most subjects prepared by using practice materials, in particular published tests.

Naqbi (2011) reported an action research about "the use of mind mapping to develop writing skills in UAE schools". The preliminary investigation of this research purposed to gather information about the current practices that teachers in government high schools use to teach and enhance writing. Later on, she aimed to help students, in grade 11, moved from a product-based approach to a process-focused approach to writing, and to evaluate the use of mind mapping in this context as a pre-writing brainstorming strategy in the EFL class. This revealed that the process of mind mapping caused a noticeable transformation in the students' writing, making them more active learners who also began to learn different skills such as asking questions to understand given writing topics, and generating their own ideas for different writing tasks.

Badger and Yan (2012) wrote in IELTS research report entitled "to what extent is communicative language teaching a feature of IELTS classes in China?" examined the teaching methodology used in IELTS preparation classes

in China. The research used Hu's six element frameworks for describing teaching methods; those were pedagogical orientation, instructional content and presentation, language practice activities, teacher and learner roles, learning materials, and assessment. They found that the most common methodology used approximated to CLT but that teachers took a more dominant role and used more Chinese than would be characteristics of CLT.

Moore, Stroupe and Mahony (2009) reported "perceptions of IELTS in Cambodia: a case study of test impact in a small developing country". This study aimed to evaluate the impact of the IELTS test on Cambodian education and society by means of a critical language testing case study. Overall, the IELTS test in Cambodia was found to have a minor impact on education and society in Cambodia in general terms, but a significant impact on facilitating opportunities for Cambodians to pursue higher education overseas at English-medium institutions especially for postgraduate studies.

Nemati, Jahandar and Khodabandehlou (2014) studied about "the effect of mind mapping technique on the enhancement of advanced Iranian EFL learner's essay writing ability through organizing information and thought". They made experimental research to investigate the impact of applying mind mapping technique as a pre-writing tool on enhancement of organization (as the major purpose) and overall quality of Iranian EFL learners' essay writing ability at the advanced level. Prior to treatment, participants of the both groups were given a pretest in order to ensure comparability of their essay writing skill. Having introduced the mind mapping technique to members of the experimental group and finished the treatment period, a posttest was administered to measure the effect of the intervention.

IELTS – International English Language Testing System

IELTS was used to test standard English for those who wanted to study or work in Anglophone countries. It assessed all of English skills – reading, writing, listening and speaking – and was designed to reflect real life use of English – at study, at work, and at play. It was developed by some of the world's leading experts in language assessment and has an excellent international reputation, and was accepted by over 9,000 organizations worldwide.

More specifically, IELTS writing section consisted of two tasks in which students were as-

ked to write in formal style of Standard English, in an answer booklet, a descriptive report and produce an argumentative essay. Overall time to do this task was an hour. There were two parts of IELTS writing section, those were writing task 1 and writing task 2. IELTS writing task 1 required candidates to describe and interpret data in chart, table, diagram, or flow chart. They needed to write 150 words in about 20 minutes. Assessment was based on the candidates' ability to organize and compare data, describe something or event, and how something works. Meanwhile, IELTS writing task 2 required candidates to argue an issue, determine their position either for or against a proposition, present and then justify their opinions by providing evidence or supporting information for each point related to the topic of discussion. They needed to write 250 words in about 40 minutes. They were assessed on their ability to solve a problem, present and justify an opinion, compare and contrast evidence, and evaluate and challenge idea (IELTS Handbook, 2007:8).

Mind Mapping

Mind maps were popularized by Tony Buzan in 1993. Buzan (2003:88) stated that mind mapping was a graphic representation of ideas (usually generated via brainstorming session) which showed generated ideas around a central theme and how they are interlinked. He used a two-dimensional structure instead of the list format conventionally used to take notes. On the mind mapping website, which was written by Mapman (2008:1), it was mentioned that mind mapping was a creative and logical means of note-taking and note-making that literally "maps out" ideas. The mind map was the external mirror of somebody's own *radiant* or natural thinking facilitated by a powerful graphic process, which provided the universal key to unlock the dynamic potential of the brain.

Some writers were diligent about creating outlines as they prepared to write something. Accordingly, Oshima and Hogue (2006:72) added that an outline not only organizes your thoughts, but it also kept you on track once you began to write. However, making an outline did not always work for everyone though it did help to have some kind of organizational plan before you started writing (Mapman, 2008:25). Harmer (2007:89) proposed a spidergram or mind map as a visual way of making preparation notes as one of effective ways to contribute in generating ideas. In this idea generating model students started with a topic at the centre and then gene-

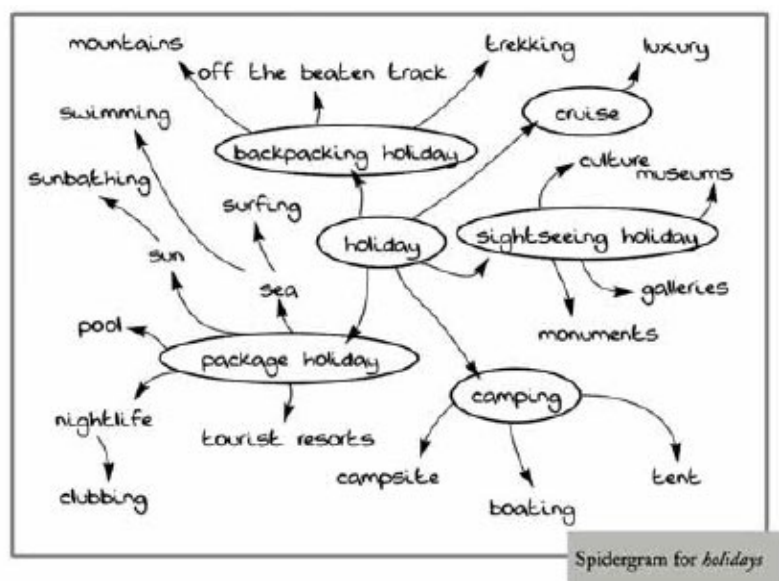


Figure 1. Example of Spidergram/Mind Map by Harmer (2007:89)

rated a web of ideas from that.

Teaching IELTS Writing Class

IELTS writing was challenging as the given topic was broad and it was subjective to the examiners. IELTS Foundation Team (2007:10) stated that each task in IELTS writing was assessed independently. The assessment of task 2 carried more weight in marking than task 1. Writing responses were assessed by certified IELTS examiners. All IELTS examiners held relevant teaching qualifications and were recruited as examiners by the test centres and approved by British Council or IDP IELTS Australia. Detailed performance descriptors have been developed which described written performance at the nine IELTS bands. Both of the tasks were assessed on: (1) task achievement, (2) coherence and cohesion, (3) lexical resources, and (4) grammatical range and accuracy.

Considering the teachers' preparation in teaching writing for students, there should be some principles employed during teaching learning process. Harmer (2007:105-106) gave some principles for preparing students in writing examination.

Model answer

The students needed to see what was expected of them. One way of doing this was to show them model answers – ones that would satisfy the examiners of the papers they were aiming to sit. These model answers should not be thought of as straitjackets, but rather as frameworks which students could lean on to help them.

Reading instructions

A crucial issue for all exam candidates was to understand what they were being asked to do. This sounded obvious and yet many candidates failed because they did not read instruction rubrics carefully enough. The teachers needed to stress the importance of reading instruction carefully and should, therefore, give students considerable practice in reading and interpreting instruction rubrics both on their own.

Generating ideas and plans

The students needed to be encouraged to do their own internal brainstorming, note making and planning. One way of helping students to get used to the planning phase in exams was to give them, repeatedly, tasks which had to plan individually (for example, through mind mapping strategy).

Writing

The students needed to be able to do so quickly but not carelessly. One way of encouraging this ability was to set timed essays and compositions at various stages of the teaching cycle.

Revising

The students who did not read through what they have written in an exam situation were at a great disadvantage. The teachers needed to give them practice in checking through their work.

Mock exams and practice papers

Where possible, the students should always have a chance to take mock exams, where they had to complete realistic exam tasks in a

realistic exam setting. The teachers did not want them to go into the actual exam and be shocked by the unfamiliarity of it. In the same way students could work through practice papers and questions.

METHOD

This study focused on the implementation of mind mapping strategy for teaching writing of IELTS preparation class in SUN English, Semarang. There were 3 teachers who taught 20 students. The students were divided into 6 classes of IELTS academic packages started on February after taking IELTS placement test. The students were XII graders from several schools in Semarang. All classes were conducted in 61 hours divided into 30 meetings. Total program ran for about 2.5 months. Each meeting lasted for 2 hours and there were 3 meetings in a week. Writing class itself had 7 meetings in a package – total meetings for learning writing task 1 and 2. It was a descriptive qualitative study on those 20 students and 3 teachers of IELTS preparation classes. The data were collected by using classroom observations, students’ questionnaire, teachers’ interview, and document analysis. Those were analyzed in descriptive qualitative method, though there was simple quantitative analysis on students’ questionnaire.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Describing and interpreting data were challenging for both teachers and students because the students did not learn this materials at formal school in Indonesia. It was something

new for the students as IELTS candidates; therefore, the teachers should be aware of their students’ needs in learning writing task 1. The teachers had to implement relevant strategies to appropriately accommodate the students’ need. In accordance with those learning condition and considerations, the teachers of SUN English decided to employ mind mapping strategy to coach the students in constructing IELTS writing task 1. This strategy allowed the students to understand data in the diagram, simplify complicated information, and boost creativity which later on interpret the data in text. In employing this strategy, there were five steps given by the teachers, as follow:

- 1) identify the main trends for each mode,
- 2) identify any large increases or decreases,
- 3) are there any clear and consistent directions?
- 4) does anything seem surprising?
- 5) are there any clear relationships between modes and percentages?

Example of writing task 1:

Instruction: You should spend about 20 minutes on this task. The graph below shows the different modes of transport used to travel to and from work in one European city in 1950, 1970 and 1990. Write a report for a university lecturer describing the information shown. You should write at least 150 words.

Table 1. Method of Data Collection

Data Collection Types	Instruments of the Study	Purposes
Observations	1) Video recorder 2) Field note	To record information as it occurred in order to investigate the teachers’ reasons and the way to implement mind mapping strategy in IELTS writing class and to explain the problems during the implementation.
Questionnaires	Questionnaire for students	To know the students’ perception and their problems in IELTS writing class.
Interviews	Guided interview for teachers	To gather deeper information from the teachers about their perception of IELTS writing class.
Documents	1) IELTS writing class material 2) IELTS writing band descriptor	To give supporting data to answer research problems.

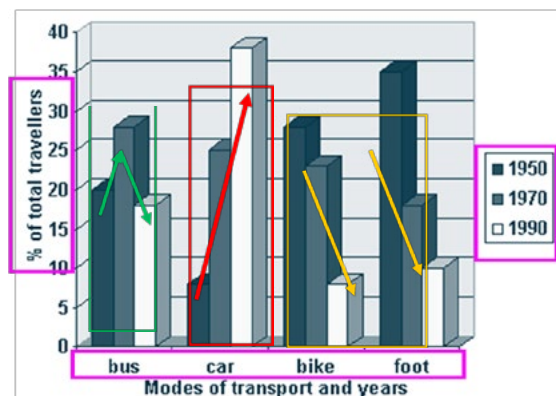


Figure 1. Example of Writing Task 1 Analysis

- 1) The graph shows the percentage of travelers in a European city who used bus, car, bike and foot to commute to and from work in the years 1950, 1970 and 1990.
- 2) The amount of people using cars grew considerably, rising from just over 5% in 1950 to 25% in 1970, and then climbing to almost 40% by 1990.
- 3) However, the amount of people using bikes decreased. Over 25% of commuters cycled in 1950, but this had fallen to less than 10% by 1990. Similarly, the amount of people who walked to work fell from more than a third in 1950 to about 10% in 1990.
- 4) The amount of people using buses initially rose in 1970 to about 30%, but had dropped to about 17% by 1990.
- 5) The graph indicates the growing use of cars for commuting and the corresponding fall in the popularity of other modes of transport since 1950.

IELTS writing task 2 required candidates to argue an issue, determine their position either for or against a proposition, present and then justify their opinions by providing evidence or supporting information for each point related to the topic of discussion (IELTS Handbook, 2007:8). Constructing an argumentative writing was not a new thing for the students as they have got this kind of material at school. Argumentative writing was included in English curriculum for senior high school students. Indeed, it did not mean that this writing would be easier for the students. Consequently, the teachers gave some considerations in constructing writing task 2, as follow:

- 1) quality of arguments – should be logical and well-considered,
- 2) ideas and evidence – should support the

points of arguments,

- 3) communicative quality.

In addition, during the implementation of mind mapping strategy to teach writing task 2, the teachers divided the strategy into several steps, as follow:

- 1) Organization
 - a. After you have produced your ideas, you need to organize them.
 - b. Do not produce a list of ideas without development.
 - c. Decide on the key ideas.
 - d. Select some supporting points for each key idea in your list.
 - e. Think about your own experience.
- 2) Planning
 - a. Allow some time to think about the question.
 - b. Note down clear and relevant ideas
 - c. Make a brief plan of the organization and content of your answer.
- 3) Introduction
 - a. Give first impression.
 - b. Write a few sentences.
 - c. Introduce the topic.
 - d. Preface the main points.
 - e. Define what you understand by the task.
 - f. Show how you intend to approach the task.
- 4) Content
 - a. Respond to each point mentioned in the task.
 - b. Your answer must be complete.
 - c. Make sure you do not misunderstand the question, write about something not required in the question, and answer only half of the topic.
- 5) Conclusion
 - a. Opportunity to leave a good impression.
 - b. Write a few sentences.
 - c. Summarize your key ideas and your main ideas.
 - d. If appropriate, a final decision, statement, or recommendation.

After explaining the strategy, the teachers gave an example of IELTS writing task 2 to make deeper understanding of those steps in constructing the task. Example of IELTS writing task 2:

Instruction: Some businesses now say that no one can smoke cigarettes in any of their offices. Some governments have banned smoking in all public places. This is a good idea but it takes away some of our freedom.

Do you agree or disagree?’

Possible Answer:

Introduction

Limitations on smoking in businesses and public places are a controversial topic as, although they may be a good idea, they may also interfere with people’s freedom. Non-smokers are likely to think that banning smoking is a good idea, but smokers naturally may not. Different cultures may have varying attitudes to whether businesses or governments have the right to ban smoking in certain places.

Content

Banning smoking in businesses may not be a good idea because smokers may work better if they can smoke. However, passive smoking can cause objections from colleagues. Although such bans may reduce freedom, businesses are widely seen as having the right to regulate staff activities.

Governments may also ban smoking in public. This may be a good idea due to the costs to society of smoking such as litter and health care. However, smoking in public may also benefit society, for example in tax revenue and the pleasure of smokers. Also, pressure groups such as tobacco companies may discourage limitations on smoking.

As for freedom, in many cultures the government has the right to regulate citizens’ activities. It is also increasingly possible that citizens would support such bans.

Conclusion

As a non-smoker I believe that limiting smoking in workplaces and in public is a good idea. I can also understand the opinion of smokers that banning smoking in such places limits their freedom. If the effects of smoking were limited to smokers I would oppose bans, but as smoking affects the health of others, I support them.

IELTS in General

From the questionnaires that I distributed to the students after teaching learning process, I found that most of the students thought that writing was essential and useful. As much as 60% students stated strongly agree and 30% agree about it. It was only 10% who neutral – neither agree nor disagree. They mentioned some reasons, such as: to express idea, to fulfil requirement in a test and writing was their hobby. The results indicated that writing skill was essential

and useful for students.

The next item was about students’ perception on their writing ability. I asked them about their opinion whether writing was simple or not and the reason. There were 20% students answered agree, 45% filled neutral and the rest 35% stated disagree. The reasons were varied which actually depended on their perception. They who ticked agree, stated that writing was simple because it was their hobby, or it meant that they liked to do it. The other who chose neutral, explained that writing was simple or depended on the topic given. The students who answered disagree because they did not like writing, it was hard to elaborate ideas and they lacked of vocabulary. From these results it could be generated that writing was simple or not depended on the topic given.

IELTS Writing Task 1. There were 11 items to explore about students’ opinion towards IELTS writing task 1 – starting from their previous knowledge before joining IELTS preparation program until they finished the class. All students stated that they have ever learnt how to construct descriptive writing as it was included in their school English curriculum. However, in the case of descriptive analysis writing which the students were needed to describe and interpret the data from graph, they wrote that they have never been taught or learnt about that. Therefore, in the placement test, they tried to describe the data from the graph by calculating the data and reporting them into paragraph.

Finishing IELTS preparation program in SUN English, 70% of the students liked descriptive analysis writing, while the other 30% answered neutral – neither like nor dislike. It seemed that they have implemented the strategy given by grouping the data to find out the main trends, large increase or decrease, clear and consistent direction which finally led to a conclusion. These meant that the students have changed their perception about descriptive analysis writing before and after joining IELTS preparation class.

On the item “the teacher suggested me about writing strategy in learning IELTS writing task 1”, 75% students answered strongly agree and 25% of the rest were classified into agree. Therefore, it could be concluded that the teachers gave relevant strategy during teaching learning process for IELTS writing task 1. These findings were also supported by open-ended questionnaire about students’ perception on teacher strategy. They stated that the teachers’ explanations were clear, understandable, and giving them new information needed.

From the questionnaire item number 11 that mentioned "learning IELTS writing task 1 through mind mapping strategy enhanced my idea and writing skill", 80% of the students agreed with this statement. As much as 15% strongly agreed and the rest 5% stated neutral. These results explained that mind mapping strategy was useful to enhance students' idea and improve their writing skill. Besides, mind mapping strategy was also helpful for students to manage the time well. It was clarified by the questionnaire which they filled up. 85% of them agreed that they could do IELTS writing task 1 on time, while 15% strongly agreed about this statement. The students also clearly understood about the idea of mind mapping strategy that was the way to group data.

IELTS Writing Task 2. From students' questionnaire item number 16 until 26, I explored students' opinion towards IELTS writing task 2. They thought that argumentative writing in IELTS writing task 2 was challenging, confusing and difficult unless they have experienced how to write argumentative writing at school. However, there were 55% of students from 20 students who agreed with statement in questionnaire item number 18 which stated, "I like argumentative writing". 30% of them ticked neutral - neither agree nor disagree and 15% chose strongly agree. These meant that the students generally liked argumentative writing though it was challenging, confusing and difficult.

In doing argumentative writing, the students used some strategies as given by the teachers, such as expressing idea, writing scientific opinion and giving example from daily life. Those were in line with item number 20 which mentioned, "The teacher suggests me about writing strategy in learning IELTS writing task 2". As much as 80% of the students agreed with that statement and the rest 20% stated strongly agreed. They acknowledged that the teachers' explanation was good, helpful, and considerable. The results indicated that the teachers' strategy appropriated with the students' need.

The teachers' strategy in teaching IELTS writing task 2 was mind mapping strategy as strategy they used in teaching IELTS writing task 1. From the questionnaire's results on item number 22 which asked, "Mind mapping strategy enhances my idea and writing skill in IELTS writing task 2", there were 45% students mentioned strongly agreed and 55% agreed. Overall, the students experienced that mind mapping elaborated their idea and writing skill in constructing argumentative writing. Those caused by learning

argumentative writing through mind mapping broaden their lexical resources, helped them to fix grammatical error and widen their topic writing. This strategy also helped them to do IELTS writing task 2 faster. This proofed by their answer on item number 24 which stated, "The more I practice the faster I can do IELTS writing task 2". As much as 15% answered strongly agreed and 85% agreed.

I revealed some problems during implementation of those two strategies in IELTS preparation class. The teachers sometimes had morning until evening schedule which were not effective because it made them exhausted and gave different performance in class. Before coming to IELTS preparation class, students have been studied from morning at school so that they were very tired especially when they had extra lessons at school on that day. Furthermore, during constructing the texts, the students were still had problems in managing time, stuck in planning phase, repetition ideas and phrases, laziness and boredom, and hand writing.

I unveiled some solutions to the problems. SUN English management should arrange teachers' schedule appropriately so that in a day, teachers worked maximum 8 hours and taught 3 classes only to keep their good performance. Students should also arrange their activity's schedule in order not to get tired when coming to the class. Relating with timing problems, the students had to be persistent in time. Task 1 should be done maximum 20 minutes in order to give 40 minutes time in doing task 2. Planning phase should be done not more than 5 minutes, however, it had not be skipped if they did not want to have repetition idea and phrases or get stuck during the writing process. Giving students reading materials and asking them to decide their own topics as writing ice breaker were also other solutions for overcoming students' laziness and boredom. Illegible hand writing could be solved by practicing more and more because practice made perfect.

CONCLUSIONS

Teachers have a big role to make difference in students' live. They are agent of change in their own classroom. They should always analyze students' knowledge background and need for classifying students' class and employing appropriate instructional strategies which could develop their students' skills. IELTS teachers should enhance their active participation in not only becoming teachers but also teachers-learner-researcher to improve their teaching practices.

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