



SNAP TO READ

## EXPLICIT PLANNING FOR PARAGRAPH WRITING CLASS

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First received: 19 May 2017

Final proof received: 31 May 2017

### **Abstract:**

*The purpose of the study is to improve the students writing ability for paragraph writing class. The subjects of the study were 37 students of English Education Study Program who joined the paragraph writing class. The design of the study was Classroom Action Research with two cycles. Cycle 1 consisted of three meetings, and cycle 2 consisted of two meetings. The types of explicit planning used in the action research were word listing and word mapping with phrases and sentence for detail. The instruments used were direct writing test, observation, and documentation of students' reflective essay. To score the students' writing, two raters were asked to rate the composition by using Jacobs ESL Composition profile scoring rubric. The finding shows that the use of explicit planning was able to improve the students' paragraph writing performance, indicated with the achievement of the criteria of success. The students' mean improved from cycle 1 (74.62) to cycle2 (76.78). Although explicit planning instruction was able to help the students to write better, data from their self-reflection essay showed that many of the students preferred to use free writing instead of explicit planning instruction.*

**Keywords:** *explicit planning, listing, paragraph writing, word mapping*

Having good writing ability is a crucial in this modern world. It is

crucial, because only from the act of writing, one's intellectuality and quality can be seen and acknowledged. Moreover, writing helps people to acquire self-consciousness, knowledge, creativity, and critical thinking ability. In Indonesia, where English is learnt as a foreign language, students learn writing mostly for tests purposes. They learn writing because they want to pass the final examination and get good grades. Because of this external motivation, they do not have a genuine purpose why they should write. Therefore, whenever the word 'writing assignment' is announced to the students, they mostly show unhappy faces. Personally, the students need to be aware that having good ability in writing can help them to achieve academic success.

Writing ability and academic success are closely related. Research has shown that writing can predict academic achievement. Preiss et al. (2013) we test how predictive writing is of subsequent academic achievement. First, using a multilevel analytic approach (n. = 2597 conducted a longitudinal study to see how writing skill and mathematical skill predict the students' academic achievement. The result shows that writing becomes a significant predictor of the university students' subsequent academic grades. This means that, the students who have better writing skill have better chances in academic performance.

However, to be able to write well is a long and tiring process. It is not enough for the students to have topics and ideas to write only. The students need to tailor those ideas through the use of proper language to make the sentences understandable and arrange those ideas logically so that they are meaningful for the readers. These kind of skills requires a great effort from the writer, especially the foreign language learner who were just practicing the target language. EFL Indonesian students dislikes writing activity because of the difficulties they face during the writing tasks, such as linguistics problems, cognitive problems, and psychological problems (Rahmatunisa, 2014) those are linguistics problems, cognitive problems, and psychological problems. Mostly, students faced problems in linguistics

related to the grammatical structure (23.2%).

The third semester students who were learning paragraph writing in STKIP PGRI Pasuruan in the academic 2016-2017 face similar problems. Based on the preliminary study, it was found out that almost half of the students (44%) believe that writing is difficult. And more than half of them confessed that they had difficulties in writing (61%). The data from the students' self reflection composition toward writing in English taken during the preliminary study also yield the difficulties the students faced during writing. It was found out that the students' problems in writing were grammar, vocabulary and content (ideas). The students had problems to start writing and to put their thoughts on the paper because they felt that they do not have enough vocabulary to express their ideas. When they knew the vocabulary, they had the problems to arrange those vocabulary in sentences by using proper structure. Because of these, writing has become a frustrating subject for them. Triggered by these problems, this reserach is intended to find the solution the students' face during writing through the use of explicit planning instruction.

Planning was firstly introduced by writing researchers, namely Flower and Hayes (1981), Murray (1982) and Kellogg (1988). They argue that to write well, it is necessary to plan what to say on the paper through the use of planning as it serves as map for the writer so that he/she knows what to do and where to go during the journey of the writing process. Further, Murray (1982:4) argues that pre-writing, or planning out what is going to be written, is a very important phase in the writing process. He argues that two thirds of the writing time are spent in the prewriting activity before the writer performs the actual writing activity During planning, one prewrites anything before an actual draft is written. This activity includes thinking, taking notes, talking to others, brainstorming, outlining, and (other forms) of gathering information. In short, planning is about organizing the ideas and focus on the subject, sequencing of the issues, aiming and the targeting audience. Most prewriting activities requires writers to explicitly plan what

they want to say by using specific outlining techniques such as mind mapping, making diagram, brainstorming and listing.

Ellis (2005) distinguishes two broad kinds of planning; pre-task planning and within-task planning. Pre-task planning is a kind of planning which happens before performing the task, whereas within-task planning refers to the kind of planning which occurs during the time of performance of a task. Planning is one of the task condition factors that affects second language production and has been of, as stated by Ellis (2005:vii) “both theoretical interest to second language acquisition (SLA) researchers and of practical importance to language teachers”. He further states that planning is essentially a “problem solving activity which involves what linguistics devices need to be selected in order to affect the audience in a desired way” (Ellis, 2005: 3).

One of the most influential model in task-planning within writing context is the Flower and Hayes’ model (1981). They distinguishes three basic systems involved in written text production. They distinguishes three basic systems involved in written text production. *First* Planning which entails the process of generating ideas in which organisation and goal setting as components; *Second* is translating which means putting the ideas on the paper (writing/composing), and *third* is reviewing that consists the act of reviewing in which mostly are under the control of a Monitor. The writer evaluates what they have written and then changes the text to suit their developing concept of the document. These processes operated upon two kinds of information: a representation of the task environment, which consisted of the writing assignment and the text produced so far; and knowledge stored in long-term memory, which consisted of such things as topic knowledge, a model of the audience, the writing plan, rules for grammar production and knowledge of text standards. They argue that pre-writing strategy helps improve the quality of composition by “calling attention to planning and discovery as legitimate parts of the writing process” (Flower & Hayes, 1981: 367). They conclude that the source of creativity comes from the writer’s ability to create goals

and generate ideas. And this important part is placed in the planning stage.

There are many ways to plan a composition. Among others are outlining and mapping. An outline is defined as systematic framework that organizes the thoughts about the content of the composition (Labaree, 2009). An outline usually uses series of numbers and letters, indented accordingly, to indicate the degree of importance. There are several steps that one can do to make an outline as suggested by Labaree (2009). Firstly, the writer should identify the problem /the point that he/she wishes to write on the paper. The problem can be written in a word, or phrases, or a sentence. Secondly, the writer identifies the main categories which later would be developed in the composition. Next, the writer creates categories and subcategories that are related to the main category written in the beginning.

To make explicit planning before writing is by using words list, the students can write down any words that come up into their mind. Those words would later be used in the composition. McCarthy (1998) introduces words listing to write descriptive paragraph for beginner. The students list the words that they could use to describe something that the sensory systems can feel.

The second way of making an explicit planning is using words mapping. McCharty (1998) provides examples how words mapping can be used to write a composition for novice writer. Basically, this type of explicit planning is similar to words listing. The difference lays in the categorization of the words. In the words mapping, the words are put into each category connected by lines.

Planning prior to composing shows consistent effect on L1 writers' texts. Most studies conducted by writing experts, such as Kellogg (1988, 1990, 1996) yield results that pre-task planning—specifically outlining—is effective in improving L1 writing quality hollistically. In the series of studies conducted by Kellogg, he focused exclusively on how pre-task planning is organized by college students in composing in their L1. He assigned the students a letter writing task ( Kellogg, 1988) and short informative writing task (1990). The findings show consistent results in which planning prior

composing—specifically outlining—improves not only students’ fluency but also the overall quality of their composition.

Other study conducted by Sundeen (2012) also shows similar result. His research focused on the explicit prewriting instruction for L1 adult students with learning disabilities. He taught the students how to plan their writing through the use of mind mapping to generate ideas and organize thoughts for personal narrative writing. He measures the students writing daily by using multiple-baseline across-subjects design. The finding shows that explicit teaching planning strategy is beneficial for students with learning disabilities who struggle with writing. What is clear from research of planning in L1 writers, pre-task planning—planning prior composing by using explicit outline—is indeed effective.

Based on the description of the problems presented in the background, and the review of related literature, this research is intended to solve the students’ writing problems at the paragraph level. The research problem is, then, formulated as follow, “How can explicit planning be used to improve the paragraph writing ability of the third semester students English Education Study Program STKIP PGRI Pasuruan?”

## **METHOD**

The design used in the study is action research since it attempts to solve the students problems in paragraph writing. Action research is a kind of research that is carried out to evaluate, modify the educational program in order to improve the quality of educational practice (Koshy, 2005). One of the proposed designs of action research is Classroom Action Research (CAR). The design is based on the consideration that the teacher as researcher attempts not only to solve the problem of the particular classroom, but also to improve the quality of teaching. One of the distinctive features of CAR design is the cycles to be implemented in the research; which consist of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting as proposed by Kemmis & McTaggart (1998, 2007).

The participants of the study were 39 EFL students taking paragraph writing class in their third semester of English Education at College of Teachers Training and Education (STKIP) PGRI Pasuruan in the academic 2016-2017. However, only 37 students were taken as the subjects of the study on the basis of the consistency of attendance and papers submitted during the research. This class was taken because of their problems in writing, such as grammar, vocabulary and ideas.

### **Research Procedures**

Two cycles were conducted in which each cycle consists of two meetings. The duration of each meeting was 90 minutes. The first cycle was conducted on 26 September, 2 October, and 12 October 2016 while the second cycle was conducted on 19 October, 27 October, and 31 October 2016. Based on the English Education Study Program syllabus, the third semester students should have the ability to write paragraph (descriptive, expository, opinion, process paragraph) developed by different types of paragraph development, such as examples and details, comparison and contrast, chronological order, and cause effect. The book used during the teaching and learning process was *Paragraph Writing* by Zemach & Islam (2004), published by MacMillan.

In the first cycle, the students were asked to write a paragraph that described their favorite place. Before writing, the students were asked to list adjective words that describe the place. The outlining strategy is called words listing. The students were given 15 minutes to list the words that came up to their mind related to the topic. After the students listed the words that represented the description of the place, then they were asked to write a descriptive the paragraph in at least 200 words. In cycle 1, some problems were identified. Firstly, it was found that, the students still had problems in the use of acceptable sentence structure. Secondly, the students wrote too short paragraph, less than 200 words. And thirdly, the students confessed that they needed longer time to plan their composition. Because of these problems and the failure in achieving the criteria of success, the second cycle was carried out.

In the second cycle, the topic was opinion essays essay developed by example and details, under the topic of “White Lie”. The researchers modified the word listing strategy as used in the first cycle. In the second cycle, word mapping as a type of explicit planning instruction was taught to the students. The word mapping strategy resembled to webbing concept in which each ideas was group based on its category and connected by lines. To solve the students’ problem in grammatical structure, during outlining, the students were asked not only to make the word mapping, but also but also to write the phrases or sentences correspond to the sub topic they wanted to discuss. The details that represented each category was listed in either in phrases or in full sentence. The time given for the students to brainstorm their ideas by using word mapping was 30 minutes. In this topic, the students should give their opinion whether lying is ok or not, state their reasons why, and give example and details to support their opinion. The feedback was given during the planning activity.

Two criteria of successes were set by the researchers. Firstly, the cycle would be stopped if 80% of the students can develop their ideas by using explicit planning instruction and reach scores of 71 or more and fall in the ‘average’ or above the criteria set by the institution. Secondly, the mean of the cycle reached at least 75 or above. The research was also intended to find out the students’ opinion toward the use of explicit planning instruction.

### **Instruments**

There are several instruments used in the study. They were direct writing tests, observation, documentation, and scoring guide to score the students’ compositions. The researcher used direct writing test in which the students were asked to write about a special person in their life by using words mapping in cycle one. While the test of cycle two, the students were asked to state their opinion whether it was okay to lie. The test was done in the end of each cycle. The second instrument used by the researcher was observation. The researcher took notes during the teaching learning process based on particular atmosphere and condition took place in the classroom.

During the observation, the researcher used field notes. The third instrument used by the researcher was documentation. The students were required to write their self-reflection in relation to their opinion of using explicit planning instruction for their writing task. The students were asked to write very short self-reflection essay in the end of cycle 2. The researcher also documented the students works, the students' plans, the feedbacks, and the students' activity during the teaching and learning process by a means of photographs.

And the forth, the scoring guide. The students' composition were scored by using Jacobs ESL Composition Profile (1981). The decision of using this analytical scoring rubric to score the students' composition was based on the consideration that the researcher needed to be equipped with sufficient information about the students' overall ability in writing. This profile is a 100-point scale and uses five sets of criteria in scoring a composition: content criteria, organization criteria, vocabulary criteria, language use criteria and mechanics criteria. Each set of criteria changes a four level subjective judgment scale into interval scores. This profile is one of the most commonly used and dependable profiles for ESL composition rating since it has been developed in 1981. It considers all the different aspects of the composition and it is a successful scale based on both the holistic and analytical approaches for writing evaluation. Two raters scored the students works. The scores which were used to make the decision whether the cycle should be continued or stopped were the average scores between the two raters.

## **FINDING**

The finding is divided into two sub section. Firstly, it discusses about the students writing performance in cycle 1 and cycle 2, and secondly, the finding discusses about the students' opinion in relation to the use of explicit planning for their writing task. Some of the students' planning are also presented.

### The Writing Performance

In order to know the impact of the implementation of explicit planning on the quality of the students' writing, the students' writing were marked by one of the researchers and a writing teacher. Thus, the scores obtained in this research are the average scores between the two raters. The students' scores were put in the table based on the institutional standard

Table 1. Students' scores

Score	Total				Category
	Cycle 1	%	Cycle 2	%	
91 – 100	-	-	3	8	Excellent
84 – 90	3	8	4	11	Very Good
77 - 83	13	35	13	35	Good
71 – 76	10	27	9	24	Average
66 – 70	9	25	5	14	Below Average
61 – 65	2	5	3	8	Poor
55 – 60	-		-	-	Very Poor
0 - 54	-		-	-	Fail
N	37		37		100
Total Score	2761.00		2841.00		
Mean	74.6216		76.7838		

Table 1 shows that in Cycle 1, none of the students reaches the criteria of 'excellent', although many of them were in the 'good' criteria (35%). Sadly, Eleven students (25% + 2%) were in the category of 'below average' criteria. In Cycle 2, there were some improvements found in the research. Two students reached the 'excellent' criteria (8%), and those who were in the 'below average' criteria were reduced into only eight students (14% + 8%).

To have a better look of the improvement of the students' scores in each cycle, the data was presented in the histogram in figure 1.

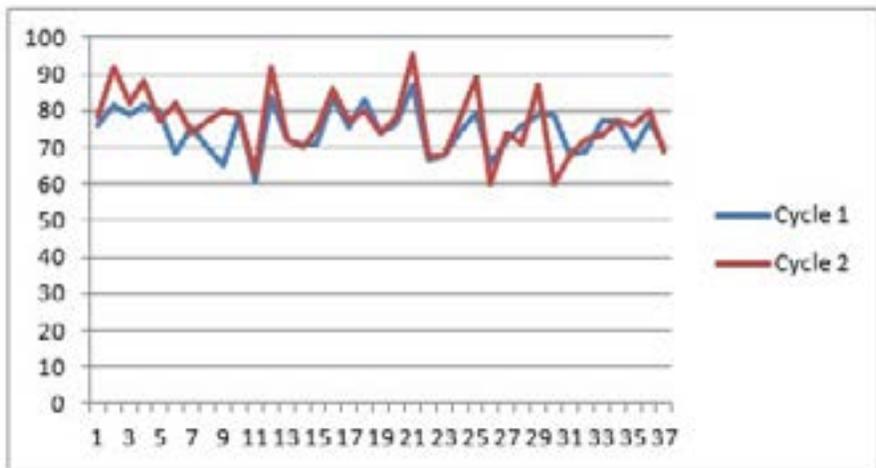


Figure 1. Students' scores of cycle 1 and cycle 2

From the chart, the improvement of the students' performance can be seen. Because the students' scores get better, the group performance also increases. Some students, however, had lower performance as compared to the first cycle, such as students number 26, 28, 30, and 33. Students number 26 in the first cycle scored 66, in cycle 2, he got 60. Similarly, student number 28 who scored 76 in cycle 1, in cycle 2 she scored 71. Student number 30 who scored 76 in cycle 1, scored 60 in cycle 2. And finally, student number 33 who score 77 in cycle 1, in cycle 2 she scored 73. Overall, the chart shows general improvement from cycle 1 to cycle 2. It is confirmed by the mean score of each cycle, in cycle 1, the mean shows 74, while in cycle 2, the mean shows 77. From this, it can be concluded that there is 0.3 points of improvement from cycle 1 to cycle 2. The development of each cycle can be seen in the figure 2.

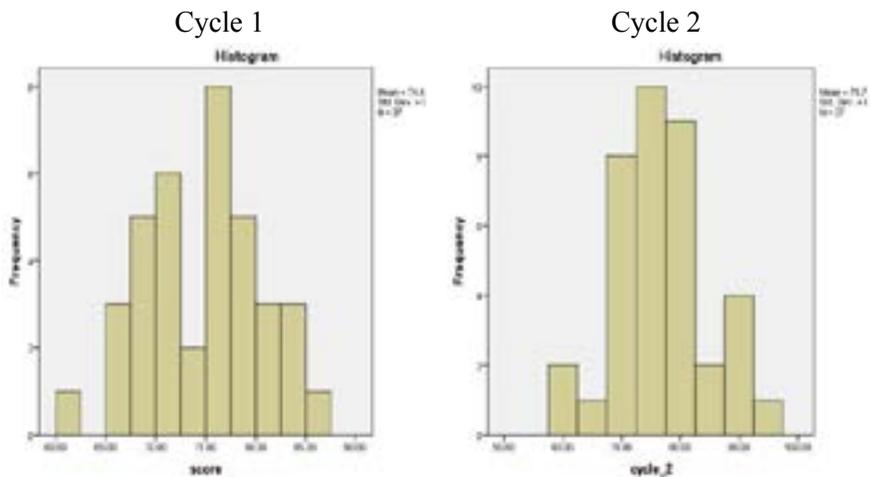


Figure 2. Development of cycle 1 and cycle 2

In cycle 1, the scores tend to form a shape like normal distribution, with the students' scores who are almost equally distributed. In cycle 2, the scores distribution tend to skew to the right side with most students who score more than 70 dominate the number. In cycle 1, the students made outline by using word mapping. The students were required to note down any words related to the topic that came up in their mind.

Irmatic Tsurayah  
15188203009

a. My favorite place to relax

The back yard

not too far  
comfortable, relax  
shady, cloudy  
sit, eat, lie down  
quite  
dry, trash  
look, shine  
Under a tree  
snack, food, drink  
Sound of bird

Figure 3. The student outline by using word mapping in cycle 1

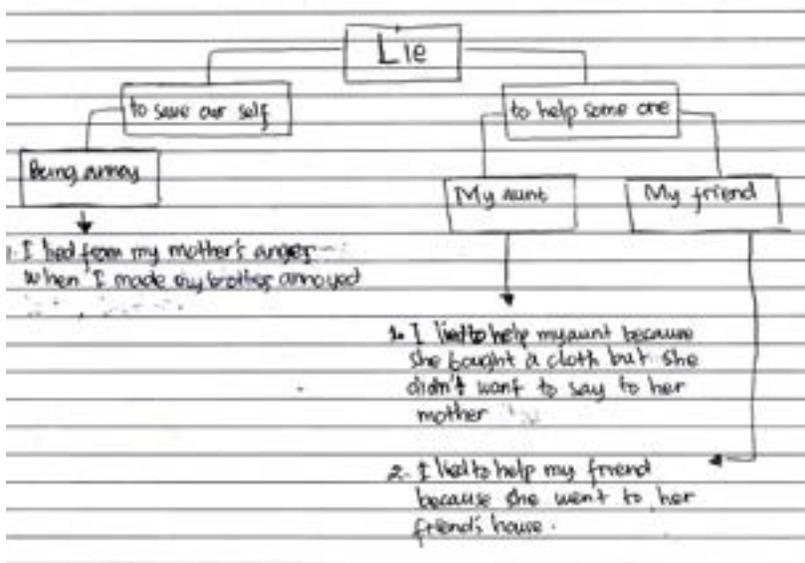
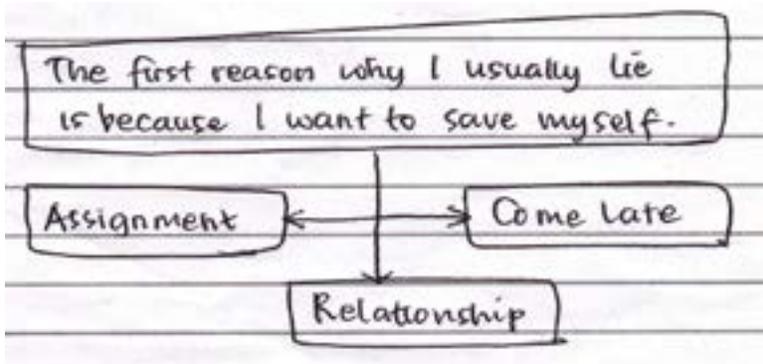


Figure 4. Student's plan in cycle 2 by using word mapping with sentence

Figure 3 and figure 4 shows the difference type of explicit planning made by the students. In cycle 1, the students only listed the ideas in the form of words and phrases without categorizing them. While in cycle 2, that the students did not only plan what they were going to write in the form of the words or phrases, but also categorized them based on each idea. The students also listed the details based each category with details in the form of correct construction of the sentences.



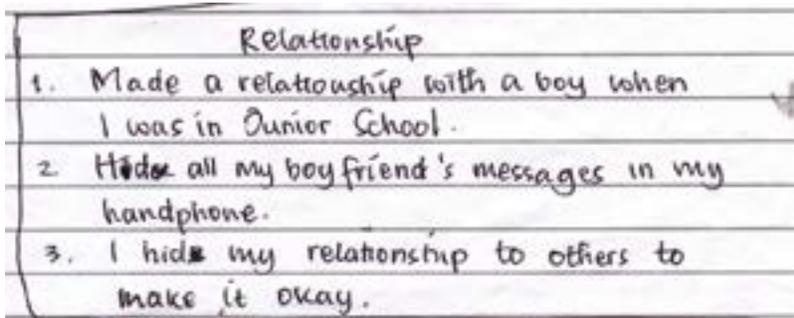


Figure 5. Words mapping with sentence detail

Figure 5 shows that the student made details of each category not only in the form of sentences. Some of them, as shown by one of the examples, made detail by listing the ideas by using phrases.

### Students' Opinion

Based on the documentation of the students' self reflection essay, it was found out that only 43 % of the students (16 students) liked the use of explicit planning instruction for their writing. While the rest of the students (57%) felt that disliked explicit planning despite of the fact that it helped them in their writing. For those who liked to use explicit planning, they felt that to plan explicitly helped them in generating ideas. The types of planning that the students like were listing and word mapping. Some of their reasons were because listing and word mapping were easy to use and helpful to get ideas.

*Listing is the easiest way for me in writing. It helps me get the most useful ideas (Desy W, 2015/38)*

*I think the type of brainstorming which is good is word map. It helps me get ideas step by step (Alfi, 2015/03)*

*I choose to use word map before writing. It is easy to begin writing by using word map and it helps me to get most ideas (Roi, 2012)*

*Listing eases me to make plan for the essay. It allows me to get more ideas in making paragraph or essay (Dina, 2015/38)*

While for those who disliked explicit planning, they preferred to use free writing to draft the writing. In contrast to others, they felt that writing freely for the first draft ease them to generate ideas.

*I think free writing is easier to start to write a paragraph because it is easy and helps me to get ideas. (Aldi, 2015/31)*

*To write freely is easy for me. Free writing helps me to express what is in my mind. (Salimatin, 2015/35)*

*Free writing is my favourite. It is the easiest way for me to begin (writing). It helps me get most ideas. (Mar'atul, 2015/51)*

Form these data, it can be seen that not all students preferred to use explicit planning instruction to carry out their writing task. Instead of using explicit planning, many of them preferred to use free writing as their prewriting strategy.

## **DISCUSSION**

Writing has always been a problem for EFL learners. It is not easy to put ideas on the paper although one has already acquired sufficient grammatical and vocabulary competence, let alone having limited grammatical and grammatical competence. The ideas which are scattered in the writers' mind need to be arranged so that they would be logical and meaningful for the readers. Based on the preliminary study, students mostly confessed that they have problems with grammar, vocabulary, and content (ideas). The use of explicit planning by using word mapping and listing was proven to be effective in improving the students' writing performance.

The result of this research has confirmed Kellogg's study (1988, 1990) and Sundeen's (2012). Result of previous research has shown that explicit planning, such as outlining and mapping, are advantageous for students who are learning to write. Explicit planning helps the students to generate ideas, and arrange them. In Cycle 1, the students were taught to plan their writing by using word listing. Word listing helps the students to generate ideas related

to the topic they are going to write. McCarthy (1998) argues that the use of word listing is beneficial to generate ideas for writing descriptive text. In this study, it was found out that although the students were able to write descriptive paragraph to describe their favorite place, this strategy could not solve the students' problem in grammar.

The second strategy used in the second cycle was brainstorming by using word mapping with details written in phrases or full sentence. The improvement of the students' scores was probably caused by several factors. Firstly, time for planning was added from 15 minutes in cycle 1 to 30 minutes in cycle 2. The addition of planning time was given due to some students confessed that 15 minutes was not enough for them to generate ideas. This research suggests that for EFL learners especially those who were in the early stage of learning English, 30 minutes was probably the ideal planning time for the students before they did their actual writing task.

Secondly, in cycle 2, the students were given a model of planning by using word mapping with phrases/sentences for detail and taught how to translate the plan into a composition. And finally, the students' composition can be improved because there was scaffolding time given during the planning time. During the scaffolding, the students discussed with the lecturer about the vocabulary and the grammar that should be used. Research shows that scaffolding is effective to improve the quality of writing (Vonna, Mukminatien & Laksmi, 2015). Further, according to Laksmi (2006), scaffolding gives positive learning environment and supports learners to become gradually independent. Thus, it can be inferred that only giving the students time to plan their composition is not sufficient to help them write better. This research suggests that there should be some time spent to help the students plan what they wanted to say and how to say it through the provision of scaffolding.

Interestingly, although explicit planning can improve the students' writing performance, many students preferred not to use it if they had other choices of prewriting strategies. Some subjects in cycle 2 had lower scores as compared to the first cycle. It happens that these students were

those who disliked explicit planning, especially one that used very detail planning. In the self-reflection essay, they wrote that they preferred free writing technique better than explicit planning. The possible explanation of the students' preferences in writing strategies can be found in Kieft's et al., (2007) study. Their research reveal that the students' preferences of which planning strategies to use plays a role in the effectiveness of the strategy. This means that, some students prefer one strategy but dislike others. If they like the strategy, the strategy would help them to achieve their best, and vice versa. Their research also shows that students who have a natural tendency to plan explicitly benefit most from instruction that emphasizes explicit and systematic planning, while those who had a tendency to directly write the draft, benefitted more from writing strategy that emphasized revision. This being the case, it is explainable why some subjects had decreased scores in cycle 2. Those subjects, as written and expressed in their self-reflection essay, preferred to write directly then revised the draft instead of making explicit and detail planning as taught to them. They felt perhaps more comfortable to use free writing strategy as opposed to explicit planning instruction. Aside from the preferences, research has shown that explicit outlining, such as mapping and listing, and free writing are actually equally effective for enhancing the students writing performance (Setyowati, Latief, & Widiati, 2016).

## **CONCLUSION**

The action research was conducted with the sole purpose of solving the students' problem in writing. The end goal of this research was improving the students' performance in paragraph writing by using explicit planning instruction. Two explicit planning instructions were used in the study, namely word listing, and word mapping with phrases/sentences for detail. In conclusion, after two cycles of action research, it was found out that explicit planning instruction can improve the students' paragraph writing performance. This can be seen from the improvement of the students' scores from cycle 1 to cycle 2. This study also found out that despite of the fact that

explicit planning was beneficial for the students to improve the quality of their writing, not many of them preferred to use them. Based on the result of this research, it can be concluded that to use the explicit planning instruction effectively, some considerations need to be taken into account, mainly the time given for planning and the provision of scaffolding during the planning. For EFL learners, the ideal time for planning is probably 30 minutes although further research needs to be conducted to find out whether different planning time does give effect to the students' composition. The result also reveals that the scaffolding activity during the planning time was found out to be helpful to help improve the quality of the students' planning.

Some suggestions are addressed to the writing teachers/lecturers and future researchers. Firstly, the writing teachers/lecturers should introduce different types of planning strategy for their students. By giving them some choices of pre-writing strategies, the students can select which that match to their learning style and preferences. Since this research has some limitations, the result of this study is only applicable to the subjects that have similar characteristics with this study. Future researcher is suggested to expand the study to find out which planning strategies is more effective to use for different proficiency level of students. The information whether low achieving learner benefit more from explicit planning instruction or implicit planning instruction through rough drafting or rough drafting is yet unknown.

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