

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Background of the Study

Writing is a core academic skill across disciplines and should not be assessed only in terms of linguistic accuracy. Effective writing also depends on the ability to plan, generate, and organize ideas coherently before drafting. Idea organization has been identified as a key component of writing quality because it supports clarity and coherence in texts (Graham, 2021; Sari & Sukirlan, 2022). Strong writing skills also contribute to learners' academic success and professional communication (Polancos et al., 2025). In EFL contexts, writing is often perceived as one of the most difficult skills. Students must manage grammar and vocabulary while also structuring ideas logically in a foreign language. Previous studies report that many EFL learners struggle with generating ideas, organizing paragraphs, and maintaining coherence, even when their grammatical knowledge is adequate (Rahmatunisa, 2021; Sari & Sukirlan, 2022). These difficulties can make writing tasks stressful and demotivating.

Academic writing in non-English-speaking countries requires students to demonstrate fluency, accuracy, and clear organization of ideas. Writing involves complex cognitive processes such as planning, organizing, revising, and editing, which pose additional challenges for EFL learners (Lesmana & Ariffin, 2020; Graham & Rijlaarsdam, 2023). Without sufficient support in the planning stage, students often produce fragmented and poorly structured texts. One instructional approach that has gained attention is mind mapping as a pre-writing strategy. Mind mapping helps learners generate, connect, and organize ideas visually before drafting. Empirical studies indicate that mind mapping supports idea development and text organization, leading to more coherent writing outcomes (Putri & Hidayati, 2021; Wahid & Sudirman, 2023). This strategy allows students to structure their thoughts systematically during the planning phase.

With the integration of technology in education, digital mind-mapping tools such as MindMeister and XMind have been introduced in EFL classrooms. These tools enable students to rearrange ideas flexibly and revise their writing plans. Studies suggest that digital mind mapping can enhance engagement and clarity of idea organization, although its effectiveness depends on how the strategy is taught and implemented (Susanti & Yuliana, 2022; Pham, 2023). Despite increasing research on mind mapping, gaps remain. Many studies examine overall writing performance without focusing on specific sub-skills such as idea organization. Moreover, research at the senior high school level in Indonesian EFL contexts is still limited. Examining specific writing components allows for more precise evaluation of instructional strategies and clearer pedagogical implications (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Graham & Rijlaarsdam, 2023).

This study will be conducted with Grade 10 students at SMA Telkom 1 Medan in the 2025/2026 academic year, where senior high schools are required to develop students' academic literacy while preparing them for examinations and further education. Responding to current educational demands that emphasize 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, idea synthesis, and creativity, this study addresses the need for students to organize their thoughts effectively in written form. Although teachers have begun to experiment with both manual and digital mind mapping, practical, research-based guidance for Grade 10 students remains limited. Therefore, this study, entitled "Mind Mapping as a Strategy to Improve Idea Organization in Writing among Grade 10 Students at SMK Telkom 1 Medan," aims to examine how mind mapping supports students in generating, structuring, and organizing ideas before writing and whether it leads to measurable improvements in the coherence and clarity of their written texts.

1.2 The Problems of the Study

The problems of this study can be formulated as follows:

1. Is there a significant difference in students' idea organization scores before and after using mind mapping?

2. How effective is the mind mapping technique in improving Grade 10 students' ability to organize ideas in their English writing at SMK Telkom 1 Medan (Academic Year 2025-2026)?
3. How do students perceive the usefulness of mind mapping in helping them plan and organize their ideas before writing?

1.3 The Objective of the Study

Based on the problems above, this study aims to:

1. To analyze whether there is a significant difference in students' idea organization scores before and after using mind mapping.
2. To analyze the effectiveness of the mind mapping technique in improving idea organization in English writing among Grade 10 students of SMK Telkom 1 Medan (Academic Year 2025/2026).
3. To analyze students' perceptions of the mind mapping technique as a pre-writing tool for planning and organizing ideas.

1.4 Significances of the Study

The significances of this study can be viewed from both theoretical and practical aspects, as it can be described below:

1.4.1 Theoretically

This study seeks to enrich existing literature on EFL writing pedagogy by offering empirical evidence on how a visual pre-writing strategy specifically mind mapping affects *idea organization*. Although *idea organization* is widely known as a subcomponent of writing, it is rarely isolated and measured independently. Furthermore, the findings can refine conceptual models linking visual organizers to compositional processes and support/rationalize further research on mapping-to-text transfer.

1.4.2 Practically

For teachers and curriculum planners at SMK Telkom 1 Medan and similar schools, the study will offer specialized scoring rubrics for idea organization and

recommendations for integrating mind mapping (manual or digital) into the standard writing lessons. For students, the intervention aims to empower them with a tangible, repeatable writing strategy for structured planning. By mastering this strategy, students may enhance their ability to organize thoughts logically, improving overall writing performance and confidence.

1.5 Literature Review

Recent studies in EFL writing pedagogy show that pre-writing strategies, particularly visual organizers, play a significant role in improving students' ability to generate, structure, and connect ideas before drafting. Research on writing processes emphasizes that planning and organization are central to text quality, influencing coherence and clarity of written products (Graham & Rijlaarsdam, 2023). In EFL contexts, learners who receive structured support during the planning stage tend to produce more coherent paragraphs and better-developed texts, as visual scaffolds help externalize thinking and reduce cognitive load during composing (Sari & Sukirlan, 2022).

Empirical evidence also suggests that mind mapping, including its digital forms, facilitates idea organization and supports students' engagement in the writing process. Digital mind-mapping tools provide flexibility in revising and reorganizing ideas, which can enhance students' awareness of text structure and logical flow when planning their writing (Susanti & Yuliana, 2022; Pham, 2023). However, findings indicate that the effectiveness of mind mapping depends on explicit instruction, guided practice, and alignment with writing tasks; without pedagogical scaffolding, students may use mind maps superficially and show limited improvement in textual coherence (Graham & Rijlaarsdam, 2023).

1.6 Novelty of the Study

The novelty of this study lies in its focused examination of idea organization as a distinct and measurable sub-skill of EFL writing, rather than treating writing performance as a single, holistic construct. While previous studies have generally investigated the effects of mind mapping on overall writing quality, this research isolates idea organization as the primary outcome, allowing for a more precise

analysis of how mind mapping supports students' planning and structuring of ideas before drafting. In addition, this study integrates both instructional use of mind mapping and students' perceptions within a single quasi-experimental design at the senior high school level in an Indonesian EFL context, which remains underrepresented in existing literature. By situating the intervention in an authentic classroom setting and aligning it with curriculum demands, the findings are expected to offer context-sensitive evidence and practical pedagogical insights that extend beyond general claims about mind mapping and writing improvement.