CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Writing is one of the most important skills to be learnt by all grade students in learning English. It is categorized as productive skill along with speaking skill. Through writing, the students can use the target language communicatively, especially to express ideas, share information, and respond to any request in written form. In achieving those goals, the students have to know the basics knowledge of writing skill, such as correct grammar, appropriate vocabulary, and genre of the text. Ability to write paragraph in English based on those basic knowledges will enable the students produce a good writing. This statement is supported by Sari and Fitrawati (2018) that the writing ability needs understanding of the elements of writing in order to deliver a good writing. So that, the students need to master the basic knowledge of writing in order to reach the goals and will be able to convey the meaning in written text.

However, in its implementation, the goals of writing ability are not easy tasks to be achieved because writing ability is said as the most difficult skill to be learnt. It is supported by Husna and Multazim (2019) that writing activity is considered more complicated than other skills, since the students need extra focus, thinking skill, and learning in a long time. It means that writing is not an instant skill due to the time is needed in its process in producing a good writing. Writing is a result of combination among training process of writing, thinking, and ordering word beautifully (Asni & Susanti, 2018). In writing, she/he needs time to think what they

1

want to write and it must be done through a long process to produce a good work. The writer needs to find out ways in delivering meaning to represent his or her ideas clearly.

Regarding to a good and clear ideas delivering ability in writing, writing has to be trained regularly. That statement is supported by Oshima and Hogue (2007) that writing is a continuous activity which needs creativity. It means the writer must through some process in writing. Oshima and Hogue (2007) suggest four steps in writing, namely creating ideas, organizing ideas, drafting and revising rough draft. Those steps are important and should be done orderly and properly. Those steps should be done in every writing activity. By implementing those steps correctly and regularly in writing any genre of text, the writer will be able to convey not only the ideas but also deliver its meaning.

Students in Junior High School in Indonesia learn about how to write a good text in various genre. There are several texts are studied by the eighth-grade students at junior high school. Descriptive text is one of them. However, based on the syllabus, junior high school students just learn about descriptive text in a simple short descriptive text in the form of descriptive paragraph. Actually, the students had learnt it in the seventh-grade and in the eighth-grade should learn it more. Basic competency in learning descriptive states students be able to compile descriptive paragraph about person, animal, and thing correctly and in context. It all needs creativity in thinking about the ideas and pay attention to the language elements used in it.

However, in real teaching and learning process, most students find difficulties in constructing their ideas in writing descriptive paragraph as well as intended in

writing skill. Based on the pre-observation and the English teacher of the eighth grade of SMPN 1 Payangan interview, she said many students are difficult to express their idea onto a piece of paper in writing descriptive paragraph along with appropriate grammar. The process of writing does not run smoothly and orderly. The students find difficulties in the first step, that is finding ideas in prewriting process. So that, it causes them difficult to do the next step. Those problems are caused by students' lack in mastering the basic elements in writing, especially correct grammar and vocabulary, and the inappropriate technique used by teacher in teaching writing, especially writing descriptive paragraph. So far, teacher uses technique by giving questions to lead students develop their idea. This technique is not students' thinking process naturally. So that, they need a technique which can make them free in thinking to find the ideas.

Referring to the problem that faced by the eighth-grade students of SMPN 1 Payangan above, the researcher is interested to conduct a study in order to help the students improve their writing ability through applying Clustering Technique in teaching writing descriptive paragraph. In its implementation, students are required to write a word circled in the center of a piece of paper. Students are instructed to radiate outward from the word written in the middle with as many associations as come to their mind in a period of time. So that, the students can pick and sort what they want to include in their writing.

Applying Clustering Technique in improving writing ability enables students to be more active in prewriting process. The students can be creative in finding ideas. It helps them to be easier in doing the process of writing since it is done from the first step of writing process. The process of finding ideas since the first step can

make them understand how to organize it and also comprehend what they have to write in a whole text. So that, the appropriate technique used in the prewriting process will help a lot to do the next process of writing.

Since clustering technique is considered as an effective strategy to improve students' writing ability. Therefore, the researcher conducted study to improve students' writing ability, especially in descriptive paragraph, in the eighth-grade students of SMPN 1 Payangan in academic year 2022/2023. Thus, the title of this study is "The Use of Clustering Technique in Improving Writing Ability of the Eighth Grade Students of SMPN 1 Payangan in Academic Year 2022/2023".

1.2 Research Problem

Since writing is assumed as the most difficult skills to be mastered in learning English, the learning objective of writing can't be maximized because of some difficulties faced by the student. The researcher found that most students face those difficulties in creating an idea and lack of grammar in writing activity, so that they are confused and difficult to express what they want to write. Referring to the background of the study above, the students are recommended think creatively in expressing an idea and improve their grammar to communicate the ideas. The research problem of this study is formulated as follows: can writing ability of the eighth-grade students of SMPN 1 Payangan in academic year 2022/2023 be improved through clustering technique?

1.3 Objective of the Study

The objective of the study is to know the answer of the research problem. From the statement above, this research aims to find out whether or not clustering technique can improve the writing ability of the eighth-grade students of SMPN 1 Payangan in academic year 2022/2023.

1.4 Limitation of the Study

Based on the formulation of problem, this study is restricted on improving writing ability of the eighth-grade students of SMPN 1 Payangan in academic year 2022/2023 which uses clustering technique in finding ideas along with using appropriate grammar in writing descriptive paragraph about animal and thing.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The result of this study is expected to provide both theoretical and practical significance toward teaching and learning process. It is expected can provide benefits related in improving students' writing ability through clustering technique theoretically and practically. Both significances are explained as follows:

Theoretically, this study is expected can be a reference in developing knowledge and supporting theory that has been established in improving writing ability. The finding of this study is expected could prove that the use of clustering technique can be effective technique used in improving writing ability. Moreover, the information and theory used in this study can be taken to enrich the existing references. Furthermore, the result of this study is expected could be useful in the

future as references regarding to improve the eighth students' writing ability of SMPN 1 Payangan through clustering technique in academic year 2022/2023.

Practically, this study is expected providing a new insight and benefits for the students, teachers, others researchers particularly and for the readers generally. The students are expected can improve their writing skill about descriptive paragraph through clustering technique and acquire a new viewpoint of writing as students since this technique provides students to be more creative in thinking. The students can find a new way to solve the problems that they have been facing in process of writing descriptive paragraph. For the teachers, this research is expected to enrich their way in teaching writing skill especially in how to find an idea along with the use of grammar in order to improve students' ability in using grammar to be effective and efficient in writing. This study is also expected to be reference for those who want to conduct similar research. It can enrich people's knowledge that writing skills can be improved using clustering technique in classroom. Hopefully, this study can be used as guidance in teaching writing.

1.6 Definition of Key Term

In order to not cause misunderstanding towards the terms of this study, the operational definition of key terms was presented as follows:

1.6.1 Writing Ability

In this study, writing ability is defined as the ability of the eighth-grade students in SMPN 1 Payangan in academic year 2022/2023 in producing a descriptive paragraph about animal and thing, especially in creating the idea using

clustering technique along with the use of correct grammar in communicating the ideas.

1.6.2 Clustering Technique

Clustering technique is a technique that is applied to the eighth-grade students of SMPN 1 Payangan in academic year 2022/2023 to improve their writing by gaining idea from the general topic in a big circle and develop it into more specific idea using line.

CHAPTER II
THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

Theoretical review is an important part of study. It allows the readers to know and understand the points being discussed in this study. The theoretical review used in this study is collected from relevant sources and experts. The present study is discussed some important points, as follows: 1) Writing ability, 2) Descriptive paragraph, 3) Clustering technique, and 4) Assessing writing.

2.1.1 Writing Ability

There are some people think that writing is a difficult skill to be mastered. For some students writing is just writes some word to be a sentence and arrange it to be a paragraph. They don't realize that writing needs ideas and framework to produce a good work. Besides, writing also needs the use of appropriate grammar. Indeed, writing is not easy because it requires a fairly long process.

Writing needs a long time in its process for the writer to produce a written work because it is complicated and not an instant process. In addition, writing as the last language skill to be acquired due to writing has a little bit difficult level than the other skill. Though, writing is complicated but it is important to be studied by student. This statement is supported by Hyland (2003) which is states that writing is the most significant skill that second language student has to be evolved. Writing helps students to be able to communicate in the written form effectively. Thus, the students will get benefits from learning writing.

Moreover, Klimova (2012) states that writing has some advantages for students. It is supported by Ariana (2010) that writing skills assist students to be independent, apprehensible, fluent and creative in writing. In addition, writing skills assist students to convey their thoughts and deliver message in a form of writing properly. Besides, Chappell (2011) states that the students will gain some benefits such as it helps one's personality, foster communication, build up thinking skills, make logical and persuasive arguments, give a person chance to later reflect on his/her ideas and re-evaluate them, provide and receive feedback, and prepare for school and employment. It indicates that writing skill will form a good character of a student in its process.

Regarding to the benefits that is produced from the writing process, it is not a brief process due to it takes time until find the result. Brown (2001) states that writing is a thinking process. It means students have time to think before doing writing on a piece of paper. Students should think about the idea from the beginning before or during writing. Besides, the students also should pay attention in process of making the content be coherent and unified in a paragraph. It requires a skill in ordering the plot of the idea. It means writing quality can be seen from how students think the ideas and organize it into writing work.

Moreover, writing is a representation of language which is used to express and explain ideas in a textual medium through the use of signs and symbols (Barus et al., 2020). Writing is also called as conveying ideas, facts, and thoughts vividly (Durga & Rao, 2018). It means writing requires students to think creatively and have an ability to convey their ideas appropriately. In writing process, the students should know what ideas to be written before releasing using language on a piece of

paper. As stated by Langan (2005), that writing can be used as a means of communication. Therefore, the choice of language structure will determine the quality of the message to be conveyed to the readers.

In addition, to produce a good quality of writing is an issue. It is supported by Luchini (2003) that writing is challenging task in making decision and choice at the level of ideas, planning, organization, and expression, among others. In order to produce a good writing and meaningful one, the students should be able to make all of those things to be interconnected. One of the basic things should be able to do by the students is being creative in finding idea or make a plan what they want to express before organizing the writing content itself. As the statement is written by Rahmawati (2019) that writing is an activity about find out ideas and set it up through long process called reshaping and revising on a piece of paper. In addition, to organize an idea in writing, the students should know the use of grammar structure. Moreover, in a good writing, the main criteria seem important is accuracy and clear exposition (Hyland, 2003). Students should explain as clear as possible about their meaning to the reader in order to prevent misunderstanding.

Furthermore, Hyland (2003) claims writing is a way of sharing personal meanings and writing courses emphasize the power of the individual to construct his or her own views on a topic. It means the writers may share their personal opinion and experience in the form of writing. It will be different from one's to another. It can be affected by some factors such as point of view, the proficiency in ordering words, and the way to organize the idea based on the topic. However, all students do the same process through the same steps of writing. So that, even the

process is same but the result of writing is still will be affected by those factors above.

In its process, the students have to complete several steps. Steps of writing is roughly divided into four steps (Oshima & Hogue, 2007). The first step is constructing ideas. The first thing needs to be done by students is finding ideas to be executed. Second step is organizing the ideas. In this step students should compile the ideas orderly and coherently. Third, drafting the ideas roughly. Drafting assists students to imagine after the idea is developed into paragraph form. Last, editing rough draft and doing some revisions. Editing and revising inappropriate thing in writing is the last step to make a good writing in spelling, format, etc. or produce a maximal writing. These all steps should be done by the students in writing activity.

This study is focused on the theory by Brown in 2001. The theory is about the students' thinking process in produce a writing. The researcher focuses on the process of writing. It is especially on how students creating ideas, organizing it until produce a good writing in accordance with the criteria of a good writing.

2.1.2 Descriptive Paragraph

Paragraph is collection of several related sentences. Oshima and Hogue (2006) state a paragraph is a group of related sentences that discuss one main idea. A paragraph can be consisted as short as one sentence or as long as ten sentences. It is supported by Zemach and Rumisek (2005) that paragraph is often consists of five until ten sentences long. It depends on the topic being written. However, the most important in a paragraph is it should be explained the main idea clearly.

In developing the main idea in a paragraph, there are functions of sentences. The first sentence states the idea, the point, or the topic. While, the rest of sentences is used to support the first sentences (Oshima & Hogue, 2007). Some paragraphs also have a concluding sentence as a signal the end of the paragraph and wrap the whole paragraph (Oshima & Hogue, 2007). The existence of those sentences in writing paragraph indicates that is a complete paragraph in any genre of text, including descriptive paragraph that is learnt by the eighth-grade students.

Regarding to the definition of descriptive paragraph, it is defined as a paragraph that describes an object. It supported by Wardiman (2008) that descriptive is a writing describes the features of someone, something, or place. Descriptive paragraph describes how something or someone looks or feels (Folse, 2010). Therefore, descriptive paragraph is about how the writer assist the reader can imagine the topic being discussed in it in one paragraph.

Moreover, descriptive writing appeals to the human's five senses (Oshima & Hogue, 2007). It tells how something looks, feels, smells, tastes, and sounds. Description has its formal characteristic, that is order things into ways of knowing the object discussed (Knapp & Watkins, 2005). The organization of descriptive paragraph is should be able to provide information that describe the object as clear as possible. The clearer description is explained in descriptive paragraph it indicates the descriptive paragraph is better. This statement is supported by Oshima and Hogue (2007) that a good description is a word picture; the reader can imagine the person, animal, or thing in his/her mind. It states that a good description is come from a good words organization and follows the rule how to organize it in the structure.

The organization structure of descriptive consists of introduction and description (Wardiman, 2008). Occasionally, the descriptive is closed with conclusion (Putra & Arini, 2021). Introduction is used to introduce about what going to be described. It usually provides general information about the object before it discusses in description more detail. While, in the description, the writer describes the object's feature in detail. At the end of the paragraph, the writer concludes the content in conclusion. There is a pattern usually followed by the writer in writing the description called as spatial order (Oshima & Hogue, 2007). Spatial order is the arrangement of thing's physical location or in space. The use of spatial order pattern in description can assist the reader imagines the object in his/her mind clearly, therefore the goals of descriptive paragraph can be achieved.

Besides, the use of language feature is no less important than the structure organization. Language feature is such a characteristic of a writing in language use to explain the content. Gerot and Wignell in Hartono (2005) state that description has several language features in order to produce a good descriptive paragraph. Those language features are focus on specific participants, use attributive and identifying processes, frequent use of epithets and classifier in nominal group, and use of simple present tense.

In present study, the researcher uses descriptive theory from Folse in 2010 by paying attention paragraph theory from Zemach and Rumisek in 2005. The researcher focuses on writing about animal and thing appearances in between eight to ten sentences. It aims to make the readers can visualize the object on his/her mind well.

2.1.3 Clustering Technique

Clustering technique is a technique usually used in writing process, especially in pre-writing stage. Clustering is also known as diagramming or mapping technique is a technique used generating material for an essay (Langan, 2005). This technique assists writer to explore ideas. It is also supported by Oshima and Hogue (2007) that clustering is another pre-writing technique can be used to get ideas. It means, this technique is used to enrich students' ideas before doing writing.

Clustering technique is useful for the writer to think ideas in a visual way (Langan, 2005). It means the writer can 'see' their ideas as they write on a piece of paper through clustering. Therefore, the writer can be easily to organize their thought into a written work since this technique provide freedom for the writer to write everything related to the main topic in a big size of circle and connect the sub-topic using line to the smaller ones. In other words, clustering allows the writer to write independently the word pops up in their mind.

Moreover, Baroudy (2008) defines clustering technique is one pre-writing technique that enables the writer to select detailed-topics from branches of main topic which is have relationship between them. The writer may write as much as it can be and later select the most potential branches that supported the main topic. The process of clustering techniques is started by writing circled word as major topic in the middle of paper. Then, it can be developed by connecting some minor ideas related to the major topic. Nevertheless, the minor topics, it can also be developed into smaller associated part. Clustering is used as a scaffolding in writing process to lead the writer focuses on the main topic.

In addition, clustering technique also can be used as an outline or list of sub-topics used in writing (Baroudy, 2008). Besides, clustering technique frees the writer from following strictly linear sequence, so that the writer can think more creatively and make new associations (Kalandadze, 2007). Based on the ideas had written by students, it will make writing process easier. Even though the writers write their idea freely but at the end she/he should pay attention to what has written in order to make it logic and be able to organize in a form of a paragraph. Thus, the product of writing can assist readers in understanding the content while reading.

There are several steps should be done by the writer in clustering. According to Oshima and Hogue (2007), the steps should be done by the writer are as follow:

a. Choose a topic and write it in a large circle in the middle of a piece of paper.

b. Think about the topic for one until two minutes; what can be developed. Then, write line and some ideas come in to mind in a smaller circle around the large one.

c. Repeat step 2 to develop the idea in a smaller circle and write new idea in even smaller circles.

d. Look over the group circles. The largest group of circles which is show many relative is the most productive topic to be written.

Based on the step stated by Oshima and Hogue above, these are the example of clustering technique that will be implemented in teaching writing descriptive paragraph, as follows:

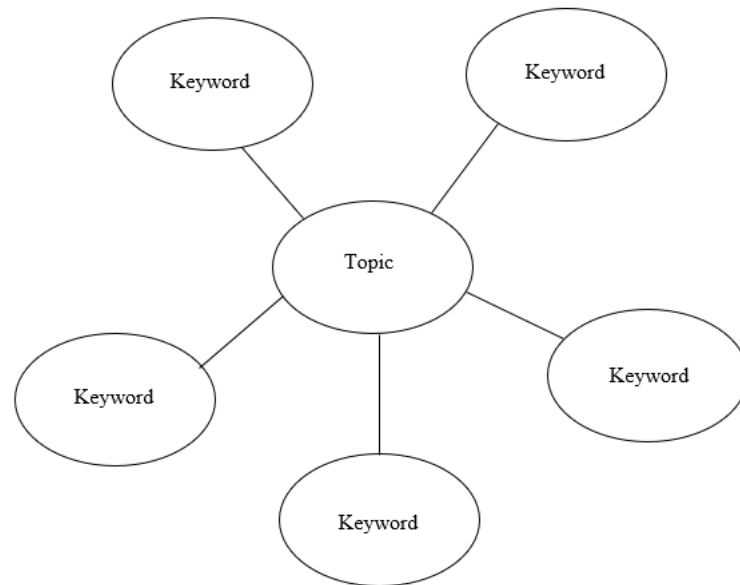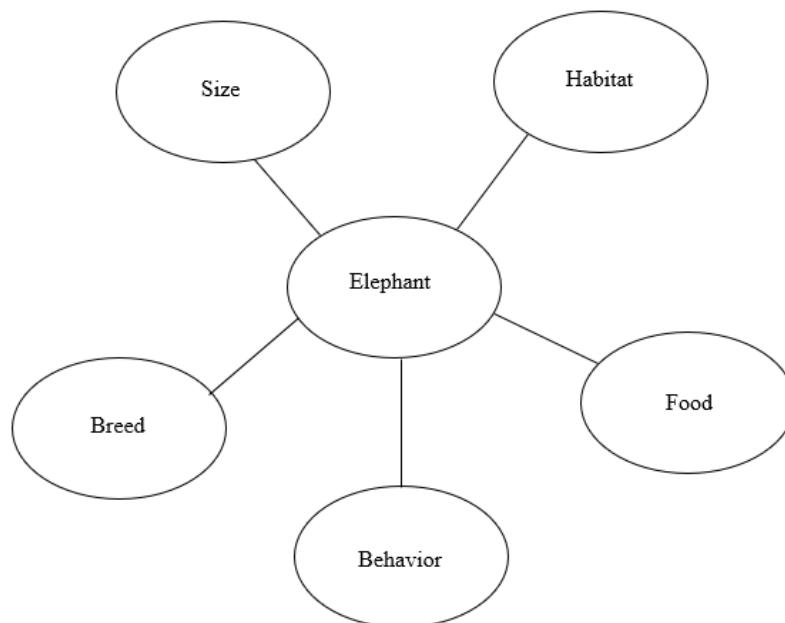Figure 2.1 The Figure of Clustering Technique

Figure 2.2 The Example of Clustering Technique

According to the experts, the researcher concludes that clustering technique
is a pre-writing technique used in writing to group some words to create ideas. In

the present study, the researcher will apply theory from Oshima and Hogue, since the steps are clear and understandable. It will facilitate the researcher to explain the steps of clustering technique to the students clearly.

2.1.4 Assessing Writing

Assessing is an important stage in teaching and learning process. Assessing is can be done in various ways with the aim gathering students' performance information. Assessment refers to variety ways in collecting information from learner about their language ability or achievement (Hyland, 2003). It means assessment is used to measure students' ability during learning process, whether the students have understood and mastered the material or not. Harmer (2001) writes teachers and educational professional spend a lot of time testing, evaluating and assessing students. It is to measure students' abilities whether they are decent to enter a course or institution or to see how well the students getting on.

There are also four main reasons for testing, which give rise to four categories of test (Harmer, 2001). The first type is placement test, this type of test is used in placing students in the right class at school. The second type is diagnostic test, this test is used to find students' difficulties and gaps, so that teacher can do something about them. The third type is progress or achievement tests is designed to measure students' progress in relation to the syllabus they have been following. The last type is proficiency test. It is designed to give general picture of students' knowledge and ability (rather than measure progress). In order to judge the effectiveness of any test, so there are criteria against which the test can be measured, as follows: 1) validity: which is the test actually measuring what it is intended to measure; 2) reliability: which is the test should provide consistent result.

Assessment has two functions in common, formative and summative (Brown, 2004). Formative assessment is useful in the process of forming students' competencies and skills in order to assist their growth process keep going. Formative test is mostly used in classroom assessment by teacher. While, summative assessment is aimed to measure, or summarize, what students have grasped, and typically does at the end of a course or unit instruction. Summative assessment does not affect the learning process directly, but it often affects decision that might have consequence for students in learning.

However, assessing writing is no simple task (Brown, 2004). In assessing students' writing ability, teacher needs clear objective or criterion. It is supported by Coffin, et al (2002) that in assessing writing, teacher focuses on both the content and the form of the writing, that is the language used, the text structure, the construction of argument, grammar and punctuation. Moreover, Oshima and Hogue (2007) states scoring rubric of writing assess several criteria, there are format, punctuation and mechanics, content, organization, grammar and sentence structure. Those aspects will provide a clear direction of assessment. Besides, those criteria in assessing students' writing provides objective assessment what is accordance to students' writing. In addition, clear criteria assist teacher to provide score easily.

In relation to this study, the students' writing ability will be measured through formative test, specifically using writing test of descriptive paragraph by constructing paragraph in theme about the topic provided. It will contain instruction to write descriptive paragraph and will be provided some topics of person, something, and thing will be described. The researcher will use scoring rubric that adapted from Oshima and Hogue (2007).

2.2 Empirical Review

Empirical review is a review obtained from research that has been done previously by other researchers. It is also as a way to acquire information related to present study, whether the study is success or not at the end of the research based on the results. The information that is obtained will be used as a guidance to make the present study much better. In the present study, the researcher uses two relevant previous studies.

The first study used as empirical review was entitled "The Use of Clustering Technique to Improve Students Writing Ability on Descriptive Text at the Eighth Grade of SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Metro" written by Mardiana in 2018. The objective of this study was to know whether using clustering technique can improve students' writing ability on descriptive text and students learning activity at the eighth graders of SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Metro. Based on the result of the study, it showed that clustering technique had positive role in improving students writing ability on descriptive text. There was writing ability improvement showed by score average in pre-test which improved in post-test I and post-test II. It meant the study was carried out successfully.

Even though, the study conducted by Mardiana in 2018 still makes confused. The researcher did not tell the steps of using clustering technique clearly. The researcher only told the steps generally without explained its step by step specifically. Besides, the instrument did not tell the students about the writing criteria that would be assessed. It made the students were difficult to write since they did not know what should be included in their writing.

The other study was from Ratri (2019) which is entitled "Increasing Students' Skill to Write Descriptive Paragraph at the Eight Grade Students of SMPN 1 UPT Patampanua through Clustering Technique". This study was purposed to find out whether clustering technique is able to increase students' skill to write descriptive paragraph. The study conducted using pre-experimental design with pre-test and post-test. The result of this study there was improvement of students' writing skill. It could be seen on the students score improvement from the pre-test to post-test.

The study conducted by Ratri in 2019 was good, since the researcher had given clear explanation of steps in clustering technique. Therefore, the students could imagine what they should do using clustering technique. However, this study did not give the example of the clustering diagram. Besides, it also did not tell the students about the writing criteria that would be assessed as the first study written by Mardiana in 2018.

From those two studies, it can be concluded that the use of clustering technique in improving writing ability was effective and it can improve students writing ability. For the present study, the researcher provides clear steps of clustering technique completed with example. Besides, the criteria were included in worksheet that is given to the students.