CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

As a productive skill, writing is considered a complex activity as it involves multiple elements such as vocabulary, grammar, and paragraph organization. It also requires knowledge of writing mechanics including punctuation, capitalization, spelling, unity, coherence, and organization to produce a coherent and effective piece of writing. According to Maba (2023), writing is a demanding task that requires a high level of concentration. Despite its challenges, writing plays a significant role in enhancing individuals' cognitive processes, particularly in organizing ideas, summarizing, and critically evaluating information (Agustin et al., 2021). Furthermore, writing is one of four language abilities that should be mastered by the students to express their ideas, feeling, and suggestion that could be understood by others in written forms. (Savitri et al., 2022).

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As stated by Wallace et al. (2004), generating words demands a number of delicate skills that are challenging to acquire all at once. This suggests that in order to foster their thoughts in writing, students must adhere to specific procedures. Drafting, concept organization, and text composition based on drafts are some of these phases. However, due to a lack of comprehending, students may find it challenging to write appropriately during the educational process. Since writing is the first step in communicating information, it can be very difficult. Students face a number of challenges while they write, including coming up with coherent ideas, organizing their ideas logically, and properly communicating their views.

Writing descriptive paragraphs and comprehending their context, which required identifying and describing things, were the main goals of the junior high school curriculum, particularly for students in the seventh-grade. However, seventh-grade students realities deviated from requirements, based on observations collected at SMPN 2 Kuta Utara. When instructed to write a descriptive paragraph, students frequently relied on replicating the teacher's examples rather than formulating their own original ideas. This suggested that they struggled to creatively arrange their ideas in order to produce descriptive paragraphs and construct sentences in the simple present tense, which was frequently used in descriptive paragraphs.

The teacher ought to choose a fascinating topic to tackle this issue. Students may be inspired to write about anything which motivates them and have no hesitation expressing their ideas in writing. One way to get students wondering throughout a piece of writing is to use the clustering technique. Another brainstorming practice that may be utilized to get insights for writing is the clustering technique, claims Armytasari (2023). This method is sometimes referred to as mapping or diagramming. Additionally, the clustering strategy might stimulate students' thoughts while prompting them to write. For the prewriting phase of the writing process, this method is an effective tool. Lines, boxes, arrows, and circles are used in the clustering approach to illustrate the causal connections between the concepts and specifics. Muhyiddin Aziz et al. (2024) explain that in clustering, students write a topic in the middle of a piece of paper, then write ideas that are suggested by the theme surrounding it. They connect these ideas to the topic by using lines and their subtopics. Thus, this method can assist students in structuring

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and accelerating their thoughts before they transform into paragraphs. Therefore, the researcher is interested in conducting research to improve students' writing skills, especially in writing descriptive paragraphs at SMPN 2 Kuta Utara in the academic year 2025/2026.

1.2 Research Problem

Due to several challenges the student encountered, the learning aim could not be fully achieved because writing was thought to be the most challenging ability to acquire while learning English. In writing assignments, the researcher discovered that the majority of students struggled to come up with ideas and utilized poor sentence structure, which left them perplexed and unwilling to effectively express their viewpoints clearly. Referring to the background of the study above, the researcher recommended Clustering Technique, which could stimulate students to think creatively to convey an idea and improve their grammar to communicate the ideas. The research problem of this study can be formulated as follows: Can writing skill of the seventh-grade students of SMPN 2 Kuta Utara in the academic year 2025/2026 be improved through Clustering Technique?

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1.3 Objective of the Study

The object of the study is the goal that the research intends to accomplish once the study is carried out. By guiding students in effectively expressing their thoughts and avoiding confusion when writing in English, this study aims to improve their writing abilities. It investigates an appropriate technique which encourages efficient and organized writing in order to accomplish this. The goal of the current study was to provide a response to the predetermined research topic. Thus, the main objective of this study was to determine whether writing skill of the

seventh-grade students of SMPN 2 Kuta Utara in the academic year 2025/2026 can be improved through Clustering Technique.

1.4 Limitation of the Study

Limiting the research is crucial to preventing this complex discussion. This study will especially use Clustering Techniques to improve the writing skills of the seventh-grade students of SMPN 2 Kuta Utara in the academic year 2025/2026, given the complexity and wide range of writing skill development. By emphasizing on a particular approach in the field of writing teaching, the study may examine its efficacy in further detail and offer useful advice to teachers. This focused method advances instructional tactics in language education by allowing a more thorough analysis of the effect of Clustering Techniques on students' writing skills.

According to the Merdeka curriculum of the school, the researcher focused on Chapter III Unit 3. It was about describing My sweet house. Thus, the present study focused on writing and presenting elements in Phase D. Therefore, writing skills in this study focused on creating descriptive paragraphs that describe a place. Besides, the paragraph should have a complete generic structure, such as identification, description, and conclusion. Furthermore, it should fulfil the scoring rubric criteria by Oshima and Hogue (2007), which focused on format, punctuation and mechanics, content, organization, and grammar and sentence structure. Furthermore, they should be able to write a good descriptive paragraph that fulfils the criteria based on the aforementioned scoring rubric.

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1.5 Significance of the Study

The primary objective of the study is to further develop the writing skills of SMPN 2 Kuta Utara students in the seventh grade through utilizing the Clustering

Technique. It is anticipated that the study's findings would have theoretical and applied implications for education. It is anticipated that the Clustering Technique could assist students write better both conceptually and practically. To ensure that the current study will have a positive effect, theoretical and practical importance are both crucial. Furthermore, the properly provided explanation might be strengthened and supported by theoretical and practical findings. The following concisely describes the importance of the current study.

Theoretically, this study could be utilized as a guide for expanding information and establishing widespread opinions about how to improve writing skills. The results of this study should demonstrate that the Clustering Technique is an advantageous instrument for improving writing skills. Researchers or linguists might leverage it to look more closely at how language acquisition develops writing skills. Additionally, the teacher can consider this study as a guide for choosing an efficient writing instruction method, particularly for descriptive paragraphs. By using the Clustering Technique as a teaching method, it is also intended that the research's findings would serve as a guide for elevating the general level of writing written by SMPN 2 Kuta Utara students in the 2025/2026 academic year.

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Practically, this research is hoped to provide new insights and benefits for teachers, students, and other researchers. It is intended that this research will help teachers optimize the way they teach writing skills, particularly in terms of coming up with ideas and requiring the use of grammar to help students become more proficient and efficient writers. The results of the study can enhance students' understanding that the Clustering Technique can be implemented in the classroom to enhance writing skills. It is predicted that this study will serve as a guide for

writing instruction. Through the use of clustering techniques, students should be able to enhance their paragraph description writing abilities and get creative writing viewpoints.

1.6 Definition of Key Term

In research, key terms are frequently utilized words. To provide readers an in-depth understanding of the subject while minimizing any misconceptions regarding the study, it is essential to define these important terminologies. The following keywords have been discovered by the present study's researchers in this context and are directly relevant to their work. The following is an explanation of these crucial terms:

1.6.1 Writing Skill

Writing skill in the present study is operationally defined as the ability of the seventh-grade students in SMPN 2 Kuta Utara in the academic year 2025/2026 to construct a short and simple descriptive paragraph that consists of 6-12 sentences and has a complete generic structure: identification, description, and conclusion.

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1.6.2 Clustering Technique

Clustering Technique is a technique that would be used to improve the writing skill of the seventh-grade students of SMPN 2 Kuta Utara. Clustering Technique is used to help students develop ideas. The teacher provides a main topic related to the lesson about descriptive text, and asks the students to write the topic in the large circle in the middle of paper. They should then draw a line to determine the subtopic described in the small circle. The subtopic created can produce other ideas in the next circle; the subtopic must relate to the main topic, making it easier for students to create descriptive paragraphs according to the ideas created.

CHAPTER II
THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

Theoretical review is a concept that plays a crucial role within any study as it helps the readers familiarize with the overall core theme of the manuscript. In this paper, the theoretical survey is a result of seminal works and recommendations that relate to the given theme. This method establishes a robust basis for the research findings and conclusions. By thoroughly reviewing these points, the study aims to offer valuable insights and practical applications. Consequently, readers will be better equipped to grasp the study's implications and relevance. The present study examines several important related issues with the current research: 1) Writing skill, 2) Descriptive paragraph, 3) Clustering Technique, and 4) Writing assessment.

2.1.1 Writing Skill

Writing is one of the four essential language skills that must be mastered by students in learning a foreign language. As a productive skill, writing plays a vital role in academic and real-life communication. In other words, writing is not only an individual activity but also a social interaction that reflects cultural values and relationships between people (Hyland, 2022). Writing enables students to express their ideas, feelings, and experiences through organized language that comes from their surroundings. It helps them engage with others meaningfully, both personally and academically. It means that writing should be taught in a way that connects with students' realities and personal expression.

In addition, writing also demands coherence and cohesion in order to be effective and understandable. According to Astiantih and Akfan (2023), coherent

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writing presents ideas logically, while cohesive writing uses proper linguistic elements to connect those ideas. Writing has several components: grammar, vocabulary, handwriting, spelling, punctuation, and written content. Skills are needed to organize the flow ideas. Oshima and Hogue (2007) also state that a paragraph must have unity and be organized clearly to support the main idea. These aspects help students deliver messages that are easy to follow and make sense to the readers. In writing, using these components is very important because in creating a good work of writing, the process and content of the writing are necessary to be meaningful and readable by readers.

Oshima and Hogue (2007) state writing is never a one-step action. The process of writing has roughly four steps: creating ideas, organizing ideas, writing a rough draft, and polishing the draft by editing it and making revisions. It means that writing is a complicated process that can be done quickly because the writer should take steps to make a good writing. Similarly, Brown (2004) argues that writing is a form of thinking, where students reflect on and shape their ideas before expressing them in written form. This means students must go through each step carefully to produce well-developed compositions. Moreover, writing requires time and practice to be done effectively. Writers cannot simply produce high-quality paragraphs without planning and revision. As a result, students need to follow these steps consistently to improve their writing outcomes.

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For some beginner students, writing requires writing a few words and forming a paragraph. They do not realize that writing skills require ideas and creativity to produce good and correct sentences or paragraphs. Apart from that, writing also requires creativity and critical thinking. According to Urquhart and

McIver (2005), writing allows students to explore ideas, organize thoughts, and reflect on different perspectives. This is supported by Graham et al. (2006), who explain that writing is a crucial skill for communicating clearly and effectively in written form. Moreover, writing encourages students to evaluate information and express their thoughts independently. Teachers should guide students to become more confident in exploring and developing their ideas. Therefore, Writing has the benefit of training the students to show their ideas to other people logically. It can strengthen the ideas and thoughts and also allow them to reflect better than if they remained involve in their heads. (Joni et al., 2022)

Many students find writing to be one of the most challenging language skills. According to Hyland (2003), writing requires both accuracy and creativity to ensure that the message is conveyed correctly. Students often struggle with limited vocabulary, grammatical errors, and organizing their ideas into structured paragraphs. Furthermore, they may be unsure about how to begin their writing or how to conclude it properly. These difficulties make it important for teachers to provide appropriate support and guidance. Writing instruction should help students overcome their fears and express their ideas with confidence.

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In support of this, writing is also a way for individuals to express personal meaning and perspectives. According to Ur (1991), writing is a medium to express ideas, thoughts, and opinions. Hyland (2003) states that students should be encouraged to develop their voice in writing and connect their experiences to the topic. This helps them build meaningful and authentic paragraphs. In line with that, effective writing comes from a process of critical thinking and revision (Brown, 2004). Students need to reflect on what they write and be willing to improve it.

Writing that comes from personal experience can be more impactful and engaging for the reader.

Furthermore, writing is not something that can be mastered instantly. According to Oshima and Hogue (2006), students need to follow specific steps: prewriting, organizing, drafting, revising, and editing. These steps help students manage their ideas and produce well-organized texts. Following this process allows them to write with better structure and clarity. It also helps them recognize and correct mistakes before submitting their work. By practicing each step regularly, students can improve both their writing fluency and accuracy (Luchini, 2003). Teachers must ensure that students understand and apply these stages properly in their learning process.

In conclusion, writing is an activity that writers do to express their ideas in written text, which have to be coherent and cohesive in particular writing and make sense. In producing good writing, the writer needs to consider the steps in writing. To make a good writing product, the writer should follow the writing process because writing is a complex skill. Based on some theories that have already been mentioned above, the researcher intended to use the theory from Oshima and Hogue (2007), which explains that writing has roughly four steps that writers must follow to achieve good writing. They are prewriting, organizing, writing, revising, and editing. These steps should be procedurally conducted to produce a well-written paragraph. The theory that was used was relevant to the present study because it was about improving the students' writing ability.

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2.1.2 Descriptive Paragraph

Students are expected to make written products since writing is an essential skill that should be mastered. A written product that is meant, in this case, is a paragraph. The paragraph is a collection of several related sentences. Oshima and Hogue (2007) state a section is a group of related sentences that discuss one main idea. A paragraph can be as short as one sentence or as long as ten sentences. It is supported by Mccarthy and Ahmed (2022), who state that a paragraph often consists of five to ten sentences long. It depends on the topic being written. However, the most important thing in a section is to clearly explain the main idea. Therefore, when the writers can arrange the paragraphs appropriately and clearly, the readers will easily understand what the writers will tell the readers through their writing.

A paragraph is a group of sentences that a writer develops about an object. According to Bryan (2023), a paragraph comprises about 6 - 12 sentences about one topic. Every sentence in a strong paragraph is about the same topic. A paragraph may give information, give an opinion, explain something, and tell a short story. A paragraph is a group of related statements the writer develops about a subject (Oshima & Hogue, 2006). In making descriptive paragraphs, there are several arrangements, such as an introduction and description, which are closed with a conclusion at the end of the paragraph. The introduction usually contains general information about the topic discussed before discussing it in a more detailed description. In the report, the author explains the characteristics of the object in detail. At the end of the paragraph, the writer will conclude that the results obtained from the contents of the description are shorter. Usually, the third thing above is a mandatory layout for writers to follow. They can make it easier for the readers to understand the contents clearly so the purpose of the paragraph can be achieved.

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In the process of developing the main idea of a paragraph, there are several sentence functions. The first sentence is to state the idea, purpose, or topic. At the same time, the remaining sentences are used to support the first sentence (Oshima & Hogue, 2007). Moreover, the other sentences in the descriptive paragraph are called supporting sentences. It gives more information about the topic, specific details, and an explanation. A paragraph will also have several closing sentences to end a piece of writing or mark that the paragraph is finished. These sentences show that the paragraph is complete in any text genre, including descriptive paragraphs studied by the classes of the seventh-grade students.

A descriptive paragraph is a paragraph that describes a person or object. The descriptions include its shape, characteristics, and other numbers. The definition of a descriptive paragraph is a paragraph that explains an object. A descriptive paragraph is writing that describes a person, object, or place. According to Juzwiak (2009), two types of words are considered descriptive: adverbs and adjectives. Those words play a vital role in modifying sentences so the readers can distinguish the details in which they can simultaneously see, feel, hear, and taste what is described in the paragraph. Descriptive paragraphs are the writer's way of helping readers imagine the topics that are being discussed in one paragraph. Therefore, descriptive paragraphs must have a clear purpose and also have a clear structure so that readers can easily understand the writing they are reading.

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In addition, descriptive writing appeals to students' five senses (Oshima & Hogue, 2007). It tells about something seen, felt, smelled, and heard. Descriptions have a moral nature, namely ordering or organizing something to discover the object to be discussed (Knapp & Watkins, 2005). The preparation of description

paragraphs must be able to provide information that describes the object as clearly as possible. This clear explanation is intended to explain a good paragraph. This statement is supported by Oshima and Hogue (2007), who state that a good description is a picture of a word, and the readers can imagine the object. It is stated that a good description comes from a good grouping of words and following the rules of how to group them in the correct structure of a good descriptive paragraph.

Moreover, there are three points of descriptive organization: introduction, body paragraph, and conclusion (Savage & Mayer, 2005). According to Evans (2000), the generic structure of a descriptive paragraph is an introduction, main body, and conclusion to support the theory above. In the introduction, the writers talk about location, population, and reason. The main point tells the general information of the paragraph, whether it is about describing a place, person, thing, or animal. The main body is about a specific description. If it is about describing a person, it can be their physical appearance, characteristics, hobby, habit, etc. The last part is a conclusion. It can express the writer feels, comments, or sometimes there will be a recommendation. A pattern is followed to create a paragraph, and it is called spatial order (Oshima & Hogue, 2007). Spatial planning is the physical arrangement of an object or space. Using spatial regularity patterns will help the writers and assist the readers in clearly imagining the objects in their minds.

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According to Oshima and Hogue (2007), a descriptive paragraph tells how something looks, feels, smells, and sounds. A good descriptive paragraph is a word picture, and the readers can imagine that object, place, or person in their mind. The more details the writers include in a descriptive paragraph, the more clearly the readers would imagine what the writers are describing. The details should appeal to

the five senses. They should tell the readers how something looks, smells, sounds, feels, and tastes. They can write about colors, sizes, shapes, noises, and textures. The students would describe it as clearly as possible to make the readers imagine it easily, which is the key to writing a descriptive paragraph.

Based on the statements above, a descriptive paragraph is a paragraph that describes a person, thing, animal, or place, which consists of a generic structure. Compiling paragraph descriptions must provide clear information so the reader can easily understand the writing. Regarding the theory method, the researchers used the theory from (Zemach & Rumisek, 2005) which states that a descriptive paragraph is how a person, thing, animal, or place looks or feels and is described by using adjectives. Moreover, the researcher used the theory of (Zemach & Islam, 2005), which state that a paragraph is a group of about 6 - 12 sentences about one topic. Those theories could be used as a guide relevant to the present research.

2.1.3 Clustering Technique

Clustering is a very effective tool for the pre-writing stage of the writing process. This was introduced by Rico (2000) in his book Writing the Natural Way. Clustering is a generative, open, non-linear arrangement of ideas, events, and feelings. This is a way of mapping the interior landscape as it emerges. It is based on prior knowledge of how both sides of the brain process the information. They process information in very different ways. In clustering, the writer uses lines, boxes, arrows, and circles to show relationships among the ideas and details that occur in the writing. From the explanation above, it can be said that clustering or mapping is a way to draw out our ideas like a spider's web. The main idea is in the middle, and the students expand their thinking outward.

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Clustering or word mapping is a pre-writing technique for creating a framework of ideas. In grouping, the writers use the main topic, which is placed in the middle of the page, and then note everything necessary and unnecessary. Clustering is also called an ideas-unlocking technique for writing and must be done quickly and uncritically. Zemach and Islam (2005) state that word maps are another kind of brainstorming. Clustering frees writers from following a strict linear order. This allows writers to think more creatively and create new ideas. To use this technique, the writers can start with a topic circled in the middle of the sheet of paper, then draw a line out of the circle and write down ideas related to the topic. In this way, the writers can easily organize their thoughts into a written work. This technique allows the writers to write everything related to the main topic in large circles and connect subtopics using lines to smaller subtopics.

Clustering Technique is usually used in writing, especially in pre-writing. Clustering, also known as diagramming or mapping technique, is used to generate material for an essay (Langan, 2005). This technique assists the writers in exploring ideas. It supports Oshima and Hogue (2007) who claim that clustering is another pre-writing technique that can be used to get ideas. This technique is used to enrich students' ideas before writing. Clustering is also called Cluster mapping or idea weaving. This is a great way to show connections between ideas. Cluster mapping is also part of the idea generation, so students will know exactly how to group their ideas once they are ready to write. To start, the writers write the topic in the middle of the page and circle it. Then, the writers can move in one of two directions.

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Langan (2005) states that the Clustering Technique also known as diagramming or mapping, is another strategy that can be used to generate material

of paper. Clustering Technique begins by writing the circled word as the main topic in the middle of the paper. Then, it can be developed by connecting ideas related to the main issues. However, minor cases can also be developed into smaller sections. Clustering is used as scaffolding in the writing process to direct the writers to focus on the main topic. This technique can also free writers from strict linearity to express their creativity within themselves. It will make it easier for writers. Even though the writers write down their ideas freely, in the end, they must pay attention to the main topic so the composition becomes more organized and can be formed in paragraphs. Thus, the results can help readers understand content while reading.

Clustering Technique is useful for writers to provide ideas visually (Langan, 2005). This means that the writers can see their ideas written on a piece of paper through clustering. In this way, they can easily organize their thoughts into writing because this technique makes it a habit for them to write ideas related to the main topic circled with a large circle and connect it to sub-topics circled with a small circle, in the sense of clustering the writers' thoughts to write independently the words that arise in their mind. There are several benefits to clustering. Clustering helps writers organize and generate ideas from main topics, making it easier to rearrange thoughts early on. It assists in focusing on a stimulus to create a mental picture. This quick and significant process, taking just seconds to minutes, uses free association to form diverse structures for writing based on personal experiences.

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Baroudy (2008) defines Clustering Technique as a pre-writing technique that helps students choose detailed topics from main topic branches that have a relationship between these topics. The author can write as much as possible and ultimately choose a branch that can become the main topic. Clustering Technique

begins by writing a word circled in the middle to indicate the main topic. Then, it can be developed by connecting many sub-topics with small circles. However, small topics can be developed into parts of these small sub-topics. Clustering is used as scaffolding in the writing process to direct the writer to focus on the main topic, where the author will focus on the main topic to provide ideas for other sub-topics.

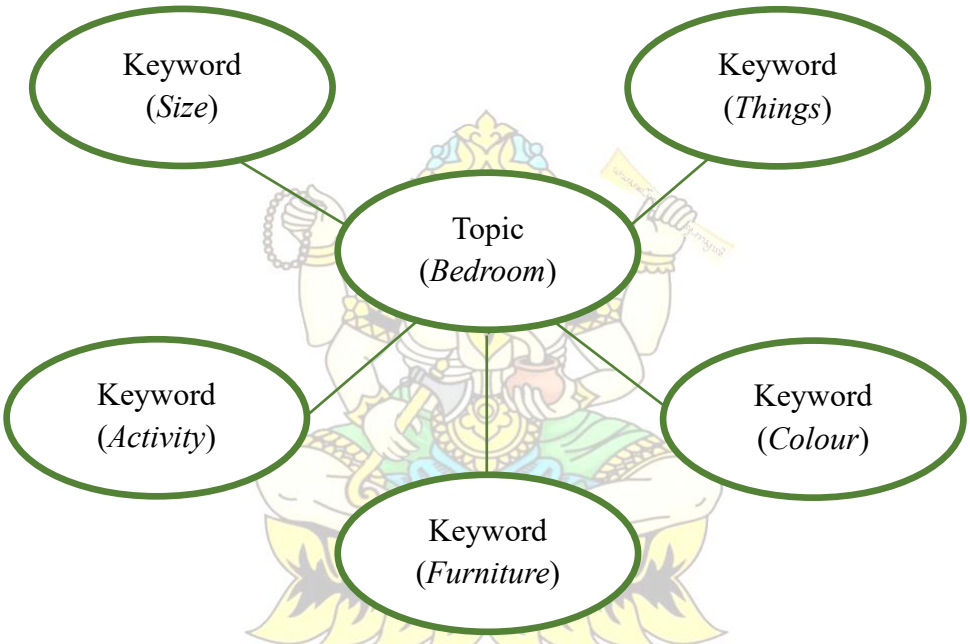
In this study, the researcher applied Clustering Techniques at the pre-writing stage during the writing process because that was what the researcher was investigating, the students were assigned to practice Clustering Technique at the pre-writing stage during the writing process, while they were writing. It was hoped that this experience would lead them to think that writing was a complex skill that must be acquired through several processes. The researchers applied the theory of Oshima and Hogue (2007) because the steps were clear and easy to understand. This would make it easier for the researcher to explain the steps of Clustering Technique. The writer should do several things in clustering. The steps of applying Clustering Technique were carefully and procedurally adapted from Oshima and Hogue (2007). The steps of Clustering Technique are as follows:

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1. The teacher presents a topic and asks the students to write it in a large circle in the middle of the paper.
2. The teacher asks them to think about the topic for one or two minutes and write each new idea that comes into their minds in smaller circles around the large circle.
3. The teacher asks them to think about the idea in each smaller circle for one or two minutes and write each new idea in even smaller circles.

4. The teacher asks them to review the group circles and cluster their ideas.
5. The teacher asks them to write a good descriptive paragraph based on the cluster.

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



Graph 2.1 The Example of Clustering Technique

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Although the Clustering Technique offers various advantages in the pre-writing stage, its implementation may also present several challenges in the writing classroom. Langan (2005) suggests that during the clustering process, students may produce an excessive number of ideas, which can make it difficult for them to maintain focus on the main topic. As a result, some ideas generated may be less relevant and require further guidance to be properly organized. In addition, Oshima and Hogue (2007) explain that students may experience confusion when arranging their ideas into meaningful relationships if clear instructions and examples are not

provided by the teacher. The non-linear nature of clustering, while encouraging creativity, may also be challenging for students who are accustomed to more structured and linear writing approaches. Furthermore, clustering can be time-consuming, particularly for students who are not familiar with brainstorming or pre-writing techniques. Therefore, effective teacher guidance, clear modelling, and sufficient practice are essential to ensure that the Clustering Technique can be applied successfully and support students in developing organized and coherent written texts.

Despite the challenges discussed above, based on qualified viewpoints, the researcher concludes that clustering is an efficient technique for accurately organizing ideas prior to writing. This method creates coherent information by grouping comparable words or thoughts collectively to create mental connections. Because Oshima and Hogue's procedures are straightforward and easy to comprehend, the researcher will employ their theory in this study. With this method, students will find it easier to figure out clustering and learn how to generate ideas, arrange ideas logically, and compose well-structured essays. Students can develop their writing abilities, investigate various viewpoints, and make creative connections by employing this approach. Students can learn how to use clustering to improve their academic writing while gaining academic accomplishment through instruction and actual practice.

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2.1.4 Assessing Writing

In the teaching-learning process, assessment is very important for students' achievement of the material during the teaching-writing process. Assessment is an ongoing process that encompasses a much wider domain. Whenever students

respond to a question, offer a comment, or try out a new word or structure, the teacher subconsciously assesses the students' performances (Brown 2004). Assessment is also an evaluation. In addition, a teacher should assess students based on objective evaluation, not subjective. In the classroom, the teacher is, therefore, deeply involved in the assessment and care about the outcomes. There is nothing distant or neutral about intervening in the lives of learners.

Furthermore, Harmer (2001) state that assessment is carried out to collect information on learners' language proficiency and achievement that can be used by the stakeholders in language learning programs for various purposes of teaching and learning. Daily student learning assessment is unquestionably one of the teachers' most important, complex, demanding tasks. Teachers are the principal agents of assessments, so they need to ensure the quality of classroom assessment practices and use them in ways that best support the students learning. Assessment activity can be carried out between a teacher and students or a group of students. Besides, the activities include classroom tests and daily assessments. It is called an umbrella term, which includes daily classroom assessment practices and large-scale testing that is externally designed and administered to students. Being successful in an external, large-scale context is one of students' learning goals.

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In addition, assessment is an important stage in the teaching and learning process. Setting can be done in various ways to gather information on student performance. In addition, Brown (2004) states that assessment is a popular and sometimes misunderstood term in the current educational practice. Assessment is an ongoing process that encompasses a much wider domain. This means that assessment measures students' abilities during the learning or teaching and learning

process, whether students have understood the material. It is an inseparable part of the teaching and learning process. Professional teachers spend a long-time testing and evaluating students. It aims to measure their ability, whether they are eligible to enter a course or to see how good the progress and development of students are.

Testers give rise to the four test categories (Harmer, 2001). The first type is a placement test, which is given to students who will enter an institution to determine the placement of students' skill levels in a particular field so that they can get groups according to the abilities of students. The second type is a diagnostic test, which helps students deal with difficulties so that they discover what difficulties they are experiencing. The teacher can help students solve these difficulties. The third type of progress test aims to measure whether students understand the material that has been given, which is usually related to the syllabus they have followed. The last type is an activity that evaluates students regarding the material provided so that the teacher can give grades according to the results obtained by students at the end of the teaching and learning process.

Assessing writing is not an easy thing for a teacher to do. Teachers need clear objectives or criteria to assess students' writing abilities. In assessing writing, the teacher focuses on the content and form: language use, test structure, argument construction, grammar, and punctuation. In addition, the writing rubric assessment assessed several criteria, namely format, punctuation, mechanics, content, organization, and grammar and sentence structure. These aspects will provide a clear direction for the assessment. In addition, the criteria for assessing student writing provide an objective assessment of what is appropriate for student writing. Clear scoring criteria help teachers to score easily.

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Brown (2004) states that writing assessments are not simple tasks that assess students' writing ability. Usually, to be clear about objectives or criteria such as handwriting ability, correct spelling, writing grammatically correct sentences, paragraph construction, or logical development of a main idea. These and more are possible objectives, and each objective can be assessed through various tasks. A similar statement is supported by Coffin et al. (2005), who state that in assessing writing, lectures focus on both the content and the form of the writing, which is the language used, the text structure, the construction of argument, grammar, and punctuation. Thus, giving feedback at the end of the assessment is very important to make students know their mistakes when constructing descriptive paragraphs.

There are four main reasons for testers, which give rise to four categories of testing (Harmer, 2001). The first type is a placement test, which places students in classes according to their abilities. The second type is a diagnostic test; this test is used to find difficulties found by students so that teachers can help overcome these difficulties. The third type of progress or achievement test is designed to measure students' understanding of material related to the syllabus they have followed. The last type is the professional test, designed to give students a general overview of their knowledge and abilities. To assess the accuracy of a test, there are criteria used to measure the test. These criteria are validity, the test measures what it is intended to measure, and reliability, namely, a test that provides consistent results.

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Research has two similar functions: formative and summative (Brown, 2004). Formative assessment is useful in student competence and skills to help the growth process as it progresses. Formative tests are also used to help teachers assess how far students' abilities are at the start of learning. Formative tests are widely

used by teachers in classroom assessment. At the same time, summative tests are intended to measure or summarize students' abilities regarding the material taught and are usually carried out at the end of a teaching unit. Summative assessment does not directly influence the learning process but often influences decisions that may affect students' learning. Teachers will use summative tests at the end of the semester to measure whether students' abilities have developed.

In connection with this research, the researcher felt it necessary to assess students' writing skills by constructing paragraphs as a test in selecting or designing written tests. The researcher planned to use two tests, namely pre-test and post-test. The researcher asked the students to write descriptive paragraphs based on the examples. The paragraph contained instructions for writing descriptive paragraphs and would be given several topics about a person, thing, and object that would be described. This researcher would use a scoring rubric adapted from (Oshima & Hogue, 2007). Paragraphs should consist of 6 - 12 sentences; they should remember these criteria to create a well-written paragraph. In this way, students would try to compose a well-constructed paragraph based on these criteria.

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2.2 Empirical Review

An empirical review is a review obtained from research that has been done previously by other researchers. It offers data on the results and findings of previous studies, which can direct and enhance the current research. In order to figure out whether the Clustering Technique could effectively improve students' writing abilities, the researcher in this study examined two relevant studies. The following are the relevant studies the researcher has reviewed as an empirical review.

The first empirical study, was conducted by Septiari (2023) entitled "The Use of Clustering Technique in Improving Writing Ability of the Eighth-grade Students of SMPN 1 Payangan in Academic Year 2022/2023." This research aimed to find out whether Clustering Technique can improve students' skills in writing descriptive paragraphs. Clustering was a technique students could use to make a descriptive paragraph with their ideas. The result of this study showed the improvement of students' writing skills. It could be seen in the progress of the students' scores from the pre-test to post-tests. Besides, they responded positively to the implementation of the technique. This can be seen in the questionnaire results delivered.

Another study was conducted by Lestari et al. (2022) entitled “Utilizing Clustering Technique to Enhance Students’ English Writing Performance.” This research aimed to investigate the effectiveness of the clustering technique in improving students’ English writing skills. The study was conducted using a quantitative approach with pre-test and post-test to measure students’ performance before and after the treatment. In addition to the tests, the researcher also used observations and interviews to collect supporting data regarding students’ engagement and motivation. The results showed a notable improvement in the students’ writing performance after being taught using the clustering technique. This indicates that clustering effectively helps students generate and organize their ideas in writing.

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Both of the previous researchers found that using Clustering Technique could effectively improve students' writing abilities. Their ability to organize the descriptive paragraph improved significantly, and they could write a complete

paragraph. This showed that Clustering Technique could effectively improve students' writing skills in paragraphs or texts. Both researchers used the theory of Clustering Technique proposed by Oshima and Hogue (2006). They have clearly mentioned the steps in applying Clustering Technique in the theoretical review. However, in the steps, they both described the general steps without any step-by-step explanations. They did not clearly mention in their lesson planning when the students should cluster the ideas already written down. It would confuse students when developing their ideas in the form of paragraphs. As a result, in the current research, the researcher would clearly state the procedural steps of Clustering Technique implementation in the teaching modules. The steps would be aligned with the theoretical concepts proposed by (Oshima & Hogue, 2006). Thus, it would be expected that procedural steps of implementing Clustering Technique would help the students organize and enrich their paragraphs, especially descriptive paragraphs. It would, of course, affect their writing achievements.

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