

# THE USE OF CONCEPT MAP STRATEGY IN IMPROVING STUDENTS' ABILITY IN COMPOSING DESCRIPTIVE TEXT

SYAMSUL RIZAL  
JUNIARTI

**Abstrak:** Tujuan dari penelitian ini untuk meningkatkan kemampuan siswa dalam menulis deskriptif teks menggunakan strategi peta konsep di SMPN 1 Taba Penanjung. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian tindakan kelas. Sample dari penelitian ini adalah siswa kelas VIIID di SMPN 1 Taba Penanjung yang terdiri dari 30 siswa. Data diperoleh dengan pemberian tes awal yang dilakukan sebelum adanya perlakuan dan memberikan tes pada siklus I, siklus II dan siklus III setelah adanya perlakuan. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa ada peningkatan terhadap pemahaman menulis siswa dengan menggunakan peta konsep di SMPN 1 Taba Penanjung (Bengkulu Tengah). Hal ini dibuktikan dengan perolehan perbedaan nilai rata-rata tes awal dan nilai rata-rata tes akhir. Rata-rata nilai tes awal adalah 47,06 atau 6,89% sedangkan rata-rata tes akhir adalah 54,41 atau 20,68% pada siklus I, 72,27 atau 96,55% pada siklus II, dan 82,44 atau 100% pada siklus III. Peningkatannya dari tes awal sampai tes akhir pada siklus III adalah 35,38 atau 93,11%.

**Keywords:** Writing Ability, Descriptive Text, Concept Map

## A. INTRODUCTION

A language is considered as a system to communicate with other people by using sounds, symbols and words to express a meaning, idea or thought. Language can be expressed through many forms, primarily through oral and written communications as well as using expressions through body language. English is one of the international languages that are used for communication, moreover many people used it in the world.

Based on School Based Curriculum Year 2006, English becomes the important subject which is taught to all junior high school students in Indonesia. It develops students' intellectual, social, and emotional competences. Students should be able to recognize their self and culture. It would help students to express their idea and feeling. English also becomes a subject which determines students' graduation. Passing the standard score of English examination becomes one of the requirements for the students' graduation. One of the objectives of

English learning in junior high schools stated in standard of content for junior high schools regulated by the Ministerial Education Regulation No. 22/ 2006 is developing students' communicative competences in oral and written forms to achieve the functional level of literacy. Particularly in written form, junior high school students should have the competency to comprehend and/or produce written texts.

The teaching of English includes four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Based on the English Education Unit Curriculum 2006 for Junior High School, one of skills that should be mastered by the students in the end of the program is writing (Mulyasa, 2006). Writing is a way of making meaning of our experiences, ideas, and feeling in written form. Writing is important for our knowledge because when we write, we will learn many things, such as the rules of writing itself, the arrangement of words and sentences. When the students write, they need to use the new language, the maximum effort to express the ideas, and the constant use of eyes, hand and brain. We have to learn how to organize information in English so that we can write effective composition because Organization is the key to good writing (Karen Blanchard and Christine, 2003:1). We also make writing as if it can communicate with the readers, based on Bram's statement that to write interesting, enjoyable paragraph, we first should master what the topic. When we deal with writing, we make the best the use of sentence to express our messages. When we write, we intend to interact with our readers using written language. Our principal purpose to make our readers understanding (Barli Bram, 1995:25).

As one of the English skills, writing is also very important to be learned to face globalization era. When we send an e-mail to our friend in another country, for example Italian, or look for information from the internet, English is very important because almost all of the programs on the computer use English.

Based on the writer's observation at Eighth grade students of SMP 1 Taba Penanjung class D, July 17th 2013, she found that teacher's strategy is still not effective. It could be assumed that students' problems in writing a descriptive text are as follows: no ideas to write about, difficulty in organizing ideas, limited range of vocabulary, no motivation to write, and lack of confidence in grammar. From

the observation, the researcher interested to improve the writing skill using a new strategy.

There are many effective strategies to improve students' writing in composing descriptive text, one of them is concepts map. According to Vanides, Yin, Tomita, et al (2005:27) concepts map is a graphical representation of the relationship among terms. It has been used as a technique to engage students in learning content knowledge. However, concepts maps can also be used as a method in teaching writing exactly in descriptive text. Concepts map appear to facilitate learning and how to process information and transform it in to expository writing. Concepts map provide students a freedom to express their knowledge on a given topic and present insights into the way they organize knowledge or as a tool to help students and teachers visualize the direction or focus of a research paper (Santrock in Muhyiddin, 2012:3).

In other word, concept mapping can be mentioned as semantic networking is a process used to create the representations of ideas and the relationships between them. It means that the concept maps or semantic networks contain ideas and labeled lines which describe the relationships between them in the graphs. The purpose of the maps is to help the students show their ideas. The students will be able to open the idea with their thinking. So students can connect the knowledge between the idea and graphs. Furthermore, they would be easier to conduct and organized their idea in composing descriptive text.

Based on background above, the researcher conducts classroom action research by the title, "Improving Students' Writing Ability in Composing Descriptive Text using concept map at the VIII D Grade Students SMPN Taba Penanjung, Bengkulu Tengah Academic year of 2013/2014. The research questions in this study is "Does concept map strategy improve students' ability in writing descriptive text at the VIII D Grade students SMPN 1 Taba Penanjung (Bengkulu Tengah) academic year 2013/2014?. The objective of this research was to know whether concept map strategy effective or not to improve students' ability in writing descriptive text at the VIII D grade students SMP N 1 Taba Penanjung (Bengkulu Tengah).

## B. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 1. THE CONCEPT OF WRITING

Writing is one of the four language skills besides listening, speaking, and reading. It is an activity in arranging words, phrases, and sentences. That is grammatically correct and appropriate with its purpose. Generally, writing can be interpreted as the act of forming or tracing a character on paper or other suitable materials with a pen or pencil. Writing is productive language skills that enable a language user to express idea and communicate them to others. Celce and Murcia (2000) in Himawati (2011:13) said that "Writing is the production of the written word that results in a text but the text must be read and comprehended in order for communication to take place.

There are many other definitions of writing purposed by many authors. Uuse (2006) in Muhyidin (2012:9) defines writing is one of the skill connecting emotions, feeling, language thoughts, experience, mechanical action and different strategies. Another definition is proposed by Elbow (1973) in Brown (2001: 336), he defines writing as a thinking process. In his elaboration, he states that writing is a transaction with words whereby a person free his or herself from what he/she presently think, feel, and perceive. Another definition of writing is proposed by Linse (2006) in Hami (2011: 8), they explain that writing is a combination of process and product of discovering ideas, putting them on paper and working with them until they are presented in manner that is polished and comprehensible to readers.

Patel and Jain (2008: 125) say that Writing is a skill which must be taught and practiced. Writing is essential features of learning a language because it provides a very good means of fixing the vocabulary, spelling, and sentence pattern. It becomes an important aspect of students' expression at higher stage. Furthermore, writing is the most efficiently acquired when practice in writing parallels practice in the other skills. It provides an excellent consolidating activity and useful for setting homework exercises and for some class text.

From the definition above, the researcher can conclude that writing is a way to produce language by putting down words or ideas to some medium. And it is a learned process that takes time and concentrated practice because the researcher has more time to think than they do in oral activities.

## 1.1 WRITING SKILL

Graham and Peri in Muhyidin (2012: 9) stated that writing skill is a basic requirement to participate in civic life and in the global economy as academic success. In addition, many of students lack in basic writing in curriculum causing the poor writing. To get an ease in writing, students must read book more. Because the definition of literacy including reading and writing skills. In this case, if the students seldom read book, it will be a literacy crisis.

Writing skills is a program of comprehensive writing that performed for beginning, struggling, at-risk for the writers. Writing skills can help the students to become a good writer. The students have to know and understand the essential foundation of writing skills such as strategy, technique, and opportunity. Writing skills also give the special instruction in spelling, handwriting, and key boarding. Beside that, writing skills can build the fluency and confidence for students and provide the variety of strategy and opportunity to apply it. In writing skills, the students are expected to understand the instruction involving content, organization, vocabulary, language use and mechanic (Jacob in Huges, 2003 : 103).

The content of the composition had some knowledge of subject, adequate range and limited development of thesis. We must recognize our subject and we must choose the topic that relevant with our subject and we must develop the theme that we choose. So, we have to develop and find about anything, which is relevant and could make our composition, is very important for the reader.

In composition, we will write an idea in some paragraph, so we will organize the idea in the sentences into some paragraph. Good organized will help us to make writing that understandable, because the sequence of expression of everything about the subject was organize that one sentence to others were connected. And each of paragraph have unity, completeness, order and coherent.

Vocabulary is very important in our written, because without vocabulary we cannot show our sentences and some paragraph. So, we have to master in vocabulary to avoid monotonous word. A good language use consists of several errors of agreement, tense, number, word order/function, article, pronoun, and preposition. We have to combine them in our composition.

In mechanic, there is regular error spelling, punctuation and capitalization, paragraph that we show in our writing, so, writing can be defined as organizing an idea that is content of writing by using correct vocabulary, grammatical rules and mechanism.

Base on the explanation above the researcher conclude that writing skills is a specific abilities which help writers put their ideas and transfer their knowledge into words in a meaningful form and to mentally interact with the message involving content, organization, vocabulary, language use and mechanic.

Brown (2004:220) explains the types of writing performance which consider the range of written production and assessment process of writing.

1. Imitative: In this type of writing, the learners must attain skills in fundamental, basic tasks of writing letters, words, punctuation, and very brief statements. At this stage, form is the primary if not exclusive focus, while context and meaning becomes the secondary concern.
2. Intensive (controlled): Producing appropriate vocabulary within context, collocations, idioms, and correct grammatical features up to the length of sentences are considered in intensive writing.
3. Responsive: In this type, assessment tasks require learners to perform at a limited discourse level, connecting sentences into a paragraph and creating a logically connected sequence of two or three paragraphs. Genres of writing include brief narratives and descriptions, short reports, lab reports, summaries, brief responses to reading, and interpretations of charts or graphs.
4. Extensive: In extensive writing, writers focus on achieving a purpose, organizing, and developing ideas logically, using details to support or illustrate ideas, demonstrating syntactic and lexical variety, and in many cases, engaging in the process of multiple drafts to achieve final product.

## 1.2 PROCESS OF WRITING

Writing as one of productive skills needs a process. This processes write to write in sequence stages. Harmer (2007:327) states that the writing process is at least as important as the product, and even in exam writing tasks, the students' ability to

plan (quickly) and later read back through what they have written in order to make any necessary corrections is extremely important.

According to Richards and Renadya (2002:316), there are four basic writing steps: planning (pre-writing), drafting (writing), revising (redrafting), and editing.

#### 1. Planning (Pre-Writing)

Pre-writing is a way of warming up your brain before you write, just as you warm up your body before you exercise, (Karen Blanchard and Christine Root, 2003:41). Prewriting is the thinking, talking, reading and writing you do about your topic before you write a first draft. It is a time to relax, to write quickly and begin organizing the thoughts. Prewriting consist of two parts, there are:

##### 1) Brainstorming

Brainstorming is one way to capture the thought then let the mind generate more ideas about what they will write. In the brainstorming process, we write down every single thing that exists or comes into our minds. According to Zemach and Lisa (2005: 6) brainstorming is a way of gathering idea about a topic; it is a way to produce many ideas from a group for the purpose of simple enjoyment or problem solving. Another opinion Brainstorm is the process of thinking of ideas by writing down in a list the first things that come to mind (Learning Express (Organization) PE1417. E98, 2007:149 ). The purpose of brainstorming is to make a list of as many ideas as possible without worrying about how writers will use them. Writers' list can include words, phrases, sentences, or even questions.

##### 2) Clustering

Clustering is another pre writing technique. It is a visual way of showing how writers' ideas are connected using circles and lines. When writers cluster, they draw a diagram to connect ideas (Karen and Christine, 2003: 42). In other words, clustering is an activity of drawing of ideas.

According to Zemach and Lisa (2005: 3) there are three steps in pre-writing:

1. Choose a topic is getting specific ideas of what to write about.
2. Gather ideas are think about what you will write about the topic that you have chosen.
3. Organize is decide which of the ideas that want to use and where you want to use them. Choose which idea to talk about first, which to talk about next, and which to talk about last.

## 2) Drafting (Writing)

After we have finished in pre-writing, we can continue to the next step (writing). As we write the first draft on our paragraph, we have to use the ideas and organisation we generated from prewriting as a guide. Drafting is write the paragraph of essay from start to finish (Zemach and Lisa, 2005:3). According to Karen and Christine, (2003:43) as we write, we should remember to:

- 1) Begin with a topic sentence that states the main ideas, include several sentences that support the main idea.
- 2) Stick the topic does not include information that does not directly support the main idea.
- 3) Arrange the sentences so that the other of ideas makes sense.
- 4) Use signal words to help the reader understand how the ideas in your paragraph are connected.

From the step above, we can conclude that in writing, we must use the step well so it can read easy by reader.

## 3). Revising (Redrafting)

According to Barli Bram (1995:5), Once writers have produced a draft that they usually read through what they have written to see where it works and where it does not. Perhaps the order of the information is not clear and the way something is written is ambiguous or confusing. They may then move paragraphs around or write a new introduction. They may use a different from of words for a particular sentence. So, revising is necessary done in order to our writing can understood or read by reader. When our writing does not understand or make confuse reader, it means our writing is bad.

According to Learning Express (Organization) PE1417. E98, 2007: 96, the process of revising is simple. Just ask yourself some questions, and while you do that, read over what you have and make sure you are able to answer each question with a definitive *yes*. Here are some questions to ask yourself as you revise.

1. Does your introduction draw the reader in?
2. Does your introduction have a thesis statement?
3. Have you addressed the topic?

4. Is your writing clear?
5. Have you removed anything that is unnecessary?
6. Is your style consistent?
7. Is there a good flow from beginning to end?
8. Does each paragraph have a topic sentence and supporting ideas?
9. Does the conclusion flow logically out of the paragraph that came before it?
10. Does your conclusion remind the reader of your thesis and supporting ideas without repeating word for word what you said in your introduction?

It means that, when revising, you go back over what you have written to make it clearer, more concise, or more organized.

#### 4). Editing

Editing is an essential part of preparing a piece of writing for public reading or publication. It involves a much closer reading of your writing than revising does because when you edit your paper, you're going to look for errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, and word usage. To do this, you're going to need to read each sentence very carefully (Learning Express (Organization) PE1417. E98, 2007: 96).

The other opinion, Richard and Renadya (2002: 318) stated that in editing, writers check grammar, spelling, punctuation, diction, sentence structure, and accuracy of supportive textual material such as quotations, example and the like. We are almost impossible to write a perfect paragraph on the first try, and we should be editing after revising it. So editing is the way to revise and improve the first draft that perhaps the order of information is not clear or the discourse marker is wrong.

## C. RESEARCH METHOD

### 1. RESEARCH DESIGN

In this research, the researcher used classroom action research method. The researcher used this method because the researcher would like to improve the students' writing ability in composing descriptive text through direct action. Arikunto (2008:2-3) states that classroom action research is the activity of the research that is done in the classroom.

The other opinion, Kemmis and Mc Taggart (1988) in Nunans' book (1993:18) stated that action research is a group of activity and a piece of descriptive research carried out by the teacher in his or her own classroom, without the involvement of others, which is aimed at interesting our understanding rather than changing the phenomenon under the investigation that would not be considered by these commentators to be „action research“, the essential impetus for carrying out action research is to change the system. One of the other experts states that action research is the systematic collection of information that is designed to bring about social change.

Base on the definition above, it can be concluded that classroom action research (CAR) is a form of research that doing in the class to improve students' achievement through direct action.

The procedures in doing this research make an observation that consists of cycles: cycle I, cycle II, cycle III and to be continued to the next cycle if the problem is not be solved yet. According to Kunandar (2012:129), there are four steps in every cycle of action research; they are planning, implementing, observation, and reflection. In this research, the researcher chose SMPN 1 Taba Penanjung (Bengkulu) as the place to collect the data and information as needed. The researcher found the problem from small observation and little interview to the students and the English teacher. Population is number of (oxford:333), the population of this research is the all of Eighth grade students of SMPN 1 Taba Penanjung (Bengkulu) academic year 2013/2014 that is consisted of 4 class. The number of population the students of Eighth grade is 122 students.

**Table of Class 8th Grade Students in MA SMPN 1 Taba Penanjung (Bengkulu)**

<b>NO.</b>	<b>CLASS</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
1	VIII A	31
2	VIII B	31
3	VIII C	30
4	VIII D	30
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>122</b>

The researcher chose VIII D class because based on the result of pre-observation and interview with the English teacher and the students of SMPN 1 Taba Penanjung (Bengkulu). The teacher informed the students at VIII D class have low achievement of writing descriptive text and the teacher said that most of students of VIII D are passive when learning English in the classroom. Therefore, the students need an appropriate strategy to assist them in developing their writing skill scores.

There were some instruments in this research: observation, interview, documentation, and giving test. The test prepared by the researcher to measure the students' level and develop the writing skill of students in each cycle. The students were asked to write a short descriptive text. They chose one of some topics that will be given thirty minutes to finish their composition.

Process of analysis data was used when the observation of students' activities during teaching learning process, and the interview before and after CAR. In this case, the writer collected the whole data that have gained. Firstly, the data gained from the pre-test before the treatments given. Secondly, the researcher gave treatment (concept map strategy). In every cycle of treatment, it was given a test. Thirdly, after giving treatment, the researcher gave post test and gave the score of the test. And the last result of the post test data compared with pre-test data and each other to see the development of the students. The researcher uses criteria of scoring writing skill in each cycle as mentioned on the table bellow:

**Table of Matrix of Assessment for Students' Writing in Descriptive Text**

Test Score	Value	Description
80 – 100	Excellent	Describe all of the parts, qualities, and characteristics completely.
60 – 79	Good	Describe parts, qualities, and characteristics. Somewhat chopp- loosely.
40 – 59	Fair	Fairly describe parts, qualities, and characteristics. Some are missing.
20 – 39	Poor	Poorly describe parts, qualities, and characteristics are missing.

0-19            Very Poor    Does not describe parts, qualities, and characteristics anymore.

Omaggio (1986:266)

In this research, there are some procedures for teaching writing argumentative text using concept map strategy, they are: Pre-activities (5 minutes), While-activity (75 minutes), and Post-activities (5 minutes).

## 2. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This research was conducted by using a classroom action research method, it consisted of three cycles. Before doing the first cycle, the researcher did pre-assessment on 25th July 2013 to know the ability of students writing descriptive text before giving treatment. The first cycle was held on 26st July 2013 after gave the pre-test, then the second cycle on 16th August 2013, and the third cycle was held on 23 August 2013. In three cycles above, the researcher not only gave treatment, but also hold evaluation test to measure the degrees of students' ability in composing descriptive text.

Before conducting the study the researcher pre-observed the situation of the classroom and shared with English teacher of eighth grade students of SMP N 1 Taba Penanjung. He said that the students of VIII D grade still poor on writing ability especially in writing descriptive text, because the motivation of students to learn English was poor.

After observing the class situation, the researcher prepared the instrument that would be used in teaching learning process. The researcher prepared the material and arranged the lesson plan. The material was taken from "English in Focus" book published by Pusat Perbukuan Departemen Pendidikan Nasional. Besides that the researcher also prepared the concept map strategy, checklist for observed the students' activity, and group of students. The implementations of each cycle were as follows:

At the beginning of the research, the researcher gave pre-assessment to the students. The pre-assessment was given on 25th July 2013. It was done to know the starting point of the students in writing before giving the actions. The students'

achievement in writing was scored based on the five scale interval categories. The result of the pre-assessment score can be seen on the following table.

**Table of The Score Distribution on Pre-Assessment**

		Pre-Assessment	
		Frequency	Percentage
80-100	Excellent	0	0
60-79	Good	6	20,68%
40-59	Fair	12	41,38%
20-39	Poor	11	37,93 %
0-19	Very Poor	0	0

Based on the figure above, the students' scores on pre-assessment were very low. There were 6 (20,68%) students in *good category*, 12 (41,38%) students were in *fair category* and 11 (37,93%) students were in *poor category*. The calculation showed that the students' achievement in writing before being given the action were still poor.

Cycle I was done based on the result of pre- test. Here the researcher applied teaching writing by using concept map strategy. In this strategy, the researcher explained about descriptive text and concept map strategy. Next, the researcher had given examples of concept map about Paris. Then the students asked to write the sentences into good paragraph.

**Table 4.2**

**The Score Distribution on Cycle 1**

Score Interval	Category	Frequency	Percentage
80-100	Excellent	0	0
60-79	Good	10	34,48%
40-59	Fair	18	62,07%
20-39	Poor	1	3,45%
0-19	Very Poor	0	0

Based on the figure above, the students' scores on cycle 1 were very low. There were 10 (4,48%) students in *good category*, 18 (62,07%) students were in *low category*, and 1 (3,45) students were in *poor category*. The calculation showed that the student's achievement in writing were improved, but some aspect such as content, vocabulary and language use needed to be improved.

Based on the data collected and the teacher's observation in the process of cycle I, the researcher found that the students in writing contents, organization, vocabulary, language use and mechanic had low improved. It was showed by the students writing product. It was no mastery sentence construction rule and the ideas confused. They also felt difficult in using appropriate in tenses in their writing. Even the result of the test shows that they were little improvements in the students' writing, but the researcher's target was not achieved.

Cycle II was done as the follow up of the cycle I. The problem in the cycle one was not clear yet and in cycle II was found new problem, the students are not able used the pronoun in their writing. In this cycle, the researcher tried to explain about pronoun and given the examples of pronoun such as: she, he, it, they, and we. In this step the researcher asked the students used the pronoun in sentences, and tried to make the sentences become good paragraph writing. The result of cycle 2 can be seen in the following table.

**Table 4.5**  
**The Score Distribution on Cycle II**

Score Interval	Category	Frequency	Percentage
80-100	Excellent	2	6,9%
60-79	Good	27	93,1%
40-59	Fair	0	0
20-39	Poor	0	0
0-19	Very Poor	0	0

The figure above shows that the students' achievement in writing were 2 (6,9%) students in *excellent category*, 27 (93,1%) students were in *good category*. The calculation showed that the students' achievement in writing were good, but the aspect such as mechanic needed to be improved because it still fair. The detail information of the table result can be seen in appendix II.

While the implementation of cycle I, observation was done not only by the researcher, but also by the collaborator. In the second cycle, researcher and co-researcher found that almost of the students were not confused with this strategy and some students more active in the learning process. They also step by step had been familiar with the strategy of concept map and could apply them well.

Cycle III was done after analyzing the result of cycle II. In this cycle, the entire problem that find in the cycle II had been finished. In this cycle the researcher focus on the use of punctuation and capitalization mistake by the students, this problem was found from cycle II but in this cycle the researcher tried to solve this problem. The result from the cycle 3 can be seen in the following table.

**Table 4.8**  
**The Score Distribution on Cycle III**

Score Interval	Category	Frequency	Percentage
80-100	Excellent	22	75,86%
60-79	Good	7	24,13%
40-59	Fair	0	0
20-39	Poor	0	0
0-19	Very Poor	0	0

The figure above shows that the students' achievement in writing were 22 (75,86%) students in *excellent category*, 7 (24,13%) students were in *good category*. The calculation showed that the students' achievements in writing were having significant improvement in all aspect of writing such as: content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanic. The detail information of the table result of the aspects can be seen in appendix III.

Based on the teacher observation of cycle III, she found there was great improvement. The students can follow the writing activity serious and active. In this cycle, the collaborators found that the teacher clearer to apply the steps in composing descriptive text using concept map strategy, so the students became more familiar with the strategy. Almost of them were actively involved in learning process. They tried to get the best score.

#### D. CONCLUSION

Based on the result of the research that had been done in three cycles in the research entitled "Improving Students` Writing Ability in Composing Descriptive Text through Concept Map Strategy (Classroom Action Research at the VIIID Grade of Junior High School 1 Taba Penanjung, Bengkulu Tengah Academic Year of 2013/2014), it can be concluded that concept map strategy can improve the students` achievement in writing in each aspect of writing such as content, organization, vocabulary, language use and mechanic. It is proved by the differences of the students` score in pre-assessment, cycle I, cycle II and cycle III. The average score of pre-assessment was 47,06 or 6,89% while average of last cycle was 82,44 or 100%. The improvement was 35,38 or 93,11 from the pre-assessment.

**Penulis;** Syamsul Rizal, M.Pd, English Lecturer of IAIN Bengkulu. Juniarti, Alumni of English Study Program of Tarbiyah and Tadris Faculty of IAIN Bengkulu.

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