

## IMPROVING TEXT DESCRIPTIVE WRITING SKILLS IN MIDDLE-SCHOOL STUDENTS: INVESTIGATING IMAGE MEDIA

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### ABSTRACT

This research aims to improve students' skills in writing descriptive text through the use of image media for class VII students at SMPN Satap Lelumpang. The low pre-test results of students are caused by teachers still using conventional methods of teaching writing. So the researchers decided to use a new method that had never been used before, namely using image media. The research carried out was classroom action research in two cycles. Each cycle consists of four stages, namely planning, action, observation, and reflection. The research was carried out at SMPN Satap Lelumpang, with the research subjects being class VII students. Data collection techniques include written tests and observation sheets. The results of research using image media show a significant increase. This can be seen from the students' learning results: in Cycle I, the average score was 4.87 in the poor category, increasing to 8.32 in the good category in Cycle II. The completeness of learning outcomes increased from 48.1% in Cycle I to 92% in Cycle II. This shows that students' skills in writing descriptive text increase through the use of image media.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In studying language subjects, in this case, especially English, teachers find many problems that accumulate and occur continuously due to the child's lack of initial abilities (Butzkamm, 2003; Willig, 2014; De Houwer, 2017). At previous levels of education, students in elementary school did not get sufficient basic knowledge of vocabulary in English. This automatically affects the child's ability to use the language both orally and in writing (Kim, 2008; Jean & Geva, 2009; Lesaux et al., 2010, Graves et al., 2012).

In language, humans use it to communicate. Oral communication has its advantages in learning a foreign language because the concept is that the speaker's meaning or intention is conveyed to the listener (Nakatani, 2006; Rabab'ah, 2016; Galante & Thomson, 2017). Even though the linguistic structure, word choice, and intonation

accuracy are still lacking, if the listener can grasp the meaning or intention of the speaker, then the language has been used or has functioned.

This is different from writing; the language used is more detailed and precise. When a person writes his ideas or main thoughts, he must choose the right diction, write with the correct sentence structure, have good relevance or connection between the topic and discussion (Storch, 2005; Levy & Ransdell, 2013; Bailey, 2014), and also be careful about capitalizing names and clear punctuation so that it does not give rise to multiple interpretations of the sentences or statements he has written.

Comparisons continue in using language orally and in writing. The next thing discovered is that, when speaking, the speaker can immediately revise or correct the statements and questions previously expressed if the listener still does not understand the speaker's intentions. Meanwhile, in writing, a writer must think carefully about what he is going to write so that the reader can grasp the meaning correctly (Heffer, 2011; Hayes, 2013; Hochman & Wexler, 2017; Anderson, 2023). Revisions or improvements to written work cannot be done immediately to satisfy the reader's curiosity or lack of clarity regarding the writing presented.

In the realm of education, especially in research schools, students tend to be more comfortable speaking, both using the national language, Indonesian, and English as a foreign language (Siregar, 2023; Rorintulus & Wuntu, 2023; Wijaya, 2023; Yamashita, 2023). Of course, the facts on the ground are not as perfect as expected, but they often use English when speaking at different levels. There are groups of students who have taken additional lessons (English) outside of school since they were in elementary school (Getie, 2020; Aslan & Shiong, 2023; Maja, 2023); there are groups who have a high interest in English and are self-taught by finding out more via the internet (independently); and there are also groups who enjoy singing. Songs in English compared to songs in Indonesian so that they can find out the meaning of words they don't know yet, there is a group of gamers or students who like playing online games so that their vocabulary knowledge is also mostly obtained from command sentences and the appearance of game menus which always use English, there are groups who are interested in English but don't make enough effort to learn more, and there are also groups who are not interested in learning English because since elementary school they have never had this lesson or have studied it but the teaching or teacher is completely cannot attract students' attention to this subject, so they think English is a difficult and uninteresting subject (Simamora & Oktaviani, 2020; Erlangga, 2022).

In the initial 2 units of teaching in the odd semester, students have been taught and asked to create short dialogue texts about how to greet, say goodbye, thank you, introduce yourself, introduce friends, describe family, and so on. The results of the oral dialogue are good, while the students' writing is still very poor.

The description above describes the researcher's experiences and opinions regarding the classroom conditions at the school. To find out how to overcome students' lack of ability to write, researchers tried to think of a technique that had never been applied so that this problem could be overcome well. First of all, the researcher, as well as the teacher in the class, refers to teaching habits in the class, which may tend to be

monotonous in teaching writing. Second, researchers refer to the habits of students who are interested in watching and reading comics or illustrated stories.

Based on the references above, the researcher concluded that children's writing skills can be improved by using attractive image media (singles and series) and teaching that involves students interactively. Researchers also want to change students' paradigm that writing is complex and not liked, namely by introducing writing more interestingly and involving students more actively.

## 2. METHOD

The type of research used is classroom action research (Mertler, 2009; Glanz, 2014; Meesuk et al., 2020). The research was carried out at SMPN Satap Lelumpang. The research process was carried out in two cycles. Each cycle consists of four stages, namely the planning stage, action, observation, and reflection stage. The answers to the problems found in Cycle I must be found in Cycle II. The second cycle is an improvement in the activities of cycle I. Implementation activities are carried out in a minimum of two cycles (cycle I and cycle II). In each cycle, it starts by showing a single picture and stimulating students to describe it in separate sentences. At this stage, the researcher focuses on actions to encourage students to play an active role in expressing their ideas and opinions and expressing them in several independent sentences. In the next step, the researcher will show a series of pictures that contain a series of descriptions of activities related to facts and habits. Students will be asked to write sentences that describe activities and order them in an orderly manner according to the structure of the descriptive text and the facts or habits presented.

In cycle I, there were 3 meetings to complete the cycle. Starting from the initial activities, core activities, presentation, and closing. Activities in cycle II are also the same or repeated.

The subjects in this research were class VII students at SMPN Satap Lelumpang, Bambalamotu District, Pasangkayu Regency, with a total of 25 students, consisting of 15 female students and 10 male students. The focus of this research is to help students improve their writing skills using image media. The data collection techniques used were written tests and observation sheets.

Success criteria are marked by changes towards improvement related to the learning environment and learning atmosphere. Regarding this, the minimum standard taken by researchers is to follow the school's minimum success assessment standards, namely 75% of the number of students in the class who can follow the learning process well, and students can achieve a score of 75 both individually and as a class average.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Results

Data was obtained from the results of tests on students' abilities to understand English subject matter, especially in writing skills. Researchers found that the average student pre-test score was 4.87, which shows that students' writing skills are still very

low. Next, the researcher carried out several treatments on students to improve their ability to write descriptive text using image media. Then, the researcher carried out a post-test, the result of which was 8.32. The calculation of the results between the pre-test and post-test shows that there is an increase in students' abilities in the post-test after receiving treatment.

Through observation, data is collected regarding the performance of teachers and students during the teaching and learning process in class. Teacher data shows that the minimal use of English in class results in students using more Indonesian. Even so, students' learning motivation is very high. The students were very active in answering questions asked by the teacher and asking questions related to the material being taught.

### 3.2 Discussion

Image media is very suitable to use because it can concretize abstract things in the form of images or photos. Image media has the following functions (Pertwi & Supeno, 2019; Vanesa & Setiawati, 2021): (1) it is more concrete; it is more realistic than verbal media alone; (2) images can overcome the boundaries between space and time; (3) image media can overcome the limitations of our observation; (4) they clarify a problem; and (5) they are cheap and easy to obtain and use without special equipment. Writing descriptions is the type of text chosen because it is suitable for class VII learning. Description is writing that describes the physical form of an object. The physical form of the object is based on the author's observations. The characteristics of descriptive writing are as follows (Coker, 2012; Yaacob & Suriyanti, 2016; Mandele et al., 2019):

- a. Connected with the five senses
- b. The use of objects is obtained by observing the shape, color, and condition of the object directly.
- c. The feeling element is sharper.

Based on the expert opinion above, the researcher concludes that in describing an object, the author must describe the object very clearly so that readers can see the same thing based on the author's description or picture.

When giving the pre-test, there were still many students who were not able to understand the picture and write it into text. So the results obtained are not optimal. After a reflection in cycle I and seeing that there were still many shortcomings in its application, the research continued into cycle II by applying image media, the results of which could improve students' writing skills. Image media used to improve the ability to write descriptive text can provide a fundamental change in students' attitudes and learning motivation.

Even though at the beginning or in the first cycle students felt unfamiliar, after they made adjustments and adapted, they felt more interested and motivated to participate in the learning. So, changes in activities were made that were deemed necessary to achieve better results compared to the results in cycle I. In cycle II, after making changes to the learning medium, it was seen that student motivation and learning outcomes had increased. The average test results in cycle II achieved by students were in the good category, whereas previously in cycle I they were only in the poor category.

Students' ability to write descriptive text before using image media in Class VII of SMPN Satap Lelumpang is still in the poor category, namely below the minimum completeness score, namely 70. In the first cycle of action, student learning outcomes were in the sufficient category, and student learning outcomes in cycle II increased. into the good category, where there are no more students who get learning outcomes below the KKM.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion, it was concluded that the results of research using image media showed a significant increase. This can be seen from the students' learning results: in Cycle I, the average score was 4.87 in the poor category, increasing to 8.32 in the good category in Cycle II. The completeness of learning outcomes increased from 48.1% in Cycle I to 92% in Cycle II. This shows that students' skills in writing descriptive text increase through the use of image media. Writing skills cannot be obtained directly. Having to do a lot of practice and using the right media are some ways to improve your writing skills. Teachers play a role in improving students' abilities in terms of achievement and learning motivation. A teacher must also continue to learn to innovate to improve the quality of teaching so that he can inspire students to become better over time.

As a suggestion, each medium used will have a different final result if applied in different places. Hopefully, this research will provide benefits to teachers everywhere. Hopefully, other research carried out by teachers will receive more appreciation and attention from the government, so teachers will be more enthusiastic and motivated to carry out further research.

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