



Use of Picture Media to Improve the Descriptive Writing Skills of Grade III Students of SD Ketapang Indah

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to improve the descriptive writing skills of third-grade students at the UPTD SPF (Student Learning Implementation Unit) of Ketapang Indah Public Elementary School through the use of images. The background of this study was the low level of students' descriptive writing skills, as indicated by preliminary results: only 35% of 28 students achieved the Minimum Completion Criteria (KKM) of 70, with an average score of 63.5. This study used the Classroom Action Research (CAR) method, implemented in two cycles, each consisting of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. Data collection instruments included writing tests, observations of student activities, and documentation. The results showed a significant improvement in students' descriptive writing skills after the application of images. In cycle I, the average student score increased to 71.8, with a completion percentage of 67.8%. Further improvement occurred in cycle II, with an average score of 82.3 and a learning completion rate of 89.2%. Furthermore, observations showed that students were more active, enthusiastic, and motivated when writing descriptions using images. Thus, the use of images has proven effective in improving the descriptive writing skills of third-grade students. This medium can be used as a creative, engaging learning alternative that aligns with the developmental characteristics of elementary school students.

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Introduction

Writing is one of the most essential literacy skills that enables students to express ideas, communicate knowledge, and develop higher-order thinking abilities (Graham & Perin, 2007). At the elementary level, writing not only serves as a means of communication but also functions as a foundation for academic success across different subjects. Among the various types of writing, descriptive writing is particularly important for young learners because it helps them develop observational skills, enrich vocabulary, and enhance creativity (Reid, 2012). However, teaching descriptive writing at the primary

school level often faces challenges, as many students struggle to generate ideas and structure sentences coherently.

The problem of low achievement in writing has been highlighted globally. Research indicates that elementary students frequently demonstrate limited writing proficiency, with difficulties in coherence, grammar, and organization (Graham et al., 2012). These challenges are also evident in Indonesian schools, where descriptive writing skills are often below expected competency standards. Instructional media has been widely recognized as a key factor influencing student motivation and learning outcomes (Mayer, 2014). Visual media, in particular, provides concrete stimuli that can help students conceptualize abstract ideas and transform them into written forms.

Pictures as learning media offer opportunities for students to observe details, connect prior knowledge, and generate descriptive language (Al-Seghayer, 2001). In the context of descriptive writing, pictures guide students to focus on objects, attributes, and relationships, thereby enriching their textual production. Several studies have confirmed the effectiveness of picture-based media in enhancing writing skills. For instance, Hidi and Boscolo (2006) emphasized that visual prompts can increase students' engagement, while more recent findings show that picture-based tasks significantly improve vocabulary and sentence development in elementary students (Putri & Retnawati, 2020).

Moreover, using pictures can reduce writing anxiety among students by providing a concrete starting point for idea generation (Zhang, 2013). This is important because writing anxiety has been identified as a barrier that reduces fluency and quality in students' compositions. In line with socio-constructivist perspectives, the use of pictures facilitates collaborative learning as students can discuss visual elements before transforming them into written texts (Vygotsky, 1978). Thus, media use not only supports individual skill development but also promotes social interaction in the classroom.

The integration of visual media also aligns with multimodal learning principles, which highlight that students learn more effectively when information is presented through multiple channels (Jewitt, 2008). By combining visual and textual elements, teachers can create richer and more engaging learning experiences. In Indonesian elementary schools, the use of picture media is highly relevant because students at this level are still in the concrete operational stage of cognitive development (Piaget, 1973). Thus, learning strategies that involve tangible and visual stimuli are particularly effective for their literacy development. Despite its potential, the use of pictures in writing instruction is not yet maximized in many classrooms. Teachers often rely on conventional explanations and writing drills, which may fail to stimulate students'

creativity and motivation (Retnawati et al., 2018). This gap highlights the need for innovative practices to improve descriptive writing achievement.

Therefore, this study focuses on the application of picture media as a tool to enhance descriptive writing skills among third-grade students at UPTD SPF SD Negeri Ketapang Indah. By examining the impact of this intervention, the study aims to provide empirical evidence on how visual media can support literacy development. The study also contributes to the broader discourse on writing pedagogy by demonstrating the role of multimodal approaches in early literacy education. Findings from this research may offer valuable implications for teachers, curriculum developers, and policymakers. In conclusion, the urgency of improving descriptive writing skills among elementary students necessitates innovative teaching strategies. The use of picture media represents a practical and effective approach to address these challenges, supporting both the cognitive and affective domains of learning.

Methods

This study employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design, which is widely applied in educational contexts to solve practical classroom problems through systematic inquiry (Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2014). The CAR approach was chosen because it allows teachers to plan, act, observe, and reflect on teaching strategies in a cyclical process, ensuring continuous improvement of students' learning outcomes. The research was conducted in the third grade of UPTD SPF SD Negeri Ketapang Indah, involving 28 students consisting of 14 boys and 14 girls. This group was selected purposively because preliminary observations indicated that their descriptive writing skills were below the expected competency level. By focusing on this class, the study targeted learners at a developmental stage where visual media is especially effective in supporting literacy learning (Piaget, 1973).

The intervention used in this research was the integration of picture media into writing instruction. Pictures were carefully selected to be culturally relevant, age-appropriate, and contextually familiar to students, such as images of school, family, and nature. The use of such media aligns with multimodal learning theories, which suggest that combining visual and textual information enhances comprehension and retention (Mayer, 2014). The CAR procedure was carried out in two cycles, each consisting of four stages: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. In the planning stage, lesson plans and picture-based teaching materials were prepared. The acting stage involved the actual implementation of the lessons, while observation focused on monitoring student participation and engagement. Reflection was then conducted to evaluate the results and improve the next cycle (Burns, 2010).

Data collection techniques included writing tests, classroom observation, and documentation. Writing tests were administered at the end of each cycle to measure

students' descriptive writing achievement. Observation sheets were used to record student behavior, motivation, and engagement, while documentation provided supporting evidence in the form of lesson plans, photos, and teacher reflections. The primary instrument for assessing writing was a rubric adapted from Jacobs et al. (1981), covering five components: content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. This rubric has been widely validated in writing research and provides a reliable framework for evaluating student performance (Graham et al., 2012).

To ensure the validity and reliability of data, triangulation was applied by combining quantitative data from test scores with qualitative data from observations and documentation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). This methodological triangulation strengthened the trustworthiness of the findings and reduced potential bias from single-source data. Quantitative data from the writing tests were analyzed descriptively by calculating mean scores and percentages of students achieving the minimum mastery criterion (KKM). Qualitative data from observations and reflections were analyzed thematically to identify patterns in student behavior and engagement during the learning process (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

Ethical considerations were also addressed in this study. Prior to the intervention, permission was obtained from the school principal, classroom teacher, and students' parents. Participation was voluntary, and students' identities were anonymized to ensure confidentiality and compliance with educational research ethics (BERA, 2018). In sum, the methodology of this study was designed to systematically evaluate the effectiveness of picture media in enhancing descriptive writing skills. By combining CAR with mixed-methods data collection, the study aimed to provide robust evidence that can inform both classroom practice and broader pedagogical strategies for literacy development.

Result

The findings of this classroom action research demonstrated a substantial improvement in the descriptive writing skills of third-grade students after the use of picture media. In the pre-cycle, only 10 out of 28 students (35.7%) reached the minimum mastery criterion (KKM = 70), with an average score of 63.5. This indicates that the majority of students struggled to produce coherent descriptive texts with sufficient vocabulary and appropriate grammar. After the implementation of the first cycle, the results showed encouraging progress. The class average rose to 71.8, and 19 students (67.8%) achieved mastery. Students demonstrated better organization in their writing, with clearer topic sentences and supporting details. However, errors in vocabulary selection and mechanics were still relatively frequent, suggesting the need for further scaffolding in the next cycle.

Observation data during the first cycle indicated that students became more motivated and engaged when exposed to visual stimuli. They were more eager to describe objects presented in the pictures, confirming that visual media could serve as effective prompts for idea generation (Mayer, 2014). Teachers also noted increased classroom interaction, as students were willing to share and compare their descriptions. In the second cycle, improvements became more significant. The class average increased to 82.3, and 25 students (89.2%) surpassed the KKM. Students' descriptive texts contained richer vocabulary, more accurate grammar, and improved cohesion between sentences. This growth suggests that continuous practice with visual media allowed students to internalize descriptive structures and apply them independently.

Observation records further revealed that students were increasingly confident in their writing tasks during the second cycle. They relied less on teacher guidance and demonstrated more autonomy in generating descriptive sentences. This finding supports previous studies highlighting that picture media enhances not only linguistic competence but also learner independence (Al-Seghayer, 2001). Documentation in the form of student work samples showed visible differences between pre-cycle and post-cycle outputs. Initially, student writings were limited to short, fragmented sentences, while by the end of the intervention, many students produced structured paragraphs of 8–10 sentences with appropriate descriptive details. This improvement aligns with research showing that visual prompts significantly facilitate writing fluency (Putri & Retnawati, 2020).

The reflective process across cycles also highlighted pedagogical implications. Teachers found that using picture media not only improved students' writing outcomes but also made the classroom environment more dynamic and enjoyable. The visual context created by the media reduced students' anxiety and provided a common reference point for discussion and writing. Overall, the results of this study demonstrate that the systematic use of picture media is highly effective in improving descriptive writing skills among elementary school students. The combined evidence from test scores, observations, and documentation underscores the importance of integrating visual media into literacy instruction, particularly for learners at the concrete operational stage.

Discussion

The results of this study confirm that the use of picture media significantly improves descriptive writing skills among elementary school students. The marked increase in test scores from the pre-cycle to the second cycle demonstrates the effectiveness of visual prompts in facilitating idea generation and written expression. These findings align with Mayer's (2014) cognitive theory of multimedia learning, which posits that combining verbal and visual input enhances comprehension and promotes meaningful learning.

One of the main benefits observed was the increased motivation and engagement of students during writing activities. Visual media provided a concrete stimulus that reduced students' hesitation in starting their writing tasks. This is consistent with Hidi and Boscolo's (2006) argument that writing motivation can be enhanced when learners are provided with meaningful and stimulating contexts. The classroom atmosphere also became more collaborative, as students eagerly discussed images before writing.

Furthermore, the intervention encouraged vocabulary enrichment and sentence fluency. When describing pictures, students naturally employed a wider range of words and sentence structures. This finding resonates with Al-Seghayer's (2001) study, which demonstrated that visual annotations support language learners by providing contextual cues for vocabulary use and sentence development. Another notable outcome was the reduction of writing anxiety. Initially, many students struggled to produce ideas independently, but picture prompts gave them a starting point and lowered their cognitive load. Zhang (2013) similarly found that visual media can help learners overcome anxiety by providing concrete references, thereby increasing confidence in writing. In addition to linguistic development, the use of pictures also fostered higher-order thinking skills. Students were encouraged to observe, analyze, and select appropriate details before transforming them into descriptive text. This supports Jewitt's (2008) work on multimodality, which emphasizes that integrating multiple semiotic resources enriches students' cognitive engagement with learning tasks.

The cyclical design of classroom action research also played a critical role in sustaining improvement. Reflection between cycles allowed the teacher to identify weaknesses and provide targeted scaffolding, ensuring that instructional adjustments met students' evolving needs. This iterative process highlights the dynamic nature of teaching and the importance of adaptive pedagogy in literacy development. The success of this intervention also has implications for primary school literacy instruction more broadly. Incorporating picture media can make writing instruction more engaging and accessible, particularly for learners in the concrete operational stage of development. Teachers may adopt this strategy not only for descriptive writing but also for other genres such as narrative and recount texts. In conclusion, the discussion underscores that the use of picture media is not merely an instructional tool but also a catalyst for student-centered learning. By enhancing motivation, reducing anxiety, and improving linguistic competence, picture-based instruction provides a holistic approach to writing pedagogy in the elementary context.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the use of picture media is highly effective in enhancing the descriptive writing skills of third-grade students at UPTD SPF SD Negeri Ketapang Indah. The intervention not only improved students' writing achievement, as shown by the

significant increase in average scores and mastery levels across cycles, but also fostered greater motivation, engagement, and confidence in the writing process. The findings demonstrate that picture media serves as a powerful instructional tool that supports idea generation, enriches vocabulary, reduces writing anxiety, and promotes more coherent and fluent text production. Therefore, integrating visual media into literacy instruction is strongly recommended as an innovative strategy to improve writing outcomes in elementary education.

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