

# Improving Language Proficiency in Writing Descriptive Texts Among Seventh Grade Students of SMP Negeri 2 Gorontalo

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## Article Info

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## ABSTRACT

*This study aims to improve students' language proficiency in the aspect of writing descriptive texts among seventh-grade students at SMP Negeri 2 Gorontalo through the implementation of innovative and student-centered learning strategies. The problems identified in writing instruction include students' low ability to generate ideas, develop concepts, use descriptive vocabulary, and organize text structures coherently. This study is based on theories of writing skills, the process approach, constructivism, and contextual learning. The implementation of learning strategies was carried out through the use of visual media, direct observation activities, outlining exercises, as well as revision and peer feedback activities. The results of the implementation showed an improvement in students' ability to write descriptive texts. Students became more active, creative, and capable of producing more detailed, systematic, and well-structured descriptive texts. In addition, the use of visual media and collaborative learning was proven to increase students' motivation and self-confidence in writing. Therefore, the application of contextual, systematic, and process-based learning strategies has proven effective in improving students' language proficiency, particularly in writing descriptive texts.*

## Informasi Artikel

### Kata Kunci:

kemahiran berbahasa, menulis, teks deskripsi, strategi pembelajaran, siswa SMP.

## ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan kemahiran berbahasa pada aspek menulis teks deskripsi siswa kelas VII SMP Negeri 2 Gorontalo melalui penerapan strategi pembelajaran yang inovatif dan berpusat pada siswa. Permasalahan yang ditemukan dalam pembelajaran menulis yaitu rendahnya kemampuan siswa dalam menemukan ide, mengembangkan gagasan, menggunakan kosakata deskriptif, serta menyusun struktur teks secara runtut. Kajian ini menggunakan landasan teori keterampilan menulis, pendekatan proses, konstruktivisme, dan pembelajaran kontekstual. Implementasi pembelajaran dilakukan melalui penggunaan media visual, kegiatan observasi langsung, penyusunan kerangka tulisan, serta kegiatan revisi dan umpan balik antarsiswa. Hasil penerapan strategi menunjukkan adanya peningkatan kemampuan menulis teks deskripsi siswa. Siswa menjadi lebih aktif, kreatif, dan mampu menghasilkan tulisan yang lebih rinci, sistematis, serta sesuai dengan struktur teks deskripsi. Selain itu, penggunaan media visual dan pembelajaran kolaboratif mampu meningkatkan motivasi serta kepercayaan diri siswa dalam menulis. Dengan demikian, penerapan strategi pembelajaran yang kontekstual, sistematis, dan berbasis proses terbukti efektif dalam meningkatkan kemahiran berbahasa siswa, khususnya pada aspek menulis teks deskripsi.

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## 1. Introduction

Language is the primary means of communication used by humans to convey ideas, feelings, and information in daily life. Through language, people can interact, build social relationships, and develop knowledge and culture. In the context of education, Indonesian language learning has a very strategic role because it not only functions as a means of communication but also as a medium for developing students' thinking, reasoning, and creativity skills.

Indonesian language learning is directed toward improving four language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These four skills are interconnected and cannot be separated from one another. Listening and reading are receptive skills, while speaking and writing are productive skills. Mastery of these four skills in a balanced manner is very important so that students can communicate effectively, both orally and in writing, in various situations.

Among the four language skills, writing is often considered the most complex skill. This is because writing not only requires the ability to express ideas but also the ability to organize thoughts logically, choose appropriate vocabulary, and apply correct language rules. In addition, writing involves higher-order thinking processes such as analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating information before expressing it in written form. Therefore, writing skills need to be continuously trained through directed and systematic learning.

In Indonesian language learning at the junior high school level, especially in seventh grade, one of the materials taught is descriptive text writing. Descriptive text is a type of text that aims to describe an object, place, atmosphere, or event in detail and clearly so that readers seem able to see, hear, or directly feel the object being described. Writing descriptive texts requires students to have sensitivity toward their surroundings as well as the ability to use rich and varied language.

However, in reality, students' ability to write descriptive texts is still relatively low. Many students experience difficulties in finding ideas, developing concepts, and constructing effective and coherent sentences. In addition, limited vocabulary and a lack of understanding of the structure of descriptive texts are common obstacles faced by students. As a result, the texts produced tend to be short, lacking in detail, disorganized, and unable to provide a clear description to readers.

These conditions indicate a gap between the expected learning objectives and the reality in the classroom. One of the causes is the lack of optimal use of learning strategies that can stimulate students' creativity and activeness. In many cases, writing instruction is still conventional and teacher-centered, so students have limited opportunities to develop ideas independently and creatively.

Therefore, appropriate and innovative learning strategies with strong theoretical foundations are needed to improve students' language proficiency, especially in writing descriptive texts. These strategies are expected to help students find ideas, develop concepts, and organize their writing systematically and attractively. Thus, students' writing skills can improve, and the objectives of Indonesian language learning can be achieved optimally.

## 2. Description and Theoretical Analysis

Language proficiency includes four main aspects, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These four aspects are interconnected and form a unified process in communication. According to Tarigan, writing is a productive and expressive language skill that requires structured and systematic thinking abilities. This indicates that writing is not merely an activity of putting words into written form, but also a complex cognitive process involving the ability to plan, organize, and express ideas logically and coherently.

Furthermore, Dalman states that writing is a process consisting of several stages, namely prewriting, writing, and revising. The prewriting stage includes activities such as finding ideas, determining topics, and organizing an outline. The writing stage is the process of developing ideas into a complete text, while the revision stage is carried out to improve and refine the writing. Related to students' conditions in the field, the most common difficulties occur in the prewriting stage, especially in finding and developing ideas. This indicates that the writing instruction implemented has not fully provided sufficient space and strategies to assist students in the early stages of the writing process.

In the context of descriptive texts, Keraf explains that descriptive texts aim to provide a clear and detailed description of an object through concrete details. This type of text has a structure consisting of identification and description sections, as well as specific linguistic characteristics such as the use of

adjectives, descriptive phrases, and sentences involving the senses (sight, hearing, smell, feeling, and touch). However, in practice, many students are not yet able to present these elements optimally in their writing. Students' writing tends to be general, lacks detail, and fails to build the reader's imagination. This condition indicates a significant gap between the theoretical concept of descriptive texts and students' actual writing abilities.

From the perspective of learning theory, the constructivist approach emphasizes that knowledge is actively constructed by students through experience and interaction with their environment. Therefore, writing instruction should not only focus on providing theory but also provide real experiences for students. For example, students can be encouraged to observe objects directly in their surroundings or through visual media such as pictures and videos. These experiences will help students develop ideas and enrich the vocabulary used in writing.

In addition, the process approach in writing emphasizes that writing is a gradual and continuous activity. This approach positions students as active participants in the writing process, from planning to revising. If this approach is applied consistently in learning, students will be better guided in developing their writing systematically and purposefully. They will not only focus on the final product but also understand the process required to produce good writing.

Thus, the analysis of these various theories shows that students' low writing ability is not solely caused by internal factors such as lack of interest or ability, but is also influenced by external factors, especially the learning strategies and methods used. The less-than-optimal implementation of learning theories in practice causes students to miss meaningful learning experiences. Therefore, the implementation of learning strategies that are aligned with theoretical foundations is necessary to improve students' writing abilities, especially in writing descriptive texts.

### **2.1 Practical Experience (Implementation of Experience)**

Based on observations and practical teaching experiences in class VII of SMP Negeri 2 Gorontalo, efforts to improve students' descriptive writing skills can be carried out through the implementation of more contextual and student-centered learning strategies. One of the strategies applied is the

use of visual media in the form of pictures of the school environment.

At the initial stage, the teacher provides stimuli in the form of pictures of certain places, such as the school garden or classroom. Students are asked to observe the pictures carefully and record what they see, hear, or feel. This activity aims to train students' sensitivity toward the object being described while helping them generate ideas.

Next, students are guided to create a simple outline consisting of identification and description sections. The teacher provides examples and guidance in organizing ideas so that the writing becomes more structured. Afterward, students begin developing the outline into a complete descriptive text.

During the writing process, the teacher provides gradual guidance, including helping students choose appropriate vocabulary and improve sentence structure. After completing their writing, students exchange their work with classmates to provide simple feedback. This activity aims to train evaluation skills and increase students' awareness of the quality of their writing.

The results of implementing this strategy showed a significant improvement. Students became more active in learning, found it easier to generate ideas, and were able to write more detailed and structured descriptive texts. In addition, the use of visual media was proven to increase students' interest and motivation in writing.

### **2.2 Analysis of the Theories Used**

The theoretical analysis in this study focuses on the conceptual foundations supporting the improvement of language proficiency, especially in writing descriptive texts. The theories used not only explain the nature of writing skills but also provide a basis for selecting effective learning strategies relevant to students' conditions.

First, the theory of writing skills as part of language proficiency places writing as a complex productive skill. According to Tarigan, writing is the ability to express ideas, thoughts, and feelings in written language in a structured and systematic way (Tarigan, 2008:22). Writing is not merely a mechanical activity but also involves deep thinking processes. This is in line with Dalman's opinion that writing is a process consisting of prewriting, writing, and revising stages (Dalman, 2015:15). Students' difficulties in writing descriptive texts,

especially in finding ideas, indicate obstacles at the prewriting stage.

Second, the theory of descriptive text provides an understanding of the characteristics of the text that students must master. Keraf states that description is a form of writing that aims to describe an object clearly and in detail so that readers seem able to see and feel the object (Keraf, 2007:93). Descriptive texts consist of identification and description sections and use linguistic features such as adjectives and sensory expressions. However, in practice, students often fail to present strong details in their writing, making the descriptions too general.

Third, the constructivist approach becomes an important foundation in writing instruction. According to Trianto, constructivist learning emphasizes that knowledge is built independently by students through meaningful learning experiences (Trianto, 2010:28). In this context, the use of visual media and direct observation activities represent the implementation of constructivist principles, where students gain real experiences that help them develop writing ideas.

Fourth, the process approach in writing emphasizes that writing is a gradual activity. According to Nunan, the writing process includes prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing stages (Nunan, 2003:88). This approach provides students with opportunities to develop their writing gradually and improve errors through feedback. Thus, students not only focus on the final result but also understand the stages needed to produce good writing.

Fifth, the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) theory also serves as the basis for selecting learning strategies. Johnson states that contextual learning helps students connect lesson material with real-life situations (Johnson, 2007:67). In this study, the use of school environment objects as material for descriptive writing represents the implementation of CTL, making learning more meaningful and relevant for students.

Based on this theoretical analysis, it can be concluded that improving descriptive writing skills requires a comprehensive approach integrating writing skill theory, descriptive text theory, constructivism, the process approach, and contextual learning. The proper application of these theories in instruction will help students develop ideas, organize text structures, and improve the overall quality of their writing.

### *2.3 Learning Strategies to Improve Students' Language Proficiency*

Efforts to improve students' language proficiency, especially in descriptive writing, require planned, systematic, and student-oriented learning strategies. The strategies implemented focus not only on the final writing product but also on the learning process that develops thinking skills, creativity, and students' active involvement in writing activities.

One strategy used is the process approach in writing instruction. This approach views writing as a gradual process involving prewriting, writing, revising, and editing. At the prewriting stage, teachers facilitate students in generating ideas through direct observation activities and the use of visual media such as pictures or videos. This stage is crucial because most students' difficulties lie in finding and developing ideas.

At the drafting stage, students begin developing their ideas into descriptive texts. Teachers act as facilitators who provide gradual guidance (scaffolding), especially in organizing text structures, selecting vocabulary, and using effective sentences. Students are given the freedom to express their ideas without excessive concern about technical mistakes, allowing their creativity to develop optimally.

The next stage is revision and editing. At this stage, students evaluate their writing through peer review activities or by exchanging feedback with classmates. This activity aims to develop critical thinking skills and increase students' awareness of writing quality. Teachers also provide constructive feedback to help students improve and refine their writing.

In addition to the process approach, contextual learning (CTL) is also applied. In this strategy, learning materials are connected to real-life situations familiar to students. For example, students are asked to write descriptive texts based on objects in the school environment, such as gardens, classrooms, or libraries. Thus, students learn not only theoretically but also through direct experiences, making learning more meaningful and easier to understand.

Another strategy applied is the use of varied learning media, especially visual media. Visual media effectively stimulates imagination and helps students describe objects in more detail. Through pictures or videos, students can observe object details more clearly, making their writing more vivid and descriptive.

To overcome limited vocabulary, teachers also implement vocabulary enrichment strategies. Students are provided with vocabulary related to the object being described, including adjectives and sensory expressions. This strategy aims to enrich students' vocabulary so they become more confident in writing.

Collaborative learning strategies are also used to increase students' participation and involvement. In these activities, students work in small groups to discuss, exchange ideas, and create writing outlines together. Collaborative learning not only helps students understand the material but also trains communication and teamwork skills.

To ensure the success of learning strategies, teachers conduct assessments based on both process and results. Assessment focuses not only on the final descriptive text but also on students' participation in discussions, outlining abilities, and involvement in revision activities. Thus, assessment becomes more comprehensive and provides a complete picture of students' development.

Overall, the implementation of these strategies showed positive results in improving students' language proficiency. Students became more active, creative, and capable of writing better descriptive texts. This demonstrates that innovative, contextual, and student-centered learning can significantly improve language skills, especially writing.

## 2.4 Indicators of Learning Success

Indicators of learning success are used to measure the effectiveness of strategies implemented in improving students' language proficiency, particularly in writing descriptive texts. These indicators are designed comprehensively by covering three main dimensions: process indicators, product indicators, and learning impact indicators.

### 1. Process Indicators

Process indicators focus on students' involvement, activities, and responses during learning activities. Success in this aspect indicates that learning strategies create an active, participatory, and meaningful learning atmosphere.

The process indicators include:

1. Active participation in initial activities (apperception and stimulation)
2. Observation skills
3. Participation in discussions and collaboration
4. Ability to organize writing outlines
5. Involvement in the drafting process
6. Participation in revision and reflection activities

### 2. Product Indicators

Product indicators are used to assess the quality of descriptive texts produced by students. These indicators include:

1. Relevance of content to the described object
2. Completeness and depth of description
3. Coherence and organization of text structure
4. Use of descriptive vocabulary
5. Effectiveness of sentences
6. Accuracy in spelling and punctuation

### 3. Learning Impact Indicators

These indicators are used to observe the short-term impact of learning strategies on students' attitudes and motivation.

The indicators include:

1. Increased interest and motivation in writing
2. Increased self-confidence
3. Development of writing habits

### 4. Learning Mastery Criteria

To determine learning success quantitatively, the following criteria are used:

1. Individual mastery: students achieve a minimum score of 75.
2. Classical mastery: at least 80% of students achieve individual mastery.
3. Improvement in class average scores from pre-learning to post-learning stages.

With these comprehensive indicators, learning evaluation focuses not only on final results but also on the process and overall impact of learning. This is in line with the principles of authentic assessment, which emphasize a balance between cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects.

**Table 1 Assessment Rubric.**

Assessment Aspect	Skor 4 (excellent)	Skor 3 (good)	Skor (fair) 2	Skor 1 (poor)
<b>Content/ideas</b>	Ideas are very clear, detailed, and relevant to the object/topik	Ideas are clear but lack detail	Ideas are unclear and limited	No clear ideas presented.
<b>Teks structure</b>	Complete structure (identification & description of parts) and well organized.	Structure is complete but less organized	Structure is incomplete.	Does not follow the required structure.
<b>Language Use</b>	Uses varied and appropriate descriptive vocabulary.	Vocabulary is fairly varied.	Limited vocabulary.	Very limited vocabulary
<b>Effective Sentences</b>	Sentences are clear, coherent, and easy to understand	There are a few sentence errors.	Many sentences are ineffective	Kalimat tidak jelas
<b>Spelling and Punctuation</b>	Almost no errors.	Some minor errors	Many errors	Too many errors

## Assessment Guidelines

1. Maximum score: 20 (5 aspects × 4)
2. Final score = (Score obtained / 20) × 100

## Score Interpretation

1. 85–100 = Excellent
2. 75–84 = Good
3. 65–74 = Fair
4. <65 = Poor

## 5. Closing

Improving language proficiency in the aspect of writing descriptive texts is an important effort in enhancing the quality of Indonesian language learning at the junior high school level. Based on the results of the discussion and the implementation of learning activities in class VII of SMP Negeri 2 Gorontalo, it can be concluded that the use of innovative, contextual, and student-centered learning strategies has a positive impact on students' writing abilities. Through the use of visual media, direct observation, the process approach, and collaborative activities, students become more active, creative, and able to develop ideas more systematically in descriptive texts.

In addition to improving writing skills, these learning strategies also increase students' motivation, interest, and self-confidence in learning Indonesian. This shows that the success of learning is determined not only by the final writing product but also by the learning process that provides meaningful experiences for students.

Therefore, teachers are expected to continue developing learning methods and strategies that suit students' needs so that language skills, especially writing skills, can develop optimally and sustainably. With appropriate learning strategies, students will not only be able to write well but also think critically, creatively, and communicatively in their daily

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