IMPROVING STUDENTS' DESCRIPTIVE WRITING SKILL THROUGH PICTURE-BASED TECHNIQUE IN CLASS XI SENI KARAWITAN STUDENTS OF SMK NEGERI 5 DENPASAR

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Abtrak

Menulis merupakan salah satu kompetensi esensial dalam menguasai bahasa Inggris yang diharapkan dapat dikembangkan oleh siswa. Di Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan (SMK), khususnya program Seni Karawitan yang berfokus pada musik tradisional Indonesia dan seni pertunjukan, kemampuan menulis teks deskriptif memegang peranan penting. Siswa sering kali diminta untuk mendeskripsikan berbagai objek budaya seperti alat musik tradisional, gerakan tari, dan upacara adat. Namun, faktanya, banyak siswa kelas XI program Seni Karawitan masih kesulitan mengekspresikan ide-ide mereka dalam bentuk tertulis, terutama dalam menulis teks deskriptif dalam bahasa Inggris. Penelitian Tindakan Kelas ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan keterampilan menulis deskriptif siswa kelas XI program Seni Karawitan di SMK Negeri 5 Denpasar melalui penerapan Teknik Berbasis Gambar. Teknik ini memanfaatkan media visual untuk membantu siswa menghasilkan ide, mengembangkan kosakata, dan menyusun teks yang koheren. Dilakukan dalam dua siklus, penelitian ini menunjukkan peningkatan signifikan dalam kinerja menulis, motivasi, dan kepercayaan diri siswa. Temuan ini menyarankan bahwa integrasi gambar dalam pengajaran menulis tidak hanya meningkatkan hasil menulis tetapi juga menciptakan pembelajaran yang lebih bermakna dan berpusat pada siswa, terutama dalam konteks pendidikan vokasi berbasis seni.

Kata kunci: Penulisan deskriptif, Teknik Berbasis Gambar, siswa vokasional, media visual, Seni Karawitan

Abstract

Writing is one of essential competencies in mastering English that students are expected to develop. In vocational high school (SMK), particularly Seni Karawitan – which focuses on traditional Indonesian music and performing arts –, the ability to write decriptive text plays an important role. Students are often required to describe various cultural objects such as traditional musical instruments, dance movement, and rituals. However, in fact, many students of eleventh-grade in Seni Karawitan program still struggle to share their ideas in written form, particularly in writing descriptive text in English. This Classroom Action Research aimed to improve the descriptive writing skills of eleventh-grade students in the Seni Karawitan program at SMK Negeri 5 Denpasar through the implementation of the Picture- Based Technique. This technique utilizes visual media to help students generate ideas, develop vocabulary, and organize coherent texts. Conducted in two cycles, the research showed a significant improvement in students' writing performance, motivation, and confidence. The findings suggest that integrating images into writing instruction not only enhances writing outcomes but also creates a more meaningful and students- centered learning, especially in art- based vocational education contexts.

Keywords: *Descriptive writing, Picture- Based Technique, vocational students, visual media, Seni Karawitan*

1. PENDAHULUAN

Writing is a fundamental skill in English language learning, and for vocational students in the Seni Karawitan program. It plays a crucial role in expressing cultural knowledge. These students are often required to describe various cultural objects such as traditional musical instruments, dance movement, and rituals, yet many still find it difficult to express their ideas in written English. Therefore, developing descriptive writing skills in English is not only a matter of academic achievement but also a relevant skill that supports their ability to promote and preserve their cultural heritage on a global stage (Hughes, 2002). Preliminary observations revealed that eleventh- grade students in this program faced challenges such as limited vocabulary, sentence construction, and understanding the structure of descriptive text. These issues were further compounded by low motivation and limited engagement, largely due to traditional teacher- centered instruction and the use of irrelevant materials that failed to connect with their artistic backgrounds (Richards & Renandya, 2022).

To address these issues, an instructional strategy that supports creativity and visual thinking is necessary. One such method is the Picture- based Technique, which uses image as the primary stimulus for writing. Through visual observation, students are guided to identify and describe objects in a more concrete, meaningful and structured way. According to Harmer (2004), images can help learners organize their thoughts and stimulate their imagination, making them more willing to participate in writing tasks.

The Picture- Based Technique has been proven effective in various educational settings. It not only supports vocabulary development but also helps students with idea generation, sentence structuring, and content organization

(Wright, 1989). For students with artistic backgrounds, such as those in Seni Karawitan, this technique aligns well with their natural tendency to observe and interpret visual elements. Furthermore, by integrating local cultural content into the pictures used for writing, teachers can create a meaningful and culturally responsive learning experience (Tomlinson, 2012).

This study aims to implement the Picture- Based Technique to improve the descriptive writing skills of eleventh-grade students in the Senior Karawitan program at

SMK Negeri 5 Denpasar. By integrating relevant images, this technique seeks to make learning more contextual and meaningful. The study also examines students' responses to this method to assess its effectiveness in increasing motivation and engagement. It is expected that this study will not only contribute to improving students' academic outcomes but also offer practical insights for English teachers working in an art- based educational context. In conclusion, the research aims to develop a more inclusive, culturally responsive, and effective approach to English language instruction for vocational students, particularly those involved in local arts and culture, by incorporating picture- based techniques to stimulate creativity and improve descriptive writing skills.

2. METODE PENELITIAN

This study used a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design to analyze the effectiveness of the Picture- Based Technique in improving students' descriptive writing skills. The research was conducted in two cycles, with each cycle consisting of four interconnected phases, such as planning, action, observation, and reflection. This model follows the framework proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), allowing for continuous improvement based on real- time classroom data.

The study was conducted at SMK Negeri 5 Denpasar, involving 15 eleventh- grade students from the Seni Karawitan program as research subjects. These students were selected based on initial observation results that showed persistent difficulties in writing descriptive texts, including challenges in vocabulary use, sentence structure, and idea development.

The object of this research is students' ability in writing descriptive texts in English. The technique used is Picture-Based Technique, which is a learning strategy that utilizes image media, especially images related to local culture, such as traditional Balinese musical instruments, as visual stimuli in writing activities. This technique was expected to help students develop ideas, expand vocabulary, and organize coherent content, aligning with their artistic background.

Data collection was carried out through four main instruments: (1) Writing tests (pre-test and post-test) to measure the improvement of students' abilities, (2) Observations to record student participation and involvement in learning, (3) Questionnaires to

determine students' perceptions and responses to the techniques used, and (4) Documentation to record the learning process and outcomes through photos, field notes, and examples of student writing. Quantitative data were analyzed by comparing the average scores of the pre-test and post-test in each cycle. Meanwhile, qualitative data were analyzed descriptively through the interpretation of the results of observations, questionnaires, and documentation. The success of the action was determined through indicators of increased writing scores, a positive response of at least 75% of students to learning, and an increase in the quality of descriptive texts in terms of structure, vocabulary, and content.

3. HASIL DAN PEMBAHASAN
Hasil

The results of this classroom action research demonstrate that the Picture-Based Technique effectively improved students' descriptive writing skills through two cycles of implementation. At the beginning of the study (pre-test), the mean score of students' writing performance was only **51.06**, indicating low proficiency in organizing ideas, limited vocabulary use, and difficulties in constructing coherent sentences. This confirmed the initial observation that writing was one of the most challenging skills for students in the Seni Karawitan program, as it required them not only to generate ideas but also to structure them effectively in English.

After the first cycle, the mean score increased to **63.94**, showing a noticeable improvement, though still below the minimum passing grade of 76.

By the end of Cycle II, the mean score rose to **78.07**, surpassing the success indicator established in this study. This progressive improvement suggests that the Picture-Based Technique successfully helped students generate and organize ideas more clearly, while also enhancing their confidence and motivation to write. The increasing trend in scores across cycles demonstrates that when students are provided with meaningful visual stimuli and opportunities for practice, they are able to make steady progress in developing descriptive writing skills.

Tabel 1. Summary of Students' Writing Test Results

Test	Mean Score
Pre- test	51.06
Post- test I	63.94
Post- test II	78.07

In addition to the test results, the student questionnaire also showed positive perceptions towards the Picture-Based Technique. A total of 82.67% of students responded "agree" or "strongly agree" that the use of pictures helped them generate ideas, organize sentences, and reduce writing anxiety, while no students expressed negative responses. This indicates that the strategy was both effective and well-received by learners.

Pembahasan

The findings of this study indicate that the Picture-Based Technique significantly improved students' descriptive writing skills through two cycles of classroom action research. The gradual increase of mean scores—from 51.06 in the pre-test, to 63.94 in post-test I, and finally to 78.07 in post-test II—demonstrates that students benefitted from the integration of visual stimuli into writing instruction. These results suggest that the Picture-Based Technique provided students with concrete and meaningful references, which helped them generate ideas more easily, expand vocabulary, and organize sentences more coherently.

In the first cycle, students were introduced to the Picture-Based Technique using visuals of Balinese traditional instruments. The activities encouraged observation, group discussion, and guided practice in composing descriptive texts. The mean score increased

from 51.06 in the pre-test to 63.94 in post-test I. This improvement indicates that pictures were effective in stimulating ideas and reducing initial difficulties in starting the writing process. However, the results also showed that many students still struggled with organization and grammar. Their texts often lacked coherence, and vocabulary was limited to basic or repetitive words. Classroom observations further revealed that while several students were active in group discussions, others were still hesitant and relied heavily on their peers. This partial improvement is consistent with Harmer (2007), who stated that writing requires repeated drafting and scaffolding before fluency can be achieved. Thus, Cycle I served as a foundation, enabling students to become familiar with descriptive writing while gradually building confidence.

In the second cycle, the Picture-Based Technique was applied with visuals related to Balinese traditional dances. By this stage, students demonstrated greater familiarity with the structure and features of descriptive texts. The mean score rose to 78.07, surpassing the minimum passing grade. Compared to Cycle I, students' writing in Cycle II showed clearer organization, more specific vocabulary, and improved grammar accuracy. Their descriptions became more detailed, reflecting a deeper engagement with the visual prompts. Students also participated more actively in discussions, asked more questions, and showed greater confidence in presenting their ideas. These results support Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory, which emphasizes that learning develops through social interaction and scaffolding, as well as Paivio's Dual Coding Theory (1986), which highlights the benefits of combining visual and verbal inputs to strengthen memory and language production.

The positive results across the two cycles were also reflected in the questionnaire responses. More than 80% of students strongly agreed or agreed that the Picture-Based Technique supported their learning and reduced their anxiety in writing. This finding aligns with Wright (2010) and Yunus & Salehi (2019), who argue that visuals reduce writing apprehension and increase creativity. The use of culturally relevant pictures in this study proved particularly effective, as it allowed students to connect new language learning with their own cultural background. This contextualization not only enhanced engagement but also fostered pride in their cultural identity, an important factor in sustaining motivation in vocational education settings.

When compared with previous studies, the findings are consistent. Handayani (2019) reported that mind mapping with visual prompts improved descriptive details, while Hidayati (2022) and Lestari (2023) found that illustrated and picture series prompts helped students elaborate ideas more cohesively. The present study extends these findings by showing how culturally rooted pictures can simultaneously improve writing skills and maintain cultural relevance, making the Picture-Based Technique particularly suitable for vocational high school students.

Taken together, the findings across both cycles suggest that the Picture-Based Technique provides not only cognitive benefits (idea generation, vocabulary enrichment, and organization) but also affective benefits (motivation, confidence, and reduced anxiety). For teachers, this indicates that picture-based strategies are highly adaptable and can be effectively integrated into writing instruction, especially when tailored to students' cultural contexts. For students, the strategy provides an accessible and engaging pathway to tackle the challenges of writing in English.

4. KESIMPULAN

This study concludes that the Picture-Based Technique is an effective and practical strategy to improve the descriptive writing skills of vocational high school students, particularly those in the Seni Karawitan program at SMK Negeri 5 Denpasar. The results showed a steady improvement in students' performance across two cycles, with the mean score rising from 51.06 in the pre-test, to 63.94 in post-test I, and finally reaching 78.07 in post-test II, surpassing the minimum passing grade. These findings indicate that the integration of pictures into writing instruction not only provides concrete stimuli that help students generate and organize ideas, but also enhances vocabulary, sentence construction, and coherence. The positive results of the student questionnaire, in which more than 80% of students agreed or strongly agreed that the technique supported their learning, further reinforce the conclusion that visuals are highly beneficial in reducing writing anxiety and increasing motivation.

In light of these results, several implications can be drawn. For teachers, the use of culturally relevant visuals, such as Balinese instruments and dances should be considered an effective way to contextualize writing instruction, making it both meaningful and enjoyable for students. Students are encouraged to actively participate in picture-based

activities, as these can serve as opportunities to strengthen vocabulary, build confidence, and practice independent writing. Future researchers are advised to expand this study by applying picture-based techniques to other genres of writing or by integrating digital visual tools to explore how technology can further support students' writing development. Overall, this study highlights that picture-based strategies not only improve linguistic outcomes but also foster creativity, cultural awareness, and engagement, making them a valuable approach in vocational EFL contexts.

5. UCAPAN TERIMA KASIH

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