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Using Discovery Learning Method to Improve Students' Descriptive Text Writing at First Grade of SMKN 1 Batukliang Utara

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan kemampuan menulis teks deskriptif melalui penerapan metode Discovery Learning serta mengidentifikasi persepsi siswa terhadap penerapannya. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode Penelitian Tindakan Kelas (PTK) yang dilaksanakan dalam dua siklus, masing-masing meliputi tahap perencanaan, tindakan, observasi, dan refleksi. Penelitian dilakukan pada siswa kelas X SMKN 1 Batukliang Utara. Data dikumpulkan melalui tes menulis, observasi, dan angket persepsi siswa, kemudian dianalisis secara deskriptif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya peningkatan kemampuan menulis teks deskriptif secara bertahap. Nilai rata-rata siswa pada tes awal sebesar 45,83 meningkat menjadi 67,29 pada siklus I dan mencapai 79,38 pada siklus II setelah pembelajaran didukung dengan media video. Selain itu, hasil angket menunjukkan bahwa siswa memberikan respons positif terhadap penerapan Discovery Learning, terutama dalam meningkatkan motivasi dan kepercayaan diri ketika menulis. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa penerapan metode Discovery Learning yang didukung media pembelajaran relevan dapat membantu meningkatkan kemampuan menulis teks deskriptif siswa. Dengan demikian, metode ini dapat menjadi alternatif strategi pembelajaran bahasa Inggris yang mendorong keterlibatan aktif siswa dalam proses menulis.

Kata kunci: Discovery Learning; keterampilan menulis; teks deskriptif; penelitian tindakan kelas; pembelajaran bahasa Inggris.

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Abstract

This study aimed to improve students' descriptive text writing skills through the implementation of the Discovery Learning method and to explore students' perceptions of its application. The study employed Classroom Action Research (CAR), conducted in two cycles consisting of planning, action, observation, and reflection. The participants were tenth-grade students at SMKN 1 Batukliang Utara. Data were collected through writing tests, classroom observations, and student perception questionnaires and were analyzed descriptively. The findings revealed a progressive improvement in students' descriptive writing performance. The mean score increased from 45.83 in the pre-test to 67.29 in Cycle I and reached 79.38 in Cycle II following the integration of video-based learning materials. Furthermore, questionnaire results indicated that students responded positively to Discovery Learning, particularly regarding their motivation and confidence in writing activities. These findings suggest that implementing Discovery Learning with appropriate instructional media can support students' development of descriptive writing skills. Therefore, Discovery Learning can serve as an alternative instructional strategy for promoting active student engagement and improving descriptive text writing in English language classrooms.

Keywords: Discovery Learning; writing skills; descriptive text; classroom action research; English language learning.

INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the essential skills in English language learning because it enables students to communicate ideas, express information, and develop their ability to organize thoughts systematically. However, writing remains a challenging skill for many learners of English as a foreign language (EFL), particularly when they are required to produce meaningful and well-structured texts. Effective writing involves not only grammatical accuracy and appropriate vocabulary but also the ability to develop ideas, organize information, and communicate messages clearly. Azis (2019) identified several difficulties experienced by students in writing, while Dewi (2021) emphasized that writing difficulties may be influenced by both internal and external factors affecting students' learning processes. Among the various genres taught in Indonesian secondary schools, descriptive text plays an important

role in developing students' ability to describe people, places, objects, and situations through clear and detailed information. Nevertheless, students frequently encounter difficulties in developing ideas, selecting appropriate vocabulary, constructing grammatically correct sentences, and organizing descriptions coherently (Amalia & Rusfandi, 2020; Suryono, 2020). These challenges indicate that teaching writing requires instructional approaches that provide meaningful opportunities for students to explore ideas, practice language use, and actively participate in the learning process.

Similar challenges were identified among first-grade students at SMKN 1 Batukliang Utara. Preliminary classroom observations and interviews revealed that many students experienced difficulties in producing descriptive texts, particularly in developing relevant ideas, organizing sentences, applying the simple present tense, and using appropriate vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. Students often produced short descriptions with limited supporting details and demonstrated uncertainty about how to begin and develop their writing. Furthermore, their participation and motivation during writing activities appeared relatively low. The existing instructional practices, which primarily involved assigning writing topics without sufficient opportunities for exploration and idea development, provided limited support for students to construct meaningful descriptions independently. These classroom conditions suggested the need for a more engaging and student-centered instructional approach. Discovery Learning offers a potential alternative because it encourages students to construct knowledge through observation, exploration, investigation, and problem-solving activities. Surur et al. (2019) explained that Discovery Learning allows students to develop their understanding by actively discovering concepts rather than receiving information in its final form. Similarly, Pangesti and Radia (2021) emphasized the importance of observation and investigation in helping students develop understanding through meaningful learning experiences. Through these processes, students may become more actively involved in generating ideas and developing their writing abilities.

Previous studies have highlighted the potential benefits of Discovery Learning in improving students' learning experiences and writing performance. Ariyana et al. (2020) and Widayanto (2021) reported positive findings regarding the implementation of Discovery Learning in teaching descriptive texts, suggesting that students' active engagement in exploring information and constructing understanding can support their writing development. Furthermore, Putri and Manurung (2020) emphasized the relationship between learning processes and the development of students' competencies, while Khasinah (2021) identified several advantages of Discovery Learning, including increased learner participation, independence, motivation, and opportunities to develop problem-solving skills. Although these studies provide a foundation for implementing Discovery Learning in language classrooms, further classroom-based investigation is needed to understand how the method can address specific writing difficulties among vocational high school students. In particular, the studies do not sufficiently explain how the successive stages of Discovery Learning can be implemented and refined through classroom action research to improve descriptive writing while simultaneously examining students' perceptions of the learning experience. This contextual and practical gap is particularly relevant to SMKN 1 Batukliang Utara, where students experience difficulties related to content development, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and writing mechanics. Investigating the implementation of Discovery Learning in this setting may therefore provide a clearer understanding of how student-centered instructional activities can respond to learners' actual writing needs.

Considering these issues, the present study focused on implementing the Discovery Learning method to improve the descriptive text writing skills of first-grade students at SMKN 1 Batukliang Utara. The method involved six instructional stages: stimulation, problem identification, data collection, data processing, verification, and generalization. These stages were intended to provide students with structured opportunities to explore descriptive topics, collect relevant information, develop ideas, and construct written descriptions through active learning. The study employed classroom action research involving planning, action, observation, and

reflection to examine the implementation and improvement of the instructional process. Specifically, this research aimed to describe how the Discovery Learning method was implemented to improve students' descriptive text writing and to investigate students' perceptions of its use in writing instruction. By integrating students' writing development with their perceptions of the learning process, the study sought to contribute practical insights into the implementation of Discovery Learning in EFL writing classrooms, particularly in vocational high school contexts.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed Classroom Action Research (CAR) to improve students' descriptive text writing skills through the implementation of the Discovery Learning method. According to Mertler (2020), action research is a systematic process conducted by educators to investigate problems in their teaching practices and develop appropriate strategies for improving classroom learning. The research followed a cyclical process consisting of four stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection, as described by Iskandar (2015). The study was conducted in two cycles, with each cycle involving the implementation and evaluation of classroom learning activities. During the planning stage, the researcher prepared lesson plans, learning materials, and research instruments. The action stage involved implementing Discovery Learning activities, while observation focused on students' participation and learning progress. Reflection was conducted to evaluate the results and determine necessary improvements for the following cycle.

Research Setting and Participants

The research was conducted at SMKN 1 Batukliang Utara during the 2024/2025 academic year. The participants consisted of 22 tenth-grade students from the Hospitality Department with different levels of English writing proficiency. The study focused on improving students' ability to produce descriptive texts, particularly in

terms of content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. All 22 students in the selected classroom participated in the research.

Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through classroom observations, writing tests, and questionnaires. Observation sheets were used to record students' activities, engagement, and responses during the implementation of Discovery Learning. Writing tests were administered before the intervention and after each cycle to measure students' progress in descriptive text writing. Students' writing was assessed based on five components: content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. In addition, an eight-item questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, was administered to identify students' perceptions of the Discovery Learning method. Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that qualitative research may involve collecting data through observations, interviews, documents, and other sources to understand participants' experiences and activities. In this study, classroom observations were used to examine students' learning participation, while writing tests were administered to measure their writing development. Questionnaires were also used to investigate students' perceptions of Discovery Learning.

Data Analysis Techniques

Saldaña (2021) emphasized that qualitative data analysis involves systematically organizing, coding, and interpreting information to identify meaningful patterns. In this study, observational data were examined to identify students' learning behaviors and difficulties during classroom activities. Quantitative data from writing tests were analyzed descriptively by comparing mean scores across the pre-test and two research cycles, while questionnaire responses were summarized to describe students' perceptions of the learning method.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Improvement in Students' Descriptive Writing Achievement

The research was conducted with 24 first-grade students at SMKN 1 Batukliang Utara using Classroom Action Research (CAR), consisting of two cycles. Each cycle involved planning, action, observation, and reflection. Students' writing achievement was evaluated through a pre-test and post-tests administered after each cycle.

The findings demonstrated a consistent improvement in students' descriptive writing performance following the implementation of the Discovery Learning method. The students' mean score increased from 45.83 in the pre-test to 67.29 in Cycle I and reached 79.38 in Cycle II.

Table 1. Students' Descriptive Writing Achievement Across Research Stages

Research stage	Mean score	Improvement
Pre-test	45.83	—
Post-test Cycle I	67.29	+21.46
Post-test Cycle II	79.38	+12.09
Overall improvement	—	+33.55

The pre-test results indicated that students initially experienced considerable difficulties in developing ideas, selecting appropriate vocabulary, and organizing descriptive texts. The lowest score was 30, while the highest was 65, and none of the students achieved the minimum competency criterion.

Following the implementation of Discovery Learning in Cycle I, the mean score increased by 21.46 points. Although this improvement indicated positive progress, the class average remained below the minimum competency criterion of 75. Consequently, the researcher continued the intervention in Cycle II by incorporating video-based learning materials and more structured writing activities.

The Cycle II post-test produced a mean score of 79.38, exceeding the minimum competency criterion. Overall, students' average writing achievement increased by 33.55 points from the pre-test to the final post-test. These findings suggested that the implementation of Discovery Learning, supported by instructional media and guided classroom activities, contributed positively to students' descriptive writing development.

The implementation of Discovery Learning followed six instructional stages: stimulation, problem statement, data collection, data processing, verification, and generalization. These stages encouraged students to explore descriptive texts, identify relevant information, organize ideas, and develop written descriptions through active participation.

During Cycle I, students engaged in discussions and writing activities related to descriptive texts, particularly descriptions of tourist attractions and historical buildings. Classroom observations indicated gradual improvements in students'

ability to identify main ideas, understand vocabulary in context, and organize information. However, difficulties in producing accurate and well-developed descriptions remained.

In Cycle II, the researcher introduced instructional videos to provide clearer examples of descriptive text structure, vocabulary, and writing techniques. Students observed the videos, discussed relevant information, selected objects to describe, and produced their own descriptive texts with teacher guidance. The classroom observations described greater independence, more active discussions, and increased confidence in expressing ideas.

The improvement between cycles suggested that combining Discovery Learning with visual instructional materials helped students connect their observations with the writing process. Nevertheless, because the video materials were introduced alongside other instructional refinements, their independent contribution could not be determined from the research design.

In addition to the mean scores, the students' achievement categories demonstrated improvement between the two cycles.

Table 2. Distribution of Students' Writing Scores in Cycles I and II

Score category	Cycle I, n (%)	Cycle II, n (%)
Excellent (85–100)	0 (0%)	9 (37.50%)
Good (70–84)	15 (62.50%)	13 (54.17%)
Enough (55–69)	8 (33.33%)	2 (8.33%)
Less (40–54)	1 (4.17%)	0 (0%)
Very lacking (below 40)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Total	24 (100%)	24 (100%)

The results showed that the proportion of students classified as good or excellent increased from 62.50% in Cycle I to 91.67% in Cycle II. Furthermore, nine students reached the excellent category in Cycle II, whereas none had achieved this category in Cycle I. The number of students in the enough category decreased from eight to two, and no students remained in the less category by the end of Cycle II.

These findings indicated a positive shift in the overall distribution of students' writing performance, supporting the improvement observed in the mean scores.

Students' perceptions were collected through a questionnaire administered to 24 participants after the implementation of Discovery Learning. The questionnaire examined students' enjoyment, participation, comprehension, confidence, motivation, and collaboration.

Table 3. Students' Perceptions of the Discovery Learning Method

Questionnaire statement	Positive responses, n (%)
Enjoyed learning through Discovery Learning	21 (87.50%)
Became more active during learning	21 (87.50%)
Understood the material more easily	17 (70.83%)
Difficulty understanding descriptive text structure	9 (37.50%)
Felt more confident writing descriptive texts	20 (83.33%)
Became more motivated to write	22 (91.67%)
Found group work easier	22 (91.67%)
Found the method interesting and enjoyable	22 (91.67%)

The questionnaire results revealed that most students responded positively to the implementation of Discovery Learning. A total of 91.67% reported increased motivation, easier collaboration, and greater interest in learning activities. Furthermore, 87.50% indicated that the method encouraged active participation, while 83.33% showed greater confidence in writing descriptive texts.

However, the results also indicated that some students continued to experience difficulties in understanding descriptive text structure. This finding suggested that active learning activities needed to be accompanied by sufficient explanations, examples, and teacher feedback to support students with different levels of writing proficiency.

Discussion

The findings demonstrated that the implementation of Discovery Learning was associated with a progressive improvement in students' descriptive writing achievement. The increase in mean scores from 45.83 in the pre-test to 79.38 in Cycle II indicated that students developed their writing abilities through repeated opportunities to observe, explore, discuss, and construct descriptive texts. This finding was consistent with Ariyana et al. (2020), who examined the application of Discovery Learning in teaching descriptive writing and highlighted its relevance to developing students' writing competence.

The improvement could be understood through the student-centered characteristics of Discovery Learning. Rather than receiving information exclusively from the teacher, students participated in identifying relevant details, developing ideas, and constructing written descriptions. Khasinah (2021) explained that Discovery Learning provides opportunities for students to investigate learning materials, develop understanding, and participate actively in learning activities. These characteristics corresponded with the classroom observations, which indicated increasing student independence and engagement throughout the two research cycles.

Furthermore, the findings supported the research discussed by Nurpahmi (2017) and Annisa (2017), both of which showed improvements in students' descriptive writing following discovery-oriented instruction. Although these studies employed pre-experimental designs, their findings provided additional contextual support for the positive writing development observed in the present classroom action research.

The improvement in Cycle II suggested that integrating video materials into Discovery Learning was beneficial for students' understanding of descriptive texts. Videos provided visual examples that students could observe, interpret, and transform into written descriptions. These activities appeared particularly relevant to students who initially struggled with generating ideas and selecting suitable vocabulary. This interpretation was consistent with Mayer's (2021) cognitive theory of multimedia learning, which explained how appropriately designed combinations of words and visual information can support comprehension. In the present study,

instructional videos provided additional opportunities for students to connect visual observations with vocabulary, sentence construction, and descriptive text organization. The improvement in students' descriptive writing achievement was also consistent with research conducted by Firman et al. (2018), who investigated the effectiveness of mind mapping in developing students' writing skills. Their study highlighted the importance of instructional strategies that support students in organizing ideas before producing written texts. Furthermore, Sumarsono and Permana (2023) found that contract learning positively influenced students' academic writing performance and encouraged independent learning. Their findings emphasized the importance of learner autonomy, active participation, and constructive feedback in writing instruction.

However, the findings also demonstrated the importance of teacher guidance. Although students became more active and confident, some continued to experience difficulties understanding descriptive text structure. Khasinah (2021) emphasized that Discovery Learning requires systematic instructional planning and appropriate classroom support. Therefore, the findings suggested that guided exploration, relevant instructional media, and constructive feedback were important elements in supporting students' writing development.

The questionnaire findings indicated that Discovery Learning received predominantly positive responses from students. The high percentages of favorable responses concerning motivation (91.67%), confidence (83.33%), active participation (87.50%), and group collaboration (91.67%) suggested that students perceived the learning activities as engaging and supportive.

These findings were consistent with Khasinah (2021), who identified active participation, learner independence, and motivation as important potential advantages of Discovery Learning. The classroom activities provided students with opportunities to exchange ideas, discuss writing problems, and learn through interaction rather than relying exclusively on teacher explanations.

Nevertheless, positive perceptions did not necessarily indicate that all students had fully mastered descriptive writing. Some participants continued to report

difficulties understanding the material and its structure. Therefore, the questionnaire findings should be interpreted as evidence of favorable student perceptions rather than independent proof of writing proficiency.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that the Discovery Learning method improves students' descriptive text writing skills at the first-grade level of SMKN 1 Batukliang Utara. The improvement is reflected in the increase in students' mean scores from 45.83 in the pre-test to 67.29 in Cycle I and 79.38 in Cycle II. The implementation of Discovery Learning through stimulation, problem identification, information gathering, processing, verification, and generalization encourages students to actively develop ideas and organize descriptive texts. The use of video media in Cycle II also supports students' understanding and writing performance. Furthermore, students show positive perceptions of the method, particularly in terms of motivation, confidence, and classroom participation. These findings suggest that Discovery Learning is an effective instructional method for improving descriptive text writing in the classroom studied.

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