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Enhancing the Eleventh Grade Students' Writing Descriptive Text by Using Draw, Label, Caption (DLC) Strategy at MA Plus Nurul Islam Sekarbela

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Abstrak

Penelitian tindakan kelas ini mengkaji penggunaan strategi Draw, Label, Caption (DLC) untuk meningkatkan keterampilan menulis deskriptif di kalangan siswa kelas sebelas di MA Plus Nurul Islam Sekarbela, Mataram. Penelitian ini melibatkan 27 siswa di kelas XI Agama pada tahun ajaran 2023/2024. Satu siklus penelitian tindakan mencakup perencanaan, tindakan, observasi, dan refleksi. Tes menulis yang diberikan sebelum dan sesudah kegiatan pembelajaran menghasilkan data kuantitatif, sementara observasi kelas mencatat partisipasi siswa serta kesulitan belajar mereka. Rata-rata nilai menulis meningkat dari 61 pada pre-test menjadi 78 pada post-test, dengan kenaikan sebesar 17 poin. Tesis tersebut melaporkan bahwa persentase siswa yang mencapai Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal (KKM) sebesar 75 melonjak dari 11,11% menjadi 81,48%. Observasi menunjukkan keterlibatan yang lebih aktif dalam mengembangkan gagasan deskriptif, meskipun kesulitan kosakata dan ejaan masih dialami oleh beberapa siswa. Temuan ini mengindikasikan bahwa strategi DLC memberikan perancah (scaffolding) visual dan leksikal yang bermanfaat untuk menulis deskriptif di ruang kelas tertentu ini. Karena penelitian ini hanya melibatkan satu kelompok dan satu siklus tindakan, temuan tersebut tidak boleh ditafsirkan sebagai bukti adanya hubungan sebab-akibat yang terkontrol.

Kata kunci: penelitian tindakan kelas; menulis deskriptif; Draw, Label, Caption; EFL; perancah visual

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Abstract

This classroom action research examined the use of the Draw, Label, Caption (DLC) strategy to improve descriptive writing among eleventh-grade students at MA Plus Nurul Islam Sekarbela, Mataram. The study involved 27 students in class XI Agama during the 2023/2024 academic year. One action-research cycle comprised planning, action, observation, and reflection. Writing tests administered before and after the instructional activities provided quantitative evidence, while classroom observations documented student participation and learning difficulties. The mean writing score increased from 61 on the pre-test to 78 on the post-test, a gain of 17 points. The proportion reaching the minimum passing grade of 75 rose from 11.11% to 81.48%. Observations indicated more active engagement in developing descriptive ideas, although vocabulary and spelling difficulties remained for some students. These findings suggest that DLC provided useful visual and lexical scaffolding for descriptive writing in this particular classroom. Because the study involved a single group and one action cycle, the findings should not be interpreted as evidence of a controlled causal effect.

Keywords: classroom action research; descriptive writing; Draw, Label, Caption; EFL; visual scaffolding

INTRODUCTION

Writing requires learners to generate ideas, select vocabulary, organize information, and produce intelligible sentences. These demands can be particularly challenging for learners of English as a foreign language. Brown (2001) emphasizes that writing performance involves content, organization, vocabulary, syntax, and mechanics, while Oshima and Hogue (2007) present writing as a structured process of developing and connecting ideas. For descriptive writing, learners must also identify salient attributes and translate observations into coherent textual descriptions (Gerot & Wignell, 1994).

At MA Plus Nurul Islam Sekarbela, preliminary classroom observations described problems with vocabulary, grammar, spelling, and students' willingness to express ideas in writing (Kasmiati, 2025). These classroom-level challenges resemble the difficulties documented in studies of descriptive-text production (Husna, 2017; Ismayanti, 2020). Limited lexical resources can constrain not only

accuracy but also the range of details that students can include in a descriptive paragraph.

The Draw, Label, Caption (DLC) strategy offers a sequence of visual planning activities before paragraph composition. Students first sketch a chosen object, label its parts or attributes, and formulate a caption before extending these elements into descriptive sentences. Peha (2003) explains the instructional value of drawing and labeling as supports for generating and organizing writing content. Studies cited also associate DLC with improvements in descriptive or narrative writing (Sastrawati, 2015; Oktavianda, 2020; Harahap, 2021). These studies provide a rationale for examining the strategy in a specific classroom rather than assuming that results will generalize across schools. Sandiarsa S. and Firman (2024) discussed the pedagogical value of innovative, context-sensitive English language teaching strategies, including communicative and task-oriented approaches. In the present setting, DLC can be understood as a staged classroom scaffold: drawing makes a topic visible, labeling supplies lexical prompts, and captioning supports the transition toward connected description. Hanan and Tawali (2024) also reported improvements in student interest through cooperative learning in a classroom action research setting; although their study addressed reading rather than writing, it offers a relevant example of reflective strategy implementation in a similar educational context.

Related research has also considered DLC in the teaching of descriptive writing (Oktavianda, 2020). Taken together, these studies offer a rationale for examining how drawing, labeling, and captioning function as connected stages of text production. In the local institutional literature, Sandiarsa S. and Hanan (2023) examined factors affecting English department students' thesis writing, while Hanan et al. (2022) investigated lecturers' online written corrective feedback. Although neither study tested DLC with secondary-school learners, both highlight broader concerns about writing development and instructional support. The present study extends the classroom-based discussion to one eleventh-grade class at MA Plus Nurul Islam Sekarbela and examines changes in descriptive-writing scores alongside

classroom observations. Its one-cycle action-research design, however, does not establish a causal effect independently of other classroom influences.

Previous studies have examined Draw, Label, Caption (DLC) as a prewriting strategy across different educational settings. Sastrawati (2015) conducted classroom action research with 30 eighth-grade learners at MTs Muhammadiyah Tongko and reported that the mean descriptive-writing score increased from 50.99 on the diagnostic test to 63.99 in Cycle I and 75.50 in Cycle II. Similarly, Harahap (2021) investigated DLC in descriptive-text instruction among eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 7 Padangsidimpuan and a statistically significant difference in writing performance. These studies suggest that visual prompts and lexical labeling may support learners in developing descriptive content, although their designs and student populations differ from those of the present study.

This study therefore asked whether the implementation of DLC was accompanied by improved descriptive writing achievement among eleventh-grade students at MA Plus Nurul Islam Sekarbela. Its contribution is a classroom-based account combining test results and observation of how students responded to the instructional sequence.

METHOD

This study used classroom action research with the stages of planning, action, observation, and reflection, following the cyclical approach described by Atweh et al. (2002). The research was conducted at MA Plus Nurul Islam Sekarbela in Mataram, West Nusa Tenggara, during January–March 2024. Participants were all 27 students of class XI Agama in the 2023/2024 academic year. The result reports one completed action cycle.

During planning, the researcher prepared a lesson plan, writing assessments, and observation sheets. The action stage introduced descriptive-text conventions and guided students through drawing an object, labeling important parts, adding a caption, and using those details to compose sentences and descriptive paragraphs. The research narrative describes a pre-test, instructional meetings, and a post-test,

with the final assessment administered on 20 March 2024. The pre-test topic concerned animals, whereas the post-test asked students to describe favorite fruits.

Data sources included writing tests, classroom observation sheets, and field notes. Quantitative analysis compared class mean scores and the proportion of students attaining the minimum passing grade (MPG) of 75. Qualitative interpretation drew on observations of participation, vocabulary use, spelling, and classroom behavior.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The classroom test results indicated a higher average writing score after the DLC instructional sequence. The pre-test total of 1,670 and the post-test total of 2,106 correspond to approximately 61.85 and 78.00 points for 27 students; rounded means of 61 and 78, which are retained here.

Table 1. Descriptive writing achievement before and after DLC

Indicator	Pre-test	Post-test
Participants	27	27
Total score	1,670	2,106
Mean	61	78
Students meeting MPG	3	21
Percentage meeting MPG	11.11%	81.48%
MPG threshold	75	75

The result increase of 17 points in the mean score indicates an improvement in the class's observed writing performance between the two assessments. At baseline, learners had difficulty constructing sentences, selecting suitable vocabulary, and spelling words accurately. In the post-test account, students were described as more capable of arranging descriptive sentences and applying grammatical forms. The difference between the pre-test and post-test prompts should nevertheless be considered when interpreting the magnitude of the change.

Observation notes suggest that the visual sequence helped learners move from a concrete representation to lexical labels and then to written descriptions. At the second instructional meeting, some students remained quiet or struggled to identify features of descriptive texts. At the subsequent meeting, several students asked about vocabulary and comparative expressions, while others were distracted by conversations. By the final meeting, the researcher described greater responsiveness and participation, alongside continuing requests for help with spelling and word choice. This interpretation resonates with Sandiarsa S. and Hanan (2023), whose study highlighted linguistic barriers in student writing. The present study differs in participant level and genre, so their findings serve as contextual support rather than direct confirmation of DLC effectiveness.

This pattern is compatible with the premise that a drawing can narrow the topic, labels can provide a provisional word bank, and captions can serve as bridges between isolated vocabulary and connected prose. The interpretation is consistent with Peha's (2003) instructional account and earlier classroom studies of DLC (Sastrawati, 2015; Oktavianda, 2020). It also relates to findings that vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics present recurrent difficulties for students composing descriptive text (Husna, 2017; Ismayanti, 2020). Hanan et al. (2022) further emphasize the role of written corrective feedback, suggesting that captions and descriptive drafts can become opportunities for targeted feedback on word choice, sentence formation, and spelling. The emphasis on active, purposeful instruction also aligns broadly with the teaching-strategy discussion by Sandiarsa S. and Firman (2024). In a separate reading-focused classroom action study, Hanan and Tawali (2024) documented increased student interest during cooperative instruction; its relevance here concerns classroom engagement and action-research practice, not the measured impact of DLC on writing.

The improvement can be interpreted through the role of prewriting support in reducing the difficulty of starting a descriptive paragraph. In the DLC sequence, a drawing makes the intended referent visible, labels isolate relevant attributes, and captions invite students to turn those attributes into statements. This progression is

consistent with Peha's (2003) view of drawing and labeling as resources for developing writing ideas. Rather than treating the picture as an artistic product, the instructional value lies in how students use it to select content and maintain a clear descriptive focus.

The classroom difficulties also help explain why the sequence may have been useful in this setting. Students initially struggled with limited vocabulary, sentence construction, and spelling (Kasmiati, 2025). Labels potentially functioned as a small, topic-specific vocabulary bank, while captions provided an intermediate step between naming objects and producing a coherent paragraph. These interpretations are compatible with the wider concerns about linguistic barriers to English writing discussed by Sandiarsa S. and Hanan (2023), although their study examined thesis writing in a different learner population and should not be treated as direct evidence of DLC effectiveness.

A further implication concerns the interaction between visual planning and feedback. Once learners have produced labels and captions, teachers can identify imprecise vocabulary, missing details, or grammatical problems before a complete paragraph is written. Hanan et al. (2022) investigated lecturers' written corrective feedback practices, offering a related perspective on the pedagogical importance of responding to learner writing. The present study did not isolate the effects of corrective feedback, however; therefore, the suggestion that DLC facilitates more targeted feedback is a pedagogical interpretation rather than a separately tested finding.

The findings also warrant comparison with earlier DLC investigations. Sastrawati (2015) reported gains in descriptive-paragraph writing within a classroom action research context, and Harahap (2021) examined DLC for descriptive-text writing among junior secondary learners. Their work supports the relevance of examining this strategy in EFL classrooms, but differences in school level, design, assessment, and instructional context prevent direct numerical comparisons. The contribution of the present study is its account of how DLC was implemented in one

eleventh-grade Islamic senior secondary classroom, with both writing scores and classroom observations informing the interpretation.

CONCLUSION

DLC-supported instruction was accompanied by improved descriptive writing performance among 27 eleventh-grade students at MA Plus Nurul Islam Sekarbela. The mean increased from 61 to 78, and classroom observations described greater engagement in generating and expressing ideas. Teachers may use drawing, labeling, and captioning to scaffold vocabulary and paragraph development, while continuing explicit support for grammar and spelling. Future research should verify the inconsistent mastery percentages in the source data and use comparable assessment tasks and more robust evaluation procedures.

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