

Description Essay Writing Skills of Grade V Elementary School Students

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Abstract

Purpose: This study aims to describe the skills of fifth grade students of SD Negeri 2 Wonokarto in writing descriptive essays.

Methodology: The research used a qualitative method, focusing on five aspects: (1) content or idea, (2) content organization, (3) grammar, (4) style: writing structure and vocabulary, and (5) spelling and punctuation. The data source was taken from 7 fifth grade students of SD Negeri 2 Wonokarto.

Results: The findings showed that the average student scores for each indicator were as follows: content/idea (21.7), content organization (15.8), grammar (14.7), style (11.9), and spelling/punctuation (10.9). Based on the assessment, 5 students (71.4%) were in the good category, and 2 students (28.6%) were in the fair category.

Applications/Originality/Value: Students experienced obstacles such as difficulty in expressing ideas, constructing sentences, and applying correct spelling. To improve descriptive writing skills, creative and innovative teaching methods can be applied, including the use of supportive learning media, visits to the library, consistent writing practice, and the provision of structured writing guidelines and spelling exercises.

Introduction

Education is defined in the Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 20 of 2003 as a conscious and planned effort to create a learning atmosphere and learning process so that students actively develop the potential needed for themselves, society, nation and state. This fact clearly states that education acts as a means of developing self-potential that is useful as a provision for current and future social life in society. Therefore, Indonesian language subjects are very important to learn in the education curriculum. Indonesian not only functions as a means of communication, but also as a bridge to understand and appreciate the culture and identity of the nation (Misriani et al., 2023). Through language learning, students can hone good and correct language skills, which will be very useful in various aspects of life, both in education, work, and social interaction. In addition, good language skills also support the development of critical and creative thinking, which are important competencies in the current era of globalization (Gultom et al., 2023).

Indonesian language learning aims to achieve language skills that cover four main aspects: listening, speaking, reading and writing. These four skills are interrelated and mutually supportive, as stated by Keraf. Among the four skills, writing has a very important role. Writing is the process of deriving graphic symbols that represent language, so that it can be understood and read by others (Tarigan & Guntur, 2008). Although pictures can convey meaning, writing offers a more organized unity of language expression. In this context, an essay functions as an organized expression of ideas about a subject matter (Lestari & Pebriana, 2019). One common type of essay is description, which aims to describe something according to reality, so that readers can better image the writer's experience (Jayanti & Fachrurazi, 2020). Description essays describe the story clearly, allowing readers to feel and understand what is expressed (Safitri, 2022). Thus, writing, especially in the form of description essays, is an important skill that helps writers convey ideas and experiences clearly to readers.

Writing skills not only allow students to express ideas and feelings clearly, but also help them in improving the 4C skills of communication, critical thinking, and creativity (Simanjuntak, 2019). However, currently many learners show low writing skills. According to Utari & Rambe (2023), students' low writing skills are caused by internal factors such as low interest and low learning motivation and also external factors such as lack of parental attention and the influence of social media. This has a negative impact on students' abilities such as difficulty expressing their thoughts and ideas clearly so that it will hinder the learning process and understanding of the material which will ultimately affect student learning

outcomes (Fajri & Wardana, 2023). Therefore, it is important for educators to pay more attention to developing students' writing skills.

The problem of low student writing skills is supported by the results of observations made by researchers. The low writing skills of students at SD Negeri 2 Wonokarto reflect the various challenges faced in the learning process. An interview with the homeroom teacher revealed that students' interest in writing tends to be low, which stems from the conventional learning methods that still dominate. The use of lectures as the main method makes students feel bored, so they are not motivated to engage in the task of writing or composing description texts. In addition, many students find it difficult to develop ideas and thoughts, given their limited vocabulary. This challenge also includes spelling problems, diction writing, and undirected sentence structure. Not to mention, the lack of assistance from parents in the learning process adds to the difficulty for students to understand the concept of descriptive essays. All these factors interact with each other and create significant obstacles in improving students' writing skills.

The problems encountered by researchers at the observation stage at SD Negeri 2 Wonokarto show an inverse comparison with the current curriculum which expects that the use of active and interactive learning methods will increase students' interest and writing skills and also the limited vocabulary and lack of assistance from parents create significant obstacles, contrary to the expectations of constructivism theory that students can develop independently (Muzakki, 2021).

This research is relevant to several previous studies that highlighted the low description writing skills of students. The results of research by Safitri (2022) showed that the description writing skills of 5th grade students of SD Negeri 01 Suak Tapeh were still low. Research by Dalilah et al (2023), concluded that the ability to write descriptive essays of class VB students was in the sufficient category, although there were still some difficulties faced. Tadzkiroh & Muryani (2023) added that students' writing ability is influenced by various difficulties, such as expressing ideas and determining correct spelling. Ikhlas et al. (2023) found that there were difficulties in writing description essays which were influenced by internal and external factors. Finally, research by (Kristina et al., 2023), showed that many students have not understood the description writing material well, and there are students who have difficulty in reading, which has an impact on their creativity in writing. The differentiation of this study from other studies is the emphasis on the techniques and strategies used by students, the difficulties faced, and the factors that influence their ability to write descriptions.

The purpose of this introduction is to provide a clear picture of the importance of developing description writing skills among students, particularly at SD Negeri 2 Wonokarto. Through an explanation of the educational context, the challenges faced by students, and the relevance of previous research, this introduction aims to identify the problems that hinder students' writing skills and underlie the need for more effective interventions in learning. Thus, it is hoped that this study can contribute to the development of better learning strategies, improve students' interest, and significantly improve their description writing skills.

Method

The type of research used is using a qualitative approach, with the type of descriptive qualitative research method. According to qualitative research is research that intends to understand phenomena about what is experienced by research subjects such as behavior, perceptions, motivations, actions, etc., holistically, and by means of descriptions in the form of words and language in a special natural context and by utilizing various natural methods. This research was conducted at SD Negeri 2 Wonokarto, focusing on fifth-grade students. The school is located at street Suprpto No. 28 B, Wonokarto Village, Wonogiri Sub-district. The researcher chose this location because it is close to their residence and easily accessible. The data collection techniques used in this study included interviews, tests, and observations. Interviews were conducted with the fifth-grade homeroom teacher and students who participated in the descriptive essay writing test to explore the difficulties and factors affecting students' ability to write descriptive essays. Then observation to find out all the behaviors carried out by teachers and students during the learning process by observing the Indonesian language learning process of writing descriptive essays. And tests are conducted to find out students in writing descriptions in the form of skill data and stages of writing descriptions. The test given to students is that students are asked to make a description text according to the imagination of each student. The data sources in this study used primary data and secondary data. Data analysis using data reduction, in this study begins with descriptive text writing activities in fifth grade students of SD Negeri 2 Wonokarto, presentation of data carried out in accordance with the formulation of problems in the study, and drawing conclusions in this study, namely how descriptive text writing skills in fifth grade students of SD Negeri 2 Wonokarto.

Result and Discussion

This research was conducted in the odd semester of the 2024/2025 school year. The subjects of this study were 7 fifth grade students of SD Negeri 2 Wonokarto. The results of this study aim to determine the factors that hinder the ability to write description essays of grade V students. The ability to be assessed is based on 5 aspects, namely the content or idea in question, content organization, grammar, style: writing structure and grammar, and grammar spelling. The data collected are student test results.

Writing Skills and Barriers in Writing Description Essay

Based on the results of observations and interviews with teachers that have been conducted during learning to write descriptions, almost 80% of students have been able to perform essay writing skills, there are only a few students who still need guidance. The obstacles faced by students in writing descriptive essays are the lack of deepening words and vocabulary of children who still need a lot of reading and literacy. The teacher has taught the material about it but based on the observation of learning activities the teacher still has not created an interesting learning atmosphere such as giving interactive quizzes, learning still uses conventional methods such as lectures.

In accordance with the results of interviews with students, students in the good category have understood the material about writing descriptive essays such as several criteria for writing descriptions, namely themes, spelling, sentences, content and also paragraphs in an essay. These students already feel that learning Indonesian is fun so they do not experience difficulties when writing descriptive essays. Meanwhile, students who are in the sufficient category although students can read and write descriptive essays, these students still have difficulty with spelling and grammar and punctuation. The results of interviews with students and teachers are in line with the opinion of Ikhlas et al (2023) that students are able to provide ideas or ideas but still not but students still have difficulty putting them into words for students it is difficult to choose the right words to convey their ideas. Their limited vocabulary still affects their writing ability because they do not know how to use capitalization and punctuation.

The assessment of writing skills is based on an instrument according to Wibowo (2017) based on 5 aspects, namely the intended content or idea, content organization, grammar, style: writing structure and grammar, and grammar spelling. The writing skills assessment guidelines are seen in the following table:

Table 1. Assessment results of garland writing skills

No.	Student's Name	Aspect/Element					Score	Category
		Content or ideas	Content organization	Grammar	Writing structure	Grammar spelling		
1	Iqbal	26	17	14	12	14	83	Good
2	Shafa	28	17	14	12	11	82	Good
3	Regina	23	14	14	12	11	74	Good enough
4	Yusran	29	18	14	12	10	83	Good
5	Rafael	26	17	16	12	11	82	Good
6	Nasya	24	15	14	12	11	76	Good
7	Fatha	22	13	14	11	8	68	Good enough
Average		21,7	15,8	14,7	11,9	10,9	78,3	Good

Based on the results of worksheets on 7 fifth grade students of SD Negeri 2 Wonokarto, the results of the writing skills of fifth grade students on the content indicator of the ideas put forward the average student score is 21.7, the second indicator of content organization the average student score is 15.8, the third indicator of grammar the average student score is 14.7, the style indicator: the choice of structure and vocabulary the average student score is 11.9, and the fifth indicator on spelling and writing the average student score is 10.9. Overall the results of the description writing skills of fifth grade students of SD Negeri 2 Wonokarto can be seen in the following table:

Table 2 Grouping of each Category

Score	Category	F	Percentage
85-100	Very Good	0	0
75-84	Good	5	71,4%
60-74	Sufficient	2	28.6%
40-59	Insufficient	0	0
0-39	Needs Improvement	0	0

Table 1 above shows that there are 5 students or 71.4% in the good category and 2 students or 28.6% in the fair category. These results show that overall the students' essay writing skills are sufficient. Based on the results of the researcher's analysis using five indicators of assessment of description writing skills on the indicator of the content of ideas, the average score still does not reach the maximum expected score, this is because students are still not ready to write an essay. Students are still confused and want examples before they can decide which topic to describe. This is in line with the results of interviews with

teachers. Students' vocabulary and word depth are still lacking. This shows that students have difficulty in putting their ideas into writing. In line with Rohmadi, and Setiawan's (2020) research that students' challenges in writing description essays include problems expressing ideas, arranging words into sentences, identifying the right spelling, and learning focus. Then on the indicator of the content of ideas the average score also still does not reach the maximum score, students still need to be given examples to open their minds because they are not ready to make descriptions, determine ideas based on the theme to be described, and are still confused. Students still have difficulty understanding the cohesiveness between sentences, only a few have understood the concept. Many children still have disorganized sentences because they use too many connecting words. This is in accordance with the research of Sanita, Marta and Nurhaswinda (2020) which explains that students still find it difficult to express what needs to be written, and are confused about where to start what they will write, do not pay attention to spelling, capital letters, and sentence order. In the grammar indicator, the average score of students has reached the maximum score expected, this shows that students can express simple and understandable sentence ideas. Although most students are sufficient in using and writing correct spelling, some students still do not pay attention to using and writing correct spelling when writing description essays. Learning grammatical structures is very important for students because it is clear that they are not speaking correctly when they speak Indonesian in a way that deviates from the standard. This is in line with what Liani (2022) revealed that language errors occur when someone uses language, either in writing or orally, which deviates from the rules of Indonesian grammar, community norms, or the determinants of communication. The fourth indicator, namely structure and vocabulary, students' scores have almost reached the maximum score. There are difficulties experienced by students in the structure and vocabulary of students, based on the results of teacher interviews that students' difficulties in writing descriptive writing students still have difficulty determining vocabulary when writing essays, also seen from the results of the analysis of students' essays. Although students' word choice and diction are adequate, some of the terms they use are still inappropriate and do not fit the context. Students still have a poor understanding of the use of nonstandard words, and most of them continue to use nonstandard vocabulary in their essays. According to Hartati & Idrus (2018) In order for the reader to understand the author's message and purpose, care is needed in the selection and application of diction and word relationships. And on the spelling and grammar indicator, the average score obtained by students has reached the maximum score. The use of punctuation marks in the essay, some students have been able to write the location of periods and commas and understand their functions well. However, there are still students who have not been able to write punctuation marks and do not understand about it. In students' description essays, several punctuation errors were found. From the beginning of the paragraph to the end, some essays had no punctuation marks at all. Conjunctions are more often used by students than punctuation marks, which has an impact on sentence structure. In line with Luthfia's research, et al (2021) have difficulty applying punctuation rules correctly and using proper spelling according to PUEBI. Students should pay attention to their spelling and punctuation. Although there are still some essays with spelling mistakes that make the work incomprehensible, the students are quite good at using and writing proper spelling. To make their spelling imprecise and impossible for readers to read, students often abbreviated the words they used in the essay. This is in accordance with research conducted by Naki, et al (2018) who mentioned the challenges students face when writing descriptive essays including their inability to learn proper spelling rules, lack of seriousness in doing their assignments, and the impact of language differences.

The challenges that students face when writing have an impact on their ability to write description essays. These challenges include the inability to come up with ideas, difficulty constructing sentences and identifying appropriate and acceptable spelling. Students who have difficulty in concentrating in writing, learning that is less interactive and still uses the lecture method makes students feel bored and less motivated to learn. These results align with the research conducted by Dalilah et al. (2021), which identified difficulties in writing descriptive essays. Students struggle to develop ideas according to the theme of the essay, and their sentence structures are often unclear. For readers to understand students' essays and the meaning of the sentences they write, the sentences must be clear. Hermaditojo (2018) stated that when using linguistic characteristics in descriptive texts, it is important not only to use specific words but also to employ language in such a way that readers can see, hear, and feel what is being described.

Efforts to improve the descriptive essay writing skills of fifth grade students

Based on the results of interviews and observations in improving the ability to write descriptive essays in class V students, teachers do several ways such as motivating students to visit the library during recess or free time and teaching them to do literacy frequently. In learning description essay requires a varied media or strategy to achieve optimal results. Based on the results of observations and interviews that the learning carried out by the teacher still uses conventional methods in explaining the material. The use of conventional methods students' focus is easily distracted and quickly feel bored, as revealed by Siregar (2023) in his research because teachers do not use creative teaching methods, lessons are considered less varied, and students become bored easily. Then the use of learning media used by teachers in grade V students tends to be less innovative and lacks an attractive classroom atmosphere.

The media used, in the form of an LCD and cellphone assistance, only displays material and does not facilitate question-and-answer interactions between the teacher and students. Abdurrahman, as cited in Ikhlas et al. (2023), states that teacher-related factors can include poor learning strategies, such as handling learning activities that do not motivate students to learn,

using monotonous methods that make learning boring, relying on inadequate teaching aids or learning media, and the teacher's lack of involvement in helping students develop writing skills and encouraging them to express themselves.

There are several factors that determine writing skills, namely experience, time, opportunity, and practice. Writing skills require regular practice and structured education. Teachers must provide opportunities for students to practice writing correct sentences and using punctuation properly. Teachers also need to create an engaging learning environment by using learning media that help make abstract concepts concrete, in line with the developmental stage of elementary school children, such as audio-visual media and images. In Azizah's research (2016), the use of audio-visual learning media was shown to improve students' descriptive writing skills, as students' interest in audio-visual media made them more active in the learning process. Additionally, the ability to write descriptive essays can be enhanced through practice. According to Rostina's research (2017), improving students' descriptive writing skills can be achieved by implementing exercises that help students understand how to write descriptive essays properly. Furthermore, students have significant opportunities to increase their knowledge and support each other in realizing their full potential.

There are several follow-up options that can be used to overcome this. Students can apply the actions listed in this solution to improve their descriptive writing skills. The first is to create an essay outline. Second, providing and seeking inspiration to students. Third, using a guidebook that contains improved spelling. Fourth, providing additional study for writing. Fifth, motivating students to always read and visit the library during breaks or during free time. The solution is tailored to the needs of students, which can be determined through initial evaluation or reflection (Rohimat, Wulandari & Wardani, 2023). Another supporting factor is to increase students' interest in learning using interesting learning resources that are tailored to students' needs in everyday life (Rohimat, 2022).

Conclusion

Based on the results of the analysis conducted on fifth grade students of SD Negeri 2 Wonokarto, it can be concluded that students' description writing skills are in the good category, the percentage of scores obtained from 7 students is 5 students or 71.4% in the good category and 2 students or 28.6% in the sufficient category. The difficulties faced by students based on 5 aspects of assessment are that students are still not ready to write essays, students still need to be given examples to open their minds because they are not ready to make descriptions, determine ideas based on themes to be described and are still confused, students still have difficulty understanding the cohesiveness between sentences, only a small proportion have understood the concept, some students still do not pay attention to using and writing correct spelling when writing description essays, and there are still students who cannot write punctuation and do not understand about it. Another factor is that the teacher still has not created an interesting learning atmosphere such as giving interactive quizzes, learning still uses convention methods such as lectures.

Solutions that can be used to overcome the difficulties faced by students by making an essay outline. Provide and seek inspiration to students. Using a guidebook that contains improved spelling. Provide additional study for writing. Motivating students to always read and visit the library during breaks or during free time. The difference between this research and previous research conducted by Kiki et al (2023) is that the analysis of description essay writing skills only describes the process of obstacles experienced by students in writing description essays. This study complements the efforts that teachers and students can make to improve students description writing skills and overcome the obstacles experienced by students.

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