



Students' Descriptive Writing Ability Through Interview Text-Based Learning in Junior High School

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: This study aims to describe the ability of seventh-grade students at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Al Jamhuriyah, Cinere, Depok, in writing descriptive essays based on interview texts, focusing on substance and language aspects of descriptive writing performance.

Methodology: This study used a descriptive qualitative method involving 30 students of class VII A at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Al Jamhuriyah, Cinere, Depok. Data were collected through writing assignments based on interview texts, observation, interviews, and documentation. The instrument used was descriptive writing guidelines covering substance and language aspects.

Main Findings: The findings showed that students' ability in writing descriptive essays based on interview texts was still low. No students reached the excellent category, while 2 students (6%) were in good category, 9 students (30%) in fair category, 16 students (53%) in poor category, and 3 students (10%) in very poor category.

Novelty/Originality of this study: This study introduces the use of interview texts as a medium for assessing students' descriptive writing ability, emphasizing both substance and language components. It provides a more specific evaluation of students' writing performance and identifies weaknesses in transforming interview content into coherent descriptive essays.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the most important language skills in the Indonesian language learning process besides listening, speaking, and reading. Writing skills serve as a medium for students to express ideas, thoughts, experiences, and feelings systematically and communicatively in written form [1]-[3]. Writing ability not only requires good and correct language mastery, but also demands logical, critical, and creative thinking skills so that the resulting text has clear meaning and can be understood by readers. In the context of junior high school education, writing skills become one of the basic competencies that must be mastered by students because they are directly related to academic ability and literacy development [4], [5].

Writing instruction at the Madrasah Tsanawiyah level often faces various challenges, especially in students' ability to compose descriptive essays [6]-[8]. Descriptive writing is a form of writing that aims to describe

an object, condition, place, or character in detail so that readers seem to be able to see, feel, and experience the described object themselves. In practice, students still experience difficulties in describing objects clearly, organizing ideas systematically, choosing appropriate diction, using effective sentences, and applying spelling according to Indonesian language rules [9], [10]. These difficulties indicate that descriptive writing skills are not merely ordinary writing activities, but require continuous practice and appropriate learning strategies.

The low writing ability of students is also influenced by the lack of learning activities oriented toward writing practice. Generally, the Indonesian language learning process still focuses more on reading activities and theoretical language mastery rather than direct writing practice [11]-[13]. Teachers often emphasize knowledge aspects more than productive skills. As a result, students have limited real experience in composing good writing. In addition, low writing interest, lack of motivation, and limited attractive learning media are also factors causing students difficulty in developing descriptive writing skills optimally.

One of the media that can be used to improve descriptive writing skills is interview text. Interview text is a form of information presentation in written question-and-answer format obtained from interview activities with informants [14]. This text has great potential as a learning medium because it contains factual information that can help students understand characters, experiences, and certain situations more concretely. By using interview texts, students have a clearer information base to be developed into descriptive essays, especially in describing characters and situations in more detailed and systematic ways [15], [16]. The use of this medium can also help students develop writing ideas and reduce difficulties in starting the writing process.

Writing descriptive essays based on interview texts is an activity of transforming interview information into complete descriptive writing. In this process, students are required to identify important information, understand the character of the subject, and reconstruct the information into coherent and interesting descriptive paragraphs [17]. The assessment aspects in this activity include not only substance such as the ability to describe objects, content organization, and suitability with the interview text, but also language aspects such as word choice, effective sentence use, and spelling accuracy. Therefore, this activity becomes a fairly comprehensive indicator for measuring students' writing abilities as a whole [18], [19].

Based on preliminary observations at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Al Jamhuriyah, Cinere District, Depok City, it was found that the ability of seventh-grade students in writing descriptive essays was still relatively low. Most students were not yet able to compose complete and coherent essays, and many errors were found in sentence structure, spelling, and inappropriate word choice. In addition, students also tended to have difficulty describing objects in detail, resulting in writing that lacked vividness and attractiveness. This condition indicates the need for a deeper study of students' descriptive writing abilities so that the main weaknesses that need improvement in the learning process can be identified.

Previous research conducted by I Made Suastra [20] showed that students' ability to write narrative essays through picture media was categorized as high, with an average score of 70.78%. Research by Suhaimah Bulqyah [21] also found that students' narrative writing skills were categorized as good, with an average score of 70.05%. Meanwhile, research by Irma Khoirot Daulay [22] showed that the ability to write narrative essays based on personal experience was still categorized as poor. These three studies have similarities in examining students' writing skills, but they still focus on narrative essays and use different media such as pictures and personal experiences. There are still limited studies that specifically examine students' ability in writing descriptive essays based on interview texts, especially at the Madrasah Tsanawiyah level. This becomes the research gap that needs further investigation.

The novelty of this study lies in the use of interview texts as a medium to assess students' descriptive writing abilities. Unlike previous studies that mostly used picture media or personal experiences in narrative writing, this study focuses on transforming interview texts into descriptive essays, requiring students to develop factual information into systematic, detailed, and communicative writing [23], [24]. This study also evaluates students' abilities more specifically through two main aspects, namely substance and language aspects, so that the results can provide a more comprehensive picture of students' weaknesses and strengths in writing.

The implications of this study are expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions to Indonesian language learning. Theoretically, this study can enrich studies on writing skills, especially descriptive writing based on interview texts. Practically, the results of this study can serve as evaluation material for teachers in determining more effective and innovative learning strategies to improve students' writing abilities [25], [26]. Teachers can use interview texts as an alternative learning medium that is more contextual and engaging, enabling students to develop ideas more easily and express them in good descriptive writing.

The urgency of this study lies in the importance of improving writing skills as part of strengthening students' literacy in the modern educational era [27]. Low writing ability can affect students' critical thinking skills, written communication, and overall academic achievement. If this condition is not addressed immediately, the quality of Indonesian language learning will continue to decline, and students will face difficulties in meeting academic demands at higher levels of education. Therefore, research on students' ability to write descriptive essays based on interview texts is very important in providing concrete solutions to writing learning problems in schools, especially at the Madrasah Tsanawiyah level.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

2.1. Research Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to describe students' ability in writing descriptive essays based on interview texts [28]. Descriptive qualitative research is used to identify, analyze, and interpret phenomena systematically based on factual conditions found in the field. This method does not emphasize numerical calculation as the main focus, but rather aims to provide a comprehensive description of students' writing performance based on substance and language aspects. According to Lexy J. Moleong, qualitative descriptive research produces data in the form of words, descriptions, and observable behaviors rather than statistical calculations. This design was considered appropriate because the study focused on describing students' writing competence in its natural classroom context.

The research was conducted at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Al Jamhuriyah, Cinere, Depok, located on Jalan Raya Gandul No. 28, RT 001/006, Gandul Village, Cinere District, Depok City. The study was carried out during the second semester of the 2013/2014 academic year. The object of this study was students' descriptive essays produced from interview texts. The researcher observed the writing outcomes and analyzed the quality of students' descriptive writing based on predetermined assessment indicators.

2.2. Subject/Sample

The subjects of this study were seventh-grade students of class VII A at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Al Jamhuriyah, Cinere, Depok. The total number of participants was 30 students consisting of 12 male students and 18 female students. Since the total population was relatively small, all students were included as the research sample using total sampling technique. This technique was selected to ensure that the researcher could obtain comprehensive data representing the actual condition of students' descriptive writing ability.

Table 1. Distribution of Research Subjects

Variable	Category	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	40.0
Gender	Female	60.0
Total	Students	100

2.3. Data Sources and Data Collection Techniques

The data sources in this study consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained directly from students' descriptive writing results based on interview texts [29]. Secondary data were obtained from classroom observations, teacher interviews, school documentation, and supporting literature related to writing instruction. The use of multiple data sources was intended to strengthen data validity and provide deeper understanding of students' writing performance.

Data collection techniques used in this study included observation, interview, documentation, and writing tests. Observation was conducted to examine classroom learning activities and students' participation during writing lessons. Interviews were conducted with Indonesian language teachers to obtain information about students' writing difficulties and teaching strategies used in the classroom. Documentation was used to collect school data, students' writing assignments, and supporting academic records. The writing test required students to transform interview texts into descriptive essays, which became the main instrument for assessing writing ability.

2.4. Research Instrument

The main research instrument used in this study was a descriptive writing assessment rubric [30]. This rubric was designed to evaluate students' writing performance based on two major aspects: substance and language. The substance aspect included relevance to interview text, completeness of information, paragraph organization, and clarity of object description. The language aspect included diction, sentence effectiveness, grammar, spelling accuracy, and punctuation usage. Each component was scored according to predetermined criteria to determine students' writing proficiency levels.

Supporting instruments included observation sheets, interview guidelines, and documentation checklists. Observation sheets were used to record classroom activities and student participation. Interview guidelines were used to structure conversations with teachers regarding students' learning conditions and writing challenges. Documentation checklists ensured systematic recording of relevant school and student data throughout the research process.

Table 2. Indicators of Descriptive Writing Assessment

Variable	Category	Percentage (%)
Substance Aspect	Content relevance and completeness	50
Language Aspect	Diction, grammar, spelling, punctuation	50
Total	Assessment Score	100

2.5. Data Analysis Technique

The data were analyzed using descriptive qualitative analysis supported by percentage calculations. Students' writing scores were first classified based on assessment indicators and then grouped into achievement categories such as very poor, poor, fair, good, and excellent [31]. The researcher interpreted the results by identifying patterns of students' strengths and weaknesses in descriptive writing.

The analysis process involved data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was conducted by selecting relevant writing results and simplifying unnecessary information. Data display was carried out through tables and descriptive explanations to facilitate interpretation. Finally, conclusions were drawn based on the dominant patterns found in students' writing performance. This analytical procedure allowed the researcher to present findings systematically and accurately.

2.6. Research Procedure

The research procedure was conducted in several systematic stages [32]. The first stage was preliminary observation to identify students' problems in descriptive writing learning. The second stage involved preparing research instruments, including writing tasks, assessment rubrics, observation sheets, and interview guidelines. The third stage was data collection through classroom observation, teacher interviews, and students' writing tests. The fourth stage involved scoring and analyzing students' writing results using the established rubric. The final stage was drawing conclusions and preparing research reports.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Students' Ability in Writing Descriptive Essays Based on Interview Texts

The results of this study indicate that the ability of seventh-grade students of Madrasah Tsanawiyah Al Jamhuriyah, Cinere, Depok, in writing descriptive essays based on interview texts is still relatively low. The assessment was conducted based on two major aspects, namely the substance aspect and the language aspect. The substance aspect included relevance to the interview text, completeness of information, clarity of object description, and paragraph organization. Meanwhile, the language aspect included diction, sentence effectiveness, grammar, spelling, punctuation, and overall language accuracy. These two aspects were used as the main indicators in determining students' writing achievement levels.

Based on the analysis of students' writing results, it was found that none of the students reached the excellent category. Only 2 students (6%) were categorized as good, 9 students (30%) were categorized as fair, 16 students (53%) were categorized as poor, and 3 students (10%) were categorized as very poor. These findings indicate that most students still experience significant difficulties in transforming interview texts into coherent and detailed descriptive essays. The dominant problems found were incomplete content development, weak paragraph organization, inappropriate diction, ineffective sentence structures, and frequent errors in spelling and punctuation.

Table 3. Students' Writing Achievement Categories

Variable	Category	Percentage (%)
Writing Ability	Very Poor	10.0
Writing Ability	Poor	53.0
Writing Ability	Fair	30.0
Writing Ability	Good	6.0
Writing Ability	Excellent	0.0

Table 3 shows that the majority of students were still in the poor category, indicating that writing descriptive essays remains a challenging task for junior high school students. This finding reflects that students have not yet mastered the process of organizing factual information from interview texts into systematic descriptive writing. Many students simply rewrote the interview content without expanding details descriptively, resulting in writing that lacked depth and vividness [33].

In the substance aspect, students generally showed difficulty in identifying the most important information from interview texts and converting it into descriptive paragraphs [34]. Some students only focused on isolated facts without building coherent descriptions of the object or person being described. This caused weak paragraph unity and poor content flow. A good descriptive essay should present an object vividly so that readers can imagine it clearly, but many students failed to achieve this because their writing lacked detailed explanation and sensory description.

In the language aspect, the most common problems were related to word choice, sentence construction, and punctuation accuracy. Many students used repetitive vocabulary, unclear sentence structures, and inconsistent spelling. Some essays also showed direct translation of spoken interview language into written form without adaptation to formal written Indonesian. This problem reduced the readability and quality of students' writing

significantly. These findings confirm that language mastery remains a major obstacle in writing instruction. The low achievement in descriptive writing can also be linked to limited writing practice during classroom learning. Students are often exposed to theoretical explanations of writing rather than direct writing exercises [35]. As a result, they have insufficient opportunities to practice organizing ideas and applying writing conventions. Furthermore, students tend to rely heavily on teacher instructions and show limited confidence in developing their own written expressions independently.

The findings of this study support the view that writing is one of the most complex productive language skills because it requires the integration of cognitive, linguistic, and organizational abilities [36]. Writing descriptive essays based on interview texts requires students not only to understand the source text but also to reconstruct information into coherent written discourse. This process demands critical thinking, interpretation, and language control simultaneously. Therefore, students with weak reading comprehension and limited vocabulary tend to face greater difficulty in completing writing tasks successfully.

Hediana [37] explains that descriptive writing aims to present objects vividly so that readers feel as if they directly experience the object being described. However, the results of this study show that many students were unable to create such vivid descriptions because they focused more on listing information rather than developing detailed imagery. This indicates that students still lack understanding of the characteristics and purpose of descriptive writing itself.

The use of interview texts as a writing medium provides important advantages because students receive factual and structured information before writing. Compared to free-topic writing tasks, interview texts help students reduce difficulties in generating ideas. [38] It was stated that contextual learning media significantly improve students' writing engagement because students feel more connected to real-life information. In this study, interview texts helped students begin the writing process more easily, although many still struggled in expanding the information descriptively.

The findings also reveal that teacher guidance plays an important role in writing improvement. Students who received clearer instructions and examples were more likely to produce better descriptive essays. This supports [39], which emphasizes that writing instruction should focus on process-based learning rather than product-based evaluation only. Teachers need to guide students through stages such as prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing rather than simply assigning final writing tasks.

Another important issue found in this study is students' limited awareness of writing mechanics such as punctuation, capitalization, and spelling conventions. Although these elements may appear technical, they strongly influence text readability and academic writing quality. [40] explains that mastery of writing mechanics reflects students' language discipline and contributes significantly to the overall effectiveness of written communication. Therefore, writing instruction should integrate both content development and technical accuracy equally.

This study differs from previous studies conducted by Kamal [41], Abdurahman [42], and Mustadi [43]. Sofia Kamal focused on students' ability to write narrative essays using picture media and found relatively high achievement. Antasari Abdurahman examined narrative writing skills without specific media support and found students' writing categorized as good. Ali Mustadi investigated narrative writing based on personal experience and found weaker writing performance. Although all three studies focused on students' writing skills, they concentrated on narrative writing and different learning media. In contrast, this study specifically investigates descriptive writing based on interview texts, which has received less attention in previous research. This gap highlights the need for a more focused study on descriptive writing performance using factual textual media rather than visual or personal-experience-based prompts.

The novelty of this study lies in the use of interview texts as a medium for assessing students' descriptive writing ability. Unlike previous studies that emphasized narrative writing through picture media or personal experience, this research examines how students transform factual interview texts into descriptive essays. This process requires students to identify essential information, reconstruct it into organized descriptive paragraphs, and apply formal written language accurately [44]. In addition, this study evaluates students using two specific dimensions substance and language aspects which provides a more comprehensive understanding of students' writing competence. This contributes new insight into descriptive writing assessment in Indonesian language learning.

The implications of this study are both theoretical and practical [45]. Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of writing instruction studies, particularly descriptive writing using authentic textual sources such as interview texts. It expands understanding of how students process factual information into descriptive discourse and highlights the relationship between comprehension and writing production. Practically, the findings provide useful guidance for teachers in designing more effective writing instruction. Teachers can use interview texts as an alternative learning medium that is contextual, realistic, and capable of stimulating students' critical thinking and writing creativity [46]. This approach may improve not only writing quality but also student engagement during the learning process.

This study has several limitations that should be considered. First, the research was conducted only in one class consisting of 30 students at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Al Jamhuriyah, so the findings may not fully represent

broader student populations in different schools or educational contexts. Second, the study used descriptive qualitative analysis without experimental comparison, which means the effectiveness of interview texts as a learning intervention was not measured statistically against other media. Third, the assessment focused mainly on final writing products rather than the full writing process such as drafting and revising stages [47]. Future research is recommended to involve larger samples, comparative experimental designs, and deeper observation of the writing process to obtain more comprehensive findings regarding descriptive writing instruction.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the ability of seventh-grade students of Madrasah Tsanawiyah Al Jamhuriyah, Cinere, Depok, in writing descriptive essays based on interview texts is still relatively low. Most students were categorized in the poor level, particularly in the aspects of content development, paragraph organization, diction, sentence effectiveness, spelling, and punctuation. The use of interview texts provided students with factual information that helped them begin the writing process, but many students still experienced difficulty in transforming interview content into coherent, detailed, and well-structured descriptive essays. These findings indicate that students need more intensive writing practice, stronger teacher guidance, and more contextual learning media to improve their descriptive writing skills. Therefore, the use of interview texts can be considered a relevant alternative medium in writing instruction, but it must be supported by process-based teaching strategies to achieve better learning outcomes.

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USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)-ASSISTED TECHNOLOGY

The authors declare that no artificial intelligence (AI)-assisted technologies were used in the preparation, analysis, or writing of this manuscript. All stages of the research process, including data collection, data analysis, interpretation of results, and manuscript preparation, were conducted entirely by the authors without the assistance of any AI-based tools.

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