Efforts to Improve Students' Interest and Ability in Writing Essays through Picture Media at MIN 2 Lahat: A Classroom Action Research

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Abstract: One of the very important roles of teachers is to create a quality, high-quality and enjoyable learning process. The purpose of this classroom action research is to find out how much impact the increase in student interest in the use of image media is interpreted into a composition. Increasing student interest can be seen from several aspects, namely student activity, teacher activity and the effectiveness of the learning process, and student achievement scores. The techniques used are the classroom action research approach, observation data collection techniques, and student learning outcome tests. The data obtained from both student activity and student learning outcome scores in cycles I and II in classroom action research can be interpreted as follows, (1) Student interest and ability in learning to write compositions are very good; (2) Image media really helps students in improving their imagination so that they are able to make simple sentences that become the framework of the composition and then developed further; (3) Students are able to interpret simple sentences by linking the series of images they observe; (4) Students are able to communicate their writing based on the results of observations to their friends and to the teacher; (5) The learning process is more varied so that children become creative, active and enjoyable; (6) Learning is more effective, because it focuses on image media; (7) Learning will be conducive, because students' attention is focused on the provided picture media; (8) It is easy for teachers to evaluate the results of children's activities, especially in terms of students' interests and abilities; (9) It can be used as a benchmark for subsequent learning. Based on these results, the use of picture media can be used as an alternative in efforts to increase students' interest and abilities in writing essays.

Keywords: Students' interest, learning media, ability in writing essays.

INTRODUCTION

Writing is a fundamental skill in language learning, allowing students to express their thoughts, ideas, and creativity in a structured manner. It plays a crucial role in cognitive and linguistic development, enabling students to convey meaning effectively. However, writing often presents challenges for young learners, particularly in elementary school. Many students struggle with organizing their ideas, using appropriate vocabulary, and maintaining coherence in their writing. According to Harmer (2004), writing is a complex skill that requires cognitive effort, linguistic knowledge, and creativity. Therefore, finding effective teaching strategies to enhance students' writing interest and ability is essential.

One of the strategies that can be employed to improve students' writing skills is the use of visual media, particularly pictures. Wright (1990) states that pictures are effective

tools in language learning as they stimulate students' imagination, provide context, and help them generate ideas. The use of images in writing activities can make the learning process more engaging and enjoyable for students, thus increasing their motivation to write. Furthermore, studies have shown that integrating visual media in writing instruction enhances students' descriptive skills and creativity (Mayer, 2009). Additionally, Duffy and Bruns (2006) argue that visual aids facilitate deeper comprehension and retention of information, allowing students to connect abstract ideas with tangible representations.

In the context of third-grade students at MIN 2 Lahat, writing activities have been observed to be less engaging, leading to low motivation and limited writing skills. Based on preliminary observations, many students find it difficult to start writing, develop their ideas, and structure their compositions effectively. The lack of enthusiasm for writing may be attributed to insufficient exposure to stimulating instructional methods and a lack of confidence in expressing ideas in written form. By implementing a classroom action research approach, this study seeks to determine whether visual media can serve as an effective pedagogical tool for improving students' writing proficiency and fostering a more interactive learning environment.

This study is significant in that it contributes to the existing body of knowledge on teaching writing to young learners, particularly in the Indonesian educational context. The findings are expected to provide insights for teachers on how to integrate visual media effectively into writing instruction to foster students' engagement and improve their writing abilities. Furthermore, this research aligns with the broader educational goal of enhancing literacy skills in elementary school students, as emphasized by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud, 2019). Effective writing instruction not only improves students' academic performance but also equips them with essential communication skills needed for their future educational and professional endeavors.

By employing classroom action research, this study will explore the implementation of picture-based writing activities and analyze their effectiveness in improving students' writing interest and competence. The research process will involve multiple cycles of planning, action, observation, and reflection to assess the impact of visual media on students' writing development. The findings will be useful not only for educators at MIN 2 Lahat but also for teachers and researchers seeking innovative strategies to enhance writing instruction in primary education. This study aspires to bridge the gap between traditional writing instruction and modern pedagogical approaches that leverage visual stimuli to foster creativity and motivation among young learners.

METHODS

This study employs a Classroom Action Research (CAR) methodology, which consists of iterative cycles of planning, action, observation, and reflection (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). The research will be conducted in the third-grade class at MIN 2 Lahat, involving students as participants. The study aims to examine the effectiveness of using pictures as a medium to improve students' interest and ability in writing compositions.

The research will be carried out in two cycles, with each cycle comprising four stages: (1) planning, (2) implementation, (3) observation, and (4) reflection. In the planning phase, the researcher will design instructional activities incorporating pictures into writing tasks. The implementation phase involves conducting the planned lessons in the classroom, where students will engage in guided and independent writing exercises using visual prompts.
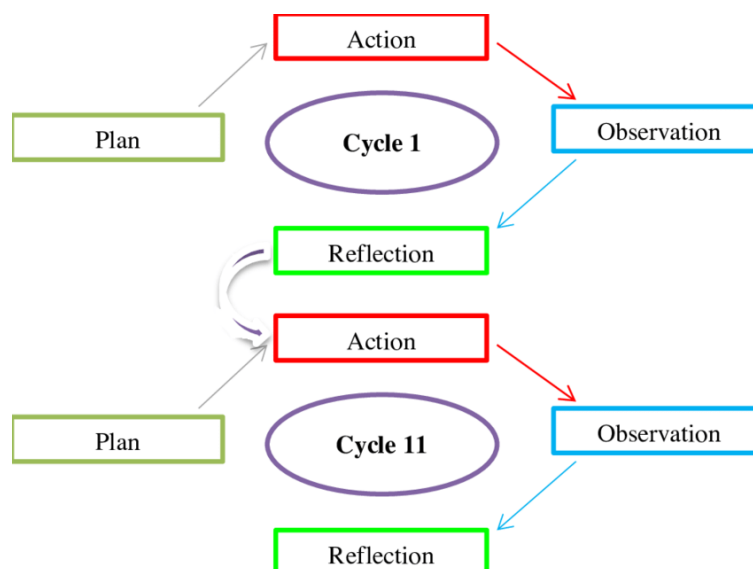
Figure 1. *Research Design*

During the observation stage, data will be collected through classroom observations, student writing samples, and teacher field notes. Students' progress will be assessed based on their ability to generate ideas, structure their compositions, and use appropriate vocabulary. The reflection phase will involve analyzing the collected data to determine the effectiveness of the intervention and make necessary improvements for the next cycle.

Both qualitative and quantitative data will be used in this study. Qualitative data will be gathered through observations, interviews, and students' written work analysis, while quantitative data will be collected using pre-tests and post-tests to measure students' writing improvement. The collected data will be analyzed using descriptive statistical methods and thematic analysis.

The ethical considerations of this research include obtaining informed consent from participants, ensuring confidentiality, and minimizing any potential risks to students. By following ethical guidelines, the study ensures that students' well-being and educational experiences remain a priority throughout the research process.

RESULTS

Pre-Cycle

Before taking action in the research, the researcher conducted initial observations in class about the achievement of Indonesian language subjects in writing essays. The results of the observation showed that student learning outcomes in Indonesian language subjects, especially in writing essays, were still relatively low and teachers had not optimally utilized learning media. Based on this, it was decided to use picture media in the material for writing essays for class III students of MIN 2 Lahat, Muara Payang District, Lahat Regency. Learning began by holding an initial assignment in class III to determine students' initial abilities in writing essays.

The initial assignment score was used as a reference to determine the results of class III students' abilities after using picture media. The initial assignment was about writing simple essays. The acquisition of this initial assignment score will be used as a reference to determine the increase in students' abilities after using picture media. The following presents data on student learning outcomes in the pre-cycle.

Based on the results of the preliminary study, it can be seen that students only get an average of 59 with the highest score of 70 and the lowest score of 50. There are only 8 students whose learning outcomes are above the KKM or only 26.66% of the set KKM

score of 65. This provides an illustration that the results of students' abilities in the Indonesian language subject regarding writing essays are still relatively low.

First Cycle

Before preparing a learning plan, the researcher first identified the problem and planned the steps to be implemented in cycle I. After understanding the problem and the steps to be implemented, the researcher then prepared a Learning Implementation Plan (RPP). In this planning stage, the researcher determined the topic that would be used as research material, developed the RPP, prepared teaching aids in the form of picture media, and prepared a learning evaluation and observation format.

In the action implementation stage, learning was carried out in two meetings. In the first meeting held on Tuesday, August 4, 2019, the teacher began the learning by examining student readiness, checking attendance, and conditioning the class so that the atmosphere remained conducive. The teacher then conducted an apperception by asking questions related to the material to be presented. After that, the teacher gave a brief explanation about writing essays and explained how to write essays using picture media. Students were then given the task of writing a simple essay by paying attention to the pictures that had been pasted on the board. In closing, the teacher guided students in a classical question and answer session to draw conclusions about how to write a good and correct essay. On this occasion, students were given space to ask questions related to material that they did not understand.

In the second meeting held on August 11, 2019, the teacher again checked the students' readiness, checked attendance, and conditioned the class so that the learning process would run smoothly. The teacher began the lesson with apperception through questions and answers about the material to be delivered. Furthermore, the teacher gave a brief explanation of how to write an essay using picture media. Students were then given the task of completing essay writing exercises. In closing, the teacher again guided students in a classical question and answer session to draw conclusions about how to write a good and correct essay. Students were also given the opportunity to ask questions if there was still something they did not understand from the material that had been taught.

From the results of the observation of cycle I, it was concluded that the implementation of Indonesian language learning about writing essays using picture media had been implemented in accordance with the RPP that had been prepared. However, based on observations made by the observer, there were several shortcomings in the delivery of the material. The teacher was not clear in explaining how to write an essay, especially in terms of spelling, so that there were still students who had difficulty in writing the correct spelling. In addition, there were still students who paid less attention during the learning process. Student activity in learning can be observed through observation sheets that record their participation in asking questions, discussing with friends, and correcting friends' mistakes during the learning process.

The results of the analysis of student learning outcomes show that the average student score is 66.33 with the highest score of 80 and the lowest score of 60. There are 17 students whose learning outcomes are above the KKM or 56.67% of the set KKM score of 65. This provides an illustration that there is an increase in student learning outcomes from the pre-cycle to cycle I.

Based on the data analysis above, there are still shortcomings in cycle I. These shortcomings include the teacher not motivating students enough, the teacher explaining too quickly and the visual media used are less interesting to students. With these shortcomings, improvements are needed in the learning process for cycle II. These improvements are by utilizing interesting visual media as a learning medium to further motivate students. In addition, teachers must be better able to condition students, so that students are truly involved in the learning process.

Second Cycle

Before designing the lesson plan for Cycle II, the researcher first identified problems based on reflections from Cycle I and planned the steps to be implemented. After understanding the issues and the steps to be applied, the researcher then developed the Lesson Plan (RPP). In this planning stage, the researcher determined the main topics to be used as study material, developed the RPP, prepared teaching aids in the form of picture media, and designed evaluation and observation formats for the learning process.

In the implementation stage, learning in Cycle II was carried out in two meetings. During the first meeting, which took place on August 23, 2018, the teacher began by assessing students' readiness, checking attendance, and setting up the classroom to ensure a conducive learning environment. The teacher then conducted an introduction by asking questions related to the topic to be taught. Following this, the teacher provided a brief explanation of the main parts of plants and used picture media as teaching aids. The students were then given exercises prepared by the teacher. To conclude the lesson, the teacher guided a class-wide discussion to draw conclusions from the material that had been covered. At this stage, students were also given the opportunity to ask questions about any aspects they had not yet fully understood.

During the second meeting, which was held on August 30, 2018, the teacher once again assessed students' readiness, checked attendance, and ensured a smooth classroom environment. The lesson began with an introduction through a question-and-answer session about the topic to be discussed. The teacher then provided a brief explanation regarding the functions of different plant parts and reinforced the material using picture media. The students proceeded to complete exercises assigned by the teacher. As a closing activity, the teacher led another class discussion to summarize the lesson. Students were again encouraged to ask questions if there were still unclear aspects of the material presented.

In this cycle, the teacher made several improvements to the teaching and learning process. One of the key improvements was increasing student motivation, which resulted in a higher level of enthusiasm for learning. With greater enthusiasm, the learning process became more effective. In addition, the teacher provided more opportunities for students to ask questions and made better use of teaching media. Student engagement during the learning process was recorded through observation sheets, which tracked their participation in asking questions, making comments, and expressing opinions throughout the lesson.

DISCUSSION

The use of image media in elementary education plays a vital role in stimulating students' interest in writing. Pictures have a natural appeal, especially for young learners, because they are visually engaging and can easily capture students' attention. This visual stimulation helps create a more dynamic and enjoyable learning environment, which is crucial in fostering enthusiasm for writing tasks.

When students are presented with pictures, they often feel more inspired and less intimidated by the writing process. Images provide concrete references that students can observe and describe, making it easier for them to generate ideas. This is especially helpful for students who struggle with forming ideas from scratch, as the visual cues offer a starting point for their imagination.

Visual media also support the development of descriptive writing skills. By observing details in an image, students are encouraged to describe what they see, which helps them practice using adjectives, prepositions, and other descriptive language elements. This can significantly enhance their vocabulary and sentence construction over time.

Images also serve as a powerful tool for storytelling. They can depict characters, settings, and actions, which students can use to build narratives. By interpreting what is happening in a picture, students learn to structure their writing with a beginning, middle, and end, contributing to the development of coherent and organized compositions.

In addition to inspiring creativity, images help bridge the gap between spoken and written language. When discussing pictures in class, students often engage in oral storytelling first. This verbal expression can then be translated into written form, helping students build confidence in expressing their ideas in writing.

Image-based activities promote active learning, as students become participants rather than passive recipients. They must analyze, infer, and create, which enhances critical thinking and observational skills. These cognitive processes naturally feed into stronger writing skills, as students learn to think more deeply about their topics.

Furthermore, visual media can cater to different learning styles, particularly for visual learners who may find traditional text-based instruction challenging. By integrating pictures into writing lessons, teachers can reach a broader range of students and ensure more equitable learning experiences. The use of image prompts can also make writing more relatable and meaningful for students. Pictures that depict familiar situations, cultural settings, or everyday events allow students to connect personally with the topic. This connection encourages them to write from their own experiences and emotions, making their writing more authentic and engaging.

Teachers can use a wide variety of images to support different writing genres. For example, photographs can be used for narrative and descriptive writing, while comic strips may help in teaching dialogue and sequence. This versatility makes images a valuable resource across the writing curriculum. The use of pictures can reduce the pressure students often feel when faced with a blank page. Having an image to respond to gives them direction and purpose, reducing anxiety and promoting a more positive attitude toward writing tasks. When used consistently, visual media can help build writing fluency. As students become more comfortable interpreting images and expressing their thoughts in writing, they write more frequently and with greater ease. This regular practice contributes to improved writing mechanics and confidence.

The integration of pictures also allows for differentiated instruction. Teachers can select images of varying complexity depending on students' language levels and developmental stages. This flexibility ensures that all students are appropriately challenged and supported. Peer collaboration around image-based writing tasks can further enhance learning. When students share and discuss their interpretations of an image, they are exposed to different perspectives and ideas. This exchange can stimulate their own thinking and enrich their written work.

Visual media also lend themselves well to formative assessment. Teachers can gauge students' understanding of language concepts and writing skills by analyzing their written responses to images. This information can guide future instruction and individual support.

Importantly, using images in writing lessons aligns with students' real-world experiences, where visual media dominate communication. Integrating pictures into academic learning helps them transfer skills between school and everyday contexts, fostering relevance and application.

The use of images can also support students with limited vocabulary or language proficiency, such as English language learners. Pictures provide a universal form of communication that can help these students express themselves even when their language skills are still developing.

In inclusive classrooms, image media can accommodate students with learning differences by providing visual support that complements verbal instruction. This approach helps ensure that all students can access and engage with the writing curriculum.

Incorporating picture-based writing tasks can also foster a sense of ownership and pride in students' work. When students see their ideas come to life on paper, inspired by

an image, they often feel a stronger connection to their writing and a greater willingness to revise and improve it.

The emotional response triggered by certain images can lead to more expressive and meaningful writing. Students may connect emotionally with a picture, which in turn motivates them to write from the heart and explore deeper themes in their work.

Ultimately, the use of image media in elementary school writing instruction not only enhances students' interest in writing but also develops their ability to communicate effectively. Through consistent and thoughtful use of pictures, teachers can nurture students' creativity, build their writing skills, and instill a lifelong love for storytelling and expression.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research conducted through three stage pre-cycle, Cycle I, and Cycle II, it can be concluded that the use of picture media in teaching essay writing in Indonesian language lessons for third-grade students at MIN 2 Lahat, Muara Payang District, Lahat Regency, effectively improved students' learning outcomes. In the pre-cycle stage, the average student score was only 59, with a mastery level of 26.66%. After implementing picture media in Cycle I, the average score increased to 66.33, and the mastery level rose to 56.67%, although some weaknesses remained, such as lack of student motivation and the use of less engaging media. Improvements were made in Cycle II by utilizing more interesting visual media and increasing student engagement, which significantly boosted students' enthusiasm, participation, and overall learning effectiveness. Therefore, it can be concluded that the use of picture media is effective in enhancing students' essay writing skills.
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