The Use of Flashcards in Strengthening the Writing Skills of Descriptive Texts

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Abstract— *This study aims to improve the descriptive writing skills of grade IX C students at SMP N 3 Kalibagor. Based on initial observations, it was found that students' writing skills were not optimal, as seen from low engagement and poor writing scores. The study employed classroom action research (CAR) in two cycles, each consisting of one session. The participants were the teacher and grade IX C students. Data was collected through observations, tests, and field notes, and analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. Qualitative data evaluated improvements in the learning process, especially teacher actions, while quantitative data measured student achievement after each action. Results showed an increase in the average student performance score, from 77.5% in Cycle I to 100% in Cycle II. This indicates that using flashcards effectively enhances students' descriptive writing skills. Additionally, flashcards not only strengthened students' writing skills but also improved teacher competence and student engagement. Teachers are encouraged to choose media that aligns with lesson content and student interests. The study suggests that using flashcards can boost student engagement in learning. Therefore, this research contributes to enhancing the quality of writing instruction in grade IX at SMP N 3 Kalibagor and can serve as a reference for other teachers seeking effective media to support students' writing skills.*

Keywords— *Flashcard Media, Writing Skills, Descriptive Text*

1 Introduction

As one of the language skills, writing is an important aspect taught to students in schools. Writing is a way for someone to express ideas, thoughts, and feelings to others in written form [1]. To help students improve their writing skills, teachers must provide clear instructions and constructive feedback [2]. Thus, students can gradually develop their writing abilities and gain broad benefits from this skill.

Writing becomes a complex activity because students must be able to convey their thoughts and arrange grammar correctly. Writing is not merely about transforming spoken language into written sentences, but it goes beyond that [3]. It involves concepts, the structuring of thoughts, ideas, and everything related to communication. In this modern era, written communication skills are crucial to master [4]. Through writing activities, students are taught to communicate using written language. The goal of teaching writing is for students to be able to express ideas or thoughts in an organized manner with appropriate diction and correct structure according to the context [5]. Moreover, writing skills also help students organize information, develop critical thinking, and enhance their understanding of language structure.

Writing is a communication skill that is carried out indirectly, and this activity is expressively productive. This aligns with what stated, that one of the productive language skills, which requires good language proficiency in the process, is writing skills [6]. Generally, it can be said that writing skills are more difficult to master than the language

skills of listening, speaking, and reading. Writing skills are one type of productive skill. The ability to write is the expertise to convey ideas, opinions, and feelings to others through the use of written language [7]. To achieve accuracy in expressing ideas, it is necessary to use precise language, appropriate word choice and grammar, as well as correct spelling.

One of the materials in the 9th grade Indonesian language curriculum that supports writing skills is descriptive text. The social purpose of descriptive text is to describe an object individually based on its physical characteristics [8]. The description presented in this text must specifically highlight the distinctive features of the object being depicted [9]. However, students have not yet mastered the skill of writing descriptive texts well. Some students are even unable to translate their ideas into written form. Essentially, in writing activities, students are taught to communicate using written language. The goal of writing instruction is for students to be able to express ideas or thoughts in an organized manner with appropriate diction and correct structure according to the context [10].

The low writing skills in descriptive texts among the students of class IX C at SMP N 3 Kalibagor are caused by two main factors: teacher-related factors and student-related factors. On the teacher's side, although the teaching in class IX C is fairly good, the techniques and methods used are not very effective. So far, the teacher has tended to use conventional methods such as lecturing followed by assignments, where students are only given theoretical material about the structure of descriptive texts and how to write them correctly. After that, students are asked to write a descriptive text about their family, which is then corrected together. This method tends to focus only on theory without providing students with many opportunities to practice and explore their writing skills. As a result, students struggle to write in detail and cannot fully understand the content of the story. On the student's side, many are less interested and tend to feel confused when they have to write descriptive texts, such as describing their family. This lack of interest might be due to the absence of emotional engagement or a lack of understanding of the importance of writing skills. Furthermore, the confusion in structuring words suggests that students may need more practice and guidance to develop their writing abilities. This aligns with the observations made on August 1, 2024, in class IX C, where several issues were found in the classroom. First, student engagement in learning was still low. Students were mostly silent rather than responding to questions or stimuli from the teacher. Second, the teaching was still teacher-centered and did not sufficiently involve the students. This caused students to be less enthusiastic, as indicated by frequent talking with friends and many students making excuses to wash their hands or go to the restroom.

Based on the problems that arose in teaching descriptive texts, the researcher focuses on writing skills. This issue was chosen with the hope that this research can improve students' writing skills in descriptive text learning. The effort that will be made is to provide solutions to overcome the difficulties faced by the students. To address this challenge, the researcher plans to use flash cards as a medium in this study. Flash cards are expected to help students better understand the concept and structure of descriptive texts [11]. With clear and interactive visualization, flash cards can make the learning process more engaging and motivate students to practice writing. In addition, flash cards can serve as an effective tool to enrich vocabulary and help students arrange words more accurately. This approach aims to improve descriptive text writing skills in a more enjoyable way, supporting more meaningful learning. Flash cards can be used as a guide and stimulus for students to provide the desired response [12].

Flash cards are learning media that use illustrated cards. This media is designed with an attractive appearance, which can capture students' attention and make them enjoy learning. Flash cards combine images and text, making them an effective and enjoyable learning tool. Who state that this media is designed to be quite appealing and can make children feel happy while learning, as it is a combination of images and text [13].

Flash cards are a type of visual learning media that take the form of small illustrated cards, usually made using photos, symbols, or images affixed to the front, while the back contains descriptions in the form of words or sentences related to the images on the flash card [14]. Flash card learning media remind or direct students to something related to the image. As a learning aid, flash cards can help students remember and understand concepts

better. The combination of visuals and text on these cards allows students to learn in a more interactive way [15]. For example, the images on flash cards can provide visual context that helps students associate specific words or concepts, while the text helps them recognize and remember that information. The use of flash cards can help students learn more effectively. Students become more engaged in interactions and more active when flash cards are used [16]. This allows teachers to communicate information more effectively, enabling students to understand the material being taught.

In the schools, writing skills are taught in the Indonesian language subject, and one of the materials that can enhance students' writing skills is descriptive text. Descriptive text is a type of text that thoroughly and clearly describes the qualities or characteristics of an object, person, place, or event [17]. Descriptive text is a type of text that explains and presents a state or object in such a way that the reader seems to hear, see, or feel what is being described. Descriptive text can be used to convey experiences and observations, such as shape, sound, taste, or movement [18][19].

Based on the description above, the researcher is interested in conducting classroom action research at SMP N 3 Kalibagor titled "The Use of Flash Card Media in Strengthening the Descriptive Text Writing Skills of 9th Grade Students at SMP N 3 Kalibagor."

2   Method

The type of research used in this study is collaborative classroom action research. Collaborative research is a type of action research conducted in the classroom in collaboration between the parties implementing the action and the observers [20][21]. Collaborative research is considered ideal because it involves efforts to reduce the elements of subjectivity from the observer and improve the accuracy of the observations made [22][23]. This research consists of two cycles, each consisting of one meeting.

In this study, the researcher employs a type of Classroom Action Research that consists of two cycles. The procedure for this Classroom Action Research follows the Kemmis and McTaggart model, where each cycle consists of four stages: planning, implementation, observation, and reflection [24][25]. Data collection techniques include tests to measure students' learning achievements and non-test methods to observe the implementation of using flash card media in learning. This research uses both qualitative and quantitative data analysis techniques. The data obtained and analyzed in this study include qualitative and quantitative data. Qualitative data is used to determine the improvement in the learning process, particularly the various actions taken by the teacher. Meanwhile, quantitative data is used to assess the improvement in students' learning achievements from each action that has been implemented. The analyzed data includes the results from observation sheets of learning activities and students' academic performance. Qualitative data are scored on a 0-4 scale, where each score has its own descriptor. The success indicator for using flashcard media to improve students' writing skills is met if it reaches the good criteria, with student scores ranging between 80%-100%.

The flashcards used contain images of traditional foods or snacks from Banyumas. The flashcards are divided into three groups: sweet snacks, savory snacks, and salty snacks. In its implementation, the researcher created a menu of traditional snacks displayed on the board, and students were asked to select a snack menu based on their interest.

Grade IX C students of SMP N 3 Kalibagor were selected for the study as the researcher observed that students in schools on the outskirts often have unique and distinctive traits, particularly in their writing potential. Non-test data collection techniques include observation and documentation. Observation was carried out during the learning process to observe teacher and student activities in Indonesian language learning. Data collection through evaluation tests was conducted to measure the improvement in writing skills after the application of flashcard media.

3   **Findings And Discussion**

3.1   **Finding**

Classroom action research began with observations of Indonesian language learning in class IX C. Based on the observations conducted on Thursday, August 1, 2024, it was found that students were less active and enthusiastic during the lessons. During the observation, several issues within the classroom were identified. The first issue was the low level of student engagement in learning activities. Many students preferred to remain silent and showed little response to questions or stimuli provided by the teacher. This indicated a lack of involvement from students in the learning process. The second issue was the teaching method, which tended to be teacher-centered, with minimal student involvement in the teaching-learning activities. As a result, student enthusiasm for the material presented decreased, evident from the number of students who often chatted with their desk mates or sought excuses to leave the classroom, such as going to the restroom.

Additionally, the data from the assignments collected by the subject teacher indicated that most students had not met the Minimum Completeness Criteria (KKM) set at 70. Out of a total of 36 students in class IX C, consisting of 18 male and 18 female students, only 27.8% or 10 students managed to reach the KKM. Conversely, 72.2% or 26 students did not meet this standard. Based on these findings, there is a need for improvement efforts in Indonesian language learning, particularly in the material of descriptive texts in class IX C. One alternative solution that will be implemented to address this issue is the use of flashcard media. It is hoped that the use of flashcards will enhance student participation and help them improve their writing skills.

3.2   **Discussion**

This research successfully demonstrates that the use of flash card media can effectively enhance students' writing skills. Both in terms of implementation by the teacher and acceptance by the students, there is a noticeable positive development in each cycle. This indicates that flash cards are an effective learning medium that can be integrated into Indonesian language instruction, particularly in the material of writing descriptive texts. This is evidenced by the increased percentage of the use of flash cards in improving writing skills and students' academic performance in each cycle.

The implementation of using flash card media in strengthening the descriptive text writing skills of grade IX students at SMP N 3 Kalibagor. This Classroom Action Research (CAR) was conducted in class IX C at SMPN 3 Kalibagor and carried out over two cycles, with each cycle consisting of one meeting. The aim of this research is to improve descriptive text writing skills in the Indonesian language subject by utilizing flashcard media as a teaching tool.

Table 1. Comparison of Average Observation Results of Flash Card Media Use in Cycle I and Cycle II

No.	Steps	Cycle I		Cycle II	
		Teacher (%)	Student (%)	Teacher (%)	Student (%)
1	Introduction	92.5	85	95	90
2	Presenting the material	87.5	87.5	100	100
3	Group/individual learning	80	87.5	95	100
4	Presentation	87.5	87.5	95	100
5	Closing	75	82.5	95	100
6	Average	84.5	86	95	97.5

The observation results indicate that the use of flash card media by the teacher successfully improved students' writing abilities in each cycle. In Cycle I, the observations of the teacher showed results that fell into the good category, with an average score of 3.38. In this cycle, the teacher implemented the learning steps according

to the planned outline. However, there were some challenges that caused the implementation of the learning to be less than optimal. One of the issues was the lack of knowledge among some students regarding the traditional snacks presented on the flash cards, which made it difficult for them to describe those objects. In Cycle II, there was a significant increase in the observations of the teacher, with an average score reaching 3.8, placing it in the very good category. This improvement was attributed to the teacher's ability to maximize the use of flash cards according to the students' needs. Although the implementation was not yet perfect, these observation results indicate that the teacher has become more skilled in integrating flash card media into the learning process, which positively impacted teaching and learning.

Not only did the observations of the teacher show improvement, but the observations of the students also demonstrated progress in each cycle. In Cycle I, the average observation score for the students was 3.44, which fell into the good category. This was due to the students' limited responses to the use of flash cards, as it was their first experience using flash cards with a Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) approach. However, in Cycle II, the average observation score increased to 3.9, placing it in the very good category. This increase occurred because the students began to become accustomed to and more familiar with the learning method using flash card media, allowing them to respond and participate more actively in writing activities.

The students' writing shows limitations in developing variations in the use of phrases and words [19]. Additionally, the descriptions written by the students still feel superficial and lack depth, making it difficult to provide a clear and detailed picture of the objects being described. The use of flashcards as a learning medium has not fully helped the students develop their ideas in a deep and structured manner when writing descriptive texts. As a result, the learning outcomes achieved have not been optimal. The use of flashcards as a learning medium has not been optimal in guiding students to develop their ideas more creatively and in detail. Additionally, the CRT approach themed around traditional snacks has not been fully implemented, as some students are unfamiliar with the traditional snacks featured on the selected flashcards.

The analysis of the results from implementing flash card media to improve descriptive text writing skills in 9th-grade students at SMP N 3 Kalibagor was based on the learning achievement outcomes evaluated during each reflection in Cycle I and Cycle II. In Cycle I, the average student achievement reached 77.5, with 63.8% of students meeting the Minimum Competency Criteria (KKM). Although these results indicated a fairly good achievement, there was still room for improvement. In Cycle II, there was a significant increase, with the average student achievement rising to 80.2. Additionally, the percentage of students who met the KKM increased to 100%. This improvement demonstrated that the corrective measures taken by the researcher had a positive impact on the students' writing skills. The success indicator was categorized as good, as all students (100%) achieved mastery.

The increase in the average learning outcomes and the percentage of students achieving mastery in each cycle was due to the corrective actions taken to address the issues found in the previous cycle. One important improvement was motivating students to be more responsive to the use of flash cards presented by the teacher.

The results of implementing flashcard media in improving descriptive text writing skills of grade IX students at SMP N 3 Kalibagor. The analysis of learning achievement was conducted after the reflection of Cycle I and Cycle II.

Table 2. Comparison of Learning Achievement Results in the Improvement of Descriptive Text Writing Skills in Cycle I and Cycle II

Score	Cycle I	Cycle II
Highest Score	89	95
Lowest Score	65	70
Average %	77.5	80.2
Students Passing %	36.2	100
Students Not Passing %	63.8	-

The results from Cycle I were not yet satisfactory. Only 13 students (36.2%) had passed, while 23 students (63.8%) had not. This indicates that the use of flash card media in enhancing descriptive text writing skills had a positive impact on students' learning achievement compared to the first meeting, which used puzzle aids. However, the results did not yet meet the research targets.

In Cycle II, the target was successfully achieved. The application of flash cards in the learning process proved effective in improving students' writing skills and learning outcomes. This was evident from the significant improvement between the results of Cycle I and Cycle II. During the learning process, students appeared more enthusiastic and eager to participate in the learning activities. They responded positively to the use of flash cards as a learning tool, which effectively helped them develop their writing skills, as the teacher asked the students to work individually and keep their written results secret from their desk mates.

The use of flashcards as a learning medium is quite optimal in guiding students to develop their ideas more creatively and in detail. During the assignment implementation, students felt more comfortable working on tasks individually rather than in groups [26]. With the right encouragement and motivation, students became more effective in using flashcards as a writing aid, resulting in significant improvements in their writing skills from cycle to cycle. The use of language, words, and in-depth descriptions has been written in detail by the students.

The improvement in learning achievement aligns with previous research findings [27], which stated that the use of flash card media is highly suitable and effective for enhancing students' descriptive writing skills in expressing ideas in descriptive texts. In the context of this study, flash card media has proven to encourage students to be more active and creative in developing their ideas when writing descriptive texts. Thus, the implementation of flash card media not only helps students meet the established learning standards but also improves their overall writing skills.

The results of this study emphasize the importance of using appropriate and relevant teaching media that align with the needs of students. By providing supportive motivation and facilitating students through media like flashcards, their writing skills can continue to develop and achieve more optimal results.

4 Conclusion

Based on the problem formulation, research results, and discussions regarding the use of flashcard media in enhancing students' writing skills, this study yields several important conclusions as follows.

The implementation of flashcard media in improving the descriptive text writing skills of students in class IX C at SMP N 3 Kalibagor has proven effective in strengthening their writing skills. The application of this media involves structured steps, namely: (1) conveying the learning objectives to students so they understand what they will achieve; (2) providing clear and detailed material to equip students with the necessary foundational knowledge; (3) assigning tasks or conducting group discussions using flashcards as teaching aids, encouraging students to actively participate in the learning process; and (4) providing constructive feedback to help students improve and enhance their writing skills.

The results of implementing flashcard media in enhancing the descriptive text writing skills of students in class IX at SMP N 3 Kalibagor show a significant increase in academic achievement. In Cycle I, the percentage of students meeting the Minimum Completeness Criteria (KKM) was 77.5%, indicating fairly good results, although there was still room for improvement. After reflection and adjustment of teaching strategies, an increase occurred in Cycle II, where the percentage of students who completed the criteria rose to 100%. This improvement indicates that flashcard media not only strengthens writing skills but also fosters overall student engagement and motivation to learn.

Based on the research findings, several recommendations for teachers are as follows: a). Use of Flashcard Media in Learning: Teachers are advised to utilize flashcard media in the process of teaching descriptive writing. This media has proven to facilitate students in

expressing their ideas and thoughts into descriptive writing in a more structured and creative manner. Flashcards can help students organize their thoughts and clearly outline the essential elements of descriptive texts. b). Improvement of Learning Outcomes with Flashcards: The use of flashcard media not only simplifies the process of writing descriptions but also has the potential to enhance students' learning outcomes. Practical experiences have shown that this media supports students in achieving better learning results. c)Flexibility of Flashcard Media Usage: Flashcard media can be applied in various other subjects such as mathematics, English, and natural sciences (IPA). This media is flexible and can be tailored to meet the needs of different subjects, thereby providing broad benefits in the context of education.

One of the challenges faced in conducting this research was time constraints. The Classroom Action Research (CAR) activities coincided with the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5), which takes place once a week. This required the researcher to carefully manage the schedule, resulting in limited time available for each cycle. Additionally, there was a considerable gap between the implementation of Cycle I and Cycle II. This relatively long time span was due to various non-instructional activities at school, such as special events or activities that disrupted the regular learning schedule.

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