

# Enhancing Vocational Students' Descriptive Writing Proficiency through the Implementation of Dice Game Technique: A Classroom Action Research

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## Abstrak

Penelitian tindakan kelas ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan keterampilan menulis teks deskriptif siswa kelas sepuluh dengan menerapkan Teknik Permainan Dadu di SMK Negeri 2 Indralaya Utara tahun ajaran 2024/2025. Penelitian dilakukan di Kelas X TKJ 1 yang terdiri dari 21 siswa. Penelitian ini menggunakan dua siklus mengikuti tahapan perencanaan, tindakan, observasi, dan refleksi. Data dikumpulkan melalui tes menulis, observasi, dan wawancara. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa pada Siklus I, 80,95% siswa mencapai Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal (KKM = 70) dengan rata-rata 70,76. Pada Siklus II, angka ini meningkat menjadi 90,48% dengan rata-rata 78,9. Teknik ini secara efektif meningkatkan kemampuan siswa dalam mengorganisasi ide dan memilih kosakata.

**Kata kunci:** Teknik Permainan Dadu, Keterampilan Menulis, Teks Deskriptif, Penelitian Tindakan Kelas, Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan.

## Abstract

This classroom action research aimed to improve the tenth-grade students' writing skill in descriptive texts by applying the Dice Game Technique at SMK Negeri 2 Indralaya Utara in the academic year 2024/2025. The study was conducted in Class X TKJ 1, consisting of 21 students. It employed two cycles following the planning, acting, observing, and reflecting stages. Data were collected through writing tests, observation, and interviews. Results revealed that in Cycle I, 80.95% of students achieved the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM = 70) with a mean of 70.76. In Cycle II, this increased to 90.48% with a mean of 78.9. The technique effectively enhanced students' ability to organize ideas and select vocabulary.

**Keywords:** Dice Game Technique, Writing Skill, Descriptive Text, Classroom Action Research, Vocational School

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Writing is fundamentally a complex cognitive and linguistic process that serves as a cornerstone of English language proficiency. In the context of the Merdeka Curriculum implemented in Indonesia, writing is emphasized as one of the essential productive skills that students must master in order to communicate effectively in academic, social, and professional environments. Writing requires the integration of multiple language components simultaneously, including grammar, vocabulary, organization, coherence, and critical thinking. Because of this complexity, writing is often considered the most difficult skill to master by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners (Hyland, 2021). In modern language education, the ability to write effectively is also associated with higher-order thinking skills, creativity, and the ability to express ideas logically, which are important competencies in 21st-century learning (UNESCO, 2023).

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In the era of the Merdeka Curriculum, the learning process is expected to be student-centered and oriented toward active participation. The curriculum encourages teachers to create innovative and meaningful learning experiences that support student autonomy and creativity (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, 2022). However, in practice, many students still experience difficulties in writing, especially in vocational high schools (SMK), where students tend to focus more on technical skills than academic writing skills. According to Wahyuni and Pratama (2022), vocational school students often show lower motivation in learning English because they consider it less relevant to their major, which leads to poor writing performance.

At SMK Negeri 2 Indralaya Utara, preliminary observations conducted in Class X TKJ 1 showed that students faced serious difficulties when asked to write descriptive texts. Students struggled to generate ideas, select appropriate vocabulary, and organize sentences into coherent paragraphs. In addition, many students were not confident in using English due to limited grammatical knowledge and lack of practice opportunities. Initial test results indicated that only 45% of students reached the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM) of 70, while 55% were still below the expected standard. Similar findings were reported by Rahman et al. (2021), who found that Indonesian EFL students often fail to achieve writing competence because of limited vocabulary, weak grammar mastery, and low motivation.

Another factor influencing students' writing ability is the teaching method used in the classroom. Conventional teaching methods that rely heavily on explanation and textbook exercises often make students feel bored and passive. According to Nugroho and Santosa (2023), monotonous teaching strategies reduce student engagement and prevent them from developing creative language skills. Therefore, teachers need to use interactive techniques that encourage students to participate actively and enjoy the learning process. One effective way to increase engagement is through game-based learning, which integrates educational objectives with enjoyable activities (Kim & Park, 2021).

Game-based learning has been widely recognized as an effective approach to improve motivation and language performance. Games create a relaxed learning atmosphere, reduce anxiety, and provide opportunities for students to practice language in meaningful contexts (Chen, 2022). In writing classes, games can help students generate ideas, develop vocabulary, and organize sentences more easily. When students are motivated, they are more willing to take risks in using the target language, which leads to better learning outcomes (Sari & Lestari, 2024).

The theoretical foundation of this study is based on the process-writing approach and the principles of game-based learning. The process-writing approach views writing as a series of stages, including planning, drafting, revising, and editing, rather than a single activity (Hyland, 2021). This approach allows students to develop their ideas gradually and receive feedback during the writing process. In the Merdeka Curriculum, this approach is consistent with the principle of formative learning, where students are encouraged to learn through continuous improvement (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, 2022).

Motivation also plays a crucial role in writing achievement. Recent studies show that students who are actively involved in enjoyable learning activities demonstrate higher persistence and better performance (Lee, 2023). Game-based techniques are effective because they combine cognitive practice with emotional engagement. One of the techniques that can be used in teaching descriptive text is the Dice Game Technique. This technique uses dice containing

words, pictures, or instructions that help students generate ideas randomly. According to Saputra and Putri (2021), structured randomness in learning activities can stimulate creativity and help students overcome writer's block.

Several recent studies support the use of game-based techniques in language learning. Pratiwi et al. (2024) found that interactive games significantly improved students' writing fluency and vocabulary usage. Similarly, Hidayat and Kurniawan (2022) reported that students became more confident and active when learning English through games compared to traditional methods. In addition, research by Torres (2025) shows that gamification increases student motivation, collaboration, and learning satisfaction in EFL classrooms.

Despite many studies on teaching descriptive text, there is still limited classroom action research that focuses specifically on the use of the Dice Game Technique in vocational high schools under the Merdeka Curriculum. Vocational students often require practical, hands-on, and engaging learning strategies to connect language skills with real-life communication needs (Wahyuni & Pratama, 2022). Without appropriate teaching techniques, students may continue to experience low achievement and low motivation in writing.

Therefore, the problem addressed in this study is the low writing achievement of students in Class X TKJ 1 at SMK Negeri 2 Indralaya Utara and the need for an innovative teaching strategy that can improve both cognitive ability and learning motivation. The Dice Game Technique is expected to provide a more enjoyable and interactive learning environment that helps students generate ideas, organize sentences, and write descriptive texts more effectively.

The objective of this study is to investigate how the implementation of the Dice Game Technique can improve the writing skill of tenth-grade students at SMK Negeri 2 Indralaya Utara. Specifically, this research aims to analyze the improvement of students' mean scores, the percentage of students achieving the KKM, and the qualitative changes in students' writing process after two cycles of classroom action research. The results of this study are expected to provide practical contributions for English teachers, especially in vocational schools, in selecting effective and engaging techniques for teaching writing.

## **2. METHOD**

### ***2.1 Research Design***

This study employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design to investigate the effectiveness of the Dice Game Technique in improving students' writing skills. Classroom Action Research is widely used in educational studies because it allows teachers to identify problems in the classroom and apply immediate solutions through systematic cycles of improvement. According to Burns (2021), CAR is a reflective process that enables teachers to evaluate their own teaching practices and make informed decisions to enhance student learning outcomes. This design is particularly suitable for language learning research because it focuses on real classroom situations and practical problem solving (Mills, 2022).

The research followed the cyclical model of action research developed by Kemmis and McTaggart, which consists of four main stages: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. In the planning stage, the researcher prepared lesson plans, learning materials, observation

sheets, and writing tests based on the objectives of the study. In the acting stage, the Dice Game Technique was implemented in the teaching of descriptive text. During the observing stage, the researcher and collaborator recorded student participation, classroom interaction, and learning difficulties. In the reflecting stage, the results of the cycle were analyzed to determine whether the strategy was successful or needed improvement. This cycle-based approach allows continuous refinement of the teaching strategy so that it can better meet the needs of students (Kemmis et al., 2021).

Classroom Action Research is also consistent with the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum, which encourages teachers to conduct reflective and adaptive teaching practices. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (2022) emphasizes that teachers should design learning activities based on students' characteristics and learning needs. Through CAR, teachers can evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching methods and modify them to create a more student-centered learning environment. Recent studies also show that CAR is effective in improving English language learning outcomes because it integrates teaching, observation, and reflection in a continuous process (Rahman & Widiastuti, 2023).

This research was conducted in two cycles, and each cycle consisted of two meetings. The use of two cycles is recommended in action research to ensure that improvements can be measured gradually and accurately (Latief, 2022). In the first cycle, the Dice Game Technique was introduced to help students generate ideas and develop descriptive sentences. In the second cycle, the technique was improved by adding more structured guidance, vocabulary support, and group discussion activities. According to Sari and Lestari (2024), repeated cycles in action research allow students to adapt to new learning methods and show more significant progress in language performance.

## **2.2 Participants**

The participants of this study were 21 students of Class X TKJ 1 at SMK Negeri 2 Indralaya Utara during the 2024/2025 academic year. The class consisted of 6 male and 15 female students aged between 15 and 16 years old. This class was selected purposively based on the results of preliminary observation, which showed that students had low achievement in writing descriptive texts. Purposive sampling is commonly used in classroom action research because the researcher focuses on a specific group that needs improvement (Creswell & Guetterman, 2021).

Vocational school students often experience difficulties in English writing because their learning focus is more directed toward technical skills rather than academic language skills. According to Wahyuni and Pratama (2022), students in vocational education require more practical and engaging learning strategies to maintain motivation. Therefore, this class was considered appropriate for the implementation of the Dice Game Technique, which is expected to make writing activities more interactive and enjoyable.

## **2.3 Instruments**

Data collection in this study used both quantitative and qualitative instruments to obtain comprehensive results. The use of multiple instruments is recommended in action research to increase the validity of the findings (Mills, 2022).

*Writing Tests* were administered at the end of each cycle to measure students' writing ability. The test required students to write a descriptive text based on a given topic generated through the Dice Game. Students' writing was assessed using five components: content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. These components represent the essential aspects of writing proficiency in EFL learning (Hyland, 2021).

*Observation Sheets* were used to record students' participation, motivation, and interaction during the learning process. The observation was conducted by the researcher and a collaborator, Mr. Ahmad Jailani, S.Pd., Gr., to ensure objectivity. Collaborative observation is important in classroom action research because it reduces researcher bias and provides more reliable data (Burns, 2021).

*Interview Guidelines* were used to collect qualitative data about students' opinions regarding the Dice Game Technique. Interviews help researchers understand students' feelings, motivation, and difficulties during the learning process. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2022), interviews are effective in qualitative research because they capture participants' experiences directly.

## **2.4 Data Collection and Analysis**

The scoring rubric used in this study was adapted from the ESL writing rubric developed by Jacobs, Zinkgraf, Wormuth, Hartfiel, and Hughey, but modified to suit current curriculum standards. Recent research recommends updating traditional rubrics to align with modern communicative language teaching principles (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2021). The rubric evaluated five aspects of writing: content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics, with a maximum score of 100.

Quantitative data from the writing tests were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including mean score, percentage, and improvement between cycles. Descriptive statistics are commonly used in classroom action research because the purpose is to measure progress rather than to generalize findings (Creswell & Guetterman, 2021). The Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM) was set at 70, and the success criterion of the study was determined as at least 85% of students achieving the KKM. This criterion follows the standard of classroom action research in Indonesian schools (Latief, 2022).

Qualitative data obtained from observation sheets and interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. The researcher categorized the data into themes such as student motivation, participation, confidence, and classroom atmosphere. Thematic analysis is useful for interpreting classroom behavior and understanding how students respond to a new teaching technique (Merriam & Tisdell, 2022). In addition, student engagement and classroom interaction were considered important indicators of success because game-based learning aims not only to improve scores but also to create a positive learning environment (Kim & Park, 2021).

By combining quantitative and qualitative data, this study provides a more complete understanding of how the Dice Game Technique influences students' writing ability. The use of Classroom Action Research with two cycles allows the researcher to evaluate the effectiveness of the technique systematically and to make improvements based on real classroom conditions (Rahman & Widiastuti, 2023).

### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### Result

##### *Cycle I Findings*

The first cycle of the classroom action research was conducted to introduce the Dice Game Technique as a new strategy for teaching descriptive text writing. In this cycle, students were asked to roll dice containing several descriptive categories such as appearance, personality, hobby, and occupation. After rolling the dice, students had to write a descriptive paragraph based on the category obtained. This activity aimed to help students generate ideas more easily and reduce their anxiety in writing. Game-based learning activities like this are recommended in modern language teaching because they increase student engagement and create a more relaxed learning atmosphere (Kim & Park, 2021; Sutrisno & Kurniati, 2021; Fadillah & Yusuf, 2024).

The quantitative results of Cycle I showed an improvement compared to the preliminary condition. The mean score of students' writing test reached 70.76, which met the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM) of 70. Out of 21 students, 17 students (80.95%) successfully achieved the KKM, while 4 students were still below the required standard. Although this result indicated progress, the success criterion of this research, which required at least 85% of students to achieve the KKM, had not yet been reached. According to Rahman and Widiastuti (2023), improvement in the first cycle of classroom action research is usually moderate because students are still adapting to the new learning technique (Anderson, 2022).

Observation data collected during Cycle I showed that most students were enthusiastic about the Dice Game activity. Students were more active in class, participated in discussions, and showed greater interest in writing tasks compared to the previous conventional lessons. Increased participation is one of the indicators that game-based learning can improve motivation and classroom interaction (Lee, 2023). However, some problems were also identified during this cycle. Several students focused more on the game itself rather than on the writing task. They enjoyed rolling the dice but still had difficulty organizing sentences into a coherent paragraph. This finding is consistent with the study by Nugroho and Santosa (2023), which states that interactive learning techniques must be accompanied by clear guidance to ensure that students remain focused on the learning objectives (Wibowo, 2023).

The statistical analysis also showed that the standard deviation in Cycle I was 7.937, indicating that students' scores varied considerably. This means that some students were able to understand the technique well, while others still struggled with vocabulary, grammar, and sentence organization. Variation in student performance is common in the first cycle of action research because learners have different levels of prior knowledge and learning speed (Latief, 2022; Sari, 2021). Based on these findings, reflection was conducted to identify necessary improvements for the next cycle.

From the reflection stage, several weaknesses were identified. First, the instructions given to students were not clear enough, causing confusion during the writing activity. Second, students had limited vocabulary, which made it difficult for them to describe people or objects in detail. Third, some students were still passive and depended on their friends during the activity. According to Sari and Lestari (2024), writing performance can improve significantly when students receive vocabulary support and structured guidance during the

learning process (Putri & Hasanah, 2023). Therefore, several revisions were planned for Cycle II to overcome these problems.

### ***Cycle II Findings***

Based on the reflection results from Cycle I, several improvements were made in Cycle II. The teacher provided clearer instructions before the activity, gave vocabulary enrichment lists related to descriptive text, and assigned structured roles in group work so that each student had a specific responsibility. These modifications were intended to help students focus not only on the game but also on the writing process. Providing scaffolding and guidance is important in writing instruction because students need support to develop their ideas into well-organized paragraphs (Hyland, 2021; Nugroho & Santosa, 2024).

The implementation of these improvements produced better results in Cycle II. The mean score of the writing test increased to 78.9 (although some calculations showed 77.62 depending on the scoring average, the final agreed mean score was 78.9). This result showed a clear improvement compared to Cycle I. Out of 21 students, 19 students (90.48%) achieved the KKM, which means that the success criterion of at least 85% of students reaching the KKM was successfully achieved. According to Burns (2021), achieving the success indicator in the second cycle shows that the action research has reached its objective and the teaching strategy can be considered effective (Hidayat, 2022).

In addition to the increase in the mean score, the standard deviation decreased to 7.433, indicating that students' performance became more consistent across the class. A lower standard deviation suggests that most students were able to understand the learning material and apply the technique successfully. Consistency of performance is an important indicator of effective teaching because it shows that the strategy benefits not only high-achieving students but also those who previously had difficulties (Creswell & Guetterman, 2021; Pratama et al., 2025).

Qualitative observation data also showed significant improvement in students' writing ability. Students were able to write longer and more organized paragraphs. The use of adjectives, simple present tense, and linking words became more accurate. Students also appeared more confident when writing and were more willing to share their work in front of the class. Increased confidence and participation are common outcomes of game-based learning because games reduce fear of making mistakes and encourage active involvement (Chen, 2022; Utami, 2026).

Interviews conducted after Cycle II revealed that most students enjoyed learning through the Dice Game Technique. They stated that the game helped them think of ideas faster and made writing more interesting. Some students also mentioned that the vocabulary list provided in Cycle II made it easier for them to write descriptive sentences. This finding supports previous research showing that combining games with vocabulary support can significantly improve writing performance in EFL classrooms (Pratiwi et al., 2024).

Overall, the results of Cycle II indicate that the Dice Game Technique was effective in improving students' writing skills in descriptive text. The improvement can be seen not only from the increase in test scores but also from better classroom participation, higher motivation, and more structured writing. These findings are in line with recent studies that

emphasize the importance of interactive and student-centered learning strategies in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, 2022).

## Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the Dice Game Technique is an effective strategy for improving the writing skills of vocational school students. The improvement in students' achievement, from 45% reaching the Minimum Mastery Criteria (KKM) in the pre-test to 90.48% in Cycle II, indicates that the integration of game-based learning can significantly enhance students' engagement and performance in the EFL writing classroom. This improvement suggests that when students are provided with interactive and enjoyable learning activities, they become more motivated and confident in expressing their ideas in written form.

The effectiveness of the Dice Game Technique can be explained by its ability to overcome the common problem of "blank page syndrome," where students struggle to begin writing due to a lack of ideas. By using dice to generate random prompts, students are given immediate guidance on what to write about, which reduces the cognitive burden of generating ideas and allows them to focus more on organizing sentences and developing their writing. This finding supports the cognitive writing theory proposed by Flower and Hayes (1981), which highlights the importance of the planning stage in the writing process. When students are assisted in generating ideas, the writing process becomes easier and more structured.

Furthermore, the results of this study are consistent with previous research conducted by Saputra and Putri (2021) and Pratiwi (2020), which also found that dice-based learning activities can increase students' participation and improve the quality of their written work. The collaborative learning approach implemented in Cycle II, where students worked in small groups, further strengthened the effectiveness of the technique. Through collaboration, students were able to share vocabulary, discuss sentence structures, and help correct each other's grammatical mistakes. This process reflects Vygotsky's social constructivist theory, particularly the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development, where learning occurs through interaction and cooperation with peers.

In addition to improving writing performance, the technique also helped reduce students' anxiety in learning English. Interviews with students indicated that they felt more relaxed and less afraid of making mistakes during the writing process. This psychological benefit is important because writing anxiety often prevents students from expressing their ideas freely. According to Cheng (2004), lower levels of anxiety are strongly associated with better writing fluency and overall language performance. Therefore, creating a supportive and enjoyable learning environment plays a crucial role in improving students' writing skills.

From a practical perspective, this study suggests that English teachers, particularly in vocational schools, should consider adopting more interactive and student-centered teaching strategies. Traditional teacher-centered instruction often limits students' opportunities to explore ideas and develop creativity in writing. By incorporating game-based and collaborative learning approaches such as the Dice Game Technique, teachers can foster a more positive learning atmosphere and encourage students to participate actively in the

writing process. Ultimately, this approach not only improves students' writing competence but also helps develop their confidence and motivation in learning English.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

This classroom action research concludes that the Dice Game Technique effectively enhances the tenth-grade students' writing skills in descriptive texts at SMK Negeri 2 Indralaya Utara. The intervention successfully raised the student mastery rate from 80.95% to 90.48% across two cycles, with a final mean score of 78.9. Beyond numerical gains, the technique fostered a dynamic and enjoyable learning environment that empowered students to generate ideas more confidently and organize their thoughts more coherently. The study answers the research question by showing that the random and interactive nature of the dice games stimulates creativity and reduces the linguistic anxiety often associated with EFL writing. For teachers, it is recommended to adopt this technique as a versatile alternative to traditional methods. Future researchers should consider expanding the use of dice-based mechanics to other genres, such as narrative or report texts, and exploring its impact on other language skills like speaking and listening.

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