

Improving Eighth Graders' Writing Skills Using Guided Questions at SMP Negeri 20 Palu

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Abstract

This study aims to determine whether the guided question technique is effective in improving the writing skills of grade VIII students at SMP Negeri 20 Palu. The researcher used a quasi-experimental research design. The population of this study consisted of 111 class VIII students at SMP Negeri 20 Palu. The sample of this study consisted of class VIII B, an experimental class with 29 students, and class VIII C, a control class with 29 students. The sample selection in this study used simple random sampling. The researcher administered pretests and posttests during data collection. The results showed that the average value of the experimental class students on the posttest (75.29) was significantly higher than that of the control class students (58.62). The significance value (Asymp. 2-tailed) is 0.001, which is smaller than the p-value of 0.05; this indicates that the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted. In conclusion, the guided question technique effectively improved the writing skills of grade VIII students at SMP Negeri 20 Palu.

Keywords: *Descriptive Text, Guided Questions Technique, Improving, and Writing Skills.*

INTRODUCTION

Writing is a crucial language skill for formal communication. It also involves pouring ideas and feelings into writing to communicate stories to readers. Based on the Kurikulum Merdeka, junior high school students are taught how to write texts in English. Students are expected to construct sentences and develop them into well-formed paragraphs. One of the texts taught in eighth grade is a descriptive text. According to Noprianto (2017), descriptive text is a type of writing used to portray something, such as animals or people. However, many studies show that high school students often face challenges in writing, especially in developing ideas, vocabulary selection, grammar, and writing mechanics.

Based on the problem, the researcher intends to conduct an experiment to assess the effectiveness of more engaging learning techniques. The guided questions technique is a teaching method that can be implemented in learning, particularly to enhance writing skills. There are several steps to writing using questions, as done by Taylor (2009). First, choose a topic for the students to write about. Then, make a list of several related questions. Third, answer the prepared questions and develop them into a paragraph. Finally, ask them to revise the paragraph to achieve organization based on the descriptive text and rewrite it into a final draft.

The use of the Guided Questions technique in writing instruction can enhance students' enthusiasm for composing descriptive texts. Students also responded positively to applying this technique in writing learning (Permatasari 2018); This technique is considered effective because

it is simple to understand and allows students to express their ideas while developing their writing skills (Darmawan & Andrianti 2018); The guided question technique also helps improve students' achievement in writing descriptive text, so it can be one of the appropriate methods to teach writing skills (Al Atiqiah 2019); Furthermore, the guided questions method makes it easier for students to systematically organize descriptive paragraphs and explore their ideas (Nawawi 2011).

Although numerous studies have explored the use of the guided questions technique to enhance students' writing skills, significant research gaps still remain. Most previous studies did not involve the revision process in students' writing, so they have not explored its impact on the final quality of writing. Therefore, this study seeks to fill the gap by implementing the final revision before the collection of drafts to analyze whether the revision significantly improves the quality of students' writing. This study builds upon previous findings and offers new insights into the effectiveness of revision in the writing process, as well as how students use revision to enhance their writing.

Guided questions are a technique applicable in language teaching and offer several advantages when implemented. According to Hidayah (2015), guided questions can make teaching writing easier for students and assist them in arranging their ideas logically. By answering questions related to the topic, students can write without confusion, as they receive structured guidance throughout the process. Although the guided question technique effectively improves students' descriptive writing skills, teachers must consider several limitations. According to Wulandari et al. (2015), this technique is challenging to implement when guiding the writing process for large groups of students. The teacher will have difficulty controlling the class. Therefore, although this technique can be very beneficial in small or manageable settings, its practical implementation may require adjustments or additional support to be effective in larger classes.

Despite the challenges of implementing the Guided Questioning Technique in large classes, the strategy can still be used effectively by dividing students into small groups so that guidance remains focused without burdening classroom management. In addition, using technology such as interactive presentations or digital worksheets can help distribute questions more systematically. With appropriate strategies, the guided questions technique remains a practical approach to enhancing students' writing skills, as it provides clear guidance and facilitates the systematic development of ideas.

Based on the explanation above, the hypotheses of this study are formulated as follows:

1. Alternative hypothesis (Ha)

The guided questions technique can effectively improve the writing skills of eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 20 Palu.

2. Null hypothesis (Ho)

The guided questions technique cannot effectively improve the writing skills of the eighth-grade students SMP Negeri 20 Palu.

METHODS

This research targeted eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 20 Palu. Data was collected using pre-tests and post-tests. Due to time constraints, this study will focus on teaching descriptive text, specifically vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics, through the use of guided questions.

Research design

The study employed a quasi-experimental design. According to Leavy (2017), This study design includes two groups: the experimental class and the control class. The researcher instructed the experimental class in descriptive text writing using the guided questions technique, whereas

the control class received instruction through the traditional method. In this research, six meetings were conducted for each group. The research design for this study is presented below:

Table 1 : Pre-test and Post-test Design

E	=	Y1	X	Y2
C	=	Y1	O	Y2

Where: E= Experimental group, C= Control group, Y1= Pre-test, Y2= Post-test, X= Treatment, O= No treatment, (Leavy, 2017)

Research Participants and Sampling Procedures

The population is the most crucial component of the study. In this research, the target population comprised eighth-grade students of SMP Negeri 20 Palu, which included four classes. Here is the table of students in detail:

Table 2 : The population of students in the eighth grade of SMP Negeri 20 Palu

No	Class	Number of students
1	VIII A	29
2	VIII B	29
3	VIII C	27
4	VIII D	26
Total		111

The sample is just a tiny portion of the overall population. The sample represents the population's size and makeup. The researcher used a simple random sampling technique to select the study sample. The researcher implemented this sampling technique by randomly selecting classes using a lottery method. Initially, she listed the names of the classes she was enrolled in during eighth grade at SMP Negeri 20 Palu on paper. Next, she shuffles the paper into a small box. The experimental class contains the first paper (Class B), while the control class contains the second paper (Class A).

Data Collection

Data collection techniques are crucial in research, encompassing methods for gathering reliable and accurate information. In this context, techniques such as testing and treatment are used to obtain and evaluate data. This study uses pre-tests, treatment, and post-tests in data collection. An instrument is a tool for gathering data. This study employed lesson plans and test items as data collection instruments. The test comprises essay questions. In assessing the students' descriptive text writing, the researcher used specific evaluation criteria. The researcher used a scoring rubric for descriptive writing adapted from Brown (2007). The table below shows this:

Table 3: The Rubric of Descriptive Writing

Aspect	Score	Performance Description
Content (C)30% ➤ Topic	4	The topic is well-developed and clearly presented, with relevant details that support it.

➤ Details Weighting: 3x	3	Although the concept is clear and comprehensive, some details are only partially relevant to the main topic.
	2	Although the concept is clear and comprehensive, the details are unrelated.
	1	The details have little to do with the theme, which is unclear.
Organization (O) 30% ➤ Identification ➤ Description Weighting: 2x	4	The descriptions are organized using the appropriate connectives, and the identification is comprehensive.
	3	The description is structured with practically exact connectors, and the identification is nearly finished.
	2	The identification is incomplete, and the descriptions are organized with a few misuses of connectives.
	1	The descriptions are structured but contain incorrect use of connectives, and the identification is not fully developed.
Grammar (G)15% ➤ Use present tense ➤ Agreement Weighting: 2x	4	There are minimal grammatical or agreement errors.
	3	There are some grammatical or agreement errors, but they do not interfere with the overall meaning.
	2	There are numerous grammatical or agreement errors.
	1	There are frequent grammatical or agreement errors.
Vocabulary (V) 15% Weighting: 1.5x	4	The choice of words and word forms is effective.
	3	There are a few vocabulary and word form misuses, but they do not alter the meaning.
	2	The range of words and word forms is limited, causing some confusion.
	1	There is very poor knowledge of vocabulary and word forms, making the text difficult to understand.
Mechanic (M) 10% ➤ Spelling ➤ Capitalization ➤ Punctuation Weighting: 1.5x	4	Spelling, punctuation, and capitalization are used correctly.
	3	There are occasional errors in spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.
	2	Frequent errors in spelling, punctuation, and capitalization are present.
	1	Errors in spelling, punctuation, and capitalization are dominant.

Adapted from Brown (2007)

$$\text{score} = \frac{3C+20+2G + 1.5V + 1.5M}{40} \times 10$$

Table 4: Classification Score

81-100	Excellent
61-80	Good
41-60	Average
21-40	Fair
0-20	Poor

Adapted from Harris (1969)

Interventions

The intervention in this study is the Guided Questioning Technique in teaching writing.

1. The experimental group will be taught writing using the Guided Questions Technique, where students answer a series of questions to help them structure paragraphs in an organized manner.
2. The control group will learn to write without the help of guided questions but rather with conventional methods.

The intervention was conducted for 6 weeks in an English writing class. Each session lasted for 80 minutes and was given twice a week. The researcher provided a list of guided questions before students started writing and additional guidance when students felt confused.

RESULTS, FINDINGS, DISCUSSION

The researcher administered a pre-test to both the experimental and control classes to assess students' descriptive text writing abilities. After the treatment, a post-test was conducted to evaluate their writing skills following the intervention. The pre-test and post-test results are displayed in Table 5.

Table 5: Pretest and Post-test Results of Experimental Class
Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Pre-test of Experimental Class	29	33	67	50.29
Post-test of Experimental Class	29	58	92	75.29
Valid N (listwise)	29			

According to the descriptive statistical analysis presented in Table 5, the experimental class consisted of 29 students. The average pre-test score was 50.29, with a highest score of 67 and a lowest score of 33, indicating that students' knowledge and ability to write descriptive texts were still relatively low. However, after the learning process, the post-test results showed significant improvement, with scores ranging from a minimum of 58 to a maximum of 92 and an increased average score of 75.29, classified as a very good category. The table clearly illustrates that the mean score is from 50.29 to 75.29, demonstrating students' progress in descriptive text writing.

Pre-tests and post-tests were also administered to the control class in class VIII A, where the researcher used only conventional teaching methods. The results are shown in the following table:

Table 6: Pre-test and Post-test Result of Control Class
Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Pre-test of Control Class	29	33	67	50.29
Post-test of Control Class	29	42	75	58.62
Valid N (listwise)	29			

According to Table 4.2, the control class comprised 29 students, with an average pre-test score of 50.29. The highest pre-test score was 67, while the lowest was 33. Additionally, the mean post-test score in the control class was 58.62, indicating a slight improvement in students'

descriptive text writing ability without intervention. The maximum post-test score achieved was 75, while the minimum was 42.

This study employed the Shapiro-Wilk Test to assess data normality, given that the sample size was below 50. A significance value greater than 0.05 in the Shapiro-Wilk Test indicates that the data follows a normal distribution.

The test result data can be seen in the following table:

Table 6: Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Pre-test of experimental class	.129	29	.200*	.966	29	.464
Post-test of experimental class	.167	29	.037	.920	29	.031
Pre-test of control	.167	29	.037	.920	29	.031
Post-test of control	.168	29	.036	.920	29	.031
*. This is a lower bound of the true significance. a. Lilliefors Significance Correction						

The results of the normality tests, using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk methods, indicated that the data distribution in this study varied between the pre-test and post-test groups in both the experimental and control classes. For the experimental class pre-test, the significance value was 0.200 in the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and 0.464 in the Shapiro-Wilk test. Since both values are more significant than 0.05, it can be concluded that the experimental class pre-test data is normally distributed.

In contrast, the significance values for the experimental class post-test, control class pre-test, and control class post-test were all below 0.05 in both statistical tests. Specifically, the experimental class post-test had a Kolmogorov-Smirnov significance value of 0.037 and a Shapiro-Wilk significance value of 0.031. Similarly, the control class pre-test and post-test also had significance values below 0.05. This indicates that the data in these three groups were not normally distributed, meaning the assumption of normality was not met. As a result, the researcher used non-parametric tests, such as the Mann-Whitney U Test, to compare the two independent groups.

The Mann-Whitney U test is a non-parametric statistical test considered robust for determining whether there is a significant difference in the average scores between the experimental and control groups. Since the post-test scores of both classes were not normally distributed, the analysis proceeded with the Mann-Whitney U test. The results of the calculations are presented in the following table.

Table 7: Mann-Whitney U Test Test Statistics^a

Result of Writing Skills	
Mann-Whitney U	94.500
Wilcoxon W	529.500
Z	-5.167

Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.001
a. Grouping Variable: Class	

The researcher conducted the Mann-Whitney U test to determine whether the difference between the two groups was statistically significant. The test results yielded a Mann-Whitney U value of 94.500, a Wilcoxon W of 529.500, and a Z value of -5.167, with a significance value (Asymp. Sig. 2-tailed) of 0.001. Since $p < 0.05$, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted. This confirms that there is a significant difference in the improvement of writing skills between the experimental and control classes.

The findings of this study demonstrate that the guided questions technique significantly enhances students' writing skills, with the experimental class showing better results than the control class. Guided questions assist students in structuring their ideas more systematically, leading to improved descriptive writing. These results align with previous research, further supporting the effectiveness of the guided questions technique.

The results of this study are supported by findings from previous studies, such as those conducted by Permatasari (2018), which showed that using guided question techniques in learning to write made students interested in writing descriptive texts. Students responded positively to applying this technique in writing descriptive texts, which indicated that the gadget questions technique could increase students' motivation and writing skills. In addition, research by Al Atiqiah (2019) supports the results of this study. The researcher concluded that the guided questions technique can enhance students' achievement in writing descriptive texts. This finding indicates that the technique is effective in improving writing skills and can be appropriately implemented in teaching descriptive text writing. Furthermore, the results of this study align with previous research, which confirmed that the guided questions technique positively impacts students' writing skills, particularly in descriptive texts. This technique helps students organize their ideas more systematically and enhances the overall quality of their writing.

Although the guided questions technique improved students' writing skills, its implementation faced several challenges. One major obstacle was students' limited vocabulary, making it difficult to find appropriate words and form correct sentences. According to Nation (2001), vocabulary knowledge is essential for language proficiency, and insufficient vocabulary hinders students from expressing their ideas clearly. This issue aligns with Fadilah et al. (2022), who found that a lack of vocabulary prevents students from developing their ideas into well-structured and detailed writing, making their work appear incomplete.

In addition to vocabulary limitations, the researcher encountered other challenges during the study. First, the research was conducted within a limited period, whereas writing skill development requires a longer time to show significant improvement. Creswell (2018) states that educational research often faces time constraints that may impact the results. To address this, the researcher developed an effective research schedule by aligning the implementation time with the school's academic calendar.

Another challenge was that some students lacked confidence in expressing their ideas when writing, primarily because they struggled to construct sentences correctly. According to Hyland (2003), confidence is an essential factor in writing skills, and students who lack confidence struggle to develop ideas effectively. To overcome this, the researcher provided gradual writing exercises, from simple sentences to more complex texts, helping students grasp writing concepts more quickly. Despite these obstacles, the strategies implemented enabled students to improve their writing skills through the guided questions technique, demonstrating its effectiveness in enhancing their ability to write with clarity and structure.

Based on this research, the researchers linked these findings to previous studies by Permatasari (2018), Al Atiqiah (2019), and Fadilah et al. (2022). These three studies demonstrate that guided questions are effective in enhancing students' writing skills, particularly in descriptive

texts. Additionally, this study confirms that applying the guided questions technique in the eighth grade at SMP Negeri 20 Palu significantly improves students' descriptive writing skills. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that guided questions are an effective technique for the learning process.

CONCLUSION

The researcher concluded that the guided questions technique effectively enhances the descriptive text writing skills of eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 20 Palu. A significant difference was observed in the average post-test scores between the experimental and control classes. The experimental class achieved an average post-test score of 75.29, while the control class scored 58.62. This finding is further supported by the Mann-Whitney U test, which yielded a significance value (Asymp. 2-tailed) of 0.001—lower than 0.05. Consequently, H_a was accepted, confirming that the guided questions technique improves the descriptive text writing skills of eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 20 Palu.

The researcher offers several suggestions for improving writing skills. Teachers are encouraged to implement the guided questions technique in writing lessons, particularly for descriptive texts, as it helps students develop ideas and structure paragraphs more systematically. Additionally, teachers can modify the questions to align with students' comprehension levels and the topic being discussed. Students are advised to engage in writing exercises using the guided questions technique actively. By responding to these questions, they can better organize their ideas before composing a complete descriptive text. Furthermore, this study can serve as a reference for future research aimed at enhancing writing instruction. Researchers are encouraged to explore the application of the guided questions technique in different text types or other language skills, such as speaking or reading, to assess its broader effectiveness.

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