

Improving the Ability of the 6th Grade Students at SDN Petemon X/358 Surabaya to Write Descriptive Texts Using Four-Square Technique

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to increase students' achievement in writing descriptive text by implementing the Four-Square Writing Technique (FSWT) to the 6th grade students at SDN Petemon X/358 Surabaya in the academic year 2020/2021. Each cycle of classroom action research consisted of three meetings and included four steps: planning, action, observation, and reflection. The data were gathered through the use of two instruments: observation and test. The results indicated that students made great progress in their ability to write descriptive texts. Pre-test mean score was only 62.42, but improved to 71.10 in cycle I and 77.30 in cycle II. The pre-test score was only 74 and improved to 82 to 88 in subsequent cycles. Meanwhile, the lowest pre-test score was 50, and the highest post-test score ranged from 62 to 68. In case of the students who passed the tests, while only five students (16.67%) passed the pre-test, there were significant improvements in post-tests, with 18 students (60%) passing in post-test cycle I and 27 students (90%) passing in post-test cycle II. This research was stopped in cycle II due to the fact that the criteria for success were met in a percentage of 90%, with 27 students passing the post-test in cycle II, based on the Minimum Mastery Criteria (KKM) standard of ≥ 70 .

Keywords: *writing, descriptive text, FSWM technique, online learning*

INTRODUCTION

Writing is the most difficult language skill to master because it requires a combination of thoughtfulness, critical thinking, and creative ability in order to produce quality written work that is supported by appropriate rules. Writing plays a significant role in the study of foreign languages, particularly in the study of English writing, which requires the ability to incorporate meaningful information in such a way that the readers will have an intuitive understanding of the written works (Tribble, 1996, p. 3). Additionally, writing is a necessary skill for written communication, which is not easy for students at any level of education. Mastering vocabularies and tenses are critical for producing quality writing, particularly in the English language, in which appropriate vocabularies are used to arrange words into sentences and develop them into good paragraphs and written works.

Students must acquire certain skills in writing, such as vocabulary, text structure, cohesive devices, grammar, and punctuation, that will help them learn English more effectively. The ability to write in English is necessary and significant. Harmer (2001, p.3) argued, "The reason students learn to write is because it's worth remembering that the majority

of exams, whether they're testing foreign language abilities or other skills, frequently rely on students' writing proficiency." It is implied that the process of English teaching and learning should include instruction in proper writing in order to assist students in developing their capability and ability to produce written language. When creating a written text, numerous factors must be considered, including the content, word choice, text organization, mechanics, grammar, and syntax, as writing is regarded as a critical skill and the standard of good writing has numerous requirements. Nonetheless, students may lose interest if they are explicitly taught all of them.

Based on pre-observation, interviews with English teachers and students, and the results, it was determined that some students in SDN Petemon X/358 Surabaya had problems with their writing abilities. Many sixth-grade students lacked basic writing skills. Their limited writing ability was attributed to issues with content, organization, language use, vocabulary, and writing procedure. Additionally, the majority of students in class 6-A struggled to find appropriate words to convey their ideas in written works. They frequently asked their friends or teachers to translate words from Bahasa Indonesia to English. Due to their intense focus on translating words into English, the students neglected to organize their thoughts effectively. As a result, their paragraphs were disorganized, and their Minimum Mastery Criteria (KKM) score fell below 70. Additionally, there were issues with grammar and adherence to writing conventions such as spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.

Additionally, the researcher discovered that students rarely engaged in writing practices after conducting interviews with the teacher and students. When they did into writing practices, the teacher simply asked them to write a text without any accompanying activities. The teacher only discussed a few examples of texts that were frequently provided via Power Point (PPT) during an online classroom via Google Meet or Zoom. Within the pandemic Covid-19 era, the specific procedures were not well-applied in the online classroom. As a result, students were disinterested in the educational process, particularly in writing activities.

Worldwide, the coronavirus disease pandemic of 2019 (COVID-19) has disrupted education. Since the dangerous virus was first identified in Wuhan, South China in November 2019, the Indonesian government has taken necessary measures to closely monitor the World Health Organization's (WHO) situation report on the COVID-19 outbreak worldwide (Agung, Surtikanti, & Quinones, 2020, p. 226). The virus then spread rapidly throughout the world. This state of affairs has impacted a variety of sectors, including education. Indonesia's Minister of Education and Culture, Nadiem Makarim, issued a Circular Note directing schools and other educational institutions, including higher education, to temporarily suspend traditional

teaching and learning activities in schools in favor of e-learning. He suggested that teachers utilize a variety of e-learning platforms, including Quipper-School, Ruang Guru, Google Classroom, Zoom, and Google meet. Additionally, these e-learning platforms gain popularity in Indonesia due to their widespread use and installation. Online education has become a hot topic and a potential issue.

In light of the foregoing, the researcher argues that an English teacher must employ an appropriate technique to pique students' interest in writing activities and make the teaching-learning process more enjoyable. It is critical to teach writing in an effective, engaging, and enjoyable manner in order to make the writing class more effective, interesting, and enjoyable for the students. Teachers should use appropriate techniques when teaching writing, particularly during the pandemic Covid-19 era's implementation of online classrooms. By employing the appropriate strategy, the teacher can make the writing process more enjoyable and accessible to students. To address these issues, the researcher proposes using the Four-Square Writing Technique (FSWT) to improve students' technical writing skills with an emphasis on descriptive text in the second semester of the academic year 2020/2021 at SDN Petemon X/358 Surabaya. The descriptive text is chosen with consideration for how it will be used in the lesson plans. The researcher establishes that FSWM is an effective method for conducting writing activities by conducting a classroom action research. The Four-Square Writing Technique is a straightforward graphic organizer that guides students through the process of organizing their thoughts or plans prior to writing a complete paragraph (Gould & Gould, 1999).

The Four-Square Writing Technique is a technique for teaching fundamental writing skills that is applicable across grade levels and curriculum areas. It consists of visual representations of significant content information designed to assist students who struggle to organize information (Bromley, Vitis, & Modlo, 1995, p. 42). Additionally, FSWM was chosen because it possesses numerous advantages for use in teaching writing to students of all levels and is suitable for narrative, descriptive, expository, and persuasive writing. FSWT follows a logical sequence, ensuring that students are not confused, and makes use of engaging features to ensure that students are engaged. Students will become accustomed to writing in a systematic manner as a result of the step-by-step approach used. By utilizing FSWT, students would be able to easily break down and explore detailed ideas in writing. As a result, they may be able to write their written works in a systematic and organized manner. Therefore, the researcher entitled "*Improving the Ability of the 6th Grade Students at SDN Petemon X/358 Surabaya to Write Descriptive Texts Using Four-Square Technique*". It aimed to describe the

implementation of the Four-Square Technique in online learning to 6th grade students at SDN Petemon X/358 Surabaya's 6th grade students in the academic year 2020/21 and their achievement of a descriptive text writing skill.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Writing

Writing is one of the four basic English skills students need to learn, and it is a useful one. Productive skill is characterized by students doing things during practice to make language. To succeed as a writer, one must practice constantly writing by setting goals, generating ideas, organizing information, selecting appropriate language usage, and drafting. Next, they must read and review their work. Finally, they must revise and edit their work (Hedge, 2000, p.308). There is also the practice of writing, which is known as the process of transforming research inspiration, serendipity, experimentation, and the like into a message with a distinct and concrete meaning. The message conveyed through writing is dependent on all sources, such as written resources, where the reader must be able to understand in order to interpret the information. If writing is the best way to convey thoughts and feelings to others, it can help others to understand one another. Because of this, the people who are building their ideas have to produce written content that is understandable and acceptable (Hyland, 2004, p. 9).

Online Learning

A learning process using electronics as a learning medium is referred to as online learning. Onno W. Purba (2002) believes that in the context of education, the application of online learning is a kind of information technology called virtual schools. With online learning technology, everything the teacher does in the classroom happens live, but at the same time, it occurs in a virtual classroom where the teacher is working with a computer on one location, while students learn with computers in other locations. Course material is available in the form of downloadable files, while an interactive classroom is built on assignments and discussions. The basic concept of online learning is to provide new classes that are equivalent to those in existing schools, thus making it possible for people to follow the course at home or at work. This indicates that, because the construction of a virtual institution is required to provide results that are approximately the same as those of the aspiration to establish a conventional educational institution, a virtual institution must provide results that are more or less equivalent to what a conventional educational institution would. Online learning, in other words, is

conventional learning that takes place in digital format over the internet using internet technology.

Four-Square Writing Technique (FSWT)

The Four-Square Writing Technique (FSWT), first described by Judith Gould and Evan Gould in 1999, is a method consisting of four phases, or four types of writing, all done in a square. It's a teaching method that's helpful in different grade levels and subject areas. For use in 1st-12th grade classrooms, it can help students improve their writing skills. The elements of an FSWM template can be utilized in each of the four writing modes: narrative, descriptive, expository, and persuasive. Additionally, FSWT is a simplified graphic organizer that uses fewer key words to effectively teach writing in school. A visual framework that helps students organize their ideas before writing texts is a type of graphic organizer. A graphic organizer is a useful means of visualizing or structuring complex information or elements of a concept or topic in a manner that employs standardized labels. It is a visual and kinesthetic approach, both of which are employed to guide writing, for enhancing word choice, and providing more detail. Step-by-step approach built around a simple graphic organizer are also employed by FSWM. Cohesiveness, coherence, and transition words all are easier to use when the students are comfortable. Words that bridge the gap between ideas are transition words. They keep sentences running smoothly when making changes.

Descriptive Text

The term "descriptive text" refers to text describing people, places, or things. Text that explains a particular location or thing can be described as descriptive. In Wardiman, et al. (2008), the structure of descriptive text was categorised into two parts: identification and description. When describing the concept, the writer describes the phenomenon. An accurate identification is a difficult task, analogous to orientation in other genres of text. Typically, it is introduced in the first paragraph and helps you to know more about the subject that was covered. If you can identify a text, you can find out what the topic is and what the text is about. the writer describes things and various characteristics such as beauty, worth, and excellence (prominent aspects that are unique). It is added to the list of identified items after identification, and then at the end of the list. Verbose text contains adjectives, the simple present tense, noun phrases, nouns, and relative clauses. Begin with an introductory statement. Demonstrate various aspects of the subject with systematic description. Then, close with a statement..

METHOD

Research Design

The purpose of this research was to describe the implementation and students' achievement of writing skills through the application of the Four-Square Writing Technique (FSWT) to students' descriptive text writing skills at SDN Petemon X/358 Surabaya in the field of action research. Action research, with its four action components of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting, is a term that refers to a series of procedures that teachers can use to either improve certain aspects of their teaching or assess the success of specific activities and procedures (Harmer, 2003, p. 344). According to Wallace, "action research is a systematic way of reflecting on a teacher's teaching by collecting data on their daily practice and analyzing it in order to make some decisions about their future practice" (1998, p. 4). According to the definitions provided, action research is defined as a systematic inquiry conducted by teachers or other individuals in a teaching or learning environment in order to gather information about and ultimately improve the way their particular school operates, how they teach, and how well their students learn.

Research Setting

The researcher conducted the study at Surabaya's SDN Petemon X/358. It is located at Jl. Simo Kwagen No. 37, Petemon, Kec. Sawahan, Kota Surabaya, East Java 60252, Indonesia.

Research Subjects

A subject is any member of a population of individuals about whom information is obtained that may differ from the sample initially designated for a variety of reasons. A subject is a subset of the population under investigation that serves to generalize the findings of the research (Arikunto, 2013, p. 174). The research subjects were students in class 6-A at SDN Petemon X/358 Surabaya, and thus the researcher determined that the total number of subjects would be 30.

Data and Research Instruments

The researcher used qualitative and quantitative data in their research. Data obtained through direct observation were utilized in the Four-Square Writing Method implementation, where students learned using a system similar to that of a college class. Meanwhile, direct tests were used to measure the quantitative data. As part of the implementation of the Four-Square Writing Method, the researcher used field notes to acquire data on the ability of students to write descriptive text within the context of online learning. Post-test evaluations were the

second step in solving the second problem, after conducting tests before and after the assessments. Before any treatment was administered, a preliminary test was given to the students to allow them to check their data. Then, after the treatment was administered, a post-test was given to the students to evaluate the effects.

Data Collection Procedures

Information which was gathered by observing in pre-research, the process and the results of action research implementation, and the discussion between researcher and teacher, were used to create the qualitative data used in this study. The test-writing taker's skills were evaluated with quantitative data. The first test was prior to the examination and the second was after. In the free-writing test of descriptive texts, the writing tests were administered. The topic for writing was decided in advance by coordinating with the English teacher.

Data Analysis

Data from the observation was drawn from activities that occurred while students were in the process of learning. We wanted to find out how the teaching and learning process related to writing skills, so we conducted an experiment that involved teacher, researcher, and students. While looking at both quantitative and qualitative data, the researcher found that students' writing scores tend to follow a pattern. The test scores served as the quantitative data, which were reported in the form of scores before and after the test. The researcher used Excel software to analyze the students' mean scores to see how their scores changed after implementing the activities.

RESULTS FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Observation was done prior to conducting any preliminary research. It was done on May 28, 2021 when the Zoom feature was used to do online learning. As the researcher and the teacher entered 6-A, the class teacher greeted them warmly. As a way of both greeting and encouraging students, the teacher greeted and prayed, and then checked the attendance list. The teacher opened the lesson by asking students to answer a series of questions that dealt with materials that would be covered in the lecture. The teacher asked the students directly if they know anything about certain texts, which texts, or which kind of texts. In this section, some students took part in a lively brainstorming session. The teacher gave a pre-test to the students before the main discussion about describing texts because writing descriptive texts was going to be a major topic of discussion. Based on the results, it appeared that most of the 6th-grade students struggled to write descriptive texts. As a result, only five students passed the test based

on the Minimum Mastery Criteria (KKM) ≥ 70 , with five others falling below the passing threshold. As stated earlier, FSWT was implemented twice, starting on June 2nd 2021 and ending on June 18th, 2021, during which each cycle featured three meetings. The study found that FSWT helped boost students' descriptive writing skill. Classroom Action Research (CAR) in the implementation of FSWT could be seen in table.1. In figures.1 and table.1, it is shown that when it was compared to the pre-research that was done, the writing results significantly differed between the students in the first cycle and the second cycle.

Table.1 Students' Scores Pre-test & Post-tests

Code	Pre-test	Post-test (Cycle I)	Post-test (Cycle II)
S6A-1	64	68	72
S6A-2	55	68	75
S6A-3	50	64	68
S6A-4	60	70	74
S6A-5	62	75	80
S6A-6	62	76	84
S6A-7	70	80	88
S6A-8	74	76	86
S6A-9	68	78	80
S6A-10	66	70	75
S6A-11	60	72	80
S6A-12	55	65	75
S6A-13	70	72	80
S6A-14	65	68	76
S6A-15	60	70	72
S6A-16	55	66	68
S6A-17	64	66	68
S6A-18	62	74	80
S6A-19	56	70	76
S6A-20	60	66	78
S6A-21	68	72	80
S6A-22	62	68	72
S6A-23	72	80	84
S6A-24	68	74	82
S6A-25	72	82	86
S6A-26	64	78	82
S6A-27	60	72	80
S6A-28	55	65	78

S6A-29	58	62	70
S6A-30	56	66	70
Mean	62.43	71.10	77.30
Highest Score	74	82	88
Lowest Score	50	62	68
Passed	5	18	27
Percentage	16.67	60.00	90.00

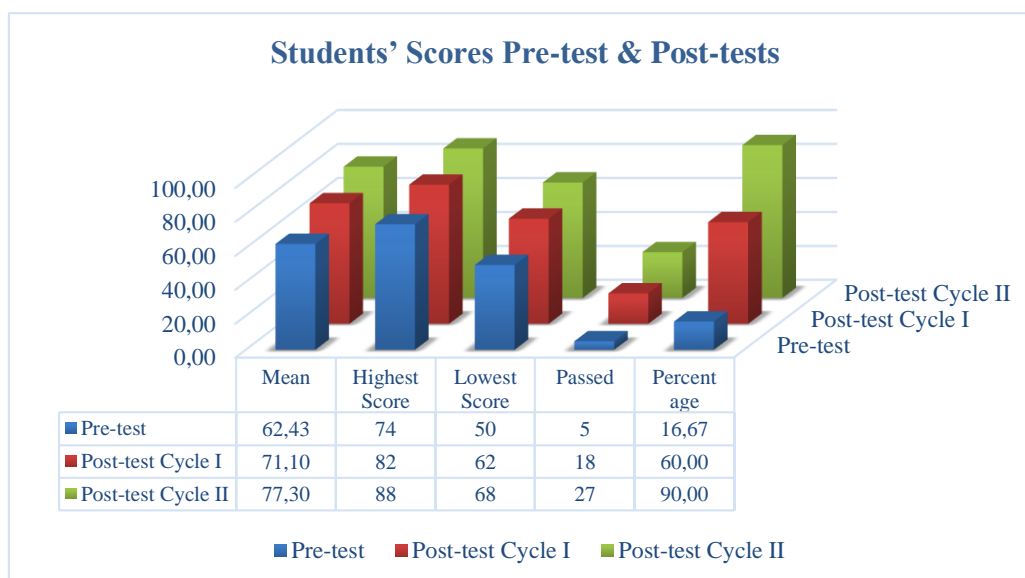


Figure.1 Students' Score Pre-test & Post-tests

The results of the pre-test, post-test cycle I, and post-test cycle II tests are presented in the table.1 and in figure.1. Now, it can be argued that the students of class 6-A performed better as a result of completing the activity. At pre-test, the mean score was only 62.42, but it improved significantly from cycle I (which was from 71.10 to 77.30) to cycle II (which was from 77.30 to 85.15). To way to prove, the score at the beginning of the trial was 74 and by the end of the study, the score had improved to 82-88. Meanwhile, the lowest-scoring participants also showed significant improvement in their post-test scores compared to the pre-test. Pre-tests yielded scores ranging from 50 to 62, while post-tests ranged from 62 to 68. There were some improvements made to the students who had passed the exams. only 5 students who previously passed the test were permitted to take the test (16.67%). Though, in post-tests, the number of students who passed the tests increased to 60 percent (from cycle I) and 90% (from cycle II), in post-tests there were improvements in students who passed the tests. Successful teaching learning process indicates that 75% or more of students' grade point average is 70 or higher. The implementation of FSWT appears to have worked in improving students' writing

skills. During the pre-test phase, a researcher used FSWT to examine the students' learning product. The researcher then compared the students' scores in post-test cycle I with their scores in post-test cycle II. On the following figure, the students' progress in writing ability was demonstrated when describing texts, with the results presented in the form of the following bar graph.

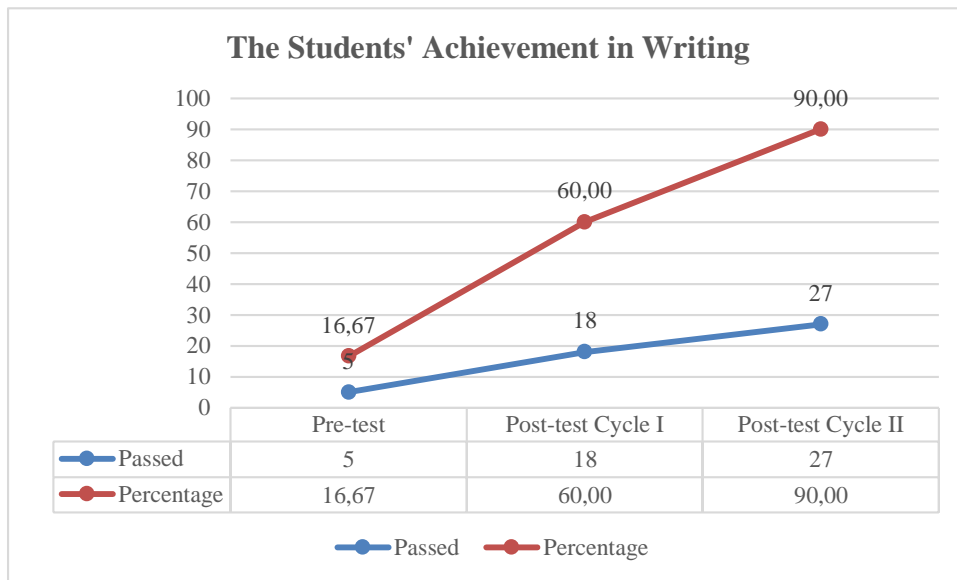


Figure.2 The Students' Achievement in Writing

As illustrated in Figure 2, FSWT enhanced students' writing abilities when they were asked to write descriptive texts. The improvement was interpreted to mean that the students were able to explore ideas for writing descriptive texts following treatment with FSWT, and the results confirmed this. According to the information gathered, this research was halted in cycle 2 because the success criteria were met in a percentage of 90%. According to the Minimum Mastery Criteria (KKM) standard, which is greater than 70, there were a total of 27 students who passed the post-test in cycle II. As a result of the research findings, the researcher concluded that FSWT was effective in improving students' descriptive text writing skills for students in class 6-A at SDN Petemon X/358 Surabaya in the academic year 2020/2021.

CONCLUSION

According to the research findings, the process of improving students' descriptive text writing skills through the implementation of the Four-Square Writing Technique (FSWM) technique via online learning for students in class 6-A at SDN Petemon X/358 Surabaya in the academic year 2020/2021 significantly improved. Students' improvements can be seen in the process of improving students' writing in each cycle, as well as in the increase in students' mean

scores and the percentage of students passing the tests administered during preliminary research, cycle I, and cycle II. The mean score at pre-test was only 62.42, but it increased to 71.10 in cycle I and 71.10 in cycle II (77.30). Following that, the highest pre-test score was only 74 and improved to 82 to 88 in subsequent cycles. Meanwhile, the lowest pre-test scores were 50, and the highest post-test scores ranged from 62 to 68. Finally, only five students passed the pre-test (16.67%). While post-tests revealed an increase in the percentage of students who passed, with 18 students (60%) passing in post-test cycle I and 27 students (90 percent) passing in post-test cycle II. This research was stopped in cycle II because the criteria for success were met in a percentage of 90%, with 27 students passing the post-test in cycle II, based on the Minimum Mastery Criteria (KKM) standard of ≥ 70 .

Based on the findings of the research, the researcher makes the following recommendations: (1) In teaching writing skills, the researcher hopes to be more creative and active in engaging students in teaching activities in order to maximize the teaching learning process while avoiding boredom. That is why teachers should incorporate the FSWT into their writing instruction. The student may not become bored if the method is used. As a result, the teaching and learning process will run smoothly and the objectives will be met.; (2) Students should practice writing on their own at home to improve their writing skills.; (3) For other researchers, it is suggested that they conduct and explore similar research in any area of English skills.

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