

## ENHANCING DESCRIPTIVE WRITING SKILLS THROUGH CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING IN CLASS IX OF SMP NEGERI 2 PULO BANDRING

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**Abstract:** *This study was conducted to improve students' descriptive text writing skills through the application of the Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) approach. The problem faced is the low writing skills of students, especially in compiling descriptive texts, due to a lack of understanding of text structure, linguistic elements and limited vocabulary. The Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) approach was selected as a strategy to address this challenge. This study was conducted as classroom action research over two cycles, involving 30 students from the IX grade at SMP Negeri 2 Pulo Bandring. Each cycle consisted of four stages: planning, implementation of actions, observation, and reflection. Data were collected through tests. The study's results demonstrated a significant improvement in the students' ability to write descriptive texts. Additionally, there was a noticeable increase in student engagement, characterized by heightened participation, collaboration, and motivation to learn. This study provides evidence that the Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) approach is effective in enhancing students' descriptive writing skills.*

**Keywords:** *Descriptive Text, Culturally Responsive Teaching, Classroom Action Research, Writing Skills.*

**Abstrak:** Penelitian ini dilakukan dengan tujuan untuk meningkatkan kemampuan menulis teks deskriptif siswa melalui penerapan pendekatan Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT). Masalah yang dihadapi adalah rendahnya kemampuan menulis siswa, khususnya dalam menyusun teks deskriptif dikarenakan kurangnya pemahaman struktur teks, unsur kebahasaan dan keterbatasan kosakata. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan kemampuan menulis teks deskriptif siswa melalui penerapan pendekatan Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT). Masalah utamanya adalah rendahnya kemampuan menulis siswa dalam menyusun teks deskriptif dikarenakan kurangnya pemahaman struktur teks, unsur kebahasaan dan keterbatasan kosakata. Pendekatan Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) dipilih sebagai strategi untuk mengatasi tantangan ini. Penelitian ini dilakukan sebagai penelitian tindakan kelas selama dua siklus, yang melibatkan 30 siswa dari kelas IX di SMP Negeri 2 Pulo Bandring. Setiap siklus terdiri dari empat tahap: perencanaan, pelaksanaan tindakan, observasi, dan refleksi. Data dikumpulkan melalui tes. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan peningkatan yang signifikan dalam kemampuan siswa untuk menulis teks deskriptif. Selain itu, ada peningkatan yang nyata dalam keterlibatan siswa, yang ditandai dengan meningkatnya partisipasi, kolaborasi, dan motivasi untuk belajar. Penelitian ini memberikan bukti bahwa

pendekatan Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) efektif dalam meningkatkan keterampilan menulis deskriptif siswa.

**Kata Kunci:** *Descriptive Text, Culturally Responsive Teaching, Classroom Action Research, Writing Skills.*

## INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is one of the many countries that teach English. As a global language, there are four have to be mastered by foreign learners. They are speaking, listening, reading, and writing. From those four basic skills that mentioned, writing is the most complicated one.

Writing is one of the basic language skills that students must master in learning English as a foreign language. Writing is a fundamental element in English, enabling students to express their thoughts, information, and ideas in both academic and communicative contexts. In English, there are various types of texts that students must master. Among the various types of texts, descriptive texts play an important role in developing students' ability to express ideas clearly and systematically. (Gerot & Wignell, 1994) argue that descriptive text used to retell events to inform and entertain. However, the ability to write well in English is a challenging milestone for many people, marked by difficulties in generating ideas, choosing the right understanding, structuring arguments, and adhering to grammatical norms (Hannay et al., 2014; Arham & Ariani, 2020). Observations at SMP Negeri 2 Pulo Bandring revealed that grade IX students faced significant challenges in writing descriptive texts, especially in organizing ideas coherently, choosing the right understanding, and applying the correct grammatical structure.

The results of initial observations showed that almost all students in grade IX-2 could not achieve the Minimum Achievement Criteria (KKM) of 75 in writing descriptive texts. Many students found it difficult to express their ideas because of a lack of understanding between the learning materials taught and their cultural background. This is because teachers still use traditional teaching methods that rely heavily on textbook examples that contain Western cultural contexts. This often fails to engage students meaningfully.

Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) emerges as a promising approach to address this challenge. Gay (2010) defines culturally responsive teaching as using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant and effective. This approach recognizes that

students learn better when their cultural identities are valued and incorporated into the learning process.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study used Classroom Action Research (CAR). The study was conducted at SMP Negeri 2 Pulo Bandring, North Sumatra in cycle stages consisting of planning, action, observation, and reflection. Two cycles were applied to achieve the research objectives.

The participants of the study were 30 students of grade IX-2, aged 14-15 years. This school is located in an area far from the city, with students from a Javanese ethnic background but born and raised in Asahan, North Sumatra. Data were collected through a writing test to assess students' ability to write descriptive texts.

The collected data were analyzed using quantitative approaches. Quantitative data collected from the writing test were analyzed using descriptive statistics to calculate the percentage of students who met the minimum criteria. Research Instruments were descriptive Text Writing. The assessment rubric was developed with four main aspects they are text structure (25%) (identification and description), Content (25%): Completeness and appropriateness of information, language (25%): Grammar and vocabulary, and Mechanics (25%): Spelling, punctuation, and writing

Each aspect is assessed on a scale of 1-4 (1=less, 2=sufficient, 3=good, 4=very good). The study was considered successful if 80% of students achieved the minimum completion criteria (KKM) of 75 in writing descriptive texts, and students showed a positive response to the culturally responsive learning approach.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Pre Cycle Condition

In the pre-cycle assessment that I tested through a descriptive test using the text of western cultural objects, it showed that there were great challenges faced by students in writing descriptive texts. Diagnostic tests and observations showed the following conditions:

Table 1. Pre-Cycle Writing Assessment Results

Score Range	Number of Students	Percentage	Category
85-100	3	0%	Excellent
75-84	6	3%	Good
65-74	9	30%	fair
66-64	12	66%	poor
Total	30	100%	
Average Score	65%		Fair

## Cycle I

### Planning

Based on the pre-cycle findings, the researcher developed a learning plan that integrated the principles of culturally responsive learning. The materials were adapted to include local cultural elements such as:

- Describing the Sei Silau Asahan River
- Describing local food (Mie Sop Kampung)
- Describing local tourist destinations (Achmad Bakrie Grand Mosque)

### Implementation

The implementation of Cycle I consists of 2 meetings, each meeting lasts for 120 minutes. In the first meeting, students are introduced to descriptive texts using examples of local foods, then they analyze the text structure and linguistic elements of the descriptive text. In the second meeting, students work together in groups to describe local figures with the teacher providing guidance and feedback during the activity.

### Observations

Observations during Cycle I showed positive changes in student engagement. Students looked more interested and actively participated in discussions about local culture. However, some challenges remain, that students still struggling with vocabulary variation, grammatical errors persisting, and time management issues during group activities

### Reflection

Writing test in Cycle I showed an improvement result that 13 out of 30 students (23%) achieved the minimum criteria. Although this is a rapid progress from the pre-cycle, it has not reached the target of 80% success. From the results of interviews with students, they expressed and asked for more support for understanding and grammar exercises.

Table 2: Result of Cycle I

Score Range	Number of Students	Percentage	Category
85-100	4	13%	Excellent
75-84	9	30%	Good
65-74	12	40%	fair
60-64	5	16%	poor
Total	30	100%	
Average Score	73%		Fair

## Cycle II

### Planning

Based on the reflection from Cycle I, the researcher improved the approach in Cycle II by increasing the focus on vocabulary development and integrating more grammar exercises in a cultural context, time management strategies, and adding peer review activities for collaborative learning.

### Implementation

The implementation of Cycle II focused on more intensive practice. In the first meeting, students created a vocabulary bank of adjectives and completed grammar exercises using sentences related to local culture. In the second session, students engaged in independent writing on a specific cultural topic, followed by a peer review session using a structured feedback form.

### Observations

Observations in Cycle II showed significant improvements in several areas. Students demonstrated increased confidence in their writing and participated more actively in peer review activities. They also exhibited a wider range of vocabulary and improved use of

grammar structures. Additionally, there was a noticeable increase in cultural pride and a stronger connection to the learning materials.

## Reflections

The results of the final writing test showed remarkable improvements: 25 out of 30 students (83%) achieved the minimum criteria, exceeding the target of 80% success. Students expressed high satisfaction with the culturally responsive approach and requested its continuation in other language skills.

Table 2: Result of Cycle 2

Score Range	Number of Students	Percentage	Category
85-100	11	36%	Excellent
75-84	14	46%	Good
65-74	4	13%	fair
66-64	1	3%	poor
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>	
<b>Average Score</b>	<b>80.4</b>		<b>Good</b>

## Discussion

The improvement of students' skills in writing descriptive texts can be attributed to the culturally responsive learning approach. First, increased motivation and engagement were observed as a result of integrating local cultural elements, which made learning more meaningful and relevant. When students see their cultural identity being valued in the classroom, they are more motivated to learn. Second, a greater understanding and connection with the material emerged because students were able to draw on prior knowledge and personal experiences when describing familiar cultural topics, such as local tourism or local food. This familiarity made the writing task more manageable. Third, this approach contributed to the development of cultural identity, as students not only improved their English writing skills but also gained a deeper appreciation for their heritage, which reinforced the positive learning cycle. In addition, the gradual learning experience starting from a familiar context and progressing to more complex writing tasks provided effective scaffolding that could help build students' self-confidence. From a learning perspective, students found the material easier to understand, the lessons more interesting, and felt their writing skills improved. These findings

highlight the value of culturally responsive learning in enhancing students' language proficiency and identity.

## CONCLUSION

This classroom action research shows that using a culturally responsive learning approach is effective in improving students' ability to write descriptive texts. The implementation of culturally responsive learning resulted in significant improvements in student achievement.

Key factors contributing to this success include: (1) the use of culturally relevant materials that are connected to students' backgrounds and experiences, (2) increased student motivation and engagement through cultural pride, (3) increased understanding through familiar contexts, and (4) the simultaneous development of language skills and cultural identity.

Students responded positively to the culturally responsive approach, expressing greater interest in learning and pride in their cultural heritage. The integration of local cultural elements not only enhanced language learning but also encouraged cultural preservation and appreciation among young learners.

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