



# Genre-Based Instruction: Improving the Students' Skill in Writing Descriptive Text

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## Abstract

Problems in writing are complex that students may find this language skill hard for some different reasons. Therefore, a holistic solution needs to be taken into account in order to cover the varied problems which might result to the improvement of students' writing skill. One of the holistic methods is genre-based approach. The objective of the study is to investigate the improvement of the students' skills in writing descriptive text by using Genre-Based Approach in seventh-grade students at MTs Daarul Muttaqien, South Tangerang. This is a Classroom Action Research with students in VII grade consisting of 22 students as subjects of the study. The main instrument employed to collect the data is writing test supported by observation and interview to meet triangulation validity. The result showed there is an improvement in the students' skills in writing descriptive text. It was shown from the test results where the mean score: the pre-test was 59.95 and only 22.7% of the students who passed the test. Then, it improved to 73.23 for the mean score of posttests 1 that 59.1% of them passed the test. The improvement also occurred in post-test II where the mean score reaches 84.36 with a percentage of 95.5% of students who successfully did the test. The improvement was supported by the observation result that the students were active and enthusiastic in every step genre-based instruction offers. Most of the students also found it joyful and effective to improve their writing skill. In conclusion, Genre-Based Approach can improve the students' writing skills, especially in writing descriptive text.

**Keywords:** descriptive text; genre-based approach; writing skill

## Introduction

The majority of pupils engage in complex activities that require them to translate what they are thinking into language. When pupils first decide whether to speak or write down their thoughts, communication begins (Lester & Lester, 2007). Writing, on the other hand, necessitates more concentration because it serves as a means for people to express themselves, share knowledge, and trade information.

On the other hand, today's curriculum considers language as a means of communication rather than a set of rules, and pupils should be able to comprehend both spoken and written texts (kemendikbud, 2017) including junior high school students. The importance of writing can also be seen from the fact that it has become a requirement for people to compete in the global era. Students must mentally prepare for their future. When applying for a job, they must be able to write an application letter as well as many other types of written texts. In written skill, students are demanded to be able to generate ideas and the use of appropriate vocabulary, sentences, and paragraphs, then the transformation of those ideas into an understandable text. However, for second language learners, writing is the most difficult skill to master (Richards J, 2002) of the three skills in comparison (Widiati & Cahyono, 2006). As a result, writing becomes the hardest skill to master by students.

Based on observations conducted in the Seventh Grade of MTs Daarul Muttaqien, most of the pupils in the class was not particularly excellent in English, which causes difficulty with their writing proficiency. They did not have a strong command of English grammar and vocabulary. Some of them even struggle to form a complete phrase. Further, the pretest in writing descriptive text revealed that their mastery of the English subject, particularly in the writing element, was low. It was previously understood that the students' low grades were primarily due to their writing issues. The majority of students at that level were unable to communicate effectively in English. They assumed that writing was the most complicated because they felt difficult to express their ideas, thoughts, and feelings in writing using English. Meanwhile, the teacher's teaching style for teaching writing the descriptive text was ineffective. Teacher-directed instruction is a typical instructional method used by teachers. As a result, the teacher only focused on teaching the theory of writing. As a result, pupils tended to be passive learners because they had no opportunity to express themselves in class.

With these facts in mind, a solution is needed to the students' low proficiency, notably in writing, in the Seventh Grade of MTs Daarul Muttaqien. The writer considered that using the Genre-Based Approach to English teaching and learning was one of the effective strategies to improve students' skills in writing. Even though Kurikulum 2013 (K-13) recommends it, the teacher does not use it and instead

prefers to use the grammatical translation method.

Genre-Based Approach does not allow students to be passive in class. Furthermore, there are points derived from the approach's principles that students can benefit from. Students benefit from the explicit course requirements and explicit language knowledge (Sukmawati and Nasution, 2020). According to Joyce and Feez (1998), the Genre-Based Approach views language learning as the result of a collaborative effort between the teacher and the students. It implies that both sides play equal roles in the learning process and that neither the teacher nor the students are dominant in the classroom. Sukmawati and Nasution (2020) adapt its implementation in classroom in 4 steps from Emilia (2011) : (1) Building Knowledge of the Field (BKoF) aiming at stimulating students' knowledge about the genre being discussed generally and encouraging them to learn; (2) Modeling by deconstructing the model of genre for scrutinizing its communicative purpose, generic structures, and language features commonly known with top-down activities; (3) Joint Construction of the Text (JCOT) to reconstruct the communicative purpose, social norms, stages, and language features of each text and assign students to write the complete text in group; (4) Independent Construction of the Text (ICOT) to assign the students to work individually.

Studies on using genre-based approach is not novel in teaching writing. Some studies have shown the benefits of implementing GBA in their classrooms such as Masitoh and Suprijadi (2015) and Ahmad (2018), and Saragih (2019) who conducted studies on improving their students' skills in writing descriptive texts using genre-based approach. Others have also conducted GBA to improve their students' skills in writing various genres such as procedure text (Kurniyaty, 2015), narrative text (Rohimah, 2019; Nasir, Lihawa, Balango, 2021), recount text (Saksono, 2022), discussion text (Syarifah and Gunawan, 2015; Ilham and Aminullah, 2018), report text (Pujianto, Emilia, and Ilham, 2014), expository (Gómez Burgos, 2017) and others. Those studies show the popularity of GBA in teaching writing.

On the other hand, this study is based on the teacher's self-reflection after teaching descriptive text to his students that treatment needs to be given urgently as their students' achievement in writing descriptive text is problematic. In classroom action research, novelty is not based on what something new to implement. It is about extension from deep reflection of each teacher and why such method is considered the best to implement.

The cause of the students' low achievement as mentioned previously was their low linguistic mastery such as vocabulary and grammar. Genre based approach has a step called modelling which is considered the most sophisticated strategy in improving students' mastery not only in vocabulary and grammar, but also in lowest layer of linguistic unit called phoneme until chaining a sentence. Further, the students were lack of collaborative activities to share and care among them. Using previous practice called process writing, the students did not have certain steps on

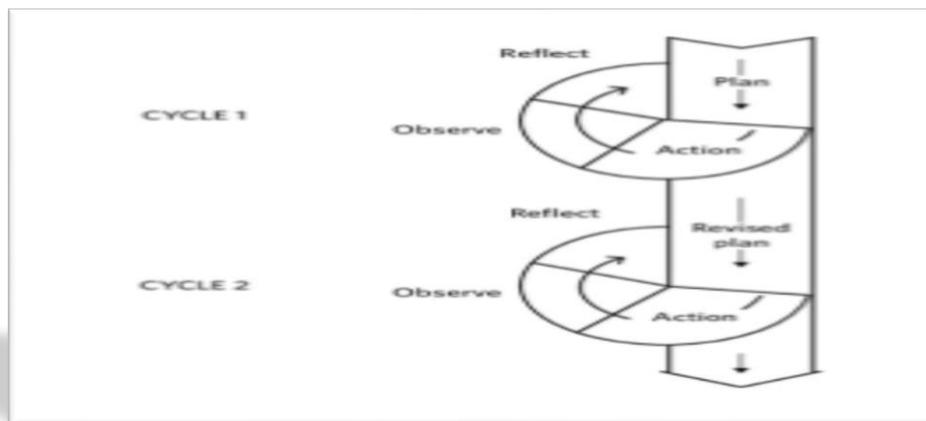
how to be collaborative in writing, GBA provides joint construction of the text which allows them to work together systematically in order for them to know their own task and contribution in the group. With all the features GBA has, this study aims at finding out whether the implementation of genre-based approach can improve the students' skill in writing narrative text.

To help the teacher solve the afore-mentioned problem by conducting a collaborative study to the Seventh Grade of MTs Daarul Muttaqien to investigate is a core value of this study. In addition, this study is expected to be able to show off the benefitting features of GBA holistically and contextually during the process of its implementation in order to elucidate English teachers to the significances and relevance of using GBA in their own classroom.

### **Method**

This is a Classroom Action Research (CAR) that bases its study based on conditioning organizations so that people can learn from their own experiences and share their experiences with others (McTaggart in Sukardi, 2015) aiming at making improvements to the students' skill in writing descriptive text. By combining the definitions of the words "Class," "Action," and "Research," Suharsimi Arikunto (2007) described what "Classroom Action Research" was. Each word's definition is as follows: (1) research is an activity that must be carried out using a method; (2) action is deliberate behavior carried out for a defined reason. The action in CAR is carried out in a succession of cycles; (3) class is a collection of numerous students who participate in the teaching and learning process in the class.

Classroom Action Research (CAR) design by Kemmis and McTaggart is employed with cycles that typically consist of four stages, such as; plan, action, observe, and reflect. There are some models of conducting classroom action research. Most of them commonly include planning, action, observing, and reflection with very little modification. One of the popular model of classroom action research is designed by Altritchter, Kemmis and McTaggart (2002). Figure 1 portrays the cycle in classroom action research.



**Figure 1.** Action Research Spiral Model by Altritchter, Kemmis and McTaggart

The study starts with administering a pre-test or an orientation test to determine the students' basic knowledge on writing descriptive text. After that, treatment is given using cycles procedures explained as follows:

### **Cycles**

#### **a. Planning**

Planning is the process of determining what someone wants to accomplish by analyzing the pupils' difficulty in writing descriptive text, creating a lesson plan that includes descriptive text writing, and preparing materials of descriptive text.

#### **b. Action**

Action is the process of executing the planning by explaining the purpose of the Genre-Based Approach to English Learning, giving background knowledge of the field, modelling, joining students into some groups to construct a text, and giving individual assignment to construct a text.

#### **c. Observation**

In this stage, the writers observed the class during the learning and teaching process about students' writing skills and the learning process using observation sheets that had been prepared and evaluated their skills by utilizing an observation sheet.

#### **d. Reflection**

Analysis of data from observation and assessment activities became the basis for the implementation of reflection. To avoid repetition in cycle II and to overcome obstacles that may be encountered in cycle II, reflection is carried out to ascertain the extent to which the Genre-Based Approach can improve students' writing skills. This is also done to find out the advantages and disadvantages of practicing the learning process that has been carried out.

### **Data Source**

This study is conducted at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Daarul Muttaqien located in Kp. Pagedangan RT 02/02 Ds. Cicalengka, Kab. Tangerang, Banten 15336 Indonesia. 22 students of seventh grade A of MTs Daarul Muttaqien Pagedangan became object

of the study implemented from February to June, 2022.

### Technique of Collecting Data

In collecting the data, some instruments were employed. They are test, observation, and interview explained as follows:

#### 1. Writing Test

Writing test is given in form of instruction to write descriptive text. The test is divided into two parts: pre-test and post-test. Before using the Genre-Based Approach in the writing learning process, students were given a pre-test to assess students' writing skills before treatment. Meanwhile, after receiving treatment from the teacher, the students were given a post-test. It is given at the end of each cycle.

The test in this study consisted of one question with one picture that students had to describe for each test. The writer provided a paper with pictures or photos that they must describe in the pre-test and post-test. They had 30 minutes to complete the test.

The result of the test is used to figure out the students' achievement in writing descriptive text. the following formula to determine the mean score of the pupils (Sudijono, 2014) is used:

$$\bar{x} = \frac{\sum x}{n}$$

Where:

$\bar{x}$  = The Students' mean score

$\sum x$  = The total score of the students

$n$  = The number of the students

The writer used the following pattern to categorize the number of students who are competent in writing descriptive text (Sudijono, 2014):

$$P = \frac{R}{T} \times 100\%$$

Where:

P = The percentage of students

R = The number of students achieve KKM

T = The total number of students

#### 2. Observation

Observation sheet is used to observe the students' behaviors during the instructional process in the classroom. It includes how students ask questions, present ideas in class, engage to the activities. A Passive observant was commanded to observe by filling in the observation sheet by making a checklist in the answer column.

### 3. Interview

This is a semi-structured interview is crosscheck the implementation of instructional practices using GBA from teacher and students' perspectives. To be specific, questions are formulated for teacher to gather information such as the challenges the teacher faced when instructing students in writing descriptive texts in class, the extent of the students' writing skills, and the steps the teacher took to address the difficulties students were experiencing during the writing learning process. For students, it includes what challenges they have when learning to write, how they feel and think about using a Genre-Based Approach to improve their writing skills, and others.

### Results

This study was carried out in the seventh A grade of MTs Daarul Muttaqien which had 22 students. In this study, there were two cycles of two meetings each, with the test administered at the end of each cycle. The table displays the results of the whole scores of the students' tests. In this data, the writer used a note for each student to reveal that students who get the success criterion ( $\geq 70$ ). Figure 1 shows the average scores in pre test, cycle 1 and cycle 2.

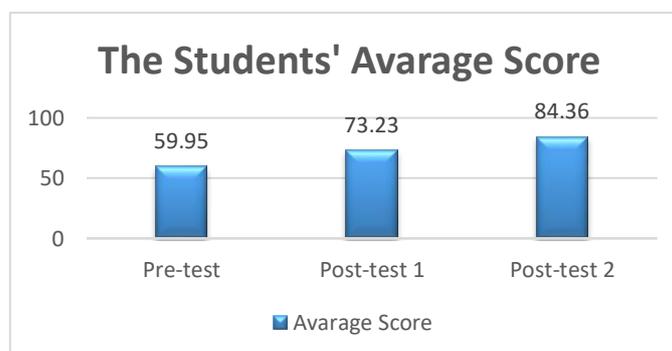


Figure 2. Chart of the Average Scores

Figure 2 shows that there is a constant increase in students' skills in writing descriptive text from pre-test to post-test II. Almost all of the students received a low score on the pre-test. It could happen because the students were yet unfamiliar with the material and wrote only what they knew. During this test, the writers observed that many students wrote the word with incorrect spelling and a lack of English vocabulary, resulting in a lower score for the students. The score can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. The Percentage of the Students Passing the Minimum Score in Pretest

	Criteria	Total of Students	Percentage
P1	Passed	5	22.7%

P2	Failed	17	77.3%
<b>Total</b>		<b>22</b>	<b>100%</b>

After conducting cycle 1, Students' scores increased in post-test I. In the class, the students became more active and braver in asking questions about the material, and the majority of them began to understand it. There were 13 students were able to achieve a passing grade of 70. However, students' scores in post-test I were still not satisfactory to both the students and the writer. As a result, cycle 2 was decided to conduct. The score can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. The Percentage of the Students Passing the Minimum Score in Cycle 1

	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Total of Students</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
P1	Passed	13	59.1%
P2	Failed	9	40.9%
<b>Total</b>		<b>22</b>	<b>100%</b>

In cycle 2, the students responded positively, becoming more motivated and impacting their skills. It made them perform better than in post-test I. 21 students achieved a passing grade of 70, indicating that more than 90% of students passed this test. Thus, the study's goal of improving students' writing skills through a genre-based approach was a success. The result can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3. The Percentage of the Students Passing the Minimum Score in Cycle 2

	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Total of Students</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
P1	Passed	21	95.5%
P2	Failed	1	4.5%
<b>Total</b>		<b>22</b>	<b>100%</b>

In details, Tables 1, 2, and 3 portray that the students' scores increased from the pre-test to post-test I, and then from post-test I to post-test II. The students who scored more than 70 ( $\geq 70$ ) on the first test (pre-test) were 5 of 22 students in the class (22.7%). In post-test I, students who received scores greater than 70 ( $\geq 70$ ) were 13 of 22 students in the class (59.1%). And in the third test (post-test II), the students who scored higher than the Minimum Mastery Criterion ( $\geq 70$ ) were 21 of 22 students in the class (95.5%). The increase from pre-test to post-test I was about 36.4% and the increase from post-test I to post-test II was about 36.4% as well. Meanwhile, the overall result from pre-test to post-test II was around 72.8%. Thus, the implementation of the Genre-Based Approach to improve students' skills in

writing descriptive texts is evident.

The evident improvement is also supported by the result of observation that the students' engagement and enthusiasm during instructional practices using GBA improves from cycle 1 to cycle 2. The improvement can be seen from their participation in every step of GBA such as addressing responses to the teacher's instruction or question, giving question to the teacher, showing active collaboration in joint construction of the text, and performing better writing in individual construction of the text. When interviewed about the instructional practices in the class, the teacher replied that Genre-Based Approach is effective for teaching descriptive writing. During the teaching and learning process, the students appeared to be engaged. Even though some students did not pay attention to the teacher and had a limited vocabulary. In general, student participation is quite high because classroom activities involve students.

Another question concerns student difficulties and solutions in the Genre-Based Approach during the teaching and learning process. It was discovered that the majority of the students struggled with the grammatical process of writing, as well as pouring and arranging their ideas into sentences. As a result, teachers must provide more incentives for students to actively learn. Teachers should instill in the students the notion that writing is a skill that requires as much practice as possible.

The final category focus on the opinion of the Genre-Based Approach. According to the teacher, the Genre-Based Approach is a good way to learn descriptive writing. It makes it easier for students to write descriptively and increases their interest. As a result, it could be an option in a writing class. Furthermore, it can significantly improve students' writing skills. It is evident from the students' grades. The students' mean score was low before using the Genre-Based Approach. Meanwhile, Students' scores improved after using the Genre-Based Approach.

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that implementing genre-based approach can improve the students' skill in writing descriptive text. This finding is in line with studies by Masitoh and Suprijadi (2015) and Ahmad (2018), and Saragih (2019) who also found that GBA in teaching descriptive text is effective to improve the students' writing skills. Haryanti and Sari (2019) also found that using GBA is able to improve the students' skill in writing. However, the skill taught is writing narrative text. It shows that GBA can also be implemented to teach students in writing other types of genres.

## **Conclusion**

Genre-based approach offers holistic features of language skills and knowledge through its five steps which enable students with various problem in writing to solve. However, if teachers decide to conduct GBA, it is relevant to get familiar with and subject to implementing top down and bottom-up activities as core activities in the teaching method. This study reveals that the use of Genre-Based Approach is able to

improve the students' skills in writing a descriptive text. It was supported by the findings of observations and interviews conducted during the research which reveals that students looked engaged and interested in participating and being active in the teaching and learning process. They also said that GBA was able to help them find and solve their own problem in different steps. Collaborative works mediated in the joint-construction was also said to be significant in sharing and cooperation as two core values significant to grow. Further researchers are suggested to take advantages of GBA in improving their students' skills in writing different types of genres such as narrative text, recount text, procedure text, and other types of text.

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