

**IMPROVING DESCRIPTIVE WRITING
ACHIEVEMENT OF THE TENTH GRADERS OF SMA
SRIJAYA NEGARA PALEMBANG BY USING CUE
CARDS**

A Thesis by

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FACULTY OF TEACHING TRAINING AND EDUCATION

SRIWIJAYA NEGARA

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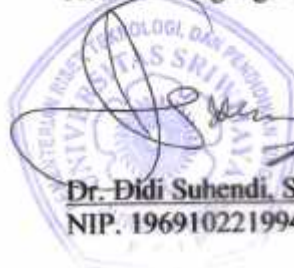
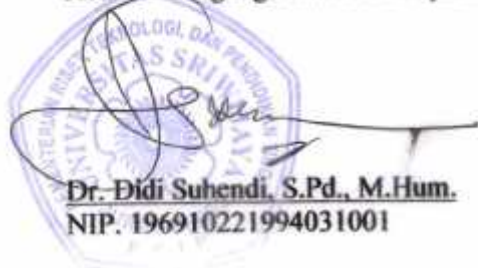
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**Improving Descriptive Writing Achievement of the Tenth Graders of SMA
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DEDICATIONS

This thesis is dedicated especially to...

- ❖ The One and Only, who has given me uncountable favor, bless and guidance, who always helps and never leave me in every situation, who always reminds me to get the straight paith, The Almighty God, **ALLAH SWT.**
- ❖ My unconditional love, Ibu, Rosmala Dewi
- ❖ My super hero, Ayah, Bustan Efrondi

Thank you for all your love, hugs, supports and never-ending pray for me.

~ Verily, every hardship there is an ease ~

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Last, I hope that this thesis will be useful for the readers. However, I realize that this thesis is far from being perfect. Therefore, any criticisms, ideas, and suggestions for the improvement of this thesis are greatly appreciated.

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IMPROVING DESCRIPTIVE WRITING ACHIEVEMENT OF THE TENTH GRADERS OF SMA SRIJAYA NEGARA PALEMBANG BY USING CUE CARDS

ABSTRACT

The objectives of this study were to find out whether or not (1) there was a significant improvement in descriptive writing achievement after the students were taught by using cue cards, and (2) there was a significant difference in descriptive writing achievement between the students who were taught by using cue cards and those who were not. The population of this study comprised 252 tenth graders of SMA Srijaya Negara Palembang. Seventy two students were chosen as the sample by using purposive sampling technique. The method of the study was quasi-experimental method. These students were divided into experimental and control groups, and each group consisted of 36 students. In collecting the data, the writer gave the students two written tests; pretest and posttest. Then, the results of the tests were analyzed by using paired sample t-test and independent sample t-test in SPSS Version 23. The result of paired sample t-test showed that the p-value was lower than the significance level ($0.00 < 0.05$). It means that there was a significant improvement in students' descriptive writing achievement after they were taught by using cue cards. The result of independent sample t-test showed that the p-value was lower than significance level ($0.00 < 0.05$). It means that there was a significant difference in descriptive writing achievement between the students who were taught by using cue cards and those who were not. Therefore, it can be concluded that the use of cue cards can be an effective way to improve students' descriptive writing achievement.

Keywords: *Improvement, Descriptive Text, Cue Cards*

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
TITLE PAGE.....	i
CERTIFICATION PAGE.....	ii
DECLARATION	iv
DEDICATION	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vi
ABSTRACT.....	viii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	ix
LIST OF TABLES	xi
LIST OF APPENDICES	xii
I. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background	1
1.2 The Problem of the Study	5
1.3 The Objectives of the Study	5
1.4 The Significance of the Study	5
II. LITERATURE REVIEW	6
2.1 Teaching Writing	6
2.2 Descriptive Writing	7
2.3 Cue Cards	9
2.4 Teaching Writing by Using Cue Cards	11
2.5 Previous Related Studies	12
2.6 Hypotheses of the Study	13
III. METHODOLOGY	14
3.1 Research Method and Design.....	14
3.2 Variable of the Study	15
3.3 The Operational Definitions	15

3.4 The Teaching Procedure	16
3.4.1 The Teaching Procedure for Experimental Group	16
3.5 Population and Sample	17
3.5.1 Population	17
3.5.2 Sample	18
3.6 Data Collection	19
3.6.1 Test	19
3.6.1.1 Validity of the Test	21
3.6.2 Reliability of the Test	23
3.7 Data Analysis	23
IV. FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS	24
4.1 The Result of Students' Descriptive Writing Achievement.....	24
4.2 The Result of Statistical Analyses	25
4.2.1 Normality Test	25
4.2.2 Homogeneity Test	26
4.2.3 Paired Sample <i>t</i> -Test	27
4.2.4 Independent Sample <i>t</i> -Test	29
4.3 Interpretation of the Study	30
V. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION	33
5.1 Conclusion	33
5.2 Suggestion	33
REFERENCES	35
APPENDICES	38

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1 The Population of the Study.....	17
Table 3.2 The Sample of the Study.....	19
Table 3.3 The Rubric for Assessing Writing Text.....	19
Table 3.4 The table of Specification	22
Table 4.1 The Score Distribution in the Experimental Group and Control Group	24
Table 4.2 The Result of Normality Test	25
Table 4.3 The Result of Homogeneity Test	26
Table 4.4 The Result of Paired Sample <i>t</i> -Test	27
Table 4.5 The Result of Paired Sample <i>t</i> -Test of Writing Aspect of the Experimental Group	28
Table 4.6 The Result of Paired Sample <i>t</i> -Test of Writing Aspect of the Control Group	28
Table 4.7 The Result of Independent Sample <i>t</i> -Test	29
Table 4.8 The Result of Independent Sample <i>t</i> -Test of Writing Achievement.....	30

LIST OF APPENDICES

- Appendix A : Writing Test
- Appendix B : Interview for Preliminary Study
- Appendix C : The Level of Appropriateness
- Appendix D : Letter of Statement
- Appendix E : The Attendance List of Experimental Group
- Appendix F : Lesson Plan
- Appendix G : The Results of Pretest in Experimental Group
- Appendix H : The Results of Posttest in Experimental Group
- Appendix I : The Results of Pretest in Control Group
- Appendix J : The Results of Posttest in Control Group
- Appendix K : The Reliability of Writing Test
- Appendix L : The Results of Normality Test
- Appendix M : The Results of Homogeneity Test
- Appendix N : The Results of Paired Sample t -Test of Experimental Group and Control Group
- Appendix O : The Results of Paired Sample t -Test of Writing Aspects in Experimental Group and Control Group
- Appendix P : The Results of Independent Sample t -Test
- Appendix Q : The Results of Independent Sample t -Test of Writing Aspects
- Appendix R : Usul Judul Skripsi
- Appendix S : Surat Keputusan Pembimbing Skripsi
- Appendix T : Surat Izin Penelitian dari FKIP Unsri
- Appendix U : Surat Izin Penelitian dari Dinas Pendidikan Pemuda dan Olahraga
- Appendix V : Surat Keterangan Selesai Penelitian
- Appendix W : Seminar for Research Design Approval
- Appendix X : Seminar for Research Result Approval
- Appendix Y : Seminar for Research Thesis Final Examination Approval
- Appendix Z : Seminar for Research Design Suggestion List

Appendix AA : Seminar for Research Result Suggestion List

Appendix AB : Seminar for Thesis Final Examination Suggestion List

Appendix AC : Consultation Card

Appendix AD : The Examples of Students' Worksheet during Treatment

Appendix AE : Documentations

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents (1) background, (2) the problems of the study, (3) the objectives of the study, and (4) the significance of the study.

1.1 Background

Students are expected to be able to write a good writing. This conclusion is based on the research conducted by Hansen (2002) that states “Academicians and business people view writing skill as crucial, yet increasing numbers of these professionals note a steady attrition in the writing abilities of graduates” (as cited in Hosseini, Taghizadeh, Abedin, & Naseri, 2013, p. 10). Based on this statement, students are expected to be good writers because writing is not only used at school, but it is also used to determine their future. In discussing the importance of writing to learning, Suleiman (2000) asserts “Writing is a central element of language, any reading and language arts program must consider the multidimensional nature of writing in instructional practices, assessment procedures, and language development” (p. 155). Accordingly, writing is taught in schools.

As one of the language skills, writing is considered difficult. People have to put their writing into readable text so that other people can understand what they have in mind. Additionally, Rass (1997) states that writers must balance multiple issues such as content, organization, purpose, audience, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling and mechanics because writing is a difficult skill for native speakers and non-native speakers. The cause of learners’ problem in writing is the nature of writing itself. Grabe (1996) thinks that writing is a complex process because it does not come naturally but rather acquired through continuous effort and a lot of practice. Then, the common problems that the students face in writing a descriptive text are that the students are getting stuck in generating the ideas and having weak motivation to write. They are not interested in writing. Students spend much time in choosing the topics or the ideas for their writing. Richards

and Renandya (2002) put forward that the most difficult skill for second language (L2) learners to master is writing. They argue that the difficulties that L2 learners might deal with are generating, organizing ideas, and translating these ideas into readable text. L2 writers have to pay attention to higher level skills of planning and organizing as well as lower level skills of spelling, punctuation, word choice, and so on.

According to Education First-English Proficiency Index (2016), Indonesia was on the 32nd rank out of 72 countries at the moderate proficiency level with 52.94 Education First-English Proficiency Index score. It means, Indonesian students' skill in listening, speaking, reading, and writing must be improved because these four skills are still weak. Therefore, one of the skills that can be improved is writing. According to the school-based curriculum of 2013, the objective of teaching English in senior high school is to develop language and communicative competence in spoken and in written form. It is used to achieve the level of informational literacy and to enable students to compete with other people in this globalization era.

The students seem to have difficulties in writing a good paragraph of descriptive text. A difficulty in writing a descriptive text as concluded by Ambarini (2014) is that the students did not know the basic rule and the concept of writing. They mostly made grammatical and organizational errors in their writings. Interesting media were also rarely used by the teachers in teaching writing. For example, the research conducted by Febriyanti, Inderawati, and Fiftinova (2018) showed that one of the problems that the students have in writing is the teacher. The English teacher does not use any media or strategies in teaching but rather give some exercises with a little explanation in every meeting to the students. Furthermore, the school also did not provide media for the teachers to teach writing. This happens to students in SMA Srijaya Negara Palembang.

The tenth graders of SMA Srijaya Negara Palembang seemed to have difficulties in writing descriptive text. This conclusion was based on the result of the interview between the writer and the English teacher teaching the tenth

graders. According to the English teacher, the tenth graders had difficulties in writing especially in writing a descriptive text.

Descriptive writing, one of the types of writing, describes objects or things like people, places, events, situations, thoughts, and feelings (Oshima & Hogue, 2007). Description presents sensory information that makes writing come alive. It expresses an experience that the reader can actively participate in by using imagination. A writer shows descriptive writing to the reader through the senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch, as well as through emotional feelings. Descriptive details enable the reader to visualize elements in the story.

In order to help students describe something in detail and clearly, they need to have good vocabulary mastery. They also have to be able to select the right word to describe something in order to avoid misunderstanding between the writer and the reader (Harmer, 2004).

Now, Indonesian education is developing. It provides the teachers with opportunities to use media in teaching their students. In this study, cue cards were used as the media for students to write a descriptive text more easily. Different students learn in different ways. Some students might understand the lesson more if they see the real material as they are visual learners. Cue card was introduced as one of the teaching media. Cue card that is used to encourage the students to respond is a card with words or pictures on it. It is interesting, simple, and attractive. Kemp and Smellie (1989) state that cue cards will make the instruction more interesting. Therefore, it can help the teacher to break the students' mindset that English is not fun. The students have their own imagination inside the picture when they look at it. Accordingly, when students are asked to describe something or someone in detail, cue cards can help students to produce the description easily. It is proven based on the research finding conducted by Ambarini (2014) who showed that there was an improvement in students' writing ability through the use of cue cards. The clear visualization described in the cue cards helped the students to generate their ideas by themselves. Furthermore, they were more independent in writing anything they have in mind. Moreover, students can analyze their

method in organizing their ideas they got from the pictures which are provided as a basis for the writing tasks. In line with this idea, Suharyati (2012) said that cue cards could improve students' ability in writing a descriptive text. Cue cards could promote spontaneity and creativity of the students. The pictures in cue cards could help students explore any information spontaneously when they look at the pictures. Furthermore, another research finding was conducted by Efendi and Meisuri (2013) who showed that cue cards could improve students' achievement in writing a descriptive text. By showing a picture, cue card pictures allow the students to explain a word in a simple and a various way. It also helped the students to produce and organize the ideas easily. Most of the students were enthusiastic during the learning process by using cue cards. Therefore, they gave good responses towards the use of cue cards in writing class.

However, there are some important points to consider in selecting appropriate cue cards. Harmer (2001) says that there are three qualities of cards that have to be considered by the teachers in choosing cue cards. First, cue cards need to be appropriate not only for the purpose in hand but also for the classes they are being used for. If cards are too childish, the students may not like them. Second, cards should be visible. The students can see the cards clearly. Last, cards have to be durable. Therefore, the use of cue cards has to consider the time; Cue cards have to support the students to learn easily. Furthermore, O'Malley and Pierce (1996) state some qualifications for precise cue cards; pictures should be appropriate to the age and interest level of students. Pictures should be real people rather than cartoon characters in order to ensure appropriate perception. Besides, the picture must be free from cultural bias. Then, make sure that the teachers give a sufficient time for students to examine, analyze and internalize the information given in the picture before they write a descriptive text. All the qualifications for the cue cards explained above inspire the writer to use picture-based cue cards to improve the students' writing skills. Cue cards seem to be effective media to improve the students' writing ability. Harmer (2004) states that some situations, grammar and vocabulary work can be particularly presented by pictures. They will allow the students to generate and develop their ideas in the process of

writing, help them to organize their texts, improve their vocabulary mastery, and enhance their motivation in learning English.

1.2 The Problems of the Study

The problems of the study were formulated into these following questions:

1. Was there any significant improvement in descriptive writing of the tenth graders of SMA Srijaya Negara after they were taught by using cue cards?
2. Was there any significant difference in descriptive writing between the students who were taught by using cue cards and those who were not?

1.3 The Objectives of the Study

Considering the problems above, the objectives of this study were to find out whether or not:

1. There was a significant improvement in descriptive writing of the tenth graders of SMA Srijaya Negara after they were taught by using cue cards.
2. There was a significant difference in descriptive writing between the students who were taught by using cue cards and those who were not.

1.4 The Significance of the Study

The results of this study are hoped to be useful for the teachers, students, and the writer herself. For the teachers, the result of this study is expected to provide them with alternative way to teach English writing. Then, this result also can help students in learning writing in a fun way so they can be more motivated to develop their abilities. For the writer, this result can develop her English and enlarge her knowledge.

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