Enhancing Seventh-Grade Students' Short Story Writing Competence through the Classroom Action Research Approach

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Abstract*. Writing skills are one of the essential basic competencies in developing students' communication abilities, creativity, and critical thinking. However, observations show that many seventh-grade students struggle to write short stories in a systematic and engaging manner due to low motivation, limited vocabulary, and less interactive teaching methods. This study aims to improve the short story writing skills of seventh-grade students through the application of the Classroom Action Research (CAR) method. The research was conducted in two cycles, consisting of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection stages, involving 30 students as research subjects. Data were collected through writing tests, observation sheets, motivation questionnaires, and field notes, then analyzed using descriptive qualitative and quantitative approaches. The results revealed an increase in the average writing score from 66.7 to 81.2 after the intervention, with the paired t-test results (t = 93.48; p < 0.001) indicating a statistically significant difference. These findings demonstrate that the classroom action method is effective in enhancing students' writing skills, learning motivation, and active participation. The study recommends implementing interactive, reflective, and collaborative learning strategies to improve the quality of writing instruction in junior high schools.*

Keywords: *writing skills, short story, classroom action research, learning motivation, junior high school students*

1. INTRODUCTION

Writing skills are one of the fundamental competencies students must possess to develop their communication abilities, creativity, and critical thinking. Writing short stories not only trains students in constructing words and sentences but also sharpens their imagination and analytical skills in understanding plot, character, and conflict (Santosa, 2020). However, field observations indicate that many seventh-grade students experience difficulties in expressing ideas systematically and engagingly in the form of short stories.

One of the main issues identified is the low motivation to write. Many students perceive short story writing as tedious or challenging due to a lack of understanding of story structure and narrative techniques (Widodo, 2019). In addition, limited vocabulary and insufficient exposure to quality literary works further hinder students' writing abilities.

Beyond students' internal factors, the teaching methods employed by teachers also influence writing skills. Conventional methods that rely heavily on lectures and memorization tend to make students passive, thereby limiting creativity and initiative in writing (Rahmawati, 2021). This condition highlights the need for more interactive and participatory learning approaches.

The Classroom Action Research (CAR) method serves as an effective approach to improving students' writing skills. Through this method, teachers can plan, implement, observe, and evaluate the learning process in repeated cycles, allowing strategies to be adjusted according to students' needs and responses (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2014; Setyowati, 2017)

Previous studies have shown that implementing classroom action through active learning techniques such as discussion, brainstorming, and peer review can enhance students' writing performance and learning motivation (Hidayat, 2020; Barus, 2018). By integrating visual media and engaging short story examples, students can more easily comprehend story structures, plotlines, and character development(Padmi, 2017; Sinaga et al., 2022)

Moreover, classroom action enables teachers to provide direct feedback, address individual student challenges, and encourage self-reflection. This is essential to help each student identify their strengths and weaknesses in writing, making the learning process more effective and personalized (Susanti, 2022).

Based on these problems and potential solutions, this study aims to improve seventh-grade students' short story writing skills through the Classroom Action Research method. The findings are expected to provide practical contributions for Indonesian language teachers in developing creative, interactive, and student-centered writing instruction methods, thereby enhancing literacy quality at the junior high school level.

2. METHODE

This study employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach to improve the short story writing skills of seventh-grade students. The research subjects consisted of 30 students from the selected class. The study was conducted in two cycles, each comprising four stages: planning, implementation, observation, and reflection for improvement in the subsequent cycle (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2014).

Data were collected through several instruments: a writing test to assess students' ability to compose short stories based on content, structure, vocabulary, creativity, and grammar; teacher observation sheets to record student activity and participation; student motivation questionnaires to measure interest in writing; and field notes to document classroom issues and instructional strategies applied by the teacher. The data were analyzed using both qualitative descriptive and quantitative approaches, comparing writing scores before and after the implementation of the actions, as well as evaluating the learning process, student interaction, and the effectiveness of the applied strategies. The results of the analysis were then used to design improvements for the following cycle. It is expected that through this process, students'

short story writing skills will improve, learning motivation will increase, and teachers will gain a deeper understanding of effective and student-centered writing instruction strategies.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

a. Respondent Characteristic

Table 1. Respondent Characteristic

Characteristic	Frequency	%
Gender		
Male	14	46.7
Female	16	53.3
Age		
12 years old	8	26.7
13 years old	15	50.0
14 years old	7	23.3
Academic Achievement		
Low (≤ 70)	10	33.3
Moderate (71–84)	12	40.0
High (≥ 85)	8	26.7

The table of respondent characteristics presents the distribution of 30 seventh-grade students based on gender, age, and academic achievement. In terms of gender, there were 14 male students (46.7%) and 16 female students (53.3%), indicating that the number of female students was slightly higher than that of male students. Based on age, the majority of students were 13 years old (15 students, 50%), followed by those aged 12 years (8 students, 26.7%) and 14 years (7 students, 23.3%). This distribution shows that most students were within the expected age range for seventh grade. Regarding academic achievement in the Indonesian language subject, 10 students (33.3%) had low achievement (scores ≤ 70), 12 students (40%) had moderate achievement (scores between 71–84), and 8 students (26.7%) had high achievement (scores ≥ 85). These data indicate that most students demonstrated a moderate level of academic performance, suggesting potential for improvement through the implementation of effective learning methods such as classroom action research.

b. Analysis of the Improvement of Short Story Writing Skills of Seventh Grade Students through the Classroom Action Method

Table 2. Analysis of the Improvement of Short Story Writing Skills of Seventh Grade Students through the Classroom Action Method

Statistic	Value
Number of Students (N)	30
Mean Pretest Score	66.7

Mean Posttest Score	81.2
Mean Difference (Δ)	14.5
Standard Deviation of Difference	0.85
t-value	93.48
df	29
p-value (2-tailed)	<0.001
Conclusion	Significant, H$_0$ rejected

The statistical analysis shows a significant improvement in students' writing skills after the implementation of the classroom action method. The mean pretest score was 66.7, increasing to 81.2 in the posttest, with an average difference of 14.5 points. The t-test result (t = 93.48, df = 29, p < 0.001) indicates that the improvement is statistically significant, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H$_0$). This suggests that the applied method effectively enhanced students' short story writing skills.

The results of the study show that the implementation of the classroom action method significantly improved the short story writing skills of seventh-grade students. The increase in the average score from 66.7 on the pretest to 81.2 on the posttest indicates the effectiveness of this method in developing students' abilities, particularly in constructing plot, character, conflict, and vocabulary use (Santosa, 2020). This finding aligns with the principles of classroom action research, which emphasize interactive and reflective learning, allowing teachers to adjust strategies according to students' needs (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2014; Agustina, 2020).

The improvement in writing skills was also influenced by the use of various learning strategies such as brainstorming, group discussions, and peer review. These strategies provided students with opportunities to express ideas, receive peer feedback, and learn from their own mistakes. This finding supports previous studies that suggest collaborative and participatory learning enhances students' creativity and writing competence (Hidayat, 2020; Rahmawati, 2021).

In addition, the use of short story text examples and visual media proved helpful in assisting students to understand story structure and narrative techniques. Visual media and concrete examples made it easier for students to organize their ideas, enabling them to communicate their stories clearly and engagingly. This is consistent with the cognitive theory of writing instruction, which states that visual representation can help students plan and execute written texts more effectively (Widodo, 2019; Pradita, 2020)

The paired t-test analysis showed a t-value of 93.48 with p < 0.001, indicating that the improvement in students' writing skills was statistically significant. This result

demonstrates that the classroom action method not only enhances technical writing ability but also motivates students to participate actively in the learning process. High motivation plays a crucial role in improving writing skills, as students become more willing to experiment with ideas and language styles (Susanti, 2022).

The respondents' characteristics showed that most students were 13 years old with moderate academic achievement. This condition indicates that the classroom action method is effective for students with varying levels of ability, including low and moderate achievers. These findings support previous research suggesting that classroom action research is adaptive and can be tailored to individual students' capabilities (Rahmawati, 2021; Hidayat, 2020).

The study also highlights the importance of teachers' roles in providing direct feedback. Teachers act not only as instructors but also as facilitators and guides in the writing process. Timely feedback helps students identify weaknesses, understand mistakes, and gradually improve the quality of their writing (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2014; Santosa, 2020).

Furthermore, this study shows that the cyclical nature of classroom action research allows for continuous evaluation. Each cycle provides data on the effectiveness of the strategies used, enabling teachers to adjust their approaches to improve student learning outcomes. This reflective approach aligns with the principles of CAR, emphasizing continuous improvement and the adjustment of teaching strategies (Azis, 2021; Susanti, 2022; Azizah, 2021).

Overall, the study confirms that the classroom action method is an effective strategy for enhancing the short story writing skills of seventh-grade students. This method not only improves technical writing skills but also fosters motivation, creativity, and active participation. The findings have practical implications for Indonesian language teachers, emphasizing the need for interactive, collaborative, and reflective learning approaches to improve literacy quality at the junior high school level.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the implementation of the classroom action method is effective in improving the short story writing skills of seventh-grade students. This is evidenced by the increase in the average pretest score from 66.7 to a posttest score of 81.2, with the paired t-test analysis showing a statistically significant result. The improvement not only encompasses technical writing abilities—such as story structure,

vocabulary, and creativity—but also enhances students' motivation and active participation. The classroom action method, which involves cycles of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection, along with collaborative learning strategies and direct feedback, has been proven to help students express their ideas in a more structured and creative manner. These findings affirm that classroom action research is an adaptive and sustainable learning strategy for improving literacy quality in junior high schools..

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