Journal of Educational Sciences
Journal homepage: https://jes.ejournal.unri.ac.id/index.php/JES
P-ISSN 2581-1657
E-ISSN 2581-2203

Improving Descriptive Writing Skills Through the Implementation of the Jigsaw Cooperative Learning Model in Grade IX Students at SMP Negeri 4 Karau Kuala, South Barito Regency

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 23 Nov 2025
Revised: 19 Des 2025
Accepted: 24 Des 2025
Published online: 05 Jan 2026

Keywords:

Writing Skills,
Descriptive Text,
Jigsaw

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Article Doi:

https://doi.org/10.31258/jes.10.1.p.1137-1149

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A B S T R A C T

Writing descriptive texts is a fundamental component of Indonesian language learning at the junior secondary level; however, many students still experience difficulties in organizing ideas, selecting appropriate vocabulary, and constructing coherent paragraphs. This study aimed to improve both the learning process and students' descriptive writing skills through the implementation of the Jigsaw cooperative learning model in Grade IX students at SMP Negeri 4 Karau Kuala, South Barito Regency. The research employed a Classroom Action Research design conducted in two cycles, each consisting of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection stages. The participants were 25 ninth-grade students, and the research was carried out collaboratively with the Indonesian language teacher. Data were collected through observation sheets, questionnaires, interviews, written tests, and documentation, and were analyzed using descriptive qualitative analysis supported by quantitative data. The results indicated that the implementation of the Jigsaw cooperative learning model improved student engagement, collaboration, and motivation during the learning process. In addition, students' descriptive writing skills showed consistent improvement across cycles in terms of content, organization, grammar, language style, and writing mechanics. The study concludes that the Jigsaw cooperative learning model is effective in enhancing descriptive writing skills and creating a more active and meaningful learning environment.

1. Introduction

Writing skills are one of the basic skills in Indonesian language learning that must be mastered by students at the primary and secondary education levels. According to Tarigan (2008), writing is a productive and expressive language skill that requires

the ability to express ideas systematically. Keraf (2010) emphasises that writing is the main means of developing logical and critical thinking skills. One important type of text that students need to master is descriptive text. According to Kosasih (2017), descriptive text aims to provide a detailed description of an object so that readers can clearly imagine what is being described. Semi (2012) states that descriptive text requires the use of concrete, detailed language that involves the five senses. Success in writing descriptions is greatly influenced by students' ability to choose diction and compose coherent paragraphs. Therefore, mastery of the structure and linguistic rules of descriptive texts is an important part of students' literacy competence (Akhadiah, 2012; Ardiana et al., 2025; Istiqori et al., 2025; Mutmainnah et al., 2025).

Descriptive texts are characterised by the use of detailed and concrete language. Students need to understand the structure of the text, which consists of identification and description of parts, as well as the use of evocative and clear vocabulary. However, in reality, many students find it difficult to write descriptive texts in a coherent and interesting manner. Students' writing often fails to describe objects completely, uses inappropriate words, and does not develop ideas. According to Suryaman, the difficulty in writing descriptive texts is that most students experience obstacles in choosing words and developing descriptive paragraphs. Research by Lestari (2021) found that poor descriptive writing skills are caused by a lack of mastery of text structure and minimal contextual writing practice in class.

The writing learning process in schools is generally still dominated by the lecture method, where teachers spend more time explaining theory without giving students space to discuss or explore ideas independently. This makes students passive and consider writing to be a boring activity. Slavin & Robert (2021) argues that active and collaborative learning is more effective in improving learning performance than one-way learning. The cooperative learning model is one approach that can encourage positive interaction between students and increase their involvement in the learning process.

The Jigsaw cooperative learning model relies on group work that allows each student to learn a specific part of the material and convey it to other group members. According to Lie (2010), Jigsaw effectively encourages individual responsibility and teamwork, so that students are more active in understanding and conveying the material. In teaching descriptive writing, the Jigsaw model can be applied by dividing the material into sections such as descriptive objects, paragraph structure, vocabulary choices, and style. Research findings by Rahmawati (2020) show that the Jigsaw model is able to improve the quality of students' descriptive paragraphs due to the division of material focus and intensive discussion among group members. The Jigsaw learning model trains students to master the material, communicate, discuss, and work together in composing good descriptive texts. This approach makes students active subjects, thereby increasing their motivation to learn. Johnson & Johnson (2014) state that cooperative learning can simultaneously improve social and cognitive skills. Research by Apriani (2022) also found that student motivation increased significantly after teachers applied Jigsaw in writing

lessons. Thus, the learning atmosphere became more lively and enjoyable and provided a more meaningful learning experience (Susanti et al., 2025; Khayyirah et al., 2024).

Based on initial observations at SMP Negeri 4 Karau Kuala, South Barito Regency, it was found that most ninth-grade students still had difficulty writing descriptive texts. Research by Wulandari (2020) states that junior high school students in rural areas are generally less exposed to innovative learning methods, resulting in low writing skills. In addition, students' interest in writing lessons is still low. Teachers also face challenges in developing learning methods that can attract students' attention. The results of the learning evaluation show that students still lack mastery of descriptive vocabulary, effective sentence usage, and coherent paragraph structure. Teachers more often use conventional methods, resulting in less active student participation. Vygotsky (1978) explains that social interaction is the key to cognitive development, so learning that lacks collaboration will hinder higher-level thinking skills such as writing. Research by Hartati (2021) supports this view by showing that learning models involving group work can improve the coherence of paragraphs in students' writing.

Research by Ningsih (2019) proves that Jigsaw significantly improves narrative writing skills. Research by Kurniawan (2020) finds that Jigsaw helps students understand reading content more deeply. However, research on its application in descriptive text writing is still limited. In addition, some previous studies only focused on cognitive aspects without assessing affective aspects such as student motivation and engagement. This study offers a new contribution by applying contextual Jigsaw cooperative learning in teaching descriptive text writing to Year 9 students at SMP Negeri 4 Karau Kuala. The approach targets improving learning outcomes and encouraging active participation, social interaction, and student motivation. This study is expected to provide a solution to the low writing skills of students and serve as a reference for Indonesian language teachers in designing more interactive, collaborative, and contextually appropriate learning strategies. Therefore, this study aims to improve the descriptive writing skills and learning process of Grade IX students at SMP Negeri 4 Karau Kuala through the implementation of the Jigsaw cooperative learning model.

2. Methodology

This research used a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design, which was carried out in two cycles, with each cycle consisting of four stages, namely: planning, implementation, observation, and reflection (Wiraatmadja, 2005). This research was conducted in class IX of SMP Negeri 4 Karau Kuala, which is located at Jalan Binjai No.188 RT 04 RW 01, Talio Village, Karau Kuala District, South Barito Regency, Central Kalimantan Province. This classroom action research was conducted from July 2025 to September 2025, covering all research activities from problem discovery to reporting. The subjects of this study were 25 ninth-grade students at SMP Negeri 4 Karau Kuala in the 2025/2026 academic year. The object

of this study was to improve descriptive writing skills through the implementation of the jigsaw cooperative learning model in ninth-grade students at SMP Negeri 4 Karau Kuala, South Barito Regency. The instruments used were observation, questionnaires, written tests, and documentation. The data analysis technique used was descriptive analysis.

3. Results and Discussion

Pre-intervention

In the pre-intervention phase (pre-action), the researcher first conducted an initial diagnosis to identify students' baseline descriptive writing ability before the implementation of the Jigsaw cooperative learning model. This stage was essential to map the main learning problems and determine which writing components required the most improvement, including idea development, paragraph organization, grammar accuracy, language style, and writing mechanics. The pretest activity was designed not only to obtain a numerical score but also to capture students' actual performance when producing descriptive texts independently under classroom conditions. During this stage, students were instructed to write a descriptive text based on the given topic within a specified time limit, so that their responses reflected authentic difficulties commonly encountered in regular learning situations. The classroom atmosphere during the pretest also provided important observational data related to students' engagement, confidence, and writing habits, such as hesitation in choosing vocabulary, limited elaboration of ideas, and frequent corrections during drafting. These observations served as preliminary evidence that the learning process still needed improvement and that a more interactive approach could be beneficial for supporting students' writing development. Therefore, the documentation of the pretest process is presented in Figure 1 to illustrate the learning situation and the students' involvement during the initial assessment stage.

Figure 1 Students Completing the Descriptive Text Writing Pretest

After the pretest was completed, students' descriptive texts were assessed using predetermined indicators to ensure that the evaluation covered both the substance and the technical quality of the writing. The assessment rubric measured several key aspects, namely content or ideas (including the background of title selection and the accuracy of writing in relation to the title), organisation of content (including the description of facts in sentences and the composition of descriptive paragraphs), grammar (including sentence effectiveness and communicative language), language style (including vocabulary and expressions), and writing mechanics (including word writing and punctuation use). Each sub-variable was scored to provide a more detailed description of students' strengths and weaknesses, so that the results could inform the planning of the next instructional actions. This detailed scoring was important because improvement in descriptive writing does not rely only on one element, but on the integration of coherent ideas, systematic structure, accurate language, appropriate diction, and correct mechanics. Moreover, presenting the results in a structured format allows readers to see clearly which components were weakest at the beginning and how they became targets for improvement in subsequent cycles. For this reason, the pre-intervention results of students' descriptive writing skills are presented in Table 1, which summarizes the average scores for each variable and sub-variable as well as the overall score.

Table 1. Pre-intervention Results of Students' Descriptive Text Writing Skills

Variable	Sub-Variable	Average Score
Content or ideas	Background of title selection	1.92
	Accuracy of the writing with the title	6.4
Organisation of content	Description of facts in sentences	16.1
	Composition of descriptive paragraphs	11
Grammar	Sentence effectiveness	11.5
	Communicative language	6.3
Language Style	Vocabulary	6.3
	Expressions	1.68
Writing Mechanism	Word writing	1.7
	Use of punctuation	1.68
	Overall Score	65

Table 1 shows the results of the pre-test on descriptive writing skills, with an overall average score of 65, which is still below the minimum passing grade (KKM). The content or ideas, especially the background for choosing the title and the accuracy of the writing in relation to the title, are still low because students are not yet able to develop ideas in depth and focus. In terms of organisation, the description of facts and paragraph structure show that the depiction of objects is not coherent and lacks detail. Grammar also shows weaknesses, with sentences that are not effective and language that is not communicative. Style received a low score for vocabulary and expressions, indicating the students' lack of ability to produce vivid and imaginative descriptions. The mechanics of writing, such as spelling, word writing, and punctuation, also contain many errors. Tarigan (2008) states that writing requires the ability to express ideas coherently and effectively; Keraf (2010) emphasises that descriptions must depict objects concretely, highlighting the importance of mastering content, organisation, grammar, and mechanics.

Cycle I

Cycle I was implemented in two classroom sessions, namely Session 1 on Saturday, 6 September 2025, and Session 2 on Thursday, 10 September 2025, with the main focus on applying the Jigsaw cooperative learning model as a corrective action to improve students' descriptive writing process and outcomes. At this stage, learning activities were designed to shift the classroom atmosphere from teacher-centered instruction to collaborative learning, where students were encouraged to actively discuss, exchange ideas, and take responsibility for mastering specific components of descriptive writing. The teacher played an important role in facilitating the process by organizing students into expert groups and home groups, ensuring that each student had a clear task and contribution within the group structure. During group work, students were guided to ask questions, clarify concepts, and share understanding when they encountered difficulties, which supported deeper comprehension of writing aspects such as idea development, paragraph structure, vocabulary choice, and mechanics. In addition, observation during Cycle I emphasized students' interaction patterns, participation level, and motivation as indicators of improvement in the learning process. The implementation evidence and classroom interaction during the Jigsaw discussion activities are documented in Figure 2 to illustrate how the teacher guided students and how students engaged in exchanging information across groups.

Figure 2 Teacher Guiding Students in the Discussion Process

After the learning actions in Cycle I were completed, students were asked to produce a descriptive text as a post-action writing task to measure the immediate impact of the Jigsaw implementation on their writing performance. The assessment in Cycle I used the same criteria and indicators as the pre-intervention stage to ensure comparability and to provide a clear picture of progress across writing components. Students' texts were evaluated in terms of content or ideas, organisation of content, grammar, language style, and writing mechanics, with each variable broken down into specific sub-variables such as title relevance, factual

description, paragraph composition, sentence effectiveness, communicative language, vocabulary, expressions, word writing, and punctuation use. This systematic assessment was important because improvement in descriptive writing typically occurs gradually and may vary across aspects; for example, students may show faster progress in organization and ideas while still needing more reinforcement in mechanics. Presenting the Cycle I results in a table format allows readers to see the distribution of scores and identify which sub-variables improved most significantly following the collaborative learning process. Therefore, the results of Cycle I students' descriptive writing skills are presented in Table 2 as an overview of average scores for each assessment component and the overall score achieved in this cycle.

Table 2. Results of Cycle 1 of Students' Descriptive Writing Skills

Variable	Sub-Variable	Average Score
Content or ideas	Background of title selection	3.96
	Accuracy of writing with the title	9.04
Organisation of content	Description of facts in sentences	17
	Composition of descriptive paragrapsshs	14
Grammar	Sentence effectiveness	13.1
	Communicative language	8
Language Style	Vocabulary	7.8
	Expressions	4
Writing Mechanism	Word writing	3
	Use of punctuation marks	3
	Overall Score	82.36

Table 2, which explains the assessment results in Cycle I, shows a significant improvement compared to the pre-action, with an overall average score of 82.4. This improvement reflects the effectiveness of the corrective actions applied to the learning process. In terms of content or ideas, the scores for the background of the title selection (3.96) and the accuracy of the writing in relation to the title (9.04) indicate that students are beginning to be able to choose titles more appropriately and maintain consistency between the content and the topic being discussed. The aspect of content organisation has also been strengthened, as seen in the scores for description of facts (17) and paragraph structure (14), which indicate that students are becoming more skilled at structuring paragraphs coherently from a general overview to the details of the object.

In terms of grammar, the scores for sentence effectiveness (13.1) and communicative language (8) indicate that students have produced clearer, more straightforward, and easier-to-understand sentences. The style aspect also showed improvement, as seen in the vocabulary (7.8) and expressions (4) scores, which indicate that students are beginning to use a more diverse range of words and descriptive expressions to create a realistic impression on the reader. A fairly good improvement was also seen in the writing mechanism aspect, both in word writing (3) and punctuation (3), although this aspect is still relatively low compared to other aspects and still requires attention in the next cycle. The increase in scores on all sub-variables indicates that the learning in Cycle I has successfully improved

students' ability to write descriptive texts, in terms of content completeness, structural neatness, linguistic accuracy, and technical writing appropriateness.

Cycle 2

Cycle 2 was carried out in two meetings, namely Meeting 1 on Saturday, 13 September 2025, and Meeting 2 on Thursday, 24 September 2025, as a follow-up action based on reflection results from Cycle I. The focus in this cycle was to strengthen and stabilize the improvements that had emerged previously, particularly by increasing the accuracy of writing mechanics and maintaining students' progress in content organization, grammar, and vocabulary use. Learning activities continued to apply the Jigsaw cooperative learning procedure, but with more intensive teacher facilitation to ensure that each student not only understood their assigned material but also could communicate it effectively to their peers.

In this cycle, students were encouraged to engage more actively in peer questioning, clarification, and feedback, so that group discussions became more purposeful and directly related to improving the quality of the descriptive texts produced. The expert group process remained central in Cycle II because it allowed students to master specific writing aspects in depth before returning to their home groups to integrate the knowledge into a complete descriptive text. This structure strengthened individual accountability while simultaneously supporting collaborative skills such as explaining ideas, listening, negotiating meaning, and revising writing based on group input. The learning interaction and the expert group activity in Cycle II are shown in Figure 3 to illustrate how students returned to their original groups and how the teacher guided them to focus on discussion and question–answer exchanges related to the material.

Figure 3. Cycle 2 Expert Group

After the implementation of the learning actions in Cycle II, students completed another descriptive writing task as a post-cycle assessment to evaluate whether the refinements made during this cycle resulted in further improvement. The assessment procedure used the same rubric and indicators as in the pre-intervention

stage and Cycle I to ensure consistency and to allow an accurate comparison of progress across cycles. Students' descriptive texts were evaluated across five main variables, namely content or ideas, organisation of content, grammar, language style, and writing mechanics, each of which was measured through specific sub-variables such as title relevance, factual description, paragraph composition, sentence effectiveness, communicative language, vocabulary, expressions, word writing, and punctuation use. Maintaining the same assessment structure was important to determine whether the increase in scores reflected genuine improvement rather than changes in measurement standards. In addition, presenting Cycle II results in a detailed table format provides clearer evidence of which writing aspects showed continued growth and which aspects still required reinforcement, especially since writing development often progresses unevenly across components. Therefore, the Cycle II results of students' descriptive writing skills are presented in Table 3 as a summary of average scores for each variable and sub-variable, along with the overall score obtained at the end of this cycle.

Table 3. Cycle 2 Results of Students' Descriptive Text Writing Skills

Variable	Sub-Variable	Average Score
Content or ideas	Background of title selection	4.8
	Accuracy of writing with the title	9.06
Organisation of content	Description of facts in sentences	17.4
	Composition of descriptive paragraphs	14.2
Grammar	Sentence effectiveness	13.2
	Communicative language	8.2
Language Style	Vocabulary	8.0
	Expressions	3.68
Writing Mechanism	Word writing	3.2
	Use of punctuation marks	3.56
	Overall score	84.6

Table 3 explains the results of Cycle II, which show a steady improvement with an overall average score of 84.6. This improvement confirms that the learning improvements made are consistent and have a positive impact on students' writing skills. In terms of content or ideas, the scores for background title selection (4.88) and accuracy of writing in relation to the title (9.06) indicate that students are increasingly able to choose relevant titles and maintain the relevance of the content to the specified topic. The aspect of content organisation also showed improvement, with a score of 17.4 for factual description and 14.2 for paragraph structure, meaning that students are becoming more skilled at developing descriptions in a coherent and systematic manner, from general descriptions to detailed descriptions of objects. In terms of grammar, the scores for sentence effectiveness (13.2) and communicative language (8.2) indicate that students are increasingly able to produce sentences that are clear, effective, and easy for readers to understand. Style has also improved, as evidenced by the vocabulary score (8.0), which indicates more varied and appropriate word usage. Although there was a slight decline in the expression sub-variable (3.68), overall, students continued to show progress in presenting more vivid descriptions.

Meanwhile, writing mechanics aspects such as word writing (3.2) and punctuation (3.56) continued to improve, indicating a decrease in technical errors in students' writing. The results of Cycle II show that students have achieved an increase in their ability to write more mature descriptive texts, in terms of content, structure, language, and writing mechanisms. This proves that the learning actions implemented are very effective in improving students' writing competence as a whole. The actions in cycle II had a positive impact on students' descriptive writing skills. This improvement has met the minimum competency standards.

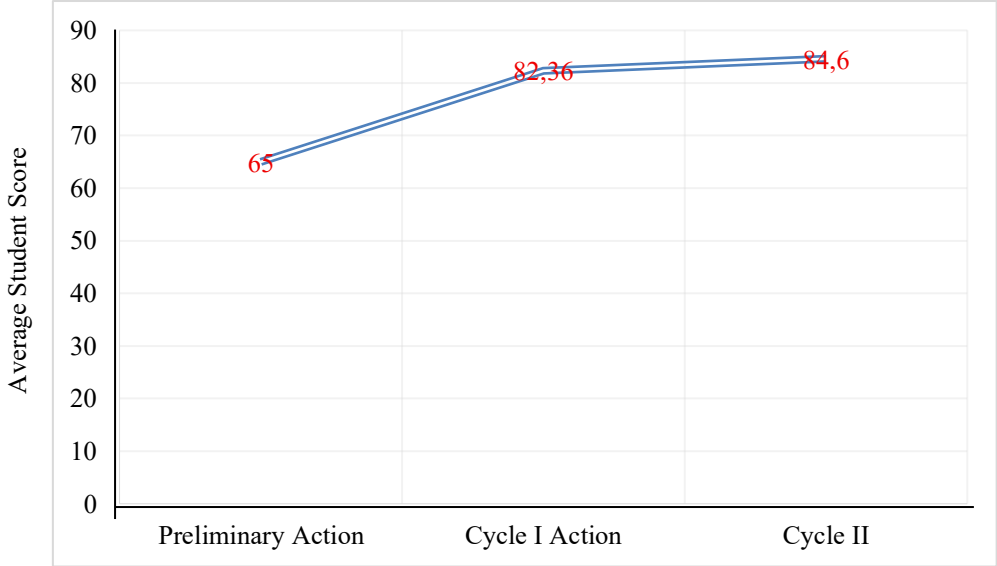

Figure 4. Increase in the Average Score for Descriptive Text Writing Skills

Figure 4 shows a significant increase in the average score from 65 in the pre-action stage to 82.36 in cycle I, and a further increase to 84.60 in cycle II. This increase proves that the consistent application of the *Jigsaw* model improves students' descriptive text writing skills from one stage to the next. This change in scores also illustrates that reflective action between cycles has a direct impact on learning outcomes, where improvements in writing mechanisms and style in cycle II resulted in more stable and consistent improvements in writing outcomes.

The research results are supported by Yulianti (2021) research, which reveals that the low formal writing skills of junior high school students are caused by a lack of collaborative learning strategies. Sari (2022) emphasises that conventional methods are less able to foster motivation to write because they do not involve social interaction between students. The pre-action conditions at SMP Negeri 4 Karau Kuala reflect the need for a cooperative approach such as *Jigsaw,* which focuses on active involvement and cooperation in writing. According to (Slavin & Robert, 2021; Hartati et al., 2025; Rosyida et al., (2025). *Jigsaw-type cooperative* learning creates individual responsibility within the group and strengthens conceptual understanding through social interaction. Lie (2018) emphasized that group work in *Jigsaw* fosters communication skills, empathy, and mutual respect among

students. *Jigsaw* not only improves the learning process but also enhances writing skills because students actively compare and improve texts continuously.

4. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the implementation of the Jigsaw cooperative learning model successfully improved students' descriptive writing skills and the overall learning process in Grade IX at SMP Negeri 4 Karau Kuala. Prior to the intervention, students experienced difficulties in developing ideas, organizing paragraphs, applying appropriate grammar, and using varied vocabulary in descriptive texts. Through collaborative learning activities, students became more actively involved in discussing writing components and sharing responsibilities within their groups. The Jigsaw model encouraged individual accountability while simultaneously fostering cooperation and communication among students. As a result, students were able to construct more coherent, detailed, and meaningful descriptive texts. In addition to cognitive improvement, the learning atmosphere became more engaging and motivating, which positively influenced students' attitudes toward writing activities. The findings indicate that the Jigsaw cooperative learning model is an effective instructional strategy for teaching descriptive writing at the junior secondary level. Therefore, this model can be recommended for Indonesian language teachers as an alternative approach to enhance students' writing competence and promote active learning in the classroom.

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How to cite this article:

Franciska, E. L., & Nurhidayah. (2026). Improving Descriptive Writing Skills Through the Implementation of the Jigsaw Cooperative Learning Model in Grade IX Students at SMP Negeri 4 Karau Kuala, South Barito Regency. *Journal of Educational Sciences*, *10(1)*, 1137-1149.