Improving Students Writing Descriptive Skills Through Snowball Throwing Games Technique at SMK Immanuel Medan

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ABSTRACT

The Snowball Throwing Games method has proven effective in enhancing students' descriptive writing skills. Beyond measurable improvements in academic performance, this interactive and collaborative approach increased student motivation and fostered a more engaging classroom atmosphere. The method encouraged active participation, creativity, and self-expression, helping students build confidence and develop their writing abilities. Moreover, the method significantly improved students' social interaction and teamwork, which positively influenced their ability to collaborate during writing tasks. Particularly in writing classes often perceived as challenging, the dynamic and supportive environment reduced student anxiety and minimized the fear of making mistakes. Each phase of implementation was strategically designed to facilitate classroom communication and highlight various aspects of the Snowball Throwing Games technique. These included student engagement, behavioral change, the development of critical thinking skills, and the integration of digital tools to support learning goals. The findings indicate that this method is both practical and effective in improving writing proficiency while fostering a positive and collaborative learning environment.

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INTRODUCTION

Writing plays a critical role in enabling students to communicate their ideas, thoughts, and experiences clearly and effectively. However, in many EFL (English as a Foreign Language) contexts, particularly in vocational schools like SMK Immanuel, students face significant challenges in developing their writing skills. Based on field observations and interviews with teachers at SMK Immanuel, it was found that more than 60% of students struggled with descriptive writing tasks due to limited vocabulary, low motivation, anxiety

about making mistakes, and the constraints of traditional grammar-focused teaching methods. These conventional approaches often emphasize correctness and structure over creativity and expression, resulting in writing classes that students perceive as monotonous and stressful. In an era where 21st-century education prioritizes communication, critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity, there is an urgent need to adopt innovative and student-centered teaching strategies.

One such method that has shown promise in addressing these challenges is the Snowball Throwing Game a cooperative, interactive classroom activity in which students write short texts on paper, crumple them into "snowballs," and throw them to classmates, who then read and continue the writing. This method introduces playfulness, movement, and peer interaction into the learning process, transforming writing into an engaging and less intimidating experience. Previous research supports the efficacy of this approach. Rahmawati (2018) reported that students showed improvement in grammar, sentence structure, and content organization when taught using the Snowball Throwing method. Similarly, Putri (2019) found that the method created a more active learning environment, leading to increased student motivation and improved vocabulary usage.

Nasution (2020) emphasized how this approach helped reduce students' anxiety toward writing assignments, allowing them to participate more freely and confidently. In addition, Sari and Saputra (2018) discovered that students using this method were able to generate ideas more quickly, resulting in improved coherence and flow in their compositions. These findings are consistent with the cognitive and social learning theories of Vygotsky, which argue that students learn best through interaction and collaboration.

The Snowball Throwing Game fosters a supportive environment in which students learn from each other, provide mutual feedback, and engage in a dynamic process of written communication. In the vocational school setting, where students often prefer practical and interactive learning experiences, this technique aligns well with their learning preferences. It supports experiential learning while also addressing emotional aspects such as anxiety and low self-confidence, which are common barriers in writing classes. Moreover, it complements constructivist pedagogy by allowing students to construct knowledge through hands on experience, reflection, and social engagement.

Despite these promising outcomes in prior studies, the application of the Snowball Throwing Game in vocational school contexts, particularly in Indonesia, remains underexplored. Most existing research has focused on junior high or general senior high school students. Therefore, this study aims to

investigate the effectiveness of the Snowball Throwing Game in improving the descriptive writing skills of students at SMK Immanuel. Specifically, the study will examine how this method enhances student engagement, increases motivation to write, reduces anxiety, and contributes to the development of critical thinking and language fluency.

To achieve this goal, the study poses three main research questions: (1) How effective is the Snowball Throwing Game in improving students' descriptive writing skills at SMK Immanuel? (2) In what ways does the Snowball Throwing Game influence students' motivation and engagement in the writing process? and (3) To what extent does this method reduce students' writing anxiety and enhance their confidence in expressing ideas? Based on the literature and preliminary field findings, the researcher hypothesizes that the implementation of the Snowball Throwing Game will significantly improve students' descriptive writing performance, elevate their motivation, and reduce writing-related stress. The hypothesis is grounded in the assumption that when students are given opportunities to participate in creative, collaborative, and enjoyable writing activities, they are more likely to develop confidence and competence in expressing their ideas.

Furthermore, this method encourages peer support and reduces the pressure often associated with teacher-centered correction, thereby creating a low-stakes environment where students can experiment with language freely. This research is expected to provide valuable insights for English teachers seeking to improve writing instruction in vocational schools. It may also contribute to a broader understanding of how interactive, game-based methods can be used to foster better writing outcomes in EFL contexts. Ultimately, the findings could inform curriculum development and promote the use of cooperative learning strategies that align with both pedagogical goals and students' emotional needs. By addressing both cognitive and affective dimensions of learning, the Snowball Throwing Game offers a holistic solution to the enduring problem of low writing performance in Indonesian EFL classrooms.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design to improve students' descriptive writing skills through the implementation of the Snowball Throwing Game.

The participants in this research will be 20 students of class X at SMK Immanuel Medan in the academic year 2024/2025. The data will collect included qualitative data (from observation and field notes) and quantitative

data (from students' writing tests). The descriptive writing performance was assessed based on criteria such as content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. Through this design, the study aimed to systematically improve students' descriptive writing skills and provide insights into the effectiveness of using game-based cooperative learning in the English classroom.

According to Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), action research is a reflective process conducted by teachers to solve problems and improve teaching practices through a cycle of planning, action, observation, and reflection. It is particularly suitable for classroom-based studies aimed at enhancing specific aspects of the teaching and learning process. The research was conducted in two cycles, with each cycle consisting of four main stages: planning, implementing the action, observing the outcomes, and reflecting on the results to inform subsequent improvements. To ensure comprehensive data collection, the researcher employed multiple data-gathering techniques including classroom observations, student writing tests, and interviews. Observations were used to monitor student participation, behavior, and interaction during the application of the Snowball Throwing Game, while writing tests were administered before and after each cycle to assess improvements in students' descriptive writing skills in terms of content, structure, grammar, and vocabulary. Additionally, interviews with selected students were conducted to gain insights into their experiences, motivation, and perceptions of the learning process.

The data collected were then analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Quantitative data from the writing tests were analyzed using descriptive statistics to compare student performance across cycles, while qualitative data from observations and interviews were analyzed through thematic analysis to identify emerging patterns related to student engagement, learning behavior, and affective responses. This mixed-method approach ensured a holistic understanding of the effectiveness of the Snowball Throwing Game in enhancing students' writing abilities within the classroom context.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

After distributed the test, it is clear from the pre-test and post-test findings, classroom observations, and student interviews that the Snowball Throwing Games method's implementation significantly improved students' descriptive writing abilities. The significant rise in average scores showed definite gains in sentence construction, vocabulary choice, and the capacity to

give precise and in-depth explanations. Additionally, students' enthusiasm, involvement, and enjoyment of learning activities were significantly increased by this creative method. In addition to making courses more interesting and less repetitive, the method's collaborative and interactive elements promoted a positive learning atmosphere where students felt more comfortable and ready to share their thoughts.

All things considered, the Snowball Throwing Games technique worked well for increasing students' passion and involvement in the classroom as well as their descriptive writing skills. Higher exam scores and superior writing components demonstrate how much the Snowball Throwing Games method enhanced students' descriptive writing abilities. Learning became more dynamic and collaborative as a result of the increased motivation, engagement, and enjoyment. Pupils gave positive answers, showing increased self- assurance and comprehension of the structure of descriptive texts.

Table 1.
Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores in Cycle I

No	Students' Initial Name	Score Pre-test Cycle I	Score Post-Test Cycle I
1	A.M	45	60
2	A.J	50	65
3	B.S	50	60
4	C.I	65	80
5	C A.M	60	70
6	C.S	55	70
7	F.H	50	65
8	F.T.T	55	70
9	D.A.S	55	70
10	D. A	60	75
11	E.N.B	60	70
12	H.S	55	75
13	I.O.H	60	80
14	G.R.S	60	75
15	J.S	60	75
16	J.M	50	65
17	N.H.T	55	70
18	M.D.S	60	75
19	K.S	60	75
20	M.N	60	75
21	M.D.S	55	70
22	K.J.M	50	75
23	P.B.M	65	70
24	S.C.S.	60	75

25	P.S.E	60	75
26	R.A.S	70	80
27	R.A.M	60	75
28	R.A.S	65	75
29	S.W	60	75

From table 1 Students' scores in Cycle I significantly improved from the pre-test to the post-test, according to the statistics in the table. Following the intervention, the majority of students demonstrated an improvement in their results; several received higher scores on the post-test than on the pre-test. The fact that practically all participants showed a constant upward trend suggests that the educational technique or therapy used during Cycle I was successful in raising students' academic performance. Consequently, it can be said that the outcomes are very important and show how the adopted strategy has a beneficial effect.

Table 2.
Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores in Cycle II

No	Students Intitial Name	Score Pre-test Cycle II	Score Post-Test Cycle II
1	A.M	60	70
2	A.J	65	80
3	B.S	65	80
4	C.I	70	85
5	C. A.M	70	85
6	C. S	70	80
7	F.T	65	80
8	F.T.T	75	80
9	D.A.S	70	85
10	D.A.	60	75
11	E.N.B	70	85
12	H.S	75	80
13	I.O.H	70	85
14	G.R.S	75	90
15	J.S	75	85
16	J.M	65	75
17	N.H.T	80	90
18	M.D.S	70	75
19	K.S	65	80
20	M.N	70	85
21	M.D.S	70	85
22	K.J.M	60	85
23	P.B.M	70	90
24	S.C.S	75	90

25	P.E.S	70	85
26	R.A.S	75	90
27	R.A.M	70	85
28	R.A.S	60	80
29	S.W	70	90

It is clear from the information in Table 2 that students' scores in Cycle II improved significantly from the pre-test to the post-test. Following the intervention, nearly every student had an improvement in their scores, with many seeing notable increases. For instance, a number of kids saw a 10–15 point improvement in their results. This steady upward trend for the vast majority of pupils amply illustrates how successful the teaching approach used in Cycle II was. As a result, it can be said that the table's results are quite noteworthy and suggest that pupils' academic performance has improved.

Discussion

The implementation of the Snowball Throwing Game technique in this study demonstrated a significant improvement in students' descriptive writing proficiency, as well as observable growth in classroom dynamics, learner motivation, and student collaboration. Drawing from both quantitative and qualitative data collected during classroom action research, the results indicated that students not only performed better in writing assessments but also exhibited increased confidence, willingness to participate, and enjoyment of the learning process. This confirms earlier findings by Rahmawati (2018), who reported notable enhancements in students' grammar and structure after applying this method, as well as Putri (2019), who found that Snowball Throwing increased student motivation and creativity.

Theoretically, this study draws on two major learning theories behaviorism and cognitivism to explain why such improvements occurred. According to behaviorist theory, as posited by B.F. Skinner, learning is shaped by stimuli and responses, where behavior is reinforced through consistent rewards or feedback. In the classroom, the Snowball Throwing Game acts as a structured stimulus that prompts active student responses, while immediate peer and teacher feedback serves as reinforcement, leading to observable changes in students' writing performance. Each round of writing, throwing, and receiving a "snowball" becomes a form of operant conditioning, motivating students to perform better due to the positive reinforcement of engagement and social interaction.

At the same time, from a cognitive learning theory perspective, the method supports active information processing and internalization of language

knowledge. Cognitivist theorists such as Piaget and Bruner emphasize the importance of mental processes like thinking, comprehension, and memory in learning. Through the Snowball Throwing Game, students are encouraged to organize their ideas, evaluate peer feedback, and adapt their writing strategies—thus fostering deeper learning and metacognitive awareness. This aligns with the study's observations that students began to plan their descriptive content more thoughtfully and responded more constructively to revisions suggested by peers. The interactive and physical nature of the game reduced students' writing anxiety, particularly for those who usually struggle with conventional grammar-based lessons, thus addressing an often-overlooked affective barrier in writing classrooms. Compared to previous traditional methods that rely on rote memorization and rigid structures, the Snowball Throwing Game stands out by offering a low-pressure environment where students feel safe to experiment and express ideas freely.

One of the key contributions of this study lies in addressing a clear research gap: while the Snowball Throwing Game has been acknowledged in earlier research as a tool for enhancing general classroom interaction or motivation, few studies have explored its specific role in improving *descriptive* writing within Indonesian vocational high school settings. This is especially relevant given that SMK students often prefer hands-on learning and practical outcomes, and yet are expected to develop complex written communication skills in English. The present study bridges this gap by offering empirical evidence that supports the use of game-based techniques not just for engagement, but for concrete skill development in writing. Another significant finding is the enhancement of social interaction among students, which positively affected their ability to collaborate during the writing process. The sense of community and shared responsibility cultivated through peer-to-peer reading and responding fostered deeper learning and created a vibrant classroom atmosphere. Several students reported that they no longer feared making mistakes because the format normalized the process of trial, error, and revision. This led to increased participation and risk-taking, which are essential for the development of authentic language production. Furthermore, students became more critical in assessing the organization and coherence of texts, indicating that the activity had activated their analytical thinking skills alongside language development. Teachers involved in the study noted a marked improvement in classroom discipline, energy, and focus; surprisingly, although the activity involved physical movement and excitement, it also promoted structure and order due to clearly defined instructions and teacher facilitation.

Nonetheless, the implementation of the technique was not without challenges. Some difficulties included managing time effectively during each cycle, ensuring all students remained on task, and addressing initial resistance from a few students unfamiliar with interactive learning methods. Additionally, classes of more than 30 students required more effort in terms of monitoring and managing the flow of the activity. However, with clear guidelines, positive reinforcement, and consistent teacher involvement, these issues were minimized. Another important dimension of this research was the inclusion of teacher and student perceptions gathered through interviews. Many students expressed enjoyment and stated that the activity helped them to "write without fear," while teachers reported that the method injected energy into the classroom and promoted student independence. One student mentioned, "I used to hate writing, but now I enjoy it because it's like playing and thinking at the same time." This anecdotal evidence, though subjective, lends a human dimension to the study's findings and supports its broader applicability.

Moving forward, the findings of this study suggest that the Snowball Throwing Game technique can be adapted across various educational levels and writing genres. For instance, it could be used not only for descriptive texts but also for narrative writing, opinion essays, or even argumentative paragraphs in higher grades. Teachers are encouraged to experiment with combining this method with digital tools such as Google Docs, collaborative AI tools, or writing apps to further enhance engagement and feedback opportunities. One recommendation is to allow students to use translation tools or AI-based grammar checkers during the drafting phase, and then integrate peer reviews through shared digital documents before finalizing their writing. These integrations not only maintain the collaborative spirit of the activity but also develop students' technological literacy, which is a crucial skill in the modern world. Practically speaking, teachers may consider employing the Snowball Throwing Game once every two weeks to maintain novelty and excitement, while blending it with structured writing assignments or portfolio assessments for long-term monitoring. Moreover, teachers should scaffold the activity with pre-writing strategies such as brainstorming, outlining, and modeling good descriptive writing, to ensure students understand both the form and the function of their output.

Visually, the difference in classroom energy before and after implementation was noticeable. Initially dull and quiet, the classroom became lively yet organized, with students actively moving, sharing, and discussing their work. The physical layout of the classroom also supported this change, as it was located adjacent to the teacher's office, allowing for proper supervision

and creating a safer environment for interactive learning. Finally, this research reinforces the idea that writing often considered the most daunting of the language skills can be taught in a way that is both enjoyable and rigorous. By tapping into students' social and cognitive strengths, the Snowball Throwing Game emerges not just as a classroom gimmick, but as a transformative strategy that improves academic outcomes, emotional resilience, and collaborative spirit.

CONCLUSION

The Snowball Throwing Games method has proven highly effective in enhancing students' descriptive writing skills. Beyond measurable improvements in academic performance, this interactive and collaborative approach fostered increased motivation, creativity, and classroom engagement. Its participatory nature encouraged students to express themselves more confidently and creatively, thereby improving their writing fluency and reducing anxiety especially in writing classes that are typically perceived as challenging. The method also significantly boosted social interaction and teamwork, contributing to a more cohesive and supportive learning environment. Every stage of implementation was carefully designed to promote classroom communication and address various learning dimensions, including student involvement, behavioral changes, and the development of critical thinking. The integration of digital resources further supported learning goals, reinforcing that the Snowball Throwing Game is not only a powerful instructional strategy but also an adaptable one that creates a dynamic and learner-centered classroom atmosphere.

The effectiveness of this method is clearly supported by the data, as students demonstrated remarkable progress in various learning aspects. They actively engaged in lessons, embraced collaborative learning, and showed greater willingness to take risks and make mistakes viewing errors as part of the learning journey. Their participation in game-based activities inspired a more imaginative and expressive approach to writing, while the classroom environment grew more vibrant, open, and conducive to learning. These findings affirm the Snowball Throwing technique as a valuable contribution to language teaching, offering both pedagogical effectiveness and practical flexibility. Morever, the study's implications extend beyond writing instruction, suggesting potential applications for other language skills such as speaking and reading, as well as cross-disciplinary use in different educational levels. Future research is encouraged to explore its impact on soft skills like critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity. In light of these conclusions, the Snowball Throwing method emerges as a promising, inclusive, and scalable strategy for

enhancing student achievement and personal development making it a valuable asset for educators and researchers seeking innovative approaches in language education.

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