

The Effect of Role-Playing on Descriptive Writing Skills in Grade XII Students with Mild Intellectual Disabilities at SLB Negeri Cilacap

 <https://doi.org/10.31004/jele.v10i5.1334>

*Rochmat Hidayat, Fajar Indra Septiana^{ab} 

¹²Universitas Islam Nusantara, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author: kometlord@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effectiveness of the role-playing learning model in improving descriptive writing skills among Grade XII students with mild intellectual disabilities at SLB Negeri Cilacap. The research is motivated by the challenges these students face in generating and expressing ideas in writing due to cognitive and adaptive limitations. Using a quantitative approach, the study employs a Single Subject Research (SSR) design with an A-B-A structure. Data were collected through direct observation and performance tests across three phases: baseline 1 (A1), intervention (B), and baseline 2 (A2). The results indicate that during the intervention, students showed improvements in idea generation, vocabulary use, and clarity in object description. Data analysis demonstrated significant differences between the pre- and post-intervention phases. In conclusion, the role-playing model is effective in enhancing descriptive writing skills, motivation, and active participation among students with mild intellectual disabilities.

Keywords: *Role-Playing Learning Model, Descriptive Writing, Mild Intellectual Disability, Special Education, SSR Method*

Article History:

Received 07th August 2025

Accepted 16th October 2025

Published 18th October 2025



INTRODUCTION

Education is a basic right of every individual, including children with special needs. Special education, as part of the national education system, aims to help children with physical, mental, and behavioral disorders to develop attitudes, knowledge, and skills. Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, Article 5 Paragraph 1 states that, "Every citizen has the same right to obtain quality education." This legal provision is significant because it provides a strong foundation that children with special needs must have equal opportunities to obtain education.

In this context, children with intellectual disabilities face significant challenges, particularly in writing skills, which are an important aspect of language proficiency. This condition is characterized by an intelligence level below average. Children with intellectual disabilities are special needs children who experience delays in intellectual, physical, emotional, and social development and require special care to develop optimally (Desiningrum, 2016). With special care tailored to their needs, children with intellectual disabilities can develop their abilities to the fullest. From the above description, it can be concluded that mentally disabled children are individuals with special needs who experience obstacles in their intellectual, physical, emotional, and social development. Due to these conditions, they require special educational approaches and services to achieve their full potential. One of the main challenges they face is in mastering writing skills, which are an important part of language skills.

Indonesian language is considered an important subject taught in elementary school through college, especially for children with intellectual disabilities. The goal of Indonesian

language for children with intellectual disabilities is to help them get to know themselves, their culture, and the cultures of others. The scope of Indonesian language learning includes listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In this study, the focus will be on the writing skills of children with intellectual disabilities. Writing is the expression of ideas or thoughts in the form of a composition (Dalman, 2015). Thus, writing is a process of pouring ideas or thoughts into writing freely. This activity is not only about stringing words together but also requires an understanding of language, good sentence structure, and the ability to convey ideas clearly and easily understood. The ability to write descriptive essays is one of the important indicators of mastery in writing skills. Descriptive essays require children to be able to observe and describe an object, place, or atmosphere in detail and realistically.

A descriptive essay is a piece of writing that describes or depicts an object, thing, or nature. The object is described using words based on spatial and physical aspects (Ermanto and Emidar, 2018, p. 156). Therefore, descriptive writing is a type of writing that conveys a detailed and clear picture of an object, event, place, or atmosphere, enabling readers to imagine or feel indirectly what the writer describes. In children with mild intellectual disabilities, this ability tends to be low due to difficulties in constructing logical sentences, limited vocabulary, and minimal ability to describe something in detail. This fact was found through initial observations at the Cilacap State Special School, where mildly mentally disabled students in grade XII showed very low descriptive writing skills. This problem became an academic concern as well as a starting point for finding solutions through appropriate learning strategies.

The research gap is evident in the lack of implementation of child-centered learning models, especially those that can stimulate the verbal and imaginative abilities of children with intellectual disabilities. Most learning approaches are still conventional and rote-based, making them ineffective in improving writing skills. In this study, the role-playing learning model was used to stimulate the verbal and imaginative abilities of children with intellectual disabilities, especially in writing descriptive essays. Role-playing is a learning process that is included in the simulation method (Mulyanti, 2017). Role-playing is a learning technique that involves children in acting out roles to understand a situation directly. The role-playing learning model is carried out by directing children to be more creative in imitating various activities in a dramatic way, whether it be ideas, situations, or specific characters.

Previous research first conducted by Fadlilah (2014) in a study entitled "Improving Descriptive Writing Skills Using Guided Writing Strategies in Grade VC Students at SD Negeri Jumoyo 2 Magelang" concluded that the application of guided writing strategies is effective in improving children's ability to write descriptive essays. This improvement was achieved through teacher guidance at every stage of the writing process. During the implementation of the learning process in cycles I and II, this strategy proved to be effective in encouraging children's activity and enthusiasm in participating in writing activities. In addition, children appeared to be more communicative and enjoyed the learning process compared to before the strategy was implemented. The second previous study conducted by Aziz (2019) in his research entitled "The Effect of the Role playing Learning Model on Improving the Understanding of the Concept of Buying and Selling for Children with Intellectual Disabilities at SLB A YKAB Surakarta" it can be concluded that the application of the role-playing learning model has a significant effect on the understanding of buying and selling concepts among children with intellectual disabilities at SLB A YKAB Surakarta. The results of this study can contribute to improving the understanding of children with mild intellectual disabilities regarding currency units, addition, and subtraction.

This study shows a new element through the application of the role-playing learning model in the context of developing descriptive writing skills in children with mild intellectual disabilities. The role-playing learning model is innovatively used as a means to build real experiences which are then expressed in descriptive writing. This provides a new approach to writing for children with special needs. In addition, this study contributes to the design of a more active and enjoyable learning model. Through role-playing activities, children are directly involved in experiences that help them build real images to be used as writing

material. This makes it easier for children to understand the concept of descriptive writing, while also increasing their motivation to learn. Through the role-playing learning model, children are not only invited to write theoretically, but are also involved in direct experiences that make it easier for them to understand and compose descriptive essays more concretely.

Based on the Single Subject Research (SSR) design with an A-B-A design, the hypothesis in this study is: "There is a significant difference in the ability to write descriptive essays in children with mild intellectual disabilities before and after being given treatment using the role-playing learning model". The purpose of this study is to determine the extent of the influence of the role-playing learning model on improving descriptive writing skills in mildly intellectually disabled students in grade XII at the Cilacap State Special School. This study is expected to prove that the application of the role-playing learning model can help improve descriptive writing skills in mildly mentally disabled children in grade XII at SLB Negeri Cilacap. In addition to improving writing skills, the role-playing learning model is also expected to encourage children's activity, motivation, and confidence in expressing their ideas in writing.

METHOD

In this study, participant selection was conducted with careful consideration to ensure alignment with the research objectives and the methodological requirements of the Single Subject Research (SSR) design. SSR focuses on the detailed observation and measurement of behavioural changes in a single individual over time, making the choice of participant a critical aspect of the research.

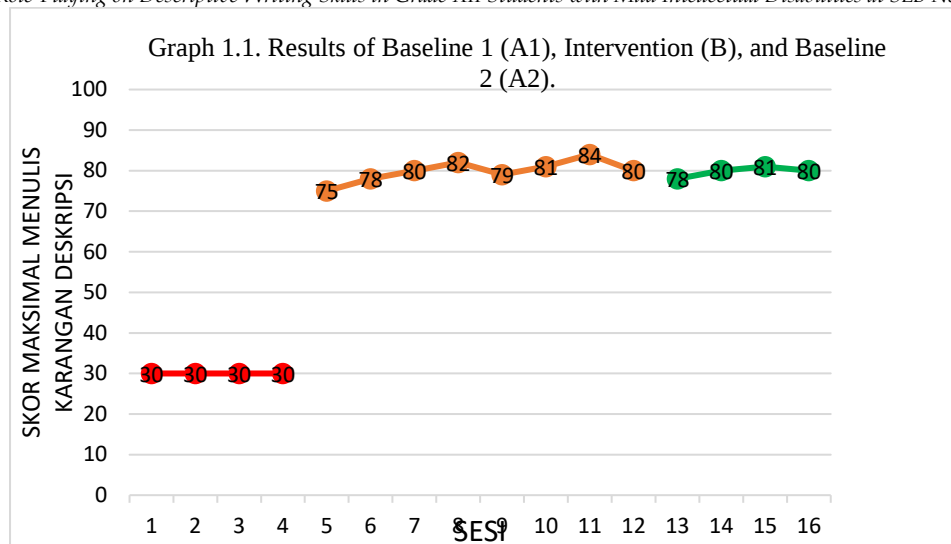
The participant was an 18-year-old female student enrolled in Grade XII at SLB Negeri Cilacap. She had been formally diagnosed with a mild intellectual disability, based on psychological assessments conducted by school professionals. This classification typically corresponds to an Intelligence Quotient (IQ) between 50 and 70 and is characterised by limitations in reasoning, problem-solving, and adaptive functioning.

Selection criteria included: (1) active enrolment in Grade XII at SLB Negeri Cilacap, (2) confirmed diagnosis of mild intellectual disability, (3) basic literacy and oral communication skills sufficient for participating in role-playing and writing tasks, and (4) absence of sensory or physical impairments that might interfere with learning activities. Prior to data collection, ethical procedures were followed rigorously. Informed consent was obtained from the participant's parents or legal guardians after a thorough explanation of the study's purpose, procedures, and potential benefits. The participant also provided verbal assent, having received a simplified explanation of the study suited to her cognitive level. Participation was entirely voluntary, with the option to withdraw at any stage. The use of a single participant allowed for intensive, individual-focused data collection and analysis. This approach enabled the researcher to closely monitor changes in descriptive writing skills as a result of the role-playing learning intervention.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Based on the results obtained during the study, changes in the descriptive writing ability of mildly mentally disabled grade XII students at SLB Negeri Cilacap in Indonesian language learning before, during, and after the intervention can be seen. The graphs of the results from baseline 1 (A1), intervention (B), and baseline 2 (A2) are as follows:



The length of the condition or the number of sessions in baseline 1 (A1) was four sessions, intervention (B) was eight sessions, and baseline 2 (A2) was four sessions.

From the results of the descriptive writing ability test in the graph above, children in baseline condition 1 (A1) showed a flat trend, meaning that the descriptive writing ability scores of children from the first to the fourth session remained stable at 30. The line in the intervention condition (B) tends to rise, meaning that the descriptive writing ability scores of children from the fifth to the twelfth session increased. Meanwhile, in baseline condition 2 (A2), the line tends to rise, meaning that the descriptive writing ability data from the thirteenth to the sixteenth sessions experienced an increase in scores.

The results of the stability trend calculation in baseline condition 1 (A1) is 100%, which means that the data obtained shows stability. The stability trend in the intervention condition (B) is 100%, which means that the data obtained is stable. The stability trend in baseline condition 2 (A2) is 100%, which means that it is stable.

The explanation of the data trace trend is the same as the direction trend described in point b above. The data trace in baseline condition 1 (A1), intervention (B), and baseline 2 (A2) shows an increase.

The stability level and data range in baseline condition 1 (A1) are flat with a data range of 30–30. In the intervention condition (B), the data tends to increase with a range of 75–84. The same thing happens in baseline condition 2 (A2), where the data tends to increase with a range of 78–81.

The level of change in baseline condition 1 (A1) did not increase or remained stable at 30 until the last session. In the intervention condition (B), there was an increase of +15, while in baseline 2 (A2), there was an increase of +2.

Table 1. Comparison of Descriptive Writing Ability Across Baseline

Condition	Baseline 1 (A1)	Intervention (B)	Baseline 2 (A2)
Duration of condition	4	8	6
Estimated trend	→	↗	↗
Stability trend	→	↗	↗
Data trace trend	Stabil 100 %	Stabil 100%	Stabil 100%
Stability level and range	→	↗	↗
Level stabilitas dan rentang	<i>stabil</i> 30 – 30	<i>stabil</i> 75 – 84	<i>stabil</i> 78 – 81
Level of change	0	+15	+2

The results of data analysis between conditions are as follows:

The number of variables changed is one (variable from baseline 1 (A1) to intervention (B)).

The change in directional trend between baseline 1 (A1) and intervention (B) is from flat to upward. This indicates the influence of the role-playing learning model in improving children's descriptive writing skills. From intervention (B) to baseline 2 (A2), the directional trend remains stable.

The trend stability changes between conditions at baseline 1 (A1) and intervention (B), from stable to variable, and from intervention (B) to baseline 2 (A2), from variable to stable. This occurs because during the intervention phase, children's abilities showed varied score gains.

The data level changes from baseline 1 (A1) to intervention (B) increased by +15. Subsequently, from intervention (B) to baseline 2 (A2), the data level changed by +2.

Table 2. Comparison of Descriptive Writing Ability Changes Between Conditions

Between conditions	Baseline 1 (A1)/ Intervensi B	Intervention (B)/ Baseline 2 (A2)
Number of variables changed	1	1
Change in direction of trend		
Change in stability trend	Stabil ke Variabel	Variabel ke stabil
Stable to variable		
Change in data level	+15	+2
Stability level and range	$\frac{stabil}{30 - 30}$	$\frac{stabil}{75 - 84}$
Level of change	+15	+2

Discussion

The ability to write descriptive essays is an important part of language skills that must be mastered because it supports the development of other language skills. In general, language skills cover four main aspects, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Among these four aspects, writing plays an important role in expressing ideas and thoughts in writing. Therefore, mastery of writing skills, including descriptive writing, is one of the main factors in facilitating the process of written communication. In this context, writing skills are very important in helping mildly mentally disabled students in grade XII to develop their thinking and communication skills through written media more effectively.

The subject of this study was a mildly mentally disabled student in grade XII at a special school (SLB) in Cilacap. Children with intellectual disabilities are individuals who experience limitations in intellectual function and adaptive abilities, which impact various aspects of development, including academic abilities such as writing. According to Sutjihati Somantri (2006), children with intellectual disabilities are children who experience obstacles in intellectual development that result in limitations in thinking, learning, and problem solving, thus requiring assistance and tailored instruction.

Seeing the condition of mildly intellectually disabled students in grade XII who had difficulty organizing their ideas and expressing them in descriptive writing, the researcher sought an appropriate solution to help improve their writing skills. One of the approaches used was the role-playing learning method. Based on the results of the study, there was an increase in the ability to write descriptive essays in children after being given treatment through the role-playing learning method.

This study was conducted over two months with a total of 16 sessions. All sessions were divided into three conditions, namely four sessions for Baseline 1 (A1), eight sessions for Intervention (B), and four sessions for Baseline 2 (A2).

In the Baseline 1 (A1) condition, the observation results showed that the data trend tended to be flat or unchanged ($=$), where the descriptive writing ability score remained at 30 from the first to the fourth session. The stability trend analysis produced a stability level of 100%, indicating that the data obtained was very consistent. The range of values during this phase did not increase, remaining at 30.

In the intervention condition (B), the trend of the graph showed a significant increase in the children's descriptive writing ability, which increased gradually from the fifth to the twelfth session. The application of the role-playing method indicated positive development in writing ability after the treatment.

Data stability during the intervention condition was recorded at 12.6%, indicating that although the values obtained varied, the trend remained consistently increasing. The data trail in this condition shows an upward graph with a value range between 75 and 84. This increase indicates that the intervention had a positive impact on the development of children's writing skills. Although there was an increase in value between sessions, the increase was gradual and stable. The level of change in this phase was quite significant, with an increase of +54 points from the initial value, which was previously stable in Baseline 2 (A2). The trend graph showed an increasing pattern, which meant that the children's descriptive writing skills continued to improve from session 13 to session 16.

The data obtained during this phase showed a stability level of 100%, indicating that the results achieved were consistent and did not experience significant improvement. The development graph in this condition shows a stable level of stability with a value range of 78 to 81, and there was an increase of 3 points. This increase shows that the results of the intervention that had been given previously remained even though the treatment had been stopped.

In other words, the children were still able to maintain the writing skills they had developed during the intervention phase. Although the scores obtained were slightly lower than those in the intervention phase (B), the results achieved in the Baseline 2 phase (A2) were overall much better than the initial condition in Baseline 1 (A1), where the scores remained stable.

This provides evidence that children with mild intellectual disabilities show a strong dependence on the treatment provided during the intervention. Thus, the application of an appropriate role-playing learning model in the intervention phase proved effective in improving descriptive writing skills and providing a positive and sustainable impact in the phase after the intervention was discontinued.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the role-playing learning model had a positive effect on the descriptive writing skills of a Grade XII student with mild intellectual disability at SLB Negeri Cilacap. During the initial baseline phase (A1), the student showed low writing ability and was unable to produce a descriptive text. However, during the intervention phase (B), the implementation of the role-playing model led to significant improvements, with the student achieving high scores. This improvement was sustained in the second baseline phase (A2), indicating that the skills acquired during the intervention were retained. The overall trend in the data shifted from flat to consistently upward, demonstrating the effectiveness of the model. These results suggest that role-playing can serve as an effective and engaging instructional method for developing descriptive writing skills in students with mild intellectual disabilities. It not only supports the acquisition of writing competence but also encourages active participation and motivation in the learning process.

REFERENCES

- Anwar, S., & Umam, H. (2020). Transformative Education: Emphasizing 21st Century Skills and Competencies in the Independent Learning Curriculum. *AIM: Journal of Islamic Education Management*, 1(1), 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.15575/aim.v1i1.28886>
- Arikunto, S. (2019). *Prosedur Penelitian: Suatu Pendekatan Praktik*. Jakarta: Rineka Cipta.
- Dalman. (2015). *Keterampilan Menulis*. Jakarta: Rajawali Pers.
- Desiningrum, D. R. (2016). *Psikologi Anak Berkebutuhan Khusus*. Yogyakarta: Psikosasin.
- Ermanto, & Emidar. (2018). *Bahasa Indonesia: Pengembangan Kepribadian di Perguruan Tinggi*. PT Raja Grafindo Persada.

Mulyanti Wida. (2017). Penggunaan metode role-play dalam mengembangkan keterampilan berbicara. *Jurnal Forum Didaktik*, 1(2), 83.

Prahmana, R. C. I. (2021). *Single Subject Research: Sebuah Pengantar Awal*. Yogyakarta: Deepublish.

Sugiyono. (2017). *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, dan R&D*. Bandung: Alfabeta.

Sugiyono. (2018). *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, dan R&D*. Bandung: Alfabeta.

Sukardi. (2015). *Metodologi Penelitian Pendidikan: Kompetensi dan Praktiknya*. Jakarta: Bumi Aksara.

Sunanto, J., Takeuchi, K., & Nakata, H. (2005). *Pengantar Penelitian dengan Subjek Tunggal*. Bandung: UPI Press.

Anwar, S., & Umam, H. (2025). Globalization and The Crisis in Islamic Education: Al-Attas' Epistemological Response and The Reconstruction of Adab-Based Pedagogy. *JURNAL YAQZHAN: Analisis Filsafat, Agama Dan Kemanusiaan*, 11(1), 135–149. <https://doi.org/10.24235/jy.v11i1.21161>

Suherman, U., Cipta, E. S., Anwar, S., Kadir, W. A., Fakhurrozi, M. F., Namira, S. H., & Halimatussadiyah, W. (2025). Implementing a Kindness-Based Leadership Strategy in Islamic Elementary Education. *EDUKASIA: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pembelajaran*, 6(1), 281–292.

Anwar, S. (2024). Education as a Practice of Liberation: A Synthesis of Freire's and Habermas' Philosophical Contributions to Emancipatory Consciousness. *AIM: Journal of Islamic Education Management*, 2(3), 228–247.