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# The Effect of the TAR Technique (Dive, Observe, Arrange) on the Descriptive Writing Ability of Grade XI Students at SMK Willem Iskander

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**A B S T R A C T**

This study aims to examine the effect of the TAR technique (Dive, Observe, Arrange) on the descriptive writing skills of eleventh-grade students at SMK Willem Iskander. Although the curriculum for vocational high schools requires students at this level to be able to produce descriptive texts, their writing proficiency remains below the expected standard. One contributing factor is the use of conventional teaching strategies that do not stimulate students' creativity or active involvement in the learning process. This study needs to be conducted due to the limited research on effective writing strategies within vocational school contexts, even though vocational students require practical and contextual approaches to develop their descriptive writing skills. In addition, most previous studies have focused on students' written products, while few have examined how the TAR technique contributes to the writing process itself. Therefore, this research is conducted to fill that gap. The TAR technique, grounded in contextual learning principles, encourages an active, meaningful, and engaging learning environment by positioning students as the main actors in the classroom. The study employed an experimental method using a one-group pretest–posttest design. The research population consisted of 128 students across four classes, and a total of 32 students were selected as the sample. The findings revealed that prior to the implementation of the TAR technique, students' descriptive writing ability was categorized as fair, with a mean score of 69.12. After the intervention, students' performance improved to the good category with a mean score of 76.75. Statistical analysis produced a two-tailed significance value of 0.002, which is lower than the threshold of $\alpha = 0.05$, indicating a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores. Thus, the null hypothesis (Ho) was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (Ha) was accepted, confirming that the TAR technique has a significant effect on students' ability to write descriptive texts.
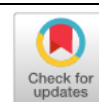
**Keywords:** *Effect, Writing Skills, Descriptive Text, TAR Technique*

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## INTRODUCTION

Indonesian functions as the primary language of instruction across all levels of education, from elementary school to higher education (Mulyati, Y. 2014). Consequently, Indonesian language instruction is designed to develop students' linguistic competence. The curriculum emphasizes students' ability to communicate effectively in both spoken and written forms through four core language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Mulyati, Y. 2014. Hakikat keterampilan berbahasa. Jakarta: PDF Ut. Ac. Id Hal, 1.

Pamuji, S. S., & Inung Setyami, S. S. 2021).

Writing is a productive language skill that requires not only linguistic mastery but also logical thinking, proper vocabulary selection, and well-structured ideas (**Error! Reference source not found.**). It is a skill that must be continuously practiced, as it does not develop instantly. Writing is more than merely arranging words; it involves communicating ideas, emotions, and messages clearly, coherently, and meaningfully so that the text can be understood by readers (Yusuf, Y., Ibrahim, R., & Iskandar, D. 2017).

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At the eleventh-grade level in vocational schools, students are required to produce various types of texts, including narrative, descriptive, expository, and argumentative writing (Rahayu, F. I. 2021)(Dr. Esti Royani, S. H. S. P. M. P. M. H. C. P. S. C. M. C. H. T. C. M. (n.d.). However, field observations revealed that students' descriptive writing ability remains below the minimum competency standard of 70. Many students struggle to generate ideas and organize them into coherent descriptive paragraphs. Learning tends to be passive and teacher-centered, as students are rarely encouraged to observe real objects directly, resulting in a lack of engagement and motivation.

Descriptive writing skills hold a crucial role in vocational education because they are not only related to linguistic competence but also to students' ability to communicate the practical knowledge and experiences they gain in the field. In vocational school contexts, students are expected to describe work processes, explain tools and materials, and present the outcomes of practical activities clearly and systematically. Such skills serve as the foundation for writing reports, procedural texts, and activity documentation that form an essential part of vocational learning Setiono, A., & Isman, M. (2024)Setiono, A., & Isman, M. (2024)Setiono, A., & Isman, M. (2024)Setiono, A., & Isman, M. (2024)Setiono, A., & Isman, M. (2024)Setiono, A., & Isman, M. (2024)Setiono, A., & Isman, M. (2024)Setiono, A., & Isman, M. (2024)Setiono, A., & Isman, M. (2024)Setiono, A., & Isman, M. (2024)Setiono, A., & Isman, M. (2024). Moreover, descriptive writing trains students to be observant, precise, and logically organized qualities that are highly valued in professional settings Restyowati, S. (2016). Therefore, mastering descriptive writing is not merely a requirement of the Indonesian language curriculum but also a vital competency that equips vocational students to express their learning experiences and practical knowledge effectively, logically, and professionally in alignment with the contextual and applied nature of vocational education **Error! Reference source not found.**.

Previous studies also confirm the low performance in descriptive writing. Research by (**Error! Reference source not found.**)(**Error! Reference source not found.**)

Restyowati, S. (2016). Peningkatan Keterampilan Menulis Paragraf Deskripsi dengan Metode Pembelajaran di Luar Kelas pada Siswa Kelas XI Administrasi Perkantoran 1 SMK Ma'Arif 5 Gombong Tahun Pelajaran 2015/2016. Jurnal Surya Bahtera, 4(40), 75–80.
Sarwono, A. E., & Handayani, A. 2021. Metode kuantitatif. Unisri Press.

Susmita, N. 2019)(Mastiara, P., Wahdini, L., & Susandi, D. G. 2023)(Husna, L. 2017) reported an average student score of only 57.3. The problem is not solely due to students' lack of ability but also to the use of traditional teaching models where teachers dominate the learning process, limiting student autonomy and creativity.

To address this issue, teachers must adopt innovative and student-centered instructional approaches that can foster motivation and improve writing achievement. One promising alternative is the TAR technique (Dive, Observe, Arrange), which has been proven effective in several prior studies (Resmi, R., Silitonga, R. K., & Lubis, F. W. 2023)(Asmah, A. 2020)(Payana, W. D. 2020. Pengaruh Penggunaan Media Film Terhadap Kemampuan Menulis Teks Deskripsi Siswa Kelas Vii Smp Al-Azhar Medan. Bahastra: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Dan Sastra Indonesia, 4(2), 124–128.
Payana, W. D. (2012). Pengaruh Model Pembelajaran Experiential Learning terhadap Kemampuan Menulis Karangan Narasi Siswa kelas XI SMK Tarbiyah Islamiyah Hamparan Perak. Asas: Jurnal Sastra, 1(2).
Purwanti, P., Sukirno, S., & Kadaryati, K. 2017).

The TAR technique is a contextual learning strategy consisting of three stages: (1) Dive—students directly engage with real objects in the field; (2) Observe—students analyze and record details of the observed object; (3) Arrange—students transform their observations into structured descriptive texts. The technique positions students as active learners, while the teacher serves as a facilitator and guide.

By applying TAR, students are encouraged to explore ideas more naturally, express real experiences creatively, and produce more vivid written descriptions based on actual observations. This process not only strengthens writing skills but also enhances learning relevance and motivation. Thus, the technique is expected to serve as an effective instructional solution for improving descriptive writing competence.

## METHOD

This study was conducted at SMK Willem Iskander to investigate the effectiveness of the TAR technique in improving students' ability to write descriptive essays. The site was chosen because the technique had never been implemented there before and the population size was adequate for experimental research. The population consisted of 128 eleventh-grade students distributed across four classes. The research sample was determined using a cluster sampling technique through a random draw system, resulting in Class XI AK2 (32 students) being selected as the experimental group. The cluster sampling method is based on the principle of probability, where the population is divided into several groups or clusters, and one or more clusters are then randomly selected to represent the sample. In this study, the sampling process was conducted through a lot-drawing procedure. The initial step involved writing the names of all classes on separate pieces of paper, which were then rolled up and placed into a box. The papers were thoroughly mixed, and the first paper drawn was designated as the experimental class, while the second paper drawn served as the comparison class. This procedure ensured that every class within the population had an equal chance of being selected, thereby maintaining the objectivity and representativeness of the sample Sumargo, B. (2020).

A quantitative research approach was used with a one-group pretest–posttest experimental design. In this design, students were given a pretest before treatment and a posttest after the implementation of the TAR technique (Sarwono, A. E., & Handayani, A. 2021). The learning process followed three stages of TAR: diving into the field to observe objects directly, observing details of the chosen object, and arranging the observations into descriptive compositions. The intervention was conducted across two meetings, each lasting 90 minutes.

The research instrument was an essay writing test in which students were asked to write a descriptive text about their school environment. The scoring rubric assessed five components: content, organization, vocabulary choice, mechanics, and the aesthetic quality of expression, with a maximum score of 100. The data were analyzed through several statistical tests, including normality testing (Liliefors), homogeneity testing, and t-test analysis (**Error! Reference source not found.**) to compare pretest and posttest scores and determine whether the TAR technique had a significant impact on writing performance.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Once the data collection phase was completed, the next step was to conduct a systematic analysis in order to interpret the results objectively and scientifically. The purpose of this stage was to process the collected data so that valid and accountable research findings could be generated.

The analysis focused on three primary aspects. First, the students' initial level of descriptive writing ability prior to the implementation of the TAR technique. Second, the level of writing proficiency attained after students had participated in learning activities using the technique. Third, a comparison of the two sets of scores to identify whether a significant change in ability occurred as a result of the instructional intervention.

Through this analytical procedure, it became possible to determine the extent to which the TAR technique contributed to the improvement of descriptive writing skills among students in Class XI AK2 at SMK Willem Iskander. The results do not merely illustrate a difference in scores, but also provide a foundation for evaluating the instructional effectiveness of the TAR approach in the context of teaching descriptive writing.

*The Effect of the TAR Technique (Dive, Observe, Arrange) on the Descriptive Writing Ability of Grade XI Students at SMK Willem Iskander*

Descriptive Statistics

| | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pretest Score | 32 | 55 | 90 | 69.37 | 8.867 |
| Posttest Score | 32 | 60 | 95 | 76.87 | 8.400 |
| Valid N (listwise) | 32 | | | | |

Based on the descriptive statistics, data were collected from 32 participants for both pretest and posttest scores. The pretest scores ranged from 55 to 90, with a mean of 69.37 and a standard deviation of 8.867, while the posttest scores ranged from 60 to 95, with a mean of 76.87 and a standard deviation of 8.400. The total number of participants included in the analysis (valid N) was 32. These results indicate an increase in the average scores from the pretest to the posttest.

In the pretest phase, student scores ranged from 55 at the lowest point to 90 at the highest, with a mean score of 69.37 and a standard deviation of 8.867. These figures suggest that the students' baseline writing ability fell within a moderate category, although the relatively large standard deviation indicates noticeable differences in individual performance levels.

Following the application of the TAR technique, the posttest results demonstrated an overall improvement. The score range shifted to a minimum of 60 and a maximum of 95, while the mean score increased to 76.87 with a slightly lower standard deviation of 8.400. This rise in the average score indicates that the instructional intervention positively influenced the students' descriptive writing performance.

A comparison of the two standard deviation values further shows a reduction in score variability after the treatment. The smaller deviation in the posttest phase implies that students' abilities became more evenly distributed, even though individual differences still remained.

Overall, the descriptive statistical analysis reveals a clear upward trend from pretest to posttest, both in terms of higher mean achievement and more balanced performance levels among students. These findings support the assumption that the implemented learning strategy had a meaningful impact on improving students' writing outcomes.

Tests of Normality

| | Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a] | | | Shapiro-Wilk | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Statistic | df | Sig. | Statistic | df | Sig. |
| Pretest Score | .159 | 32 | .038 | .950 | 32 | .142 |
| Posttest Score | .151 | 32 | .062 | .965 | 32 | .385 |

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Based on the normality test table, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test with Lilliefors correction and the Shapiro-Wilk test were conducted on the pretest and posttest scores of 32 participants. For the pretest, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic was 0.159 with a significance level of 0.038, while the Shapiro-Wilk statistic was 0.950 with a significance level of 0.142. For the posttest, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic was 0.151 with a significance level of 0.062, and the Shapiro-Wilk statistic was 0.965 with a significance level of 0.385. These results indicate that the posttest data meet the normality assumption according to both tests, whereas the pretest data are considered normal according to Shapiro-Wilk but not according to Kolmogorov-Smirnov.

In this study, the normality assessment was carried out using two statistical tests: the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test and the Shapiro–Wilk test, both applied with a significance level of α = 0.05. The decision rule for both tests is that if the significance value (Sig.) is greater than 0.05, the data are considered normally distributed; conversely, a value below 0.05 indicates a non-normal distribution.

For the pretest scores, the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test generated a significance value of 0.038, which is below the 0.05 threshold, suggesting that the data do not follow a normal distribution based on that test. However, the Shapiro–Wilk test produced a significance value

of 0.142, which is above 0.05, indicating that the pretest data can be treated as normally distributed.

This discrepancy highlights the importance of selecting the appropriate test based on sample size. Since the sample in this study consists of fewer than 50 participants, the Shapiro–Wilk test is considered more reliable; therefore, the pretest scores were concluded to be normally distributed.

For the posttest scores, both the Kolmogorov–Smirnov (Sig. = 0.062) and Shapiro–Wilk tests (Sig. = 0.385) produced significance values greater than 0.05. These results confirm that the posttest data also meet the assumption of normality.

Taken together, the normality test results for both datasets indicate that the distribution of students' learning outcomes conforms to the assumption of normality. Consequently, the data are suitable for further analysis using parametric statistical methods.

### Test of Homogeneity of Variance

| | | Levene Statistic | df1 | df2 | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Students' Learning Outcomes | Based on Mean | .008 | 1 | 62 | .927 |
| | Based on Median | .052 | 1 | 62 | .820 |
| | Based on Median and with adjusted df | .052 | 1 | 61.996 | .820 |
| | Based on trimmed mean | .012 | 1 | 62 | .912 |

Based on the homogeneity of variance test using Levene's Test for students' learning outcomes, several results were obtained. Using the mean, the Levene statistic was 0.008 with degrees of freedom (df) 1 and 62, and a significance level of 0.927. Using the median, the statistic was 0.052 with df 1 and 62, and a significance of 0.820. When adjusted for df based on the median, the statistic remained 0.052 with df 1 and 61.996, and a significance of 0.820. Using the trimmed mean, the statistic was 0.012 with df 1 and 62, and a significance level of 0.912. These results indicate that the variances across groups are homogeneous, as all significance values exceed 0.05.

In this study, homogeneity was assessed using Levene's Test of Homogeneity of Variance with a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$. The decision rule states that if the significance value (Sig.) is greater than 0.05, the data are considered homogeneous; if the value is below 0.05, the data are regarded as non-homogeneous. The results showed that the significance values obtained across all statistical bases exceeded 0.05. Specifically, the Sig. value based on the mean was 0.927, the median 0.820, the median with adjusted degrees of freedom 0.820, and the trimmed mean 0.912.

Since all significance values were well above the 0.05 threshold, it can be concluded that there was no meaningful difference in variance across the score distributions. This indicates that the dataset satisfies the assumption of homogeneity. These findings demonstrate that the students' score variances were relatively consistent, whether examined through the mean, median, or trimmed mean. The stability of variance confirms that the data are suitable for subsequent inferential analysis.

With both normality and homogeneity assumptions met, the dataset was deemed appropriate for further analysis using parametric methods. This condition enabled the researcher to proceed confidently with hypothesis testing, particularly through the paired sample t-test, in accordance with the research design.

Overall, the homogeneity test results strengthen the credibility of the research data, as no variance imbalance was detected between the two score sets. Consequently, the statistical analysis could be conducted with a higher degree of confidence, since one of the key assumptions for inferential testing had been satisfied.

### Paired Samples Test

| Paired Differences | | t | df | Significance |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | |

*The Effect of the TAR Technique (Dive, Observe, Arrange) on the Descriptive Writing Ability of Grade XI Students at SMK Willem Iskander*

| | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | 95% Confidence | | | | One-Sided p | Two-Sided p |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | Lower | Upper | | | | |
| Pair 1 **Pretest – Posttest** | -7.500 | 12.826 | 2.267 | -12.124 | -2.876 | -3.308 | 31 | .001 | .002 |

Based on the Paired Samples Test table, the paired differences between the pretest and posttest scores of 32 participants were analyzed. The mean difference between the pretest and posttest was -7.500, with a standard deviation of 12.826 and a standard error of 2.267. The 95% confidence interval for this difference ranged from -12.124 to -2.876. The t-value was -3.308 with 31 degrees of freedom. The one-tailed significance (One-Sided p) was 0.001, while the two-tailed significance (Two-Sided p) was 0.002. These results indicate a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores, with the posttest scores tending to be higher than the pretest scores.

The statistical results revealed several important figures: the mean difference between pretest and posttest scores was -7.500, with a standard deviation of 12.826 and a standard error of the mean at 2.267. These values formed the basis for assessing the magnitude of score changes following the intervention.

Additionally, the 95% confidence interval for the mean difference ranged from -12.124 to -2.876, indicating that the negative difference observed was not due to random variation, but rather reflected a consistent and systematic change between the two sets of measurements.

The computed t-value was -3.308 with 31 degrees of freedom (df = 31). This value was compared against the critical t-value in the distribution table to assess statistical significance. The most decisive result was the two-tailed significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) of 0.002. Since this value is far below the alpha level of 0.05, it confirms the existence of a statistically significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores.

Primary statistical findings

| | | Mean | N | Std. Deviation | t-value | Significance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pair 1 | Pretest | 69.38 | 32 | 8.867 | -3.308 | .002 |
| | Posttest | 76.88 | 32 | 8.400 | | |

Based on the statistical results derived from the descriptive, normality, homogeneity, and paired-sample t-test analyses, the findings can be summarized in a table of primary statistical data that includes the mean, standard deviation, t-value, and significance level. Collectively, these findings illustrate the differences in students' descriptive writing performance before and after the implementation of the TAR (Dive, Observe, Arrange) technique.

The mean score for the pretest was 69.38, while the posttest mean increased to 76.88. Both measurements were conducted with the same number of participants 32 students ensuring the validity and comparability of the results. The standard deviation was 8.867 for the pretest and slightly decreased to 8.400 for the posttest, indicating a reduction in score variability after the instructional intervention. The paired-sample t-test yielded a t-value of -3.308 with a significance level of 0.002.

The descriptive analysis results indicate that students' descriptive writing ability improved notably following the application of the TAR technique. The consistent sample size of 32 students across both testing stages reinforces the reliability of the comparison. The pretest mean score of 69.37, with a standard deviation of 8.867, suggests that students initially possessed moderate writing ability with relatively wide performance variation. After the TAR based instruction, the posttest mean rose to 76.87 with a standard deviation of 8.400, reflecting not only an improvement in writing performance but also a narrower range of ability

differences among students. The increase of approximately 7.5 points from pretest to posttest demonstrates a meaningful and measurable enhancement in students' descriptive writing proficiency after undergoing the TAR learning process.

The paired-sample t-test results further confirm this finding, with a calculated t-value of -3.308 and a significance level (p) of 0.002, which is well below the threshold of $\alpha = 0.05$. According to statistical decision criteria, a significance value lower than 0.05 warrants the rejection of the null hypothesis ($H_o$) and acceptance of the alternative hypothesis ($H_a$). This indicates that the difference in test scores was not due to random variation but rather a direct effect of the instructional treatment.

Therefore, the paired-sample t-test results clearly demonstrate that there is a statistically significant difference in students' descriptive writing performance before and after the application of the TAR technique. This improvement suggests that the TAR model emphasizing experiential learning through the stages of Dive, Observe, and Arrange is effective in enhancing students' ability to produce more structured and meaningful descriptive texts. By engaging students in firsthand observation, critical reflection, and organized expression, this technique fosters both linguistic competence and conceptual understanding, making it a valuable approach for developing descriptive writing skills in vocational education settings.

## CONCLUSIONS

After completing the research procedures, the collected data formed the basis for interpretation and discussion, revealing that students' descriptive writing skills before the application of the TAR technique were categorized as "fair" with an average score of 69.12, indicating limited engagement and passive participation under traditional, teacher-centered instruction that restricted their ability to observe, explore, and construct coherent texts. Excessive reliance on teacher explanation left students disengaged and less motivated, resulting in underdeveloped skills in content organization, diction selection, and creating vivid descriptions. In contrast, post-intervention results showed significant improvement, with the average score rising to 76.75 in the "good" category, demonstrating the positive impact of the TAR technique, which fostered student-centered learning by engaging students in direct observation, recording findings, and organizing them into descriptive texts, thereby stimulating creativity, expression, and confidence while shifting the teacher's role to facilitator. Normality and homogeneity tests confirmed that the data met statistical assumptions, validating the use of parametric tests, while hypothesis testing yielded a significance value of 0.002 (p < 0.05), confirming a meaningful difference between pretest and posttest scores and supporting the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis. Overall, the TAR technique not only enhanced students' descriptive writing skills but also transformed the learning experience into a more engaging, creative, and meaningful process, offering practical implications for teachers seeking participatory, contextual learning strategies and providing a foundation for future researchers to adapt the TAR technique to other language skills or educational levels, thereby contributing to the development of experiential-based language learning practices.

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