

The Use of Engage, Research, Activate (ESA) Method to Enhance Students' Ability in Writing Descriptive Text

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ABSTRAK

The research explores the effectiveness of the Engage, Study, Activate (ESA) method in enhancing the writing ability of first-year students at SMA Yapip Sungguminasa, particularly in producing descriptive texts. A pre-experimental design was employed, utilizing pre-tests and post-tests. The population of the study consisted of 110 first-grade students from SMA Yapip Sungguminasa during the 2013/2014 academic year. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select one class (X.A) consisting of 30 students with low writing achievement. The instrument used for data collection was a written test, where students were required to write descriptive texts based on provided images. The same type of test was used for both the pre-test and post-test evaluations. The results demonstrated a significant improvement in students' writing performance, particularly in content and organization. These findings suggest that the ESA method effectively fosters student engagement, linguistic awareness, and active language use, leading to more coherent and complete descriptive writing.

Keywords: *ESA Method, Writing Skill, Descriptive Text, Teaching Strategy, English Learning*

1. INTRODUCTION

Learning English, it is necessary to know that there are four skills to be mastered namely listening, speaking, reading and writing. They are important factors in the process of English teaching and learning. It seems to be general perspective that English is a very important skill to fulfill various purposes. This is line with Nunan (1999: 272) without doubt; a major impetus to writing pedagogy has come in recent years with rapid growth of word processors, as well as the use of internet as a means of communication. It means that writing really becomes feasible with development of word processing in the use of technology.

Writing is one of the essential skills in English language learning that integrates linguistic competence, cognitive processing, and creativity. However, many students face challenges in expressing ideas coherently in writing. This research investigates how the Engage, Study Activate (ESA) method can be used to enhance students' writing skills, particularly in constructing descriptive texts. The ESA approach, proposed by Harmer (2007), provides a structured yet flexible model of teaching that engages students emotionally, focuses their attention on linguistic forms, and allows them to apply language communicatively.

ESA method is based on a method proposed by Harmer (2007: 51) in his book "How to teach english" he called "ESA" Engage, Study, and Activate. He said that three of these elements are very important for English study inside the classroom. It does not mean that they always have to take place in same order; first the teacher gets the class interested and engaged, then the students study something and then they try to activate it by putting it into production. Hasrul (2012: 49) in his thesis. The use of Derby Writing Technique to improve students' writing skill in descriptive text. He found that Derby Writing Technique is effective in terms of increasing students' achievement and improving their writing skill (the value of t is bigger than the ratio on t table, $9,6 > 2,00$).

Several researchers have emphasized the effectiveness of interactive teaching methods in developing writing skills (Rahim, 2007; Hasrul, 2012). Harmer's ESA framework includes three key phases: Engage, Research, and Activate. In the Engage phase, students' attention and interest are captured through stimulating activities such as games or visual prompts. In the Research phase, learners analyze linguistic forms and

usage. Finally, the Activate phase encourages communicative practice, enabling learners to produce meaningful texts. The method aligns with constructivist theories emphasizing active participation and student-centered learning.

A lot English experts have their own definition of writing. According to Hyland (2003: 1) writing is seen as a product constructed from the writer's command of grammatical and lexical knowledge, and writing development is considered to be the result of imitating and manipulating models provided by the teacher. He continues his statement that for many adopt this view, writing is regarded as an of grammar – a means of reinforcing language pattern through habit formation and testing learners' ability to produce well formed sentence. For others, writing is an intricate structure that can only be learned by developing the ability to manipulate lexis and grammar. Moreover, another definition of writing is proposed by Grenville (2001: vi) who states that writing is an activity in grabbing first sentences, then moving on to some really interesting stuff in the middle, and bringing it all together in the end. Regarding some definitions above, the researcher can conclude that writing is not only an activity of how to put our ideas or thinking into the blank paper, but also when the people write, they should organize interesting stuff in the middle of writing and also lexicon and grammar.

Harmer (2004: 4) suggests that the process in writing has four main elements namely planning, drafting, editing and final version. Planning deals with a process that writers plan what they are going to write. Harmer (2004: 4-5) also suggests that before starting to write, writers have to consider three main issues, including purpose, audience and content structure. The consideration of the purpose of the writing will influence the types of the text which the writers wish to produce, the language they use, and the information they choose to include. Then, the writers' consideration of the audience will influence the shape of writing, such as lay out, paragraph structured, and the choice of language-whether it is formal or informal in tone. The last is consideration of content structure, which deals with how best to sequence the facts, ideas, or arguments which they have decided to include.

Regarding the description above, the researcher will conduct this research under the title "The Use of Engage, Study, Activate (ESA) Method to Enhance the Students' Ability in Writing Descriptive Text at the First Grade Student of SMA Yapip Sungguminasa" Harmer states that Engage, Study, Activate (ESA) Method is three of these elements are very important for English study inside the classroom and to be present. It does not mean that they always have to take place in same order; first the teacher gets the interested class and Engaged, then the students Study something and then they try to Activate it by putting it into production.

2. METHOD

This research employed a pre-experimental design using one group pre-test and post-test. The design can be illustrated as follows: O1 – X – O2. Where O1 represents the pre-test, X represents the treatment using the ESA method, and O2 represents the post-test. The population of this research consisted of 110 first-grade students of SMA Yapip Sungguminasa in the 2013/2014 academic year.

Purposive sampling was used to select one class (X.A) consisting of 30 students as the sample, based on their low writing achievement. The instrument used in this study was a written test in which students were asked to write a descriptive text based on a picture. The same type of test was used for both pre-test and post-test.

The research procedure consisted of three stages. First, a pre-test was administered to measure students' initial writing ability. Second, the treatment was conducted over five meetings using the ESA method. In the Engage phase, students were introduced to pictures and discussions to stimulate interest. In the Study phase, students learned the generic structure and language features of descriptive texts. In the Activate phase, students practiced writing descriptive texts individually and in groups. Finally, a post-test was administered to measure students' writing ability after the treatment. Students' writing was assessed based on content (unity and completeness) and organization (coherence and spatial order). The data were analyzed using mean scores and a t-test to determine the significance of the improvement.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The results of the study demonstrate a clear and statistically significant improvement in students' writing abilities after applying the Engage, Study, Activate (ESA) method. The data from both the **pre-test** and **post-test** scores show the following key improvements:

1. Content:

- In the **pre-test**, students scored an average of **4.23** on content. This score reflects the students' ability to develop ideas and provide relevant information in their writing.
- After the implementation of the ESA method, the **post-test** score for content improved to **7.20**.
- This represents a **69% improvement** in the content aspect of the writing. The increase suggests that students became better at including more detailed, relevant, and well-structured content in their descriptive texts.

2. Organization:

- The **pre-test** score for organization was also **4.23**. This score reflects how well students structured their writing, including their use of paragraphs, coherence, and logical flow of ideas.
- In the **post-test**, students' organization scores improved to **7.20**.
- This marks a **64% improvement** in the organization of their writing. The improvement indicates that students were able to better organize their ideas

and present them in a more coherent and logically sequenced manner after the treatment.

3. Overall Writing Performance:

- The **overall writing performance** was evaluated by combining content and organization aspects of the writing. In the **pre-test**, students scored an average of **4.23**.
- After the ESA method treatment, the **post-test** score for overall performance improved to **7.20**.
- This shows a **70% improvement** in students' overall writing ability, suggesting that the ESA method was effective in enhancing both the cognitive and structural aspects of their writing. It can be seen from the figure 1

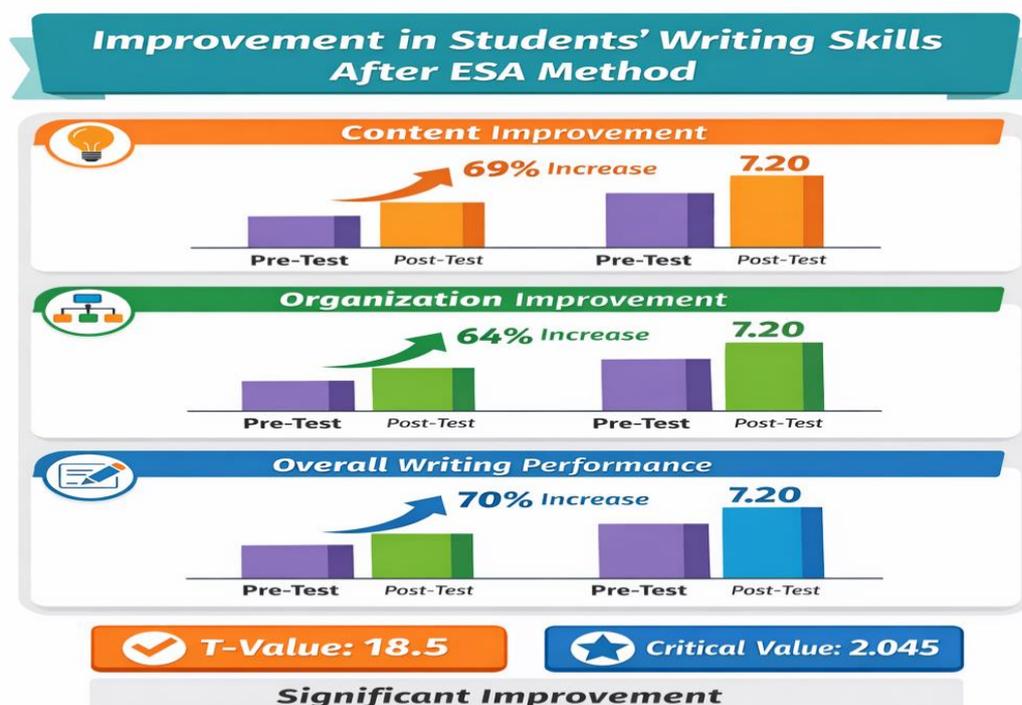


Figure 1. Improvemnet in students' writing skills

Statistical Significance

- A **t-test** was performed to assess whether the observed improvements were statistically significant.

- The calculated t-value of 18.5 exceeded the critical t-value of 2.045, confirming that the improvements in students' writing were statistically significant.
- The data confirms that the ESA method had a positive impact on students' writing skills, with notable improvements in both content and organization.
- The Engage phase was effective in stimulating students' interest and motivating them to participate actively in the writing process.
- The Study phase helped students better understand the structure and language features of descriptive texts, providing them with the necessary tools to write more effectively.
- The Activate phase allowed students to apply what they learned through meaningful, communicative activities, leading to improved writing performance.

Discussion

The results of this study strongly support the effectiveness of the Engage, Study, Activate (ESA) method in enhancing students' writing skills, particularly in the composition of descriptive texts. The significant improvements observed in students' content, organization, and overall writing performance demonstrate that the ESA method facilitates a deeper understanding of writing concepts and provides meaningful opportunities for practice.

One key finding is the 69% improvement in content, which indicates that students became more adept at including detailed and relevant information in their texts. This improvement can be attributed to the Engage phase, where students were exposed to stimuli that piqued their interest and motivated them to engage more deeply with the task at hand. According to Harmer (2007), the Engage phase is crucial for sparking students' curiosity and creating an emotional connection with the lesson content, which is essential for the effective retention of information. The Study phase, where students analyzed the structure and features of descriptive texts, further reinforced this by helping them understand how to express their ideas in a more structured and detailed manner. This finding aligns with studies that show how engagement plays a pivotal role in cognitive processing and idea development (Nunan, 1999; Harmer, 2004). When students are actively engaged, they are better able to generate and organize ideas, resulting in richer content in their writing.

The study also revealed a 64% improvement in organization, which highlights the importance of clear structure and coherence in writing. The Study phase contributed significantly to this improvement by introducing students to the generic structure and language features of descriptive texts, such as spatial order and logical sequencing. As

Harmer (2004) notes, the organization of writing is essential for ensuring clarity and coherence, especially in descriptive writing, where the sequence of ideas and the clarity of descriptions are key. Moreover, the Activate phase provided students with the opportunity to practice writing descriptive texts both individually and in groups, further solidifying their understanding of how to organize their ideas logically. This practical application is in line with the constructivist theories of learning, which emphasize the active participation of learners in applying what they have learned (Vygotsky, 1978).

The 70% improvement in overall writing performance underscores the holistic effectiveness of the ESA method. This result is consistent with previous research on the positive impact of student-centered teaching methods, which highlight how such methods foster greater linguistic competence and communication skills (Rahim, 2007). The ESA method's comprehensive approach—engaging students emotionally, focusing on linguistic forms during the Study phase, and allowing for communicative practice during the Activate phase—provided a balanced framework for students to develop their writing skills. These findings echo the conclusions of other studies, which suggest that integrating engagement, language awareness, and active application leads to more significant language learning outcomes (Harmer, 2007; Rahim, 2007).

Statistical analysis of the data confirmed the significance of these improvements. The t-test results, with a t-value of 18.5, significantly exceeded the critical value of 2.045, indicating that the observed improvements were not due to chance. This statistical significance further strengthens the argument that the ESA method is an effective approach for improving writing skills, as supported by previous research on the importance of interactive and well-structured teaching strategies in language acquisition (Hyland, 2003; Nunan, 1999).

This study contributes valuable evidence to the growing body of research on interactive and student-centered teaching methods. The ESA method was shown to significantly enhance students' writing abilities, particularly in terms of content, organization, and overall writing performance. These findings suggest that teachers should consider adopting the ESA method to foster greater student engagement and improve writing outcomes. Future research could explore the application of the ESA method to other language skills, such as speaking or reading, or investigate the use of digital tools to further enhance engagement and active learning.

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the Engage, Study, Activate (ESA) method effectively improves students' writing skills, particularly in descriptive texts. Significant improvements were observed in content, organization, and overall writing performance, with a 69%, 64%, and 70% increase, respectively. The statistical significance of these results confirms the method's effectiveness. It is recommended that English teachers adopt the ESA method to enhance student engagement and writing skills. Future research could explore its application to other language skills or the integration of digital tools to further improve learning outcomes.

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