

## Developing Middle School Students' Poetry Skills Using Visual Media and Structured Strategy

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### Abstract

This study addresses the issue of low writing ability among eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 3 Sepatan, Tangerang Regency. This problem arises due to ineffective poetry writing instruction, leading to difficulties when students are asked to compose poetry. Therefore, engaging and appropriate learning strategies and media are necessary. To overcome this issue, a learning strategy utilizing event picture media from newspapers was implemented in poetry writing instruction for eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 3 Sepatan. The research was conducted in two cycles, each consisting of planning, action, observation, and reflection. The findings indicate improvements in the learning process, increased student performance, and positive behavioral changes.

**Keywords:** *Learning, Poetry Writing, Strategy, and Event Picture Media.*

### A. Introduction

Poetry writing is included in the syllabus for Indonesian language subjects at the junior high school (SMP) level, specifically for eighth-grade students in the second semester. It falls under Competency Standard (SK) 16, which states: *Expressing thoughts and feelings in free verse poetry*. Based on this competency standard, students must master specific basic competencies, and teachers must deliver the core material effectively. However, in practice, teaching poetry writing remains a challenge for educators due to their limited knowledge and instructional skills. In addition to teacher-related factors, students' abilities and interests also pose significant obstacles to effective learning.

Lack of student interest is another barrier to poetry writing instruction. This issue is closely related to the choice of teaching strategies and instructional media, which should be engaging and easy for students to emulate. Although students study complex poetry—its rhyme, rhythm, and linguistic elements—during literary studies, free verse poetry writing can be simplified using the *Pikir Plus* strategy and event picture media from

newspapers. This approach does not require students to write intricate poetry, making the learning process more accessible.

In light of these challenges, this study aims to enhance students' ability to write poetry by implementing the *Pikir Plus* strategy and utilizing event picture media from newspapers. An effective poetry-writing learning process requires teaching strategies that foster student engagement, creativity, and innovation. The *Pikir Plus* strategy is designed to instill confidence in students, enabling them to maximize their potential. According to Prasetyo (2007:2), *Pikir Plus* consists of a series of activities that provide students with extensive opportunities to engage in the writing process, from discovering a writing object to publishing their completed poems. The acronym *Pikir Plus* represents six steps in the poetry-writing process:

1. Selecting an object of interest,
2. Imagining the object,
3. Expressing the imagination through words,
4. Summarizing and developing words into poetic lines,
5. Combining and refining lines into stanzas,
6. Publishing the poem (Prasetyo, 2007:2).

The use of event picture media from newspapers complements the *Pikir Plus* strategy, particularly in the initial step when students choose an object of interest. These objects do not necessarily have to be real physical items but can be derived from images of various events featured in newspapers. This approach helps students generate ideas based on visual stimuli.

Based on these considerations, the objectives of this study are:

1. To describe the improvement in the quality of poetry writing instruction for eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 3 Sepatan, Tangerang Regency, after implementing the *Pikir Plus* strategy with event picture media from newspapers.
2. To analyze the improvement in students' poetry writing skills after applying this instructional strategy.
3. To examine changes in student behavior when participating in poetry writing lessons using the *Pikir Plus* strategy and event picture media.

The theoretical framework of this study includes poetry writing, students' writing skills, the *Pikir Plus* strategy, and the use of event picture media from newspapers. According to Djibran (2008:75), writing poetry is not significantly different from writing other forms of literature; the key aspect is reflecting on ideas and emotions. Creating poetry requires a creative process, which involves transforming personal experiences into artistic expression. This creative process is unique to each writer and reflects their individual responses to their environment.

Wiyanto (2005:48) argues that poetry writing is often perceived as a talent-based skill, leading some individuals to believe that they cannot write poetry if they lack innate talent. However, talent alone is insufficient without practice. Conversely, even without natural talent, a person can develop poetry-writing skills through consistent learning and practice. Poetry writing is a skill that, like any other, requires frequent training and reinforcement. Regular practice enables individuals to refine their cognitive abilities, language structure, and vocabulary mastery. Through intensive training, writers can effectively organize their thoughts and emotions into well-structured, aesthetically pleasing language.

The term *strategy* originates from the Greek word *strategia*, meaning the art of war or military tactics. In the educational context, Gagné (as cited in Iskandar & Dadang, 2010) defines strategy as an internal ability to think, solve problems, and make decisions. Similarly, Djahmarah and Aswan (2010:5) describe strategy as a set of guiding principles designed to achieve specific learning objectives. In the teaching-learning process, a strategy serves as a general pattern for teacher-student interaction to achieve predetermined goals.

Prasetyo (2007:3) emphasizes that the *Pikir Plus* strategy is a structured approach to poetry writing that provides students with greater opportunities to engage in the writing process, from idea generation to poem publication. *Photo story* or *event picture media* refers to a collection of images based on specific topics or events that, when arranged sequentially, create a narrative. Each image is intended to convey meaning (Daryanto, 2011:108).

Sadiman (2008:29) states that visual media is one of the most widely used instructional tools because images serve as a universal language that can be easily understood and appreciated. A Chinese proverb suggests that *a picture speaks a thousand words*. Photographic media, like other visual aids, can be sourced from newspapers, magazines, brochures, and books (Sudjana, 2009:70). Thus, event picture media can be effectively utilized as a teaching tool, provided that images are carefully selected to align with instructional objectives.

By incorporating event picture media into poetry writing instruction, educators can facilitate a more engaging and productive learning experience. This study demonstrates that the *Pikir Plus* strategy, combined with visual media, can significantly improve students' poetry-writing skills by fostering creativity, motivation, and confidence in their ability to express thoughts and emotions through poetry.

## **B. Method**

This study employs a classroom action research (CAR) design, commonly referred to as PTK (Penelitian Tindakan Kelas), which is conducted in four stages: planning,

action, observation, and reflection. These four stages are systematically implemented throughout the research process and applied across two cycles: the first cycle of action and the second cycle of action. Each of these cycles consists of planning, action, observation, and reflection. The subjects of this study are eighth-grade students of SMP Negeri 3 Sepatan, Tangerang Regency, focusing on poetry writing skills through the *Pikir Plus* strategy, utilizing event-based images from newspapers as instructional media. This study involves two types of variables: (1) poetry writing skills and (2) the use of the *Pikir Plus* strategy combined with event-based images from newspapers. The poetry writing skills variable serves as the outcome variable in this study. It encompasses various aspects of poetry writing assessment, including theme relevance, diction, rhyme, typography, and message delivery. The process variable in this study is the *Pikir Plus* strategy, which the researcher employs to encourage students to actively engage in expressing their creative ideas in poetry writing based on their imagination. Event-based images function as a medium to inspire students and provide them with creative ideas to transform into poetry.

### **C. Findings and Discussion**

The findings of this study were obtained from the actions implemented in Cycle I and Cycle II. The research results consist of both poetry test scores and non-test data. The poetry test results from both cycles reflect the poetry writing skills of eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 3 Sepatan after engaging in poetry writing instruction using the *Pikir Plus* strategy with event-based images from newspapers as a learning medium. The non-test data includes observations, field notes, daily journals, interviews, and photographic documentation.

The process of poetry writing instruction through the *Pikir Plus* strategy, utilizing event-based images from newspapers in Cycle I, was summarized into three core activities:

1. The process of perception-building and internalization to foster students' interest in poetry writing.
2. The process of selecting event-based images from newspapers as inspiration and themes for poetry writing in groups.
3. The intensive process of writing poetry, ensuring content alignment with the selected images in terms of theme, diction, rhyme, typography, and message.

Based on the test results from Cycle I, there was an improvement in students' poetry writing skills. This improvement was influenced by the use of self-suggestion methods and audiovisual media.

The assessment criteria in this study included the following aspects:

1. Content alignment with the selected image

2. Diction
3. Rhyme
4. Typography
5. Message

The poetry writing performance in Cycle I was measured as follows:

1. Content alignment with images: 77.78%
2. Message: 76.67%
3. Diction: 68.89%
4. Rhyme: 61.37%
5. Typography: 61.37% (lowest score)

The overall average score in Cycle I was 69.50, which did not meet the minimum target score of 75 for class-wide proficiency. Consequently, an additional instructional cycle (Cycle II) was necessary.

Observations in Cycle I indicated that some students demonstrated positive behaviors:

1. 26 students (72.22%) were enthusiastic and engaged in poetry writing activities.
2. 25 students (69.44%) paid close attention to the teacher's explanations.
3. 26 students (72.22%) responded positively to the use of event-based images from newspapers.
4. 10 students (72.77%) actively participated in the learning process by asking or answering questions.
5. 26 students (72.22%) worked diligently on their poetry writing assignments.

However, not all students exhibited positive attitudes:

1. 10 students (27.78%) showed low enthusiasm and engagement in poetry writing activities.
2. 11 students (30.56%) did not pay attention to the teacher's explanation and engaged in unnecessary activities such as talking, wandering around, lying down, or making unrelated notes.
3. 10 students (27.78%) responded negatively (i.e., lacked interest) toward the event-based images from newspapers.
4. 26 students (72.22%) were passive during the learning process and engaged in unrelated activities.
5. 10 students (27.78%) worked on their poetry assignments while simultaneously engaging in other unrelated tasks.

Cycle II was conducted as a follow-up to Cycle I since the first cycle did not achieve the predetermined minimum mastery level of 75 (categorized as "good"). Additionally,

negative behaviors among students persisted. Therefore, Cycle II was designed to address the shortcomings identified in Cycle I.

Data collected from Cycle II indicated improvements across all aspects of poetry writing compared to Cycle I:

1. Content alignment with images increased by 3.89%, from 74.44% in Cycle I to 78.33% in Cycle II. This suggests that students were better able to align the content of their poetry with the selected theme.
2. Diction improved by 6.66%, from 71.67% in Cycle I to 78.33% in Cycle II. This demonstrates that effective instructional strategies facilitated students' ability to articulate their ideas using appropriate word choices. Although students initially struggled with word selection, their overall performance in diction was satisfactory.
3. Rhyme showed an increase of 7.78%, from an average score of 63.33 in Cycle I to 71.11 in Cycle II.
4. Typography exhibited the highest improvement, increasing by 15.00%, from an average score of 63.33 in Cycle I to 78.33 in Cycle II. The improvements in rhyme and typography shifted their classification from "moderate" in Cycle I to "good" in Cycle II, indicating that students successfully applied these elements in their poetry writing.
5. The message aspect improved by 8.33%, from an average score of 78.89 in Cycle I to 87.22 in Cycle II. Students did not encounter significant difficulties in conveying clear and meaningful messages through their poetry.

Based on these results, students demonstrated significant progress in poetry writing across all assessed aspects, with Cycle II addressing the deficiencies observed in Cycle I.

#### **D. Conclusion**

The research findings revealed that the implementation of the *Pikir Plus* strategy, combined with the use of images from newspapers, played a significant role in improving the poetry writing skills of eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri Sepatan, Tangerang Regency. Over the course of the study, students demonstrated notable progress in their writing abilities, as reflected in their increasing test scores. During the initial stage, or pre-cycle, the students' average poetry writing score was 56.22. However, after the first cycle of implementing the *Pikir Plus* strategy, their average increased to 69.17, marking a 12.96% improvement. Encouraged by these results, the intervention was continued into a second cycle, which further elevated the students' performance. By the end of Cycle II, the average score had reached 77.83—an increase of 10.88% from Cycle I and a total improvement of 23.84% from the pre-cycle stage. With these scores surpassing the

minimum competency criterion (*KKM*) of 75, the study concluded that additional intervention beyond Cycle II was unnecessary.

Beyond the measurable improvement in scores, the students also exhibited positive behavioral changes. They became more engaged and enthusiastic about poetry writing, responding with greater interest and motivation. The use of newspaper images as a medium appeared to inspire creativity and provided students with concrete themes to explore in their writing. Given these findings, several recommendations emerged from the study. First, Indonesian language teachers are encouraged to integrate effective teaching strategies and media selections to enhance student engagement in poetry writing. The *Pikir Plus* strategy, coupled with visual stimuli such as newspaper images, can serve as a valuable tool not only for poetry lessons but also for broader learning applications. Additionally, students are encouraged to continue practicing and refining their poetry writing skills by utilizing the approaches introduced in the study. By making use of newspaper images available at home, they can generate new ideas and develop more compelling poetry. Through continued practice and creative exploration, students can further enhance their ability to express themselves through written language.

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