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**Research Article** 

# Peer Tutoring as an Innovative Strategy for Teaching Descriptive Text Structures in Indonesian Language Classrooms

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#### **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to investigate the implementation of the peer tutoring method in teaching descriptive text structure to seventh-grade students at MTs Darussalam, Bengkulu City, and explore the supporting and inhibiting factors in its application. The research adopts a qualitative approach, encompassing stages of planning, data collection, implementation, and evaluation. The subjects of the study were teachers and grade VII students at MTs Darussalam, Bengkulu City. Data were collected through interviews, documentation, and observations, and were validated using source triangulation and technique triangulation. The data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's framework. The findings reveal that the peer tutoring method was effectively implemented, as evidenced by student learning outcomes that surpassed the average in their ability to identify and organize the structure of descriptive texts. The evaluation specifically assessed students' accuracy in determining the text structure. The study identified inhibiting factors, such as difficulties in selecting appropriate tutors and challenges arising from a less conducive learning environment. In contrast, supporting factors included strong teacher-student interaction and high levels of student enthusiasm. These findings underscore the potential of the peer tutoring method to improve learning outcomes in descriptive text structure, while also highlighting areas for further enhancement, particularly in tutor selection and classroom management.

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#### **KEYWORDS**

Peer tutoring method; language learning; descriptive text structure

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## Introduction

In recent years, the importance of effective teaching strategies in secondary education has become increasingly recognized globally. This is particularly crucial in subjects that require not only knowledge acquisition but also the development of critical thinking and analytical skills. One such subject is Indonesian language education, where students are required to master various text types, including descriptive texts, which demand a high level of cognitive engagement. Descriptive texts, by their nature, involve detailed and structured depictions of objects, places, or experiences, and require students to develop skills in observation, articulation, and organization. Given the centrality of descriptive writing in the curriculum, its effective teaching is paramount to improving students' overall academic performance (Balachandar & Venkatesh, 2025; Bangert-Drowns et al., 2004).

However, despite the critical role of descriptive texts in the Indonesian language curriculum, several challenges persist in the classroom. A significant number of students continue to struggle with identifying and applying the appropriate structure of a descriptive text, which often hinders their ability to produce coherent and compelling descriptions. This issue is particularly evident in middle schools, such as MTs Darussalam in Bengkulu City, where observational data reveal that many students exhibit passivity and lack the necessary skills to engage with the subject matter actively. The teacher-centered approach, which is prevalent in many classrooms, exacerbates this issue by leaving students in a passive learning role, with limited opportunities for interaction and engagement (Awacorach et al., 2021; Keiler, 2018). These challenges are reflective of a broader trend in Indonesian education, where traditional teaching methods often fail to foster critical thinking and student autonomy.

Globally, educational systems are increasingly moving toward more interactive and student-centered teaching models. As such, active learning strategies that encourage peer interaction and collaborative learning have gained prominence. The peer tutoring method, in particular, has been highlighted as an effective pedagogical tool to promote student engagement, improve learning outcomes, and foster critical thinking. Peer tutoring, defined as a learning strategy where students with higher proficiency assist those with lower proficiency in a given subject, has shown positive results in various educational contexts, especially in improving academic achievement and social skills (Thurston et al., 2021; Topping, 1996).

This study is underpinned by Alkhudiry (2022) and Yaghoubi & Farrokh (2022), which emphasizes the importance of social interaction in cognitive development. Vygotsky posited that learning occurs most effectively when students engage in collaborative activities within their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where they can perform tasks with the help of more knowledgeable peers. Peer tutoring directly aligns with this theory, as it allows students to scaffold each other's learning, thus facilitating cognitive development and enhancing learning outcomes. Additionally, the constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes the role of learners in actively constructing their knowledge through interaction with others, further supports the use of peer tutoring (Mishra, 2023; Zajda, 2021). In this context, peer tutoring is viewed not only as a method for enhancing understanding but also as a means to promote deeper engagement and active learning in the classroom.

Another relevant framework is Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which underscores the role of observational learning in the development of skills and behaviors (Rumjaun & Narod, 2023). According to Bandura, students learn not just from direct instruction but also by observing and interacting with their peers. Peer tutoring provides a platform for students to both teach and learn, reinforcing knowledge and skills through role modeling and social interaction. The Theory of Peer Tutoring also suggests that peer tutoring can enhance students' academic performance, as the tutor reinforces their own learning by teaching, while the tutee benefits from personalized instruction.

Recent studies have explored the benefits of peer tutoring in various educational contexts, demonstrating its effectiveness in improving student achievement and engagement. Topping (1996) conducted a meta-analysis on peer tutoring, concluding that it positively impacts academic performance, particularly in subjects such as mathematics and language arts. Their findings suggest that the reciprocal nature of peer tutoring, where both the tutor and tutee benefit from the process, is particularly effective in fostering deeper understanding and improving learning outcomes.

Moreover, Toulia et al., (2023) found that peer tutoring fosters collaborative learning, which improves not only academic skills but also social skills, such as communication and teamwork. These studies support the idea that peer tutoring can be an effective tool in language learning, particularly in subjects requiring critical thinking and analysis, such as descriptive writing.

In the Indonesian context, studies by Cheng et al., (2023), Nur Hanifansyah et al., (2024) and Zhang and Hyland (2023) have shown that peer tutoring can significantly improve student engagement and understanding of difficult concepts, including language structure and writing skills. Specifically, peer tutoring in writing has been identified as a promising approach to helping students overcome difficulties in organizing their ideas and producing coherent texts. However, Widiyaningrum et al., (2020) argues that while peer tutoring has been widely adopted in higher education and urban schools, its implementation in middle schools, especially in rural areas such as Bengkulu, has been limited. This suggests a gap in the application of peer tutoring as a method for teaching specific language skills, such as the structure of descriptive texts, at the middle school level in Indonesia.

Internationally, there has been growing interest in the use of peer tutoring as a tool to support inclusive education. Research by (Nurkhin et al., 2022; Toulia et al., 2023) highlights the potential of peer tutoring in fostering an inclusive learning environment, where all students, regardless of their ability levels, can engage in meaningful learning activities. This is particularly relevant in the context of language education, where students' diverse proficiency levels can create barriers to effective learning. Peer tutoring offers a differentiated learning environment that addresses these disparities by allowing students to work at their own pace with the guidance of a peer.

While existing studies demonstrate the benefits of peer tutoring in improving student achievement and engagement, there remains a notable gap in the literature regarding its application to descriptive text structure in Indonesian language education. Most studies have focused on subjects like mathematics, reading comprehension, and language proficiency in English, with limited attention given to writing skills in the Indonesian context, especially at the middle school level. Furthermore, while peer tutoring has been shown to improve general academic performance, there is insufficient research on how it specifically impacts the teaching and learning of descriptive texts, which require students to engage in critical observation and detailed description.

Additionally, much of the research on peer tutoring has been conducted in urban settings or higher education, with few studies exploring its effectiveness in rural schools like those in Bengkulu, where resources and teaching strategies may differ. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by examining the implementation of peer tutoring in teaching descriptive text structure to grade VII students in MTs Darussalam, a school located in Bengkulu City, Indonesia.

This study contributes to the field of educational research by exploring the specific application of peer tutoring to the teaching of descriptive texts in the context of Indonesian language education. It offers a novel approach by integrating established theories of peer tutoring with the unique demands of teaching text structure, focusing specifically on how peer interaction can enhance students' ability to produce coherent and detailed descriptions. Furthermore, the study adds to the body of literature on peer tutoring in middle schools in rural Indonesia, a context that has been largely overlooked in previous research.

By examining the impact of peer tutoring on both student engagement and learning outcomes, this research provides valuable insights into how collaborative learning can be effectively utilized to

improve writing skills, particularly in regions where traditional teaching methods may not be as effective. The findings will offer practical recommendations for educators seeking to implement more interactive and student-centered teaching approaches, particularly in Indonesian language classrooms.

The objectives of this research are to investigate the effectiveness of peer tutoring in enhancing grade VII students' understanding and application of descriptive text structure in Indonesian language education at MTs Darussalam, Bengkulu City, identify the supporting and inhibiting factors affecting its implementation, and evaluate its impact on student engagement, participation, and academic performance in descriptive writing.

By addressing these objectives, the study aims to contribute to the development of more effective teaching methods in Indonesian language education, particularly in the context of rural middle schools. The findings will provide evidence-based recommendations for educators and policymakers looking to improve the teaching of descriptive writing through peer tutoring and other interactive strategies.

#### Methods

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore the implementation of peer tutoring in teaching descriptive text structures to seventh-grade students at MTs Darussalam, Bengkulu City. A qualitative approach was selected because it enables in-depth investigation of teaching and learning processes in their natural classroom setting, emphasizing meaning-making and contextual interpretation (Saldaña, 2021; Sugiyono, 2019).

The research site was MTs Darussalam, located in Bengkulu City, with the study conducted over approximately two months following the issuance of the research permit. The participants consisted of one Indonesian language teacher and students from Grade VII. The teacher was responsible for applying the peer tutoring strategy, while students acted both as tutors and tutees, depending on their academic achievement and classroom roles.

Data collection employed multiple techniques observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon (Afifurrahman et al., 2025; Erlina et al., 2025; Pribowo et al., 2024). Observations focused on classroom interactions during the implementation of peer tutoring. Interviews were conducted with the teacher and selected students to capture their perceptions, while documentation included lesson plans and student assignments.

To ensure trustworthiness, the study applied data source triangulation and methodological triangulation. Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman interactive model, consisting of data collection, reduction, display, and conclusion drawing (Mahmudah et al., 2024; Miles & Huberman, 1984; Olifia et al., 2024). Ethical considerations were respected by seeking permission from the school, ensuring voluntary participation, and maintaining the confidentiality of participants' identities.

# **Results and Discussion**

## **Findings**

The implementation of the peer tutoring method in teaching the structure of descriptive texts to grade VII students at MTs Darussalam, Bengkulu City, produced positive results across several

domains, including student engagement, academic performance, and the development of critical thinking skills. These results were obtained through a combination of observations, interviews, and documentary analysis, which provided both quantitative and qualitative data on the impact of peer tutoring on students' understanding of descriptive text structure.

The peer tutoring sessions enabled students to gain a better understanding of the core components of descriptive texts, including identification, classification, and the description of parts. Students showed marked improvement in their ability to identify the various elements of a descriptive text, aligning with the curriculum requirements. This was particularly evident in their ability to distinguish between the general description and specific details that make up the text's structure.

Furthermore, student engagement during the peer tutoring sessions was notably higher than during traditional lecture-based classes. The active participation in group discussions and peer interactions allowed students to engage with the material more deeply, contributing to an enhanced understanding of the text structure. More competent students (tutors) guided their peers (tutees), fostering collaboration and the development of critical thinking skills. These findings suggest that peer tutoring provided students with both the cognitive and social support needed to enhance their academic performance.

To provide a clearer representation of the study's results, Table 1 below shows a comparison of pre-test and post-test scores for students' ability to identify and structure descriptive texts. The data indicate a significant improvement in student performance after the implementation of the peer tutoring method.

Table 1.	Comparison	of Pre-test and	Post-test Scores
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Test Type	Mean Score (%)	Number of Students	Above Average (%)
Pre-test	56.7	30	40%
Post-test	85.2	30	80%

As shown in Table 1, the mean score of students' ability to identify and structure descriptive texts significantly increased from 56.7% in the pre-test to 85.2% in the post-test. This improvement was also reflected in the percentage of students achieving above-average scores, which increased from 40% to 80%, demonstrating the effectiveness of the peer tutoring method.

In addition to the improvements in academic performance, several inhibiting and supporting factors were identified throughout the peer tutoring process. Supporting factors included strong teacher-student interaction, which was crucial in guiding the tutoring process, and the enthusiasm of students, who actively participated in discussions and took initiative during group activities. These factors were key to maintaining a conducive learning environment and ensuring that students remained engaged throughout the learning sessions.

However, there were also several inhibiting factors that presented challenges during the implementation of the peer tutoring method. One significant issue was the difficulty in selecting tutors from a class where many students had similar academic abilities. In such cases, it was challenging to identify which students were best suited to serve as tutors, as their ability to assist their peers was not always clear. Additionally, the learning environment during group discussions was sometimes less conducive to learning. In some instances, the group dynamics made it difficult for all students to engage equally, and some students appeared hesitant to ask questions or share their thoughts in front of their peers.

In addition to the quantitative data, qualitative insights were gathered from interviews with both students and teachers. Many students reported feeling more confident in their ability to structure descriptive texts after engaging in peer tutoring. One student, for example, stated, "I feel more confident now because I understand the structure of the text better, and my peer tutor explained it in a way that I could easily understand." This sentiment was echoed by multiple students, suggesting that the peer tutoring method helped them grasp the structure of descriptive texts in a more comprehensible manner than traditional teaching methods.

From the teachers' perspective, the peer tutoring sessions were seen as a valuable tool for fostering student collaboration and active learning. The teacher commented, "Peer tutoring has significantly improved student engagement in the classroom. I have noticed that students are more willing to participate, and they seem more motivated to learn." This aligns with the findings of Bakare and Orji (2019), Kim et al., (2021) and Mingorance Estrada et al., (2019), who emphasized that peer tutoring not only improves academic achievement but also encourages student-centered learning.

In summary, the implementation of peer tutoring in teaching descriptive text structure resulted in significant improvements in students' ability to identify and apply the key components of descriptive texts. The post-test scores revealed that over 80% of students achieved above-average performance, which was a notable increase from their pre-test scores. Additionally, the peer tutoring sessions led to higher levels of student engagement, collaboration, and critical thinking, as evidenced by active participation and positive feedback from both students and teachers.

While the method was largely successful, inhibiting factors such as challenges in selecting appropriate tutors and occasional difficulties in creating an optimal learning environment during group discussions need to be addressed. Future implementations of peer tutoring could benefit from a more structured approach to tutor selection and more effective management of group dynamics to ensure that all students benefit equally from the process.

#### **Discussion**

The findings from this study align with the broader body of literature on peer tutoring in educational contexts. Peer tutoring has long been recognized for its ability to enhance academic achievement by fostering active learning and increasing student participation (Topping, 1996; Toulia et al., 2023). In this study, students who participated as tutors were able to reinforce their understanding of descriptive text structure, while those who received tutoring benefited from personalized, peer-driven instruction. This reciprocal learning process is consistent with Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which posits that social interaction and collaborative learning are essential for cognitive development (Allahyar & Nazari, 2012; Jaramillo, 1996). In the context of this study, students were able to scaffold each other's learning, which helped them better understand the structural components of descriptive texts.

In contrast to traditional lecture-based methods, which often lead to passive learning, the peer tutoring method encouraged active engagement and problem-solving among students. Piaget's Constructivist Learning Theory also supports this approach, emphasizing that learners construct knowledge actively through social interactions (Cohen & Waite-Stupiansky, 2022; Foulkes & Naylor, 2022). The peer tutoring model used in this study facilitated such interactions, enabling students to develop a deeper understanding of text structures by discussing and applying them in real-time. This collaborative aspect of peer tutoring helps students not only understand the content but also practice

essential interpersonal skills such as communication, teamwork, and leadership (Issa & Hall, 2024; Lluch et al., 2021).

International studies, such as those by (Núñez-Andrés et al., 2021; Thurston et al., 2021) have shown that peer tutoring has a positive impact on academic performance, especially in language arts. Zhang et al., (2025) meta-analysis revealed that peer tutoring is particularly effective in subjects that require higher-order cognitive skills, such as writing. This aligns with the findings of the current study, where peer tutoring was found to improve students' ability to identify and organize the components of descriptive texts. However, the study also highlighted some challenges, particularly the difficulty in selecting tutors when students have similar academic abilities. This is in line with Montanero et al., (2024) observations that the selection process can be a barrier to the successful implementation of peer tutoring, especially in classrooms where students' academic levels are relatively homogeneous.

One of the key insights from this study is the importance of teacher involvement in the peer tutoring process. While the peer tutors played a crucial role in guiding their peers, the teacher's role in monitoring and facilitating the process was equally important. This finding echoes the work of Xu et al., (2022), who highlighted that the effectiveness of peer tutoring is highly dependent on the teacher's ability to guide and support the interactions between tutors and tutees. In the case of this study, the teacher's oversight ensured that discussions remained on track and that any misunderstandings were promptly addressed.

Moreover, the study found that student enthusiasm was a significant supporting factor in the successful implementation of the peer tutoring method. When students are motivated and actively engaged in the learning process, they are more likely to perform well academically. This is consistent with the findings of Jin et al., (2022) and Zhao (2023), who found that motivation plays a critical role in the success of peer tutoring programs. In this study, the enthusiasm exhibited by students contributed to a more dynamic and collaborative classroom environment, which facilitated the learning of descriptive text structure.

Despite these successes, the study also identified several inhibiting factors that need to be addressed for peer tutoring to be fully effective. The most notable of these was the difficulty in selecting tutors from among students with similar academic abilities. This finding mirrors Kim et al., (2021) assertion that peer tutoring is more challenging in environments where students have relatively equal academic performance. Additionally, the study observed that group dynamics and the lack of conducive learning environments during peer discussions could sometimes hinder the effectiveness of the method. In particular, some students were hesitant to take on the role of tutor due to self-doubt and lack of confidence, a finding that is consistent with Avonts et al., (2023) analysis, which suggested that students may experience anxiety when asked to assume leadership roles in peer tutoring settings.

From a theoretical perspective, the results of this study provide further support for Vygotsky's theory of scaffolding and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). In peer tutoring, students are able to support each other in ways that extend their learning beyond what they could achieve alone. The findings also highlight the importance of creating a supportive learning environment, where students feel comfortable engaging in discussions and taking risks. This can be achieved through teacher facilitation and the development of a positive classroom culture that values collaboration and peer support.

In terms of practical implications, this study provides evidence of the effectiveness of peer tutoring as a teaching strategy in language education, particularly in teaching descriptive writing. Educators can use these findings to inform their teaching practices, particularly when working with students who are struggling to understand complex text structures. Peer tutoring can be an effective way to provide personalized, student-centered learning, especially when teachers are able to guide the process and ensure that group dynamics are conducive to learning.

While this study provides valuable insights into the use of peer tutoring in teaching descriptive texts, there are some limitations that must be acknowledged. The study was conducted in a single classroom at MTs Darussalam, and the findings may not be generalizable to other schools or regions with different demographic profiles. Additionally, the study relied on a small sample size, which may limit the broader applicability of the results. Future research could expand on this study by exploring the effectiveness of peer tutoring in larger, more diverse classrooms and by examining its impact across multiple subject areas. Moreover, longitudinal studies could assess the long-term effects of peer tutoring on student achievement and engagement.

In conclusion, the findings of this study highlight the potential of peer tutoring as an effective method for improving student understanding of descriptive text structure in Indonesian language education. Despite some challenges related to group dynamics and tutor selection, the method was found to significantly enhance student engagement, participation, and academic performance. By addressing the factors that inhibit the method's implementation, such as tutor selection and classroom environment, educators can better harness the potential of peer tutoring to support student learning and foster a more collaborative, engaging educational experience.

# **Conclusion**

This study aimed to assess the effectiveness of peer tutoring in enhancing grade VII students' understanding and application of descriptive text structure in Indonesian language education at MTs Darussalam, Bengkulu City. The findings indicate that peer tutoring significantly improved students' ability to identify and apply the structure of descriptive texts, as reflected in higher post-test scores and increased student engagement. Students' active participation in group discussions and their collaboration with peers led to improved academic performance and fostered critical thinking and collaborative learning. These results support the potential of peer tutoring as an effective strategy for teaching complex text structures like descriptive writing, aligning with Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory and Piaget's Constructivist Learning Theory, both of which emphasize the importance of social interaction in learning.

However, the study has limitations, including the small sample size and short duration of implementation. Future research could explore the long-term impact of peer tutoring on students' writing skills and extend the study to larger, more diverse samples for greater generalizability. Despite these limitations, the study highlights the practical application of peer tutoring in improving student engagement and academic performance in descriptive writing, providing valuable insights for educators seeking to enhance collaborative learning in language education.

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