
**DRAWING-BASED WRITING TASK TECHNIQUE TO IMPROVE
YOUNG EFL LEARNERS' DESCRIPTIVE TEXT
WRITING SKILLS**

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ABSTRACT

Teaching writing to young learners in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context often met with concerns about developmental readiness. However, some studies show that young learners can benefit from creative and multimodal approaches to writing. While much has been studied on teaching speaking and listening skills, studies on visual stimuli like drawing for writing instruction at an early age are limited. This study aims to empower young learners to produce simple descriptive texts through a drawing-based writing task, using their favorite pets as the topic. Employing a case study design, this study involved one class of children, class I,I, which consisted of fourteen learners in a private English language course in Bengkulu, Indonesia. They were in the first and second grades in the elementary schools with ages between 6-7 years. Data were collected through classroom observations, student work, and reflective feedback from teachers. After young learners studied basic vocabulary and sentence structures in eight meetings, they drew their favorite pets and wrote short descriptions based on their drawings. The number of sentences that they should write ranges from four to six sentences. Each sentence contained five to eight words. The results show that young learners could write simple descriptive texts using basic vocabulary and sentence structures using drawing-based writing tasks. This technique also helped young learners generate content and reduced cognitive load during writing. These findings suggest that creative, visual-based tasks can be effective in teaching writing to young EFL learners.

Keyword: *Drawing-based writing task, descriptive text, writing instruction, EFL young learners*

INTRODUCTION

Teaching writing to young learners in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context poses unique challenges (O'g'li, 2023; Putri, 2024). Many educators, such as Liu et al. (2022), Zhang et al. (2021), and Jolly and Gentaz (2014), express concerns about developmental readiness, and question whether young learners possess the linguistic and cognitive capabilities required to compose written texts (Cameron, 2010; Cerni & Job, 2024;

Ose Askvik et al., 2020). Jasrial (2019) categorized linguistic capabilities as vocabulary, grammar, spelling, and punctuation and cognitive capabilities as idea generation, clarity, coherence, and text structure. These elements work together to support the writer in creating coherent, structured, and effective written communication.

In the Indonesian EFL context, for example, teaching writing to young learners presents additional challenges due to limited exposure to English outside the classroom and a heavy reliance on rote learning methods (Patanduk et al., 2024). Many young learners struggle to generate ideas or express thoughts in written English because their opportunities to practice are constrained by the dominance of Indonesian and local languages in daily communication. For example, in Bengkulu, students' first language is local languages (e.g., Bengkulu Malay, Serawai, Rejang, Lembak), and Indonesian is as a second language (Diani & Azwandi, 2021). These multilingual settings, while rich, often result in limited opportunities to use English, as students primarily communicate in Indonesian and local languages (Suparman et al., 2021), including young EFL learners in this private English course. Moreover, cultural factors, such as the hierarchical teacher-student relationship, often limit the use of exploratory or student-centered learning approaches (Jasrial & Zaim, 2023) that could encourage creativity and active participation in writing tasks. These challenges necessitate innovative strategies that not only address linguistic and cognitive barriers but also adapt to the sociocultural context of Indonesian classrooms.

To address these barriers, educators have explored innovative solutions to make writing more accessible and enjoyable for young learners. Previous studies highlight the potential benefits of creative and multimodal approaches, such as using movies (Kusumawardhani & Nurhayati, 2019), flashcards (Kusumawardhani, 2019), storybooks (Hertiki, 2018), and model text approaches (Nguyen et al., 2023). While these strategies show promise, fewer studies have specifically explored methods to teach writing at an early age. One promising yet underexplored method involves drawing-based writing tasks. Visual prompts, such as drawings or visual aids, have been shown to stimulate ideas and provide a scaffold for writing (Superable, 2020). These prompts illustrate children's language development from micro functions to meta functions (Thwaite, 2019). In particular, drawing serves as visual stimuli that act as a bridge between abstract thoughts and written words, reducing the cognitive load of language production. For descriptive writing, Chung (2023) suggests that visual elements can help young learners connect their observations with language expressions, fostering both creativity and linguistic development. It can be in terms of drawing or pictures to teach writing.

Based on the problems and suggestions, this present study employed the drawing-based writing task as an instructional technique in teaching writing to young EFL learners. This technique fits within the Task-Based Language Teaching approach (TBLT) (Ellis et al., 2019) and constructivism (Fosnot, 2005; Golder & Bengal, 2018; Jasrial & Zaim, 2023) theories. In TBLT, a task is a meaningful activity where learners use the target language to achieve a specific outcome, often mirroring real-life language use (East, 2021), and this can include creative tasks like drawing, which integrates visual expression to facilitate language learning. In constructivism, tasks like drawing-based writing tasks serve as meaningful activities where learners actively construct knowledge by visually representing ideas, fostering creativity, and integrating language skills within authentic contexts (Golder & Bengal, 2018; C. C. Liu, 2010). Such tasks leverage the cognitive and emotional benefits of visualization, enabling students to conceptualize ideas more concretely and engage in creative expression. Chen and Adam (2023) argue that drawing activities will provide a scaffolding mechanism that reduces cognitive load and helps learners generate ideas and organize thoughts for writing. Likewise, Gidoni and Rajuan (2018) emphasize that drawing not only fosters creativity but also enhances motivation, making learning tasks more enjoyable and meaningful.

The fundamental theories above imply that a drawing-based writing task is a teaching technique where learners engage in creating drawings as part of the language-learning process, which has three main characteristics: active engagement, scaffolding, and creativity and expression. Active engagement means learners actively create drawings, which encourages deeper cognitive development and engagement (Wu et al., 2020). Scaffolding in this context is that drawing provides visual support to reduce the cognitive load during writing tasks. Creativity and expression mean learners use their imagination to represent ideas visually which aids language expressions. It is particularly effective in fostering creativity, engagement, and contextualized learning. In this technique, students use drawings as visual prompts or scaffolds to generate ideas, organize thoughts, and write or describe their work. This approach integrates visual and textual modalities, making it especially useful for young learners in developing descriptive writing and vocabulary.

In line with the research gap and theoretical foundation, this present study investigates the use of drawing as a pedagogical tool to empower young EFL learners to write short descriptive texts. The descriptive text in this study means a genre that primarily focuses on providing a clear and vivid representation of a particular person, place, thing, or event (Emilia & Christie, 2013). It is used to describe the qualities or features of a subject in a detailed and organized manner. By engaging learners with a topic of personal interest, their favorite pet,

this study integrates drawing-based writing tasks with foundational instruction in vocabulary and sentence structures.

This present study is set in a private English language course in Bengkulu, Indonesia, involving first and second-grade primary school students where the researcher taught English in this institution. This institution is the best and the first English language course established in Bengkulu City, making it a significant site for investigating early English language learning practices in a regional context. Its longstanding reputation and pioneering role in English education in Bengkulu provide a unique setting to explore how private language institutions contribute to young learners' English language development, particularly in multilingual environments. Through a case study design, the study examines how visual stimuli can facilitate the writing process and enhance learners' ability to produce coherent, simple descriptive texts. The findings aim to contribute to the growing body of literature on innovative strategies for teaching writing to young EFL learners. Thus, to address the problem, this study is addressed to answer this question.

1. How do drawing-based writing tasks support young EFL learners in developing their descriptive writing skills?
 - 1.1. What specific aspects of language development (e.g., vocabulary, sentence structure, grammar) are influenced by drawing-based writing tasks?
 - 1.2. How do drawing-based tasks help reduce cognitive load in the writing process for young EFL learners?

METHOD

This study employed a case study design to explore how drawing-based writing tasks can empower young EFL learners to write descriptive texts. A case study is an appropriate methodological choice under the qualitative approach as it allows researchers to investigate a specific phenomenon within its real-life (Creswell, 2017). In this study, the phenomenon under investigation was the use of drawing-based writing tasks as a pedagogical tool in an EFL classroom, and the context was a private English course in Bengkulu.

Moreover, this present study applied a total sampling method involving one class of children in the second grade (or Children Class II) in a private English course in Bengkulu, Indonesia. This institution was where the researcher taught English, so the researcher applied this case study research design. The number of young learners who participated in this study was fourteen learners. In the elementary school, they were in the first and the second grade. They were in the age between six to seven years old. This age range was in line with the

young learners' category, which is normally between five to twelve years old (Sehan, 2018). Their first language was Bengkulu Malay and they used it in their daily life communication. In schools, they spoke Indonesian. They started learning English in this course in Children's Class I. At this level, they only learned basic vocabulary, while basic grammar (e.g., using be, have/has, article a/an) was learned in the children class II. In other words, they have been learning English for more than one year.

This case study research design was carried out over eight instructional sessions. Young learners were taught basic vocabulary and sentence structures, followed by a task where they drew their favorite pets and wrote short descriptions based on their drawings. Data were collected through some methods. First, classroom observations: Classroom observations were conducted using a structured observation sheet focusing on student engagement (e.g., active participation, attentiveness), vocabulary use (e.g., frequency and accuracy of vocabulary use), and progression in writing tasks (e.g., improvements in sentence structure, coherence, and use of descriptive language). Second, student work analysis: All student writing samples, including pre-writing drafts, final drafts, and any revisions, were collected and analysed. The last, teacher reflections: The teacher involved in the study maintained a reflective journal throughout the intervention. In addition, a semi-structured interview was conducted with the teacher at the conclusion of the study to gather in-depth insights into their observations and experiences. This approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of how visual prompts, in this case, drawings, support writing development in young learners.

The data analysis techniques involved thematic analysis following Christou (2023) stages to analyse classroom observations, analysis of student work, and reflective feedback from the teacher. Initially, the data were coded to identify recurring patterns, themes, or categories related to the research question. These initial codes were then grouped into broader categories, such as the role of drawings in generating and organizing ideas, the nature of teacher support, and the specific language features developed using drawings. Subsequently, these categories were analyzed to identify overarching themes that provide a comprehensive understanding of how drawing-based tasks influence the development of descriptive writing skills. Moreover, to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, triangulation was employed. This involved comparing the results of the thematic analysis with data from other sources, such as field notes or student interviews. Triangulation helped to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

This study shows that drawing-based writing tasks are effective in helping young EFL learners produce simple descriptive texts. Through eight instructional sessions, the students successfully learned basic vocabulary and sentence structures, which were then applied in a task where they drew their favorite pets and wrote short descriptions based on their drawings.

Drawing-based writing tasks support young EFL learners in developing their descriptive writing skills.

After analyzing data, drawing-based writing tasks were found to significantly support young EFL learners in developing their descriptive writing skills by:

1. Encouraging the use of basic vocabulary related to objects and personal preferences, such as "cat," "like," and "cute."
2. Helping learners apply simple sentence structures effectively, such as "I have a cat at home" and "I like him very much."
3. Facilitating the expression of opinions and feelings using phrases like "because she's very cute and very active."
4. Providing a tangible context through drawings which motivated students and made it easier to focus on sentence formation.

Example 1

Below is an example of a student's work that highlights these findings.

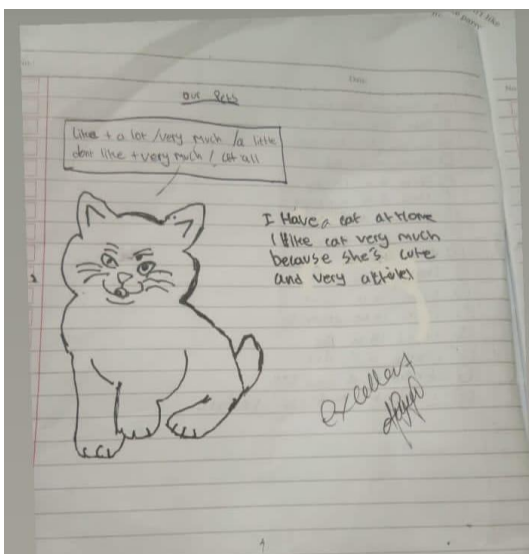


Figure 1: Young EFL Learner's Writing

This writing in Figure 1 shows the learner's ability to form basic sentences such as "I have a cat at home" and express opinions like "I like cat very much." Although the learner missed the plural "s" in "cat," the text demonstrates progress in sentence structure and vocabulary.

The specific aspects of language development (e.g., vocabulary, sentence structure, grammar) are influenced by drawing-based writing tasks

The data show specific aspects of language development influenced by drawing-based tasks:

1. Vocabulary Development

Learners incorporated relevant adjectives (e.g., "cute," "active") to describe objects. Basic nouns and verbs (e.g., "cat," "have," "like") were frequently and correctly used.

2. Sentence Structure

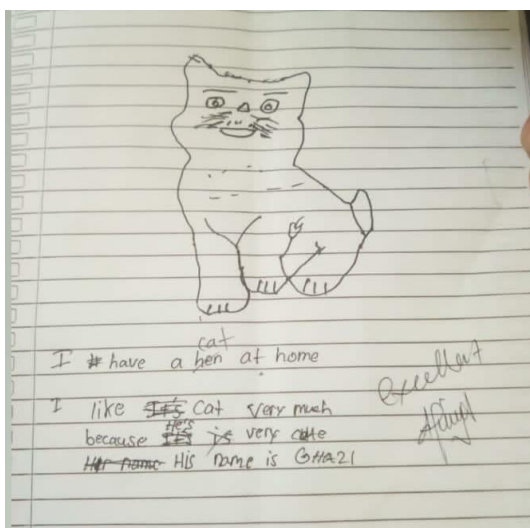
Learners successfully constructed declarative sentences (e.g., "This is my pet."). They used conjunctions like "because" to provide explanations (e.g., "because he's very cute").

3. Grammar Understanding

Learners demonstrated an understanding of possessive pronouns (e.g., "his name") and gender and pronoun agreement (e.g., "she's cute"). Minor errors in grammar, such as the omission of articles ("a" before "cat") and plural forms ("cats"), were noted, indicating areas for further improvement.

Example 2

Below is another sample text from a learner.



This example shows the learner's development in grammar (e.g., "I have a cat at home.") and vocabulary use. Minor errors like the omission of "a" in "I like cat very much" suggest areas where further support is needed.

Figure 2: Young EFL Learner's Writing

Drawing-based tasks help reduce cognitive load in the writing process for young EFL learners

Drawing-based tasks effectively reduced cognitive load by:

1. Providing Visual Stimuli

Drawings gave students a clear context for their writing, helping them organize their thoughts and ideas. For example, students could describe their favorite pets directly based on their own drawings, which eliminated ambiguity about what to write.

2. Simplifying Idea Generation

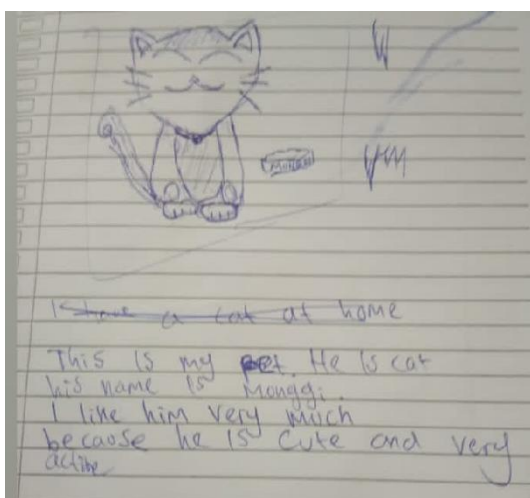
The act of drawing helped students visualize their ideas, making it easier to transition from abstract thoughts to concrete sentences.

3. Enhancing Focus on Language Production

With visual aids in place, students could concentrate on constructing sentences and using appropriate vocabulary rather than struggling to imagine or recall ideas.

Example 3

Below is an illustration of a student's descriptive text generated from their drawing:



This sample demonstrates how the drawing helped the learner form clear ideas and write sentences like "This is my pet. He is cat. His name is Menggi."

Figure 3: Young EFL Learner's Writing

In conclusion, the main findings of this study reveal several important aspects of using drawing-based writing tasks in teaching young EFL learners. First, students' descriptive writing skills showed significant improvement, with the majority of students being able to write simple descriptive texts using basic vocabulary and sentence structures. They demonstrated a better understanding of object descriptions by incorporating relevant adjectives and phrases. Second, the use of drawings as a visual stimulus helped reduce cognitive load, enabling students to generate ideas more easily and avoid confusion during the

writing process. The act of drawing provided a visual context that clarified the ideas students wanted to express in writing. Third, effective teacher support played a crucial role in guiding students to construct accurate sentences and correct writing mistakes. Finally, the drawing-based writing tasks encouraged active student participation, as students felt more enthusiastic and confident when completing tasks related to their interests, such as drawing their favorite pets.

Discussion

The findings of this study show that drawing-based writing tasks effectively improve young EFL learners' ability to write descriptive texts. Throughout eight learning sessions, the students showed significant improvement in vocabulary use and accuracy of sentence structure. Their texts showed creativity and coherence, indicating that the drawing tasks helped them generate content and organize their thoughts. The use of drawings as visual cues not only facilitated content generation but also improved the overall structure of their writing, making it easier for young EFL learners to organize their ideas effectively. These findings are in line with the theories of the value of visual stimuli in enhancing writing skills in terms of linguistics and cognitive capabilities (Dyson, 2010; Jolly & Gentaz, 2014; Kaminski, 2019). Furthermore, this study offers practical insights into using drawing-based tasks as an instructional strategy, particularly for young learners.

The use of drawing-based writing tasks significantly impacted students' descriptive writing skills. Learners demonstrated notable progress in vocabulary acquisition, particularly in using relevant adjectives (e.g., "cute," "active") and basic verbs (e.g., "have," "like"). Sentence structure improvements were also evident, as students consistently formed simple declarative sentences such as "I have a cat at home" and compound sentences using conjunctions like "because" (e.g., "I like him because he is very active"). These findings corroborate Cameron's (2021) assertion that repetitive practice with structured tasks enhances writing accuracy and coherence. While students showed progress, minor grammatical errors persisted, such as the omission of articles ("a" before "cat"), or plural markers ("cats" instead of "cat"). These errors highlight areas for further development, particularly in reinforcing singular/plural distinctions and proper article usage.

Furthermore, the young EFL learners' engagement with drawing activities fostered a sense of ownership and motivation, which were evident in their descriptive texts. It can be attributed to the personal relevance of the task, as learners chose their favourite pets as subjects. The use of familiar and personally meaningful topics, such as describing favorite

pets, fostered a sense of ownership and motivation among learners. This is consistent with Yuli and Halimi's (2020) argument that personal relevance in writing tasks enhances engagement. The learners' enthusiasm was evident in their detailed drawings and descriptive texts, which reflected genuine interest and effort. This motivation likely contributed to the overall improvement in writing performance.

One possible explanation for these positive outcomes is that drawing provided a non-verbal scaffold for young learners. By acting as visual prompts, drawing tasks facilitated idea generation and potentially reduced cognitive load during writing. For example, in an activity where students drew their favorite pets, the drawings likely served as mental anchors, helping them visualize and organize their thoughts before translating them into written descriptions (Thwaite, 2019). This aligns with the non-verbal scaffolding theory, which posits that visual aids can bridge the gap between conceptualization and written expression (Gashaye & Muchie, 2021). By providing a concrete and engaging context, drawing may have helped reduce anxiety and supported language production among young learners. Furthermore, the combination of visual prompts and structured writing practice synergistically enhanced the development of their descriptive writing skills.

These results align with previous studies highlighting the benefits of multimodal approaches in language learning. For instance, research by Marosi (2021) emphasizes that incorporating visual and creative tasks in EFL classrooms stimulates learners' cognitive and linguistic development, particularly for young learners. Drawing not only served as a tool for content generation but also reduced the cognitive load associated with writing tasks, supporting the findings of Merriënboer and Sweller (2010) regarding the value of visual literacy in language instruction. Moreover, this study's findings resonate with studies on multimodal approaches but offer new insights specific to young EFL learners. While Halliday's (2014) work on functional grammar highlights the importance of contextualizing language learning; this study adds evidence that visual prompts can serve as effective contextual tools in early writing instruction. However, unlike studies that focus on older learners (Brown, 2001), this research emphasizes the feasibility of teaching writing to young learners through creative tasks, addressing concerns about developmental readiness.

Despite its promising findings, this study has several limitations. The sample size was small, consisting of students from a private English course in Bengkulu, which limits the generalizability of the results. Additionally, the focus on descriptive texts leaves the applicability of drawing-based tasks for other text genres unexplored. Future research should address these limitations by including diverse learner groups and examining the effectiveness

of drawing-based writing tasks across various genres. Longitudinal studies could also provide deeper insights into the long-term impact of multimodal approaches on language learning.

This study concludes that drawing-based writing tasks are effective in supporting young EFL learners' development of descriptive writing skills. By enabling learners to engage with writing in a creative and low-stress manner, this approach promotes both linguistic and cognitive growth. Teachers in EFL contexts are encouraged to integrate visual prompts into writing instruction to foster learner motivation, creativity, and language accuracy. While further exploration is needed, this research highlights the pedagogical value of multimodal approaches in early language education.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study has demonstrated the efficacy of drawing-based writing tasks in fostering descriptive writing skills among young EFL learners. By providing a visual stimulus, these tasks not only stimulated students' creativity but also facilitated the organization of their thoughts and the expression of ideas clearly and coherently. The findings revealed a significant improvement in students' vocabulary usage, sentence structure, and ability to construct cohesive paragraphs. Moreover, these tasks encouraged critical thinking and creativity as students analyzed their drawings and selected appropriate language to describe them. The integration of visual elements into the writing process proved to be an engaging and effective approach, enhancing students' motivation and overall language proficiency. Future research could explore the use of a wider range of visual stimuli, such as photographs, illustrations, and digital images, as well as investigate the long-term impacts of this pedagogical approach. Additionally, the role of teacher guidance and feedback in supporting students' writing development could be further examined.

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