

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS**

#### **A. Review of Literature**

##### **1. Writing skill of EFL Students**

Writing is one of the most challenging skills in the context of EFL learning because it requires not only language knowledge but also higher-order cognitive processes. Writing is a recursive process involving planning, drafting, and revising, in which writers continuously develop and refine their ideas to elevate the overall quality of texts (Limpo & Alves, 2018). Through these stages, students are guided to generate ideas, organize information, and produce more effective written texts. However, implementing each stage of the writing process requires appropriate instructional support because many students still encounter difficulties in developing and organizing their ideas effectively.

Although the process-based approach has been widely applied in writing instruction, many EFL students still experience difficulties during the writing process. Students often face challenges in the prewriting stage, particularly in generating and organizing ideas before beginning their writing (Bisriyah, 2022). These difficulties are often related to limited exposure to the target language, low writing confidence, and challenges in transferring ideas into written form. Regarding the Indonesian EFL environment, Setyowati et al. (2016)

observed that students tend to produce incoherent texts with unclear sentence construction due to limited mastery of sentence structure and paragraph development. As a result, their writing often lacks organization, coherence, and clarity. Therefore, students require structured writing instruction that provides explicit guidance, continuous support, and opportunities to practice and improve their writing skills.

Although previous studies have explored the difficulties faced by EFL students in writing, limited studies have investigated structured writing strategies that systematically address these challenges, particularly in the Indonesian vocational high school context. Since vocational students have specific writing needs related to academic and workplace communication, an effective strategy is needed to provide step-by-step support in generating ideas, organizing information, and developing descriptive texts. Therefore, this study focuses on a structured writing strategy that aims to improve students' ability to produce more organized and coherent descriptive paragraphs.

## 2. Teaching Writing for EFL Students

In the context of EFL learning, writing skills require special attention from teachers because they involve not only language production but also cognitive engagement. Effective writing instruction aims to help students produce well-organized texts while developing critical thinking skills, genre awareness, and confidence in expressing

their ideas. Therefore, EFL teachers need to implement appropriate strategies that address the complexity of writing development..

The process-based writing approach highlights essential stages: prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. These stages assist students to generate and refine ideas gradually while improving writing quality through continuous revision as well as teacher feedback (Faraj, 2015). Through this approach, students are encouraged to view writing as a systematic process rather than a final product.

To support students throughout the writing process, teachers use various student-centered techniques such as brainstorming, peer discussions, and visual tools like graphic organizers. Demonstrated that graphic organizers assist learners to generate and structure ideas, enhancing writing quality, particularly in content, vocabulary, and mechanics (Styati & Irawati, 2020). In this process, teachers act not only as instructors but also as facilitators who provide scaffolding to support students' writing development.

However, although previous studies have discussed various approaches to writing instruction, limited empirical research has examined how specific structured strategies such as the Please Strategy can support descriptive writing development among Indonesian vocational high school students. Therefore, integrating a structured writing strategy such as the Please Strategy is considered necessary to

provide students with systematic guidance in generating ideas, organizing information, and producing descriptive texts.

### 3. Using Please Strategy in Teaching English

According to Welch (1992) the Please Strategy is a writing instructional strategy designed to help learners produce coherent texts systematically through a series of structured steps . This strategy aims to help learners develop ideas, organize their writing, and revise their work to make it clearer and more coherent. Please serves as an acronym representing six phases: Pick, List, Evaluate, Activate, Supply, and End. During the Pick stage, learners select a topic or object to write about so that they have a clear focus before beginning the writing process. In the List stage, they generate ideas, facts, characteristics, or other relevant information related to the selected topic as the foundation for developing their writing. Next, the Evaluate stage requires learners to organize these ideas by selecting relevant information, eliminating unnecessary points, and arranging them logically to achieve better text organization. The Activate stage then encourages learners to transform the organized ideas into a paragraph by developing an appropriate topic sentence as the basis for further development. In the Supply stage, the paragraph is expanded by adding supporting sentences that provide explanations, descriptions, or details related to the topic sentence using appropriate vocabulary, grammar, and cohesive sentence connections. Finally, the End stage emphasizes concluding the writing with an appropriate closing sentence

and reviewing the content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics before submitting the final composition. Through these six stages, the Please Strategy provides systematic guidance from selecting a topic to producing a complete piece of writing. Therefore, this strategy is considered beneficial in helping learners who experience difficulties in generating ideas, organizing paragraphs, and producing coherent and meaningful writing.

The concept of the Please Strategy proposed by Welch (1992) has been implemented in several studies, including research executed by Windi Kurniati et al., (2021). The strategy applied in their research was grounded in Welch's theory; therefore, the six stages of Pick, List, Evaluate, Activate, Supply, and End served as the foundation of the instructional treatment. Through the implementation of this strategy, the researchers attempted to help learners develop ideas, organize information, arrange paragraphs systematically, and produce more structured and coherent descriptive texts.

Although the researchers applied the Please Strategy as the instructional treatment, their study did not describe how the strategy was implemented during classroom instruction. They only stated that the experimental group received treatment based on Welch's framework without explaining the specific activities carried out during each stage of Pick, List, Evaluate, Activate, Supply, and End. In addition, the researchers did not provide detailed information regarding the time

allocation for each stage, the learning media or worksheets used, or the classroom procedures followed during the implementation process. Instead, the research primarily examined the effectiveness of the Please Strategy as an instructional treatment rather than describing its operational implementation in classroom practice.

In addition to describing the use of the Please Strategy as an instructional treatment, the researchers also explained the research procedures employed to examine its effectiveness. From a methodological viewpoint, this study implemented a comparative research approach contrasting the Please Strategy with the Idea Details Strategy regarding students' descriptive writing enhancement. Grounded in Setiyadi (2006), it adopted a Static Group Comparison design alongside Sugiyono's (2010) comparative guidelines. From a total population of 189 eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 2 Menggala, 64 participants formed two experimental cohorts. Class VIII A received instruction using the Please Strategy, whereas Class VIII B was taught using the Idea Details Strategy.

The research procedure began with the administration of a pre-test to both groups to determine the students' initial ability in writing descriptive texts. Each group then received different instructional treatments according to the assigned strategy. Following the instructional interventions, researchers conducted a post-test evaluating students' writing growth. Data gathered from pre-test and post-test

assessments were examined through an Independent Samples t-test after meeting prerequisite testing requirements, namely the normality and homogeneity tests, had been fulfilled.

Besides explaining the research procedures Kurniati et al., (2021) also described the instrument used to assess students' writing ability. In their study, the writing assessment was not based on students' performance at each stage of the Please Strategy. Instead, it focused on the overall quality of the written product. Student writing was assessed across five dimensions: content, organization, vocabulary, language use (grammar), and mechanics, including spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. These aspects served as the assessment criteria for both the pre-test and post-test. Consequently, students' writing improvement was measured based on the quality of their written products rather than on the implementation of each stage of the Please Strategy.

From the preceding discussion, it is evident that research by Kurniati et al. (2021) adopted the Please Strategy proposed by Welch (1992) as the foundation for writing instruction. However, the researchers did not provide a detailed explanation of the operational procedures for implementing each stage of the strategy in the classroom. Instead, the research primarily focused on demonstrating the effectiveness of the strategy through an experimental design and measuring students' writing improvement using general writing assessment criteria. This limitation provides a rationale for the present

study, which aims to describe the operational implementation of the Please Strategy more systematically by explaining the roles of both teachers and students at each stage. Consequently, the instructional process can be understood more comprehensively in the context of teaching descriptive writing at the vocational high school level.

#### 4. Teaching Writing by Using Please Strategy

One of the previous studies investigating the implementation of the Please Strategy was conducted by (Sartika, 2019). The study examined the effect of the Please Strategy on students' descriptive writing skills. The findings revealed that students who were taught using the Please Strategy achieved significantly better writing performance than those who received conventional instruction. The researchers concluded that the Please Strategy effectively helped students generate ideas, organize information, and improve the overall quality of their descriptive writing.

Another study was conducted by Kurniati et al. (2021), who compared the Please Strategy with the Idea Details Strategy in teaching descriptive writing. The study employed a quasi-experimental design using pre-test and post-test writing assessments. The findings showed that students who learned through the Please Strategy achieved significantly better writing performance, particularly in organizing ideas, using appropriate vocabulary, applying grammatical structures, and producing more coherent descriptive texts. The results also indicated that the Please Strategy effectively supported students



throughout the writing process and improved the overall quality of their written work.

Previous studies have demonstrated that the Please Strategy is effective in improving students' writing skills. The findings consistently indicate that the strategy helps students generate ideas, organize information systematically, develop supporting details, and produce more coherent written texts. These results suggest that the Please Strategy can serve as an effective instructional strategy for enhancing students' writing performance.

Although previous studies have reported positive findings, most of them were conducted at the junior high school level. Therefore, the implementation of the Please Strategy in vocational high schools remains underexplored. Vocational high school students possess different learning characteristics and writing needs because English instruction is more closely related to workplace communication. Consequently, it is important to investigate whether the Please Strategy is equally effective in this educational context.

Based on this research gap, the present study employs the Please Strategy to examine its effectiveness in improving the descriptive writing skills of tenth-grade students at SMK Gamaliel 1 Madiun. The study focuses on students' ability to generate ideas, organize paragraphs, apply the generic structure of descriptive texts, and use appropriate vocabulary and grammar. Descriptive text was selected because it is one

of the essential writing competencies in the vocational high school curriculum. The findings of this study are expected to provide empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of the Please Strategy and offer English teachers an alternative instructional strategy for teaching descriptive writing in vocational high schools.

#### 5. Writing Assessment

In the context of writing assessment, Brown & Abeywickrama (2019) explain that scoring rubrics are widely used to assess students' writing systematically by applying explicit evaluation criteria. Through the use of analytic scoring rubrics, teachers can evaluate different aspects of students' writing separately, making the assessment process more reliable and facilitating the provision of constructive feedback. Brown and Abeywickrama (2019) suggest that writing assessment commonly focuses on several key components, including:

1. Content: capacity to think creatively and develop thinking encompassing relevant topics.
2. Organization: The capacity to write appropriately for a specific purpose targeting a specific audience, alongside the skill to select, organize, and present relevant information.
3. Vocabulary: The capacity to write words effectively and appropriately within structured lists
4. Use of language: Ability to write correct and precise sentences.

Therefore, all components of students' writing are assessed and awarded points based on these criteria. More detailed scoring guidelines for each component are explained in the following section

*Table 2.1 Scoring rubric*

| Aspect              | Score        | Performance descriptive                                                                                                                             |
|---------------------|--------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Content</b>      | <b>30-27</b> | <b>EXCELENT VERY TO GOOD:</b> Knowledgeable, substantive, thorough development of thesis, relevant to the assignment.                               |
|                     | <b>26-22</b> | <b>GOOD TO AVERAGE:</b> Some knowledge of the subject, adequate range, limited development of thesis, lack of detail, mostly relevant to the topic. |
|                     | <b>21-17</b> | <b>FAIR TO POOR:</b> Limited knowledge of subject, little substance, inadequate development of the topic.                                           |
|                     | <b>16-13</b> | <b>VERY POOR:</b> Does not show knowledge of the subject, non-substantive, not pertinent, or not enough to evaluate.                                |
| <b>Organization</b> | <b>20-18</b> | <b>EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD:</b> Fluent expression, ideas clearly stated, supported, succinct, well organized, logical sequencing, cohesive.          |
|                     | <b>17-14</b> | <b>GOOD TO AVERAGE:</b> Somewhat choppy, loosely organized but main ideas stand out, limited support, logical but incomplete sequencing.            |
|                     | <b>13-10</b> | <b>FAIR TO POOR:</b> Non-fluent, ideas confused or disconnected, lack logical sequencing and development.                                           |
|                     | <b>9-7</b>   | <b>VERY POOR:</b> Does not communicate, no organization, or not enough to evaluate.                                                                 |
| <b>Grammar</b>      | <b>20-18</b> | <b>EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD:</b> Sophisticated, effective word/idiom choice and usage, word form mastery, appropriate register.                       |
|                     | <b>17-14</b> | <b>GOOD TO AVERAGE:</b> Adequate range, occasional errors of word/idiom form, choice, usage, but meaning not obscured.                              |
|                     | <b>13-10</b> | <b>FAIR TO POOR:</b> Limited range, frequent errors of word/idiom form, choice, usage, meaning confused or obscured.                                |
|                     | <b>9-7</b>   | <b>VERY POOR:</b> Essentially translation, little knowledge of English vocabulary, idioms, words, form, OR not enough to evaluate.                  |

|                   |              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-------------------|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Vocabulary</b> | <b>25–22</b> | <b>EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD:</b> Effective complex constructions, few errors in agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, and prepositions.                                                                                   |
|                   | <b>21–18</b> | <b>GOOD TO AVERAGE:</b> Effective but simple constructions, minor problems in complex constructions, several errors of agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, and prepositions but meaning seldom obscured.              |
|                   | <b>17–11</b> | <b>AIR TO POOR:</b> Major problems in simple/complex construction, frequent errors of negation, agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions, and/or fragments, run-ons, deletions, meaning confused or obscured. |
|                   | <b>10–5</b>  | <b>VERY POOR:</b> Virtually no mastery of sentence construction rules, dominated by errors, does not communicate, OR not enough to evaluate.                                                                                                         |
| <b>Mechanics</b>  | <b>5</b>     | <b>EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD:</b> Demonstrates mastery of conventions, few errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and paragraphing.                                                                                                           |
|                   | <b>4</b>     | <b>GOOD TO AVERAGE:</b> Occasional errors of spelling, punctuation, and paragraphing but meaning not obscured.                                                                                                                                       |
|                   | <b>3</b>     | <b>FAIR TO POOR:</b> Frequent errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing, poor handwriting, meaning confused or obscured.                                                                                                         |
|                   | <b>2</b>     | <b>VERY POOR:</b> No mastery of conventions, dominated by errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing, handwriting illegible, OR not enough to evaluate.                                                                           |

The indicator of success in this study is determined by students achieving a minimum score of 70 in descriptive writing, which is assessed using the established scoring criteria and aligned with the school's standard competency. The classification of writing scores ranges from Excellent (85–100), Good (70–84), Fair (60–69), Poor (50–59), to Fail (0–49). Such score categorization is commonly used in writing assessment to interpret students' levels of writing proficiency and overall performance. Setting a minimum achievement score is

essential in language assessment as it helps determine whether learners have met the expected learning outcomes and writing competence Brown & Abeywickrama (2019). Therefore, the use of a minimum score of 70 as the indicator of success provides a clear benchmark for evaluating students' descriptive writing ability in relation to institutional standards and learning objectives.

*Table 2.2 Scoring rubric*

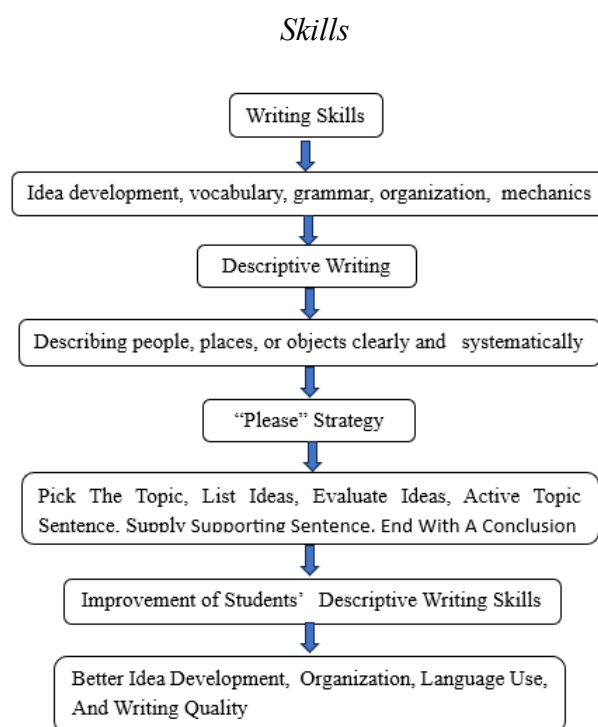
|               |                  |
|---------------|------------------|
| <b>85–100</b> | <b>Excellent</b> |
| <b>70–84</b>  | <b>Good</b>      |
| <b>60–69</b>  | <b>fair</b>      |
| <b>50–59</b>  | <b>Poor</b>      |
| <b>0–49</b>   | <b>Fail</b>      |

## **B. Theoretical Framework**

Writing skills are fundamental language abilities that involve complex cognitive processes, including generating ideas, organizing information, selecting appropriate vocabulary, applying grammatical rules, and producing coherent written texts. Within the scope of writing skills, descriptive writing plays an important role because it trains students to express detailed information about people, places, or objects in a clear and systematic manner. Descriptive writing requires students to organize ideas logically, use specific vocabulary, and construct well-structured paragraphs to create vivid and meaningful descriptions. Nonetheless, several students face persistent difficulties in developing ideas and organizing descriptive paragraphs effectively, thereby harming their final writing quality.

To overcome these challenges, the Please Strategy is considered an appropriate instructional approach for teaching descriptive writing. The Please Strategy provides structured and sequential steps—Pick the topic, List ideas, Evaluate ideas, Activate the paragraph with a topic sentence, Supply supporting sentences, and End with a concluding sentence—that guide students throughout the writing process. Through these steps, students are assisted in planning, organizing, and developing descriptive texts more systematically. Consequently, adopting the Please Strategy is predicted to bring a positive effect on students' descriptive writing skills through improving idea development, paragraph organization, language use, and overall writing quality

*Figure 2.1 The Effect of Please Strategy on Student's Descriptive Writing*



### **C. Research Hypothesis**

A hypothesis is a tentative answer to a research question that can be accepted or rejected based on research data. Based on the focus of this study, the hypotheses are formulated as bellow:

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant difference in students' descriptive writing skills between those who are taught using the Please Strategy and those who are taught using conventional teaching.

**H<sub>1</sub>:** There is a significant difference in students' descriptive writing skills between those who are taught using the Please Strategy and those who are taught using conventional teaching.