

## **IMPROVING STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH THE USE OF PUNCTUATION IN WRITING DESCRIPTIVE TEXTS AT SMP NEGERI 3 BEO**

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study is to ascertain whether using punctuation correctly such as hyphens (-), parentheses (), commas (,), and periods (.) can help students write better descriptive texts. Using a pre-test and post-test design and quantitative methods, the study was carried out with eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 3 Beo. A multiple-choice test with ten questions was used to gather data. A pre-test was given to the students before they were taught how to use punctuation. They completed a post-test to gauge their progress following the treatment. The pre-test results revealed a standard deviation of 7.54 and an average score of 57.82. The post-test results, on the other hand, showed a notable improvement, with an average score of 85.22 and a standard deviation of 6.30. These results imply that mastering proper punctuation significantly improved students' descriptive writing abilities. According to the study's findings, teaching punctuation improves students' writing skills and motivates teachers to incorporate activities that emphasize punctuation into their writing classes. This study emphasizes how crucial it is to use focused language teaching techniques to raise students' general writing proficiency.

**Keywords:** *Writing Skills, Descriptive text, Punctuation, Junior High School*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Language serves as a tool for communicating nonverbal cues as well as information both orally and in writing. used to interact with others, express ideas, and exert social influence (Liando et al., 2022). Karimullah (2024) asserts that language is a crucial instrument for human communication. Learning English is necessary because it is a universal language. According to Girsang et al. (2023), English is the language that is most commonly used worldwide. It is necessary to develop the four English language skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing (Bander et al., 2023).

Writing is one of the English language skills that language learners need to master, according to Maru & Lengkoan (2024). Writing is the process of putting ideas, feelings, and words together to produce a coherent and expressive communication medium. Writing is one of the English language skills that language learners need to master, according to Maru & Lengkoan (2024). Writing is the process of putting ideas, feelings, and words together to produce a coherent and expressive communication medium. Writing is one of the English language skills that language learners need to master, according to Maru & Lengkoan (2024). Writing is the process of putting ideas, feelings, and words together to produce a coherent and expressive communication medium. Writing is a productive ability, and its outcomes depend on the goal for which it was produced, such as sending out written invitations, disseminating information, or describing something. One outcome of writing is descriptive text. A descriptive text offers comprehensive details on a person or an object, including its attributes, according to Arifah & Kusumarasdyati (cited in Fitriana & Syafitri, 2023). Because students are taught to express what is on their minds, descriptive writing is a type of writing that can help them become better writers. Additionally, by utilizing descriptive texts in their daily lives, kids indirectly improve their language proficiency. When someone writes this descriptive prose, they have a message they want the reader to understand. If the writer's message is successfully received, then he is

considered successful and has good writing skills. However, creating quality descriptive writing is not always simple for kids.

Students have a number of challenges when it comes to sharing their ideas and expressing the aim of their writing. When writing descriptive texts, students encounter issues such trouble coming up with ideas, having multiple main ideas in a single paragraph, and producing a single, lengthy sentence for a single paragraph. The incapacity to correctly use punctuation marks is the last issue. It will be meaningless and might have two meanings if descriptive articles are not used with proper punctuation. The usage of exclamation points is one of the skills that pupils need to learn in school. A well-written work will have meaning if the punctuation is utilized appropriately. However, if the punctuation is used wrong, it can often yield different interpretations and lead to misunderstandings. Therefore, in order to convey ideas or messages in their writing, it is crucial that students understand how to utilize punctuation correctly. In the first semester of secondary school, students in class VIII begin learning how to utilize punctuation. When it comes to the usage of punctuation, students at this level acquire material information more thoroughly than they did in elementary school.

Zoyirova (2024) asserts that punctuation acts as a gateway in writing, enabling punctuation marks to efficiently communicate the meaning of written language and facilitate comprehension. According to Dewi (2024), spelling, sentence composition, phrase structure, and word usage are all correlated with punctuation. Ganiyeva (2023) asserts that punctuation highlights the significance of writing. If you look at how long it takes kids to learn how to use punctuation from the beginning, they should be able to write descriptive texts with proper punctuation by the conclusion of the semester or at a high grade. However, the author's findings at SMP Negeri 3 Beo show that there are still issues with pupils' usage of punctuation in their writing. Some students are less accurate in their writing, and some even do not utilize punctuation, even though most students produce descriptive texts that call for the use of

appropriate and correct reading, such as the usage of periods, commas, hyphens, and brackets. Understanding how punctuation is used, particularly with regard to periods (.), commas (,), hyphens (-), and parentheses (), as well as the reasons why many pupils misuse punctuation in English, is of great interest to researchers. Students' descriptive text. Talud, SMP N 3 Beo.

Thus, the researcher conducted this study. It is believed that many people would find this research valuable, particularly in enhancing pupils' writing and punctuation skills. By highlighting the importance of punctuation in descriptive writing, this study aims to enhance student communication and coherence, which has significant ramifications for educational practice and student development. By comprehending and using punctuation appropriately, students can improve the structure and clarity of their writing, develop their attention to detail, and become more proficient in grammatical rules. Writing instruction frequently overlooks the opportunity to provide students with critical tools for effectively and appropriately expressing their thoughts, which is a significant topic covered in this study. Furthermore, curriculum creation and learning strategies targeted at strengthening writing abilities in a range of educational contexts can be influenced by the findings. Students at SMP Negeri 3 Beo continue to struggle with proper punctuation in their work. Some students continue to write inaccurately, and some even fail to use punctuation at all, while they produce descriptive writings that call for the use of good and correct reading, both in terms of tone, intonation, pauses, and meaning. Researchers attempted to enhance students' comprehension of proper punctuation usage at SMP Negeri 3 Beo, particularly with regard to the use of periods (.), commas (,), hyphens (-), and parentheses () in writing. The purpose of this study is to ascertain whether or not VIII students at SMP Negeri 3 Beo can improve their writing abilities by using punctuation correctly in descriptive texts, such as periods (.), commas (,), hyphens (-), and parentheses ().

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study employed quantitative research as its methodology. Susanto et al. (2024) define quantitative research as a type of study that tests hypotheses, makes inferences, and comprehends the connections between the variables under investigation by using numerical data gathering and analysis methodologies. According to Cresswel (cited in Afif et al., 2023), quantitative research is an endeavor to explore issues; researchers use current issues as the foundation for data collection. Next, identify the variables and quantify them using numerical values so that they can be examined using the relevant statistical techniques. With one group taking a pre-test and another group taking a post-test, this study employs a pre-experimental design. The one group pre- and post-test learning design is comparable to one-shot test learning, claim Hatch & Farhady (1982). The T1 Pre-test and the T2 Post-test are the two tests. Students take a pre-test prior to receiving treatment. The post-test, which is administered to students following treatment, measures their learning progress following instruction in proper punctuation usage. The study was carried out at SMP Negeri 3 Beo in Talaud. 23 pupils in the VIII grade made up the study's sample. To gather information, the researcher employed ten multiple-choice and ten completion questions. The average value and standard deviation from Moore, 1983:251 were used to the data analysis.

***Table 1. Design of Research***

<b>Class</b>	<b>Pre-test</b>	<b>Treatment</b>	<b>Post-test</b>
<b>VIII</b>	<b>T1</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>T2</b>

Descriptions:

Class = Experiment Class

T1 = Pre-test before the treatment

T2 = Post-test after the treatment

X = Punctuation

The pre-test and post-test average results were produced by calculating the average value and standard deviation from Moore, 1983:251 in the data analysis. The equation is:

Mean score Formula :

$$\bar{x} = \frac{\sum x}{n}$$

Where:

- $\bar{x}$  = Mean score of students
- $\sum x$  = Sums of X
- n = The total number of students

Standard deviation formula :

$$S = \sqrt{\frac{\sum x^2}{n} - (\bar{x}^2)}$$

Where:

- S = Standard deviation
- $\bar{x}$  = Mean score of students
- $\sum x$  = Sums of X
- n = The total number of students

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

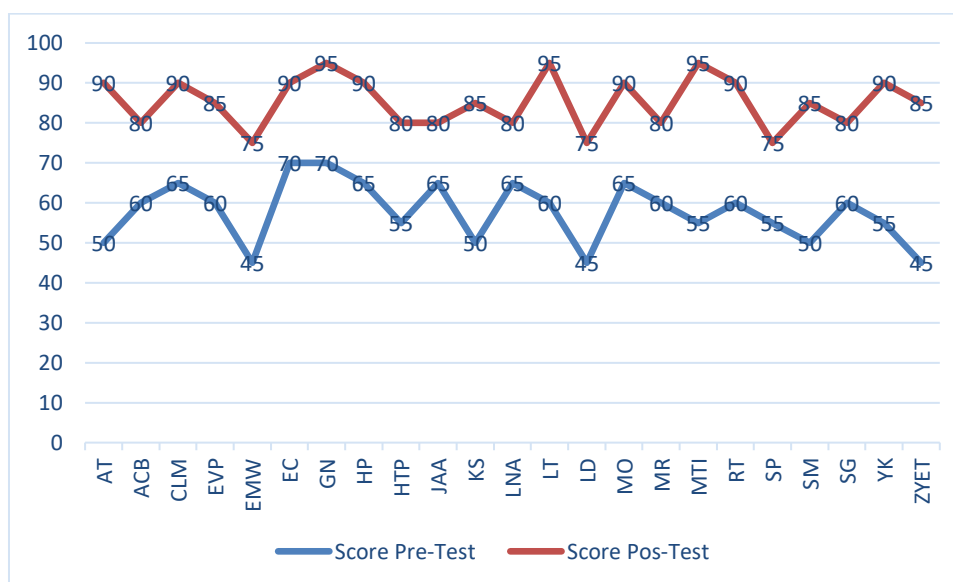
This outcome provides a summary of the test outcomes of the students, ranging from the pre-test results prior to the intervention to the post-test results following punctuation instruction. This research indicates that pupils' writing abilities have improved when punctuation is used with descriptive material. The researcher said that there were twenty multiple-choice items in each of the pre-test and post-test. The baseline score was determined by the pre-test, and the teaching of punctuation

and descriptive text before conducting the post-test. The scores have increased, which shows the efficacy of teaching about the use of punctuation in descriptive text. As you can see from the table below, the intervention significantly improved students' writing skills.

***Table 2. Students' Pretest and Posttest score***

<b>No</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Score</b>	
		<b>Pre-Test</b>	<b>Pos-Test</b>
1	AT	50	90
2	ACB	60	80
3	CLM	65	90
4	EVP	60	85
5	EMW	45	75
6	EC	70	90
7	GN	70	95
8	HP	65	90
9	HTP	55	80
10	JAA	65	80
11	KS	50	85
12	LNA	65	80
13	LT	60	95
14	LD	45	75
15	MO	65	90
16	MR	60	80
17	MTI	55	95
18	RT	60	90
19	SP	55	75

20	SM	50	85
21	SG	60	80
22	YK	55	90
23	ZYET	45	85



**Figure 1. Result of Pre-Test & Post-Test**

### **Statistical Analysis of Data**

The collected data has been statistically evaluated using descriptive statistics. The statistical study involved determining the means, standard deviations, and frequency distribution of scores for each test.

**Table 3. Frequency Distribution of Pre-Test**

Scores	Tally	Freq	Freq-%	Cum-Freq	Cum-%
70	II	2	8.7 %	23	100%
65	IIII	5	21.7%	21	91.3 %
60	IIII I	6	26.1%	16	69.6 %
55	IIII	4	17.4%	10	43.5 %
50	III	3	13%	6	26.1 %



45	III	3	13%	3	13 %
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Note :

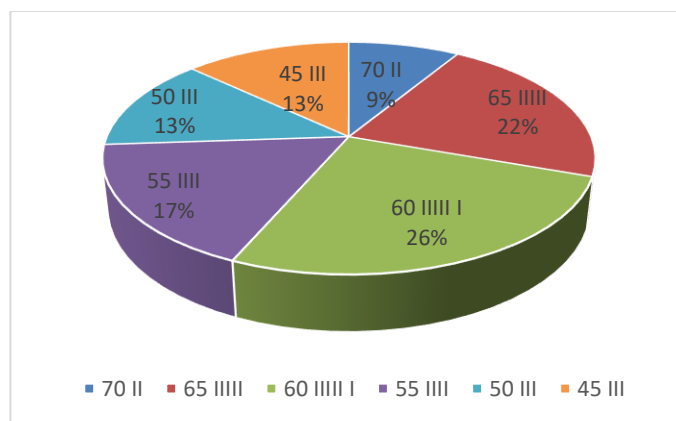
Freq- : Frequency

Cum-Freq : Cumulative Frequency

Cum-% : Comulative Percentage

The pre-test had a maximum score of 70 and a minimum score of 45. Out of the 23 individuals who took the pre-test, two (8.7%) achieved a score of 70. Five people (21.1%) received a score of 65. One participant (13%) received a score of 45, three (17.4%) received a score of 50, six (26.1%) received a score of 60, and four (17.4%) received a score of 55.

**Pitcure 1. Frequency distribution of pre-test**

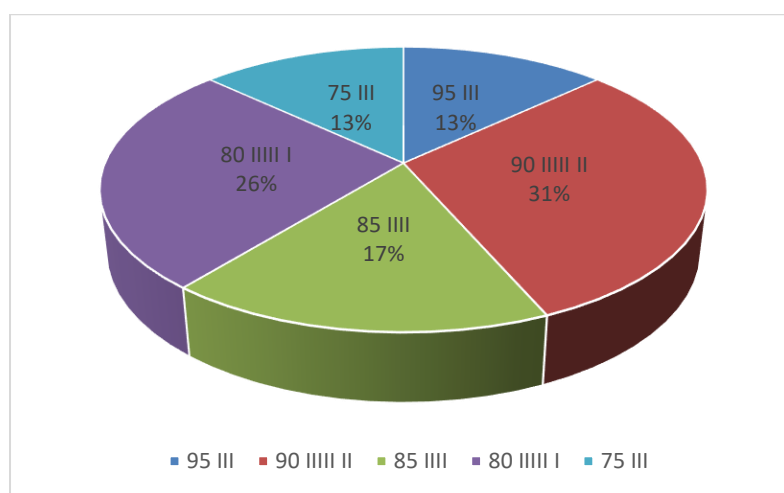


**Table 4. Frequency Distribution of Post-Test**

Scores	Tally	Freq	Freq-%	Cum-Freq	Cum-%
95	III	3	13 %	23	100%
90	IIII II	7	30.4%	20	87 %
85	IIII	4	17.4%	13	56.5 %
80	IIII I	6	26.1%	9	39 %
75	III	3	13%	3	13 %

Table 3 shows that the greatest score is 95 and the lowest is 75. Three (13%) and seven (30.4%) of the twenty-three participants who took the post-test received scores of 95 and 90, respectively. 4 (17.4%) obtained an 85, 6 (26.1%) score. got a score of 80, 3 (13%) got a score of 75.

**Pitcure 2. Frequency distribution of post-test**



**Computation of mean score and standard deviation**

To determine the mean and general deviation from one another, the pre- and post-test score numbers, as indicated in Table 4 above, are first added up and squared.

**Table 5. Sums of Pre-Test (X) and Post-Test (Y) scores**

<b>Total Number Of Student</b>	<b>Pre-test (X)</b>	$X^2$	<b>Post-test (Y)</b>	$Y^2$
N=23	1330	78200	1960	167950

It is mentioned in table 4, N= 23,  $\Sigma X = 1330$ ,  $\Sigma X^2 = 78200$ ,  $\Sigma Y = 1960$ ,  $\Sigma Y^2 = 167950$ . Based on these results: the mean and standard deviation of the pre-test and post-test scores were calculated.

The mean of Pre-test (X)

$$\bar{x} = \frac{\Sigma x}{N}$$

$$\bar{x} = \frac{1330}{23} = 57.82$$

The mean of post-test

$$y = \frac{1960}{23} = 85.22$$

The standard deviation of pre-test is :

$$s = \sqrt{\frac{\Sigma x^2}{N} - (\bar{x})^2}$$

$$S(x) = \sqrt{\frac{78200}{23} - (57,82)^2}$$

$$S(x) = \sqrt{3.400 - 3.343,16}$$

$$S(x) = \sqrt{57,84}$$

$$S(x) = 7,54$$

The standard deviation of the post-test is:

$$S(y) = \sqrt{\frac{167950}{23} - (85,22)^2}$$

$$S(y) = \sqrt{7.302,18 - 7.262,45}$$

$$S(y) = \sqrt{39,73}$$

$$S(x) = 6,30$$

The pre-test results obtained by the author show an average pre-test score of 57.82 and a standard deviation of 7.54 or relatively low, the highest score was seventy (70) achieved by two (2) students, the lowest score was four thirty five were achieved by three (3) students. When analyzing the pre-test scores, the author found that students' difficulties were caused by many factors, such as lack of vocabulary, lack of grammar knowledge, low interest in writing. Apart from that, there are also students who have difficulty understanding the rest of the text, making it difficult to understand the meaning of the text. As per Grellet (1990), "understanding a written text means

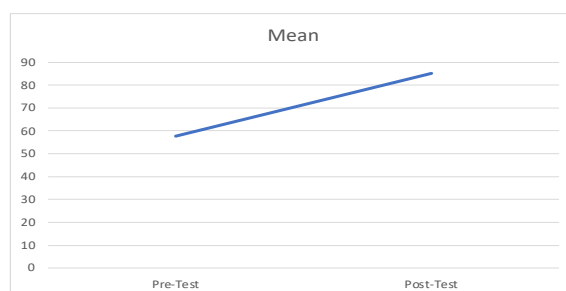
extracting and extracting information from that text as efficiently as possible." In this regard, students must develop concepts and describe all information related to an item (person, thing or place) so that it can assist readers get a clear picture.

The average post-test score was 85.22, with a standard deviation of 6.30, indicating that students had mastered the comprehension of descriptive texts. Three (3) students received the maximum score of ninety-five (95), while three students had the lowest score of seventy-five (75).

**Table 6. The mean and standard Deviation scores in Pre-Test And Post-Test**

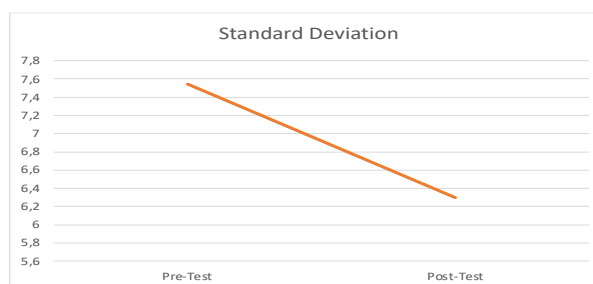
Note	Pre-Test	Post Test
Mean	57.82	85.22
Standard deviation	7.54	6.30

The data above reveals that numerous students' scores grew dramatically, in the pre-test the students' scores were low because pupils were unable to convey thoughts in the teaching and learning process. Therefore, using punctuation correctly in written descriptive text can help students learn more concepts and connect the information in the text to what they have already learned.



**Figure 2. student Means score curve from pre-test to post-test**

After receiving treatment, the pupils' average scores rose, as seen in Figure 1 above. Students' post-test average score was greater than their pre-test average.



**Figure 3. student Standard deviation curve from pre-test to post-test**

The pre-test standard deviation is typically higher than the post-test standard deviation, as shown in Figure 2 above. This indicates that students typically make very little errors on the post-test.

The study's findings indicate that a significant number of students continue to struggle with producing accurate and well-written descriptive texts. Additionally, some of the reasons why students struggle with producing descriptive texts include the use of the proper general structure, incoherence between sentences, improper punctuation, and a lack of vocabulary. Students must increase their vocabulary and practice in order to write well both within and outside of the classroom.

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