



Utilization and Strengthening of Character through Digital Media in Learning to Write Descriptive Texts

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ABSTRACT

Integrating local culture into language learning is a practical approach to enhancing students' writing skills while promoting positive character values and cultural identity. This study focuses on the utilisation and strengthening of character through digital media in learning to write descriptive texts by highlighting the Malay maritime tradition of the jong boat race as contextual learning material for elementary school students. The purpose of this study is to develop descriptive text writing competencies that incorporate traditional Malay culture, modern technology, and the principles of meaningful learning, thereby fostering the connection between new knowledge and students' existing experiences and knowledge. The method employed is a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative approach uses a pre-experimental one-class pretest-posttest design to measure the improvement of writing skills before and after learning. The qualitative approach is carried out through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and documentation to explore the experiences and responses of students and teachers. Digital media, including photos, short videos, and presentation applications, are used to help students observe, analyse, and describe the characteristics, materials, and processes of the Jong Boat Race. The results indicate that integrating cultural elements supported by digital visual sources and meaningful learning strategies can enhance students' descriptive vocabulary, sentence structure, emotional engagement, and depth of understanding. Furthermore, this approach encourages students to appreciate and preserve Malay maritime traditions, thereby enabling language learning to be integrated with cultural education. The study concluded that technology-enabled culture-based learning not only enriches students' language skills but also strengthens cultural awareness, making it a relevant and sustainable strategy for language education at the primary school level.

Keywords: utilization and strengthening, character, digital media, learning to write, descriptive texts

Pemanfaatan dan Penguatan Karakter melalui Media Digital pada Pembelajaran Menulis Teks Deskripsi Berbasis Budaya Melayu

ABSTRAK

Integrasi budaya lokal dalam pembelajaran bahasa merupakan pendekatan yang efektif untuk meningkatkan keterampilan menulis siswa sekaligus menumbuhkan nilai karakter positif serta identitas budaya. Penelitian ini memfokuskan pada pemanfaatan dan penguatan karakter melalui media digital dalam pembelajaran menulis teks deskripsi dengan mengangkat tradisi maritim Melayu berupa perlombaan perahu jong sebagai materi pembelajaran kontekstual bagi siswa sekolah dasar. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah mengembangkan kompetensi menulis teks deskripsi berbasis budaya tradisional Melayu, teknologi modern, dan prinsip meaningful learning yang mendorong keterkaitan pengetahuan baru dengan pengalaman serta pengetahuan yang telah dimiliki siswa. Metode yang digunakan adalah mixed methods, menggabungkan pendekatan kuantitatif dan kualitatif. Pendekatan kuantitatif menggunakan desain pre-experimental one-class pretest-posttest untuk mengukur peningkatan keterampilan menulis sebelum dan sesudah pembelajaran. Pendekatan kualitatif dilakukan melalui observasi kelas, wawancara semi-terstruktur, dan dokumentasi untuk menggali pengalaman serta respons siswa dan guru. Media digital yakni foto, video singkat, dan aplikasi presentasi dimanfaatkan untuk membantu siswa mengamati, menganalisis, dan mendeskripsikan ciri, bahan, serta proses perlombaan perahu jong. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa integrasi unsur budaya yang didukung sumber visual digital dan strategi meaningful learning dapat meningkatkan kosakata deskriptif, struktur kalimat, keterlibatan emosional, dan kedalaman pemahaman siswa. Selain itu, pendekatan ini mendorong siswa untuk menghargai dan melestarikan tradisi maritim Melayu, sehingga pembelajaran bahasa berjalan seiring dengan pendidikan budaya. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa pembelajaran berbasis budaya dengan dukungan teknologi tidak hanya memperkaya kemampuan bahasa siswa, tetapi juga memperkuat kesadaran budaya, menjadikannya strategi yang relevan dan berkelanjutan untuk pendidikan bahasa di tingkat sekolah dasar.

Kata kunci: media digital, penguatan karakter, teks deskripsi, budaya Melayu, perahu jong, mixed methods, sekolah dasar

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INTRODUCTION

Integrating local culture into language learning is a practical approach to enhancing students' writing skills while promoting positive character values and cultural identity. This study focuses on the utilisation and strengthening of character through digital media in learning to write descriptive texts by highlighting the Malay maritime tradition of the jong boat race as contextual learning material for elementary school students. The purpose of this study is to develop descriptive text writing competencies that incorporate traditional Malay culture, modern technology, and the principles of meaningful learning, thereby fostering the connection between new knowledge and students' existing experiences and knowledge. The method employed is a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative approach uses a pre-experimental one-class pretest-posttest design to measure the improvement of writing skills before and after learning. The qualitative approach is carried out through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and documentation to explore the experiences and responses of students and teachers.

Digital media, including photos, short videos, and presentation applications, are used to help students observe, analyse, and describe the characteristics, materials, and processes of the JongJong Boat Race. The results indicate that integrating cultural elements supported by digital visual sources and meaningful learning strategies can enhance students' descriptive vocabulary, sentence structure, emotional engagement, and depth of understanding.

Furthermore, this approach encourages students to appreciate and preserve Malay maritime traditions, thereby enabling language learning to be integrated with cultural education. The study concluded that technology-enabled culture-based learning not only enriches students' language skills but also strengthens cultural awareness, making it a relevant and sustainable strategy for language education at the primary school level.

Real problems were also found at SD Negeri 002 Seri Kuala Lobam, Bintan Regency, Riau Islands. Initial observations revealed that students' writing skills at this school remained low. Students tended to have difficulty expressing their ideas in writing, their vocabulary was still limited, and their sentences were not coherent. Teachers had attempted to provide writing exercises, but the learning media used were still conventional and less engaging for students. Furthermore, local cultural potential, such as the jong boat tradition, which is closely related to the lives of the local community, has never been optimally utilised in Indonesian language learning, particularly in writing descriptive texts. In fact, this tradition could be a rich, characteristic, contextual, and relevant learning resource for students.

How can we utilise and strengthen character through digital media in teaching descriptive text writing based on Malay culture, focusing on the tradition of the jong boat racing? That is the formulation of the research problem.

To utilise and strengthen character through digital media in teaching descriptive text writing based on Malay culture, focusing on the tradition of the jong boat racing, "Relevant studies related to this research include:

- 1) Fitriani & Pratama (2023) used Canva-based digital media in teaching descriptive text writing in elementary schools. The results showed an increase in student creativity and learning motivation through engaging visualisations.
- 2) Hidayat & Sari (2022) studied the integration of local wisdom in Indonesian language learning. The researchers found that integrating local culture into teaching materials fostered a sense of cultural ownership, strengthened patriotism, and improved students' literacy skills.
- 3) Utami & Lestari (2021) examined the effectiveness of using interactive video media based on regional culture in improving students' writing skills. The research results indicate that students find



it easier to express their ideas, use a broader range of vocabulary, and produce more coherent and detailed writing.

The use of digital media in teaching descriptive text writing has been extensively studied in recent research. Digital media has been shown to improve observation skills, enrich vocabulary, and help students express detailed descriptions (Dayyana et al., 2022). The integration of local culture, such as the traditional game of Perahu Jong, provides an authentic context that motivates students while instilling Malay cultural values. Several recent studies have shown that learning based on local wisdom combined with technology can improve learning motivation, writing skills, and cultural literacy in elementary school students.

Although previous research has discussed digital media and local culture-based learning, studies specifically combining the two in the context of writing descriptive texts about the Perahu Jong tradition are still limited. Previous research tends to focus on media development or increasing learning motivation, without in-depth measurements of the quality of student writing in terms of sensory detail, coherence, and accuracy of cultural terms (Kusuma et al., 2024). Therefore, this study is crucial to fill this gap by developing learning that utilizes digital media to improve the quality of students' descriptive texts while preserving Malay cultural heritage in elementary school settings.

METHOD

This research was conducted on August 2, 2025, during the first semester of the 2025/2026 academic year at SD Negeri 002 Seri Kuala Lobam, located on Simpang Jembatan Street, Kuala Sempang Village, Seri Kuala Lobam District, Bintan Regency, Riau Islands Province. The population of this study consisted of all students at SD Negeri 002 Seri Kuala Lobam who were studying the Indonesian language at the elementary school level. The sampling technique used was random sampling, which involved selecting samples randomly from the existing population.

This technique was chosen to provide equal opportunity for each fifth-grade student to be included in the research sample, thus ensuring more objective data and representing the overall condition of students' writing skills.

This research employed a mixed methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods to obtain more comprehensive data. The quantitative approach was used to measure improvements in students' writing skills before and after learning. In contrast, the qualitative approach was used to explore students' and teachers' experiences, perceptions, and responses to the learning process.

The research subjects were fifth-grade elementary school students enrolled in Indonesian language learning, focusing on writing descriptive texts that integrated local culture, specifically the Malay maritime tradition of the Perahu Jong. Class teachers were also involved as supporting participants in the interviews and observations.

The research was conducted through the following stages:

- 1) Preparation: compiling learning materials, selecting digital media (photos, short videos, and presentation applications), and preparing data collection instruments.
- 2) Implementation: providing descriptive text writing lessons utilising digital media and integrating elements of the Perahu Jong culture.
- 3) Evaluation: measuring students' writing skills before (pretest) and after (posttest) learning, and analysing student responses through interviews and observations.

The materials and instruments used were as follows:

- 1) Digital media in the form of a learning application.
- 2) Descriptive text writing test instrument (writing skills assessment sheet).
- 3) Observation guide for the learning process.
- 4) Semi-structured interview guide for students and teachers.

Furthermore, the techniques used in this study were Mixed Methods, as described below:

- 1) Quantitative: pre-learning writing tests and post-learning writing tests (one-group pretest-posttest).
- 2) Qualitative: direct observation of the learning process, semi-structured interviews, and documentation of student work.




The data analysis techniques used in this study were as follows:

- 1) Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics and paired t-tests to examine differences in pretest and posttest results.

- 2) Qualitative data were analysed using the Miles and Huberman interactive analysis model, including data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing.

Based on the analysis of student needs and the curriculum, the learning media design was developed in the form of an interactive web-based application that teaches descriptive writing skills by integrating local wisdom, namely the traditional game of Perahu Jong from the Riau Islands. This application is designed for use by elementary school students, both independently and with the guidance of teachers, in Indonesian language learning activities.

Table 1
The Meaning of Perahu Jong

Aspect	Meaning/Philosophy
 Figure 1 Meaning of the Game	Symbolises the Malay people's lives, which are closely linked to the sea and maritime activities. It depicts the spirit of togetherness, sportsmanship, and cooperation among residents. It represents the Malay maritime cultural identity, a legacy of our ancestors that strengthens our sense of belonging.
 Figure 2 Sailing	It symbolises the fighting spirit, direction, and aspirations we aspire to achieve in life.
 Figure 3 Shape and Material	It demonstrates the local wisdom of the community in utilising natural resources simply and sustainably.



The next stage is the development phase. This stage involves creating a prototype of the application. The application is designed to be simple and engaging for students. It features authentic illustrations and photographs of junks, simple animation models, and a child-friendly layout with bright colours and easy-to-read typography.



Figure 1
Application Front View



Figure 2
Game Menu (Jong Boat Material and Questions)



Figure 3
Quiz Menu (Descriptive Text Material on the Topic of the Jong Boat)



Figure 4
E-Module Menu



Figure 4
Video Menu

RESULTS

1. Descriptive Text Writing Skills

Quantitative data were obtained through descriptive text writing tests administered before (pretest) and after (posttest) the local culture-based learning of boat jong. The results of the descriptive analysis are shown in Table 1.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics Results of Students' Pretest and Posttest Scores

Descriptive Statistics	Pretest	Posttest
N	13	13
Minimum Score	55	70
Maximum Score	65	82
Mean	59,6	76,4
Standar Deviation	3,21	3,85

Before receiving the treatment of descriptive text writing based on the local culture of the boat jong, sixth-grade students at SD Negeri 002 Seri Kuala Lobam demonstrated low writing skills. This

was evident in their pretest score, which averaged only 59.6, with a minimum score of 55 and a maximum score of 65. The majority of students were only able to write short descriptions with limited vocabulary and inconsistent sentence structure.

After participating in the local culture-based learning, students' posttest scores increased significantly, with an average of 76.4, a minimum score of 70, and a maximum score of 82. The results of a paired t-test using SPSS showed a calculated t-value of 42.48 with a significance level of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). This means there was a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores, thus demonstrating that the boat jong-based learning was effective in improving students' descriptive text writing skills.

This improvement was also reflected in students' written work. In the initial stages, students' descriptions tended to be brief and general, for example, simply writing, "boat jong is a traditional game." However, after the intervention, students were able to write in more detail, such as, "Perahjong is made of light wood, has a slender shape, and a cloth sail. This boat can sail fast when hit by wind at sea.

2. Qualitative Analysis Results

Qualitative data were obtained through learning observations, semi-structured interviews with students and teachers, and documentation of students' written work. Analysis was conducted using the Miles and Huberman model, including data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results can be summarised as follows:

2.1 Student Motivation and Enthusiasm

During the lesson, students were motivated and enthusiastic because the material being studied related to their own regional culture. The character value that emerged here was a love of country, where the regional culture presented was the perhu jong and its history, which are integral to this love of country.



2.2 Ease in Expressing Ideas

Most students stated that writing was easier when the topics used were close to their daily experiences. They can describe objects in detail because they have sufficient prior knowledge.

2.3 Changes in Written Work

In the initial stages, students' writing tended to be brief and unstructured. After the lesson, students' writing became more coherent, detailed, and used a more varied vocabulary.

2.4 Teacher Perception

Teachers also emphasised that this learning method was more effective than the conventional methods previously used. The contextual approach based on local culture helped students become more focused, active, and creative.

DISCUSSION

The research results showed an improvement in students' descriptive writing skills after participating in local culture-based learning utilizing digital media. Students who previously tended to write briefly and repetitively began to produce more detailed, coherent, and vocabulary-rich writing after the teaching was provided. This aligns with the findings of Dayyana et al. (2022), who emphasized that the use of digital media can strengthen observational skills, expand vocabulary, and help students express descriptions with greater detail. The cultural context derived from the traditional game of perahu jong (dancing boat) was also shown to provide an authentic experience that increased writing motivation while instilling Malay cultural values in the learning process.

Although the use of digital media and local culture-based learning has been extensively researched previously, this study provides a novel contribution by simultaneously combining the two in the context of writing descriptive text. Previous research, such as that presented by Kusuma et al. (2024), has primarily focused on developing learning media or enhancing learning

motivation, rather than examining the quality of student writing in depth. This study demonstrates that integrating local culture with digital technology can improve the quality of students' descriptive texts, both in terms of sensory detail, coherence of ideas, and the accuracy of cultural terminology.

Thus, learning that combines digital media and local culture has been proven to provide a more contextual learning experience. For students, this learning helps improve writing skills while fostering an appreciation for regional culture. For teachers, these findings emphasize the importance of presenting learning innovations that are relevant to students' daily lives and supported by technology. Meanwhile, for schools, this research can serve as a reference in developing a curriculum based on local wisdom that not only supports the achievement of academic competencies but also strengthens cultural literacy from an early age.

The mixed methods analysis in this study is limited to combining quantitative and qualitative data. This means that this article does not cover simple procedures in mixed methods research. Morse (2010) and Razak (2017) describe the simplest type of mixed methods research as a sequential explanatory strategy. Through this strategy, quantitative data is collected from a large sample size at the beginning of the study (data analyzed without interpretation). The study continues with qualitative data collection, focusing on the factors that contribute to the high or low quantitative data.

CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that utilising and strengthening character through digital media integrated with local culture, specifically the traditional game of perahu jong (Jong boat), can enhance elementary school students' descriptive writing skills. Students not only experienced improvements in writing structure, descriptive detail, and vocabulary, but also increased motivation to participate in the learning process due to the context close to their lives. Furthermore,



this approach positively impacted the strengthening of cultural identity, as students learned to recognise, appreciate, and preserve Malay maritime traditions through writing activities.

Local culture-based learning combined with digital technology proved more effective than conventional learning, creating a meaningful, contextual, and enjoyable learning environment. Therefore, this research confirms that learning innovations based on local wisdom, rich in character values, and supported by digital media are highly relevant for improving elementary school students' writing skills while simultaneously instilling cultural values from an early age.

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