

English Writing Instructional Material for Secondary School Students: A Needs Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This descriptive qualitative study explores the English teaching writing materials needs analysis for secondary students in Indonesia. This study aimed to: (1) analyze the writing teaching materials currently used, (2) identify the specific needs for teaching writing materials, and (3) suggest recommendations for teaching writing materials. The study included 152 secondary school students and one English teacher as the research participants. A questionnaire, interview, and documentation were used as research instruments to collect the data. Findings revealed that the writing teaching materials currently used had met various important aspects of writing skills. The teaching materials were also in accordance with the government curriculum (*Merdeka Curriculum*) and basic competencies, so that they could help students achieve the expected learning objectives. Furthermore, although the materials used generally aligned with the curriculum and were considered effective, several issues persisted, including limited vocabulary mastery and disparities in students' writing abilities. The study also revealed that the students required instructional materials that could foster creativity, such as storytelling and article-writing exercises. Based on these findings, some recommendations were proposed, such as providing clearer instructions, incorporating contextualized examples, and developing structured yet creative writing exercises to support student learning.

Keywords: Need Analysis, Writing Instruction, Teaching Material

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INTRODUCTION

Teaching materials are materials specifically designed for learning purposes and play an important role in the classroom learning process. These materials consist of content that is systematically arranged to create an environment or atmosphere that enables students to learn effectively. In classroom learning, teaching materials are essential because interesting and flexible materials can benefit both educators and students. For educators, teaching materials help save teaching time, shift the teacher's role to that of a facilitator, and create an efficient and interactive learning environment. Meanwhile, for students, they promote independent learning, expand opportunities for continuous study, and motivate them to learn better (Bahraeni, 2017).

Teaching materials play a crucial role in achieving educational goals. Well-designed materials must be arranged systematically and adapted to students' needs to ensure effective and efficient learning. By understanding students' needs, English instruction can be directed toward equipping learners with comprehensive communication skills—both oral and written. The four primary language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—are central to developing students' English proficiency. These skills are interconnected and should be developed in a balanced way to enable students to communicate effectively. Among these, writing is often regarded as the most challenging. In terms of skills, creating a coherent, fluent, and extended piece of writing is likely the most demanding task in language learning (Alidoost, 2014).

Writing is considered difficult for language learners due to the complexities involved in generating and organizing ideas, selecting appropriate vocabulary, constructing sentences and paragraphs, and composing them into coherent and intelligible texts (Tuan, 2011). Writing is not only about producing grammatically correct and precise sentences, but also involves creative thinking skills to filter out irrelevant information. Because of this, students often find writing difficult, resulting in low interest in writing activities. Based on interviews with secondary school students, it was found that students considered writing to be the most difficult English skill. The main difficulties in writing included limited vocabulary and grammar mastery. Regarding the current writing teaching materials, students reported that the materials were generally helpful, particularly the example of texts, but some parts were considered too difficult, and the exercises were insufficient. As additional support, students suggested more writing practice, simpler grammar explanations, and more frequent speaking opportunities (Observation, 2024). This finding aligns with the principles of the *Merdeka Curriculum*, which is now being implemented by the Indonesian government, and emphasizes student-centered learning. The *Merdeka Curriculum* gives teachers the autonomy to innovate and design materials tailored to the students' needs (Indrayani, 2022). This allows learners to develop their interests and talents while gaining meaningful learning experiences.

Based on previous research with the Indonesian students' context, students' needs in writing materials varied widely depending on their educational level and learning environment. In discussing the students' needs for English writing materials, studies by Sumarsono (2017) and Ilham (2020) reveal interesting similarities and differences. Both studies emphasize the importance of understanding students' needs in the writing learning process. Sumarsono found that students desired a structured approach to writing, including the role of teachers as guides and providers of feedback. This aligns with Ilham's findings, who also emphasized the need for instructional models appropriate to students' characteristics and needs. Both agreed that the use of relevant and engaging materials—such as pictures and supporting topics—can enhance students' engagement in learning. However, differences emerged in the studies' focus and context. Sumarsono focused on fifth-semester students at the University of Muhammadiyah Mataram, while Ilham took a broader scope, covering students across different semesters. This indicates that although similar challenges may be faced, specific student contexts can influence their needs. For example, second-semester students may require more reinforcement in basic skills, while fifth-semester students focus on developing more complex academic abilities.

Overall, both studies complement one another in providing insight into students' challenges and needs in learning to write in English. They stress the importance of appropriate instructional approaches to enhance students' motivation and writing skills, while also showing that educational level and context influence specific needs. Therefore, this study aims to provide a broader picture of the students' need for teaching writing

materials within the secondary school context. By understanding this specific need, teachers can develop more relevant and effective materials. This, in turn, will help improve students' interest and writing abilities, preparing them for future challenges. Regarding the purpose of this study, there are three research questions proposed: (1) What are the current writing teaching materials being used?, (2) What are the specific needs for writing teaching materials for secondary school students?, and (3) What are the recommendations for effective writing teaching materials for secondary school students?

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach with a case study method to explore the needs of students regarding English teaching materials for secondary school students. The research was conducted in a natural setting, where the researcher acted as the primary instrument of data collection through triangulation, including interviews, questionnaires, and document analysis. Data were analyzed inductively, focusing on meaning rather than generalization. The case study design enabled an in-depth investigation of the real-life context and provided a comprehensive understanding of the teaching material needs, perceptions, and challenges faced by both students and teachers'

FINDING

The Writing Teaching Materials Currently Used

To answer the first research question, a questionnaire was employed. The questionnaire consisted of seven questions covering some criteria such as: the quality of writing teaching materials, the suitability of teaching materials to students' writing ability levels, the motivation provided by the teaching materials, the clarity of instructions and guidance in the teaching materials, the adequacy of examples in the teaching materials, the level of difficulty in using the teaching materials, and the relevance of the teaching materials to the topics and needs of everyday writing. The overall result of the questionnaire is presented in the Table. 1.

Table 1. The Questionnaire Result of Writing Teaching Materials Currently Used

No.	Apects	Category				
1	The quality of the writing teaching materials	Very good	Good	Quite good	Less good	Not good
	<i>Response rate</i>	n = 39	n = 57	n = 51	n = 5	n = 0
		(25,7%)	(37,5%)	(33,6%)	(3,3%)	(0%)
2	The appropriateness of the students' writing ability level	Very appropriate	Appropriate	Quite appropriate	Less appropriate	Not appropriate
	<i>Response rate</i>	n = 39	n = 56	n = 51	n = 6	n = 0
		(25,7%)	(36,8%)	(33,6%)	(3,9%)	(0%)
3	Impact on students' motivation	Very motivating	Motivating	Quite motivating	Less motivating	Not motivating
	<i>Response rate</i>	n = 55	n = 50	n = 41	n = 6	n = 0
		(36,2%)	(32,9%)	(27%)	(3,9%)	(0%)
4	The clarity of the	Very clear	Clear	Quite clear	Less clear	Not clear

	instructions					
	<i>Response rate</i>	n = 42	n = 58	n = 46	n = 6	n = 0
		(27,6%)	(38,2%)	(30,3%)	(3,9%)	(0%)
5	The variability of the texts with different genres	Very sufficient	Enough	Less	Very less	Not available
	<i>Response rate</i>	n = 56	n = 81	n = 12	n = 3	n = 0
		(36,8%)	(53,3%)	(7,9%)	(2%)	(0%)
6	The difficulty in using teaching materials	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
	<i>Response rate</i>	n = 6	n = 20	n = 83	n = 35	n = 8
		(3,9%)	(13,2%)	(54,6%)	(23%)	(5,3%)
7	The relevance to the writing learning process	Very relevant	Relevant	Quite relevant	Less relevant	Not relevant
	<i>Response rate</i>	n = 31	n = 52	n = 67	n = 2	n = 0
		(20,4%)	(34,2%)	(44,1%)	(1,3%)	(0%)

Based on Table 1. It can be explained that most students rated the materials as “good” (37.5%) or “quite good” (33.6%). They felt the content was suitable for their level (36.8% said “appropriate”), motivating (36.2% said “very motivating”), and clear in instruction (38,2%). However, they also suggested that the examples could be improved and admitted they still experienced difficulties using the materials (54.6% answered “sometimes”). The teaching materials were also considered “quite relevant” to the writing learning process (44,1%).

Meanwhile, based on the results of document analysis, it can be explained that the materials had met various important aspects in assessing quality. First, the teaching materials were in accordance with the applicable curriculum and basic competencies, so that they could help students achieve the expected learning objectives. In addition, the instructions contained in the materials were delivered clearly and easily understood by students, which supported the readability and ease of implementing learning activities. The materials had also been prepared by considering the level of readability that was appropriate to the students' abilities, so that they were neither too difficult nor too easy. In terms of diversity, the materials provided various types of writing exercises that covered various aspects of writing skills, and were supported by relevant writing models and learning media. Finally, the teaching materials were also assessed as being in accordance with the needs and interests of students, because the content of the exercises presented was able to attract students' attention and encourage active involvement in the learning process. Overall, the teaching materials used showed a good level of compliance with the assessment indicators analyzed.

The Specific Needs for Writing Teaching Materials for Secondary School Students

To answer the second research question, a questionnaire was employed. This questionnaire consisted of five questions covering the topics of important topics in writing skills, the types of writing exercises that are most helpful, the main difficulties in writing, the suitability of writing teaching materials to students' needs, and the types of support or additional materials needed. The overall result of the questionnaire is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The Questionnaire Result of the Specific Needs for Teaching Writing Materials for Secondary School Students

No.	Aspects	Category				
		Writing fictional stories	Writing descriptions of places or people	Writing articles	Writing formal and informal letters	Other
1	Types of writing topics					
	<i>Response rate</i>	n = 53 (34,9%)	n = 30 (19,7%)	n = 40 (26,3%)	n = 29 (19,1%)	n = 0 (0%)
2	Types of writing exercises	Essay writing exercises	Letter writing exercises	Short story writing exercises	Grammar and sentence structure exercises	Other
	<i>Response rate</i>	n = 26 (17,1%)	n = 13 (8,6%)	n = 61 (40,1%)	n = 51 (33,6%)	n = 1 (0,7%)
3	Main difficulties in writing in English	Difficulty finding ideas for writing	Difficulty organizing the structure and organization of writing	Difficulty in using correct grammar	Difficulty choosing vocabulary	Other
	<i>Response rate</i>	n = 29 (19,1%)	n = 25 (16,4%)	n = 76 (50%)	n = 22 (14,5%)	n = 0 (0%)
4	Suitability with the students' learning needs	Very satisfying	Satisfying	Quite satisfying	Less satisfying	Not satisfying
	<i>Response rate</i>	n = 44 (28,9%)	n = 50 (32,9%)	n = 50 (32,9%)	n = 6 (3,9%)	n = 2 (1,3%)
5	Types of support or additional materials in teaching writing	Examples of good and relevant writing	Step-by-step guides for writing	Additional exercises with feedback	Visual media such as pictures or videos	Other
	<i>Response rate</i>	n = 61 (40,1%)	n = 50 (32,9%)	n = 18 (11,8%)	n = 21 (13,8%)	n = 2 (1,4%)

Based on the student questionnaire results presented in Table 2, the majority of students (34.9%) considered *writing fictional stories* as the most important topic to learn in writing skills, followed by *writing articles* (26.3%) and *writing descriptions of places or people* (19.7%). This indicates that students are more interested in narrative and descriptive text types. On the other hand, the teacher stated that the most important topic was *writing descriptions of places or people*. This shows a gap between students' interests and the teacher's perspective in selecting writing topics. In terms of the most helpful writing activities, most students preferred *short story writing exercises* (40.1%) and *grammar and sentence structure exercises*

(33.6%), highlighting the importance of combining creative writing with structural language practice. The teacher also agreed that grammar and sentence structure practice were the most effective. Regarding writing difficulties, half of the students (50%) admitted that using correct grammar was the most challenging aspect, followed by finding ideas to write (19.1%). This was also supported by the teacher's interview, which revealed that students had weak vocabulary and often struggled to understand previously taught grammar topics. When asked about the suitability of the current teaching materials, most students felt that the materials were fairly appropriate for their learning needs (32.9% chose "satisfying" and another 32.9% "quite satisfying"), although a few students felt unsatisfied (5.2%). Students suggested improvements such as the addition of relevant sample texts (40.1%) and step-by-step writing guides (32.9%) as additional support. The teacher also emphasized the importance of using visual media such as pictures or videos to assist students in writing lessons.

Effective Writing Teaching Materials Recommendations for Secondary School Students

To answer the third research question, a questionnaire was employed. The questionnaire aimed to obtain some recommendations for effective writing teaching materials. This questionnaire contains four questions covering aspects of teaching materials that need to be improved, types of writing exercises that are more effective, methods of presenting interesting teaching materials, and additional support needed for teaching writing. The overall result of the questionnaire is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. The Questionnaire Result of Effective Teaching Writing Materials Recommendations for Secondary School Students

No.	Aspects	Category				
		Quality and relevance of writing texts	Clarity of instructions and guidance	Types of writing exercises provided	Availability of supporting media	Other
1	Types of writing materials					
	<i>Response rate</i>	n = 60 (39,5%)	n = 42 (27,6%)	n = 26 (17,1%)	n = 24 (15,8%)	n = 0 (0%)
2	Types of writing exercises	Creative writing exercises (stories, poems, etc.)	Functional writing exercises (formal letters, articles, etc.)	Writing exercises with immediate feedback	Exercises with step-by-step guidance	Other
	<i>Response rate</i>	n = 80 (52,6%)	n = 29 (19,1%)	n = 14 (9,2%)	n = 29 (19,1%)	n = 0 (0%)
3	Types of teaching activities/methods	Providing real-life examples of different types of writing	Using visual and audio media	Presenting materials in an interactive format	Providing exercises relevant to everyday	Other

					life	
	<i>Response rate</i>	n = 98 (64,5%)	n = 25 (16,4%)	n = 14 (9,2%)	n = 15 (9,9%)	n = 0 (0%)
4	Types of additional support in teaching writing	Additional sessions with teacher feedback	Online resources or writing learning applications	Guidebooks or additional materials	Discussion groups or peer learning	Other
	<i>Response rate</i>	n = 52 (34,2%)	n = 27 (17,8%)	n = 48 (31,6%)	n = 25 (16,4%)	n = 0 (0%)

Based on the student questionnaire results presented in Table 3, some recommendations for improving the materials included better and more relevant examples (39.5%), clearer instructions (27.6%), and more engaging writing exercises. Most students (52.6%) preferred creative writing tasks like stories and poems, and suggested presenting materials in a more attractive way with real-life examples and visual media. They also hoped for extra sessions with teacher feedback (34.2%) and additional learning guides in the form of books or online applications.

Additionally, based on the results of the interview with the teacher, it can be explained that the main challenges in teaching writing included students' limited vocabulary and the varying levels of reading and writing abilities within the same class. The teacher has attempted to overcome these issues through vocabulary games to increase student participation. While additional training for teachers was not deemed necessary, the teacher stressed that students' motivation was a key factor in writing instruction success.

DISCUSSION

Based on the research findings, the quality of the writing teaching materials is in the good to fairly good category. This shows that, in general, the teaching materials have met the eligibility standards in supporting writing learning. In terms of suitability to the level of student ability, the materials were appropriate, although there were still a small number of students who felt that they were not suitable. This shows that the approach used is relatively adaptive to student abilities, but additional flexibility is still needed to accommodate individual differences. Students' motivation towards the teaching materials is also quite high. Many students feel that the materials used encourage them to learn to write better. This is in line with Krashen's view that motivation is an important affective factor in second language acquisition, and that interesting and appropriate material will strengthen students' motivation in the learning process (Krashen 1982).

In terms of clarity of instructions, the instructions contained in the materials are quite clear and helpful in the writing process. This is important because, according to Hyland, students need to be explicitly guided in understanding the structure and genre of writing so that they are able to develop coherent writing (Hyland 2003). This clarity is also reinforced by the examples in the material, which, according to most students, are sufficient to help them understand how to write correctly. Providing relevant and contextual examples is one of the basic principles in developing effective teaching materials, according to Tomlinson (Tomlinson 2011).

Regarding the improvement aspects of the teaching materials, the relevance of the material to the students' needs could still be improved. Although most considered the material to be relevant, students' aspirations for more contextual and applicable material

showed that the preparation of the material should involve a more in-depth mapping of student needs, as suggested by Nation in his approach to developing reading and writing materials (Nation 2009). In terms of the use of teaching materials, teachers find it difficult to adjust teaching materials to the very varied levels of students' ability. This reflects the need for more adaptive and contextual teaching materials. Tomlinson emphasized that effective teaching materials must be relevant to the needs and levels of students' abilities, and be able to facilitate meaningful learning (Tomlinson 2011).

The study also revealed that student motivation was a key factor in successful learning. This statement is consistent with Dornyei's theory of motivation in language learning, which states that students' internal motivation has a significant influence on their success in learning a foreign language (Dornyei 2001). The teaching materials used need to present examples of texts that are more representative, contextual, and in accordance with the type of writing that students want to master. Tomlinson stated that examples in teaching materials must be authentic and relevant in order to maximize the learning process and student involvement emotionally and cognitively (Tomlinson 2011).

Regarding the form of writing exercises, students and teachers both suggested the use of creative writing exercises, such as writing stories or poetry, as a more effective form of learning. In addition, exercises with step-by-step guidance are also considered important to help students compose writing systematically. This recommendation is in line with Hyland's view, which emphasizes the importance of writing exercises that not only channel ideas but also guide students to understand the structure of the text gradually and continuously (Hyland 2003).

CONCLUSION

The writing teaching materials currently used are generally appropriate and aligned with the *Merdeka Curriculum*, which is now being implemented by the Indonesian government, especially in guiding students to write recount texts. However, several challenges remain, such as low vocabulary mastery, limited grammar understanding, and the need for more engaging, contextual, and adaptive materials. Students also require clearer instructions, authentic examples, and supportive media. To improve effectiveness, teaching materials should be developed creatively with step-by-step guidance, visual/audio aids, digital resources, and regular feedback. These enhancements can better meet students' diverse needs and gradually improve their writing skills in a more comprehensive and meaningful way.

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