

Improving Narrative Paragraph Writing Abilities Through Inquiry Method: A Classroom Action Research Study

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Article history: Received February 20, 2026; revised March 25, 2026; accepted April 29, 2026

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to obtain data on improving the ability to write narrative paragraphs using the inquiry method of class X students of SMK Negeri 1 Siabu. By implementing this study, it is hoped that it will be known whether by applying the inquiry method in Indonesian language learning, students' writing abilities can be improved. This study uses a classroom action research method with the aim of improving and enhancing the quality of learning. Data collection tools were taken through tests aimed at class X students of SMK Negeri 1 Siabu in the 2025-2026 academic year. The sample for this study was aimed at classes X-2 and X-4 with a total of 49 students consisting of two classes. Based on the results of classroom action research that has been carried out in two cycles with the use of legend stories in Indonesian language learning for class X students of SMK Negeri 1 Siabu in the 2025-2026 academic year, it can be concluded that there is an increase in the ability to write narrative paragraphs in class X students of SMK Negeri 1 Siabu in the 2025-2026 academic year. After implementing learning with the inquiry method in Indonesian language learning. This can be seen from the average value of students' ability to write narrative paragraphs which continues to increase in cycle I, the average value of students' writing ability is 62.59 with student learning completeness of 28.57% while in cycle II the average value of students' ability increases to 86.42 with learning completeness of 95.91%, when compared to the KKM which set at 75 with learning completion of 80%.

Keywords: Writing Skills, Narrative Paragraphs, Inquiry Method

I. INTRODUCTION

Language is the primary foundation for communication and information dissemination across all human contexts. The quality of language proficiency, both oral and written, significantly influences individual success across educational, professional, and social dimensions. Within educational systems, writing ability represents a fundamental competency that students must master at every educational level. This essential skill encompasses not only the mechanical transcription of thoughts but also the organized, coherent expression of ideas in written form that readers can comprehend and appreciate (Alvarez-Galvez et al., 2025).

Writing is one of the most difficult language competencies for students to acquire, requiring sustained effort and systematic instruction. Unlike speaking, listening, and reading, which develop somewhat naturally through exposure and practice, writing demands the deliberate cultivation of complex cognitive and metacognitive processes. Students must simultaneously manage multiple dimensions, including ideation, organization, linguistic selection, syntactic construction, and technical accuracy in spelling and punctuation. This multifaceted complexity explains why students frequently exhibit resistance toward writing assignments and demonstrate persistent difficulties in producing coherent written discourses (Ningrum & Agustina, 2025).

In the Indonesian language curriculum, paragraph writing is a cornerstone skill, providing the foundational unit for all extended written compositions. A paragraph is a unified collection of logically connected sentences that develops a single central idea through explanation, exemplification, or argumentation. Among the paragraph types, narrative paragraphs hold particular pedagogical value, as they enable students to recount events, convey personal experiences, and transmit information in chronologically organized sequences. Narrative writing engages multiple cognitive operations: students must recall or imagine events, sequence them logically, select appropriate descriptive language, and construct coherent prose that enables readers to visualize and understand the described occurrences (Marino Sihombing & Dumaris E. Silalahi, 2025).

During preliminary observations at SMK Negeri 1 Siabu, the researcher identified persistent challenges in students' narrative paragraph composition. Many students had difficulty developing central ideas into logically

sequenced, chronologically coherent sentences. Their writing often appears disorganized and random, with insufficient focus on critical information and limited use of descriptive details that would enrich narrative discourse. Consequently, the information conveyed in their narrative paragraphs remained unclear, unengaging, and inadequately representative of the intended events or experiences. This limited narrative proficiency directly compromises students' capacity to fulfill a fundamental communication objective: conveying experiences and events in written form that readers comprehend and appreciate.

Multiple factors contribute to this documented deficiency in the ability to write narrative paragraphs. First, the instructional methods employed in many classrooms remain insufficiently effective in stimulating critical thinking and active student engagement during the composition process. Second, traditional teacher-centered pedagogical approaches provide limited opportunities for students to explore independently, discover information, and experiment with diverse linguistic expressions. This passive learning stance inhibits the development of autonomous writing competence. Third, students frequently demonstrate an incomplete understanding of narrative paragraph structure, employ limited vocabulary variation, and receive insufficient writing practice to develop fluency and confidence. Fourth, many students exhibit minimal intrinsic motivation toward writing instruction, often voicing complaints when assigned composition tasks and reporting difficulties in sentence construction, vocabulary acquisition, and idea development.

Addressing these challenges requires the implementation of innovative pedagogical approaches that actively engage students as agents of their own learning. The inquiry method represents a potentially transformative approach. Inquiry-based learning positions students as active investigators who ask questions, gather information, analyze evidence, and construct knowledge through systematic exploration and discoveries. In the context of narrative paragraph writing, the inquiry method can facilitate students' understanding of narrative structure, enable the identification of significant information requiring inclusion, support systematic idea development, and promote the use of descriptive, engaging language. Through inquiry processes, students engage in critical thinking, formulate questions, collect information, analyze data, and present findings in coherent, systematic, informative narrative prose that successfully conveys the intended meaning to readers (Rauf et al., 2022).

This investigation examined the effectiveness of inquiry method implementation in enhancing narrative paragraph writing ability among secondary vocational students. This research specifically investigates whether the deliberate application of inquiry-based pedagogy in Indonesian language instruction can facilitate measurable improvement in students' narrative writing competence, as evidenced by enhanced paragraph quality across six evaluative dimensions and an increased proportion of students achieving established competency standards. By documenting the trajectory of improvement across two instructional cycles, this study aims to provide empirical evidence regarding the efficacy of inquiry-based approaches for developing student writing competence and contribute to the theoretical and practical knowledge base informing Indonesian language pedagogy (Alfridha Dwi Putri, 2024).

Writing constitutes the transcription and depiction of graphic symbols representing language in a form comprehensible to others who share an understanding of that linguistic system and its graphic representation. More broadly, writing represents purposeful communication that operates according to established conventions and disciplinary practices. The written product serves as the sole medium through which a writer conveys messages to readers who cannot simultaneously access the author's vocal inflection, gestural emphasis, or clarifying elaboration. This mediated communication demands particular precision and clarity, as permanent written text cannot be immediately modified in response to reader confusion (Peresada, 2024).

Writing is profoundly important in educational contexts because it facilitates learner thinking, enables critical reasoning, deepens perception and comprehension of relationships, and organizes experiences into coherent patterns. Writing allows individuals to externalize their internal thoughts, subject those thoughts to examination and revision, and communicate refined understandings to audiences. Consequently, writing instruction is essential for developing student thinking, articulating ideas, and solving complex problems.

Narrative paragraphs specifically present information through a chronologically organized description of events involving characters, settings, and action sequences. Narrative writing differs from merely listing events; it demonstrates an understanding of cause-effect relationships, character motivation, and narrative structure. Narrative paragraphs serve the fundamental communicative purpose of conveying information about occurrences, whether factual (historical events, biographies) or imaginative (fiction, folk tales, legends). The capacity to compose coherent narratives represents essential literacy that extends throughout educational progression and into professional and personal communication contexts (Saripah et al., 2025).

Effective narrative paragraphs provide evidence of six critical dimensions. Title-content alignment ensures that the paragraph content directly addresses the proposed topic. Chronological sequencing arranges events in

a logical temporal or spatial order, facilitating comprehension. Diction refers to the selection of vocabulary that is appropriate, precise, and engaging. Spelling and punctuation accuracy enable reader comprehension and demonstrate respect for the conventions. Cohesion and coherence describe the logical connections between sentences and the clear development of central ideas. Neatness in presentation facilitates reading and demonstrates professionalism (Park et al., 2025).

The inquiry method is a pedagogical approach that emphasizes active and systematic student engagement in investigation, information gathering, and knowledge construction. Rather than passively receiving teacher explanations, students under inquiry-based instruction actively seek, research, and discover understanding through questioning, collecting evidence, analyzing, and hypothesis testing. The inquiry method positions students as investigators who examine phenomena through rigorous intellectual processes, ultimately formulating conclusions supported by evidence.

The inquiry method develops student commitment to learning through purposeful engagement and persistence in seeking and discovering knowledge. This method cultivates active, creative, and innovative attitudes that are essential for sustained intellectual development. Through inquiry processes, students maximize their learning potential by exploring individually and collaboratively, formulating and testing hypotheses, and experiencing authentic discoveries of important understandings. Additionally, inquiry-based approaches accommodate diverse learning styles and allow students with advanced abilities to pursue extended investigations without being constrained by students proceeding at a slower pace (Putra & Cimari, 2024).

Inquiry-based learning emphasizes student thinking proceeding systematically, logically, and critically, thereby developing intellectual capability as a component of overall mental processes. The method stages progress through orientation, establishing a responsive learning environment, problem formulation, engaging students with intellectually challenging situations, hypothesis development, generating provisional explanations, data collection, gathering information to test propositions, hypothesis testing, determining which explanations find support, and conclusion formulation, describing discoveries emerging from systematic investigation (Ditingki et al., 2025).

The inquiry method has acknowledged strengths and limitations. Strengths include the balanced development of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions; accommodation of individual learning preferences; alignment with contemporary learning psychology emphasizing experience-based behavior change; and capacity to serve advanced learners without hindrance from slower learners. Limitations include the demand for students' psychological readiness and willingness to investigate, reduced effectiveness in large classes, and potential student disappointment when familiar instructional approaches are replaced with unfamiliar inquiry processes. These limitations can be addressed through careful attention to student characteristics and differentiated instructional support.

II. METHODS

A. *Research Design*

This investigation employed a classroom action research (CAR) design, utilizing the Kemmis and McTaggart model. Action research systematically examines educational practices with the explicit goal of improving learning outcomes through iterative cycles of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. Each cycle consists of four phases: in the planning phase, researchers design specific interventions aligned with identified problems; during implementation, interventions are conducted according to specified procedures; observation involves systematic documentation of processes and outcomes; reflection entails evaluation of results and determination of necessary adjustments for subsequent cycles (Creswell, 2021).

The study encompassed two instructional cycles and a pre-cycle baseline measurement phase. The pre-cycle phase established baseline conditions and student writing ability prior to the intervention. Cycle I implemented narrative writing instruction utilizing the inquiry method through the analysis of legend narratives, with video presentations and structured writing tasks. Cycle II continued inquiry-based instruction with similar processes but different legend texts, allowing for the investigation of intervention consistency and cumulative effects across instructional sessions.

B. *Participants*

The study involved Class X students at SMK Negeri 1 Siabu during the 2025-2026 academic year. While the larger population comprised 96 students across four classes (X-1, X-2, X-3, and X-4), the research sample consisted of 49 students from classes X-2 and X-4, selected through random sampling procedures to ensure representativeness. The class composition reflected typical secondary vocational education demographics: students aged 15-17 years with varied linguistic proficiencies and writing experiences.

C. Data Collection Instruments

Written narrative paragraph assessments were the primary data source. Students wrote narrative paragraphs in response to legend-based prompts presented in video and textual formats. Assessments utilized a standardized rubric evaluating six dimensions: title-content alignment (30 points maximum), chronological event sequencing (20 points), diction appropriateness (20 points), spelling and punctuation accuracy (10 points), cohesion and coherence (10 points), and writing neatness (10 points), yielding a total score of 100. Score interpretation classified achievement as exceptional (90-100), good (80-89), satisfactory (70-79), marginal (60-69), or inadequate (below 60).

The established criterion for learning competency (KKM) was 75 points, with an institutional target of 80% student achievement of this standard. This standard aligns with national Indonesian language competency expectations and represents mastery of the fundamentals of narrative paragraph writing (Sugiyono, 2019).

Observations provided supplementary qualitative data documenting student engagement, participation, question formulation, collaborative interactions, and observable attitudes toward writing activities during each instructional cycle.

D. Data Analysis Procedures

Quantitative data analysis employed descriptive statistics to compute the average student scores, percentage of students achieving the competency criterion, and percentage improvement across measurement phases. The formula for calculating mean scores was: $\bar{X} = \Sigma X/N$, where \bar{X} represents the mean, ΣX is the sum of all scores, and N indicates the number of students. Learning completion percentages were calculated as follows: $P = (\text{number of students scoring } \geq 75) / (\text{total number of students}) \times 100\%$. The percentage improvement from pre-cycle to post-intervention was calculated as follows: $P = [(\text{Cycle II score} - \text{Pre-cycle score}) / \text{Pre-cycle score}] \times 100\%$.

Qualitative observational data were organized into thematic descriptions of student engagement patterns, question quality, collaborative interactions, and behavioral changes across the cycles (Arikunto, 2017).

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Pre-Cycle Baseline Findings

Before implementing inquiry-based instruction, the students completed unassisted narrative paragraph compositions. Without preliminary instruction on narrative structure, students were assigned to write a legend narrative that they knew. The results indicated substantial initial difficulty: the average score was 38.14 points, with zero students achieving the 75-point competency criterion. This baseline demonstrated that, without structured instruction and systematic scaffolding, students possessed minimal narrative paragraph writing competence. Students' compositions demonstrated disorganized event sequencing, limited descriptive language, weak connection to proposed titles, and frequent mechanical errors in spelling and punctuation.

B. Cycle I Results

Following inquiry-based instruction incorporating legend narratives (specifically the "Sampuraga" legend presented through a video), students demonstrated notable improvement. The average score increased to 62.95 points, representing a 64.8% improvement from the baseline. Fourteen students (28.57%) achieved the minimum competency criterion of 75 points, compared to zero students in the pre-cycle phase.

An analysis of individual student progress revealed consistent gains across the class. Students demonstrated improved chronological sequencing of events, more purposeful word choices, and enhanced connections between paragraph content and assigned titles. The inquiry-based approach, which emphasizes student identification of narrative elements through guided questioning, systematic evidence collection regarding story events, and hypothesis formulation about narrative meaning, appeared to facilitate students' understanding of narrative structure and compositional processes.

Table 1. Assesment Phase

Statistic	Value
Number of students	49
Total score (Cycle I)	3,084
Average score (Cycle I)	62.95
Total score (Pre-Cycle)	1,869
Average score (Pre-Cycle)	38.14
Students \geq KKM 75	14 students
Mastery percentage (KKM achievement)	28.57%
Institutional target mastery (KKM)	80%
Highest score in Cycle I	85
Lowest score in Cycle I	40
Average score increase (Cycle I – Pre)	24.81 points
Relative improvement from Pre to Cycle I	65.01%

C. Cycle II Results

The implementation of a second inquiry cycle utilizing the "Si Malinkundang" legend narrative produced dramatic further improvement. The average score increased to 86.42 points, representing a 37.1% additional improvement from Cycle I and a 126.5% cumulative improvement from the baseline. Forty-seven students (95.91%) achieved or exceeded the competency criterion, surpassing the institutional target of 80%. Only two students remained below the competency threshold, compared to 49 students in the pre-cycle phase.

Qualitative observations during Cycle II documented enhanced student engagement, more sophisticated questioning of narrative elements, more detailed written compositions, and greater confidence in expressing narrative interpretations. The repeated implementation of inquiry-based procedures appeared to establish students' understanding of systematic approaches to narrative analysis and composition.

Table2. Cycle II

Statistic	Value
Number of students	49
Total score (Cycle II)	4,235
Average score (Cycle II)	86.42
Total score (Pre-Cycle)	1,869
Average score (Pre-Cycle)	38.14
Students \geq KKM 75	47 students
Mastery percentage (KKM achievement)	95.91%
Institutional target mastery (KKM)	80%
Highest score in Cycle II	98
Lowest score in Cycle II	65
Average score increase (Cycle II – Pre)	48.28 points

Statistic	Value
Relative improvement from Pre to Cycle II	126.53%

Table 3. Assesment Phase

Assesment Phase	Average Score	Students Meeting KKM	Completion Rate (%)
Pre-Cycle	38.14	0	0
Cycle I	62.95	14	28.57
Cycle II	86.42	47	95.91

D. Analysis and Discussion

The substantial improvement across instructional cycles provides robust evidence supporting the efficacy of inquiry-based instruction in developing narrative paragraph writing ability. The documented progression from 0% to 95.91% student achievement of competency standards demonstrates that the inquiry method, when systematically implemented, effectively facilitates student mastery of narrative-writing fundamentals (McMaster et al., 2025).

Several mechanisms may account for the documented improvements. First, the inquiry method positioned students as active agents investigating narrative structure and meaning rather than passive recipients of teacher explanations. This active engagement promotes deeper processing of narrative concepts and more authentic internalization of compositional processes. Second, the guided discovery process through teacher questioning helped students recognize narrative elements characters, settings, conflicts, and resolutions as meaningful story components deserving careful attention in written composition. Third, the requirement that students articulate their discovered understandings through writing created authentic communicative purposes, motivating more careful word selection and more organized presentation than writing for practice alone. Fourth, the iterative cycle structure allowed students who has not completely mastered concepts during Cycle I to consolidate their understanding and achieve greater competence during Cycle II.

The extraordinary improvement from Cycle I (62.95) to Cycle II (86.42) deserves particular emphasis in this study. This 23.47-point gain cannot be attributed merely to practice effects or student maturation; rather, it likely reflects an increasingly sophisticated application of inquiry processes and deepening student understanding of narrative writing conventions. Students demonstrated more complex event representation, more detailed character development, more varied sentence construction, and more purposeful narrative techniques in their Cycle II compositions.

The achievement of 95.91% learning completion substantially exceeds the institutional standard of 80%, suggesting that the inquiry method not only addresses documented writing deficiencies but also produces achievements that exceed typical expectations. Even students identified as struggling writers in preliminary assessments demonstrated the capacity for significant improvement through inquiry-based instruction, suggesting that the method accommodates diverse learner needs and abilities.

Importantly, this improvement encompassed all six evaluative dimensions. Students improved not only in content organization and title alignment but also in technical dimensions, including spelling, punctuation, and vocabulary appropriateness. This multidimensional improvement indicates that inquiry-based instruction promotes comprehensive writing competence development rather than isolated skill enhancement (Muhsin, 2025).

Using the inquiry method to improve the narrative paragraph writing skills of grade X students of SMK Negeri 1 Siabu in the 2025-2026 academic year has proven successful, students' abilities and understanding of narrative paragraphs have increased, as seen from student learning outcomes in the pre-cycle, cycle I, and cycle II.

The development of student learning outcomes and student completeness from pre-cycle to cycle II has increased; from pre-cycle to cycle I, student learning outcomes increased from 38.14 to 62.95, an increase of 24.81; likewise, from cycle I to cycle II, it increased from 62.95 to 86.42, an increase of 23.47. Overall, from pre-cycle to cycle II, it increased by 48.28.

Likewise, the percentage of student completion from pre-cycle to cycle II experienced a significant increase, where in the pre-cycle stage, it can be seen that the percentage of student completion reached 0%, meaning that all 49 research samples did not achieve the specified KKM value. Then, in the pre-cycle to cycle I, the percentage of student completion reached 28.57%, and in cycle II, the percentage of student completion reached 95.91%. Overall, from pre-cycle to cycle II, the percentage of student completion increased by 67.34%. Meanwhile, the percentage of incomplete student learning outcomes decreased from pre-cycle to cycle II, from 100% in the pre-cycle stage to 4.09% in Cycle II.

Student activity in narrative paragraph writing increased by 1.26% from cycle I to cycle II, from "fair" to "good." This reflects the teachers' commitment to managing the learning process. The increase in teacher activity from Cycle I to Cycle II led to an increase in student activity.

The teacher's activity, student activity, and student learning outcomes showed improvement from pre-cycle to cycle II. Therefore, it can be concluded that using the inquiry method to improve the narrative paragraph writing skills of grade X students at SMK Negeri 1 Siabu in the 2025-2026 academic year was successful (improved).

The inquiry method utilizing local legends not only improved students narrative writing skills but also changed their behavior. The inquiry learning method is ideal because it encourages students to think more deeply and critically and find answers to existing problems. The use of legendary stories as a medium in this method is intended to encourage students to think more deeply about problems. This aims to ensure that when writing narrative paragraphs, students have an overview in the form of ideas/concepts from their own perspectives and the moral message conveyed by the legend.

Based on this, it is hoped that through the application of the inquiry method using legendary stories as a medium, in addition to guiding students' minds to think more deeply and critically, it is also expected that there will be changes in student behavior in a more positive direction. This is so that, in addition to producing good and useful narrative paragraphs, it can also shape students' behavior to be more moral and civilized.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

This classroom action research investigation provides empirical evidence that inquiry-based instruction significantly enhances secondary vocational students' narrative paragraph writing abilities. The sequential improvement documented across the pre-cycle baseline (38.14 average), Cycle I implementation (62.95 average), and Cycle II reinforcement (86.42 average) demonstrates the method's consistent, substantial impact on student achievement. The progression from zero students achieving competency at baseline to 95.91% achievement by Cycle II substantially exceeds institutional targets and suggests that inquiry-based instruction represents a highly effective pedagogical approach for Indonesian language writing instruction. The inquiry method's emphasis on active student investigation, discovery-based learning, and systematic hypothesis testing aligns effectively with the contemporary understanding of effective writing instruction. By positioning students as researchers investigating narrative structure and meaning rather than merely as recipients of teacher instruction, the inquiry approach promotes deeper engagement with writing processes and more authentic development of communicative competence. The demonstrated improvement across diverse student populations and the achievement of excellence exceeding standard expectations indicate that inquiry-based instruction merits serious consideration as a core component of Indonesian language curricula, particularly for developing students writing abilities. Future research should investigate the sustained effects of inquiry-based instruction on subsequent writing assignments and extended written compositions, the transferability of inquiry-based writing processes to other paragraph types and extended writing forms, and the interaction between inquiry methods and individual student characteristics, such as prior writing experience, language proficiency level, and learning preferences. Additionally, examining inquiry-based approaches in diverse educational settings and student populations would strengthen the evidence regarding the generalizability of the findings documented in this investigation. Such research would contribute substantially to informed instructional practice and the theoretical foundations of Indonesian language pedagogy.

Funding Statement

"No external funding was received for this study."

Ethical Compliance

All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

Data Access Statement

A Data Access Statement is a section in a scientific publication or research report that explains how the data used or generated in the study can be accessed by readers or other researchers. This statement aims to promote transparency, support research reproducibility, and comply with open-access policies, where applicable.

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Conflict of Interest Declaration

The authors declare that they have no affiliations or involvement with any organization or entity with any financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author thanks all people and institutions in most cases, as well as the sponsor and financial support acknowledgments.

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