Teaching Descriptive Text Writing Through Indonesian Traditional Cartoons: An Ethno-Pedagogical and Constructivist Approach

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ABSTRACT

Writing descriptive texts is a fundamental skill in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, yet it often presents challenges for students due to its reliance on creativity, vocabulary, and structural coherence. Traditional Indonesian cartoons, rooted in local culture and values, offer a unique ethno-pedagogical approach that aligns with constructivist principles by promoting active, student-centered learning. This study investigates how traditional Indonesian cartoons can be used as an effective tool to teach descriptive text writing, exploring their impact on student engagement, cultural awareness, and writing proficiency. This qualitative case study was used in this study. Data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, and classroom observations. The findings revealed that the teacher effectively integrated traditional Indonesian cartoons to enhance classroom interactions and align teaching with local cultural contexts. The teacher reported that using these cartoons created a positive and engaging learning environment, motivating students and stimulating their intellectual curiosity. Students expressed high levels of enjoyment during the learning process, with 80% indicating a strong preference for learning to write descriptive texts using traditional cartoons. Furthermore, the incorporation of culturally familiar materials facilitated deeper connections between students and the learning content. The study concludes that traditional Indonesian cartoons serve as a valuable ethno-pedagogical resource, promoting cultural awareness and supporting constructivist learning by actively engaging students in meaningful and enjoyable writing activities.

Keywords: *cartoons; descriptive text; teaching writing; traditional cartoon; writing descriptive.*

INTRODUCTION

Writing is considered to be a fundamental literacy skill that plays a crucial role in communication, critical thinking, and academic success. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), writing skills are particularly significant as they enable students to express their thoughts, ideas, and emotions effectively in a global language (Graham, 2019). However, mastering writing in a foreign language can be challenging for learners, as it requires a combination of linguistic accuracy, coherence, creativity, and cultural awareness. Among various types of writing, descriptive text stands out as an essential genre that helps students develop their ability to provide detailed and vivid descriptions of people, places, or objects, fostering both their linguistic competence and imaginative expression (Spurlin et al., 2009).

Teaching descriptive text writing in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms often poses challenges for students and teachers alike. Students frequently struggle with generating ideas, organizing thoughts, and using appropriate vocabulary, while teachers seek effective strategies to engage learners and foster creativity(Khumphee & Yodkamlue, 2017). Traditional teaching methods may not sufficiently address these needs, particularly in contexts where cultural relevance and student engagement are critical(Hyun et al., 2017).Consequently, teachers are advised to avoid monotonous teaching approaches and instead devise effective strategies that capture students' interest.

Descriptive text is a genre designed to depict and clarify the characteristics of an object, event, or person, including their behavior and identity. The primary purpose of descriptive text writing is to describe a person, place, or thing in such a way that a picture is formed in the reader's mind (Kaharuddin et al., 2022). It is used to convey factual information about a subject to a reader or listener (Hyland, 2018). This genre focuses on delivering objective descriptions without incorporating personal opinions, making it a valuable tool for presenting clear and precise information.

Besides, to develop the process of teaching descriptive writing, teachers are required to create engaging and enjoyable learning media (Munajah et al., 2023). With the presence of learning media, students can illustrate the material presented by the teacher. Ethno-pedagogy, which integrates local cultural elements into teaching practices, offers a promising solution. By incorporating culturally familiar materials, such as traditional Indonesian cartoons. These cartoons, which are rich in cultural narratives and visual appeal, serve as a meaningful resource to stimulate students' imagination and make the learning process more relatable and enjoyable.

Teachers can enhance the effectiveness of teaching writing descriptive texts by using various teaching

materials, with educational cartoons being one effective option. Different teaching materials may impact students in different ways, but they generally help support the development of students' cognitive, emotional, and physical skills during the learning process (Rawan et al., 2018). Teaching materials are effective tools in developing different perspectives in students, enriching the educational process, and creating diverse learning environments. Additionally, with materials that engage students, teachers can overcome many challenges in the teaching process.

Cartoons can be a fun and engaging tool for students to discover new words, both inside and outside the classroom (Singer, 2022). They are regarded as one of the best ways to create a visually rich and engaging learning environment for students. As a tool for visual communication, the primary goal of cartoons is to simplify complex concepts, make the unseen visible, and deliver effective teaching (Uzun, 2022). They contribute to clarifying abstract concepts and adding humor to various topics. Naylor & Keogh (2024) assert that the incorporation of cartoons as an educational tool has an immediate impact in the classroom. Cartoons are recognized as facilitators in the second language learning process, leading to advancements such as a shift from negatively-worded to positively-worded statements and a transition from using single alternatives to multiple alternatives.

Previous studies have shown that teachers' perceptions of using cartoons are as a medium in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) (Uzun, 2022). They can improve creative problem-solving and support academic success (Saenboonsong & Poonsawad, 2024). Cartoons are especially beneficial for teaching primary school students, with different styles suited to various grade levels (Sakorn & Lata, 2024). They also create an engaging, multi-sensory learning environment, particularly in science education (Ayvacı et al., 2012).

In teaching writing descriptive text through the use of traditional Indonesian cartoons, the focus is on integrating cultural context to make the learning experience more memorable for students. In the context of EFL learning, language and culture are fundamentally interconnected, and isolating them would undermine the effectiveness of the learning experience (Kanoksilapatham, 2020). These cartoons, rooted in Indonesian heritage, provide a unique opportunity to introduce students to local stories, customs, and values while developing their writing skills. By using familiar characters and scenarios from traditional folklore or everyday life, students can easily connect with the material. This approach not only enhances their understanding of cultural narratives but also helps them practice descriptive writing in a way that is engaging and culturally relevant. By emphasizing

cultural elements in the cartoons, students are encouraged to explore their own traditions and express their thoughts in writing with greater creativity and confidence.

The significance of using cartoons as an educational tool becomes clear when considering the diverse aspects of educational settings. The effectiveness of incorporating cartoons depends on various factors, such as the existing learning culture, different teaching approaches, and teachers' perceptions. Acknowledging this complexity, the present study explores teachers' views on using various types of cartoons in teaching English as a foreign language. By examining these perceptions, the study aims to provide valuable insights into how traditional cartoon usage can be optimized for teaching descriptive writing.

METHOD

This study adopted a qualitative case study approach. The case study method is considered an appropriate research approach because it enables researchers to investigate the phenomenon within its natural context (Creswell &Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). In this study, researchers examined the challenges English teachers face in teaching descriptive text writing to seventh-grade students in the private secondary school in Metro, Lampung, Indonesia. The study focused on an English teacher instructing descriptive text writing at the private secondary school in Metro, Lampung, Indonesia. Data collection was

conducted during the first academic semester of 2023/2024, specifically from November 2023 to May 2024, at the schools.

The study focused on an English teacher and 20 students at a private secondary school in Metro, Lampung, Indonesia. This sample size was deemed suitable for the case study approach, which does not require a large number of participants as quantitative studies do. Instead, case studies aim to explore specific phenomena in detail rather than generalizing findings to a broader population (Yin, 1994). The teacher was purposefully selected by the researchers based on specific criteria, including: (1) Holding at least a Bachelor's degree in ESL or a related field; (2) Teaching English to seventh-grade students; (3) Having a minimum of two years of teaching experience at the secondary level; (4) Serving as a permanent academic staff member. The teacher was provided with an informed consent form to confirm her voluntary participation in the study. To maintain confidentiality, pseudonyms were used for both the participant and the institution.

The study employed multiple qualitative methods to ensure robust findings, including semi-structured interviews and observation. Semi-structured interviews, validated by TESL experts, were conducted three times with the teachers to explore their experiences and perceptions. Class observations, carried out four times in the students'

activity, provided additional context and informed follow-up interviews (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Data collection took place at a private secondary school in Metro, Lampung, Indonesia, during the first semester of the 2022/2023 academic year, spanning approximately six months. Permission letters were sent to gatekeepers to secure approval for conducting the study. After receiving approval, participants provided informed consent to confirm their voluntary participation. Each participant participated in three individual interviews conducted in *Bahasa Indonesia* at the beginning, middle, and end of the study, lasting 60–80 minutes per session. The interviews were voice-recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis.The researchers also conducted four lesson observations at the school, acting as non-participant observers to avoid influencing the classroom dynamics. They recorded descriptive information about teaching activities, student-teacher interactions, and the learning environment, along with reflective notes documenting personal thoughts, questions, and impressions. These observations aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the teaching and learning processes.

The researchers analyzed the data using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step thematic analysis. This process involved triangulating interview transcripts and observation notes with documents such as course syllabi, lesson plans, teaching schedules, and assessment samples. Triangulation, as outlined by Yin (2014), strengthens and corroborates data in a case study approach. Thematic analysis began with the researchers familiarizing themselves with the data by reading and listening to the interview transcripts multiple times to fully understand the participants' experiences. Next, they generated initial codes and grouped them into similar categories. From these categories, potential themes were identified, reviewed for their relevance to the research questions, and refined. Finally, the researchers compiled and wrote the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Students' Perception of Usefulness of Traditional Cartoons in Teaching Writing Descriptive Text

This section delves into the students' perspectives on the effectiveness of using traditional cartoons as a tool for learning to write descriptive texts. Through the interviews, the study explored how students perceived the usefulness of cartoons in various aspects of the writing process.

Eighty-five percent of participants confirmed the positive impact of traditional cartoons on their writing. Interviews highlighted the value of small group collaboration, where the cartoons inspired idea exploration throughout the writing process, from planning and drafting to revising and editing. The following

excerpts provide further support for this finding.

> "*Those traditional cartoon images have familiar roles and characters. When we see that media, our imagination can develop to start writing topics from the writing process.*" (*Student-1*)

After selecting a topic, students planned their writing by generating ideas using techniques like freewriting, listing, clustering, and mind mapping. They then narrowed their focus, choosing a manageable and relevant topic suited to their purpose and audience. Traditional cartoons were subsequently provided to aid in descriptive writing.

> "*I was helped by the existence of cartoon images to develop ideas in describing the existing cartoon images. Because the pictures are very interesting. Despite its lack of perfect structure, analyzing the image provides us with sentence options that aid in script development.*"(*Student-10*)

Despite reporting difficulties with descriptive writing, participants indicated that viewing traditional cartoons enabled them to articulate their observations of the images. Furthermore, revising and editing posed a challenge, requiring a strong grasp of writing mechanics, encompassing both content and language. A participant's response, shown below, further illustrates this point.

> *In my opinion, the use of traditional cartoon media is very helpful in developing ideas and vocabulary development, but in the revision and editing stage we also still have to think logically to determine the sentence structure. (Student-2)*

Interviews revealed that traditional cartoons aided participants in writing, improved some of their writing skills, and facilitated the achievement of learning objectives. The traditional cartoons also directly contributed to script quality. However, their support was limited to certain stages of the writing process, primarily planning and drafting. Furthermore, improvements in student writing were not observed across all indicators, but rather specifically in the creativity of ideas. This finding aligns with Mahbub (2023) who stated that watching English TV shows, cartoons, and movies is a fast and efficient method for EFL students to learn the language. Hence, traditional cartoons are designed to be visually appealing and entertaining, which can capture students' attention and make learning enjoyable. It often contextually presents language, allowing students to understand vocabulary and expressions through real-life situations. This helps them learn how words and phrases are used in context, which is essential for language acquisition.

Teachers' Perceptions of the Use of Traditional Cartoons in Teaching Writing Descriptive Texts

The perception of traditional cartoons can improve their writing skills. It can be proved that the participants' support for the statements is reflected in the average score of 3.8. While the English teachers believed traditional cartoons could enhance writing skills by stimulating and organizing ideas, they emphasized the importance of visually appealing images for successful implementation in descriptive writing.

Table .1 Teachers' Responses of questionnaires

No	Statements	Mean
1.	Traditional cartoons are relatable.	4
2.	Traditional cartoons are effective	4
3.	Traditional cartoons are engaging.	4
4.	Traditional cartoons are memorable.	4
5.	Traditional cartoons are accessible.	3

Investigation into the use of traditional cartoons to teach writing descriptive prose indicated that teachers responded well to this educational technique, such as the teacher's statement below:

For me, this is a unique media, even though many people have applied it in learning, this is something new for me. Using traditional cartoons as a medium to describe something. After seeing and listening to several instructional videos using this media, I was quite interested in applying it in class. (Teacher-1)

Prior to teaching, the teacher made thorough preparations, including creating a plan and a mini-draft for the text to be presented through traditional cartoons. Occasionally, the teacher even printed the stories generated by the traditional cartoons.

In table 1, teachers' perceptions of using cartoon-based learning media show a positive response. As shown on teacher's statement below:

The use of cartoons in teaching a text turns out to be quite fun. I simply present it according to the learning context. Provide a little instruction and direction to spark students' imaginations. They automatically respond and capture the information contained in the cartoon. This method really helps me explain teaching material in class. (Teacher-2)

Furthermore, the teacher stated that the use of cartoon-based learning media effectively enhanced student attention, motivated learners, improved learning effectiveness, and facilitated the achievement of learning objectives. This finding is consistent with the results of previous research by (Sari & Suryana, 2019).

The research results found that visual media was able to improve enthusiasm in carrying out the learning process, enable learning to be carried out efficiently and effectively, and arouse students' enthusiasm for learning. That is in line with which teacher's expressed below:

After several meetings using this method, I found that the students' writing quality became better. The information presented in their writing is more organized, coherent and connected to each other. Not only that, students' desire to write has also increased. This can be seen from the large number of writing assignments that they complete on time. (Teacher-1)

In this way, new learning is carried out efficiently and effectively so that students have an interest in learning and make it easier to understand the content of the material to achieve learning goals. By increasing students' attention, teachers say that using visual media in learning can help students understand the material clearly. This is in line with research Suryani & Seto (2020) that the presence of learning media can be an efficient vehicle for improving aspects of children's growth and development.

Cartoons with various displays that are quite popular can also increase students' interest when participating in the learning process. With the concept of teachers being independent and giving complete freedom to students in expressing ideas through the information they capture, it can encourage them to participate more actively in the learning process. For teachers, this is a solution. It is reinforced by the teacher's experience as an instructor in the classroom:

Sometimes, I often ran out of ideas on how to present the material in detail

without having to use up so much energy. However, after learning about the method of using cartoons, it felt as if I had a new innovation in teaching descriptive material. This method is not boring at all, because presenting material through cartoons tends to make the class atmosphere more friendly, flexible and fun. (Teacher-2)

By increasing students' attention, teachers say that using visual media in learning can help students understand the material clearly. This is in line with research by Suryani and Seto (2020) that the presence of learning media can be an efficient vehicle for improving aspects of children's growth and development. Cartoons with various displays that are quite popular can also increase students' interest when participating in the learning process. With the concept of teachers being independent and giving complete freedom to students in expressing ideas through the information they capture, it can encourage them to participate more actively in the learning process.

The teacher expressed a positive perception of using cartoons in teaching writing descriptive text, believing that students have a strong affinity for cartoons and are engaged when presented with cartoon stimuli. This is also supported by the teacher's statement in the interview as follows:

Initially explaining the detailed information that I would convey to students was quite difficult and time

consuming. However, through the use of cartoons, conveying information and explaining it in detail becomes quite easy. Apart from shortening the explanation time, it is also easier for students to understand the meaning and capture the information displayed through cartoons in detail. (Teacher-1)

The field notes from the researcher indicated that students actively tried to relate the context of the cartoons to their own experiences. They would write texts in their books, and the teacher could then use these texts to discuss various pictures related to the cartoons.

However, the teacher did encounter challenges in implementing this technique. Creating material in cartoons required more than twenty minutes, and the teacher faced the additional task of either drawing cartoons or searching for appropriate images on the internet to display in class. This process consumed time and internet data, especially when suitable cartoon templates were unavailable or deemed inappropriate. Despite these challenges, the overall response to using cartoons in teaching descriptive text was positive, both from the teacher and the students. This point in in line with teacher's say in interview as follow:

Apart from using cartoons conventionally, I also try to combine technology and learning methods. Explanation of material about writing descriptive text is more helpful. I use a cartoon application to attract students'

attention. When students are interested, they will easily understand all the explanations of the teaching material. Apart from making it easier to explain the material, this method also helps students organize detailed information in their writing. (Teacher-2)

Consistent with it, Arief et al., (2021) said that learning media can do more than it can do, such as arousing students' curiosity or interest in learning. Visual media such as cartoons which are applied at primary and junior secondary education levels are able to stimulate students' curiosity to obtain more concrete knowledge and information. That way students will be interested in learning.

Visualization of learning media is also able to prevent boredom in the learning process (Sofianah, 2021). The delivery is structured, the language is easy to understand and the choice of animation and cartoon images as learning media has a positive effect on students' learning motivation. Students' interest in learning can be influenced by internal factors, namely interest in participating when learning, watching, and listening during learning (Hickman et al., 2020). This finding is supported by the result point carried out by Luo et al. (2021) stating that using visual media as teaching materials can make the learning process more fun and interesting. This is also supported by the teacher's statement in the interview as follows:

Using this cartoon method helps me in conveying and explaining material about writing descriptions and other teaching materials. The use of cartoons visually and audio-visually can be applied to language teaching materials such as speaking and listening. (Teacher-1)

Sometimes the material communicated using the lecture method is not fully understood by students, moreover teachers are less able to interpret the material, so the media acts as an instrument to emphasize the material provided during the learning process.

Students' Perception of Ease in Using Traditional Cartoons in Teaching Descriptive Writing

To evaluate students' perceptions of their enjoyment level in using traditional cartoons as a medium, a questionnaire was used to gather data from their responses. The statements are included in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Averages score for perceived ease of using traditional cartoons

No	Statements	Mean
1.	I am happy to use the traditional cartoons in my writing process.	4
2.	I am motivated to learn descriptive writing by using traditional cartoons.	4
3.	I am eager to learn how to write descriptive text using traditional cartoons.	4
4.	I am interested in learning how to write descriptive text using traditional cartoons.	4

The statement that traditional cartoons can help students achieve the learning objective was scored with an average score of 3.8. It is encouraging to note that many students responded positively to the use of traditional cartoons in teaching descriptive text writing, as indicated in Table 2. While individual responses may vary, the overall sentiment seems to be positive, contributing to the overall impact of the research. The fact that students expressed happiness and motivation without feeling hindered in their learning efforts aligns with Williams, (2014) assertion that the involvement of more advanced equipment, such as cartoons, provides additional illustrations for students, particularly younger children, enhancing their appreciation for the learning process. This positive reception suggests that the use of cartoons has had a beneficial impact on students' engagement and enthusiasm in learning to write descriptive text.

In line with it, the impact of using learning media such as cartoons to increase students' desire and interest in the learning process, which has an impact on students' understanding and absorption capacity. Not only that, when students feel happy, focusing and influencing students' psycho-emotions through teaching media is easier. This is very important to facilitate their understanding when learning takes place.

The influence of cartoon media, which is quite popular among students, will be able to reach and stimulate students'

imagination, so that students feel freer to describe and express their thoughts and concepts in writing. Of course, cartoons used for students must be relevant to their learning objectives (Yudianto, 2017).

Beside it, interesting learning media and varied presentation of material can make teachers more liked and awaited by students (Yudianto, 2017). Because through cartoon visualization, students are able to organize the ideas and information they capture into writing in a more structured and sequential manner, implementing cartoon media as a learning medium has various benefits for children or early adolescents, even though it is only cartoon, this media turns out to be quite helpful in improving students' writing skills.

In line with it, learning media such as cartoons are useful learning media as a means of increasing students' motivation, understanding and interest when studying the learning material provided by the teacher during the learning process (Prehanto et al., 2021). As beneficiaries of efforts to increase motivation in learning, students said that using visual learning media such as cartoons was able to increase their motivation during the learning process.

With animations or video images, students will immediately concentrate on the material provided by the teacher without feeling bored with the learning provided. (Riyanti et al., 2021) revealed that teachers in the classroom can use videos or visual materials as learning media to make learning more fun. Learning using visual media is created by teachers so that learning is communicated in a way that is easy to understand, and fun, because students like learning in an exciting way so they remain motivated during the learning process. High motivation and strong interest will encourage students to channel it into writing. When this happens, the teacher only needs to direct them to put it into a text, of course with guidance and direction from the teacher.

CONCLUSION

In general, this study shows that the use of cartoons has a positive impact on both teachers and students. In this case, the teacher's depiction is able to stimulate students' imagination. Followed by the use of cartoons in learning to further increase students' ideas and creativity. The teacher's role as a facilitator was crucial in these sessions, culminating in ample space for students to express their imagination through written descriptions of the cartoons. Not only that, the use of cartoons has a positive impact on student activity, this can be seen from the quantity of text descriptions produced by students. In line with this, this research found that by asking and answering questions that could be expanded into paragraphs students were able to increase their capacity in writing descriptive prose.

This is a reasonable consideration considering that students' ability to adjust content, organization, use of vocabulary,

grammatical accuracy and other technical factors can be applied by students. This shows that the use of cartoons also has an impact on students' success criteria in writing descriptive texts

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

EN, IM, and TM contributed significantly to the research and preparation of this article. EN conceptualized the study, designed the research methodology, and analyzed the data. IM contributed to the literature review, interpretation of results, and provided critical revisions to the manuscript. TM assisted in data collection, statistical analysis, and drafting the initial manuscript. All authors reviewed and approved the final manuscript.

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