

Trends and Effectiveness of Learning Models in Improving Elementary School Students' Explanatory Text Writing Skills: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract. This study aims to analyze the trends and effectiveness of learning models used to improve explanatory text writing skills in elementary school students. This study used the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines. Articles were collected from the Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar databases with a publication range of 2015–2024. Of the total 120 articles identified, nine articles met the inclusion criteria and were further analyzed. The synthesis results show that constructivist-based learning models such as Project-Based Learning (PjBL), Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL), Discovery Learning, Genre-Based Approach (GBA), and RADEC are effective in improving students' explanatory text writing skills. This effectiveness is related to the characteristics of the model, which emphasizes active engagement, collaboration, reflection, and higher-order thinking processes. This study recommends that elementary school teachers strengthen their pedagogical competencies in applying innovative learning models that are appropriate to the characteristics of students and the texts being taught.

Keywords: learning models, writing explanatory texts, elementary schools, systematic literature review, PRISMA.

INTRODUCTION

Writing is a complex language skill because it involves cognitive, linguistic, and affective aspects in an integrated manner (Hyland, 2019). In the context of primary education, writing is not only a means of communication but also a means of critical and reflective thinking. One type of text taught in elementary school is explanatory text, which aims to explain the process of a phenomenon logically and systematically (Emilia & Hamied, 2019). This skill requires students to be able to identify cause-and-effect relationships, use the appropriate text structure, and choose linguistic elements that are appropriate for their social function.

However, various national studies show that the writing skills of elementary school students are still relatively low (Al Amin, 2024; Retnowati, 2021). Students often find it difficult to develop ideas, organize coherent text structures, and use appropriate scientific vocabulary. The results of the PISA survey (OECD, 2019) also confirm the low level of writing literacy among Indonesian students, especially in the analytical and argumentative aspects. This low achievement is due to a number of factors, including a conventional learning approach, a lack of process-based writing activities, and minimal feedback from teachers (Widodo & Setiawan, 2019).

In elementary school teaching practices, writing activities often focus on the final product rather than the thought process underlying the writing. Teachers tend to assess the final product without considering the stages of planning, drafting, revising, and publishing (Graham & Perin, 2018). As a result, students do not have the opportunity to develop reflective writing strategies. This condition is exacerbated by teachers' low ability to design contextual and challenging writing activities (Kern, 2019). To overcome these problems, various innovative learning models have been developed based on constructivism theory and the scientific approach. Models such as Project-Based Learning (PjBL), Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL), Discovery Learning, Genre-Based Approach (GBA), and RADEC have been widely used to improve the quality of writing instruction in various countries (Bell, 2018; Johnson, 2017; Bruner, 2016; Sopandi, 2021; Emilia et al., 2021). These models share similarities in providing active, collaborative, and reflection-based learning experiences.

According to Bell (2018), Project-Based Learning encourages students to relate knowledge to real-life experiences through project activities that produce authentic products. Meanwhile, CTL (Johnson, 2017) emphasizes the importance of the relationship between academic material and the context of students' daily lives. Discovery Learning (Bruner, 2016) allows students to construct knowledge through exploration and discovery of concepts. The Genre-Based Approach (GBA) guides students to understand the structure and social function of texts, while RADEC (Sopandi, 2021) emphasizes reading, discussing, explaining, and creating activities to build scientific thinking skills. Over the past two decades, research on the effectiveness of these models has shown positive results in improving students' writing skills. Emilia and Hamied (2019) found that GBA helps students understand rhetorical patterns and the structure of explanatory texts more deeply. Research by Sopandi (2021) demonstrated that RADEC can improve elementary school students' scientific writing skills and argumentative literacy. Similarly, international research by Hyland (2019) and Graham (2020) emphasized the importance of process- and genre-based approaches in effective writing instruction.

However, most of these studies are fragmented and do not provide a complete picture of trends in the application of the most effective learning models in the context of writing explanatory texts in elementary schools. Therefore, a systematic review is needed that can identify learning models that have been used, evaluate their effectiveness, and map the implications for language teaching practices in elementary schools (Snyder, 2019; Kitchenham & Charters, 2019).

This research was conducted to address these needs through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach. This study attempts to integrate the results of empirical research over the past ten years to uncover trends in the use and effectiveness of various learning models in improving explanatory text writing skills. Specifically, this research focuses on three main questions, namely: (1) what learning models are most widely used in teaching explanatory text writing in elementary schools; (2) how effective is the application of these models in improving students' writing skills; and (3) what are the implications for the development of Indonesian language learning at the elementary level. This research is expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions to the development of evidence-based writing learning strategies. Theoretically, the results of this study enrich the understanding of the role of constructivist models in developing literacy skills. Practically, the findings of this study are expected to serve as a reference for teachers and curriculum developers in selecting relevant and effective learning models to improve elementary school students' explanatory writing skills.

The Nature of Writing Explanatory Texts in Elementary School

Writing explanatory texts is an important part of developing elementary school students' scientific literacy. In the Independent Curriculum, explanatory writing skills aim to enable students to describe the processes of natural or social phenomena using logical structures and effective language (Kemendikbudristek, 2022). According to Hyland (2019), writing is a cognitive activity that involves higher-order thinking processes—from planning and organizing ideas to revision—therefore, writing instruction must facilitate students' development of conceptual and reflective understanding.

An explanatory text has three main structures: a general statement, a series of explanations, and a conclusion (Emilia, 2019). Students are expected to be able to identify cause-and-effect relationships in a phenomenon, use appropriate scientific language, and construct coherent and cohesive paragraphs. However, national studies show that many students struggle to understand these structures (Al Amin, 2024; Yulistiani & Indihadi, 2023). This difficulty is related to limited writing experience, a lack of explicit guidance, and learning that does not emphasize metacognitive strategies (Graham & Harris, 2018). According to Vygotsky's (1978) theory of social constructivism, the writing process develops through social interaction and scaffolding from teachers and peers. Therefore, effective writing instruction requires providing opportunities for students to discuss, evaluate ideas, and revise their work collaboratively (Graham, 2020). In this context, the teacher acts as a facilitator, guiding students in understanding the structure of texts and their social functions.

Innovative Learning Models in Teaching Writing

Developments in learning theory indicate a shift from a teacher-centered paradigm to a student-centered learning paradigm. Innovative learning models such as Project-Based Learning (PjBL), Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL), Discovery Learning, Genre-Based Approach (GBA), and RADEC have been developed to stimulate active student engagement, critical thinking, and collaborative skills (Bell, 2018; Bruner, 2016; Johnson, 2017; Sopandi, 2021). The PjBL model focuses on project-based activities that require students to solve real-life problems and produce written products. According to Thomas (2020), project-based learning increases motivation and analytical thinking skills because students learn through authentic experiences. In the context of writing explanatory texts, projects can take the form of reports on observations of natural or social phenomena, which are then presented in written form (Setiawan & Herlambang, 2022).

The CTL model links academic concepts to the context of students' everyday lives (Johnson, 2017). Through this approach, students understand the relationship between events and scientific concepts they experience. Research by Sari and Pratiwi (2018) shows that implementing CTL helps students write more meaningfully because their writing is based on empirical experience. The Discovery Learning model positions students as discoverers of knowledge. Bruner (2016) explains that discovery-based learning activates inductive and analytical thinking skills. In writing, students are encouraged to discover patterns, concepts, and text structures based on the exploration of phenomena (Rahmawati & Lestari, 2022).

The Genre-Based Approach (GBA) model is based on Halliday's systemic functional linguistics theory, which emphasizes the relationship between text structure and social function (Hyland, 2019). This model consists of four stages: building knowledge of the field, modeling the text, joint construction, and independent construction. Research by Emilia and Hamied (2019) and Emilia et al. (2021) shows that GBA is effective in improving genre awareness, text coherence, and the quality of students' written language. The RADEC (Read Answer Discuss Explain–Create) model is a reflection based learning innovation developed by Sopandi (2021). This model guides students through the stages of reading, answering questions, discussing, explaining, and creating written products. Research by Sopandi and Dini (2023) shows that RADEC can improve scientific literacy and argumentative writing skills through collaborative and reflective learning.

The above models share a common constructivist principle: students construct knowledge through social interaction and reflection on learning experiences (Kozulin, 2018). Effective

writing instruction must provide space for students to observe, think critically, collaborate, and write with contextual meaning (Graham, 2020; Emilia, 2019).

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach, following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines (Kitchenham & Charters, 2019; Moher et al., 2020). SLR was chosen because it synthesizes previous research findings objectively, transparently, and measurably, resulting in evidence-based conclusions.

Data Sources and Search Strategy

Research data was obtained from three main databases: Scopus, Web of Science (WoS), and Google Scholar. The search was conducted using the following keyword combinations: "learning model" AND "writing explanatory text" AND "elementary school" OR "elementary students" OR "writing skills." The publication period used was 2015–2024. The articles searched included accredited national journals and reputable international journals relevant to the context of Indonesian language learning or basic literacy. The search process yielded 120 potential articles: 40 from Scopus, 30 from WoS, and 50 from Google Scholar. All articles were exported to Mendeley Reference Manager software to eliminate duplication and facilitate the filtering process.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Selected articles must meet the following inclusion criteria:

- Empirical research examining the application of learning models in the context of writing explanatory texts;
- Research focused on elementary school or primary education;
- Articles in Indonesian or English;
- Published between 2015 and 2024.

Meanwhile, articles excluded were:

- Purely conceptual or theoretical articles without empirical data;
- Research discussing writing skills in general without a focus on explanatory texts;

- Duplicate articles or unpublished reports.

Article Selection Procedure (PRISMA Flow)

The following describes the article selection stages following the PRISMA format (Moher et al., 2020):

| Stage | Description Process | Number of Articles |
|----------------|---|--------------------|
| Identification | Articles were obtained from Scopus (40), Web of Science (30), and Google Scholar (50). The total initial articles were 120. | 120 |
| Filtering | After removing duplications (20 articles), 100 articles remained which were selected based on the suitability of the title and abstract. | 100 |
| Eligibility | Of the 100 articles, 75 articles were eliminated because they did not meet the criteria (not in the elementary school context or not explanatory text). | 75 |
| Inclusion | After a full review of the article content, 9 articles were obtained that met the inclusion criteria and were analyzed in this study. | 9 |

This procedure ensured that only relevant, empirical, and high-quality articles were used in the analysis. Each article was thoroughly read to identify learning models, research contexts, and key findings related to improving explanatory writing skills.

Data Analysis Techniques

The analysis was conducted using a meta-synthesis approach, combining findings from various studies to identify patterns, themes, and relationships between concepts. The analysis process included:

- In-depth reading of each selected article.
- Coding research findings based on learning models, contexts, and key findings.
- Grouping analysis results based on the theme of model effectiveness.
- Drawing synthetic conclusions to answer the Research Questions (RQ).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the literature selection using the PRISMA approach, nine articles met the inclusion criteria. These articles discussed five primary learning models used to improve explanatory text writing skills in elementary schools: Project-Based Learning (PjBL), Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL), Discovery Learning, Genre-Based Approach (GBA), and RADEC.

Table 2. Summary of Systematic Review Results (Meta-synthesis)

| No | Author and Year | Learning model | Research Context | Key Findings |
|----|----------------------------|--|---------------------------------|--|
| 1 | Emilia & Hamied (2019) | Genre Based Approach (GBA) | elementary school in Bandung | GBA effectively improves the text structure and coherence of students' writing. |
| 2 | Sopandi (2021) | RADEC (Read Answer Discuss Explain Create) | elementary school in Bandung | RADEC improves critical thinking and scientific writing skills. |
| 3 | Nurulpaik et al. (2020) | Project-Based Learning (PjBL) | elementary school in Cimahi | PjBL increases writing motivation and the ability to compose project based explanatory texts. |
| 4 | Johnson (2017) | Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) | Elementary school, Malaysia | CTL increases the relevance of learning and the ability to connect scientific concepts with writing. |
| 5 | Rahmawati & Lestari (2022) | Discovery Learning | elementary school in Yogyakarta | Discovery Learning improves students' ability to write logical cause-effect explanations. |
| 6 | Bell (2018) | Project-Based Learning | Elementary school, USA | PjBL effectively builds student collaboration and responsibility in producing explanatory texts. |
| 7 | Hyland (2019) | Genre-Based Approach (GBA) | Primary school, Australia | GBA improves genre awareness and scientific text writing skills. |
| 8 | Sopandi & Dini (2023) | RADEC | elementary school in Jawa Barat | RADEC strengthens scientific literacy and argumentative writing skills. |
| 9 | Emilia et al. (2021) | Genre-Based Approach (GBA) | elementary school in Indonesia | GBA forms awareness of the structure and social function of explanatory texts. |

Based on these nine studies, all constructivist learning models demonstrated a positive impact on improving students' explanatory text writing skills. However, there was variation in effectiveness depending on the focus and characteristics of each model.

Thematic Analysis of Learning Models

Based on the meta-synthesis results above, it was found that there are five main learning models used in teaching explanatory text writing: Project-Based Learning (PjBL), Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL), Discovery Learning, Genre-Based Approach (GBA), and RADEC. These five models have distinct characteristics, but they all emphasize active, collaborative, and contextual learning.

Project-Based Learning (PjBL)

The PjBL model has a significant impact on improving writing skills because it combines scientific thinking processes with collaborative, project-based activities (Thomas, 2020; Bell, 2018). PjBL encourages students to conduct observations, collect data, and present the results in the form of explanatory texts.

Nurulpaik et al. (2020) found that PjBL increases students' intrinsic motivation because each writing project is rooted in real-life experiences. This finding is supported by Widodo and Setiawan (2019), who noted that students become more reflective about text structure and language functions. However, PjBL's weaknesses lie in time constraints and the complexity of assessments. Teachers need sound project management strategies to ensure active participation by all students (Kokotsaki et al., 2016). In the elementary school context, teachers are advised to use simple projects such as "The Process of Rain" or "The Water Cycle" to remain appropriate to students' cognitive developmental levels (Emilia & Hamied, 2019).

Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL)

CTL emphasizes meaningful learning through the connection between student experiences and subject matter (Johnson, 2017). In the context of writing explanatory texts, CTL helps students understand scientific concepts before they are translated into writing (Retnowati, 2021). Research by Sari and Pratiwi (2018) shows that students who learn with CTL are able to produce texts with a more logical structure and more natural language. This is because they write based on direct experience, rather than simply memorizing concepts. In an international study, Misbah et al. (2020) confirmed that CTL also strengthens learning motivation through learning based on students' sociocultural contexts. Thus, CTL not only improves writing skills but also strengthens students' awareness of the learning environment and social empathy.

Discovery Learning

Discovery Learning is rooted in Bruner's (2016) theory, which emphasizes that students learn more meaningfully when they discover the concepts they are learning for themselves. In writing explanatory texts, students are encouraged to explore the causes and effects of phenomena and then weave them into a scientific narrative. Rahmawati and Lestari (2022) found that this model improves students' analytical thinking skills and causal logic. However, they also noted that Discovery Learning requires intensive teacher guidance to ensure students do not lose their way during the discovery process. International research by Hosnan (2017) and Mayer (2020) supports that Discovery Learning strengthens deep learning and scientific literacy, but its effectiveness is enhanced when combined with collaborative learning and formative feedback.

Genre Based Approach (GBA)

GBA is an approach based on systemic functional linguistics theory (Halliday, 2014) that emphasizes the relationship between text form and its social function. This model helps students understand how the structure of explanatory texts is constructed through communicative purpose, idea organization, and language choice. Research by Emilia (2019) shows that GBA increases students' awareness of text macrostructure and the use of scientific vocabulary. Hyland (2019) and Emilia et al. (2021) also confirm that this approach is highly effective in teaching academic writing because it provides scaffolding.

Internationally, GBA has proven adaptable in various multilingual contexts (Gee, 2015; Derewianka & Jones, 2016). In the Indonesian context, GBA helps students write explanatory texts that align with the scientific structure of the Indonesian language curriculum (Arifin & Fadhilah, 2021). However, the implementation of GBA requires adequate teacher training, as not all educators understand the relationship between linguistic structure and the social purpose of texts (Mutia & Emilia, 2021). Therefore, genre-based teacher training is recommended to increase its effectiveness.

RADEC (Read Answer Discuss Explain Create)

RADEC is a reflective learning model developed in Indonesia by Sopandi (2021) and further studied in an international context (Setiawan & Sopandi, 2023). This model focuses on strengthening scientific literacy and critical thinking through five structured stages. Research by Sopandi & Dini (2023) shows that RADEC improves explanatory writing skills by encouraging students to construct knowledge before writing. Through the "Explain" and

"Create" stages, students practice writing explanatory texts that reflect their scientific understanding.

The advantage of RADEC is its integration of reading, discussion, and writing within a single learning cycle. This aligns with Graham's (2020) argument that effective writing occurs when students engage in cognitive and social dialogue about the text's content. Practically, RADEC is also flexible and can be combined with digital technologies such as Padlet or Google Classroom, which support online collaboration (Nuryaningsih, 2021). This integration strengthens the reflection and publication aspects of student writing.

Synthetic Analysis and Discussion

A cross-model analysis shows that all constructivist approaches contribute to improving explanatory writing skills, but their development focuses differ:

- PjBL excels in fostering collaboration and responsibility for learning (Bell & Pahl, 2019).
- CTL effectively establishes relevance between scientific concepts and real-world experiences (Misbah et al., 2020).
- Discovery Learning strengthens logical thinking skills and cause-and-effect understanding (Mayer, 2020).
- GBA most consistently improves text structure and language cohesion (Hyland, 2019).
- RADEC excels in integrating scientific thinking, reading, and writing skills (Sopandi & Dini, 2023).

Of the five models, GBA and RADEC are the most effective in the context of Indonesian language learning in elementary schools. Both models emphasize not only text structure but also students' reflective and collaborative thinking processes. This finding is consistent with a meta-analysis by Graham et al. (2022) which stated that the success of writing learning depends on the integration of process writing, genre awareness, and reflective learning. Furthermore, this study emphasizes the importance of the teacher's role as a facilitator capable of:

- Designing contextual and experience-based writing activities;

- Providing constructive formative feedback;
- Fostering a collaborative learning climate.

This aligns with Darling-Hammond et al.'s (2019) view that teacher quality is a key determinant of the successful implementation of innovative models in elementary schools. Thus, the results of this systematic review reinforce the view that successful writing skill improvement lies not only in the choice of learning model, but also in teacher pedagogical competence and school institutional support.

Theoretical Implications

Theoretically, the results of this study broaden our understanding of the integration of social constructivism theory (Vygotsky, 1978) in teaching explanatory text writing. Learning that combines reading, discussion, and writing activities has been shown to be more effective in developing students' scientific thinking skills. Furthermore, the theory of genre pedagogy (Halliday, 2014), which underpins GBA, emphasizes the importance of genre-based learning as a means of exploring the structure and social function of texts within a local cultural context.

This research also strengthens the theoretical framework of process writing (Graham & Harris, 2018), which emphasizes that writing is not a final product, but rather an ongoing process involving planning, drafting, revising, and reflecting. In this context, RADEC is a relevant model because it facilitates all these stages systematically and reflectively. Furthermore, these findings support an evidence-based education approach that emphasizes the use of empirical research findings in pedagogical decision-making (Slavin, 2020). Thus, the results of this systematic study can be used as a scientific basis for developing a writing learning model in elementary schools that is evidence-based and relevant to the needs of the 21st century.

Practical Implications

The results of this study have several important implications for teachers, schools, and elementary education policymakers:

- For Indonesian Language Teachers: Teachers need to understand that learning to write is not simply about producing text products, but also about developing students' scientific and reflective thinking processes. Therefore, teachers are advised to contextually integrate the GBA and RADEC models into teaching explanatory text

writing. The use of small projects, group discussions, and independent reflection will help students understand the relationship between scientific phenomena and the structure of the written text.

- For Schools: Schools need to provide institutional support in the form of continuous professional development for teachers to enable them to effectively implement innovative learning models (Darling-Hammond et al., 2019). Furthermore, schools need to create a strong literacy culture by providing authentic learning resources such as children's scientific articles, educational videos, and interactive digital media (Suprianto, 2023).
- For Curriculum Developers: The national curriculum needs to explicitly integrate genre-based and reflective approaches into writing learning outcomes. This approach can be tailored to the characteristics of elementary school students, particularly in the areas of scientific thinking and written communication.
- For Researchers and Academics: Further research can expand this study with a quantitative meta-analysis approach to measure the effect size of each learning model. Furthermore, cross-cultural and cross-national studies are needed to compare the effectiveness of innovative learning models across various social and linguistic contexts.

CONCLUSION

Overall, this study confirms that effective teaching of explanatory text writing in elementary schools must be based on the principles of social constructivism, collaboration, and reflection. The Genre-Based Approach (GBA) and RADEC models have proven to be most adaptable to the context of elementary education in Indonesia because they integrate linguistic, cognitive, and social aspects into a unified learning process.

Improvement in writing skills is determined not only by the use of learning models, but also by teachers' ability to adapt teaching strategies to student characteristics, school support for pedagogical innovation, and a learning environment that encourages exploration and creativity.

By referring to the results of this study, it is hoped that teachers, educational institutions, and policymakers can design writing lessons that are more meaningful, evidence-based, and relevant to the challenges of 21st-century literacy.

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