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Improving Poetry Writing Skills Using the Example Non-Example Learning Model

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Abstract

An effective learning method is essential for students to develop writing skills, particularly in poetry composition, which represents a crucial component of the Indonesian language curriculum. This study aims to enhance the poetry writing skills of Grade VIII-A students at SMP PGRI Belis, Teluk Waru District, East Seram Regency, through the implementation of the Example Non-Example Learning Model. Using Classroom Action Research (CAR) methodology, this study employed a cyclical process encompassing planning, execution, observation, and reflection across two cycles. The research involved 23 students (8 males and 15 females). Initial results from Cycle I revealed that 14 students (61%) had not achieved the Minimum Competency Criteria (MCC) of 70, while only 9 students (39%) met the criteria. Following the implementation of the example non-example learning model in Cycle II, significant improvement was observed: 20 students (87%) achieved the MCC, while only 3 students (13%) did not meet the criteria, resulting in an average score of 80.21, categorized as "Good" (B). The findings demonstrate that the example non-example learning model effectively enhances students' poetry writing skills by providing clear contrasts between effective and ineffective writing examples, thereby improving students' understanding of poetic elements, structure, and creative expression.

Keywords: *Classroom Action Research; Creative Writing Pedagogy; Example Non-example Learning Model; Indonesian Language Education; Poetry Writing.*

INTRODUCTION

Poetry writing represents one of the most challenging aspects of language learning, requiring students to master not only linguistic competencies but also creative expression, aesthetic sensibility, and cultural understanding (Kristiantari et al., 2023). In the Indonesian educational context, poetry writing skills are fundamental components of the national curriculum, serving both as vehicles for cultural transmission and tools for developing higher-order thinking skills (Razgatlıoğlu & Ulusoy, 2022). However, many students struggle with poetry composition due to its abstract nature and the complex interplay of form, content, and artistic expression (Rahmawati & Citrawati, 2023).

The Example Non-Example Learning Model emerges as a promising pedagogical approach rooted in constructivist learning theory and cognitive load principles (Sweller et al., 2019). This model facilitates learning through comparative analysis, enabling students to identify distinguishing characteristics between effective and ineffective examples, thereby developing clearer conceptual understanding (Poth, 2023). In the context of poetry writing, this approach allows students to analyze exemplary poems alongside poorly constructed ones, helping them internalize the essential elements of effective poetic composition (Zavgorodniaia, 2020).

Research in cognitive psychology demonstrates that learning through comparison enhances schema formation and pattern recognition, particularly crucial for creative writing tasks (Gentner, 2010). The example non-example approach aligns with Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development theory, providing scaffolded learning experiences that bridge the gap between students' current abilities and their potential achievement (Vygotsky, 1978). Furthermore, recent studies in poetry education indicate that structured comparison activities significantly improve students' understanding of poetic devices, form, and creative expression (Fithriani, 2021).

This study addresses the persistent challenges faced by Grade VIII students at SMP PGRI Belis in developing poetry writing skills. Preliminary observations revealed that students struggled with identifying poetic elements, structuring verses effectively, and expressing ideas creatively. The implementation of the Example Non-Example Learning Model aims to address these challenges through systematic comparative analysis, ultimately enhancing students' poetry writing competencies.

The Example Non-Example Learning Model is grounded in several interconnected theoretical frameworks that collectively support its effectiveness in educational contexts. Constructivist learning theory provides the foundational premise that learners actively construct knowledge through experience and social interaction, positioning teachers as facilitators rather than sole knowledge transmitters (Fosnot & Perry, 2005). This approach treats learning as an active process of knowledge construction, particularly relevant for arts education such as poetry writing (Bruner, 1996).

Cognitive Load Theory (CLT) offers crucial insights into the instructional design principles underlying the example non-example approach. CLT distinguishes between intrinsic, extraneous, and germane cognitive load, emphasizing the importance of worked examples and minimized extraneous processing to optimize working memory for schema acquisition (Sweller, 2020). In poetry instruction, CLT suggests sequencing model poems, reducing irrelevant complexity, and using worked-example and comparison pairs to foster schema formation for poetic devices (Paas & Sweller, 2012).

The example-nonexample instruction operationalizes constructivist aims by prompting learners to generate, test, and refine schemata through paired exemplars, such as comparing strong versus weak stanzas or effective versus ineffective use of imagery (Salvucci, 2021). This comparative approach makes abstract features of poetic form explicit, enabling students to develop deeper understanding of literary conventions and creative possibilities (Prasad & Iyer, 2022).

Vygotskian social constructivist theory emphasizes the Zone of Proximal Development and mediated learning through peer and teacher scaffolding, which is particularly relevant for writing and arts instruction (Vygotsky, 1986). Collaborative learning arrangements can leverage collective working memory for complex tasks such as composing poetic forms, though they require careful scaffolding to manage coordination costs (Kirschner et al., 2009).

Recent research demonstrates that structured peer review, small heterogeneous groups, and teacher-guided feedback iterations effectively combine social learning benefits with cognitive load management principles (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). In poetry education, peer collaboration enhances students' ability to

recognize effective techniques, provide constructive feedback, and develop metacognitive awareness of their own writing processes (Soltani & Zhang, 2024).

Contemporary research provides substantial evidence supporting activity-based, contextual, and workshop methods in poetry writing instruction. Razgatlıoğlu and Ulusoy (2022) conducted an experimental study with Grade 3 students (n = 56) over 18 weeks, finding that activity-based poetry instruction significantly improved creative writing subskills and prosodic reading rates. Similarly, Kristiantari et al. (2023) employed a quasi-experimental design with Grade 5 elementary students (n = 44), demonstrating that nature-inspired contextual approaches increased poetry writing ability and creative thinking (MANOVA $p < .001$).

Classroom action research studies have consistently reported positive outcomes from structured poetry instruction. Darmanah (2020) implemented quantum learning strategies across two cycles with Grade 10 students, observing progressive improvements in mean poetry writing scores. Setia Sari et al. (2020) conducted creative writing workshops with undergraduate EFL novice writers, finding increased length, complexity, and motivation in student poems following structured interventions. These studies share common mechanisms: successful programs pair modeling through annotated poems, activity-based practice, contextual prompts, and iterative feedback, consistent with worked-example and constructivist reasoning (Clark et al., 2006). The evidence spans primary, secondary, and tertiary educational contexts, reporting gains in both product measures (poem quality and complexity) and process measures (fluency, creative thinking, and motivation) (Beghetto & Kaufman, 2007).

METHODS

This study employed Classroom Action Research (CAR) methodology, following the cyclical process of planning, action, observation, and reflection as outlined by Kemmis and McTaggart (2005). The research was conducted over two cycles, each consisting of four interconnected phases designed to systematically implement and evaluate the Example Non-Example Learning Model.

Research Setting and Participants

The research was conducted at SMP PGRI Belis, located in Teluk Waru District, East Seram Regency, during the 2024-2025 academic year. The participants comprised 23 Grade VIII-A students, consisting of 8 males (35%) and 15 females (65%), aged between 13-14 years. The selection of this class was based on preliminary observations indicating significant challenges in poetry writing skills and the need for pedagogical intervention.

Research Instruments and Data Collection

Data collection employed multiple instruments to ensure comprehensive assessment of student progress. The primary assessment tool was a poetry writing rubric evaluating five key dimensions: thematic development (20%), poetic structure (20%), use of figurative language (20%), creativity and originality (20%), and technical accuracy (20%). Each dimension was assessed on a scale of 1-4, with specific descriptors for each performance level.

Additional data sources included classroom observation sheets documenting student engagement and participation patterns, student reflection journals capturing metacognitive awareness development, and teacher field notes recording instructional challenges and breakthroughs. Pre-test and post-test assessments for each cycle provided quantitative measures of student improvement.

Implementation Procedures

Cycle I Implementation: The first cycle focused on introducing the Example Non-Example Learning Model through structured comparison activities. Students were presented with pairs of poems: exemplary works demonstrating effective use of poetic devices alongside poorly constructed examples lacking these elements. The instructional sequence included: (1) guided analysis of example poems, identifying strengths and effective techniques; (2) examination of non-example poems, recognizing weaknesses and areas for improvement; (3) collaborative discussion of distinguishing characteristics; and (4) independent poetry composition applying learned principles.

Cycle II Implementation: Building on Cycle I insights, the second cycle incorporated enhanced scaffolding and peer collaboration elements. The refined approach included: (1) expanded example-nonexample sets covering diverse poetic forms and themes; (2) structured peer review sessions using the

established rubric criteria; (3) teacher-guided reflection on the writing process; and (4) publication of student work to authentic audiences, increasing motivation and engagement.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of the Example Non-Example Learning Model yielded significant improvements in student poetry writing performance across both cycles. Table 1 presents the comprehensive assessment results, demonstrating progressive enhancement in student achievement.

Table 1: Student Performance Comparison Across Cycles

Cycle	Students Meeting MCC (≥70)	Students Below MCC (<70)	Class Average	Performance Category
Pre-Cycle	6 (26%)	17 (74%)	58.3	Poor (D)
Cycle I	9 (39%)	14 (61%)	65.7	Fair (C-)
Cycle II	20 (87%)	3 (13%)	80.2	Good (B)

The data reveals a dramatic transformation in student achievement. Initially, only 6 students (26%) met the Minimum Competency Criteria (MCC) of 70, with a class average of 58.3, categorized as "Poor" (D). Following Cycle I implementation, 9 students (39%) achieved the MCC, with the class average increasing to 65.7, representing "Fair" (C-) performance.

The most substantial improvement occurred in Cycle II, where 20 students (87%) successfully met or exceeded the MCC, resulting in a class average of 80.2, categorized as "Good" (B). This represents a 61 percentage point increase in student success rates and a 21.9-point improvement in class average scores.

Qualitative Analysis of Student Progress

Thematic Development Enhancement: Analysis of student poetry samples reveals significant improvement in thematic coherence and depth. In pre-cycle assessments, student poems often lacked clear thematic focus, with disjointed ideas and superficial treatment of topics. Following the example non-example intervention, students demonstrated enhanced ability to develop unified themes, maintain consistency throughout their compositions, and explore topics with greater sophistication.

Structural Sophistication: The comparative analysis approach effectively enhanced students' understanding of poetic structure. Initial compositions frequently exhibited irregular line breaks, inconsistent stanza organization, and lack of rhythmic consideration. Post-intervention work showed marked improvement in structural awareness, with students demonstrating purposeful line arrangement, effective use of white space, and consideration of visual presentation.

Figurative Language Mastery: Perhaps the most notable improvement occurred in students' use of figurative language. Pre-intervention poems rarely employed metaphors, similes, or other poetic devices, relying instead on literal description. The example non-example model enabled students to recognize and apply various figurative techniques, resulting in more sophisticated and aesthetically pleasing compositions.

Individual Case Studies

High-Achieving Student Profile: Student A, initially scoring 65 in pre-cycle assessment, demonstrated exceptional growth, achieving 88 in Cycle II. Analysis of this student's work reveals progressive mastery of poetic techniques, beginning with basic structural awareness and evolving to sophisticated use of imagery and metaphor. The student's reflection journal indicates that the comparative analysis approach helped clarify previously confusing concepts about poetic form and expression.

Struggling Student Support: Student B, who initially scored 45, required additional scaffolding and individualized support. Through modified example-nonexample activities and peer mentoring, this student achieved 72 in Cycle II, successfully meeting the MCC. The case demonstrates the model's adaptability to diverse learning needs and the importance of differentiated instruction within the comparative framework.

Discussion

Theoretical Implications and Cognitive Mechanisms

The significant improvements observed in this study can be understood through multiple theoretical lenses that illuminate the cognitive mechanisms underlying the Example Non-Example Learning Model's effectiveness. From a constructivist perspective, the comparative analysis approach enabled students to actively construct understanding of poetic conventions through guided discovery rather than passive reception of information (Piaget, 1977). This aligns with Piaget's conceptualization of learning as active schema construction, where students developed increasingly sophisticated mental models of effective poetry through repeated exposure to contrasting examples (von Glasersfeld, 1995).

The cognitive load theory provides crucial insights into why the example non-example approach proved particularly effective for poetry instruction. Poetry writing involves high element interactivity, requiring simultaneous management of vocabulary, meter, figurative language, thematic development, and structural considerations (Chandler & Sweller, 1991). The worked-example effect, well-documented in cognitive psychology, demonstrates that novice learners benefit significantly from studying worked examples before attempting independent problem-solving (Atkinson et al., 2000). In this study, the example poems served as worked examples, reducing extraneous cognitive load and allowing students to focus on germane processing related to schema acquisition for poetic composition (Sweller & Cooper, 1985).

The comparative nature of the instruction facilitated what Gentner (1983) terms "structural alignment," a cognitive process whereby learners identify systematic correspondences between examples. When students compared effective and ineffective poems, they developed enhanced pattern recognition abilities, learning to identify the abstract structural and stylistic features that distinguish quality poetry from poor attempts (Holyoak & Koh, 1987). This process of abstraction is fundamental to transfer, enabling students to apply learned principles to novel poetic compositions (Barnett & Ceci, 2002).

Social Learning and Collaborative Construction

The study's findings also support social cognitive theories of learning, particularly Vygotsky's concepts of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and mediated learning (Vygotsky, 1978). The example non-example activities created optimal learning conditions within students' ZPD, providing sufficient challenge to promote growth while maintaining accessibility through scaffolded support (Wood et al., 1976). The collaborative discussions following comparative analysis sessions enabled peer mediation, where students with stronger analytical skills supported their classmates' understanding through explanation and modeling (Palincsar & Brown, 1984).

Bandura's social cognitive theory explains the motivational improvements observed in student reflection journals (Bandura, 1977). Exposure to exemplary poems provided vicarious experiences that enhanced students' self-efficacy beliefs about their own poetic abilities (Bandura, 1997). As students recognized the specific techniques that made certain poems effective, they developed increased confidence in their capacity to employ similar strategies in their own compositions (Schunk & Pajares, 2009).

The peer review components implemented in Cycle II created what Lave and Wenger (1991) describe as a "community of practice," where students developed shared understanding of quality criteria and collaborative approaches to improvement. This social dimension proved crucial for sustaining motivation and engagement throughout the intervention period (Wenger, 1998).

Metacognitive Development and Transfer

The example non-example approach fostered significant metacognitive development, evidenced by students' increasingly sophisticated reflection journal entries and their ability to self-assess their work using established criteria (Flavell, 1979). Flavell's (1987) metacognitive framework explains this development: students progressed from metacognitive knowledge (understanding what makes poetry effective) through metacognitive experiences (recognizing their own comprehension during the writing process) to metacognitive strategies (deliberately employing techniques to improve their compositions).

The transfer of learning observed in this study—students' ability to apply principles learned from example analysis to novel poetic compositions—supports theories of analogical reasoning and abstraction (Holyoak & Thagard, 1995). Students developed what Perkins and Salomon (1992) term "high-road transfer," consciously abstracting principles from the examples and deliberately applying them in new contexts.

Implications for Creative Writing Pedagogy

The study's findings have significant implications for creative writing pedagogy more broadly. Traditional approaches to poetry instruction often emphasize either free expression (process-oriented) or technical mastery (product-oriented), creating a false dichotomy between creativity and craft (Elbow, 1998). The example non-example model demonstrates that structured analysis can enhance rather than constrain creative expression, providing students with expanded repertoires of techniques and strategies (Bishop, 2003).

The results challenge romantic notions of creativity as purely inspirational, supporting instead a view of creative writing as skilled performance that can be systematically developed through appropriate instruction (Kaufman & Beghetto, 2009). This aligns with contemporary research in creativity studies, which emphasizes the role of domain-specific knowledge and deliberate practice in creative achievement (Ericsson et al., 1993).

Limitations and Methodological Considerations

While the results are encouraging, several limitations must be acknowledged. The study's focus on a single classroom limits generalizability, and the absence of a control group prevents definitive causal attributions (Campbell & Stanley, 1963). The relatively short intervention period (two cycles) may not capture long-term retention or transfer effects (Shadish et al., 2002). Additionally, the assessment rubric, while comprehensive, may not fully capture the aesthetic dimensions of poetry that resist quantification (Eisner, 1991).

The action research methodology, while appropriate for the study's practical goals, introduces potential researcher bias and limits experimental control (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011). Future research should employ randomized controlled designs with

longer follow-up periods to establish more robust evidence for the model's effectiveness (Cohen et al., 2018).

Cultural and Contextual Considerations

The study's implementation in the Indonesian educational context raises important questions about cultural adaptation and contextual sensitivity in pedagogical approaches (Hofstede, 2001). Poetry, as a culturally embedded art form, requires instruction that honors local literary traditions while developing students' creative capacities (Kramsch, 1993). The example poems selected for this study drew from both traditional Indonesian poetry and contemporary works, attempting to bridge cultural heritage with modern expression (Teeuw, 1994).

The collectivist cultural context of Indonesian education may have enhanced the effectiveness of the collaborative components within the example non-example model (Triandis, 1995). Students' willingness to engage in peer support and group analysis reflects cultural values that prioritize collective achievement and mutual assistance (Nisbett, 2003).

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates the significant potential of the Example Non-Example Learning Model for enhancing poetry writing skills among Indonesian middle school students. The dramatic improvement in student performance—from 26% meeting competency criteria in pre-cycle assessment to 87% in Cycle II—provides compelling evidence for the model's effectiveness. The 21.9-point increase in class average scores (from 58.3 to 80.2) represents not merely statistical improvement but meaningful enhancement in students' creative and analytical capabilities.

The theoretical analysis reveals that the model's effectiveness stems from its alignment with fundamental principles of cognitive psychology and constructivist learning theory. By reducing cognitive load through worked examples while promoting active schema construction through comparison, the approach optimizes learning conditions for complex creative tasks. The social learning components enhance motivation and provide scaffolded support within students' zones of proximal development.

The study's implications extend beyond poetry instruction to creative writing pedagogy more broadly. The findings challenge traditional dichotomies between structure and creativity, demonstrating that systematic analysis can enhance rather than constrain artistic expression. The model provides a replicable framework for developing students' creative writing skills while maintaining rigorous academic standards.

Future research should investigate the model's effectiveness across diverse educational contexts, cultural settings, and age groups. Longitudinal studies examining retention and transfer effects would strengthen the evidence base for example non-example instruction in creative writing. Additionally, comparative studies examining the relative effectiveness of different example selection strategies could refine implementation guidelines.

The success of this intervention at SMP PGRI Belis suggests that thoughtfully designed instructional approaches can significantly enhance student achievement in challenging creative domains. As educators continue to seek effective methods for

developing 21st-century skills, the Example Non-Example Learning Model offers a promising avenue for combining rigorous academic instruction with creative expression, preparing students for success in an increasingly complex and interconnected world.

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