



The Effect of Differentiated Instruction on Students' Writing Skills in Descriptive Texts at Grade Eleven of State Senior High School 1 Sei Kepayang in the 2025/2026 Academic Year

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the effect of Differentiated Instruction on students' writing skills in descriptive texts at State Senior High School 1 Sei Kepayang during the 2025/2026 academic year. The research was motivated by students' low achievement in writing descriptive texts and the limited use of instructional strategies that accommodate diverse learning needs. The study addressed whether Differentiated Instruction significantly improved students' writing performance compared to conventional teaching methods. A quantitative experimental design was employed involving two groups, namely an experimental class and a control class, each consisting of 33 students. Data were collected through *pre-test* and *post-test* writing assessments and analyzed using the *t-test* formula. The findings revealed that the experimental class showed a substantial improvement, with the mean score increasing from 66.6 to 85.7, while the control class improved from 49.6 to 57.7. Hypothesis testing demonstrated that the *t-count* value (31.42) exceeded the *t-table* value (1.998) at the significance level of 0.05 with 64 degrees of freedom. The study concludes that Differentiated Instruction has a statistically significant positive effect on students' writing skills in descriptive texts and can be effectively implemented to enhance students' writing achievement.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Submitted	25 04 2026
Revised	16 05 2026
Accepted	22 05 2026
Published	28 05 2026

KEYWORDS

Descriptive Text Writing; Differentiated Instruction; Experimental Research; Students' Writing Skills; Teaching Strategy.

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30743/bahastra.v10i2.13505>

INTRODUCTION

Fragrance advertising presents unique challenges compared to other forms of advertising because scents cannot be directly seen, touched, or fully represented through visual media. Unlike products with tangible and visible characteristics, perfume relies heavily on sensory experiences that cannot be transmitted explicitly to audiences. Consequently, fragrance advertisements depend on the strategic use of verbal and visual signs to help consumers imagine the qualities and sensations associated with a particular scent. In semiotic theory, a sign is understood as a unit of meaning consisting of a signifier (form) and a signified (concept), whose relationship is socially and culturally constructed rather than naturally determined (Saussure et al., 2011). Chandler (2007) further explains that signs operate within systems of meaning shaped by cultural conventions, interpretive practices, and social contexts.

Within linguistic and media analysis, semiotics serves as an essential framework for examining how signs function to construct meaning in advertisements, particularly in representing abstract concepts such as identity, emotion, desire, and sensory experience. This approach has been widely employed in advertising studies because it enables researchers to uncover implicit meanings embedded within visual and linguistic elements (Prasetya, 2025). Semiotics is fundamentally concerned with the study of sign systems in language and communication (Barthes, 1972; Saussure et al., 2011). It investigates how meanings are generated and interpreted through verbal and non-verbal forms of representation. In semiotic analysis, meaning operates at several interconnected levels, namely denotation, connotation, and myth. Denotation refers to the literal and explicit meaning of a sign, whereas connotation involves associative meanings influenced by cultural values and emotional interpretations. At a deeper ideological level, myth functions as a system in which connotative meanings become naturalized and reflect broader cultural beliefs, norms, and values (Barthes, 1972).

Previous studies have demonstrated that advertising plays a significant role in shaping cultural ideologies, particularly in relation to gender representation. Pratiwi and Amri (2020) examined the use of signs in female celebrity fragrance advertisements and found that celebrities construct product identity through the strategic use of personal

image and symbolic representation. Their findings indicate that verbal and visual signs are deliberately employed to emphasize the intended target consumers of the fragrance, while linguistic choices and imagery reinforce particular ideological messages. Similarly, Jha et al. (2017) revealed that magazine advertisements frequently portray femininity as passive and sexualized, whereas masculinity is represented through hegemonic traits such as dominance, authority, and control, conveyed through visual signs including posture, gaze, and positioning. Zhang (2019) further argues that luxury perfume advertisements for women utilize symbolic and visual elements to construct meanings associated with femininity, elegance, and sensuality. These studies collectively demonstrate that fragrances are represented symbolically through systems of signs rather than through direct sensory description, thereby highlighting how gendered meanings are socially constructed within advertising discourse.

Several other studies on advertising semiotics have emphasized that the interaction between verbal and visual signs is fundamental to the construction of persuasive messages (Lytvynenko et al., 2022). Existing research, however, tends to prioritize visual analysis or general semiotic interpretation without systematically examining the relationship between linguistic elements and visual signs as an integrated process of meaning-making (Feng & Espindola, 2013). This limitation indicates the need for further research that specifically investigates how verbal and visual components interact to produce ideological meanings in advertising texts. Addressing this gap, the present study analyzes the construction of masculinity through verbal and visual signs in the *Dior Sauvage* advertisement featuring Johnny Depp. The study focuses on how meaning is generated through the interaction of linguistic expressions and visual representations within the advertisement. By applying a Barthesian semiotic framework, this research seeks to reveal how signs operate at the levels of denotation, connotation, and myth in constructing masculinity as both naturalized and refined within contemporary advertising discourse.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative experimental research design involving two groups, namely an experimental group and a control group. The research was conducted with eleventh-grade students of State Senior High School 1 Sei Kepayang during the 2025/2026 academic year, with each group consisting of 33 students. Data were collected through writing assessments in the form of *pre-test* and *post-test* activities designed to measure students’ ability in writing descriptive texts before and after the treatment. The collected scores were analyzed using the *t-test* formula to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups (Iqbal et al., 2020; Subandiyah et al., 2025). The experimental group was taught using Differentiated Instruction, whereas the control group received conventional teacher-centered instruction.

Table 1. Research Design

Group	Pre-Test	Treatment	Post-Test
Experimental	X	Differentiated Learning	X
Control	Y	Conventional Model	Y

Where:

- X = Differentiated Instruction
- Y = Conventional Instruction

The experimental class received instruction through the Differentiated Instruction approach, in which students were provided with varied tasks, instructional materials, and levels of support based on their readiness, interests, and learning profiles. In contrast, the control class was taught using conventional instructional methods characterized by teacher-centered activities and uniform learning tasks for all students. Through these contrasting instructional approaches, the study examined whether Differentiated Instruction produced greater improvement in students’ descriptive writing skills compared to conventional instruction. The *pre-test* was administered prior to the treatment in order to assess students’ initial writing ability and establish baseline data for the experiment. Students’ responses were evaluated systematically to identify their preliminary levels of descriptive writing proficiency.

The *pre-test* was conducted to measure students’ initial ability in writing descriptive texts before the implementation of Differentiated Instruction. All students were instructed to compose a descriptive text based on the same writing prompt without receiving scaffolding or additional instructional support. The results of the *pre-test* served as baseline data for determining students’ initial proficiency levels. Students’ writings were analyzed according to five criteria, namely content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics, and subsequently classified into

three categories: low, medium, and high ability levels. This classification was essential because Differentiated Instruction requires instructional strategies to be adjusted according to students' varying levels of readiness and proficiency.

The treatment phase was conducted after the administration of the *pre-test*. The experimental group was taught descriptive text writing through the Differentiated Instruction approach, in which students received learning activities and materials tailored to their ability levels. Students with low ability were provided with sentence starters, vocabulary banks, and simplified text examples to support idea generation and sentence construction. Students with medium ability participated in guided writing activities and worked with model texts containing complete descriptive structures. Students with high ability were assigned more advanced writing tasks, such as incorporating sensory details and varying sentence structures to enhance descriptive quality.

Table 1. Students Ability Levels

Students' Ability Level	Differentiated Instruction Treatment
Low ability	provided with sentence starters, vocabulary banks, and simple text examples.
Medium ability	given guided writing activities and model texts with complete structures.
High ability	assigned more complex tasks, such as adding sensory details or varying sentence structures.

The control group, meanwhile, was taught using conventional instructional methods characterized by direct explanation and uniform tasks for all students regardless of their proficiency levels. Both groups studied the same material, namely descriptive text writing, but differed in the instructional approach employed during the learning process. Following the treatment, the *post-test* was administered to evaluate students' progress in writing descriptive texts. The *post-test* used a writing task similar in format to the *pre-test*, requiring students to produce a descriptive text based on a given prompt. The resulting data were subsequently used to compare the performance of the two groups and determine the effectiveness of Differentiated Instruction in improving students' writing skills.

After the *post-test*, students' writings were analyzed and evaluated using a writing assessment rubric covering five aspects: content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics (Sinaga et al., 2023; Syukriya, 2024). Scores were categorized into several performance levels, namely Excellent, Very Good, Good, Fair, and Unsatisfactory. Brown (2007) identifies content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics as five essential components contributing to successful writing performance. The rubric enabled the researcher not only to measure students' final writing achievement but also to identify how Differentiated Instruction facilitated improvement among students with low, medium, and high proficiency levels.

Table 3. Criteria in Writing

Students Score	Score	Criteria
Content	16–20	Content is highly relevant; description is rich, specific, and clear; details help the reader visualize the object/person.
	11–15	Content is relevant; description is adequate with some clear details.
	6–10	Content is limited; few descriptive details are provided.
	0–5	Content is unclear or not relevant to the topic.
Organisation	16–20	Clear identification and description; ideas are logically ordered and well connected.
	11–15	Generic structure is mostly correct; ideas are logically ordered with minor problems.
	6–10	Organization is weak; identification or description is partially correct.
	0–5	No clear organization; generic structure is incorrect.
Vocabulary	16–20	Uses varied, precise, and effective descriptive vocabulary.
	11–15	Uses appropriate vocabulary with some variation.
	6–10	Vocabulary is limited; frequent repetition of basic words.
	0–5	Vocabulary is inadequate to convey meaning.
Grammar	16–20	Grammar is accurate and varied; sentence structures are clear and effective.
	11–15	Grammar is generally accurate; some errors but meaning is clear.
	6–10	Frequent grammatical errors; meaning is sometimes unclear.
	0–5	Grammar errors seriously interfere with understanding.
Mechanics	16–20	Almost no errors in spelling and punctuation.
	11–15	Few errors; do not interfere with meaning.
	6–10	Several errors; meaning remains understandable.
	0–5	Frequent errors that interfere with readability.

To ensure the quality of the research instrument, validity and reliability testing were conducted prior to administering the writing tests. Validity testing was intended to determine whether the instrument accurately measured students' descriptive writing ability, whereas reliability testing examined the consistency and dependability of the instrument in generating stable results. These procedures ensured that the data obtained from the *pre-test* and *post-test* were accurate, reliable, and appropriate for further statistical analysis. According to Sitorus et al. (2023), citing Scarvia B. Anderson, an instrument is considered valid if it effectively measures the variable it is intended to assess. In this study, instrument validity was calculated using the *Product Moment* correlation formula.

$$r_{xy} = \frac{N\sum XY - (\sum X)(\sum Y)}{\sqrt{[N\sum X^2 - (\sum X)^2][N\sum Y^2 - (\sum Y)^2]}}$$

Reliability, meanwhile, cannot be defined solely in terms of measurement accuracy but must also reflect consistency in assessing the intended construct. Scarvia B. Anderson, as cited in Arikunto, Saputra, Khoirunnisa, and Sawai (2023), states that a reliable instrument provides stable and dependable measurements of the characteristic being investigated. In this study, reliability was measured using the following formula:

$$r_{11} = \frac{2 \cdot r_{1/21/2}}{(1 + r_{1/21/2})}$$

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of students' writing scores in the experimental class are presented in Table 4. The table displays the comparison between the *pre-test* and *post-test* scores obtained by students after the implementation of Differentiated Instruction. The data indicate a substantial improvement in students' descriptive writing performance following the treatment. This improvement can be observed through the increase in individual scores as well as the overall class achievement. The findings suggest that Differentiated Instruction contributed positively to the enhancement of students' writing skills.

Table 4. The Scores of *Pre-Test* and *Post-Test* of the Experimental Class

No	Students' Initial	Score of Pre-Test (X)	Score of Post-Test (Y)	X ²	Y ²	X.Y
1	AF	85	91	7225	8281	7735
2	RP	82	93	6724	8649	7626
3	SOM	80	91	6400	8281	7280
4	MFS	86	89	7396	7921	7654
5	KNA	81	91	6561	8281	7371
6	MJM	84	97	7056	9409	8148
7	E	78	91	6084	8281	7098
8	SRN	75	97	5625	9409	7275
9	SJM	79	92	6241	8464	7268
10	LNH	77	93	5929	8649	7161
11	AA	76	95	5776	9025	7220
12	NAS	78	96	6084	9216	7488
13	KN	70	84	4900	7056	5880
14	RR	79	90	6241	8100	7110
15	SNA	79	93	6241	8649	7347
16	Y	63	86	3969	7396	5418
17	YPH	65	88	4225	7744	5720
18	JA	44	76	1936	5776	3344

No	Students' Initial	Score of Pre-Test (X)	Score of Post-Test (Y)	X ²	Y ²	X.Y
19	FNH	44	69	1936	4761	3036
20	AP	41	59	1681	3481	2419
21	ASM	42	79	1764	6241	3318
22	NP	70	89	4900	7921	6230
23	MR	48	78	2304	6084	3744
24	FRR	54	72	2916	5184	3888
25	AH	26	69	676	4761	1794
26	AS	71	84	5041	7056	5964
27	SK	73	83	5329	6889	6059
28	GDZBH	77	89	5929	7921	6853
29	YS	60	84	3600	7056	5040
30	IA	69	86	4761	7396	5934
31	FR	48	82	2304	6724	3936
32	SA	54	86	2916	7396	4644
33	MS	60	89	3600	7921	5340
TOTAL		Σ_x 2198	Σ_y 2831	Σx^2 154270	Σy^2 245379	Σxy 192342

Based on the data presented in Table 4, students' writing abilities in the *pre-test* were categorized into three proficiency levels. Seven students were classified into the high-level category with scores ranging from 80–100, seventeen students were categorized as medium-level with scores between 60–79, and nine students were included in the low-level category with scores below 60. After receiving the treatment through Differentiated Instruction, substantial improvement was observed in the *post-test* results. Twenty-nine students achieved the high-level category, three students remained in the medium-level category, and only one student was categorized at the low level. These findings indicate that Differentiated Instruction effectively improved students' descriptive writing performance across varying levels of proficiency.

The results of students' writing scores in the control class are presented in Table 5. The table illustrates the comparison between the *pre-test* and *post-test* scores of students who were taught using conventional instructional methods. Although the control group also demonstrated some improvement after the learning process, the increase was less significant compared to that of the experimental group. The findings indicate that conventional instruction contributed to limited progress in students' descriptive writing ability. This difference further supports the effectiveness of Differentiated Instruction in enhancing students' writing achievement.

Table 5. The Scores of Pre-Test and Post-Test of the Control Class

No	Students' Initial	Score of Pre-Test (X)	Score of Post-Test (Y)	X ²	Y ²	X.Y
1	AG	52	58	2704	3364	3016
2	IC	42	55	1764	3025	2310
3	PBS	48	62	2304	3844	2976
4	A	55	56	3025	3136	3080
5	AT	56	72	3136	5184	4032
6	YRGG	46	48	2116	2304	2208
7	JS	50	54	2500	2916	2700
8	NHM	55	75	3025	5625	4125
9	ISA	57	60	3249	3600	3420
10	FF	51	68	2601	4624	3468
11	SJS	43	52	1849	2704	2236

No	Students' Initial	Score of Pre-Test (X)	Score of Post-Test (Y)	X ²	Y ²	X.Y
12	FRN	56	61	3136	3721	3416
13	D	44	48	1936	2304	2112
14	RR	44	58	1936	3364	2552
15	SRMN	50	52	2500	2704	2600
16	MM	53	63	2809	3969	3339
17	RS	44	45	1936	2025	1980
18	ME	38	62	1444	3844	2356
19	RR	57	65	3249	4225	3705
20	NSBM	70	72	4900	5184	5040
21	RZAS	56	57	3136	3249	3192
22	MSM	45	49	2025	2401	2205
23	FMS	49	52	2401	2704	2548
24	NS	46	56	2116	3136	2576
25	SA	58	72	3364	5184	4176
26	SAI	55	58	3025	3364	3190
27	MMAS	45	47	2025	2209	2115
28	KNA	45	50	2025	2500	2250
29	ZML	43	60	1849	3600	2580
30	AM	42	46	1764	2116	1932
31	BCL	60	62	3600	3844	3720
32	SR	54	56	2916	3136	3024
33	JA	30	56	900	3136	1680
TOTAL		$\sum x$ 1639	$\sum y$ 1907	$\sum x^2$ 83145	$\sum y^2$ 112245	$\sum xy$ 97459

Based on the data above, it can be observed that the students' writing skills in the *pre-test*, categorized according to their initial abilities without differentiated grouping, demonstrated varied levels of achievement. One student obtained a score of 70, while one student achieved a score of 60. Scores of 58 and 54 were each obtained by one student, whereas scores of 57, 50, 46, 43, and 42 were each achieved by two students. Three students obtained scores of 56, 55, 45, and 44 respectively, indicating that a considerable number of students were clustered within the middle and lower score ranges. Other individual scores included 53, 52, 51, 49, 48, and 38, each achieved by one student, while the lowest score of 30 was obtained by one student. These findings indicate that students' initial writing abilities varied considerably prior to the implementation of the instructional treatment.

The frequency distribution of students' scores in the *post-test* demonstrated noticeable improvement after the instructional process. The highest score frequency was represented by four students who achieved a score of 56, while scores of 75, 72, 62, 60, 57, 52, and 48 were each obtained by two students. Three students achieved a score of 58, indicating a concentration of students within the moderate achievement category. Other scores, including 68, 65, 63, 61, 55, 54, 50, 49, 47, 46, and 45, were each obtained by one student. The distribution of scores in the *post-test* suggests that students experienced improvement in their descriptive writing performance following the learning activities. These results indicate that the instructional treatment contributed positively to enhancing students' writing achievement, although variations in individual performance remained evident across the class.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study demonstrated that Differentiated Instruction has a significant positive effect on students' writing skills in descriptive texts. The findings revealed that students taught through Differentiated Instruction

achieved greater improvement in their writing performance compared to those taught using conventional instructional methods. The statistical analysis confirmed this result, as the *t-count* value exceeded the *t-table* value at the significance level of 0.05, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis and the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis. The implementation of Differentiated Instruction enabled students to become more actively engaged in the learning process and facilitated the development of their ideas in descriptive writing. These findings indicate that Differentiated Instruction is an effective and responsive teaching strategy for enhancing students' writing achievement in heterogeneous classrooms.

Based on the findings of this study, several suggestions can be proposed for English teachers and educational practitioners. Teachers are encouraged to implement Differentiated Instruction in writing classes in order to accommodate students' diverse readiness levels, learning preferences, and interests. The use of differentiated learning activities, flexible tasks, and personalized support can help students improve their motivation, participation, and confidence in writing descriptive texts. Schools are also expected to provide adequate support and training for teachers to effectively apply student-centered instructional approaches in English language learning. The integration of Differentiated Instruction into classroom practice may contribute to the creation of a more inclusive and effective learning environment.

This study also provides recommendations for future researchers interested in exploring Differentiated Instruction in language learning contexts. Further studies are recommended to investigate the implementation of Differentiated Instruction in other English language skills, such as speaking, reading, and listening, as well as in different educational levels and classroom settings. Future research may also examine the long-term impact of Differentiated Instruction on students' academic achievement, motivation, and learning autonomy. In addition, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches could provide a more comprehensive understanding of students' experiences and perceptions regarding differentiated learning practices. Broader research involving larger samples and diverse educational contexts would further strengthen the generalizability of findings related to the effectiveness of Differentiated Instruction.

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