



Improving students' reading comprehension of report texts in English subject through the four-square writing method for grade x of vocational high school in the second semester of the 2024/2025 academic year at a vocational school in Surakarta City

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ABSTRACT

This classroom action research aimed to answer two questions: (1) What are the results of using the Four-Square Writing Method to improve student's reading comprehension of report text to vocational high school students? and (2) What are the students' views on the use of the Four-Square Writing Method in learning report text? The study was conducted from late March to early May 2025 at one of the state vocational high schools in Surakarta. This study employed a descriptive qualitative data analysis method, using a modified version of "The Interactive Method" by (Miles et al., 2014). Data were collected through pre-test and post-test scores, students' written work, and questionnaire responses. The results showed that: (1) the Four-Square Writing Method was somewhat effective in enhancing students' reading comprehension of report texts of approximately 3%; and (2) the method was well-received by students. Based on the study's findings, the writer recommends: (1) Teachers consider implementing innovative methods such as the Four-Square Writing Method, (2) students should improve their basic English skills, and (3) future researchers should explore solutions to the challenges faced during implementation new method. Overall, the study suggests that the method holds promise for improving students' reading comprehension of report texts.

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INTRODUCTION

In Indonesian secondary education, particularly in English and Indonesian language subjects, the curriculum emphasizes the mastery of various text genres. Among these, the Report Text constitutes one of the core competencies that students are expected to acquire. According to the

Ministry of Education and Culture in 2025 (*CP & ATP - Bahasa Inggris Fase E*, n.d.), Grade X students in senior and vocational high schools are required to study multiple text genres—including narrative, descriptive, procedure, analytical exposition, recount, and report texts—through the use of authentic and real-life materials. As noted by (Mauludin, 2020), English education in Indonesia adopts a text-based or genre-based approach, which requires students to understand the definition, purpose, structure, linguistic features, and practical applications of each text type.

The text-based approach offers notable pedagogical benefits but also presents significant challenges. (Hossain, 2024) emphasizes that this method strengthens language proficiency, cultural awareness, and critical thinking. By engaging with various texts, students enhance vocabulary, grammar, and sentence construction while gaining exposure to authentic language use. However, difficulties emerge when texts are not appropriately aligned with students' proficiency levels or cultural contexts. Overly complex materials may demotivate learners and induce anxiety. (Widodo, 2006) highlights the difficulty students face when transferring ideas between their first language and English, while (D'Mello & Graesser, 2011; Dweek, n.d.) note that teacher-centered explanations may lead to confusion and disengagement. These challenges are widely recognized in both Indonesian and international contexts.

To address such issues, researchers have explored innovative approaches to teach Report Texts. (Fauzia et al., 2024), for instance, investigated the use of Instagram in Report Text instruction at State Senior High School No. 4 Malang. Their findings showed that 85.7% of students considered Instagram useful in supporting writing, as its visual prompts encouraged idea generation. Students demonstrated greater engagement when given the freedom to select their own images, highlighting the importance of learner autonomy. Nevertheless, persistent issues such as grammar, vocabulary, organization, and comprehension difficulties were noted, and some students displayed limited interest in the platform. These findings are consistent with broader challenges in text-based pedagogy reported by (Hossain, 2024).

Other studies have examined alternative strategies. (Pujianto & Emilia, 2014) investigated scaffolding techniques to support student writing, while (Farha & Rohani, 2019) applied cooperative learning to promote peer collaboration. (Hidayati, 2019) implemented picture-based in classroom settings, and (Fauziah, 2023) integrated interactive method to enhance comprehension. Collectively, these studies illustrate that diverse pedagogical innovations can improve student outcomes, although issues related to language production and comprehension remain.

Aside from those studies that tried to use many kinds of pedagogical/teaching innovation, there are some studies that studied on the Four-Square Writing Method. In English-teaching context, previous studies have demonstrated its effectiveness in improving students' ability to write across various text types (Hardi, 2020; Lumenta et al., 2020; Tri Utami & Siti Rohbiah, 2024; Utami et al., 2024; Wijaya et al., 2022; Yunus et al., 2021). These studies consistently report positive outcomes, showing that the method assists students in understanding and constructing different text genres. Beyond improving writing skills, the method has also been shown to strengthen content development (Hasanah et al., 2023). Furthermore, when combined with mind mapping, the Four-Square method was found to enhance both writing performance and classroom participation (Saragih et al., 2022). Additional research has applied the method across varied contexts, student levels, and topics (Amiruddin & Muslaini, 2022; Tampubolon & Tampubolon, 2022; Sartika et al., 2024; Sauhana, 2021), with results indicating improved writing skills and expanded vocabulary. (Elvis & Sanchez, 2023) likewise reported comparable findings in their thesis, aligning with results from the aforementioned studies.

In non-English contexts, previous studies in Turkish language education reported similarly positive outcomes of using Four-Square writing method in teaching Turkish, despite structural and linguistic differences between Turkish and English (Aslan & Özdemir, 2025; Dağlı Gökbulut et al., 2025; İpek & Karabuğa, 2022).

However, to date, no studies have specifically investigated the application of the Four-Square Writing Method in teaching Report Texts or in enhancing students' comprehension of such texts. Existing research has primarily focused on the use of the Four-Square Writing Method to improve students' general writing skills or other related aspects, with limited attention given to its potential impact on reading comprehension.

The promising findings regarding the successful implementation of the Four-Square Writing Method highlight its potential as one of the solutions for realizing the objectives of both the Merdeka Curriculum and the K13 Curriculum. These curricula emphasize the expectation that teachers employ innovative pedagogical approaches to enhance educational practices, thereby improving students' academic performance and, ultimately, the quality of graduates (KSPSTENDIK Kemdikbud | 2024, n.d.). Furthermore, the Four-Square Writing Method may serve as a valuable tool for teaching various text genres, as both the K13 and Merdeka Curricula continue to adopt a text-based or literature-based approach to language learning (CP & ATP - Bahasa Inggris Fase E, n.d.).

The positive results reported in previous studies can be attributed to the structured nature of the Four-Square Writing Method. Developed by (Gould et al., 1999), this method involves identifying a central topic, drafting an introductory sentence, generating supporting subtopics, and expanding these subtopics into coherent paragraphs. By dividing the writing process into manageable stages, the method facilitates both comprehension and expression. Its simplicity and adaptability make it applicable across various educational levels, providing students with easier strategies for effective writing. Moreover, the flexibility of this method aligns with the objectives of both the Merdeka and the K13 Curriculum, which emphasize the use of innovative pedagogical approaches to enhance student performance at all educational levels while fostering literacy and reading comprehension (Ayuningtyas & Nugraheni, 2024; KSPSTENDIK Kemdikbud | 2024, n.d.).

Nonetheless, challenges have also been reported. (Almassry et al., 2025) found that some students were unfamiliar with the graphic organizer at the heart of the method, struggled due to limited prior exposure to structured writing strategies, or adapted at different rates. These findings underline the importance of effective teacher guidance to ensure the successful implementation of the method.

Despite these limitations, structured approaches such as the Four-Square Writing Method can yield substantial outcomes, particularly in the development of literacy skills, which also one of many goals that K13 and Merdeka Curriculum want (Ayuningtyas & Nugraheni, 2024). One of the critical outcomes is enhanced reading comprehension, a skill essential for long-term academic, social, and professional success (Jane Oakhill et al., 2014; Rapp et al., 2007). Achieving such outcomes requires synergy between students and teachers. Students must learn to process information effectively and demonstrate language proficiency (Gough & Tunmer, 1986; Scarborough, 2001), while teachers play a central role in facilitating and nurturing these skills (Bus & Van Ijzendoorn, 1999; Jane Oakhill et al., 2014). Teachers' instructional expertise and social-empathic abilities are crucial for maximizing the result of the implementation of the new writing method, particularly for learners who require additional support.

Based on the information above, the present study investigates the application of the Four-Square Writing Method in teaching Report Texts to Grade X vocational high school students in Surakarta. The study aims to evaluate the potential of the method to improve both comprehension and writing skills, thereby contributing to the broader development of effective pedagogical practices within genre-based English education.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted using classroom action research method. In short, classroom action research (PTK) can be defined as a form of reflective inquiry conducted by the practitioner, aimed at improving the rational foundation of their actions in carrying out tasks, deepening their

understanding of those actions, and improving the conditions in which the learning practices are implemented (Kemmis, 1993; Kemmis et al., 2014; Sanford, 1970). To meet its goals, classroom action research is implemented through a recurring cycle of four stages: planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting. During the reflecting phase, which includes analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating both the process and results, new challenges or insights often emerge. This prompts a revised cycle—new planning, further implementing, continued observing, and deeper reflecting. The process repeats as needed until the problem is resolved, with each cycle potentially uncovering new issues to be addressed in a similar way. Below is the illustration of stages of classroom action research.

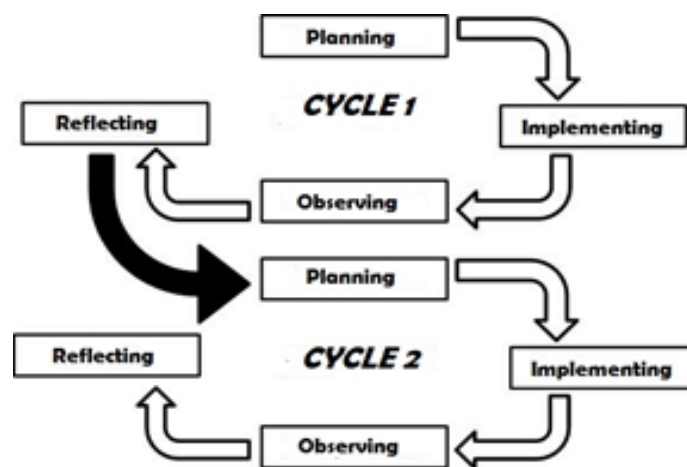


Figure 1. Classroom action research cycles (taken from (Indriyanti & Prasetyo, 2018))

In order to analyze the data obtained from the study, a bit modified “The Interactive Method” (descriptive qualitative data analysis method) proposed by (Miles et al., 2014) was employed in this study. The modified method will have four steps of analyzing the data. The first step was data reduction which in this case, the data that couldn’t be analyzed were removed via listwise deletion. From all 35 students (100%), seven (20% of the them were excluded due to incomplete data. The second step was data display which the data such as Pre and Post-Test were displayed into table and Student’s Questionnaire replies were displayed into pie chart with percentage. The third step was discussion which all displayed data were discussed and analyzed objectively by the researcher, based on the facts identified in the research findings. The final step was drawing conclusions, implications, and recommendations based on the findings and discussions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The process of obtaining the data were taken using pre-test and post-test, questionnaire, and writing activity which produced student’s work. The implementation and the process of obtaining the data was done from late March to early May 2025. First, let’s answer the first research question employed in this study, which is “What are the results of using the Four-Square Writing Method to improve student’s reading comprehension of report text to vocational high school students?”, by take a look and analyze the results of the Pre-Test, Post-Test, and Writing Activity that was taken in this study.

Table 1. Pre-test result

Scoring Range Pre-Test			
Classification	Score Range	Frequency	Percent

Scoring Range Pre-Test			
Very Good	90-100	18	64,3%
Good	80-89	2	7,1%
Okay	70-79	4	14,3%
Poor	40-69	4	14,3%
Very Poor	0-39	0	0%
Mean: 83,6	Total	28	100%

Table 2. Post-test result

Scoring Range Post-Test			
Classification	Score Range	Frequency	Percent
Very Good	90-100	19	67,8%
Good	80-89	6	21,4%
Okay	70-79	1	3,6%
Poor	40-69	1	3,6%
Very Poor	0-39	1	3,6%
Mean: 87,5	Total	28	100%

Based on the tables above, the mean score for the pre-test was 83.6, while the mean score for the post-test was 87.5. The highest score in the pre-test was 100, and the lowest was 40. In the post-test, the highest score remained at 100, but the lowest dropped to 30. The passing grade for this study was set at 70; therefore, 24 students passed the pre-test, and 26 students passed the post-test. This indicates that two students who had not met the passing grade in the pre-test successfully passed in the post-test. Additionally, the number of students classified under the "Okay" and "Poor" categories decreased, with each dropping from four to just one. However, it is worth noting that one student who previously scored in the "Okay" category during the pre-test received a "Very Poor" score in the post-test. Overall, the results indicate a slight improvement in students' reading comprehension levels. The number of students in the "Good" category increased from two to six. Furthermore, the mean score of the post-test (87.5) was higher than that of the pre-test (83.6), reflecting an average score increase of 3%. This supports the conclusion that the new method had a positive, though a little bit, impact on students' performance. However, the students who performed "Poor" and "Very Poor" is still there, which should be noted by the teacher/the writer of this study. Next, let's see the result of Writing Activity taken in this study.

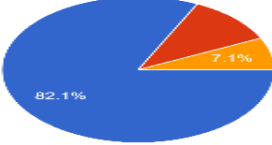
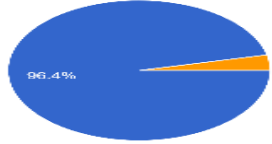
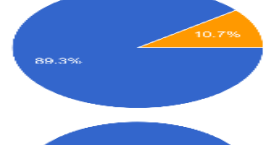

Table 3. Writing activity result

Scoring Range Student's Work			
Classification	Score Range	Frequency	Percent
Very Good	90-100	2	7,1%
Good	80-89	11	39,3%
Okay	70-79	6	21,4%
Poor	40-69	8	28,6%
Very Poor	0-39	1	3,6%
Mean: 72,5	Total	28	100%

Based on the table above, the average student grade was 72,5. A total of 19 students scored at or above the passing grade of 70, while 9 students scored below it. Approximately 67.8% of students performed well during the writing activity, whereas 32.2% did not. This suggests that the majority of students were able to succeed in the writing activity by applying the Four-Square Writing Method, which aimed to improve their reading comprehension and overall understanding of report texts. However, a significant portion of the class still did not meet the passing standard, with some students falling into the "Very Poor" performance category.

That means, the writing activity was considered a little bit effective. After answering the first research question, now let's answering the second research question employed in this study, which is "What are the students' views on the use of the Four-Square Writing Method in learning report text?" by taking look at the questionnaire result that was taken in this study.

Table 4. Questionnaire responses and explanation

No	Questionnaire Responses chart	Explanation
1		Regarding whether the Four-Square Writing Method was better than conventional method, approximately 82.1% (23 students) answered "yes," 10.7% (3 students) answered "no," and 7.1% (2 students) answered "unsure." Majority of students expressed that the new writing method helps them to understand Report Text such as understanding information and ideas written in each paragraph and how to write Report text clearly.
2		Regarding whether the Four-Square Writing Method was able to improve student's knowledge by looking at before and after the lesson/study, approximately 96.4% (27 students) answered "yes," and 3,6% (1 student) answered "unsure."
3		Regarding whether students was able to understand information inside the Report Text by using the Four-Square Writing Method or teacher's teaching, approximately 89.3% (25 students) answered "yes," and 10.7% (3 students) answered "unsure."
4		Regarding whether students was able to understand Report Text's Main Topic and supporting topics in each paragraph by using the Four-Square Writing Method or teacher's teaching, approximately 89.3% (25 students) answered "yes," and 10.7% (3 students) answered "unsure."

Based on the four important questionnaires, the majority of students reacted positively to the Four-Square Writing Method, preferring it over conventional approaches. Most students reported that the method was effective in teaching report texts, particularly in enhancing reading comprehension, writing skills, and understanding of the text type. They highlighted its clarity, structured guidance, and usefulness in organizing ideas and information. Many also reported increased confidences in writing and better comprehension of report texts.

The writer implies that the Four-Square Writing Method has strong potential for improving vocational high school students' reading comprehension, especially in Report Texts. Student answers indicated that it helped them identify main ideas, supporting details, and overall text structure which is key components of reading comprehension. The high rate of positive responses shows that integrating this method into instruction can create a more systematic and engaging framework for processing text-based materials. In addition to improving reading comprehension, the method also improved students' writing abilities. Its implementation may serve as one of effective pedagogical strategies to solve difficulties in understanding difficult texts while promoting broader literacy development within vocational education and across different educational contexts.

There are other responses that supports it but not enough to insert it to this article. Therefore, (a) all full questionnaire responses and (b) full explanation of all questionnaires written in the report which is the base of this journal article, are available in the following link: a) <https://tinyurl.com/2s4myr7k>; b) <https://tinyurl.com/2xs6cytc>

All of the research questions are answered. Now let's discuss what happened during this study that yield those answers. Regarding a little bit good result reported in the answers of the first research question, this is because there are two factors, internal and external. There are three external factors, first is interrupted teaching-learning process due to long Eid Mubarak holiday between first cycle and second cycle. This caused students having learning loss and struggling to remember the lesson they currently learn at that time. Second, teacher/writer have insufficient

teaching skills and couldn't give more accurate pre-test to expose student's weakness, so the teacher/writer could take care of it by giving supplement materials and extra guidance. Those difficulties were similar in (D'Mello & Graesser, 2011; Dweek, n.d.). Lastly, the teaching-learning process was interrupted again for one meeting because the class was used for teaching practice test. During this test, the teacher/the writer used different lesson materials which confused the students. Also, because of this interrupted teaching-learning process, the students experienced an interrupted learning and writing flow which reduced their performance in writing activity.

Apart from the external factors, there are also two internal factors. First, several students clearly stated that they had difficulty constructing English sentences, were still confused about verb usage and tense types, and even struggled with translating from Indonesian to English. Those difficulties were similar in (Almassry et al., 2025; Widodo, 2006) papers. That means, students lack of English basic skills/knowledge which was not taken care by the teacher/the writer. This evidence was found inside the questionnaire responses which was available in the link above. Second, student's confusion due to interrupted learning and writing flow as the effect of one meeting was used for teaching practice test which was explained in the previous part.

Based on the findings of this study, three key considerations are proposed to enhance the effectiveness of future implementations of the Four-Square Writing Method. First, the timing of implementation plays a critical role. The method should be introduced during active school months without long holidays or major events, such as Eid Mubarak or Eid al-Adha. Interruptions in teaching often result in learning loss, requiring teachers to reteach previously covered material. If interruptions are unavoidable, teachers could provide a brief introduction to the method before the break and then refresh students' understanding afterward. This approach would allow for a smoother transition and help maintain the method's effectiveness.

Second, a strong foundation in the basics of English writing—such as grammar, verb usage, and tenses—is essential for the success of writing activities. Even the most effective pedagogical methods cannot compensate for the absence of fundamental language skills. Teachers can address this by offering supplementary lessons after school, providing additional learning materials for student's study at home, or giving extra guidance during classroom writing activities. Ensuring that all students in the class possess enough foundational skills will maximize the benefits of the Four-Square Writing Method.

Third, the study highlights the importance of teachers' pedagogical competence. In this case, the teacher demonstrated limited instructional skills, which influenced student outcomes. It is therefore recommended that teachers strengthen their abilities in delivering clear instructions, communicating effectively with students, preparing and executing assessments such as pre- and post-tests, and managing classroom dynamics. Improvements in these areas will positively influence students' engagement and learning outcomes, as effective pedagogy is closely linked to improved academic performance.

Despite minuses reported in this study, the findings indicate that the Four-Square Writing Method yielded moderate success, consistent with results reported in previous studies. Evidence of this can be seen in students' writing performance during class's writing activities and the improvements reflected in their post-test scores. However, there are several things that influence whether it's a success or not. Those were timing of implementation, teacher and students' collaboration to master basic English writing skills, and the teacher's pedagogical competence. Not only that, more attention should also be directed toward students who scored below the passing grade as reported in this study. While many students were able to apply the method effectively, others struggled due to various internal and external factors, as discussed earlier. Addressing these factors will enhance the method's effectiveness and contribute to better student achievement.

Other findings such as the explanations of each cycle and detailed findings are available in the following online PDF report of this study: <https://tinyurl.com/2xs6cyc>

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, this study concludes that the Four-Square Writing Method contributes to improving vocational high school students' reading comprehension of Report Texts, despite the findings show a little bit good result. The method's structured and systematic way gives a good tool for students to organize information and develop comprehension. However, its success depends heavily on three key factors: students' basic English writing skills, time of implementation, and teachers' pedagogical competence. Without adequate attention, the effect may remain limited.

To maximize its effectiveness, measurable strategies should be implemented at both student and teacher levels. For students, strengthening their foundational English writing skills like grammar, verb usage, tenses, and sentence structure is very crucial. This can be taken care in many ways such as remedial sessions for all or low-performed students, supplementary worksheets or lesson materials, after-school classes, or peer-assisted learning groups. This is to ensure that all students or low-performed students are gradually able to build the linguistic foundation needed to apply the new writing method effectively. For teachers, continuous professional development is vital. To do that, teacher can attend workshops on classroom management and lesson planning, attending peer-teaching observations, and using reflective practices like lesson journals. Teachers should design accurate diagnostic assessments to search student weaknesses and low-performer, so the teacher could give accurate support based on that assessment's results. These approaches make the recommendations not only practical but also measurable in real classroom contexts.

Furthermore, while this study was conducted in a single vocational high school in Surakarta, its findings may be cautiously generalized to other education level/places. The structured nature of the Four-Square Writing Method makes it adaptable across different educational environments, such as local wisdom, different curriculum/topics, different student's level, available school facilities/support facilities, and many more. Therefore, future research in diverse schools with varying conditions is recommended to validate and extend the present findings. Overall, this study underscores the promise of the Four-Square Writing Method as an instructional tool while highlighting the essential role of foundational skills and effective pedagogy in ensuring its success.

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