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## Improving Students' Writing Skills in Grade IV of SDN 173274 Siborongborong Through a Contextual Approach

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### Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan minat dan keterampilan menulis siswa dengan pendekatan kontekstual. Penelitian ini merupakan Penelitian Tindakan Kelas yang mengambil lokasi di kelas IV SD Negeri 173274 Siborongborong. Penelitian ini dilaksanakan dalam tiga siklus. Rencana Pembelajaran setiap siklus disusun oleh guru dan peneliti. Setiap tindakan terdiri dari empat tahap, yaitu perencanaan, tindakan, pengamatan, dan refleksi. Teknik pengumpulan data yang digunakan adalah angket, pengamatan, wawancara atau diskusi, kajian dokumen, dan tes. Uji validitas data dalam penelitian ini dengan triangulasi dan review informan kunci. Hasil penelitian dapat disimpulkan sebagai berikut: Pertama, penerapan pendekatan kontekstual dapat meningkatkan minat menulis siswa, hal itu terlihat bahwa setelah dilakukan tindakan siswa membuat perencanaan sebelum menulis, merevisi setelah menyeleksi tulisan, menggunakan Ejaan Yang Disempurnakan dan lebih senang berlatih menulis meskipun tidak diperintah guru. Kedua, penerapan pendekatan kontekstual dapat meningkatkan keterampilan menulis siswa dari 63,01 menjadi 86,53.

Kata Kunci: *keterampilan menulis, pendekatan kontekstual, siswa*

## Abstract

This research aims to improve students' interest and writing skills with a contextual approach. This research is a Class Action Research that takes place in grade IV of SD Negeri 173274 Siborongborong. This research was carried out in three cycles. Teachers and researchers prepare the lesson plan for each Cycle. Each action consists of four stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection. The data collection techniques are questionnaires, observations, interviews or discussions, document reviews, and tests. The validity of the data in this study was tested by triangulation and review of key informants. The results of the study can be concluded as follows: First, the application of a contextual approach can increase students' interest in writing, and it can be seen that after taking action, students make plans before writing, revise after selecting writing, use Enhanced Spelling and prefer to practice writing even though the teacher does not order them. Second, a contextual approach can improve students' writing skills from 63.01 to 86.53.

*Keywords: writing skills, contextual approach, students*

## INTRODUCTION

The implementation of Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System is described in several regulations, including Government Regulation Number 19 of 2005 concerning National Education Standards (Anugrah et al., 2022). This Government Regulation provides direction on the need to prepare and implement eight national education standards, namely (1) Content Standards, (2) Process Standards, (3) Graduation Competency Standards, (4) Educator and Education Personnel Standards, (5) Facilities and Infrastructure Standards, (6) Management Standards, (7) Financing Standards, and (8) Education Assessment Standards (Helda & Syahrani, 2022).

Based on this, in the current Indonesian subject curriculum (Education Unit Level Curriculum or KTSP), the competency standards for Indonesian subjects include two competencies, namely (1) language competence and (2) literary competence (Sugiantomas et al., 2017). The two competencies are integrally taught through four skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Writing is a very important aspect of language skills to prepare students because writing skills have become inevitable in meeting daily needs related to writing activities. By writing, it is hoped that students can express ideas clearly, logically, and systematically to the context and needs of communication (Sadiku, 2015).

The problem often raised in composition lessons is the lack of students' ability to use Indonesian well and correctly. This can be seen in the choice of words that are not precise, less effective sentences, difficulty expressing ideas because of problems in choosing words or making sentences, and even less able to develop ideas regularly and systematically, in

addition to spelling errors (Asnas & Hidayanti, 2024). In addition, effective writing is necessary for everyone involved in social, economic, educational, technological, and other activities. This is because no communication activities can be separated from using written means. Written communication is the most necessary (Irwan et al., 2019). It feels like no activities so far that can be separated from reading and writing. In addition, effective writing skills are needed in all jobs and can support or even determine success in a job or position (Sa'adah & Kurnia, 2024). Writing is a very useful skill for everyone.

According to Tarigan, most teachers cannot present writing material in an interesting, inspirational, and creative manner even though the teaching techniques chosen and practiced by teachers in the implementation of writing learning have a great influence on student learning achievement. Until now, most teachers still carry out learning with a conventional approach, teaching writing using lecture and assignment techniques. The teacher determines several titles/topics and then assigns students to choose one title as the basis for writing. The priority is products in the form of writing. Essay discussions are rarely done. With such a learning model, students have difficulty writing because they must comply with the title/topic that the teacher has determined. This makes students unable to develop their creativity optimally. In essence, the difficulty of writing is related to what should be written and how to pour it into writing. The learning model's negative impact is students' lack of motivation to write, which causes students' writing skills to be low. The above exposure hints that writing skills need to be improved. To improve it, teachers must improve their teaching approach. A contextual approach is predicted to improve writing skills.

One way to overcome the lack of success in manual learning can be to do therapy with classroom action research. With classroom action research, teachers will get practical benefits. Namely, they can know the problems in their class and how to overcome them. Thus, teachers can improve their learning process in the classroom consciously and well-planned. With classroom action research, the quality of teaching is better, and the quality of service in education will be improved so that the performance of teachers and students will also increase. In addition, teachers will be encouraged to be more professional.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This research was conducted at SD Negeri 173274 Siborongborong, Siborongborong District, North Sumatra Province, with the subject of grade IV students in the 2018/2019 school year. The type of research used is Classroom Action Research (PTK), which aims to improve students' writing skills by applying a contextual approach. This PTK involves

collaboration between researchers and grade IV teachers to design, implement, observe, and reflect on actions in learning cycles. This process aims to identify learning constraints, implement contextual approach strategies, and evaluate their impact on students' interests and writing skills. Research data is collected through observation techniques, interviews, document reviews, and tests, which are then critically and comparatively analyzed to ensure the validity and reliability of the research results.

The research is carried out through three cycles: planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. The principles of the contextual approach used include constructivism, questioning, discovering, community-based learning, modeling, reflection, and authentic assessment. In addition, data triangulation is used to test the validity of data by comparing information from various sources, such as interview results, observations, and learning documents. This research aims to increase students' interest in writing, develop the ability to make writing plans and increase the average daily score of students from 63.81 to 86.53. With this approach, it is hoped that research can positively contribute to developing students' writing skills and learning quality.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

#### Pre-Action Activities

Pre-action activities to start this research include (a) a description of the condition of writing skills, (b) initial conditions of interest in writing experiences, and (c) initial conditions of writing skills.

#### 1. Description of Writing Skills Conditions for Grade IV Students of SD Negeri 173274 Siborongborong

From the observations on writing learning, several problems need to be corrected. First, learning is still conventional with a classical approach, where teachers are active and students are passive. Teachers have not applied the contextual approach and its components in learning. Second, the lecture method is still dominant, and students tend to answer in unison without the courage to ask. Third, classroom management has not been optimal, especially in the arrangement of students when working in groups, which are still crowded. Fourth, teachers have not conducted process or result assessments to give awards to students. In addition, students' interest in writing is still low, as they consider writing difficult and boring. Based on these findings, there is a need for improvements in the learning system to optimize the role of students, create a pleasant learning atmosphere, and improve

meaningful learning outcomes.

## 2. Initial Conditions of Interest in Writing Experience of Grade IV Students of SD Negeri 173274 Siborongborong

Based on the results of observations, interviews, and questionnaires conducted before the action, it was found that students' interest in writing in grade IV of SDN 173274 Siborongborong was still very low. This is reflected in students' activities when given writing assignments, where they look confused and don't know where to start. Some students even play with their stationery, such as biting a ballpoint pen or banging it on a table and looking at their friends to see if they have started writing. When asked about the writing topic, some students admitted they were still confused and had not begun. This low interest in writing is directly related to students' low writing skills caused by their ignorance of writing rules. Writing is considered a boring activity for them.

Therefore, examples of writing from various media are needed to arouse students' interest in writing. Awareness of the importance of writing can encourage students to develop their interest and skills in writing. Students are more likely to feel happy writing if they do it without the teacher's orders, such as filling their free time by writing or displaying writing in class. Writing is also a hobby for some students interested in reading other people's works and studying books about writing.

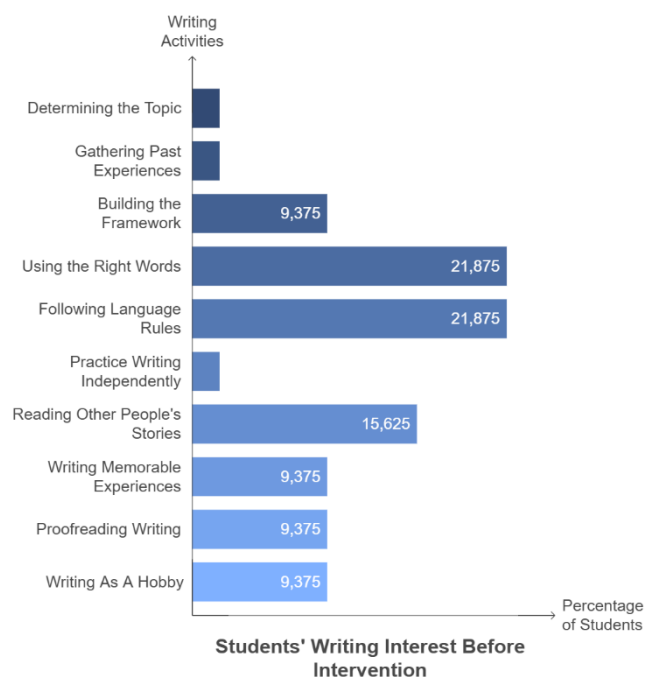


Figure 1. Students' Writing Interests Before Receiving Intervention

Based on the results of the questionnaire, students' interest in writing is still low, shown by most students not determining the topic before writing (81.25%), not

gathering experience (81.25%), not compiling an essay outline (90.625%), and not using the right words (78.125%). In addition, the skills in using EYD are also minimal (78.125%), and the habit of reading and writing outside of school assignments is low due to the limited library facilities and the lack of writing culture at home. Writing revision activities are rarely done because students do not understand revision techniques. Other factors that affect low interest in writing are lack of parental guidance, a less supportive environment, and the assumption that writing is only for the gifted. For this reason, learning involving a contextual approach is needed to increase students' interest and writing skills gradually.

#### Initial Conditions of Writing Skills for Grade IV Students of SD Negeri 173274 Siborongborong

Many people prefer reading to writing because writing is considered more difficult. However, writing skills are very important in school and society, such as completing assignments, sending letters, or taking notes. Writing learning includes initial writing, spelling, and expressive writing, and this research focuses on expressive writing, namely writing about personal experiences. Observations of grade IV students of SD Negeri 173274 Siborongborong show that their writing skills are still low based on assessments with an analytical approach. The evaluation includes elements of content, organization of content, grammar, style, and spelling, each of which has a certain weight. These elements are assessed in detail, ranging from the unity of ideas, writing order, word selection, and sentence structure to grammar and spelling rules. The results of this analysis confirm the need for improvement in writing learning to improve students' skills according to the demands of basic competencies.

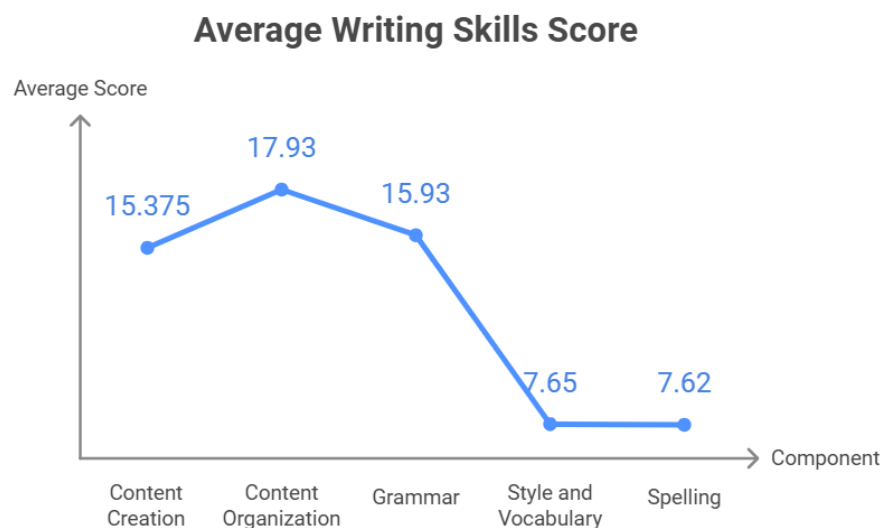


Figure 2. Writing Skills Assessment before PTK

## Implementation of Class Actions

### 1. Cycle I

#### a. Planning

The first action in the first Cycle of this research includes improving teachers' understanding of Classroom Action Research (PTK), Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL), writing interest, and students' writing skills to equalize perceptions between teachers and researchers to improve the learning that has been carried out. The researcher explained that PTK aims to enhance the quality of education, especially writing experiences, with benefits such as updating teaching methods, enhancing reflection skills, solving learning problems, and creativity in curriculum development, which increases teacher professionalism. In addition, an understanding of CTL is provided by emphasizing its seven main components, its relevance to KTSP, and an assessment system to determine students' abilities. To improve students' writing skills, the importance of methods that can engage students, encourage active engagement, and create a fun learning atmosphere through strategies such as connecting learning with students' lives, building new interests, and providing incentives are emphasized. In the context of grade IV students, it is targeted so that students can compose sentences properly and correctly so that their writing can be understood easily.

#### b. Implementation of Actions

The learning steps of Cycle I include two meetings aimed at improving students' writing skills through a contextual approach. At the first meeting, the teacher opened the lesson by greeting students, attending, conveying learning objectives, and providing examples of interesting experiences to lead to the core material. Students were divided into five groups and tasked with writing a fun personal experience, such as a vacation experience. In groups, students work together—one recounts expertise, one helps construct sentences, and another writes a story on folio paper. This process also encourages peer tutoring, where students who are better at helping their friends with difficulty. Teachers provide active guidance, direct students to use EYD appropriately and remind them of the importance of structuring sentences and paragraphs in sequence. The group work results are then read in front of the class to get assessments and comments from teachers and other friends so that students

understand the shortcomings and advantages of their writing. In the second meeting, learning was focused on writing individuals with the same material. The teacher reviews the results of the first meeting to provide direction before students start writing. Students with difficulty getting direct guidance from teachers, especially regarding spelling, title writing, and idea preparation. The teacher collects and reviews the student's writing, which varies from one to three paragraphs. The learning ended with reflection, where students revealed that although composing sentences was still difficult, writing their own experiences felt fun. This reflection is a moment for students to be aware of their progress and encourage the spirit of writing at the next meeting.

## Observation – Interpretation

### 1. Observation of Students

In the first Cycle of the first meeting, students consider writing a difficult and unpleasant lesson, so they tend to be passive and only write if the teacher orders. Even fun experiences like birthdays are not used as writing material, and homework is done haphazardly. At the second meeting, some students began to write actively, although some were still restless, turned their heads to the right and left, or often deleted their writing. Students' inability to make good use of time causes the implementation of assignments less efficient.

### 2. Teacher's Observation

Teachers have carried out learning according to the plan, including conveying indicators students must master. To clarify the understanding, the teacher gave examples of relevant experiences, although they did not write on the board and relied too much on the lecture method. Students' interest in writing begins to be seen in learning, especially in experiential writing assignments. Students seemed happy and busy writing, although some still lacked confidence and hesitated to comment or ask questions. Teachers also provide guidance in organizing writing and involve students in assessing group work results, even though students are not fully active in discussions. Teachers must improve their ability to give clear writing examples, especially for the structure of opening, content, and closing, and utilize process assessment as part of learning.

Generally, the teacher's performance is quite good with various learning techniques such as questions and answers and writing exercises, which help students understand writing rules. However, weaknesses are still visible, such as the lack of exercise timing, so students look relaxed and unfocused. Although efforts to arouse

interest in writing are carried out, such as giving praise and motivation, students' responses have not been maximized, and many speak off-topic. In addition, teachers have not been optimal in assessing the process and results of writing. Based on the students' writing, there were many errors in expressing ideas and language styles, requiring more attention, guidance, and practice.

Table 1. Students' Interest in Writing Scores - First Cycle

No	Component	Absolute	Relative	Notes
1	Determining a topic before writing			
	a. Yes	10	31.25 %	
	b. No	22	68.75 %	
	Total	32	100 %	
2	Recalling past experiences before writing			
	a. Yes	10	31.25 %	
	b. No	22	68.75 %	
	Total	32	100 %	
3	Outlining before writing			
	a. Yes	6	18.75 %	
	b. No	26	81.25 %	
	Total	32	100 %	
4	Writing using precise words			
	a. Yes	17	53.125 %	
	b. No	15	46.875 %	
	Total	32	100 %	
5	Writing using correct spelling			
	a. Yes	17	53.125 %	
	b. No	15	46.875 %	
	Total	32	100 %	
6	Practicing writing even without the teacher's instructions			
	a. Yes	17	53.125 %	
	b. No	15	46.875 %	
	Total	32	100 %	
7	Reading others' experience stories in the library			

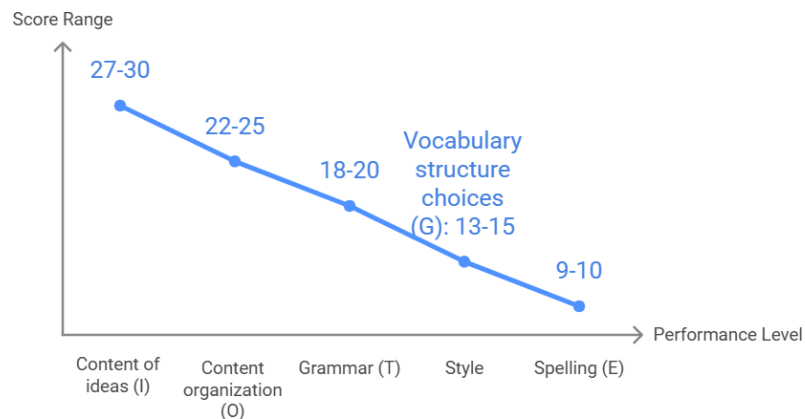
	a. Yes	12	37.50 %	
	b. No	20	62.50 %	
	Total	32	100 %	
8	Writing memorable experiences in a diary			
	a. Yes	6	18.75 %	
	b. No	26	81.25 %	
	Total	32	100 %	
9	Revising after reviewing writings			
	a. Yes	6	18.75 %	
	b. No	26	81.25 %	
	Total	32	100 %	
10	Writing to foster a hobby			
	a. Yes	6	18.75 %	
	b. No	26	81.25 %	
	Total	32	100 %	

Table 2. Writing Skills (Writing Experience) Cycle I

No	Name	Assessed components					Value	Inf.
		The content of the ideas presented (30)	Organization of Contents (25)	Grammar (20)	Vocabulary Structure Style Choice (16)	Ejaan (10)		
1	Amel Yulia Nababan	12	12	13	6	7	50	
2	Angelika	18	18	17	9	8	70	
3	Agrecia Gricella	23	23	18	10	8	82	
4	Aldo Ridho Sianturi	22	23	17	10	8	80	
5	Deborah Hiskia	13	18	16	6	7	61	
6	Dinar Rejeki	16	18	17	8	8	67	
7	Edwin Agape	22	22	17	12	8	81	
8	Fadil Arjuna	20	20	20	7	8	75	
9	Gabriel Dwison	14	21	17	6	8	66	

10	Gabriel Arjuna	13	18	17	6	7	61	
11	Gunawan Hutagalung	12	12	13	6	7	50	
12	Indah Stefany	18	18	17	9	8	70	
13	Kevin Antonius	23	23	18	10	8	82	
14	Ketty Fanny	22	23	17	10	8	80	
15	Leli Rahel	13	18	16	6	7	61	
16	Mutiara	16	18	17	8	8	67	
17	Naqiyya Natusion	22	22	17	12	8	81	
18	Olivia Amelia	20	20	20	7	8	75	
19	Petrus Perdinan	14	21	17	6	8	66	
20	Ray Saputra Hutagalung	13	18	17	6	7	61	
21	Rasya Nabila	12	16	15	6	6	55	
22	Rehan Renaldy	11	18	17	7	7	60	
23	Renaldo Simarmata	16	18	17	8	8	67	
24	Reynita Sianipar	13	18	17	6	7	61	
25	Rivaldy Nababan	20	20	20	7	8	75	
26	Tiara Delima Sihite	16	18	17	8	8	67	
27	Qesya Aulia	22	22	17	6	8	66	
28	Vebrilian Albertus	16	18	17	8	8	67	
29	Vedro Chrystian	13	18	17	6	7	61	
30	Zivana Silaban	23	23	18	10	8	82	
31	Farecta Silaban	20	20	20	7	8	75	
32	Sola Greacia Tumoso	14	21	21	6	7	61	
	Jumlah	542	616	551	245	167	2183	
	Rata-rata	16,93	19,25	17,21	7,65	7,59	68,21	

### Assessment Rubric Score



### Figure 3. Value Range

#### Cycle I Reflection

Based on the results of observation and evaluation, the researcher reflects on several important things related to writing learning. First, the application of the Contextual Approach needs to be improved, especially in grouping students, which must involve the democratic election of group chairs to support smoother group work and create a fun and stress-free learning atmosphere. Teachers should also ensure that all students are active, creative, and helpful to each other, especially when paying more attention to less intelligent students. Second, teachers need to increase students' interest in writing by reprimanding those who are less active and providing information about the assessments carried out. Third, teachers must be given examples of assessing writing with an analytical approach. Fourth, even though students can use spelling and grammar well, they still need practice to develop better ideas and writing styles. Finally, writing practice needs to be improved to analyze weaknesses in students' writing and improve their writing competence in the next Cycle.

#### Cycle II

The learning plan for Cycle II is prepared based on the reflection of the results of Cycle I, with a focus on improving students' experience writing skills through a contextual approach. In this plan, teachers combine speaking and writing skills and provide opportunities for discussion to increase interest in writing. In addition, teachers are trained to teach good writing techniques, including proper content organization, style, word choice, and grammar. The main goal of cycle II is to improve student participation, writing quality, and overall writing skills.

In implementing the second Cycle of actions, the same material was used to retrain the concepts taught in the first. Children analyze stories' content, ideas, content organization, and grammar in groups. This process involves question-and-answer activities and discussions, where the teacher provides examples and explains the steps of good writing, such as how to write a title and organize paragraphs.

At the second meeting, students write down their personal experiences individually. With the teacher's encouragement, children became more active in writing, connecting

their personal experiences with more structured writing activities. Teachers monitor and provide direct feedback, praise when students perform well, and provide corrections when mistakes are found, such as using capital letters. This activity ended with assessing the students' writing results and allowed them to improve on the shortcomings found.

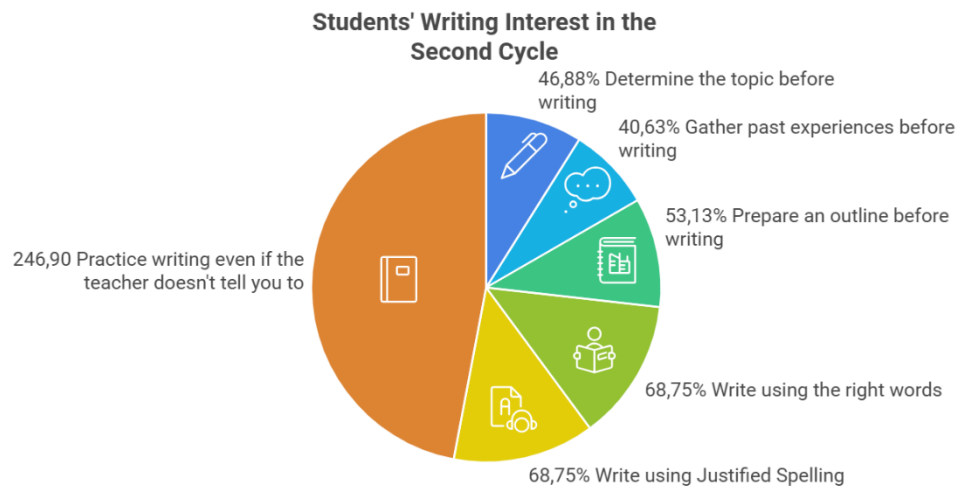


Figure 4. Second Cycle Students' Writing Interest Scores

### Reflection Cycle II

Based on the results of observation and evaluation, it can be stated that the implementation of experiential writing learning can be done well. Problems that existed before can be resolved. This success is because teachers are open to receiving input. In addition, the success of learning is caused by students' high interest and the teachers' motivation to advance students. Based on these findings, teachers can plan and carry out learning independently in the next lesson.

### Cycle III

In the third Cycle, teachers and researchers prepare for learning to write experiences with the theme of health. Learning is focused on style, choice of structure, and vocabulary. Teachers begin with a question and answer about the experience of illness, then ask students to write down their experiences related to pain and care. Students are taught to develop writing skills, from short sentences to whole paragraphs. In the second meeting, students write based on the framework that has been prepared and discuss in groups to assess and revise each other's writings. Learning occurs actively with contextual methods, and teachers act as facilitators who encourage students to ask questions, reflect, and

evaluate friends' work. Observations show that students are becoming more fluent in writing and can follow the learning well, emphasizing proper spelling, sentence structure, and vocabulary.

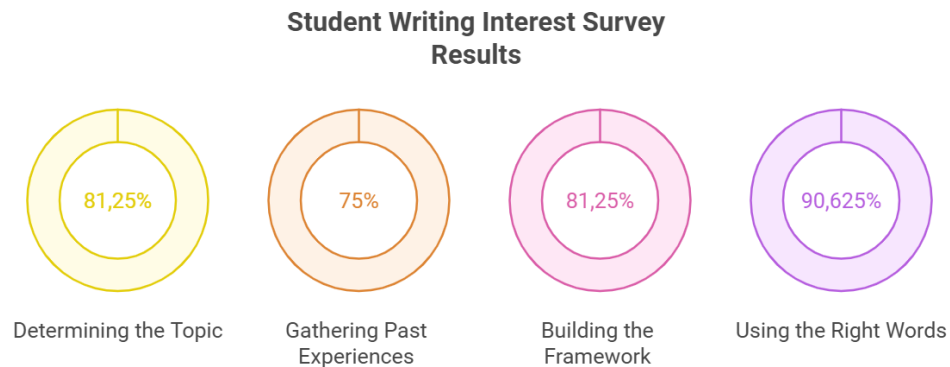


Figure 5. Third Cycle Student Writing Interest Score

### Reflection of Cycle III

Students feel happy and enthusiastic about learning to write because students know how to write what they have done. With the help of a group of students, they will find it easier to write, develop, and revise their writing. Students' writing results will improve after utilizing the contextual approach method. Ultimately, students feel that learning to write is not difficult but fun.

### Discussion

Based on the research results, the discussion was divided into three parts: the initial condition of interest and writing skills and the improvement of writing skills with a contextual approach. Before the contextual approach was applied, writing learning in grade IV of SD Negeri 173274 Siborongborong still used the traditional approach, which tended to be abstract and theoretical, with students who were less interested in and involved in writing. Students' interest in writing is low due to a lack of encouragement and unclear writing goals. High interest is believed to increase students' motivation and writing results, which should be based on a sense of pleasure, attention, and willingness (Hidi & Renninger, 2019). Students also do not understand good writing techniques, such as choosing interesting topics, organizing ideas, and choosing appropriate writing styles (Victori, 1999). In the prewriting stage, the writer must consider the topic, goals, and objectives of the writing and gather relevant information. Students must be able to compose well-structured writing during the writing stage, while in the post-writing stage,

editing and correction are carried out. Good writing requires mastering linguistic aspects such as spelling, grammar, sentences, paragraphs, and style. The observation results show that most students can use grammar and spelling well but still need to improve their ability to organize ideas and choose the right writing style.

This research aims to increase students' interest in writing through a contextual approach that relates learning to real experiences. Students' interest in writing can grow when they feel happy and interested, especially if the learning material is relevant to daily life, such as writing about personal experiences. With this approach, students are actively writing and independently involved in learning, such as choosing a topic and drafting an essay outline. In addition, correctly using EYD helps students overcome writing difficulties and improve their activeness. Learning that is fun and connected to real experiences, such as writing a diary or personal story, makes students more motivated and feels important to keep writing.

The actions taken in this study can be accounted for both theoretically and empirically. Theoretically, the actions taken refer to the theories put forward by education experts, especially regarding contextual approaches aimed at improving students' writing skills. Meanwhile, empirically, the actions taken have been proven to be effective in enhancing students' writing skills based on the results obtained after three research cycles. In the first Cycle, although students' writing skills began to improve, some mistakes still needed to be corrected in the next Cycle. Through improvement in each Cycle, students wrote well without significant errors in the third Cycle. The study results showed an increase in students' interest and writing skills and an increase in the average daily score from 64 to 75. In addition, students also begin to be active in planning writing before writing. This study proves that applying a contextual approach can improve students' writing skills, as described in the initial hypothesis.

## CONCLUSION

Research on contextual approaches in improving students' interest and writing skills in grade IV of SD Negeri 173274 Siborongborong showed positive results. This approach has succeeded in increasing students' interest in writing, as evidenced by a significant increase in topic determination, experience collection, framing, and the use of diction and EYD. In addition, students' writing skills also improved, with the average daily score of students writing rising from 64.72 to 75.41. Teachers are advised to apply varied contextual learning methods, give authentic rewards to students' writing, and encourage group work and peer tutors to increase student engagement. Students are also expected to continue

to develop writing skills through personal experience. Other researchers are advised to continue similar research to improve the results and address problems in learning to write.

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