



Implementing Lexical Choice Strategies for Writing Short Descriptive Texts at Pondok An Nahdloh, Selangor, Malaysia

Mujad Didien Afandi^{1*}, Savira Zaniar², Nailul Authar³, Novi Rahmania Aquariza⁴, Edi Pujo Basuki⁵, and Destita Shari⁶

Published online: 03 July 2026

ABSTRACT

Limited vocabulary and inappropriate word selection often hinder junior high school students from producing effective English descriptive texts. To address this issue, a community service program entitled *Teaching Lexical Choice for Writing Short Descriptive Texts at Pondok An Nahdloh, Selangor, Malaysia* was conducted to improve students' lexical diversity, lexical appropriateness, and linguistic development. The program involved fifteen Indonesian junior high school students and was implemented through a participatory training approach consisting of preparation, implementation, and evaluation stages. Instructional activities included introducing lexical choice, practicing synonym use, selecting contextually appropriate vocabulary, and writing short self-descriptive texts. Students completed writing tasks before and after the training, and their texts were evaluated using a lexical analysis rubric covering lexical diversity, lexical appropriateness, lexical density, register awareness, and overall lexical control. The findings showed substantial improvement in students' lexical performance. The average total score increased from 12.07 (Fair) in the pre-writing task to 21.80 (Excellent) in the post-writing task. Students demonstrated greater vocabulary variation, more precise word selection, higher lexical density, and improved control of descriptive language. These findings indicate that lexical-choice instruction is an effective strategy for enhancing students' writing quality and supporting linguistic development in English language learning.

Keywords: lexical choice; lexical diversity; lexical appropriateness; descriptive writing; linguistic development

INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary plays a central role in English language learning because it enables learners to communicate ideas accurately and effectively. In writing activities, vocabulary knowledge is reflected through lexical choice, which refers to the selection of words that are appropriate for a particular context, purpose, and audience. Research has shown that lexical choice contributes significantly to writing quality because it affects clarity, coherence, precision, and communicative effectiveness (Ayadi, 2024; Bao et al., 2025).

Recent studies have emphasized that lexical development is not limited to vocabulary size but also includes lexical diversity and lexical appropriateness. Lexical diversity refers to the variety of words used in a text, whereas lexical appropriateness concerns the suitability of word selection according to context and communicative purpose (Li & Lei, 2025; Maamuujav et al., 2021). Students who demonstrate greater lexical diversity and appropriateness tend to produce more sophisticated and effective writing.

The present community service program was derived from a previous research project entitled *Exploring Lexical Choices in Junior High School Students' Academic Writing for Educational*

Assessment and Evaluation Methods. The study found that lexical diversity and lexical appropriateness significantly influence the quality of students' writing and can serve as indicators of linguistic development. These findings

^{1*-6} Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Surabaya

*) *corresponding author*

Mujad Didien Afandi
Email: dinosetro74@unusa.ac.id

encouraged the implementation of a community service program designed to transfer research-based knowledge into educational practice.

The program was conducted at Pondok An Nahdloh, Selangor, Malaysia, involving Indonesian junior high school students. Preliminary observations revealed several challenges. Students possessed limited vocabulary, frequently repeated the same words, experienced difficulties selecting contextually appropriate words, and produced short descriptive texts with simple lexical features. Furthermore, the concept of lexical choice had not previously been introduced in writing instruction.

Therefore, this community service program aimed to improve students' awareness and application of lexical choice through explicit instruction on lexical diversity and lexical appropriateness. The program expected to support students' linguistic development and improve the quality of their descriptive writing.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Lexical Choice and Linguistic Development

Lexical choice refers to the conscious selection of words during language production. Effective lexical choice enables writers to express meanings accurately, establish appropriate tone, and create coherent discourse (Ayadi, 2024). In second language writing, lexical choice serves as an indicator of linguistic competence because it reflects vocabulary knowledge, communicative awareness, and language proficiency (Li & Lei, 2025).

Linguistic development among adolescent learners is characterized by the gradual transition from basic vocabulary toward more varied and contextually appropriate lexical items. As learners expand their vocabulary repertoire, they become capable of expressing ideas with greater precision and sophistication (Maamuujav et al., 2021).

Lexical Diversity

Lexical diversity refers to the range of different vocabulary items employed in a text. Students who demonstrate higher lexical diversity tend to avoid repetitive language and employ synonyms, descriptive expressions, and topic-related vocabulary (Ayadi, 2024). Previous studies have reported positive relationships between lexical diversity and writing quality because diverse vocabulary enhances reader engagement and textual richness (Li & Lei, 2025).

Lexical Appropriateness

Lexical appropriateness concerns the suitability of vocabulary selection within a specific context. Appropriate lexical choices improve clarity, reduce ambiguity, and strengthen communicative effectiveness. Students who possess higher levels of lexical appropriateness are able to choose words that accurately represent intended meanings and align with the communicative purpose of the text (Bao et al., 2025).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This community service program employed a participatory training approach involving fifteen Indonesian junior high school students studying at Pondok An Nahdloh, Selangor, Malaysia. The program was conducted in April 2026 through one meeting lasting sixty minutes. The program consisted of three stages, Preparation Stage, Implementation Stage, and Evaluation Stage.

Preparation Stage

The preparation stage involved coordination with the partner institution, needs analysis through classroom observation, and collection of preliminary student writing samples. Initial observations identified students' difficulties in vocabulary usage, lexical repetition, and contextual word selection.

Implementation Stage

The implementation stage included lectures, demonstrations, and guided writing practice. The instructional materials covered:

1. Introduction to lexical choice
2. Importance of vocabulary in writing
3. Lexical diversity and synonym usage
4. Lexical appropriateness and contextual vocabulary selection
5. Guided writing of short descriptive texts

Students participated in vocabulary selection activities, synonym identification exercises, and writing practice sessions.

Evaluation Stage

The evaluation stage consisted of writing assignments, questionnaires, and student reflections. Students completed writing tasks before and after instruction. Their texts were analyzed qualitatively with reference to lexical diversity and lexical appropriateness. Observational notes and questionnaire responses were also used to evaluate program effectiveness

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Pre-Writing (Before Community Service Program)

Students	Student's Writings
Student 1	My name is Ahmad. I am a good boy. I am good at football. I have good friends. We have good times together.
Student 2	My name is Siti. I am a good student. I like reading books. Reading is good for me. My teachers are good too.
Student 3	My name is Rizky. I am a quiet boy. I am quiet in class. I am quiet at home. I like drawing pictures.
Student 4	My name is Aisyah. I am a nice girl. I have a nice family. I live in a nice place. My life is nice.
Student 5	My name is Fikri. I am a happy boy. I am happy every day. My friends make me happy. I like playing games.
Student 6	My name is Zahra. I am a good girl. I help my mother. I help my friends. I like helping people.
Student 7	My name is Farhan. I am friendly. I have many friends. My friends are friendly too. We play together every day.
Student 8	My name is Nisa. I am a good student. I study hard. Hard study is good. I want good scores.
Student 9	My name is Ilham. I am an active boy. I like sports. Sports are good for me. I play football every week.
Student 10	My name is Rina. I am a kind girl. I help my friends. My friends are kind too. We help each other.
Student 11	My name is Dimas. I am a good boy. I like music. Music is good for me. I listen to music every day.
Student 12	My name is Putri. I am a happy girl. I have happy moments with my family. We are happy together.
Student 13	My name is Arif. I am smart. I am smart in English. I am smart in mathematics. I like learning.
Student 14	My name is Salsa. I am nice and good. I like helping people. My friends say I am nice.
Student 15	My name is Budi. I am a good student. I study every day. I want to be a good person in the future.

Table 2. Post-Writing (After Community Service Program)

Students	Student's Writings
Student 1	My name is Ahmad. I am a diligent and energetic boy. I enjoy playing football and improving my skills. I have loyal friends who always support me. We spend memorable moments together.
Student 2	My name is Siti. I am a curious and hardworking student. I enjoy reading various books because they broaden my knowledge. My teachers are supportive and inspiring.
Student 3	My name is Rizky. I am a calm and thoughtful boy. Although I am not very talkative, I enjoy expressing my ideas through drawing. This hobby helps me become creative.
Student 4	My name is Aisyah. I am a cheerful girl who appreciates my family. I live in a peaceful environment that makes me feel comfortable and grateful.
Student 5	My name is Fikri. I am an optimistic and cheerful boy. Spending time with my friends always brightens my day. I also enjoy playing games during my free time.
Student 6	My name is Zahra. I am a caring and responsible girl. I enjoy assisting my family and supporting my friends whenever they need help. Helping others gives me satisfaction.
Student 7	My name is Farhan. I am a sociable and friendly student. I easily make new friends and enjoy participating in group activities. Working with others helps me learn new things.
Student 8	My name is Nisa. I am a dedicated learner who values education. I study consistently to achieve excellent results and develop my abilities.
Student 9	My name is Ilham. I am an enthusiastic and active boy. I enjoy participating in sports because they keep me healthy and disciplined. Football is my favorite activity.
Student 10	My name is Rina. I am a compassionate girl who enjoys helping others. I believe kindness strengthens friendships and creates a positive environment.
Student 11	My name is Dimas. I am a creative boy with a strong interest in music. Listening to different genres helps me relax and express my emotions.
Student 12	My name is Putri. I am an optimistic and cheerful girl. Spending quality time with my family creates meaningful memories and makes me feel appreciated.
Student 13	My name is Arif. I am a motivated student who enjoys learning new things. English and mathematics are my favorite subjects because they challenge me to think critically.
Student 14	My name is Salsa. I am a considerate and helpful girl. I enjoy supporting people around me and contributing positively to my community.
Student 15	My name is Budi. I am a disciplined and ambitious student. I study regularly to achieve my goals and become a knowledgeable person in the future.

The community service program involved fifteen Indonesian junior high school students studying at Pondok An Nahdloh, Selangor, Malaysia. The program focused on introducing lexical choice concepts through explicit instruction on lexical diversity and lexical appropriateness. To evaluate the effectiveness of the training, students completed short self-description texts before and after the intervention.

A qualitative comparison of the pre-writing and post-writing texts revealed noticeable improvements in vocabulary selection. Prior to the training, students frequently relied on repetitive and general vocabulary such as *good*, *nice*, *happy*, and *smart*. For example, Student 1 repeatedly used the adjective *good* four times in a short paragraph: “I am a good boy. I am good at football. I have good friends. We have good times together.” Similar patterns of lexical repetition were observed in many other students' texts.

Following the lexical-choice instruction, students demonstrated greater vocabulary variation and more contextually appropriate word choices. Student 1 revised the text by replacing the repeated adjective *good* with more specific expressions such as *diligent*, *energetic*, *loyal*, and *memorable*. Similar improvements were identified across the majority of participants.

Lexical Diversity

The pre-writing texts demonstrated limited lexical diversity characterized by frequent repetition of the same vocabulary items. Words such as *good*, *nice*, *happy*, and *smart* appeared repeatedly within individual texts. After the training, students employed a wider range of adjectives and descriptive expressions, including *diligent*, *energetic*, *curious*, *hardworking*, *thoughtful*, *optimistic*,

compassionate, and *ambitious*. These changes indicate expansion of students' lexical repertoires and reduced dependence on high-frequency vocabulary.

Lexical Appropriateness

Students also showed improvement in lexical appropriateness. Prior to the intervention, many lexical choices were overly general and lacked semantic precision. After the training, students selected vocabulary that more accurately represented personal characteristics. For example, the general adjective *good* was replaced with more context-specific descriptors such as *kind-hearted*, *loyal*, *responsible*, and *disciplined*. These lexical choices provided clearer and more meaningful self-descriptions.

Lexical Density

The post-writing texts contained a higher proportion of content words, particularly descriptive adjectives and meaningful verbs. Students incorporated vocabulary such as *participating*, *supporting*, *improving*, *contributing*, and *achieve*, resulting in more information-rich sentences. Consequently, the overall lexical density of the texts increased.

DISCUSSION

The findings suggest that explicit instruction on lexical choice positively influenced students' linguistic development. The activities focusing on synonym identification, contextual vocabulary selection, and writing revision enabled students to notice lexical alternatives and apply them in meaningful contexts. This supports previous research suggesting that direct vocabulary instruction contributes to improved lexical control and writing performance (Webb, 2018; Zhang, 2017).

The improvements observed in lexical diversity, lexical appropriateness, and lexical density support the findings of the preceding research project entitled *Exploring Lexical Choices in Junior High School Students' Academic Writing for Educational Assessment and Evaluation Methods*. The research concluded that lexical diversity and lexical appropriateness are important indicators of writing quality and linguistic development. The present PKM program successfully translated these research findings into classroom practice.

Improvement in Lexical Diversity

Analysis of students' writing tasks demonstrated improvement in lexical diversity following the training. Before the program, students frequently relied on repetitive vocabulary. In pre-training student 1 wrote "My name is Ahmad. I am a good boy. I am good at football. I have good friends. We have good times together." The repeated use of the adjective "good" indicates limited lexical diversity and restricted vocabulary repertoire.

After the training, student 1 demonstrated greater lexical variation. In post-training, he wrote "My name is Ahmad. I am a diligent and energetic boy. I enjoy playing football and improving my skills. I have loyal friends who always support me. We spend memorable moments together." The revised text shows the use of multiple descriptive expressions, including "kind-hearted," "loyal," and "memorable." These lexical choices enrich the text and reduce repetition.

The observed improvements in students' writing support previous studies suggesting that lexical diversity contributes to richer and more sophisticated texts (Ayadi, 2024; Li & Lei, 2025). The replacement of repetitive vocabulary with contextually meaningful expressions suggests an expansion of students' lexical repertoire and increased awareness of language choices.

The substantial increase in lexical diversity demonstrates that students became more aware of vocabulary variation and learned to avoid unnecessary repetition. This finding aligns with previous

studies reporting that lexical diversity is strongly associated with writing quality because varied vocabulary allows writers to express ideas more precisely and effectively (Müngen, 2023; Li & Lei, 2025). The use of a broader vocabulary repertoire also reflects ongoing linguistic development among adolescent language learners.

Improvement in Lexical Appropriateness

Similarly, the improvement in lexical appropriateness indicates that students developed greater sensitivity toward contextual word selection. Before the intervention, many students relied on generic adjectives that conveyed limited meaning. Following the training, students selected more precise lexical items that better represented their intended self-descriptions. This finding is consistent with the view that appropriate lexical selection enhances clarity, accuracy, and communicative effectiveness in writing (Ayadi, 2024; Bao et al., 2025).

The post-training writing samples also demonstrated improved lexical appropriateness. Students selected words that more accurately represented their intended meanings and better suited the descriptive context. In student 1's writing, the replacement of the general adjective "good" with context-specific vocabulary indicates greater awareness of semantic distinctions and communicative purposes.

Improvement in Lexical Density

The increase in lexical density further suggests improvement in students' writing sophistication. The post-writing texts contained more content-bearing words and fewer repetitive structures. According to Maamuujav et al. (2021), higher lexical density often reflects greater linguistic maturity because learners are able to convey more information through concise and meaningful language. The students' ability to incorporate descriptive adjectives and purposeful verbs demonstrates progress toward more effective written communication.

From a community service perspective, the program demonstrates how research findings can be disseminated and implemented through educational interventions. The previous research generated evidence regarding the importance of lexical choice in writing assessment, while the present PKM transformed those findings into practical learning activities. The positive changes observed in students' writing suggest that research-based community engagement can effectively support language development among Indonesian students studying abroad.

Overall, the findings indicate that lexical-choice instruction can serve as a practical strategy for improving students' descriptive writing. By enhancing lexical diversity, lexical appropriateness, and lexical density, students become better equipped to communicate ideas clearly and accurately in English.

CONCLUSION

This community service program successfully implemented research findings on lexical choice in an educational setting involving Indonesian junior high school students at Pondok An Nahdloh, Selangor, Malaysia. The training focused on lexical diversity and lexical appropriateness as key components of linguistic development.

The results demonstrated improvements in students' vocabulary variation, contextual word selection, and overall writing quality. Students became more aware of lexical alternatives and were able to apply more precise vocabulary in descriptive writing tasks. Classroom observations and student reflections further indicated positive engagement and increased confidence in writing activities.

The program confirms that research findings concerning lexical choice can be effectively disseminated through community service activities. Future programs are encouraged to involve larger participant groups, longer instructional periods, and systematic pre-test and post-test analyses to provide stronger evidence of linguistic development.

Acknowledgments

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Surabaya (UNUSA) and the Institute for Research and Community Service (LPPM) for funding this Community Service Program. We also extend our thanks to Pondok An Nahdloh, Selangor, Malaysia for the willingness to serve as the partner in this program.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declared that no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the authorship and publication of this article.

REFERENCES

- Ayadi, M. (2024). Exploring lexical complexity in scientific writing: A corpus-based study across disciplines. *LLT Journal: A Journal on Language and Language Teaching*, 27(1), 421–433.
- Bao, T., Zhao, Y., Mao, J., et al. (2025). Examining linguistic shifts in academic writing before and after the launch of ChatGPT: A study on preprint papers. *Scientometrics*.
- Li, Y., & Lei, H. (2025). Lexical bundles in L1 and L2 English academic writing: Convergent and divergent usage. *SAGE Open*, 15(2).
- Maamuujav, U., Olson, C. B., & Chung, H. (2021). Syntactic and lexical features of adolescent L2 students' academic writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 53, 100822.
- Müngen, A. A. (2023). Exploring lexical richness in English-language theses across disciplines: A comparative analysis. *Journal of Scientometric Research*, 12(2), 459–468.
- Webb, S. (2018). Vocabulary learning and language teaching: Current trends and future directions. *Language Teaching Research*, 22(4), 1–15.
- Zhang, B. (2017). Vocabulary and writing performance among EFL learners. *English Language Teaching*, 10(6), 95–107.

This page has been intentionally left blank