



**SPECIAL ASSISTANT TEACHER'S STRATEGY IN GUIDING
WRITING FOR SLOW LEARNERS: CASE STUDY IN
THE STATE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL 18 MALANG**

THESIS

BY

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ABSTRAK

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Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh pentingnya strategi pembelajaran yang responsif dan inklusif dalam pengajaran keterampilan menulis bahasa Inggris bagi siswa lambat belajar (SLS). Tujuan utama penelitian ini adalah untuk mengidentifikasi hambatan yang dihadapi oleh Guru Pendamping Khusus (SAT) serta mengeksplorasi strategi adaptif yang mereka terapkan dalam proses pembelajaran.

Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif untuk memperoleh pemahaman mendalam mengenai interaksi dan strategi pengajaran dalam konteks nyata kelas inklusif. Teknik pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui triangulasi, termasuk observasi kelas, wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan SAT, dan analisis dokumentasi pembelajaran. Peneliti berperan sebagai guru sekaligus pengamat langsung untuk menangkap dinamika pembelajaran secara autentik. Lokasi penelitian adalah SMP Negeri 18 Malang yang memiliki program pendidikan inklusif dan didukung oleh staf SAT yang kompeten.

Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa SAT menghadapi berbagai hambatan dalam mengajar menulis bahasa Inggris kepada SLS, seperti keterbatasan kosakata, rendahnya kepercayaan diri, kesulitan dalam mengorganisasi ide, serta keterbatasan media pembelajaran. SAT merespons tantangan tersebut dengan menerapkan strategi scaffolding, penggunaan media visual, teknik mind mapping, pendampingan individual, dan penguatan emosional. SAT juga berperan sebagai penghubung antara guru reguler dan siswa, dengan menjelaskan instruksi pembelajaran secara kontekstual. Penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya pendekatan holistik dalam pengajaran menulis yang menggabungkan teknik linguistik dan dukungan emosional. Penguatan motivasi, pendekatan individual, dan penciptaan lingkungan belajar yang aman secara emosional menjadi elemen sentral dalam membangun kesiapan siswa untuk mengekspresikan diri melalui tulisan.

Kesimpulan dari penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa pengajaran keterampilan menulis bagi SLS menghadapi tantangan multidimensional yang mencakup aspek kognitif, linguistik, dan afektif. Peran SAT sangat penting dalam merancang pembelajaran yang disesuaikan dengan kebutuhan dan karakteristik masing-masing siswa. Peran ini terbukti strategis dalam mengatasi tantangan melalui penerapan strategi pembelajaran yang adaptif dan inklusif. Penelitian ini memberikan rekomendasi untuk penyediaan dukungan sistemik berupa pelatihan, adaptasi kurikulum, dan pengembangan kapasitas profesional. Dengan pendekatan ini, pendidikan inklusif dapat dilaksanakan secara lebih efektif dan berkelanjutan.

ABSTRACT

Rahayuni, Dwi Nurhayati. 2025. *Special Assistant Teacher's Strategy in Guiding Writing for Slow Learners: Case Study in The State Junior High School 18 Malang*. Thesis, English Education Department, Postgraduate Program, Universitas Islam Malang, Advisor: (I) Dr. Alfian Zuhairi, M.Pd. (II) Dr. H. Muhammad Yunus, M.Pd.

Keywords: SAT's strategies: Guiding: Writing skill: Special Assistant Teacher (SAT): Slow Learner Student (SLS)

This research is motivated by the importance of responsive and inclusive teaching strategies in teaching English writing skills for SLSs. The main purpose of the research is to identify the obstacles faced by SATs and explore the adaptive strategies they apply in the learning process.

This research uses a qualitative case study approach to gain an in- depth understanding of interactions and teaching strategies in the real context of an inclusive classroom. Data collection techniques were conducted through triangulation, including classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with SATs, and analysis of learning documentation. The researcher acted as both a teacher and a direct observer to capture the dynamics of learning authentically. The research location was State Junior High School 18 Malang, which has an inclusive education program and is supported by competent SAT staff.

The research revealed that SAT faced various obstacles in teaching English writing to SLS, including limited vocabulary, low self-confidence, difficulty organizing ideas, and limited learning media. SAT responded to these challenges by implementing scaffolding strategies, using visual media, mind mapping techniques, individual mentoring, and providing emotional reinforcement. SAT also served as a connector between regular teachers and students, clarifying learning instructions contextually. This research emphasizes the importance of a holistic approach to writing instruction that combines linguistic techniques and emotional support. Strengthening motivation, an individualized approach, and creating an emotionally safe learning environment are central elements in building students' readiness to express themselves through writing.

The conclusions of this study confirm that teaching writing skills for SLS faces multidimensional challenges encompassing cognitive, linguistic, and affective aspects. The role of the SAT is crucial in designing learning tailored to the needs and characteristics of each student. This role has proven strategic in overcoming these challenges through the implementation of adaptive and inclusive learning strategies. This study provides recommendations for providing systemic support in the form of training, curriculum adaptation, and professional capacity development. With this approach, inclusive education can be implemented more effectively and sustainably.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter explained some basic components related to this research. These components were research background that explained why this research was conducted and the research questions that described the problems chosen. This chapter also presented the research objectives that were intended to determine the objectives to be achieved and the research assumptions as a framework for thinking. The function of this research on several substances was also explained. Finally, key terms were defined to ensure clarity they would not cause misinterpretations.

1.1 Background of the Study

Students with special needs are students who have different characters and intelligence from students in general. Students with special needs refer to the condition of individuals who are different from other individuals in their abilities/functions both physically and mentally (Kristiana, 2021). One of category in special need students is SLSSs. The students with this category are different from students with special need abilities. (Alloway & Copello, 2013) stated that students with the slow learning category show cognitive limitations, low memory, are easily distracted and have low concentration. Children with special needs are often treated as an isolated group, in addition, children with special needs also often experience discriminatory behavior towards themselves, especially in the world of education. In fact, the educational environment is very important for

every child (Jesslin & Kurniawati, 2020). Slow learners have intellectual potential slightly below average with an IQ of 70-89 (Kamala & Minhalina, 2022). Their achievements are usually below normal children of the same age. When SLS enter public elementary schools, they will face academic and social problems.

Academically, they are indeed slow to absorb lessons due to cognitive limitations, especially in language, numbers, and concepts. In terms of social, slow learners need to be more confident, have a small number of friends, or prefer friends under their age (Rofiah & Rofiana, 2017).

SLSs have the same rights as students in general, especially the right to receive education. Every citizen has the right to receive education as stated in the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia and every citizen has the same right to obtain quality education and citizens who have physical, emotional, mental, intellectual, and/or social disabilities have the right to receive special education (Law no. 20 of 2003). Based on the Constitution and the Law, it can be ascertained that all Indonesian citizens have the right to receive education, both formal and non-formal, regardless of the child's condition. Education is the most basic right for all children, both children who are physically and mentally healthy and those who have physical or mental disorders. The basic rights that children have to education cannot prevent children with physical or mental disorders from obtaining education in schools, both special schools and public schools. SLSs also have the right to receive the same rights as normal children in public schools.

Slow learners are students who have the characteristic of being slow

in receiving the knowledge delivered. Like any normal toddler, slow learners have the capacity to absorb information. A slow learner is someone who takes more time than a typical child to grasp new concepts (Korikana, 2020). In receiving education in public schools, of course, Slow learners get special treatment to absorb the material. They cannot be equated with regular students in receiving material. These students require special services that are different from regular children in education because they have obstacles in physical and mental development and have many obstacles in learning or what is called a barrier to learning and development. Slow learners may experience various kinds of obstacles during the learning process. Problems that may cause slow learning include; concentration problems, weak memory, cognition, and social and emotional problems (Korikana, 2020). Students must complete learning tasks seriously in receiving lessons and achieving high-quality results. However, many students experience difficulties in completing current tasks because they are slow learners, resulting in feelings of inferiority (Cents-Boonstra et al., 2021). Because of that statement, SLs should be accompanied by special teachers who is called SATs. They can help SLs handling the obstacles in learning process. According to the guidelines for inclusive education providers, SATs are teachers who have a special education background or who has attended training organized by inclusive schools (Ali, 2021; Paper, 2020).

In serving SLs, teachers must be able to accept these students with all their limitations, considering them in a positive way and find the right way to

understand these students. They must have a specific strategy that is suitable in delivering the material so that it can be easily accepted. The strategy chosen must be adjusted to the limitations of students with indications of slow learning. The SATs must find the right learning method to achieve expected goals. The learning method is the determination of learning procedures to achieve learning goals or to internalize the material/message (Lumpkin, 2020). (Mukhlis et al., 2023) also said that learning method is a determinant of learning to achieve learning goals or to convey material/messages. SATs can design and choose learning materials and learning strategies that are appropriate to the various backgrounds of their students so that they can learn with effective strategies during the learning process (Rasyada et al., 2022).

In developing the right learning method, SATs must first recognize the characteristics of each slow learner. A competent teacher should be aware of the general characteristics of the associated classroom behavior related to a child's learning difficulties (Vasudevan, 2017). (Losberg & Zwozdiak-Myers, 2024) states that they must be a careful and complex pedagogical design to face the ongoing challenges of effective teacher education for inclusive teaching, common perception between schools, communities and Government. A careful and complex learning strategy is needed in teaching students with special needs.

Research on inclusive education has largely focused on academic skills such as reading and mathematics for slow learners, with limited attention to developing speaking skills a critical competency for social and academic

integration (Alloway and Copello, 2013). While global practices highlight the use of collaborative and technology-driven strategies, their applicability in Indonesian inclusive classrooms remains underexplored.

Previous research on inclusive education had generally focused on basic academic skills such as reading and mathematics, while writing skills have not received adequate attention (Alloway & Copello, 2013). Yet, writing skills are a crucial competency in students' learning and social integration. Writing is not only a means of self-expression but also plays a role in building students' self-confidence and communication skills, particularly for SLSs who struggle with abstract thinking and organizing ideas systematically.

Furthermore, writing skills require complex cognitive processes, from organizing ideas and selecting vocabulary to constructing coherent sentence structures. For SLSs, this process presents a unique challenge that requires appropriate learning strategies and adequate emotional support. Therefore, SATs are required to possess high pedagogical competence and the ability to design adaptive and inclusive writing learning methods.

Based on the description, this research focused on exploring the writing learning strategies used by STs in teaching slow learners in inclusive classes, as well as identifying the challenges they face in the process. This research was expected to contribute to the development of more effective and equitable inclusive learning practices, particularly in developing writing skills for students with slow learning disabilities.

1.2 Research Questions

In teaching and learning activities for SLs, the role of SATs is very important in supporting the academic development of these students. One of the main obstacles faced by the SATs is teaching English writing skills, which requires more structured and adaptive approaches. State Junior High School 18 Malang, as an institution that accommodates inclusive education, faces various obstacles in its efforts to improve the writing skills of these students. This research aimed to identify the main obstacles faced by SATs in teaching English writing skills to SLs. In addition, this research also tried to explore the strategies used by SATs in overcoming these obstacles, as well as how the approaches applied can improve the effectiveness of learning. By understanding these two aspects, it was hoped that this research can provide deeper insights into optimal teaching practices for SLs. The research questions were stated in the following question:

- a. What obstacles are faced by SATs in teaching English writing skills to SLs in State Junior High School 18 Malang?
- b. What strategies used by SATs in teaching English writing skills to SLs in State Junior High School 18 Malang?

1.3 Research Objectives

This research aimed to investigate the teaching obstacles and strategic applied by SATs in delivering English writing instruction to SLs at State Junior

High School 18 Malang. Specifically, the research seeks to identify the primary obstacles faced by SATs in facilitating English writing skills among SLSs and explore the adaptive strategies employed to overcome the obstacles in teaching English writing skills. By examining these two focal areas, the study intended to generate practical insights that support more effective, inclusive instructional approaches tailored to SLSs.

1.4 Scope and Limitation of the Research

This research focused on the implementation of English writing instruction for SLSs at State Junior High School 18 Malang, emphasizing the pedagogical roles and lived experiences of SATs. Using a qualitative case study approach, the researcher explored the contextual and personal dynamics of inclusive teaching, particularly in guiding students with cognitive challenges to express their daily activities through structured writing.

The scope of the research was geographically confined to a single educational institution, namely State Junior High School 18 Malang, involving only SATs directly engaged in English learning process and excluded regular subject teacher also students with other special needs outside the slow learner category.

Substantively, the inquiry centered on two key aspects: the multifaceted obstacles encountered by SATs: linguistic, psychological, and pedagogical and the adaptive strategies employed to address these challenges, including differentiated instructional approaches, tailored media usage, and

curriculum modifications.

The instructional process was observed over four consecutive learning sessions, each designed to scaffold students' ability to write about their everyday activities. These sessions included guided vocabulary building, sentence structuring, contextual modeling, and independent writing practice, all adapted to the cognitive profiles of SLSs.

By focusing on the theme of writing everyday activities, the research aimed to illuminate how SATs scaffold functional literacy and foster expressive competence among SLSs. The findings are expected to inform the development of more responsive and effective inclusive writing practices at the junior high school level.

1.5 Significance of the Research

The significance of the research was explained in two parts: theoretical and practical significances. The theoretical research enriched knowledge in the field of inclusive education, particularly concerning the instructional practices for SLSs in English writing. By focusing on the role of SATs, the research contributed to the theoretical discourse on differentiated instruction, scaffolding, and adaptive learning design within inclusive pedagogies. Moreover, the integration of constructivist, cognitive, and sociocultural learning frameworks in analyzing the teaching of English writing offered a nuanced perspective on how learning difficulties intersect with language acquisition. The research also extended the discussion on how emotional and cognitive support

mechanisms influence student engagement and academic development, which can inform future theoretical models on inclusive language instruction.

The other significance was practical significance. Practically, the findings of this research were expected to offer evidence-based insights for SATs, classroom teachers, and school administrators in implementing more targeted and responsive strategies for teaching English writing to SLSs. By identifying specific obstacles and strategies used in real classroom contexts at State Junior High School 18 Malang, the research provided concrete examples that can be adapted and applied across other inclusive junior high school settings. Additionally, the research held relevance for teacher training programs, offering input for the development of professional learning modules focused on inclusive teaching competencies. Policy-makers in education may also benefit from the research's findings by using them as references for refining inclusive education guidelines and resource allocations, especially for supporting the role of SATs.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

In this research, several terms were used to explain the concepts that were the focus of the discussion. The following definitions aimed to provide a clear and consistent understanding of the terms used:

1. Special Assistant Teacher (SAT)

SAT in this study was dedicated mentor teacher for SLS in State Junior High School 18 Malang. Their education backgrounds were education and

psychology. They are not English teachers. Their role was to assist SLS in learning English by simplifying the material presented by the English teacher in the classroom to suit SLS's needs. SAT played a strategic, non-teaching yet crucial role. They were not tasked with directly delivering the material, but rather served as facilitators, mediators, and reinforcers of the inclusive learning process.

They played a role in developing adaptive strategies, such as providing additional personalized explanations, modifying instructions to make them more understandable, and creating an emotionally and socially supportive learning environment.

2. Slow Learner Student (SLS)

SLSs are exclusive students who study at State Junior High School. They have difficulty in understanding academic concepts due to their below-average academic performance. They study in regular class together with other regular students. SLSs are accompanied by SAT in their learning activities. SAT help them understand the material presented by their English teachers.

3. English Writing Skills

English Writing Skills in this study was SLS's ability to compose simple paragraph with a theme determined by the English teacher. The theme used in this research was daily activities.

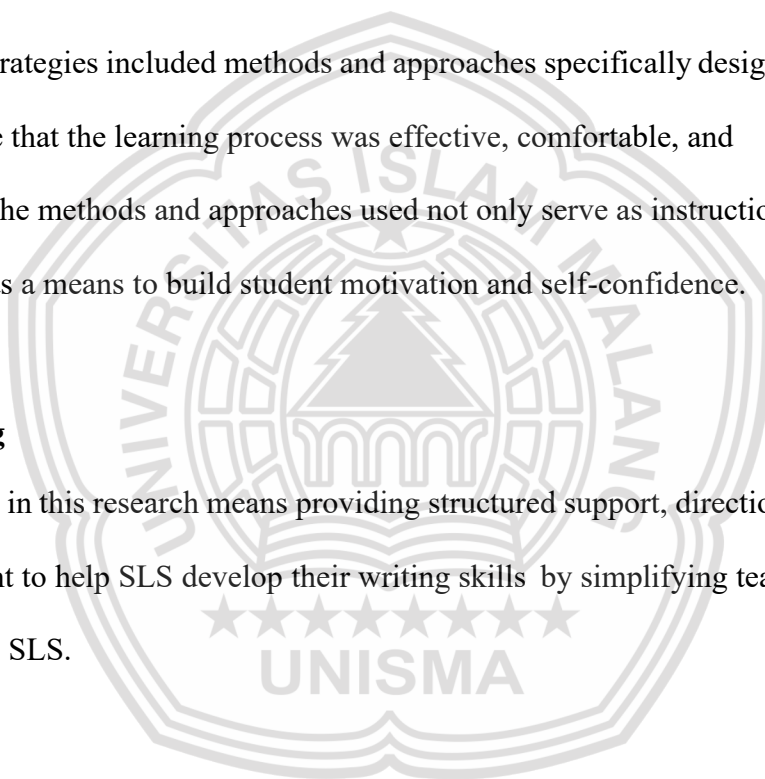
4. SAT's Strategies

The strategies referred to in this research are the methods used by SAT to convey material from the English teacher to SLSs in an easy and acceptable manner in accordance with the characteristics of SLS. These strategies were chosen to overcome obstacles that appeared in SLS when the lesson was taking place.

These strategies included methods and approaches specifically designed by SAT to ensure that the learning process was effective, comfortable, and meaningful. The methods and approaches used not only serve as instructional aids but also as a means to build student motivation and self-confidence.

5. Guiding

Guiding in this research means providing structured support, direction, and encouragement to help SLS develop their writing skills by simplifying teachers' explanation to SLS.



CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This chapter presents a comprehensive discussion of findings related to writing challenges faced by SLSs and the strategic role of SAT in addressing these barriers. Thematic and theoretical analyses connect field data to inclusive education frameworks.

5.1 Obstacles in teaching English writing skills for SLSs

Based on the results of interviews and observations, the main obstacles faced by SATs in teaching writing skills to SLSs were limited vocabulary and low student confidence. Limited vocabulary made it difficult for students to express ideas in writing, even to construct simple sentences. This is in accordance with the findings of (Lawrence, Guitard, & Cowan, 2024) that students with limited short-term memory capacity had difficulty in storing and remembering new vocabulary, especially if it was not associated with a concrete context. Observations showed that students tend to repeat the same simple sentences or even only write one sentence without clear development of ideas.

In addition, psychological factors such as anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and low motivation to learn were other significant barriers. Anxiety indicated affective obstacles that interfered with active participation in writing activities. These obstacles also indicated that teaching writing skills to students with special learning needs was not only related to linguistic aspects, but also

involved cognitive and affective dimensions in depth. Limited vocabulary not only impacted the lack of variation in word use, but also limited students' ability to build logical and coherent sentence structures. In the long term, this could hinder the development of critical thinking skills and the delivery of ideas in writing.

In addition, low student self-confidence played a major role in forming a passive attitude towards writing activities. When students were afraid of being judged or worried about making mistakes, they tend to choose to remain silent or just copied previously recognized expressions, without daring to explore new ideas. In this context, the role of SATs became very crucial, not only as learning facilitators, but also as emotional companions who were able to create a safe and supportive learning space.

Thus, a holistic approach was needed in teaching writing skills to SLSs. Strategies that could be applied included strengthening vocabulary through visual media and concreted experiences, using scaffolding in composing paragraphs, and integrating writing activities with emotional expression to build personal connections to the material. This approach was in line with the principles of inclusive education that place individual needs at the center of the learning process.

5.2 The SATs' Strategies

The SATs applied various adaptive strategies to overcome the obstacles faced by students. These strategies were developed based on individual

and multimodal approaches, with the aim of providing scaffolding or gradual support that was appropriate to the cognitive and emotional conditions of students.

First, the use of mind mapping as a visual aid had been proven effective in helping students start the writing process in a more structured way. This strategy allowed students to develop main ideas gradually before being expressed in paragraph form. As explained by (Sung, 2025), mind mapping helps clarify the relationship between ideas and improves information retention through visual presentation.

Second, an individual mentoring approach was applied to provide full attention to students who need intensive guidance. SATs actively accompanied students during writing activities, providing simple and repetitive instructions so that students feel supported and confident. This was in line with the concept of responsive instructional design where teachers act as partners in building students' cognitive readiness (Awidi & Klutsey, 2024).

Third, the application of visual media such as images, videos, and concept maps was used as contextual media to bridge the limitations of students' abstraction. This strategy showed effectiveness in helping students connect concrete experiences with abstract English concepts, which was supported by a multimodal approach as explained by (Yang, Meng, & Deris, 2025).

Fourth, providing positive reinforcement such as praise, recognition of small progress, and repetition of exercises with simple sentence models also encouraged students' learning motivation. This was in line with the view of

(Chakraborty & Kaur, 2025) who said that intrinsic motivation can be increased through positive reinforcement and empathetic teaching strategies.

5.3 Implications for Inclusive Education Practices

These findings provided a clear picture that teaching writing skills for slow learners required a flexible, empathetic approach that was tailored to individual capacity. The role of SATs was not only as a teacher, but also as an emotional and cognitive facilitator. Strategies such as the use of visual media, individual approaches, and linguistic scaffolding should be an integral part of the learning design in inclusive classrooms.

Furthermore, this study emphasized the need for ongoing training for SATs and regular teachers to have adaptive pedagogical skills in dealing with students with learning disabilities. In addition, collaboration between schools, families, and supporting institutions such as psychological services is important in building an effective and sustainable inclusive ecosystem.

5.4 Integration Between Cognitive and Affective Factors in Writing Skill

In the context of slow learner student learning, writing skills could not be taught separately from cognitive and affective factors. As had been revealed in the research results, limited short-term memory and minimal vocabulary mastery were real cognitive challenges. However, these challenges became more complex when associated with affective factors such as fear, anxiety, and low self-efficacy of students. Vygotsky's theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

supported that students with learning disabilities need systematic scaffolding interventions based on supportive social relationships (Vygotsky, 1978). In this case, SATs not only acted as an academic facilitator, but also as a social and emotional mediator.

A holistic approach that integrated cognitive reinforcement strategies (such as idea mapping and the use of frame sentences) and affective strategies (such as motivation, positive affirmations, and task simplification) could improve students' readiness to overcome writing barriers. These findings indicated the need for multi-level interventions that focused not only on linguistic strategies but also on responding to students' emotions that were often hidden behind the inability to complete tasks.

5.5 The Role of Adaptive Instructional Design

Writing learning for SLSs require flexible, differentiated, and individual-needs-based instructional design strategies. Learning adjustments covered three main domains: content, learning process, and product, as explained by (Tomlinson, 2017). The SATs involved in this study had shown responsive responses to all three, such as modifying materials by simplifying text, using visual illustrations, and assessing student progress based on the process, not just the end result.

Mind mapping strategies, hands-on coaching, and picture-based writing exercises are real-world examples of the universal design for learning (UDL) approach that accommodates a variety of learning abilities. This shows that

flexible instruction did not simply ‘make things easier’, but provide opportunities for students to demonstrate their competence through pathways that suit their strengths.

5.6 The Importance of Collaboration between Regular Teacher and SATs

Although this study focused on SATs, the success of learning strategies cannot be separated from the synergy between regular teachers and SATs. Collaboration in designing adaptive learning, compiling assessments based on student needs, and joint reflection after learning are crucial aspects in realizing the success of inclusive education.

(Fu and Clarke, 2019) emphasized that professional partnerships between regular teachers and SATs are key to creating a responsive and inclusive learning environment. In the context of State Junior High School 18 Malang, strengthening the capacity of regular teachers through training and technical support is a strategic suggestion that cannot be ignored so that SATs intervention is not sporadic and individual.

5.7 Critical Reflection and Further Research Directions

The findings of this research open up space for reflection that writing learning for students with learning disabilities still requires continuous innovation. Short-term interventions tend to be ineffective enough to form sustainable writing skills, especially in the aspects of developing ideas and text structure.

In the future, further research is needed that integrates digital

technology to support writing learning for SLSs. In addition, the involvement of parents and school communities needs to be explored further as part of the learning support system. Research that combines qualitative and quantitative approaches is also recommended in order to objectively measure the impact of interventions on improving student learning outcomes.

5.8 Comparison of Findings with Previous Research

This research strengthens previous research that found similar obstacles, such as research in Hulu Langat, Malaysia, by (Khoirunisya & Hidayati, 2023), which showed that only 21% of slow learner students were classified as able to write, while the rest had difficulty in copying or forming sentences. In addition, affective aspects such as anxiety and low self-esteem were also confirmed in the study of (Chakraborty & Kaur, 2024) in India.

However, the uniqueness of this research lied in the in-depth exploration of the contextual role of SATs in Indonesia as well as responsive strategies such as mind mapping, multimodal visuals, and individual mentoring that are still minimally discussed in local literature. Thus, the contribution of this research not only confirmed global patterns but also enriched local context-based learning practices that were humanistic and empathetic.

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