

# A Study on Teaching Descriptive Essay Writing Skills to Students through Virtual Tourism

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**Abstract:** This study examines how Form 4 Tamil language students at Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Setia Alam, situated in Shah Alam, Selangor, can improve their descriptive essay writing abilities by using virtual tourism (VT) as an innovative teaching tool. The main goal of VT-based education is to assess students' descriptive writing skills, difficulties, and general progress. Due to their limited vocabulary, lack of exposure to a variety of events, and disinterest in traditional teaching techniques that frequently rely on superficial explanations, many students struggle while writing descriptive essays. This study uses a mixed-methods strategy that includes pre-tests, post-tests, reflective observations, and ongoing assessments spread out across eight weeks in order to address these issues. John Dewey's experiential learning theory and 21st-century learning concepts serve as the foundation for the instructional planning, guaranteeing an engaging and participatory learning environment. By allowing students to visually explore a variety of settings, VT fosters more engagement and creativity by allowing them to vividly imagine and describe scenes. Students' descriptive writing abilities significantly improved as a result of the intervention, especially in terms of vocabulary enrichment, organisational coherence, and creative expression. Pupils expressed a higher passion for writing and showed more assurance while expressing their thoughts. Teachers observed a change in the dynamics of the classroom, with increased collaboration and active engagement. All things considered, the study highlights VT's potential as an immersive and captivating teaching method that provides a workable way to enhance students' descriptive writing skills in an exciting and dynamic way.

**Keywords:** descriptive essays, Form 4 Tamil language learners, and virtual tourism (VT)

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to determine how well Form 4 students write descriptive essays. In addition to identifying obstacles, this study included instruction in descriptive writing strategies and the use of virtual tourism (VT) to enhance descriptive essay writing abilities. Since students lack adequate experience to describe scenes accurately, the main problem in this study is a lack of depth in their linguistic abilities, artistic expression, and imagination. Additionally, students are not participating as much in traditional descriptive writing teaching, which frequently results in apathy and boredom. Conventional teaching approaches, which are popular in Asia, involve cursory explanations and examples without a thorough comprehension of descriptive writing, leading pupils to make assumptions. Finally, these difficulties are made worse by insufficient practice, which hinders students' ability to improve their descriptive writing abilities.

### *Background of the study*

The 19th century marked the beginning of Tamil language education in Malaysia, and official instruction changed over time. By 2017, secondary school students were taking Tamil as a structured topic in a standardised curriculum. This study focusses on employing virtual reality (VR) technology, which provides immersive experiences, to help form four students improve their descriptive writing abilities. In contrast to conventional approaches, virtual reality (VR) can offer students realistic, immersive simulations that enhance creativity and engagement and facilitate the development of descriptive writing skills.

### *Research Purposes.*

There are three main research objectives in this study:

- To evaluate students' descriptive essay writing skills,
- To investigate the difficulties pupils, encounter when composing descriptive essays, and
- to use virtual tourism as a teaching tool to improve students' descriptive essay writing skills.

### *Details of Research.*

This study was conducted at Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Setia Alam, a secondary school in the Shah Alam area of Selangor. Only 16-year-old Tamil fourth-form students were included in this study. The reason the researcher chose these students is that the researcher teaches them Tamil. The researcher chose the class for this study based on the students' performance after instructing them on the writing of descriptive essays and evaluating their work.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Regarding the second chapter, the researcher provides and discusses explanations of the prior study that was selected. Books, research articles, and online research journals comprised all of the research sources used in this study. Based on factors including the research purpose, research tool, research approach, research data, and research outcomes, the researcher has compiled the prior studies that are relevant to this study.

Additionally, the researcher has explained how this study and earlier research are related. Apparently, the research's title is "A Study on Teaching Descriptive Essay Writing Skills to Students through Virtual Tourism." Accordingly, the researcher also searched for articles using some of the title's keywords, including Virtual Tourism in Education, Virtual Reality in Education, Descriptive Essay (since the two have similar components), and (Essay) Writing Skills, in addition to the chosen theory—John Dewey's theory—and some characteristics of the research classification, particularly 21st-century learning.

For instance, Gidion Marue and Marvio B. Pantas conducted a study in 2019 on the difficulties Indonesian EFL students encounter when writing descriptive essays, identifying problems with language and creative abilities. Astrid Wangsagirindra Pudjastawa examined the use of Google Earth virtual tours to enhance writing abilities in 2022, demonstrating how technology may increase student engagement and enhance learning outcomes. In the same way, Lakshmi Perumal and P. Vidhyavathi demonstrated enhanced understanding and cognitive abilities in students by using the I-Think cognitive map to improve Tamil essay writing. Together with 20 other articles, these investigations provided insightful information and served as the basis for the researcher's own study design.

## **METHODOLOGY**

A detailed discussion of research methodology is covered in the third chapter. A researcher's systematic technique to investigating their study topic and addressing their research questions is referred to as research methodology. Research design, structure, methodology, participants, tools, data collection techniques, data analysis techniques, research theory, and theoretical framework are all covered in this section.

There are three types of research approaches: mixed methods, qualitative, and quantitative. For this study, the researcher opted for a mixed-methods technique. A variety of data gathering techniques were used, and part of the data were analysed qualitatively while the others were analysed quantitatively. Descriptive analysis was done using qualitative methods, and data pertaining to numerical components, including surveys, pre-tests, and post-tests, were analysed using quantitative methods. Along with these research techniques, this study also incorporates components such as comparison, observation, planning, implementation, and reflection. These elements offered a more thorough and understandable description of the research procedure.

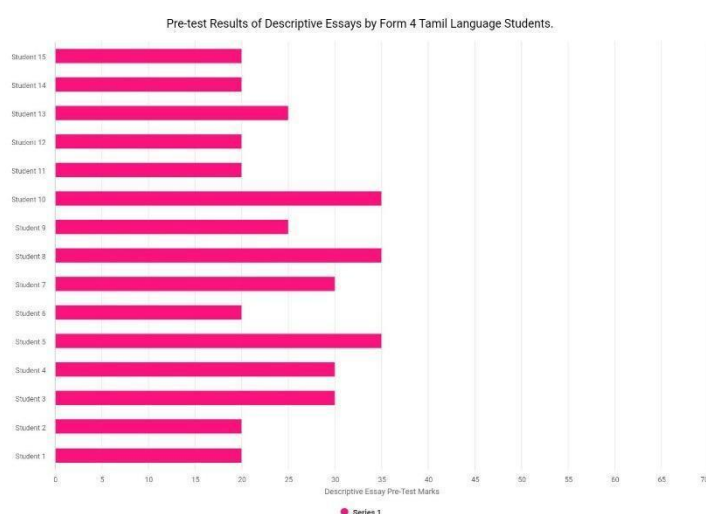
Students' initial skills were evaluated through the reflection component, and then specific activities were planned to overcome their challenges. Planned activities were carried out during implementation, and four weeks after the actions were completed, students were monitored using the observation component. In this action research project at the classroom level, the researcher applied John Dewey's theory.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

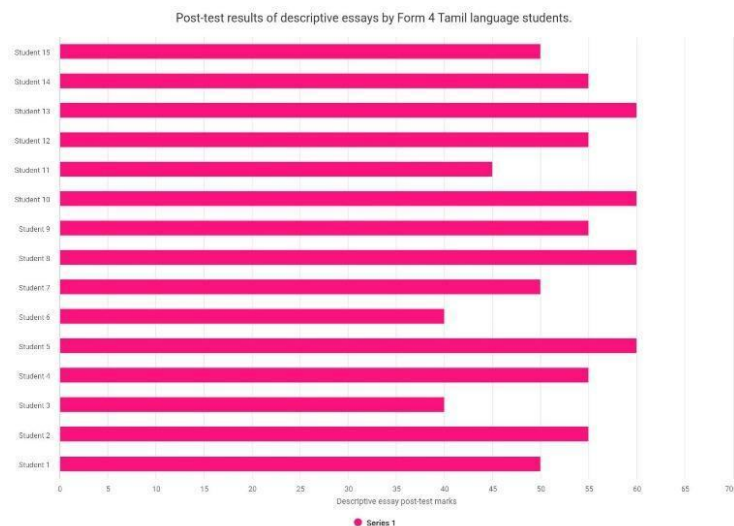
The findings gathered from the study are methodically presented in Chapter 4. Results for the three study objectives are presented together with a descriptive analysis of the research samples. The data that was gathered was analysed using both descriptive and statistical techniques. Thirteen Form 4 Tamil language students from a secondary school in the Shah Alam district participated in the study. The study sought to determine the students' degree of

proficiency in writing descriptive essays, the challenges they encounter, and the ways in which virtual tourism improves their descriptive essay writing. This title alludes to John Dewey's idea.

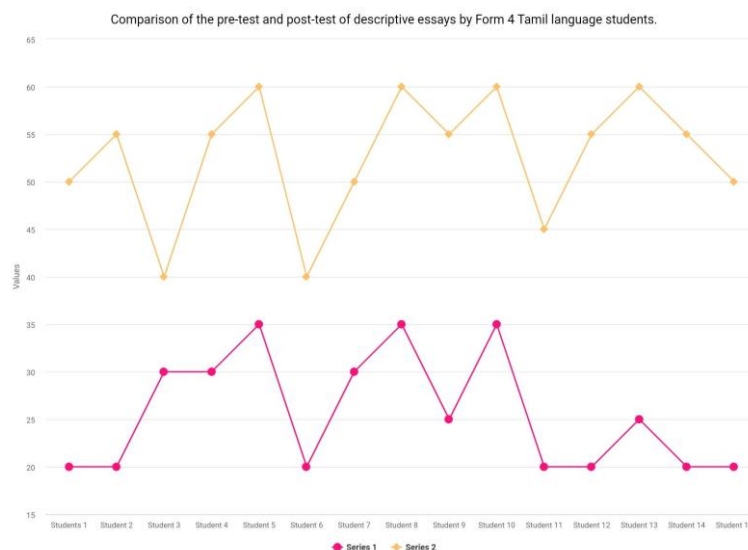
This theory backs up the label by highlighting interdisciplinary and experiential learning. As they explore simulated landscapes, virtual tourism enables students to learn by doing, promoting active observation and interpersonal interactions that are crucial for descriptive writing. This method extends the learning process beyond conventional writing education by incorporating subjects like geography, history, and technology. Additionally, the collaborative options that virtual tourism offers—like group discussions and peer feedback—reflect Dewey's emphasis on interactive and discussion-based learning, making the experience dynamic and reflective. This supports his view of education as an all-encompassing and interesting activity.



The distribution of scores indicates a mild range of descriptive essay writing talents among these students, with some getting moderate marks and others falling behind, according to the pre-test results of descriptive essays provided to Form 4 Tamil Language students. This variation suggests that efforts for improving descriptive writing abilities are necessary. All 15 students received only satisfactory or below-grade grades on the descriptive essay pre-test administered to Form 4 Tamil language learners. In particular, three students (Students 5, 8, and 10) received the highest pre-test score of around 35, while three other students (Students 3, 4, and 7) received about 30 and two students (Students 9 and 13) received about 25. Finally, seven pupils received 20 marks (students 1, 2, 6, 11, 12, 14, and 15). There is a need for improvement measures to boost descriptive writing abilities, as evidenced by this distribution, which shows some pupils with moderate marks and others falling behind.



Following eight weeks of drills and five enhancement activities, the researcher gave Form 4 Tamil language students a post-test on descriptive essays. The post-test results for 15 Form 4 Tamil Language students' descriptive essay scores are shown in the chart. A horizontal bar graph illustrating each student's performance displays the scores attained following the instructional intervention. With almost 60 marks, four students (Students 5, 8, 10, and 13) had the highest scores on the post-test, followed by five students (Students 2, 4, 9, 12, & 14) with roughly 55 marks and one student (Student 11) with a slightly lower score. In the end, two students (Students 3 and 6) received 40 points. Most students' post-test scores show a discernible improvement over their pre-test levels.



Every student demonstrated improvement from the prior test by receiving scores ranging from roughly 40 to 60. According to the post-test results, all of the students made considerable growth and achieved a satisfactory to high level of proficiency in descriptive writing. The higher scores and the students' consistent performance show that the instructional intervention was successful in improving their skills.

## CONCLUSION

Each of the three enquiries posed in this study,

1. How well-developed are the students' descriptive essay writing abilities?
2. What challenges do students face when it comes to creating descriptive essays?
3. Can students learn how to write descriptive essays using virtual tours?

were covered during the course of the investigation. The following criteria were taken into account for the first question, which sought to assess students' proficiency in writing descriptive essays: creativity and originality, organisational skills, and vocabulary and language use. Over the course of the previous eight weeks, the researcher built these skills through teacher evaluations, peer reviews, and assessment rubrics.

Regarding the second topic, this study found that restricted vocabulary acquisition, difficulty expressing or visualising ideas, and structural issues are some prevalent hurdles in writing descriptive essays. Regarding the third topic, by immersing students in dynamic and realistic settings, virtual tours have shown promise as a cutting-edge teaching tool for descriptive writing. By giving students, a virtual "visit" to locations they might not otherwise be able to see, including historical landmarks, natural settings, or cultural areas, virtual tours have improved students' visualisation and creativity. Students' imaginations may be piqued by this encounter, which may facilitate their ability to picture and explain these locations.

By encouraging students to pay close attention and teaching them to notice details they might overlook in a physical setting, virtual tours also help students become more detail oriented. Their ability to write descriptively can be directly enhanced by this exercise. By giving students descriptive writing assignments centred on certain virtual settings, teachers could include virtual tours into their courses. Feedback on students' involvement and enjoyment levels or a comparison of student essays before and after the exam can be used to evaluate how well virtual tours improve descriptive writing.

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