



Enhancing Creative Poetry Writing through the Acrostic Technique in Elementary School Students

Faiqotul Himmah ✉, Dwi Masdi Widada ✉

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Abstract: This study investigates the use of the acrostic technique to support fourth-grade students at MI Almaarif 08 Watugede Singosari in writing creative poetry. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were obtained through interviews, classroom observations, and analysis of student poems. A descriptive rubric assessed three aspects: structural accuracy, lexical richness, and thematic coherence. Results showed that about 80% of students successfully applied the acrostic structure, 70% improved vocabulary use, and roughly half maintained thematic unity. Two-thirds refined their poems through revision, showing growing awareness of diction and rhythm. The technique effectively increased motivation and guided creativity, though challenges persisted in sustaining coherence and depth. As the study involved only 25 students from one school, findings are context-specific rather than generalizable. Future research should examine broader applications of the acrostic method, including its integration with digital and collaborative learning to enhance young learners' fluency and expressive writing.

Introduction

Mastery of language arts, particularly writing, is essential for developing students' cognitive and expressive abilities (1). Among the four core language skills, listening, speaking, reading, and writing, writing remains the most complex and often the least developed, especially among primary-level students (2). Writing poetry, a form of creative expression, requires students to synthesize emotion, structure, and language aesthetics (3). However, evidence from both national assessments and classroom-based observations reveals that Indonesian elementary students face significant challenges in composing poetry, particularly in initiating and organizing their ideas into coherent poetic structures (4, 5). At MI Almaarif 08 Watugede Singosari, teachers report that while students often have creative ideas, they struggle to convert these ideas into poetic form, indicating a need for targeted instructional strategies (6).

The urgency of improving students' writing capabilities is underscored by national literacy data. According to Indonesia's Ministry of Education and Culture, over 60% of students in primary education exhibit below-average writing proficiency, with creative writing ranking among the lowest. Standard approaches to teaching poetry often fail to scaffold the process effectively, leaving students without the tools to transform imaginative thought into structured poetic text (7, 8). Although various instructional models have been implemented to address this, including audiovisual aids and guided writing exercises, many lack accessibility, adaptability, or proven effectiveness in early-grade

classrooms (9, 10).

The acrostic technique, where students generate poems by using each letter of a keyword to begin a line, offers a promising yet underexplored solution (11, 12). This structured yet flexible method reduces the cognitive load associated with idea generation and sequencing, thereby supporting novice writers. Prior studies have highlighted its potential to enhance vocabulary retrieval, thematic cohesion, and student motivation (13-15). However, existing research tends to focus on upper elementary or secondary levels, or integrates additional media such as audiovisual elements, limiting its generalizability. This study addresses this gap by exploring the application of the acrostic technique in a conventional fourth-grade classroom setting without auxiliary media. The research aims to 1). identify the steps used to implement the acrostic technique in creative poetry writing instruction and 2). evaluate its impact on student learning outcomes. Using a descriptive qualitative design, the study employs classroom observation, semi-structured interviews, and student work documentation to generate in-depth insights into both process and outcome. By systematically evaluating a low-tech, replicable instructional method, this study contributes to the growing body of research on creative literacy interventions in early education.

Methodology

Study Design and Rationale

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design, which was considered the most appropriate approach to explore

classroom-based language learning phenomena in their natural setting. This design was chosen because it allows for a detailed and contextualized understanding of the instructional process, student engagement, and learning outcomes that emerge naturally during teaching and learning activities. By focusing on direct observations and participants' experiences, this approach enabled the researcher to describe and interpret how the acrostic technique supported students in developing creativity and language competence. The emphasis of the study was therefore placed on capturing authentic classroom practices and describing how students experienced the process of creative poetry writing, rather than on testing a predetermined hypothesis.

Study Site and Participants

The research was conducted at MI Almaarif 08 Watugede Singosari, located at Jl. Masjid No. 97, Krajan Hamlet, Watugede Village, Singosari District, Malang Regency, Indonesia. This school was purposively selected due to the observed problem in students' ability to transform ideas into poetic form, which directly aligned with the research focus. Additionally, the site was easily accessible to the researcher, enabling sustained classroom observation and collaboration with the teacher, thus ensuring data depth and reliability.

The participants consisted of one classroom teacher and 25 fourth-grade students (13 boys and 12 girls) from class IV-A. This group was chosen because students at this developmental stage are transitioning from basic to expressive language use, making them appropriate subjects for exploring creative writing pedagogy. The teacher was included as a participant because of her active role in Bahasa Indonesia instruction and her openness to integrating innovative strategies such as the acrostic technique.

Instruments and Materials

Data collection instruments included: (1) semi-structured interview protocols for teachers and students, (2) observation checklists focusing on pedagogical strategies and student behavior, and (3) documentation guidelines for capturing student outputs and classroom activities. Audio recorders and cameras were used to support data triangulation.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted with both the teacher and selected students to explore their experiences, challenges, and perceptions regarding the use of the acrostic technique. The interview protocols included open-ended questions that encouraged participants to share detailed insights. For instance, the teacher was asked how she introduced the acrostic technique in class and what difficulties students encountered during the poetry writing process. Meanwhile, students were asked what aspects of the activity helped them begin writing and whether using initial letters made the process easier. Each interview lasted approximately twenty to thirty min and was audio-recorded with the participants' consent to ensure accuracy in transcription and analysis.

The classroom observations were conducted systematically to capture both teacher and student behaviors during the implementation of the technique. The observation checklist focused on two key areas: the teacher's instructional practices and the students' engagement during learning activities. Teacher practices observed included modeling, scaffolding, feedback delivery, and classroom management, while student engagement was

examined in terms of participation, creativity, collaboration, and attentiveness. Each observed aspect was recorded using a descriptive three-point scale frequent, occasional, or rare and supported by qualitative field notes that documented the dynamics of classroom interaction and the overall atmosphere of the lesson.

In addition, documentation was used to collect and analyze the poems written by students as the tangible results of the learning process. Each poem was examined based on several criteria, including adherence to the acrostic structure, richness and variation of vocabulary, thematic coherence, and evidence of revision after feedback. Photographs and copies of student work were archived to strengthen the data triangulation process. Audio recorders, notebooks, and cameras were employed throughout to support data accuracy and completeness.

Procedures

The research was conducted through three interconnected stages: preliminary, implementation, and post-implementation. In the preliminary phase, researchers obtained formal authorization from the school and conducted initial classroom observations alongside informal discussions with the teacher to identify existing instructional challenges, particularly those related to students' difficulties in expressing ideas through poetry.

During the implementation phase, the teacher systematically introduced the acrostic technique by modeling how to compose poems using vertically arranged keywords (e.g., "MEJA" or "SENIN"). Students were then guided to write their own poems by aligning a selected word vertically, using each initial letter as the starting point for a new line. The teacher supported the process by providing vocabulary prompts and contextual clues related to the theme chosen for the poem, such as nature or family. After this guided activity, students proceeded to compose individual acrostic poems using either assigned or self-selected themes.

In the post-implementation phase, students were instructed to revise their poems through a process of peer and self-assessment. They reviewed their drafts, read them aloud, and made corrections to improve coherence, relevance, and poetic structure. Throughout this phase, researchers documented classroom interactions, teacher feedback, and student responses to capture a holistic picture of the implementation.

Data Collection and Validation

Data were collected using multiple complementary techniques to ensure the richness and validity of the findings. First, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the classroom teacher and selected students to obtain detailed insights into the instructional process and their experiences with the acrostic technique. These interviews explored both pedagogical practices and student perceptions of learning outcomes.

Second, participant observation was employed during classroom sessions to monitor the teaching and learning process in real-time. Researchers observed how the teacher introduced the technique, how students engaged with the task, and how instructional interactions unfolded throughout the lesson. These observations were supported by detailed field notes and photographic documentation.

Third, student work in the form of acrostic poems was collected and analyzed as part of the documentation

strategy. These written products were evaluated to assess the students' creative expression, thematic alignment, and structural adherence to the acrostic form. To validate the data, triangulation was applied by comparing findings from interviews, observations, and document analysis. Additionally, member checking was conducted with the teacher to confirm the accuracy of the interpreted data.

Results

Implementation of the Acrostic Technique

The implementation of the acrostic technique in creative poetry writing was carried out through a combination of modeling, guided practice, and independent writing. The teacher introduced the technique by demonstrating how to construct an acrostic poem using a vertically arranged keyword, followed by collaborative exercises and individual composition. Observations and interviews indicated that students responded positively to this structured method. The acrostic framework provided them with clear guidance and reduced anxiety when beginning to write, helping them generate ideas more easily. The use of familiar and meaningful themes such as *nature*, *family*, and *daily life* encouraged students' participation and ownership of their creative work.

Evaluation Framework for Student Poetry

To systematically evaluate student outcomes, the researcher employed a descriptive analytic rubric focusing on three core criteria: structural accuracy, lexical richness, and thematic coherence. *Structural accuracy* measured students' ability to maintain the vertical letter alignment of the acrostic format. *Lexical richness* assessed the variety, precision, and imagery of word choice, while *thematic coherence* evaluated the logical connection between lines within a poem. Each poem was reviewed by two independent raters using a three-level scale (*emerging*, *developing*, *proficient*), and inter-rater discussions were conducted to ensure consistency. Percentages are reported descriptively to illustrate trends rather than to suggest statistical generalization.

Student Learning Outcomes

Analysis of 25 student poems revealed that most learners successfully grasped the concept of constructing acrostic poetry. Approximately 80% of the students produced poems that adhered to the correct structural format, demonstrating their ability to initiate poetic lines using the initial letters effectively. Around 70% of students showed signs of lexical growth by using more varied and expressive diction, moving from literal descriptions toward more imaginative expressions. However, about one-third of the class still relied on simple, repetitive vocabulary, suggesting the need for continued vocabulary enrichment.

Thematic coherence was found to be the most challenging aspect of the task. Roughly half of the students maintained a unified theme throughout their poems, while others produced disjointed lines with inconsistent ideas. This indicates that while the acrostic structure helped students initiate lines, it did not automatically guarantee conceptual unity. These findings highlight the need for integrating explicit instruction on thematic development alongside structural modeling.

Revision and Feedback Phase

The revision process served as an essential component of

student learning. After completing their initial drafts, students engaged in peer and self-assessment activities guided by the teacher. Analysis of these revisions showed that about two-thirds of the students made meaningful improvements to their work by refining word choice, adjusting rhythm, or enhancing thematic flow. Most revisions focused on lexical enrichment, while fewer addressed deeper structural or conceptual issues.

A smaller subset of students, predominantly boys, demonstrated limited engagement with revision tasks, often completing drafts quickly without extensive self-reflection. Closer classroom observation suggested that this pattern was not related to writing ability but rather to differences in motivation and interest in language-based tasks. This aligns with socio-cultural classroom dynamics in which male students often show lower sustained attention in literacy activities. The teacher's reflections supported this interpretation, noting that additional motivational support and scaffolding were required to maintain focus among these students.

Synthesis of Findings

Overall, the implementation of the acrostic technique proved pedagogically effective in enhancing students' engagement, linguistic expression, and understanding of basic poetic structure. The technique's clear framework made poetry writing more accessible, particularly for students who previously found it intimidating. The approach fostered creativity, encouraged vocabulary expansion, and improved students' ability to begin and structure poetic lines. However, challenges remained in maintaining thematic coherence and fluency across lines, underscoring the importance of combining structural guidance with instruction in idea development and revision strategies.

The findings suggest that the acrostic technique functions best as a formative learning tool that supports creativity through structure, rather than as a summative evaluation instrument. When integrated with teacher feedback, collaborative discussion, and iterative revision, the technique holds strong potential to promote motivation, language development, and expressive fluency among elementary students learning creative writing.

Discussion

This finding is supported by teacher and student interviews confirming regular exposure to acrostic-based instruction, as well as the analysis of student-written poems that reflected measurable improvements in structural and lexical competence. The implementation of the acrostic technique in creative poetry writing at MI Almaarif 08 Watugede Singosari has demonstrated effectiveness in guiding students through a structured writing process. Since 2021, the technique has been consistently used to introduce poetry composition in an accessible and motivational way for fourth-grade students.

The acrostic method was found to support students' linguistic creativity by offering a systematic framework in four key steps: determining a poem's title, arranging its letters vertically, constructing lines from each initial letter, and conducting textual revision. These steps are aligned with established pedagogical models⁽¹⁶⁾ and were evident in classroom practice. For instance, the teacher used simple thematic words such as "MENTARI" (sunshine) or "BUNGA" (flower) to scaffold poetic construction, encouraging students to work within familiar contexts and vocabularies. The

descriptive rubric developed for this study showed that most students demonstrated strong performance in line initiation and vocabulary use but needed further support to achieve thematic coherence.

By starting with a vertical layout of the chosen word, the students could quickly identify an entry point into the poem. This initial structure reduced the cognitive load commonly associated with open-ended creative tasks and allowed them to focus on line-by-line composition (14, 15). Moreover, this scaffolding had a motivational effect, as students found success early in the task, which likely enhanced engagement and perceived competence in writing (17). The structured nature of the task helped lower writing anxiety and fostered a sense of accomplishment that sustained participation across activities.

Nevertheless, despite its strengths in initiating creativity, the acrostic approach revealed challenges in maintaining coherence and depth across poetic lines. While most students could generate appropriate initial words based on the given letters, thematic unity and semantic linkage often remained weak. This suggests that while the acrostic format supports the form of poetry, it does not automatically foster content development (18). Additional support in idea elaboration and metaphorical thinking and contextual expansion would be needed to elevate the artistic quality of student work.

Another key aspect was the revision phase. Although most students participated in self- or peer-editing, only about two-thirds made meaningful improvements, mainly focusing on word choice and rhythm. These findings highlight that revision is still a developing cognitive skill for elementary learners, requiring explicit modeling and feedback to deepen their understanding of cohesion and poetic flow (19, 20). Integrating structured revision activities such as guided rewriting or collaborative reflection could further strengthen this process.

Moreover, the use of personal names or familiar objects (such as “tables” or “Monday”) as the basis for poems provided both benefits and limitations. While these words increased familiarity and accessibility, they sometimes constrained thematic richness or resulted in repetitive diction. Teachers may consider integrating brainstorming sessions or guided semantic mapping to broaden students' lexical resources before composition (21, 22). Expanding prewriting activities could help balance structural guidance with creative freedom.

Students reported feeling supported by the technique, especially in starting their writing. However, they also encountered difficulties in maintaining thematic consistency between lines. This issue was evident both in rubric analysis and classroom observations, where although most students were able to produce initial words aligned with the acrostic format, many struggled to connect the content across lines meaningfully (23). Gender-related patterns also emerged, with several male students requiring additional guidance and encouragement during revision and idea development. This tendency appears more related to engagement styles and task persistence rather than ability differences, as noted in prior studies on gender and literacy motivation.

The teacher observed that while the majority of students followed instructions well and remained engaged, a portion of the class, particularly those who viewed poetry as challenging, were reluctant to participate from the outset. Nonetheless, the overall results were considered satisfactory. Students benefited from the structural support

provided by the acrostic format, especially in beginning their poems confidently. Those with stronger reading and writing habits exhibited more developed vocabulary and fluency, as also reflected in the descriptive analysis of their poems.

Overall, the acrostic technique has proven effective in improving students' creative writing skills by offering a structured yet imaginative framework. However, further scaffolding is needed to support students in developing stronger cohesion and fluency across lines. Future applications may integrate the technique with explicit instruction in theme development, collaborative writing, and digital poetry tools to enhance engagement and linguistic creativity.

Future applications may integrate the technique with explicit instruction in theme development, collaborative writing, and digital poetry tools to enhance engagement and linguistic creativity. These implications suggest that the acrostic technique serves not only as a creative language learning tool but also as a structured bridge toward more advanced forms of poetic and expressive writing.

Conclusion

The implementation of the acrostic technique effectively supported fourth-grade students at *MI Almaarif 08 Watugede Singosari* in initiating and structuring creative poetry writing through a guided and engaging approach. Analysis of student work showed that most students successfully applied the acrostic structure, improved their vocabulary, and demonstrated greater motivation in writing. Around 80% of students initiated poetic lines correctly, 70% used more varied diction, and about half maintained thematic coherence across their poems. In addition, two-thirds made meaningful revisions to refine word choice and rhythm, indicating progress in language awareness and creative confidence.

While the results affirm the pedagogical value of the acrostic technique in supporting structured creativity, these findings are limited to one class of 25 students and should be understood within this specific context. Future studies in broader and more varied educational settings are needed to explore the technique's wider applicability and potential integration with other creative writing strategies.

Declarations

Author Informations

Faiqotul Himmah ✉

Corresponding Author

Affiliation: Department of Islamic Elementary Teacher Education, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Indonesia.

Contribution: Data Curation, Formal analysis, Visualization, Writing - Original Draft, Writing - Review & Editing.

Dwi Masdi Widada ✉

Corresponding Author

Affiliation: Department of Islamic Elementary Teacher Education, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Indonesia.

Contribution: Conceptualization, Funding acquisition, Methodology, Project administration, Resources, Supervision, Validation, Writing - Review & Editing.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicting interest.

Data Availability

The unpublished data is available upon request to the corresponding author.

Ethics Statement

Not applicable.

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Additional Information


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