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Improving the writing ability of deaf children through giving rewards in grade 1 SLB Pangudi Luhur West Jakarta

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the effectiveness of rewarding in improving the writing ability of deaf children in grade 1 of SLB B Pangudi Luhur, West Jakarta. The method used is Class Action Research (PTK) with three cycles, each consisting of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection stages. The subjects of the study were 10 deaf students aged 6-8 years. Data was collected through observation, writing tests, and documentation, then analyzed descriptively, quantitatively, and qualitatively. The results showed that giving rewards in the form of verbal compliments, stickers, and small gifts succeeded in improving students' writing skills, with the average score increasing from 39 in the pre-cycle to 83 in the 3rd cycle. In addition, the number of students who achieved completeness also increased significantly, from 2 students (20%) in the pre-cycle to 8 students (80%) in the 3rd cycle. The implications of this study suggest that rewarding can motivate deaf students to be more active in learning and help them overcome difficulties in writing. Therefore, giving rewards can be used as an effective strategy in learning to write for children with special needs, especially in special schools (SLB). This study also suggests the application of a more individualized and consistent approach to support student development more optimally.

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INTRODUCTION

Writing skills are an important basic skill in a person's communication development (Kim et al., 2021). Writing is not only a means to express thoughts, but also serves as a tool to process information, deepen understanding, and enrich learning experiences (Gustina Nasution et al., 2025). Writing skills are one of the main aspects of the curriculum because they are directly related to the achievement of literacy and students' critical thinking skills (Jagaiah et al., 2020). Writing skills are the foundation of advanced learning in a variety of subjects. As a multifunctional skill, writing also impacts social and emotional aspects, such as boosting confidence and helping students develop their personal identity (Graham et al., 2022). Therefore, teaching writing at an early age is crucial to ensure students' academic success, which will have an effect on their achievement and ability to participate in a society that is increasingly dependent on literacy.

Writing skills in deaf children present their own challenges (Asonye et al., 2018; Mayer & Trezek, 2018; Ruffini et al., 2024). Children with hearing loss, especially those with total or near-total deafness, often have difficulty developing overall language skills, both oral and written (Aozora et al., 2024). This is due to their limitations in receiving oral language stimuli which are generally the basis for the development of written language. These limitations not only affect the ability to speak, but also the mastery of vocabulary, sentence structure, and proper spelling in writing (Zhaliha et al., 2024). The learning process of writing for deaf children requires a more creative and structured approach, where visual and kinesthetic aspects become more dominant (Aozora et al., 2024). These children tend to rely on alternative methods, such as sign language, visual observation, and text writing, to develop language skills, including writing (Kim et al., 2021). In this case, the process of learning to write is not only about writing words and sentences, but also about helping them build a connection between the symbols of the writing and the meanings they understand, as well as motivating them to use writing as an effective

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communication tool.

In Special Schools (SLB), especially in the classroom of deaf children, the ability to write is still one of the biggest challenges (Mayer & Trezek, 2019). Based on observations in several extraordinary schools, including SLB B Pangudi Luhur West Jakarta, most deaf children face difficulties in writing systematically, especially in terms of writing upright letters in a straight line correctly. Some of the difficulties commonly found include difficulties in copying writing from the whiteboard to the book, inconsistent differences in the shape and size of the letters, and limitations in understanding the distance between letters and words. Deaf children also tend to be slower in developing writing skills, so they often feel less confident in their written language skills (Nelson & Bruce, 2019). The impact of these limitations is not only limited to the academic aspect, but can also affect their social and emotional development, given that the ability to write is one of the main ways for them to express themselves and interact with others (Ruffini et al., 2024).

One of the solutions that can be implemented to overcome the problem of writing ability in deaf children is through rewards. Rewards are a form of positive reinforcement that can increase students' motivation to be actively involved in the learning process. According to the behavioristic theory put forward by B.F. Skinner, positive reinforcement can shape desired behaviors and habits, such as improving writing skills. In this study, the rewards given were verbal compliments, stickers, and small prizes. The reward is expected to motivate students to practice writing more actively and feel appreciated for their efforts. The rewards given consistently are able to increase students' confidence and provide a sense of achievement that motivates them to continue learning. Rewarding can also create a fun learning atmosphere and reduce the stress or anxiety that deaf students may experience when learning to write. This approach allows students to feel valued, which in turn can encourage them to put in more effort in overcoming writing challenges.

Several previous studies have examined various methods to improve writing skills in deaf children, both domestically and abroad (Humphries et al., 2024; Puhlman et al., 2025; Strassman et al., 2019). However, although these studies have made significant contributions to our understanding of the writing learning of deaf children, most studies have not placed much emphasis on the use of rewards as positive reinforcement in learning to write. Many studies have been limited to the use of specific methods without considering the diversity of approaches that can be more effective when combined (Aozora et al., 2024). The gap in this study lies in the lack of focus on rewarding in the specific context of exceptional schools, especially in the classroom of deaf children. This study aims to fill this gap by testing the effectiveness of rewarding in improving the writing skills of deaf students in SLB.

The purpose of this study is to examine and analyze the effectiveness of reward in improving the writing ability of deaf children in grade 1 of SLB Pangudi Luhur West Jakarta. This research aims to provide practical solutions to the obstacles faced by deaf students in writing, as well as to contribute to the development of more inclusive and fun learning methods. Using a classroom action research approach, the study also focused on understanding how rewards can be used to strengthen students' motivation to learn, improve motor skills in writing, and build their confidence. In addition, this research is expected to provide recommendations for teachers and other educators in designing more effective learning strategies for children with special needs, especially in improving their writing skills.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses the Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach with the Kemmis and McTaggart model to improve writing skills in grade 1 deaf children at SLB Pangudi Luhur, West Jakarta, involving ten (10) children aged 6-8 with a hearing loss of more than 91 dB. The research is conducted over three months (January-May 2025) in three cycles, each consisting of four stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection. In the planning stage, the researcher and the classroom teacher develop a Lesson Plan (RPP) tailored to the needs of deaf children, using a positive reinforcement strategy and learning materials suited to the students' visual and kinesthetic learning styles. In the action stage, the learning process focuses on writing skills, particularly upright letter writing, with repeated practice to familiarize the necessary motor movements. In the observation stage,

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the researcher monitors the development of students' writing skills using observation sheets and writing tests, and documents the learning process through photos and videos. Reflection takes place after each cycle to evaluate the effectiveness of the actions taken, aiming to improve the quality of learning in the next cycle. The data collected is analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively, measuring the development of writing test results and analyzing patterns of changes in students' attitudes and motivation during the learning process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This Results and Discussion section presents the main findings of research conducted to improve the writing ability of deaf children through the provision of rewards in grade 1 of SLB Pangudi Luhur, West Jakarta. This research consists of three cycles conducted for three months, focusing on measuring the development of students' writing skills through the application of positive reinforcement strategies in the form of rewards. In this section, we will discuss in detail the learning outcomes, the effect of reward on student motivation and engagement, a comparative analysis of results between cycles, and the relationship of these findings with relevant theories of education and motivation. Each sub-chapter will discuss the quantitative and qualitative data obtained, as well as the implications of these findings for the development of learning methods in SLB and similar educational institutions. The data presented will provide a clear picture of the effectiveness of rewarding in improving the writing skills of deaf children, as well as the challenges faced throughout the research.

Comparison of Pre-cycle cycle 1

In the pre-cycle, students' writing skills were still relatively low, with an average score of only 39. Two students, namely Tr and In, showed quite good writing skills, were able to write neatly and according to the lines in the book of continuous upright writing. After rewarding in cycle 1, which included verbal praise and small rewards, the average score of students' writing ability increased to 58. Not only that, two other students, namely Jz and Zah, managed to achieve Developing According to Expectations (BSH), which signifies a significant improvement in their writing skills. Even so, most students are still not optimal in their writing skills, this is understandable considering that cycle 1 is the initial stage where students are still adapting to the reward and new learning strategies that are applied.

The increase in the average score from 39 in the pre-cycle to 58 in the 1st cycle shows that the implementation of rewards has a significant positive impact on the writing learning of deaf children. According to the theory of behaviorism put forward by B.F. Skinner, positive reinforcement or rewards serve to reinforce the desired behavior and encourage students to repeat it in the future (Goddard, 2022). In this context, the provision of rewards in the form of verbal praise and small prizes aims to increase students' motivation to be more active in learning to write. The improvement recorded in the two students (Jz and Zah) who managed to achieve Thrive on Expectations indicated that rewards not only affected technical writing skills, but also motivated students to keep trying to improve their abilities. However, not all students immediately achieve optimal results in the first cycle. This is understandable because cycle 1 is the initial phase in the process of adapting to new learning methods that involve positive reinforcement strategies, which take time for students to fully adjust. As stated by Schneider & Sanguinetti (2021), rewards given gradually can form more consistent learning habits if applied correctly.

Comparison of Cycle 1 and Cycle 2

In cycle 2, adjustments in the form of reward and a more individualized approach to each student resulted in a significant improvement. The average student score rose to 70, with 6 students Tr, In, Jz, Zah, Iq, and Ken successfully achieving Developing as Expected (BSH). This improvement suggests that changes made in terms of reward variation, including direct verbal reinforcement and writing exercises performed gradually, successfully encourage student engagement in the learning process. The additional two students who achieved completion signaled that the improvement strategy in cycle 2 was starting to be effective, although some students still needed more practice to overcome constraints in fine motor and concentration.

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The increase recorded in cycle 2 can be understood through the theory of positive reinforcement promoted by B.F. Skinner (1953) (Schneider & Sanguinetti, 2021), which emphasizes the importance of reinforcement to reinforce desired behaviors. Adjustments to more varied forms of rewards, including direct verbal reinforcement and rewarding in accordance with student achievement, have been shown to increase students' motivation and engagement in writing learning. This strategy supports the view of Fahad Mon et al (2023) who stated that consistently rewarding can increase students' interest in learning, especially in the context of special education such as SLB. The improvements in cycle 2 also highlight the importance of an individualized approach to learning. Students with specific needs, such as Iq and Ken, get more attention, so they are more motivated to practice writing and show progress. Gradual repetition of writing exercises has also been shown to be effective in correcting motor and concentration constraints often experienced by deaf students. While there are still students who take longer to master writing skills optimally, this significant improvement suggests that implementing the right positive reinforcement strategies can help students better overcome these barriers.

Comparison between Cycle 2 and Cycle 3

In cycle 3, the main focus is on strengthening writing skills with an emphasis on better writing quality. The reward strategy that has been implemented in the previous cycle is still used, but with the addition of a simple reflective practice approach that is carried out repeatedly to strengthen students' writing skills. As a result, the average score of students increased to 83, with two additional students, Zo and Ken, successfully achieving the Developing Expectations (BSH) criteria. This improvement shows that most students have become accustomed to learning patterns that involve rewarding, and they are starting to show significant improvements in neatness, completeness, and consistency of lines in writing. Cycle 3 marks more stable and consistent progress, where positive reinforcement strategies successfully form better learning habits in deaf students.

The increase that occurred in cycle 3 reinforces the finding that rewards can shape positive learning habits, especially in the context of deaf children's education. Positive reinforcement through consistent rewards can strengthen desired behaviors, such as neater and more consistent writing skills (Doroudi et al., 2019). In cycle 3, the repetition of reflective exercises proved to be very effective in helping students overcome fine motor challenges, such as spacing between letters and ensuring consistency of lines when writing. This shows that repeated learning with positive reinforcement can strengthen students' technical skills more stably. Gradual reinforcement in increasing student motivation and involvement in the learning process (Fahad Mon et al., 2023). As students become more accustomed to this strategy, they become more confident in writing, and their ability to write neatly, completely, and consistently develops. The consistent improvement in results in Zo and Ken shows that students who previously had great difficulties are now able to master writing skills, thanks to the application of adaptive and structured reward methods. Thus, consistent reward in each cycle can be considered a key factor in building positive learning habits among deaf students.

Overall comparison

There is an increase when viewed as a whole, namely an increase in pre-cycle to cycle 3:

Table 1. Upgrade from pre-cycle stage to cycle 3

Cycle Stages	Average Score	Number of Shiva Complete
Pre-Cycle	39	2
Cycle 1	58	4
Cycle 2	70	6
Cycle 3	83	8

This study showed a significant improvement in the writing ability of deaf students, both in terms of average scores and the number of students who achieved completion. In the pre-cycle, the average score of students' writing ability reached only 39, with only 2 students achieving the Developing Expectations (BSH) criteria. However, after the implementation of the reward strategy, the results

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obtained in cycle 1 showed a significant increase with the average student score increasing to 58, and the number of students who completed increased to 4 students. This increase continued in cycle 2, where the average student score increased to 70, and the number of students who completed to 6 students. In cycle 3, the average score of students reached 83, with 8 students achieving Developing Accordingly (BSH). Overall, there was an increase of 44 points from pre-cycle to cycle 3, which shows that the reward has been effective in improving students' writing skills, especially in writing upright letters more neatly and consistently.

The increase in average grades and the number of students who completed each cycle illustrates the effectiveness of the reward strategy in improving the writing skills of deaf children. Based on the table presented, it can be seen that from the pre-cycle that had an average value of 39, there was a consistent increase to 83 in cycle 3. This increase is in accordance with behaviorist theory which states that positive reinforcement, such as rewarding, can increase the frequency of desired behaviors, in this case the ability to write (Abou Zaid, 2024; Keller-Bell & Short, 2019). The rewards given, such as verbal compliments, stickers, and small gifts, not only motivate students to write better, but also create a more fun and positive learning atmosphere. The increase in the number of students who complete, from just 2 students (20%) in the pre-cycle to 8 students (80%) in the 3rd cycle, shows that rewarding serves as an effective reinforcement to improve students' writing skills. Gifting can increase students' motivation and interest in learning, especially in learning basic skills such as writing (Gustina Nasution et al., 2025). The peak of the effectiveness of rewarding is reflected in cycle 3, where most students show optimal performance in writing neatly and completely, reflecting the achievement of overall learning goals.

Research Limitations and Implications

This study shows that giving rewards as a method of positive reinforcement can have a significant impact on improving the writing ability of deaf children in grade 1 of SLB Pangudi Luhur, West Jakarta. Overall, the increase recorded in each cycle shows the effectiveness of rewarding in encouraging students to participate more actively in learning to write. In the pre-cycle, the average score of students' writing ability of only 39 showed great challenges in terms of writing neatness, difficulty copying writing from the blackboard, and problems in fine motor coordination. However, after the reward in the first cycle, there was a significant increase, with the average score increasing to 58, and 4 students who achieved Developing According to Expectations (BSH). This shows that giving rewards in the form of verbal compliments, stickers, and small gifts begins to motivate students to practice more actively and in a structured way.

In the following cycles, the improvement of students' writing skills became more and more consistent. Adjustments in the form of rewards and an individualized approach in cycle 2 successfully encouraged more students to achieve completion, with the average score increasing to 70 and 6 students completing the course. Giving more varied rewards, such as verbal reinforcement and repetition of exercises that focus on correcting technical errors in writing, has been shown to be effective in correcting motor and concentration problems often experienced by deaf students (Mayer & Trezek, 2019; Zhaliha et al., 2024). In cycle 3, the focus on strengthening the quality of writing resulted in further improvement, with the average student score reaching 83 and 8 students successfully achieving Developing as Expected (BSH). This shows that through consistent reward giving and repetitive exercises, students can improve their writing skills significantly, especially in the aspects of neatness, completeness of letters, and consistency of lines (Bo & Ayob, 2025; Riedmann et al., 2025).

Overall, this study confirms that rewarding has an important role in building positive learning habits and improving the writing skills of deaf children. As part of the behavioristic approach, positive reinforcement carried out in a structured and consistent manner is able to motivate students to repeat the desired behavior, in this case neater and more consistent writing skills (Aknin et al., 2018; Goddard, 2022; Keller-Bell & Short, 2019). Rewarding not only has a direct impact on improving writing techniques, but also increases students' intrinsic motivation, which in turn strengthens their confidence in following the learning process (Arthur-Banning & Windbiel, 2022). Despite limitations in the number of subjects and the duration of the study, the results show the great potential of this strategy, which can be adapted and applied more widely in various other exceptional schools (SLBs). The success

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of this study provides a solid basis for further developing inclusive and engaging learning strategies, which are appropriate for the needs of children with hearing loss.

CONCLUSION

Rewards has been proven to be effective in improving the writing skills of deaf children. Through the application of positive reinforcement strategies in the form of verbal praise, stickers, and small gifts, students showed significant improvements in neatness, completeness of letters, and consistency of lines in writing consecutive upright letters. Rewarding also succeeded in increasing students' motivation and confidence, which in turn encouraged them to actively participate in learning. Although the study has limitations in terms of the number of subjects and duration, these findings provide a solid basis for the application of rewards in the learning of deaf children in SLB, as well as provide recommendations for teachers to continue to develop inclusive and fun learning methods for students with special needs.

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