

The Effectiveness of Photo Prompt Media Based on the Word Bank Technique in Improving Students' Poetry Writing Skills

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study evaluated the effectiveness of photo prompt media based on the word bank technique in improving Grade VIII students' poetry writing skills, considering common prewriting difficulties such as idea blockage, limited diction, and weak imagery. **Method:** A quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental one-group pretest-posttest design was employed with 32 students. The intervention was implemented across six meetings: a pretest requiring students to write free-verse poetry without images, followed by instruction using everyday-themed photo prompts and a structured word bank, and a posttest using an equivalent new prompt. Two raters scored students' poems using an analytic rubric covering five aspects (theme, diction, imagery, figurative language, and unity/coherence). **Results:** The mean score increased from 65.63 (SD = 7.21) on the pretest to 74.88 (SD = 8.30) on the posttest, yielding an average gain of 9.25 points; 31 of 32 students improved. A paired-samples test indicated a significant difference ($p < 0.001$) with a very large effect size ($d = 2.45$). The largest gains occurred in diction and imagery (gain = 1.19 each on a 4-point scale), followed by unity/coherence (gain = 0.81), figurative language (gain = 0.66), and theme (gain = 0.53). **Novelty:** The study contributes a structured integration of everyday-themed photo prompts and a categorized word bank within a six-session teaching sequence, assessed through an analytic rubric across multiple aspects of poetry quality.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesian language education positions writing skills and literary appreciation as core components for strengthening students' literacy, creativity, and self-expression at the junior high school level. The *Capaian Pembelajaran* for Indonesian Language (Phase D) in the *Kurikulum Merdeka* emphasizes students' ability to write logically, critically, and creatively, and to communicate experience and imagination "in the form of prose and poetry" through creative use of denotative, connotative, and figurative vocabulary (Amir et al., 2023; *Capaian Pembelajaran Bahasa Indonesia*, 2025). National reading literacy challenges remain serious. Results from the 2022 *Programme for International Student Assessment* (PISA) indicate that only about 25% of Indonesian students reach the reading proficiency standard, far below the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average of 74% (OECD, 2023). Creativity challenges also appear in the PISA 2022 creative thinking assessment. Indonesian students' average score was 19 out of 60 points, substantially lower than the OECD average of 33 points (Katoningsih & Sunaryo, 2020; OECD, 2024). Poetry writing instruction is relevant in responding to these conditions because writing poetry provides meaningful language-learning experiences and can build students' writing confidence through guided practice in expressing ideas and feelings purposefully (Fithriani, 2021; Kangasharju et al., 2024).

An initial diagnostic in Grade VIII at SMP Negeri 2 Batang Angkola identified dominant difficulties at the poetry prewriting stage, particularly in idea generation, diction selection, and imagery development. Pre-task notes from a free-verse writing

assignment without images involving 32 students showed that 20 students (62.50%) experienced idea blockage, 22 students (68.75%) repeatedly used general words, and 24 students (75.00%) did not demonstrate clear figurative language in their initial drafts. The early poetry products also indicated lines that tended to be long and prose-like, along with limited use of concrete words, resulting in weakly constructed mood and imagery in most texts. These classroom findings align with research reporting students' difficulties in writing free-verse poetry, especially in selecting appropriate words and expressing ideas effectively (Aisiyah et al., 2023). The findings are also consistent with studies identifying limited diction as a major barrier in poetry writing and highlighting the importance of strategies that enrich lexical choices before drafting (Annisa, 2022).

The absence of a structured prewriting strategy makes poetry writing more demanding because novice writers must generate ideas, select diction, develop imagery, and shape lines simultaneously. The planning stage prior to writing has strong pedagogical grounding, as a systematic review indicates that pre-task planning tends to produce better writing outcomes than conditions without planning, particularly when planning is aligned with task demands (Ellis, 2021). Prompt-based support is also considered relevant as scaffolding, since a systematic review and meta-analysis in digital learning reported that prompts help direct attention, stimulate thinking processes, and improve the attainment of learning goals across domains (Thomann & Deutscher, 2025). The need for an instructional intervention in poetry writing therefore becomes logical when ideation difficulties and limited vocabulary emerge early in the writing process, making visual triggers and vocabulary-elicitation techniques necessary supports before students write independently.

Photo prompt media refers to the use of photographs as prompts to initiate writing activities, enabling students to receive concrete visual stimulation before composing poetic lines. Photographs help novice writers notice details of objects, atmosphere, and emotions more specifically; these details can then be transformed into richer diction, more vivid imagery, and a more coherent mood within a poem. In this study, everyday-themed photo prompts refer to photographs depicting familiar situations close to students' daily experiences, such as school activities, rain, family, friendship, or nature. An effective visual trigger was selected based on several criteria: familiarity of the theme for Grade VIII students, clarity of visible objects and actions, richness of atmosphere and emotional cues, and potential to elicit concrete diction, sensory imagery, and figurative expressions without providing an overly explicit narrative. These criteria ensured that the photographs did not merely function as decorative media but served as structured stimuli for idea generation and poetic language development. Evidence from the use of visual media in junior high school poetry-writing instruction reflects a process consistent with the photo prompt concept: students observe an image, list words that match the image, and then develop the ideas into a complete poem (Prawoto et al., 2026). That implementation was reported to improve poetry-writing achievement from an average score of 40 in the initial condition to 60 in Cycle I and 85 in Cycle II (Kartini, 2021). Visual media were also employed in a descriptive quantitative study in Grade VIII with 40 students; the results indicated students' ability to write poetry using images, while figurative style and imagery remained at a "fair" level. This suggests that photographs as prompts are relevant for strengthening imagery development and word choice through concrete stimulation (Rokhmah et al., 2022).

The word bank technique is a prewriting strategy that guides students to collect vocabulary in a structured way before drafting, so that initially abstract ideas can be transformed more quickly into concrete poetic lines. In this study, the word bank was organized into categories of nouns (objects), verbs (actions), adjectives (atmosphere), feeling words (emotions), and figurative phrases to support diction choices, build imagery, and facilitate the use of figurative language (Fajri & Wardoyo, 2024). Research evidence supports this rationale, as a meta-analysis of vocabulary-development interventions found that programs designed to enrich vocabulary yield stronger gains than traditional word-list instruction that is decontextualized (Kansızoğlu & Bekiroğlu, 2025). The effectiveness of scaffolding in writing has also been reported in a quasi-experimental study that showed improved writing achievement and gains in sub-skills, including vocabulary, after systematic scaffolding was implemented (Hassen et al., 2024). A similar approach appears in classroom action research that used targeted vocabulary media for free-verse poetry writing and emphasized vocabulary support as an idea trigger and a guide for composing poems more structurally (Pano et al., 2025).

School-based poetry-writing studies commonly use visual media as an idea trigger or apply vocabulary strategies as prewriting support; however, integrating both within a single structured instructional procedure remains relatively uncommon and has not been widely tested in Grade VIII contexts using rigorous measurement. The novelty of this study lies in combining everyday-themed photo prompt media with a structured word bank technique organized by vocabulary categories and figurative phrases, implementing the instruction across six meetings, and assessing poetry-writing skills using a validated rubric and two raters to maintain scoring consistency. This study aimed to examine the effectiveness of photo prompt media based on the word bank technique in improving students' poetry-writing skills using a quasi-experimental one-group pretest-posttest design, with research questions focusing on differences in scores before and after the intervention and the magnitude of the improvement.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach using a quasi-experimental one-group pretest-posttest design (O₁-X-O₂). A quasi-experimental design was selected because classroom-based research does not involve random assignment of participants, while pre-post measurement within the same group still enables evaluation of skill changes following an intervention (Maciejewski, 2020; White & Sabarwal, 2014). The participants were 32 Grade VIII students at SMP Negeri 2 Batang Angkola, consisting of 20 female and 12 male students. The intervention was implemented across six meetings, with an allocation of 2 × 40 minutes per meeting. The pretest was administered in the first meeting through a free-verse poetry writing task without images. The treatment was conducted in Meetings 2-5 through poetry writing instruction using everyday-themed photo prompts and a structured word bank technique. The posttest was administered in the sixth meeting using a new photo prompt that was equivalent in difficulty to the practice prompts. The equivalence criteria included:

- a) Similar familiarity of the everyday theme;
- b) Comparable number and clarity of visible objects;
- c) Similar atmospheric and emotional richness; and

- d) equal potential to elicit diction, imagery, and figurative language without overly explicit narrative cues.

These criteria were used to reduce the possibility that score differences were influenced by prompt difficulty rather than by the instructional intervention. Students' products were specified as free-verse poems consisting of 3 stanzas $\times$ 4 lines (12 lines) with a title, containing at least one instance of figurative language and at least two instances of imagery, and using at least 10 words drawn from the word bank. The instructional competence framework referred to the Capaian Pembelajaran Bahasa Indonesia (Phase D) of the Kurikulum Merdeka.

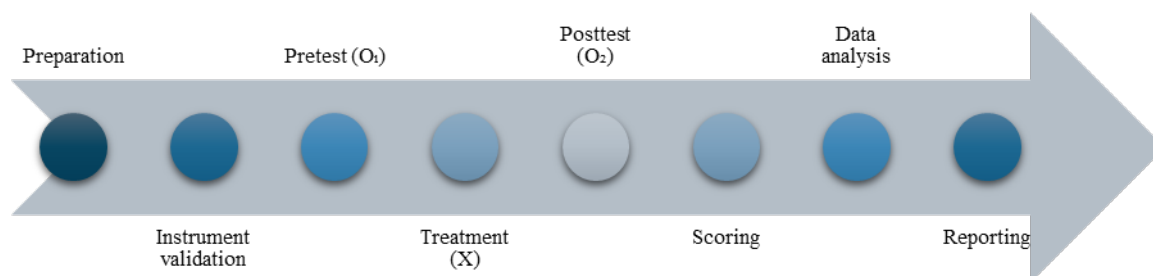


Figure 1. Research Implementation Flow Diagram

The research instruments comprised a poetry writing test (pretest-posttest), a word *bank* worksheet, and an analytic rubric using a 1-4 scale across the aspects of theme, diction, imagery, figurative language, and unity/coherence of form. The rubric's content validity was evaluated by three validators using Aiken's V index to ensure that the indicators aligned with the assessment construct for poetry writing (Aiken, 1985; Nurjanah et al., 2023). Two raters assessed the poems, and the final score was determined as the average of the two raters' scores. Data analysis employed descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, minimum-maximum scores) and a paired difference test. A paired-samples t-test was used when the assumption for score differences was met, whereas the Wilcoxon signed-rank test was applied when the assumption was not satisfied (Carolina, 2008; Ross & Willson, 2017).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results

Pretest and Posttest Results of Writing Skills

Reporting results in a *one-group pretest-posttest* design commonly begins with descriptive statistics to summarize score changes before and after the intervention, particularly the mean, standard deviation (SD), and score range (minimum-maximum), so that readers can quickly understand the central tendency and variability of the data. This practice aligns with journal-based statistical reporting guidelines that emphasize presenting results clearly through informative tables/figures that are consistent with the analyses conducted (Kattan & Vickers, 2020). The students' pretest and posttest scores in poetry writing are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Pretest and Posttest Scores in Poetry Writing Skills

Test	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Pretest	32	65.63	7.21	55	75
Posttest	32	74.88	8.30	57	88

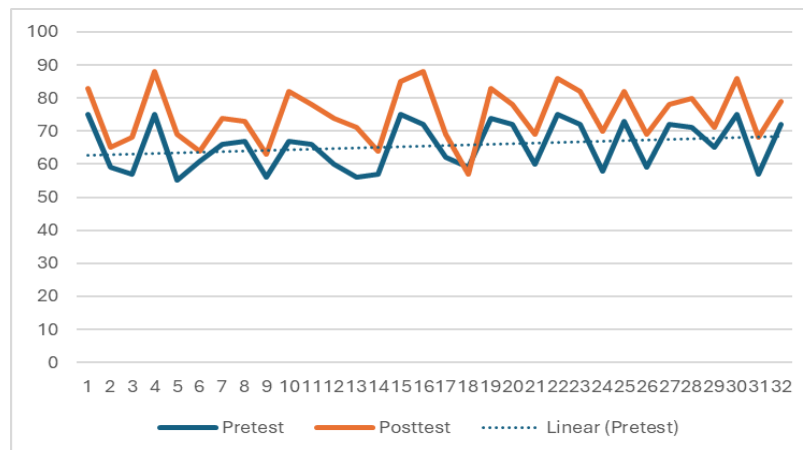


Figure 2. Mean pretest and posttest scores in poetry writing skills

The pretest yielded a mean score of 65.63 (SD = 7.21) with a range of 55–75, whereas the posttest yielded a mean score of 74.88 (SD = 8.30) with a range of 57–88. The mean difference of 9.25 points indicates an improvement in poetry writing achievement following the implementation of photo prompt media based on the word bank technique. Score changes occurred in 31 of 32 students (96.88%), who showed improvement, while 1 student (3.12%) showed a decrease. This isolated decrease may reflect normal individual variation in response to the intervention or temporary performance-related factors during the posttest, and does not alter the overall pattern of improvement observed in the group. Individual gains ranged from -2 to 16 points, indicating that improvement was observed in the majority of students, although the magnitude of improvement varied across individuals, an outcome commonly found in quasi-experimental pretest-posttest studies when students respond to an intervention at different rates of development (Patria & Laili, 2021).

Improvement in Poetry Writing Skills

An aspect-based rubric analysis was used to identify where improvements in poetry quality occurred more specifically, because changes in total scores may result from different components of performance. Visual media used as writing prompts have been reported to help students generate more concrete details and strengthen imagery, while structured vocabulary support functions as scaffolding to enrich diction and facilitate line construction (Mukramah et al., 2023). A summary of the mean scores for each rubric aspect in the pretest and posttest is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Mean Scores by Rubric Aspect in the Pretest and Posttest

Aspect	Mean Pretest	SD Pretest	Mean Posttest	SD Posttest	Gain
Theme	2.50	0.51	3.03	0.69	0.53
Diction	2.25	0.44	3.44	0.50	1.19
Imagery	2.38	0.49	3.56	0.50	1.19
Figurative Language	2.22	0.66	2.88	0.83	0.66
Unity/Coherence	2.53	0.51	3.34	0.55	0.81

Improvement occurred across all rubric aspects. The largest gains were observed in diction and imagery (gain = 1.19), followed by unity/coherence (gain = 0.81) and figurative language (gain = 0.66), while the smallest gain was in theme (gain = 0.53).



Figure 2. Everyday-themed *photo prompts*

Table 3. Word Bank Worksheet

Category	Example Entries
Nouns (objects)	umbrella, puddles, uniform, window, field
Verbs (actions)	dripping, running, waiting, shivering, hugging
Adjectives (atmosphere)	cold, gloomy, wet, quiet, dim
Feeling words (emotions)	longing, anxious, relieved
Figurative phrases	"rain knocks on the window"; "clouds hang up silence"

Effectiveness Test of the Intervention and Effect Size

The effectiveness test was conducted to ensure that the improvement in students' poetry writing scores after the implementation of *photo prompts* based on the *word bank* technique was not only descriptively observable but also statistically supported. The analysis began by examining the normality of the score differences (posttest–pretest) to determine the appropriate paired comparison test (Kamath et al., 2025). Testing normality is important because the accuracy of parametric procedures depends on distributional characteristics, particularly with classroom-sized samples. The analysis then proceeded to a paired mean comparison test and an effect size estimate to describe the strength of the change so that the findings do not rely solely on p-value significance.

a. Normality Test of the Score Differences (Posttest - Pretest)

Table 4. Normality Test of Score Differences

Test	Statistic	df	p-value
Kolmogorov-Smirnov (Lilliefors)	0.132	32	0.177
Shapiro-Wilk	0.956	32	0.207

The Shapiro-Wilk p-value of 0.207 indicates that the score differences met the normality assumption; therefore, the effectiveness analysis continued using a parametric paired comparison test.

b. Pretest–Posttest Difference Test

A paired-samples t-test was used because the study compared scores from the same participants at two measurement points. This test is relevant for evaluating changes after an instructional intervention in which students experienced a sequence of treatment sessions combining visual stimulation and vocabulary scaffolding across six meetings (Langenberg et al., 2023).

Table 5. Pretest and Posttest Score Statistics

Measurement	Mean	SD	SE
Pretest	65.625	7.206	1.274
Posttest	74.875	8.304	1.468

Table 6. Paired-Samples t-test Results (Posttest – Pretest)

Mean Difference	SD Difference	SE Difference	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	t	df	p-value
9.250	3.776	0.668	7.889	10.611	13.858	31	< 0.001

The results show that posttest scores were significantly higher than pretest scores ($p < 0.001$), indicating that the implementation of *photo prompts* based on the *word bank* technique effectively improved poetry writing skills in the investigated group. The confidence interval suggests that the mean improvement falls between 7.889 and 10.611 points, supporting the conclusion that the observed change is unlikely to be due to chance.

c. Effect Size (Cohen's d^2)

Effect size was calculated to indicate the strength of the improvement. Reporting effect size is important because statistical significance can be influenced by sample size, whereas effect size helps readers interpret the magnitude of impact within an instructional context. In this study, improvement occurred in nearly all students and was supported by large gains in rubric aspects most directly targeted by the intervention (diction and imagery), making effect size a key indicator that the intervention contributed strongly to poetry quality rather than producing only marginal score increases.

Table 7. Effect Size of Score Improvement

Index	Value	Interpretation
Cohen's d^2	2.450	Very large
Hedges' g	2.390	Very large

A d^2 value of 2.450 indicates a very strong effect, consistent with the improvement observed in most students after instruction that emphasized visual prompts for ideation and a structured *word bank* to enrich diction and support the development of poetic lines. Interpretation of effect size in educational settings should consider classroom context, students' initial ability levels, and instructional design to ensure an appropriate practical reading of the findings (Agusrita et al., 2020).

Discussion

The results of this study show that students' poetry writing scores increased on the posttest compared to the pretest, the difference was significant, and the strength of the effect was very large. An aspect-based pattern of improvement showed the most prominent gains in diction and imagery, followed by unity/coherence, while theme improved to a lesser extent. This pattern is reasonable in a writing-instruction context that positions stimulus support and prewriting strategies as levers for text quality, as meta-analytic evidence on writing instruction indicates that targeted instructional interventions can improve students' writing quality, with the magnitude of effects varying depending on instructional focus and learner characteristics (Maulidah, 2020; Wahyuni et al., 2024).

When compared with similar Indonesian poetry-writing studies, the effect size in this study is relatively strong. An outdoor-learning study in junior high school poetry writing reported a large effect size of approximately $d = 1.53$, while a mind mapping-based outdoor learning study reported an effect size of 0.62. Thus, the d^z value of 2.45 in the present study contextualizes the intervention as producing a very strong within-group improvement. Nevertheless, this comparison should be interpreted cautiously because the present study used a one-group pretest–posttest design, while comparable studies may differ in research design, sample characteristics, and effect-size calculation.

The pattern of gains across rubric aspects is consistent with the nature of the intervention. Visual media used as writing prompts have been reported to help students generate more concrete details and strengthen imagery, while structured vocabulary support functions as scaffolding to enrich diction and facilitate line construction (Mukramah et al., 2023). The photographs used as prompts provide concrete stimuli that help students notice objects, atmosphere, and sensory details, making imagery easier to develop. Findings from other Grade VIII contexts using image-based media also indicate that figurative style and imagery are often components that require more focused stimulation to be strengthened (Wibowo et al., 2020). word bank offers a set of vocabulary options that supports greater variation in diction and reduces repetition of general words, making lines more poetic and improving the overall unity of the poem. This aligns with reports that prompts and scaffolding help direct thinking processes and facilitate text production because students do not begin from a “blank” state (Situmorang et al., 2025).

Including the prompts and the word bank in this study supports the interpretation of the results, as Table 2 shows that the greatest improvements occurred in diction and imagery, with each aspect gaining 1.19 points. This pattern provides specific evidence that the word bank technique contributed directly to the components most closely related to vocabulary selection and sensory expression. The categorized word bank helped students move from general and repetitive words to more concrete lexical choices, while the photo prompts provided visual details that could be transformed into sensory imagery. Therefore, the high gains in diction and imagery indicate that the intervention was particularly effective in addressing the initial problems identified in the prewriting stage, namely limited diction and weak imagery. Research on the use of image prompts in writing instruction has reported a similar mechanism: visual prompts support ideation and organization, while word support helps learners express ideas more clearly (Liu & Wang, 2024).

The statistical findings also strengthen the practical interpretation of the intervention’s contribution. The normality test showed that the score differences met the normality assumption, allowing the use of a parametric paired-samples t-test. The paired comparison confirmed that posttest scores were significantly higher than pretest scores, and the confidence interval indicates that the observed improvement is unlikely to be due to chance. In addition, reporting effect size is important because statistical significance can be influenced by sample size, whereas effect size helps readers interpret the magnitude of impact within an instructional context. In this study, improvement occurred in nearly all students and was supported by large gains in rubric aspects most directly targeted by the intervention (diction and imagery), making effect size a key indicator that the intervention contributed strongly to poetry quality rather than producing only marginal score increases. Interpretation of effect size in

educational settings should consider classroom context, students' initial ability levels, and instructional design to ensure an appropriate practical reading of the findings (Agusrita et al., 2020).

Mechanisms for Improving Poetry Writing Skills through Photo Prompts and the Word Bank Technique

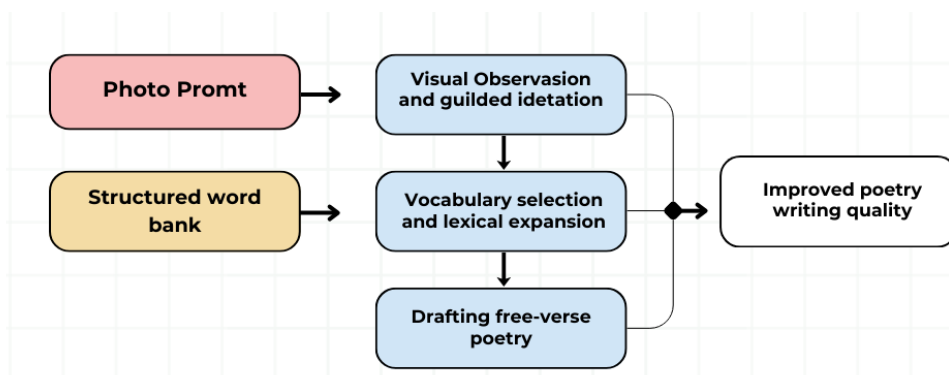


Figure 3. Intervention Mechanism Model of *Photo Prompts* and the *Word Bank* Technique on Poetry Quality

Photo prompt media contributed strongly to improvements in imagery because photographs present concrete objects, settings, and atmospheres, enabling ideas to become “readable” more quickly and allowing sensory details to be transformed more easily into poetic lines. This mechanism aligns with findings from visual-prompt studies reporting support for idea formulation and organization when learners write based on image stimuli (Jamil et al., 2025). Evidence from junior high school poetry instruction also indicates that image-based media can help students develop poems through stages of observing images and expanding relevant words into complete poetic texts, making imagery enhancement through visual stimulation pedagogically reasonable for Grade VIII learners (Wahono, 2023).

The word bank technique accounts for the largest gain in diction and the improvement in figurative language because it provides vocabulary scaffolding that students can use immediately when composing lines, reduces repetition of general words, and creates space for selecting more specific lexical items (objects, actions, attributes, emotions, and figurative phrases). The effectiveness of scaffolding for writing achievement and linguistic sub-skills has also been reported in quasi-experimental research; therefore, the improvements in diction and figurative language in this study are consistent with the function of scaffolding as a support that makes text production more guided and focused (Kerbs et al., 2024). The intervention's design, which integrates prompts and scaffolding (as language support), also aligns with meta-analytic evidence indicating that prompts as learning supports improve goal attainment when their features match task demands (Thomann & Deutscher, 2025).

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding: This study demonstrates that implementing *photo prompts* supported by a structured *word bank* is effective in improving students' poetry writing skills in the research context, as post-intervention performance was higher than baseline performance. Improvements were observed across all assessed rubric aspects, with the most pronounced gains occurring in the components most directly targeted by the

interventio stronger imagery through visual stimulation and richer diction through the *word bank* followed by improved unity/coherence in poem construction. These findings answer the research question by showing that instruction integrating visual idea triggers and vocabulary scaffolding helps students generate ideas, expand lexical choices, and produce more poetic lines. **Implication:** The results suggest that combining everyday-themed photo prompts with a categorized word bank can serve as a practical instructional strategy for poetry writing lessons, particularly when teachers apply the stages consistently from prewriting (observation and vocabulary generation) to drafting and revision. In classroom practice, teachers can develop their own word banks by organizing vocabulary according to the theme of the poem and grouping it into categories such as nouns/objects, verbs/actions, adjectives/atmosphere, feeling words/emotions, and figurative phrases. For example, for themes such as rain, school, family, or nature, teachers can prepare theme-related vocabulary lists that help students generate ideas, select more concrete diction, and build imagery more effectively. The use of an analytic rubric also supports more transparent assessment and allows teachers to monitor students' development in specific poetic components. **Limitation:** The study employed a single-group pretest-posttest design without a comparison group, which limits causal claims beyond the participating class and context. The sample was drawn from one Grade VIII class, so generalization to other grade levels, schools, or regions should be made cautiously. **Future Research:** Future studies should include a control or comparison group, involve larger and more diverse samples, and examine longer-term retention of poetry writing skills. Further research may also compare variations of the intervention (e.g., different prompt types, levels of *word bank* scaffolding, or rubric-guided revision intensity) to identify which components contribute most to sustained improvement.

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