The Use of Story-Based Learning Method in Improving English Writing Skills

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Abstract: This study aims to examine the effectiveness of story-based learning in enhancing English writing skills among Grade 7 students at SMP Negeri 4 Gerung. Writing, a critical productive skill in language learning, is often perceived as challenging due to its demand for clarity, coherence, and mastery of language components such as grammar and vocabulary. Many students struggle with writing due to limited practice, inadequate teaching methods, and low motivation. Story-based learning offers a potential solution by providing an engaging and context-rich environment that encourages students to develop their writing skills. This research focuses on addressing the identified challenges by utilizing stories as a medium to increase student interest and motivation. The findings showed that students in the experimental group, who were taught using story-based learning, experienced a significant improvement of 23.19% in their writing skills, as evidenced by their post-test scores. In contrast, the control group, which followed traditional teaching methods, showed only a marginal improvement of 0.79%. These results indicate that story-based learning not only enhances student engagement and interest in the learning process but also fosters creativity and critical thinking, leading to improved writing performance.

Keywords: story-based learning, writing skills, motivation, vocabulary, teaching methods

INTRODUCTION

English is one of the important languages widely used in the world as a means of international communication. English is also considered a compulsory subject that must be studied in schools. Written communication is very important for the exchange of ideas, thoughts, or feelings. In English, there are four skills that must be mastered: listening, speaking, reading and writing. In general, these four skills cannot be separated from each other. In line with that, Harmer (2001) stated that there are various skills in language acquisition: Receptive skills, namely listening (understanding spoken language) and reading (understanding written language) and productive skills, namely speaking and writing. These four skills must be developed in a balanced way by students in order to learn English thoroughly.

Writing is a basic language skill that is very important in learning English. It is also the last language skill that students learn (Lestari & Wahyudin, 2020). Writing is a skill that is difficult to master if we do not have knowledge about what we want to write. In addition, special skills are needed which include the ability to express the writer's opinions or thoughts clearly and efficiently. Students must also master several language components in writing such as spelling, grammar, vocabulary, and punctuation.

Writing is included in productive skills, just like speaking, while listening and reading are included in receptive skills. Productive skills mean skills used to produce language that contains meaning, while receptive skills mean skills used to capture meaning. Writing skills are one of the skills that are difficult to master, because writing has a higher position than speaking and almost everyone can speak but only a few people can write (Anh, 2019). Most of them think writing skills are difficult. This happens because students are afraid of structure. In addition, they must write with correct grammar, organize what they write into paragraphs, and use more formal sentences. This requires them to have good skills in writing sentences, especially composing texts correctly.

In addition, writing has many benefits. According to Ghaith (2001), writing is a complex process that allows writers to explore thoughts and ideas, and make them real and concrete. Writing encourages thinking and learning because it motivates communication and reflection. When thoughts are written down, they can be examined, reconsidered, added to, reorganized, and changed.

However, among the four language skills, writing is considered to be the most difficult skill for foreign language (FL) learners to master (Anh, 2019). The task lies not only in generating and organizing ideas but also in translating those ideas into readable text. The skills involved in writing are very complex. FL writers must pay attention to both high-level planning and organizing skills and low-level spelling, punctuation, and word choice skills, which means the statement means that writers in a Foreign Language (FL) need to focus on high-level skills such as planning and organizing text structure or developing ideas, as well as low-level skills such as spelling, punctuation, and choosing the right words. This shows that effective writing requires attention to both larger and smaller aspects of the writing process. The difficulty is even greater if their language skills are weak.

Mukminatien in Yulianti (2018) stated that these difficulties are not only caused by the students themselves, but also be caused by inappropriate language techniques or approaches. This will lead to student boredom and a decrease in motivation to learn writing. Unfortunately, writing is not a favorite subject, not only for students but also teachers. Very few English teachers are interested in teaching writing because this activity requires a lot of time for preparation and evaluation (Arifin et al., 2022).

Junior high school students also experience a number of difficulties in writing (Harmer, 2004; Astrid et al., 2023; Amalia et al., 2021; Dunn, 2021)). First, they make a number of mistakes in terms of content, organization, language use, and mechanics so that they cannot produce good paragraphs. Second, they do not have sufficient understanding, so they

cannot respond to the teacher's instructions, they just wait until the teacher translates the instructions into Indonesian. Third, they rarely practice writing. English teaching focuses more on reading and exercises that focus on language. In their writing, they only arrange random sentences into good paragraphs based on textbooks without expressing their ideas that come from real situations. They do not have strong motivation and are not interested in learning English. They are just silent and look confused when the teacher asks them to do assignments from the textbook. In addition, most of them said that they do not like writing in Indonesian because it is very difficult for them. Finally, in the writing process, students never express their ideas through systematic stages such as prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing.

According to Graham (2019) The problems faced by students are caused by several aspects as follows: (1) teachers do not provide a writing model for writing paragraphs that make students know what to do to write: (2) teachers do not provide a larger portion of time in writing activities compared to other skills; (3) teachers do not use varied and interesting strategies; (4) teachers' pay less attention to the process of forming students' writing, but only focus on product orientation: (5) teachers never hold conferences with students to discuss the stages they take in producing writing, which can also help them identify what mistakes and errors they make to correct them; and (6) teachers do not try to find the right writing instruction.

Although learning English is quite fun, many students feel confused about this subject (Kholili, 2023). They assume that English is difficult to learn, has words that are difficult to pronounce, and many new words to remember. One of the challenges is the limited vocabulary they know, and the limited vocabulary they have when they want to speak. As a result, students become lazy to learn English, afraid to speak, and even feel bored when they have to learn it. Without adequate vocabulary knowledge, a student will face problems in the process of mastering the other four language skills, namely speaking, reading, writing, and listening. So, the basics are the foundation in learning English.

To facilitate students in learning English writing, teachers often use media as a strategy to increase student motivation. One strategy that researchers have done is teaching English using stories. Stories are chosen as English learning media because stories can make students interested and motivated in learning (Tamimi, 2024; Kasami, 2021, Pratiwi et al., 2020). In addition, students will hear many words and phrases, especially idioms and everyday expressions.

However, the fact of improving writing skills through stories with English subtitles is still uncertain and involves many researchers. There are many strategies that teachers can use in teaching English and all of them are interesting. I like the use of English subtitles in improving writing skills through stories as a medium to increase students' vocabulary. In addition to mastering new words, students can also improve their listening and speaking skills. From these challenges and considerations, researchers are interested in conducting research entitled " "Utilization of Story-Based Learning Methods in Improving English Writing Skills in Grade VII Students of SMP Negeri 4 Gerung".

Stories in English teaching have been widely used in previous studies. Many researchers agree that the use of stories is very beneficial and can make students more interested in learning. The problems observed at SMPN 4 Gerung, students

were asked about their feelings in learning English. Most of them answered that they felt bored in learning English because the teaching process was carried out using conventional methods. Therefore, they need a new learning style, a new classroom atmosphere, and a more interesting and enjoyable learning situation. Then, the use of stories to improve writing skills was asked to students in English learning. Unexpected answers came from them. Most of them agreed to use stories as a medium in learning. Stories can make them more interested and excited. They like to watch or hear stories and thus they find something new and something they like in the learning process. So that students become more excited in learning.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employed an experimental research design with a pre-test and post-test model. The main objective was to compare the English writing skills of students before and after the implementation of a story-based learning method. According to Gay (1992: p.298), "Experimental research is the only research that can truly test hypotheses about cause and effect relationships. It is the most valid approach to solving educational problems, both practical and theoretical, and to the advancement of education as a science." This method facilitated the evaluation of how the dependent variable reacted to changes in the independent variable. Pre-tests and post-tests were conducted on both control and experimental groups to gather data for the study.

The subjects of this research were 7th-grade students at SMP Negeri 4 Gerung. A purposive sampling method was employed to select two classes randomly, designating one as the experimental class and the other as the control class. The sample was chosen randomly from the population, ensuring that one class received the story-based learning intervention while the other class continued with traditional methods. This approach allowed for an unbiased comparison of results between the two groups.

Quantitative data was collected in this study, which was statistically measured based on students' scores. The primary data sources were the pre-test and post-test results from the students. The writing test, developed by the researchers, was used to evaluate students' writing skills before and after the intervention. The instrument, adapted from Brown and Bailey (1984), assessed various writing aspects such as grammar, vocabulary, coherence, and organization of ideas.

The research process began with a preparation phase, including the development of a story-based learning plan tailored to the curriculum and students' needs at SMP Negeri 4 Gerung. This was followed by a pre-test to measure students' initial abilities, which provided a foundational understanding of their skills. During the treatment phase, students participated in structured sessions utilizing stories to enhance their writing abilities, focusing on narrative construction, language fluency, and grammar. Afterward, a post-test was conducted to evaluate their improvement. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, including calculations for averages and standard deviations, as outlined by Heaton (1988). The findings were then used to determine the effectiveness of the story-based learning method in improving students' English writing skills.

Data Collection Procedures
Preparation stage

In the preparation stage, the researcher prepared a story-based learning plan that is in accordance with the curriculum and needs of students at SMP 4 Gerung. This includes selecting stories, developing learning activities, and preparing learning materials. The preparation stage is the initial step in this study. The researcher will analyze the applicable curriculum to understand the learning objectives and needs of students. Furthermore, the researcher prepared a story-based learning plan that includes selecting stories that are relevant to English material, developing interesting and varied learning activities, and preparing supporting learning materials. This is done to ensure that the learning methods to be applied are in accordance with the context and needs of students.

Pre-test

Conducting a writing test before implementing the intervention was to measure students' initial abilities. Before starting the intervention using a story-based learning method, the researcher conducted an initial test to measure students' initial abilities in writing English. This initial test provided an initial picture that became the basis for the effectiveness of the intervention.

Students were directed to write a short paragraph according to the given theme (minimum 100 words). Researchers will assess paragraphs written by students based on understanding the story, use of appropriate sentences, and clarity of grammar.

Treatment

During an experimental study titled "Utilization of Story-Based Learning Method in Improving English Writing Skills," Grade 7 students of SMP Negeri 4 Gerung underwent a structured treatment phase. This phase involved teaching students using stories as the primary teaching approach to improve their English writing skills. Over a span of 4-5 sessions, students engaged in interactive storytelling sessions where they listened to narratives, analyzed story structures, practiced guided writing exercises based on these stories, collaborated with peers to improve narrative coherence, received feedback, and revised their writing. This approach aimed to improve students' narrative construction, language fluency, grammar proficiency, vocabulary application, and overall creativity in writing tasks.

Post-test

After going through a learning period with a story-based method, a post-test was conducted to improve students' English writing skills. Students did a post-test session after going through several meetings after doing the post-test. Students are asked to create a paragraph text based on the theme that has been given by the researcher (minimum 100-150 words). Students are also asked to describe the main characters, settings, and events clearly and with correct grammar, the text consists of a minimum of 150 words. The post-test data was compared with the pre-test to assess the writing ability of the learning method.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Three steps were taken during the study in collecting the data. Those were pre-test in the first meeting, treatment by applying understand the story structure technique for the experimental group while the control group was not treated by understanding the story structure technique, then post-test for

both classes in the last passing. The study was carried out for two weeks, in which the students of each class were treated for three meetings and two meetings were wed to conduct pre-test and post-test. In other words, each class consists of four meetings. The pre test was carried out on October 17, 2024 for both experimental group and control group. After the protest was carried out, the treatment was given on October 21, 23 and 24, 2024 for experimental group and control group. Then the post-test was given on the same day for the experimental group and the coal group, October 26, 2024.

The pre-test was given to test the students' personal writing skills, especially in writing stories, and after applying the treatment. After conducting the pre-test for both classes, the students in the experimental group were taught to understand the story structure. However, before applying the technique of understanding the structure, it is necessary to first explain the structure of composing a story and the use of language. Then, the students were also explained how to compose their own story. They were surprised when I taught them how to compose a story on the board. For the first time, they found it difficult to express their ideas and how to start composing a story. However, after providing enough time to work on each structure and writing it on the board, they were able to understand how to compose a story.

Table 1. Pre-test of control group and experimental group

Pre-test score					
Experimental group			**Control group**		
no	Sample	Score	No	Sample	score
1	AHA	50	1	AIN	70
2	AP	55	2	BQA	70
3	DKD	65	3	DRS	65
4	DKN	80	4	DFH	75
5	DKK	60	5	DKD	70
6	DPP	75	6	DPA	75
7	DKI	70	7	DPM	70
8	FA	40	8	DPS	55
9	FC	50	9	DGJ	50
10	GH	35	10	DPSS	50
11	IKN	45	11	DBA	55
12	HE	75	12	GAA	70
13	KS	65	13	LA	75
14	KR	50	14	MAK	45
15	KA	50	15	MZR	75
16	LDF	45	16	MA	50
17	LRA	50	17	MAZ	65
18	MIR	55	18	MA	60
19	MP	75	19	MIY	75
20	NHN	70	20	MZD	65
21	NAI	60	21	NMP	70
22	NH	55	22	NRN	70
23	NKP	70	23	NZ	70
24	PSA	50	24	RS	75
25	RNA	65	25	RT	40
26	ST	70	26	RAR	55
27	SNA	60	27	SL	65
28	SH	75	28	SA	80
29	U.A.	85	29	VS	65
30	ZG	40	30	ZH	75
	TOTAL	1790			1900
	Max	85			80
	Min	35			40
	Mean	59.67			63.33

The table above shows the student score on the pre-test for the experimental group. As can be seen the result of pre-

test shown on the table above As shown in the table above, the average score for the experimental group is 59.67 and the average score for the control group is 63.33. The highest score in the experimental group is 85, and in the control group, the highest score is 80. The lowest score in the experimental group is 35, while in the control group, the lowest score is 40. In the experimental group, there are 10 students who can pass 70 (standard score), and in the control group there are also 16 students who can pass 70. From the data shown in the table, the researcher found that there is a big difference in the scores of the experimental and control groups. So, the researcher concluded that the control group has a higher ability than the experimental group in writing stories.

After the pre-test was given, the researcher then continued with the administration of treatment. Treatment was given only to the experimental group. The control group did not receive treatment from the researcher, only the experimental group received treatment. The experimental group was given treatment with a technique on how to compose a story, while the control group was not given any treatment at all.

To find out the effect of the treatment carried out by the researcher, at the last meeting a post-test was given to the experimental group and the control group. The following are the post-test scores of the students in the experimental group and the control group.

Table 2. post-test scores for the experimental & control groups

Post-test score					
Experimental group			Control group		
no	Sample	Score	No	Sample	Score
1	AHA	70	1	AIN	65
2	AP	75	2	BQA	70
3	DKD	75	3	DRS	70
4	DKN	70	4	DFH	65
5	DKK	75	5	DKD	50
6	DPP	80	6	DPA	75
7	DKI	75	7	DPM	60
8	FA	85	8	DPS	55
9	FC	70	9	DGJ	50
10	GH	80	10	DPSS	65
11	IKN	70	11	DBA	65
12	HE	70	12	GAA	55
13	KS	75	13	LA	60
14	KR	80	14	MAK	70
15	KA	65	15	MZR	55
16	LDF	70	16	MA	75
17	LRA	70	17	MAZ	45
18	MIR	65	18	MA	70
19	MP	65	19	MIY	70
20	NHN	75	20	MZD	55
21	NAI	70	21	NMP	75
22	NH	75	22	NRN	65
23	NKP	75	23	NZ	60
24	PSA	80	24	RS	65
25	RNA	70	25	RT	70
26	ST	95	26	RAR	45
27	SNA	70	27	SL	75
28	SH	70	28	SA	80
29	U.A.	75	29	VS	65
30	ZG	65	30	ZH	70
	TOTAL	2,205			1,915
	Max	95			80
	Min	65			40
	Mean	73.33			63.83

Based on the table of student scores on the post-test above, we can see that the experimental group's score increased and the control group's slightly decreased, the increase was influenced by the treatment given by the researcher. However, there was a difference between the scores of students in the experimental and control groups. The average score of the experimental group was 73.33, while the average score of the control group was 63.83, This shows that the difference between the average scores of the experimental and control groups on the post-test was higher than the average score on the pre-test. On the post-test there were more students who were able to pass the standard score than on the pre-test. There were 26 students in the experimental group and 12 students in the control group who were able to pass the standard score. This means that the use of story-based learning techniques has a better effect on students' ability to write texts.

Discussion

The research findings reveal a comparative analysis of pre-test and post-test scores between an experimental group and a control group. Initially, the control group had a higher mean pre-test score of 63.33 compared to the experimental group's mean of 59.67. However, following the treatment, the experimental group demonstrated a notable improvement, achieving a post-test mean score of 73.50, significantly surpassing the control group's post-test mean of 63.83.

In terms of variability, the experimental group exhibited a higher standard deviation of 18.83 in the pre-test, indicating greater score diversity, while the control group's standard deviation was lower at 12.21, suggesting more consistent results. Interestingly, this standard deviation remained the same post-treatment for both groups, indicating consistent variations in scores after the intervention.

The median scores further illustrate the impact of the treatment. Both groups had the same median pre-test score of 70, suggesting similar performance levels before the intervention. After the treatment, the experimental group's median rose to 75, while the control group's median remained unchanged at 70. This increase in the experimental group's median underscores the effectiveness of the treatment in enhancing overall performance.

Overall, these results highlight the experimental group's significant improvement in scores post-treatment, while also reflecting the control group's relative consistency in performance throughout the study. The results can be presented based on statistical analysis of the data obtained. From the difference in pre-test and post-test scores of the two groups, namely the experimental group and the control group, it is clear that there is a significant influence of the use of story-based techniques on the writing skills of grade 7 students of SMPN 4 GERUNG. This is because the experimental group's score is higher than the control group's score.

On the other hand, the story-based learning technique has a positive effect on students' ability to improve their writing skills. This can be seen from the results of the initial and final tests which are different in the experimental class. In addition, the story-based learning technique is also fun. Story based learning method is easy to apply and creates an easy way to understand the visual representation of the ideas placed in each text. In addition, by using the story-based learning technique, students are able to remember what to write and how to organize those ideas into interesting writing. In conclusion, the story-based learning technique has a

significant effect on students' writing skills in grade eleven of SMPN 4 GERUNG in the 2024/2025 academic year.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the story-based learning method is a highly effective approach in improving the writing skills of 7th grade students at SMPN 4 Gerung. The findings showed that students in the experimental group, who were taught using story-based learning, experienced a significant improvement of 23.19% in their writing skills, as evidenced by their post-test scores. In contrast, the control group, which followed traditional teaching methods, showed only a marginal improvement of 0.79%.

These results indicate that story-based learning not only enhances student engagement and interest in the learning process but also fosters creativity and critical thinking, leading to improved writing performance. By using stories as a medium for learning, students were able to actively participate and express their ideas more effectively. This approach, therefore, proves to be a valuable educational strategy, demonstrating that creative and interactive methods can be more successful in improving students' academic abilities compared to conventional teaching techniques.

In conclusion, this study confirms that the story-based learning method can be a powerful tool for enhancing students' writing skills. The positive impact observed in this research offers valuable insights for educators, encouraging them to implement such methods in other subjects to improve overall learning outcomes. As education continues to evolve, it is crucial for teachers to explore and apply innovative strategies that can foster students' academic growth and development.

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