The Effect of Creative Writing Activities on the Story Writing Skill In University Curriculum

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Abstrak

Studi ini mengeksplorasi efektivitas panduan terstruktur dan rangsangan visual dalam meningkatkan keterampilan menulis kreatif mahasiswa. Mengikuti pendekatan bertahap yang didasarkan pada rekomendasi ilmiah, mahasiswa dipandu melalui struktur teks naratif, penulisan topik bebas, dan penggunaan petunjuk visual. Pengenalan elemen naratif terstruktur memfasilitasi pemahaman dan menyediakan kerangka kerja bagi mahasiswa untuk dikembangkan. Selain itu, sesi curah pendapat dan diskusi kelompok membantu mahasiswa mengatasi ketidakpastian awal dan menghasilkan ide. Petunjuk visual terbukti sangat berharga dalam merangsang kreativitas dan menyediakan perancah untuk pengembangan cerita. Dengan menerapkan panduan Tredinnick (2006), mahasiswa menghasilkan narasi terstruktur dengan baik dengan plot yang menarik dan pengembangan karakter. Secara keseluruhan, studi ini menggarisbawahi pentingnya menggabungkan panduan terstruktur dan alat bantu visual dalam instruksi penulisan kreatif untuk menumbuhkan kepercayaan diri dan kemahiran mahasiswa dalam komposisi naratif.

Kata kunci: *Menulis Kreatif, Narasi, Cerita, Keterampilan Menulis*

Abstract

This study explores the effectiveness of structured guidance and visual stimuli in enhancing college students' creative writing skills. Following a phased approach grounded in scholarly recommendations, students were guided through narrative text structure, free topic writing, and visual prompt utilization. The introduction of structured narrative elements facilitated comprehension and provided a framework for students to build upon. Additionally, brainstorming sessions and group discussions helped students overcome initial uncertainties and generate ideas. Visual prompts proved invaluable in stimulating creativity and providing a scaffold for story development. By applying Tredinnick's (2006) guidance, students produced well-structured narratives with engaging plots and character development. Overall, this study underscores the importance of incorporating structured guidance and visual aids in creative writing instruction to foster students' confidence and proficiency in narrative composition.

Keywords: *Creative Writing, Narrative, Story, Writing Skill*

INTRODUCTION

Creative writing stems from the rich well of human imagination, originating from an individual's excitement and crafted with a sense of aesthetics to captivate and delight readers. It serves as a medium through which one's thoughts, emotions, personal experiences, testimonies, or fantasies are articulated and brought to life on the page. This form of writing often begins as a personal interest and evolves into a structured piece of fiction.

According to Heather Sellers, author of *The Practice of Creative Writing: A Guide for Students*, creative writing is deeply rooted in personal experiences and the imaginative process.

Sellers notes that "the best writing grows out of the real stuff of life, out of the places, things, and people we know and love" (Sellers, 2016). This emphasizes the personal and experiential origins of creative writing. Stephen King, in his memoir *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft*, discusses how writing often emerges from a combination of personal passion and a desire to evoke a response in readers. He states, "Writing is not life, but I think that sometimes it can be a way back to life" (King, 2000), highlighting the transformative and expressive power of creative writing.

Anne Lamott, in *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*, underscores the importance of personal expression in writing. She suggests that writers should "write straight into the emotional center of things" (Lamott, 1994), advocating for an honest and heartfelt approach to creative writing that stems from personal emotions and experiences. One effective way to stimulate writing is by offering discussion materials such as photographs from past events, illustrations, newspapers, or images of celebrities. Before beginning their writing tasks, students can participate in peer or group discussions using these resources provided by the teacher. Allowing time for these debates helps ensure that, when students write, they have developed their own unique viewpoints and vocabulary.

According to Steve Peha, an educational consultant and author, engaging students in discussions before writing can significantly enhance their writing skills. In his work, he states, "When students discuss their ideas with peers before writing, they develop a clearer understanding of their own thoughts and learn how to articulate them more effectively" (Peha, 2003). This suggests that pre-writing discussions help students clarify and organize their ideas.

Educational researchers James Britton, Tony Burgess, Nancy Martin, Alex McLeod, and Harold Rosen emphasize the importance of talk in the writing process. In their influential work, *The Development of Writing Abilities*, they argue that "talk is a rehearsal for writing" and that through discussion, "students can explore and expand their ideas, making their subsequent writing richer and more coherent" (Britton et al., 1975). Additionally, Gail E. Tompkins, in her book *Teaching Writing: Balancing Process and Product*, supports the use of visual and textual materials to stimulate discussion and idea generation. She writes, "Using a variety of prompts such as pictures, artifacts, and media clips can spark rich discussions that lead to more detailed and vivid writing" (Tompkins, 2013). This reinforces the idea that diverse materials can serve as effective catalysts for writing.

This study aims to inspire college students' creativity in writing stories by presenting them with a series of pictures. The students will be tasked with crafting narratives based on these visual prompts, allowing the images to guide their storytelling and spark their imagination. Through this approach, the study seeks to explore how visual stimuli can enhance students' narrative skills and encourage more dynamic and engaging story writing.

The novelty of this research lies in its integrative approach, drawing upon previous studies that underscore the efficacy of discussion and visual stimuli in improving students' writing skills. Steve Peha (2003) emphasizes the significance of pre-writing discussions, suggesting that engaging students in dialogue before writing enhances clarity of thought and articulation. Similarly, James Britton et al. (1975) asserts the importance of verbal interaction in the writing process, positing that discussion serves as a rehearsal for subsequent writing endeavors, enriching the depth and coherence of students' compositions. Additionally, Gail E. Tompkins (2013) advocates for the use of diverse materials, such as pictures and media clips, to stimulate discussion and idea generation, fostering more detailed and vivid writing. Building upon these insights, this study proposes a novel approach to inspire creativity in college students' narrative writing by presenting them with a series of visual prompts. By integrating pre-writing discussions and visual stimuli, the research aims to explore how this combined method can enhance narrative skills and cultivate more dynamic storytelling among college students. This research addresses a gap in the literature by focusing on an older student demographic and aims to offer new insights into effective methods for teaching creative writing.

METHOD
Research design
This study focuses on the learning outcomes of the implementation of creative writing in writing a narrative text. The study will employ a qualitative research approach aligned with its objectives and investigation questions. This qualitative design involves teaching sessions and interviews with students. According to Hancock (2002), qualitative research aims to provide explanations for social phenomena, with a particular emphasis on understanding the "why" and "how" aspects.

Furthermore, the study incorporates a case study methodology to assess the learning outcomes and students' perceptions of the genre-based approach in teaching recount text writing. As described by Shuttleworth (2008), a case study focuses on specific and intriguing instances, allowing for detailed examination. Merriam (1988) further categorizes case studies as involving description, explanation, and judgment.

Moreover, drawing on Geertz (1973), case studies aim to provide a "thick description" of participants' actual experiences, thoughts, and emotions within a given context, capturing the essence of the situation. Thus, the selection of a case study as the research method allows for a comprehensive exploration of the research questions and provides insights into participants' perspectives and experiences.

Research Participant
The research took place at a university situated in Bandung, where a standardized class structure was established, influencing the reliability of the study's outcomes. This university had already incorporated a genre-based approach into its curriculum. By conducting the research in a familiar environment, it was anticipated that a more natural research setting would be achieved, leveraging the researcher's familiarity with the location and participants. This approach aimed to minimize potential disruptions in class behavior, despite students being informed about the ongoing research and its objectives. The participants consisted of the researcher, who also assumed the role of the teacher (participant-observer), and 20 university students who volunteered for the study after receiving a briefing on its purpose and requirements. The research spanned a duration about one month.

Data Collection
A Phase of Teaching
The teaching sessions spanned five meetings, with the researcher taking on the role of the teacher. The first meeting focused on understanding the structure of narrative texts. In the second meeting, the college students were asked to write a story without any pictures being provided. Next, they were asked to create a story using a series of pictures depicting folklore.

Furthermore, they were given a series of pictures and asked to write a story based on these images. This activity aligns with Tompkins' (2013) statement in *Balancing Process and Product*, which supports the use of visual and textual materials to stimulate discussion and idea generation. She writes, "Using a variety of prompts, such as pictures, artifacts, and media clips, can spark rich discussions that lead to more detailed and vivid writing."

Writing Samples
Throughout the research program, successive phases involved gathering student texts, which served as the primary data source for assessing students' progress in writing proficiency. These texts exhibit evidence of students grappling with meeting the requirements of specific text genres, conveying the impacts and meanings of discourses, and demonstrating language forms in written communication, as noted by Kress (1985). These texts also demonstrate students' achievements in these areas, supporting Freebody's (2003) assertion that "students' actual accomplishments can often be measured through their written work across various text types." Therefore, one of the most crucial sources of data for evaluating students' learning outcomes concerning the implementation of creative writing in teaching writing is the analysis of students' written texts.

Interview
To gather precise and comprehensive information that could not be obtained through observation alone, interviews were conducted, significantly impacting the research outcomes

(Alwasilah, 2011). These interviews were essential in ensuring that the investigator collected all necessary data (Emilia, 2000).

Interviews involve questioning participants about aspects of the study that are not discernible through observation, such as their opinions and thoughts (Fraenkel, 2012). They are specifically designed to elicit certain information or responses (Fraenkel, 2012).

Data Analysis
A Phase of Teaching

In this study, the teaching phase of creative writing was also thoroughly examined. The researcher focused on evaluating the theory of creative writing that posits "the use of visual and textual materials to stimulate discussion and idea generation" (Tompkins, 2003). This theory was put into practice by incorporating various visual prompts and textual materials in the classroom to engage students and spark their creativity.

The teaching sessions were designed to explore how these materials could enhance students' ability to generate ideas and develop their writing skills. According to Harmer (2004), incorporating visual aids in teaching can significantly improve students' engagement and comprehension, making abstract ideas more tangible and accessible. Additionally, Kress (2003) supports this approach by highlighting that multimodal teaching strategies, which involve the use of different types of media, can cater to diverse learning styles and improve overall learning outcomes.

During the teaching phase, students were presented with a variety of visual stimuli, including pictures, drawings, and media clips, alongside textual materials such as short stories and essays. These resources were used as prompts to initiate group discussions, individual reflections, and collaborative writing activities. The aim was to create a dynamic and interactive learning environment where students could freely express their ideas and develop their narrative skills.

Furthermore, the researcher observed and recorded how students interacted with the visual and textual materials, noting any improvements in their ability to generate ideas and structure their writing. This phase also involved gathering feedback from the students about their experiences and the effectiveness of the materials used.

By systematically analyzing the impact of visual and textual materials on creative writing, the study aimed to provide empirical evidence supporting Tompkins' theory. It sought to demonstrate that these materials not only stimulate idea generation but also enhance the overall quality of students' writing by providing concrete examples and inspiration for their stories. The findings from this phase were expected to contribute to the broader understanding of effective teaching strategies in creative writing, offering practical insights for educators aiming to foster creativity and improve writing skills among their students.

Writing Samples

As instruments for data collection, the researcher utilized writing samples from the participants. Writing samples were chosen as the primary research instrument because they provide clear and direct insight into the writing challenges faced by college students. According to Hyland (2003), analyzing writing samples allows for the identification of specific issues such as grammar mistakes, structural weaknesses, and overall coherence in the students' writing.

To gather the necessary data, each participant was tasked with conducting a mini research project. This task involved selecting a topic, performing preliminary research, and writing a concise report or essay. By analyzing these mini research projects, the researcher aimed to evaluate various aspects of the students' writing abilities, including their capacity to synthesize information, develop arguments, and maintain clarity and cohesion in their written work. As Swales (1990) notes, such tasks are effective in assessing students' abilities to engage in academic discourse and produce structured, coherent texts. This method provided comprehensive data to identify and understand the common writing problems among college students.

Interview

To analyze the information gathered from interviews, several steps were undertaken. First, voice recordings were transcribed, with pseudonyms used to protect students' identities. Students reviewed the transcripts to ensure their accuracy. Following Emilia's (2005)

recommendations, quality checks were performed on the transcripts. Thematic analysis was then applied, and translations into English were made if necessary. Afterward, the transcripts were categorized according to the narrative writing topics and related activities.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS
Analysis of the Phase of Teaching

In the first meeting, students were introduced to the structure of narrative text. The session began with an overview of what narrative texts entail, highlighting key elements such as plot, setting, characters, conflict, and resolution. This foundational knowledge is crucial, as it provides students with a clear framework for constructing their own stories.

To solidify their understanding, students were provided with a sample story. The lecturer guided them through this example, breaking down its structure to show how each element contributes to the overall narrative. For instance, the plot was dissected to reveal the sequence of events, the characters were analyzed to understand their roles and development, and the setting was described to illustrate how it enhances the story's atmosphere. Conflicts and resolutions were particularly emphasized, demonstrating how they drive the narrative forward and provide satisfaction to the reader.

This phase of the lesson is essential as it offers a practical demonstration of theoretical concepts. By seeing a complete narrative deconstructed, students can better grasp how individual components work together to create a cohesive and engaging story. This approach aligns with educational theories that advocate for modeling as an effective teaching strategy. According to Bandura (1977), modeling provides a clear example for learners to emulate, which can significantly enhance their understanding and skill acquisition.

In the subsequent meeting, students were tasked with writing a story on a free topic of their choice. This phase aimed to encourage creativity and personal expression by allowing students the freedom to explore any subject matter that interested them. However, this openness proved to be a double-edged sword. While it offered students the liberty to write about topics, they were passionate about, it also introduced a level of ambiguity that left some feeling confused and uncertain about how to proceed.

Many students struggled to organize their thoughts and develop their ideas into coherent narratives. The absence of a structured prompt meant they had to rely solely on their own creativity and imagination, which can be daunting, especially for those who are less confident in their writing abilities. This confusion is not uncommon in creative writing, as noted by Flower and Hayes (1981), who explain that generating ideas from scratch can be one of the most challenging aspects of the writing process.

To address this, the lecturer provided additional support and guidance. First, brainstorming sessions were introduced to help students generate and organize their ideas. Techniques such as mind mapping and listing were employed to assist students in visualizing the connections between their thoughts and potential plot points. These strategies are supported by educators like Buzan (2010), who advocate for visual thinking tools to enhance creativity and idea generation.

In the next meeting, before the students were tasked with writing another story, the lecturer provided them with a series of pictures as a guiding tool. This visual guidance proved to be immensely beneficial in helping the students generate ideas and structure their narratives.

The use of pictures served as a concrete prompt that students could easily relate to and draw inspiration from. Visual stimuli can significantly enhance creativity by providing clear, tangible reference points around which to build a story. According to Paivio's Dual Coding Theory (1971), both verbal and visual information are processed differently and stored separately in our memory. By leveraging visual aids, the lecturer tapped into this cognitive process, allowing students to create richer and more detailed narratives.

The pictures depicted various scenes and characters, ranging from everyday life situations to fantastical settings. This variety not only catered to different interests and preferences among the students but also sparked diverse ideas and storylines. Some students were inspired to write

about a day in the life of a character in the picture, while others developed intricate plots based on the scenes depicted.

To maximize the effectiveness of this exercise, the lecturer encouraged the students to discuss the pictures in groups before starting their individual writing. This collaborative brainstorming session allowed students to share their initial thoughts and interpretations of the images. It fostered a sense of community and provided an opportunity for peer feedback, which further refined their ideas. As Vygotsky (1978) emphasized, social interaction is crucial for cognitive development, and discussing ideas with peers can significantly enhance individual creativity and problem-solving skills.

By the end of the session, students had crafted a variety of stories, each unique and reflective of their interpretations of the pictures. The visual prompts had not only stimulated their creativity but also provided a scaffold that made the task of writing more accessible and less daunting. This phase demonstrated the power of visual aids in the teaching of creative writing, underscoring the importance of using diverse materials to inspire and guide students in their creative endeavors.

Analysis of Writing Samples

In analyzing the text, the researcher followed Tredinnick. Trednnick (2006) has given the clue in assessing creative writing, here is the guideline rubric that can be used.

Good story writing:

a) Has a flowing, moving, and enjoyable idea of the story.
b) Its sound like comes from someone and from somewhere
c) Has the plot that makes the reader go to somewhere with someone, feeling the vivid moments
d) When talking about the place, it is an exploring of the landscape, talking about the ecology, atmosphere, weather, society, culture, politics, local trees, rivers, local winds.
e) Animating the story with images from the real world; animating it with colors, sounds, light, emotion, figurative language.
f) In the making of the story, the reader just like listening to the music, they can feel the beat, the lyric, the plucking of guitar strings.
g) The ignorance of the rules; licencia poetica
h) In creating and elaborating the characters, it is like creating them from inside their clothes, their skins, bones, mind, and memories.   On the story, it mentioned their inner life, their childhood, body fragrance. In reading, readers are just like facing and communicating with the real person.
i) There is at least one conflict in the story
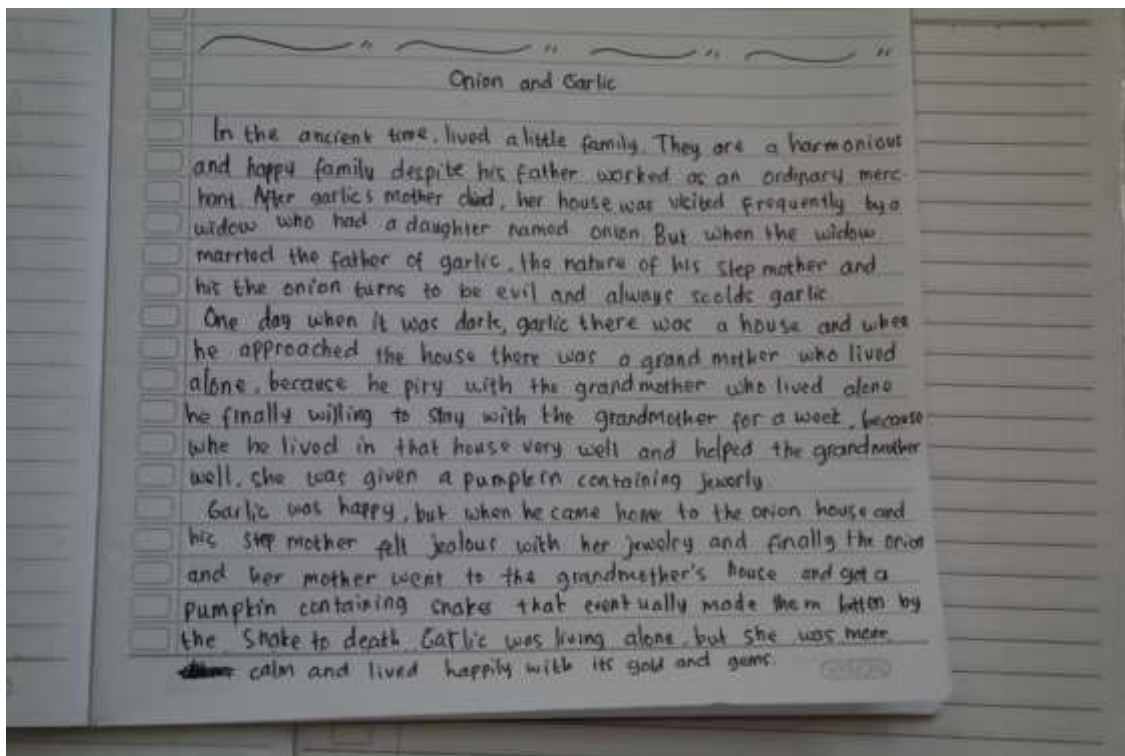j) Smoothly shifting the point of view.

Figure 1

Following the guidance provided by Tredinnick (2006), the student was able to craft her story exceptionally well. Tredinnick's approach to creative writing emphasizes clarity, structure, and the seamless flow of ideas, all of which were evident in the student's work. She demonstrated a remarkable ability to create a narrative that was engaging and coherent, characterized by a smooth progression of events and a captivating storyline.

The student began her story by clearly establishing the time and setting, as well as introducing the main characters. This initial grounding in the narrative provided readers with a clear context and helped them to quickly become immersed in the story. By starting with concrete details, she effectively set the stage for the unfolding events, ensuring that readers were well-oriented and interested from the very beginning.

Following Tredinnick's advice, the student introduced the central conflict early in the narrative. This conflict served as the driving force of the story, propelling the action forward and keeping readers engaged. By skillfully weaving in elements of tension and intrigue, she was able to maintain a dynamic and compelling storyline that held the reader's attention.

Her ability to maintain a flowing and moving narrative was particularly noteworthy. The story unfolded naturally, with each event and character action logically following from the previous ones. This seamless flow is a key aspect of Tredinnick's guidance, which stresses the importance of narrative coherence and the avoidance of jarring transitions or disjointed plot points.

Moreover, the student's use of descriptive language and vivid imagery brought the story to life, making it enjoyable to read. Her attention to detail in describing scenes, emotions, and character interactions added depth and richness to the narrative. This descriptive prowess not only enhanced the reader's experience but also demonstrated her ability to create a vivid and immersive world within her story.

As the story progressed towards the climax, the student carefully escalated the conflict, adding layers of complexity and heightening the stakes. This careful build-up ensured that the climax was both impactful and satisfying, providing a resolution that felt earned and meaningful. According to Tredinnick, a well-crafted climax is essential for delivering a powerful and memorable story, and the student achieved this with finesse.

In summary, by following Tredinnick's (2006) guidance, the student was able to produce a story that was not only structurally sound but also engaging and enjoyable. Her ability to

introduce time and character effectively, develop a compelling conflict, and maintain a flowing narrative demonstrated a strong grasp of the principles of creative writing. This approach resulted in a well-crafted piece that showcased her creativity and writing skills, making for a thoroughly enjoyable read.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study highlight the significant impact of structured guidance and visual stimuli on the creative writing abilities of students. By following a phased approach to teaching creative writing, grounded in scholarly recommendations, students were able to enhance their writing skills and produce more coherent and engaging narratives.

The introduction of visual prompts in the subsequent meeting significantly aided students in overcoming writer's block and enhancing their creativity. The use of pictures as a guiding tool provided concrete reference points, making the task of writing more accessible and less daunting. This approach was supported by Tompkins (2013) and other scholars who advocate for the use of diverse materials to stimulate discussion and idea generation.

Finally, the application of Tredinnick's (2006) guidance in crafting narratives demonstrated the effectiveness of structured writing techniques. The student who followed this guidance produced a well-structured, engaging story with a clear flow of ideas, a strong introduction of characters and setting, and a compelling conflict and resolution. This success illustrates the value of incorporating proven writing strategies into the teaching process.

Overall, the study confirms that combining theoretical knowledge with practical, visual, and structured guidance can significantly enhance students' creative writing skills. It highlights the importance of a supportive and interactive learning environment, where students can freely express their ideas and receive constructive feedback. The findings suggest that such an approach not only improves writing proficiency but also fosters creativity and confidence in students.

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