

## **Enhancing Writing Skills through English Short Story Creation among Tenth-Grade Students at High School**

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**Abstract:** *This research examines the effectiveness of English short story creation as a method to enhance students' writing skills. Conducted at MA Al-Ma'arif Bonder with a sample of 16 tenth-grade students, the research employed a pre-experimental one-group pre-test and post-test design. Writing skills were assessed based on five aspects: ideas/content, structure, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and a paired sample t-test with SPSS 25. Results revealed significant improvement in students' writing performance, with the mean score increasing from 56.8 in the pre-test to 75.3 in the post-test. The paired sample t-test produced a significance value of 0.000, indicating a positive effect of short story writing on students' writing proficiency. This suggests that integrating creative writing activities into English instruction can foster students' language development, motivation, and creativity.*

**Keywords:** *EFL, Experimental study, Short story creation, Writing skills*

**Abstrak:** Penelitian ini mengkaji efektivitas pembuatan cerita pendek berbahasa Inggris sebagai metode untuk meningkatkan keterampilan menulis siswa. Penelitian dilaksanakan di MA Al-Ma'arif Bonder dengan sampel sebanyak 16 siswa kelas sepuluh. Desain penelitian yang digunakan adalah pre-eksperimental dengan model one-group pre-test and post-test. Keterampilan menulis dinilai berdasarkan lima aspek, yaitu: ide/konten, struktur, kosakata, tata bahasa, dan mekanika. Data dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif dan uji-t sampel berpasangan dengan bantuan SPSS 25. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya peningkatan yang signifikan pada kemampuan menulis siswa, dengan nilai rata-rata meningkat dari 56,8 pada pre-test menjadi 75,3 pada post-test. Uji-t sampel berpasangan menghasilkan nilai signifikansi sebesar 0,000, yang menunjukkan bahwa penulisan cerita pendek memberikan pengaruh positif terhadap kemahiran menulis siswa. Hal ini mengindikasikan bahwa mengintegrasikan kegiatan menulis kreatif ke dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris dapat mendorong perkembangan bahasa, motivasi, serta kreativitas siswa.

**Kata Kunci:** EFL, Keterampilan menulis, Pembuatan cerita pendek, Penelitian eksperimental.

## 1. PENDAHULUAN

Writing is a fundamental skill in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, serving as both a medium of communication and a tool for knowledge development. In the Indonesian educational context, writing proficiency is emphasized in the 2013 Curriculum, which highlights the need for students to acquire communicative competence in all language skills [1],[2]. Despite its importance, writing remains one of the most challenging skills for EFL learners due to its complex integration of grammar, vocabulary, coherence, and mechanics [4],[6],[9]

Previous research has indicated that many Indonesian students struggle with writing in English. Limited vocabulary, insufficient practice, and low motivation are recurring issues that hinder writing development [3],[5],[7]. Such challenges often lead to students' lack of confidence and reluctance to engage in writing tasks, thereby necessitating innovative teaching approaches that are both effective and engaging [8]-[10].

One promising method is the integration of short story creation into writing instruction. Short stories, by nature, are concise, imaginative, and rich in cultural and moral values, making them suitable tools for developing creativity and writing skills [11],[13],[20]. Writing short stories allows students to practice narrative structure, grammar, and vocabulary while fostering motivation through creative expression [12],[14].

This study focuses on tenth-grade students at MA Al-Ma'arif Bonder, where many learners experience difficulties in writing. The research investigates whether the creation of English short stories can enhance students' writing skills and identifies the challenges they encounter during the process. The study aims to contribute to the body of knowledge in EFL pedagogy by providing empirical evidence on the effectiveness of short story writing as a learning strategy.

## 2. METODE PENELITIAN

This research adopted a quantitative pre-experimental design using a one-group pre-test and post-test model [5].

1. **Participants:** The sample consisted of 16 tenth-grade students (6 male, 10 female) from

class X Science at MA Al-Ma'arif Bonder, selected through purposive sampling.

2. **Instruments:** A writing test was used, assessed across five criteria: ideas/content, structure, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics.
3. **Data Collection:** Students first completed a pre-test on short story writing. The treatment consisted of four sessions of guided short story writing activities, focusing on narrative structure, vocabulary development, and grammar application. A post-test was administered afterward.
4. **Data Analysis:** Scores were analyzed using descriptive statistics to calculate means and standard deviations. Normality tests confirmed data suitability for parametric analysis. A paired sample t-test was conducted in SPSS 25 to determine the significance of score differences between pre- and post-tests.

## 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1.** Students' Pre-Test and Post-Test Results

Test Type	Mean Score	Highes t	Lowes t	Classification
Pre-Test	56.8	65	45	Fail
Post-Test	75.3	85	65	Good

The data indicate a substantial improvement in students' writing performance following the treatment. The pre-test average score of 56.8 was below the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM = 70), while the post-test average of 75.3 exceeded the criterion. The paired sample t-test yielded  $t = -18.596$ ,  $p = 0.000 (< 0.05)$ , confirming a statistically significant improvement.

The findings of this study demonstrate that the implementation of short story creation as a learning strategy had a substantial impact on improving students' writing skills. As shown in Table 1, the mean score of the pre-test was 56.8, which fell below the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM = 70), indicating that most students initially struggled with key aspects of

writing such as grammar, vocabulary usage, coherence, and idea organization. However, after the treatment, the post-test mean score rose to 75.3, surpassing the KKM and moving the overall classification from *Fail* to *Good*. This improvement suggests that engaging students in the creative process of story writing encouraged them to use English more freely and meaningfully, promoting better language fluency and confidence in expressing ideas.

The statistical analysis further supports the effectiveness of the method. The result of the paired sample *t*-test ( $t = -18.596$ ,  $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ) indicates a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores. This confirms that the enhancement in students' writing ability was not incidental but rather a direct effect of the short story writing activities conducted during the intervention. The creative writing process required students to engage in multiple writing stages—planning, drafting, revising, and editing—which fostered a deeper understanding of linguistic accuracy and narrative coherence [15],[17]. Moreover, collaborative discussions and peer feedback sessions during the activity allowed students to reflect critically on their writing, further contributing to their progress [16],[18].

From a pedagogical perspective, the findings highlight the value of integrating creative literary tasks into the English language curriculum at the secondary school level. Writing short stories allows students to explore imagination while applying grammatical structures and vocabulary in meaningful contexts [19]-[21]. This type of activity aligns with communicative language teaching principles, emphasizing authentic language use and learner-centered approaches. Students were not only motivated to write more but also developed a stronger sense of authorship and personal voice in their compositions. As such, the approach promotes both cognitive and affective engagement, which are crucial for long-term language retention and skill development [22]-[24].

The use of English short story creation as a learning technique effectively enhanced the writing proficiency of tenth-grade students. The significant improvement in post-test scores reflects both academic and creative growth, showing that students gained better mastery of structure, content development, and language mechanics [25],[26]. This approach can

therefore be recommended as an alternative or complementary method for teaching writing in high school English classes. Future research could expand on these findings by exploring its effects on other language skills—such as speaking and reading comprehension—or by examining how digital storytelling tools might further enhance students' engagement and learning outcomes.

When compared with previous research, the results of this study strongly align with earlier findings on the effectiveness of creative writing strategies in improving students' English writing performance. Studies by [27],[28] similarly reported that students who engaged in short story or narrative writing tasks demonstrated notable improvements in their writing fluency, vocabulary range, and idea organization. Their studies found an average increase of 15–20 points between pre-test and post-test scores, which is comparable to the 18.5-point improvement (from 56.8 to 75.3) observed in this research. These consistent outcomes indicate that creative writing activities—particularly short story creation—encourage students to use language more naturally, fostering both grammatical accuracy and creative expression [29],[30].

In contrast, some earlier studies that relied on more conventional writing approaches, such as controlled composition or model-text imitation, showed less significant improvement, typically within a 5–8 point increase. This suggests that while traditional methods may help students with structural accuracy, they often fail to promote independent thinking and creativity, which are essential for effective writing [31],[32]. The present study's larger gain in scores reflects how integrating imaginative tasks like storytelling stimulates higher engagement, intrinsic motivation, and self-expression—factors that play a key role in sustained writing development.

Furthermore, the significant *t*-test result ( $t = -18.596$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) in this study reinforces findings from [33],[34], who reported that narrative-based instruction produces statistically significant progress in writing proficiency compared to standard grammar drills. Both studies conclude that creative narrative writing encourages students to internalize vocabulary and grammar within meaningful contexts rather than memorizing them in isolation [35],[36]. This communicative and contextualized learning

environment appears to produce more durable and authentic writing improvement [37],[38].

This study contributes to the growing body of evidence supporting creative writing pedagogy as an effective method for developing writing skills in English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts. The comparable or even greater gains achieved here, relative to prior research, highlight the pedagogical importance of incorporating short story creation into English instruction. Such findings reinforce the idea that fostering imagination, self-expression, and contextual learning is essential for helping students reach beyond minimal mastery standards and achieve higher levels of linguistic and literary competence.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that **short story** creation significantly enhances the writing skills of tenth-grade students at MA Al-Ma'arif Bonder. The use of narrative writing activities increased students' motivation, creativity, and language accuracy. This approach is recommended as an effective strategy for EFL teachers seeking to improve students' writing proficiency.

#### 5. CLOSING STATEMENT

The researcher extends sincere appreciation to the students and teachers of MA Al-Ma'arif Bonder for their participation and support, as well as to the academic supervisors whose guidance made this research possible.

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