

Improving Students' Creative Writing by Using Story Cubes Media

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ABSTRACT

Creative writing ability is one of the important abilities that must be possessed by students, however, in reality, there are still many students who experience difficulties in creative writing. Therefore, a learning method that can increase students' creativity and motivation in writing is needed, namely by using story cubes media. The subjects in this study were grade XI students at SMA Negeri 4 Subang. This study used a pre-experimental Quantitative design. The results showed a significant increase in students' creative writing ability after the application of Story Cubes. The questionnaire results showed that students gave positive responses to the use of Story Cubes. They consider this media effective, easy to use, and very interesting. The majority of students reported an increase in motivation and creativity when using Story Cubes in their writing activities. In conclusion, the use of Story Cubes media significantly improved students' creative writing skills at SMAN 4 Subang. This innovative teaching tool not only improved students' writing skills, but also increased their engagement and motivation in the learning process.

Keywords: Creative Writing, Story Cubes, Writing Skill

I. INTRODUCTION

Writing skills, among the four target language skills, are one of the skills that language learners need to master. Therefore, in teaching this skill, teachers should make every effort to help students write using the language they are learning correctly. However, in the context of teaching English in Indonesia, especially writing skills, teachers often face challenges.

In developing the 21st century skills in era industry, students need both creativity of development and insight research. Teachers provide up-to-date media and strategies, particularly those related to integrated learning and teaching programs, soft skills improvement in various projects in the classroom. The traditional way of educating students is no longer viable in their future skills. This way of teaching-learning relies on textbook-based approaches from pedagogy models used in place for ages (Pentury, et al., 2020, p.165).

Most of the pedagogy systems still rely on the outdated method of applying knowledge. To equip students with more practical skills aside from theories as they were expected to proactive in developing their qualities include the ability to collaborate in a team, think critically, problem-solving skills, written and verbal communication skills, explore creativity, and initiative. (Pentury, et al., 2020, p.165). One of the learning media that can be used to improve students' creative writing skills is story cubes.

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Story cubes are dice-shaped learning media that have pictures, words, sentences or themes that can trigger student's imagination and creativity in writing stories. The use of story cubes is expected to help students in finding ideas, developing stories, and increasing students' motivation and enthusiasm in creative writing activities. As mentioned by the Ministry of Education and Culture in the learning outcomes for senior secondary school students, learners write various types of fiction and factual texts independently, showing learners awareness of the purpose and target audience. They plan, write, review and rewrite a range of text types showing self-correction strategies, including punctuation, capitalisation and grammar.

They convey complex ideas and use a diverse range of vocabulary and grammar in their writing. They write main sentences in their paragraphs and use time signatures for order, as well as conjunctions, conjunctions and third person pronouns to connect or differentiate ideas between and within paragraphs. They present information using various modes of presentation to suit different audiences and to achieve different purposes, in print and digital forms. This shows that writing is very important for students.

Writing is a difficult skill for some students, and its processes refer to the unification of ideas from the beginning to the end and this is useful for novice writers. As writing has many steps to follow, it is not solely based on the logic that evokes a different imagination. The writing processes need critical thinking to develop the idea as well. A critical thinker should be alerted that his/her inquisitive nature to write seeks to inquire, judge, and evaluate all such sources critically (Muchtart, et.al., 2020, p.140).

According Kemendikbud (2022) Covering the principles that are often recognized in developing writing skills for students at the high school level, high school students' writing skills should include several main aspects, first. Students who are good at writing at an advanced level must have the ability to organize ideas and information well, so that their writing is easy to understand and logically structured. Students must also have the ability to analyze and synthesize information well, so that they are able to present strong and substantial arguments in their writing.

Then students must have the ability to choose and use the right genre, such as essays, reports, or opinion articles, according to the specified context and objectives. And students must also have the ability to write in a style and language that suits the context and intended audience, so that their writing is easy to understand and attracts attention. And most importantly, ideally students should have the ability to revise and edit their writing well, so that they can correct grammatical, grammatical and spelling errors, as well as improve the completeness and quality of their writing.

Students might develop negative attitudes towards writing and as a result acquire unproductive writing habits since writing is regarded as a complex activity and students generally have discouraging experiences with writing. Due to the same reason, writing is an activity that students are tired of, have difficulty with, feel reluctant about and dislike (Bruning & Horn, 2000; Akkaya, 2011; Bayat, 2014; Kurudayıoğlu & Karadağ, 2010 cited in Gocen, 2019, p.1032-1033). The reason why writing is perceived as a difficult skill is closely related to the

importance that teachers attach to writing skills and how writing activities are conducted in the classroom (Gocen, 2018 cited in Gocen, 2019, p.1033).

It is not possible to make students like writing and encourage them to write by setting strict rules in writing, by focusing on legible and neat sentences as well as the form and the cleanness of the paper. Emphasizing the rules of writing and grammar and having students write similar texts that explain proverbial statements would not help students fancy writing, as well (Oral, 2014; Susar Kırmızı, 2015; Tonyalı, 2010 cited in Gocen, 2019, p.1032-1033). Since the 1980s, the acquisition of writing skills in English for students at school level and students in higher education has been influenced by changing social communication needs and the development of new communication media (Wicke, 1993, cited in Arifin & Harida, 2022, p.65). Communicative competence training is important for the improvement of writing skills in English.

Directly associated with creativity, creative writing means one's putting his or her ideas and feelings about a particular topic on paper by using his or her imagination freely (Oral, 2003 cited in Temizkan, 2011, p.933-934). Creative writing involves going beyond the ordinary without deviating from the normal values, creating ideas that are different from everyone else's ideas with the help of one's imagination, achieving originality, and writing fluently while taking pleasure in the act of composing, and going beyond the standards (Küçük, 2007 cited in Temizkan, 2011, p.933-934). Creative writing is characterized by originality and imagination rather than truthfulness or standardization of thoughts (Brookes & Marshall, 2004 cited in Temizkan, 2011, p.933-934).

Creative writing requires organization, planning, and discovery of thoughts and it rejects restrained thinking. "Recreating emotional experiences freely in mind" is a fundamental philosophy of creative writing (Sharples, 1996 cited in Temizkan, 2011, p.933-934). Factors motivating students to become involved in creative writing activities include a higher order of thinking, exploration and observation skills, knowledge, a regular habit of reading, innovativeness, a critical eye for things happening around, richness of emotions and experience, sufficient use of information, communication technologies, and diversity of methods (Küçük, 2007 cited in Temizkan, 2011, p.933-934). Creative writing in English offers an alternative method to develop students' expressive and communication skills. In creative writing, stimuli are needed to arouse students' motivation. Writing tasks should be designed in a way that takes into account students interests and needs. Tasks designed to find creative solutions should also note that challenges should not overwhelm students. (Arifin & Harida, 2022, p.65).

Writing is the activity of expressing ideas, opinions, or ideas in the form of written language to be conveyed to readers. Creative writing can be defined as a specialised form of writing that is process-orientated. In America and Europe, creative writing has a prestigious status in the school and college curriculum. The purpose of creating such a writing process is not to educate writers, but to discover one's inner creativity and exploration to strengthen self-awareness. (Ipsiroglu, 2006 cited in Arifin & Harida, 2022, p.65).

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The purpose of creative writing in schools is to accentuate individual expression. Not to be all writers, but to make writing fun. But creative writing in schools is more than just a stimulus to write. It trains perception, attracts attention, and sharpens our senses." Creative writing also encompasses texts. "Creative writing also includes texts that a person creates individually, with the help of various writing techniques that can be learn. (Gay, 2012 cited in Arifin & Harida, 2022, p.65).

Creative writing is writing about feelings, thoughts and impressions on the outside world by using imagination in an original, unusual, free and authentic way (Gülyüz, 2006; Küçük, 2007; Maltepe, 2006; Oral, 2014; Temizkan, 2011; Topçuoğlu Ünal & Sever, 2012; Yıldız, Okur, Arı & Yılmaz, 2008 cited in Göçen, 2019, p.1033-1034). Creative writing as a way for writers to communicate their thoughts and feelings creatively in their own way (Mansoor, 2010 cited in Göçen, 2019, p.1033-1034). Creative writing as a product of creative thinking and as a significant prerequisite. They believe that it needs to be authentic and fruitful in terms of expression and statement (Sahbaz & Duran 2011 cited in Göçen, 2019, p.1033-1034). Creative writing is about being original and imaginative rather than having correct thoughts and is the ability of using the language, but not transferring knowledge (Akdal & Şahin, 2014 cited in Göçen, 2019, p.1033-1034). Creative writing activities are not to be done for the sake of grammar, punctuation or spelling lessons.

What is meant here is not the unnecessary of writing form or tools. He, on the contrary, suggested that making the final version of the original creative work more meaningful would help students develop these (Filbin, 1963 cited in Göçen, 2019, p.1033-1034). As we know each of us have better or poorer capability to write. But when it comes to creative writing, it has to be taught as it is one of the highest writing skills to achieve. Creating good writers from students' needs constant and wholehearted support (Kroll, 2003 cited in Pawliczak, 2015, p.1). It is often the case that improving at creative writing requires massive amount of exercises and practice (Bizzaro, 2003 cited in Pawliczak, 2015, p.348).

Characterized creativity as the "ability to come up with new ideas that are surprising yet intelligible, and also valuable in some way" (Boden, 2001 cited in Yeh, 2017, p.2), Similarly identified novelty as the core idea of creativity, adding that creative acts need also be relevant, practicable, recognized and accepted in their respective domains (Maley, 2015 cited in Yeh, 2017, p.2). In general, high school students in Indonesia are expected to develop creative and effective writing skills in English, which include using correct grammar, choosing the right words, and organizing ideas well. In English learning that is integrated with the Merdeka Curriculum, schools are expected to provide innovative and interesting learning to improve students' writing skills.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

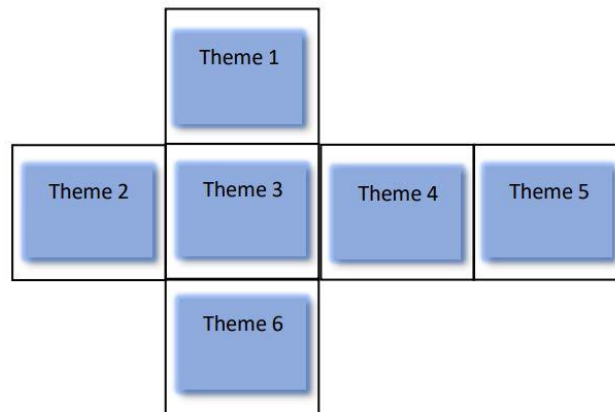
Story Cubes

Using games in language classes is another crucial and new phenomenon since it has different multiple functional purposes for the language learners. It is quite obvious that students are more likely to participate in class when they are having fun and the topic is interesting, attractive for

them. It can be said that involving the students' in such games so as to help them interact is fun feature of motivation.

Language games are enjoying a new prominence it seems worthwhile to take closer look at what makes them work. Is there any feature of the design of a game that will make it more likely that learners start using the language in more meaningful way. As it can be clearly understood from the author's statement, games are becoming trendy and favored however we need to determine the possible reasons of what makes them work in language classes (Rixon, 1979 cited in Saygili et al., 2016, p.7-8)

Story Creation Games, such as Rory's Story Cubes and the Tell-Tale card game, require players to invent creative and coherent narratives from a set of unconnected elements assembled by random chance, e.g., the throw of a die or the draw of a card. Often producing comical and entertaining storylines, these games also demonstrate the remarkable human capacity for sense-making, where one's knowledge and experience is used to explain the co-occurrence of novel combinations of observations. (Barbara Zsiray, & Ildikó Koós, 2022, p.193-194).



Picture 1. The Illustration of Story Cubes

Creative Writing

Creative is a complex and mysterious concept, and therefore it is difficult to define creative because of the ambiguity about the concept and no accepted definition for it in general (Andriopoulos, 2000 cited in Al-Ababneh, 2020, p.245). The earliest definitions of creative were based on the concept of creative individual, when Guilford (1950: p.444 cited in Al-Ababneh, 2020, p.245) defined creative as “the abilities that are most characteristic of Creative people”. That definition became dominant during the 1950s and it is popular among creative researchers (Amabile, 1996, p.21 cited in Al-Ababneh, 2020, p.245). Although each individual has a different creative, the real payoff appears when the creative process is leveraged in an organization at the organizational level (Cook, 1998a cited in Al-Ababneh, 2020, p.245).

Creative has been defined in various ways. Creative is defined in as “the production of novel, appropriate ideas in any realm of human activity, from science, to the arts, to education, to business, to everyday life”, thus the ideas have to be new and appropriate to the opportunity or problem presented (Amabile, 1997: p.40, cited in Al-Ababneh, 2020, p.245). Creative writing

is a fun field of study in language learning abilities. It stems purely from enthusiasm from within and develops as time evolves into something much more desirable, knowledgeable, and immensely necessary for the learning environment (Harshini, 2020 cited in Dewi & Siregar, 2022, p.359).

Creative is the ability to come up with new ideas that are surprising yet intelligible, and also valuable in some way' (Boden 2001, cited in Tok & Kandemir, 2014). The reflection of creative aspects of students in school environment can be seen mostly in the texts they produce by using writing skill. For this reason, creative and writing skill are very close together and identical (Demir, 2013, cited in Tok & Kandemir, 2014).

Writing includes "creative thinking and relating new information with the prior knowledge and this make new information sense" (Lawwill, 1999; Demir, 2013, cited in Tok & Kandemir, 2014). Directly associated with creative, creative writing means one's putting his or her ideas and feelings about a particular topic on paper by using his or her imagination freely (Oral, 2012, cited in Tok & Kandemir, 2014). Creative writing aids language development at all levels: grammar, vocabulary, phonology and discourse. It requires learners to manipulate the language in interesting and demanding ways in attempting to express uniquely personal meanings.

Creativity is the use of imagination and new ideas to become more effective and successful (Khodabakhshzadeh et al., 2018 cited in Turkel & Cetinkaya, 2020, p.173). Creative writing has taken the word "creativity" as its companion because the word creativity has a uniqueness that leads to liberation from stereotypes and traditionalism, and its close relationship to the principles of purposeful education in all its dimensions. (Al-tamimi & Jaber, 2022, p.6352-6353).

III. RESEARCH METHOD

This research used quantitative method with pre-experimental design. Quantitative research is a process of discovering knowledge that uses numerical data (numbers) as a tool to analyse data. Quantitative research is also a research approach that uses data in the form of numbers and exact science to answer research hypotheses (Waruwu. M, 2023, p.2902). Quantitative research includes various methods related to the systematic investigation of social phenomena, using statistical data or numbers. Therefore, quantitative research involve measurement and assumes that the phenomenon under study can be measured. Quantitative research aims to collect data using measurements, analyse this data for trends and relationships, and verify the measurements made (Watson R. 2015, p.2). There are two broad categories of research design in quantitative research, experimental designs and survey designs.

Pre-experimental design is a type of research design that involves intervention or treatment in one group without a control group being compared. This allows researchers to observe the impact of the intervention, but due to the lack of a control group, interpretation of the results is often difficult. Although pre-experimental designs have their uses, research methodologists often emphasize the importance of treating results with caution due to limitations in drawing strong causal conclusions. Therefore, this design is often used for pilot or exploratory studies

that aim to gather preliminary information about the effectiveness of an intervention or treatment, but needs to be verified with a more robust research design to confirm the findings. In this study, it used pre-experimental or you could say it only had 1 treatment class.

IV. FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings of the research conducted to assess the effectiveness of using Story Cubes media in improving students' creative writing skills at SMAN 4 Subang. This study used a pre-experimental design with two main instruments: a creative writing test and a questionnaire. The study started by collecting pretest data to measure students' creative writing skills before the intervention using Story Cubes media. After several learning sessions with Story Cubes media, posttest data was collected to assess the improvement of students' creative writing ability.

N-gain Analysis

Table 1. Table The N-gain Test

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation
N-Gain Score	21	0	0.15	0.0788	0.04
N-Gain Persen	21	0	15.31	7.8788	4.00013
Valid N (listwise)	21				

The mean or average of the N-Gain Score is 0.0788. This shows that in general, there is an increase in students' creative writing ability after using Story Cubes media, although the increase is not too large. The standard deviation of 0.04000 shows how far the variation or dispersion of students' N-Gain Score values is from the mean. The small standard deviation value indicates that most students have similar improvements. The mean or average of the N-Gain in percentage is 7.8788%. This shows the average increase in the percentage of creative writing ability after the use of Story Cubes media. The standard deviation of 4.00013 shows the variation in the percentage increase in creative writing ability among students.

This variation indicates that there is a difference in the level of improvement among students. The hypotheses in this study are:

H1: There is an increase in students' creative writing ability after using Story Cubes media.

H0: There is no improvement in students' creative writing ability after using Story Cubes media.

Based on the results of the N-Gain analysis, it can be concluded that there is an increase in students' creative writing ability after using Story Cubes media. This can be seen from the positive mean N-Gain Score (0.0788) and mean N-Gain Percent (7.8788%). Thus, the use of Story Cubes media can be considered to improve students' creative writing ability at SMAN 4 Subang. The data showed that students experienced a significant improvement in their creative writing skills after using this media.

Questionnaire Analysis

To answer the second research question, how do students respond to the use of Story Cubes as a medium for learning creative writing, was answered by using a questionnaire.

Table 2. Questionnaire Calculation Results Indicator

Indicator	Percentage (%)	Category
Effectiveness of Story Cube Media	83.33%	Very Good
Ease Use of Story Cubes Media	91.67%	Very Good
Creativity That Is Generated	71.43%	Good
Engagement and Motivation	89.29%	Very Good

The table above shows the calculation results of the questionnaire responses from this study. for the first indicator, namely the effectiveness of Story Cube Media, it gets Percentage 83.33% and Category Very Good, which means 83.33% of respondents assess the effectiveness of Story Cube media as very good in improving students' creative writing skills. the second indicator Ease of Use of Story Cubes Media gets Percentage 91.67% and Category Very Good, which means 91.67% of respondents feel that Story Cubes media is very easy to use. The third indicator, Creativity That Is Generated, received a Percentage of 71.43% and Category Good, which means 71.43% of respondents considered that the use of Story Cubes media was able to produce good creativity. The fourth indicator, Engagement and Motivation, received a Percentage of 89.29% and Category Very Good, which means 89.29% of respondents felt that Story Cubes media was very good at increasing student engagement and motivation in creative writing activities.

V. DISCUSSION

The results of the study indicate a significant improvement in students' creative writing abilities after the implementation of Story Cubes media at SMAN 4 Subang. The pretest scores showed a wide variation in students' abilities, with a mean score of 8.90 and a standard deviation of 6.45. This variation suggests that students initially had differing levels of proficiency in creative writing, as also noted by Stein (2017), who emphasized the diversity of individuals' storytelling abilities.

The use of Story Cubes media as an intervention led to a marked increase in the posttest scores, with a mean score of 15.14 and a significantly lower standard deviation of 3.39. The higher mean score and reduced variability among students' scores demonstrate the effectiveness of Story Cubes in enhancing creative writing skills uniformly across the class. This finding aligns with Ellis and Brewster (2002), who highlighted the importance of engaging and motivational teaching methods in language learning. The significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores was further supported by the ANOVA test, indicating that the intervention using Story Cubes had a statistically significant impact on students' creative writing abilities.

Additionally, the normality test using the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test confirmed that the data followed a normal distribution, ensuring the validity of the statistical analysis.

The N-Gain analysis further supported the hypothesis that there is an improvement in students' creative writing abilities after using Story Cubes media. The mean N-Gain score of 0.0788 and mean N-Gain percentage of 7.8788% reflect a positive increase in students' performance, consistent with the findings of previous studies on the effectiveness of innovative teaching tools in language education (Rixon, 1979; Mart, 2012).

Meanwhile from the questionnaire, the findings demonstrate that the use of Story Cubes media significantly improves students' creative writing skills, increases their engagement and motivation, and is perceived as an effective and user-friendly teaching tool. These results support the hypothesis that innovative teaching methods can enhance language learning outcomes and provide a strong rationale for incorporating such tools into language education curricula.

VI. CONCLUSION

The findings from the pre-test and post-test data indicate a significant improvement in students' creative writing abilities after the introduction of Story Cubes media. The mean pre-test score was 8.90, with a high standard deviation of 6.45, indicating considerable variability in students' initial creative writing skills. Following the intervention, the mean post-test score rose to 15.14, and the standard deviation decreased to 3.39, reflecting a more uniform improvement across the student cohort. The N-Gain analysis further corroborated these results, showing a positive increase in students' creative writing performance. The questionnaire responses highlighted the students' positive reception of the Story Cubes media. Most students rated the effectiveness and ease of use of the Story Cubes media very highly, with 83.33% and 91.67% of respondents, respectively, indicating that the media were very good. The media's ability to foster creativity was rated good by 71.43% of the students, while engagement and motivation were rated very good by 89.29% of the respondents.

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