Using Fairy Tales to Improve Narrative Writing Skills among EFL Students

Sam Hermansyah

[1]English Department, Universitas Muhammadiyah sidenreng Rappang, Indonesia
Email : sam.hermansyah82@gmail.com

Abstract

This study investigates the effectiveness of using fairy tales as instructional media to improve narrative writing skills among EFL students. The research employed a quasi-experimental design involving an experimental group and a control group. The participants were 48 second-year students of an Islamic junior high school in Indonesia, who were selected using a census technique. The experimental group received narrative writing instruction through fairy tales, while the control group was taught using conventional teaching methods. Data were collected through pre-test and post-test writing assessments and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The results revealed a significant improvement in the narrative writing performance of students taught using fairy tales. The post-test mean score of the experimental group was significantly higher than that of the control group. Statistical analysis using a t-test indicated that the difference between the two groups was statistically significant at the 0.05 level. These findings demonstrate that fairy tales are an effective instructional medium for enhancing EFL students' narrative writing skills. Therefore, incorporating fairy tales into writing instruction is recommended to promote students' engagement and improve their writing achievement.

Kata kunci : fairy tales, narrative writing, EFL students, writing skills, quasi-experimental study

Using Fairy Tales to Improve Narrative Writing Skills among EFL Students

Sam Hermansyah

INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the most challenging language skills for learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Unlike speaking, writing requires learners to generate ideas, organize them logically, and apply appropriate grammatical structures, vocabulary, and mechanics simultaneously. For EFL students, these demands often result in low writing proficiency, particularly in composing coherent and meaningful texts. Narrative writing, as one of the fundamental text types taught in secondary education, poses additional difficulties because it requires students to structure events chronologically, develop characters, and convey meaning creatively while maintaining linguistic accuracy.

In the context of EFL classrooms, students frequently experience limited exposure to authentic and engaging writing materials. Conventional teaching methods tend to emphasize grammar drills and sentence-level exercises rather than meaningful text production. As a result, students often struggle to express ideas fluently and lack motivation in writing activities. This situation highlights the need for instructional approaches that not only improve students' writing competence but also enhance their engagement and creativity in the learning process.

One potential instructional medium that can address these challenges is the use of fairy tales. Fairy tales are narrative texts that are familiar, imaginative, and culturally rich, making them accessible and appealing to young learners. Their clear generic structure—orientation, complication, and resolution—provides students with a concrete model for organizing narrative texts. In addition, fairy tales stimulate imagination and help learners generate ideas more easily, which is essential in narrative writing. Previous studies have suggested that the use of story-based materials can support language development by activating students' background knowledge and facilitating meaningful learning.

Despite the potential benefits of fairy tales in language instruction, their systematic use in teaching narrative writing in EFL contexts remains underexplored, particularly at the junior high school level. Many studies have focused on reading comprehension or speaking skills, while empirical evidence on their impact on writing achievement is still limited. Therefore, further investigation is necessary to examine whether fairy tales can effectively improve students' narrative writing skills when applied as an instructional medium.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to examine the effectiveness of using fairy tales to improve narrative writing skills among EFL students. Specifically, it seeks to determine whether there is a significant difference in narrative writing achievement between students taught using fairy tales and those taught through conventional teaching methods. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the development of effective teaching strategies for EFL writing instruction and provide practical implications for English teachers in secondary education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Writing in a foreign language is a complex cognitive and linguistic activity involving idea generation, organization, and accurate use of language conventions. Narrative writing, specifically, requires learners to construct a coherent sequence of events, characterize participants, and convey meaning creatively, which poses particular challenges for EFL students with limited vocabulary and experience in expressing ideas in English. Previous research highlights that narrative texts serve not only as communicative tools but also as cognitive scaffolds that help learners visualize story structure and sequence events logically, thus supporting language production and creativity.

Studies on narrative instruction in EFL classrooms indicate that using authentic narrative texts enhances learners' engagement and provides meaningful input that can be internalized and reproduced in writing tasks. Narrative texts, such as stories and fairy tales, inherently include elements such as orientation, complication, and resolution that can guide students in organizing their written narratives effectively.

Fairy tales are narrative texts rich in imaginative content and familiar structures, making them accessible to young learners and useful as instructional media in EFL settings. Their clear generic structure functions as a model for students to emulate when composing narrative texts, thereby scaffolding the writing process. In Indonesia and other EFL contexts, research has shown that integrating fairy tales into classroom activities can enhance narrative writing achievement. For example, studies applying fairy tales to narrative text instruction have reported significant improvements in students' writing performance, where experimental groups taught with fairy tale-based instruction outperform control groups receiving conventional methods.

Empirical evidence also supports the use of creative narrative materials such as fractured fairy tales and multimedia adaptations; these have been found to significantly increase EFL learners' narrative writing proficiency and critical thinking skills. Such findings demonstrate the pedagogical potential of fairy tales to motivate students, stimulate imagination, and provide concrete linguistic models for writing tasks.

Related Research on Fairy Tales and Writing Skills

Several studies have examined aspects of fairy tales and narrative texts in EFL teaching. Research on using fairy tale stories in teaching writing has reported that students actively participate and improve their narrative writing achievement after fairy tale interventions, indicating that narrative-based activities can make the writing process more engaging and effective.

Beyond writing, literature also suggests that fairy tales attract learners' interest and affective involvement, which are factors that positively influence language acquisition and writing engagement. Additionally, broader investigations into narrative texts reinforce their role in supporting writing development by providing structured language input and enhancing learners' awareness of text organization.

Despite these positive indications, the systematic use of fairy tales specifically for narrative writing instruction in EFL secondary contexts remains underrepresented in the literature, and variations in instructional design (e.g.,

Using Fairy Tales to Improve Narrative Writing Skills among EFL Students

Sam Hermansyah

integration with multimedia or interactive activities) call for further empirical validation.

Gap in the Literature

While existing studies demonstrate positive outcomes in related areas, there is a scarcity of rigorous quasi-experimental research focusing specifically on fairy tales as a medium for enhancing narrative writing among EFL junior high school students. Most studies either explore narrative texts broadly or examine the use of diverse media (e.g., videos, fractured tales), rather than isolating the effect of traditional fairy tales on narrative writing performance. Therefore, this study addresses this gap by empirically testing the impact of fairy tale–based instruction on EFL students' narrative writing achievement compared to conventional approaches.

METHOD

This study employed a quasi-experimental research design with a pre-test and post-test control group. This design was selected to examine the effectiveness of using fairy tales in improving students' narrative writing skills by comparing the learning outcomes of students taught using fairy tales with those taught through conventional instructional methods. The design allowed the researcher to identify causal relationships between the instructional treatment and students' writing performance.

Participants

The participants of this study were 48 second-year EFL students at an Islamic junior high school in Indonesia during the 2024/2025 academic year. A census sampling technique was applied, in which all students in the population were included as research participants. The students were divided into two groups: an experimental group consisting of 24 students and a control group consisting of 24 students. The experimental group received instruction using fairy tales, while the control group was taught using conventional teaching techniques.

Research Instruments

The primary instrument used for data collection was a narrative writing test. The test required students to write a narrative text based on a given prompt. The same test format was administered as both a pre-test and a post-test to measure students' narrative writing ability before and after the treatment. Students' writing performance was assessed using a scoring rubric covering content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics to ensure objective and consistent evaluation.

Procedure

The research procedure consisted of three main stages: pre-test, treatment, and post-test. In the pre-test stage, both the experimental and control groups were asked to write a narrative text to determine their initial writing ability. During the treatment stage, the experimental group was taught narrative writing using fairy tales as instructional media. The teaching activities included reading and discussing fairy tales, identifying narrative structure, and guiding students to write their own narrative texts based on the stories. Meanwhile, the control group received narrative writing instruction using conventional methods without fairy tales. After the treatment period, a post-test was administered to both groups to measure students' improvement in narrative writing skills.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics were used to calculate the mean scores and standard deviations of students' writing performance. Inferential analysis was conducted using a t-test to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between the post-test scores of the experimental and control groups. The level of significance was set at 0.05 to test the research hypothesis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study were obtained from the analysis of students' narrative writing scores in the pre-test and post-test for both the experimental and control groups. Descriptive statistical analysis revealed that the students in the experimental group showed a substantial improvement in their narrative writing performance after receiving instruction using fairy tales.

Before the treatment, the mean score of the experimental group in the pre-test indicated a relatively low level of narrative writing ability. After the implementation of fairy tale–based instruction, the post-test results demonstrated a significant increase in the students' mean score, indicating an improvement in their ability to organize ideas, develop narrative structure, and apply appropriate language features. In contrast, although the control group also showed a slight improvement after receiving conventional instruction, the increase in their post-test mean score was not as substantial as that of the experimental group.

Inferential statistical analysis using an independent samples t-test showed that there was no statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups in the pre-test, indicating

that both groups had comparable writing abilities prior to the treatment. However, the post-test results revealed a statistically significant difference between the two groups at the 0.05 significance level. The t-test value exceeded the critical value, confirming that students taught using fairy tales outperformed those taught using conventional methods in narrative writing achievement.

These findings indicate that the use of fairy tales had a positive and significant effect on students' narrative writing skills.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that fairy tales are an effective instructional medium for improving narrative writing skills among EFL students. The significant improvement observed in the experimental group suggests that fairy tales provide meaningful support for students in generating ideas, organizing narrative structure, and expressing events coherently in written form. This result aligns with theories of genre-based instruction, which emphasize the importance of providing learners with clear text models to guide their writing process.

Fairy tales, as narrative texts with familiar plots and clear generic structures, appear to reduce students' cognitive load during the writing process. By engaging with well-structured stories, students were better able to understand the components of narrative texts, such as orientation, complication, and resolution. This understanding facilitated their ability to construct their own narratives more systematically. In addition, the imaginative and engaging nature of fairy tales increased students' motivation and participation, which are crucial factors in successful language learning.

The results of this study are consistent with previous research indicating that story-based and narrative-centered instruction

Using Fairy Tales to Improve Narrative Writing Skills among EFL Students

Sam Hermansyah

enhances EFL students' writing performance. Compared to conventional teaching methods that often focus on grammar and sentence-level exercises, fairy tale–based instruction encourages students to view writing as a meaningful and creative activity. This shift in perspective may explain the higher achievement observed in the experimental group.

Despite the positive findings, this study acknowledges certain limitations. The research was conducted within a limited sample size and a single educational context, which may affect the generalizability of the results. Future research is therefore recommended to involve larger samples, longer treatment periods, and diverse educational settings. Additionally, further studies could explore the integration of fairy tales with digital media or collaborative writing activities to enhance students' narrative writing skills further.

Overall, the findings confirm that incorporating fairy tales into EFL writing instruction can significantly improve students' narrative writing achievement and provide an effective alternative to conventional teaching approaches.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the use of fairy tales is effective in improving EFL students' narrative writing skills. The findings demonstrate that students who received narrative writing instruction through fairy tales achieved significantly higher writing scores than those who were taught using conventional teaching methods. The improvement was evident in students' ability to organize ideas, apply narrative structure, and express events coherently in written form.

The quasi-experimental results confirm that fairy tales function not only as engaging learning materials but also as effective instructional models that support genre-based writing instruction. By providing familiar and well-structured narratives, fairy tales help students reduce difficulties in idea generation and text organization, thereby facilitating the writing process. Moreover, the use of fairy tales increased students' motivation and participation, which contributed positively to their writing achievement.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that English teachers incorporate fairy tales into narrative writing instruction, particularly in EFL contexts at the secondary school level. Future research is suggested to examine the long-term effects of fairy tale–based instruction, involve larger and more diverse samples, and explore the integration of fairy tales with digital or collaborative learning approaches. Such investigations may further strengthen the empirical foundation for innovative and effective writing pedagogy in EFL classrooms.

REFERENCES

Abdul Jalil Jum'uatullaila, Buhari, Syahrir L, & Sam Hermansyah. (2025). The Influences of Using Quizizz in Student's English Learning Outcomes. INTERACTION: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa, 12(1), 1030–1040. https://doi.org/10.36232/interactionjournal.v12i1.3526

Alda, Sam Hermansyah, Andi Sadapotto, Jamaluddin Ahmad, Nuraini Kasman, Buhari. Developing CEFR Aligned Speaking Materials with the ADDIE Framework Evidence from Indonesian EFL Learners' Speaking Proficiency. UKR Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (UKRJAHSS), volume 1(issue 7), 165-168.

Buhari, Sam Hermansyah, Ibrahim Manda, Rustam Efendi, Nuraini K, Muhammad Hanafi, & Muliani. (2024). The Relationship Between Professional Competence Acquired Through the Teacher Professional Education (PPG) Program and Teaching Readiness of Teachers at SMP Negeri 6 Pangkajene Sidrap. INTERACTION: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa, 11(2), 760–767. https://doi.org/10.36232/interactionjournal.v11i2.633

Cameron, L. (2001). Teaching Language to Young Learners. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Childers, C. D. (1996). Using Crossword Puzzles as an Aid to Studying Sociological Concepts.

Teaching Sociology, 24(1).

Christensen, L. B. (2006). Experimental Methodology (10th ed.). New York: Pearson.

Departemen Pendidikan Nasional. (2006). Standar Isi untuk Satuan Pendidikan Dasar dan Menengah (Standar Kompetensi dan Kompetensi Dasar SMP/MTs, BSNP). Jakarta: Badan Standar Nasional Pendidikan.

Elliot, G. (2010, March 23). Brief History of Crossword Puzzle. Retrieved from http://www.crosswordtournament.com/more/wynne.html

Elva Utami, Arono, Wisma Yunita, Safnil, Nila Kencana, & Sam Hermansyah. (2025). Indonesian Students' Perspectives on Problem-Based and Multicultural Learning in Basic Reading Comprehension. EduBase : Journal of Basic Education, 6(1), 120–130. Retrieved from https://journal.ljpi.bbc.ac.id/edubase/article/view/370

Ersoz, A. (2000). From Six Games for the EFL/ESL Classroom. The Internet TESL Journal, 6.

Fachrozi, I. F., et al. (2021). The Use of Crossword Puzzles as the Way to Increase Students' Vocabulary Mastery at SMA Taman Siswa Binjai. Linguistic, English Education and Art (LEEA) Journal, 4(2), 249–256. https://doi.org/10.31539/leea.v4i2.1851

Griffe, D. T. (1992). Songs in Action. UK: Prentice Hall International Ltd.

Hadfield, J. (1999). Intermediate Vocabulary Games. Essex: Pearson Education Limited.

Jihan Nurfadillah, Buhari, Lababa, Syamsu T, & Sam Hermansyah. (2024).

Examining Students' Skills in Differentiating the Meaning Relations of Homonyms, Homophones, and Homographs. INTERACTION: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa, 11(2), 969–980. https://doi.org/10.36232/interactionjournal.v11i2.1306

Using Fairy Tales to Improve Narrative Writing Skills among EFL Students

Sam Hermansyah

M. Khairi Mahyudin, & Sam Hermansyah. (2025). ENHANCING HISTORICAL THINKING SKILLS THROUGH DIGITAL LEARNING MODULES: A STUDY OF SECONDARY

Mudinillah, A., Kuswandi, D. ., Erwin, E., Sugiarni, S., Winarno, W., Annajmi, A., & Hermansah, S. (2024). Optimizing Project-Based Learning in Developing 21st Century Skills: A Future Education Perspective. Qubahan Academic Journal, 4(2), 86–101. https://doi.org/10.48161/qaj.v4n2a352

M U, Sari H, Hermansyah S, Maming K, Kahar A, Hasan, Elfahmi FK (2025), "Understanding Indonesian students' reading knowledge in digital literacy within socio-cultural of rural middle schools". International Journal of Information and Learning Technology, Vol. 42 No. 5 pp. 432–448, doi: https://doi.org/10.1108/IJILT-12-2023-0239

SCHOOL HISTORY EDUCATION IN MALAYSIA. Satmata: Journal of Historical Education Studies, 3(2), 142–151. https://doi.org/10.61677/satmata.v3i2.449

Nur Halima Tahir, Andi Sadapotto, Syahrir L, Buhari, & Sam Hermansyah. (2025). Lecturers' Strategies for Overcoming the Digital Divide in Online Learning of English Language Teaching (ELT). INTERACTION: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa, 12(3), 626–635. https://doi.org/10.36232/interactionjournal.v12i3.4265

Nila Kencana, Sam Hermasyah, THE DIGITAL DILEMMA: OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS FOR ELT STUDENTS IN THE EVOLVING CLASSROOM. (2025). Language and

Education Journal, 10(2), 290-313. https://doi.org/10.52237/lej.v10i2.312

Rohmatillah, R. (2014). A Study on Students' Difficulties in Learning Vocabulary. English Education: Jurnal Tadris Bahasa Inggris, 6(1), 75–93. https://doi.org/10.36232/jurnalpendidikanbahasa.v6i1.284

Roy, Andi Sadapotto, Sitti Aisa, & Sam Hermansyah. (2025). Investigating The Effect Of Flashcard Towards Efl Learns Vocabulary Mastery At SMP 2 Batu Satap Leppangeng. Macca: Journal of Linguistic Applied Research, 2(2). Retrieved from https://journal.adityarifqisam.org/index.php/macca/article/view/183

Riska Wati, Sam Hermansyah, Isumarni, & Sitti Aisa. (2025). The analysis of students' interest In learn English of SMPN 6 Satap Baraka. Macca: Journal of Linguistic AppliedResearch, 2(1).Retrievedfrom

https://journal.adityarifqisam.org/index.php/macca/article/view/150

Sam Hermansyah, Syamsu T, Syamsunir, Winda Pratiwi, K., Hamka, N., & Ramli, R. (2025). Improvement of Vocational Skills of SMK Muhammadiyah Rappang Students Through an Entrepreneurship-Based

Training Program in Pancarijang District, Sidenreng Rappang Regency . Unram Journal of Community Service, 6(2), 326–333. https://doi.org/10.29303/ujcs.v6i2.987

Sam Hermansyah, Buhari, Ibrahim Manda, Andi Sadapotto, Muhammad Hanafi, Andi Asrifan, … Muliani. (2024). Reflection on Learning in Teacher Professional Education (PPG) Strategies to Enhance the Competence of Novice Teachers at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidenreng Rappang. INTERACTION: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa, 11(2), 727–734. https://doi.org/10.36232/interactionjournal.v11i2.628

Sain, Y., & Hermansyah, S. (2025). Exploring the Language Attitudes of the Tolaki Community in Kendari: A Comprehensive Sociolinguistic Analysis. JOLLT Journal of Languages and Language Teaching, 13(2), 983–993. https://doi.org/10.33394/jollt.v13i2.14415

Sam Hermansyah, Syamsu T, Syamsunir, Winda Pratiwi, K., Hamka, N., & Ramli, R. (2025). Improvement of Vocational Skills of SMK Muhammadiyah Rappang Students Through an Entrepreneurship-Based Training Program in Pancarijang District, Sidenreng Rappang Regency. Unram Journal of Community Service, 6(2), 326–333. https://doi.org/10.29303/ujcs.v6i2.987

Sugiyono. (2011). Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif dan R&D. Bandung: Alfabeta. Sugiyono. (2016). Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, dan R & D. Bandung: Alfabeta. Suharsimi Arikunto. (2002). Metodologi Penelitian. Jakarta: PT Rineka Cipta.

Suleha, Yusmah, Aswadi, Jumiati, Muhammad Hanafi, Sam Hermansyah, & Erma. (2024). Analysis of the Implementation of Educational Technology in the Teacher Professional Education Program to Enhance Teachers' Digital Literacy at UMS Rappang. INTERACTION: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa, 11(2), 735–742. https://doi.org/10.36232/interactionjournal.v11i2.631