

Story Maps and Personal experiences: A Strategy to Enhance Students' Writing Narrative Text

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Received: April 17, 2025

Accepted: May20, 2025

Published: June 27, 2025

Abstract

This study investigates the effectiveness of using story maps, integrated with students' personal experiences, as a strategy to enhance narrative text writing skills. The research employs a pre-experimental design involving the X-IPS 3 of high school students at SMA Negeri 1 Sekaran: an experimental group using story maps based on personal experiences, and a control group employing conventional writing methods. Data were collected through pre-tests and post-tests to measure students' narrative writing narrative text in terms of structure, coherence, creativity, and language use. The findings reveal a significant improvement in the writing abilities of the experimental group, indicating that combining story mapping with personal experience not only enhances content development but also increases student engagement and motivation. This approach is shown to be an effective pedagogical tool in narrative writing instruction, promoting a deeper connection between learners and their written work. It showed the effectiveness of the story map by looking at the value of the sign. (2-tailed) is 0,027, and the value of the t-test (2,327) is greater than the t-table (2,024) at a significance level of 0,05 with a degree of freedom (df) = 30. Therefore, the hypothesis of this study is accepted. Integrating story maps with students' personal experiences is an effective strategy to improve narrative writing skills, fostering greater creativity, coherence, and engagement in the writing process.

Keywords: Writing English, Narrative Text, Story Map, Personal Experiences.

1.Introduction

Writing is one of the most complex and essential skills in language learning, especially for students studying English as a foreign or second language. The process of developing these skills demands not only mastery of grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure, but also the ability to convey ideas clearly, logically, and creatively (Reichelt et al., 2012; Zanyar Nathir Ghafar & Akam Azad Mohamedamin, 2022). The challenge of writing in English is often influenced by the student's first language, which may be very different in terms of syntax, organizational patterns, and rhetoric. For example, Indonesian language learners often have difficulty in proper use of tenses, subject-verb congruence, use of articles, and paragraph structuring. Given that writing also involves high-level thinking skills such as planning-drafting, revision and editing-an appropriate pedagogical approach is needed for the process of learning to write to be effective. An approach that emphasizes not only linguistic aspects, but also cognitive and metacognitive strategies, is essential to equip students with communicative and meaningful writing skills.

One common issue among writing students is the lack of confidence. Many learners feel anxious or hesitant when they are asked to write in English, fearing they will make mistakes or fail to meet expectations. This fear can lead to writer's block or minimal effort in completing writing tasks. Motivation also plays a crucial role. Students who do not see the relevance of writing to their lives or future careers may put little effort into improving their writing skills (Alghamdi, 2022; Ghafar, 2023; Graham & Perin, 2007). Therefore, writing instruction should be engaging, meaningful, and student-centered. Teachers need to create a supportive environment where students are encouraged to express their ideas without fear of judgment. Providing positive feedback, using real-world writing tasks, and allowing students to choose their topics can help make writing more enjoyable and relevant.

Furthermore, writing should not be treated as an isolated activity. Integrating writing with reading, speaking, and listening activities can enhance students' understanding of language and how it works in different contexts. For instance, reading well-written texts can expose students to a variety of sentence structures, vocabulary, and writing styles, which they can then apply in their writing (Ahmed, 2019; Mei et al., 2025; Zhang, 2025). Peer feedback and group writing activities can also help students learn from each other and develop collaboration skills (Huong & Chi, 2025; Liu et al., 2021; Majidova & Rozikova, 2025; Pias, 2025). Technology can be a useful tool as well—writing blogs, using writing

apps, or engaging in online discussions can make writing more interactive and authentic (Bakla & Karakaş, 2022; Perifanou et al., 2021; Yang & Liu, 2024). With patience, guidance, and encouragement, writing students can develop not only the technical aspects of writing but also the confidence and creativity to express themselves effectively in writing English (Cahyani et al., 2023; Fitria, 2024; Sofeny & Khusnia, 2022; Wu et al., 2025). In the long term, strong writing skills can support academic success, enhance communication abilities, and open doors to global opportunities.

Writing in English can be a challenging skill for many Indonesian students, as it requires not only a good understanding of grammar and vocabulary but also the ability to organize ideas clearly and logically. Unlike speaking, writing involves more complex processes such as planning, drafting, revising, and editing. Indonesian students often struggle with sentence structure, coherence, and the appropriate use of tenses, which are different from those in the Indonesian language. Additionally, limited exposure to authentic English writing and a lack of confidence can hinder their ability to express ideas effectively. Therefore, it is important to provide engaging strategies and sufficient practice that can help students develop their writing skills gradually and meaningfully (Bakla & Karakaş, 2022).

When students write about events they have personally encountered, their narratives tend to be more vivid, authentic, and emotionally resonant. Personal experiences give students a concrete foundation to build their stories, making it easier for them to develop characters, settings, and plotlines based on real-life situations. This not only helps reduce the difficulty of generating ideas but also improves the overall coherence and relevance of the narrative.

Moreover, writing from personal experience increases students' confidence in their writing abilities. Since they are familiar with the events they are describing, they are more likely to use descriptive language and organize their ideas logically. This also provides a unique opportunity for self-reflection and emotional expression, which can be therapeutic and motivating. In the classroom, encouraging students to use their own experiences in narrative writing fosters a more student-centered learning environment where learners feel that their voices are heard and valued.

Integrating personal experiences into writing tasks also aligns with communicative and experiential language learning approaches, where language is used for real and meaningful purposes. Students are more engaged and motivated when they see that writing is not just an academic exercise but a way to share their lives and perspectives. Furthermore, teachers can better assess students' understanding of narrative structure, vocabulary, and grammar when the content is original and personally relevant. Overall, combining writing instruction with students' personal experiences in narrative text writing not only enhances language skills but also deepens their connection to the writing process itself.

Although many previous studies have explored learning strategies to improve students' narrative writing skills, most of them have focused on conventional approaches or common techniques, such as the use of images or brainstorming. However, there is still a research gap that specifically combines story maps with students' personal experiences as an integrated strategy. Story maps help students organize plot systematically, while personal experiences provide emotional engagement and authenticity in writing. The absence of studies that discuss the integration of these two approaches indicates the need for further research to assess the effectiveness of these strategies in the context of learning to write narratives, especially for secondary students. Therefore, this study aims to fill that gap by investigating how the combination of story maps and personal experiences can significantly improve the quality of students' narrative writing.

Based on the above explanation, this study aims to examine the effectiveness of using story maps combined with students' personal experiences as a learning strategy to enhance their narrative writing skills, with the expectation that it will provide a significant contribution to the development of more effective and meaningful writing instruction methods for students.

2. Method

This research outlines the research methodology used to examine the effectiveness of Story Maps and Personal Experiences as a strategy to enhance students' narrative writing skills. An experimental design with a pre-experimental design is a type of quantitative research method used to examine cause-effect relationships between variables. However, it lacks the rigor of true experimental designs. In pre-experimental designs, the researcher typically uses one group and applies an intervention without a control group for comparison. One common form is the one-group pretest-posttest design, where measurements are taken before and after the treatment to determine its effect. This method is often used in educational settings when random assignment is not feasible, and it allows researchers to observe potential changes due to the intervention (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). However, because it does not control for all threats to internal validity such as history, maturation, or testing effects—the results must be interpreted with caution. Despite its limitations, pre-experimental designs are useful for preliminary investigations and for exploring instructional strategies in real classroom settings (Bin-Hady et al., 2020).

The research was conducted in one group for tenth grades at SMA Negeri 1 Sekaran Lamongan in academic 2024/2025. There were two variables: independent was story map media and students' personal experiences; dependent was students' writing narrative text. The instrument used was a students' writing test, namely, pre-test, and posttest. In analyzing the students' writing test, the researcher used an assessment rubric from (Suastra and Menggo, 2020). The data were analyzed to test the normality, homogeneity, N Gain score, and T-Test. Those were to find out the significance of the mean differences of the pre-test and posttest using SPSS 22.

$$t_{hitung} = \frac{x_1 - x_2}{S_{gab} \sqrt{\frac{1}{n_1} + \frac{1}{n_2}}}$$

$$S_{gab} = \sqrt{\frac{(n_1 - 1) S_1^2 + (n_2 - 1) S_2^2}{n_1 + n_2 - 2}}$$

(Sugiono, 2013).

3. Findings and Discussion

This chapter presents the results of the study and discusses the findings about the use of story maps and personal experiences as a strategy to enhance student's ability to write narrative texts. The data were collected through pre-test and posttest and were analyzed to determine the effectiveness of the treatment. In addition, supporting data such as observation and student feedback are also discussed to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how the strategy influenced the students' writing performance.

The data on pre-test and posttest scores in students' writing narrative text were calculated by using SPSS 22, which are shown below:

The normality Test was intended to determine whether or not the distribution of variables in this research was normal. It can be seen below;

Kelas	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Pretest Experiment	,905	16	,095
Posttest Experiment	,954	16	,550

Shapiro-Wilk

The significance values of variables in the Shapiro-Wilk test showed values greater than 0.05, indicating that the data were normally distributed. It is recommended to evaluate normality both visually and through statistical tests. Among these, the Shapiro-Wilk test available in SPSS is highly suggested for small to moderate sample sizes (Ghasemi & Zahediasl, 2012). Assessing normality is crucial in statistical analysis because many parametric tests assume that the data follow a normal distribution. Understanding the distribution pattern of data helps researchers to establish statistical benchmarks, identify deviations, and ensure the validity of inferences. Moreover, defining what is considered "normal" must take into account the theoretical and contextual framework of the study, as it can vary across cultures, disciplines, and situational factors. In the context of hypothesis testing, it is essential that hypotheses are formulated based on theoretically grounded assumptions, are specific, and testable. These characteristics ensure that statistical tests such as normality assessments are applied meaningfully and support the robustness of the research design.

The homogeneity test was intended to test the similarity of the samples, like whether or not the sample variants were taken from the population.

	Levens			
	Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Based on Mean	,254	1	30	,618
Based on Median	,240	1	30	,628
Based on Median and with adjusted df	,240	1	28,260	,628
Based on trimmed mean	,260	1	30	,614

The significance value in the homogeneity test in Shapiro-Wilk was greater than 0.05. Due to the large number of statistical tests, the homogeneity test was crucial (Woźniak, 2014). Homogeneity refers to the quality or state of being uniform, consistent, or similar in nature or composition. In various fields, such as science, sociology, and economics, homogeneity plays an important role in understanding systems, behaviors, or groups that share common characteristics. While it can lead to stability and predictability, excessive homogeneity may also reduce diversity and limit adaptability. Therefore, recognizing and balancing homogeneity is essential in both research and real-world applications.

The n-Gain score test is to determine the effectiveness of treatment in experimental research by implementing pre-test and posttest in one group. It can be seen below;

No	Experiment Group	No	Control Group
	N-Gain Score (%)		N-Gain Score (%)
Average	53,6135	Average	14,8975
Minimum	28,57	Minimum	-40,00

Considering the table above, the N-Gain test score shows the effectiveness of story maps in writing narrative text based on the student's personal experiences. The N-Gain score helps educators assess how much students have learned as a result of teaching activities and is commonly used in educational research to evaluate learning outcomes. A higher N-Gain value indicates greater learning progress and instructional effectiveness (Allo et al., 2020; Graham & Perin, 2007; Rika Nurhikmah Sugandi et al., 2022). It is a method used to measure the effectiveness of instructional interventions by comparing students' pre-test and posttest scores

Hypothesis test: The **Shapiro-Wilk test** is a statistical test used to determine whether a dataset is **normally distributed**. It is commonly applied as a **normality test** before performing other statistical analyses that assume a normal distribution (e.g., t-tests, ANOVA). This research used a t-test to determine the differences in implementing story maps by students' personal experiences in writing the narrative text for tenth grades at SMAN 1 Sekaran, Lamongan, East Java.

Based on the data analysis, it was found that the value sign (2-tailed) was 0.027, and the t-test (2,327) was greater than the t-table 92,024) at a significance level of 0.05 with a degree of freedom (df) = 30. He was rejected, and Ha was accepted. It is shown below;

	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	,254	,618	2,327	30	,027	4,000	1,719	,490	7,510
Equal variances not assumed			2,327	29,218	,027	4,000	1,719	,486	7,514

Thus, the hypothesis is a crucial element in the scientific research process, as it provides a clear direction for designing experiments, collecting data, and interpreting findings. A strong hypothesis is not merely a speculative statement but must be formulated based on relevant theoretical frameworks and prior empirical evidence. It should possess key characteristics: it must be specific, empirically testable, and theoretically grounded (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012). For instance, instead of stating, “*There is a relationship between reading habits and academic performance,*” a more robust hypothesis would be, “*Students who read for at least 30 minutes daily have significantly higher academic achievement scores than those who do not.*” Such precision allows for the use of appropriate statistical tests and supports objective interpretation. According to Ilham Aufa & Zuhriyah (2024), a clearly stated and testable hypothesis enhances the reliability and validity of research outcomes, ensuring that conclusions drawn are both accurate and meaningful within the context of the study.(Ilham Aufa & Zuhriyah, 2024).

4. Conclusion

The research found that the normality value in Shapiro-Wilk was more than 0.05, the homogeneity used in the Shapiro-Wilk analysis was greater than 0.05, N-Gain score was 53,6%. That story maps in students' personal experiences to writing the narrative text was less effective, and the hypothesis found that the value of the sign. (2-tailed) is 0,027, and the value of the t-test (2,327) is greater than the t-table (2,024) at a significance level of 0,05 with a degree of freedom (df) = 30. It means that Ho was rejected, and Ha was accepted.

Based on the result of this pre-experimental research, the use of *Story Maps* combined with *Personal Experiences* is an effective strategy to enhance students' ability to write narrative texts. The students showed a significant improvement in various aspects of writing, including organization, content development, grammar, and vocabulary, after being taught using this method. The use of story maps helped students to organize their ideas logically, while personal experiences encouraged them to write more meaningfully and confidently. The increase in posttest scores compared to the pre-test results demonstrates that this strategy has a positive impact on students' narrative writing skills.

Therefore, integrating story maps and personal experiences into the teaching of narrative writing is recommended, especially for EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners who often struggle with idea generation and text structure.

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