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# Story Circle: Alternative Strategy to Narrative Writing Among Non-English Learners in Post Pandemic Era

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**Abstract—** Ordering words into sentences in English that are correct and understandable both in structure and grammar is not as easy as pie. One of the causes for writing difficulties is lack of interest in being able to express ideas, feelings, and experiences using correct grammatical structure. Writing comments on viral phenomena and events through social media, on the other hand, is extremely chatty, long and ease. This is due to the fact that the phenomena and events are presented in a compelling way, with satirical language that inspires others to post their comments without being asked and without standard structures. The fact however, numerous activities and strategies to enhance writing skills among non-English learners continue to experience various problems. Accordingly, it is essential to have learning alternatives in order to meet an effective learning process especially in English writing. The current research focused on the students' writing ability after using story circle technique with a total of 35 freshmen of Visual and Communication Design Department involved during the study. An experiment of one-shot case study design was applied to find out and measure the influence of the technique on the students' narrative writing after giving several treatments. The initial results revealed that the technique has significantly influenced their ability in developing a story. By adopting an assessment in order to observe the text on the organization, content, grammar, mechanics and vocabulary choice, the technique has also successfully inspired the students to have a creative way to develop a story.

**Keywords:** *Story Circle, Narrative Text, Writing Ability*

## INTRODUCTION

The more we use our brains to process sentences and paragraphs in English writing, the more "familiar" we become with the language. This will ease communication. Reading ability, on the other hand, supports writing ability. Because the more you read, the more vocabulary you will absorb that can be used in written sentences.

Writing is one of the four language skills or abilities. The ability to express ideas and knowledge gained, feelings and creativity as outlined in written language generally requires repeated exposure, particularly with previously heard and obtained vocabulary in order to produce text forms that are clear to comprehend. Writing also is a complex activity and process, from generating ideas to story development, and ideas can be completed, accepted, and well understood. According to (1) writing is a continuous and structured thought process. Writing activities, according to (2) are structured activities that involve multiple stages such as setting goals, conveying ideas, compiling information, determining language, making drafts, reading and reviewing, revising or improving, and eventually editing.

Students are sometimes constantly terrified to try and write. (3) states that fear of typographical errors is a major factor in the lack of interest in this skill. Many such concerns include apprehension about making mistakes in grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

Ordering words into sentences English that are correct and understandable both in structure and grammar is not as easy as pie. One of the causes for writing difficulties is lack of interest in being able to express ideas, feelings, and experiences using correct grammatical structure. Writing comments on viral phenomena and events through social media, on the other hand, is extremely chatty, long and ease. This is due to the fact that the phenomena and events are presented in a compelling way, with satirical language that inspires others to post their comments without being asked and without standard structures. The fact however, numerous activities and strategies to enhance writing skills among non-English learners continue to experience various problems.

As a global language, English will continue to be and will always be important to learn in Indonesia, from Primary Education to Higher Education. In fact, in vocational education, this course is taught for more than two semesters. This is done to better prepare graduates for the world of work



after they finish their studies. The Semester Learning Plan is also tailored to the agreed-upon vision and mission, with a greater emphasis on the implementation of the four language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. However, activities and ways to enhance writing skills among vocational education students (non-English students) continue to experience numerous challenges. According to (4), writing is always regarded as an important skill among ELF Learners. Because it is essential, it is also very important to use the effective approaches to convey this skill. There are several methods that can be used as an alternative to traditional writing teaching methods. By implementing various techniques that may be applicable, lecturers can use techniques that are most acceptable and appropriate for students in the class. Based on this, an effective learning alternative is required. One of them is the need for different techniques or methods that lecturers can use to make the learning process and material transfer more interesting. As a result, it can boost student motivation to write in accordance with learning objectives. Story Circle is an intriguing technique for teaching writing to choose.

The Story Circle is a type of collaboration that combines writing and listening exercises. This technique is a group action performed at the same time as everyone. In practice, (5) shares the technique that students must write down their ideas by writing a portion of a story or narrative in the form of a story that the lecturer hears and reads in the classroom. The writing is then passed to the colleague sitting next to him to finish. And so on, exchanging writings until the sentences or story are read aloud. The Story Circle technique was introduced to help students improve their English writing skills.

Furthermore, narrative story circles can be used to foster group community and investigate students' social awareness. Story circle, according to (6), it is a collaborative writing exercise in which students contribute ideas to each other by conveying some written stories from student to student, as well as ideas that arise when students adjust to each new page. Teaching writing can be done collaboratively by a small group of students (7).

Some related studies used the technique as the treatment in different classroom situations. One of which was done by (8). Through the research they belief that there are some advantages to using story circles as follows:

1. It helps students express their ideas in the simplest way possible because students only need to adapt ideas that their friends have already created.
2. It fosters creativity in students as writers of all ages and experiences because they are free to express ideas from a variety of perspectives after reading their friends' works.
3. It enhances storytelling abilities and comprehension of narrative structure.
4. The technique is more fun, exciting, and hilarious for all students because of the stories they develop together.
5. It helps facilitate the cooperation of the entire class to complete the task and benefit the teacher in fostering positive relationships with students.

With the purpose to discuss one method of solving student problems in writing narrative text using Story Circle, (8) conducted the study titled Using Story Circle to Improve Students' Ability in Writing Narrative Text. The students were divided into groups, and the teacher read one of narrative texts

(fairy tales, fables, or legends) that they have never heard before. The results demonstrated that the students were capable of developing story ideas in a creative manner. Another work from (9) titled The Effectiveness of Using Story Circles in Teaching Writing. The goal her experimental study was to determine the significant differences in writing skills among students using Story Circle technique.

Similar work was held by (10) over 35 students of college students. The result of the study showed that there was a significant difference of the students in writing achievement before and after implementing Story Circle technique.

In other words, from the above studies, the technique helps learners to improve abilities to communicate, share ideas, and express emotions. In addition, Story Circle leads to individual participation and receive not only new ideas but also helpful advice from other group members.

Genre on the other hands in (11) mentioned: spoof, recount, report, analytical exposition, hortatory exposition, anecdote, description, explanation, review, discussion, procedure, news item, and narrative as the most common among learners.

Narrative has distinct characteristics when compared to others. The characters are what set this genre apart from the rests. These characteristics or traits, according to (11) are: uses a lot of action verbs, conjunctions, is written in the past tense, uses various mental and metaphorical verbs, uses rhythm and repetition, and runs a lot with sentence structure. EFL (English Foreign Language) students, particularly those majoring in subjects other than English, frequently mix up the present and past tense. Students can correctly use simple present tense verbs but not the past tense.

Non-English students must actively engage during learning process. Furthermore, lecturers should be more familiar with a variety of appropriate teaching techniques especially during COVID-19 pandemic. Otherwise, students would be difficult, discouraged or easily bored with respect to the classroom environment during two years online sessions. Vocational students of Politeknik Harapan Bersama are part of Non-English learners. They join English as compulsory subject (MKDU). Because the course is given as general subject, most students are unaware about the importance of English writing in particular. To make the subject interesting, the lecturer must be prepared with various learning strategies and techniques.

Accordingly, the current research proposed Story Circle technique as an alternative strategy in English writing class after two years online classroom meeting or post Covid-19 Pandemic outbreak to engage the students in an on-site collaboration to create and share their experiences. The study aimed at investigating its influence and the significance of using the technique among the students to develop short Narrative story.

## METHODS

### A. Research Design

One-shot case study of pre-experimental research design with Story Circle as the independent variable and narrative writing as the dependent variable was applied. The design was chosen because the researcher took only one group both as control and experiment group as in (12). This means one group intake was given the treatment during the experiment and the



results were then observed. The following is design of a one-shot case study:

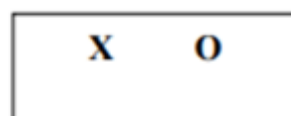


Fig 1. Design of One-Shot case Study

Total sampling with one group of 35 freshmen of Communication and Visual Design study program was selected using convenience sampling. This means that the number of subjects involved was similar to the total population without any other intervention. The subject was favored for the course syllabus that covers Writing Narrative Story within the semester.

### B. Instrument and Procedure

Firstly, all students joined with pre-test session individually to find out initial ability before the treatments. Some narrative stories were then introduced in order to give the students opportunity to select one topic among the three: recount, legend and fable. Recount has been preferred, as the story told their own experience in daily basis. The stories were free but not limited to their involvement at home or in campus environment in post Covid-19 pandemic era.

Secondly, the researcher gathered the students in a small group consisting of 5 to 6 members and sit in a circle. Once they are assembled, each student took a piece of paper to write the story. Then, the lecturer dictated one sentence of selected narrative recount story. All the groups should write the sentence at once. The story went on, and the first persons in every group continued writing the story on the paper in the amount of time. The stories extended based on the students' daily experiences, and these was the most hilarious part that everyone had different way to express the idea in written language. All the first persons then passed the paper to the persons who sat on the right and let them conveyed the ideas in 3 minutes until all group members got their chance to complete the stories. The procedure remained the paper reached back to the first writer. Once the stories complete, then the last writers in each group were given a chance to read the story aloud.

### C. Data Collection and Analysis

All data were gathered based on the results after the treatments in the form narrative texts for each group. As purpose of this study mentioned was to determine the influence of the technique and its significance on the students' ability to develop narrative texts, (13) rubric was employed to assess particular indicators. They included Organization, Content, Grammar, Mechanics, and Vocabulary, with a range score or value interval as follows:

Table 1. Score Interval

20-18	Excellent to Good
17-15	Good to Adequate
14-12	Adequate to Fair
11-6	Unacceptable to Not
5-1	Poor

Technique of data analysis was carried out in three stages: calculating gained Value, Mean and comparing the Mean. As a preliminary study, the researcher applied quantitative data calculation using Microsoft Excel software to test the initial hypotheses that the technique has significant influence on the students' writing ability in developing English narrative story or  $H_0$  is rejected if  $F_{count} > F_{crit}$  or by comparing  $F_{sig} < 5\%$  (0.05) and  $H_1$  is accepted.

In addition, the interpretations of the results were then analysed and described based on the output of One-Way Anova and Regression to get further look on the influences with significance level of 95% or with an alpha of 5%.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### A. Results

One-Way Anova statistical test was employed to investigate the influence between the variables, Story Circle technique and Writing. The technique had been given to the students in three meetings of ninety minutes each in short passage telling about personal daily experiences.

Table 2. Results of One-Way ANOVA Analysis Test

Source of variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	290.32	4	72.58	15.46855	8.24	2.424815
Within Groups	797.6571429	170	4.692101			
Total	1087.977143	174				

Furthermore, Regression test was conducted to determine the significance of the influence and to test the initial hypotheses as shown in the outputs below:

Table 3. Regression on Hypotheses Testing

	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F
Regression	1	18.40697	18.40697	1.023015	0.031916392
Residual	33	593.7645	17.99286		
Total	34	612.1714			

### B. Discussions

Table 2. shows statistical calculation of One-Way Anova with the significance level of 95% or alpha of 5% gained on the influence of both the variables. Here, 35 students joined in three meetings of writing class. Value of  $F_{count} = 15.46$  reaches higher than the  $F_{crit}$  ( $F_{table}$ ) = 2.42, or  $15.46 > 2.42$ . The results demonstrated that there was a positive influence of the use of Story Circle technique towards writing ability among the students.



Meanwhile, Regression statistical test was performed to investigate initial hypotheses that the technique has significant influence on the student's writing. Based on the results shown in Table 3, the  $F_{sig} = 0.03$  gained reaches lower than the  $F_{count} = 1.02$ , or  $0.03 < 1.02$ . Thus, the technique had a significant influence on their writing ability.

In other words, the results indicated that Story Circle technique provides opportunities to develop one language skill in English, the skill that has been considered as the most difficult among other skills as in (13). The technique can be applied as another option for fun learning experience to help engage collaborative and motivating classroom environment, particularly in post Covid-19 pandemic situation

## CONCLUSION

The above statistical results demonstrated that Story Circle sessions in three meeting writing classes show a positive significant influence on the students' ability in writing narrative story. The technique can be used as another option to have different learning experience. Another reason is that story circle appears to be a useful technique for motivating students and trying to assist them in developing their own knowledge in writing skills through collaborative work. Story circle are a warm, inviting and comfortable environment that encourages students to write creatively and spontaneously. This implies that story circle creates learning more enjoyable and fun, increase student motivation to learn. The technique is simple way to create classroom environments comfortable classroom atmosphere to be able to share their ideas and feelings. Furthermore, the technique has successfully led the development of trust and relationships in the group.

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