

An Analysis of Students' Perception Toward the Use of Narrative Text in Writing Activities in English Student Community

Marisa Sandika¹, Fera Zasrianita¹, Hanura Febriani¹
Universitas Islam Fatmawati Sukarno, Bengkulu, Indonesia

Corresponding author e-mail: Sandikamaris88@gmail.com

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Abstract: Writing in English is often challenging for students, especially in organizing ideas, developing coherence, and applying accurate grammar. Narrative text, although commonly introduced in language classes, has not been fully explored as a medium to foster creativity and strengthen writing competence in student-led communities. This study aims to analyze students' perceptions of the use of narrative text in writing activities at the English Students Community (ESCO) of the English Study Program, Fatmawati Sukarno State Islamic University Bengkulu. Using a qualitative descriptive method, data were obtained from 39 fourth-semester students through questionnaires and in-depth interviews. The findings indicate that most students perceived narrative text writing as useful for generating ideas, structuring paragraphs, enriching vocabulary, and improving grammar mastery. Participation in narrative-based writing activities also increased students' motivation and confidence in both spoken and written English. However, some challenges were reported, such as difficulties in plot development, character creation, conflict resolution, vocabulary limitation, and time management. In conclusion, narrative text provides not only academic benefits but also motivational value, encouraging students to be more active in writing practices. This study suggests the importance of providing guidance in story construction, incorporating peer feedback, and strengthening writing communities as a way to enhance English proficiency.

Keywords: ESCO, Narrative Text, Students' Perception, Writing Activities

A. Introduction

English, one of the most frequently spoken languages in the world, was employed in many areas of life, such as politics, economics, social work, and education. English is an international language that many people use to interact with each other. English was one of the foreign languages that Indonesian students had to learn in school from kindergarten through university. English's lexicon, tone, and structure make it clear that it differs from Indonesian. It makes it difficult for Indonesian students to learn English. The four language skills taught in English classrooms are speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Four components of language training supported the four-language skills vocabulary, grammar, spelling, and pronunciation mentioned above.

Writing is one of the language skills in learning English that is closely related to the text and must be mastered by high school students. One of the texts is a narrative text which focuses on entertaining the readers (Sari et al., 2024).

Writing is an integrated English skill that plays a significant role in addition to speaking, listening, and reading (Sadiku, 2015). Because writing is an integrated English skill that is linked to other English skills, students are advised to become proficient in writing as soon as feasible because of the advantages of writing. The least benefits of writing for students are the ability to express themselves and their thoughts, expand their vocabulary, and improve their memory and critical thinking abilities. Writing skills are crucial to students' academic success because they enable them to organize their thoughts and feelings and extract meaning from texts (Aluemalai & Maniam, 2020). Through their writing, students are free to express themselves and their thoughts as they see fit. They can use straightforward free writing, like journaling, or more intricate structured writing, like essays, to convey their thoughts. Additionally, pupils are very expressive and have adjusted to what they have learned thus far. It is far superior when their thoughts and emotions are written in a way that makes the new information they learn difficult to leave or firmly stay for a long period (Nasir et al., 2013).

Students who write not only improve their vocabulary but also their capacity to communicate themselves and their views. Students can expand their vocabulary by reading a variety of sources and then writing about them. As long as they write it down, they will continue to use the new terminology they have acquired. Vocabulary has a crucial role in language development, particularly when it comes to writing exercise (Dhuli et al., 2023). According to Guritno (2017) vocabulary knowledge enables language use, language use enable the increase of vocabulary knowledge, knowledge of the world enables the increase of vocabulary knowledge and language use, and so on. This highlights the significance of vocabulary mastery. Also, writing in English could help students understand grammar better and produce more coherent and significant writing. Thornbury (2002) asserts that "without grammar, very little can be conveyed but without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed". Additionally, students can practice honing their analytical and critical thinking skills by writing, which helps them strengthen their critical thinking abilities.

Still, a lot of pupils steer clear of writing. The majority of them believe that learning to write is difficult. Students frequently avoid writing for a variety of reasons, including the lengthy writing process and the difficulty of coming up with an original concept. Regarding a common issue, Rosiana said that Indonesian students believe that writing is a very hard skill to learn because of the lengthy writing process, which includes the plan, draft, re-draft, edit, re-edit, re-plan, etc. In order to produce a well-structured written text, writing requires the brain to process and activate a large number of exposures or inputs. Richards and Renandya also mentioned the most difficult ability. Writing is a skill that second or foreign language learners should develop (Wibowo,

2013). The difficulties lie not just in generating and structuring concepts but also in translating them into a language that can be understood. The problem is exacerbated if they have weak language skills. The issue is exacerbated by several inadequate writing-related subskills.

As a result, pupils shouldn't overthink the drawn-out procedure or the difficulty of writing. The writing process is only a set of rules or procedures to assist students in improving and professionalizing their writing. Depending on their writing style, pupils might personalize that drawn-out writing process. Otherwise, they avoid writing when they consider that drawn-out procedure (Rosiana & Yasmin, 2017). All that is required of students is that they begin writing and practice without considering the process. The page or blank page can always be edited by the writer. In this sense, the only way to begin writing is to write without hesitation and without considering how to gather the courage to do so.

One benefit of writing is that it helps students become better writers of papers, including scientific reports. According to a number of students at "Universitas Islam Negeri Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu, writing is challenging and takes time to do well. They feel anxious when they use grammar. They also find it difficult to choose which words to use. Additionally, the pupils find it difficult to write coherent paragraphs. Some similar results can be found when comparing my research to the older study: Students find it difficult to articulate their thoughts or ideas in writing. Furthermore, according to Farooq et al grammar is the most difficult part for L2 writers. Then, students have difficulty in constructing sentence in the correct structure. It is because creating a good grammar rule is extremely difficult and communication may suffer if it is violated. Vocabulary is also considered as one of other difficulties that students face in writing. Choosing the right words in an essay is one of the best ways to convey the ideas accurately (Saprina et al., 2021 : 2). Because of this, many students still find it difficult to tell the difference between writing what is polite and what is suitable. Because they have trouble selecting their vocabulary and grammar, the researcher consequently thinks that students are bored when writing. Teachers adopt a teaching approach that encourages students to think more autonomously, creatively, and innovatively in order to circumvent this.

Writing is not only in class but also in the English department, in the English department every student is encouraged to take part in off-campus activities, namely ESCO (English Students Community) activities from the results of the Pre-observation there is Esco Saturday (Esday) where here in Esday there is a lesson that discusses writing which is guided directly by the tutor, the writing taught there is taught in the form of narrative text, Why? because maybe learning using narrative text will increase student motivation in learning writing because Narrative text is usually interesting and motivates students to be more active in writing, because in ESCO it is mostly semester 4 so from the results of Pre-observation obtained data that the average who

participated in Esday was semester 4 students, therefore the researcher intends or aims to analyze.

Students in the fourth semester of Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu State Islamic University's English Study Program report that writing is challenging and time-consuming. They frequently struggle to use acceptable words, create well-structured paragraphs, and feel uncomfortable about their grammar. Moreover, (Abeer M. W. Alharbi, 2022) states that lack of reading could also be one of the factors that affected academic writing among undergraduates. Poor reading habit and being trapped in the vicious cycle of reading that is, poor readers do not like to read because it is difficult. As they do not like to read, they do not read and as they do not read, they continue to struggle. This could make writing critically more difficult for them (Siew Eng & Ching Anne, 2024). Students may become bored and lose interest in writing assignments as a result of these challenges when they feel overpowered by the intricacies of syntax and language. Teachers must use cutting-edge teaching strategies that inspire students to think independently, creatively, and innovatively in order to meet these obstacles.

In addition to learning in the classroom, learning activities should also be carried out outside the classroom, such as participating in extracurricular learning communities and others, this is done by all UINFAS English Tadris students from semester 1 to semester 5 where they are required to participate in ESCO activities every Saturday, they learn in tutorials, ESCO is divided into several divisions, including the English study club division which focuses on understanding grammar, writing division, speaking division and art and culture division, the material presented in the tutorial at ESCO activity refers to the material or RPS of the lecturer, so that the material provided is more measurable and in accordance with student needs.

Students are free to choose according to the division they are interested in, thus they can deepen their understanding of the material delivered by lecturers in class. The researcher observed students who took the writing division, based on the results of observations made by researchers, several students stated that the existence of writing activities in extracurricular activities really helped deepen the understanding that had been delivered by lecturers in class, especially on narrative text. Considering the value of writing in language acquisition and the difficulties students have, this study attempts to look into *An Analysis of Students' Perception Towards the Use Narrative Text in Writing Activities in English Students Community*. The goal of the study is to determine whether this novel approach to instruction may help children who struggle with vocabulary, grammar, and paragraph structure while encouraging their creativity and critical thinking.

B. Methods

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design to explore students' perceptions of using narrative texts in writing assignments. The participants were 39 fourth-semester students of the English Study Program at Fatmawati Sukarno State Islamic University Bengkulu, who are active members of the English Students Community (ESCO). The participants were selected purposively based on their involvement in ESCO writing activities. The primary instrument of this research was a questionnaire consisting of 50 items that examined students' experiences, challenges, and perceptions related to the use of narrative texts. To obtain richer data, the questionnaire was supplemented with semi-structured interviews conducted with several volunteer participants. These interviews provided in-depth insights into the students' responses and allowed the researcher to clarify any ambiguous answers. Data collection was carried out in two stages. First, the questionnaires were distributed to all participants during ESCO activities. Second, interviews were conducted face-to-face with selected participants to triangulate and validate the questionnaire findings. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The researcher organized the data, identified recurring themes, and categorized students' perceptions into several dimensions, such as motivation, writing skills improvement, challenges, and overall experiences. To ensure trustworthiness, the researcher applied triangulation of data sources.

C. Results and Discussion

The findings of this study showed that students' perceptions of the writing community in relation to their writing skills development. Data were collected from 39 students of the English Study Program, fourth semester, at UIN FAS Bengkulu in the academic year 2024/2025. The results were drawn from a questionnaire consisting of 50 items using a Likert scale, along with interviews with four participants.

Overall, the questionnaire responses revealed that a majority of students hold a positive perception of the writing community. On the content indicator, for instance, almost all respondents expressed strong interest in joining a writing community, with 48.7% strongly agreeing and 48% agreeing that a supportive environment encourages consistent writing and idea development. Across several items, more than half of the respondents consistently selected "Strongly Agree," with percentages ranging between 50% and 69%, indicating that students largely recognize the benefits of such communities. However, a notable proportion (20–35%) expressed disagreement, suggesting that while the majority view the writing community positively, some students remain sceptical about its actual effectiveness in improving their writing consistency and creativity.

The interview results enriched the quantitative findings. Half of the participants (50%) defined narrative text as storytelling, while the others emphasized its role in sharing

experiences within the community. All respondents (100%) stated that writing narrative texts was enjoyable. Nevertheless, challenges were also identified: 50% experienced difficulties in developing plots and endings, 25% struggled with character and conflict development, and 25% mentioned time management issues. Importantly, half of the interviewees (50%) felt that consistent practice in narrative writing significantly boosted their confidence not only in writing but also in speaking English in broader contexts.

Taken together, these results highlight that the majority of students appreciate the role of a writing community in enhancing their writing skills, particularly in content generation, creativity, and motivation. At the same time, the mixed responses underscore the need to address specific challenges, such as sustaining consistency, supporting idea development, and overcoming doubts about the tangible benefits of writing communities. The result of this study showed that the majority of students in the ESCO community see the usage of narrative texts in writing assignments favorably. The following key findings were derived from 39 respondents who completed the questionnaire and were bolstered by in-depth interviews with four participants:

Gaining Knowledge and Composing Experience

The majority of pupils are aware that a narrative text is a type of writing that describes an incident or tale. Although some participants found it challenging to establish plots, characters, conflicts, and conclusion, all interviewed participants expressed that they loved the process of writing narrative texts. Limited vocabulary and time management were additional challenges.

Effect on Language Proficiency in English

Students' writing and speaking abilities in English are positively impacted by regular narrative writing assignments. As a result of their narrative writing exercises at ESCO, students reported feeling more comfortable speaking and writing in English.

Writing-Related Aspects

Results from the evaluation of narrative writing's mechanics, vocabulary, grammar, structure, and substance revealed favorable opinions, with percentages above 75% in each area. This suggests that students' general writing skills can be effectively developed through the ESCO writing community.

The findings reveal that narrative texts play a significant role in enhancing English language skills among university students, especially within learning communities like ESCO. Transforming ideas, feelings, and thoughts into written form is the process of writing (Aston, 2015: 7), emphasized the ability of the individual to create their

own opinions on a subject and backed up the idea that writing is a means of expressing personal meanings.

The challenges reported such as plot development, character building, and time management are consistent with Harmer (2004), who highlights that narrative writing requires creativity and structural planning. However, students' ability to overcome these challenges through practice suggests that narrative writing can foster persistence and self-improvement.

Furthermore, the perceived improvement in speaking and writing confidence supports Graham & Perin's (2007) view that consistent writing practice, particularly in genres like narrative, enhances overall language performance and learner confidence. Writing stories also seems to promote emotional engagement, which is key in sustaining motivation (Lee & Schmidgall, 2020).

In this part, the researcher discussed what are the students' perception of the writing community in terms of improving their writing skills. To discover students' perception on the writing community towards their writing skills at English Community of UINFAS Bengkulu, the researcher used questionnaire contains of 50 items with 5 indicators gave to the 39 respondents from 4th semesters since they got the experience in writing community. As a result, out of 39 students who given a questionnaire.

Based on the results of questionnaires, researchers found that in the content indicator which is one component in writing, the majority of the respondents have a positive perception of writing community in improving their writing skills, namely in the content aspect. In composing a good paragraph, important criteria like content is obviously needed. According to Shehadeh notes content in writing as knowledge of subject, development of thesis, coverage of topic, relevance of details, substance, and quantity of details. So, it can be concluded that the content in writing is very important so the readers can read and understand our writing because the paragraphs we make are well structured and clearly connected.

From the result of the questionnaire, students agree that writing can help them enhance their abilities to select topic for writing, develop their ideas, develop the contents of the topic in a clear and detailed way, and so on after participating in the writing community for approximately a semester. According to the findings, students' perception of the writing community for content has 79,25%. It means that content has a high percentage of perception.

In terms of organization, the majority of students have positive perception with the writing community's implementation. When writing, students must master the skill of organization. A piece of writing which is well-organized helps the readers to follow the text easily. It means that if a writer does not have good ability in organizing the

text, the readers will face confusion. Based on Nik et.al. simplified the definition about organization as the beginning, middle, and the end of a text.

The writing community really helps them to have a positive impact on their writing. Assisted by tutors, students learn how to write well by paying attention to components or aspects of writing, one of which is the organization component. In line with it, according to Freedman, et al. quoted from Steve Graham states some writing communities have a tutor or teacher who helps them gain skills, knowledge, strategies, and others.

After participating in the writing community, students learn how to write unified sentences, coherent sentences, good paragraphs starting with topic sentences, supporting sentences, conclusions from sentences, and so on after participating in the writing community. It is supported by Nik et.al. simplified the definition about organization as the beginning, middle, and the end of a text. Based on the previous findings, students' perception of the component organization received a percentage of 79,25%. It means has high of perception.

Furthermore, data obtained in the indicator of mechanic revealed that the majority of students have positive perception of the mechanic. Mechanic is divided into several aspects, based on Shehadeh. There are: including spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and paragraph indentation. According to the results of the questionnaire, the respondents agree that writing community activities have a positive impact on their writing. By participating in the writing community, they learn the proper use of capital letters, punctuation, and spelling. According to Steve Graham, individuals who follow the writing community gain writing knowledge that becomes long term memory, such as knowledge about spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and the more frequent use of subordinate clauses when writing specific types of text. As a result, it can be concluded that the writing community assists students in the mechanic aspect, with a percentage result of 77,5%. indicating a very high of perception.

The next component of writing is vocabulary. According to the findings of the previous study, students have a positive perception of vocabulary with a percentage of 80,25%, indicating that vocabulary has a very high perception. Vocabulary is important in text writing because the reader will receive the message from the text through the words that have been written. Based on Long and Richard cited in Maisal Rahmadi, vocabulary is important in writing because the author can convey the message, he writes through the vocabulary he uses. Based on the preceding theory, it is possible to conclude that good vocabulary selection is critical in writing.

In addition, based on the results of the student questionnaire, it was discovered that in the writing community, they learn to select the appropriate vocabulary based on the context of the sentence. Students in the writing community learn new vocabulary in writing, making it easier for them to develop their ideas. They can also reduce

repetition of the same vocabulary in a paragraph as their vocabulary expands. We can see from the results of the processed questionnaire that the writing community can help students improve their writing, including increasing their vocabulary. Students with a wide range of vocabulary will find it easier to construct sentences. This is supported by the opinion of Andrew Taylor stated that the choice of vocabulary is a sign that the author has adopted a certain community discourse and good work depends on the accuracy of the vocabulary chosen by the author.

The last is grammar as one of the 5 components of writing. From the finding, the majority of the students have positive perception towards grammar. From the finding, this indicator got percentage 79,25% and it indicates that grammar has very high of perception. The questionnaire results show that through the writing community, they learn to use tenses that match the context of the sentence, they learn to use articles, they learn to use correct pronouns, and they also have a tutor who will check their writing products, including the grammar section, so that students can revise what they have written that is incorrect. In line with it, Freedman et al. Claimed that some writing communities have a tutor or teacher who helps them acquire skills, knowledge, strategies, and so on. In this case, the tutor in the writing community is responsible for guiding, encouraging, and helping students in checking the results of their writing so that students understand what is wrong and what students must correct.

The results of this study are in line with the literature, which claims that narrative texts can foster students' creativity, imagination, and emotional involvement in language acquisition in addition to being useful for enhancing writing abilities (Knapp & Watkins, 2005). The ease with which students can artistically express their thoughts and experiences supports their favorable perception of narrative texts and increases their motivation to study English. The learning process of narrative writing naturally involves technical challenges like plot and character development, which can be resolved with consistent practice and tutoring that prioritizes the use of peer criticism. This aligns with the collaborative learning principle seen in successful writing groups (Khalil & Kholofelo, 2020). Furthermore, the discovery that story writing exercises might boost speaking confidence points to a beneficial transfer effect between language skills, supporting the multifaceted argument in the growth of students' English proficiency. Overall, this study demonstrates how crucial extracurricular writing groups like ESCO are to enhancing students' overall English language proficiency, especially when it comes to using narrative texts as an inspiring and empowering teaching tool.

D. Conclusions

This study reveals that the use of narrative texts in writing exercises at ESCO significantly enhances students' motivation, confidence, and overall language skills, particularly in developing their writing abilities. The findings indicate that narrative-

based activities not only improve students' engagement in learning English but also provide meaningful contexts for self-expression and creativity. In conclusion, the ESCO community demonstrates that narrative writing practices can be an effective approach to strengthening students' competence and confidence in English learning. Based on the challenges identified, ESCO tutors are encouraged to provide explicit instruction on plot structuring, as well as to implement peer feedback mechanisms to help students refine their writing collaboratively. Such practices will ensure that students not only enjoy the writing process but also achieve measurable improvement in their skills. For future research, it is recommended to employ a longitudinal design to track the actual improvement in students' writing performance over time as a result of their consistent participation in narrative-based writing communities. Further studies could also explore how narrative writing activities influence other aspects of language learning, such as speaking fluency or critical thinking skills.

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