

Using Story Cube in Enhancing Students' Writing Skills

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ABSTRACT

Organizing their papers is a frequent challenge for students, who often fight with independent writing, run-on sentences, selecting words, structuring sentences, and composing coherent paragraphs to maintain a clear and well-organized flow of information. This action research aimed to enhance the writing skills of Grade 9 students using story cubes at a public high school in Ozamiz City. Specifically, it investigated students' performance in grammar, sentence structure, creativity, and coherence in writing. The study employed a pre-test and post-test design with a total of 30 Grade 9 students as participants. Story cubes were integrated into writing sessions to stimulate imagination and guide narrative development. Data was collected through written outputs, observation, and rubrics assessing the identified writing components. Results revealed a significant improvement in students' writing performance after the intervention. The findings suggest that story cubes are an effective instructional tool for improving the writing skills of junior high school students. Given the significant improvement in students' writing performance, it is recommended that English teachers incorporate Story Cubes into regular writing activities. This tool can help students better organize their thoughts, enhance creativity, and reduce writing anxiety, especially for those who struggle with traditional approaches.

Keywords: Story cube, writing skills, action research, interaction

INTRODUCTION

Language skills can be divided into four main areas: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Writing is a skill that is given the utmost attention as the most significant among all skills. The biggest challenge faced by students in their workplace is when they are asked to communicate through writing.

Students attempt to cultivate their writing skills in English; nevertheless, it is not always possible for them to fully express their writing potential since writing is quite a challenging task (Perumal & Ajit, 2020). At present, they possess minimal interest in writing. Writing is the key goal of schools, and thus, the need for excellence in writing and academic achievement makes it a necessity for students.

Creative teaching aids like story cubes have been utilized to instigate creativity and enhance the writing skills of students in schools. Many people struggle to create well-structured and imaginative narratives. Writing as a skill also involves persistent practice by the learner to obtain it. It is common knowledge to all that teaching writing skills is one of the trickiest tasks that any English language teacher must perform. Learners also find it difficult to acquire excellent command over writing skills due to its complexity as regards spelling, grammatical structure, usage, coherence, organization, and so forth (Bora, 2023).

It is a typical teaching process that fails to promote critical thinking and express complex opinions vividly. Most learners struggle to develop writing skills, both in terms of coherence and creativity. This is prevalent at various educational levels. Consequently, students' ability to think critically, appropriately, and creatively in all their academic work may be hampered (None & Amin, 2024).

In the case of learning English, writing narrative texts is a significant challenge for high school students. Traditional methods may not engage students enough or inspire creativity to tell a story. The use of story cubes would be an innovative way out in this respect for getting students to construct narratives more appropriately by offering interactive and engaging stimuli.

Using story cubes as a teaching medium, the students showed significant improvement in their narrative writing (Purba et al., 2024). This had a positive effect on students' oral and written narratives, as their stories are better connected (Zsiray & Koós, 2022). In addition, the use of story cubes is related to increased engagement and cooperation among students. Thus, it also contributes to the development of writing skills.

While existing studies point out the potential benefits of these dice, there is still too little substantial evidence of how well story cubes are beneficial across broad educational contexts in different age classes. The existing literature does little to show just how far having story cubes as an alternative tool could yield long-term benefits, particularly with improved writing skills among students. To address this knowledge gap, the researchers explored the use of story cubes in enhancing students' writing skills at a public high school in Ozamiz City.

The purpose of this action research is to explore how story cubes enhance students' writing skills. The method involves grammar and spelling during the discussions, ensuring that students can improve their writing skills. The study aims to explore the potential of story cubes to increase student motivation in writing activities. The research intends to contribute to the development of innovative teaching strategies that support the enhancement of writing skills in educational settings.

METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

The study will use single group pretest-post test design to enhance students' writing skills using story cubes strategy particularly grammar and sentence structure. Action design research, or ADR, has gained widespread recognition as a major research methodology in the field of information systems (Cronholm & Göbel, 2022). This design is deemed appropriate as it focuses on a specific class or group of students, and it aims to enhance students' writing skills using story cubes.

B. Research Setting

The study was conducted at a public secondary school in Ozamiz City, Misamis Occidental. The school was established in 1952, it continues to offer inclusive and competitive curriculum-based education. The institution was built to improve quality education within the reach of the people. It is identified as one of the corporation schools of the Department of Education in the Philippines, which supports the K-12 curriculum.

This is enhanced by a thorough curriculum that aims to establish graduates with the necessary knowledge and skills for further education or job opportunities. Recreational areas provided the students with opportunities to participate in many physical activities. In all the areas. Teachers and staff provide individualized attention and act as guides and advocates throughout these transformative educational journeys. Examining the learning environments at the junior and senior high school levels provides an understanding of the current students' educational concerns in this community.

C. Respondents of the Study

The respondents of this study were junior high school students in one of the public schools in Ozamiz City, where students were selected through purposive sampling. The criteria for selecting the respondents in alignment with purposive sampling: (1) bona fide students at the public high school, (2) attended classes for at least six months during the academic year 2024- 2025, and (3) willing to participate in the study.

D. Instruments

This study utilized the following instruments:

- a) *Pre-test*. It is administered to students to assess their current writing abilities. The activity involved writing a short piece based on a prompt provided by the researcher. Their work was evaluated using a rubric that assessed organization, grammar and mechanics, vocabulary, coherence, and content. The

pre-test aimed to capture their initial writing skills, allowing for comparison with their progress after the intervention.

- b) *Post-test*. It is to find out how much their writing has improved. Similar to the pre-test, the post-test required the students to complete a writing task under identical conditions and was evaluated using the same rubric to ensure consistency and comparability of results. The post-test results showed the changes and improvements in the students' writing, helping the researcher measure how effective the intervention was in developing their skills.
- c) *Grammar and Sentence Structure Test*. It is a researcher-made questionnaire consisting of 10 items designed to gather insights from students regarding their writing skills in class discussions when using story cubes. This test is used to compare the means of two groups to determine if there is a significant difference between them. The questionnaire aims to explore how students perceive and experience this method of participation and how it influences their involvement in classroom activities.
- d) *Lesson Plan*. The researchers created a lesson plan to integrate the modernized story cubes into a structured framework to enhance students' writing skills. Prior to implementation, the lesson plan was thoroughly reviewed by the cooperating teacher and revised by the student teacher. The strategy involves using a story cube to enhance students' writing skills by generating random story elements, such as characters, settings, and conflicts. This method can be applied throughout the discussion whenever students need inspiration for their writing, encouraging creativity and critical thinking.
- e) *Story Cube*. The researcher intends to employ this approach to assess, improve, and enhance writing skills.

E. Data Collection

- a) *Pre-Implementation Phase*. The researchers will request permission from the dean of the College of Education, the School Division Superintendent, and the principal of the school where to conduct the study. The data collection will begin after all required approvals are achieved. The aim is to reduce student anxiety by framing participation as an impartial process while also encouraging preparation and attentiveness, since students will not know when they will be selected. Based on the lesson plan devised by the teacher, assessments will also be prepared during this phase.
- b) *Implementation Phase*. The researchers will discuss the lesson with the assistance of modernized story cubes in the classroom. Clear instructions will be provided for the students regarding the story cube and its use in assessments. After a month of implementing this strategy, a comprehensive assessment will be administered to evaluate its effectiveness. This assessment will measure not only the students' understanding of the lesson content but also their engagement and participation levels throughout the process.
- c) *Post-Implementation Phase*. The post-implementation phase involves concluding the study, making recommendations, proofreading, editing, and finalizing the research. Additionally, it includes the appropriate sharing of the research findings with a specific audience.

F. Ethical Considerations

Before starting this study, the researchers obtained consent from the relevant authorities, including the superintendent, supervisors, principals, and assistant principal of the school. In a letter of consent, they explained the purpose of the study and requested agreement to respond. The researchers ensured that the respondents were fully informed about the objectives and significance of the research, both to them and the university.

In this study, the privacy of respondents' data was of utmost importance, and questionnaire responses have been kept confidential. Moreover, the researchers ensured that no harm was caused to their respondents and

that they were provided with the right to participate voluntarily. During the study, the results of the data collected were presented without bias, reflecting the honest and unfiltered responses of the respondents.

G. Data Analysis

The researcher will calculate descriptive statistics, specifically the mean and standard deviations, to assess the level of performance both before and after implementing the intervention.

Mean and Standard Deviation. These were calculated to determine the central tendency and variability of the students' scores before and after the intervention.

Frequency and Percentage. They will be used to identify the level of students' writing skills before and after the use of story cubes.

Grammar and Sentence Structure Test. This tool will be used to compare students' writing skills before and after the use of story cubes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Level of Students' Writing Skills Before Using Story Cube

Table 1: Level of Students' Writing Skills Before Using Story Cube

Comprehension	Frequency	Percentage	M	SD
Did Not Meet Expectation (DME)	29	100	17.84	5.81
Overall	29	100	17.84	5.81

Before the intervention, 31 Grade 9 students received an evaluation for their writing abilities, as shown in Table 1. Analysis indicated that all participants ($n=31$) reached the Did Not Meet Expectation classification regarding their writing abilities. The students scored minimally ($M = 17.84$, $SD = 5.81$) on the assessment that evaluated their writing abilities for idea development and organization, as well as coherence and grammar.

School-based educators have introduced various creative strategies to enhance the effectiveness and engagement quality of writing education for their students throughout the past few years. The application of visual storytelling elements within tools such as

Story Cubes results in improved narrative writing abilities through the stimulation of new ideas, improved plot development, and lowered student anxiety about writing. Story Cubes demonstrated greater improvement in narrative structure, creativity, and vocabulary usage compared to students who received traditional instruction. Story cubes affect English narrative text writing abilities in students (Purba et al., 2024).

Interactive tools foster deeper student engagement, autonomy, and writing fluency, especially among learners who previously struggled with generating ideas (Farajollahi & Tajadini, 2023). By providing a hands-on, playful approach to storytelling, these tools help students overcome creative blocks and participate more actively in the writing process.

The outcome shows it is essential to apply better learning methods for Grade 9 students to enhance their writing, particularly in areas of planning, developing thoughts, organizing them, keeping their writing clear, and using proper grammar. It is clear from this example that relying solely on traditional methods may not be sufficient.

One solution is to use interactive tools such as Story Cubes. Writing assistants offer enjoyable experiences, stimulate creativity, guide students when planning stories, and reduce their stress while creating content.

Including things like Story Cubes can improve the creative writing abilities of learners who struggle with writing.

B. Level of Students' Writing Skills After the Implementation of the Story Cube

Table 2: Level of Students' Writing Skills After the Implementation of the Story Cube

Comprehension	Frequency	Percentage	M	SD
Outstanding (O)	17	54.8387	47.059	2.135
Very Satisfactory (VS)	8	25.8065	39.000	1.069
Satisfactory (S)	3	9.6774	35.333	1.155
Fairly Satisfactory	2	6.4516	31.00	1.41
Did Not Meet Expectation	1	3.2258	28.00	*
Overall	31	100	42.19	6.23

The results of 31 Grade 9 students who received the Story Cube strategy appear in Table 2 following their writing assessment. Students achieved significant improvements in their writing capabilities based on the class mean score of ($M = 42.19$, $SD = 6.23$). Student performance improved significantly since pre-intervention measurements indicated that all students were in the "Did Not Meet Expectation" category.

Students who met the outstanding writing proficiency criteria were the most predominant group at $n = 17$ (54.84%) with an average score of $M = 47.06$ ($SD = 322.14$). The Very Satisfactory level was achieved by eight students out of 32 who participated in this study ($n = 8$, 25.81%, $M = 39.00$, $SD = 1.07$). Staff evaluation rate revealed three participants (9.68%) at the Satisfactory level with a mean score ($M = 35.33$, $SD = 1.16$), and two participants (6.45%) achieved the Fairly Satisfactory level ($M = 31.00$, $SD = 1.41$). This student scored 28.00, which placed them in the lowest category of Did Not Meet Expectation, with a 3.23% student population.

The improvement in students' writing also highlights growth in organizing ideas and presenting coherent narratives, which are essential components of effective written communication. Through writing, the learners will be able to develop their analytical, rational, and critical thinking skills (Bora, 2023). Integrating visual aids and creative scaffolding techniques in writing instruction shows that students exposed to structured creative tools performed better in written composition tasks than those who were not (Villanueva, 2022).

It appears that using Story Cubes in the classroom significantly improved students' writing skills. After receiving the intervention, more than half of the students showed excellent results. Story Cubes allow students to connect their ideas better and write more organized stories. This strategy also makes students feel more confident and interested in writing. Using visual and hands-on approaches in teaching writing is more useful for students who have difficulties with sitting still and listening. With Story Cubes, students can practice improving their organization and communication skills.

C. Difference in Students' Writing Skills Before and After the Implementation of the Story Cube

Table 3: Difference in Students' Writing Skills Before and After the Implementation of the Story Cube

Variables	M	SD	t-value	p-value	Decision
Before Story Cube Activity	17.84	5.81	-17.20	0.000	Reject Ho

After Story Cube Activity	42.19	6.23			
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Table 3 presents the results of a paired sample t-test conducted to determine the difference in students' writing skills before and after the implementation of the Story Cube activity. The intervention aimed to enhance students' creative thinking, organization, and expression in writing.

The analysis revealed a highly significant difference in students' writing skills following the implementation of the Story Cube. Before the activity, students had a mean score of $M = 17.84$, $SD = 5.81$, while after the activity, the mean increased to $M = 42.19$, $SD = 6.23$. The computed t-value was -17.20 with a p-value of 0.000 ($t = -17.20$, $p = 0.000$), indicating a highly significant improvement in writing skills.

This significant increase suggests that the Story Cube activity was highly effective in developing students' writing performance. Most learners have problems organizing their pieces of writing. It is the usual observation that learners have hardships in composing on their own. Classroom teaching and learning, therefore, offer an adequate learning base for a learner to analyze, evaluate, and address them (Bora, 2023). When learners are involved in hands-on, interactive learning tasks, they demonstrate stronger creative thinking and content generation in writing (Santos, 2021).

It is evident from the findings that participating in Story Cubes activities improved students' writing skills. The significant improvement between their past and current scores indicates that engaging with the activity enhances students' ability to organize, express their concepts, and structure their writing. Using interactive methods such as Story Cubes, many students who struggle to organize their ideas properly can improve their ability to think and collaborate when writing. These results underline the value of introducing lively, student-centered activities in school to aid students with writing and promote the development of their thinking and communication skills.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this action research clearly demonstrate the effectiveness of using Story Cubes as an instructional tool in enhancing the writing skills of Grade 9 students. Prior to the intervention, all students fell within the "Did Not Meet Expectation" category, showing significant difficulties in organizing ideas, developing content, and applying correct grammar in their writing. However, after the implementation of the Story Cube strategy, there was a remarkable improvement in the students' writing performance. Most of the students achieved higher performance levels, with over half achieving the "Outstanding" category.

The significant difference in the pre-test and post-test results confirms that the use of Story Cubes positively impacted students' ability to generate ideas, organize thoughts, and write coherent narratives. Moreover, the engaging and interactive nature of Story Cubes helped reduce writing anxiety, boost confidence, and encourage active participation in writing tasks.

This research supports the integration of creative, student-centered tools such as Story Cubes in writing instruction. Such approaches foster creativity, improve narrative structure, and provide students—especially those who struggle with writing—with meaningful opportunities to develop their communication and critical thinking skills. Therefore, it is recommended that educators consider incorporating Story Cubes and similar strategies into their teaching to enhance students' overall writing proficiency.

Appendix

Rubric

Criteria	Excellent	Good	Fair	Needs Improvement
Grammar & Mechanics	Free of grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors.	Few minor errors that do not interfere	Noticeable errors that distract the	Frequent errors that make understanding

		with meaning.	reader.	difficult.
Coherence & Cohesion	Ideas are well-connected; transitions and cohesive devices are used effectively.	Ideas are mostly connected with some effective transitions.	Some attempt at connecting ideas, but with limited cohesion.	Lacks coherence: ideas seem disconnected.
Vocabulary	Use rich, varied, and precise vocabulary appropriately.	Adequate and appropriate word choice with some variety.	Limited vocabulary; repetitive or sometimes inappropriate words.	Basic vocabulary; many inappropriate or unclear word choices.
Content	Thoroughly addresses the topic with rich, relevant, and original ideas.	Addresses the topic with mostly relevant and clear ideas.	Ideas are somewhat relevant but underdeveloped.	Ideas are unclear, off-topic, or not developed.
Organization	Clear structure (introduction, body, conclusion); logical and smooth flow.	Organized with some minor lapses in flow or clarity.	Weak structure; lacks logical flow or transitions.	Disorganized; hard to follow.

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