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The Relationship Between Reading Interest and Narrative Essay Writing Skills in English for Junior High School Students

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Abstract

This research investigates the correlation between students' reading interest and their narrative essay writing skills in English among eighth-grade junior high school students. The study employed a quantitative correlational method with a sample of 40 students, using a questionnaire to measure reading interest and a writing test to assess narrative essay writing skills. The data were analyzed using Pearson product-moment correlation. The result showed a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.730 with a significance value of p = 0.000, indicating a strong and statistically significant positive relationship between the two variables. This implies that students with higher reading interest tend to perform better in constructing narrative texts, particularly in aspects such as organization, grammar, vocabulary, and the development of story structure. These findings support Krashen's Input Hypothesis and the theory of reciprocal literacy, which posit that reading provides essential linguistic input that strengthens writing proficiency. The study suggests that increasing students' reading interest—especially in narrative texts—can be an effective strategy to improve their writing outcomes in English as a foreign language learning contexts.

1. Introduction

Writing is widely recognized as one of the most complex productive skills in English language learning, requiring the integration of grammar, vocabulary, organization, and coherence (Panday & Napil, 2024). At the junior high school level, narrative writing is particularly emphasized as it enables students to express ideas, experiences, and creativity in a structured form. However, many students still encounter difficulties in composing effective narrative texts, including limited vocabulary, grammatical inaccuracies, and weak development of ideas (Muamaroh et al., 2020). These challenges indicate that students' writing performance is influenced by multiple underlying factors that require further investigation.

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One factor that has received considerable attention is students' reading interest. Reading interest is believed to contribute significantly to writing development by enhancing vocabulary knowledge, exposing learners to various sentence structures, and providing models of well-organized texts (Pratiwi & Mayrita, 2023). Students who engage more frequently in reading activities tend to demonstrate better writing performance due to their increased familiarity with linguistic patterns and discourse structures (Fitria, 2024). This assumption is supported by Krashen's Input Hypothesis (Krashen, 1989), which posits that language acquisition occurs when learners are exposed to meaningful and comprehensible input, much of which can be obtained through reading activities.

Despite these insights, previous studies have predominantly examined the general relationship between reading habits and overall writing ability without focusing on specific genres. In particular, limited attention has been given to how reading interest relates specifically to narrative essay writing at the junior high school level. Few studies examine reading interest specifically in relation to narrative writing at the junior high level, even though narrative texts possess unique structural and linguistic characteristics that may require different cognitive and linguistic processes (Luo et al., 2024). This gap suggests that existing findings may not fully capture the genre-specific dynamics between reading and writing skills.

Moreover, while prior research generally reports a positive association between reading and writing, it often lacks critical examination of how and why this relationship occurs. For instance, it remains unclear to what extent reading interest directly contributes to students' ability to generate ideas, organize narratives, and apply appropriate language features in writing. This indicates the need for more focused empirical studies that not only confirm the relationship but also contextualize it within specific learning domains.

Addressing these gaps, the present study aims to investigate the relationship between students' reading interest and their narrative essay writing skills among junior high school students. By concentrating on a specific genre and educational level, this study seeks to provide more precise and meaningful insights into the interplay between reading and writing. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of more effective instructional strategies, particularly in integrating reading activities to enhance students' narrative writing proficiency, as well as to enrich the existing body of research in English language education (Indah et al., 2022; Razilu & Pangestu, 2022).

2. Method

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative correlational design to examine the relationship between students' reading interest and their narrative essay writing skills. A quantitative approach enables the systematic measurement of variables and their statistical relationships (Creswell, n.d.). In this study, reading interest functions as the independent variable, while narrative writing skill serves as the dependent variable. The correlational design is appropriate as it allows the researcher to determine the degree and direction of association between naturally occurring variables without manipulation (Kusmawan et al., 2025). The analysis is specifically directed to examine whether students' reading interest significantly predicts or is associated with their narrative writing performance.

Research Subjects

The participants of this study were eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 2 Kutawaluya, Karawang Regency, West Java Province, Indonesia. The sample consisted of 40 students selected through purposive sampling, which involves choosing participants based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives (Sugiyono, 2013; Thomas, 2022). The selection was based on students' level of exposure to English literacy activities, particularly reading and narrative writing tasks. While this sample size is adequate for correlational analysis, it is relatively limited; therefore, the findings of this study may not be generalized to broader populations.

Research Instrument

Two instruments were used to collect the data: a reading interest questionnaire and a narrative writing test. The reading interest questionnaire consisted of 14 items measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The items were designed to capture cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of reading interest, including enjoyment, habits, preferences, motivation, and support for reading activities (Angraini et al., 2024; Winberg et al., 2022; Dera, 2025).

The writing test required students to compose a narrative essay based on a given prompt. The essays were assessed using an analytic scoring rubric covering five aspects: content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics, adapted from established writing assessment frameworks (Rifai et al., 2024; Isna, 2025). This rubric enables a comprehensive evaluation of both structural and linguistic components of students' writing.

The validity of the questionnaire items was tested using Pearson correlation, showing that most items were valid with significance values below 0.05. The reliability test yielded a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.778, indicating good internal consistency. Similarly, the writing assessment instrument demonstrated acceptable validity and reliability, with all components showing significant correlations and a standardized reliability coefficient of 0.802. These results indicate that both instruments are appropriate for measuring the variables in this study.

Table 3.1 Blue Print for Reading Interest

No.	Aspects	Indicator	Number of Items
1	Enjoyment of Reading	Enjoy reading activities Reading for personal pleasure	3
2	Reading Habits	Read regularly A visit to the library Access to reading materials	4
3	Reading Preferences	Choosing reading over other activities Choose English as your primary reading	2
4	Reading Motivation	Feeling motivated to read because of interest in the topic Connecting reading and writing	2
5	Support	Access to narrative books and reading facilities	3
		Total Item	14

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Table 3.2 Validity test from Students' Reading Interest

No	Item Statement	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	Information
1	I prefer to read books for personal pleasure	0.415	0.008	Valid
2	I feel that reading makes me better understand new vocabulary in English	0.746	0.000	Valid
3	I like to read books or texts in English in my free time	0.563	0.000	Valid
4	I read fictional stories (short stories or novels) in English regularly	0.165	0.308	Invalid
5	I prefer to read books rather than watch television or play gadgets	0.153	0.347	Invalid
6	I often visit libraries to look for English-language storybooks	0.422	0.007	Valid*
7	I buy or borrow English-language narrative books on a regular basis	0.400	0.011	Valid
8	I enjoy reading narrative texts such as short stories or novels	0.473	0.002	Valid
9	I prefer to read in English rather than Indonesian	0.604	0.000	Valid
10	I feel motivated to read when the topic is interesting	0.349	0.027	Valid
11	I often visit libraries or use digital sources to read in English	0.699	0.000	Valid
12	I feel that reading more can improve my writing skills	0.542	0.000	Valid
13	I feel that reading affects ideas and creativity in writing	0.565	0.000	Valid
14	I feel that reading stories in English helps me write my own stories	0.614	0.000	Valid

Table 3.2 presents the results of the instrument validity test through Pearson correlation analysis of 14 statements. Of the total items tested, 12 statements were declared valid because they had a significance value (sig. 2-tailed) < 0.05, indicating a significant relationship between the items and the total score. Statements such as "I feel that reading helps me understand new vocabulary" and "reading stories in English helps me write my own stories" obtained high correlation values, indicating that students recognize the direct benefits of reading on their writing skills (Krashen, 1989; Pratiwi & Mayrita, 2023). Two items were deemed invalid because their significance values exceeded 0.05, namely statements about the frequency of reading fiction and preferences for reading over other leisure activities. Nevertheless, most items in the questionnaire had good construct validity and were suitable for comprehensively measuring reading interest.

Table 3.3 Reliability test from Students' Reading Interest

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.778	.779	14

Based on the results of the reliability test on the reading interest questionnaire instrument, a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.778 was obtained. This value indicates that the instrument has a high and consistent level of reliability. In the context of social and educational research, Cronbach's Alpha value ≥ 0.70 is generally considered reliable or worth using, while a value above 0.80 is considered excellent. Therefore, with a value of 0.778, it can be concluded that the questionnaire consisting of 14 items of this statement has good reliability and is able to measure the variable of reading interest consistently between items.

Table 3.4 Instrument for Measuring Narrative Essay Writing Ability

No	Aspects Assessed	Weight (%)	Assessment Indicators
1	**Content**	30%	Complete story (orientation, complication, resolution) - Logical and interesting plot - Relevant to the theme
2	**Structure**	20%	Use of narrative structure (orientation, complication, resolution) - Clear transitions between paragraphs
3	**Vocabulary**	15%	Variety of vocabulary - Appropriate word choice - Idioms/expressions appropriate to the context
4	**Language Use**	20%	Consistent use of tenses (past tense) - Correct sentence structure - Grammar appropriate for junior high school level
5	**Mechanics**	15%	Correct spelling - Proper punctuation - Capitalization according to rules

Table 3.4 shows the format for assessing students' narrative essay writing skills, which covers five main aspects: story content, organizational structure, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. The "content" aspect has the highest weighting (30%), emphasizing the importance of narrative completeness (orientation, complication, resolution) and logical story flow. Each aspect is weighted according to its contribution to the overall quality of the writing, based on the writing skill assessment standards according to Rifai et al. (2024) and Isna (2025). This rubric enables objective and comprehensive assessment of students' performance in writing English narratives. With indicators such as vocabulary variety, proper tense usage, and accuracy in spelling and punctuation, this rubric evaluates both the technical and stylistic aspects of writing.

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Table 3.5 Validity test from Students' Narrative Essay Writing Ability

No	Assessment Components	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	Keterangan
1	Content	0.923	0.000	Valid
2	Organization	0.563	0.000	Valid
3	Vocabulary	0.554	0.000	Valid
4	Language Use	0.819	0.000	Valid
5	Mechanics	0.555	0.000	Valid

Table 3.5 presents the validity test results for the five aspects of the writing assessment instrument. All components—content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics—have significant Pearson correlation coefficients (< 0.01) with the total score, with the "content" component showing the highest correlation (r = 0.923). This indicates that content quality is the dominant determinant in assessing students' narrative writing skills (Luo et al., 2024). The high validity of all aspects indicates that this assessment rubric successfully represents the construction of narrative writing skills. Thus, this instrument not only meets reliability standards but is also theoretically and empirically valid in evaluating students' writing abilities at the junior high school level (Ayu et al., 2023; Mathew, 2023).

Table 3.6 Reliability test from Students' Narrative Essay Writing Ability

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.648	.802	5

Based on the results of the reliability test on the narrative text writing instrument consisting of 5 items, Cronbach's Alpha values were obtained of 0.648 and 0.802 based on standardized items. A value of 0.648 indicates that the reliability of the instrument is in the category of sufficient or close to good, although it has not reached the general threshold of 0.70 which is often used as a minimum standard in social research. However, because the number of items is relatively small (only 5), it is still acceptable, especially if it is supported by a standard item-based Alpha value of 0.802 which is already in the high category.

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected during regular classroom sessions in two stages. First, students completed the reading interest questionnaire. Second, they performed a narrative writing task based on a given topic. All data collection procedures were conducted under the supervision of the researcher to ensure consistency and authenticity of responses.

This study also considered ethical aspects of research involving human participants. Prior to data collection, students were informed about the purpose of the study, and their participation was voluntary. Consent was obtained, and students' identities were kept anonymous to ensure confidentiality and protect their privacy.

Data Collection Techiques

The study employed two techniques: a questionnaire and a writing test. The questionnaire was used to measure students' reading interest as the independent variable, while the writing test was used to assess their narrative writing ability as the dependent variable. Both techniques are commonly used in quantitative educational research to obtain measurable and performance-based data (Creswell, n.d.; Sugiyono, 2013).

The table below summarizes the techniques, instruments, and objectives used in the data collection process:

Table 3.7 Data Collection Techniques

Technique	Instrument	Purpose	Data Type
Questionnaire	Reading Interest Questionnaire (10 items, Likert scale)	To measure students' attitudes, motivation, and behavior in reading English texts	Quantitative
Writing Test	Narrative Essay Task & Analytic Scoring Rubric	To assess students' ability to write coherent and structured narrative texts in English	Performanc e Score

These techniques were implemented sequentially under standardized conditions during classroom sessions to ensure reliability and control external variables. This methodological strategy aligns with the principles of structured, non-manipulative observation in correlational research (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012).

Data Analysis Techniques

The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive analysis was used to summarize students' reading interest and writing performance, including mean scores and standard deviations. Prior to inferential analysis, a normality test was conducted to ensure that the data met the assumptions required for parametric analysis.

Inferential analysis was carried out using Pearson product-moment correlation to examine the strength and direction of the relationship between reading interest and narrative writing skills. In addition, simple linear regression analysis was performed to determine whether reading interest significantly predicts students' writing performance. In this analysis, reading interest is treated as the predictor variable, and writing skill as the outcome variable, ensuring alignment with the conceptual framework of the study.

Although the main variables were not perfectly normally distributed, the regression model was considered acceptable because the residuals were normally distributed. Therefore, the use of parametric statistical analysis remains justified, and the results can be interpreted with appropriate caution.

Table 3.8 Prerequisite test based on Normality Test

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test		
		Unstandardized Residual
N		40
Normal Parameters[a,b]	Mean	.0000000
	Std. Deviation	3.57512044
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.124
	Positive	.106
	Negative	-.124

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Test Statistic				.124
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)[c]				**.125**
Monte Carlo Sig. (2-tailed)[d]	Sig.			.123
	99% Confidence Interval		Lower Bound	.114
			Upper Bound	.131
a. Test distribution is Normal.				
b. Calculated from data.				
c. Lilliefors Significance Correction.				
d. Lilliefors' method based on 10000 Monte Carlo samples with starting seed 926214481.				

Based on the results of the normality test using Kolmogorov-Smirnov on the non-standardized residual of the regression model, a significance value of 0.125 was obtained in Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) and 0.123 in Monte Carlo Sig. (2-tailed). Since the significance value is greater than the significance level of 0.05, it can be concluded that the residual distribution meets the assumption of normality. This means that there are no significant deviations from the normal distribution in the residual data. This shows that the regression model used in this study has fulfilled one of the basic assumptions in linear regression analysis, namely residual normality.

The fulfillment of this residual normality assumption is important because it provides validity to the model significance test and regression parameter estimation. Although it was previously found that the two main variables in the study, namely reading interest and the ability to write narrative texts, were not completely normally distributed, the regression model was still considered suitable for use as long as the residual of the model was normally distributed. Thus, it can be concluded that the results of regression analysis can be accepted and interpreted further to examine the relationship between the variables in this study.

3. Result

Students' Perceptions of Reading Interest

To explore students' perceptions of reading interest, a 10-item Likert-scale questionnaire was administered. The results revealed that the majority of students expressed positive attitudes toward reading in English. As shown in Table 4.1, statements related to enjoyment, vocabulary enrichment, and reading preferences received high agreement levels.

Table 4.1. Students' Perceptions of Reading Interest

Item	SA		A		N		D		SD		Mean	Level
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
I prefer to read books or other materials for personal pleasure (novels, folklore, etc)	7	17,5	18	45,0	14	35,0	1	2,5	0	0,00	3,77	High
I feel that reading makes me better understand new	9	22,5	17	42,5	13	32,5	0	0,00	1	2,5	3,83	High

vocabulary in English												
I love reading books or texts in English in my free time	0	0,00	5	12,5	32	80,0	2	5,0	1	2,5	3,03	Moderate
I read fictional stories (e.g. short stories or novels) in English regularly.	4	10,0	9	22,5	25	62,5	2	5,0	0	0,00	3,38	High
I prefer to read books rather than watch television or play gadgets.	0	0,00	8	20,0	28	70,0	4	20,0	0	0,00	3,10	High
I often visit libraries in search of English-language storybooks.	3	7,5	7	17,4	20	50,0	10	25,0	0	0,00	3,08	Moderate
I buy or borrow English-language narrative books on a regular basis	4	10,0	3	7,5	19	47,5	12	30,0	2	5,0	2,88	Moderate
I enjoy reading narrative texts such as short stories or novels.	2	5,0	11	27,5	23	57,5	3	7,5	1	2,5	3,25	High
I prefer to read in English rather than Indonesian	0	0,00	7	17,5	23	57,5	6	15,0	4	10,0	2,83	Moderate
I feel motivated to read when the topic interests me	6	15,0	22	55,0	9	22,5	3	7,5	0	0,00	3,77	High
I often visit libraries or use digital resources to read in English	2	5,0	8	20,0	23	57,5	7	17,5	0	0,00	3,13	High
I feel that reading more can improve my writing skills	6	15,0	18	45,0	15	37,5	1	2,5	0	0,00	3,73	High
I feel that reading affects ideas and creativity in writing	6	15,0	15	37,5	16	40,0	3	7,5	0	0,00	3,60	High
I feel that reading stories in English helps me write my own stories	2	5,0	16	40,0	18	45,0	3	7,5	1	2,5	3,38	High

The descriptive analysis of students' reading interest indicates that most students demonstrate a generally positive attitude toward reading in English. The overall mean scores suggest that students perceive reading as beneficial, particularly in improving vocabulary and supporting writing development. However, several indicators, such as reading habits during leisure time and access to reading materials, fall into the moderate category, indicating that reading has not yet become a consistent routine for all students.

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Rather than merely describing individual questionnaire items, these findings suggest that students' reading interest is situational and influenced by factors such as topic attractiveness and accessibility of materials. This implies that although students recognize the value of reading, their engagement may depend on external conditions.

Table 4.2. Students' Score of Writing Skill

Score		Frequency	Percent
Valid	63	4	10,0
	65	2	5,0
	68	1	2,5
	73	13	32,5
	76	1	2,5
	78	11	27,5
	80	2	5,0
	81	1	2,5
	84	1	2,5
	85	3	7,5
	87	1	2,5
	Total	40	100,0

Table 4.3. Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Content	40	15	25	21.67	3.569
Organization	40	15	18	15.62	1.170
Vocabulary	40	15	18	15.35	.921
Language Use	40	15	25	19.25	2.133
Mechanics	40	3	4	3.10	.304
Scores (students' narrative writing skill)	40	63	87	75.00	6.381
Valid N (listwise)	40				

The results show that students' narrative writing performance is generally at a moderate to high level, with a mean score of 75.00. Most students achieved scores within a relatively narrow range, indicating a fairly homogeneous level of writing ability.

Across assessment aspects, students performed best in content development, suggesting that they are able to generate and organize ideas effectively. However, relatively lower variation in vocabulary and language use indicates that linguistic proficiency remains a limiting factor. This suggests that while students can construct narrative structures, their expressive ability in English still requires improvement.

Table 4.4. T-Test

Coefficients[a]					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.085	6.841		.305	.762
Score (Narrative Text Writing Skills)	.599	.091	.730	6.589	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Score (Reading Interest)					

The inferential analysis revealed a Pearson correlation coefficient of r = 0.730 (p = 0.000), indicating a strong and statistically significant positive relationship between students' reading interest and their narrative writing skills. This means that students with higher levels of reading interest tend to achieve better performance in narrative writing.

Further analysis using simple linear regression showed that reading interest significantly predicts students' writing ability. This finding confirms that reading interest contributes meaningfully to writing performance, supporting the assumption that increased exposure to reading enhances students' ability to produce structured and coherent texts.

It is important to note that although earlier analysis indicated minor deviations from normality in the raw data, the regression model met the assumption of residual normality. Therefore, the use of parametric statistical analysis remains appropriate, and the results can be interpreted reliably.

4. Discussion

Students' Reading Interest and Its Influence

The findings indicate that students generally demonstrate moderate to high levels of reading interest, which plays a significant role in supporting their narrative writing skills. This result is consistent with previous studies suggesting that reading engagement contributes to vocabulary development, language exposure, and comprehension of text structures (Fitria, 2024; Pratiwi & Mayrita, 2023). However, beyond confirming this relationship, it is essential to understand the underlying mechanism of how reading interest influences writing ability.

From a theoretical perspective, this relationship can be explained through Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1989), which posits that language acquisition occurs when learners are exposed to meaningful input. Students who are more interested in reading tend to engage more frequently with texts, allowing them to internalize vocabulary, grammar, and narrative patterns. This internalized knowledge is then transformed into written output, explaining why higher reading interest is associated with better writing performance.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that reading interest is not entirely stable but influenced by external factors such as topic relevance and access to reading materials. This indicates that students' engagement in reading activities may increase when instructional strategies align with their interests. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the relationship identified in this study is correlational in nature and does not imply direct causation.

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Narrative Writing Performance

The analysis of students' narrative writing performance shows that most students achieved moderate to high scores, particularly in content and organization. This suggests that students are generally capable of generating ideas and structuring narratives effectively. However, limitations are still evident in aspects such as vocabulary and language use, indicating that linguistic competence remains a challenge.

This pattern can be explained by the role of reading as a source of linguistic input. Students who frequently read narrative texts are more likely to be familiar with story structures and expressions, which supports their ability to organize ideas in writing. However, limited exposure to diverse vocabulary and complex sentence structures may restrict their ability to express ideas more elaborately. This explains why improvements in writing are more visible in structural aspects than in linguistic richness.

In line with reciprocal literacy theory (Heller, 1999), reading and writing are interdependent processes. Students who engage more in reading activities develop better writing skills because they are exposed to models of effective language use. However, it is important to critically acknowledge that other factors, such as teaching methods, practice frequency, and feedback, may also influence writing performance. Therefore, reading interest should be seen as one of several contributing factors rather than the sole determinant of writing ability.

Pedagogical Implications

The findings of this study have important implications for teaching practices, particularly in English language instruction at the junior high school level. Since reading interest is shown to be significantly associated with writing performance, fostering students' engagement in reading activities should be considered a key instructional strategy.

Teachers are encouraged to integrate reading and writing activities, especially through the use of narrative texts that are relevant and engaging for students. By providing meaningful and interesting reading materials, teachers can enhance students' motivation to read, which in turn supports their writing development through increased language exposure.

Additionally, instructional practices should focus not only on increasing reading frequency but also on guiding students to actively process and reflect on what they read. Activities such as summarizing, analyzing story structures, and rewriting narratives can help students transform reading input into writing output more effectively.

However, it is also important to consider the limitations of this study, particularly the small sample size and specific context. Therefore, while the findings provide useful insights, further research is needed to explore the effectiveness of integrated reading–writing instruction in broader educational settings.

5. Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that there is a significant and positive relationship between students' reading interest and their ability to write narrative essays in English. Students who demonstrate higher levels of interest in reading—especially English narrative texts—tend to possess better writing skills in terms

of idea organization, vocabulary use, grammar accuracy, and narrative structure such as orientation, complication, and resolution. This supports the theoretical frameworks proposed by Krashen (1992) and Heller (1999), which emphasize the reciprocal nature of reading and writing skills.

Reading not only enhances students' language exposure but also helps them internalize patterns and expressions commonly found in narrative texts, which in turn facilitates the writing process. Therefore, increasing students' reading engagement is a strategic and foundational step to improving their narrative writing proficiency, as it cultivates both cognitive and affective literacy competencies necessary for academic success.

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