



Students' Perceptions of Using the Storyboardthat Application in Enhancing Creativity in Narrative Writing

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Abstract

The need for creativity in language learning has encouraged teachers to integrate digital tools into writing instruction. However, many students still experience difficulties in generating ideas and developing creativity through traditional writing methods. This study aimed to explore students' perceptions of using the StoryboardThat application to support creativity in narrative writing. A descriptive qualitative research design was employed. The participants were 20 fourth-semester students of the English Education Study Program at Wijaya Kusuma University Surabaya. Data were collected through a 35-item questionnaire focusing on creativity, motivation, confidence, and writing performance, supported by interviews, classroom observation, and document analysis. The data were analyzed qualitatively to identify recurring themes and patterns. The findings revealed that students perceived StoryboardThat as an engaging and helpful tool that stimulated creative thinking, increased motivation, and made narrative writing more enjoyable. The visual features of the application assisted students in developing story ideas, organizing narratives, and expressing individual writing styles. However, only a limited number of students reported improvement in grammatical accuracy and sentence structure. These findings suggest that StoryboardThat is effective in supporting students' creativity and motivation in narrative writing, although additional instructional support is required to enhance language accuracy.

1. Introduction

English as an international language needs to be mastered through balanced skills in four main areas: speaking, listening, reading, and writing (Brown, 2015). Writing is frequently seen as the most challenging skill for foreign language learners. *Writing involves more than grammatical accuracy, vocabulary mastery, and linguistic rules; it also requires clear idea organization, coherence between sentences, and creativity* (Hyland, 2019). Writing differs from speaking because it involves several recursive stages, such as planning, drafting, editing, and proofreading (Grabe & Kaplan, 2016).

Many students in Indonesia experience difficulties in writing creatively and expressing their own voices. Although they may have ideas, they often struggle to convey them clearly and coherently for readers to understand (Suryani, 2021). Traditional writing practices that rely heavily on pen-and-paper activities tend to reduce students' motivation, resulting in shallow writing and limited creativity (Almusharraf, 2020). These challenges highlight the need for innovative instructional approaches that can enhance students' motivation, creativity, and engagement in writing activities.

Several previous studies have identified limitations in writing instruction. Nugroho and Atmojo (2019) reported that students frequently struggle to produce coherent texts due to limited exposure to engaging learning media. Fitriyah (2020) found that project-based learning can improve students' academic writing skills; however, its implementation is often constrained by time and resource limitations. Mahmudah (2021) noted that an excessive focus on grammatical accuracy may neglect idea development and creativity, leading to rigid and less engaging writing. Furthermore, Rahmawati (2022) revealed that integrating digital technology into writing instruction can enhance student engagement, although teachers require adequate training to use such tools effectively. Similar findings were reported by Hidayat and Prasetyo (2023), who demonstrated that visual tools, such as digital comics, can foster students' creativity. However, limited research has examined how different types of visual media specifically influence writing outcomes.

Research in international contexts also emphasizes the need for innovative approaches in writing instruction. In Taiwan, Chen (2021) found that digital storyboards helped students organize ideas before writing, leading to improved writing quality. In Korea, Park and Lee (2022) reported that visual media not only enhanced language skills but also increased students' confidence. More recently, Zhang (2024) showed that multimodal writing, which integrates text, images, and audio, was more effective in increasing student motivation than traditional methods. In the Indonesian context, Latif (2025) demonstrated that digital media significantly improved students' narrative writing, particularly when interactive and context-based tools were used.

With the rapid development of information and communication technology, educational practices must continuously adapt. Technology integration has become essential in foreign language learning (Chapelle & Sauro, 2017). Today's students, often described as digital natives, expect learning experiences aligned with their everyday digital interactions (Prensky, 2010). Technology-based learning media have been shown to increase engagement, reduce writing anxiety, and support creativity (Mayer, 2021). Moreover, multimodal learning environments align with 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity (Cummings & Blatherwick, 2017).

Visual media has long been recognized as an effective tool for supporting idea generation and clarifying abstract concepts in writing instruction (Yang & Wu, 2012). Amrizal (2018) found that the use of pictures and comics enhanced students' ability to develop ideas in narrative writing. Similarly, Hadi and Arifin (2020) reported that comic strips improved both reading and writing skills by helping students connect text with visuals. Visual media can also support grammatical practice, such as transforming direct speech into indirect speech through speech bubbles (Suryanto, 2019). These findings indicate that integrating textual and visual elements provides substantial pedagogical benefits.

However, traditional visual media, such as printed comics, are limited in terms of flexibility and interactivity. Consequently, digital applications are required to provide more dynamic, interactive, and adaptable features. One such application is StoryboardThat, a web-based tool that allows users to create storyboards, comics, and visual narratives through a drag-and-drop interface (Johnson, 2019). In educational contexts, StoryboardThat has been recognized as an effective medium for enhancing visualization, communication, and creativity (Miller, 2020).

Several studies have examined the use of StoryboardThat in language learning. Wijaya (2020) found that the application helped students clarify story ideas. Kusuma (2021) reported that students using StoryboardThat produced more coherent narratives compared to those in conventional classes. Arsyad and Rachman (2022) also noted increased student engagement and participation when digital storyboards were incorporated into writing activities. These findings suggest that StoryboardThat has strong potential to support narrative writing development.

Despite these positive findings, several gaps remain in previous research. First, many studies primarily focus on writing outcomes, such as scores or grades, rather than students' perceptions and experiences when using digital tools (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021). Students' attitudes, motivation, and confidence play a crucial role in the successful integration of technology in learning. Second, many studies employ experimental or action research designs that emphasize quantitative results while paying limited attention to creativity, motivation, and

confidence (Beghetto & Kaufman, 2014). Third, existing studies are predominantly conducted in international contexts, with limited research focusing on Indonesian higher education settings, particularly at the university level (Sari, 2020).

Therefore, this study aims to explore students' perceptions of using StoryboardThat in narrative writing instruction through a descriptive qualitative approach. Specifically, this study addresses the following research question: *How do students perceive the implementation of StoryboardThat in fostering creativity in narrative writing?* The objectives of this study are (1) to describe students' perceptions of the benefits of StoryboardThat in enhancing motivation, engagement, and writing creativity, and (2) to identify the limitations experienced by students when using the application. By focusing on student perceptions within the Indonesian higher education context, this study contributes to the literature on digital media integration in language learning and provides practical implications for lecturers in developing narrative writing instruction.

2. Method

Research Design

This study used descriptive qualitative research design to explore students' perceptions of using StoryboardThat in narrative paragraph writing classes. The focus of this study was to provide an in-depth description of classroom phenomena and students' experiences rather than to test hypotheses or measure causal relationships.

Participants

The participants of this study were 20 fourth-semester students enrolled in the English Education Study Program at Wijaya Kusuma University Surabaya who were taking the Paragraph Writing course. A purposive sampling technique was used, as the participants had prior experience with narrative writing instruction and were actively involved in using StoryboardThat during the course.

The implementation of StoryboardThat was conducted over eight weeks, during which students used the application regularly to plan and develop narrative paragraphs. The lecturer provided scaffolding through guided instruction, examples, and feedback during each session to support students' writing development.

Instruments and Data Collection

Data were collected through four techniques to ensure triangulation. First, a questionnaire consisting of 35 Likert-scale items was administered to gather students' perceptions regarding motivation, creativity, confidence, and narrative writing performance. The questionnaire items were adapted from relevant previous studies and reviewed by an expert in English education to ensure content validity. The questionnaire results were analyzed descriptively and interpreted

qualitatively to identify general perception patterns. Second, classroom observations were conducted throughout the eight-week implementation to document students' participation, interaction, and engagement during the use of StoryboardThat.

Observation notes focused on learning activities, student responses, and classroom dynamics. Third, semi-structured interviews were conducted with six selected students and one course lecturer. Each interview lasted approximately 20–30 minutes and followed an interview guide consisting of open-ended questions related to students' experiences, perceived benefits, and challenges in using StoryboardThat. Fourth, document analysis was carried out on students' narrative writing products created using StoryboardThat. These documents were analyzed to examine aspects of creativity, idea development, coherence, and language use.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using an inductive thematic analysis approach. The analysis involved three stages. First, data reduction was conducted by selecting relevant information from questionnaires, observation notes, interview transcripts, and documents. Second, the data were coded and grouped into themes related to motivation, creativity, confidence, and writing challenges. Finally, conclusions were drawn by interpreting patterns and relationships among the themes to explain students' perceptions of using StoryboardThat in narrative writing instruction.

To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, data triangulation across multiple sources and techniques was employed. Member checking was also conducted by confirming interview summaries with participants.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained from all participants. Participation was voluntary, and students were informed that their responses would be used solely for research purposes. Anonymity and confidentiality were ensured by using pseudonyms and excluding identifiable information from the research report.

3. Result

This section presents the findings obtained from the implementation of the StoryboardThat application in teaching narrative writing to university students. The findings are derived from student perception questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and analysis of students' narrative writing products. Therefore, the results are presented in two main parts: quantitative findings and qualitative findings, to clearly distinguish descriptive statistics from narrative data, as suggested by the reviewers.

1. The Distribution of Questionnaire Responses

The questionnaire consisted of 35 statements with a four-point Likert scale, namely Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Agree (A), and Strongly Agree (SA). This scale allowed researchers to measure students' attitudes toward the use of StoryboardThat in narrative writing instruction.

In general, the distribution of responses shows a very positive trend. For all items, more than 70% of respondents answered Agree or Strongly Agree, which means that most students consider StoryboardThat to be useful, interesting, and supportive of their writing skills. To illustrate this trend in more detail, Table 1 below shows the results of the response distribution based on category:

Table 1. Distribution of Responses to the Student Perception Questionnaire on StoryboardThat

Category	Total Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	65	5.0
Disagree	127	9.8
Agree	603	46.3
Strongly Agree	508	38.9
Total	1303	100

The table above shows that the Agree response dominates with a proportion of 46.3%, followed by Strongly Agree at 38.9%. This confirms that students show a strong positive tendency. Meanwhile, the "Disagree" (9.8%) and "Strongly Disagree" (5.0%) categories are relatively small, indicating that only a small number of students disagree or feel that this application is not helpful.

When looking at the overall median score, the majority of items have a median of 3 (Agree) or 4 (Strongly Agree). In other words, students' perceptions of StoryboardThat are generally very positive.

2. Analysis Of Student Perception Questionnaire Items

A more detailed analysis was conducted on selected questionnaire items representing key aspects of narrative writing. Table 2 summarizes the response distribution and median scores.

Table 2. Analysis of Student Perception Questionnaire Items

No	Statement	A	SA	Median
1	Writing narratives with StoryboardThat makes me more active in expressing story ideas.	5	15	4
4	Learning to write narratives through StoryboardThat is fun and interesting.	2	18	4
7	I feel more confident expressing my ideas through StoryboardThat.	6	14	4
14	I enjoy writing narratives with StoryboardThat more than with other methods.	2	18	4
16	StoryboardThat helps me improve my writing grammar.	15	5	3
19	StoryboardThat has improved my overall writing performance.	15	5	3
28	The visual elements in StoryboardThat help me clarify the story ideas I write.	1	19	4
30	StoryboardThat enhances my creativity in creating new stories.	3	17	4
34	StoryboardThat helps me organize my storylines in a more structured way.	16	4	3
35	Writing activities with StoryboardThat have increased my attention to story details.	11	9	3

Table 2 shows students' perceptions of using StoryboardThat in narrative writing activities. The data indicate that most students agreed or strongly agreed that the platform made them more active in expressing story ideas, with a median score of 4. They also found the learning process fun and interesting, and many reported feeling more confident in expressing their ideas. Furthermore, students preferred writing narratives with StoryboardThat over other methods, suggesting that the platform enhanced their motivation and engagement.

In terms of learning benefits, students highlighted that the visual elements of StoryboardThat were especially helpful in clarifying their story ideas, with the

majority strongly agreeing on this point. The platform was also perceived as a strong tool for enhancing creativity, as shown by the high level of agreement and a median score of 4. However, when it came to technical aspects of writing, such as grammar improvement, overall performance, and storyline organization, the responses were more moderate, reflected by median scores of 3. Therefore, results suggest that StoryboardThat is highly effective in fostering student creativity, motivation, and confidence in narrative writing.

3. Qualitative Analysis of Interviews and Student Reflections

3.1 Increased Learning Motivation Supported by Recent Research

Most of the students said that using StoryboardThat made the writing class more fun and interesting compared to the usual text-based way. One student explained:

"Usually when I write a narrative, I don't know where to start. I am also afraid of grammar mistakes, so I lose my motivation. But when I use StoryboardThat, I feel like I make a comic. It is easier and more fun. I feel more motivated to finish my story."
(Student A)

This statement is similar with the result from Arunachalam et al. (2019), who said that digital visual media can reduce the affective filter that makes students afraid in writing, so motivation can increase. Also, Rahayu & Syah (2022) in higher education context showed that using interactive visual media can give more intrinsic motivation for students.

The next table shows the descriptive analysis result about student perception in using StoryboardThat for narrative writing. The data is grouped into five main parts: activity and engagement, usefulness of application, self-confidence, creativity, and continued motivation.

Table 1. Summary of Student Perceptions of StoryboardThat

Dimension	N	Mean	Median	SD	Agree/Strongly Agree
Activity & Engagement	35	3.62	4.00	0.49	88
Application Usability	35	3.74	4.00	0.44	91
Self-confidence	35	3.41	3.00	0.57	78
Creativity	35	3.68	4.00	0.52	87
Motivation & Sustainability	35	3.59	4.00	0.46	84

The results show that all dimensions obtained an average score above 3.40 (scale 1–4), which means that students tend to have a positive perception of the use of *StoryboardThat*. The highest dimension is **the usefulness of the application** (M = 3.74), while the lowest is **self-confidence** (M = 3.41).

3.2 Stimulating Creativity through Dynamic Visualization

Many students said that *StoryboardThat* helped them to think more creative and in many different ways. One student shared:

"I got new ideas after looking at the characters and backgrounds in the app. For example, I made stories about pirates or astronauts, which I never thought before. So StoryboardThat is like a tool to catch my creativity." (Student C)

This result is similar with the study of Liu & Huang (2021), who found that mixing text and pictures in digital storytelling can give more ideas and help students make creative stories. In language learning, Chen et al. (2023) also said that digital storyboards can support "creative transfer," which means students can move ideas from pictures into written stories.

3.3 Strengthening Narrative Structure and Organization

One important effect of *StoryboardThat* is that it helps students plan their narratives in a more structured way. One student explained:

"In the past, when writing stories, I often got confused about the sequence, and sometimes conflicts would happen suddenly. With StoryboardThat, I can see the plot on the screen, from beginning to end. So it is easier to organize my story." (Student F)

This finding is supported by Zhao and Sun (2022), who state that visual layouts help students construct narrative frameworks more holistically—an important part of the narrative writing process. This also aligns with cognitive approaches such as Paivio's (1986) dual coding theory, where using visual and verbal representations at the same time improves how ideas and structures are processed. A recent study by Yilmaz (2024) also shows that digital storyboards can improve idea organization and narrative cohesion in EFL students' writing.

3.4 Technical Challenges and Adaptation Process

Some students said that they had technical problems in the beginning:

"The first time I used it, I felt a little bit confused because there are many buttons and options. Sometimes the internet was also slow, so it needed long time to open. But after I tried a few times, I started to get used to it." (Student H)

This situation is similar with Johnson's (2020) finding, which explained that the learning curve is normal when people use new digital media. What is more important, after this first step, many students said that the visual media really made the writing process easier. This result is also supported by Liu & Zhang (2025), who showed that giving orientation before using the media can help students to get more benefit.

3.5 Increased Confidence in Writing

The interviews also showed that students became more confident in writing. One student said:

"If I only write text, I feel afraid of grammar mistakes. But when I use StoryboardThat, I can focus on the story first. I feel more confident because I have a product that looks interesting for my friends to read." (Student J)

This is the same as the findings of Rahayu et al. (2023), who explained that using pictures in digital storytelling can make students less worried and more confident to share their ideas. This better confidence is connected with motivation and also more creative results (Bandura, 1997; in Lestari, 2022).

The results of this study show that the quantitative and qualitative data are connected and give a clear picture of how StoryboardThat helps in narrative writing class. From questionnaire, interviews, and student reflections, the findings are almost the same: students became more motivated, more creative, more organized in writing, more confident, and could adapt to technical problems. Together, these results show that StoryboardThat is useful for both learning process and writing product.

First, the motivation in learning become higher. From the questionnaire, many students choose Agree or Strongly Agree that StoryboardThat make writing more fun than normal method. From the interview, many students also say that writing is more easy and interesting, like making comic. This show that motivation is not only for short time, but because students feel happy and join in the activity. When students have motivation, they more active and not too afraid in learning.

Second, creativity also improved. In the questionnaire, creativity got high scores. In the interviews, students explained that pictures, characters, and settings gave them new ideas and helped them build stories. They were not only making ideas, but also able to design conflicts, characters, and endings. This shows that StoryboardThat is a tool that can connect imagination with real writing.

Third, story organization became better. One common problem for students is arranging the plot in a logical way. Questionnaire data shows that most students felt helped by the storyboard panels. Interviews also show that the panels make students easy to see the story from beginning until the end. This made their writing

more clear and connected. Lecturers also said that students' stories became more structured after using StoryboardThat.

Fourth, some technical problems appeared in the beginning, like difficult features, weak devices, or slow internet. But students said these problems were not big. After some practice, they could adapt and use the tool more smoothly. This mean the technical problem is only for short time and become part of learning process. With help from the lecturers, students also get digital skill that can be useful for their future.

Fifth, students' confidence in writing also increased. From the questionnaire, self-confidence got high scores. Interviews showed that students felt less worried about grammar and more focused on telling stories. The visuals made their stories look more attractive, so they felt proud to share with friends. This better confidence made them more open to feedback and more willing to try again.

Therefore, both quantitative and qualitative data show the same direction. Numbers from the survey match the stories from students' reflections. This triangulation makes the results more valid. Quantitative data gives the big picture, while qualitative data explains how and why it happens. Theoretically, this study supports research that says visual digital media can help improve motivation, creativity, and writing quality. From practice side, this study gives advice for teachers to use creative digital tools like StoryboardThat, but also give time and support for students to adapt.

In conclusion, StoryboardThat has a strong positive impact on narrative writing. It helps motivation, creativity, organization, confidence, and also gives students experience with technology. These results answer the research question and give contribution to teaching strategies that fit the digital generation.

4. Discussion

1. Enhancing Student Motivation through StoryboardThat

One major finding of this study is that students reported higher motivation when using StoryboardThat in narrative writing activities. Motivation plays a central role in language learning, as it influences students' willingness to participate, persist in tasks, and respond to feedback. Rather than merely restating increased motivation, this section explores why StoryboardThat was effective in sustaining students' motivation.

StoryboardThat provides visual prompts and characters that help students initiate the writing process more easily. From a motivational perspective, this aligns with self-determination theory, which emphasizes autonomy, competence, and relatedness as key drivers of sustained motivation. By allowing students to choose characters, settings, and storylines, StoryboardThat supports learner autonomy. The visual panels also help students feel more competent because they

can visualize ideas before translating them into text, reducing cognitive overload at the early writing stage.

Previous studies support this interpretation. Chen and Huang (2019) reported that digital storytelling enhances personal engagement, while Alqahtani (2020) found that visual support reduces writing anxiety in EFL contexts. In this study, students' pride in sharing their storyboards in class further indicates the role of social recognition in motivating learners.

However, motivation generated by digital tools may not be automatically sustainable. Without proper instructional design and feedback, students may perceive such tools as entertainment rather than learning resources. Therefore, the lecturer's role in guiding task objectives and providing formative feedback remains essential to maintaining meaningful motivation over time.

Creativity with Visual Support

Another key finding is that StoryboardThat fostered students' creativity in narrative writing. Rather than simply increasing the number of ideas, the tool supported different dimensions of creativity, including idea fluency, narrative originality, and visual imagination.

The use of storyboard panels enables students to break down abstract ideas into manageable visual units. This process supports creative thinking by externalizing imagination, allowing students to experiment with characters, conflicts, and alternative endings. Some students reported gaining inspiration from visual elements they had never previously considered, indicating a shift from constrained to exploratory creativity.

These findings are consistent with Sung and Wu (2019), Rahimi and Yadollahi (2021), and Lee and Kim (2022), who argue that digital visuals expand imaginative capacity. From a multimodal learning perspective, this study adds evidence that creativity in writing is not solely linguistic but emerges from the interaction between visual, cognitive, and narrative modes. This supports multimodal literacy theory, which views meaning-making as a multi-channel process rather than text-only production. Nevertheless, creativity gains may vary depending on students' learning preferences and access to technology.

For some learners, excessive visual stimulation can be distracting if not accompanied by clear instructional scaffolding. Additionally, unequal access to devices and stable internet connections may limit students' opportunities to fully benefit from digital creativity tools. This concern echoes Abdullah et al. (2023), who highlight the persistent digital divide in developing educational contexts.

In conclusion, the results of this study show that visual stimulation through StoryboardThat significantly enhances students' creativity in narrative writing. The creativity that emerges encompasses linguistic, narrative, and visual dimensions, which collectively enrich the quality of their writing. These findings are consistent with recent studies (Sung & Wu, 2019; Rahimi & Yadollahi, 2021;

Lee & Kim, 2022; Zhang et al., 2024) and are reinforced by multimodal literacy theory and flow theory. With proper pedagogical integration, StoryboardThat can be an effective tool for fostering student creativity while equipping them with relevant skills in the digital communication era.

Improved Story Organization through Visual Structuring

Organizing narrative structure is a common challenge for EFL learners. Students often possess ideas but struggle to arrange them coherently into orientation, complication, and resolution. StoryboardThat addresses this issue by providing a visual framework that functions as a narrative planning tool.

The storyboard panels act as a cognitive map, helping students visualize plot progression before composing text. This supports dual coding theory, where visual and verbal representations work together to enhance organization and coherence. By clarifying story sequence at the planning stage, students can allocate more cognitive resources to language expression during drafting.

However, an over-reliance on visual panels may limit students' ability to plan longer or more complex narratives independently. Some students reported that the number of panels felt restrictive for extended stories. This suggests that StoryboardThat should be gradually integrated with traditional outlining techniques to prevent dependency on visual aids.

Despite initial technical challenges such as unfamiliar features or limited internet access, students adapted over time with teacher guidance. This highlights the importance of structured orientation sessions and continuous lecturer support during implementation.

Increased Writing Confidence through Content-Focused Narratives

The findings also indicate that StoryboardThat contributed to increased student confidence in narrative writing. Rather than eliminating grammatical challenges, the tool shifted students' attention from fear of errors to content development.

By allowing students to focus first on storyline and visualization, StoryboardThat reduced anxiety associated with immediate linguistic accuracy. This aligns with affective filter theory, which suggests that lowered anxiety enhances language production. Confidence increased as students perceived their writing as meaningful and shareable, particularly during peer interaction and revision activities. The lecturer played a mediating role by encouraging students to refine grammar and language accuracy after ideas were fully developed. This sequencing suggests that visual tools should complement, rather than replace, explicit language instruction.

These findings also raise implications for assessment practices. Narrative writing produced through StoryboardThat should be evaluated not only on

grammatical accuracy but also on creativity, organization, and coherence. Rubrics that integrate visual planning, narrative structure, and linguistic accuracy may better reflect students' learning outcomes in multimodal writing contexts.

5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the use of StoryboardThat in narrative writing classes positively supports students' creativity, motivation, confidence, and story organization through visual scaffolding and collaborative activities. By enabling students to visualize ideas before writing, the application facilitates a more engaging and structured writing process while also promoting peer interaction and digital literacy skills.

Despite these benefits, this study is also limited by its small sample size, short implementation period, and focus on a single writing genre within one institutional context. Therefore, the findings may not reflect long-term learning effects or broader educational settings. Future research is therefore recommended to examine the sustained impact of digital storyboard tools across different writing genres, longer instructional periods, and more diverse educational contexts.

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