

## Developing EFL Student's Narrative Writing through Storybird Application

 <https://doi.org/10.31004/jele.v11i3.2387>

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### ABSTRACT

Writing is one of the most challenging skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning because it requires students to combine language knowledge, idea development, and organization at the same time. Many students still experience difficulties in starting their writing, developing ideas, and organizing their stories into a clear structure. This study aims to investigate the implementation of the Storybird application in teaching narrative writing and to describe how students' narrative writing skills develop through its use. This research employed a qualitative design conducted at MTs Raudhatul Hasaniyah involving 14 students. Data were collected through classroom observation, interviews, and document analysis of students' narrative texts. The findings showed that Storybird helped students generate ideas more easily, organize their narratives better, and become more engaged in writing activities. The visual prompts provided by the application supported students in developing coherent stories and increased their confidence in writing. The learning process also became more interactive and enjoyable. These results indicate that Storybird is an effective tool to support the development of students' narrative writing skills in EFL classrooms.

**Keywords:** *EFL Writing, Narrative Writing, Storybird Digital Storytelling, Writing Skills.*

#### Article History:

Received 16<sup>th</sup> April 2026

Accepted 10<sup>th</sup> May 2026

Published 19<sup>th</sup> May 2026



## INTRODUCTION

Writing is widely recognized as one of the most complex skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning because it requires students to integrate multiple components of language simultaneously. Students are expected to combine grammar, vocabulary, idea development, and organization in order to produce meaningful texts. In practice, many students still experience significant difficulties in writing. As explained by Ferdiyanto (2024), students often struggle to express their ideas and organize them into coherent paragraphs, which makes writing a demanding task. These difficulties are more evident in EFL contexts where students have limited exposure to English, resulting in low confidence and low motivation in writing activities.

The challenges in writing are not only related to linguistic competence but also to the instructional approaches used in the classroom. In many situations, writing instruction still emphasizes the final product rather than the writing process itself. According to Marlina (2024), this approach causes students to focus more on grammatical accuracy than on developing ideas. As a result, students tend to hesitate when writing because they are afraid of making mistakes. This condition leads to low participation and weak engagement in writing activities. Therefore, writing instruction needs to be supported by more interactive and meaningful strategies that can help students express their ideas more freely.

Narrative writing is one of the essential genres taught in secondary education because it enables students to express their imagination, experiences, and creativity through storytelling. Writing a narrative text requires students to organize events in a logical sequence and maintain coherence throughout the story. Zainuddin (2024) explain that many students still encounter

difficulties in organizing narrative structures, especially in developing orientation, complication, and resolution. This problem indicates that students need support not only in language use but also in structuring their ideas into a clear narrative form.

The development of digital technology has brought significant changes in the field of education. Digital media are increasingly used to create more engaging and interactive learning environments. According to Zainuddin et al., (2025), digital media can improve students' participation and help them understand learning materials more effectively. In writing instruction, digital tools can assist students in generating ideas and organizing their thoughts. Research conducted by Miao et al., (2024) shows that the integration of digital media in language learning significantly improves students' engagement and writing performance.

One approach that has gained attention in recent years is digital storytelling. Digital storytelling combines written text with visual elements such as images and illustrations, allowing students to construct stories in a more creative way. Yeh et al (2024) found that students who used digital storytelling showed improvement in idea organization and coherence in writing. At the same time, this approach encourages students to participate actively and express their ideas more confidently. Digital storytelling also helps students connect abstract ideas with visual representations. Safitri and Kuning (2024) argue that visual support plays an important role in helping students generate ideas and develop narratives. When students are provided with images, they can more easily imagine story events and organize them into a meaningful sequence. This makes the writing process less difficult and more enjoyable.

One of the digital tools that can be used in storytelling is Storybird. Storybird provides visual illustrations that can be used as prompts for writing. Islam (2023) explain that visual prompts help students reduce confusion when starting to write because they already have a clear context for their stories. This allows students to focus more on developing ideas rather than worrying about how to begin their writing.

The use of Storybird also influences students' motivation in writing activities. (Islam, 2023) state that students tend to be more active and enthusiastic when learning involves visual and interactive media. In this case, Storybird creates a more engaging learning environment where students feel more comfortable expressing their ideas. This condition encourages students to participate actively and improves their overall learning experience.

Students' confidence in writing is another important aspect influenced by digital storytelling tools. Ivan & Hakim (2024) explain that many students feel insecure when writing in English due to limited vocabulary and grammar knowledge. By using Storybird, students can rely on visual support to guide their writing, which reduces anxiety and increases confidence. As a result, students become more willing to write and take risks in expressing their ideas.

Although many studies have discussed digital storytelling, most of them focus on general writing improvement or students' motivation. Ferdiantos (2024) highlight that there is still limited research that specifically examines how digital tools support the development of narrative writing aspects such as idea development, organization, and structure in real classroom settings. This gap shows the need for further research that provides a deeper understanding of how Storybird can be implemented effectively in EFL classrooms.

Based on these considerations, this study focuses on the implementation of the Storybird application in teaching narrative writing and how it supports the development of students' writing skills. This study is expected to provide a clearer description of how digital storytelling can help students generate ideas, organize narratives, and improve their writing performance in EFL learning contexts.

## METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore the implementation of the Storybird application in teaching narrative writing and to describe the development of students' writing skills. A qualitative approach was chosen because this study focused on understanding the learning process and students' experiences during the implementation of the digital storytelling tool in the classroom. The research was conducted at MTs Raudhatul Hasaniyah. The participants of this study were 14 students of the eighth grade. The participants were selected because they had difficulties in narrative writing, particularly in generating ideas, organizing stories, and expressing their thoughts in written form. This study was carried out during several classroom meetings in which the Storybird application was integrated into the teaching and learning process.

The data of this study were collected through three techniques: classroom observation, interviews, and document analysis. Observation was conducted to examine students' participation, engagement, and interaction during the learning process. The researcher observed how students responded to the use of Storybird and how the application influenced their writing activities. Interviews were conducted with selected students to gain deeper insights into their experiences, perceptions, and difficulties in using Storybird for narrative writing. Document analysis was used to analyze students' narrative texts in order to identify the development of their writing skills, particularly in terms of idea development, organization, and narrative structure.

The data were analyzed using qualitative data analysis techniques, which included data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing Jellema et al (2023). In the data reduction stage, the researcher selected and focused on relevant data related to students' writing development. The data were then organized and presented in a descriptive form to make them easier to interpret. Finally, conclusions were drawn based on the patterns and findings obtained from the data analysis.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, this study applied triangulation techniques by comparing data obtained from observation, interviews, and document analysis. This triangulation process helped to validate the findings and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem.

### Data Source

The data of this study were obtained from primary and secondary sources. The primary data came from 14 eighth-grade students of MTs Raudhatul Hasaniyah who were directly involved in the learning process using the Storybird application. These students were selected because they experienced the implementation of digital storytelling in narrative writing activities. In qualitative research, participants are considered the main source of data since they provide real insights into the learning process (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Their responses, participation, and experiences during classroom activities became the main focus of this study.

The teacher was also involved as a supporting data source to provide additional information about the teaching process and classroom conditions. The teacher's role helped to explain how the Storybird application was implemented and how students responded during the learning activities. This aligns with the idea that using more than one data source can strengthen the credibility of qualitative research findings (Cindy et al., 2022).

The secondary data were taken from students' narrative writing products created during the learning process. These documents were analyzed to identify the development of students' writing skills, especially in idea development, organization, and narrative structure. As stated by Miles et al., (2014), document analysis provides direct evidence of participants' performance and supports the overall findings of the study.

### Data Collection Technique

The data in this study were collected through observation, interviews, and document analysis. These techniques were used to obtain comprehensive information about the implementation of the Storybird application in teaching narrative writing.

Observation was conducted during the teaching and learning process in the classroom. The researcher observed students' participation, interaction, and responses while using Storybird in writing activities. This technique helped to capture real classroom situations and students' behavior during the learning process (Creswell, 2014). The observation focused on how students generated ideas, organized their stories, and engaged in the writing tasks.

Interviews were conducted with several students to gain deeper insights into their experiences in using Storybird. The questions were designed to explore students' difficulties, perceptions, and feelings during the writing process. Through interviews, the researcher was able to understand how Storybird influenced students' motivation and confidence in writing. As explained by Cindy et al., (2022), interviews allow researchers to obtain detailed information directly from participants.

Document analysis was used to examine students' narrative writing products. These documents provided evidence of students' writing development, especially in terms of idea development, organization, and narrative structure. The analysis of students' work helped to support the findings obtained from observation and interviews, as stated by (Miles et al., 2014).

### **Observation Analysis**

The observation data in this study were examined using a descriptive approach to understand students' behavior and responses during the use of the Storybird application in narrative writing activities at MTs Raudhatul Hasaniyah. The focus of the observation was on students' participation, how they developed ideas, how they arranged their stories, and how they interacted during the learning process.

During the classroom sessions, the researcher recorded important events through field notes and observation checklists. These notes captured students' involvement, their reactions to the visual prompts in Storybird, and how they worked on their writing tasks. After each meeting, the data were reviewed to identify patterns and changes in students' writing behavior (Belina, 2023).

The results of the observation were grouped into several aspects, including students' engagement, idea development, organization of narrative texts, and classroom interaction. In terms of engagement, most students showed better participation when Storybird was used. They appeared more interested and willing to join the activity compared to when they were asked to write without any media. The visual illustrations helped attract their attention and made the activity feel less difficult.

For idea development, the images in Storybird made it easier for students to start writing (Suprana, 2025). They were able to imagine storylines based on the pictures, which helped them overcome their difficulty in beginning a narrative. Before the use of Storybird, students often produced only a few simple sentences and showed confusion in starting their stories. After using the application, their ideas became more developed and clearer.

Students also showed improvement in organizing their writing. Many of them were able to arrange their stories in a clearer sequence, following the structure of narrative text such as orientation, complication, and resolution. The sequence of images supported them in arranging events more logically, so their stories were easier to understand.

Interaction in the classroom became more active. Students were more comfortable sharing ideas, asking questions, and discussing their work with friends. The learning process did not rely only on the teacher, but students were also involved in building their own stories. The observation shows that the use of Storybird helped create a more engaging learning situation. It supported students in participating more actively and helped them develop their narrative writing, especially in generating ideas and organizing their stories.

### **Research Validity and Trustworthiness**

The trustworthiness of this study was ensured by applying several strategies during the research process. The researcher used triangulation by collecting data through classroom observation, interviews, and documentation of students' writing using the Storybird application, so that the data could be compared and verified from different sources. In addition, member checking was conducted by confirming the interview results with the participants to ensure the accuracy of their responses. The researcher also provided a clear

description of the research setting and the implementation of Storybird in the classroom to support the transferability of the findings. All research procedures were carried out consistently and documented carefully to maintain dependability, while the use of actual data from observations and students' writing helped minimize personal bias and ensured the confirmability of the study.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the findings of the study based on the data collected through classroom observation, interviews, questionnaire, and document analysis during the implementation of the Storybird application in teaching narrative writing. The data were analyzed by identifying patterns that appeared consistently across the three data sources, so that the results could describe students' learning experiences more clearly.

During the implementation process, several changes were observed in students' participation and writing performance. At the beginning of the learning process, many students showed hesitation when they were asked to write. They tended to spend a long time thinking about how to start their stories, and some of them produced only a few sentences. This condition indicates that students still experienced difficulties in generating ideas and organizing them into a complete narrative (MEGA, 2022).

After the introduction of Storybird, the classroom situation gradually changed. Students became more involved in the learning activities and showed greater interest in writing tasks. The visual images provided by Storybird seemed to help students imagine storylines more easily. Instead of asking what to write, students started discussing ideas based on the pictures they selected. This shift shows that the use of visual media can support students in overcoming their initial difficulties in writing (Chicho & Zrary, 2022).

The findings also show that students did not only become more active, but they also showed improvement in the way they developed their writing. Their stories became longer, more structured, and easier to understand. This improvement was identified through the comparison of students' writing before and after using Storybird, as well as through their responses during interviews and questionnaire. The results of this study are presented in three main parts. The first part explains how Storybird was implemented in the classroom. The second part discusses students' responses toward the use of Storybird, supported by questionnaire data. The third part focuses on the development of students' narrative writing skills as seen from their writing products.

### **The Implementation of Storybird in Teaching Narrative Writing**

The implementation of Storybird in this study was carried out through three main stages: pre-writing, while-writing, and post-writing (Trianingsih, 2025). In the pre-writing stage, the teacher introduced the concept of narrative text, including its structure such as orientation, complication, and resolution. Students were also guided on how to use Storybird and how to interpret the visual images provided in the platform.

During the while-writing stage, students selected images from Storybird and began to develop their own stories. The visual prompts helped students to generate ideas more easily and provided a clear direction for their writing. The teacher acted as a facilitator by guiding students, monitoring their progress, and providing feedback when necessary. This is in line with the idea that digital media can support students in constructing meaning and organizing ideas in writing (Zainuddin et al., 2025).

In the post-writing stage, students revised their work and shared their stories with their peers. This activity encouraged students to reflect on their writing and improve their narrative structure. The implementation shows that Storybird was effectively integrated into the writing process and supported students in each stage of writing development (Islam, 2023).

**Students' Responses toward the Use of Storybird**

To strengthen the findings from observation and interviews, the researcher also distributed a simple questionnaire to identify students' responses toward the use of Storybird in writing activities. The results are presented in the table below.

Table 1. Students' Responses toward the Use of Storybird

No	Statement	Agree	Disagree
1.	Storybird makes writing more interesting	85%	15%
2.	The images help me generate ideas easily	90%	10%
3	Storybird helps me organize my story better	78%	22%
4.	I feel more confident when writing using Storybird	80%	20%
5.	Writing with Storybird is easier than without media	83%	17%
6.	Storybird helps me understand narrative structure	75%	25%
7	I enjoy writing activities using Storybird	88%	12%

Based on the questionnaire results presented in Table 1, most students showed positive responses toward the use of Storybird in learning narrative writing. A large number of students agreed that Storybird made writing activities more interesting and helped them generate ideas more easily. This indicates that visual media plays an important role in supporting students when they face difficulties in starting their writing.

Students also reported that Storybird helped them organize their stories better. The sequence of images provided a clear direction, so they were able to arrange events more logically. This finding is consistent with the observation data, where students appeared more focused and were able to complete their writing with a clearer structure.

To strengthen these findings, the interview data revealed similar responses from students. Several students mentioned that the images helped them imagine the storyline and reduced their confusion when starting to write. One of the students stated:

Student 2: *"I usually feel confused when I want to start writing, but when I see the pictures in Storybird, I can directly imagine the story."*

Another student also expressed that Storybird made writing feel easier and more enjoyable:

Student 5: *"Writing becomes easier because I already have an idea from the images. I don't need to think too hard about what to write."*

In addition, students also showed increased confidence when using Storybird. They felt less afraid of making mistakes because they could rely on the images to guide their writing. This was also reflected in the interview with another student:

Student 1: *"I feel more confident because I know what I want to write. The pictures help me."*

These responses indicate that Storybird does not only support students in generating ideas but also helps them feel more comfortable during the writing process. The combination of visual support and interactive learning creates a more engaging classroom atmosphere, where students are more willing to participate. This finding is in line with previous studies which highlight that digital storytelling can improve students' motivation and engagement in writing activities (Ivan & Hakim, 2024). It also shows that visual-based learning media can reduce students' anxiety and increase their confidence in EFL writing contexts.

**CONCLUSIONS**

This study investigated the implementation of the Storybird application in teaching narrative writing and examined its role in supporting students' writing development. The findings indicate that Storybird provides positive contributions to students' narrative writing

skills by helping them generate ideas through visual images and organize events into a logical sequence. Students also demonstrated better understanding of narrative text structures, including orientation, complication, and resolution. In addition, the use of Storybird increased students' interest, participation, and confidence during writing activities. Visual support reduced students' anxiety and made them feel more comfortable expressing ideas in English. Overall, Storybird can be considered an effective digital storytelling tool for improving narrative writing performance and creating a more interactive learning environment in EFL classrooms. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to integrate applications such as Storybird into writing instruction to support students' creativity, organization, and confidence in developing narrative texts.

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