

DESIGN OF A STORY-WRITING TRAINING PROGRAM FOR LOWER-GRADE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract: This study aims to design a story-writing training program for lower-grade elementary school students that supports structured, creative, and developmentally appropriate writing. The study employs a Design-Based Research (DBR) approach involving needs analysis, initial program development, expert validation, limited implementation, evaluation, revision, and development of the final program. The training consists of activities for generating ideas, developing characters and settings, organizing events, drafting, receiving feedback, revising, editing, and presenting stories. Data reported in this study were obtained through classroom observation, a four-point student questionnaire, and analysis of students' comments during the implementation. Quantitative data were summarized using descriptive statistics, while qualitative comments were organized into recurring themes related to students' responses to the training. The implementation involved 30 students in Grades 1–3 across six 60-minute sessions. The findings showed a positive overall response ($M = 3.45/4.00$; 86.25%), with enjoyment receiving the highest mean score ($M = 3.60$; 90.00%). The findings also indicate that visual media, guided practice, and gradual writing activities supported students' participation and confidence, while some students continued to require assistance with spelling, sentence construction, and event sequencing. The resulting program was revised to provide shorter instructions, stronger visual support, additional vocabulary, more examples, and a longer drafting period.

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INTRODUCTION

Writing ability is an essential part of literacy development among elementary school students because it helps them express ideas, develop imagination, select appropriate vocabulary, and organize information logically. This skill supports language learning and helps students understand various school subjects. However, writing is a complex activity. Students must generate ideas, determine writing purposes, construct sentences, develop paragraphs, apply correct spelling, and review their work. This complexity causes many students to experience difficulties in producing complete and coherent stories. Graham et al. (2012) explain that structured writing instruction can improve the quality of elementary school students' writing. Effective strategies include teaching the writing process, providing models, offering guided practice, encouraging peer collaboration, and giving feedback. This finding indicates that writing ability cannot develop optimally when students only receive writing assignments



without adequate guidance. Story writing is suitable for elementary school students because it allows them to use their experiences, knowledge, and imagination. Through this activity, students learn to determine themes, characters, settings, conflicts, plots, and resolutions that are connected meaningfully. In practice, students often experience difficulties in starting their writing, developing ideas, and organizing events into a coherent plot. Some students can only write several sentences without clear connections. Other problems include limited vocabulary, weak relationships between sentences, inappropriate dialogue, and spelling errors. Koster et al. (2015) found that writing instruction interventions positively affect writing quality, particularly when teachers explicitly teach writing strategies, establish clear objectives, and provide gradual practice. Therefore, students need a program that does not merely explain story concepts but also guides them through each stage of the writing process. Story-writing instruction should apply a process approach that includes prewriting, drafting, reviewing, revising, editing, and publishing. Each stage helps students understand that effective writing requires continuous improvement. Graham, Harris, and Santangelo (2015) emphasize that planning, drafting, revising, self-regulation, and feedback can improve students' writing ability. Writing quality is also influenced by vocabulary mastery, sentence construction, spelling ability, and understanding of text structure. Limpo and Alves (2013) explain that transcription skills and self-regulation contribute to the quality of students' written texts. Therefore, a training program should provide story maps, planning sheets, checklists, and revision guidelines. Psychological factors also influence students' success in writing. Some students are afraid of making mistakes, while others believe that they cannot write stories. Bruning et al. (2013) found that writing self-efficacy is related to students' confidence in generating ideas, applying writing conventions, and managing the writing process. Students with positive beliefs tend to show greater persistence in completing writing tasks. A training program should create a supportive learning environment, provide opportunities to experiment, and appreciate each student's progress.

A preliminary observation was conducted before the training program was implemented to identify students' initial difficulties in story writing. The observation focused on students' ability to generate ideas, organize events, use vocabulary, construct sentences, and sustain participation during writing activities.

The learning environment also determines the development of writing ability. Teachers should provide sufficient time, model stories, discussion activities, guided practice, and constructive feedback. Assessment should not focus only on spelling but also on idea clarity, character development, event sequence, conflict, and resolution. Zumbrunn and Krause (2012) state that effective writing instruction requires active student participation, opportunities to make choices, useful feedback, and chances to revise written work. However, writing instruction in schools often emphasizes the final product. Students are asked to write and are immediately assessed without sufficient guidance in generating ideas, organizing plots, or revising their work. Based on these conditions, a systematic, gradual, and needs-based story-writing training program is required for elementary school students. This study employs a Design-Based Research approach because it enables researchers to design, implement, evaluate, and improve the program using field data. Anderson and Shattuck (2012) explain that this approach connects theoretical development with the solution of educational problems in authentic settings through continuous processes of design, implementation, analysis, and revision. The proposed program includes introducing story elements, generating ideas, creating story maps, developing characters and settings, organizing plots, writing drafts, receiving feedback, revising, editing, and publishing students' work. The program is expected to help students develop ideas, organize stories coherently, use language appropriately, and build positive attitudes toward independent writing activities.



METHOD

This study employs a Design-Based Research (DBR) approach to design, test, evaluate, and improve a story-writing training program for lower-grade elementary school students. DBR was selected because the study aims not only to examine students' responses to the training but also to develop a program that fits learners' needs and classroom conditions. The research was implemented iteratively through needs analysis, initial program development, expert validation, limited implementation, evaluation, revision, and development of the final program. Each stage generated information used to refine the subsequent stage. The training program was designed to help students generate ideas, develop characters and settings, organize events, draft stories, receive feedback, revise, edit, and present their work.

Participants and Setting

The implementation involved 30 lower-grade elementary school students from Grades 1–3. The program was conducted in six sessions, with approximately 60 minutes allocated to each session. The activities used picture cards, story maps, illustrated worksheets, and guided writing tasks to provide concrete stimuli and manageable steps for young learners.

Instruments and Data Collection

Three sources of data were used in the reported implementation: classroom observation, a four-point student questionnaire, and students' comments. Classroom observation focused on students' attention, participation, responses to visual materials, willingness to share ideas, and the need for teacher assistance during writing activities. The questionnaire covered five aspects: enjoyment, clarity of instruction, participation, confidence, and willingness to write another story. The response scale ranged from 1 to 4, with higher scores indicating more positive responses. Students' comments were collected during the evaluation of the training and were used to identify recurring responses to the instructional activities.

Data Analysis

Questionnaire data were analyzed descriptively by calculating mean scores and converting them to percentages using the maximum possible score as the denominator. The percentage was calculated as: $\text{mean score} / 4 \times 100$. Thus, an overall mean of 3.45 corresponds to 86.25%. Observation notes and students' comments were analyzed qualitatively by reading the responses, identifying recurring ideas, grouping similar responses, and organizing them into three main themes: enjoyment through visual media, increased confidence through guided practice, and the need for continuous assistance.

Evaluation and Revision

The evaluation considered students' questionnaire responses, classroom observations, and comments. The findings were used to revise the program by shortening instructions, enlarging visual materials, adding examples and vocabulary support, extending drafting time, and introducing a four-question self-checking sheet: Who is the main character? Where does the story happen? What problem occurs? How does the story end?

The design of a story-writing training program for lower-grade elementary school students produced a structured, gradual, and developmentally appropriate program. The program includes introducing story elements, generating ideas, creating story maps, developing characters and settings, organizing plots, writing drafts, providing feedback, revising, editing, and presenting students' work. The implementation showed a positive student response,



particularly to visual media, guided practice, group activities, and opportunities to choose characters and settings. Students also reported greater confidence in writing, although several still required assistances with spelling, sentence construction, and event sequencing. Therefore, the program should use simple instructions, concrete examples, vocabulary support, and sufficient practice time. The DBR approach enabled the program to be revised using student responses and classroom observations. The resulting design provides a practical, student-centered framework for story-writing instruction and has potential to support students in generating ideas, organizing stories coherently, and developing positive attitudes toward writing.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Table 1. Students' Questionnaire Responses

Aspect	Mean	Percentage
Enjoyment	3.60	90.00%
Participation	3.53	88.25%
Clarity of instruction	3.47	86.75%
Confidence	3.33	83.25%
Willingness to write again	3.33	83.25%
Overall	3.45	86.25%

The story-writing training program was implemented with 30 lower-grade elementary school students from Grades 1–3 in six sessions of approximately 60 minutes each. The training covered idea generation, character introduction, setting development, event sequencing, drafting, revision, and story presentation. Picture cards, story maps, illustrated worksheets, and guided writing activities were used to provide concrete visual support and manageable writing steps. The first session introduced basic story elements, followed by activities in which students developed characters, selected settings, arranged events, and wrote short stories with teacher guidance.

The questionnaire results are summarized in Table 1. The overall mean score was 3.45 out of 4.00 (86.25%), indicating a highly positive response. Enjoyment received the highest score ($M = 3.60$; 90.00%). Participation was also high ($M = 3.53$; 88.25%); 26 of the 30 students participated consistently, while four required additional guidance, particularly during drafting. Clarity of instruction received a mean of 3.47 (86.75%). Students generally understood short instructions supported by examples and demonstrations, although several had difficulties with abstract terms such as conflict and resolution. These terms were therefore explained using simpler expressions such as problem and ending.

Confidence and willingness to write another story both received means of 3.33 (83.25%). Twenty-four students reported greater confidence after the training, while 25 expressed a willingness to write another story using different characters and settings. The remaining students preferred drawing activities but still showed interest when writing was combined with pictures.

Classroom observations showed that students remained engaged for most sessions, with the strongest attention during activities involving pictures, storytelling demonstrations, and group discussions. Concentration decreased during long explanations or extended independent



writing. Analysis of students' comments produced three themes: enjoyment through visual media, increased confidence through guided practice, and the need for continuous assistance. Students indicated that pictures helped them imagine characters and events, while story maps made writing easier because they did not have to begin with a blank page. Some students still required support with spelling, sentence formation, and event sequencing.

The qualitative analysis identified three main themes. First, students demonstrated enjoyment when visual media were used to support story development. Second, guided practice and story maps appeared to increase students' willingness to express their ideas. Third, classroom observations indicated that several students continued to require assistance with spelling, sentence construction, and event sequencing.

Based on the evaluation, the program was revised to include shorter instructions, larger visual materials, more examples, additional vocabulary lists, a longer drafting period, and a simple self-checking sheet containing four questions: Who is the main character? Where does the story happen? What problem occurs? How does the story end?

Discussion

The findings indicate that the story-writing training program received a positive response from lower-grade elementary school students. The overall response score of 86.25 percent indicates a highly positive student response to the program within the reported implementation. The positive response was closely related to the use of visual media, gradual instruction, guided practice, and opportunities for students to share their work. The high enjoyment score shows that writing activities become more attractive when teachers combine them with pictures, character cards, and story-based games. Lower-grade students often find abstract writing tasks difficult. Visual materials provide concrete stimuli that help students generate ideas. They also reduce the difficulty of beginning a story. This finding supports Graham et al. (2012), who explain that structured instruction, teacher modeling, guided practice, and feedback can improve students' engagement and writing performance. In this program, students did not receive only a general instruction to write a story. They completed smaller tasks before producing a complete text. These tasks included choosing a character, determining a setting, arranging events, and deciding the ending. The high participation score indicates that the program successfully involved students in the learning process. Students became active because the activities required them to select, arrange, discuss, write, and present. This structure differs from conventional writing instruction that often places students in a passive position before asking them to produce a final text. The findings are consistent with Zumbrunn and Krause (2012), who state that effective writing instruction requires active involvement, meaningful choices, feedback, and opportunities for revision. The program allowed students to choose characters and settings. This choice gave them a sense of ownership over their stories. As a result, they showed stronger interest in completing the tasks. The clarity score indicates that most instructions were understandable. However, the difficulty associated with abstract terminology shows that language adaptation remains essential. Lower-grade students need simple explanations and direct examples. Teachers should avoid introducing complex literary terms without concrete illustrations. For example, the concept of conflict can be introduced as a problem faced by the main character. The confidence score was lower than the enjoyment and participation scores. This difference suggests that students may enjoy writing activities but still feel uncertain about their ability. Fear of spelling errors and difficulty constructing sentences can reduce confidence. Bruning et al. (2013) explain that writing self-efficacy influences



students' willingness to generate ideas, apply writing conventions, and persist in completing tasks. Guided writing was associated with students' reported increase in confidence. Story maps helped them organize ideas before writing sentences. Teacher feedback also focused first on story meaning rather than technical errors. This approach encouraged students to continue writing without excessive fear of making mistakes. The findings also support Limpo and Alves (2013), who emphasize the contribution of transcription skills and self-regulation to writing quality. Some students in this study still required assistance with spelling and sentence construction. These difficulties consumed their attention and reduced their ability to develop story content. Therefore, a lower-grade writing program should combine creative activities with basic language support. The students' positive willingness to write another story indicates that the program created a favorable learning experience. However, the preference of several students for drawing shows that writing activities should remain multimodal. Drawing can function as a prewriting activity. Students may draw a scene first and then describe it through sentences. The classroom observations showed that students' attention decreased during long explanations and extended writing periods. This finding confirms the need for short, varied, and interactive sessions. Each activity should have one clear objective. Teachers can divide a complex writing task into several manageable steps. The Design-Based Research approach supported continuous program improvement. Student responses did not serve only as evaluation data. They also informed revisions to the instructional design. Anderson and Shattuck (2012) explain that Design-Based Research connects educational theory with practical problem-solving through repeated cycles of design, implementation, analysis, and revision. Based on the findings, the training program should retain visual media, story maps, guided practice, peer interaction, and story presentation. The program should improve vocabulary support, simplify instructions, and provide more time for students who require individual assistance. Assessment should also focus on students' progress in generating ideas, organizing events, and expressing meaning. Technical accuracy can be developed gradually. The results demonstrate that a structured and developmentally appropriate program can create positive student responses toward story writing. The strongest elements were visual stimulation, gradual activities, teacher guidance, and opportunities for creative choice. These features helped students view writing as an achievable process rather than a difficult final task. The revised program therefore has the potential to support engagement, confidence, and active participation among lower-grade elementary school students.

CONCLUSION

The design of a story-writing training program for lower-grade elementary school students produced a structured, gradual, and developmentally appropriate program. The program includes introducing story elements, generating ideas, creating story maps, developing characters and settings, organizing plots, writing drafts, providing feedback, revising, editing, and publishing students' work. The implementation results showed that students responded positively to the program, particularly to the use of visual media, guided practice, group activities, and opportunities to choose characters and settings. The program also increased students' engagement, courage, and confidence in writing. However, several students still required assistance with spelling, sentence construction, and event sequencing. Therefore, the program should use simple instructions, concrete examples, vocabulary support, and sufficient practice time. The Design-Based Research approach allowed the program to be revised based on students' responses and classroom observations. This iterative process helped ensure that the program met students' learning needs. The designed training program can serve as an engaging, practical, and student-centered alternative for teaching story writing. It has the



potential to help students generate ideas, organize stories coherently, use language more accurately, and develop positive attitudes toward writing activities.

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