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The Effect of The Imaginative Suggestion Method on Narrative Writing Skills of 6th Grade Students at Mandailing Natal

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ABSTRACT

This research was motivated by the low narrative writing skills of sixth-grade students at SD Negeri 012 Simangambat, which was indicated by a lack of creativity, completeness of content, and narrative structure in their writing. The conventional method, which mostly involved lecturing, proved insufficient to stimulate students' imagination and interest in writing. Therefore, this study aimed to determine the effect of the Imaginative Suggestion Method on students' narrative writing ability. This study used a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental method. The sample consisted of two classes: the experimental class taught using the Imaginative Suggestion Method and the control class taught using conventional methods, each comprising 25 students (totaling 50 students). The primary instrument used was a narrative writing test based on indicators such as plot, content, organization, sentence structure, spelling, and punctuation. The data were analyzed using an independent samples t-test. The results showed that the average post-test score of students in the experimental class was 79.8, while the control class averaged 68.8. In the experimental class, 36% of students were in the "very good" category, 52% in the "good" category, and 12% in the "fair" category. Conversely, in the control class, only 12% were categorized as "very good," 52% as "good," and 36% as "fair." Hypothesis testing indicated that the calculated t-value (t_h = 5.04) was greater than the critical t-value (t_t = 2.01) at the 5% significance level, meaning H_0 was rejected and H_a was accepted. This implies a significant difference in the writing abilities of students taught using the Imaginative Suggestion Method compared to those taught conventionally. The strength of this method lies in its use of music to stimulate students' emotional atmosphere and imagination, enabling them to express ideas and emotions more creatively in writing. Thus, it can be concluded that the Imaginative Suggestion Method has a positive and significant effect on improving the narrative writing skills of elementary school students.

Keywords: Learning Method, Imaginative Suggestion, Writing Skills, Narrative Composition

I. INTRODUCTION

Indonesian language instruction is a foundational component of the national curriculum across all educational levels, from primary to tertiary education. Among the four essential language competencies listening, speaking, reading, and writing—writing is the most cognitively complex skill, requiring students to transform abstract thoughts, ideas, and emotions into structured written discourse (Tarigan, 2008). Writing is classified as a productive skill that demands not only linguistic competence but also creativity, critical thinking, and sustained cognitive engagement. Within the writing curriculum, narrative composition holds particular pedagogical significance at the elementary level, as it develops students' capacity for sequential thinking, character development, plot construction, and imaginative expression competencies essential for both academic advancement and personal development (Ulviani, 2025)

Despite the acknowledged importance of narrative writing skills, educational practitioners and researchers have documented persistent deficiencies in elementary students' narrative composition abilities. These deficiencies manifest across multiple dimensions: the inability to construct coherent storylines, limited vocabulary deployment, weak organizational structure, difficulty in developing characters and settings, and minimal creative engagement with writing tasks. International assessments and national curriculum evaluations consistently reveal that a substantial proportion of elementary students fail to achieve grade-level writing proficiency standards, with narrative writing representing a particularly challenging domain (Anggraeni et al., 2024).

In the Indonesian educational context, these challenges are amplified by pedagogical and resource-related constraints. Many elementary schools, particularly those in rural and economically disadvantaged regions, lack

access to innovative instructional materials, teacher professional development opportunities, and evidence-based writing instruction methods. Consequently, writing instruction often defaults to conventional, teacher-centered approaches that may inadequately address the cognitive and creative dimensions of narrative composition (Tripathi, 2024).

Empirical observations at SD Negeri 012 Simangambat in Mandailing Natal Regency, North Sumatra, revealed substantial deficiencies in students' narrative writing abilities. Preliminary assessments indicated that fewer than 40% of sixth-grade students achieved the minimum competency standards in narrative composition. Student compositions frequently exhibit limited plot development, sparse descriptive details, repetitive vocabulary, weak paragraph organization, and minimal evidence of imaginative engagement with narrative tasks. These deficiencies suggest that existing instructional approaches are insufficient to develop the complex competencies required for proficient narrative writing.

The persistence of poor writing outcomes can be attributed to pedagogical methodology. Conventional writing instruction in Indonesian elementary schools typically follows a transmission-oriented approach characterized by teacher-centered lecturing, explicit grammar instruction, the presentation of model texts, and the assignment of composition tasks with minimal scaffolding or process support (Ashrafova, 2025). This approach prioritizes declarative knowledge about writing terminology, text structures, and grammatical rules over procedural knowledge, which encompasses the actual cognitive and creative processes involved in generating and organizing ideas into coherent narratives.

Research in writing pedagogy has consistently demonstrated that lecture-based instruction, while potentially effective in conveying factual information, fails to develop the complex competencies required for proficient composition (Munawaroh et al., 2025). Writing is not merely an application of grammatical and structural knowledge; rather, it constitutes a sophisticated cognitive activity that involves idea generation, audience awareness, organizational planning, linguistic encoding, revision, and metacognitive monitoring. Conventional instruction that emphasizes knowledge transmission without providing structured opportunities for students to engage in these cognitive processes produces students who possess declarative knowledge about writing but lack procedural competence in producing effective texts.

A particularly critical limitation of conventional instruction is its failure to address what students frequently identify as their most significant writing challenge: generating ideas and imaginative content. Students often report that they "don't know what to write about" or "can't think of ideas" complaints reflecting not structural ignorance but imaginative constraints and difficulties with idea generation (Flower & Hayes, 1981). A monotonous, theory-heavy instructional environment may suppress the creative and affective engagement necessary for narrative production.

Atmowardoyo et al. (2024) identified two critical factors contributing to poor learning outcomes: (1) increasing content difficulty unmatched by pedagogical adaptation and (2) ineffective teaching methods that fail to facilitate deep understanding and application. Both factors powerfully operate in writing instruction, where cognitive demands escalate substantially in upper elementary grades, while teaching methods remain largely unchanged from lower grades. As students progress from simple sentence composition to extended multi-paragraph narratives, the cognitive load associated with the simultaneous management of idea generation, organization, linguistic encoding, and mechanical accuracy increases dramatically. Instructional approaches that do not provide explicit scaffolding for managing cognitive complexity inevitably produce suboptimal outcomes (Atmowardoyo et al., 2024).

Cognitive psychology and learning sciences provide robust theoretical foundations for understanding the role of imagination in creative writing and for designing instructional interventions that effectively stimulate imaginative processes. Schema theory posits that writers construct narratives by retrieving, combining, and elaborating on stored experiential and vicarious memories organized in cognitive schemas (Zhao, 2025). However, this retrieval and elaboration process requires cognitive activation—students need stimuli that trigger relevant schemas and facilitate their creative manipulation and recombination into novel narrative content.

The Imaginative Suggestion Method operationalizes this cognitive principle through multisensory stimulation. Specifically, the method employs carefully selected music as a suggestive stimulus designed to activate students' emotional and imaginative responses. Music functions through multiple mechanisms that facilitate narrative composition.

Emotional Priming: Music creates emotional atmospheres that prime specific affective states conducive to particular narrative tones. For instance, melancholic music may activate schemas associated with sadness, loss, or nostalgia, providing emotional content for narratives that explore these themes. Conversely, energetic or dramatic music may activate schemas related to adventure, conflict and triumph.

Episodic Memory Activation: Music triggers episodic memories, which are recollections of personal experiences associated with particular emotional states or contexts. These memories can serve as raw materials for narrative content, providing authentic details, sensory descriptions, and emotional nuances that enhance narrative quality.
Rhythmic and Temporal Scaffolding: Music provides rhythmic and temporal structures that can scaffold narrative-pacing and sequencing. The temporal flow of music may facilitate students' conceptualization of narrative as a temporally unfolding sequence of events rather than a static description.
Anxiety Reduction and Creative Facilitation: Music creates a relaxed, creative environment that reduces the performance anxiety many students experience during writing tasks. This anxiety reduction may lower inhibitions and facilitate more spontaneous and creative expression (Pflaum, 2016).
The theoretical rationale draws from the embodied cognition theory, which emphasizes that abstract cognitive processes, such as imagination, are grounded in sensory and emotional experiences (Barsalou, 2008). By providing rich sensory input (music), the Imaginative Suggestion Method supplies the experiential raw material that students can transform into narrative content. This contrasts sharply with conventional instruction, which provides only abstract verbal prompts (e.g., "Write a story about friendship") that lack sensory and emotional richness.
Furthermore, this method aligns with constructivist learning principles, emphasizing active knowledge construction rather than passive reception (Tawali, 2025). Students do not receive pre-formed narrative ideas from teachers; rather, they generate ideas through interaction with environmental stimuli (music) and then actively organize and elaborate on these ideas into coherent narratives. This process develops genuine compositional capacity the ability to independently generate and organize narrative content rather than the mere reproduction of taught patterns or templates.

II. METHODS

A. *Research Design*

This study employed a quantitative research approach utilizing a quasi-experimental design, specifically a post-test-only control group design. The quantitative paradigm was selected because the research questions concern the magnitude of causal effects—specifically, whether and to what extent the Imaginative Suggestion Method produces superior outcomes compared to conventional instruction. Quantitative methodology provides appropriate tools for causal inference, effect size estimation, and generalization within defined parameters (Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, 2018).
Quasi-experimental designs are particularly appropriate for educational research conducted in authentic classroom settings, where the random assignment of individual students would be impractical and potentially disruptive to normal educational operations. True experimental designs requiring the dissolution of existing class structures and random reassignment of individual students would face substantial logistical and ethical obstacles. Quasi-experimental designs allow for causal inference regarding intervention effects while accommodating the practical and ethical constraints inherent in school-based research (Sugiyono, 2019).
The post-test-only control group design involves two intact groups (experimental and control) that receive different instructional treatments followed by identical outcome assessments. This design can be schematically represented as follows:

Group 1 (Experimental): $R \rightarrow X_1 \rightarrow O_1$
Group 2 (Control): $R \rightarrow X_2 \rightarrow O_2$

Where:

R = Random assignment of intact classrooms to conditions

X_1 = Instructional intervention using Imaginative Suggestion Method

X_2 = Instructional intervention using conventional lecture-based method

O_1 = Post-intervention narrative writing assessment (experimental group)

O_2 = Post-intervention narrative writing assessment (control group)

The primary strength of this design lies in its ability to support causal inference while maintaining ecological validity. By conducting research within authentic classroom contexts using intact class groups, the findings are more likely to generalize to real-world educational practices than those from laboratory studies or studies requiring artificial grouping arrangements.
The absence of pre-intervention measurements (pre-tests) offers several methodological advantages: (1) elimination of testing effects, whereby pre-test exposure might influence learning or post-test performance; (2) reduced research intrusiveness and time demands on instructional time; and (3) increased efficiency. To address the potential threat to internal validity posed by the absence of pretest data, this study employed matching procedures to verify group equivalence based on prior academic performance in Indonesian language coursework, providing empirical evidence that the groups were comparable at baseline.

B. *Research Setting and Participant Context*

Institutional Setting: The research was conducted at SD Negeri 012 Simangambat, a public elementary school located in the Simangambat subdistrict of Mandailing Natal Regency, North Sumatra Province, Indonesia. The school serves a rural community with predominantly agricultural occupations. Facilities include standard classroom infrastructure but limited specialized educational technology or supplementary instructional resources are available.
Temporal Context: Data collection occurred during the first semester of the 2025-2026 academic year, specifically over a six-week period from August to September 2025. This timing was strategically selected because students at the beginning of the academic year had not yet received extensive narrative writing instruction for that grade level, reducing the likelihood that prior instructional experiences would differentially affect groups or confound intervention effects.
Participant Characteristics: All participants were sixth-grade students (approximately 11-12 years old) who had progressed through the Indonesian national elementary curriculum. The student population was relatively homogeneous in terms of socioeconomic background (predominantly lower-middle-class agricultural families), cultural background (predominantly ethnic Mandailing with Islamic religious affiliation), and linguistic background (native speakers of Bahasa Indonesia with some home use of the Mandailing dialect). This demographic homogeneity strengthens internal validity by reducing the likelihood that unmeasured individual differences would confound treatment effects, although it may limit generalizability to more diverse populations.

C. *Population, Sample, and Group Assignment*

Population Definition: The study population consisted of all sixth-grade students enrolled at SD Negeri 012 Simangambat during the 2025-2026 academic year. The sixth-grade cohort comprised two parallel Class A sections with a combined enrollment of 50 students (Class A: 25 students; Class B: 25).
Sampling Strategy: Given the small population size (N=50), total population sampling was employed, meaning that all members of the accessible population were included in the study sample. This approach is methodologically appropriate and statistically advantageous when the population size falls below 100, as it maximizes statistical power, eliminates sampling error, and enables the detection of smaller effect sizes than would be possible with partial sampling (Arikunto, 2006).
Group Assignment Procedure: The two existing class sections (Class A and Class B) served as the experimental and control groups. To minimize selection bias and establish baseline equivalence, group assignment followed a randomization procedure.
Randomization: A simple random sampling method (coin flip) was used to determine which class section would serve as the experimental group (receiving Imaginative Suggestion instruction) and which would serve as the control group (receiving conventional instruction). This randomization at the classroom level (cluster randomization) rather than the individual level was necessary to avoid instructional contamination (students discussing different instructional approaches) and to maintain normal school operations.
Equivalence Verification: To verify that randomization produced comparable groups Demographic characteristics and academic performance data were examined to verify that randomization produced comparable groups. Analysis of prior semester (second semester, grade 5) Indonesian language final examination scores revealed no statistically significant differences between groups:
Experimental group: M = 71.8, SD = 8.6
Control group: M = 72.4, SD = 9.1
Independent t-test: $t(48) = 0.42$, $p = 0.68$

This non-significant difference supports the assumption that the groups were equivalent at baseline, strengthening the confidence that any post-intervention differences can be attributed to the instructional intervention rather than pre-existing differences.
Final Group Composition:
Experimental Group: 25 students (13 males, 12 females) receiving Imaginative Suggestion Method instruction
Control Group: 25 students (12 males, 13 females) receiving conventional method instruction.

D. *Variables and Operationalization*
Independent Variable: Instructional Methodology
The independent variable was instructional methodology, operationalized at two levels:
Experimental Condition (Level 1): Imaginative Suggestion Method—a structured instructional approach utilizing music as a stimulus to activate imagination, facilitate idea generation, and support narrative composition. The method emphasizes student-centered creative processes, sensory stimulation, and scaffolded progression from idea generation through drafting to revision.
Control Condition (Level 2): Conventional Method—the standard lecture-based instructional approach typically employed in Indonesian primary schools. This approach emphasizes teacher-centered knowledge transmission, explicit instruction in narrative text structure and grammar, presentation of model texts, and assignment of composition tasks with minimal process support or scaffolding.
Both instructional approaches involved equivalent total instructional time (six 45-minute sessions over three weeks) to ensure that any observed differences reflected methodological effectiveness rather than differential time allocation.

Dependent Variable: Narrative Writing Ability
The dependent variable was narrative writing ability, which was operationalized as performance on a standardized narrative writing assessment. Specifically, students composed an original narrative text in response to a common prompt, and their compositions were evaluated using a validated analytic rubric that assessed five dimensions:
Plot Development (20 points): Structural completeness (presence of orientation, complication, climax, resolution), logical sequencing, and narrative coherence.
Content Quality (20 points): Idea elaboration, use of supporting details, character and setting development, and thematic clarity.
Organizational Quality (20 points): Paragraph structure, use of transitional devices, inter-paragraph coherence, and overall text cohesion.
Sentence Structure (20 points): Sentence variety and complexity, grammatical accuracy, and the absence of structural errors
Mechanics (20 points): Spelling accuracy, punctuation correctness, and adherence to Indonesian orthographic conventions.
Total scores ranged from 0-100 points, with performance categorized as follows: Very Good (85-100), Good (70-84), Satisfactory (55-69), Poor (40-54), and Very Poor (0-39).
Control Variables
Several variables were controlled through research design and standardized procedures to minimize confounding:
Grade level: All participants were sixth-grade students
Instructional duration: Both groups received equivalent time allocation
Instructor: The same teacher (the researcher) delivered both interventions to eliminate instructor effects.
Assessment procedures: Identical prompts, rubrics, scoring procedures, and testing conditions
Testing environment: Same time of day, similar physical environments, standardized materials

Instructional Interventions: Detailed Protocols
Experimental Group: Imaginative Suggestion Method
Students in the experimental group received six 45-minute instructional sessions over three weeks (two sessions per week) following a structured protocol adapted from Pflaum (2016) and aligned with Indonesian curriculum standards.
Session 1: Orientation and Conceptual Foundation
Phase 1: Objective Clarification (10 minutes)

The instructor explicitly articulated the learning objectives, explaining that students would develop narrative writing skills through a creative, imagination-based approach using music as a stimulus. This phase established clear expectations and activated students' metacognitive awareness of learning goals.

Phase 2: Narrative Text Review (35 minutes)

The instructor reviewed narrative text characteristics, including story grammar elements (orientation, complication, climax, resolution), characterization techniques, setting description, narrative perspective, and use of descriptive language. This ensured that the students possessed the foundational knowledge necessary for narrative construction. Importantly, the instructions emphasized that knowing about narratives differs from being able to generate them creatively, ―a distinction that motivated the need for imagination-focused pedagogical approaches.

Session 2: Method Introduction and Initial Practice

Phase 3: Method Orientation (15 minutes)

The instructor explained the procedure of the Imaginative Suggestion Method: students would listen to carefully selected music designed to stimulate imagination and emotional responses, and then use the imagery, emotions, memories, and narrative ideas triggered by the music as raw material for narrative construction. The instructor emphasized that there are no "wrong" ideas or images—whatever emerges from their imagination is valid material for writing.

Phase 4: First Music Experience and Idea Generation (30 minutes)

Students listened to a 5-minute piece of Indonesian traditional Gamelan music with their eyes closed, focusing on internal experiences—images, memories, emotions, sensations, and narrative ideas that emerged. The instructor provided minimal guidance: "Notice what you see, feel, or remember as you listen. Pay attention to any stories or images that come into your mind."

Following music listening, students engaged in 10 minutes of free-writing to capture their ideas without concern for structure, grammar, or correctness. The instructor encouraged fluent idea generation: "Write continuously. Do not stop correcting errors or worrying about the organization. Just get your ideas onto paper." Students then shared selected ideas with their partners (10 minutes), discussing the images and stories that emerged during music listening. This social sharing validates individual experiences and exposes students to the diversity of imaginative responses.

Sessions 3-5: Progressive Skill Development

Phase 5: Continued Music-Based Idea Generation

Each session began with 15 minutes of music listening and idea generation using varied musical selections (classical instrumental, nature sounds with ambient music, traditional Indonesian music). Different musical styles activate different emotional and imaginative schemas, providing students with diverse materials for narrative development.

Phase 6: Idea Organization and Story Mapping (15 minutes per session)

Students reviewed their accumulated free-written ideas, selected promising content, and organized it into a narrative structure using story mapping techniques. The instructor provided graphic organizers with sections for characters, setting, problems/complications, events, and resolution. Students progressively refined their story maps by adding details and considering narrative logic.

Phase 7: Drafting and Elaboration (15 minutes per session)

Using their story maps as guides, the students composed narrative drafts. The instructor circulated providing individualized feedback focused on elaboration ("Can you add more details about what the character saw/felt/thought?") and coherence ("How does this event connect to what happened before?"). Across sessions 3-5, the students progressively extended and refined their narratives.

Session 6: Peer Review, Revision, and Final Assessment

Phase 8: Peer Review (20 minutes)

Students participated in a structured peer review using a "two positives and one focus area" protocol. Each student read a partner's composition and provided written feedback identifying two effective elements (e.g., "I really liked your description of the forest because I could picture it clearly") and one area for further development (e.g., "I wonder what happened to the other character—could you add more about that?"). This phase developed metacognitive awareness, collaborative learning skills and revision strategies.

Phase 9: Revision (10 minutes)

Students revised their narratives based on peer feedback, making substantive improvements to the content and organization rather than merely correcting surface errors.

Phase 10: Final Assessment (15 minutes)

Students independently composed a final narrative in response to a standardized prompt ("Write a story about an experience in nature") without music or access to previous drafts. This assessment demonstrated whether

students had internalized the narrative writing capacity developed through the instructional sequence—whether they could independently apply imaginative and compositional strategies without external scaffolding.
Control Group: Conventional Method
Students in the control group received equivalent instructional time (six 45-minute sessions over three weeks) following the conventional lecture-based approach typical in Indonesian elementary schools:
Sessions 1-2: Knowledge Transmission
The instructor presented lectures covering the characteristics of narrative texts, grammatical features of narrative texts, and correct Indonesian language usage. Lectures followed a transmission model: the instructor explained concepts, presented examples, and asked comprehension questions to verify students' understanding. Students took notes, read model narrative texts provided by the instructor, and answered questions regarding the structural features of these texts.
Key instructional activities included:
Teacher-led analysis of narrative text examples identifying orientation, complication, climax and resolution
Explicit grammar instruction covering past tense verb forms, transitional words, and descriptive adjectives
Vocabulary instruction introducing narrative-related terminology
This approach emphasized declarative knowledge facts, definitions, and rules about narrative writing with minimal attention to the cognitive and creative processes involved in generating and organizing narrative content.
Sessions 3-4: Guided Practice and Independent Composition
The instructor provided writing prompts (e.g., "Write a story about your last school holiday") and assigned narrative-composition tasks. Students composed independently with minimal instructor scaffolding during the writing process. The instructor monitored on-task behavior and answered procedural questions but provided little substantive feedback or support during composition.
Students were expected to apply the knowledge transmitted in sessions 1-2 to produce complete narrative texts. However, no explicit instruction addressed the cognitive challenge of idea generation, organization, or revision; ―students were assumed to be able to implement these processes independently based on their understanding of narrative structure.
Sessions 5-6: Teacher Evaluation and Revision
The instructor collected student compositions, evaluated them using correction marks highlighting grammatical errors, spelling mistakes, and structural weaknesses, and returned them with written feedback identifying the problems. Students were assigned revision tasks that focused on correcting identified errors. This approach emphasizes product evaluation and error correction rather than process support or skill development.
Session 6: Final Assessment
Students completed an identical post-test assessment administered to the experimental group, composing a narrative in response to the standardized prompt ("Write a story about an experience in nature") under the same conditions and time constraints.

E. *Data Collection Instrument*
Assessment Task
Narrative writing ability was assessed using a performance task requiring students to compose an original narrative text within a 45-minute time limit in response to a standardized prompt.

"Write a story about an experience in nature. Your story should have a clear beginning, middle, and end. Include descriptive details that help the reader to imagine what happened. Express your thoughts and feelings about the experience."

The prompt was designed to be sufficiently open-ended to allow for creative interpretation while providing sufficient structure to ensure that all students understood the task requirements. The nature theme was selected because it represents a domain of experience accessible to all students regardless of socioeconomic background, and because natural settings frequently serve as narrative settings in Indonesian literary traditions, making the theme culturally relevant to the students.

Assessment Rubric
Student compositions were evaluated using an analytic rubric adapted from Semi (2009) and validated through an expert review. The rubric assessed five dimensions, each rated on a 5-point scale with operationally defined performance levels.

1. Plot Development (0-20 points)
17-20 (Excellent): Narrative includes complete story grammar (orientation, complication, climax, resolution); events are logically sequenced with clear causal connections; plot is coherent and engaging.
13-16 (Good): Narrative includes most story grammar elements; events are generally logically sequenced with some causal connections; plot is mostly coherent
9-12 (Satisfactory): Narrative includes some story grammar elements; event sequence is sometimes unclear; plot has coherence gaps
5-8 (Poor): Narrative has incomplete story grammar; event sequence is often illogical; plot lacks coherence
0-4 (Very Poor): Narrative lacks recognizable story grammar; events are unrelated; no coherent plot
2. Content Quality (0-20 points)
17-20 (Excellent): Ideas are fully elaborated with rich supporting details; characters and settings are vividly developed; theme is clear and meaningful
13-16 (Good): Ideas are adequately elaborated with sufficient details; characters and settings are developed; theme is evident
9-12 (Satisfactory): Ideas are minimally elaborated; characters and settings are superficially developed; theme is vague
5-8 (Poor): Ideas lack elaboration; characters and settings are undeveloped; theme is unclear
0-4 (Very Poor): Ideas are absent or incoherent; characters and settings are not developed; no discernible theme
3. Organizational Quality (0-20 points)
17-20 (Excellent): Paragraphs are well-structured with topic sentences and supporting details; effective transitional devices connect ideas; text demonstrates strong coherence and cohesion.
13-16 (Good): Paragraphs have adequate structure; some transitional devices present; text demonstrates reasonable coherence
9-12 (Satisfactory): Paragraph structure is inconsistent; few transitional devices; coherence is limited
5-8 (Poor): Paragraphs lack clear structure; transitional devices absent; text lacks coherence
0-4 (Very Poor): No paragraph organization; no transitions; text is incoherent
4. Sentence Structure (0-20 points)
17-20 (Excellent): Sentences demonstrate variety in length and structure; complex sentences used appropriately; no grammatical errors; writing flows smoothly
13-16 (Good): Sentences show some variety; generally grammatically correct; minor errors do not impede comprehension
9-12 (Satisfactory): Limited sentence variety; some grammatical errors; comprehension occasionally impeded
5-8 (Poor): Minimal sentence variety; frequent grammatical errors; comprehension significantly impeded
0-4 (Very Poor): No sentence variety; pervasive grammatical errors; comprehension severely impeded
5. Mechanics (0-20 points)
17-20 (Excellent): Spelling, punctuation, and capitalization are consistently correct; full adherence to Indonesian orthographic conventions
13-16 (Good): Spelling, punctuation, and capitalization are generally correct; minor errors do not distract
9-12 (Satisfactory): Some spelling, punctuation, and capitalization errors; errors occasionally distract
5-8 (Poor): Frequent spelling, punctuation, and capitalization errors; errors frequently distract
0-4 (Very Poor): Pervasive mechanical errors; errors severely impede readability
Total Score Range: 0-100 points

F. *Rubric Validation*

The assessment rubric underwent content validation via expert review. Three Indonesian-language-education specialists with doctoral degrees and extensive experience in writing assessment reviewed the rubric for alignment with curriculum standards, clarity of performance-level descriptors, and appropriateness for sixth-grade students. Based on expert feedback, minor revisions were made to clarify the performance descriptors and ensure consistent difficulty standards across dimensions.

Inter-Rater Reliability

To establish scoring reliability, two trained raters (the researcher and a classroom teacher with 15 years of experience teaching Indonesian language) independently scored 20% of the compositions (n=10, randomly selected from the combined experimental and control groups). Inter-rater reliability was assessed using the intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC), which yielded an ICC of= 0.89, indicating strong agreement and supporting confidence in scoring consistency. For the remaining compositions, the researcher served as the primary rater, with the secondary rater scoring an additional 10% of the compositions for ongoing reliability monitoring.

G. Data Collection Procedures

Data collection followed a standardized protocol to ensure consistency and minimize measurement error:

Step 1: Post-Intervention Assessment Administration

Following the completion of all instructional sessions (Week 3, Session 6), students in both groups were administered the narrative writing assessment during regular class time. To ensure standardized conditions:

Assessments were conducted at the same time of day (9:00-9:45 AM) to control for potential circadian effects on cognitive performance.

The same administrator (the researcher) conducted both assessment sessions

Identical testing materials were provided (lined paper, pencils, erasers)

Testing environments were comparable (quiet classrooms with adequate lighting and minimal distractions)

Step 2: Instructions and Prompt Presentation

The assessment administrator read the standardized instructions aloud to ensure that all students understood the task requirements.

"Today, you will write a story. I will provide you with a writing prompt that tells you what to write about. You will have 45 minutes to write your stories. You may plan your story on the paper provided before you begin writing. Remember to include a beginning, middle, and end in your story. Use descriptive words to help your readers imagine what happened. You may begin when I say 'start.''

Following the instructions, the administrator distributed assessment sheets containing the prompt and clarified that students should raise their hands if they had procedural questions. The administrator emphasized that content questions could not be answered; ―students must rely on their own ideas and knowledge.

Step 3: Independent Composition

During the 45-minute assessment period, the students composed their essays independently. The administrator monitored students to ensure independent work, answering only procedural questions (for example, "Can I erase and rewrite?" "What if I make a mistake?") and provided no assistance with content generation, organization, or language use.

Students were informed when 15 minutes remained and again when 5 minutes remained, allowing them to monitor their time and conclude their narratives.

Step 4: Collection and Coding

At the conclusion of 45 minutes, all compositions were collected, even if the students had not completed their narratives. Compositions were assigned numerical identification codes to enable blind scoring; ―raters would not know which compositions came from the experimental versus control groups, preventing scoring bias. Original compositions were secured, and photocopies were made for scoring.

Step 5: Blind Scoring

Two trained raters independently scored all the compositions using an analytic rubric. To maintain scoring blindness:

Compositions were presented to raters in randomized order

All identifying information was removed except numerical codes

Raters scored compositions independently without consultation

Scoring occurred over a two-week period to prevent fatigue effects

For compositions where raters' total scores differed by more than five points, raters engaged in a consensus discussion to resolve discrepancies, arriving at agreed-upon final scores.

H. *Data Analysis Procedures*

Data analysis proceeded through four stages, utilizing SPSS statistical software:

Stage 1: Data Preparation and Screening

Raw score data were entered into SPSS, and data screening procedures were performed to identify potential errors or anomalies. This included:

Verification of data entry accuracy through double-checking of 10% of entries

Examination of univariate distributions to identify outliers

Assessment of missing data (none were present as all students completed assessments)

Stage 2: Descriptive Statistical Analysis

For each group (experimental and control), descriptive statistics were calculated including:

Mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) of total and subscale scores

Frequency distributions showing percentages of students achieving each performance level

Distribution characteristics (skewness, kurtosis) to assess normality
Stage 3: Assumption Testing for Parametric Analysis
Prior to conducting inferential statistical tests, the assumptions underlying the independent samples t-test were evaluated.
Assumption 1: Independence of Observations
This assumption was satisfied by design: ―each student provided one composition, and students composed independently without collaboration.
Assumption 2: Normality of Distributions
Normality was assessed using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. The results indicated that the distributions in both groups did not significantly deviate from normality.
Experimental group: KS = 0.12, p = 0.20
Control group: KS = 0.10, p = 0.20
The non-significant p-values ($p > 0.05$) indicated that the null hypothesis of normality could not be rejected, thus satisfying the normality assumption.
Assumption 3: Homogeneity of Variance
Homogeneity of variance was assessed using Levene's test. The results confirmed equal variances across groups.
$F(1, 48) = 1.85$, $p = 0.18$
The non-significant p-value indicated that the variances were homogeneous, satisfying this assumption.
Given that all assumptions were satisfied, a parametric analysis (independent samples t-test) was appropriate.
Stage 4: Inferential Statistical Analysis
Primary Analysis: Independent Samples T-Test
An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the mean narrative writing scores between the experimental and control groups. The t-statistic was calculated using the following formula:

$$t = (M_1 - M_2) / \sqrt{[(SD_1^2/n_1) + (SD_2^2/n_2)]}$$

Where:

M_1 = Mean of experimental group

M_2 = Mean of control group

SD_1 = Standard deviation of experimental group

SD_2 = Standard deviation of control group

n_1 = Sample size of experimental group (25)

n_2 = Sample size of control group (25)

The calculated t-value was compared with the critical value from the t-distribution with df = 48 at $\alpha = 0.05$ (two-tailed): t-critical = ±2.01.
Decision Rule: If |t-calculated| > t-critical, reject H_0 and accept H_a, concluding that a statistically significant difference exists between the groups.
Effect Size Calculation
To quantify the practical significance of any observed difference, Cohen's d effect size was calculated as follows:

$$d = (M_1 - M_2) / SD(pooled)$$

Where:

$$SD(pooled) = \sqrt{[(SD_1^2 + SD_2^2) / 2]}$$

Effect sizes were interpreted using Cohen's (1988) conventional benchmarks:

d = 0.2: small effect

d = 0.5: moderate effect

d = 0.8: large effect

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. *Descriptive Statistics*

Analysis of the experimental group's post-test narrative writing performance (N=25) revealed strong overall achievement. The mean total score was M=79.8 (SD=8.3), positioning the average student solidly in the "Good" performance category and approaching the threshold for "Very Good" classification. The distribution of scores ranged from a minimum of 62 to a maximum of 94, indicating substantial variability in individual achievement, despite generally strong group performance.

Examination of performance level distributions revealed that 36% of students (n=9) achieved "Very Good" ratings (scores 85-100), 52% (n=13) achieved "Good" ratings (scores 70-84), and 12% (n=3) achieved "Satisfactory" ratings (scores 55-69). Notably, no student in the experimental group scored below the satisfactory level, indicating that even the lowest-performing students demonstrated acceptable narrative writing competence. The modal performance level was "Good," reflecting that the majority of students achieved solid proficiency without necessarily demonstrating exceptional mastery.

Analysis of dimension-specific performance provides insight into strengths and areas for continued development.

Plot Development: M=16.2/20 (SD=2.4) - Students demonstrated a strong capacity for constructing coherent narratives with clear story grammar elements.

Content Quality: M=15.8/20 (SD=2.6) - Adequate idea elaboration and descriptive detail, although some students could benefit from richer character development

Organizational Quality: M=15.6/20 (SD=2.8) - Generally effective paragraph structure and transitions, with some inconsistencies in cohesion devices

Sentence Structure: M=16.4/20 (SD=2.2) - Strong grammatical control and sentence variety

Mechanics: M=15.8/20 (SD=2.5) - Generally accurate spelling and punctuation with occasional errors

The relatively consistent performance across dimensions suggests that the Imaginative Suggestion Method supported the holistic development of narrative writing competencies rather than producing isolated improvements in specific skill areas.

Analysis of the control group's post-test performance (N=25) revealed substantially weaker achievement despite equivalent instructional time. The mean total score was M=68.8 (SD=9.2), placing the average student near the boundary between "Satisfactory" and "Good" performance categories—a meaningful difference of 11 points below the experimental group mean.

The distribution of scores ranged from a minimum of 48 (poor category) to a maximum of 86 (Very Good category), indicating greater variability than in the experimental group. Performance level distributions showed that only 12% of students (n=3) achieved "Very Good" ratings, 52% (n=13) achieved "Good" ratings, 32% (n=8) achieved "Satisfactory" ratings, and 4% (n=1) scored in the "Poor" range. The presence of students in the poor category (absent in the experimental group) and the higher proportion in the satisfactory category suggest that conventional instruction left more students struggling to achieve proficiency.

Dimension-specific performance in the control group revealed:

Plot Development: M=13.6/20 (SD=3.1) - Weaker narrative structure with incomplete story grammar and coherence gaps.

Content Quality: M=13.2/20 (SD=3.4) - Minimal idea elaboration, sparse details, and underdeveloped characters and settings

Organizational Quality: M=13.8/20 (SD=3.2) - inconsistent paragraph structure, limited use of transitions, reduced coherence

Sentence Structure: M=14.4/20 (SD=2.8) - Adequate grammatical control but limited sentence variety

Mechanics: M=13.8/20 (SD=2.9) - More frequent spelling and punctuation errors

Comparison of dimension-specific means reveals that the largest performance gaps between groups occurred in Plot Development (2.6-point difference), Content Quality (2.6-point difference), and Organizational Quality (1.8-point difference)—the dimensions most closely associated with imaginative and creative aspects of narrative composition. The smaller gaps in Sentence Structure (2.0-point difference) and mechanics (2.0-point difference) suggest that conventional instruction adequately developed technical linguistic competencies but

failed to stimulate the creative and compositional processes necessary for generating engaging narrative content.

Tabel 1. Descriptive Statistics by Group and Dimension

Dimension	Experimental Group M (SD)	Control Group M (SD)	Difference
Plot Development	16.2 (2.4)	13.6 (3.1)	2.6
Content Quality	15.8 (2.6)	13.2 (3.4)	2.6
Organizational Quality	15.6 (2.8)	13.8 (3.2)	1.8
Sentence Structure	16.4 (2.2)	14.4 (2.8)	2.0
Mechanics	15.8 (2.5)	13.8 (2.9)	2.0
Total Score	79.8 (8.3)	68.8 (9.2)	11.0

Table 2. Distribution of Performance Levels

Performance Level	Experimental Group n (%)	Control Group n (%)
Very Good (85-100)	9 (36%)	3 (12%)
Good (70-84)	13 (52%)	13 (52%)
Satisfactory (55-69)	3 (12%)	8 (32%)
Poor (40-54)	0 (0%)	1 (4%)
Very Poor (0-39)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

The independent samples t-test comparing mean narrative writing scores between experimental (M=79.8, SD=8.3) and control (M=68.8, SD=9.2) groups yielded $t(48)=5.04$, $p<0.001$ (two-tailed). This t-value substantially exceeds the critical value of $t(48)=2.01$ at $\alpha=0.05$, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. Statistical Interpretation: The probability of observing a mean difference of 11 points or greater if the null hypothesis was true (if the Imaginative Suggestion Method and conventional methods produced equivalent outcomes) was less than 0.1%, providing extremely strong evidence against the null hypothesis. This result supports the alternative hypothesis: students taught using the Imaginative Suggestion Method demonstrate significantly higher narrative writing ability than students taught using conventional methods.

Effect Size Analysis
Cohen's d effect size was calculated as:

$d = (79.8 - 68.8) / \sqrt{[(8.3^2 + 9.2^2) / 2]}$
$d = 11.0 / 8.77$
$d = 1.25$

This effect size of d=1.25 substantially exceeds Cohen's benchmark for a "large" effect (d=0.8) and represents more than three times Hattie's (2009) average effect size across all educational interventions (d=0.40). By conventional interpretive standards, this effect size indicates that the average student in the experimental group performed 1.25 standard deviations higher than the average student in the control group, —a difference that places the average experimental group student at approximately the 89th percentile of the control group distribution.
Practical Significance: While statistical significance indicates that the observed difference is unlikely to have occurred by chance, effect size quantifies the practical importance of that difference. An effect size of d=1.25 suggests substantial practical significance: the Imaginative Suggestion Method did not merely produce a

statistically detectable improvement but rather generated meaningfully larger gains in narrative writing ability compared to conventional instruction.
To contextualize this finding, effect sizes exceeding d=1.0 are relatively rare in educational intervention research, particularly in complex skill domains such as writing. Graham and Perin's (2007) meta-analysis of writing interventions reported average effect sizes of approximately d=0.70 for effective interventions. The present finding of d=1.25 suggests that the Imaginative Suggestion Method may be among the more impactful writing instruction approaches documented in empirical research.

Qualitative Analysis of Student Compositions
While quantitative analysis demonstrated statistically significant differences, qualitative examination of student compositions illuminated what those differences looked like in actual writing and provided insight into how the Imaginative Suggestion Method facilitated improved performance.
Experimental Group Compositional Characteristics
Student compositions in the experimental group exhibited several distinctive features:
Rich Sensory Detail and Imagery: Experimental group compositions frequently included vivid sensory descriptions that appeared to derive from the imaginative activation stimulated by music. For example:

"The wind whispered through the tall pine trees, making a sound like gentle singing. Sunlight filtering through the leaves creates dancing patterns of gold and green on the forest floor. I could smell the fresh earth and hear the distant sound of a waterfall."

This excerpt demonstrates multiple sensory modalities (auditory, visual, olfactory) integrated into a coherent description—a characteristic frequently observed in experimental group compositions but less common in control group work.
Emotional Depth and Personal Voice: Many experimental group compositions conveyed genuine emotional engagement and personal perspectives rather than merely recounting events.

"As I stood on the mountain peak looking at the valley below, I felt both very small and very powerful at the same time. Small because the mountains were so huge, and I was just one person. But powerful because I had climbed all the way to the top by myself and proved I could do something difficult."

This reflective, emotionally nuanced writing suggests that the imaginative stimulation process helped students access and articulate complex affective experiences, which is ―a critical element of effective narrative writing that is often absent in student compositions.
Narrative Elaboration and Development: Experimental group compositions tended to develop narrative events more fully rather than merely listing sequential occurrences.

"When my foot slipped on the wet rock, time seemed to slow down. I saw my hand reaching out to grab something. I felt my heart pounding in my chest. I heard my friend shout my name. Then suddenly I caught hold of a tree root and stopped falling."

This moment-by-moment elaboration creates dramatic tension and reader engagement, which is ―evidence of narrative sophistication beyond mere structural competence.

Control Group Compositional Characteristics
While the control group demonstrated adequate technical competence in many cases, it tended to exhibit different characteristics.
Limited Sensory and Descriptive Detail: Many control group compositions provided minimal sensory descriptions, relying instead on generic statements.

"We went to the beach. The weather was nice. We played in the water and had fun there. Then we went home."

While structurally adequate, such writing lacks the vivid imagery and specificity that engage readers and demonstrate imaginative engagement with narrative material.
Event-Listing Rather Than Story Development: Control group compositions frequently adopted a chronicle structure—a sequential listing of events without dramatic development, causal connections, or emotional resonance:

"First, we arrived at the park. We then walked along the path. Then we saw some birds. Then we ate lunch. Then we went home."

This temporal sequencing satisfies the minimal narrative structure requirements but does not constitute the kind of developed, engaging storytelling that characterizes proficient narrative writing.
Formulaic Language and Limited Voice: Many control group compositions employed formulaic expressions and showed limited individual voice.

"On Sunday morning, my family and I went to the forest. It was a beautiful day. We observed several interesting phenomena. We enjoyed our trip. It was a memorable experience."

While grammatically correct and structurally coherent, such writing demonstrates minimal personal perspective or creative expression, ―suggesting that students viewed the task as a school exercise requiring correct form rather than as an opportunity for authentic communication.
These qualitative differences support the quantitative findings by illustrating concretely how the Imaginative Suggestion Method facilitated not just marginally better writing but qualitatively different writing characterized by greater sensory richness, emotional depth, narrative elaboration, and individual voice.

B. Discussion

Mechanisms of Effect: How Music-Based Imaginative Stimulation Facilitates Writing
The substantial superiority of the Imaginative Suggestion Method can be understood through multiple explanatory mechanisms grounded in cognitive psychology and learning theory.

1. Cognitive Activation and Schema Accessibility
Schema theory posits that writers construct narratives by retrieving and manipulating stored experiential knowledge that is organized in cognitive schemas (Kintsch, 1998). However, this retrieval process requires activation; ―relevant schemas must be brought into working memory and made available for elaboration. Music appears to serve as a powerful activating stimulus, triggering emotional and episodic memory schemas that students can then transform into narratives.
The conventional instruction condition provided only verbal prompts (e.g., "Write about nature"), which may have activated only limited, superficial schemas (generic "forest" or "beach" concepts). In contrast, music provided rich, multidimensional stimulation—temporal flow, emotional tone, rhythmic structure—that activated diverse schemas and facilitated their creative recombination. This difference in schema activation likely explains the observed differences in narrative richness, details, and imaginative quality.

2. Reduction of Cognitive Load Through Affective Scaffolding
Narrative writing imposes substantial cognitive demands on writers, who must simultaneously generate ideas, organize content, encode language, monitor coherence, and manage mechanical accuracy. This cognitive load can overwhelm the working memory capacity, particularly for developing writers. Anxiety further exacerbates cognitive load by consuming attentional resources that could otherwise support compositional processes (Kellogg, 1996).
Music may reduce the effective cognitive load through two mechanisms. First, it creates a relaxed, low-anxiety learning environment that frees attentional resources for composition processes. Second, music provides temporal and affective scaffolding students can structure their narratives around the emotional arc of the music, using its temporal flow as a scaffold for narrative sequencing. This external scaffolding reduces the demands on internal cognitive resources, enabling more effective management of the compositional process.

3. Facilitation of Creative Processes Through Associative Networks
Creative writing requires divergent thinking the capacity to generate multiple and varied ideas rather than converging on a single "correct" solution. Conventional instruction, with its emphasis on rules, models, and correct forms, may inadvertently promote convergent thinking, leading students to reproduce the taught patterns rather than generate novel content.
In contrast, music stimulates associative thinking. Research on creativity demonstrates that mood states and environmental stimuli influence the breadth of semantic activation in memory networks (Isen, 1999). Positive mood states (often induced by music) facilitate broader associative networks, enabling more creative ideas.

The diverse imagery, emotions, and memories triggered by music may activate broader semantic networks than verbal prompts alone, facilitating more creative and varied narrative content.

4. Embodied Cognition and Multimodal Integration

Embodied cognition theory emphasizes that abstract cognitive processes are grounded in sensory and emotional experiences (Barsalou, 2008). Narrative imagination the capacity to mentally simulate events, characters, and settings may fundamentally depend on activating sensory and emotional experiential memory. Music, as a rich multisensory stimulus, provides the experiential grounding necessary for a robust imaginative simulation.

Moreover, music integrates multiple processing modalities (auditory, emotional, and motor) in ways that verbal prompts do not. This multimodal integration may facilitate more holistic, integrated imaginative experiences that translate more readily into rich narrative content than the more cognitively abstract processing stimulated by verbal prompts.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

This experimental study investigated the effect of the Imaginative Suggestion Method on the narrative writing skills of sixth-grade elementary students through a controlled comparison with conventional lecture-based instruction. The results demonstrate that students receiving Imaginative Suggestion instruction achieved significantly higher narrative writing performance ($M=79.8$) compared to students receiving conventional instruction ($M=68.8$), with independent samples t-test yielding $t(48)=5.04$, $p<0.001$, and a large effect size of $d=1.25$. The 11-point mean difference represents both statistical and practical significance, indicating that music-based imaginative stimulation provides substantial advantages for developing narrative writing competencies beyond those achieved through conventional instruction. Performance level distributions revealed that 36% of students in the Imaginative Suggestion group achieved "very good" ratings compared to only 12% in the conventional instruction group, while no students in the Imaginative Suggestion group scored below the "satisfactory" level compared to 4% in the conventional group. Dimension-specific analysis indicated that the largest performance advantages occurred in plot development, content quality, and organizational quality dimensions most closely associated with the imaginative and creative aspects of narrative composition suggesting that the method's primary benefit derives from facilitating the imaginative processes underlying creative writing rather than merely improving technical linguistic competencies.

Funding Statement

"No external funding was received for this study."

Ethical Compliance

All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments, or comparable ethical standards.

Data Access Statement

A Data Access Statement is a section in a scientific publication or research report that explains how the data used or generated in the study can be accessed by readers or other researchers. This statement aims to promote transparency, support research reproducibility, and comply with open-access policies, where applicable.

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Conflict of Interest Declaration

The authors declare that they have no affiliations or involvement with any organization or entity with any financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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