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The Development of Interactive Narrative Writing Teaching Material based on Story Cube for Grade Ninth Students

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to develop and evaluate interactive narrative writing teaching materials based on Story Cube for junior high school students at SMP Al-Washliyah 27 Medan, within the framework of the Merdeka Curriculum. Employing a research and development (R&D) design adapted from Borg and Gall and operationalized through the ADDIE model, the study combined qualitative data (observations, interviews, and open responses) with quantitative data (expert validation scores, questionnaires, and pre–post writing tests). Needs analysis showed that students experienced substantial difficulties in generating ideas, structuring narrative texts, and sustaining motivation, while both students and teachers expressed a strong need for visual, game-based media that could stimulate creativity and make writing more engaging. A digital interactive module integrating Story Cube into guided narrative writing tasks was then designed, developed, validated by material and media experts, revised, and implemented in classroom trials. Expert validation yielded very high feasibility scores across content, language, presentation, and graphics. student responses indicated high levels of acceptance and perceived usefulness. Classroom implementation and learning outcome data suggested that the Story Cube-based module was pedagogically valid, practically usable, and potentially effective in supporting students' narrative-writing development and creativity.

Keywords: Interactive, Narrative, Writing, Development

I. INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the most complex productive skills in English as a foreign language (EFL), particularly at the junior high school level, where students are expected to use written language to express ideas coherently and creatively. In the context of the Indonesian Merdeka Curriculum, writing is not merely a linguistic exercise but a vehicle for developing higher-order thinking skills, including analyzing, evaluating, and creating (Muhtar et al., 2024). Narrative writing, in particular, requires students to organize events into a meaningful plot, develop characters and settings, and express moral or reflective insights, all of which demand both linguistic competence and imaginative thinking (Suhaila et al., 2025).

However, empirical evidence shows that many junior high school students still struggle with narrative writing. They frequently experience difficulties in generating ideas, choosing appropriate vocabulary, constructing grammatically accurate sentences, and maintaining cohesion and coherence across paragraphs (Lubbiya & Liansari, 2026). Needs analysis at SMP Al-Washliyah 27 Medan confirmed that students perceived narrative writing as difficult and tedious; a large proportion reported lacking ideas and struggling to create conflicts and resolutions in their stories. These challenges are exacerbated by students' strong exposure to informal digital writing on social media, which often carries over into academic tasks in the form of non-standard abbreviations, emotive symbols and loosely structured sentences (Nelson et al., 2024).

Classroom observations and teacher interviews indicated that writing lessons at the research site were still dominated by conventional textbook-based and teacher-centered approaches (Zulkifli Surahmat et al., 2025). Teachers tended to explain narrative text structures and linguistic features through lectures and assigned tasks that required students to imitate model texts rather than create original stories. Consequently, students' creative processes—brainstorming, exploring alternative plots, and experimenting with different narrative voices were insufficiently supported by the tool. Time constraints and the limited availability of appropriate media have been cited by teachers as reasons for rarely implementing more interactive and creative approaches to writing instruction (Saa, 2024).

Simultaneously, the Merdeka Curriculum explicitly encourages student-centered and project-based learning that develops the four key competencies of 21st-century education: creativity, critical thinking,

communication, and collaboration (4Cs). Curriculum analysis in this study showed that narrative writing outcomes require students to not only reproduce text structures but also to generate, develop, and express ideas in contextually meaningful ways (Pebriani et al., 2025). This implies that learning materials and media must support the entire writing process, from prewriting to publishing, and must be aligned with students' characteristics as digital natives who are highly responsive to visual and interactive stimuli (Furbani, 2025).

The Story Cube, a dice-shaped medium containing visual symbols related to story elements such as characters, settings, events, and objects, offers a promising response to these needs. When students roll the cubes and are asked to construct stories based on the resulting image combinations, they are prompted to generate ideas spontaneously and link visual cues to narrative structures. Previous studies have shown that Story Cube can improve cohesion, creativity, and engagement in narrative writing in both Indonesian and EFL contexts, and can also support students' confidence in speaking and storytelling (Marino Sihombing & Dumaris E. Silalahi, 2025). Theoretical perspectives such as Dual Coding Theory further suggest that combining verbal and visual information enhances comprehension and retention, which is highly relevant to writing instruction that seeks to link abstract narrative concepts with concrete imagery (Fitriana & Rokhuma, 2025).

Despite its pedagogical potential, existing research indicates that Story Cubes have mostly been used as an isolated game or supplementary activity rather than as the core component of systematically designed and curriculum-aligned teaching material (Piazuelo-Rodríguez & Rivero-gracia, 2025). There remains a lack of digital interactive modules that integrate Story Cube into structured narrative writing lessons, including explicit guidance on orientation, complication, resolution, and moral value, and that incorporate assessment components aligned with curriculum standards. Furthermore, few studies have examined Story Cube-based materials through rigorous R&D procedures,expert validation, systematic trials, and mixed-method evaluations (Rauf et al., 2022).

To address these gaps, this study was conducted to develop and test interactive narrative writing teaching materials based on Story Cubes for junior high school students at SMP Al-Washliyah 27 Medan. The product was conceptualized as a digital module that could be accessed via computers, tablets, or smartphones, and integrated visual Story Cube activities with stepwise writing guidance, collaborative tasks, and reflective components. The development process followed the ADDIE model Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation allowing systematic alignment between the identified needs, curriculum requirements, design decisions, and empirical evaluation.

The study was guided by three main research questions: (1) How is Story Cube-based interactive narrative writing teaching material developed for junior high school students? (2) How valid and feasible is the developed material based on expert evaluation? (3) What is the practicality and potential effectiveness of the material in supporting students' narrative writing and creativity during classroom implementation? The corresponding objectives were to develop Story Cube-based interactive materials, obtain empirical evidence of their feasibility through expert validation, and evaluate their practicality and effectiveness through classroom trials involving students.

This article reports the results of the R&D process, focusing on the theoretical underpinnings of the product, methodological procedures undertaken, and empirical findings related to needs analysis, product validation, and implementation outcomes. This study is expected to contribute to the literature on media-supported writing pedagogy and provide a model for integrating game-based visual tools into narrative writing instruction under the Merdeka Curriculum.

II. METHODS

This study employed a research and development (R&D) approach with the primary aim of producing and evaluating Story Cube-based interactive narrative writing teaching materials for junior high school students. The R&D framework was adapted from Borg and Gall and operationalized through the ADDIE model, which comprises five interrelated stages: Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation. The use of ADDIE enabled a systematic alignment between initial needs analysis, product design, iterative revision, and empirical testing of the developed materials (Borg, W. R., & Gall, 2003).

The research was conducted at SMP Al-Washliyah 27 Medan, located in the Medan Amplas District, Medan City, North Sumatra Province. The school was selected because it implements an English curriculum that includes narrative text writing and has reported challenges in students' ability to express ideas and demonstrate creativity in narrative writing. The study was conducted during the odd semester of the 2024/2025 academic year (August–December 2025).

The population consisted of junior high school students at the school, and purposive sampling was used to select two intact classes as the research samples. One class was assigned for limited (small-scale) trials to

review the readability, practicality, and initial reception of the materials, while another class was used for the main field trials to examine the practicality and potential effectiveness of the product in a more authentic classroom setting. In the developmental stage, approximately 60 students (around 30 per class) participated in the trials, allowing for both descriptive and inferential analyses of quantitative data (Creswell, 2021).

Multiple instruments were constructed to capture the different types of data required at each ADDIE stage. First, an expert validation sheet was used to evaluate the feasibility of the developed teaching materials in terms of content, language, presentation, and graphical design based on national standards (BSNP). The sheet employed a Likert scale and included both closed rating items and open comment sections. One material expert (English/literacy) and one media expert (educational technology) served as validators.

Second, a student needs questionnaire was administered during the analysis stage to identify students' perceptions of narrative writing, the difficulties encountered, and expectations regarding learning media. This questionnaire comprised 10 statements related to perceived difficulty, idea generation, motivation, and preferences for visual and game-based media, rated on a four-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Third, a student response questionnaire was employed after the implementation of the Story Cube-based module to gather learners' perceptions of the product's attractiveness, clarity, ease of use, and contribution to creativity and interest in writing. This instrument also used a four-point Likert scale and served to assess the practicality and perceived usefulness of the materials from the users' perspective.

Fourth, a student evaluation sheet and accompanying rubric were used to assess narrative writing performance before and after using the teaching materials (pre-test and post-test). Students were asked to write narrative texts based on given themes or visual stimuli, and their products were rated on criteria such as content appropriateness, narrative structure, language accuracy, coherence, and creativity (originality and flexibility of ideas). The rubric provided quantitative scores that could be statistically analyzed to examine changes in writing performance.

In addition, observation guidelines and interview protocols were used to collect qualitative data on classroom processes, student engagement, and teachers' reflections on the use of the Story Cube-based module. These qualitative instruments enriched the interpretation of the quantitative findings and informed product revisions.

In the Analysis stage, the researchers conducted classroom observations, teacher interviews, and student needs questionnaires to identify existing problems in narrative writing instruction, students' difficulties and attitudes, and the alignment with Merdeka Curriculum requirements. The analysis also covered curriculum documents to determine relevant learning outcomes and ensure that the planned product would support the development of narrative writing competencies and 21st-century skills.

In the Design stage, the structure and components of the Story Cube-based module were planned. The module was organized around the generic structure of narrative text orientation, complication, resolution, and moral value—and incorporated Story Cube activities at each stage. Storyboards and drafts were created to specify the learning objectives, content sequences, tasks, Story Cube prompts, and assessment components, including narrative writing rubrics.

The Development stage involved producing the initial version of the digital interactive module using platforms such as Canva and PowerPoint. Textual explanations, model texts (e.g., legends, fables, and fairy tales), visual illustrations, and Story Cube-based activities were integrated to create a coherent learning resource. The prototype module was then submitted to material and media experts for validation. Based on their quantitative ratings and qualitative suggestions, the module underwent revisions in term of content clarity, language simplicity, layout, color contrast, and interactivity (e.g., addition of subtle animations and reflection notes).

In the Implementation stage, the revised module was tried out in two cycles. A limited trial was first conducted in a smaller class to examine readability, technical functionality, and initial student reactions, and feedback was used for further refinement. Subsequently, a main field trial was conducted in another class, in which the module was used across several meetings for narrative writing lessons. During implementation, the researchers observed student participation, recorded classroom activities, administered the student response questionnaire, and collected pre- and post-test writing products.

The Evaluation stage consisted of both formative and summative evaluations. Formative evaluation occurred throughout expert validation, limited trials, and iterative revisions, while summative evaluation focused on overall product feasibility, practicality, and potential effectiveness based on expert scores, student responses, and changes in writing performance. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (means and percentages) and inferential methods (paired-sample t-tests) to test whether the differences between pre- and post-test scores were statistically significant. Qualitative data from observations, interviews, and open-ended

responses were analyzed thematically to identify patterns in classroom dynamics, perceived benefits and remaining challenges.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Needs analysis revealed substantial gaps between existing narrative writing instruction and students' learning needs at SMP Al-Washliyah 27, Medan. Questionnaire data from 30 students showed that 83% agreed or strongly agreed that writing narrative texts was difficult, and 87% reported often lacking ideas while writing. Furthermore, 80% acknowledged difficulties in constructing conflicts and resolutions, indicating a limited understanding of narrative structure.

Simultaneously, students expressed a strong desire for supportive learning media. Ninety percent agreed that they needed media to help them generate ideas, and 93% stated that they understood the material better through visual media. A similar proportion reported preferring interactive and game-based learning and wanting to improve their writing creativity. These findings were consistent with classroom observations, which showed low engagement and passivity during conventional textbook-based writing lessons, and with teacher interviews, in which teachers reported that students were easily bored and tended to copy sample texts rather than develop original stories.

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Table 1. Summary of Students' Perceived Needs in Narrative Writing (n = 30).

No.	Questionnaire indicator (agree/strongly agree)	Frequency	Percentage
1	Writing narrative texts is difficult	25	83%
2	I often lack ideas when writing	26	87%
3	I have difficulty creating conflict and resolution in a story	24	80%
4	I need learning media that help me generate ideas	27	90%
5	I understand lessons better through visual media	28	93%
6	Narrative writing lessons are boring	23	77%
7	I prefer interactive learning media	27	90%
8	Game-based learning makes writing more interesting	26	87%
9	I want to improve my creativity in writing	28	93%
10	I need clear examples of narrative text structure	27	90%

Average perceived need: 87% (very high).

These data indicate that students face both cognitive and affective barriers to narrative writing. Cognitively, they struggle to generate ideas and construct narrative elements, and affectively, they perceive writing as boring and demotivating when implemented through conventional methods. The high percentages related to preferences for visual and game-based media support the argument that interactive tools such as Story Cube are well aligned with students' learning profiles and could address both the cognitive and motivational aspects of writing.

Teacher interviews further reinforced these findings by revealing themes of limited media variety, low student motivation, and incomplete implementation of the writing process in the classroom. Teachers noted that students tended to skip the prewriting and revision stages, expecting to complete writing tasks quickly, which resulted in weak narrative organization and limited creativity. Teachers also expressed agreement that the Story Cube could serve as relevant learning support, given its potential to provide structured visual guidance and stimulate idea generation in a playful manner.

Curriculum analysis confirmed that the Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes student-centered, active, and contextual learning, as well as the development of 4C skills and higher-order thinking through language activities. Narrative writing competencies require students to generate and develop ideas, apply narrative

structures, and use language accurately and appropriately, in addition to reflecting moral or contextual messages. The Story Cube-based module was therefore conceptualized not merely as media but as an integrated instructional tool that organizes learning activities around the stages of orientation, complication, resolution, and moral value (Andriani et al., 2025).

The conceptual framework of this study positions the Story Cube as a trigger for divergent and creative thinking, allowing students to move from visual prompts to verbal narratives through structured guidance. Each side of the cube provides semi-random combinations of characters, settings, actions, and feelings, encouraging students to construct unique, but logically coherent, stories. This design responds directly to the identified needs: it supports idea generation, scaffolds narrative structure, and introduces a playful, game-based element into writing lessons (Syamsuddin et al., 2025).

The final product of the R&D process was a digital interactive module titled "The Development of Interactive Narrative Writing Teaching Material Based on Story Cube for Grade IX Students." The module is accessible via electronic devices and integrates explanatory texts, model narratives (e.g., Malin Kundang, The Lion and the Mouse, Cinderella), Story Cube activities, guided writing tasks, collaborative work, and reflection prompts. Each chapter follows a consistent pattern: understanding narrative structure, exploring language features, generating ideas with the Story Cube, drafting orientation–complication–resolution, revising, and presenting the final story.

Expert validation results indicated that the module met high standards of feasibility and quality. On a five-point Likert scale, the average overall score from the material and media experts was 4.65, falling into the "very appropriate" category. The content and presentation aspects received mean scores of approximately 4.70, reflecting strong alignment with learning objectives, coherent organization, and pedagogical soundness. The language and graphical aspects obtained mean scores of approximately 4.55, indicating that the instructions were generally clear and the visuals effective, athough minor improvements were recommended.

Material experts emphasized that the module was consistent with Merdeka Curriculum learning outcomes, particularly in supporting students in generating context-based narrative ideas and applying text structure systematically. They suggested adding more model texts and student writing samples to provide concrete references for learners, which was implemented during the revision phase. Media experts recommended improving color contrast, simplifying instructions, and refining icons and illustrations to increase readability and user-friendliness. The revisions included changing dark backgrounds to softer pastel colors, reorganizing layouts for clearer information flow, and adding subtle animations and reflection note features at the end of activities (Tasikin, 2021).

These validation results and subsequent revisions indicate that the Story Cube-based module satisfies the key criteria of validity: content validity (alignment with curriculum standards), construct validity (coherent internal organization of activities), and usability validity (practicality for classroom use). From the perspective of educational product development, such evidence is essential to ensure that the module is not only theoretically grounded, but also implementable and sustainable in real school contexts.

During classroom implementation, observations revealed that the Story Cube-based module positively influenced students' engagement and participation in the narrative writing lessons. In contrast to prior lessons, where students were passive and tended to rely on textbook examples, the Story Cube activities encouraged them to actively roll the cubes, discuss image combinations, and collaboratively develop storylines before writing. Students appeared more willing to share ideas, negotiate plots, and revise their drafts, suggesting enhanced ownership of the writing process.

Student response questionnaires administered after implementation indicated high levels of satisfaction and acceptance. Learners reported that the module was visually attractive, easy to understand, and helpful in generating ideas and understanding the narrative structure. They also perceived that the Story Cube activities made writing classes more enjoyable and less intimidating, which aligns with the needs analysis findings that students prefer interactive and game-based media for learning. The high positive response scores support the conclusion that the module is practically feasible and well received by primary users.

Regarding learning outcomes, quantitative data from pre- and post-test writing tasks showed improvements in students' narrative writing performance, particularly in terms of idea development, narrative structure, and creativity. Although detailed statistics are reported in the full thesis, the analysis in this study applied paired-sample t-tests to compare pre- and post-intervention scores, following standard procedures in educational research. The results indicated that students' posttest scores were higher than their pretest scores, providing empirical support for the potential effectiveness of the Story Cube-based module in enhancing narrative-writing skills.

Qualitative analyses of students' written products corroborated these quantitative trends. After using the module, students' narratives more frequently displayed clear orientation sections that introduced characters and settings, well-developed complications with identifiable conflicts, and resolutions that logically addressed the problems presented in the nararative. There was also a greater variety in vocabulary and more evidence of imaginative and original storylines, reflecting growth in creative thinking. These patterns suggest that the combination of visual prompts and structured writing guidance helped students internalize narrative conventions while expanding their imaginative capacities.

From a pedagogical perspective, the findings demonstrate that integrating Story Cubes within a systematically developed module can address both the process and product aspects of writing. The module supports the full writing cycle—brainstorming, drafting, revising, and sharing while maintaining alignment with curriculum-based learning outcomes and assessment criteria of the course. It also offers practical benefits for teachers, who gain a ready-to-use, validated resource that organizes learning activities, reduces preparation time, and provides clear rubrics for evaluating writing quality and creativity.

Overall, the results of the needs analysis, validation, and implementation collectively indicate that the Story Cube-based interactive module is a valid, practical, and potentially effective teaching material for improving narrative writing skills among junior high school students. Thus, this study adds to the growing body of literature supporting the use of visual, game-based media in writing instruction and illustrates how such media can be integrated into curriculum-aligned, technology-based teaching materials through a rigorous R&D process.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

This research developed and evaluated an interactive narrative writing teaching module based on Story Cube for junior high school students at SMP Al-Washliyah 27 Medan using an R&D design grounded in the ADDIE model. Needs analysis revealed that students faced serious difficulties in narrative writing and strongly preferred visual, interactive, and game-based media, whereas classroom instruction remained largely conventional and text-based in nature. In response, a digital module integrating Story Cube activities with structured narrative writing guidance was designed, validated by material and media experts, revised, and implemented in classroom trials. Expert validation results placed the module in the "very appropriate" category across content, language, presentation, and graphics, while student responses indicated high levels of acceptance and perceived usefulness of the module. Classroom implementation showed increased student engagement, more active participation in the writing process, and observable improvements in narrative structure and creativity, supported by pre–post writing performance data. These findings suggest that Story Cube-based interactive materials are pedagogically valid, practically feasible, and potentially effective in enhancing junior high school students' narrative writing skills within the Merdeka Curriculum. Future research can extend this work by testing the module in different school contexts, integrating adaptive or AI-based feedback features, and examining its long-term impact on students' literacy development.

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 and 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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