

Analysis of Needs and Basic Assessment of Fifth Grade Students' Narrative Writing Skills as a Basis for Instructional Media Development

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Submitted: 28/01/2026

Revised: 02/02/2026

Accepted: 20/02/2026

Published: 10/03/2026

Abstract

This study aims to describe the profile of fifth-grade elementary students' narrative writing skills, analyze their learning needs in narrative writing, and formulate the characteristics of instructional media responsive to students' actual conditions. A mixed-methods approach with a sequential exploratory design was employed, involving 31 fifth-grade students from SDN Kayu Putih 08 Pagi as participants. Quantitative data were obtained through an assessment of narrative writing skills using a four-dimensional rubric (ideas, organization, diction, spelling and punctuation) and analyzed descriptively. Qualitative data were collected through a needs analysis questionnaire and analyzed thematically. The results indicate that 70.97% of students are in the low category, with an average score of 47.98 out of 100. The main difficulty encountered is generating writing ideas (83.87%), with story writing identified as the most challenging material (64.52%). Students prefer interactive learning activities such as role-playing (35.48%) and the use of digital media (45.16%). The characteristics of responsive instructional media include being interactive and digital-based, providing systematic support at every writing stage, fostering imagination through visual stimuli, offering diverse narrative content, delivering constructive feedback, user-friendly interfaces, support for differentiated learning, and facilitating collaboration. The findings underscore the urgency of developing innovative digital media to adaptively and contextually enhance elementary students' narrative writing skills.

Keywords

Narrative Writing Skills, Needs Analysis, Digital Instructional Media, Elementary School, Skill Assessment.



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INTRODUCTION

The ability to write narratives is one of the essential competencies that must be mastered by elementary school students as an integral part of academic literacy, which serves as the main foundation for learning across various fields of science (Rahmayanti et al., 2023; Ulu, 2019). Narrative writing skills not only function as a medium of self-expression, but also as a cognitive instrument that facilitates the development of critical, creative, and analytical thinking skills in the context of Indonesian language learning at the elementary education level (Graham et al., 2024; Hidayatullah, 2022; Pérez-gómez & Daza, 2019). Specifically, for fifth-grade elementary school students, mastering narrative writing skills is crucial because, at this stage of cognitive development, they are undergoing a transition from concrete to abstract thinking (Andriani et al., 2022). During this period, students begin to organize complex ideas into coherent and cohesive text structures. However, empirical reality shows that most fifth-grade students still face significant challenges in narrative writing, as reflected in their inability to develop logical storylines, create characters with depth, use varied diction, and apply linguistic conventions according to the rules of good narrative writing (Graham & Harris, 2018).

A review of the literature on narrative writing instruction in elementary schools shows that this skill is a complex competency that demands the integration of various linguistic, cognitive, and metacognitive sub-skills simultaneously (Astutik et al., 2024; Fauzi et al., 2020; Rikmasari et al., 2025). Narrative writing requires students to build stories with a clear structure, including orientation, complication, and resolution, as well as integrate intrinsic elements such as theme, character, setting, plot, point of view, and message into a complete and meaningful text (Hidayati & Zainil, 2025; Salpianti & Dafit, 2023). Effective writing instruction requires a systematic, explicit instructional approach grounded in a deep understanding of students' learning needs and initial abilities (Gadd & Parr, 2017; Graham, 2008). Needs analysis is a fundamental step in designing writing programs that are responsive to individual learner characteristics and specific learning contexts (Ismayanti & Kholiq, 2020; Pardosi et al., 2019). Through comprehensive needs analysis, educators can identify the gaps between students' actual abilities and the expected competencies (Maki & Kuh, 2023). In the context of instructional media development, multimedia learning theory asserts that media designed based on solid instructional design principles and tailored to students' cognitive characteristics can significantly enhance learning effectiveness. Nevertheless, the development of effective learning media requires comprehensive empirical data on students' initial

abilities and learning needs (Ceken & Taskın, 2022; Mayer, 2024).

Findings from previous research have yielded important insights regarding narrative writing instruction in elementary schools. Studies on the implementation of process-based writing strategies show significant improvements in the quality of students' narrative writing, especially in terms of idea organization, use of descriptive language, and text coherence. Other studies exploring the use of digital technology in narrative writing instruction found that the integration of interactive digital media can enhance students' motivation and the quality of their writing, particularly in plot development, creativity, and character characterization (Kim et al., 2024). Research on scaffolding in narrative writing instruction has revealed that structured and gradual instructional support can help students overcome cognitive barriers during the writing process. However, most previous studies tend to focus on the application of certain instructional strategies or media without being preceded by needs analysis and basic assessment to obtain a comprehensive picture of students' initial narrative writing abilities (Xiao et al., 2025).

An analysis of previous research findings indicates a significant research gap in the study of narrative writing instruction in elementary schools. First, most previous studies have emphasized evaluating the effectiveness of instructional interventions or specific learning media without being preceded by systematic needs analysis and comprehensive basic assessment of students' narrative writing skills. Second, there is a lack of studies that specifically explore the narrative writing ability profile of fifth-grade students by considering various dimensions of writing skills, such as linguistic mechanics, text organization, content development, and creativity. Third, research that integrates the results of needs analysis and basic assessment as the foundation for the development of responsive and contextual learning media is still very limited, even though such an approach is essential to ensure that the developed media truly meet the real needs of students (Zou et al., 2026).

The novelty of this research lies in its comprehensive and systematic approach to conducting needs analysis and basic assessment of fifth-grade students' narrative writing skills as the foundation for developing responsive and contextual instructional media. This study not only identifies gaps in students' narrative writing skills but also explores in depth the factors contributing to these gaps, including cognitive, linguistic, motivational, and contextual aspects that influence the narrative writing process. In addition, this research utilizes multidimensional assessment instruments specifically designed to measure various aspects of narrative writing skills holistically, including linguistic mechanics, text structure, content development, creativity, and coherence.

Another unique aspect of this study is the integration of multi-stakeholder perspectives, namely students, teachers, and parents, in the needs analysis process to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of students' narrative writing learning needs (Jurenka et al., 2024).

Therefore, the main objectives of this research are as follows: (1) to describe the profile of fifth-grade students' narrative writing abilities based on a comprehensive baseline assessment; (2) to identify the narrative writing learning needs of fifth-grade students from the perspectives of students, teachers, and parents; and (3) to formulate the characteristics of narrative writing instructional media that are responsive to the results of needs analysis and baseline assessment.

This research is expected to provide significant contributions, both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, this study will enrich the body of knowledge in the field of Indonesian language learning, particularly related to the development of a comprehensive needs analysis and baseline assessment model for narrative writing instruction in elementary schools. Practically, this research will produce empirical data that can serve as a reference for teachers in designing more effective narrative writing instruction, as well as serve as a solid foundation for the development of innovative and responsive narrative writing instructional media tailored to the characteristics of fifth-grade students.

By clarifying these objectives, this research occupies a strategic position in filling the research gap related to the integration of baseline assessment and needs analysis as the basis for developing narrative writing instructional media at the elementary school level, and is expected to make a real contribution to improving the quality of narrative writing instruction and the development of more contextual literacy education policies.

METHOD

This study employed a mixed methods approach with an explanatory sequential design, systematically integrating quantitative and qualitative paradigms in sequence to obtain a comprehensive understanding of fifth grade students' narrative writing abilities as well as the needs for developing instructional media that are responsive to students' actual conditions. This approach was chosen because it provides both in-depth and holistic analysis by combining the strengths of measurable numerical data with rich contextual descriptive data, thereby enabling researchers not only to quantitatively identify the profile of students' narrative writing skills but also to qualitatively explore the underlying factors behind these conditions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The research was conducted at SDN Kayu Putih 08 Pagi, involving 31 fifth grade students who were purposively selected. The selection of subjects was based on the consideration that fifth grade students are at a critical stage in the development of narrative writing skills and require structured learning interventions to achieve optimal literacy competencies.

At the quantitative stage, a baseline assessment of students' narrative writing skills was conducted using a validated four-dimensional narrative assessment rubric covering: (1) ideas, (2) organization of ideas—including unity and the structure of narrative texts with orientation, complication, and resolution components, (3) diction, and (4) spelling and punctuation. Each dimension was measured using 14 assessment indicators on a Likert scale of 1–4 (Likert, 1932), producing a measurable and objective skill profile. The quantitative data obtained were analyzed descriptively to identify the distribution of students' abilities based on the following categories (Arikunto, 2021): low (score < 55), sufficient (55–69.99), good (70–84.99), and excellent (> 85). Furthermore, this analysis was also used to determine the average achievement on each narrative writing skill indicator, thereby identifying the specific weaknesses experienced by students.

Subsequently, at the qualitative stage, a needs analysis was carried out using a questionnaire distributed to 31 students to explore difficulties in learning Indonesian—including reading comprehension, finding ideas for writing, composing sentences, and the use of punctuation—as well as topics perceived as difficult (such as story writing and poetry writing), preferred learning activities (reading stories, writing stories, role-playing, watching videos), and preferences for instructional media (digital media, storybooks, instructional videos, and podcasts). The qualitative data collected were analyzed thematically to identify patterns of learning needs and the characteristics of instructional media that match students' preferences, also taking into account the availability of technological infrastructure at the school, such as wifi access, projector devices, students' gadget ownership, and teachers' habits of using PowerPoint media and YouTube instructional videos.

Integration of quantitative data from the baseline assessment and qualitative data from the needs analysis was carried out sequentially according to the explanatory sequential design, enabling the researcher to formulate characteristics of instructional media that are not only responsive to students' narrative writing weaknesses but also aligned with learning preferences and the availability of technological resources at the school. The entire research process adhered to research

ethics principles, including maintaining the confidentiality of participant identities and obtaining voluntary consent from all participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

1. Profile of Fifth-Grade Students' Narrative Writing Ability

The baseline assessment conducted on 31 fifth-grade students at SDN Kayu Putih 08 Pagi revealed that the majority of students' narrative writing ability remains in the low category. The overall average score was 47.98 (out of 100), which is far below the expected competency standard for fifth grade. The distribution of narrative writing ability categories is shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Distribution of Students' Narrative Writing Ability Categories

Category	Score Range	Number of Students	Percentages
Low	≤54.99	22	70.97%
Fair	55–69.99	5	16.13%
Good	70–84.99	4	12.90%
Excellent	≥85	0	0.00%
Total		31	100%

The majority of students (70.97%) were in the low category, and none reached the excellent category (≥85). The average overall narrative writing score was 47.98 (out of 100), indicating a level significantly below the fifth-grade competency standard. This finding is consistent with Sánchez & Sunesson (2023), who emphasize the complexity of narrative writing tasks and the need for integrated mastery of multiple sub-skills.

Narrative writing ability was analyzed across four main dimensions: ideas, organization of ideas, diction, and spelling & punctuation. The average achievement per indicator is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Average Achievement per Dimension of Narrative Writing Ability

Dimensions	Indicator	Average Score	Categories
Ideas	Determining the title according to the content of the story	1,84	Low
	Present a clear idea	1,87	Low
Organization of Ideas	Develop ideas with relevant explanations	1,90	Low
	Crafting a flowing storyline	1,96	Low
	Maintain cohesion between paragraphs	1,93	Low
	Structure sentences logically	1,96	Low
	Build onboarding	1,93	Low

Diction	Structuring complications	1,87	Low
	Drafting resolutions	1,78	Low
	Using the right word choice	1,90	Low
	Showing vocabulary variations in the narrative	1,81	Low
Spelling &	Use PUEBI appropriate spelling	2,00	Low
Punctuation	Use capital letters correctly	2,03	Low
	Consistent punctuation is exactly according to the rules	2,28	Low

All dimensions are categorized as low (scores <2.5 on a 4-point scale). The lowest indicator is “drafting resolutions” (1.78), while the highest is “use of punctuation” (2.28).

The distribution of individual student scores shows that most students fall within the very low to low ranges. Details are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Distribution of Individual Student Scores

Score Range (out of 56)	Number of Students	Percentage	Description
14–20 (25.00–35.71)	8	25.00%	Very Low
21–30 (37.50–53.57)	14	43.75%	Low
31–40 (55.36–71.43)	6	18.75%	Fair
41–50 (73.21–76.79)	4	12.50%	Good
51–56 (≥85)	0	0.00%	Excellent

A total of 68.75% of students are in the very low to low category, while only 12.5% reached the good category, and none achieved the excellent category.

Analysis of individual student writings revealed common problems, such as: (1) Disjointed storylines without adequate explanation; (2) Shallow characterizations, with little physical or psychological description; (3) Underdeveloped settings, making visualization difficult for readers; (4) Weak development of conflict and resolution, resulting in flat and unengaging stories. These findings are corroborated by student quotes, for example:

“I get confused about what to write, so my story isn’t clear and there are only one or two characters.” (S3)
“Sometimes I forget how to end the story so it’s interesting.” (S9)

This is consistent with literature suggesting that exposure to quality narrative models and structured practice are essential for improving narrative writing skills (Tantipidok, 2025).

2. Learning Needs of Fifth-Grade Narrative Writing from Multiple Perspectives

a. Student Perspective

The needs questionnaire shows that the main difficulty students face in Indonesian language learning is finding ideas for writing (83.87%), followed by difficulties in understanding reading

(61.29%), composing sentences (35.48%), and using punctuation (12.90%).

Table 4. Difficulties Experienced in Learning Indonesian

Type of Difficulty	Number of Students	Percentage
Understanding reading	19	61.29%
Finding writing ideas	26	83.87%
Composing sentences	11	35.48%
Using punctuation	4	12.90%

As one informant stated: *"I often don't know what to write when told to write a story"* (S12). This finding strengthens the baseline assessment results and highlights the need for support in the pre-writing stage, particularly brainstorming and story planning.

The most difficult material according to students is story writing (64.52%), followed by poetry writing (54.84%), summarizing (32.26%), expressing opinions (22.58%), and reading aloud (19.35%). See Table 5.

Table 5. Indonesian Language Materials Considered Difficult

Learning Material	Number of Students	Percentage
Story writing	20	64.52%
Poetry writing	17	54.84%
Summarizing	10	32.26%
Expressing opinions	7	22.58%
Reading aloud	6	19.35%

A student commented on this difficulty:

"Story writing is the hardest because I get confused about how to start and end the story." (S6)

Students most prefer role-playing (35.48%), followed by reading stories (29.03%), watching videos (29.03%), and only 6.45% like story writing. Conversely, story writing is also the least liked activity (54.84%). See Table 6.

Table 6. Student Preferences for Learning Activities

Activity	Most Liked	Least Liked
Reading stories	9 (29.03%)	6 (19.35%)
Story writing	2 (6.45%)	17 (54.84%)
Role-playing	11 (35.48%)	4 (12.90%)
Watching videos	9 (29.03%)	5 (16.13%)

A student stated:

"I prefer learning through role-play or watching videos because it's more fun than writing stories." (S14)

This finding highlights the urgent need to design narrative writing instruction that is more interactive, creative, and enjoyable.

Digital media is the most preferred by students (45.16%), followed by storybooks (25.81%), instructional videos (19.35%), and podcasts (9.68%). The availability of school infrastructure and teachers' familiarity with digital media reinforce the potential for developing interactive digital media for narrative writing. See Table 7.

Table 7. Student Preferences for Learning Media

Media Type	Number of Students	Percentage
Digital media	14	45.16%
Storybooks	8	25.81%
Videos	6	19.35%
Podcasts	3	9.68%

A student commented:

"I like learning with my phone or computer because I can see pictures, watch videos, and write directly." (S22)

b. Teacher Perspective

Based on interviews and observations, teachers noted that most students are passive during the writing process, have difficulty generating ideas independently, and need clear narrative text models and step-by-step guidance. Teachers emphasize the importance of scaffolding, gradual practice, and specific, timely feedback. Teachers also see significant potential in using digital media to make narrative writing instruction more interactive and engaging, supported by the school's technology infrastructure.

c. Parent Perspective

Parents are aware that their children still experience difficulties in writing stories, particularly in generating ideas, structuring plots, and writing in proper Indonesian. Some parents expect innovations in instructional media that can motivate their children to write more actively at home, for example through accessible digital platforms or applications that allow for monitoring their child's progress.

3. Characteristics of Responsive Narrative Writing Instructional Media Based on Needs Analysis and Baseline Assessment

The analysis of students' abilities and learning needs indicates that responsive instructional media for narrative writing should primarily be digital and interactive, aligning with students'

preferences and the school's available technology. The media must systematically support each stage of the writing process—pre-writing, drafting, revising, and editing—through features such as graphic organizers, example texts, revision checklists, and clear language guidelines.

To foster creativity and engagement, the media should include visual stimuli and interactive activities, like role-playing and video-based tasks. It is also important that the content is varied and leveled, offering narrative texts of different themes and complexity to suit diverse student abilities.

Furthermore, the platform should provide automatic feedback and opportunities for peer review, while maintaining a user-friendly interface enhanced by gamification elements to boost motivation. Support for differentiated learning and collaborative features, such as discussion forums and shared writing spaces, are also essential. Altogether, these characteristics are expected to help address students' main difficulties, increase motivation, and create a more effective and enjoyable narrative writing learning experience.

Discussion

The findings of this research reveal that the profile of fifth-grade elementary students' narrative writing abilities is characterized by significant multidimensional challenges. Most students are classified in the low proficiency category, with average scores far below the expected competency standards. This pattern points not only to cognitive limitations—such as weak executive functioning and poor idea organization, as highlighted by Zahra & Sumiyadi (2023)—but also to deficits in affective, reflective, social, and cultural domains that are embedded in narrative writing learning at the elementary level. The dominance of difficulties in generating ideas, organizing narrative structure, and using varied language suggests that students are often trapped within formulaic and mechanical approaches. This is consistent with the observations of Healey (2025) and Ruini & Mortara (2022), who warn that instruction overly focused on structural conventions without opportunities for imaginative exploration and self-reflection tends to produce superficial, less meaningful texts and undermines the development of students' personal agency.

Addressing the second research aim, it becomes clear that the core learning needs of students extend beyond technical writing skills. Many students are not accustomed to expressing and reflecting on their experiences and feelings in writing, leading to a persistent struggle in finding narrative ideas and developing authentic stories. One major reason why 83.87% of students struggle to generate ideas, as indicated in Table 4, is the lack of meaningful exposure to rich narrative experiences—such as reading diverse story models, engaging in creative play, or participating in

storytelling activities—both in and out of school. Students are rarely given opportunities to explore their own interests, emotions, and lived experiences as legitimate sources for narrative content. Furthermore, classroom practices often prioritize rigid prompts and single-answer tasks, which stifle students' imaginative thinking and personal agency. Many students internalize the belief that their daily lives or feelings are not 'interesting enough' to be turned into stories, resulting in low self-confidence and fear of being judged when sharing personal ideas. This lack of confidence and the absence of structured brainstorming or pre-writing activities leave students with little strategy to overcome initial writer's block. These factors, combined with minimal teacher scaffolding for idea development, explain why students' scores for idea generation remain so low.

This indicates a fundamental need for reflective and emotional stimuli within the learning process. Literature on writing therapy and educational psychology, as synthesized (Leal & Soares, 2024; Ruini & Mortara, 2022), demonstrates that narrative writing and reflective journaling are not only tools for strengthening literacy but also powerful instruments for enhancing well-being, resilience, agency, and emotional regulation. Empirical studies on practices such as guided autobiography, gratitude journaling, forgiveness letters, and writing about best possible selves show that these approaches can reduce anxiety, foster optimism, and help students make sense of both positive and adverse life experiences. The integration of these therapeutic and reflective elements is particularly vital in the elementary context, where students are developing their capacity for self-understanding and meaning-making.

The findings further underscore the value of narrative writing in strengthening empathy, social attitudes, and perspective-taking. Experimental research by Bientzle et al. (2021) demonstrates that practicing narrative writing about fictional characters or the experiences of others significantly increases empathy and positive attitudes, offering a concrete pathway for schools in Indonesia to mainstream character education, inclusion, and social awareness. Learning experiences that encourage students to adopt the perspectives of others or reflect on their peers' stories are highly effective in fostering social attitudes, reducing prejudice, and increasing openness and communication within the classroom community.

With regard to the third research aim, the development and implementation of responsive instructional media must be grounded in a deep understanding of both students' ability profiles and their learning needs. Media that merely reinforce mechanical drills and formulaic exercises are insufficient. Instead, effective instructional media should create space for self-expression,

imagination, and personal reflection. The work of Hellystia & Hermawatu (2024) demonstrates that integrating local stories, autobiographies, and folklore into narrative writing instruction not only enriches students' linguistic resources but also reinforces their self-identity, sense of belonging, acceptance of diversity, and confidence in facing change. Students trained to write about personal, family, and community experiences are better equipped to affirm their identity and find meaning in life, preparing them to leave a positive legacy for themselves and their communities. Leal & Soares (2024) further emphasize that narrative writing should be conceptualized as a dynamic space for students to narrate, reflect on, and negotiate the meaning of their life experiences, which in turn strengthens their quality of life, resilience, and well-being both individually and collectively.

The transformation brought by digital technology also offers new opportunities for instructional media that are personal, adaptive, and inclusive. Digital applications, AI platforms, and online journaling, as discussed by Pellas (2023) and Tantipidok (2025), have been shown to enhance motivation, narrative intelligence, self-efficacy, and expand students' access to writing freely and reflectively. These technologies enable adaptive feedback, exploration of ideas, and foster supportive writing communities, even for students facing barriers in oral communication. Effective media should leverage these affordances, providing students with multimodal resources, interactive storytelling, and personalized scaffolding at every stage of the writing process.

Furthermore, narrative writing serves as a vital means to strengthen communication, build trust, and foster collaboration among students, teachers, and parents. Reflective narratives and daily journaling provide a safe space for expressing thoughts and feelings that are difficult to articulate orally, thus strengthening authentic communication, empathy, and social relations in both school and family environments (Leal & Soares, 2024; Ruini & Mortara, 2022; Sanchez & Sunesson, 2023). Evidence from palliative care even shows that narrative and writing therapy can serve as effective communication bridges, enhancing the quality of relationships and trust in emotionally charged contexts (Leal & Soares, 2024)

Taken together, these findings reinforce the need for a paradigm shift in literacy instruction and media development in elementary schools. Narrative writing must be regarded not only as a technical skill but as the foundation of psychoeducational and therapeutic strategies that foster students' well-being, character, identity, communication, and empathy. Teachers are encouraged to integrate reflective writing exercises, autobiography, gratitude journaling, and narratives based on local and cultural experiences into their teaching programs. Schools and the national curriculum

should position narrative writing as a cross-disciplinary approach that strengthens language skills, builds resilience, and develops the global competence of Indonesian students while rooting them in the richness of local culture. Instructional media should be designed to be flexible, adaptive, and responsive to students' diverse needs—providing scaffolding, emotional support, and opportunities for meaning-making, agency, and authentic self-expression.

Ultimately, this research contributes valuable insights for literacy education policy, curriculum innovation, and the holistic development of students' character. Narrative writing at the elementary level is not just about language skills; it is about building meaning, well-being, and a strong identity. Narrative becomes a medium for understanding, accepting, and celebrating the diversity of life experiences, while simultaneously strengthening resilience and the quality of social relationships in an ever-changing society.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that the narrative writing skills of fifth-grade students at SDN Kayu Putih 08 Pagi remain relatively low, with most students facing major difficulties in generating ideas, developing storylines, and using appropriate diction and punctuation. Students also tend to show little interest in narrative writing activities, but prefer digital and interactive learning methods such as role-playing and watching videos. These findings highlight the urgent need to develop responsive and adaptive instructional media for narrative writing that utilizes digital technology to support a more systematic and engaging learning process.

As an implication, teachers and schools are encouraged to integrate interactive digital media into narrative writing instruction and to design learning experiences that are more reflective and personalized. Future researchers are advised to develop and test the effectiveness of digital media based on students' identified needs, thereby strengthening narrative literacy and supporting the development of character, empathy, and student well-being in the digital era.

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