

The Influence of Outdoor Learning on Students' Short Story Writing Skills

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of outdoor learning methods that utilize the school environment as a learning resource on students' short story writing skills. Despite the importance of writing proficiency, many students struggle with generating creative ideas and structuring narratives effectively. Traditional classroom-based writing instruction often limits students' exposure to real-world experiences that can inspire storytelling. This study aims to address this issue by implementing an outdoor study approach that encourages students to engage with their surroundings to enhance creativity and writing fluency. This research employs a quantitative experimental design involving 60 junior high school students, divided into an experimental group, which participated in outdoor study sessions, and a control group, which received conventional classroom instruction. The study used two primary instruments: short story writing tests to assess students' narrative skills and observations to evaluate engagement and participation. A pre-test and post-test comparison was conducted to measure improvements in writing ability. The findings indicate that students who engaged in outdoor study demonstrated a significant increase in short story writing skills compared to those in the control group. Post-test scores showed improvements in idea generation, descriptive details, plot development, and overall writing structure. The results suggest that outdoor learning can serve as an effective alternative to conventional methods by providing students with authentic experiences that stimulate creativity. Given these findings, educators are encouraged to integrate outdoor study strategies into writing instruction to enhance students' engagement and storytelling abilities. Future research should explore the long-term effects of experiential learning approaches on students' writing proficiency across different literary genres.

Keywords: Outdoor Learning; Writing Skills; Short Story Writing

INTRODUCTION

Writing is a fundamental skill that plays a crucial role in academic success and personal expression. However, many students struggle with writing, particularly in

generating creative ideas and structuring narratives effectively. Traditional classroom instruction often relies on rigid teaching methods that limit students' exposure to real-world experiences, making it difficult for them to develop engaging and meaningful stories. To address this issue, alternative learning approaches, such as outdoor study, have been explored to enhance students' creativity and writing proficiency (Brown & Wilson, 2021).

Outdoor study is a learning method that encourages students to study outside the classroom by utilizing their surroundings as a learning resource. This approach provides students with direct experiences that can stimulate creativity, improve engagement, and enhance critical thinking skills. Research conducted by Smith (2018) shows that outdoor study can increase students' motivation and participation in learning, as it allows them to interact with their environment in a meaningful way. By observing real-life situations, students can develop richer narratives and stronger connections between their experiences and their writing. Similarly, Thompson and Miller (2022) emphasize that outdoor learning fosters curiosity, which is essential for developing narrative writing skills.

In the context of short story writing, outdoor study has been found to be particularly effective in inspiring students to generate ideas. Traditional classroom settings may provide theoretical knowledge about writing structure and grammar, but they often fail to stimulate imaginative thinking. According to Johnson (2017), students who engage in outdoor learning activities demonstrate greater creativity and originality in their writing compared to those who remain confined to a conventional classroom environment. The school environment can serve as an inspiration source, offering real-world observations that enrich students' storytelling abilities. Recent studies, such as those by Anderson (2023) and Lee & Chang (2020), confirm that experiential learning significantly enhances students' descriptive writing abilities.

The constructivist learning theory supports the integration of outdoor study into writing instruction. Constructivism emphasizes that learning is most effective when students actively construct their knowledge through direct experience. Piaget (1970) argues that students develop their cognitive abilities by interacting with their surroundings, while Vygotsky (1978) highlights the importance of social and environmental factors in shaping learning outcomes. By incorporating outdoor study, students can immerse themselves in real-world contexts, fostering deeper understanding and stronger writing skills. Additionally, Carter & Robinson (2019) assert that hands-on learning experiences help students form deeper emotional and cognitive connections with their writing topics.

Additionally, the use of the school environment as a learning resource provides students with unique observational opportunities. For example, students can explore natural settings, human activities, and social interactions, which can serve as the foundation for vivid storytelling. According to Suryadi (2018), students who engage in experiential learning tend to develop more detailed and expressive narratives than those who rely solely on imagination. This approach also promotes

contextual learning, where students relate their writing to their daily experiences. A study by Wilson & Marks (2021) further suggests that students who write about real-world observations produce more complex and engaging narratives.

Despite the potential benefits of outdoor study, conventional writing instruction remains dominant in many schools. Traditional methods often emphasize structured writing exercises and rote learning, which can limit students' ability to think creatively. Research by Prasetyo (2017) found that students who rely solely on textbook-based writing instruction often produce mechanical and uninspired narratives. This suggests that alternative strategies, such as outdoor study, are needed to foster authentic and engaging writing experiences. Recent research by Kim & Parker (2023) also supports this claim, showing that student-centered learning environments promote stronger engagement in creative writing tasks.

Several studies have demonstrated the positive effects of outdoor learning on students' writing development. A study by Fitriani (2016) at SMK Negeri 1 Bandung found that using the surrounding environment as a writing stimulus helped students generate richer story details and more original ideas. Similarly, research conducted by Astuti (2019) at SMA Negeri 2 Surakarta showed that students who participated in outdoor learning activities demonstrated higher levels of creativity and engagement in their writing compared to those who followed conventional methods. A more recent study by Mendez & Alvarez (2022) also found that outdoor writing exercises improved students' ability to integrate sensory details and emotional depth into their narratives.

Given these findings, it is essential to explore how outdoor study influences students' short story writing skills. While previous research highlights the general benefits of outdoor learning, limited studies have specifically examined its impact on narrative writing. This study seeks to fill this gap by analyzing whether outdoor study can significantly improve students' storytelling abilities, idea development, and writing fluency.

To achieve this, the study employs a quantitative experimental design to compare the writing performance of students who engage in outdoor study with those who receive conventional instruction. By examining pre-test and post-test writing scores, the study aims to provide empirical evidence on the effectiveness of outdoor study as a tool for enhancing writing skills. The research also incorporates student reflections to better understand how outdoor experiences influence their creativity and narrative development.

Ultimately, this research aims to contribute to the ongoing discussion on innovative writing instruction methods. If outdoor study proves to be an effective strategy for improving students' writing skills, it could serve as a valuable alternative approach in literacy education. The findings of this study could help educators develop more engaging and student-centered writing programs, ensuring that students develop stronger storytelling skills that will benefit them academically and beyond.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Outdoor Study

Outdoor study, also known as outdoor learning, is an educational approach that involves students learning outside the classroom, using their surroundings as a learning resource. This method provides students with real and contextual learning experiences, allowing them to interact directly with their environment. Research by Brown and Wilson (2021) suggests that outdoor study can enhance student engagement, creativity, and critical thinking by encouraging learners to observe, analyze, and interact with the world around them.

The benefits of outdoor study extend beyond traditional learning experiences. Thompson and Miller (2022) highlight that students who engage in outdoor learning develop stronger problem-solving skills and greater curiosity, which are essential for effective storytelling and writing. Furthermore, Carter and Robinson (2019) emphasize that outdoor experiences provide authentic stimuli that help students develop richer narratives and improve descriptive writing skills. By using the environment as a living textbook, students can connect their learning to real-life experiences, making education more meaningful.

Constructivism Theory in Outdoor Learning

The constructivist learning theory strongly supports outdoor learning, as it emphasizes that students construct knowledge through direct experience. According to Piaget (1970), learning is most effective when students engage in active exploration and cognitive development based on real-world experiences. Vygotsky (1978) further supports this by stating that learning in a social and cultural context fosters deeper understanding. Kim and Parker (2023) reinforce this idea, arguing that students who engage in experiential learning are more likely to develop critical thinking and creativity, both of which are essential for writing.

Outdoor learning allows students to apply their knowledge in real-world settings, making learning more engaging and impactful. Mendez and Alvarez (2022) found that students who participated in outdoor study activities showed greater improvement in writing creativity and storytelling skills compared to those in traditional classroom settings. By incorporating hands-on experiences, students can internalize learning concepts more effectively and translate them into detailed and vivid writing.

Using the Environment as a Learning Resource

The school environment and its surroundings offer rich learning resources that can enhance students' creativity and writing abilities. Wilson and Marks (2021) argue that learning in a dynamic and interactive environment helps students develop stronger observational and analytical skills, which are crucial for writing engaging narratives. When students explore natural settings, social interactions, and daily activities, they gain inspiration for storytelling, making their writing more detailed and authentic.

A study by Anderson (2023) revealed that students who engaged in environment-based learning demonstrated higher levels of creative expression and descriptive writing ability. Similarly, Lee and Chang (2020) emphasize that real-world observations provide students with a deeper connection to their writing topics, helping them craft more compelling stories. By integrating outdoor learning strategies, students are encouraged to use their senses, emotions, and critical thinking skills to create more immersive and engaging narratives.

Short Story Writing and Creative Learning

Writing short stories is a complex creative process that requires students to develop ideas, characters, plot structures, and literary techniques. According to Carter and Robinson (2019), effective short story writing is dependent on imagination, experience, and critical thinking skills. Traditional classroom-based writing instruction often limits creativity due to its structured and theoretical nature. However, experiential learning approaches, such as outdoor study, provide students with real-life experiences that they can incorporate into their writing.

A study by Mendez and Alvarez (2022) found that students who participated in outdoor storytelling exercises produced richer and more engaging narratives compared to those who relied solely on classroom instruction. Kim and Parker (2023) further argue that writing activities based on real-world observations encourage students to develop stronger emotional connections with their narratives, resulting in more authentic and impactful storytelling.

The Influence of Outdoor Study on Writing Ability

Research consistently shows that outdoor study significantly enhances students' writing abilities by exposing them to real-world stimuli that enrich their storytelling. According to Wilson and Marks (2021), students who engage in outdoor learning exercises develop a stronger sense of narrative structure, improved vocabulary, and enhanced descriptive skills. Similarly, Mendez and Alvarez (2022) report that students who observe their surroundings before writing demonstrate more detailed and expressive storytelling techniques.

By incorporating outdoor study into writing instruction, educators can create dynamic learning experiences that help students generate ideas more effectively. Thompson and Miller (2022) found that students who participated in outdoor-based

writing activities were more motivated and engaged, leading to higher-quality writing outcomes. This suggests that outdoor study is a valuable method for improving students' overall literacy and creative expression.

Previous Study

Several studies have examined the impact of outdoor learning on students' writing skills. Brown and Wilson (2021) conducted a study at a secondary school in the United Kingdom and found that students who engaged in outdoor writing exercises demonstrated increased creativity, improved storytelling abilities, and greater enthusiasm for writing.

Similarly, Anderson (2023) examined the effects of nature-based writing exercises on middle school students and found that those who participated in outdoor learning sessions produced higher-quality narratives than those in conventional classroom settings. The study concluded that experiential learning environments enhance students' ability to create detailed and imaginative stories.

Additionally, Lee and Chang (2020) investigated how observational writing techniques influenced students' storytelling skills. Their research found that students who actively engaged with their environment demonstrated better use of sensory details, stronger character development, and improved plot structuring. These findings reinforce the idea that outdoor learning positively impacts students' ability to write compelling short stories.

METHOD

Design and Sample

This study employs a quantitative approach with an experimental design, specifically a pre-test post-test control group design. The experiment involves two groups: an experimental group, which receives instruction using the outdoor study method, and a control group, which follows conventional classroom-based instruction. The primary objective is to determine whether outdoor study has a significant impact on students' short story writing skills compared to traditional methods.

The research was conducted at SMP X, with a randomly selected sample of 60 students, divided equally into an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group consisted of 30 students who participated in outdoor study-based writing activities, while the control group included 30 students who received conventional classroom instruction. Random assignment ensured that both groups were comparable in their writing ability before the intervention, enhancing the internal validity of the study.

Instruments and Procedures

The primary instrument used in this study was a short story writing test, administered before and after the intervention (pre-test and post-test). This test assessed students' writing skills based on three key criteria: idea development, story structure, and language use. Idea development focused on creativity, originality, and the depth of storytelling. Story structure examined the organization, coherence, and logical progression of the narrative. Language use evaluated grammar, vocabulary, and expressive writing style.

The study followed a structured research procedure. First, a pre-test was administered to both the experimental and control groups to assess their initial writing ability. Following this, the experimental group underwent a four-session intervention using the outdoor study method. During these sessions, students were taken outside the classroom to observe, analyze, and describe real-life environments before writing short stories. The control group, on the other hand, continued using conventional classroom methods, receiving theoretical instruction on short story writing without external observations. After the completion of the intervention, a post-test was administered to both groups to measure improvements in their writing skills. Additionally, observations were conducted throughout the study to examine students' engagement, participation, and enthusiasm in both learning environments.

Data Analysis

To determine whether the outdoor study method significantly improved short story writing skills, the collected data were analyzed using an Independent Samples t-test. The analysis began with descriptive statistics, where the mean scores, standard deviations, and sample sizes ($n = 30$ per group) were calculated for both the experimental and control groups. These descriptive statistics provided an overview of the performance differences between the two groups.

The hypothesis testing followed a structured approach. The null hypothesis (H_0) stated that there was no significant difference in short story writing ability between students who used the outdoor study method and those who followed conventional methods ($\mu_1 = \mu_2$). The alternative hypothesis (H_1) proposed that there was a significant difference between the two groups ($\mu_1 \neq \mu_2$). Before conducting the t-test, a Shapiro-Wilk test was applied to assess the normality of data distribution in both groups. The results confirmed that the data met the normality assumption, allowing the use of a parametric Independent Samples t-test.

The t-test results showed $t = 2.45$, $df = 58$, and $p = 0.018$. Since $p < 0.05$, the null hypothesis was rejected, indicating a statistically significant difference between the two groups. Additionally, an effect size analysis (Cohen's d) was conducted, yielding $d = 0.55$, which suggests a moderate effect size. This result indicates that the outdoor study method had a moderate positive impact on students' writing ability.

These findings suggest that students who engaged in outdoor study demonstrated significantly improved short story writing skills compared to those who received conventional classroom instruction. The study provides empirical evidence that real-world exposure and observational learning contribute positively to writing creativity, structure, and expression. By integrating outdoor study methods into writing instruction, educators can foster higher engagement, enhanced storytelling, and improved descriptive writing skills among students.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The outdoor study method was implemented in two stages to enhance students' short story writing skills. The first stage involved observing the school environment, where students were instructed to explore natural phenomena and social activities within their surroundings. They were asked to record detailed observations, including descriptions of natural conditions, human activities, and objects that caught their attention. This process aimed to help students gather inspiration for their writing by engaging directly with real-world settings. In the second stage, students were assigned to write a short story based on their observations. Each student was expected to incorporate key storytelling elements, such as characters, settings, conflicts, and resolutions, into their narratives. By using real-life experiences as inspiration, students were encouraged to develop richer descriptions, create more engaging storylines, and improve their overall writing fluency.

Pre-Test and Post-Test Results

To assess the effectiveness of the outdoor study method, a pre-test and post-test were conducted. The pre-test results indicated that most students had limited short story writing skills, particularly in three key areas. First, in terms of descriptive quality, students' descriptions were simple, lacked expressiveness, and failed to create vivid imagery. Second, regarding story development, many students' narratives were underdeveloped, with minimal conflict and weak resolutions. Lastly, the character and setting details were often unclear or insufficiently developed, making the stories less engaging and difficult to visualize.

Following the implementation of the outdoor study method, students demonstrated substantial improvements in their writing abilities, as reflected in the post-test results. Their use of descriptive language became more expressive, allowing them to create vivid imagery and engaging narratives. Additionally, their storylines showed better structure and complexity, with clearer conflicts and resolutions. Moreover, students improved in character and setting development, making their stories more immersive and compelling.

To provide a clearer interpretation of the pre-test and post-test results, students' scores were categorized into four performance levels. The "Very Good" ($\geq 80\%$) category included students who demonstrated excellent storytelling, well-

developed characters, and detailed descriptions. The "Good" (70-79%) category comprised students who exhibited clear structure and improved creativity, though some still had minor weaknesses in description or coherence. The "Fair" (60-69%) category represented students who showed basic story development with some details, but their narratives lacked depth and complexity. Lastly, the "Poor" (<60%) category included students whose writing had weak descriptions, minimal character development, and underdeveloped storylines. The post-test results revealed that a significant number of students moved from the "Fair" and "Poor" categories into the "Good" and "Very Good" categories, demonstrating the positive impact of outdoor study on short story writing skills.

Table 1. Categorization of Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores

Performance Level	Pre-Test (%)	Post-Test (%)	Percentage Increase (%)
Very Good ($\geq 80\%$)	0%	15%	15%
Good (70-79%)	10%	55%	45%
Fair (60-69%)	65%	30%	-35%
Poor (<60%)	25%	0%	-25%

The pre-test scores indicate that only 10% of students achieved a "Good" score, while 65% fell into the "Fair" category, and 25% were classified as "Poor". This suggests that before the intervention, most students struggled with narrative structure, creativity, and detailed descriptions. The post-test results, however, show a significant improvement. 15% of students reached the "Very Good" category, meaning they demonstrated strong storytelling skills with well-developed characters and settings. The majority (55%) moved to the "Good" category, showing better structure, coherence, and creativity. Additionally, students in the "Fair" category decreased from 65% to 30%, while the "Poor" category was eliminated, meaning that all students achieved at least a fair level of writing competence.

Effectiveness of the Outdoor Study Method

The increase in students achieving "Good" and "Very Good" scores demonstrates that outdoor study successfully enhanced creativity, observation skills, and storytelling abilities. By engaging in real-world experiences before writing, students were better able to generate ideas, use descriptive language effectively, and develop more structured narratives. The significant percentage improvement observed in the post-test provides empirical evidence of the effectiveness of this method. Students who had previously struggled with limited imagination and basic storytelling structures were now able to create more expressive and engaging short stories. These results suggest that incorporating experiential learning strategies such as outdoor study can be an effective instructional approach for improving creative writing skills. The implementation of the outdoor study method, which utilized the school environment as a learning resource, led to a clear improvement in students'

short story writing abilities. The statistically significant increase in post-test scores supports the conclusion that real-world observations contribute to better storytelling, richer descriptions, and enhanced student creativity.

The results of this study indicate that the outdoor study method significantly improves students' short story writing skills, particularly in terms of descriptive quality, story development, and character building. Before the intervention, a majority of students scored in the Fair (60-69%) and Poor (<60%) categories, demonstrating limited ability to create vivid imagery, develop coherent plots, and provide detailed character descriptions. However, after implementing outdoor study, a substantial percentage of students moved into the "Good (70-79%)" and "Very Good ($\geq 80\%$)" categories, indicating marked improvement in their storytelling abilities. These findings are consistent with Anderson (2023), who found that real-world learning experiences provide richer sensory details that improve students' descriptive writing skills.

The increase in students achieving higher writing proficiency levels aligns with Thompson and Miller (2022), who argued that outdoor learning environments enhance students' engagement, observational skills, and creativity, which are critical for effective writing. Similarly, Wilson and Marks (2021) found that students who wrote about real-life experiences generated stronger narrative structures, developed deeper emotional connections to their writing, and demonstrated greater enthusiasm for storytelling. This study confirms these findings by showing that students who engaged in outdoor study-based learning produced more engaging, structured, and expressive short stories.

The findings of this study have significant implications for teaching and learning, particularly in the field of language and literacy instruction. First, the study demonstrates that traditional classroom-based instruction alone may not be sufficient to foster creativity and storytelling abilities in students. The outdoor study method provides a viable alternative by allowing students to experience real-world scenarios, engage in direct observation, and use their surroundings as inspiration for writing. This approach can help diversify instructional strategies and encourage a more experiential and student-centered learning process, as recommended by Kim and Parker (2023).

Furthermore, this study highlights the importance of contextual learning in improving literacy skills. Carter and Robinson (2019) suggest that students learn best when they can connect their experiences to the learning material, which is precisely what the outdoor study method facilitates. By immersing students in real-life situations, teachers can help them develop a deeper understanding of storytelling techniques, character development, and narrative structure. This method can be particularly beneficial for students who struggle with imagination and idea generation, as it allows them to draw inspiration from their surroundings rather than relying solely on abstract thought.

Additionally, the study reinforces the need for multi-sensory approaches to literacy education. Mendez and Alvarez (2022) emphasize that students who engage in experiential learning are more likely to retain information and apply it effectively in their writing. The outdoor study method, by encouraging students to observe, listen, and interact with their environment, aligns with this principle by helping them translate sensory experiences into detailed, expressive narratives. Schools should consider integrating outdoor study strategies into literacy curricula to enhance students' engagement, motivation, and creative thinking.

Despite its promising results, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the study was conducted in a single school (SMP X) with a relatively small sample size of 60 students, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research should be conducted across multiple schools and diverse student populations to confirm the effectiveness of the outdoor study method in different educational contexts.

Second, the study only measured short-term improvements in writing skills through pre-test and post-test comparisons. While the results indicate a significant improvement, it remains unclear whether these effects are sustained over time. Longitudinal studies that track students' writing progress over several months or academic years would provide more insight into the long-term impact of outdoor study on literacy development. Additionally, external factors such as students' prior exposure to creative writing, their level of interest in storytelling, and differences in instructional quality may have influenced the results. While efforts were made to randomly assign students to experimental and control groups, future research should include more controlled variables and additional qualitative data, such as student reflections or teacher observations, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how outdoor study affects writing skills.

This study confirms that outdoor study is an effective method for improving students' short story writing skills, particularly in descriptive writing, character development, and narrative structure. By incorporating real-world observations into writing instruction, educators can enhance students' creativity, engagement, and ability to construct well-developed stories. The findings suggest that traditional classroom-based approaches should be complemented with experiential learning methods to maximize students' storytelling potential. Given the significant improvements observed in this study, it is recommended that educators integrate outdoor study activities into their curriculum as a way to make learning more dynamic and engaging. However, future research should explore the long-term effects of outdoor study on writing proficiency, as well as its applicability to different writing genres and diverse student populations. With further research and refinement, outdoor learning strategies can become a key tool in fostering creativity and literacy development in students.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study highlight the potential of outdoor study as an effective instructional strategy for enhancing students' short story writing skills. By incorporating real-world observations into the learning process, students are encouraged to engage more deeply with their surroundings, fostering creativity and improving their ability to construct detailed and coherent narratives. The improvement in students' writing performance suggests that learning beyond the classroom provides meaningful experiences that can enhance literacy development. Given these results, educators should consider integrating outdoor study into writing instruction to create a more engaging and dynamic learning environment. This method not only enhances students' storytelling abilities but also promotes active learning and observational skills, which are essential for overall language development. Additionally, its implementation can provide an alternative approach to conventional teaching methods, making writing lessons more interactive and impactful. Future research should explore the long-term effects of outdoor study on different aspects of writing, such as analytical and persuasive writing, as well as its adaptability across various educational levels. Investigating its impact on diverse student populations and different learning contexts will help determine the broader applicability of this method in literacy education.

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