The Use of Graphic Organizer Focusing on Story Elements to Promote Students' Narrative Writing

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Abstract. This study investigated the impact of using graphic organizers focusing on story elements to enhance the narrative writing ability of sixth-grade students. The research aimed to: (1) examine the effects of graphic organizers on students' narrative writing abilities, (2) compare students' post-test narrative writing abilities with their pre-test performance, and (3) explore students' opinions on using graphic organizers during the writing process. A pre-experimental design with one group pre-test and post-test was employed, involving 30 sixth-grade students from Marie Kaengkhro School. The students participated in lessons integrating graphic organizers based on Matsuda and Hammill's writing principles. The results indicated a significant improvement in students' post-test scores across all narrative writing criteria, with gains in organization, idea development, and conventions. The paired t-test confirmed the statistical significance of the difference between pre- and post-test scores (t = 11.79, p < .001). Student feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with 95% reporting that the graphic organizers helped them organize their ideas and improve their narrative writing skills. The findings suggest that graphic organizers effectively enhance narrative writing skills, particularly in EFL contexts. Future research could explore the long-term effects of this approach across different educational settings.

Keywords: Graphic Organizers, Story Elements, Narrative Writing, Writing Ability

Introduction

Narrative writing holds an important place in language learning worldwide, particularly for students studying English as a Foreign Language (EFL). It is not just about building language skills; it is about igniting creativity, encouraging critical thinking, and giving students the opportunity to express themselves freely. In classrooms across the globe, narrative writing allows students to explore language, create dynamic characters, and craft stories that reflect their unique perspectives. This type of creative engagement builds their confidence in using

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English and deepens their connection to the language. As schools and educational systems increasingly focus on higher-order thinking skills, narrative writing becomes even more crucial, giving students a meaningful way to communicate complex ideas and emotions.

Narrative writing encourages students to articulate original ideas, scenarios, and solutions by constructing fictional worlds, developing characters, and resolving conflicts. Through this process, students stimulate cognitive functions such as problem-solving and critical thinking. As Hyland (2019) points out, narrative writing is crucial for helping students develop a sense of agency and confidence in their linguistic abilities, as it provides them with opportunities to express complex ideas and emotions.

Despite the recognized benefits, many students in Thailand, particularly those at Marie Kaengkhro School in Chaiyaphum, struggle with narrative writing. National assessments reveal significant challenges: for example, the National Institute of Educational Testing Service (NIETS) reported in 2022 that only 35% of sixth-grade students achieved a satisfactory level in narrative writing tasks, demonstrating difficulties in constructing coherent and engaging narratives (Damrongkiat Mala, 2022; NIETS, 2022). These struggles are often rooted in traditional teaching methods that emphasize rote memorization and grammatical accuracy over creativity and idea development. As a result, students lack the confidence and skills needed to write narratives that are both structurally sound and rich in creative content, limiting their overall writing proficiency.

The difficulties these students face include organizing ideas, using appropriate vocabulary, and maintaining coherence throughout their writing. The pressure to adhere strictly to grammatical rules often suppresses their creative impulses, leading to writing that is technically correct but lacking originality and depth. To address these issues, a pedagogical shift is required, one that places greater emphasis on creativity and the development of students' narrative voices.

Previous research highlights the effectiveness of innovative strategies to support narrative writing. Hyland (2019) emphasizes the role of narrative writing in fostering student confidence and linguistic agency, suggesting that traditional teaching methods may need adjustment to support students' creative expression. Adler (2018) and Tayib (2021) provide evidence that graphic organizers can significantly enhance students' ability to plan and structure their writing. Adler (2018) demonstrated that using graphic organizers helps students break down complex narrative elements into manageable parts, improving their ability to organize thoughts and produce coherent stories. Tayib (2021) supports these findings, showing that graphic organizers, when combined with structured writing frameworks like Matsuda and Hammill's Writing Principles, lead to more cohesive and engaging narratives.

Building on these studies, the current research aims to investigate the effects of using graphic organizers focusing on story elements for the narrative writing ability of sixth-grade students. This study addresses a pressing gap highlighted by national assessment data, which reveals persistent deficiencies in students' narrative writing skills that could have long-term effects on their academic success and language development. By comparing students' pre-test and post-test writing performances, the study seeks to identify tangible improvements in their writing

ability and offer evidence-based strategies to address these widespread challenges. Additionally, it explores students' opinions towards learning English using these graphic organizers, providing valuable insights into their attitudes and experiences with this instructional approach.

In conclusion, narrative writing serves as a powerful tool for fostering creativity and enhancing students' language proficiency. By incorporating graphic organizers within structured writing frameworks, educators can effectively help students address the challenges they face in narrative writing. This method not only improves students' writing skills but also empowers them to articulate their ideas with greater clarity and originality. To explore these outcomes, this study aims to answer the following research questions: (a) How does the use of graphic organizers focusing on story elements impact the narrative writing ability of sixth-grade students? (b) What differences can be observed between students' pre-test and post-test writing performances? (c) What are students' opinions about learning English through the use of these graphic organizers?

Method

This study utilized a pre-experimental design with a one-group pre-test and post-test format to assess the effects of using graphic organizers focused on story elements on the narrative writing ability of sixth-grade students. The method is organized into the following stages: Population and Samples, Experimental Design, Research Instruments, Data Collection, and Data Analysis.

Population and Samples

Population

The population for this study comprised 60 students from the sixth grade, enrolled in the Intensive English Program at Marie Kaengkhro School, Chaiyaphum, during the 2023 academic year. These students were divided into two classrooms: Grade 6, Section 1 (30 students), and Grade 6, Section 2 (30 students).

Samples

The sample consisted of 30 students from Grade 6, Section 1. Cluster random sampling was used to select these students. The experimental group participated in lessons using graphic organizers focusing on story elements. The sample size ensured sufficient data for statistical analysis while maintaining relevance to similar educational contexts.

Experimental Design

A one-group pre-test and post-test design was employed to evaluate the impact of graphic organizers on students' narrative writing abilities. The study spanned over an eight-week period, during which students were instructed using graphic organizers integrated with Matsuda and Hammill's writing principles.

O_1	x	O_2

Pre-Test (O_1):
Before the intervention, a pre-test was administered to assess students' initial narrative writing ability.
Intervention (X):

Students received instruction focusing on story elements (character, setting, plot, conflict, and resolution) using graphic organizers. Matsuda and Hammill's writing principles were incorporated into the instructional process to guide students through structured narrative development.

Post-Test (O_2):

After the instructional period, a post-test was administered to evaluate improvements in students' narrative writing abilities.

Research Instruments

Lesson Plans

The lesson plans were developed following Matsuda and Hammill's writing principles and focused on story elements. Each lesson integrated graphic organizers to assist students in visualizing and organizing key narrative components. The lesson plans underwent expert review, and adjustments were made based on the feedback received. They were also piloted with a small group of students to refine their content and instructional flow.

Narrative Writing Ability Test

The Narrative Writing Ability Test was designed to measure students' narrative writing proficiency and consisted of two main parts. First, the Story Elements Drafting component required students to draft narratives by incorporating essential story elements, such as setting, character, and plot. This initial drafting stage helped students organize their ideas and create a structured narrative outline. Second, in the Narrative Writing component, students developed full narratives, applying the planned structure from the drafting phase to produce complete and coherent stories. To ensure the test's validity, three experts in English language education reviewed and validated its content. Additionally, the reliability of the test was confirmed through inter-rater reliability measures. The test was validated by three experts in English language education, and reliability was established through inter-rater reliability.
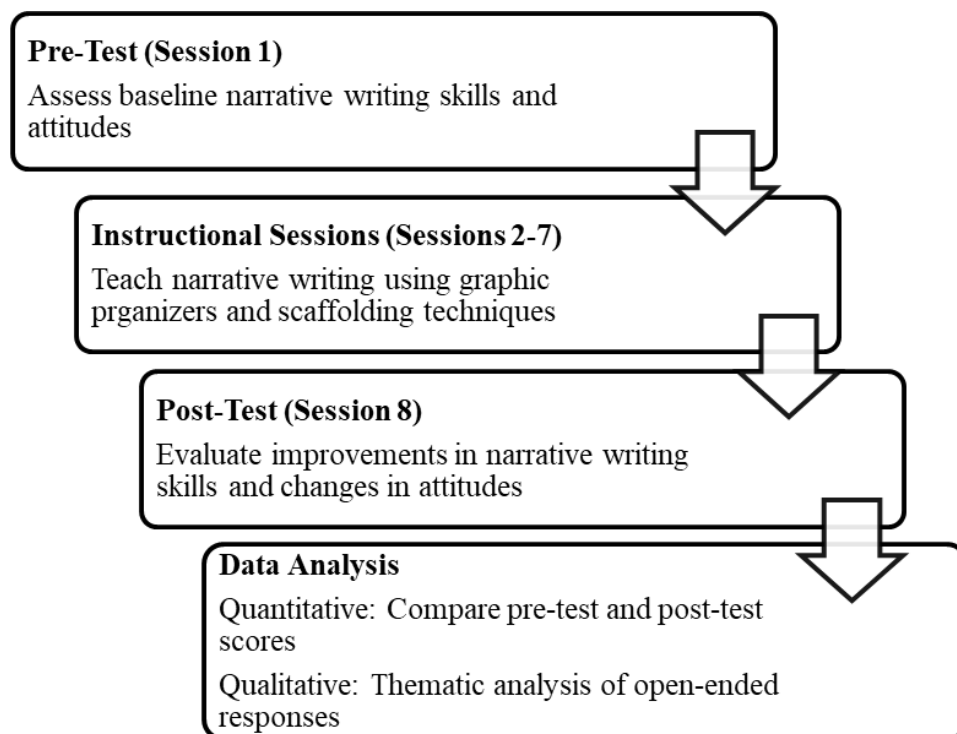
Questionnaire

A questionnaire was used to collect students' opinions on learning English using graphic organizers. It included 20 Yes/No questions and an open-ended section for qualitative feedback. The questionnaire was reviewed by educational research experts to ensure clarity and relevance.

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted over six weeks and was organized into three main phases. In the first week, a pre-test was administered to establish baseline data on students' narrative writing skills. During weeks two to seven, instructional sessions were held twice a week, focusing on teaching narrative writing using story elements and graphic organizers. Finally, in the eighth week, a post-test was administered to measure improvements in students' narrative writing abilities. Additionally, students completed a questionnaire at this stage to provide feedback on their experiences with the instructional approach.

As illustrated in the figure, the research procedures framework outlines the sequential stages of the study. The process began with the Pre-Test (Session 1), where baseline narrative writing skills and attitudes of the students were assessed to establish initial data for later comparison. Following this, the Instructional Sessions (Sessions 2-7) are depicted, highlighting the teaching phase where narrative writing was taught using graphic organizers and scaffolding techniques to improve students' skills. The Post-Test (Session 8) followed, evaluating any enhancements in narrative writing abilities and shifts in students' attitudes. The final part of the figure shows the Data Analysis phase, where quantitative analysis was conducted to compare pre-test and post-test scores, while qualitative thematic analysis was used to interpret open-ended student responses.

Pre-Test (Session 1)
Assess baseline narrative writing skills and attitudes

Instructional Sessions (Sessions 2-7)
Teach narrative writing using graphic prganizers and scaffolding techniques

Post-Test (Session 8)
Evaluate improvements in narrative writing skills and changes in attitudes

Data Analysis
Quantitative: Compare pre-test and post-test scores
Qualitative: Thematic analysis of open-ended responses

Data Analysis

Data from the pre-test and post-test were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation. A paired t-test was performed to determine statistically significant differences in students' narrative writing abilities before and after the intervention. Questionnaire data were analyzed using frequency and percentage calculations to assess students' attitudes towards the instructional approach.

Findings and Discussion

This section presents the results of the study, which explored the effects of using graphic organizers focusing on story elements to enhance the narrative writing ability of sixth-grade students. The results are structured according to the three research objectives, using tables and figures to present key findings. The discussion compares these results with previous studies, highlights their theoretical significance, and discusses the implications for teaching practice.

Findings

Effects of Using Graphic Organizers on Students' Narrative Writing Ability

The pre-test and post-test scores show a significant improvement in students' narrative writing abilities after the intervention. Table 1 presents the students' progress, comparing their pre- and post-test narrative writing scores across all criteria.

Table 1. Comparison of Pre- and Post-Test Narrative Writing Scores

Criteria	Pre-Test Mean	Post-Test Mean	Improvement (%)
Idea	2.5	4	60%
Organization	2.5	4.5	80%
Voice	2.5	4	60%
Word Choice	2	4	100%
Sentence Fluency	2.5	4	60%
Conventions	2	4.5	125%
Presentation	2.5	4.5	80%

Table 1 illustrates the improvement in students' narrative writing ability by comparing their pre-test and post-test scores across key criteria: Idea, Organization, Voice, Word Choice, Sentence Fluency, Conventions, and Presentation. The pre-test mean scores, which ranged between 2.0 and 2.5, indicate that students initially struggled in most areas, particularly in Word Choice and Conventions. These low scores reflect the challenges students faced in developing well-structured narratives with appropriate word use and adherence to grammatical rules.

After the instructional intervention, the post-test mean scores showed significant improvement, with all criteria scoring between 4.0 and 4.5. The most notable gains were observed in the areas of Word Choice and Conventions, where students doubled their performance, showing a 100% and 125% improvement, respectively. These results suggest that students became much more proficient at selecting appropriate vocabulary and applying correct grammar and punctuation after being taught using graphic organizers. The Idea and Organization criteria also showed strong improvements, with increases of 60% and 80%, respectively, indicating that students were better able to develop coherent ideas and structure their narratives effectively.

Overall, the substantial improvement across all criteria underscores the positive impact of using graphic organizers focused on story elements. These tools helped students not only in creative aspects, such as developing ideas and narrative voice but also in the technical aspects of writing, such as grammar and sentence structure. The data strongly support the hypothesis that graphic organizers significantly enhance students' narrative writing proficiency, leading to more coherent, structured, and engaging narratives.

Table 2. Paired t-Test Results for Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores

Mode of assessment	n	($\bar{X}$)	S.D.	t	df	Sig.
Pre-test	30	18.53	6.66	11.79*	29	.000
Post-test	30	13.91	5.09			

*$p < .05$

The significant increase in post-test scores (mean = 25.83) compared to pre-test scores (mean = 18.53) confirms that the use of graphic organizers had a statistically significant positive effect on students' narrative writing abilities. This result supports the second research objective, which aimed to compare students' pre- and post-test performances.

Students' Opinions on Learning with Graphic Organizers

The questionnaire provided insights into students' experiences and opinions regarding the use of graphic organizers in narrative writing. Table 3 summarizes the key findings from the student feedback.

Table 3. Summary of Students' Opinions on Learning with Graphic Organizers

Statement	Yes (%)	No (%)
Did you enjoy learning how to write a narrative?	95%	5%
Did you feel like you learned a lot during the writing process?	70%	30%
Did you find the tips and strategies for developing characters helpful?	90%	10%
Did you find the tips and strategies for developing setting helpful?	92%	8%
Did you find the tips and strategies for developing the plot helpful?	88%	12%
Did you find the tips and strategies for creating conflict and tension helpful?	55%	45%
Did you find the tips and strategies for writing dialogue helpful?	80%	20%
Did you find the tips and strategies for revising and editing your narrative helpful?	85%	15%
Did you feel supported by your teacher during the writing process?	95%	5%
Did you feel like you had enough time to complete the writing process?	60%	40%
Did you feel like you had enough resources and materials to support your writing process?	65%	35%
Did you feel like you had enough feedback from your teacher and peers?	80%	20%
Did you feel like the writing process helped you develop your writing skills?	85%	15%
Did you feel like you learned something new about writing narratives during this process?	90%	10%
Did you feel like you improved your writing skills during this process?	55%	45%
Would you be interested in writing another narrative in the future?	95%	5%
Did you feel like you were able to express yourself well through your narrative?	92%	8%

Did you feel like you were able to connect with your readers through your narrative?	88%	12%
Did you feel like you were able to create a vivid and engaging story through your narrative?	90%	10%
Would you recommend this writing process to other students?	95%	5%

The overwhelming majority of students (95%) reported enjoying the use of graphic organizers and found the tools helpful in organizing their ideas and structuring their narratives. However, some students (55%) indicated that the strategies for creating conflict and tension could be further improved, suggesting room for refining this instructional aspect.

Discussion

The findings of this study strongly support the effectiveness of graphic organizers in enhancing narrative writing ability. The statistically significant improvement in post-test scores—rising from a pre-test mean score of 18.53 to a post-test mean of 25.83—demonstrates the considerable impact of providing structured visual aids for students to plan, draft, and revise their writing. This increase, confirmed by a t-value of 11.79 ($p < .001$), clearly indicates that the instructional intervention using graphic organizers successfully improved students' narrative writing performance across multiple criteria, including Idea, Organization, Voice, and Presentation.

These results align with cognitive writing theories, which emphasize the importance of planning and organization in the writing process (Adler, 2018). By using graphic organizers, students were able to break down the complexities of narrative writing into manageable components, resulting in more polished and cohesive narratives. The substantial gains observed in traits like Idea and Organization (e.g., from 2s and 3s in the pre-test to consistent 4s and 5s in the post-test) highlight how graphic organizers facilitated the development of well-structured and engaging stories. These findings mirror those of Tayib (2021), who found that graphic organizers significantly enhanced writing coherence and fluency. The structured support provided by the organizers helped students manage cognitive load more effectively, as evidenced by the improved consistency of their scores.

Furthermore, the overwhelmingly positive feedback from students underscores the practical value of integrating graphic organizers into writing instruction. The questionnaire results revealed that 95% of students enjoyed the writing process and felt that the organizers helped them organize their thoughts more clearly. Specific strategies, such as developing characters and settings, were particularly well-received, with 90% and 92% of students, respectively, finding these aspects helpful. However, there were areas for improvement, such as strategies for creating conflict and tension, which only 55% of students found beneficial. This feedback suggests that while graphic organizers are effective overall, there is potential for refining certain instructional techniques to further support students.

The results of this study contribute to the growing body of evidence supporting the use of graphic organizers in educational contexts. The success of the intervention is consistent with Jones (2017), who found that visual aids help

students connect ideas and improve the overall flow of their writing. The clear improvement in writing traits, such as Sentence Fluency and Word Choice, further emphasizes the benefits of using graphic organizers for young learners, particularly those who may struggle with organizing complex ideas.

In summary, the study confirms that graphic organizers focusing on story elements are a powerful tool for enhancing narrative writing ability. The statistically significant improvements in writing performance, coupled with students' positive experiences and feedback, reinforce the value of incorporating visual aids into writing instruction. This approach not only enhances writing proficiency but also fosters greater engagement and confidence among students, offering a compelling strategy for educators aiming to improve narrative writing outcomes.

Conclusion

This study aimed to examine the effects of using graphic organizers focusing on story elements on the narrative writing ability of sixth-grade students. The research objectives were to assess the improvement in students' narrative writing skills, compare pre-test and post-test performance, and gauge students' opinions on the instructional intervention. The findings revealed a significant improvement in students' writing abilities, with substantial gains in key areas such as Idea, Organization, Word Choice, and Conventions. The use of graphic organizers provided students with a structured approach to organizing their narratives, which helped them overcome initial challenges in writing and improved their overall narrative coherence and fluency.

The paired t-test analysis confirmed the statistical significance of these improvements, indicating that graphic organizers focusing on story elements are effective in enhancing students' narrative writing ability. The majority of students also expressed positive attitudes toward learning with graphic organizers, reporting that the visual tools made the writing process more accessible and engaging.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings align with cognitive learning theories that emphasize the importance of scaffolding and structured support in writing instruction. The use of graphic organizers complements these theories by offering a practical tool that helps students plan, draft, and revise their narratives in a manageable way. Additionally, the results contribute to the body of research on writing instruction, reinforcing the idea that visual aids can significantly improve writing outcomes, especially in EFL contexts where students often face unique challenges in developing writing skills.

Practically, this study suggests that educators should consider incorporating graphic organizers into their teaching strategies to enhance students' writing performance. These tools can serve as effective aids in helping students plan and structure their thoughts, leading to more organized and coherent writing. The positive student feedback also suggests that graphic organizers can increase engagement and confidence in writing, making the process more enjoyable.

Despite these promising results, the study had some limitations, including a relatively small sample size and the focus on one school. Future research could explore the long-term effects of using graphic organizers in different educational contexts and with larger, more diverse student populations. Additionally, investigating how graphic organizers impact other forms of writing beyond

narrative writing would provide further insights into their broader applicability in writing instruction.

In conclusion, the findings of this study strongly support the use of graphic organizers as a valuable tool for improving narrative writing in EFL contexts. By providing structured support, graphic organizers enable students to organize their thoughts more effectively, helping them to develop a clearer narrative structure. This, in turn, enhances both the creative and technical aspects of their writing. For instance, students can visualize story elements more easily. This structured approach boosts creativity by allowing students to experiment within a clear framework and fosters improved language accuracy and coherence. Ultimately, graphic organizers can lead to better learning outcomes by making the writing process more accessible, reducing cognitive load, and allowing students to focus on refining their language skills. Thus, incorporating graphic organizers into EFL instruction holds considerable potential for elevating students' narrative writing abilities, encouraging meaningful engagement with the language, and enhancing their overall proficiency.

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