

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

Writing skills, often referred to as productive skills, are a process where students actively and creatively express their ideas in a piece of writing (Ratminingsih et al., 2022; Tetri et al., 2025). In addition, Nunan (2003) states that writing is a process that involves a person's mental and physical abilities in the process of organizing and processing ideas and thoughts into a clear, coherent, and meaningful piece of writing for the reader. In line with this, the process theory of Flower & Hayes (1981) states that individuals go through a planning stage, followed by reformulation, and finally revision to perfect a piece of writing (Bhowmik, 2021). It is not much different from the statement by Harmer (2006), which states that there are four writing processes consisting of planning, drafting, editing, and the final version, and these processes are interconnected, resulting in a good final result. All of the above statements show that writing is not just about putting words on paper, but involves many processes.

Apart from all that, in the context of learning to write in 8th-grade junior high school, students focus on functional and short texts, including recount texts, by using the simple past tense in written form. Ideally, students can develop their writing skills in the form of short texts, namely recount texts. However, based on initial observations at SMP N 3 Sawan, especially in class 8B, the students' writing skills are still very low. This difficulty stems from teachers who do not adequately use learning media in teaching students to write. The lack of variety in learning media was the root cause of students' poor writing skills, which ultimately causes them to lose interest in exploring the language. In addition, these findings were supported by a direct review of several recount texts written by students in Class 8B, which indicate that the lack of instructional media causes a snowball effect resulting in limited vocabulary and students' inability to spell correctly. These obstacles were even more pronounced when students are faced with complex sentence patterns, making it even more difficult for them to learn to write without

the support of adequate learning media. These difficulties ultimately hinder the optimal development of students' writing skills. Thus, the main problem in this study is students' difficulties in improving their writing skills. The writing difficulties in Class 8B stem from a snowball effect caused by the lack of use of learning media. These difficulties include difficulty in developing ideas, limited vocabulary, inability to spell correctly, and even difficulty in understanding grammar rules.

In Indonesia, formal English instruction is taught intensively at the junior high school level, while at the elementary school level, this subject is not part of the mandatory curriculum (Ardaya et al., 2022; Kaltsum, 2016). This condition shows that junior high school students are still considered beginners in terms of learning English. In this study, the researchers also explored how beginners' characteristics were observed and adjusted to address problems that arose, especially in terms of their writing learning needs. The following are their characteristics: 1.) Children have short attention spans by nature, 2.) Children have a great and broad curiosity, 3.) Children need to be stimulated with their five senses, 4.) Children have difficulty understanding abstract things and concepts, 5.) Children have sensitive feelings (Setyaningsih, 2007). From these characteristics, it can also be realized that junior high school students are in a phase of linguistic transition, so they need gradual support to help them understand difficult material and turn it into real understanding. So, teachers in writing classes need to consider the use of engaging tools, contextualization related to daily routines, and the ease of materials used (Elmahida et al., 2021). This statement is aligned with the current approach in education, namely the deep learning approach that focuses on three aspects: meaningful, mindful, and joyful. Teachers must creatively utilize learning media to support students' writing instruction. The efficiency of technology-assisted classroom methodology can encourage ways to overcome the shortcomings that occur (hPisheh et al., 2020; Zarei & Navidinia, 2024). In align whit statement from Lev Vygotsky, social interaction plays a fundamental role in cognitive development, while mediating tools like language and technology are important in the process of children's cognitive development (Junior et al.,2024; Vygotsky, 1978).

Recognizing the problems experienced by students in class 8B and their needs, the implementation of digital storytelling in this study is not only a learning media but also an adaptive pedagogical solution. Teaching writing to junior high school students is a challenging task for teachers, especially in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context (Annisa & Yunita, 2025). In this case, to maximize beginner learners' writing skills, teachers must carefully select and implement the most effective methods, and selecting suitable media can support this in teaching writing to beginner learners. In this era of modern education, the implementation of technology-based learning media has emerged as a strategic solution to bridge existing difficulties. In this study, digital storytelling was applied to provide support and guidance to students in learning to write. When looking back at students' writing skills problems with the snowball effect, the researcher assessed that conventional teaching methods are no longer sufficient. Therefore, the implementation of digital storytelling became the primary solution in this study. Additionally, the reason for choosing digital storytelling is its ability to present stories in the form of real examples from which the researcher can extract story sentences, then analyze them to teach grammar and learn the structure of the recount from real-life examples of stories in digital storytelling. Furthermore, its ability to combine images, audio, and text provides visual support, allowing students to learn the spelling of text elements and the pronunciation of audio elements, thereby helping them learn new vocabulary and correct spelling from the stories in digital storytelling.

Digital storytelling is not merely a media, but an interactive media capable of visualizing abstract and complex material so that students can understand it more easily. In our current education system, particularly in English learning, the implementation of technology-based learning media is strongly recommended (Hussain et al., 2010; Hidayat et al., 2024). Digital storytelling can provide more enjoyable learning for students through animations or videos that are useful for stimulating students' knowledge and understanding (Pandiangan et al., 2024). From the description of the characteristics of digital storytelling above, it directly shows the alignment with the characteristics of beginner learners who like varied learning and have short attention spans, are unable to understand abstract concepts, etc.

In addition, when viewed in the context of current learning approaches, namely deep learning, the above statement regarding digital storytelling is believed to provide a fully immersive, enjoyable, and relaxing learning experience that can be obtained through the combination of animation, audio, and text, which provides a more varied learning experience in line with the current deep learning approach. According to Hidayat et al. (2024) & Wijaya (2023), also stated that the combination of text, visual, and audio elements to create imaginative and energetic media is the visualization of digital storytelling. Through digital storytelling, students get more meaningful learning, such as learning the art of writing good stories, the integration of text and art, and the creative use of technology (Miller & Rief, 2023; Munajah et al., 2022). In line with this, according to Susila et al. (2024), digital storytelling provides a strong foundation for supporting students in gaining a deeper understanding of material, both spoken and written. Digital storytelling also provides a learning experience using a platform to develop creativity, self-expression, and foster motivation and engagement in language learning (Azir et al., 2024). The use of digital storytelling is believed to improve students' four language skills and digital literacy (Alemi et al., 2022; Maureen et al., 2018). Furthermore, digital storytelling is believed to develop self-confidence in students (Hung et al., 2012; Meletiadou, 2022). Digital storytelling is an educational technology formed through the combination of technology and the art of storytelling (Hidayat et al., 2024).

Therefore, this study focuses entirely on the use of digital storytelling as the primary learning media, aimed at addressing the snowball effect that hinders the ability of 8B students to improve their writing skills. Digital Storytelling in this study is defined as a short storytelling video-based learning media taken from YouTube, which combines elements of text, images, and audio to visualize English material. In selecting videos, the researcher used several criteria as guidelines, namely: 1) videos telling a story related to the recount text; 2) videos in English; 3) videos with language that is easy to understand; 4) videos with engaging visuals that illustrate the situation/storyline; 5) videos with clear and easily understandable pronunciation or accent; and 6) videos with text that matches the audio. This media was implemented by researchers in the writing instruction process as a visual

stimulus to help students understand grammar usage, vocabulary, and spelling accuracy through sentence analysis activities contained in digital storytelling. It was

also used to stimulate ideas for students. Next, through four stages of the cycle, starting from the planning stage, action, observation, and finally systematic reflection. This study used digital storytelling not only as a regular learning media, but also as a supporting medium for the learning process that can assist students in improving their writing skills. In addition, digital storytelling in this study serves as a sentence dissection media that makes it easier for students to understand

language structure without having to memorize formulas from scratch. Through interactive visual displays, this media presents story examples with complete sentences that are then explained and analyzed directly in front of the students. In this way, students can clearly see how vocabulary is arranged, how to spell it correctly, both during analysis and through the subtitles available in digital storytelling, and directly understand how seemingly complex sentence patterns are built from simpler parts. The real-life examples used in digital storytelling are

expected to be effective in reducing students' cognitive load and increasing motivation through the presentation of material that is easier to understand, thereby helping students systematically improve their writing skills in each cycle of action.

Therefore, regarding the issue of students' difficulty in improving their writing skills caused by a snowball effect in the form of difficulties in developing ideas, limited vocabulary, spelling difficulties, and even difficulties in understanding grammar usage, all of which arise due to the lack of suitable learning media and the fact that conventional teaching methods are no longer effective, thus this study aims to provide more in-depth interventions through classroom action research. Through the action cycles in this study, students' obstacles can be addressed gradually and continuously until digital storytelling is truly effective in helping students improve the quality of their learning process and, most importantly, break the snowball effect to improve students' writing skills for class 8B at SMPN 3 Sawan. Writing skills in this study are defined as the 8B students' ability to produce simple English texts, namely recount texts, which are measured through writing tests at the end of each cycle. Students' writing is assessed using a specific writing rubric from Brown's theory, and the rubric adopted from Huda &

Rahadianto's (2019) study, with four main aspects, including content, vocabulary mastery, grammar, and mechanical aspects such as spelling and punctuation. In addition, researchers explored students' perceptions with the aim of answering the second question in this study and supporting the main findings in this classroom action research. Students' perception is a form of response that arises from the stimulus given in the learning process (Maryati & Brataningrum, 2022). Students' perceptions are important to explore, as they reveal how they view and respond to the learning process. Perception works based on stimuli that students experience when learning to write with the implementation of digital storytelling. Students in class 8B at SMPN 3 Sawan were the subjects of this classroom action research. Therefore, students in class 8B actively participated in every action cycle to improve the quality of the learning process as well as outcomes, particularly in writing skills. This class was selected based on findings of real problems in the field that required immediate attention through the implementation of digital storytelling. In addition, this school was chosen to see whether digital storytelling is still applied effectively in rural schools. This school, located in Suwug Village, Sawan sub-district, Buleleng Regency, is quite far from the city center. This is supported by previous research, which is mostly conducted in urban areas, so the researcher is interested in conducting research in rural schools, which certainly have different mindsets, attractiveness, and interest in education. Therefore, in this study, the researcher conducted a study entitled "*The Use of Digital Storytelling to Improve Students' Writing Skills in Eighth-Grade Students at SMP N 3 Sawan.*"

1.2 Problem Identification

Theoretically, writing skills are crucial to master. However, the 8B class students at SMP N 3 Sawan faced obstacles in improving these skills in practice. Besides that, this problem is worsened by the limited variety of learning media, which makes it hard for students to develop their ideas and can make them feel bored quickly during the learning process. In this context, the problem is clearly evident from the results of observations, interviews, and students' writing, which

show that the 8B class students at SMP N 3 Sawan have difficulty improving their writing skills, especially in writing recount texts, which was caused by the snowball effect in the form of a lack of vocabulary and the students' inability to spell correctly, which made students feel burdened when they had to arrange sentence patterns. Therefore, an innovative learning media intervention is needed. The use of digital storytelling is an urgent solution because of its ability to present stories as real examples that can be dissected and analyzed directly, providing students with an understanding of sentence structure. In addition, by transforming complex material into easy-to-understand visualizations, digital storytelling not only reduces technical difficulties in spelling and vocabulary but also builds student motivation and engagement in mastering the sentence structure of recount texts in a systematic and meaningful way.

Previous studies have also demonstrated the benefits of using digital storytelling in English learning, particularly in improving students' writing skills. According to a previous study carried out by Zarei & Navidinia (2024), which focused on the impact of digital storytelling in improving the writing skills of EFL students and examining student perceptions. In the initial implementation procedure, students were given a pre-test in the form of an essay on "traveling." Next, in the implementation stage, students were introduced to the concept and procedure of digital storytelling through online platforms such as Adobe Connect and were shown examples of digital storytelling. Students were divided into small groups (four people per group). Each group collaborates to write a story script using video conferencing and Google Docs. Each group presents its draft script and receives feedback and corrections from the teacher and classmates. After the final script is completed, students create a story video by adding appropriate images or videos and recording their voice narration. They use various applications such as Google Docs, Skype, Camtasia, voice recorders, Paint, and Photoshop. In the final stage, students are given a final test in the form of an essay on the same theme. The test is conducted individually to measure each student's writing skills after the implementation. The results showed that Digital storytelling can improve students' writing skills. In addition, students' perceptions showed that digital storytelling also enhanced other aspects such as participation, collaboration,

creativity, motivation, and self-confidence. This is also consistent with the findings of a study conducted by Meletiadou (2022), which showed that the students improved their writing performance as well as their critical thinking skills, self-confidence, intercultural awareness, and positive attitudes among students. By implementing a different procedure, starting from a pre-test in the form of an essay for all students, followed by an experimental module that uses digital storytelling and a control module that does not use digital storytelling. In the experimental module, students created their digital stories using Canva, which consisted of text, images, videos, podcasts, and infographics, to present their teaching philosophies. During this process, students collaborated and provided each other with feedback, while the researcher collected qualitative and quantitative data through essays, anonymous feedback, focused group discussions, and observations. However, what makes this study different from other studies is that Digital storytelling is used not only as a learning media, but also as a final assignment. Besides that, the implementation procedures are also different.

The other research that can also support this study is from Fitri et al., (2021) The primary objective of this study was to investigate the impact of digital storytelling-based tasks on the narrative writing skills and perceptions of students. So, in this study, Digital storytelling is focused on task-based use, and the analysis showed that digital storytelling-based tasks had a positive impact on students' narrative writing skills. In addition, the use of digital storytelling is similar to the two studies above, which have a positive effect that influences other aspects, namely vocabulary, listening, and motivation. Thus, it shows that digital storytelling indirectly affects other aspects of language. In addition, there are several other previous studies relevant to this research that show similar results. The implementation of digital storytelling in previous studies differed in terms of research functions and objectives, research subjects, and implementation procedures, and showed that digital storytelling as a teaching media had a positive effect on improving students' writing skills, engagement, and other aspect of language.

The description of the previous studies above consistently shows that the use of digital storytelling is effective in improving students' writing skills. However, the

fundamental connection between previous studies and this study lies in the role of digital storytelling as a learning media for students. While previous studies have mostly focused on the general effectiveness of media, this study took a more specific approach by using digital storytelling as a media to directly analyze sentence patterns. This relevance is crucial because this study addresses a fundamental obstacle found in the field, namely, the cognitive burden on students when dealing with complex spelling, vocabulary, and sentence patterns. This study adopts the success of digital storytelling from Riani et al. (2021) and Fitri et al. (2021). However, considering that previous research has been dominated by urban areas and rarely addressed junior high school levels, this study aims to fill that gap in rural areas. Through this classroom action research method, the researcher conducted a real intervention through a cycle of actions in class 8B at SMP N 3 Sawan to transform obstacles into successes in improving students' writing skills.

1.3 Research Limitation

This classroom action research focuses on helping students in class 8B at SMP N 3 Sawan improve their writing skills. The main problem stems from the lack of variety in the use of learning media, which triggers low student motivation in learning to write. This condition causes interrelated technical problems, including students' limited vocabulary, difficulty with spelling accuracy, and obstacles in understanding complex sentence patterns. The intervention in this study is limited to the use of digital storytelling as the key solution to solve the above problems. Digital storytelling is used as a learning medium, with multimedia and interactive features, to make complex written material easier for students to understand more enjoyably. Thus, the focus of this research is to transform the learning process from one that was previously difficult and boring to one that is easier and more enjoyable, to achieve the final goal of systematically improving students' writing skills in each cycle.

1.4 Research Question

- 1.4.1 Can the implementation of digital storytelling improve the writing skills of students in 8B class at SMP N 3 Sawan?
- 1.4.2 How do students in 8B class perceive the implementation of digital storytelling in their writing instruction?

1.5 Research Objective

This study aims to improve the writing skills of students in class 8B at SMP N 3 Sawan by implementing digital storytelling as a learning media. Specifically, in addition to introducing the use of technological media, this action research aims to improve spelling accuracy, expand vocabulary, and simplify complex recount sentence patterns through a systematic, reflective action cycle, ultimately improving students' writing skills. In addition, this research explored how students perceive the process of learning to write through digital storytelling.

1.6 Research Significance

- 1.6.1 Practical significance of this study are: 1) Teachers can utilize technology as a learning media, in which technology, namely Digital Storytelling, can be an interesting and enjoyable learning media for students. 2) EFL students have many ways to utilize technology in the form of Digital Storytelling to improve writing skills and creativity in a more interesting and fun way. 3) Future researchers can use the results of this study as a reference and future researchers can develop research on the use of Digital Storytelling in the future.