Canadian Journal of Language and Literature Studies
Vol. 5(3), 2025, pp. 143-158

Enhancing Students' Imagination: The Effectiveness of Story Map Based on Digital Comics for Fantasy Story Writing Skills of Junior High School Students in Indonesia

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DOI: 10.53103/cjlls.v5i3.219

Abstract

This research attempts to evaluate (1) the difference in fantasy story writing ability between grade VII students of SMP Negeri 1 Pejawaran who participate in learning with the *digital* comic assisted Story Map strategy and those who do not, (2) prove the effectiveness of these strategies in improving their ability to write fantasy stories. The method used was an experiment with *the design of a pretest-posttest* control group. The subject of the study was a grade VII student of SMP Negeri 1 Pejawaran, Banjarnegara Regency. The data collected in this study was collected by means of written tests before and after treatment or what is called an intervention. Sample selection is carried out by matching the initial ice scort or called a pretest to ensure that the two groups, namely the experimental group and the control group, will have equal initial capabilities. After it was confirmed that the data had met the requirements for normality and similarity of variance, the analysis was carried out using a t-test with a significance level of 0.05. The validity of the research instrument was tested through the validity of indicators and constructs. The results of this study show that there is a significant difference between the experimental group and the control group, this shows that the t-value in the final test or called the posttest is 2.667 and the p-value between the pretest and the post-test shows a t-value of -3.956 and a p-value of 0.000. This shows that the use of Story Map techniques supported by digital comics significantly affects students' writing skills. It can be concluded that the use of digital comics will greatly support the Story Map technique which is a creative and effective way to help students develop fantasy story writing skills. This approach will also support teachers in creating more interesting and fun learning while being able to increase student motivation and learning outcomes.

Keywords: Effectiveness, Story Map Strategy, Digital Comics, Writing, Fantasy Stories

Introduction

The emergence of digital technology has brought new challenges, but it has also

opened up many opportunities for Indonesian learning, especially at the junior high school level, where writing skills are very important because they are the basis for students' overall literacy skills, especially in the midst of the current rapid technological development. According to Sari et al., (2022) and Rahman et al., (2024), in this era of industry 4.0, the world of education continues to change, so teachers and students need to improve digital literacy skills, be more creative, and utilize technology as the main tool to create innovative learning.

Writing is an activity in which a person pours his or her ideas, thoughts, and feelings into the form of writing (Tonglo et al., 2020). Compared to other language skills, writing is the most complicated because it involves the ability to read, hear, and think critically at the same time. It requires students to compose their thoughts clearly, analyze information thoroughly, and explore ideas creatively. This skill must be adapted through innovative learning strategies and diverse media for effective communication to succeed in a rapidly evolving technological landscape.

In reality, learning to write, especially writing fantasy stories, is still dominated by conventional approaches that tend to be theoretical and less involved in creative exercises. Students often find it difficult to articulate their ideas well, to use their imagination, and to effectively manifest their creative vision (Shoimah, 2023). Although the advancement of digital technology has opened up many new opportunities in the world of education, acquiring writing skills fantasy stories at the junior high school level, especially at SMP Negeri 1 Pejawaran, is still dominated by conventional methods that are less creative and use less digital media. Most students still find it difficult to express their ideas in an imaginative and confident way, while innovative and interactive learning methods, such as Story Map strategy and digital comics integration, have not been widely applied and thoroughly researched in the junior high school level. This indicates an urgency to explore and conduct tests on new learning methods that can stimulate imagination, enhance motivation, and allow students to develop fantasy story writing skills that are relevant to the current times.

During the mastering process of fantasy narrative writing skills, educators are not only responsible for providing knowledge about the literary elements, but also guiding students to grasp the characteristics and decisive conventions associated with fantasy literature. These stories usually feature the elements of magic, originality, mystery, and supernatural phenomena that transcends the confines of the actual world. In addition, learning resources do not only depend on the teacher during the teaching process, but this can also be used as a tool or support in learning which can also be a source of learning (Rahman et al., 2024). Thus, the integration of digital media such as digital comics and the Story Map strategy serves as an innovative pedagogical solution to tackle these challenges effectively.

This research offers a new perspective by combining the Story Map strategy and

digital comics in an interactive way for fantasy story writing. This approach does not only provide an interesting visual stimulus, but also helps students to organize ideas and construct a coherent and creative story structure (Sidekli, 2013). Students are provided with digital comics as a visual stimulus to help them develop their imagination and enhance the story they are going to write. Digital comics have a significant impact on improving the efficacy and efficiency of education. This situation is in accordance with research conducted (Mursolimah, 2023; Fibiyanti & Nuroh, 2024) that digital comics can increase students' motivation in writing because of its appealing and interactive features, making the learning process more enjoyable and less boring.

This study was held at SMP Negeri 1 Pejawaran in 2024/2025 which until now has never been the location of a similar study, thus making a new contribution both in strategy and local context. This study's primary goals are to ascertain whether students' proficiency in writing fantasy stories using the Story Map technique with and without digital comics differ significantly and to assess how well this technique works to help students develop their creative writing abilities. Based on these objectives, the problem formulations are: (1) Is there a significant difference in students' proficiency in crafting imaginative tales among pupils who use the Story Map technique supported by digital comics and those who do not, and how effective this strategy is in enhancing pupils' capacity for imaginative writing? (1) Do students who use the Story Map technique aided by digital comics have a significantly different capacity for writing fantasy tales than students who do not? (2) To what extent is the effectiveness of the Story Map strategy supported by digital comics in improving seventh grade students' fantasy story writing skills at SMP Negeri 1 Pejawaran? Thus, this research is aimed to provide innovative solutions for learning to write fantasy narratives that are more effective, fun, and relevant to today's needs.

Method

This study uses a quantitative research methodology, evaluating the effects of a certain researcher's intervention on students' fantasy writing abilities using an experimental approach. Specifically, the methodology is design to assess the effectiveness of the Story Map strategy, which is complemented by digital comics in enhancing the seventh-grade pupils' ability to write fiction in Banjarnegara at SMP Negeri 1 Pejawaran in 2025. An experimental framework was chosen to evaluate the correlation between the independent variable (treatment) as well as the dependent variable (students' writing results). The study adopts a pretest-posttest control group design, allowing the observation of any changes in students' ability to write fantasy stories before and after the intervention. The population consisted of all seventh grade students in three different classes at SMP Negeri 1 Pejawaran, with a total of 86 students. The sample was selected through matching based on pretest scores to ensure initial equality, resulting in a total of 30 students divided into control and experimental groups whose prior abilities were assessed through pre-

intervention testing.

This study uses testing instruments to evaluate significant differences in fantasy story writing skills between students who participated in learning activities using the Story Map strategy supported by digital comics and those who participated in learning without using the Story Map strategy supported by digital comics. In addition, this study intends to evaluate the efficacy of the Story Map strategy supported by digital comics in enhancing the fantasy story writing skills of seventh grade students at SMP Negeri 1 Pejawaran.

The validity and reliability of the evaluation instrument must be determined before it can be implemented. Content validity was evaluated through an expert evaluation by Mrs. Sugiarti, S.Pd., an Indonesian language teacher at SMP Negeri 1 Pejawaran, to verify that the learning tool was accurately reflecting students' skills in creating fantasy story texts. Reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to determine the consistency of the scoring rubric. The data were collected using the pre-testing method to determine students' proficiency in creating fantasy stories. Measurements were taken during the pretest and posttest phases to monitor any changes in the desired variables. The primary data consisted of the scores from these assessments. Data analysis was facilitated through IBM SPSS Statistics version 25, prior to doing the t-test, confirming variance homogeneity using Levene's test and confirming the data's normality using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. The experimental and control groups were tested for differences in their capacity to produce fantasy tales using an independent sample t-test. The scoring instruments to evaluate fantasy story writing are specified in Table 1.

Table 1: Fantasy story writing evaluation instrument

No	Aspect	Score Range
1.	Content	15-30
2.	Organization	14-25
3.	Vocabulary	9-20
4.	Use of Language	9-20
5.	Mechanics	2-5
	Maximum Score	100

Source: (Nurgiyantoro, 2009) with changes

Results and Discussion

The researcher has systematically done all stages of the research, starting with observation and data collection. In this study, the results related to students' skill in writing fantasy stories are served through pretest and posttest evaluations of the seventh grade students of SMP Negeri 1 Pejawaran in 2024/2025. The data were analyzed descriptively and further carried out normality and homogeneity tests, followed by a paired sample t-test to determine statistical significance. The researcher then illustrates the results in the table below.

Reliability Test

This study explores how the use of the Story Map strategy combined with an engaging digital comic can enhance the fantasy story writing skills of seventh grade students at SMP Negeri 1 Pejawaran. By integrating visual storytelling assistance tools, this study aims to make creative writing more accessible and stimulating for students. To ensure that the results of the research will be accurate and consistent, this will be a reliability test, the results of the study show that the data collection tools that have been used are valid and trustworthy. The results of this study have provided important insights into effective teaching methods in terms of maintaining students' imagination and writing skills (Sugiyono, 2007). The instrument will be considered reliable if it has a Cronbach Alpha value of more than 0.6, which means that there is good internal consistency between questions. In this analysis, data processing with the help of the IBM SPSS 25 program will be used, where the Cronbach Alpha value indicates that the instrument is within an acceptable range, so that it can be concluded that the measuring instrument used has been consistent and stable when used in various data. Table 2 through Table 5 provide the reliability test computation results.

Table 2: Experimental group pretest reliability

Statistical Reliability

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.797	5

Table 3: Experimental group posttest reliability

Statistical Reliability

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.786	5

Table 4: Control group pretest reliability

Statistical Reliability

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.664	5

Table 5: Control Group Posttest Reliability

Statistical Reliability

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.778	5

This test revealed that all instruments used in both experimental and control groups demonstrated Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.6, with the highest value reaching 0.797. This range indicates a reliable level of internal consistency and reliability. The results confirmed that the measurement tools used were not only reliable but also appropriate for the research context. The strength of this instrument ensures that the data collected effectively reflects the variables of interest. As a result, the researcher is confident in interpreting the results, recognizing that it provides a stable and valid basis to make useful insights about the observed variables.

Normality Test of Experimental Group Pretest and Posttest

Taking a thorough manner, the normality test evaluates whether the distribution of pretest and posttest scores aligns with a normal curve. This evaluation is important for choosing the correct statistical method. When the Asymp. Sig (p-value) exceeds 0.05, it indicates that the data does not differ significantly from the normal distribution. As a result, researchers are able to proceed confidently with parametric tests, recognizing that assumptions regarding the normality of the data are covered, ensuring the validity and reliability of their analysis. Table 6 displays the findings of the normalcy test.

Table 6: Normality of pretest and posttest experimental group

		Kolmogrovo-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	CATEGORY	Statistic	df	Sig	Statistic	df	Sig
EFFECTIVITY	PRETEST EXPERIMENT	218	15	053	927	15	.243
	POSTTEST EXPERIMENT	171	15	200*	897	15	.087

* This is a lower bound of the true significance

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

As can be seen from the above table, the results of the pretest and posttest normality tests show that the Asmp Sig. (2-tailed) values are 0.243 and 0.087, respectively. The data

is regularly distributed across the experimental group's pretest and posttest classes, as shown by the results being greater than 0.05.

Normality Test of Experimental and Control Groups Posttest

Normality was assessed using the Shapiro-Wilk test since the sample size was less than fifty. For small samples, this test is ideal since it produces accurate findings. A significance value (Sig.) greater than 0.05 indicates that the data is normally distributed. In contrast, the data exhibits an abnormal distribution if Sig. < 0.05, indicating a deviation from normalcy. Table 7 displays the normality test computation results.

Table 7: Normality of experimental and control groups posttest

		Kolmogrovo-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	CATEGORY	Statistic	df	Sig	Statistic	df	Sig
DIFFERENCE	PRETEST EXPERIMENT	.171	15	.200	.897	15	.087
	POSTTEST EXPERIMENT	.213	15	.065	.944	15	.439

* This is a lower bound of the true significance

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

The pre-test and post-test normality evaluations produced Asmp Sig. values at 0.087 and 0.439, respectively. These results indicate that both data sets reasonably adhere to the assumption of normal distribution that supports the validity of further parametric analysis. The normality of the data reveals a consistent distribution pattern before and after the intervention.

Posttest Homogeneity Test of Experimental and Control Groups

Within a state of the art and methodical approach, Levene's test for homogeneity is conducted on the post-test data to determine if the various sample groups come from equally diverse populations. This step is crucial in validating the necessary assumptions for the next parametric analysis. The study focused on the independent variable of Story Map strategy implementation integrated with digital comics that aims to enhance student learning achievements. The dependent variables measured student learning performance and engagement levels, providing a comprehensive insight into the strategy's effectiveness. Assuring the variance homogeneity strengthens the precision and statistical credibility of the research can be seen in Table 8.

Table 8: Posttest homogeneity of experimental and control groups

Homogeneity of Variances Test

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig
DIFFERENCE	According to Mean	.487	1	28	.491
	According to Median	.390	1	28	.537
	According to Median and with adjusted df	.390	1	25.839	.538
	According to trimmed mean	.419	1	28	.523

In this in-depth approach, it is crucial to accurately interpret the significance value. There is no discernible difference between the groups when the significance level is greater than 0.05, indicating that the data is homogeneous. In this context, the sig value derived from the pretest and posttest class data is 0.491, conveniently surpassing the standardized level. This indicates that the two groups are comparable, allowing valid and insightful comparisons to be done with no concern of heterogeneity affecting the results.

Pretest and Posttest T-test of Experimental and Control Groups

This study used t-test to determine the difference in fantasy narrative writing skills between two groups: the experimental group that used Story Map strategy embedded with digital comics and the control group that used conventional methods. The analysis aims to determine whether the new approach would significantly improve students' fantasy narrative writing skills. The t-test results reveals that the combination of visual storytelling through digital comics and strategic planning positively affects pupils' ability to write imaginative stories. These results highlights the potentially innovative teaching strategies in developing creative writing skills. The results of the t-test calculations can be seen in Table 9.

Table 9: Independent Sample T test pretest and posttest
of experimental and control groups
Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variance		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig	t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
EFFECTIVENESS	Equal variances assumed	.414	.525	-3.956	28	.000	-8.93333	2.25797	-13.55857	-4.30810
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.956	27.224	.000	-8.93333	2.25797	-13.56452	-4.30215

* This is a lower bound of the true significance
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

In this study, the following hypothesis is used with a significant value of 0.05, namely:

a. H_a is allowed while H_o is rejected when the sig value is less than 0.05.
b. H_a is ignored and H_o is approved if the sig value is greater than 0.05.

A statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores was found with a p-value of 0.000, according to the findings of the independent samples t-test, which was performed at a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$. The two sets of scores vary significantly, as shown by the calculated t-value of -3.956. The average difference is approximately -8.93 points, which reveals that students' post-test scores increased by almost 8.93 points compared to their pre-test scores. This notable improvement demonstrates that the study's intervention or therapy improved the performance of the students. The considerable increase in scores highlights the effectiveness of the program, pointing to its potential to enhance their knowledge, skills or comprehension in the area of interest. Overall, these results support the conclusion that these changes are unlikely to have occurred by chance, confirming the effect of the intervention.

Posttest T-test of Experimental and Control Groups

Another independent sample t-test was conducted to evaluate its effectiveness on the Story Map strategy using digital comics on the post-test scores. It compares the students' performance who used the innovative approach (experimental group) with the ones who did not (control group). Prior to testing, the necessary assumptions of normality

and variance homogeneity were verified to ensure the validity of the results. Such results provide insight into whether the Story Map strategy has a significant impact on students' writing performance. The results of the t-test calculation can be seen in Table 10.

Table 10: Independent Sample T-Test posttest of experimental and control groups

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variance		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig	t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
EFFECTIVENESS	Equal variances assumed	.487	.491	2.354	28	.026	4.20000	1.78441	.54480	7.85520
	Equal variances not assumed			2.354	25.238	.027	4.20000	1.78441	.52669	-4.30215

* This is a lower bound of the true significance
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

One statistical technique for comparing the mean post-test scores of two distinct groups the experimental group and the control group is the independent sample t-test. The significance threshold used is 0.05. This test assists the researcher in drawing conclusions by determining if the differences noticed are statistically significant or just coincidental:

a. Ha is approved while Ho is denied if the sig value is less than 0.05.
b. Ha (rejected) and Ho (accepted) occur if the sig value is greater than 0.05.

The Independent Sample t-Test test, with a significance threshold of 0.05, is the testing procedure. The posttest scores of the two groups vary statistically significantly, as shown by the value of Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.026 < 0.05. In comparison to the control class, the experimental group's mean posttest score was 4.2 points higher, with a t value of 2.354 > t table 2.048. It may be inferred that the experimental and control group posttest results have a substantial impact as the t value of 2.354 > t table 2.048, indicating that either the Ho hypothesis is rejected or the Ha hypothesis is accepted.

Discussion

In this study, it has discussed the effect of using the Story Map strategy supported by digital comics on the ability to write fantasy stories for students in grade VII of SMP Negeri 1 Pejawaran for the 2024/2025 school year. The purpose of this study is to find out

whether the creative approach used will be able to improve a student's writing and imagination skills. The implementation was carried out with students divided into two groups, the first group was an experimental group that used a story map strategy with the help of digital comics. The second group is a control group that is divided using the usual teaching method. The results of the study have shown that students who use the Story Map strategy are able to write more complex fantasy stories and have high imagination compared to the control group. This significant difference shows the use of visual and digital aids in learning to write properly and effectively. The results of this study can be concluded that strategies on the Story Map, especially when combined or combined with digital comics, are an excellent learning method to increase students' creativity and storytelling skills in class (Everett, 2020; Li, 2007; Sidekli, 2013)

The results of this study also show that students in the experimental group have obtained an average post-test score of 80.06 which is higher than the score of the control group which only obtained a score of 75.86. This significant difference has shown that the use of Story Map strategies with the help of digital comics has become effective in helping students to recognize and group the most important parts of a story. By using visually and interactive media, this also makes students more aware of the structure of the story and able to develop their critical thinking skills, so that finally by using this innovative shortening has created a more interesting and dynamic environment that has supported the understanding and retention of story components. This has been due to the fact that in order to understand a story, it is often difficult for students to see the entire plot and the relationships between each part of a complete narrative. To overcome this, a strategy is needed to present the big picture in a clear and structured manner. One effective way is to use story mapping. This method helps us visualize the overall story, which is usually quite challenging if we only read the story separately (Patton, Jeff & Economy, 2014). This situation is further supported in Sidekli (2013) that this strategy aims to make story writing easier for students with a clear structure, including elements such as character, setting, conflict, and plot. According to Hattaway (2014) concept maps are a note taking method that helps students by writing the main topic in the center within an oval, then connecting and writing related information around it. This method is very useful for grasping new concepts, as well as collecting vocabulary and important details related to the topic.

The strategies in this study can be associated with constructivism theory, which is a student focused learning theory (Harun et al., 2022). In Vygotsky's theory of constructivism, there is the concept of the Proximal Development Zone or called ZPD which is the limit of students' ability to solve problems either alone or with friends even with the help of teachers or adults. In this theory, the best way to learn is through direct understanding, so students must be actively involved in the learning process (Sayfullooh, I. A., & Latifah, 2023).Therefore, using a Story Map strategy with the help of digital comics is an effective way to help students understand new things, this will work together

with friends, solve problems independently, and collect vocabulary and important information related to the subject matter.

With the use of creative and innovative methods, this study has shown that there are control groups that use ordinary learning methods, such as learning and based only on textbooks, will indeed experience a slight improvement in the ability to write fantasy stories. However, this increase was much smaller when compared to the experimental group that used a story map strategy using digital comics. Conventional methods can help provide a basic understanding and introduce concepts, but these conventional methods are considered less effective and less practical in developing the skills and creativity that are important for creating interesting stories. The story map strategy using digital comics has looked interesting and interactive and is useful in helping students in organizing better ideas, creating plot plots, and building interesting stories. Therefore, this strategy will be more effective in developing practical writing skills in learning (D. Randy Garrison, 2018.) Combining the Story Map strategy with digital comics means using Story Map to systematically organize and understand ideas and story structures during the learning process, as well as using digital comics as a visual medium to make these ideas more alive. This helps students visualize more clearly the details of the story, characters, and plot before they write a full fantasy story. The implementation of this method consists of three main steps: (1) creating a Story Map to recognize important parts of the story, (2) converting the Story Map into a visual image using digital comics, and (3) writing a complete fantasy story based on the structure and images that have already been created. This method is explained in more detail in Suherli (2017) research which states that Story Map are very effective in improving writing skills because they help organize ideas logically, especially in creating fantasy stories. Story Map are an important guide for students to recognize and develop key parts such as characters, settings, conflicts, and solutions before creating their stories.

Media assistance is also important to help delivering the material with clarity and to provide interaction between teachers, and students. In the learning process, educators are expected to use media as a way to accommodate students' individual needs, such as learning preferences, interests, and thinking levels. With the media availability that suits students' learning needs, they will be able to effectively grasp the lessons (Ginting, 2022). This is mainly because according to Sukirno (2004) to guarantee that education may be enjoyable and captivating, it requires good classroom organization, comfortable room arrangement, proper use of media and learning resources, as well as variety in learning methods. In this study, digital comic media was chosen to help students in conceptualizing students' abstract thinking of a story line. Using comics for learning is very effective because it follows the modality principle, which combines visual elements in the form of both images and text simultaneously. This is consistent with what Mayer (2021) has stated that in the development of educational media, the modality principle emphasizes the

necessity of integrating visual, audio, and textual elements to optimize how information is processed. As an illustration, the information provided through visual representations alongside text can maximize students' understanding and retention of the information through the multiple simultaneous activities of different sensory modalities.

By using a Story Map strategy combined with the help of digital comics, this provides a new, interesting and fun way of learning to improve writing skills with fantasy stories in the classroom. This will not only improve students' literacy skills, but will also help develop important skills in the 21st century such as creativity, critical thinking, and digital literacy. By making activities by storytelling more exciting and visually speaking, making students more enthusiastic and skilled in making imaginative stories (Agustin et al., 2021). Digital literacy included in learning is also important in preparing students with critical thinking skills, good communication, teamwork, and innovation. So that way students will become students who are ready to face this very fast digital world change so that they will be more confident and resilient in undergoing education, careers, and learning in the future.

Conclusion

Based on research that has been conducted at SMP Negeri 1 Pejawaran, Banjarnegara in the 2024/2025 school year, it can be concluded that the use of Story Map strategies combined with the support of digital comics has significantly improved the ability to write fantasy stories for students, especially grade VII. The results of the post-learning test showed a t-value of 2.677 with a $p<0.05$ value, this means that there is a significant difference between the group that uses ordinary learning and learning with Story Map strategies. In addition, in the group that used the Story Map strategy, it showed that the intermediate t-test value before and after learning was -3.956 with a p value of 0.000 which showed a very significant improvement in writing skills after using a Story Map combined with digital comics, this is an effective method compared to conventional methods in helping students improve their ability to write fantasy stories.

The results of this study also show that Story Map strategies combined with digital comics have become a creative and effective way of teaching in improving the ability to write fantasy comics for students. In its application, teachers need to pay attention to the background, conditions, and environment of students so that the learning process will be easier to understand and not confusing. Therefore, this strategy will provide maximum results for a student. However, in order for students to remain enthusiastic and motivated, it must be that this set strategy is combined with various other learning media. Although the results are positive, this study also has limitations because it only researches in one school and only in one class, so the results cannot be applied in general. Therefore, in order to be more effective in research, this strategy can be used in different situations and compared with other strategies and media to find the best way to teach fantasy story writing

to students.

Acknowledgement

Thank you to the Master Program in Indonesian Language and Literature Education at the University of Muhammadiyah Purwokerto, as well as to Dr. Onok Yayang Pamungkas, M.Pd as the head of academic advisory and Dr. Eko Suroso, M.Pd who has provided full support and assistance in this research.

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