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Students' Perceived Benefits and Difficulties of Using Character.AI for Narrative Writing at MAN 2 Bojonegoro

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Abstract – This research seeks to explore the benefits and difficulties that students perceive in utilizing Character.AI for narrative composition at MAN 2 Bojonegoro. The study utilized a qualitative descriptive approach, involving 25 students from the twelfth grade as subjects. Data acquisition was carried out through interviews, questionnaire, and documentation. The results indicated that students viewed Character.AI positively in aiding their narrative writing efforts. The tool assisted learners in brainstorming story concepts, crafting characters, structuring plots, and boosting their creativity in storytelling. Additionally, many students found Character.AI beneficial for delving into different story genres, making the writing experience more captivating and pleasurable. Furthermore, this tool bolstered students' confidence in articulating their thoughts and crafting narratives. However, various challenges were recognized as well, such as technical issues, varying responses produced by the AI, and the risk of students becoming excessively reliant on the tool. Thus, even though Character. AI can be a helpful resource for teaching narrative writing, its application needs to be moderated with the support of educators to guarantee that students maintain their development in writing independently.

Keywords— Character.AI, Narrative writing, Students' perception, Creativity, AI in education

Abstrak – Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji manfaat dan kendala yang dirasakan siswa dalam memanfaatkan Character.AI untuk penulisan naratif di MAN 2 Bojonegoro. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif dengan melibatkan 25 siswa kelas XII sebagai subjek. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui wawancara, kuesioner, dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa siswa memandang Character.AI secara positif dalam membantu upaya penulisan naratif mereka. Alat ini membantu siswa dalam melakukan brainstorming konsep cerita, mengembangkan karakter, menyusun alur cerita, serta meningkatkan kreativitas mereka dalam bercerita. Selain itu, banyak siswa yang merasa Character.AI bermanfaat untuk menjelajahi berbagai genre cerita, sehingga pengalaman menulis menjadi lebih menarik dan menyenangkan. Lebih lanjut, alat ini meningkatkan kepercayaan diri siswa dalam mengartikulasikan pemikiran dan menyusun narasi. Namun, berbagai tantangan juga teridentifikasi, seperti masalah teknis, variasi respons yang dihasilkan oleh AI, dan risiko siswa menjadi terlalu bergantung pada alat ini. Oleh karena itu, meskipun Character.AI dapat menjadi sumber daya yang bermanfaat untuk pengajaran penulisan naratif, penggunaannya perlu dimoderasi

dengan dukungan pendidik untuk memastikan bahwa siswa tetap mengembangkan kemampuan menulis secara mandiri.

Kata kunci – Character.AI, Penulisan naratif, Persepsi siswa, Kreativitas, AI dalam pendidikan

INTRODUCTION

Writing is a productive skill that is essential for learning English because it encourages students to express themselves clearly and creatively. In addition, many EFL students consider writing to be one of the most difficult skills to master. According to Tsiriotakis et al. (2020) writing is a lengthy process that involves formulating sentences, generating ideas, drafting, and setting goals. According to a study titled "Writing difficulties faced by EFL learners in English language education programs" by Nurdianingsih et al. (2024) EFL students often struggle with language, word choice, structure, and logistics when creating written documents. This suggests that writing enhances language use; writing also supports cognitive functions that require creativity, planning, and coherence

This issue is also evident in narrative writing, which requires students to create characters, settings, plotlines, and sequences of events in order to construct the necessary story. Based on an initial informal conversation with an English teacher, many students struggle with writing narrative texts due to their limited vocabulary and their inability to express their thoughts clearly. The teacher mentioned earlier also stated that students often take a long time to start writing because they lack the vocabulary needed to write long stories, and many of them struggle to write logically. As a result, their narratives are often incoherent and lack clear meaning. This study emphasizes the need for alternative educational methods that can help students develop their ideas, write their own stories, and write more effectively.

One possible outcome is that Character.AI is an AI-powered chatbot platform that allows users to interact with virtual characters through dialogue. According to Hoque et al. (2023) Character.AI facilitates reading and writing, making it a useful tool for enhancing students' creative abilities and narrative writing skills. In terms of writing, this platform has the potential to create more engaging and satisfying activities because students can generate ideas, explore various character traits, and

collaboratively develop stories through interactive engagement. Character differs from traditional writing tools. Character.AI can provide a more immersive and communicative learning experience, encouraging students to write with greater confidence and creativity.

Previous research has shown that tools enabled by artificial intelligence can help students improve their writing skills. According to Cahyani et al. (2024) narrative learning is crucial for Indonesian students, particularly in developing ideas and creating coherent narratives. In line with this, other research related to digital research and AI-based education indicates that creativity can be stimulated, ideas can be challenged, and students' writing abilities can be enhanced. However, most current research focuses on simpler AI writing applications such as Grammarly, Quillbot, and ChatGPT, and there are few studies that specifically focus on characters.AI in the context of narrative composition. Thus, the purpose of this study is to examine students' perceptions of the relationships and challenges associated with the use of Character.AI for narrative writing at MAN 2 Bojonegoro. The subject of this study is a high school student at MAN 2 Bojonegoro who participated in narrative writing using Character.AI. It is hoped that the results of this study will contribute to the field of English education, particularly by providing insights into how AI-based tools can enhance students' creativity and skills in narrative writing.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive methodology to investigate how students' behavior relates to the use of AI characters and how this enhances their narrative writing skills. According to Creswell (2014) qualitative research serves as a method for analyzing and understanding information provided by individuals or groups regarding social or humanitarian issues. This method involves collecting information from the real world, analyzing it through an inductive lens, and presenting the research results. This methodology was developed in accordance with the research objectives, namely to identify the students, benefits, and challenges encountered when using AI characters to write narratives.

This study was conducted at MAN 2 Bojonegoro and involved 25 second-year students who used Character.AI to help them write their stories. Individual decisions were based on how they interacted with their Character.AI, which helped them generate story ideas, create characters and figures, and support their creative writing efforts. Data collection included 15 dichotomous-scale questions, 5 open-ended questions, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. The primary data sources were questionnaires and interviews, while documentation was used to corroborate and validate the information. The research tools were developed based on theories regarding student perception and previous research on chatbots, English language teaching, and narrative writing, and were adapted to the specific context of this study. To ensure content validity, these instruments were pilot-tested with the supervising lecturer before being used in the research setting.

To make the study easier to understand, the researchers employed a variety of approaches, combining questionnaires, interviews, and documents. This study helps provide a clearer and more comprehensive picture of how students view the use of character.AI for writing texts. These tools are also used by academic advisors, who rely on their own expertise to ensure that the content is authentic.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The research process was conducted in several different ways. In this study, the researcher encouraged students to use character.AI for two weeks as part of their writing assignments. In the fourth week, the researcher collected data using a questionnaire, interviews with five selected students, and documentation of the students using Character.AI. After data collection, the researcher used a method known as "thematic analysis," developed by Miles et al. (2013). This method involves three steps: organizing the data, presenting the data clearly, and assessing its accuracy. This method is a good choice because it allows for the systematic and comprehensive collection of qualitative data from surveys, interviews, and documents.

The results show that a large number of students are interested in Character.AI as a useful tool for writing narratives. Many claim that the app helps them develop

ideas, create characters, develop plots, and boost their creativity. Every student who participated in the survey stated that Character.AI helped them come up with ideas for a story. All students also mentioned that this app helped them develop characters, explore various genres, create their own stories, and be creative in storytelling. This indicates that Character.AI is used not only as a chatbot but also as a tool that helps students write and be creative when crafting stories. Respondents were selected based on their answers to the questionnaire. In this section, we will review the study data based on the research questions.

The benefits and limitations students' perceived in using Character.AI as a media for narrative writing

Table 1. Indicator of result study

Indicators	Number of Statements
Idea and character development	4, 5, 13, 18
Plot and creativity	7, 14, 16
Limitations as a learning tool	10, 19

The table above shows that it is divided into three main indicators: idea and character development, plot and creativity, and limitations as a leaning tool. These indicators were identified based on student behavior in the classroom and then evaluated using interview data and documentation.

A. Idea and Character Development

Table 2. Percentage of Students' Responses on Idea-Related Statements

No	Statements	Yes	No
4	Does Character.AI help you generate ideas for a story?	100%	0%
5	Does Character.AI help you develop character in your story?	96%	4%
13	Do you use Character.AI to explore different story genres?	96%	4%

Based on the table above, each student focuses on character development. AI helps them generate ideas for a story, while 96% of respondents said that this tool

helps them develop characters and explore various literary genres. This indicates that AI is viewed as a useful tool in the early stages of narrative writing, especially when students need inspiration to start writing. According to previous research on Grammarly and QuillBot by Umah et al. (2025), AI-based tools can support students during the writing process by providing guidance and facilitating idea development. However, Character .AI offers a more interactive approach through its conversational feature, which can enhance narrative construction. Because students explain their characters, their responses are more concise. Character.AI helps them with inspiration, content requirements, vocabulary development, and sentence construction.

In addition, some students mentioned that Character.AI allows them to interact, communicate, and read in ways that help them refine their ideas and develop more creative writing skills. One student said that when AI is used as a creative tool, it can significantly improve narrative writing skills. However, another student argued that this tool enhances idea development and improves literary quality. These responses indicate that AI not only provides ideas but also helps students understand those ideas and transform them into more engaging narratives.

These findings are consistent with the nature of narrative writing itself. According to Boyd et al. (2020) the purpose of narrative writing is to facilitate reading, foster experiences, or convey ideas through a logical sequence of events. Therefore, students need support not only in using language but also in developing ideas and writing. Character.AI can help meet these needs by providing students with access to a learning environment where they can collaborate to generate ideas, review written content, and explore character traits more easily.

This also supports Težak's (2015) assertion that even simple writing skills require a creative process, such as idea generation, elaboration, and problem-solving. According to Sternberg & Lubart (1998) creativity drives the production of new ideas appropriate to the task. In this study, Character.AI helped students develop ideas aligned with their narrative goals and enabled them to explore imaginative storylines. More specifically, Tsatsou-Nikolouli (2023) states that originality in writing requires

the use of creative language to express meaning, and student responses indicate that Character.AI contributes to this process by helping people write more expressive and vivid narratives.

B. Plot and Creativity

Table 3. Percentage of Students' Responses on Creativity-Related Statements

No	Statements	Yes	No
7	Does Character.AI help you organize your plot of your story?	96%	4%
14	Do you think Character.AI helps you improve your creativity in storytelling?	96%	4%

The table mentioned above shows that 96% of students aim to develop their writing skills. AI helps them write stories and boost their creativity. This indicates that character-based AI is useful not only for generating ideas but also for helping students transform those ideas into more coherent narrative structures. In their open-ended responses, students explained that character-based AI provides clear instructions, quick and well-organized responses, as well as examples of narrative language and story structure.

Some students also noted that character.AI is a creative tool that facilitates character development, brainstorming, and real-time dialogue simulation. According to others, this tool helps them create more engaging and interactive writing, as well as complex story concepts and ideas. Consequently, some students noted that character.AI is a creative tool, or a "writing partner," that facilitates writing without disrupting the writing process. These statements indicate that students view this tool as a resource, not as an obstacle to their own creativity.

These findings are consistent with previous research by (Nurdianingsih et al. (2025) on media literacy and the development of EFL writing classes. Integrating digital literacy into writing practice can encourage students to explore ideas creatively and use technology-based resources during the writing process. Therefore, interactive digital tools can support students' creativity and help them develop narrative writing skills. Character.AI can assist in this by helping students make more informed decisions about their experiences. Furthermore, this topic aligns with Sternberg &

Lubart (1998) assertion that creativity must be both novel and appropriate, as this tool helps students generate new ideas for stories while reinforcing narrative relevance. In this context, Character.AI functions as a tool that makes writing more creative, adaptive, and productive.

C. Difficulties as a Learning Tool

Table 4. Percentage of Students' Responses on Limitation-Related Statement

No	Statements	Yes	No
10	Do you experience any difficulties when using Character.AI?	60%	40%

This table shows that 60% of students reported experiencing difficulties when using Character. However, 40% of students did not encounter any problems. This indicates that while the tool is generally viewed positively, a significant number of students still face challenges when using it. Open-ended responses revealed several types of difficulties, including technical issues such as slow login times, account creation problems, and difficulties navigating the platform.

Some students also mentioned language-related difficulties, such as responses that were too long, hard to understand, or did not fully meet their expectations. Additionally, some claimed that the responses were sometimes inconsistent, the plot changed abruptly, or it was difficult to choose a suitable character based on the available options. These issues indicate that there are shortcomings. Character.AI can enhance narrative writing, but it still requires adaptation by students and researchers. These findings are supported by interview data.

“The challenge is that sometimes the responses are too long compared to the flow I want, so I often have to remind it again; plus, if it relies too much on the AI, the results end up lacking originality.” (KJ, interviewed on January 27, 2026)

“Although this AI is helpful, there are some technical challenges, such as memory limitations, repetition, and content filtering.” (RN, interviewed on January 27, 2026)

This is consistent with Chen et al. (2020), who explain that AI in education can support learning, teaching, and assessment, but its effectiveness depends on integration. Character.AI was useful in this study, but this was not due to practical challenges. Because of this, student responses indicate that this tool should be used as a support system rather than as a means to improve one's own writing skills. If used improperly, it can reduce originality and create a reliance on AI-generated content.

Overall, the results indicate that students possess a strong sense of character. On the positive side, AI can be used as a teaching tool for narrative writing, particularly in terms of ideas, character development, organizational structure, and creativity. However, this tool also has some drawbacks, such as technical difficulties, inconsistent or lengthy responses, and the risk of dependency. This suggests that character.AI has great potential to improve narrative writing, but it must be used with proper guidance and evaluated in comparison to the students' own writing.

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