



## **CREATING DIGITAL STORYTELLING TO IMPROVE EFL STUDENTS' NARRATIVE WRITING AT SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL**

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### **Abstract**

Digital Storytelling is a media to telling story by using technology. The purpose of digital storytelling is to improve EFL students' narrative writing at Senior High School. The main thing that is discussed in this paper is how teachers and students implement digital storytelling in improving EFL students' narrative writing and what are the advantages of creating digital storytelling in improving EFL students' narrative writing at Senior High School. The teacher builds the background of the student's knowledge first by showing the video in relation to the material to be given. Then, the teacher gives the narrative text related to the material which students are asked to understand the elements contained in the text. Furthermore, teachers provide exercise to students who are asked them to create digital storytelling itself in groups such as creating story map, mapping the plot structure, character profile, background information, completing the story, peer response t-chart, and storyboard. By creating digital storytelling, students can master English well.

**Key words:** Digital Storytelling, Narrative Writing Skills, Senior High School

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

Writing is a very important skill in language learning. Writing skill is as important as other skills like listening, speaking and reading. Especially for students, they must have the ability to write in order to express their ideas through what they learn. Writing is a process of communication that uses a conventional graphic system to convey a message to a reader (Lindemann, 2001). It means that the way of using symbol and graphic system to convey a message through writing on paper can make the reader more understand about the meaning of message.

Nowadays, writing is no longer an act of putting words on paper, but writers must use technological tools to communicate their message. The use of technological tools such as digital storytelling has been shown to improve writing. Therefore, in the pursuit of achieving an improvement in EFL learning

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focused on writing and digital storytelling has been primarily used to engage student's writing process as it significantly improves students' writing skills.

In learning English as a foreign language, there are some students' problems in writing. The main problem faced by EFL students today is that they have difficulties in narrative writing. It is due to several factors.

First, the lack of students' practice in writing in the learning process. Most of students feel so lazy and bored when the teacher ask them to do the exercise in the writing form because they think that writing is difficult, so they do not have many times to practice writing in the classroom. Sommers (2006) states that writer need plenty of practice in order to get better. It means that good writing requires good practice. Without practice, the learning process of writing skills will be low. Second, the lack of students' knowledge about grammar and vocabulary. Students have more problems with the structure of a paper more often than the language- related (Marshall, 1991). In fact, most of students often have mistakes about grammar and vocabulary when writing a text. Without grammar and vocabulary, they could not express their ideas properly in writing.

The second problem faced by EFL students is about media of learning. Media has an important role in learning English. Using of a media is needed to conduct teaching and learning process in the class. Media give students something new, but not all of teachers know how to implement it correctly in the class, so sometimes students are not interested to learn. They have no interest and motivation in learning English because the media used is not interesting.

Based on the problem above, English teachers have to able to solve the problems encountered in the learning process. They should be creative to find a good way to help the students in improving their writing skills through the implementation of a variety of media in the classroom. One of them is to create digital storytelling to improve EFL students' narrative writing, especially at Senior High School.

Based on 2013 curriculum, generally, Senior High School students must be able to understand some kinds of text such as narrative and recount. In this case, narrative writing is focused in this paper. Narrative writing is kind of writing which tell a story. The story in narrative writing must be supported by conflicts and resolution (Dumais cited in Kristanti, 2002).

From the statement above, the writer chooses a suitable media that is digital storytelling to teach narrative writing. In this paper, digital storytelling is used as an approaching media in improving EFL students' narrative writing. The digital storytelling may be suitable to be applied in learning narrative writing since it consist of story in a form of digital video.

Robin (2008) explains that digital storytelling is used as a powerful teaching and learning tool that engage both teachers and students. It really takes contrubution in the education field. It is more effective because it connects the approaching media with the development of technology.

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Digital storytelling is an educational technology. Digital storytelling facilitates the transformation of already acquiring knowledge into actual writing phrase, and gives the students an opportunity of reflection of their learning. Digital storytelling is the modern expression of the ancient art of storytelling. Throughout history, storytelling has been used to share knowledge, wisdom, and values (The Digital Storytelling Association, 2002).

Robin (2011) defined digital storytelling as the practice of using computer-based tools to tell stories. It means that digital storytelling is one of the media to tell a story plus technology. Digital storytelling refers to creating and distributing a story using digital tools.

A number of researchers have investigated the digital storytelling in improving students' writing, especially in improving EFL students' narrative writing. One of them is Hariadi (2016) who has investigated the use of digital storytelling to improve narrative writing skill for 8th grade students of SMP Negeri 1 Yogyakarta. The result showed the students' narrative writing skill improved after using digital storytelling. The improvements could be seen in terms of developing topic sentence, logical sequencing, tenses agreement and punctuation.

Another researcher is Abdel-Hack and Helwa (2014) who has investigated the effectiveness of digital storytelling and weblogs instruction in enhancing EFL narrative writing and critical thinking skills among EFL majors at faculty of education. The results revealed that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the study sample in the pre and post assessment of EFL narrative writing and critical thinking skills in favor of the post assessment. Therefore, the EFL narrative writing and critical thinking skills of the sample were developed as a result through integrating digital storytelling instruction and weblogs.

Therefore, by creating digital storytelling, EFL students can improve their narrative writing in learning English as a foreign language. In this paper, the writer would like to discuss more about improving EFL students' narrative writing at Senior High School by creating *Digital Storytelling*.

## **B. DISCUSSION**

### **Implementing Digital Storytelling in Improving EFL Students' Narrative Writing at Senior High School**

There are several steps in improving EFL students' narrative writing by creating digital storytelling.

First, teachers are expected to motivate their students to study and learn the material well. It is important for teacher to build a background of students' knowledge of the material to be learned. Teacher shows a video, which is

available in digital storytelling, related to the media which will be create by students at the core of the lesson.

As an example, the teacher will provide a video about narrative story such as a story of “The Knock at the Door”, so the teacher can build a background of students' knowledge by showing video about it. In this way, students try to recall what they already know about the story in the video.

In addition, the teacher also asks the students what they know from the video and appoints the students who can answer it. In this case, it aims to get students re-engaging with their comprehension about narrative story, so when they are introduced to the narrative story relating to the material, they would not be surprised. The use of an example video served as a way to preservice teachers' understanding of how the materials would support the learning process.

Second, teachers will give the material about narrative writing, for example, the teacher introduces a narrative story of “The Knock at the Door”, which the teacher can take from their textbook, and input into digital storytelling.

Furthermore, students are focused on the narrative story in the video by giving a text about that. Students will focus on the content of the story, such as the characters, the place and time settings and the events that occur in the story. Students also focus on the generic structures and the language features of the narrative story. Then, teachers brainstorm by stimulating students to ask the questions about the story. While answering the students' questions, the teacher explains the material given related to the story.

Last, teachers provide exercise for their students. This exercise is given in written form, so the teacher tells their students to make their own narrative story by creating digital storytelling.

To create digital storytelling itself, teachers devide students into groups. One group consist of 3- 5 students. Alexander in Tang (2016) indicated that digital stories lets students own their creative work. It can help students' practice in collaborative learning.

In addition, Hewit and Scardamalia in Rahimi & Yadollahi (2017) states that digitally collaborative writing has been found to empower students to write together regardless of time limitation and restriction. Therefore, digital storytelling appeals to the student with diverse learning style and can also foster collaboration when students are able to work in groups.

Futhermore, teachers tell students to make the story. Previously, students have to find the right topic. Teachers poses certain question about a topic based on the context or experiences related to the students' lives and interest in order to encourage students decide upon a topic. Students can choose a topic about themselves, about community, someone else, history or a traditional story. Before begin writing a story, the teacher tells students to plan the story by creating the story map. The visual portrait of a story is an excellent way to begin using story map. There is no single right way to map a story; each students may come up with their own way of graphically mapping the narrative for each storytelling project.

Yang & Wu (2012) states that a story map is designed to illustrate the main components of the story and their relationship to the overall narrative. A story map is a one-page diagram showing how the essential components of a story are incorporated into the overall flow of the narrative.

After mapping the basic story elements, teachers tell students to write a graphic organiser the plot structure of the story in more details. The teacher tells students to write down details about the compliment, the climax, the resolution and if possible, students can write the code and the theme. The teacher tells students to brainstorm ideas and map the details of their story on worksheet.

Futhermore, the teacher tells students to begin developing their characters. with a character profile, students can create profiles for each of the main characters in the story. In a group, students will discuss who will complete the profile for main character and who will complete the profiles for the other characters in the story. Then, the teacher gives the worksheet to the students to create the character profile of their story.

Then, students begin to extend their ideas. Each student write a descriptive paragraph about one character from their story. The teacher tells students to write the first sentence and description about the character in their story with the whole class. Students work in pairs to complete the next two sentences. One way to develop a character in a story is to provide background information about the character. This is often done in the orientation of a story. Futhermore, students begin to completing their story by build a paragraph about their story.

After completing their story, students can engage in peer response in order to receive feedback from their peers on what they have written. Peer response can be done in pairs or in a group. Peer response can be done orally. Students read their work aloud and ask their peers for feedback. When engaged in peer response, students should not spend much time commenting or errors in grammar, spelling or punctuation.

Peer response will help students revise their preliminary drafts and make improvements to the final drafts of their collaborative story. To facilitate peer response, students can prepare photocopies of their written work for their peers, so the peers responders can highlight parts of text and make notes in the margins.

Students should take the feedback they receive from their peers into consideration when revising their drafts, but each students can decide whether or not to take on the suggestions they receive from peers.

Furthermore, after students editing and revising their final draft, the teacher tells students to represent their stories in a storyboard format to arranging the sequence of events, effects, and other digital components. Teachers will choose one story in a group. The best story will selected and made into digital stories.

Then, students begin to map out their story on a storyboard. Teachers help their students in writing the storyboard to organise the story sequence. Storyboard shows the different elements of the story they want to tell and when they appear. It can show each slide or each scene from a movie and describe what will happen there. This will help students visualise each scene of the story and remember the sequence of events more easily.

In creating a storyboard, students followed the several steps, which are: the first storyboard and the second storyboard. In the first storyboard, the teacher tells students to illustrate the pictures of the main events for the story that they selected in the frames of the storyboard and complete the text boxes for each frame. In the second storyboard, the teacher tells students begin to draw the pictures of the main events for the story.

In addition, to prepare picture used in the digital storytelling, it can be done in various ways, such as download pictures that related to the story from the internet, take photographs by students themselves, scan students' hand-drawn pictures and use online drawing tools to create illustration. After students have finished make the first storyboard, they are ready to make the second storyboard.

Furthermore, the students created the digital story based on the storyboard by improving the elements to Windows Movie Maker software and recording their voice to add to the narratives. To do this, students will need to use software that enables them to record their voices, add background music or sound effects if desired and save the audio file in WAV or MPEG format. Students will narrate stories with proper intonation, pauses, and prosody to reflect and enhance the emotional content.

The computer technicians at the school should be able to advise students on how to produce the recording. In addition, students can use their phone to record their voice. When recording the story, students should read and record their parts from beginning to end stopping. If students make a mistake with their first recording, they should start their part again from the beginning.

Then, the teacher tells students to begin arrange and edit into a digital stories by using the various software on the computer, such as Microsoft Power Point, iMovie, Photo Story, Windows Movie Maker, and others. For teachers, this lesson is designed to help students create the digital story and explain how to import pictures and videos into the software on the computer. Students can also add special effects and adjust the length of each visual elements. This achieved by choosing and adding some special effects, such as music and transitions.

Before that, the teacher have to introduces and exposes students to the technology, and provide motivation as students may experience frustration applying the technological tools and resources. Then, teachers will observe students' work and give instructions during the process of creating digital storytelling.

After students have finished their digital storytelling project, teachers provide some feedback to incorporate further improvements before the final draft of the digital story. Students revise and edit the draft based on teachers' comments and feedback. Then, they discuss the final drafts with the teacher and other students. The final form of the story is prepared based on these comments and feedback.

The final step of digital story creation is about presenting and evaluating. Students should be ready to present their stories and receive feedback from their friends and their teacher. Teachers attend the students presentation and evaluate them based on story elements, story creation and presentation. Students use computers to present narrative instead of physically standing in front of the audience.

During this practice, students will have opportunities to hone their face-to-face presentation skills. Students will have a chance to improve pronunciation and know how to use intonation, tone, pace, and articulation to enhance their performance. Students take turns to give a brief introduction of their productions before presenting videos on a computer. When the video is over, they will lead a discussion regarding their digital stories. Peer assessment can be done in this section as well.

Then, students can share their digital stories in social media, such as Youtube, Facebook, Instagram, Blogs, and others. They can share their comments and share their digital stories with others.

Based on the description above, it can be concluded that implementing digital storytelling is aimed to improve EFL students' narrative writing at Senior High School. Teacher has to build students' background knowledge first by showing video about digital storytelling. Second, the teacher gives the text related to the material. The last is students' exercise. Teachers ask students to create their own digital storytelling with group collaboration, so that teachers need to give them worksheets.

### **Advantages and Disadvantages of Creating Digital Storytelling in Improving EFL Students' Narrative Writing at Senior High School**

#### **1. Advantages**

##### **a. For EFL Students**

Digital storytelling is a special feature in teaching and learning that shares information through multimedia. Digital storytelling is a way to combine traditional means of telling a story with different types of digital multimedia. When students create a traditional storytelling, students followed the steps of the writing process, such as pre-writing, drafting, revising, and editing. However, when create a digital storytelling, students not only followed all of those steps, but they also followed the steps of creating a storyboard, recording the story, add background music or sound effects, and edit into a digital stories.

As with the traditional storytelling, telling stories digitally also involves plotting a personal narration about self, family, ideas, achievements, disappointments, or learning experiences. However, by using any of available multimedia tools, including images, audio, video, animation, and arts. Digital stories may become short movies that can be made on computers with basic hardware and software by students relatively unfamiliar with high technology so as to narrate personal stories enhanced with written or spoken text, still images video, and background music. It is digital technology that changes storytelling into modern form. Therefore, contrary to traditional storytelling, digital storytelling can focus on the content and writing process of multimedia methods rather than the traditional methods.

The advantages of creating digital storytelling than any other way of writing narrative text is digital storytelling created by using visual aids, still images, audio, music, and the students' voice which expresses emotions. By digitally telling stories of different genres, students may learn by reflecting on the experience of narrating and the narrating of experience (Cortazzi & Jin, 2007).

Besides, digital storytelling also have advantages in the following aspects, they are in education, technological skill, communication skill, listening skill, speaking skill, reading skill, grammar and vocabulary, and learning motivation.

### **1. Education**

Digital storytelling have many advantages in education, which are: (1) to provide more variation than traditional methods in current practice; (2) to personalize learning experience; (3) to make explanation or the practicing of certain topics more compelling; (4) to create real life situation in an easy and cheaper way; and (5) to improve the involment of students in the process of learning (Gils, 2005).

In addition, Boase (2008) states that educational use of digital storytelling has undergone a process from involving mainly self discovery to sharing knowledge with learning communities. The early use of digital storytelling was utilize a new set of digital media tools for self-reflection and investigating issues of identity.

Because of the potentials of digital storytelling for reflective, active, emancipative, and enjoyable learning, digital storytelling has been applied in the classroom as both a teaching tool and a learning tool in many innovative ways.

### **2. Technological Skill**

Digital storytelling revolve around the idea of combining the art of telling stories with a variety of digital multimedia, such as pictures, audio, and video. By introducing the technology aspect, digital storytelling can combine advantages and success of traditional storytelling with the innovations of new technologies to teach English to EFL students.

Both the content and technology are present in a digital storytelling. Students will explore and improve their technology skills during the process of making their digital storytelling project. For example, when students create the digital storytelling, students will learn and practice how to use many software on their computer such Microsoft PowerPoint, Windows Movie Maker, etc. Then, when they add their voice to the story, they will record their voice using technology such as mobile phone and other recording devices. Therefore, in the process of creating digital storytelling, the ability of students in using technology become increasing because they are required to use technology in the class.

Barret (2006) found digital storytelling fasilitates the convergence of four students centered learning strategies: students engagement, reflection for deep learning, project based learning, and effective integration of technology into instruction. In integration of technology is achieved when students are able to select technology tools to help them obtain the information. However, the power of the integration of technology requires not only a new or advanced technology, but also a systematic way to utilizing the technology to improve students learning.

Thus, in the EFL classroom, teachers do not only face the challenge to help their students improve the necessary listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in English, but they also face the challange to provide students with



meaningful and opportunities to apply technology in creating digital storytelling.

### **3. Communication skill**

Digital storytelling is used to work on routines in daily interaction in English as foreign language. Although traditionally digital stories mainly consist of a narration of, it also integrated a series of dialogues to provide an example of different communicative exchanges in which a variety of language chunks are used.

In creating digital storytelling, students may develop enhanced communication skills by learning to organize their ideas, ask questions, express opinions, and construct narratives. For example, after students create the story map, plot structure, character profile, background information, and completing the story, they will express their ideas and opinions when take the feedback they receive from their peers and their teacher. In addition, intense eye contact between the teacher and students is a unique in storytelling because such behavior is a natural one in communication, then it increase the communication skills in the classroom (Setyarini, 2011). Thus, digital storytelling have an advantage on the development of students' communication in EFL classroom.

### **4. Listening skill**

One of the advantages of digital storytelling in EFL classroom, For example, when students listen to the story, they tend to inadvertently search for patterns in language and develop a sense of rhetorical structure. In addition, story listening facilitates second language acquisition by offering opportunities for listeners to experience natural language input (Clipson-Boyles, 2012).

Therefore, the digital storytelling reshapes the relationship between the storyteller and audience. Storyteller no longer merely pour information into listeners but bring the listeners into the experience and evoke emotional response. Thus, digital storytelling audiences are viewed not only as listeners but also as learners who can interact and shape the story. When students interact the story, they can improve their listening skill because they can hear the story delivered by the storyteller.

### **5. Speaking skill**

An additional advantage of digital storytelling, this point out that digital storytelling is a media that could greatly helps students to improve their speaking skill. Through telling stories in a dramatic way, students are not only equipped with linguistic knowledge but also learn to utilize other dynamics like tone, volume, and space to make meaning, thus growing up into confident English speaker (Clipson- Boyles, 2012).

Digital storytelling projects brought to students what they felt more confident while delivering speeches. Digital storytelling primarily use to enhance students' proficiency skills, it significantly improved students' speaking skills. For example, when students telling their stories in front of the class, they can train their pronunciation and their fluency in speaking. Therefore, digital storytelling can have an advantage on the development of students' overall oral English proficiency.

## **6. Reading Skill**

According to Kempter & Edward (1986), digital storytelling is a useful way of improving reading comprehension in EFL classroom. In reading, for example, a sense of story can help students to predict and know what to expect and read with more awareness of cause and effect, sequence and other story factors related to the comprehension.

Digital stories made the process of reading to be more visually appealing, engaging, fun for students, and over time students were able to improve their reading skills, including fluency and comprehension. Therefore, digital storytelling is a great tool in helping students to significantly improve their reading skills.

## **7. Grammar and Vocabulary**

When teachers combined digital storytelling with collaborative writing tasks, students were able to improve particular aspects of their language, increase their awareness of language structures, and explore more complex grammatical rules as their performances were evaluated through teacher, peer, and self-assessments. Digital storytelling allowed students to gain a better understanding of grammatical rules and functions as students were encouraged to practice particular forms in the narration of their digital stories. Therefore, digital storytelling can be effectively to enhance students' vocabulary and grammar in the EFL classroom.

## **8. Learning Motivation**

Engaging and motivating students is always a key factor for successful learning. When students follow the steps in creating digital storytelling, they will motivated to learn.

For example, when students create the story using multimedia technology, they will motivate to study because they can learn how to use the technology. With the images, sounds, animations, and arts, students become more interested because they not only creates stories in traditional form but also in a modern form.

The application of technology improves students learning motivation and performance in technology-rich classrooms. Students spend more time on tasks required to produce their digital stories because they were motivated to learn new software. Using technology in creating digital storytelling in the classroom can improve students' motivation. Thus, digital storytelling is a great tool which has the advantage of improving students' motivation in EFL classsroom.

### **b. For EFL Teachers**

Though it has focused on the advantages of digital storytelling to students, it is important to mention that digital storytelling may be a valuable tool for teachers. Digital storytelling is the best application for teachers to encourage students to increase their use and knowledge of technology and technical skills. In order to create the stories, not only the students but also the teachers are obliged to increase their technical proficiency in using personal computers, digital cameras, recorders, etc. This helped teachers keep up with the latest technology.

For example, when teachers create digital storytelling and, they will learn how to use Windows Movie Maker software and practice it on their computer. With digital storytelling, teachers also got the opportunity to improve their

technological skills. So, teachers are not rigid in using technology while teaching in the classroom or outside of the classroom.

Digital storytelling as a multimedia project that considers the act of teaching and learning with technology that can enhance the acquisition of many skills, since they engage teachers and students in a participatory process rather than in a passive one. As teachers learn how to design digital stories, they become aware of how they can ally creativity and critical thinking to the art of teaching. They also become aware of ways to engage the students in their own creations. Thus, the teacher must be proficient in using the technology before they teach it to the students. The use of technology is only effective if the teacher has the expertise to customise the use of technology for the story creation. The advantages can only be received if teachers have the ability to use it in the classroom effectively.

## **2. Disadvantages**

Digital storytelling can be both advantages and disadvantages in EFL classroom. Although the writer indicates that digital storytelling improves students' narrative writing and literacy skills in many aspects, it does have its limitations in the classroom. For example, in some cases, teachers perceive digital storytelling as a process of simply combining visuals and music, students are unable to further develop and practice their language and literacy skills since it does not encourage students to utilize the second language skills (Mullen and Wedwick, 2008). Therefore, a teacher's lack of understanding of the essential components of digital stories can lead to the ineffective implementation of digital storytelling in the classroom.

Students experienced difficulties and frustration throughout the digital storytelling process when they could not relate to the topics due to insufficient knowledge. As a result, students were not able to produce and apply language forms and structures to help them advance their second language (Lee, 2014).

When digital storytelling exercises were not incorporated on a weekly basis, many students complained and felt overwhelmed as digital storytelling is a time-consuming process, especially for students who demonstrate lower second language abilities. Time can be a great limitation for students with lower proficiency levels in the EFL classroom. However, when teachers carefully and thoughtfully plan and integrate digital storytelling tasks into the curriculum, they can overcome such barriers (Lee, 2014).

Many teachers believe that by using technology in creating digital storytelling, such as video editing software programs, is necessary to carry out effective digital storytelling projects in the EFL classroom. However, technology tools and resources do not increase the effectiveness of digital storytelling tasks in the classroom. Students can create successful digital stories with any type of technology, but teachers must understand how the technology tools and resources can be used in their teaching context with their particular students and curriculum, as well as the educational and technological limitations they experience in their school setting.

Therefore, teachers must understand their teaching and students' learning context as well as carefully plan for the activities to successfully implement digital storytelling into their classroom.

### **C. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

Digital storytelling is a media that created to help teachers teach writing which can improve students' narrative writing at Senior High School. This is because of the digital storytelling is created by using multimedia technology which contains images, sounds, music, and arts. It can make students more interested and have motivation in writing. Through digital storytelling, students become more active and more practice in writing.

Implementing digital storytelling is aimed to improve students' narrative writing at Senior High School. Teacher has to build a background of students' knowledge first by showing video about digital storytelling. Then, the teacher gives the text related to the material in which students are asked to understand the elements contained in narrative text such as the generic structures and the language features, for students' exercise, teachers ask students to create their own digital storytelling with group collaboration, so that teachers need to give them worksheets.

Based on the discussion and conclusion above, the writer expects that this paper will be helpful for teachers and also for readers who are interested in teaching writing especially narrative writing at Senior High School.

Thus, the writer gives several suggestions. Firstly, for English teachers who lack of knowledge about strategies or media and interest of media, it is better for them to read more articles or some sources about that. Teachers should have deep knowledge of the teaching content and multimedia technology, and know how to combine the convergence of these types of knowledge in teaching. Secondly, it is better for teacher to be more creative in teaching narrative writing by creating appropriate media. One of them is digital storytelling.

Thirdly, digital storytelling is a media which created by using multimedia technology, so it is better for schools to facilitate the computer and internet in teaching to make a good learning process and achievement, since the technology has been advanced in this era. Lastly, not all Senior High Schools can create this media, but specific Senior High School can create this media in learning. If the school is not able to create this media, it is better for teachers to do more efforts by their own strategies.

Note: This article was written based on Putri Nanda Laina's paper under the supervision of Leni Marlina, S.S, M.A.

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