




Boosting students' engagement and writing skills through team games tournament in primary classrooms

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ARTICLE INFORMATION		ABSTRACT
History:		This study, grounded in the principles of cooperative learning and social constructivism, examines the pedagogical potential of the Teams Games Tournament (TGT) model in promoting student engagement and improving writing proficiency. In Indonesian primary classrooms, writing instruction is often teacher-centered, with limited opportunities for active learning, collaboration, and authentic expression. To address this gap, the study investigates the effectiveness of the TGT model in enhancing sixth-grade students' engagement and explanatory writing performance. A quasi-experimental design was employed, involving 58 students from a public primary school in Indonesia, who were assigned to experimental and control groups. Data were collected through explanatory writing assessments, classroom observation checklists, and self-report engagement questionnaires. The quantitative analysis, utilizing both descriptive and inferential statistics, revealed that students in the experimental group exposed to the TGT model exhibited significantly higher levels of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement. Furthermore, they demonstrated substantial improvements in writing quality, including content, organization, and language use, compared to their peers in the control group. The collaborative, game-based structure of the TGT model fostered a supportive, competitive, and motivating learning environment. These findings suggest that the TGT model can be an effective instructional strategy to enhance both student engagement and writing proficiency in primary education, particularly in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL)
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INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the fundamental skills that students must master in the 21st century. Beyond serving as a medium for communication, writing is also a tool for critical thinking, idea expression, and constructing an understanding of the surrounding world (Crompton, 2023; Zein et al., 2020). In the context of primary education, effective writing instruction plays a crucial role in shaping literacy competence and establishing a solid academic foundation for future success. Therefore, pedagogical approaches that not only enhance students' writing proficiency but also foster active engagement are essential for development and implementation (Albarracin et al., 2023).

Student engagement has been widely recognized as a key indicator of successful learning. In language learning, high levels of engagement have been shown to improve comprehension, enhance retention, and encourage students to use the language more actively and functionally (Aswad et al., 2024). This lack of early writing practice leads to difficulties in producing coherent, well-structured texts, which are essential for future academic success. Furthermore, many teachers face challenges in adopting innovative teaching methods or utilizing engaging learning media, further limiting students' active participation. The scarcity of interactive and technology-enhanced instructional tools exacerbates this issue, making writing lessons feel monotonous and disconnected from students' real-life experiences (Rochmawan & Nugraheni, 2023).

One contributing factor to this low engagement in writing is the limited emphasis placed on productive language skills during the early stages of education. Indonesian students are often exposed more to receptive skills such as listening and reading, while writing is frequently underdeveloped (Amalia et al., 2021). This lack of early writing practice results in difficulties in producing coherent, structured texts, skills that are essential for future academic success. Moreover, many teachers encounter difficulties in adopting innovative teaching methods or utilizing engaging learning media, further limiting students' active participation. The scarcity of interactive and technology-enhanced instructional tools worsens the problem, making writing lessons feel monotonous and disconnected from students' real-life experiences (Dayantri & Nasution, 2024).

Numerous studies have emphasized the importance of active and collaborative learning to improve student engagement. One particularly notable approach in this regard is cooperative learning, specifically the Teams Games Tournament (TGT) model (Wibowo, 2024). TGT combines elements of competition and collaboration in a fun and interactive learning environment, creating a more engaging experience for students. International research has demonstrated that this approach is effective in enhancing student motivation, social interaction, and academic outcomes across a wide range of subjects (Isaloka et al., 2024).

However, in the context of Indonesian language instruction at the primary level, the application of the TGT model remains relatively limited, particularly in the area of writing. This presents a specific challenge, as writing is a productive skill that requires mastery of language structures, discourse cohesion, and the ability to articulate ideas logically (Putra, 2021; Ulfa Nur'afifah, 2023). As the highest level in the hierarchy of language skills, writing demands not only technical guidance but also pedagogical support that can foster students' emotional and cognitive involvement in the learning process. This study addresses a significant gap in the existing literature, which has largely overlooked the use of TGT to improve writing skills, particularly in Indonesia. While numerous studies have confirmed the effectiveness of TGT in other subjects, its

application in writing instruction has rarely been explored. Furthermore, although many studies focus on student engagement in general, few have examined the holistic engagement of students (behavioral, cognitive, and emotional) in writing development through cooperative learning models such as TGT.

The situation at the research site clearly illustrates these challenges. Evaluation results revealed that more than half of the sixth-grade students had not yet met the minimum writing competency standards, particularly in writing explanatory texts. According to internal school assessments at SDN Jatimurni I, only 42% of students achieved a passing score on explanatory writing tasks, with common weaknesses observed in paragraph organization, logical sequencing, and appropriate vocabulary usage. Teachers expressed difficulty in identifying instructional methods that could stimulate students' interest and creativity in writing. The low levels of student engagement during writing instruction suggest that current approaches have failed to create an effective and stimulating learning environment.

Explanatory text, as one of the core writing materials taught in Grade VI, requires students to organize information systematically, identify cause-and-effect relationships, and use appropriate linguistic features. Teaching this genre requires strategies that encourage students to think logically, structure ideas coherently, and express their understanding in written form (Hitimala et al., 2024). Unfortunately, many students still struggle with mastering text structure and articulating information clearly and sequentially, making writing feel more like a burden than a meaningful challenge.

The implementation of the TGT model in writing explanatory texts is considered a promising pedagogical innovation to address these challenges. By combining group work with competitive games, students are encouraged to actively participate, collaborate, and support one another in the process of understanding and producing texts (Ananda Feby et al., 2024). This model not only strengthens students' writing abilities but also creates a learning environment that is both collaborative and healthily competitive, which in turn enhances their overall motivation and engagement (Pasaribu & Sihotang, 2024).

While previous studies have confirmed the positive impact of TGT on academic performance and classroom activity (Herningtyasari & Himawati, 2022; Siregar et al., 2025), most of this research has focused on subjects such as mathematics and science. Few studies have specifically examined the effectiveness of TGT in improving writing skills, particularly at the primary level and within the Indonesian educational context. Moreover, the multifaceted dimensions of student engagement, including behavioral, cognitive, and emotional aspects, have rarely been analyzed holistically in relation to writing development through cooperative learning models.

Given the widespread writing challenges faced by primary students and the documented disengagement in language classrooms, there is an urgent need to explore innovative, data-informed teaching strategies that can bridge the gap between instruction and student needs. This study aims to empirically evaluate the impact of the Teams Games Tournament model on student engagement and explanatory writing performance among sixth-grade students at SDN Jatimurni I in Bekasi City. The findings are expected to contribute practical insights into designing more interactive, contextual, and engaging language instruction for primary learners.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a quasi-experimental approach with a non-equivalent control group design to evaluate the effectiveness of the Teams Games Tournament (TGT) model

in improving student engagement and writing ability. This design allowed for comparison between an experimental group that received the TGT intervention and a control group that followed conventional instruction. Both groups were administered pre-tests and post-tests, allowing for analysis of learning gains before and after the intervention. The selection of this model was based on its practicality in primary education settings, where random assignment is often infeasible. The instructional intervention consisted of three sessions, each lasting 80 minutes, structured into four main phases: introduction, content delivery, core activity, and conclusion.

The participants in this study were all sixth-grade students in one primary school in Bekasi City, Indonesia, during the 2024/2025 academic year, totaling 58 students. As the total population of sixth-grade students in the school was 58, the study used a total sampling technique, meaning all students in the grade were included as the sample. Class VI A (28 students) served as the experimental group, while Class VI B (30 students) functioned as the control group (see Table 1). The selection was based on prior academic performance, which confirmed that both classes were comparable in ability. To ensure internal validity, both classes were taught by the same teacher, with the researcher acting as a non-intrusive observer to minimize instructional bias.

The TGT model was implemented in three 80-minute sessions, each consisting of four main phases:

1. Introduction: In this phase, students were introduced to the topic through a brief discussion linking the material to their everyday experiences.
2. Content Delivery: The teacher delivered the lesson using various methods, including group discussions and the use of visual aids to clarify difficult concepts.
3. Core Activity: Students worked in teams to complete academic challenges through games involving competitive and collaborative elements, as is typical in TGT.
4. Conclusion: The session was concluded with a class reflection to summarize learning and ensure understanding of the material taught

The sample size was determined based on the feasibility of the school setting and the recommendation that for quasi-experimental designs in classroom-based research, a minimum of 25–30 participants per group is considered acceptable to detect meaningful differences. While relatively small, the sample was sufficient for preliminary exploration and controlled comparison within the specific school context.

Table 1. Participant Characteristics by Gender

Gender	Group		Total
	Experimental	Control	
Male	11	12	
Female	17	18	
Total	28	30	

Three types of instruments were used to collect data: writing tests, observation checklists, and student self-report questionnaires.

1. Writing Tests (Pre-Test and Post-Test): These tests assessed students' ability to compose explanatory texts based on five criteria: content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics, with a maximum score of 100 (see Table 2). The scoring rubric was developed according to the 2013 Indonesian National Curriculum standards to ensure validity and reliability.
2. Observation Checklists: Classroom observations were conducted to assess students' engagement in three dimensions: behavioral, emotional, and cognitive. A binary rating scale (Yes/No) was used to capture student engagement during the learning activities.

3. Self-Report Questionnaires: This questionnaire explored students' perceptions of their learning experience under the TGT model, including their motivation, comfort, and perceived improvement in writing skills. A binary response format was used, as it aligns with the cognitive development stage of primary school students.

Table 2. Scoring Criteria for Explanatory Text Writing

Assessment Component	Maximum Score
Content	30
Organization	20
Vocabulary	20
Language Use	20
Mechanics	10
Total	100

Data were analyzed through a series of systematic steps. First, descriptive statistics, including maximum, minimum, mean, standard deviation, and frequency distribution, were used to provide an overview of data dispersion. Next, assumption tests were conducted, including the normality test and an F-test for homogeneity of variance, to ensure the appropriateness of parametric analysis. Subsequently, independent samples t-tests were used to compare pre-test and post-test scores between the experimental and control groups to identify statistically significant differences. If the data were not normally distributed, the Mann-Whitney U test was employed as a non-parametric alternative. All analyses were conducted at a 0.05 significance level. This methodological approach was intended to accurately assess the impact of the TGT model on student engagement and writing skills within the context of primary-level Indonesian language instruction.

It is important to acknowledge certain limitations in this study. The relatively small sample size (N=58), the single-school setting, and the short duration of the intervention (three sessions) may limit the generalizability of the findings to broader populations. This design, while valuable for preliminary insights, may not fully capture the long-term effects of the TGT model on writing development. As noted by Creswell (2014), smaller-scale studies in natural classroom settings are useful for establishing feasibility and grounding future large-scale investigations, but their findings should be interpreted with caution. Future research should consider including more diverse schools across different regions, expanding the duration of intervention to observe long-term outcomes, and employing mixed-method approaches to gain deeper qualitative insights into student engagement and learning processes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results and discussion based on the two primary objectives of the study: (1) to examine the effect of the Teams Games Tournament (TGT) learning model on student engagement in Indonesian language instruction at the primary level; and (2) to evaluate the impact of the TGT model on students' writing proficiency.

The Effect of the TGT Model on Student Engagement

The results show that the Teams Games Tournament (TGT) model had a significant positive impact on students' engagement in Indonesian language learning. In the experimental group, there was a marked improvement in various engagement indicators, including active participation in discussions and critical thinking. This was evidenced not only qualitatively through classroom observations but also quantitatively, as shown by the observational data across the three sessions. Table 3 provides a detailed comparison

of the average engagement percentages across 11 key indicators between the experimental group (TGT) and the control group (conventional).

Table 3. Average Student Engagement Data

Student Engagement Indicators	Group	
	Experimental (%)	Control (%)
Actively involved in class discussions	84.33	57
Completes assignments on time	77.33	76.67
Asks questions when confused	71	45.67
Completes homework	77.33	70.67
Gives comments during class	82	48.67
Appears attentive (not sleepy)	88	52.33
Appears calm during tasks/exams	68	74.33
Uses notes or learning tools	56.33	47.67
Demonstrates deep understanding	59.33	37.33
Solves problems independently	72.67	55.67
Shows critical thinking (asks “why” or “how” questions)	48.67	31.67

Based on Table 3, a substantial difference can be observed between the experimental group (TGT) and the control group in terms of engagement levels. In the discussion indicator, students in the TGT group exhibited significantly higher participation (84.33%) compared to the control group (57.00%), highlighting the TGT model’s ability to foster collaborative interaction. Similarly, enthusiasm and attentiveness were markedly higher among TGT participants, with scores of 82.00% and 88.00%, far exceeding those of the control group at 48.67% and 52.33%, respectively.

Cognitively, students in the experimental group demonstrated higher curiosity and critical thinking. This was reflected in higher rates of questioning (71.00% vs. 45.67%), deeper comprehension (59.33% vs. 37.33%), and critical analysis (48.67% vs. 31.67%). These results suggest that the team-based and game-integrated nature of TGT creates a learning environment conducive to inquiry and conceptual development. The findings are in line with Yulfani and Putra’s (Yulfani & Putra, 2024) study that indicated that TGT model significantly improved students' conceptual understanding, indicating that cooperative learning can effectively enhance higher-order thinking skills. Moreover, the study results corroborate previous research by Fahira et al. (2023), which found that TGT fosters metacognitive engagement by encouraging students to question, explain, and evaluate both their own ideas and those of their peers.

From an implementation standpoint, the TGT model provides pedagogical flexibility by fostering student collaboration and stimulating active participation through structured competition. The tournament mechanism and point system offer immediate feedback that reinforces intrinsic motivation. Teachers also reported more dynamic classroom atmospheres, despite technical challenges such as time management and the need for peer support training. These findings reinforce the notion that learning environments integrating game elements and peer interaction can increase not only behavioral engagement but also classroom climate and learner autonomy. The study thereby extends previous findings by Tran and Lewis (2012), who observed that gamification has been identified as a powerful tool to boost student engagement and motivation across various educational settings. By incorporating game design elements such as points, leaderboards, and badges, educators can create dynamic and interactive

learning experiences that encourage active participation and collaboration among students.

This study's key contribution is its demonstration that the TGT model is not only effective at the secondary level, as previous research has shown, but also highly relevant for primary education. Primary students, who are often perceived as passive during writing instruction, were found to be much more engaged through this cooperative and game-based strategy. Thus, this research adds both practical and conceptual dimensions to the discourse on interactive pedagogy at the primary level. These findings align with those of Agustina et al. (2024) and (Yulfani & Putra, 2024), who observed that TGT significantly improved student involvement and academic performance in elementary settings across multiple subjects. Moreover, the results are consistent with the work of Frayoga (2024), who emphasized that cooperative learning fosters not only engagement but also language production skills, particularly when learners are given structured opportunities for peer interaction.

Nevertheless, certain limitations must be acknowledged. Student engagement was measured on a nominal scale (Yes/No), which does not capture the intensity of each behavior. Furthermore, the limited instructional period of only three sessions restricts the generalizability of long-term effects. The short intervention duration may have captured only the initial motivational boost caused by novelty, competition, or collaborative excitement, without fully representing sustained engagement over time. Educational psychology literature highlights that authentic behavioral change and long-term learning require repeated exposure and reinforcement (Slavin, 2011; Graham & Perin, 2007). Thus, the improvements seen in this study, although statistically significant, should be interpreted as short-term gains. Prolonged and continuous implementation of TGT is likely needed to embed deeper engagement habits and foster more stable interaction patterns in writing instruction.

Despite these limitations, the consistent data pattern provides strong empirical support for the effectiveness of the TGT model in increasing student engagement. Future studies could adopt multi-dimensional engagement scales, such as those used by Charland et al. (2015) to better assess the affective, behavioral, and cognitive dimensions of engagement. In addition, longitudinal studies, such as those suggested by Kim et al. (2021), are needed to investigate the sustained impact of TGT over time and across various genres of writing. In addition, longitudinal or semester-based designs are recommended to investigate the sustained impact of TGT over time and across various genres of writing.

The Effect of the TGT Model on Students' Writing Proficiency

To determine if the Teams Games Tournament (TGT) model had a significant impact on students' writing proficiency, the normality of the data was first assessed. Normal distribution is crucial for conducting parametric statistical analyses, such as the independent samples t-test.

Table 4. Normality Test Results

Group	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Sig.	Shapiro-Wilk Sig.
Pre_Control	.200*	.495
Post_Control	.200*	.275
Pre_Experimental	.200*	.603
Post_Experimental	.200*	.154

*Note: Data are normally distributed if Sig. > 0.05

Table 4 presents the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests for the pre-test and post-test scores of both the experimental and control groups. These tests are vital in ensuring the reliability and robustness of the inferential statistics that follow. As shown in Table 4, all significance values exceed the 0.05 threshold, indicating that the data are normally distributed across all groups. Specifically, both the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk results confirm that the assumptions for normality were met for pre- and post-test scores in both experimental and control conditions. This outcome validates the use of parametric tests in the next stages of analysis. Consequently, it strengthens the analytical integrity of the study by ensuring that comparisons of writing performance are statistically sound.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of Writing Performance

Group	N	Mean	SD
Pre-Test (Control)	30	63.93	19.46
Post-Test (Control)	30	66.13	16.89
Pre-Test (TGT)	28	62.35	19.28
Post-Test (TGT)	28	87.17	9.69

Table 5 shows that the experimental group experienced a considerably greater improvement in writing performance compared to the control group. While the pre-test scores were relatively comparable (Control = 63.93; TGT = 62.35), the post-test scores differed significantly, with the TGT group reaching an average of 87.17, whereas the control group achieved 66.13. This substantial 24.82-point increase in the experimental group was also accompanied by a notable reduction in standard deviation, from 19.28 to 9.69, indicating that student performance gains were not only higher but also more consistent across the group.

Table 6. Independent Sample t-Test for Writing Scores

t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
5.864	20	< .001	17.03	5.77

The independent samples t-test confirmed a statistically significant difference ($t = 5.864$; $p < .001$) between the groups.

Table 7. Student Self-Report on TGT Implementation

Statement	Yes (%)	No (%)
I feel more excited to learn through the TGT method	89	11
I actively participated in group discussions	82	18
I was motivated to join the games in TGT	93	7
My group and I completed the tasks successfully	75	25
I felt more confident expressing opinions after using TGT	71	29
It became easier to develop ideas when writing	68	32
I now better understand the structure of a text	64	36
I can now construct sentences better	61	39
I now enjoy writing more because of TGT	79	21
My writing ability improved after TGT	75	25
I prefer learning with TGT over the conventional method	86	14
I felt challenged by the healthy competition in TGT	57	43
I was more motivated to learn through games in TGT	82	18
I feel more comfortable learning in groups than individually	89	11
I didn't feel burdened by the tasks in TGT	71	29

Table 7 presents student responses regarding their experience learning explanatory writing through TGT. This confirms that the TGT model not only improved overall writing performance but also reduced inter-student disparity. Students in the experimental group showed consistent improvement across key writing criteria: content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. This suggests that TGT holistically supports the development of writing competence. The gains in writing proficiency were further validated by student self-reports, which reinforced the effectiveness of the TGT model in creating a positive learning experience.

Table 7 shows that the student responses reflected overwhelmingly positive sentiment toward the TGT approach. A total of 93% reported being motivated to participate in TGT activities, and 89% expressed greater enthusiasm for learning. The group-based, game-integrated learning environment proved to be both enjoyable and educational. In addition, 89% of students indicated they preferred collaborative learning over individual work, and 75% reported their groups could complete tasks effectively, highlighting the social and cooperative benefits of the model.

Academically, 75% of students believed their writing skills had improved, while many also reported enhanced confidence (71%), idea development (68%), and understanding of text structure (64%). Although only 61% noted improvements in sentence construction, this result suggests that some technical aspects may require additional instructional support. Notably, 86% of students preferred TGT over traditional methods, and 82% felt more motivated when learning through games. However, 43% admitted feeling somewhat burdened by the competitive aspects of TGT, indicating the need to carefully manage the balance between challenge and comfort. Overall, students perceived the TGT model as effective in enhancing both motivation and learning outcomes.

The interactive, collaborative, and competitive environment of TGT encouraged students to express themselves more confidently in writing. Thus, integrating game-based strategies and teamwork into Indonesian language instruction proved to be effective not only in enhancing cognitive skills but also in fostering students' affective engagement in writing. These results align with findings by Naseha (2022), who emphasized that the TGT model enhances students' expressive abilities by creating a low-anxiety, peer-supported atmosphere. Similarly, Siregar et al. (2025) reported that cooperative learning models that include game dynamics lead to greater student confidence and willingness to participate in language production tasks.

The findings also show that TGT creates a supportive social environment where peer scaffolding naturally occurs, allowing higher-achieving students to assist their peers. This collaborative process enhances cognitive development and improves written thinking skills. Furthermore, the inclusion of games transforms writing into an engaging, purposeful activity. Vygotsky's theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) underpins this process, suggesting that learning occurs most effectively when students work with more capable peers (De Guerrero & Villamil, 2000). Furthermore, studies such as Dixon-Krauss (2019) have shown that structured peer interaction increases linguistic competence, especially in writing-focused activities that require idea elaboration and revision. Furthermore, the inclusion of games transforms writing into an engaging, purposeful activity.

Conceptually, these findings support the principles of social constructivism, which emphasize the role of interaction in knowledge construction. Through shared group activities, students developed a collective understanding of explanatory text structures.

Additionally, game-based tasks fueled intrinsic motivation, leading to improved mastery of writing skills. This is consistent with Johnson and Johnson's (2013) assertion that cooperative learning not only builds conceptual understanding but also fosters a sense of interdependence that sustains motivation. Likewise, Self-Determination Theory (SDT) supports the idea that intrinsically motivating tasks, such as educational games, enhance autonomy and competence, both of which are essential for long-term learning success.

However, the limited duration of the intervention, only three sessions, must be acknowledged as a critical limitation. Writing is a complex cognitive process that develops over time through iterative practice, feedback, and reflection (Rodríguez-Málaga et al., 2021). The three-session implementation may not have been sufficient to observe the full extent of TGT's impact on advanced writing elements such as stylistic fluency, rhetorical awareness, or error self-correction. Moreover, certain writing improvements, such as structural coherence and grammar control, often require sustained modeling and practice, which were constrained by the short timeframe.

Therefore, while the post-test results indicate promising short-term improvements, they should be interpreted as preliminary. Extended implementations over several weeks or months are recommended in future studies to better evaluate the cumulative impact of TGT on students' writing development. Longitudinal research could also examine whether such improvements are retained and transferred across different writing genres and contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study provides strong evidence for the effectiveness of the Teams Games Tournament (TGT) model in enhancing both student engagement and writing proficiency among primary school students in Indonesia. By integrating cooperative learning and game-based activities, the TGT model successfully fostered students' behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement throughout writing instruction. Students in the experimental group exhibited significantly higher levels of participation, collaboration, and motivation compared to their peers in conventional classrooms. Notably, the TGT model significantly improved engagement indicators such as attentiveness, curiosity, and critical thinking, highlighting its potential to create a dynamic and inclusive classroom environment that encourages active learning.

In terms of academic outcomes, the implementation of the TGT model led to substantial improvements in students' writing performance. Students in the experimental group achieved significantly higher post-test scores and demonstrated greater consistency across writing criteria, including content development, organization, language use, and mechanics. These gains were supported by student self-reports, which reflected increased confidence, motivation, and enjoyment in the writing process. The collaborative nature of TGT allowed peer scaffolding to occur naturally, enhancing students' ability to logically organize and coherently express their ideas. These findings align with Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development and Social Constructivist theory, further validating the role of cooperative learning in improving writing skills at the primary level.

Despite its effectiveness, this study acknowledges some limitations, such as the short duration of the intervention (three sessions) and the focus on only explanatory texts. These factors may limit the generalizability of the findings across other writing genres or longer-term effects. Future research is needed to explore the longitudinal impact of the TGT model and to adopt more nuanced engagement metrics that capture the depth of students' behavioral, emotional, and cognitive involvement. Nonetheless, the study provides valuable insights into how cooperative and game-based learning strategies, like

TGT, can enhance both student engagement and writing proficiency, offering practical implications for educators and policymakers in primary education.

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