

Old Tales, New Skills: Exploring the Influence of Fables on EFL Writing Performance

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Abstract—This quasi-experimental mixed-methods study investigated the efficacy of integrating fables into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction to enhance high school students' writing proficiency and critical thinking. Conducted with 65 A1-level learners aged 15–16, this research employed pre- and post-tests to evaluate improvements in paragraph structure, grammatical accuracy, vocabulary range, and critical problem-solving skills. At the outset, participants demonstrated difficulties with verb tense consistency, sentence construction, and the logical organization of ideas. Thus, an eight-week intervention was implemented, using a series of fable-based activities that included moral interpretation, character analysis, and narrative reconstruction, providing repetitive and contextualized input and opportunities for meaningful writing practice. Results showed that this scaffolded approach significantly softened initial problems, leading to marked gains in writing coherence, cohesion, lexical diversity, syntactical precision, and expansion of vocabulary. Furthermore, the tasks were effective in enhancing critical thinking, students learned to formulate and justify arguments, interpret implicit messages, analyze narrative structures, and consider alternative perspectives. Students also strengthened their ability to evaluate information and recognize biases, producing more well-supported written responses. These findings affirmed fables as a powerful tool that effectively harmonizes linguistic development with critical reasoning. The study suggests further research into integrating AI with story-based writing activities to promote creativity and differentiated instruction.

Index Terms—critical thinking, EFL instruction, fables, problem solving, vocabulary

I. INTRODUCTION

Writing in English as a foreign language (EFL) is a fundamental skill that enables learners to communicate effectively in academic, professional, and everyday contexts. As Arochman et al. (2024) point out, writing competence is essential for producing academic and professional texts such as reports, emails, and resumes within the professional and academic fields. Nonetheless, mastering writing skills is a process that requires not only instruction but also practice (Arianti, 2020). However, in the Ecuadorian EFL context, writing remains a challenging skill for many learners due to the limited opportunities to practice it in classroom settings. This situation is particularly evident in public educational institutions, where English instruction is often limited to approximately three hours per week. To address this limitation, narrative texts such as fables may serve as an effective pedagogical resource to support writing development in EFL classrooms (Guerrero Rodriguez & Moreira Baquerizo, 2025).

Humpherys and Babb (2020) define fables as narrative texts that convey moral lessons through characters, often represented by animals with human-like qualities, thus they become an effective resource to foster language development and critical thinking skills (Nippold & Marr, 2022). Besides, fables allow students to analyze, interpret, and create texts. Some researchers demonstrate the positive impact of using fables in the EFL classes. Additionally, Saputra et al. (2023) assert that fables help students to stimulate their ideas and increase their creativity in writing. Similarly, Smogorzewska (2014) indicates that creativity and critical analysis are fostered thanks to the incorporation of stories in the EFL classes. Because of fables' clear narrative structure and moral focus, they can provide meaningful contexts for language use, allowing learners to practice vocabulary, grammar, and textual organization while reflecting on the message of the story.

Although previous studies have explored the role of storytelling and narrative texts in language learning, limited research has examined the use of fables as a structured pedagogical resource to simultaneously enhance written production and critical thinking among beginner EFL learners in secondary education contexts. Therefore, this study aims to examine the effects of using fables as a pedagogical strategy to enhance EFL students' writing performance and foster their critical thinking and problem-solving skills. From this perspective, the following research questions were addressed:

What are the effects of using fables on EFL students' writing performance in terms of paragraph structure, grammar, and vocabulary?

How do writing activities based on fables influence the development of EFL students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *The Role of Writing Skills in EFL Students*

For English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students developing strong writing skills is fundamental to achieving communicative competence. These skills allow learners to move beyond simply understanding the language and actively express themselves in real-world situations in a written way. Writing is known as a productive skill because learners use it to actively create language, not just understand it (Harmer, 2007; Spratt et al., 2005).

Language classrooms develop this skill through activities such as paragraphs and essays. This skill permits students to experiment with the target language by expressing themselves through written words. Writing, according to Harmer (2007), results in a physical product that others can read and mentally process. Furthermore, it involves the act of generating language for communication. Through this skill, students can demonstrate both their understanding of grammar and vocabulary and showcase their critical thinking and problem-solving.

Investing in the development of productive skills promotes confidence and motivation in EFL learners. The ability to express oneself clearly and confidently fosters a sense of accomplishment and a deeper connection with the language. Additionally, research conducted by McDonough and Mackey (2016) highlights the importance of productive skills in language learning, leading to improved accuracy, enhanced EFL students' writing skills, and overall language proficiency.

B. *The Benefits of Using Fables for EFL Learning*

Fables are short, fictional narratives that typically feature animal characters exhibiting human traits. Also known as folktales, these stories convey moral lessons that have been transmitted across generations through oral and written traditions (Fahmy, 2021). In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, fables offer significant pedagogical value due to their structured format, engaging content, and meaningful messages. Their concise and vivid nature, combined with clear narrative structures and moral outcomes, makes them particularly accessible and appealing to learners (Simon, 2022).

Unlike traditional instructional materials, fables capture learners' attention through relatable scenarios and symbolic characters, fostering a more enjoyable and motivating learning environment. Moreover, the universal themes commonly found in fables such as honesty, kindness, and perseverance resonate with learners from diverse cultural backgrounds, facilitating emotional engagement and personal connection to the content. The use of animal characters further supports classroom interaction, as it enables students to discuss abstract ideas and personal reflections in a less intimidating and more approachable manner. These interactions contribute to the development of productive skills, particularly speaking and writing, while also enhancing learners' ability to interpret moral meanings (Romdoni, 2020).

In addition, exposure to a variety of fables allows learners to gain cultural insights, promoting intercultural awareness and broadening their understanding of different worldviews (Simon, 2022). Retelling fables in their own words provides learners with opportunities to actively practice language production, reinforcing newly acquired vocabulary and grammatical structures encountered in the narratives (Fahmy, 2021). This process not only consolidates linguistic knowledge but also supports the development of fluency, as learners strive to communicate ideas effectively. Furthermore, the presence of explicit moral lessons offers learners a sense of purpose and achievement, which can enhance motivation and engagement.

Fables also contribute to vocabulary acquisition by presenting new lexical items in meaningful and contextualized situations, thereby facilitating comprehension and retention. Their narrative structure enables learners to observe grammatical patterns in authentic language use, supporting a deeper understanding of syntactic forms. Additionally, analyzing both the narrative and its underlying message encourages critical thinking and strengthens both oral and written communication skills. Through active engagement with the text, learners develop a more profound and integrated understanding of the language (Saputra, 2023). Overall, fables represent a versatile and effective pedagogical resource for EFL instruction, as they simultaneously promote language development, cultural awareness, and learner motivation.

C. *The Implementation of Fables as a Strategy to Foster Writing Skills*

Several studies have investigated the use of fables in the ELF learning process, and they have shown positive results. Meletiadiou (2022) carried out a study to analyze the impact of storytelling on writing competence of undergraduates, concluding that storytelling fostered genuine educational experiences by encouraging students to incorporate their personal narratives into their academic work. Additionally, it engages students in authentic learning experiences while deepening their comprehension of theoretical frameworks and course material. In the same vein, fables are seen as a strategy to support EFL students to produce written language as well as to promote critical thinking by analyzing the moral of the stories. Under this line, Fahmy (2021) pointed out that fluency and vocabulary were boosted by rewriting

the selected fable using students' words, it led to an increase in their vocabulary and enabled them to be aware of the correct paragraph structure without overlooking the cognitive skills such as critical thinking and comprehension (Aisyah et al., 2024). Besides that, fables promote independent thinking in students, guiding them to justify their opinions with evidence and to communicate their ideas clearly, precisely, and effectively (Nippold & Marr, 2022).

D. Writing Skills Through Critical Thinking in Fables

Education constitutes the means through which students can develop their creativity in terms of cognition, behavior, and attitude. Fables always include moral lessons that students can analyze and interpret. In this sense, students are provoked to show their critical thinking skills in a written form (Tolipova, 2024). Critical thinking in EFL writing refers to the ability of learners to interpret, analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information in English, leaving simple memorization apart to develop reasoning and problem-solving skills. It involves enhancing students' ability to form judgments, question assumptions, and supporting their ideas with evidence while using the target language in written form. Deepening critical thinking helps EFL learners become more autonomous and effective communicators in real-world contexts (Facione, 2015; Stapleton, 2011). Research also points out that the ability to think critically is connected to narrative discourse, as well as to the use of more complex sentence structures and specific vocabulary, such as metacognitive verbs (Nippold & Marr, 2022).

In this sense, to cultivate the critical thinking learning approach, teachers play a fundamental role helping students develop deep understanding through questioning, comparing perspectives, identifying moral ambiguities, analyzing language and symbolism, connecting to real life, comparing across fables, among others (Pardede, 2019). This will provide them with the necessary competencies to overcome challenges (Al-Zou'bi, 2021).

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Participants of the Study

The study adopted a one-group pre-and post-tests quasi-experimental design, which allowed the researchers to examine changes in students' writing performance before and after the intervention. According to Campbell and Stanley (1963), this design is frequently applied in educational research when it is not feasible to create control groups in classrooms settings. The implementation of a control group was not feasible due to the limited number of students enrolled in the course. Therefore, the study relied on within-group comparisons to examine changes in students' written output. Although the absence of a control group limits causal inference, the pre-and post-tests comparison provides valuable evidence regarding the potential effectiveness of the instructional intervention.

This study employed both qualitative and quantitative approaches. In this regard, Creswell (2014) states that integrating these approaches facilitates a comprehensive and holistic understanding of the research purpose. The study utilized purposive sampling, involving 65 A1-level EFL students enrolled in a public high school in Loja, Ecuador, where English is taught as a foreign language. The participants were between 15 and 16 years old and were in their second year of senior secondary education.

It is important to note that students in public high schools receive only three hours of English instruction per week, which is insufficient for the effective development of all language skills. In contrast, students in private high schools typically receive approximately eight hours of English instruction weekly. This disparity in instructional time may negatively impact the overall English language performance of students in public institutions.

Moreover, with regard to the sample, participants' privacy and confidentiality were fully ensured, as all data collected during this study were voluntary and anonymized in accordance with institutional ethical standards and the Declaration of Helsinki for research involving human subjects. All participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any academic consequences.

B. Procedure

This research started with a writing pre-test that consisted of three questions; the first task involved writing a paragraph on the moral of the fable "The Ant and the Grasshopper," allowing students to demonstrate their critical thinking. In the second question, students had to write the antonyms of some words from the fable with the purpose of showing their background vocabulary knowledge, and the third and last question included an exercise in which students had to complete some sentences using simple past. The writing test was scored on a 10-point scale. To evaluate students' writing performance, an analytic rubric was employed. This rubric assessed three key components of writing: paragraph structure, grammatical accuracy, and vocabulary use. Each component was rated on a scale from 0 to 3 points, resulting in a maximum raw score of 9 points. To ensure consistency with the institutional grading system, the total rubric score was subsequently converted to a 10-point scale.

The instrument was designed to capture students' ability to organize ideas coherently, apply accurate grammatical structures, and use appropriate vocabulary in their written responses. Specifically, paragraph structure assessed the organization and coherence of ideas, including the presence of a clear topic sentence and relevant supporting details. Grammar evaluated the accuracy of sentence construction and the appropriate use of verb tenses. Vocabulary measured lexical variety and the effective use of words related to the narrative context. Finally, the rubric was reviewed by experienced EFL instructors to ensure its clarity, validity, and alignment with the learning objectives of the intervention.

The intervention involving fable-based activities lasted eight weeks, with the purpose of improving students' writing proficiency and fostering critical thinking and problem-solving through the use of six classic fables: *The Lion and the Mouse*, *The City Mouse and the Country Mouse*, *The Boy Who Cried Wolf*, *The Goose with the Golden Eggs*, *The Wolf in Sheep's Clothing*, and *The Fox and the Crow*. The selection of the six fables used in this study was guided by specific pedagogical and linguistic criteria to ensure their suitability for A1-level EFL learners. First, the chosen fables present simple and accessible language structures, including high-frequency vocabulary and basic grammatical patterns such as the simple past tense, which are aligned with learners' proficiency level. Second, each fable follows a clear and consistent narrative structure (introduction, conflict, resolution, and moral), which supports the development of paragraph organization and coherence in writing tasks. Additionally, the selected fables contain explicit moral lessons and well-defined conflicts, providing meaningful opportunities for students to engage in interpretation, critical reflection, and problem-solving activities. Finally, these fables address universal themes such as honesty, responsibility, and perseverance, facilitating learners' engagement and connection with the content. Therefore, their selection was not arbitrary but grounded in their potential to simultaneously support linguistic development and foster critical thinking skills in beginner EFL learners.

Throughout the intervention, students completed some writing activities to enhance their paragraph structure, grammar and cohesive devices, vocabulary, critical thinking skills, and problem-solving. These activities included writing a paragraph based on the moral of each fable, grammar exercises with open questions, sentence unscrambling, matching tasks, and vocabulary tasks centered on synonyms, antonyms, and definitions. Moreover, activities such as identifying a central problem in a fable and proposing alternative solutions were employed to foster problem-solving. Additional activities were rewriting the story from a different character's viewpoint or designing a new moral lesson based on alternative resolution. Finally, to assess the effectiveness of the intervention, a writing post-test identical in format to the pre-test was administered.

IV. RESULTS

The data collected were analyzed statistically by using Jamovi software. Hence, to know the effectiveness of the use of fables for writing, it was applied first to pair sample t-tests with the corresponding scores from the pre- and post-tests.

TABLE 1
PAIRED-SAMPLES T-TEST RESULTS FOR PRE- AND POST-TEST WRITING SCORES

Test	Mean	Standard Deviation	T-value	p-value	Cohen's d
Pre-test ¹	5.23	0.59			
Post-test ¹	7.76	0.13	-32.70	< .001	5.88

A paired sample t-test was conducted to examine the effect of the fable-based intervention on students' written output. The results revealed a statistically significant improvement between the pre-test ($M = 5.23$, $SD = 0.59$) and the post-test ($M = 7.76$, $SD = 0.13$), $t = -32.70$, $p < .001$. Cohen's d indicated a very large effect size ($d = 5.88$), suggesting a substantial improvement in students' writing performance following the intervention. Such a large effect may be explained by the intensive practice provided through the fable-based writing activities and the relatively low variability observed in the post-test scores.

Additionally, a repeated-measures ANOVA was conducted to examine differences in students' performance across the three writing components assessed in the rubric: paragraph structure, grammar, and vocabulary. This analysis aimed to identify which dimension of writing showed the greatest improvement because of the fable-based activities. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 3, while Table 2 summarizes the descriptive statistics obtained during the intervention.

TABLE 2
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE IN THE FABLE WRITING TASKS

Aspects	Mean	SD	Min	Max	95% CI
Paragraph Structure	2.52	0.20	2.13	2.7	0.21
Grammar	2.77	0.18	2.5	3.03	0.19
Vocabulary	2.92	0.16	2.73	3.2	0.17
Total	8.20	0.52	7.36	8.93	0.55

Table 2 illustrates the average scores in each analyzed aspects, whereas the 95% confidence interval indicates the probable range where the population means lie, based on a 95% confidence level. All the averages demonstrated a significant increase in each evaluated aspect of writing. Hence, in paragraph structure, the mean was 2.52 and the standard deviation was 0.20, which demonstrates a consistent progression during the intervention. With reference to grammar, the mean was 2.77 and the standard deviation was 0.18. In comparison to paragraph structure, the outcomes evidence a more noticeable and reliable advancement. Regarding vocabulary, the mean obtained was 2.92, and the

standard deviation was 0.16. These results reflect the enhancement of the participants of this study by learning new terms.

TABLE 3
RESULTS OF THE REPEATED MEASURES ANOVA COMPARING PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE, GRAMMAR, AND VOCABULARY

	F	df	p
Writing Component	46.99	(2,10)	< .001

A repeated-measures ANOVA was conducted to compare students' performance across the three writing components: paragraph structure, grammar, and vocabulary. The analysis revealed a statistically significant difference among the components, $F(2,10) = 46.99$, $p < .001$. Among the evaluated components, vocabulary obtained the highest mean score, suggesting that narrative-based activities may particularly support lexical development in beginner EFL learners.

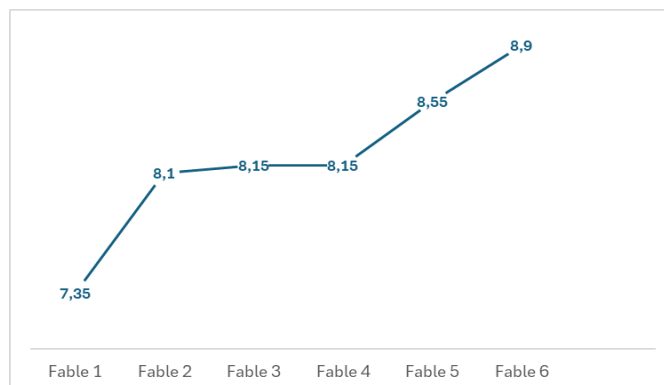


Figure 1. Progression of Students' Writing Performance Across the Fable-Based Writing Activities

The figure above clearly shows the overall writing improvement by using fables. The total mean was 8.20, which validates the overall improvement in writing by using fables considering the three aspects: paragraph structure, grammar, and vocabulary. The low standard deviation indicates the effectiveness of using fables, as the results were consistent among participants.

V. DISCUSSION

Regarding initial participants' knowledge based on their writing skills, the outcomes demonstrated the critical obstacles that they presented with vocabulary usage, paragraph organization, and basic grammar structures knowledge. According to Setiani et al. (2024), EFL students struggle with writing because they usually meet various problems related to grammar use, vocabulary, and content, which cause a kind of frustration when they are asked to produce; therefore, writing is not as easy as it seems. The most prevalent mistakes found in the pre-test were in the use of the past simple tenses (e.g., "The boy who cry wolf" instead of "cried") and present simple tenses in third person singular (e.g., "The lion live in the forest" instead of "lives"). Students also had trouble with simple conjunctions ("and" or "but" The city mouse liked rich, delicious food and he did not like the dangers of the city. Instead of writing correctly: The city mouse liked rich and delicious food, but he did not like the dangers of the city.); using singular and plural forms of nouns ("a golden eggs" instead of "golden eggs") and wrong ordering of adjectives and nouns (A tiny small mouse helped the lion instead of A small tiny mouse helped the lion). Their ability to construct coherent sentences was hindered by these grammatical errors. This issue may be attributed to the influence of the students' mother tongue, as learners often tend to transfer sentence structures and linguistic patterns from their first language, as noted by Alrashed (2024).

Additionally, students' paragraphs frequently lack cohesive structure, topic sentences, conclusion sentences, and adequate supporting facts. Because concepts were often fragmented or unconnected, there was a lack of coherence and unity. Students' low results were also influenced by their narrow vocabulary range, as they used repetitive or too basic terms. These difficulties can be linked to a lack of exposure to systematic writing practice, a poor understanding of core grammatical rules, and a lack of confidence when using the target language (Alrashed, 2024).

However, after the intervention, students showed significant improvement, particularly in grammar accuracy, paragraph organization, and vocabulary usage, as a result of the incorporation of fables. Narrative texts such as fables often present clear and structured language patterns that provide learners with models of coherent discourse and grammatical usage. When students retell or rewrite these stories, they practice verb tenses, sentence structure, and lexical choices in meaningful contexts, which can facilitate writing development in EFL classrooms (Ajabshir, 2024). Thus, in this research, errors in the present simple and past simple tenses were greatly reduced. Likewise, when learning a language, students may doubt how to use tenses in writing a sentence. This result can be explained based on the input received.

These improvements can be justified by Krashen's Input Hypothesis, which emphasizes the role of comprehensible input in second language acquisition (Krashen, 1985). The use of fables provided learners with meaningful narrative input in which grammatical structures and vocabulary were presented in contextualized forms. Such exposure likely facilitated learners' understanding of how language operates within coherent narratives, supporting the development of their writing abilities.

In this sense, Fitria (2020) asserts that the simple past tense is used to refer to activities or situations that began and ended in the past. In the same line, in simple past tense, students usually write recount texts that have happened in a certain order. Consequently, students' constant errors will help them to master the correct form to use later. The intervention process also helped students to have deeper knowledge of grammar, which allowed them to create sentences that were clearer and more meaningful. Additionally, the correct use of conjunctions significantly improved as students recognized their role in establishing logical relationships between ideas and enhancing textual cohesion. Conjunctions function as cohesive devices that organize discourse and contribute to the overall quality and readability of written texts (Zhang & Zhang, 2023). Furthermore, students' paragraphs had a more cohesive structure, with clear topic sentences, pertinent supporting details, and effective concluding statements. All mentioned previously improved their writing's cohesiveness and cohesion by connecting concepts logically and developing them fully. Fables typically follow a clear storyline from introduction through conflict to resolution, which helps learners understand how coherent texts are built. By analyzing how the elements in the story are logically connected, students can improve their use of linking words and transitions that ensure smooth flow in their writing (Briesmaster & Etchegarar, 2017).

Additionally, students broadened their vocabulary by using more descriptive and varied terms (e.g., "clever fox," "greedy farmer") to describe complex thoughts. Fables offer learners a valuable chance to encounter new vocabulary, including terms linked to values and key messages. Working with such texts helps students reinforce word meanings by seeing them applied in relevant and engaging situations (Dewi et al., 2022; Gao et al., 2023; Razaq et al., 2022). These advancements can be attributed to the intervention's emphasis on writing practice, specific grammar instruction, and vocabulary-building activities centered on engaging the six fables. Furthermore, reading the fables provided students with the appropriate input and consequently served as a model for their writing practice. As confirmed by Qatrinada and Apoko (2024), narrative texts play a crucial role in improving English writing proficiency; as students grasp the language features such as tense usage, text structure, and grammar. These results are aligned with the findings of De Wilde (2023), who highlights that EFL learners working with narrative-based texts such as stories can activate diverse linguistic resources and organize ideas within meaningful narrative structures, which supports the development of written expression.

The improvement of students' critical thinking skills was also reflected in the qualitative analysis of their written responses. In the pre-test, students tended to provide very simple and literal answers, often limited to basic statements such as "the moral is work hard" or "the fox is bad." In contrast, post-intervention responses, although still linguistically simple due to their A1 level, showed clearer reasoning and interpretation. For example, one student wrote: "The grasshopper did not work, so he was hungry. This shows we must prepare for the future." This response reflects an emerging ability to establish cause-effect relationships and interpret the message of the story. Similarly, other students began to explain their ideas using simple connectors such as "because" and "so," which indicates a progression from isolated statements to more connected reasoning. These findings provide concrete evidence that fable-based writing activities can support the development of early-stage critical thinking skills in beginner EFL learners. Furthermore, the findings can be interpreted through the lens of sociocultural theory, which highlights the role of interaction and scaffolding in learning (Vygotsky, 1978). Throughout the intervention, students received guidance from the teacher while engaging in narrative interpretation and writing activities. This instructional support may have helped learners gradually develop their writing abilities by providing structured opportunities to practice language in meaningful contexts.

In the first fable activity, most of the participants could recognize the intention and the role of each character in the fables and what could be the consequences of changing the characters' roles. In the same token, Nippold and Marr (2022) confirm that engaging students in working with fables supports their ability to reflect on moral messages, examine character roles, and consider various possible outcomes, which contributes to the development of critical thinking. In almost every fable, there is a problem that the characters must solve. The way they solve (or fail to solve) the problem is what teaches morals.

As for the second activity, participants generated a dissimilar ending to the fable, provoking them to use their critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Through critical thinking, students were equipped to develop their responsibility and competencies, which consequently led to better learning. It is necessary to consider critical thinking as one of the key goals of education; hence, it should receive more devotion to guarantee that students present good arguments when expressing their ideas. In this sense, fables or short stories can help learners to boost their critical thinking (Sahibzada et al., 2020). These results can also be interpreted through Swain's Output Hypothesis, which emphasizes the importance of language production in second language development (Swain, 1995). Writing activities based on fables required students to actively produce language, organize ideas, and express interpretations of the stories' moral messages. This process likely encouraged learners to notice gaps in their linguistic knowledge and refine their use of grammatical structures and vocabulary.

The subsequent activities were focused on boosting their creativity and imagination since they provided different morals. Students were required to use the moral of the fables to write a paragraph interpreting the message in each of them since the moral lessons at the end of each fable prompted students to reflect and form their own perspectives. Furthermore, while doing these activities students used their ability to reason, build arguments, and support their opinions with justification that are essential skills for critical thinking (Pramahaniyom et al., 2023; Sahibzada et al., 2020).

VI. CONCLUSIONS

The outcomes of this research demonstrated that the use of fables as instructional material had a beneficial impact on EFL students' writing performance. In the beginning of the intervention, participants struggled with the use of verb tenses, sentence construction, and logical organization of ideas, which were caused by limited linguistic exposure, L1 interference, and lack of writing practice. However, the previous issues were mitigated by the implementation of fables since they were used repetitively and contextualized, which offered participants understandable input and meaningful opportunities to implement them in their writing practice. Fables proved to be effective instructional resources that not only enriched vocabulary and supported grammar but also were an effective scaffolding tool to foster coherence and cohesion in EFL writing. Overall, writing activities based on fables made a significant contribution to boosting students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills. These activities promoted participants to develop arguments and justify their perspective performing critical thinking skills.

The improvement of these skills was achieved gradually by developing the capability to interpret morals, analyze character roles, and consider alternative outcomes. The activities based on fables demonstrated to be an effective resource for improving cognitive development. Furthermore, by engaging students with fables, they developed skills in analyzing narrative structures, distinguishing between explicit and implicit messages, and reflecting the ethical aspects of storytelling. This type of analysis also strengthened students' ability to critically evaluate information sources, recognize biases, and produce well-supported written responses.

Despite the positive outcomes reported in this study, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the research was conducted in a single educational institution, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other educational contexts. Second, the sample size was relatively small and consisted of students from only one class, which may restrict the broader applicability of the results. Third, the study employed a one-group pre- and post-tests design without a control group, which may introduce potential threats to internal validity such as practice effects or maturation over time. Finally, the instructional intervention was implemented over a relatively short period of time, which may not fully capture the long-term impact of narrative-based instruction on writing development. Nevertheless, the findings provide valuable insights into the potential benefits of integrating narrative texts such as fables into EFL writing instruction, particularly in contexts where instructional time is limited.

Additional studies are suggested to investigate the ways that AI could be integrated into story-based and writing activities, considering the age of learners, their language proficiency level, and other learning concerns. Such an inquiry would contribute to understanding how AI-led storytelling platforms can promote creativity, improve language output, and enable differentiated instruction across education.

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