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## PICTURE SERIES IN TEACHING WRITING SKILLS: A LITERATURE REVIEW

by

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### Abstract:

This library research investigates how picture series implementation effectively improves students' writing skills on different text types. Data were collected from journals published in the last ten years, from 2012-2022, and analyzed using content analysis. The results indicated that picture series effectively improve students' writing skills in descriptive, narrative, recount, procedure, explanation, and spoof texts. Even the picture series is helpful when applied to teach writing skills to deaf and hard-of-hearing students. A visual representation of events arranged in chronological order naturally provides the students with clues that can help them arrange and develop ideas in writing. Besides, the picture series stimulate the students' process of thinking and imagination to write the assigned text. Picture series also promote students' engagement and participation. In other words, picture series enables students to improve their writing skills and change their behavior toward learning.

**Keywords:** Picture series, Text-types, Writing skills

## INTRODUCTION

Writing has an inclusive position as it gets to the last stage of English language teaching. Before starting writing activities, EFL learners are supposed to be familiar with the skills of

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listening, speaking, and reading. (Gautam, 2019) states, "writing skill assumes the highest order on a scale of hierarchy and develops only after the former three have been learned or acquired." Besides, in the writing process, EFL learners must use cognitive and aster metacognitive skills such as planning, editing, and revising (Klimova, 2014). It makes writing more challenging and complicated to learn than other macro skills.

Writing is a complex process involving components like content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics that are "going on simultaneously" (Hedge, 2015). Those aspects lead EFL learners to produce a compelling text that is "cohesive, logical, clearly structured, exciting and adequately organized with a wide range of vocabulary and mastery of conventions in mechanics (Fareed & Bilal, 2016; Turmudi, 2017). In other words, to write a good piece of text, EFL learners require a wide range of skills in the genre, text structure, lexical, language use, and conventions of writing.

The ability to write is not innate; it is learned. It is obtained through a series of experiences. It means writing skills can be learned through a set of practices. Therefore, effective writing instruction needs to be performed. (Davis, 2013) states that effective writing instruction provides students with the knowledge and skills to become active and engaged in learning to write and from writing. For this reason, teachers must create an enjoyable classroom environment to support the teaching and learning process and improve students' interest in writing activities.

One way to arouse the students' interest in writing is through visual instructional media (e.g., pictures, photographs, and PPTs.). Visual media have proven to be advantageous. It provides students with the ability to devote attention simultaneously to multiple visual objects (fixative), to control objects (manipulative), and to divide objects into parts (distributive). Also, it makes learning experiences more concrete (Dwiutami et al., 2018; Memmert et al., 2013; Abu & Prasetya, 2005; Dwiutami, 2016). In effect, both the teacher and the students find visual instructional media helpful in teaching and learning writing skills.

Using visual media to teach writing skills can significantly help teachers and EFL learners. Visual media can overcome students' difficulties, facilitate learning, and make it more effective. It can also scaffold the students in different ways at different levels. Furthermore, it helps teachers introduce the lesson and give it better illustrations. In addition, through visual media, the teacher can easily monitor and evaluate students' performance

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(Halwani, 2017); Van Staden, 2011). In short, the use of visual media in teaching writing skills can elevate effective pedagogical practices.

As a visual medium, the picture is considered an effective tool as it visualizes something being described. According to Abdullah & Yunus (2019), "using a picture to plan a description is a useful technique for helping students to see the importance of selection and focus in developing a description which is non-chronological, for example, of places, people, or scenes." Pictures can spark students' imagination and creativity, and using pictures as writing prompts can sharpen the students' sensory details. Pictures are like snapshots of life, and they can strike a chord of feelings and memory, leading students to write more about things they see.

Picture as instructional media is a pictorial illustration serving as a two-dimensional representation of a person, place, or thing (object). It is divided into pictures of an individual and a picture series. The picture of an individual, also called a portrait, is a picture of a person or single object in close detail ((Selpiah, 2016)(Orianda, P & Rosa, 2013). Meanwhile, picture series refers to "a collection of images that depict the continuous events of a story with significant data" (Ramadhanty, A.W., Utomo, D.W., & Mayasari, 2021). It consists of three or more pictures showing some actions or events in chronological order (Wening, R.H., Cahyono, B.Y., & Iragiliati, 2017); (Khotimah, K., Daud, B., & Burhansyah, 2017). A picture series, therefore, is a connected series of images that are put together on one chart or paperboard to show sequential actions or events in a story.

This paper intends to reveal the merit of using picture series in teaching writing skills to EFL learners. It reviews pictures as visual media by emphasizing the advantages and disadvantages of using pictures in EFL writing for teachers and students (Mitchell, 1994; Birdsell, 2017). It aims to provide new insights into teaching writing in the EFL classroom through picture series and the implications for theory and practice in ELT. This study focuses on how and what causes picture series implementation to effectively increase students' performance in writing different text types. The results provide information to educators and future researchers about the efficacy of using picture series in teaching writing skills.

In light of the above research objectives, this study attempts to look for answers to the following questions:

1. How do the students perform in writing due to the implementation of the picture series?

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2. Can picture series be used to teach different types of text?
3. What makes picture series effective in improving students' performance in writing?

**METHOD*****Design***

The design of this recent study was library research – a method of searching for literature, and factual information, collecting data, and analyzing data to be presented in the form of a qualitative study. It tracked the previous method employed in a study (Turmudi, 2020).

***Data Collecting Technique***

Various types of records or documents (existing documents) were examined through this study, including books, academic writings, and journal articles published in both international and national journals between 2012-2022.

***Data Analysis Technique***

The data collected were organized and analyzed using the content analysis method. It is a method of collecting and analyzing data from texts to answer the research questions. We tracked the previous research procedures suggested (Dewi et al., 2021); Ariantini et al., 2021). Firstly, we selected the topic related to the implementation of picture series in teaching writing skills. We proposed a research question after we chose the topic. Secondly, we browsed and reviewed the related sources. Thirdly, we charted the findings before drafting the thesis. Then, we composed and outlined arguments. Finally, the draft was written and revised. On the other hand, the arranging cited work and list of references employ the online model using Mendeley cite (Turmudi, 2020).

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION*****Results***

Using picture series in teaching writing of different types of text is proven effective in improving students' writing skills and behavior toward learning. For example, a study by (Wening, R.H., Cahyono, B.Y., & Irigiliati, 2017) indicated that the students who were taught

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using picture series had a better ability to write recount text than those who were not. Their ability in writing components like content, organization, grammar, and vocabulary improved. The reason is that picture series provides the students with actions or events in chronological order, which helps them organize and develop ideas in writing.

A scholar (Thresia, 2017) furthermore investigated the effect of using picture series and realia in teaching the writing of the descriptive text. She compared the impact of both visual media on students' writing. The results showed that picture series are more effective than realia when used to teach descriptive text writing. Picture series explains the activity that enables the students to understand the materials easily. It stimulates the students to write effectively. As a result, the students become interested in writing activities and feel enthusiastic about the picture series, which affects their involvement in the teaching and learning processes.

Moreover, a study (Setiawan, 2019) shows that picture series significantly affect students' ability to write narrative text. It is due to the characteristics of the picture itself, which is concrete and realistic, so it can solve problems resulting from the limitations of time and space and human sense. Besides, it is adaptable to the needs of the teaching and learning process. On top of that, through picture series, the students can create, explore and develop their imagination about the ideas, information, and main problems of their narrative writing. With such rich ideas, they can write smoothly from general to more specific detail (Wahyuni et al., 2020) and accomplish learning objectives.

Furthermore, (Aini & Ratih, 2021) researched using picture series in teaching the writing of the explanatory or explanatory text. They found that student's ability to write explanatory text improves after being taught using picture series media. It means picture series help students become more imaginative in writing. The simplicity and authenticity of the pictures create some impressions, while their purity has aesthetic and practical values that arouse students' interest in writing. More importantly, the students are enthusiastically engaged in the writing activities, and they are motivated and more confident in their ability to write.

Picture series is also compelling when used in teaching the writing of procedure text. (Margana, 2018) claims that picture series helps students learn and understand the lesson quickly because they use it to guide writing the text. (Wardhani, A.K., & Khoiron, 2021) Additionally, picture series help teachers in teaching writing skills. Such media builds students' interest in the topic, which helps them generate writing ideas. When the picture

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series is appropriately selected, it can lead to the enthusiasm and a lively learning atmosphere. Thus, teaching and learning activities are working well.

Then, picture series can improve students' writing skills on spoof text. A study (Orianda, P & Rosa, 2013) reported that picture series effectively help students write a spoof text. With a simple and chronological sequence of pictures, the students are guided to find ideas or words to develop their paragraphs. Attractive and funny pictures build the students' imagination and encourage them to write the text. Consequently, the writing activities run smoothly, and the students are more creative than before. In other words, writing spoof text using picture series is advantageous.

In addition, picture series can be used to teach students with disabilities. Scholars (Setiati & Gemilang, 2019) investigated the use of picture series to teach writing descriptive text to be deaf and hard-hearing students. The results indicated that the students received some benefits from the picture series. For example, picture series make them participate actively in in-classroom activities because students with hearing loss prefer visual learning strategies. They are enthusiastic about the learning process, which can create a fun learning atmosphere and increase students' interest in writing. Simply put, picture series are effective when applied to teach writing skills to students with hearing impairment.

***Discussion***

Using picture series in EFL writing provides many benefits for teachers and learners. According to (Uematsu, 2012), using picture series helps teachers to teach better and students to learn better. Scholars (Krčelić, P., Matijević, 2015) point out that it allows teachers to be creative in preparing new materials while the students can use their imagination. Besides, it is easy to prepare and relatively adjustable to be used by learners of all ages and purposes. It can be used to create many interesting activities in writing (Risdayanti, 2020). It is a valuable resource in the teaching and learning process that provides a shared experience in the classroom (Wening, R.H., Cahyono, B.Y., & Iragiliati, 2017). Most importantly, the preparation does not take much time and cost.

The EFL students found picture series helpful when used in the writing class. It encourages students to participate actively in teaching and learning activities (Deviga & Arum Ardhani, 2021). It helps them get and develop ideas (Ekarista, 2018). Also, it can improve the students' thinking processes and creativity in writing (Risdayanti, 2020)(Wahyuni et al., 2020) because it activates the whole brain for linear thinking (Nashruddin et al., 2022); (Holbert et

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al., 2020). It can improve students' grammar and vocabulary skills as well ((Krčelić, P., Matijević, 2015). It forms a cooperative atmosphere and increases students' responsibility for learning (Nashruddin et al., 2022), resulting in a classroom environment conducive to learning.

Furthermore, the picture series provides students with steps that are meaningful for writing practice so that they can be more accessible at doing writing tasks (Kasmini, 2020). In addition, it applies to teaching writing of different types of text such as narrative, descriptive, recount, procedure, explanatory, and spoof. Even though it works for students with deafness, as stated that using visual media benefits students with hearing problems (Razalli et al., 2017). It is an essential tool in the unique education systems. The visual media should be well-established and relevant to students with hearing impairment; therefore, their understanding of the presented media is improved since it can facilitate learning, widen knowledge, clarify ideas and create enjoyment.

The use of visual instructional media like picture series continues to grow as it can produce higher engagement than plain text. Scholars (Sweller et al., 2019) note that using pictures and graphics plays a crucial part in helping to manage the intrinsic cognitive load and minimize the extraneous cognitive load experienced by learners, who are then able to provide mental resources to learning the material within the instruction. Nevertheless, using picture series in teaching writing skills has some drawbacks. A scholar mentions that one of the drawbacks relates to the complexity (Kasmini, 2020). A picture series consists of many different and connected pictures; consequently, it is going to be ineffective when used in a small class.

Another drawback relates to the picture size. It can be a problem for a large group of students. Therefore, it is necessary to prepare big and clear images to support the teaching and learning process. Moreover, more than complete picture series is needed to teach writing skills. Therefore, it is necessary to provide the students with pictures that reflect the story's main points or procedure.

Further investigation about the use of picture series in teaching writing of other texts, such as report text, is highly suggested. Besides, an investigation in a big class is necessary to carry out as reported that there are more than 34 students per class in Indonesia, while one of the drawbacks of using picture series lies in this area (OECD, 2012). Thus, the picture series is still applicable regardless of the class size.

## CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

### *Conclusion*

The primary objective of this study is to review how picture series implementation effectively improves the students' performance in writing different types of text and those vigorous that make it effective. In order to achieve the goal, the library research method is performed. The analysis revealed that using picture series can enhance students' writing skills, and the chronological order of the pictures helps students organize and develop ideas in writing. The picture series serves as stimulants that form imagination and creativity for students to write effectively.

Furthermore, it changes the classroom environment and students' behaviors toward the learning process. Accordingly, students are motivated to participate actively in writing activities. In addition, deaf and hard-of-hearing students are helped with their writing using picture series.

### *Limitation*

Nonetheless, this study has a limitation. Past research on this topic is abundant, but it still needs to answer the research questions fully. This study is supposed to review and briefly present findings of prior research studies about the impact of using picture series on students' performance in writing different types of text, whether or not it is effective, and the reasons for the efficacy. However, there are only so many research findings that explain the strengths. Hence, only a few previous studies were reviewed, resulting in less factual information about the topic that is being investigated.

### *Implication*

The findings of this study have contributed to the understanding that pictures as visual media are still a good choice for teaching writing skills. The findings accord with and provide theoretical and practical implications for the ELT fields and English language teachers in particular. This study shows that pictures can be a powerful teaching medium as they provide students with context and, thus, the students can visualize certain situations based on what they see in the picture. It is underpinned by the Theory of Picture that pictures trigger communicative action to strengthen the relationship between speaker and listener, writer and reader, leading to emotionally charged responses.



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The findings of this study also indicate that using pictures in EFL writing provides the opportunity to enhance both students' performance and participation as pointed out by "pictures have potential to engage the learners and also provide meaningful pedagogical tasks with ample learning opportunities." Pictures can decrease and terminate abstract concepts in language and related culture teaching (Kiss & Weninger, 2017). Teachers, therefore, can incorporate the text with pictures in their lessons to help students learn the concept and simplify and clarify things they may need help understanding. Pictures can provide different contexts and support learning tasks that enable students to connect what they already know and what they want to learn.

**BIO-PROFILE**

**Erniwati** has been an assistant professor in English Education Study Program at Tadulako University since 2005. She got her Bachelor's degree in English Education from Tadulako University in 2003 and her Master's degree in ESOL/Bilingual from Western Oregon University, USA, in 2011. Her research interests cover ELT methodologies, literacy, and research studies.

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