



Empowering Young Writers through Picture-Mediated Instruction: A Study at SMP Negeri 2 Mamuju

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.18415/ijmmu.v12i12.7189>

Abstract

This study aims to improve students' ability in writing descriptive texts through picture-mediated instruction at the second year of SMP Negeri 2 Mamuju. The research applied Classroom Action Research (CAR) which consisted of two cycles. Each cycle included planning, action, observation, and reflection. The participants were 37 students from class VIII. Data were collected through observation and writing tests conducted at the end of each cycle. The results revealed a consistent improvement in students' writing performance. The mean score increased from 38.45 in the pre-test to 38.92 in cycle I and 42.92 in cycle II. The use of pictures as visual stimuli helped students generate ideas, organize sentences coherently, and use appropriate vocabulary. The findings indicate that picture-mediated instruction effectively enhances students' engagement and descriptive writing skills. Therefore, it can be concluded that visual-based strategies are beneficial in fostering junior high school students' writing competence, especially in descriptive text production.

Keywords: *Descriptive Writing; Picture-Mediated Instruction; Classroom Action Research; Visual Learning; Junior High School Students*

Introduction

English plays a significant role in global communication and has become one of the most important subjects in Indonesian schools. As a foreign language, English is taught from elementary to tertiary levels to equip students with the ability to communicate effectively in academic and professional contexts. Among the four language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—writing is often considered the most challenging because it requires mastery of language components and the ability to organize ideas coherently.

Writing is not only a means of expressing thoughts but also a process of learning and reflection. Through writing, students can consolidate their understanding of grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure. According to Raimes (1983), writing helps students learn because it reinforces grammatical patterns, idioms, and lexical items that have been taught. However, many students still perceive writing as a difficult skill to master due to their limited experience and confidence in producing written texts (Hasanah & Ali, 2020).

One of the text types emphasized in the junior high school English curriculum is *descriptive text*. This genre aims to describe people, places, or objects in detail, allowing readers to visualize what is being portrayed. Despite its apparent simplicity, many students struggle to write descriptive texts effectively. They often face problems in generating ideas, choosing suitable vocabulary, and structuring their sentences in a logical sequence.

Several factors contribute to students' difficulties in writing descriptive texts. Most notably, the lack of engaging teaching methods and media leads to low motivation and minimal participation during writing activities (Ali & Hasanah, 2020). When students are asked to write without sufficient input or inspiration, they tend to produce short, repetitive, and grammatically inaccurate compositions. Therefore, teachers need to employ more creative strategies that stimulate students' imagination and help them express ideas more vividly.

The use of visual media, particularly pictures, offers a promising solution to these challenges. Pictures can serve as concrete stimuli that help students visualize the objects they are going to describe. Wright (1989) emphasizes that pictures play a vital role in motivating learners, providing non-verbal contexts for writing, and making abstract ideas more tangible. By using picture-mediated instruction, students are encouraged to observe details, analyze features, and translate visual information into descriptive sentences. (Fitriani et al., 2019)

Picture-mediated instruction aligns with the principles of communicative and constructivist learning approaches. It allows students to construct meaning based on real or simulated visual contexts, promoting active engagement rather than rote memorization. This method also provides opportunities for collaborative discussion, vocabulary enrichment, and creative writing practice, all of which are essential for developing effective writing skills.

Previous studies (e.g., Sumarti, 2010; Ismail, 2002; Kadir, 2010) have demonstrated that using visual aids such as pictures and photographs can significantly enhance students' performance in descriptive writing. These findings suggest that visual-based learning can increase learners' motivation, help them organize ideas more logically, and produce more coherent and meaningful texts. However, further research is still needed to explore how picture-mediated instruction can be effectively implemented in different school contexts.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to investigate the effectiveness of picture-mediated instruction in improving students' ability to write descriptive texts at SMP Negeri 2 Mamuju. Through Classroom Action Research (CAR), the study seeks to examine how the integration of visual media can foster students' creativity, linguistic accuracy, and confidence in writing. The findings are expected to provide insights for English teachers on the practical use of pictures as a pedagogical tool to enhance writing competence among junior high school learners.

Research Method

This study employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design, which was conducted to improve students' writing ability through the use of picture-mediated instruction. The CAR model followed the cyclical process proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), consisting of four main stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection. The research was carried out in two cycles to identify students' progress and to refine the teaching strategy based on the reflection of each stage.

The participants of this study were 37 students of class VIII at SMP Negeri 2 Mamuju during the 2024/2025 academic year. This class was chosen based on the students' low writing achievement and limited engagement in previous writing activities. The instruments used for data collection included observation sheets and writing tests. The observation sheets were utilized to record students' participation and learning behavior during the teaching process, while the writing tests were

administered at the end of each cycle to measure improvement in five aspects of writing: content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics.

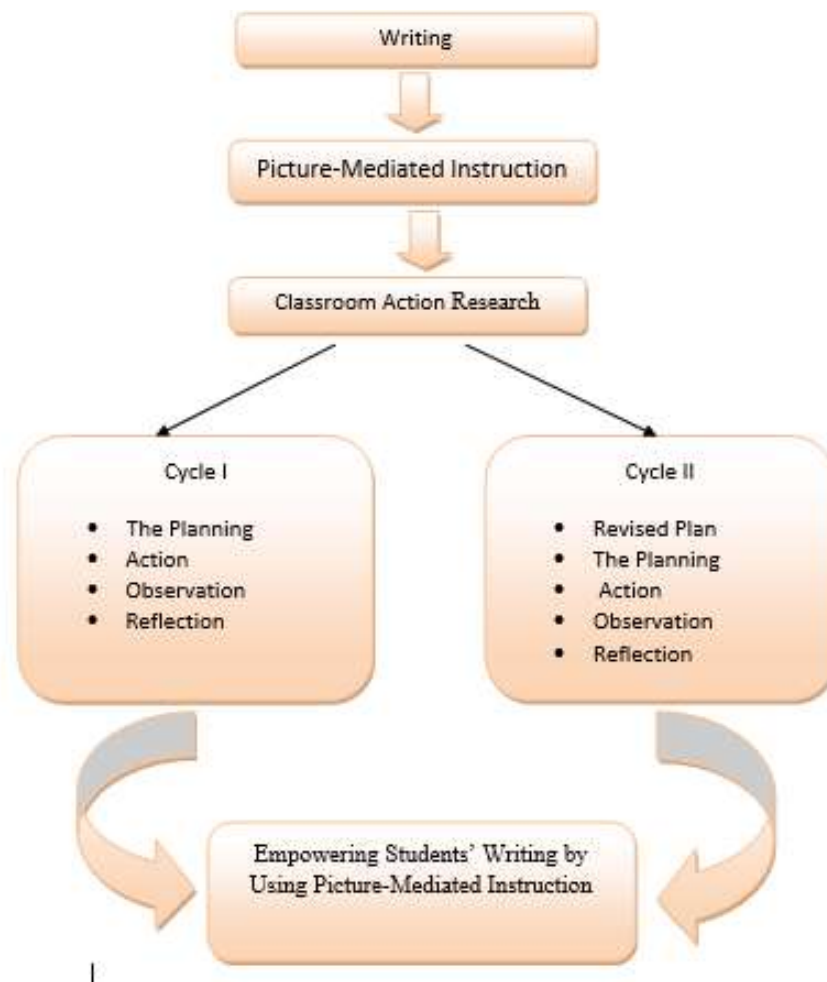


Figure 1. The conceptual Framework can be seen as followed:

The collected data were analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. The qualitative data from classroom observations were described to explain students' engagement, motivation, and classroom interaction during the implementation of the picture-mediated instruction. Meanwhile, the quantitative data were obtained from students' writing scores, which were calculated to determine the mean score and the percentage of improvement from the diagnostic test, cycle I, and cycle II. The improvement of students' writing ability was considered successful if their mean score increased and the majority of students achieved the minimum passing grade criterion.

Finding & Discussions

Findings

The findings of this study describe the improvement of students' ability to write descriptive texts through picture-mediated instruction. The research was conducted in two cycles following the principles of Classroom Action Research (CAR). Each cycle consisted of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. Data were obtained through classroom observation and writing tests given before and after the implementation of the picture method.

Table 1: The Mean Score of Students' Writing Ability in Descriptive Text by Picture Mediated-Instruction

Mean Score			Improvement	
D-test	Cycle I	Cycle II	D-test-Cycle I	Cycle I-Cycle II
38,45	38,92	42,92	0,47	4

The initial diagnostic test revealed that most students had low achievement in writing. Their average score was 38.45, which fell into the *poor* category. The students demonstrated weaknesses in generating ideas, organizing sentences, and applying correct grammar and vocabulary. They often wrote short and repetitive sentences, showing limited vocabulary mastery and a lack of coherence in their paragraphs. This result confirmed the need for an engaging and visual-based learning approach to help them develop descriptive writing skills.

Table 2. Rate Percentage and Frequency of the Students' Score in the Five Components Observed

No	Classification	Range	D-Test		Cycle I		Cycle II	
			Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Very Good	86-100	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	Good	71-85	0	0	0	0	1	3%
3	Fair	56-70	0	0	0	0	2	5%
4	Poor	41-55	4	11%	9	24%	12	33%
5	Very Poor	< 40	33	89%	28	76%	22	59%
T O T A L			37	100	37	100	37	100

The data indicate that during the diagnostic test, most students performed poorly, with 33 students (89%) falling into the *Very Poor* category and 11 students (27%) categorized as *Fair*, while none achieved *Good* or *Very Good* levels. In Cycle I, the results slightly improved, showing 9 students (24%) in the *Very Poor* category and 28 students (76%) in the *Poor* category, with no students reaching the *Fair* or *Very Good* levels. By Cycle II, students demonstrated more noticeable progress: 22 students (59%) were still in the *Very Poor* category, 12 students (33%) in the *Poor* category, 2 students (5%) reached the *Fair* level, and 1 student (3%) achieved a *Good* score, although none attained the *Very Good* level.

During Cycle I, the researcher implemented picture-mediated instruction by introducing descriptive writing through visual stimuli. Students were guided to observe pictures and describe what they saw in structured sentences. The result showed a slight improvement in students' performance, with the mean score increasing to 38.92. Although this improvement was small, students began to show more interest and enthusiasm in writing. However, many still faced difficulties in expressing ideas fluently and organizing sentences logically.

Based on reflections from Cycle I, the researcher revised the teaching plan for Cycle II by providing more interactive activities. Students were encouraged to discuss pictures in pairs, brainstorm descriptive words, and construct sentences collaboratively before writing their final drafts. The improvement became more significant in this cycle, as students showed better understanding of how to use adjectives, structure paragraphs, and apply appropriate tenses in their descriptive texts.

In Cycle II, students' mean writing score increased to 42.92, categorized as *good*. The improvement from the diagnostic test to Cycle II was 4.47 points, indicating that the picture-mediated instruction had a positive effect on students' writing achievement. Students were more confident in describing objects, people, and places, and their compositions demonstrated greater variety in vocabulary and better organization of ideas.

Observational data supported these quantitative findings. The students were more active and motivated during the learning process. They responded enthusiastically to visual materials, frequently asked questions, and participated in peer discussions. The use of pictures helped them generate ideas quickly and maintain focus on the writing task. The classroom atmosphere also became more interactive and enjoyable, leading to higher participation rates and reduced writing anxiety.

Overall, the findings revealed that picture-mediated instruction effectively enhanced students' descriptive writing ability. It not only improved linguistic aspects such as vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics, but also fostered creativity, confidence, and collaboration among learners. The consistent increase in mean scores and classroom engagement across the two cycles demonstrated that visual-based teaching strategies can serve as an effective tool to improve writing competence among junior high school students.

Discussions

The results of this study indicate that the use of picture-mediated instruction effectively improved students' ability to write descriptive texts. The gradual increase in mean scores from the diagnostic test (38.45) to Cycle I (38.92) and finally to Cycle II (42.92) shows consistent progress in students' writing performance. This improvement demonstrates that the integration of visual media in writing instruction helps students to develop ideas more easily and express them with greater clarity. It also supports the view of Wright (1989), who emphasized that pictures can motivate learners and provide meaningful contexts that stimulate language production.

The improvement observed was not only in quantitative scores but also in qualitative aspects of students' writing. Students began to use more accurate vocabulary and showed better control over sentence structure and organization. Initially, they struggled with forming coherent paragraphs, but after the second cycle, their compositions showed clearer topic sentences, logical sequencing, and more descriptive detail. This suggests that pictures functioned as scaffolding tools that helped students connect visual information with linguistic expression, leading to richer and more structured writing outcomes.

The positive change in students' attitudes and participation also contributed to their improved writing performance. During the learning process, students appeared more enthusiastic and confident when they were provided with visual prompts. Pictures served as stimuli that reduced writing anxiety and encouraged students to share ideas more openly. This finding aligns with Graham and Perin (2007), who stated that engaging prewriting activities—such as generating ideas from visual materials—can significantly enhance the quality of students' written work.

From a pedagogical perspective, the success of the picture-mediated instruction reflects the principles of communicative and constructivist learning approaches. Students were not merely passive recipients of information; instead, they became active participants in constructing meaning based on what they observed. The learning process involved discussion, collaboration, and reflection—key components of a student-centered classroom. These elements helped students internalize descriptive writing skills more effectively than through traditional grammar-based instruction.

Overall, the findings of this research confirm that picture-mediated instruction is a valuable and practical strategy for improving junior high school students' descriptive writing skills. It integrates visual literacy into language learning, fosters motivation, and provides a concrete foundation for abstract linguistic tasks. Therefore, English teachers are encouraged to incorporate visual materials such as pictures, photographs, or digital images into writing lessons to enhance students' creativity, accuracy, and engagement in the writing process.

Suggestion

Based on the results of this study, it is suggested that English teachers implement picture-mediated instruction as an alternative strategy in teaching descriptive writing. Pictures can serve as effective visual aids to stimulate students' imagination, generate ideas, and enhance their motivation to write. By integrating visual elements into writing lessons, teachers can help students overcome difficulties in expressing thoughts and organizing ideas coherently.

Teachers are also encouraged to design interactive and collaborative activities that accompany the use of pictures, such as pair discussions, group brainstorming, and descriptive games. These activities not only make learning more enjoyable but also allow students to practice language in meaningful contexts. Moreover, teachers should provide constructive feedback focusing on content, vocabulary, and organization to guide students in improving the quality of their writing.

For future researchers, it is recommended to explore the use of other types of visual or multimedia aids, such as videos, infographics, or digital storyboards, to support writing development. Further studies can also examine the long-term impact of visual-based instruction on students' creativity, writing fluency, and critical thinking. Such research will contribute to a deeper understanding of how visual learning strategies can be optimized to improve language education at various levels.

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