



# THE EFFECT OF USING PICTURE SERIES TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' WRITING SKILL IN DESCRIPTIVE TEXT AT EIGHTH GRADE STUDENTS OF SMP SWASTA HKBP BATU 4 SIANTAR

## *PENGARUH PENGGUNAAN PICTURE SERIES TERHADAP PENINGKATAN KETERAMPILAN MENULIS TEKS DESKRIPTIF SISWA KELAS VIII DI SMP SWASTA HKBP BATU 4 SIANTAR*

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### Abstrak

*Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi dampak penggunaan picture series (rangkai gambar) sebagai alat bantu pengajaran terhadap keterampilan menulis deskriptif siswa kelas VIII di SMP Swasta HKBP Batu 4 Siantar. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain kuasi-eksperimen, yang melibatkan kelompok eksperimen yang diajar menggunakan picture series dan kelompok kontrol yang diajar dengan metode konvensional. Sebanyak 60 siswa berpartisipasi, dengan masing-masing 30 siswa dalam setiap kelompok. Pre-test dan post-test diberikan untuk mengevaluasi kemampuan menulis siswa dalam hal isi, organisasi, kosakata, tata bahasa, dan mekanika penulisan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan peningkatan yang signifikan dalam kemampuan menulis siswa pada kelompok eksperimen, yang menegaskan bahwa picture series dapat meningkatkan kreativitas, penggunaan kosakata, dan keterlibatan siswa dalam tugas menulis. Hasil ini menunjukkan bahwa picture series merupakan media pembelajaran visual yang efektif dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris di tingkat SMP.*

**Kata Kunci :** *menulis deskriptif, pembelajar EFL, picture-series*

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### Abstract

This study explores the impact of using picture series as a teaching aid on descriptive writing skills of eighth grade students at SMP Swasta HKBP Batu 4 Siantar. This study used a quasi-experimental design, involving an experimental group taught using picture series and a control group taught using conventional methods. A total of 60 students participated, with 30 students in each group. Pre-test and post-test were given to evaluate students' writing skills in terms of content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and writing mechanics. The results showed a significant increase in students' writing skills in the experimental group, confirming that picture series can improve students' creativity, vocabulary use, and engagement in writing tasks. These results indicate that picture series is an effective visual learning media in teaching English at the junior high school level.

**Keywords:** *descriptive writing, EFL learners, picture-series*

### INTRODUCTION

Language stands as one of the most defining characteristics of human civilization. It functions not only as a means of communication but also as a tool for expressing ideas, emotions, and social connections. As noted by Chen (2020) and Sary et al. (2021), language is a fundamental aspect of human interaction—facilitating the exchange of thoughts, information, and personal perspectives.



It operates across various forms, including spoken, written, and non-verbal communication. Among the many languages used worldwide, English holds a unique position as a global lingua franca, adopted both as a second and foreign language in many countries (Jašková, 2014; Khansir et al., 2021; Nu Nu Wah, 2019).

In Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language and is incorporated into the national curriculum starting from junior high school. This early introduction underscores the importance placed on equipping students with the language skills necessary to navigate a globally connected world (Iskandar, 2019; Willyarto et al., 2021). English proficiency involves the mastery of four fundamental skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Among these, writing often proves to be the most challenging, as it demands not only linguistic knowledge but also a high level of cognitive processing and creativity (Bezerra et al., 2018; Fitriani & Zaiturrahmi, 2022).

Writing, as emphasized by Ariyanti and Fitriana (2017), is a cognitive and communicative process that allows individuals to translate ideas into structured, written language. It fosters reflection, deep thinking, and self-expression. Cargill and O'Connor (2021) note that writing can serve dual purposes—writing to learn and writing to express—both of which are essential in language development. Through writing, students consolidate knowledge, organize their thoughts, and engage in meaningful self-expression. However, this skill requires more than just putting words on paper; it involves mastery over grammar, vocabulary, organization, and the mechanics of language (Dalle, 2019; Widyaningrum & Octavita, 2019).

Despite its importance, writing is often perceived as a difficult and tedious task by students, especially when they are asked to compose descriptive texts. Observations at SMP Swasta HKBP Batu 4 Siantar revealed that many eighth-grade students struggle with idea development, sentence construction, and maintaining coherence in their writing. This struggle often leads to disengagement and reduced motivation. Students tend to find writing activities monotonous, especially when lessons rely solely on textbook-based instruction without the integration of engaging and interactive media. These difficulties highlight the need for innovative instructional strategies that can rekindle students' interest and support their writing development (Al Islamiah & Sari, 2021; Rizkiana & Pulungan, 2020).

A major issue identified is the students' limited ability to effectively use visual prompts, such as picture series, in their descriptive writing. Although picture series can offer a valuable scaffold for structuring ideas, students often lack the training or exposure needed to integrate visual cues into their writing process. Additionally, their limited vocabulary and underdeveloped paragraphing skills further hinder their ability to produce detailed and cohesive descriptions. These concerns were echoed in informal discussions with the students' English teacher, who noted frequent difficulties in initiating writing tasks and sustaining idea flow.

Given these challenges, educators must seek alternative strategies that cater to diverse learning needs. One promising solution is the use of picture series—a sequence of related images designed to support storytelling and descriptive writing. This method has been shown to increase student motivation, enhance vocabulary acquisition, and promote clearer organization in writing (Fadhilah, 2020; Maitlo et al., 2023). By encouraging students to observe, interpret, and write about a series of images, teachers can help them better visualize and structure their ideas.



Fitri et al. (2022) affirm that pictures serve as valuable tools for contextualizing learning materials, particularly in writing instruction. Through picture series, students can explore sequencing, plot development, and character descriptions more naturally. This strategy not only activates prior knowledge but also nurtures creativity and imagination—two critical components of descriptive writing. Saripah (2024a) and Simanjuntak et al. (2023a) support this view, suggesting that picture series enhance comprehension and writing fluency by offering a concrete foundation for idea generation.

Multiple studies have demonstrated the benefits of using picture series in writing classrooms. Simanjuntak et al. (2023b) conducted a research analyzing students' content and organization when writing descriptive texts and found notable improvements in coherence and richness when visual prompts were used. Similarly, Sa'diyah (2011) and Apsari (2017) reported that students taught with picture series outperformed those taught through traditional methods in both creativity and structural clarity.

In the context of the current research at SMP Swasta HKBP Batu 4 Siantar, the implementation of picture series is particularly relevant. The students' challenges in generating ideas, organizing sentences, and using descriptive vocabulary point to a clear need for visual scaffolding. Writing should not be an isolated or mechanical activity—it should be dynamic, purposeful, and engaging. When students are provided with meaningful stimuli such as picture series, they are more likely to invest emotionally and cognitively in their writing tasks.

Moreover, writing in junior high school is not merely a technical exercise; it is an emotional and reflective journey. Each written paragraph represents an attempt to capture experience, feeling, and perspective. Teachers must support this process by offering tools that make writing accessible and enjoyable. Integrating picture series into writing lessons may serve as a bridge between abstract ideas and concrete expression, thus enabling students to describe people, objects, places, or events in greater detail.

In conclusion, the integration of picture series offers a promising approach to address the limitations students face in descriptive writing. It supports idea development, encourages creativity, and facilitates logical organization. The current research seeks to examine whether the use of picture series significantly improves students' ability to compose descriptive texts in English. Based on these observations and the gap identified, the researcher conducted a research titled: "The Effect of Using Picture Series To Improve Students' Writing Skill in Descriptive Text at Eighth Grade Students of SMP Swasta HKBP Batu 4 Siantar."

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This research employed a quantitative quasi-experimental design involving two classes of Grade VIII students from SMP Swasta HKBP Batu 4 Siantar during the 2024/2025 academic year. The participants consisted of 60 students, with 30 students in class VIII-1 as the experimental group and 30 students in class VIII-2 as the control group. The experimental group received instruction using Picture Series, while the control group was taught using conventional methods. The research was carried out in November 2024 and used pre-tests and post-tests to measure the effectiveness of the treatment on students' descriptive writing skills. The tests were in essay format, and students' writing was assessed based on five criteria: content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and



mechanics. Each student's score was calculated using the formula:  $\text{Score} = (\text{Number of Correct Answers} \div \text{Total Items}) \times 100$ . The final scores were then categorized into five levels of performance: 80–100 (Excellent), 60–79 (Very Good), 40–59 (Good), 20–39 (Poor), and 0–19 (Very Poor). Instrument validity was measured using the Pearson Product Moment formula, where an item was considered valid if  $r_{xy}$  exceeded the critical  $r$ -value at a 5% significance level. Reliability was measured through the Split-Half method using the formula  $r_{11} = (2 \times r_{\text{half}}) / (1 + r_{\text{half}})$ , with values ranging from 0.70 to 1.00 interpreted as highly reliable. The collected data were analyzed using mean score calculations and a  $t$ -test to determine the significance of differences between the pre-test and post-test scores of both groups.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This research aimed to investigate the effectiveness of using picture series as a teaching medium to improve students' skills in writing descriptive texts at the eighth-grade level of SMP SWASTA HKBP BATU 4 SIANTAR. The findings are derived from a series of pre-tests and post-tests administered to both an experimental class and a control class. The statistical analyses were carried out to assess the impact of the instructional treatment.

The experimental class showed a notable improvement after the implementation of the picture series as a teaching aid. The mean score increased significantly from 68.29 in the pre-test to 84.67 in the post-test. This improvement is further supported by the change in the distribution of scores: prior to the treatment, more than half of the students scored below 70, whereas in the post-test, 17 out of 21 students scored above 80. The shift in median from 68.00 to 84.00 and an increase in the minimum score from 56 to 74 further confirm the positive impact of the treatment. The maximum score also rose from 80 to 96, indicating a higher performance among students.

In contrast, the control group, which did not receive instruction using picture series, experienced a relatively modest improvement. The mean score increased from 68.29 in the pre-test to 78.86 in the post-test. Although this improvement is statistically visible, it is not as substantial as that observed in the experimental group. The number of students scoring above 80 in the control group was 9 out of 21, which is significantly lower than the experimental group. The median also increased from 68.00 to 78.00, with the minimum score rising from 58 to 70 and the maximum from 80 to 90. While some degree of progress is noted, the extent is not comparable to that of the experimental class.

### Pre-test Analysis

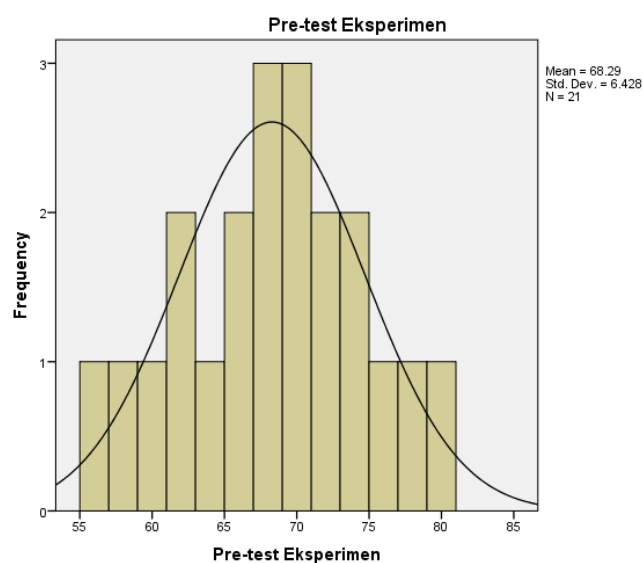
The pre-test data demonstrated that students in both the experimental and control classes had similar average scores before treatment, with a mean score of 68.29. This reflects a balanced starting point for comparing the two groups.


**Table 1.**

Pre-test of Experimental.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	56	1	4.8	4.8	4.8
	58	1	4.8	4.8	9.5
	60	1	4.8	4.8	14.3
	62	2	9.5	9.5	23.8
	64	1	4.8	4.8	28.6
	66	2	9.5	9.5	38.1
	68	3	14.3	14.3	52.4
	70	3	14.3	14.3	66.7
	72	2	9.5	9.5	76.2
	74	2	9.5	9.5	85.7
	76	1	4.8	4.8	90.5
	78	1	4.8	4.8	95.2
	80	1	4.8	4.8	100.0
	Total	21	100.0	100.0	

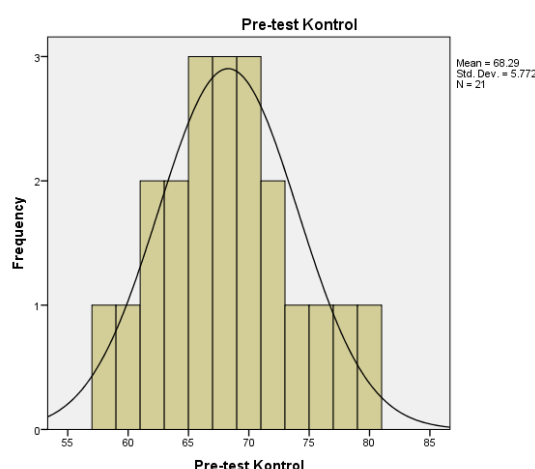
**Table 2.**

Pre-test control.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	58	1	4.8	4.8	4.8
	60	1	4.8	4.8	9.5
	62	2	9.5	9.5	19.0
	64	2	9.5	9.5	28.6
	66	3	14.3	14.3	42.9
	68	3	14.3	14.3	57.1
	70	3	14.3	14.3	71.4
	72	2	9.5	9.5	81.0
	74	1	4.8	4.8	85.7
	76	1	4.8	4.8	90.5
	78	1	4.8	4.8	95.2
	80	1	4.8	4.8	100.0
	Total	21	100.0	100.0	





**Graphic 1. Descriptive Data of Experimental Pre-test.**



**Graphic 2. Descriptive Data of Control Pre-test.**

The data distribution in both groups indicated that most students scored below the target competency level, affirming the necessity for instructional intervention.

**Table 3. Frequency Distribution of Pre-test.**

Statistics			
		Pre-test Eksperimen	Pre-test Kontrol
N	Valid	21	21
	Missing	0	0
Mean		68.29	68.29
Median		68.00	68.00
Mode		68 <sup>a</sup>	66 <sup>a</sup>
Minimum		56	58
Maximum		80	80

The statistical summary of the pre-test results for both the experimental and control groups indicates that the two groups had comparable initial abilities in writing descriptive texts. Each group consisted of 21 students with no missing data. The mean score for both groups was identical at 68.29, suggesting an equal average performance before the treatment. Similarly, the median scores were the same at 68.00, and the mode values were also close (68 for the experimental group and 66 for the control group), which reflects a relatively symmetrical distribution of scores. Furthermore, the minimum score in the experimental group was 56, slightly lower than the control group's 58, while the maximum score was the same in both groups at 80. These findings support the conclusion that the two groups started from an equivalent baseline, making the comparison of post-treatment results valid and reliable for this research.

### Post-test Analysis

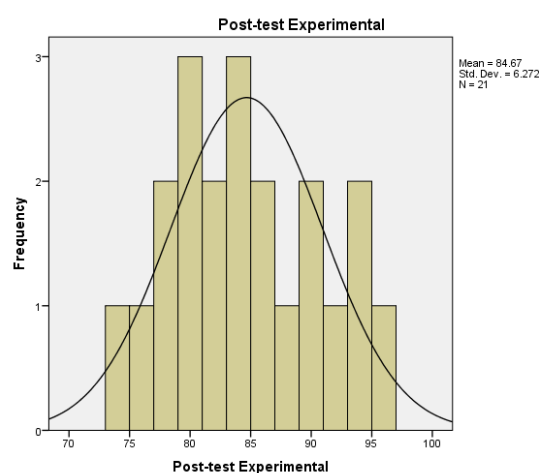
After the treatment, the experimental class showed a significant increase in scores. The mean post-test score reached 84.67, compared to 78.86 in the control group. The range of scores also showed higher minimum and maximum values in the experimental class.


**Table 4.**

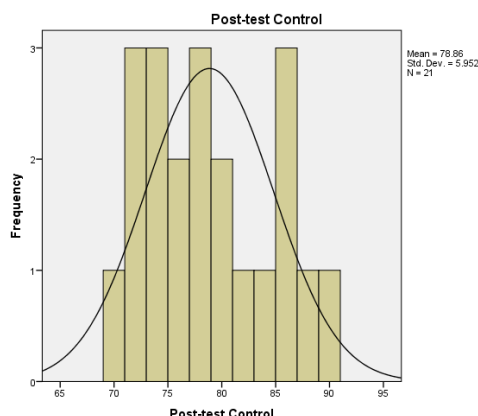
Post-test of Experimental.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	74	1	4.8	4.8	4.8
	76	1	4.8	4.8	9.5
	78	2	9.5	9.5	19.0
	80	3	14.3	14.3	33.3
	82	2	9.5	9.5	42.9
	84	3	14.3	14.3	57.1
	86	2	9.5	9.5	66.7
	88	1	4.8	4.8	71.4
	90	2	9.5	9.5	81.0
	92	1	4.8	4.8	85.7
	94	2	9.5	9.5	95.2
	96	1	4.8	4.8	100.0
	Total	21	100.0	100.0	

**Table 5.**

Post-test of Control.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	70	1	4.8	4.8	4.8
	72	3	14.3	14.3	19.0
	74	3	14.3	14.3	33.3
	76	2	9.5	9.5	42.9
	78	3	14.3	14.3	57.1
	80	2	9.5	9.5	66.7
	82	1	4.8	4.8	71.4
	84	1	4.8	4.8	76.2
	86	3	14.3	14.3	90.5
	88	1	4.8	4.8	95.2
	90	1	4.8	4.8	100.0


**Graphic 4. Descriptive Data of Experimental Post-test.**





**Graphic 5. Descriptive Data of Control Post-test.**

This rise in scores indicates that the picture series method had a positive influence on students' ability to write descriptive texts.

**Table 6. Frequency Distribution of Post-test.**

Statistics		Post-test Experimental	Post-test Control
N	Valid	21	21
	Missing	0	0
Mean		84.67	78.86
Median		84.00	78.00
Minimum		74	70
Maximum		96	90

The post-test statistics reveal that the experimental group outperformed the control group after the treatment. Both groups consisted of 21 students with no missing data. The experimental group achieved a higher mean score of 84.67 compared to 78.86 in the control group. The median scores also showed an advantage for the experimental group (84.00 vs. 78.00). Additionally, the experimental group had a higher minimum score (74) and a higher maximum score (96) than the control group (70 and 90, respectively). These results indicate a positive effect of the treatment on the experimental group's performance in writing descriptive texts.

### Test Instrument Validity and Reliability

Before formal testing, the instrument underwent validation and reliability testing using 30 students outside the sample. All test items were found to be valid, with  $r_{xy}$  values exceeding the  $r_{table}$  value of 0.463. The reliability coefficient, measured using Cronbach's Alpha, was 0.775, confirming a high level of internal consistency. This indicates that the test instrument used for data collection was both accurate and dependable.

**Table 7. Validity of Instrument.**

Test Item No	$r_{xy}$ Value	$r_{table}$ Value	Validity
1	0,772	0,463	Valid
2	0,677	0,463	Valid
3	0,634	0,463	Valid




**Table 8. Reliability of Instrument.**

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.775	3

### Normality Test

To determine whether the test scores were normally distributed, the Liliefors test was conducted. The results showed that all pre-test and post-test scores in both the experimental and control groups had significance values greater than 0.05.

**Table 9. Normality Test.**

Tests of Normality							
	TEST STUDENTS' WRITING SKILL DESCRIPTIVE TEXT	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
TEST RESULT	Experiment Class Pre-test	.101	21	.200 <sup>*</sup>	.984	21	.969
	Experiment Class Post-test	.114	21	.200 <sup>*</sup>	.966	21	.639
	Control Class Pre-test	.098	21	.200 <sup>*</sup>	.982	21	.947
	Control Class Post-test	.129	21	.200 <sup>*</sup>	.941	21	.230

These findings confirm that the data were normally distributed, validating the appropriateness of using parametric tests in further analysis.

### Hypothesis Testing

An independent samples t-test was performed to compare the post-test scores between the experimental and control groups. The t-count value was 3.079, which exceeded the t-table value of 1.721 at a 5% significance level.

**Table 10. Hypothesis Test Result.**

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Students' Writing Skill Descriptive Text	Equal variances assumed	.027	.871	3.079	40	.004	5.810	1.887	1.996	9.623
	Equal variances not assumed			3.079	39.891	.004	5.810	1.887	1.996	9.623

These results support the alternative hypothesis (Ha), confirming that the use of picture series significantly affects students' ability to write descriptive texts. Thus, the null hypothesis (Ho) is rejected.



## Discussions

The findings of this research revealed that the use of Picture Series as a learning medium had a significant positive impact on students' descriptive writing skills. As demonstrated in the post-test results, students in the experimental group, who were taught using Picture Series, achieved higher mean scores ( $M = 84.67$ ) than those in the control group ( $M = 78.86$ ). This improvement indicates the effectiveness of Picture Series in facilitating better writing outcomes among students. The visual and engaging nature of the materials helped students generate ideas more easily, structure their writing more coherently, and enrich their vocabulary with more descriptive expressions.

The Picture Series provided real, tangible stimuli that enhanced students' ability to observe details such as color, shape, position, and emotion. These visuals acted as prompts, helping students concentrate on relevant details while minimizing distractions. As a result, students were more focused and confident in expressing their ideas. This aligns with Harmer's (2004) argument that visual aids not only stimulate vocabulary recall and grammar use but also activate students' creativity by encouraging them to construct more detailed and imaginative responses.

Furthermore, the students' attitudes toward the learning process improved notably. The integration of visuals made the classroom atmosphere more dynamic and enjoyable. According to student feedback, 94% found the Picture Series interesting, and all expressed interest in using such media in future writing tasks. Observational data confirmed this increased motivation, as students paid more attention to the teacher's instructions and were more enthusiastic during learning activities. These findings are consistent with those of Ansley (2007) and Latuheru (1988), who emphasized that images could stimulate curiosity and make learning more engaging.

In terms of participation, the Picture Series encouraged more collaborative learning. Many students actively asked questions, shared ideas, and worked together to describe the pictures. These activities were not only student-centered but also fostered peer support and group problem-solving. This reinforces earlier research by Brown, Lewis, and Halclerod (1983), who noted that educational media enhances student engagement and participation.

Finally, teacher-student interaction also benefited from the use of Picture Series. Students frequently asked the teacher for clarification and shared their interpretations of the visuals, leading to richer classroom communication. This aligns with Heinich, Molenda, and Russell's (1990) assertion that instructional media can support meaningful interaction in the classroom.

Therefore, the use of Picture Series significantly improved students' descriptive writing skills and contributed to a more interactive, focused, and enjoyable learning experience. The results of this research support the continued use of visual media in English writing instruction, particularly for junior high school students, as it promotes creativity, enhances engagement, and strengthens language development.

## CONCLUSION

This research concludes that picture series significantly enhance students' descriptive writing skills. Eighth-grade students who were taught using picture series demonstrated improved vocabulary, better sentence structure, and more organized ideas compared to their peers taught conventionally. Picture series not only serve as an effective writing aid but also stimulate student



interest and creativity. Teachers are encouraged to adopt this visual strategy, particularly when teaching descriptive texts. Future research can explore the long-term effects of this method and its adaptability to other genres such as narrative or recount writing.

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