

**Research Article**

## **Using Picture Series to Improve the Ability of the Students Writing Recount Text**

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### **Abstract**

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*Article history:*

Received March 20, 2025

Revised April 5, 2025

Accepted May 8, 2025

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*Keywords:*

writing, recount, picture series, Classroom Action Research (CAR), english writing skills

Most of the students were not interested in writing. It could prove by the students mean score on preliminary study was 49.5 while the minimum mastery learning standard at MTs Al Ulum Dadapan Wajak Malang is 70. As the result of preliminary study, they got difficulties in finding and generating ideas so they had difficulties when they want to start writing. Beside that, they have less motivation since the writing activities were not varied and interested. Based on the problem, the researcher found an idea to try picture series to make the students easier to find ideas to write and organize their writing. This study intended to give Classroom Action Research (CAR). It was conducted collaboratively with the English teacher there. The collaborator acted as the observer who observed the teaching and learning process. Therefore, the criterions of success based on the students writing score and the attitude recorded during the activities in the classroom. The study was considered successful when the students improved their writing score.

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**To cite this article:** Sidiq, A. 2025. Using Picture Series to Improve the Ability of the Students Writing Recount Text . Journal of Applied Science and Engineering Management Research 1(2):89-93.

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### **Introduction**

English is very important for the students to study, because English is as international language in several countries. One of the English language skills is writing, it needs to be taught in the teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Indonesia. Therefore, Indonesia government has determined that writing is taught from secondary up to higher education. Weigle (2002, as cited in Cahyono, 2009, p. 42) writing is an important part of language teaching as it also functions as an essential tool for learning in which students expand their knowledge of element in real use.

As stated above, Scott and Ytreberg (2009, p. 69) also argued that writing is a good thing. They are some reasons, such as; writing adds another physical dimension to the leaning process, it lets students express their personalities, besides that, writing activities also help to consolidate learning in the other skill areas, and allows for conscious development of language. The last reason, it is valuable in itself.

Therefore, the teacher should introduce writing early in order to make the students confidence to write.

Next, English standard of competency in the syllabus for junior high school state that students are expected to be able to communicate in English both in the oral and writing forms. It is also stated that junior high school students should learn writing to enable them to create genres like descriptive, recount, procedure, report and narrative. In this case, this study focused on recount text.

Anderson & Anderson (2010) state that there are also the language features which are usually found in a recount text, they are: a) proper nouns to identify those involved in the text; b) descriptive words to give details about who, what, when, where, and how; c) the use of the past tense to retell the events, and 4) words that show the order of events or connectors (for example, first, next, then, etc).

In fact, writing is a difficult subject, because writing is a mixture of our idea, vocabulary and also grammar. "Writing is often believed to be the most

complex one compared to the three other skills, i.e. listening, speaking, and reading” (Cahyono and Widiati, 2011, p. 69). On the other hand, it also involves several components such as organization and mechanics (punctuation and capitalization).

In this case, teacher should be creative to use good strategy and also prepares supporting material to make the learning and teaching process alive. In addition, to make students interest to learn English writing skill, the researcher uses visual aid to help students remember things, such as; explain important information and a sequence of events. One of visual aid that can be used in teaching writing is picture series.

Picture series is a number picture to tell a story or sequence of event. Picture series gives a visual to the text. Baugh (as cited in Asdam, 2008) argued about the comparative role of our sensory organs. All learning experiences every people can see from this percentage: 90% is obtained through the senses of sight, 5% through the sense of hearing, and 5% through other senses. Human learning experience as much as 75% is obtained through the senses of sight, 13% through the senses of hearing and other senses. Therefore, we can conclude that using picture series can improve students’ ability in their writing, because they can see the sequence of event from the picture they have.

The researcher believes that using picture series can improve students writing ability in recount text for some consideration. Picture can tell the events of the story. It also enables students to make prediction about everything related to the picture. Then, they can use their personal experience to visualize what happen in the picture. Next, it can motivate the students to study English, because it can attract students’ interest. Besides building the students’ direct imagery, this strategy may build the students’ writing habit. Harmer (2007, p. 329) explained that students do not have courage to write because they do not have experience to write in their first language or they feel that they have nothing to say and produce idea. By using the picture series, the students can be stimulated to ask questions such as “what is it showing” and other questions which are be rich with ideas.

Picture series can provide the students with direct ideas. It is a simple guide for the students to be easier to find idea of what to write. When the students see the object, they can directly know the topic of their sentence. For example, when the picture is zoo, the topic of their sentence will be about vacation or spend their time in their holiday. Further, they will recognize what they are doing there, ect. Then, because picture series arranged in series, it will also make the students easier to make event in a paragraph. The paragraph will be well-organized because it follows the sequence in the picture series. The orderly arranged pictures also stimulate the students of series of event in text recount of certain condition reflected by the picture series.

According to Admin (2011) there are some advantages of using pictures series in the teaching writing activity. They are: first, pictures series create the enjoyment in the writing process. When the students’ environment is fun, they will be free and more confident to share their feelings, ideas, and thoughts in writing. Second, pictures series develop students’ creativity in writing. “A picture is worth a thousand words”. Students can develop their stories based on pictures series they see freely. So, they have to create their own stories by using pictures series they have. And the third, pictures series can increase students’ vocabulary. When the students have more vocabulary, their ideas in writing will be easier to be developed.

Some research has shown that picture series can improve the language skill such as writing and speaking skills. It was proved by Mujianto (2012). In his study, he found that the students became more enthusiastic and confident to speak. Group work provided with series of pictures improved the students’ speaking performance due some reasons; working in group encouraged the students to perform better since they didn’t feel they were alone. And then, because picture had more thousand meaning. It provided them with some ideas for them to utter the word. In addition, Cahyono (2009) gave recommendation to asking the students to write by using pictures or videos as sources of ideas will result in writing products different from those written based on pure imagination.

The aim of the present study is to find out how picture series can be implemented to improve the ability of the eighth grade students of MTs Al Ulum Dadapan Wajak Malang in writing recount text.

The result of the preliminary study found that most of the students can’t write well. It proved from their score were low and under the school standard. It showed that the students mean score were about 49.5. There were many factors that influence low students score, for example; they got difficulties in finding and generating ideas so they had difficulties when they want to start writing. The other problems of writing are also caused by teachers. The students seldom get written tasks in English. Then, the teacher did not use various strategies to encourage student in teaching writing skill. Myers (2004, as cited in Kartikaningsih 2012, p. 2) explains “the ability to write well is not a naturally acquired skill. Writing skill must be practiced and learned through experience”. So students need to practice, practice and practice as their daily activity. They can write everything from their experience.

## Materials and Methods

In order to answer the research problem stated above, this study intended to give Classroom Action Research (CAR). CAR is a research to solve the problem usually done by a teacher. This research focused on a particular classroom. It was conducted collaboratively

with the English teacher there. The collaborator acted as the observer who observed the teaching and learning process. While, the researcher acted as the teacher who taught in the classroom by applying picture series. Therefore, the classroom action research covered planning (prepare everything to apply in the study), acting (implement the action in the classroom), observing (times to collect the data), and reflecting (analyze the data).

### **Planning**

The researcher prepared everything to apply this study, such as; preparing the lesson plan, preparing picture series, procedure of assessment and the criteria of success.

Preparing lesson plan. This action was planned consist of three steps namely; pre-writing, whilst-writing, and post-writing. In this case, the researcher used picture series as strategy to improve the students' writing recount text. The important thing that researcher concerned with the procedures of picture series. There were some procedures to teach writing recount text through picture series, there are; a) asking students to make a pair group, b) giving the example of a recount text, c) asking students to identify the generic structure and verb in pair group, d) give each pair groups a picture series, e) asking them to discuss the good order of the pictures, f) asking them to write sentences of a recount text based on the picture series, g) asking a representative of each pair group to write on the board in front of the class, and h) submitting the text.

Preparing picture series. It is important for the researcher to select and prepare appropriate strategy. In this case, the researcher used picture series to teach them in order to make them easy to understand, and became an active student in learning writing recount text.

Procedure of assessment. With the regard to the procedure of assessment, the researcher used process and product. The process assessment focused on the students' response toward writing recount text activities during the teaching learning process by using an observation checklist. Meanwhile, the product assessment focused on the students' final writing test. There are four indicators to assess the written test, they are; content, organization, language use, and mechanic. Besides that, the indicators have four component, each component was scaled 1-4. The component of writing assessment modified with two considerations; first, the students was categorize as beginner, and second, the researcher assessed only the students' acceptable in sentences. The individual score gained by using the formula as follows;

$$\text{Student score} = (\text{obtained score}) / (\text{maximum score}) \times 100\%$$

Criteria of success. There are two criteria of success implemented in this study; (1) the writing mean score targeted by the researcher is 70 based on minimum

mastery learning standard at MTs Al Ulum Dadapan Wajak Malang, and (2) the result of observation checklist which records the students' activities in the classroom.

### **Acting**

Action is implementing the strategy as what has been carefully planned before. If all of parts had ready, the researcher taught the subject by using picture series. If the first cycle was successful, so this research could be stopped but if not, the next cycle could be continued and revised the first planning. The subject is the eighth grade students of MTs Al Ulum Dadapan Wajak Malang. In implementing, the collaborator helped the researcher to observe the students' progress during the implementing the strategy in the classroom. It was prepared in the form of table and the teacher as the observer needed to tick the items in rows which matched the student's activities in the columns and gave a note.

### **Observing**

In this step, the researcher collected the data. The data analysis obtained from the result of questionnaire and observation checklist of the teaching and learning process was classified as qualitative data and result of the students' writing test as quantitative data. Therefore, the researcher used some instruments which include questionnaire, observation checklist, and test.

Questionnaire is aimed to collect data of students' interest and motivation before implementing of "picture series" in writing recount text in the classroom. The questionnaire sheet consists of 5 items. Next, the data also took from the observation checklist to observe the process of teaching writing of recount text by using picture series in the classroom. Then, the researcher uses test to measure the achievement. The researcher asks students to write down a recount text through the picture series. The test gave in the last meeting in the cycle. The result of the students' writing test was scored by two raters. The first rater was the researcher and the second rater was a collaborator.

### **Reflecting**

Reflecting is the activity of analyzing, interpreting and explaining the information obtained from the implemented activity in the study. It was conducted after the accomplishment of each cycle. It was done by checking the result of the data collected through observation checklist and writing test with the criteria of success. On the other hand, the researcher tried to find the weakness of this research and made in better. So, if the data met the criteria of success, the CAR could be stopped, but if not, the teaching scenario could be revised and applied in next cycle.

## Results

There were two cycles of this study. They had three meetings each cycle; two meetings for treatment using picture series in writing recount in the classroom where it was observed by the collaborator and one meeting for a test. The findings were based on the result of the students' writing test and the observation checklist.

### *Students Ability in Writing*

On the basis of data analysis of the students' writing, it was found that the mean score of writing test cycle I was 61.06. Their writing test in cycle I were relatively organized and the ideas were rather easy to understand, however, it contained some mistakes. From this data, the researcher and collaborator should run another cycle because the criteria of success presented in the previous chapter had not been successful yet. Furthermore, the result of the writing test in cycle II informed that the mean score of the students improved. It proved that the students' mean score was 75.44.

### *Students Participation*

In getting the data on the students' participation in teaching writing recount using picture series, the researcher utilized observation checklist. The observation checklist consisted of students' indicators which encompassed two meetings. The researcher categorized active (A) if they met more than two of the indicators, and not active (NA) if they only met two or none of the indicators. The indicators were; showing enthusiasm, responding instruction, requesting assistance, doing discussion, and doing test. It was prepared in the form of table and the teacher as the observer needed to tick the items in rows which matched the student's activities in the columns and gave a note.

Based on the data obtained from the observation checklist, in the first meeting, it was found that 15 of 21 students (71.43%) were active participants, and 6 of 21 students (28.57%) were not active participants. And in the next meeting, it was found that all of the students (100%) were active, they met more than two of the indicators.

## Discussion

After the picture series strategy was implemented through one cycle, it can be concluded that the students' ability in writing recount text of the eighth grade students of Al Ulum Dadapan Wajak Malang has not been achieved yet. It could be proved by seeing the result of the observation checklist showed that 6 of 21 students (28.57%) were not active, they didn't look enthusiasm, ignored the researchers' instruction, and no instruction with his friend. Further, day by day showed that the students' quality of learning activity in the class was improved. They had a positive attitude toward the implementation of the study, such as: the

improvement of the students' enthusiasm during the teaching and learning process, the improvement of the students' activeness to ask and answer the questions toward both the researcher and their friends, and also, the students requested for assistance. Therefore, it means that the teaching writing recount using picture series was good.

Besides that, the result of the writing test cycle I had not been successful yet. The sentences that the students made in cycle I still contained some mistakes, in terms of content, organization, language used, and mechanic. For example, some sentences that they arranged were no punctuation and capitalization and also used verb 1.

Based on the problem, the researcher assumed that writing is difficult skill. However, it is language skill that needs to be taught in the classroom. Cahyono and Widiati (2011, p. 69) state that Writing is often believed to be the most complex one compared to the three other skills, i.e, listening, speaking, and reading. Therefore, to make students interest to learn English writing skill, the researcher is use visual aid. It is in line with the statement given by Leny (2006, p. 14) pictures are kinds of visual instruction materials might be used more effectively to develop and sustain motivation in producing positive attitudes towards English and to teach or reinforce language skills.

Next, the result of the writing test in cycle II proven that teaching writing recount using picture series improved students' ability, especially writing recount text. This could be seen from the improvement were 11.66 (preliminary – cycle I) and 14.38 (cycle I – cycle II) after using picture series in teaching writing recount using picture series.

The students could write well and got standard score. In giving the material, the teacher encouraged the students to write recount familiar to them. It is in line with the statement given by Brown (2007, p. 403, as cited in Kartikaningsih 2012, p. 56) the students should experience appropriate stage. Therefore, the teacher was responsible to monitor and guided the students until they could make recount text.

Usually, the students could create good product when they had adequate background knowledge. Background knowledge that students have ever experienced made them easier to find idea for their writing. It was in line with the statement given by Harmer (2007, p. 329), he explained that students do not have courage to write because they do not have experience to write in their first language or they feel that they have nothing to say and produce idea. By using the picture series, the students can be stimulated to ask questions such as "what is it showing" and other questions which are be rich with ideas.

From the statements above, it could be concluded that the using of picture series improved students' ability of writing recount of the eighth grade students of MTs Al Ulum Dadapan Wajak Malang.

## Conclusion

Based on the result of data analyses, it can be concluded that this study can work well. It can be seen from their improvement in their writing ability. It increased from 61.06 to 75.44. The data showed that the mean score is higher than the minimum mastery learning standard at that school that is 70. From the result of the study, it means that the implementation of picture series improved students' writing recount text.

Furthermore, the observation checklist showed that the students' quality of learning activity in the class was improved day by day. This situation was happened because of some indicators, such as: all of the students showed enthusiasm, responded the researchers' instruction, asked to the researcher when they felt don't understand to do task, interacted with each other in their group during the activities, and had do the test. All of the students categorized active participation in teaching writing recount using picture series.

The procedure to teach writing recount text through picture series, are; a) asking students to make a pair group, b) giving the example of a recount text on the board and identifying the generic structure and verb together, c) giving a picture series to each pair groups, d) asking them to make note, e) asking a representative of each pair group to write on the board in front of the class, f) revise the text with their friends, g) revise the text individually, and h) submitting the text.

In general, using picture series improved the ability of the students at the eighth grade students at MTs Al Ulum Dadapan in writing recount text. It means that, the study ran well. It could be seen from the result of the test and observation checklist.

In teaching recount, the teacher should explain not only what a recount text and all generic structure of recount, but also teacher should focus on student's writing product. Moreover, in teaching writing, the teacher should bring an appropriate strategy to make students more interested and motivated in writing class. Next, for the future researchers were also suggested to conduct a similar or different condition on other skills likes listening, speaking, and reading at other level of students for the improvement of teaching English.

## Acknowledgments

This research was funded by LPPM Sekolah Tinggi Teknik Malang. The authors would also like to express their gratitude to the English teacher and students of MTs Al Ulum Dadapan Wajak Malang for their valuable cooperation and participation in this study.

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