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DEVELOPING STUDENTS' CREATIVITY AND COHERENCE IN NARRATIVE WRITING THROUGH PICTURE: A CLASSROOM ACTION RESEARCH AT MAN 1 PROBOLINGGO

Abstrak

Penelitian tindakan kelas (CAR) ini dimaksudkan untuk menemukan langkah yang efektif guna meningkatkan kreativitas dan koherensi penulisan naratif pada 10 siswa kelas XII program Bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa Asing (EFL) di MAN 1 Probolinggo melalui pembelajaran dengan media gambar. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terjadi peningkatan signifikan dalam kreativitas siswa (dari 67,8 menjadi 82,4) dan koherensi (dari 75,1 menjadi 84,7). Hasil kualitatif menunjukkan motivasi, kepercayaan diri, dan keterlibatan yang lebih besar. Dapat disimpulkan bahwa stimulus visual membantu siswa mengonseptualisasikan ide, menyusun narasi secara logis, dan memandang penulisan sebagai proses kreatif. Secara pedagogis, penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pengajaran menulis bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing (EFL) dan pembelajaran multimodal, menyoroti teknik berbasis visual sebagai metode efektif untuk meningkatkan dimensi kognitif dan afektif dalam pembelajaran.

Kata Kunci: Teknik Seri Gambar, Kreativitas, Koherensi, Penelitian Tindakan Kelas, Penulisan Naratif

Abstract

This classroom action research (CAR) investigated the use of the picture series technique to enhance narrative writing creativity and coherence among 10 twelfth-grade EFL students at MAN 1 Probolinggo. Conducted in two cycles, data were collected through observations, writing tests, and interviews. Findings revealed a significant improvement in students' creativity (from 67.8 to 82.4) and coherence (from 75.1 to 84.7). Qualitative results indicated greater motivation, confidence, and engagement. The study concludes that visual prompts help students conceptualize ideas, structure narratives logically, and perceive writing as a creative process. Pedagogically, this research contributes to EFL writing instruction and multimodal learning, highlighting visual-based techniques as effective for enhancing both cognitive and affective learning dimensions.

Keywords: Picture Series Technique, Creativity, Coherence, Classroom Research, Narrative Writing.

INTRODUCTION

Writing is an essential skill in English language learning (Sharma & puri, 2020; Song & Song, 2023), yet it remains one of the most challenging for EFL students (Karimian Shirejini & Derakhshan, 2020; Taye & Mengesha, 2024). Many learners struggle to produce creative and coherent narrative texts due to limited vocabulary, lack of ideas, and difficulties in organizing sentences logically. Creativity enables students to express original ideas, while coherence ensures logical flow and unity in writing (Barroga & Matanguihan, 2021; Jo, 2025; Milicevic A et al., 2020; Ramadhan, 2024). However, conventional teaching approaches often focus too heavily on grammar and structure, leaving little room for imagination or meaningful expression

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(Hossain, 2024; Sajjad et al., 2021). To overcome these issues, innovative strategies that stimulate students' ideas and help them organize thoughts effectively are needed.

One useful method is the usage of picture series, which are sequences of connected pictures that help students create narratives (Barroga & Matanguihan, 2021). Picture series help students visualize events, generate ideas, and maintain logical connections between paragraphs. Previous studies have shown that visual media can enhance students' motivation, creativity, and writing coherence. In the context of MAN 1 Probolinggo, many students face challenges in creating structured and engaging narrative texts. Therefore, this study employs a Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach to explore how the use of picture series can improve students' creativity and coherence in narrative writing. The results are expected to provide insights for teachers to apply visual-based learning strategies that make writing more meaningful and effective in EFL classrooms.

Many students at MAN 1 Probolinggo struggle to produce creative and coherent narrative texts in English texts often lack idea development, logical organization, and imaginative expression. This is because writing instruction typically emphasises grammar accuracy over creativity and coherence, leading learners to translate Indonesian ideas directly into English without establishing logical links. Research shows that using a sequence of picture series can help: students working with visual prompts generate ideas more effectively, maintain narrative flow, and improve coherence (Cohn, 2020; Hong et al., 2023; Yang et al., 2025). Thus, it is crucial to incorporate picture series into a Classroom Action Research framework in order to help students visualize story sequences and arrange their narratives more imaginatively and coherently.

Several studies have emphasized the effectiveness of visual-based instruction, particularly the use of picture series, in improving students' narrative writing skills in terms of creativity and coherence (Gregoria et al., 2015; Sinaga et al., 2020). Gregoria et al. and Sinaga et al. found that after sixteen weeks of instruction, students taught through the picture series Technique combined with a process-based approach performed significantly better in post-tests than those who received process-based instruction alone, especially in the areas of idea development and logical sequencing. Similarly, it is also reported that the use of visual images and comic strips effectively enhanced students' ability to generate ideas, express creativity, and develop imagination and motivation in writing, even though some learners still encountered difficulties in grammar and diction (Listyani, 2019; Lulu et al., 2025; Malim Soleh Rambe, 2019). Complementing these findings, Ershad revealed that picture stories helped students create more coherent and organized narratives by fostering attention to text structure and temporal-causal relationships (Qurratulain Ershad, 2020). Their statistical examination confirmed a notable enhancement in textual coherence among students who utilized picture prompts for writing, in contrast to those who did not. Furthermore, students of all ages benefit greatly from the use of visual aids when learning English as a foreign language (EFL), particularly when it comes to vocabulary growth (Pesántez Sigüenza & Brito Carmona, 2020). Visual aids improve understanding and retention, make abstract ideas more tangible, and foster a more stimulating and anxiety-free learning environment. According to the study, visual aides increase memory and contextual knowledge by helping students connect words with pictures. These studies collectively suggest that picture-based techniques are essential for enhancing both the creative and structural dimensions of narrative writing. By offering visual scaffolding that guides learners in organizing events and linking ideas logically, picture series not only enhance linguistic coherence but also stimulate students' imaginative engagement, making writing instruction more effective and meaningful in EFL contexts.

Previous studies have demonstrated that visual media, particularly picture series, can effectively enhance students' narrative writing skills in terms of idea generation, organization, and creativity (Gregoria et al., 2015; Listyani, 2019; Lulu et al., 2025; Pesántez Sigüenza & Brito Carmona, 2020; Qurratulain Ershad, 2020; Sinaga et al., 2020). However, most of these studies were conducted in different educational contexts either in international or higher education settings and focused primarily on measuring students' writing performance through experimental or quasi-experimental designs. There remains a limited number of studies that explore how the implementation of picture series develops students' creativity and coherence in

a real classroom environment, particularly within Islamic senior high schools (Madrasah Aliyah) in Indonesia. Moreover, previous research has often emphasized the quantitative outcomes of writing improvement, while giving less attention to the process-oriented and reflective aspects of teaching that could provide deeper insights into students' cognitive and creative development.

Therefore, a research gap exists in investigating the practical and reflective implementation of the picture series technique through a Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach, which allows for iterative observation, reflection, and improvement of instructional practices. This study addresses that gap by focusing on how the use of picture series can foster both creativity and coherence among EFL learners in the Indonesian secondary school context, specifically at MAN 1 Probolinggo, where such an approach has not been systematically explored.

The main objective of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of using picture series in developing students' creativity and coherence in narrative writing within the EFL context of twelfth-grade language class at MAN 1 Probolinggo. Specifically, this study aims to examine how the implementation of picture series can enhance students' creativity in generating and organizing ideas during the process of writing narrative texts; identify the extent to which the use of picture series contributes to improving students' coherence, particularly in establishing logical sequencing, transition, and unity within their written narratives; and reflect on the process of applying the picture series technique through Classroom Action Research (CAR) to understand its pedagogical implications and effectiveness in fostering a more engaging and process-oriented writing classroom. Through these objectives, the study seeks to provide empirical and pedagogical insights into how visual-based strategies can be effectively integrated into EFL writing instruction to promote creative thinking, logical organization, and sustained learner motivation among twelfth-grade language students.

Based on the theoretical framework and previous empirical findings, this study hypothesizes that the implementation of picture series as a visual instructional medium significantly enhances students' creativity and coherence in narrative writing. It is assumed that by engaging with sequential visual prompts, students can generate original ideas more effectively, organize story events logically, and produce more cohesive and meaningful narratives. Therefore, the integration of picture series in EFL writing instruction is expected to have a positive effect on students' overall narrative writing performance, particularly in improving their creativity and coherence.

METHOD

This study employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design to investigate the effectiveness of using picture series in developing students' creativity and coherence in narrative writing. The research employed a mixed-method approach, integrating quantitative data from writing tests with qualitative data from classroom observations and semi-structured interviews to achieve triangulation and a deeper understanding of learning outcomes (Hendrayadi Hendrayadi, Martin Kustati, 2023). The research was conducted at MAN 1 Probolinggo in the twelfth-grade language class during the 2025 academic year. The CAR design was chosen because it allows for continuous improvement through cycles of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988), making it suitable for addressing practical classroom problems and enhancing pedagogical practice. The unit of analysis consisted of ten students from the twelfth-grade language program who were purposively selected based on their participation level and varying writing proficiency. These students were considered representative of the class and were directly involved throughout the two cycles of classroom action research. The sources of information included students' written works, observation notes, and interview transcripts, while supplementary data were gathered from classroom documentation such as lesson plans and teacher reflections to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the intervention's effectiveness.

Data were collected through observation, writing tests, and interviews across two CAR cycles. Observation was carried out during each teaching session to monitor students' engagement, participation, and responses to the use of picture series, with field notes and

observation checklists used to record classroom interactions and learning behaviors. Writing tests were administered as a pre-test and post-test in each cycle, with the pre-test measuring students' initial writing ability and the post-test assessing improvement in creativity and coherence after the implementation of the picture series technique. Interviews were conducted with the ten participating students at the end of each cycle to capture their perceptions, experiences, and reflections on how picture series supported their idea generation, narrative structure, and motivation in writing.

Data analysis followed both qualitative and quantitative approaches consistent with the CAR model. Qualitative data from observations and interviews were analyzed through thematic analysis, identifying patterns related to creativity, coherence, and student engagement. Quantitative data from writing tests were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean and percentage improvement) to measure progress between pre- and post-tests. Triangulation was applied by comparing data from multiple sources tests, observations, and interviews to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings. The cyclical nature of CAR enabled the researcher to reflect on each cycle's outcomes and refine instructional strategies for the next phase, ensuring continuous improvement in students' narrative writing performance.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study revealed three main points related to the effectiveness of using picture series in developing students' creativity and coherence in narrative writing among twelfth-grade language students at MAN 1 Probolinggo. First, the implementation of picture series significantly enhanced students' creativity, as reflected in their ability to generate original ideas, expand storylines, and develop more engaging narratives compared to their initial writing. Second, the use of picture series improved students' coherence and organization, demonstrated by better logical sequencing, smoother transitions between paragraphs, and more consistent use of cohesive devices in their texts. Third, the application of the technique fostered positive engagement and motivation during the writing process; students showed increased enthusiasm, participation, and confidence in expressing their ideas through visual prompts. These findings align with previous research (Gregoria et al., 2015; Listyani, 2019; Lulu et al., 2025; Pesántez Sigüenza & Brito Carmona, 2020; Quratulain Ershad, 2020; Sinaga et al., 2020) which confirms that visual media such as picture series effectively enhance students' creativity, coherence, and overall writing quality in EFL classrooms.

Table 1: Students' Writing Test Result in Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 (n=10)

Aspect Assessed	Mean Score Cycle 1	Mean Score Cycle 2	Mean Difference	Percentage Improvement (%)	Interpretation
Creativity	67.8	82.4	+14.6	21.5%	Significant improvement in idea generation, imagination, and expression.
Coherence	75.1	84.7	+9.6	12.8%	Enhanced ability to organize ideas logically and use cohesive devices effectively.
Overall Performance	71.5	83.6	+12.1	16.9%	Overall improvement in narrative writing skills across all components.

The results of the writing tests showed a significant improvement in students' creativity after the implementation of the picture series technique. During the first cycle, the average creativity score from ten students was 67.8, indicating that most students could only develop basic ideas with limited vocabulary and repetitive expressions. However, in the second cycle, the mean score increased to 82.4, showing that students were able to generate more original ideas, develop richer storylines, and use more expressive language. The improvement was

particularly visible in students' ability to elaborate settings, create engaging plots, and introduce imaginative characters. The use of sequential pictures served as visual scaffolding, helping students visualize storylines and stimulate imaginative thinking. This finding aligns with Listyani and Lulu et al. who emphasizes that visual images enhance creative engagement by enabling learners to connect imagination with linguistic expression (Listyani, 2019; Lulu et al., 2025). Interviews in Cycle 1 revealed that students initially struggled to interpret picture sequences and feared making mistakes, but in Cycle 2 they reported feeling more confident, motivated, and inspired to "write freely" and "think creatively without being afraid of errors."

In terms of coherence, students showed marked progress between cycles. The pre-test results before the intervention yielded a mean coherence score of 65.2, indicating difficulties in maintaining logical sequencing and transitions. In the first CAR cycle, after the initial implementation of picture series, the average score increased to 75.1, showing moderate improvement in organizing ideas. By the second cycle, the mean reached 84.7, demonstrating students' ability to construct more cohesive narratives with clear temporal and causal relations. Analysis of their written texts revealed that students began using appropriate transitional markers ("then," "after that," "suddenly") and pronouns effectively to maintain unity across paragraphs. This supports Ershad who found that picture-based writing activities help students focus on text organization and coherence through visual sequencing (Qurratulain Ershad, 2020). The overall writing performance rose by 16.9%, confirming that the Picture Series Technique effectively enhanced both the creative and structural aspects of students' writing. Besides, interviews confirmed that students found the pictures helpful in arranging story events logically one student mentioned, "The pictures help me know what comes first and what happens next," reflecting increased awareness of narrative flow.

Table 2: Observation Result of Students Engagement during CAR Implementation

Observed Aspect	Cycle 1 (Percentage)	Cycle 2 (Percentage)	Description of Change
Active participation in class discussion	60%	90%	Increased enthusiasm and willingness to share ideas.
Collaboration in group writing	55%	88%	Improved teamwork and idea exchange among peers.
Use of visual prompts during writing	65%	92%	Students actively used pictures as idea triggers.
Confidence in writing narratives	58%	85%	Students showed higher confidence and independence.
Teacher-student interaction	62%	89%	More dynamic engagement during feedback sessions.

Observational data and interviews indicated an overall increase in students' motivation, engagement, and positive attitudes toward writing activities. In Cycle 1, classroom observation sheets showed that only 60% of students actively participated in brainstorming and discussion, while others appeared hesitant or passive. By Cycle 2, active participation increased to 90%, with students more willing to share ideas, discuss storylines, and revise their drafts collaboratively. Interviews revealed that students enjoyed the use of picture series because it made writing "fun," "easier to imagine," and "more interesting than just writing from a topic." The reflective discussions conducted between the two CAR cycles enabled the teacher to modify instructional strategies, such as increasing group discussions and providing clearer picture prompts. This adaptive process enhanced student engagement and improved outcomes, consistent with researches conducted by Gregoria et al. and Sinaga et al. who found that integrating visual media within a process-based approach promotes motivation and sustained engagement in writing (Gregoria et al., 2015; Sinaga et al., 2020). Overall, the CAR process not only improved students' writing outcomes but also cultivated a more collaborative and reflective classroom environment.

Table 3 presents the qualitative findings from interviews conducted during Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 of the Classroom Action Research, highlighting students' perceptions, challenges, and

progress in using the Picture Series Technique to develop creativity and coherence in narrative writing. In Cycle 1, the majority of students expressed difficulties in generating ideas and constructing coherent stories. They tended to depend on the teacher's prompts, and their narratives often lacked originality and logical sequencing. Most students followed familiar storylines and struggled to connect events smoothly, showing limited use of transition signals and cohesive devices. Moreover, students reported that writing was a stressful and demanding activity, indicating low confidence and motivation.

Table 3: Summary of Interviews Findings in Cycle 1 and Cycle 2

Theme	Cycle 1 Findings	Cycle 2 Findings
Idea Generation	Students found it hard to develop ideas and depended on teacher prompts.	Students reported that pictures helped them visualize storylines and generate ideas more easily.
Creativity	Limited imagination; most stories followed familiar patterns.	Students created more original plots and unique characters.
Coherence and Organization	Difficulty connecting events logically; narratives lacked transitions.	Improved use of sequence connectors ("then," "after that," "finally") and smoother narrative flow.
Motivation and Confidence	Writing perceived as difficult and stressful.	Students expressed enjoyment and confidence in expressing ideas freely.
Teacher's Reflection	Need to provide clearer picture sequencing and guidance.	Improved scaffolding resulted in more autonomous and confident learners.

In contrast, Cycle 2 demonstrated significant improvement across all thematic areas. Students became more capable of visualizing and developing storylines independently, as the picture series effectively triggered their imagination and guided idea generation. Their creativity increased, reflected in the emergence of more original plots, diverse character development, and richer descriptions. Coherence also improved, as students employed appropriate sequencing connectors such as "then," "after that," and "finally," which contributed to smoother and more logically structured narratives. Motivation and confidence were notably higher as students described the writing process as enjoyable, engaging, and less intimidating.

Teacher reflections throughout the CAR cycles revealed that refining the instructional scaffolding, such as sequencing pictures more clearly and providing structured feedback, enabled students to become more autonomous writers. These findings align with some researches who emphasize that visual-based approaches stimulate learner engagement, creativity, and coherence in writing (Gregoria et al., 2015; Listyani, 2019; Lulu et al., 2025; Sinaga et al., 2020). Overall, the qualitative data in Table 3 confirm that the Picture Series Technique not only enhanced students' narrative writing skills but also fostered a more positive, reflective, and student-centered learning environment in the twelfth-grade language classroom.

The three main findings demonstrate that the Picture Series Technique effectively enhances students' creativity, coherence, and engagement in narrative writing among twelfth-grade language students at MAN 1 Probolinggo. The improvement in creativity shows that visual stimuli help students generate ideas and express imagination more freely, as picture sequences provided concrete cues for developing storylines, characters, and descriptions, supporting Listyani (2019) and Lulu et al. (2025) who emphasized that visual images stimulate creative thinking and reduce writing anxiety (Listyani, 2019; Lulu et al., 2025). The enhancement of coherence and logical sequencing indicates that the Picture Series Technique strengthens students' awareness of narrative structure, as following the picture order guided them to arrange events chronologically, use transition signals, and maintain unity, consistent with Ershad who found that visual prompts improve text organization through temporal and causal connections, reflected in the increase of coherence scores from 75.1 to 84.7 (Qurratulain Ershad, 2020). Additionally, the rise in motivation and engagement highlights the benefit of the

Classroom Action Research (CAR) process, where continuous reflection and feedback allowed instructional adjustments that made writing activities more enjoyable and interactive, confirming Gregoria et al. (2015) and Sinaga et al. (2020) that visual approaches within a process-based framework promote learner autonomy and sustained involvement (Gregoria et al., 2015; Sinaga et al., 2020). Overall, the interpretation confirms that the Picture Series Technique, integrated through CAR, enhances creativity, coherence, and motivation simultaneously, making it an effective strategy for improving narrative writing skills in EFL classrooms.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the effectiveness of the Picture Series Technique in enhancing students' creativity and coherence in narrative writing among twelfth-grade language students at MAN 1 Probolinggo through a Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach. The findings showed significant improvement from Cycle 1 to Cycle 2, where students became more creative in generating ideas, developing imaginative plots, and expressing thoughts fluently, while also demonstrating better coherence by organizing ideas logically, using appropriate transitions, and maintaining unity. Students' motivation and engagement also increased, indicating that visual-based instruction made the learning process more interactive and enjoyable. The study contributes to the field of EFL writing pedagogy by providing empirical evidence that integrating picture series within process-based writing can effectively enhance both linguistic and affective dimensions of learning. It also enriches the understanding of multimodal strategies that combine visual literacy with narrative composition, offering practical implications for teachers seeking to promote creativity and coherence in students' writing. However, the study is limited by its small sample size of ten students and short duration of two CAR cycles, which restrict the generalizability of the results. Future research should involve a larger participant pool, longer implementation periods, and explore the integration of visual media with digital storytelling or collaborative writing platforms to deepen the understanding of visual-based learning in EFL contexts.

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