

USING PICTURE SERIES IN IMPROVING STUDENTS' WRITING SKILL IN RECOUNT

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Abstract: *Writing skill is important and beneficial in English language learning. Having good writing skill enables learners in language learning to do communication. Problem in writing is a language barrier to written communication. This action research aims to overcome students' problem in writing in terms of recount text by applying pictures series. The procedures of classroom action research were used to investigate the process and the subject's outcomes. There were 33 students of 8th grade (VIII-1) at MTs Negeri 1 Muna who enrolled in the academic year 2022/2023 for the subject of this research which was taken purposively. The researcher uses writing tests and field notes to gather the data. The study was accomplished in two cycles. The successful research is indicated by students' average scores meeting the minimum target (75). In cycle 1 the students obtained 66.87 on average. Another improvement in cycle 2 appeared, the students reached 81.31 on average. The result from this research indicates that students' writing improved after picture series was used in the learning process.*

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INTRODUCTION

Students in Indonesia are anticipated to possess communication in foreign languages (including English) for several important reasons. One of the reasons is revealed by Santoso that students can absorb and be up to date with science and technology development (Santoso, 2014). English as a foreign language in the Indonesian curriculum has set up a target for English writing to be completed by students at each school level. High school students in Indonesia have to succeed in writing in various type of genres. This is based on the English language learning curriculum in Indonesia namely basic competencies in The 2013 Curriculum in Basic and Secondary Education where students are able to compose oral and written texts related to topic/material in each class.

Writing skills are essential within the field of education. Writing plays an important role in education, serving both as a tool for finishing academic assignments and as a means to enhance students' communication skills. Ravivarman affirms that the definitive aim of developing the skills (reading, listening, writing, speaking) is to enable the learner to communicate and respond (Ravivarman, 2019).

Concerning the vital objective of writing, a problem related to writing appeared in students at 8th grade (VIII-1) in MTs Negeri 1 Muna in the academic year 2022/2023. The problem was found in the learning process when the teacher instructed them to create sentences. They were thinking about it for a long time and did not produce anything. The teacher then held a test related to writing to have a valid data. The test was done on Saturday, 25th March 2023 when the teacher tutored them to produce simple past text related to their experience. It looked like they wanted to produce lots of sentences orally, but they looked as if blur where to start writing them. Their lack of writing was proven by their score. They obtained only 27.37 on average as their preliminary research score.

The researcher tries to cope with the problem by using the best media. Then the researcher selects using picture series to overcome the problem. Picture can be recognized as the symbol for representing objects in real life. In this current research, the teacher as the researcher utilized contextual picture related to the daily activities of students or something close to their contextual life. Some of the picture used in the current study is downloaded from the internet as suggested that the picture or media can be from the internet downloaded (Ur, 2012). Some other pictures were taken from students' experiences. Then, all of the pictures were set up and printed in a series picture with a simple guide for students.

Another benefit of picture series presented by an investigation conducted by Sitti Nuraeni in 2021. She investigated picture series in increasing writing recount ability and discovered that picture series act as strong potential media in developing students' writing in terms of recount (Siti Nuraeni, 2021).

Picture series used in the classroom fascinate students in the learning process and also facilitate students in accomplishing the subject. Through seeing the series pictures, the students can creatively compose sentences that become paragraphs because the visual of pictures series help their brains to do so.

A lot of studies have successfully shown that picture series can enhance students' writing for recount text. Apsari studied students' writing in Madrasah Tsanawiyah Nurul Hidayah Batujajar in grade seventh by applying pictures series and found that picture series effectively improved the students' writing ability (Apsari, 2017).

Rohaniyah and Mari in 2022 also did a similar investigation under a collaborative action research design with 2 cycles. The study performed a significant improvement in the last cycle; 82.8% of their achievement of writing in terms of recount text after applying picture series strategy (Rohaniyah & Mari, 2022).

Another research conducted by Deviga and Diliyana in 2020 who applied picture series strategy in writing to 45 students of a higher medical school in Madiun in the first semester. They reported that picture series helps students in writing and attracts them to

the activity of writing. The implementation of picture series in the process of writing greatly affects students in their writing in constructing recount text (Deviga & Diliyana, 2020).

Another motive supports the use of picture series reported by Cristine in 2019 who investigated students at grade eighth of SMP Negeri 1 Malinau Barat for the 2018/2019 school year by applying picture series in teaching recount text. They got higher scores in writing which indicated that pictures series greatly affect positively to the students' writing (Cristine, 2019).

In this current investigation, the researcher focuses on recount text namely telling experience which was included in the curriculum at 8th grade in the second semester; so other areas of writing are out of the scope. The teacher creates media of pictures series which consists of students' experience during Ramadhan in 2023 and their experience at school in the same year.

This research aims to improve students' writing competence, particularly in composing recount text by applying the use of picture series to 8th grade students (VIII-1) of MTs Negeri 1 Muna for the 2022/2023 school year.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Writing of English in EFL as a Target of Language Skill

Writing is a productive activity in which someone expresses ideas by resulting in something that can be read by others. Related to writing, Hammond in Sadiku notes that in writing, the author organizes clauses to form a sentence; the major idea develops the main clause; subsidiary ideas turn out to be subordinate clauses, and so forth (Sadiku, 2015). Amri adds that writing is process of expressing ideas on paper until the desired outcome is achieved (Amri, 2022).

Sadiku claims that when a person has good ability in writing, she or he will always be able to express him/herself. Sadiku continues that someone's writing shows their degree of intelligence (Sadiku, 2015). Ravivarman declares that to reach communicative competence, learners should master writing as one basic skill from three others (reading, listening, and speaking). Ravivarman continues by stating that the definitive aim of developing the skills (reading, listening, writing, speaking) is to enable the learner to communicate and respond (Ravivarman, 2019).

Urbanova and Oakland's avowal presented in Klimova that written communication plays a vital role in social and educational spheres (Klimova, 2012). Students must begin writing at an earlier educational level to become good writers for their school tasks and other areas. It corresponds with Walsh in Klimova who stated that writing is crucial and required in higher education settings, such as college (Klimova, 2012).

Writing serves two significant aims: one is related to telling the reader about something; and the other is about positioning the reader to acknowledge the truth (Knapp & Watkins, 2005).

In view of the foregoing, the researcher concludes that writing has a vital role in the educational system for students to have a good foundation to produce written language in a higher level of education.

Picture Concept and Writing

Picture represents something real visually. Bayat defines about picture concept, that picture is a symbol that represents particular object, action or concept to the person who saw it (Bayat, 2016). Driver emphasizes that learners in all levels of education get benefit from visuals or pictures to support their competence in the process of learning (Driver, 2018).

Images or pictures as visual media is stated as the most common strategy used by beginner English learners (Lado, 2012). Surapur adds by highlighting that pictures are one of the visual aids which can be used as rich resources or material in the teaching of English (Surapur, 2020). A picture can be utilized for describing, interpreting, dictating, comparing, and is particularly helpful for younger learners as it serves as the basis for language tasks (Ur, 2012).

Eilam adds that pictures can convey a message without expressing the message through words. Eilam continues another benefit of picture is that a picture can communicate information even to an uneducated person. Eilam also adds that pictures can help students imagine what happened in the picture just simply by looking it (Eilam, 2012).

Yunus in Apsari grouped pictures into three classifications; composite pictures, pictures series and individual picture (Apsari, 2017). In this research, the teacher selects the picture series to be applied in the process of how to write recount text .

Each picture in the picture series will provide students with ideas to write about what they see in the images sequentially. In other words, it enables students to generate additional ideas simply just by looking at the picture series. Gleason states that simplified frames contribute to the benefit of pictures series because each image offers the viewer a particular detail of the story (Gleason, 2019).

Chairena in Deviga & Diliyana claims that a picture series facilitate students in producing a better writing text (Deviga & Diliyana, 2020). By observing the picture series, it enables students to have more ideas and compose sentences effortlessly.

Recount Text

Recount text related to someone's past or experience. Nottingham points that recount text is a text with past form tenses and starts by orientation to answer "what", "where", "when", and "how", then followed by events in chronological order and it uses time-related, cause-related, and contrast-related connectives. Nottingham continues by stating that the final paragraph of recount text should summarize and bring the reader back to the subject (Nottingham & Nottingham, 2018).

It can be said recount text is a kind of text about a past event in which the person participated, using past tense (verb 2) and forming in sequential order. In Junior High Schools in Indonesia, recount text is studied by students at grade eighth as set out in curriculum 2013. Recount text included in basic competence in the second-semester in the eighth grade of junior high school.

METHOD

This current study used an action research design. Each cycle of action research consisted of four steps as suggested by Kemmis in Putman & Rock namely planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. A revised and simplified design from Kemmis' design is stated by Putman & Rock which is presented in the following figure (Putman & Rock, 2016).

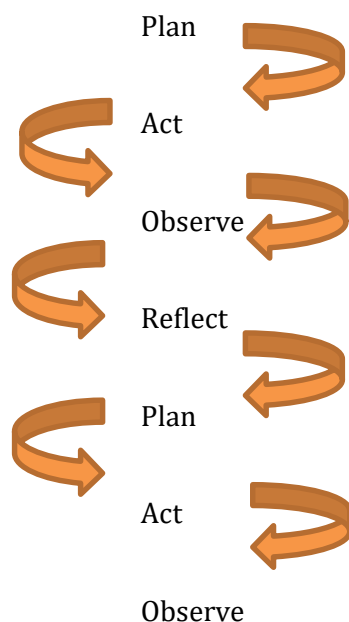


Figure 1. Spiral of Action Research (Putman & Rock, 2016)

Participants

The subject of this current investigation was 33 eighth graders (VIII-1) of MTs Negeri 1 Muna for the 2022/2023 school year. The subject was determined purposively.

Instruments

The instruments used in this study are:

1. Writing Test

The researcher instructed them to compose a recount text based on the picture series given. The students were instructed to compose a text (recount text) by seeing and observing the picture series.

2. Field Note

Mulyono remarks that in field notes the researcher wrote anything important related to the research (Mulyono, 2022). This instrument was used to keep a record of what happens throughout the research activities. The teacher and collaborative teacher notice and note everything related to this current study to support the findings.

Data Analysis

The researcher employed qualitative and quantitative methodologies in data analysis. Qualitative data was about the use of picture series in the educational process. The data came from a field note. Quantitative data is related to students' improvement in writing recount text that will be taken from the writing test. The result of students' work was accounted by using an assessment rubric consisting of 6 items (language use and vocabulary, ideas, clear and effective, good connectivity, originality, and grammar). Each item has 5 levels of options.

$$\text{Students' score} = \frac{\text{gain score}}{\text{maximum score}} \times 100$$

The result of students' score will be used for knowing students' average/mean score.

$$\text{Mean} = \frac{\sum x}{N}$$

Where:

X = the score of the students

N = the number of sample/subject

Students' mean score was compared to the 75 % as the minimum standard.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This research applied the use of picture series to improve students' writing competence. The research was conducted in two cycles. Each cycle of this research was conducted in two meetings. The first cycle was on Saturday 1st April 2023 and Wednesday 05th April 2023. The last cycle was on Tuesday 12nd April 2023 and Saturday, 15th April

2023. The result presented how picture series improve students' writing competence, particularly in recount text. The result of the research is described as follow:

Cycle 1

In cycle 1, The teacher began the meeting by introducing the students to recount text. So, this meeting started with an explanation. The teacher shared elaboration about recount text using infocus, so the students could see the presentation and listen to the teacher's elaboration. The explanation included the definition, generic structure, language features, and example of recount text. The students recognized recount text because this topic related to previous material namely simple past tense. They could relate this current topic with the previous one easily.

Then the next activity was students' activities related to picture series and creating recount text. The students observed the picture series. After that, the teacher asked students about the picture. One of them is Fazrul. He expressed his idea after looking at the picture series, "Mom, this series picture is jumbled?". The teacher responded; "Is that right students?" Others answered; "Yes mam" . The teacher replied; "Yes, you all are right. You are gonna arrange it becoming good paragraph. Can you do that?". The students responded in an enthusiast way; ""Yes Mam".

Then, the students were divided into groups of two. The students created sentences using picture series. Some students showed their pleasure during the picture series observation and creating sentences. They had a communicative and creative ideas in conversation with their friends. They said; "Who was with him?" Other responded; "His Older sister" While another said; "His friend" Other students replied; "His cousin".

The students arranged the jumbled pictures that contained sentences they made. Then the teacher assessed students' attitudes through observation during the group's activities. Some students smiled and laughed while seeing and observing the picture series. Students gave positive comments while discussing the picture series. They seemed to have lots of ideas to share with their member group.

After implementing the use of picture series in cycle 1, some improvement appeared. First, a good view that appeared in this cycle was that the students like this approach. It was based on their enthusiasm in following the learning process. They smiled and showed a better attitude than previous meeting when the strategy had not been used. Another proof that they could produce the paragraph more easily. They just became more creative in creating sentences. A student also was over the moon in creating text. She came in front of the class and showed the teacher her sentences. The researcher also found that students' mean scores improved to 66,87 %. compared with the score of the preliminary research

(26,57). The mean score of the first cycle indicated a little improvement in terms of students' writing ability.

Related to the implementation of picture series for the first cycle, most students had applied it well, but the weakness came from the media used. The teacher only used 1 big picture series presented on the projector screen. It could be seen that the students still needed a picture series for their group. Some students came forward in front of the class to see the picture in the screen projector.

Cycle 2

This cycle was started by encouraging students to write and re-explaining how to use picture series briefly. The teacher used one printed colorful picture for each group to facilitate them in composing recount text.

The students observed the new picture series given. After that, the teacher asked students about the picture. The students answered and also seemed happy while seeing the picture series. Then, the students were divided into groups of two. The students created sentences using picture series.

Students displayed a good attitude during the activity. Aulia Putri showed a great positive attitude by raising the picture series close to her face and talking to her friend in groups with smiling. In addition, Nazila and Ar Anisa talked and smiled at each other while seeing and observing the picture series.

Next activity was the students wrote down any unfamiliar word they found in their sentences and looked for the meaning in the dictionary. Some others asked the teacher if they found any difficulties in the meaning of the words. The unfamiliar words only few vocabularies.

The students collected relevant information in picture series to get social function from the text in groups guided by the teacher. The students in groups under teacher guidance processed the information for presentation with the following steps: arranging the sentences into good recount text individually in group discussion, and practicing presenting the work by reading the text to their group members with the correct pronunciation and intonation.

The teacher noticed that the students seemed happy doing this activity. They were motivated in writing by seeing the picture series. It could be seen from their visual performance. They smiled and were enthusiastic and also participated actively in the group. One student, while looking at the picture series, said with a big smile to her member of the group; "What are they doing?". Her friend then responded, "Maybe they looked for worms for fishing". Then she responded with a smile; "Absolutely, I do agree, they dig the ground for seeking worms".

The group in the back also looked very enthusiastic when observing the picture series and said to his member of the group with a laugh; "He got sick because he didn't wash his hand before eating". Then his friend responded; "what disease does he suffer from?".

Another group discussed with her friend and said, "In your opinion, what they were doing?". Her friend responded; "They are playing with sand". Then she replied; "Oh yes, they were playing sand for fun".

Those kinds of discussion (and other similar comments from students) and their imaginative ideas with their smiles and laughs did not appear when they composed text without picture series media. They were in silent mode and had nothing to think more without media (picture series).

When the teacher asked one of them why she smiled. Then she answered that the picture that she shared ideas with her friend made her joyful. She said that she liked the picture given by the teacher.

After applying the second cycle by solving problems in the first cycle and re-explaining writing using picture series, particularly about how to write sentences after seeing the picture series, the teacher found that there was improvement in students' writing ability. In cycle 2, the students obtained good scores on average. It indicated that they could write recount text better. Their score has a lot increased to 81.31 as compared with cycle 1 (66.87). The number of students who reached the minimum standard also increased to 33 students as compared with cycle 1 (13 students).

Writing test results on the preliminary test, first cycle, and last cycle and is presented in the following figure overleaf:

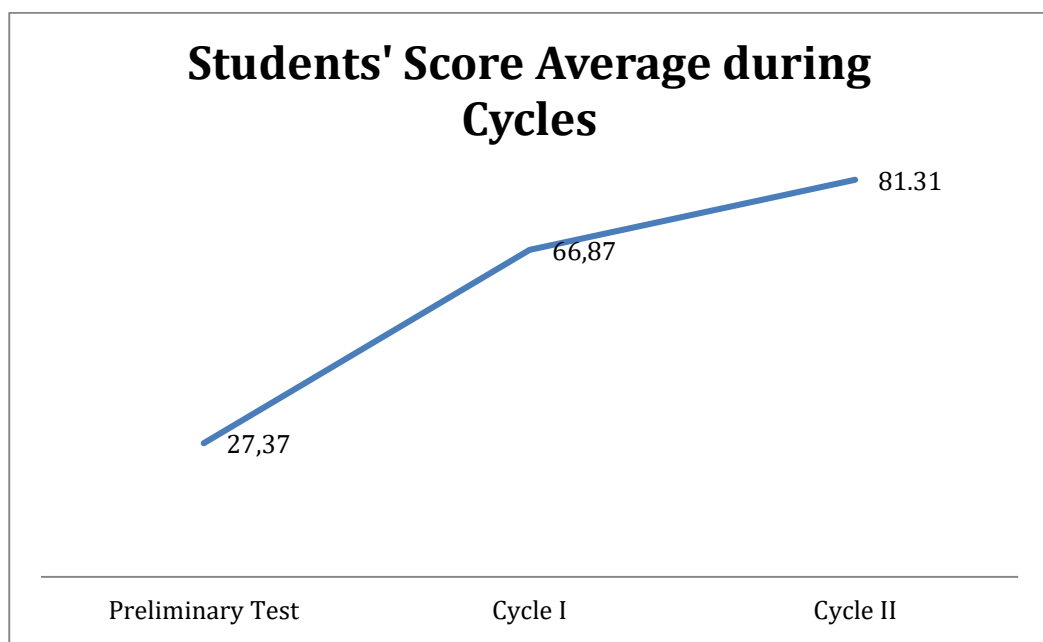


Figure 2. Students' Score during Cycles

Looking at the above figure, it is clear that the students got higher scores than in their previous cycle. The findings of this research demonstrate that picture series has a positive effect on their ability to write recount text in terms of telling experience/past activities.

After using series picture and analyzing the result of their writing tests' scores, it is presented that students' writing competence significantly improved in each cycle, since all the problems had been treated well by the teacher and the collaborative teacher.

Discussion

Cycle 1 indicated students' score improvement compared with preliminary research. The score in preliminary research was 27.37 and increased to 66.87 but it still could not reach the minimum target (75). The second cycle was executed to achieve the standard. In the second cycle, students' scores are above the standard; 81.31. This statistical evidence indicates that students' scores improved after using picture series.

After the using picture series, the students became more excited and engaged in what is happening in the classroom. Their attitude changed to positive after the teacher used a picture series. It seemed from their smile or laugh when they were in group discussion with friends while they were looking at and observing the picture series. Students' comments with smiles and enthusiasm such as "Look at this picture! They look for worms." It showed how interesting this media is for them.

Another group acted different attitude which also presented the similar glad. They even took the paper (picture series) close to their face and showed how interested they were in the picture series given by the teacher.

This condition is supported by an investigation by Deviga & Diliyana who conducted a study by applying picture series in the learning process of composing recount to 45 students in one of a higher of medical school in Madiun in the first semester. They found that picture series attract students to the activity of writing. They were enthusiastic in the learning process. It is indicated that they had a positive attitude and high motivation in composing recount text using picture series (Deviga & Diliyana, 2020).

Another proof was reported by Farkhan who did research on third graders in SMPN 1 Sumberlawang for the 2019/2020 school year to explore the application of picture series in teaching how to write toward their perception. The findings reported that most of the students decided that picture series are pleasurable and gorgeous. They loved picture series which was beneficial for them in the learning process and was able to improve their writing interest (Farkhan, 2020).

Related to their writing, after using picture series throughout the cycles of this current study, it could be seen that the students made an improvement in their writing from first

cycle to the last cycle. Each item assessed language use and vocabulary, ideas, clear and effective, good connectivity, originality, and grammar proved that picture series enhance students' writing competence. Six aspects of writing (language use and vocabulary, ideas, clear and effective, good connectivity, originality, and grammar) improved as presented in the following.

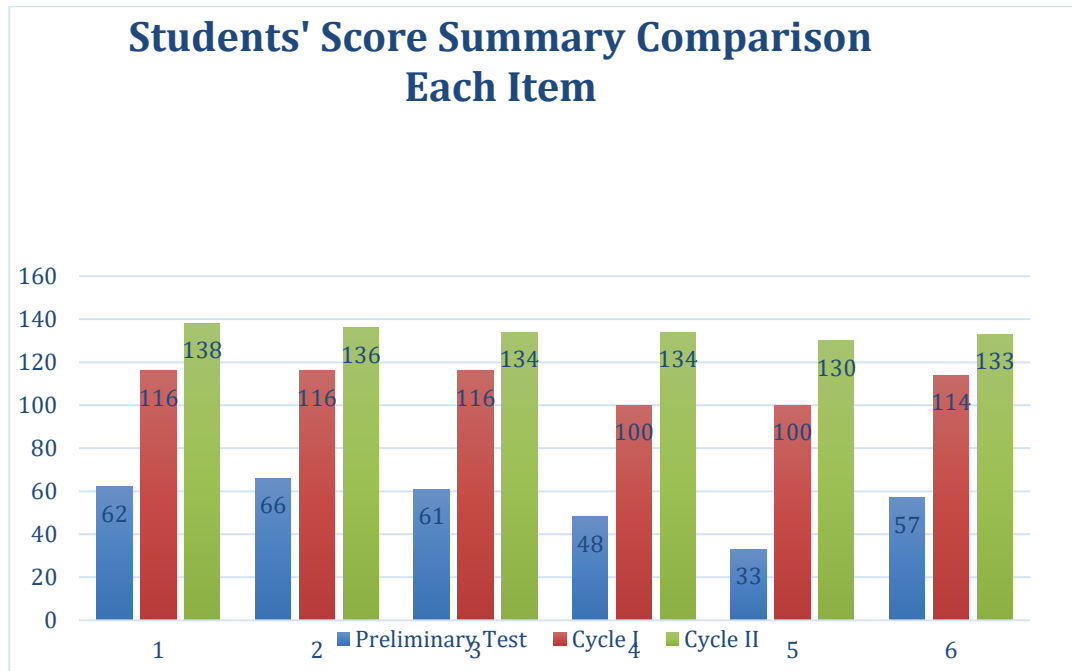


Figure 3. Students' Score Comparison in Each Item

The finding of this investigation is strongly supported by Cristine who performed an experimental procedure to the 8th graders of SMP Negeri 1 Malinau Barat for the 2018/2019 school year and applied pictures series to see the effect of it on the students' writing. The experimental group got a higher score which indicated that picture series succeed in affecting positively to the competence of students' writing related to recount text (Cristine, 2019).

In this current study, the preliminary test showed that the students only got 27.37 on average on their writing test. The score improved to 66.87 after the teacher applied the pictures series strategy. The second cycle is executed because their score is below the target. The last cycle is the second cycle because the students have reached the standard achievement; 75. They got 81.31 on average as proof that their writing ability developed.

Students' improvement in their scores specified that students' writing competence was increased, and picture series were as big possible cause of that improvement. It is supported by several analysis studies that had found gains in writing ability through picture series. First, Aini et al., investigated the impact of the pictures series using action research design on developing students' writing for the students of SMA Negeri 7 Kediri at the

eleventh year. The finding indicated that picture series were significantly affects to the writing competence of students in recount text (Aini et al., 2021).

The application of picture series in writing have been reinforced by Scrivener in Corbett who claims that picture stories since years ago has been used in writing exercises and it supports this current research which uses picture series in improving writing; recount text (Corbett, 2022). Scrivener also supports by continuing that most picture series seem inevitably to involve the practice of the past simple and past continuous which is relevant to this study specifically recount text (Corbett, 2022).

Ekarista examined students' writing of 30 tenth graders of SMA Negeri 1 Barusjahe by using pictures series. The students wrote confidently and they resulted in better writing text. They obtained 70.68 after being treated and only 56 before they were treated by picture series media. It proved that picture series had a significant positive effect in improving the students' writing (Ekarista, 2018).

Khotimah et al applied picture series in the learning process of writing to the third graders of MTs Negeri Rukoh Banda Aceh. The finding presented that students in the experimental class got higher scores than the control class. The students in experimental class got 7.26 on average while the control class obtained 3.28 which indicated that picture series greatly increase students' writing (Khotimah et al., 2017).

A study related to picture series and writing was done by Deviga & Diliyana to 45 students of medical record program in the first semester in one of a higher medical schools in Madiun. They reported that the students increased confidence and felt more successful in their writing ability. They become enthusiastic and concentrate on participating in the learning process. Pictures series also inspire in composing more sentences and the students have lots of ideas to express creatively. They have good motivation in composing recount text. Thus, the picture series application in teaching writing seriously affect students' performance in their work of creating recount text (Deviga & Diliyana, 2020).

Mardiana et al., investigated 30 eight grade students of SMP Negeri 2 Monterado Bengkayan for the 2012/2013 school year with three cycles of classroom action research. The findings discovered that students' scores improved; in cycle I the students gained 53.3 on average. The second cycle improves their writing to 59. The last cycle the students obtained 72.6. It is directed that a picture series are successful media in improving the skill of students' writing mainly recount (Mardiana et al., 2014).

Another study also studied pictures and students' writing improvement. They investigated 35 students at X IPS 2 of one of senior high schools in Yogyakarta for 2020/2021 school year. The findings discovered that picture increases students' writing in terms of recount text by comparing the result of students' scores. In cycle 1, the students

obtained 74.80 while in cycle II, the students gained 83.22 for their writing score (Suryani & Hikmawati, 2023).

Another investigation using a quasi-experimental procedure has been assessed by Wening et al., to students of the SMP 2 at Kawunganten, Cilacap, Central Java. The findings of the investigation presented that learners who were treated by picture series gained better scores than auditory students. The class treated using picture series have better marks of writing than the auditory class (Wening et al., 2017).

Relevant to that, another investigation also examined collaborative action research and reported that students' writing ability developed after 2 cycles by applying picture series in teaching writing in the classroom (Rohaniyah & Mari, 2022).

Shafwati et al., also conducted research by using picture series to the second-semester students consisting of 36 students in SMA Negeri 10 Bandar Lampung for the 2019/2020 school year. The findings showed that students' average score on the pretest was 58.98 and the students gained 70.34 on average for their posttest. It demonstrated clearly that students made an improvement in their writing skills namely in composing recount text (Shafwati et al., 2020).

Those whole studies have brought to light the positive effect of using pictures series in English language classrooms to increase students' writing competence in composing recount text.

CONCLUSION

The key findings from this research revealed that students improved in their competence of writing after the teacher applied pictures series in the learning process. This is proven by comparing students' scores in the preliminary test, after implementing the strategy in the first cycle and the last cycle's scores after did the action and solved the problems that arise during the cycles.

This whole research has brought to light an improvement comparing students' scores from preliminary research, the first cycle to the last cycle. The mean score in preliminary research was 21.37 and increased to 81.31 on average after implementing picture series throughout the cycles. The findings from this investigation revealed that students did have an improvement in their writing ability and achieved the target of this research mastery; 75%.

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