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# Developing Simple Composition Writing Skills Through Interactive Picture Media in Elementary School Students

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**ABSTRACT**

Writing is one of the most fundamental language skills in elementary education, yet it remains a persistent challenge due to passive and teacher-centered instructional approaches. This study aims to improve the simple essay writing skills of third-grade students at SDN 01 Pasirmuncang, Caringin District, Bogor Regency, through the implementation of interactive picture media. In the pre-cycle phase, only 11 out of 36 students (30.56%) met the Minimum Mastery Criteria (KKM ≥ 80), with a class average score of 74.6, indicating critically low writing proficiency. This study employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design following the Kemmis and McTaggart cyclical model, conducted over two action cycles in the even semester of the 2025/2026 academic year. Data were collected through written essay production tests and structured classroom observation sheets, then analyzed using quantitative descriptive and qualitative methods. The results showed a consistent and significant improvement across cycles: the class average score rose from 74.6 (pre-cycle) to 78.7 (Cycle I) and reached 82.9 (Cycle II), while the classical completion rate increased from 30.56% to 61.11% in Cycle I and further to 86.11% in Cycle II, successfully surpassing the 75% success indicator. These gains were driven by the shift from single static images to sequential interactive picture series in Cycle II, combined with individualized desk-by-desk teacher guidance. In conclusion, interactive picture media effectively scaffolds students' writing process by transforming abstract idea generation into concrete, structured visual experiences, thereby improving SPOK sentence construction, spelling accuracy, and writing self-confidence in elementary Indonesian language learning.

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## Introduction

Writing is one of the four core language skills that occupies a central position in elementary school education. As a productive and expressive skill, writing enables students to externalize their ideas, experiences, and observations into coherent written form, while simultaneously cultivating critical thinking, logical reasoning, and communicative competence (Tarigan, 2008). In the context of Indonesian language learning at the elementary level, writing instruction particularly simple essay or narrative composition writing holds strategic importance as a foundation for students' academic literacy development across all subject areas. Despite its significance, writing remains one of the most challenging skills for young learners to acquire, as it demands the simultaneous integration of multiple cognitive processes including idea generation, vocabulary selection, grammatical structuring, and the application of spelling and punctuation mechanics (Nunan, 1991; Graham & Perin, 2007).

A persistent challenge in writing instruction at the elementary level is the prevalence of teacher-centered, monotonous, and overly theoretical pedagogical approaches that fail to engage students actively in the writing process (Nunan, 1991; Harmer, 2004). When writing is taught primarily through direct verbal instruction and mechanical copying exercises, students develop negative perceptions of writing as a burdensome and unenjoyable task, leading to diminished motivation, writing anxiety, and low creative output (Hidi & Boscolo, 2006). This instructional reality was directly observed in the third-grade classroom of SDN 01 Pasirmuncang, Caringin District, Bogor Regency, which served as the research site for this study. Based on pre-cycle diagnostic tests and structured classroom observations, students' simple essay writing ability was found to be critically low. Of the 36 enrolled students, only 11 (30.56%) achieved scores at or above the Minimum Mastery Criteria (KKM) of 80, while the remaining 25 students (69.44%) demonstrated serious difficulties in three key areas: developing coherent story ideas from minimal prompts, constructing grammatically complete SPOK-structured sentences (Subject-Predicate-Object-Adverb), and applying correct spelling and punctuation conventions. Beyond these cognitive challenges, affective barriers including low self-confidence and excessive dependence on direct teacher direction further compounded students' reluctance to write independently.

Addressing these multidimensional writing challenges requires an instructional approach that is not only cognitively scaffolded but also affectively engaging. Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) underscores the importance of structured mediation in extending learners' independent capabilities a principle that directly supports the use of visual media as a scaffolding tool in writing instruction. In line with this, Dale's Cone of Experience (1969) emphasizes that learning is most enduring and effective when it originates from concrete, observable experiences before progressing toward abstract symbolic representations such as written language. Brown (2001) further argues that language acquisition is significantly more effective when learners are provided with active practice opportunities supported by clear visual contexts, as these reduce cognitive load and provide meaningful anchors for language production. The use of visual media in particular has been widely acknowledged as capable of clarifying instructional messages, stimulating imagination, enriching students' mental vocabulary, and facilitating the abstraction of concrete objects into written symbols (Arsyad, 2011; Sadirman, 2009). Mayer's (2009) Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning adds a neurological dimension to this argument, explaining that simultaneous processing of visual and verbal information through dual cognitive channels produces deeper comprehension and stronger memory encoding than single channel instruction alone.

A growing body of empirical research has examined the effectiveness of visual and picture-based media in elementary writing instruction. Sari (2018) demonstrated that visual stimuli significantly contribute to sparking creative ideas and improving written output in elementary students. Rahmawati (2019) found that the use of visual materials

substantially increased students' intrinsic motivation and engagement during the writing process. Pratama (2020) reported measurable improvements in sentence structure quality following the integration of picture media into language learning activities. Wulandari (2021) similarly documented increased student self-confidence and writing initiative when clear visual guidance was provided prior to independent writing tasks. More broadly, Wuryani and Syukur (2018) confirmed through a comparative study that picture series media produced significantly higher narrative writing scores than conventional text-based instruction among elementary school students. Collectively, these findings establish a strong empirical foundation for the effectiveness of visual media in elementary writing pedagogy.

Despite the convergent evidence above, a critical gap remains in the existing literature. The majority of prior studies have employed static, single image, or non-sequential visual media within conventional whole-class instructional settings, and few have adopted a cyclical classroom action research design that systematically tracks improvement across iterative intervention cycles. More importantly, no study to date has specifically targeted the simultaneous remediation of three interrelated writing deficits idea development, SPOK sentence construction, and writing self-confidence through the use of interactive and sequential picture media in combination with individualized personal guidance strategies. This study therefore aims to fill this gap by investigating how the implementation of interactive picture media, designed as a logically sequenced narrative series, can improve the simple essay writing skills of third-grade students at SDN 01 Pasirmuncang across two action cycles. Specifically, this study seeks to: (1) measure the improvement in students' class average writing scores from pre-cycle through Cycle I and Cycle II; (2) evaluate the increase in classical learning completion rates against the 75% success indicator; and (3) describe the qualitative changes in students' idea development, sentence structure, and writing confidence as a result of the intervention. The findings of this study are expected to provide elementary school teachers with an evidence-based, practical, and replicable instructional strategy for developing students' writing competence in a meaningful, active, and student-centered learning environment.

## Method

This study uses a cyclical Classroom Action Research (CAR) design that adapts the action model from Kemmis and McTaggart. The research was carried out in two full cycles, where each cycle integrates four main stages which include: planning, implementing actions (acting), observing, and reflecting. This research was conducted in the even semester of the 2025/2026 Academic Year at the third grade of SDN 01 Pasirmuncang, Caringin District, Bogor Regency. The research subjects involved all third grade students totaling 36 students, consisting of a composition of male and female students with heterogeneous academic ability characteristics.

The data collection procedure was carried out through test and non-test techniques. The test technique was implemented in the form of a written test instrument in the form of a simple essay product worksheet to measure students' cognitive writing abilities based on a specified rubric. Meanwhile, the non-test technique was implemented through an observation sheet of teacher activities and student activity during the action process in the classroom. The indicators of success of the action determined in this study refer to two main aspects: (1) an increase in the average class value classically in each cycle, and (2) the level of learning completeness classically reaching a minimum of 75% of the total number of students who obtained a score above or equal to the individual KKM, namely 80.

### *Cycle I Design*

In the planning stage of Cycle I, the researcher developed a Learning Improvement Implementation Plan (RPP), prepared assessment instruments, and selected single visual image media relevant to the essay material. The implementation steps began with the teacher delivering apperception, introducing simple writing material, posting the image media on the board, guiding students to identify objects in the images, and assigning students to compose short paragraphs independently. The learning process ended with providing feedback on students' writing results.

### *Cycle II Design*

Based on the reflection results from Cycle I, an improved strategy for Cycle II was designed. Researchers developed instruments and modified the use of media into interactive image media in the form of a series of images that have a logical storyline, are brightly colored and larger in size. Apart from that, the guidance technique was changed from classical to intensive personal guidance going around to visit students' desks that had not been completed in the previous cycle, in order to provide emotional encouragement and direct reinforcement of SPOK and punctuation rules.

## Results

Data obtained from the implementation of the pre-cycle, Cycle I actions, to Cycle II showed a significant trend of increasing student learning outcomes in simple essay writing skills through the use of interactive image media.

### *Student Learning Outcomes*

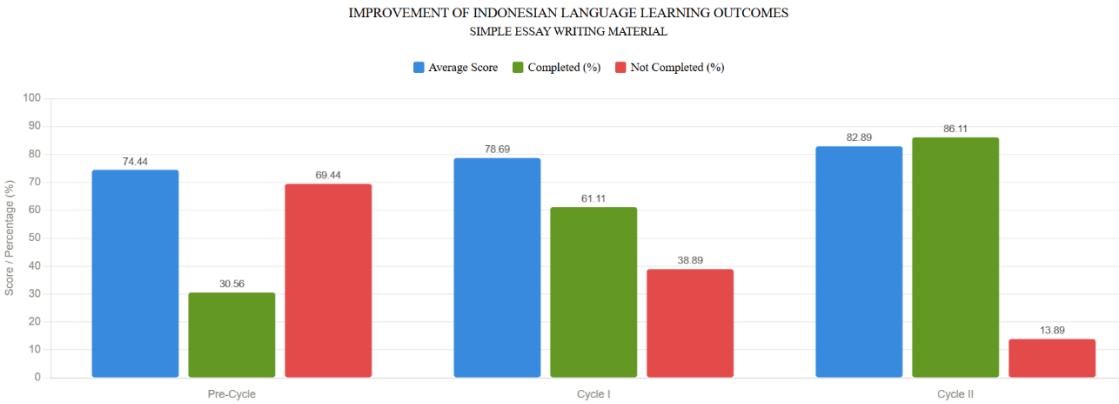
The achievement of students' writing skills scores from each evaluation stage is systematically summarized in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Summary of Grade III Students' Simple Essay Writing Skills Scores

| No. | Learning Outcome Parameter | Pre-cycle | Cycle I | Cycle II |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Classical Mean Value | 74.6 | 78.7 | 82.9 |
| 2. | Completed Students | 11 | 22 | 31 |
| 3. | Classical Completion Percentage | 30.56% | 61.11% | 86.11% |
| 4. | Students Not Completed | 25 | 14 | 5 |
| 5. | Percentage of Classical Incompleteness | 69.44% | 38.89% | 13.89% |

*(Source: Primary Data of PTK Research SDN 01 Pasirmuncang, 2026)*

The data in Table 1 shows that in the initial conditions (pre-cycle) before the implementation of the image media, the classical mastery of students only reached 30.56% (11 students) with a class average of 74.6. After the action was carried out in Cycle I using standard visual image media, the learning mastery graph crept up to 61.11% (22 students) with an average score of 78.7. Despite the increase, the results of Cycle I did not meet the success indicator limit set at a minimum of 75% mastery. After continuing to Cycle II by implementing interactive series of image media combined with intensive guidance around the classroom, the percentage of classical mastery jumped sharply to 86.11% (31 students) with the class average score reaching the highest performance of 82.9. The results in Cycle II were declared to have successfully exceeded the set target indicators.




| | Pre-Cycle | Cycle I | Cycle II |
|---|---|---|---|
| Average Score | 74.44 | 78.69 | 82.89 |
| Completed (%) | 30.56% | 61.11% | 86.11% |
| Not Completed (%) | 69.44% | 38.89% | 13.89% |

Figure 1. Improvement of Indonesian Language Learning Outcomes

The chart above shows the improvement of the average score and student learning completion rate from Pre-Cycle to Cycle I and Cycle II. In the Pre-Cycle, the average score was 74.6 with a completion rate of only 30.56% and a non-completion rate of 69.44%. After the implementation of Cycle I, the average score rose to 78.7, the completion rate increased to 61.11%, and the non-completion rate dropped to 38.89%. By the end of Cycle II, further improvement was achieved, with the average score reaching 82.9, the completion rate rising to 86.11%, and the non-completion rate decreasing significantly to 13.89%. These results demonstrate that the Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach applied across each cycle was effective in improving students' learning outcomes in simple essay writing, with students assessed against a minimum completion criterion (KKM) of ≥ 80, based on written tests conducted at the end of each learning cycle.

## Discussion

This discussion examines the significance of the research findings and situates them within relevant theoretical frameworks and prior empirical studies. The central question of this classroom action research whether the use of interactive picture media can improve the simple essay writing skills of third grade students at SDN 01 Pasirmuncang has been answered affirmatively by the data. The progressive increase in both the class average score (74.6 → 78.7 → 82.9) and the classical completion rate (30.56% → 61.11% → 86.11%) across the pre-cycle, Cycle I, and Cycle II provides robust quantitative evidence that the instructional intervention was effective and that the improvement was not incidental but systematically produced through deliberate pedagogical modifications in each cycle.

From a psychological perspective, the most notable shift occurred between the pre-cycle and Cycle I, where the completion rate doubled from 30.56% to 61.11%. This substantial gain can be attributed to the introduction of visual stimuli, which functioned as an affective scaffold for students who previously experienced writing anxiety. Dale's Cone of Experience (1969) posits that learning is most effective when it begins from concrete, observable experiences before moving toward abstract symbolic representation. In the context of this study, displaying single picture media gave students a tangible reference point, reducing the cognitive load associated with idea generation a process that Nunan (1991) identifies as one of the most demanding sub-processes in writing, alongside grammar and mechanics. When students are no longer burdened by the question of "what to write," their attentional resources can be redirected toward "how to write," thereby improving both sentence structure and writing fluency. The observation

data from Cycle I further support this interpretation, as classroom records noted a marked reduction in student passivity and an increase in the frequency of self-initiated writing attempts compared to the pre-cycle baseline.

The more dramatic improvement in Cycle II where the completion rate surpassed the 75% success indicator to reach 86.11% can be attributed to two compounding factors: the upgrade from single static images to a sequential interactive picture series, and the shift from classical whole-class guidance to intensive personal desk-by-desk assistance. Mayer's (2009) Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning explains that when verbal and visual information are processed simultaneously through dual channels, learning comprehension deepens significantly. The sequential picture series used in Cycle II operationalized this principle by presenting a structured narrative arc that guided students to think causally connecting one image to the next before translating that mental sequence into written sentences. This process directly addressed the three core weaknesses identified in the pre-cycle diagnostic: difficulty in developing ideas, inability to construct SPOK-structured sentences, and lack of confidence. Classroom observation records from Cycle II confirmed that the proportion of students producing grammatically complete SPOK sentences (Subject-Predicate-Object-Adverb) increased notably, with fewer instances of fragmented or incoherent paragraph structures compared to Cycle I outputs. These findings are consistent with Arsyad (2011) and Sadirman (2009), both of whom argue that image-based media enrich students' mental vocabulary, clarify abstract concepts, and provide a structured framework for translating experiences into language.

When situated within the broader body of literature, the findings of this study both corroborate and extend previous research. Sari (2018) and Rahmawati (2019) demonstrated that visual stimuli improve creative idea generation and intrinsic motivation in elementary writing contexts, a pattern that is clearly mirrored in this study's Cycle I results. Pratama (2020) similarly reported improvements in sentence construction following the use of visual media, which aligns with the SPOK-structured sentence gains observed in this study. Wulandari (2021) found that visual guidance increased student self-confidence during writing a finding that resonates with the reduction in student passivity and increased writing initiative observed across both cycles of this research. However, the present study advances beyond these prior works in one important respect: rather than treating visual media as a static instructional tool, this research demonstrates that the *interactivity* and *sequential narrative structure* of the media, combined with individualized real-time teacher guidance, produces a qualitatively different level of learning outcome. The combination of interactive picture series and personal corrective feedback at students' desks allowed teachers to address errors in capitalization, punctuation, and paragraph cohesion at the moment of writing a form of immediate formative assessment that static media-based studies did not systematically incorporate.

From a theoretical standpoint, these findings contribute to the growing body of evidence supporting the integration of constructivist and multimedia learning principles in early literacy instruction. Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is particularly relevant here: the interactive picture series served as a mediating tool that extended students' independent writing capacity by providing structured scaffolding, while the teacher's personal guidance represented the "more knowledgeable other" who facilitated the learner's transition from dependent to independent writing performance. The cyclical improvement across the two action cycles further reflects the self-correcting logic of the Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) action research model, in which each cycle of reflection generates targeted refinements that address the residual gaps of the previous cycle. The successful transition from 61.11% to 86.11% completion demonstrates that this iterative process, when applied with diagnostic precision, can produce meaningful and measurable gains even within a limited timeframe.

Despite the encouraging results, several limitations of this study must be acknowledged. First, the research was conducted in a single classroom at one school (SDN

01 Pasirmuncang), which limits the generalizability of the findings to other educational contexts with different student demographics, resource availability, or teacher competencies. Second, the absence of a control group a structural characteristic of classroom action research means that it is not possible to isolate the effect of the interactive picture media from other concurrent variables such as teacher enthusiasm, student familiarity with the researcher, or natural developmental progression. Third, the study measured writing outcomes primarily through quantitative rubric scores; a more comprehensive assessment incorporating qualitative analysis of students' actual written texts would provide deeper insight into the nature and quality of the improvements observed. Future research should address these limitations by conducting comparative studies across multiple schools and incorporating mixed-method assessments that capture both the quantity and quality of student writing development.

In summary, the findings of this classroom action research affirm that interactive picture media, particularly when presented as a sequential narrative series and accompanied by responsive personal guidance, constitute an effective and theoretically grounded strategy for developing simple essay writing skills in elementary school students. The success of this intervention lies not merely in the visual appeal of the media, but in its capacity to simultaneously address cognitive, affective, and linguistic dimensions of the writing process transforming writing instruction from a teacher-centered, abstract exercise into a student-centered, experience-based learning activity.

## Conclusion

This classroom action research concludes that the implementation of interactive picture media, specifically in the form of a logically sequenced and colorful picture series, is effective and statistically meaningful in improving the simple essay writing skills of third-grade students at SDN 01 Pasirmuncang. The evidence is demonstrated through consistent and progressive improvement across all measured indicators. The class average score increased from 74.6 in the pre-cycle to 78.7 in Cycle I, and reached its peak at 82.9 in Cycle II. Correspondingly, the classical learning completion rate rose substantially from 30.56% in the pre-cycle to 61.11% in Cycle I, and ultimately achieved 86.11% in Cycle II successfully surpassing the predetermined success indicator of 75%. These results confirm that the two-cycle intervention, grounded in the Kemmis and McTaggart action research model, produced systematic and replicable improvements that were not attributable to chance but to the deliberate pedagogical refinements applied between cycles.

The success of this intervention can be attributed to the capacity of interactive picture media to simultaneously address the three core writing deficits identified in this study: difficulty in generating coherent ideas, inability to construct grammatically complete SPOK-structured sentences, and low writing self-confidence. By providing students with a concrete, sequential visual narrative, the media functioned as a cognitive scaffold consistent with Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development that bridged the gap between students' current writing ability and their potential performance under guided conditions. The additional strategy of individualized desk-by-desk teacher guidance in Cycle II further reinforced this scaffolding effect by delivering real-time corrective feedback on spelling, punctuation, and sentence mechanics at the moment of writing. These findings carry important practical implications: elementary school teachers are strongly encouraged to integrate interactive and sequential picture media into Indonesian language writing instruction as a structured, engaging, and evidence-based alternative to conventional text-based or lecture driven approaches, particularly for students who demonstrate difficulty in the early stages of independent writing.

Notwithstanding these contributions, the scope of this study carries inherent limitations that open avenues for future investigation. The single-school, single-classroom context constrains the generalizability of these findings to broader educational settings.

Future research is therefore recommended to conduct quasi experimental or multi site studies that compare the effectiveness of interactive picture media across different school contexts, grade levels, and regional educational environments. Additionally, subsequent studies could explore the integration of digital or technology based interactive picture media such as animated sequences or interactive presentation tools to examine whether digital enhancements further amplify the learning gains observed in this study. Longitudinal research tracking the durability of writing skill improvements beyond the immediate intervention period would also contribute valuable insights to the field of elementary literacy education in Indonesia.

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