

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PICTURE BOOKS ON STUDENTS' NARRATIVE TEXT WRITING SKILLS

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### Abstrak

*Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui apakah terdapat perbedaan kemampuan menulis teks narasi siswa sebelum dan sesudah penerapan media Picture Books, serta mengukur besarnya perbedaan tersebut pada siswa kelas X TKJ 3 SMKN 1 Nanga Pinoh tahun akademik 2025/2026. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kuantitatif dengan desain pre-eksperimental one-group pre-test and post-test. Hasil analisis data menunjukkan bahwa standar deviasi pre-test sebesar 5.26 sedikit lebih tinggi dibandingkan post-test sebesar 5.25, yang mengindikasikan adanya kecenderungan peningkatan konsistensi hasil setelah perlakuan. Hasil uji paired sample t-test menunjukkan bahwa nilai t-hitung (7.317) lebih besar dari t-tabel (2.042) pada taraf signifikansi 5%, sehingga  $H_a$  diterima. Perhitungan effect size menggunakan rumus Cohen's d menghasilkan nilai sebesar 1.29, yang termasuk kategori efek sangat kuat. Berdasarkan hasil tersebut, dapat disimpulkan bahwa terdapat perbedaan skor kemampuan menulis siswa sebelum dan sesudah penerapan Picture Books. Namun, karena desain penelitian tidak menggunakan kelompok kontrol, hasil ini hanya menunjukkan adanya asosiasi dan belum dapat dijadikan dasar kesimpulan kausal mengenai efektivitas metode.*

**Kata kunci :** Picture Books, Keterampilan Menulis, Teks Narasi, Pre-eksperimental

### Abstract

This study aimed to examine whether there was a difference in students' narrative text writing performance before and after the implementation of Picture Books as a teaching medium, and to explore the extent of that difference among tenth-grade students of TKJ 3 at SMKN 1 Nanga Pinoh during the 2025/2026 academic year. The research employed a quantitative method using a pre-experimental one-group pre-test and post-test design. The results showed that the standard deviation of the pre-test was 5.26, slightly higher than the post-test, which was 5.25. A paired sample t-test revealed a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores ( $t_{\text{obtained}} = 7.317$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). Additionally, the effect size calculated using Cohen's d was 1.29, indicating a strong magnitude of difference. While the findings suggest a potential association between the use of Picture Books and improved narrative writing performance, they should be interpreted with caution due to the absence of a control group. The results are indicative, not conclusive, regarding instructional effectiveness.

**Keyword:** Picture Books, Writing Skills, Narrative Text, Pre-Experimental Research

## **INTRODUCTION**

Writing holds a crucial role as a productive skill in the context of English language acquisition, particularly for learners in non-native settings such as EFL classrooms. Instead of simply producing text, students are not only able to convey ideas and thoughts, but also express emotions, experiences, and information in a structured and permanent form. Harmer (2015) emphasizes that writing is more than merely recording spoken utterances into written form; it is a complex cognitive process requiring careful planning, idea organization, and appropriate language selection to construct meaning. Hyland (2019) reinforces this by stating that writing in EFL classrooms serves as a medium to integrate various language skills and as a formal tool for assessing students' comprehensive linguistic competence.

Among the four language skills, writing is frequently considered the most challenging by EFL learners. This skill demands students to not only master linguistic structures but also to logically sequence ideas, develop narrative flow, and select vocabulary appropriate to the context. Hyland (2019) asserts that writing requires mastery of linguistic knowledge, critical thinking, and the ability to organize information into coherent and cohesive texts. Unfortunately, in vocational high schools (SMK), writing often receives less emphasis than other language skills, resulting in students' writing competence remaining far below expectations (Falihah et al., 2022).

This condition is in stark contrast to the fundamental principles of the Merdeka Curriculum, which is currently implemented in Indonesia. This curriculum requires vocational students to produce various functional texts relevant to their vocational fields, including narrative texts. It encourages students to actively explore, create, and express their ideas through meaningful and contextual literacy activities. The government emphasizes activity-based learning as an effective strategy to foster critical, creative, independent, and collaborative learners. However, preliminary observations conducted at SMKN 1 Nanga Pinoh revealed that most students still struggled with writing narrative texts. The difficulties included an inability to develop story ideas, organize sequences, select suitable vocabulary, and apply appropriate language conventions.

This issue indicates an urgent need to integrate instructional media that is effective, engaging, and tailored to the characteristics of vocational students. In line with this, Bakrin, Aunurrahman, & Darajat (2021) concluded that the use of blog media in teaching writing proved effective in increasing students' motivation, engagement, and writing quality in EFL classrooms. This finding highlights the importance of utilizing digital and visual-based

learning media capable of helping students develop ideas, expand vocabulary, and structure texts logically. One alternative instructional medium that can be applied is Picture Books.

Picture Books are illustrated storybooks that combine visual narratives with minimal text, stimulating students' imagination, assisting them in organizing storylines, and enriching contextually appropriate vocabulary. Martin et al., (2018) state that Picture Books combine visual narratives with simple text that can facilitate students in constructing story sequences chronologically. Damayanti (2019) and Goga et al., (2020) further argue that visually based media serves as effective scaffolding to support the writing process, particularly in developing event sequences and describing characters in narrative texts.

Theoretically, the effectiveness of Picture Books in writing instruction is supported by Dual Coding Theory developed by Paivio (2015). According to this theory, the brain handles incoming information using two separate systems one that processes language and another that interprets images allowing learners to encode, store, and recall knowledge more effectively. Paivio believes that when information is presented through both visual and verbal forms, students can more easily encode and reconstruct that information in writing. Empirical evidence from Lefevre (2018) and Damayanti (2019) indicates that Picture Books not only enrich students' ideas but also improve text organization and vocabulary mastery within relevant contexts.

Several previous studies have confirmed the intergration of Picture Books into writing instruction can significantly enhance learners' ability to compose texts. For instance, the study by Ciecierski (2021) reported that Picture Books effectively enhanced storytelling ability, visual literacy, and active student participation in writing classes. Mourão (2023) emphasized that Picture Books serve as effective media to foster intercultural awareness, critical thinking, and integrated language skills in EFL classrooms. Additionally, Damayanti (2019) study demonstrated that Picture Books assist students in systematically developing story ideas and expanding their vocabulary range.

Nevertheless, most of these studies have predominantly been conducted in elementary and junior high school contexts and have largely focused on reading or story comprehension rather than writing proficiency. Despite the growing interest in visual media, there remains a noticeable lack of research that directly investigates how Picture Books influence students' writing development, particularly in vocational school settings, even though SMK students are likewise required to produce written texts for both academic and

vocational purposes. This gap in research highlights the novelty of the current study, which specifically investigates Picture Books in a vocational context.

The outcomes of this research are anticipated to provide English teachers at vocational schools with actionable teaching strategies rooted in visual literacy. In addition to addressing classroom practice, this study seeks to broaden the academic discourse on the integration of image-based media in the context of writing instruction for EFL learners.

Based on the aforementioned background, theoretical framework, and findings of prior research, this study seeks to determine whether the application of Picture Books results in a statistically significant difference in students' ability to compose narrative texts, as measured before and after the treatment, as well as to assess the degree of effectiveness of this medium in enhancing the writing skills of tenth-grade TKJ 3 students at SMKN 1 Nanga Pinoh in the academic year 2025/2026.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study implemented a quantitative approach to investigate how Picture Books influence students' narrative writing abilities. The research adopted a pre-experimental method, specifically using the one-group pretest-posttest design. In this framework, a single group of learners is assessed twice: once prior to the instructional intervention and again after it. As noted by Sugiyono (2018), this design allows researchers to identify differences in learning outcomes before and after treatment, despite the absence of a control group. Similarly, Ary et al. (2018) emphasize that such a design is useful for evaluating the potential effect of a teaching method when random assignment and control groups are not feasible.

In this study, students were first asked to compose a narrative text as the pretest task. Following several sessions using Picture Books as the main instructional media, they completed a posttest task of similar format. The two writing samples were then compared to assess any measurable differences in performance.

The study took place at SMKN 1 Nanga Pinoh in the academic year 2025/2026, involving tenth-grade students. The total population consisted of eight classes with approximately 320 students. The researcher applied cluster random sampling to select one class to represent the sample. Each class name was written on a slip of paper, and a random draw was conducted. The class chosen was X TKJ 3, consisting of 32 students, and served as the research sample.

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A two stage writing test was used, beginning with an initial task to gauge students' foundational skills in crafting narrative texts. The treatment involved the use of a Picture Book titled *Flotsam* by David Wiesner, which contains visual sequences without text. During the treatment, students were guided to observe the pictures and create narrative texts based on the images provided. The goal was to help students generate ideas, organize story elements, and use appropriate vocabulary and grammar in their writing.

The students' writing performance was evaluated using an analytical scoring rubric, which assessed four key aspects: organization, elaboration, language and vocabulary use, and conventions. This rubric was adapted from SBAC (2022) and aligned with the competencies outlined in the Merdeka Curriculum. Before implementation, the test was reviewed and validated by five English teachers to ensure its clarity, relevance, and fairness. The review produced an agreement score above 80%, indicating strong content validity.

To analyze the data, SPSS version 31.0 was employed. The initial step involved generating descriptive statistics such as the mean and standard deviation to summarize student performance. Subsequently, a paired-sample t-test was applied to assess the statistical difference between pre-test and post-test scores following the implementation of Picture Books. Furthermore, Cohen's d was calculated to quantify the effect size and evaluate the extent of the intervention's influence on students' writing outcomes (Cohend et al., 2018).

This method enabled the researcher to assess how visual media could influence narrative writing skills, especially in a vocational school context where learners often face difficulties with text organization, idea development, and vocabulary expression. The findings from the statistical analysis were expected to provide evidence of whether Picture Books could serve as an effective learning medium in EFL writing instruction.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

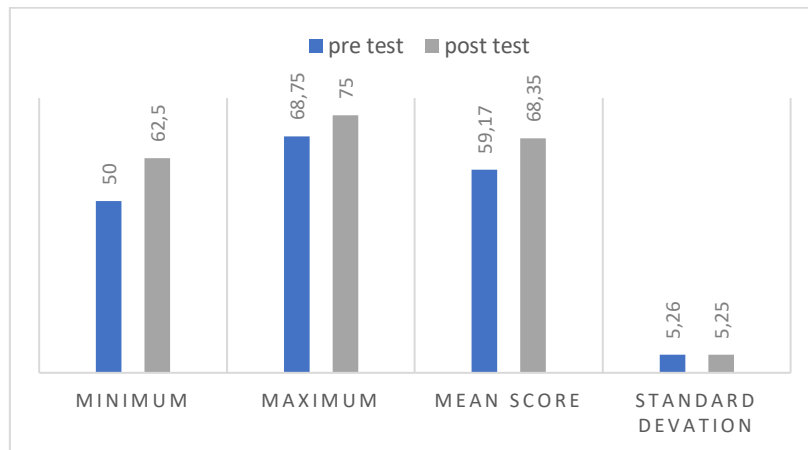
### A. Findings

The dataset comprised two rounds of assessment a pretest followed by a posttest. During the initial evaluation, 32 students produced a combined score of 1,893, with individual scores ranging from 50.00 to 68.75. This yielded an average of 59.17 and a standard deviation of 5.26. At that stage, many learners struggled to construct coherent narratives: limited lexicon and unclear grasp of text structure led some to write only a few disjointed sentences and overlook basic conventions such as punctuation and grammar.

Upon retesting, students' scores rose, spanning from 62.50 to 75.00 and summing to 2,187 across 32 participants. The new mean reached 68.35, with a slightly reduced standard deviation of 5.25. Following the Picture Book intervention, learners demonstrated clearer

command of narrative conventions and vocabulary, producing texts that were both more detailed and inventive. A side-by-side comparison of these descriptive statistics appears in Figure 4.1.

**Figure 4.1 The Comparison of Mean Scores in Pre-Test and Post-Test**

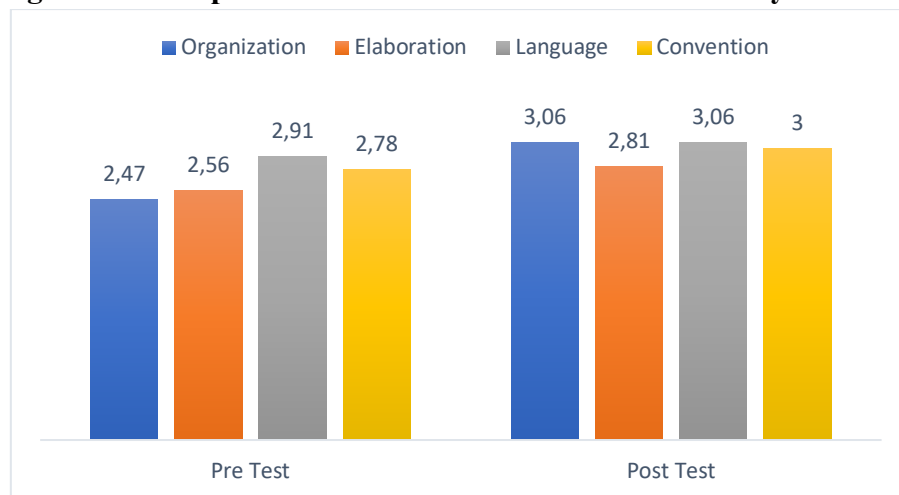


The average score obtained from the pretest was 59.17, while the posttest yielded an average of 68.35. This indicates a measurable increase in students' writing performance following the treatment. The difference between the two means is calculated as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Difference} &= \text{Post-test} - \text{Pre-test} \\ &= 68.35 - 59.17 \\ &= 9.18 \end{aligned}$$

This numerical gap of 9.18 suggests a positive shift in students' narrative writing performance following the Picture Book-based instruction. To explore this trend further, the researcher also examined mean scores across specific assessment indicators.

**Figure 4.2 Comparison of Pre-test and Post-test Scores by Indicator**



As illustrated in the chart, the average scores for each indicator in the pre-test varied, indicating that students demonstrated uneven proficiency across different aspects of narrative writing. The highest mean score in pre-test was Language (2.91) and the lowest

was Organization (2.47), with each indicator having a maximum score of 4. This proved that before the treatment, most students had difficulty in organizing their writing. Many of them did not include orientation or resolution properly, and often skipped basic structure. Elaboration was also weak, as students wrote only brief or vague sentences. Language skills were relatively stronger, though errors still occurred.

After the treatment using Picture Book, all indicators showed improvement. The highest post-test mean scores were Organization and Language (3.06). This indicates that students became more capable of building the structure of narrative text and using appropriate vocabulary. Elaboration also increased to 2.81, suggesting students could expand their ideas better. Convention rose from 2.78 to 3.00, indicating better use of punctuation, grammar, and capitalization.

Each writing aspect was assessed using SBAC rubric on a 1 - 4 scale, with total raw score 16, then converted to a 100-point final score. The increase in all indicators reflects the positive effect of Picture Book media on students' narrative writing development.

Standard Deviation (SD) represents how the scores deviate from the mean. A lower SD means scores are more concentrated around the average, while a higher SD shows a wider spread. The analysis revealed a standard deviation of 5.26 in the pre-test results and a marginally decreased value of 5.25 in the post-test, suggesting that the variability in student performance remained relatively consistent across both assessments. The difference is very small, indicating that students' writing performance after the treatment became more consistent. This implies that not only high-achieving students improved, but also those with previously lower writing skills gained benefits from the use of Picture Book in the classroom.

To determine whether the data were normally distributed, the researcher applied the Kolmogorov Smirnov normality test. According to the Kolmogorov Smirnov test, data are considered normally distributed when the significance value (p) exceeds 0.05. The outcomes of the test are displayed in Table 2 below.

**Table 4.5 Kolmogorov–Smirnov Normality Test Result.**

		Pre-test	Post-test
N		32	32
Normal	Mean	59.17	68.35
Parameters <sup>a</sup>	Std. Deviation	5.26	5.25
Most	Absolute	0.126	0.132
Extreme	Positive	0.103	0.119
Differences	Negative	-0.26	-0.132
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		0.712	0.745
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		0.689	0.634

Furthermore, the effect size value of 1.29 indicates a very large effect. According to Cohen (2018), an effect size above 0.80 is considered large. This result confirms that Picture Books had a highly significant and meaningful influence on improving students' narrative writing skills.

The results of the normality test show that the significance values for both the pre-test (0.689) and the post-test (0.634) exceed the standard threshold of 0.05. This implies that the distribution of both datasets does not deviate significantly from normality. This indicates that the scores from both tests are normally distributed. Therefore, it is appropriate to proceed with the paired sample t-test for further analysis.

A paired samples t-test was employed to compare students' narrative writing scores before and after the Picture Book intervention. The analysis was performed using SPSS version 31.0, and the outcomes are summarized in Table 4.6.

**Tabel 4.6 Paired Samples T-Test Result**

		Paired Differences					T	Df	Sig.(2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair1	Pretest Posttest	23.44	6.64	1.174	21.05	25.83	19.643	31	0.000

The analysis yielded a t-obtained value of 7.317, which exceeds the critical t-value of 2.042 at a 5% significance level with 31 degrees of freedom. Furthermore, the two-tailed significance level ( $p = 0.001$ ) falls well below the 0.05 threshold. These results suggest a statistically significant difference in students' narrative writing scores before and after the Picture Book-based intervention.

To address the second research question concerning the magnitude of this effect, the researcher proceeded to calculate the effect size using Cohen's d formula.

$$D = \frac{M_D}{SD_D}$$

Where:

$M_D$  = Mean of the difference scores



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$SD_D$  = Standard deviation of the difference scores

Based on the data:

Mean Difference ( $M_D$ ) = 9.18

Standard Deviation of Differences ( $SD_D$ ) = 7.10

Then:

$$D = \frac{9.18}{7.10} = 1.29$$

Referring to the effect size benchmarks outlined by Cohen et al. (2018), a value of 0.2 is categorized as a small effect, 0.5 as moderate, and 0.8 as large. The observed effect size in this study, Cohen's  $d = 1.29$ , exceeds the standard threshold for a large effect, indicating a substantial difference in students' narrative writing scores at SMKN 1 Nanga Pinoh following the Picture Book intervention.

While the result suggests a strong association between the instructional method and students' performance, it should be interpreted with caution due to the pre-experimental nature of the design, which lacks a control group and does not eliminate alternative explanations.

This finding aligns with Mourão (2023), who emphasized that visual narratives such as picture books provide powerful scaffolding for writing development in EFL contexts. It also resonates with Hyland's (2019) argument that visual stimuli can activate learners' schema and enhance engagement in narrative composition.

## Discussion

The findings of this study suggest that the implementation of Picture Books was associated with a measurable improvement in students' narrative writing performance. The average score increased by 9.18 points from the pre-test to the post-test, with the latter reaching a mean of 68.35. This difference was statistically supported by a  $t$ -obtained value of 7.317, which surpassed the critical  $t$ -value of 2.042 at the 0.05 significance level. Additionally, the effect size, calculated through Cohen's  $d$ , was 1.29 indicating a substantial magnitude of difference, even in the absence of a control group.

These quantitative outcomes reflect notable progress in various writing components. Prior to the treatment, students' writing was often fragmented, consisting of only one or two unstructured sentences. After being exposed to Picture Books, students were able to write longer texts with clearer plot organization, character descriptions, and temporal coherence.

Many students successfully used time sequence markers such as then, after that, and finally, demonstrating a stronger understanding of narrative structure. These outcomes provide empirical evidence that the treatment was effective in guiding students toward more competent narrative composition.

These findings are consistent with the theoretical framework of Paivio's (2015) Dual Coding Theory, which posits that information presented through both visual and verbal modalities can support learners' cognitive processing and enhance conceptual understanding. In this study, the use of Picture Books may have facilitated dual-channel input, enabling students to better structure and articulate their narrative ideas. Through visual storytelling elements in Picture Books, students were able to conceptualize ideas more vividly, which supported their written expression. This finding highlights the instructional potential of combining visual input with written language in EFL classrooms.

In addition, these findings are consistent with Damayanti (2019), who argued that Picture Books stimulate students' creative thinking and support the development of story elements. Ciecierski et al. (2021) also reported that the use of visual narratives significantly improved learners' engagement and performance in writing tasks. The coherence between this study and prior research further confirms the relevance of visual media in facilitating EFL writing instruction, particularly for secondary-level learners.

Nonetheless, not all students responded equally to the treatment. A few still demonstrated difficulties in elaborating ideas or using accurate grammar. These variations could be influenced by individual proficiency levels or limited writing experience. Therefore, while the findings confirm the effectiveness of Picture Books, they also suggest the need for extended or differentiated instructional support in future implementations. Further research comparing Picture Books with other instructional media could also help determine the most suitable tools for various learner contexts.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the findings from this pre-experimental study, the integration of Picture Books was associated with a notable difference in narrative writing performance among tenth-grade students at SMKN 1 Nanga Pinoh. This observation is supported by the statistical gap between the pre-test and post-test scores ( $t$ -obtained = 7.317;  $p < 0.05$ ), accompanied by a large effect size (Cohen's  $d = 1.29$ ).

These findings indicate a potential relationship between the use of Picture Books and students' narrative writing outcomes, particularly in terms of organization, elaboration, vocabulary, and writing conventions. However, in the absence of a control group, this association should not be interpreted as conclusive evidence of instructional effectiveness.

In light of these results, Picture Books can be considered an effective and pedagogically valuable medium for EFL instruction in vocational high school contexts. They offer visual scaffolding that aids in idea generation and narrative structuring, addressing common challenges faced by learners in developing coherent and engaging texts.

To support broader implementation, English teachers are encouraged to incorporate Picture Books with relevant themes and language levels into their writing lessons. These materials can stimulate students' imagination, support vocabulary acquisition, and promote structured writing habits.

Students, likewise, are encouraged to use Picture Books as learning tools both inside and outside the classroom to foster independent practice in developing narrative skills. Exposure to diverse visual narratives can help them understand plot structure, enhance descriptive writing, and improve coherence in storytelling.

For future researchers, it is recommended to conduct studies with larger and more varied samples, or to apply comparative designs to validate the impact of Picture Books across different educational settings. Additionally, longitudinal studies could be conducted to explore the sustained influence of such media on students' writing development over time, beyond short-term interventions. These efforts will contribute to more robust pedagogical strategies in EFL writing instruction aligned with current curriculum reforms such as the Merdeka Curriculum.

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