



The Role of Sequential Picture Media in Improving Short Story Writing Skills of Fourth-Grade Elementary School Students

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of sequential picture media in improving short story writing skills of fourth-grade elementary school students at SD Negeri 028 Penajam through a descriptive qualitative approach. Data were collected through direct observation and in-depth interviews with the class teacher and selected students. Analysis employed Miles & Huberman's interactive model through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, with validity ensured through source and method triangulation. Findings indicate that: (1) conventional writing instruction lacked adequate visual support, creating barriers to student creativity; (2) sequential picture media effectively served as an imagination trigger by providing concrete starting points for story development; (3) the media significantly improved writing quality in terms of story structure, descriptive vocabulary, paragraph coherence, and character development; and (4) it strongly enhanced and sustained student learning motivation. The study recommends systematic, contextual, and high-quality development of sequential picture media as an integral component of Indonesian language learning strategies in elementary schools.

Keywords: Sequential Picture Media, Writing Skills, Short Story, Elementary School, Qualitative



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1. Introduction

Writing skills represent one of the most complex and strategic language competencies in Indonesian language learning at the elementary school level. Writing is not merely a mechanical activity of putting words on paper; it is a higher-order thinking process that requires students to plan ideas, organize thoughts, construct text structures, and revise their writing in a systematic and communicative manner (Siadari, 2019). Writing ability also serves as an important foundation for mastering other academic skills, as through writing, students learn to think critically, expand their vocabulary, and convey information effectively (Renza, 2022).

However, the reality in the field presents a different picture. Various studies reveal that writing instruction in elementary schools still faces a number of serious challenges. Students frequently experience creative blocks, struggle to construct coherent sentences, and lack confidence in expressing their ideas in written form Hoiriyah (2023). This situation is further compounded by the limited use of innovative and engaging instructional media; most teachers continue to rely on textbooks and student worksheets without providing visual stimulation that could spark student creativity (Nasihah & Cahyono, 2017). A similar situation was found at SD Negeri 028 Penajam. Based on initial observations and interviews conducted in October 2025, it was identified that Indonesian language learning in Grade IV, particularly in the area of writing competence, had not yet been adequately supported by appropriate media. Teachers acknowledged that students frequently appeared hesitant and lacked confidence when asked to write stories, as they had no visual reference or clear narrative framework to guide them.

In this context, sequential picture media emerges as a promising alternative. Sequential picture media consists of a series of images arranged in order to depict the sequence of an event or story, enabling students to visually grasp the relationships between events (Sastafiana, 2024). Research by Azhiza & Yamin (2022) demonstrated that the use of sequential pictures can improve writing skills, including vocabulary use, narrative flow, and inter-paragraph coherence. Based on this background, this study aims to conduct an in-depth analysis of the role of sequential picture media in improving short story writing skills of fourth-grade elementary school students through a descriptive qualitative approach.

2. Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach aimed at obtaining an in-depth understanding of phenomena occurring naturally in the field (Moleong, 2017). The research was conducted at SD Negeri 028 Penajam, which was selected due to its diverse student population in terms of social, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds.

The research subjects were the Grade IV teacher and Grade IV students of SD Negeri 028 Penajam. Data collection techniques consisted of two primary methods: (1) direct observation during Indonesian language learning sessions focused on writing activities, and (2) in-depth interviews with the Grade IV teacher and several purposively selected students. Data were analyzed using Miles & Huberman's interactive analysis model, which encompasses three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation and method triangulation techniques.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 Short Story Writing Learning Conditions in Grade IV

Observations and interviews revealed that short story writing instruction in Grade IV at SD Negeri 028 Penajam remained predominantly reliant on textbooks and student worksheets (LKS) without adequate visual media support. The writing activities provided were largely closed-ended, leaving students little room to develop creative ideas independently. Students were frequently observed appearing confused and uncertain about where to begin when asked to write a story.

From the students' perspective, interview results revealed several common obstacles: students had difficulty determining a theme and beginning a story; students were confused about establishing the sequence of events, resulting in incoherent narratives; limited vocabulary made it difficult for students to express their ideas; and several students expressed boredom with the repetitive nature of writing activities. These findings are consistent with the results of Hoiriyah (2023), who identified that the lack of engaging instructional media represents the primary problem in writing instruction at the elementary school level.

3.2 The Role of Sequential Picture Media as an Idea Trigger and Story Framework

Data analysis consistently demonstrated that sequential picture media plays a highly significant role both as an idea trigger and as a structural framework. First, sequential pictures function as an effective imagination catalyst by providing a concrete starting point from which to build story ideas. Sequential pictures assist students in developing ideas, strengthening their imagination, and constructing sentences in a coherent sequence that follows the depicted story line (Sahno, 2022).

Second, sequential pictures function as a structural framework that helps students understand and apply the components of a short story. The sequential order of images naturally guides students to introduce characters and setting in the opening, develop conflict in the middle, and reach a resolution at the end. Sequential visualization is particularly helpful for elementary school students because they require concrete examples in order to understand story structure before writing (Windari, 2024). Third, sequential pictures help students develop cause-and-effect thinking skills that are essential in narrative writing (Sahno 2022).

3.3 The Influence of Sequential Picture Media on Student Writing Quality

In terms of story structure, student writing produced with sequential pictures demonstrated more organized and coherent narrative flow. The use of sequential picture media enhances narrative writing skills by providing concrete stimuli that enable students to express ideas more easily through writing (Renza 2022). In terms of vocabulary use, students inspired by concrete images tended to employ a richer array of descriptive words.

In terms of character development, sequential pictures that visually depict character expressions and actions helped students construct more vivid and consistent characters. Characters, plot, setting, conflict, and resolution are important short story components that students can more readily master with the assistance of structured visual stimuli (Eliana, 2021). This finding is reinforced by the research of Rozika & Hendratno (2022), who found that learning approaches incorporating visualization prior to writing were shown to significantly improve student writing quality.

3.4 The Role of Sequential Picture Media in Building Writing Learning Motivation

One of the most prominent findings was the role of sequential picture media in building and sustaining student learning motivation. Observations revealed noticeable changes in the classroom atmosphere: students who had previously been passive became more enthusiastic and actively engaged, discussing the pictures with their seatmates and beginning writing activities more quickly and eagerly (Mbasi, 2023).

Interviews with students revealed several reasons why they felt more motivated: the pictures made writing activities feel more tangible; having a visual reference reduced anxiety about facing a blank page; and the freedom to interpret the pictures according to their own creativity provided a sense of autonomy. These findings are consistent with the research of Hanifah & Sukartiningsih (2024) and Dwiningrum & Sukartiningsih (2022), who found that picture-based media encourages students to write fictional stories more creatively and confidently. Sumaryanto et al. (2024) affirm the importance of contextualizing media in writing instruction.

3.5 Limitations of Conventional Media and the Advantages of Sequential Pictures

A comparison between learning with conventional media and sequential picture media yielded striking differences. Conventional media-based learning produced student writing that tended to be brief, unstructured, and lacking in detail. In contrast, learning with sequential picture media produced writing that was longer, better structured, and richer in detail. Its flexible nature also enabled use in both individual and group settings, indirectly training students' critical thinking and communication skills in line with the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum.

3.6 Implications for Learning Practice

The findings above carry a number of important implications for writing instruction practices in elementary schools. First, teachers need to recognize that visual stimuli are an essential pedagogical component. Second, sequential picture media must be developed systematically, taking into account thematic relevance, visual clarity, narrative complexity, and design appeal (Liyawindari et al., 2023). Third, the use of sequential picture media needs to be integrated with learning models that promote active student participation and collaboration, in accordance with the inclusivity principles of the Merdeka Curriculum.

4. Conclusion

Based on observational and interview data from SD Negeri 028 Penajam, several conclusions can be drawn: (1) short story writing instruction in Grade IV continues to face serious challenges due to the dominance of conventional media and the lack of visual stimuli; (2) sequential picture media has proven to play an important role as an effective idea trigger by providing students with a concrete starting point; (3) sequential picture media has contributed significantly to improving writing quality in terms of story structure, descriptive vocabulary, inter-paragraph coherence, and character development; and (4) sequential picture media has played a strong role in building and sustaining student learning motivation.

This study recommends the need for systematic, contextual, and high-quality development of sequential picture media as an integral part of Indonesian language learning strategies in elementary schools. Future research is encouraged to examine the effectiveness of sequential picture media through a development research design that produces validated and standardized media products.

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