## The Use of a Visual Image to Promote Narrative Writing Ability and Creativity

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### ARTICLE INFO

### ABSTRACT

**Purpose**: Second language writing as an inherent part of ELT is no exception. One specific part of second language writing in which visual images can be used is narrative essay writing. Visual images, in this case, comic series and pictures, can be a very useful aid in stimulating students' ideas, creativity, as well as interest and ability in narrative essay writing. Students' writing activities in using

pictures and comic strips are discussed in this study, including students' responses towards this particular topic, as well as the procedures of how these visual images are used. This study is therefore aimed at disclosing how pictures and comic strips, as forms of visual images, can be used to enhance students' narrative writing ability as well as creativity. In writing narrative essays with the help of visual images, students were helped in terms of generating ideas, developing logical and critical thinking, and improving reasoning skills.

**Research Methods:** The design of this study was qualitative in nature. The participants were comprised of 19 *Professional Narrative Writing* students. The data for this research was taken from documents, that is, students' essays and journals which were written after the writing activities were done, interviews with two students, and students' scores. There were also pre-tests and post-tests given at the beginning and the end of the semester, but the scores were descriptively presented. Interviews with two students were also conducted to validate the findings. These students, whose essays were used as analyzed documents, were enrolled in the *Professional Narrative Writing* class of the English Language Education Program, the Faculty of Language and Arts (FLA), Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana (UKSW), Salatiga, Indonesia. The class was conducted in Semester I of the 2017-2018 academic year. The students were fourth-semester students. The *Professional Narrative Writing* course taught students how to be professional in writing narratives.

**Findings:** The findings showed that pictures, as well as comic strips, were very useful in helping students to write narratives. They helped students generate ideas, delve into more creativity, as well as develop their imagination and motivation in writing, though some students experienced difficulties in some aspects like ideas, grammar, diction, and plot.

**Implications for Research and Practice:** The results of the study hopefully can inspire other narrative writing lecturers all over the globe to maximize the use of visual images, including pictures and comic strips. These visual aids can enhance students' writing abilities as well as their creativity. Students taking writing courses can hopefully be motivated to write better narratives.

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## Introduction

In this section, the background of the study, the rationale, the design, a literature review, previous studies, and research questions are discussed.

### Background of the Study

Students' creativity and imaginations in writing should be triggered or encouraged in order to make them produce better writing. In a Narrative Writing class, the help of visual images – in this case, mystery pictures and picture series or sequential pictures in the form of comic strips, mean a lot for students. They are helped at least in one sense: developing their creativity and imagination. Thus, the aim of this study was to describe how visual images in the form of a picture series and mystery pictures helped students improve their narrative writing abilities, as well as expanded their imagination and creativity. From the findings of this research, it was found that students could be very imaginative and creative both in the language and content of the writing. OECD (2018, p.6) claims that

*…to prepare for 2030, people should be able to think creatively, develop new products and services, new jobs, new processes and methods, new ways of thinking and living, new enterprises, new sectors, new business models and new social models… The constructs that underpin the competency include adaptability, creativity, curiosity, and open-mindedness.*

Working collaboratively in small groups, students were successful in creating the plot of the story based on the provided pictures, as well as in other aspects of narrative writing, like coherence, unity, the development of ideas, problem formulation, and problem-solving. As mentioned earlier, there is a famous proverb which states that a picture is worth a thousand words. The meaning is, more or less, that a picture tells a story as well as, if not better than, a lot of written words. Everybody surely agrees with this; one picture can say a lot of things. This is what 19 students of a Narrative Writing class of the English Department of the Faculty of Language and Arts (FLA) of Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana (UKSW) Salatiga, Indonesia, were able to experience. They were given pictures and comic strips with no dialog at all, and they had to tell what happened in the stories in the form of a narrative essay. Most of them enjoyed this activity. They had to work in pairs or in a group of three, and they told their stories based on the comics or pictures given. These students were fifth-semester students who were left behind by their peer students. Their peer students had taken the *Professional Narrative Writing* class in the previous semester.

### Rationale & Design

A significant shift has happened over the last century, from manufacturing to emphasizing information and knowledge services. "*Shared decision-making, information sharing, collaboration, innovation, and speed are essential in today's enterprises*" (Kamehameha Schools Research and Evaluation, 2010, p.1). Trilling and Fadel (2009), as cited in Kamehameha Schools Research and Evaluation, 2010, p 6, claim that today's students should be able to communicate clearly, collaborate with others, think critically, solve problems, be creative, and be innovative. Education has focused on the essences of communication, like speaking, writing, and reading, but the demands of

social relations and a global economy in this century call for a more diverse set of communication and collaboration skills. This becomes the underlying reason of the rationale of this study; that students of this century, including the ones learning English in English Language Education Program (ELEP), who later on are expected to be teachers, should be able to master these twenty-first century skills.

Comic strips, as a form of a picture series and mystery pictures, are a good media to use in narrative writing. Using these teaching aids in classroom activities can improve students' creativity and imagination in writing. From the student participants' journals, it can be clearly seen that they found this activity challenging. It successfully activated their imaginations and creativity. In our everyday lives, whether we realize it or not, we deal with narratives. They may not be in the form of a written essay, but they take the form of spoken narratives. When we talk about something that happened the other day, the previous week, month, or year, we use narratives. It is not something new in our lives. In this research, it is argued that to write narratives creatively and imaginatively, visual images need to be used. The design of this study is basically qualitative in nature, which is then backed up with some descriptive statistics. This will be discussed in length in the Methodology section.

*Review of Literature*

The use of pictures as an aid in teaching is not something new. Allford (2000, as cited by Rayo, 2015), claims that since the Renaissance era, Latin has been learned by using pictures. By the 1950s, pictures were widely used in ESL classrooms. The purpose was to stimulate learners' interest and reinforce materials in a textual form. Randle (n.d., as cited from Arnheim, 1964) stated that every picture and visual image that we perceive is a statement of thought. How skillful we are in cultivating our perception skills will determine how well we can understand the meaning from a visual image. Arnheim first coined the term 'visual thinking strategies' (VTS). VTS is a teaching strategy which is used to encourage critical and creative thinking by using visual images. There are three questions which are carefully worded to ask about an image during a group discussion to foster critical thinking. They are: *What's going on in the picture? What do you see which makes you say that? What more can we find?* The purposes of these questions are to construct meaning and understanding from the image. Silva, Santos and Bispo (2017) mentioned that comics have existed for more than 40,000 years, which began with cave paintings. They further revealed that there are several purposes of using comics in the educational field. First, they can be used as a teaching aid, and second, they can be applied to improve students' speaking abilities.

Rayo (2015) further stated that pictures require no or just a little explanation. As cited by Spanley and Peprnik (1967), Rayo (2015) explained that there are three guidelines for utilizing pictures in the classroom. First, they must be clear in showing a cause and effect. Next, pictures should contain examples of the actions that the authors want to emphasize. This is to avoid misinterpretations. The relationships between the elements in the pictures should also be clear so that the sequence of actions makes sense. Third, pictures should contain a break in the action to introduce an

element of surprise. By fulfilling these picture requirements, it can make pictures become successful aids for language learners.

Rayo (2015) claims that there are many benefits of using picture stories in the area of language learning. Among them is that it makes students engaged in learning when pictures are used. Besides that, pictures can also be an aid in the transfer of fictional stories to personalized life experiences. Pictures can be used with various degrees of difficulties. Pictures can also become a medium for students to express their thoughts and feelings. In line with Rayo, Aschawir (2014) postulates that the more interesting and varied the encouragement through visual aids, the faster and more effective the learning will be. Pictures, still according to Aschawir (2014), contribute to learners' interest and motivation. They also have positive effects on the sense of the context of the language and specific stimulus. Aschawir also introduced different kinds of pictures. They were wall pictures, wall charts, sequential pictures, flashcards, and board drawings.

Asrifan (2015) reinforced this idea. He mentioned that there are two types of materials used for language learning, visual and non-visual. He stated further that, "*A visual material offers an attractive and stimulating framework for writing practice and has great potential as an aid to develop writing skills since it provides both contexts and stimulation of a variety of activities. One of the visual materials is pictures*" (p. 245). Picture stories can help students in generating ideas and organizing those ideas in writing. Picture stories can also effectively stimulate students' imaginative ability. A similar insight also comes from Aschawir (2014). He stated that one of the main characteristics of a writing program is that learners should be given opportunities to communicate through writing, and also to simply enjoy writing. In building up learners' writing skills, a picture series can be used as a good medium or visual aid. Imastuti and Suparno (2012), as cited from Wright (1989), also claim that there are five roles in writing. First, pictures can motivate learners. Second, they contribute to the context in which learning takes place. Next, pictures can describe something in an objective way. The fourth one is that pictures can cue responses. Finally, pictures can stimulate and provide information in storytelling.

The use of pictures to help students write better is commonly known, especially in the area of narrative writing. Picture usage is a common practice in a performance-based assessment in writing. The next question may be: What is a performance-based assessment? From the name, one can guess that it is a kind of assessment that is based on performance. A performance-based assessment measures students' ability to apply skills and knowledge which are learned from a unit or units of study. The task challenges students to use higher-order thinking skills or create a product or complete a process (Chun, 2010, in Hilliard, 2015). Schweizer (1999) has a similar idea, mentioning that in writing tests, the pictures that are used should be the ones which foster the writing process. The underlying reason is that the quality of writing is affected by the pictorial stimulus which will be used to produce the writing (Schweizer, 1999). Hyvärinen (2007) also mentioned that a narrative is, as cited from Propp (1968 & 1984) about Aristotelian idea, a good tragedy which has a beginning, a

middle, and an end; while open, conversational, or artistic narratives emphasize a clear sequence of events.

There is a theory which states that both visual and verbal information are used to represent information (Thomas, 2014). According to this theory, human beings process and represent verbal and non-verbal information in separate yet related systems. Both visual and verbal information can be used to represent information. This theory was developed by Paivio (1991, p. 158) in the 1960s, and is known as the *Dual Coding Theory (DCT)*. DCT predicts that:

> *Word concreteness and imagery value should be the central variables in cognitive and educational tasks, which are related to meaning. Concreteness and imagery value have been measured empirically by ratings of the ease with which words, sentences, or larger units of text evoke a visual, auditory, or other mental picture (imagery value), or the degree to which they refer to tangible objects with concrete referents (concreteness) (Clark & Paivio, 1991).*

This theory also states that "mental representations" are related with both verbal and non-verbal symbolic modes. These mental representations retain the features of the concrete sensorimotor events, which they are based on. The verbal system contains "visual, auditory, articulatory, and other modality-specific verbal codes". In contrast, non-verbal representations include *modality-specific images for shapes*, for example, a chemical model; *environmental sounds* like a school bell; *actions*, for example, drawing lines or pressing keys; *skeletal or visceral sensations related to emotion* (e.g., a clenched jaw or a racing heart), and other non-linguistic objects and events (p. 151-2).

Paivio and some other researchers support the importance of imagery in cognitive operations. The human brain processes visual as well as verbal information in completely different ways; one is for the visual images, the other is for verbal language. Clark and Paivio (1991, p.162, p. 166) mentioned that DCT is concerned with the interaction between individual differences and the use of imagery in text comprehension. This theory of DCT assumes that people vary in both their ease as well as skill in which they use non-verbal and imaginative processes. They also stated that both imagery and concreteness play an important role in memory for a text. From their research, it was found that the subjects who received imagery remembered better than those who did not.

Beckley (2014) studied the relationship between visual and written narratives in student engagement. In her study, she collected data from direct observations of students, teacher notes, rubrics, student surveys, and student projects. She found that providing students with a variety of methods – especially image making - will make students produce stories which are richer, more elaborated, and engaging.

Related with visual images, Grainger (2004, p. 199) indicated that there are some key features of a visual image. They are the line, color, action and movement, size and location, and symbolism. Line and color are two basic elements of a picture, Grainger claims. On these two elements, more complicated features are built. Color is very important in one sense; that is, in creating the world as we expect readers to see it. Illustrated pictures also have action, movement, and the passing of time. However, artists describe the characters in a frozen form. Arhnheim (in Grainger, 2004, p. 204) indicated that sometimes the frozen form of the characters in the illustrations created by artists do not exist in the real world. It is the ability of the artists to describe the rapid movements of the characters' limbs in the motionless pictures that matter.

Readers or writers' perceptions and interpretations of the characters are influenced by the settings and locations where the characters are placed. Even the same picture may trigger different interpretations for different people. High, low, left, and right may show significant meanings. Certain symbols may be present in pictures which bring certain meanings. Dark clouds, rain, and night, for example, may symbolize sadness and a gloomy situation.

As summed up from the theories above, visual images can be used in the educational field. Two of them are pictures and comic strips. These two non-verbal representations can function as a media to help learners of English write narratives better. As stated earlier, we deal with narratives in our daily lives. We cannot avoid it. This is not exempt from the area of academic life, especially in the English language major. Students, as well as teachers, should deal with narrative writing. There are many strategies that teachers can use in order to motivate students to write better. Using pictures and a comic series is one of the strategies worth trying in narrative essay writing. Besides giving students visual images, pictures and comics also can develop students' motivation and eagerness to write.

Gutiérrez, Pueelo, and Galvis (2015) support this idea, saying that "*Through narrative writing, students organize ideas and experiences creatively and imaginatively by combining linguistic, pragmatic, and sociolinguistic competencies.*" Incorporating pictures into language teaching and learning surely has positive impacts on learners' communicative skills. These teaching aids can help teachers to make language contextualized by "going out of the classroom walls".

*Previous Research Reviewed*

As mentioned above, the use of visual images in education is not something new. Recently, studies in language learning involving the use of visual images have been done by some researchers. In 2012, Imastuti and Suparno from UNS Solo Indonesia conducted a study on the use of a picture series in teaching writing in order to help students solve their problems in writing. They argued that there are five roles of pictures in writing. First, pictures can motivate students to take an active part in the writing process. Secondly, pictures help bring the 'world' into the classroom. Students will get visualization from pictures. Next, pictures can describe something objectively. The fourth benefit is that pictures can lead students' responses to a question. The last advantage is that pictures can provide information.

From their study, Ismatuti and Suparno (2012) concluded that their respondents, students of Public Junior High School (SMPN) 2 in Ampel, Indonesia, improved in their motivation after being given a picture series for their writing activity. The second conclusion was that there were improvements in students' writing skills as they wrote more detailed information, included longer paragraphs, had better organization, used sufficient supporting sentences, and could also change present tense into past tense. In short, these student respondents could write narrative texts better.

In the same year, 2012, Ayuningtyas and Wulyani also conducted action research on the eleventh graders of Public High School (SMAN) 1 in Srengat Blitar, Indonesia. They wanted to know if the ability of the eleventh graders in writing narrative texts could be improved by using picture sequences as instructional media. They obtained data through two observation checklists, questionnaires, and the students' writing products. The findings showed that there were good improvements in terms of students' attitudes and writing products. There is a need to conduct a similar study on tertiary-level students with participants of different age groups and English mastery level, which other pieces of research have not covered yet.

Aschawir (2014) also carried out a similar kind of research on second-semester students at the English Department of the Faculty of Letters of UMI, Indonesia. The experimental group was taught using a picture series, while the control group was taught without a picture series. Five writing components were emphasized, including content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. From his research, it was found that the results of the use of a picture series increased experimental group's post-test writing scores.

Another research was conducted by Gutiérrez, Puello and Galvis, in 2015. The research was done with ten students in the experimental group, and ten students in the control group. The experimental group was taught with a pictures series technique and a process-based approach. In contrast, the other group was taught using the process-based approach only. From their research, it was found that the picture series technique which was applied to the process-based approach was suitable for EFL students of the eighth grade. They could improve their narrative writing skill in English. Besides that, students' motivation to practice their narrative writing was improved.

Rayo (2015) also contributed to the findings in this area. He examined the effectiveness of the use of picture stories to improve verb tenses in narrative writing of adult English learners. There were 36 participants from China. The results showed that there were no significant improvements in the experimental group. He found that these learners preferred the simple past tense form over other verb forms in their narrative writing.

Silva et al. (2017) also reported some research done in the past, dealing with the use of pictures. Results showed that the use of comics could enhance competence development, innovation, and flexibility in writing. Besides, it could reduce the gap between theory and practice. It also helped students to be more critical in writing. Jensen et al. (2007) conducted a study using drawings in management learning which

involved the use of comics as a way of representing knowledge. This study found that comics can help students to express and represent professional situations. In 2009, some high school physics teachers introduced Einstein's idea of using pictures to the students. The teachers thought that this teaching strategy could become a source of motivation to present words and images (as cited from Caruso & Freitas, 2009). Two years later, in 2011, Rosetto and Chiera-Macchia reported on the use of comics in teaching Italian. This activity helped students in developing memory, analysis, and reasoning skills. This also decreased their anxiety and encouraged their creativity. In 2012, Kiliçkaya and Krajka conducted research to identify whether students liked to create comics to facilitate their learning process. The findings showed that 24 out of 25 students claimed that they enjoyed participating in this activity.

With the aims of enriching the previous theories in the use of visual images in ELT and completing the existing literature in narrative writing using pictures, this study was thus conducted. This present study will confirm and complete the previous findings. The special addition lies in the additional visual materials used besides sequential pictures; that is, mystery pictures. Pedagogically, the results of this study are expected to provide new horizons and insights for writing teachers at any level about the use of visual images to enhance students' writing skills as well critical thinking and creativity.

### Research Questions

The main focus of this paper is to describe and reveal how pictures and comics as a form of visual images can be used as a technique to teach students to write narrative essays. Basically, there are two questions to answer in this paper:

1. *How can pictures and comic strips be used to enhance students' creativity and abilities in narrative writing?*
2. *What are students' perspectives on the use of pictures and comic series in narrative writing?*

### Research Setting

The research was conducted in the first semester of the 2017/2018 academic year. Nineteen students of the English Language Education Program, the Faculty of Language and Arts, UKSW, Salatiga, Indonesia, became the participants of this study. They were fourth-semester students.

## Method

### Research Design

The design of this study was basically qualitative, which was supported by quantitative data. A qualitative design was chosen as the main model of this research, mainly because in this kind of research, participants' perspectives are given priority (Cresswell, 2009). The underlying reason why participants' perspectives were given an important place in this research was that this study was *progressive* in nature, not

an *experimental* one. The bottom line was that the participants' perspectives constructed the social world, and their voices for changes were highly valued and very much appreciated; therefore, there were no right or wrong answers to a particular problem. What the researcher describes and what the participants say are both of equal importance (Halliday, 2002). The participants could freely express their opinions and feelings, including satisfaction or dissatisfaction with a certain treatment given to them. The perspectives could vary according to some factors, like cultures.

This research portrayed individuals – in this case, Narrative Writing class students - as they were building their social worlds; that is, the imaginative worlds they were building in their minds that later on were reflected in their narrative essays. As a researcher, I tried to build my own social world through my interpretation. Participants' perspectives, which represented human behavior, were then analyzed and interpreted in elaborate descriptions. This research could also be called a *narrative* study because all the data was interpreted in a "thick description", and later on presented in the form of narratives (Halliday, 2002).

As seen from the involvement of the research participants, this research can be called *participatory* and *interpretive*. It interprets human behavior from participants' perspectives, and the emphasis is on rich data collection and thick descriptions (Burns, 2003). Cresswell (2009, p. 9) reinforces this idea, mentioning that qualitative researchers tend to use open-ended questions so that participants can express their views. The researcher tries to understand the context of the participants through information gathering done personally. Quantitative data from the students' scores from the pre-tests and the post-tests were also used.

The data collection was done throughout Semester I/2017-2018 Academic Year, that is, from September till the end of November 2017. Students were given three days to finish one piece of writing. Data in the forms of essays, journals, and interviews were analyzed qualitatively. Meanwhile, data related to scores were quantitatively analyzed. The visual tools used in this study were five mystery pictures and two comic strips which represented sequential pictures. The selection of the pictures was done in collaboration with another lecturer who was teaching a parallel class in the same semester. Themes of the pictures were found based on a thought that those pictures had to give students ample opportunities to develop their imagination and critical thinking. At the beginning and the end of the semester, students were given pre- and post-tests. This was done to see whether the aspects of their narratives improved or not. The aspects graded were ideas, voice, diction, and convention. During the semester, they were asked to write two essays based on the pictures given, two email complaints, and one personal statement. Involving two kinds of data, qualitative and quantitative, the study can be considered as having a mixed-method design. About this mixed-method research, Gall, Gall and Borg (2007, p. 32) defined it as: "*A review of quantitative studies about a particular phenomenon combined with a review of qualitative studies about the same phenomenon that can provide richer insights and raise more interesting questions for future research.*" Due to the limitation of time and space, this paper only focuses on qualitative data.

According to Gall et al. (2007), in a one-group pre-test and post-test design, three steps are taken. The first step is the implementation of the pre-test. Second, treatment is given to all the participants. Last, the post-test is implemented. In this study, a pre-test was given at the beginning of the semester, while a post-test was given at the end of the semester. In a one-group pre-test and post-test design, the absence of a control group is not a problem. It does not constitute a threat to internal validity since the researchers can make a good estimate of the results of the pre-test as well as the post-test because of extraneous factors. A one-group pre-test and post-test design is the most justified design when extraneous factors can be estimated with a high degree of certainty or can be assumed to be minimal or non-existing.

During the narrative writing using pictures, there were two cycles. First, students were given two sequential pictures, and they were allowed to choose one sequence, each of which consisted of four comic pictures. They then worked in small groups, creating a narrative story based on the pictures. For the second step, students were given five mystery pictures. Just like the previous stage, they were given freedom to choose one among five pictures and asked to write a narrative based on the selected picture. Students' essays were read and graded based on certain grading rubrics. Journals were also qualitatively analyzed. After doing those two assignments, students were asked to write journals about their opinions and feelings in writing using pictures.

About qualitative research, Leung (2015) supported this idea, saying that "*The essence of qualitative research is to make sense of and recognize patterns among words in order to build up a meaningful picture without compromising its richness and dimensionality.*" From Leung's statement, it can be clearly seen that in qualitative research, words are important as through words, a meaningful world is built. Leung further stated that similar to quantitative research, qualitative research seeks answers to questions of how, where, when, why, and who. In qualitative research, however, there is no need to assess any work numerically and statistically. Everything is described, explained, and elaborated through words.

### Research Participants

All the data for this research was derived from documents, in the form of students' essays and journals. Altogether, there were 19 students who attended this Narrative Writing Class, Group A, in Semester I of the 2017-2018 academic year. They were all selected for this research. Before taking this class, they had previously taken *Creative Writing* and *Procedural Writing* courses. These students were late in taking this *Narrative Writing* class due to grammar classes that they had to repeat.

### Research Instruments

The instruments used in this study were pre-tests, post-tests, interview protocol, as well as pictures and comic strips, which students had to base their essays on. Besides those two things, journals were also used to get students' perspectives on the use of pictures and comic strips.

### Research Procedures

In detail, here are the steps of the procedures. At the beginning of the semester, on August 29, 2017, the students did their pre-tests. The post-tests were given at the end of the semester, on November 28, 2017. The scores were presented descriptively. For the narrative writing task of using pictures, there were two cycles which were explained afterward. First, I searched for the right pictures and comic strips without dialogs for the students to complete. After getting the right pictures from the right artists, I assigned students to work in groups of two or three, so they could start brainstorming their ideas about the pictures and the comic strips (they had to choose one comic strip and one picture). After imagining what had happened in both the pictures as well as comics, they began writing their stories in collaboration with others. The same stages happened when students had to write a narrative essay based on a mystery picture which they selected out of five pictures. Journals on students' opinions on the use of pictures and comics were also used as data in this research, besides interview results.

### Validity and Reliability

Regarding the validity of qualitative research, Leung (2015) claims that the validity of qualitative research deals with the appropriateness of tools, processes, and data. There must also be several methods which are adapted to add validity, like first and second triangulation, and well-documented materials. This present study used appropriate tools of data collection like direct observations and a close look at students' journals and essays.

Reliability of qualitative research refers to the replicability of the process of research and the results as well (Leung, 2015). While getting original data from the participants, researchers have to verify with constant comparisons, the accuracy of the data related to the form and context. The scope and analysis of data should be comprehensive and inclusive. Reference to quantitative aspects should be made possible. This study also has a comprehensive and inclusive data analysis.

Another aspect of qualitative research is generalizability. Leung (2015) stated that the generalizability of qualitative research is usually not expected. This kind of research is meant to study specific phenomena in a certain population or ethnic group. However, Leung (2015) mentioned that there is a pragmatic approach to assess the generalizability of qualitative research. This includes systematic sampling, triangulation, constant comparison, documentation, and the multi-dimensional theory.

All data, including students' pre-tests, post-tests, essays, journals, and interviews were analyzed qualitatively. Pre-tests were given at the beginning of the semester, while post-tests were given at the end of the semester to see in what aspects students improved. Two pieces of students' essays written collaboratively, one based on comic series and the other on mystery pictures, were also graded based on certain aspects. Students' journals and interview results were then conducted to support the findings from tests and essays.

*Data Analysis Procedures*

All the qualitative data derived for this research were then interpreted in the form of *narratives*. The focus of the interpretation was the participants' narrative essays and perspectives. The improvements of several aspects were then seen from students' narrative essays, in terms of ideas, creativity, and fluency of ideas. The aspects graded from the essays included their ideas, the writers' voice, (reflected in dialogs in the essays), word choice or diction, and grammar and mechanics. The grading sheet is attached as an appendix.

The participants' behavior and motivation in this series of activities were also observed from what they said in the journals as well as interviews with two students who were randomly selected. The data were then interpreted in a "rich description". After the findings were presented, the data were then qualitatively interpreted. Finally, conclusions were drawn.

In the discussion section, the process of the essay writing based on visual images from the beginning till the end, the strengths, the main challenges, as well as the solutions to the problems are discussed. Some samples of students' completed dialogs in comic strips and students' completed essays are also presented. Students worked in collaboration with one or two other classmates in a small group. After working hard to make the outlines of their essays, they began writing with their group members, and they submitted the drafts to the lecturer.

## Results

Presented below are students' essays which were written collaboratively with their peers. Based on comic strips with empty bubbles and mystery pictures, they worked in small groups of two or three students. Here their creative and imaginative minds could be seen. They managed to develop their writing based on the visual images given.

The visual images used in this study were comic strips with sequences, or usually called as sequential pictures, and five mystery pictures, which were single pictures. For the comics, two comic strips without dialogs were given to the students. The first one showed a picture of a car speeding up and a policeman on the right side of the street, sitting on his motorbike. Next, the policeman was chasing the car. In the third picture, the car stopped, and the policeman got off his motorbike and approached the car. The last picture showed a group of clowns sitting closely next to each other in the small car.

The second comic strip was about a boy and his father. In the first picture, it was shown that a boy was squatting near his father who was making something from wood. Next, the boy was conversing with his father about a wooden board. In the third picture, the boy was talking to his friend, and the boy was sitting on a small wooden wagon. In the fourth picture, both the boy and his friend were enjoying the ride. However, in the fifth and sixth pictures, the boy and his friend began to lose control of

the wagon, as the ground started to slope downwards and the wagon was speeding up uncontrollably. The seventh picture showed the two kids being thrown hard and jumped into a valley. In the last picture, they landed hard on the ground headfirst.

For the mystery pictures, there were five choices for the students. The first one was a picture of an older sister with her younger brother climbing a cliff and they were at the top. The second picture was of a girl running into a mysterious room with stairs going down into the dark room. The next one, picture 3, was of two men in a kind of treehouse, with water under it. The fourth one was a picture of a man writing in the dark and it was raining. He was at the top of a cliff. The last picture, picture 5, showed a woman/ man (unclear because of the storm) walking alone in the snow. Presented below are samples of students' collaborative essays based on the visual images they got.

**Text 1: Group 1's Completed Collaborative Essay Based on Comic Strip 1 (Unedited)**

WAGON'S ACCIDENT

*An accident could be happened to anyone who was careless. One day, there was a naughty little boy called Bob. He came to his father, Edward. He felt curious about what his father did and then he asked him, "What's that? What are you doing?" His father answered, "This is a wagon. I'm just fixing it."*

*Bob felt more curious about it and wanted to try it. An hour later, his father took a nap. Besides, Bob took the wagon secretly and brought it to jungle. He met a tiger, Toddy. He asked Toddy to play together. Toddy agreed and said that he would control the speed through the speedometer in his hand. Bob sit on the wagon and Toddy started push the wagon while running, so that it could go fast.*

*They enjoyed that game, but they worried about the speed of the wagon went faster and faster. Toddy looked to the speedometer and he shocked because the speed was out of limit. They became panic and didn't know what they had to do. They afraid and screamed. Finally, they fell at the brink and laid down on the ground. Bob said, "Huft! That was awful." Then Toddy replied, "Yes, absolutely awful and my speedometer is broken."*

*The accident made their body sick and the speedometer and the wagon was broken. We can conclude that we have to be careful while doing something.*

**Text 2: Group 2's Competed Collaborative Essay Based on Comic Strip 2 (Unedited)**

THE CLOWNS

*A policeman chased a small car full of unexpected people. Long time ago, there was a funny accident in Noting Hill. It was a little town in London that popular with the high discipline traffic system. There was a firm cop at that time, Mr. Danish. He has been working as a cop for about fifteen years. He was really obedient to the rules.*

> *One day, he looked a small car drove very fast. He said, "Hi, the ugly small car, stop please!" However, the car didn't stop and went faster than before. He chased the car by his motorcycle. He screamed out the car and said, "Stop! I will kill you by my hand if you don't stop right now!"*
>
> *After that the car stopped immediately. He walked to the car and said, "Stop little kid! Or I will slap your face! Get out of the car!" He knocked the drive's window and the driver opened it. He shocked after looked who the passenger is.*
>
> *They were not naughty little kids, but they are group of clowns. The driver said to him, "What's up? Seriously? You want to slap twenty of us? Our face one by one?" Mr. Danish astonished and just said, "Oh, no!". From that story we can learn that we have to think first before we take an action.*

From Text 1 and Text 2, it was clear that the students really worked hard to make the best stories that they could, based on the comic strips given. They worked collaboratively with other friends in small groups. After such conflicting moments with their peer students in the groups to decide the plot of the story, they came up with interesting ideas for their essays. This is one of the benefits of this activity: students practiced and sharpened their soft skills while they were negotiating meaning and finding the best solutions for any disagreement.

**Text 3: Students' Collaborative Narrative Essay 1 Based on Mystery Picture 5 (Unedited)**

> *A Choice*
>
> *Once upon a time, there was a man named Edward. He was a kind person, patient, loyal, and always help each other. Edward had a beautiful wife named Diane. He loved her so much with all of his heart, but Diane betrayed him. When Edward knew that his wife betrayed him, Edward tried to stay and kept struggle for his relationship. Edward always be patient in facing his wife. Overtime, as a husband that had been betrayed by the woman that he loved, he realized that every patient had limit. Because of that, he should chose a bitter choice for a better life.*
>
> *Edward and Diane were the best couple in their city. Edward was a kind person and Diane was one of the most beautiful women in the city. Everyone who looked them will be felt jealous, because they were really harmonious and romantic couple. Everything had changed when Diane met another man named Alfonso. She fell in love with Alfonso, "Oh God! I falling in love with Alfonso and wanna live with him, but how about my husband? What I should says to him ?" Diane thinks. Edward tried to be patient and defend his relationship, but Diane still chose to left him. Edward's heart was so broke and he did not have other choises except to let Diane go. He realized that this is the most bitter choice that he ever made, "I hope this is a better choice for myself," he said. Edward felt that he should*

*did something to forgot his problems, "I need some vacation to refresh my mind," he thinks. So he decided to roam places that he never knew to found his happiness again.*

*Edward strated his new journey to forgot about his problems. He just started his journey alone, without someone accompenied him. Sometimes he felt so lonely. His eyes looked so empty and right now he was so thin. He lost his spirit of life and did not eat anything for around a week. He just drank the drinks that he brought from his city. However, his drinks was not enough for his stock. In this condition, he was in a desert and felt thirsty, "I need some water. Who can help me?" he whimpering. At the same time, he also looked at the sand at the front of him. He imagine and wonder to himself, "Is there any hope for me?" he tried to not cried. It was a hard journey for edward, but he still tried to walking even though it was so hard to kept his two feet on the ground. Luckily, he finally found a city. Edward felt saved and the citizen in that city were so kind. Edward think that it was a perfect city to started his new life. Then, he built a new house in the city and made good relations to the other citizens. In that city, Edward became rich as the greatest sword maker in the city. It was made him so grateful.*

*Edward realized that his choice to leave his wife was the best for him, "maybe it is bitter, but I know it is better," he said. Edward so grateful for the result that he had got now. He tried to not hate Diane, he wish that she could be happy on her new life with her new man. Edward wanted to forgot about his internal problem with Diane, and he forgave her, "everyone has a choice and Diane too," he said in his heart. Right now, Edward was so happy with his new life. He also enjoyed his new activity as a sword maker. Edward realized that God had the best for him.*

*We should chose a painful choice for a better life. No matter if it so hard, no mater if it made you hurt. We should made a choice, because a choice was an important aspect in life. We should brave in made a choice, and remember that life is a choice.*

## Text 4: Students' Collaborative Narrative Essay 2 Based on Mystery Picture 3 (Unedited)

*One day, Jenny and Jerry would go to Raja Ampat Island with a boat. They have been prepared all of the things that they need for a long time. They were so excited about it. Unfortunately, there was an accident. Suddenly, the storm has come and hit the boat into the secret island. They were so sad, but Jenny had a good idea to build a tree house. They were working together to make a tree house. Usually, people like to work independently. However, working with partners is better.*

*There are several things that they needed to build a tree house but they have not got it in the secret island. They needed some woods, nails and tools to build the tree house. They have tried to search anything that they need around the secret island but they could not find anything. Jenny said, "I have not got anything that we need to build the tree house." Jerry answered, "I think, we can use the tree and the grass." So, they used the tree and the grass to build a tree house."*

*The process to build a tree house was difficult. There were some things that happened to them. The wind was very heavy at that time, so they struggled to build the tree. Also, they*

> *found the difficulties to build the tree house, but they could not solve the problem. Jenny said "build the tree house is very difficult, so I cannot do that." She did not continue on making the tree house and stopped helping Jerry on making the tree house. However, Jerry did not complain about that. The thing that he wanted was the tree house must be finished so both of them could stay longer in the secret island.*
>
> *Jerry was building the tree house with a spirit. However, Jerry built the tree house alone by himself and Jenny just looked at him. At first, Jenny did care about it anymore. She gave up because she thought that the tree house would not be finished. On the other hand, Jenny felt pity to Jerry because Jerry made the tree house alone. Finally, Jenny helped him to build the tree house. They were building the tree house together. They did it. The tree house looks beautiful and amazing.*
>
> *In conclusion, they are willing to help each other and they will sacrifice for one another whenever necessary. They promised to each other that they would always be together in any cases. At last, friends will always help you and they will not let you down no matter what the conditions are. A good friendship starts from how you can accept the positives and the negatives sides of your friends.*

Students had to work hard in a collaborative team, thinking creatively and logically. Text 3 and Text 4 were two sample essays that they wrote based on the pictures given to them. They could make up such interesting stories with very good moral lessons. These students to my surprise were able to create such an interesting plot for each story that they chose. It is another benefit of this activity, developing creativity and critical thinking, which are two among other twenty-first century skills, being able to communicate clearly, collaborate with others, think critically, solve problems, be creative, and be innovative (Binkley et al, 2012).

In this section, the detailed stages of the picture-based narrative writing will also be discussed. The stages of writing narratives using pictures and comic strips are as follows. First was the selection of pictures and comics. After selecting the desired pictures and comics, students began interpreting them in groups. For the third step, students had to imagine what was happening and complete the comic strips which had no dialogs. After doing this fourth step, they had to proceed to the fifth step, which was making an outline of their essay. If they were confused, they could consult with the lecturer. Finally, they were ready to write their first draft. After they received input from the lecturer, they did revisions and submitted their final draft. These steps are described in Figure 2.

From the sample texts above, which were written by the students in collaboration, it can be seen that students' creativity and imagination developed throughout the learning process. The proofs can be seen from students' pre-tests, post-tests, journals and interviews results, all of which were presented in this study. In doing the picture-based activity, students were supposed to think creatively, logically, and imaginatively to produce a sensible piece of writing. These were the strengths of this writing process. Despite the grammatical errors that they still made, these students

showed that they were able to write narrative essays well. Not only did they have to deal with the plot of their essay, but also how interesting the story was. When done collaboratively, this work became lighter. Besides learning the skills of writing narrative essays, students also learned about soft skills, working in collaboration with others, delving into their imagination, using their creativity, applying logical thinking, and synthesizing those ideas together with other group members. Figure 1 shows the flow of stages in this research. Most of the time, students worked collaboratively with their peers in writing the narratives based on the pictures given.
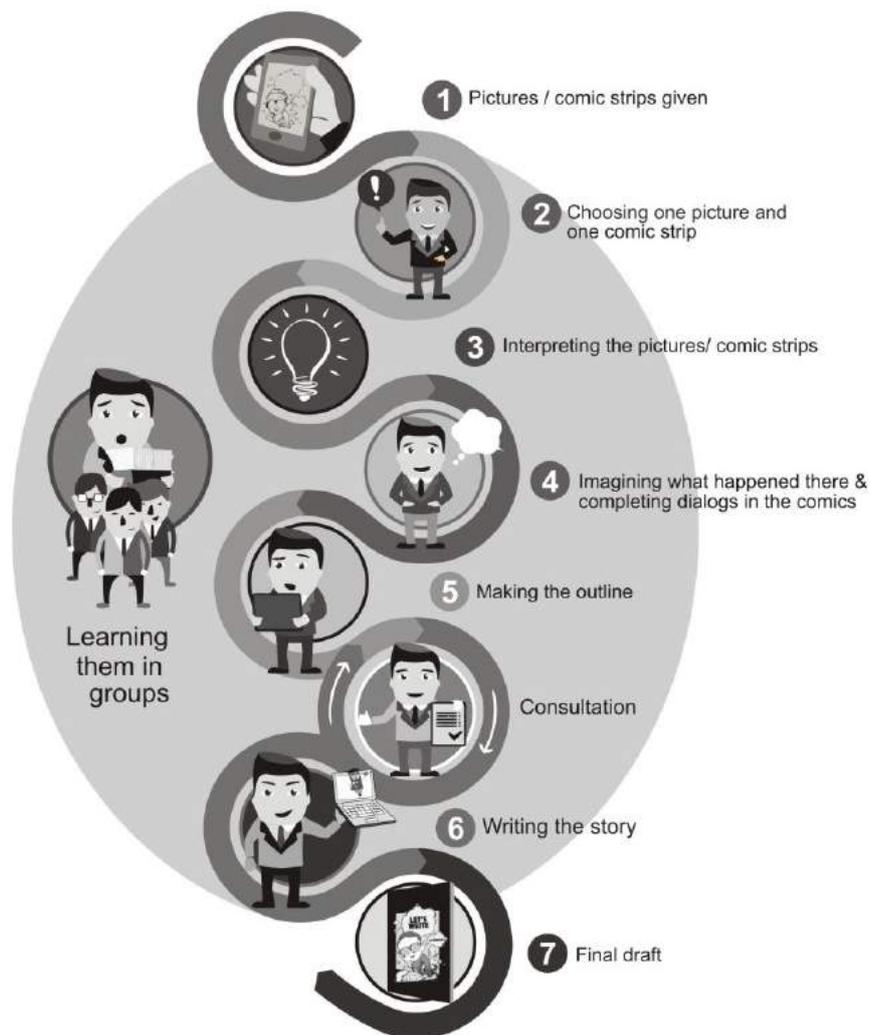


**Figure 1.** Infographic Picture of the Procedures of Narrative Essay Writing Based on Pictures/ Comic Strips

No matter how good a process is, there must be some drawbacks. The same case happened with this narrative writing using visual images. The main problem encountered by the students was when they did not have anything in mind. They were blank and just looked at the pictures as well as the comic strips with no ideas at all. Thanks to collaborative work, because when some students did not have any ideas in their minds, other group members could help them by sharing what they had in mind.

From students' journals, which were submitted after these series of activities were finished, various responses were given. Mostly, out of 19 students taking the class, 15 students said positive things about it. They mentioned that writing a narrative essay based on pictures or comic strips was enjoyable, fun, interesting, and challenging. It developed their imagination as well as creativity. This activity also improved their grammar and vocabulary. They were in a way 'forced' to use various adjectives to describe a situation or a person. However, due to space limitations, opinions from only five students who were randomly selected are discussed. Described in excerpts 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 are some statements from these students.

Excerpt 1: Student A's Journal on Picture-Based Stories

> *It made me play with my imagination more than usual, but we worked in a group of two. It was easier than working alone. My friend helped me to make the dialogue into a story. When we played with our imagination, it increased our new vocabulary and our creativity. It also helped me to improve my writing skills with the correct grammar.*

Student A seemed to enjoy this activity, even though this student was not a talented writer. She got help from her friends, which was very meaningful for her. Different from Student A, Student C felt that she enjoyed this activity mainly because she had to play with her imagination and try hard to make her story interesting for people.

Excerpt 2: Student C's Journal on Picture-Based Stories

> *It's a great idea and I like this activity. It forces you to use your imagination before you write a story from the picture that you've chosen. You must see the pictures first and choose your favorite one. There is no explanation what the picture is about. You have to imagine the right story for your picture, and after you decide it, write down your story idea. This activity is really fun and challenging. The pictures are interesting also contain a mystery. All you need here is just an imagination and creativity to make it good and people will be interested with your story.*

Different from his peer students, Student F emphasized that creativity was the key to doing this exercise. For him, this activity was not a difficult one. This can be seen from Excerpt 3.

Excerpt 3: Student F's Journal on Picture-Based Stories

> *Learning narrative writing through games is very fun and makes learning become easy to understand. For example, during the picture-based story activities we had to make a topic sentence based on the picture. By looking at the picture, we could arrange the story. I think that was easy to do for everyone. I understood a lot by using this method because the games could make me think creatively. I liked this method and I think it was enjoyable for everyone in this class. I think that is my opinion towards my impression about learning narrative writing through games.*

What this student meant by 'games' was completing the comic strips with dialogs. As mentioned earlier, two comic strips were given to the students. One was a series of pictures of a policeman chasing a speeding car, and the other was a picture of a man fixing a stroller for his kid. Besides comic strips, mystery pictures were also given to them. The next opinions presented here come from Student I and Student O.

Excerpt 4: Student I's Journal on Picture-Based Stories

> *I was very cheerful to work together with my team members. I felt very happy taking this class. Gladly, I kept praying to calm me down, practicing and studying hard on the difficult parts or when I lacked in doing those parts. Someday, I will become a better writer in the future.*

Student I felt excited and happy taking this class, mainly because her close friends were in the same class she was in. That was why she had no problems in adjusting herself with her peer students in the group as well as in interrelating ideas with them. Another student, Student O, mentioned that this activity made her defeat her boredom in the classroom. Being a student who was good at fashion design, Student O was basically an imaginative and creative student. This activity reinforced her being an imaginative and creative person.

Excerpt 5: Student O's Journal on Picture-Based Stories

> *In my opinion, using pictures in the Narrative Writing class was very interesting and also very helpful to me. This was interesting because these pictures made me not feel bored. These pictures also made the*

*atmosphere more fun. The use of pictures was also very helpful to me because from the pictures, I came to know about the picture of the story that I would make. These pictures also helped to provoke my imagination when I was writing. So in my opinion, these pictures were very important in the writing class. In addition to being fun, it helped reduce my boredom and also increased my creativity in composing a story.*

Apart from the students who enjoyed the learning process using pictures and comic strips, there were also students who did not enjoy this activity fully. Only three students mentioned the drawbacks of these activities. Student A, Student H, and Student P mentioned several things which made them uncomfortable about this, even though they also admitted that they enjoyed the class. Here is Student A's statement about it: "*Sometimes I felt confused with the pictures entitled the kid. I thought it made me confused because in the picture there was a tiger, who was the boy's friend*" (Student A's statement in Journal 1).

Student H emphasized the difficulties that she faced. It dealt with interrelating her ideas with her friends': "*Sadly, when I made the story, I often found some difficulties. The difficulty that I often found in writing the story was to combine my ideas with my friend's and make the story interesting to read.*" (Student H's statement in Journal 1). The last student who did not really like writing based on pictures or comic strips was Student P. She admitted that actually it was fun. However, she felt tired because she felt that she was not a creative person:

Excerpt 6: Student P's Journal on Picture-Based Stories

*For me it's fun sometimes but sometimes it's tiring because I'm not the typical person who is creative enough to make a story. It needs a long time for me to think really hard about the idea, plot, and characters for the story. Besides that, it's a bit complicated for me to put the grammatical structures in writing. I feel that every writing that I make still has some wrong grammatical structure.*

From these three students who did not really like the idea of narrative writing based on pictures or comic strips, there is at least one thing in common. They all admitted that the activity was fun and challenging. However, their limitations like their fear of lack of creativity, difficulty in interrelating ideas, and confusion in making the plot became obstacles for them to enjoy all the class sessions.

From interviews with two Narrative Writing students, in January 2018, Student B and Student M who were randomly selected, it was revealed that they faced some challenges writing narratives based on the pictures given. Student M mentioned that the main difficulties lied in language problems and coherence in writing the story. She and her friends tried to seek help from the lecturer, as described in the excerpt below:

Excerpt 7: Student M's Journal on Picture-Based Stories

> *Sometimes, when the students were trying to produce an essay based on the picture, they found some difficulties. For example, they had already written an essay well, but the grammar was wrong. People that read that essay maybe could not understand, because the sentences were very confusing. The second one, when the students were writing an essay, they needed conjunctions to connect one sentence with the other sentence. Sometimes the students could not choose the right conjunction. If the students found a difficulty like that, they could meet with the lecturer to ask advice about an essay in how to use good grammar and conjunctions.*

Student B also mentioned that he encountered difficulties in grammar, especially when there were flashbacks and progressive plots in the same essay. He also got confused with the tenses to be used, and the diction he should use. Being stuck in finding ideas was something which made him frustrated. To solve these problems, Student B tried to use a thesaurus and consulted the lecturer to confirm his sentences. Besides that, he tried to analyze the pictures carefully, "*I tried to analyze and imagine the pictures in real life. I also tried to connect the pictures with films or animations which I saw before. Finally, I tried to share my ideas with my partners in my group.*"

In summary, it can be concluded that pictures can be used as an effective teaching aid in narrative writing. This is in line with what Carry (2016) mentioned, in that students need visual images to help them read and understand texts. This is also supported by Asrifan (2015), asserting that to boost students' writing abilities, students need to be creative. Teachers, therefore, need to create an environment which allows for students' creativeness, so that students can get involved deeply into the writing process, and have both passion and compassion to write. They will have no fear or doubt and will not think that they cannot write. From the quantitative data, these findings say a lot about students' improvements in their narrative writing scores, which will be discussed in detail in the next part.

## Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

In this part, the process of the essay writing based on visual images from the beginning till the end, the strengths, the main challenges, as well as the solutions to the problems are discussed. First, the answers to the two research questions are discussed. The first question was: *How can pictures and comic strips be used to enhance students' creativity and ability in narrative writing?* It was answered in the previous section. Starting from the first stage, students worked in pairs or groups of three. They brainstormed ideas, made outlines, wrote the first drafts, and revised the drafts together. Each group was given the task to write one narrative essay based on one comic strip, and one narrative essay based on a mystery picture. The results show that

these students could be very creative and imaginative in their ideas, as reflected in their essays.

The second question was: *What are students' perspectives on the use of pictures and comic series in narrative writing?* Out of 19 students in the Professional Narrative Writing class, only three students had mixed feelings of both excitement and confusion or tiredness. Their main problems were a lack of ideas, confusion in creating dialogs, and tiredness of thinking too hard about the characters, plot, conflicts, and dialogs in the stories. The first and second research questions have thus been answered.

As previously mentioned, similar studies have been done in the area of narrative writing using pictures. Gutiérrez et al. (2015) conducted experimental research on 20 EFL ninth graders in an urban area of Colombia. After those 16 meetings, the experimental group improved in their narrative writing. Using pictures helped these students increase their vocabulary usage. They could utilize words that explained and evaluated the pictures. The students in the experimental group outperformed the ones in the control group.

Two other researchers, Ismatuti and Suparno (2012) also conducted research on junior high school students in Solo, Indonesia. They concluded that their respondents, SMPN 2 Ampel students, improved in their motivation after being given a picture series in their writing activity. In the meantime, Aschawir (2014) also did a similar kind of research on second-semester students of the English Department of the Faculty of Letters of UMI, Indonesia. From his research, it was found that using picture series increased experimental group members' post-test writing scores.

Another piece of research was also conducted by Rayo (2015). He examined the effectiveness of the use of picture stories to improve verb tenses in the narrative writing of adult English learners. There were 36 participants from China. From his study, the results showed that there were no significant improvements in the experimental group. He found that these learners preferred using the simple past form over other verb forms in their narrative writing. Another researcher, Asrifan (2015), conducted an experimental study on 78 senior high school students to find out whether the use of picture stories could improve students' writing abilities or not. The findings showed that using pictures enhanced students' abilities to write narrative compositions at Public Senior High School (SMAN) 3 in Pare Pare, South Sulawesi, Indonesia.

Ayuningtyas and Wulyani (2012) conducted action research on the eleventh graders of Public Senior High School (SMAN) 1 in Srengat Blitar, Indonesia. They wanted to know how the abilities of eleventh graders in writing narrative texts could be developed using picture sequences as instructional media. Data were obtained through two observations checklists, questionnaires, and the students' writing products. The findings showed that there were good improvements in terms of students' attitudes and writing products. Silva et al. (2017) also reported several studies involving the use of pictures in different fields of study like physics and language. Pictures were found to be beneficial in facilitating learning. Students became motivated and more creative. This present study confirms the previous

findings that pictures can enhance students' creativity and critical thinking in tertiary-level writing.

There were some similarities between this present study and research conducted by Gutiérrez et al. (2015), Ismatuti and Suparno (2012), Aschawir (2014), Ayuningtyas and Wulyani (2012), and Rayo (2015). All these studies dealt with the same thing, that is, the use of picture series in narrative essay writing. This was the red line of both: all the pieces of research made use of pictures as an aid to boost students' creativity and abilities in writing. This present study was different from the previously conducted ones in terms of the design. This present study was qualitative in nature, while the others were quantitatively implemented. The educational levels of the participants in all these different studies were also different. In the above-mentioned studies, all the participants were from the secondary level, high school students; while in this study, the participants were tertiary level students.

As seen from the pre-tests and post-tests which were given to the students, there were improvements in students' writing. From the pre-tests, the lowest score was 40, while the highest was 87.5, and the average was 54.21. In the post-tests, the lowest was 52.50, the highest was 92.5, with an average of 70.66. It meant that the difference between the average of the pre-test and post-test results was very big, which was 16.45. However, there were three students whose pre-tests and post-tests did not have big differences; they were Student I, Student P, and Student R. Further research needs to be done to determine the reasons behind this fact.

**Table 1**

Students' Pre-test & Post-test Scores

| NAMES | Pre-test | Post-test |
|-------|----------|-----------|
| Student A | 52.50 | 70.00 |
| Student B | 60.00 | 82.50 |
| Student C | 57.50 | 77.50 |
| Student D | 70.00 | 82.50 |
| Student E | 50.00 | 80.00 |
| Student F | 40.00 | 80.00 |
| Student G | 45.00 | 55.00 |
| Student H | 65.00 | 92.50 |
| Student I | 87.50 | 90.00 |

Table 1 Continue

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Student J | **40.00** | **60.00** |
| Student K | 50.00 | 57.50 |
| Student L | 50.00 | 70.00 |
| Student M | 55.00 | 70.00 |
| Student N | 45.00 | 55.00 |
| Student O | 55.00 | 65.00 |
| Student P | 57.50 | 60.00 |
| Student Q | 50.00 | 80.00 |
| Student R | 50.00 | 52.50 |
| Student S | 50.00 | 62.50 |

The student participants in this study also faced some challenges as they revealed in their journals, and they tried hard to solve their problems. In general, participants admitted the benefits and enjoyed this picture-based writing activity. They mentioned that it improved their imagination and creativity, as well as their vocabulary and writing skills. This activity was also fun, interesting, and engaging.

Besides the benefits of writing narratives using pictures, there were some drawbacks too. The main difficulties were in interrelating individual ideas with those of other students. Besides that, some students, especially those who felt that they were not creative enough, admitted that they faced difficulties in finding ideas, creating the plot, and developing the characters. They also got confused in writing the story. Thus, this activity was tiring for them and increased their anxiety. In overcoming those challenges, students received help from their peer students in the group.

This study acquired data from various methods: students' texts, journals, scores, and interviews. From all the data derived in this study, several conclusions can be drawn. First, visual images are needed to build up students' imaginative minds. Visual images here are comic strips and pictures. They are there to facilitate students in writing narratives. These visual images can be used to stimulate students to be creative and think logically.

Second, comic strips with empty bubbles and mystery pictures are good media to enhance their creativity in narrative writing and to sharpen students' soft skills as well. Students need to train their soft skills while cooperating with their peers. Expressing ideas, refusing one's idea politely, interrelating one's own idea with others' ideas, showing disagreements, suggesting new things, and other skills involving special social abilities need to be sharpened.

The last conclusion is that the lecturer should help these learners boost their creativity, imagination, and logic. Two types of media that can be used are pictures and comic strips. Hopefully, this piece of research can be useful for other lecturers of narrative writing, giving a new horizon for lecturers in giving performance-based assessments as well as sharpening students' soft skills. Future researchers can conduct similar research on other writing courses, like Procedural Writing or Creative Writing. They can also delve into other types of pictures more deeply, or ask students' opinions on what types of pictures they like best as an aid for them to write narratives.

What was impressive from these fifth semester students was how they could be creative and imaginative in their writing. I suggest that future researchers conduct research on narrative writing using more kinds of images to help motivate students to be creative and think critically, including pictures and videos. Other designs of research can also be applied like experimental or action research, as conducted by Gutiérrez et al. (2015), as well as Rayo (2015), and Ayuningtyas and Wulyani (2015).

Further research on collaborative work can also be conducted involving more participants. Future researchers can also carry out similar studies on different types of writing, namely *Creative Writing* or *Procedural Writing,* to see how effective the teaching can be when aided with pictures or other forms of visual images. There are some possible implications in the narrative essay writing teaching and learning process. Students' imagination and creativity will be built up and enhanced when they are tasked to write with the help of pictures. Lecturers can also maximize these students' abilities to transform what is in their minds into a written form.

### Acknowledgments

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**Appendix A: The Six-Trait Rubrics (Torres, P., n.d.)**

| Ideas | Voice | Word Choice | Conventions |
|---|---|---|---|
| **5** The narrative tells about an unforgettable experience. The details make the story truly memorable. | **5** The writer's voice creates an unforgettable experience for the reader. | **5** The writer's exceptional word choice captures the experience. | **5** Punctuation and grammar are correct. The writing is free from spelling errors. |
| **4** The writer tells about an interesting experience. Details help create the interest. | **4** The writer's personal voice creates interest in the story. Dialogue is used. | **4** Specific nouns, strong verbs, and well-chosen modifiers create vivid pictures and express clear feelings. | **4** The narrative has a few minor errors in punctuation, spelling, or grammar. |
| **3** The writer tells about an interesting experience. More details are needed. | **3** The writer's voice creates interest in the story. More dialogue is needed. | **3** Specific nouns, strong verbs are used. Modifiers are needed to create a clearer picture. | **3** The writing has several errors in punctuation, spelling, or grammar. |
| **2** The writer needs to focus on one experience. Some details do not relate to the story. | **2** A voice can usually be heard. More dialogue is needed. | **2** Strong nouns, verbs and modifiers are needed to create a clear picture. | **2** Some errors confuse the reader. |
| **1** The writer needs to focus on one experience. Details are needed. | **1** The voice is weak. Dialogue is needed. | **1** General and overused words do not create a clear picture. | **1** Many errors make the writing confusing and hard to read. |

**Appendix B: The Comic Series**

Comic strip 1: The Clowns
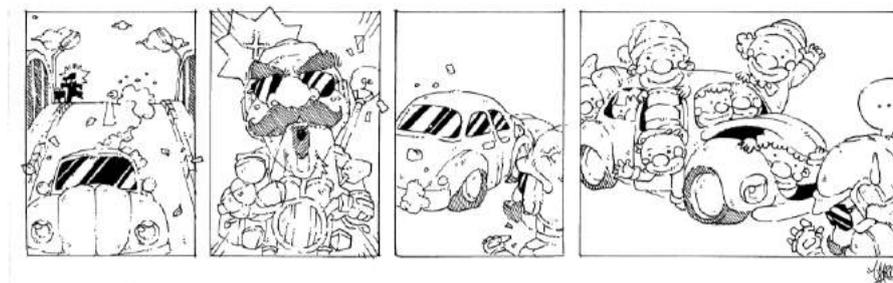
Comic strip 2: The Stroller
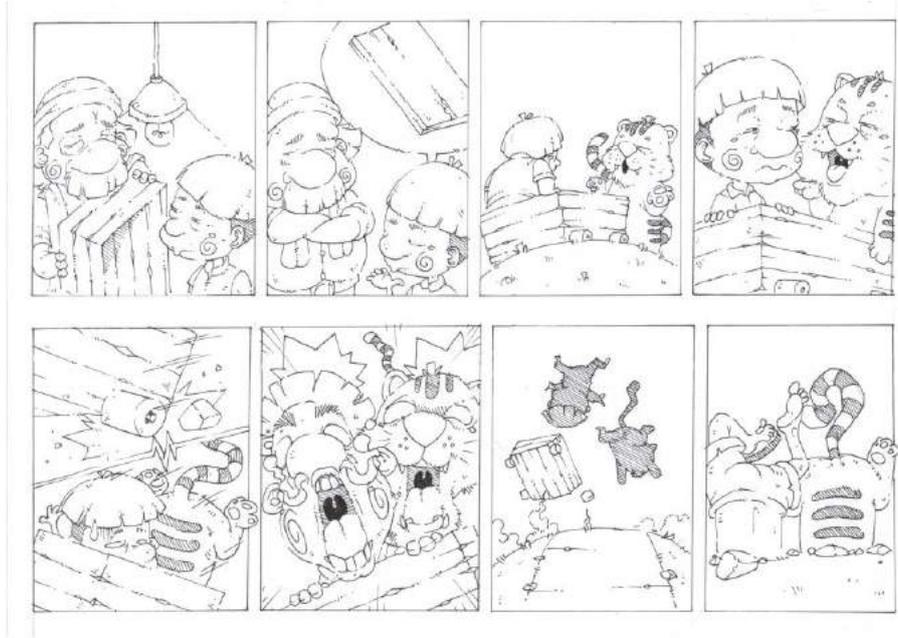


**Appendix C: The Mystery Pictures**

Picture 1: On a Cliff
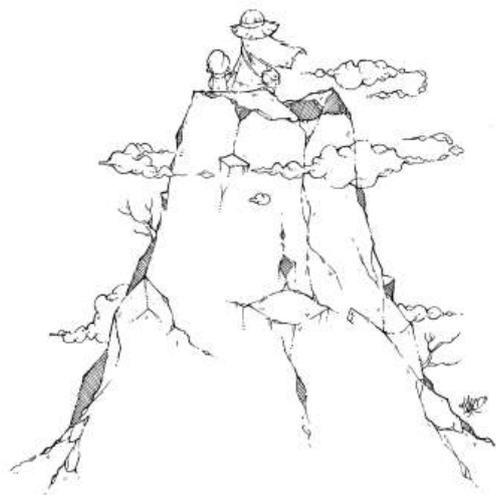
Picture 2: The Mysterious Room



Picture 3: The Tree House

Picture 4: The Cliff



Picture 5: Walking in the Storm