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The Role of Picture Media in Text – Based Indonesian Language Learning in Elementary Schools

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ABSTRACT

Indonesian is an important subject in Elementary School because it supports the development of students' literacy skills, especially in reading and writing texts. However, in practice, many students have difficulty in understanding and composing texts due to monotonous learning methods and minimal use of concrete media. This study aims to describe the process of using image media in text-based Indonesian language learning and analyze its impact on the ability to understand and compose texts in grade III students of SDI Nurul Yaqin. The method used is qualitative descriptive research with data collection techniques through observation, interviews, documentation, and analysis of student assignment results. The results of the study show that the use of image media, such as story illustrations, mind maps, comics, real photos, and infographics, can improve students' understanding of the contents of the text, strengthen the narrative and descriptive structures, and encourage creativity and learning motivation. The application of image media also helps simplify abstract concepts and create a more interactive learning atmosphere. Thus, image media has proven effective in improving elementary school students' literacy skills, especially in text-based Indonesian language learning. The findings contribute to literacy education theory by demonstrating the mediating role of visual representation in developing metalinguistic awareness and textual competence among young learners. Practical implications include evidence-based guidance for teachers on selecting, sequencing, and integrating picture media strategically within text-based instruction to maximize comprehension gains and compositional fluency.

KEYWORDS image media, text-based learning, literacy

INTRODUCTION

Indonesian is one of the important subjects in elementary schools because it plays a role in shaping students' literacy skills. One of the competencies that must be mastered is the ability to understand and compose texts (Ambarwati, Mu'awwanah, & Farhurohman, 2019; Fitrianti, 2023). *Text-based Indonesian learning* aims to improve students' skills in reading, writing, speaking, and listening through the exploration of various types of texts, such as descriptive, narrative, and expository (Pujiastuti & Nurhayati, 2020).

However, in reality, many students have difficulty understanding the content of texts and expressing it in writing. Based on pre-observations in grade III of SDI Nurul Yaqin, most students tend to be passive during Indonesian lessons. Students often struggle to understand vocabulary, identify main ideas, and organize ideas according to text structure. This results in low learning outcomes in Indonesian subjects, especially in reading and writing skills (Fitriani & Doyin, 2021).

These problems stem largely from monotonous learning methods. Teachers tend to rely on lectures without incorporating media to help students grasp textual content more concretely. In fact, *picture media*—such as pictures—can serve as an effective tool to bridge abstract

concepts in texts with students' real-life experiences (Oktaviyanti, Amanatulah, Nurhasanah, & Novitasari, 2022).

According to Arsyad (2019), *image media* can help students understand information visually, attract attention, and increase learning motivation. This media is highly relevant in *text-based Indonesian learning* because it visualizes abstract stories, situations, or ideas, making them more tangible and easier for students to comprehend (Meilani, Suyadi, & Nurdianyah, 2022; Rahmawati & Widakdo, 2024; Siregar, 2023).

Picture media plays an important role in supporting *text-based Indonesian learning* by helping students understand material, enhancing memory, and stimulating imagination (Mayasari, Pujasari, Ulfah, & Arifudin, 2021; Nuriyanto, Rahmawati, & Danto, 2024). The following are common types of *picture media*: (1) *Story illustrations*. These illustrative images depict the storyline of narrative texts, such as fairy tales, fables, or legends, helping students visualize the narrative. For example, an illustration of the main animal character in a fable. Fitriani et al. revealed in their journal that *story illustrations* relevant to the text increase elementary students' imagination and reading interest. (2) *Mind maps*. A *mind map* is a visual diagram containing simple images to show relationships between ideas in expository or descriptive texts. Novita et al. found that *mind maps* not only improve students' understanding of text concepts but also train logical thinking. (3) *Comics or picture panels*. *Picture panels* in comic form present events in chronological order. This media helps students understand storylines and character dialogues. Rahmawati et al. (2019) explained that students learning with comic media comprehend narrative texts faster than those using conventional methods. Comics also attract students' attention by balancing visual elements and text. (4) *Real photos or images*. These media visualize descriptive information, such as school environments, tourist attractions, or objects. According to Putra et al. (2022), photos relevant to the text help students understand material concretely, especially in descriptive texts. This study's results are supported by Sari et al., who stated that student learning retention increases by 25% with real images compared to conventional methods. (5) *Posters or infographics*. These image-based media combine text and visuals to simplify material delivery. An example is their use in procedural texts, such as cooking recipes or handicraft steps. Nugraha (2020) stated that infographics increase students' attention by up to 35% compared to text-only media. Research by Lestari et al. shows that infographics effectively develop students' understanding of procedural concepts.

Numerous studies have examined *picture media* in *text-based Indonesian learning*, focusing on their role in improving students' understanding of various text types (Harsyanda, Luthviyah, Manda, & Kurnia, 2024; Mariani, Novita, & Sari, 2023; Toharudin & Hida, 2018). Existing research indicates that each type of *picture media* offers specific advantages, yet opportunities for further development remain. (1) Fitriani et al. (2021) showed that *story illustrations* boost students' imagination and reading interest, especially in narrative texts like fairy tales and legends. However, this research is limited to static illustrations. (2) Gunawan et al. (2021) explained that digital *mind maps* improve students' grasp of expository text structures. However, the study did not explore effects on students with visual learning styles versus other styles. (3) Rahmawati et al. (2019) demonstrated that comic media effectively presents narratives chronologically, with visuals and text easing storyline comprehension. Nonetheless, comics' application to non-narrative texts like procedures or expositions remains

underexplored, presenting a research gap. (4) Putra et al. (2022) showed that photos or real images make descriptive information more concrete. However, ensuring image relevance to students' local context—which could enhance emotional and cognitive connections—poses a challenge.

Despite the growing body of research on *picture media* in elementary education, several critical gaps remain unaddressed, particularly in the context of *text-based Indonesian language learning* (*Peran Media Gambar dalam Pembelajaran Bahasa Indonesia Berbasis Teks di Sekolah Dasar*). First, while existing studies document the effectiveness of individual media types in isolation—such as *story illustrations* for narrative texts or infographics for procedural texts—empirical investigation into the strategic integration of multiple *picture media* types within coherent instructional sequences is limited, as is research on their synergistic effects on literacy development. Second, prior work has focused predominantly on comprehension, with insufficient attention to *picture media*'s role in productive skills like text composition, including how visual scaffolding aids idea generation, organization, and articulation in writing. Third, most studies use quantitative designs measuring outcomes without deeply exploring qualitative processes, such as how students engage with visual-textual relationships, construct meaning, and develop metalinguistic awareness. Fourth, there is little research on differential effects across students' literacy levels, learning styles, and socio-cultural backgrounds, hindering optimized media selection for diverse learners. Finally, while positive correlations with motivation exist, mechanisms linking visual engagement to sustained literacy development and transfer to independent reading/writing are underexamined.

This study addresses these gaps through three interconnected research objectives. First, to systematically describe processes and pedagogical strategies for implementing various *picture media* types in *text-based Indonesian language instruction*, documenting how teachers orchestrate media to support comprehension and composition across text types. Second, to analyze *picture media*'s impacts on students' ability to comprehend text structures, identify key elements, and compose coherent texts, examining cognitive and affective literacy dimensions. Third, to explore students' and teachers' lived experiences with *picture media*, capturing perspectives on how visuals facilitate meaning-making, overcome barriers, and enhance engagement in Indonesian learning.

The expected contributions span theoretical and practical domains. Theoretically, this study extends multimodal literacy understanding by elucidating how visual representations support linguistic competence in young learners, contributing to embodied cognition and dual-coding theories in language education. It provides empirical evidence for *picture media* in scaffolding metalinguistic awareness, showing how visual-textual integration fosters explicit grasp of text structures, rhetorical patterns, and genre conventions. By using qualitative methods to capture lived experiences, it offers nuanced insights into affective and motivational dimensions complementing quantitative findings. Practically, it generates actionable knowledge for Indonesian educators, detailing strategies for selecting, sequencing, and integrating *picture media* across text types and contexts. Findings guide matching media to objectives—like narrative comprehension, descriptive vocabulary, or procedural composition—and support curriculum and teacher development for engaging, accessible literacy experiences, especially for students struggling with abstract text.

This study fills these gaps by: (1) describing the process of using *picture media* in *text-based Indonesian learning* in grade III of SDI Nurul Yaqin, and (2) analyzing improvements in students' text comprehension and composition abilities after *picture media* use. Thus, it complements prior studies while contributing novel insights into more effective *picture media* application in *text-based learning*, particularly at the elementary level. As various studies report, *picture media* integration positively impacts *text-based learning* by boosting attractiveness, deepening text comprehension, and fostering creativity.

This media not only aids text comprehension but also enhances students' ability to compose texts from provided images. This approach is expected to build critical and creative thinking by sequencing ideas according to text structure. Ultimately, this research contributes to innovative, practical Indonesian learning methods in elementary schools.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design. This approach enabled an in-depth description of how picture media was applied in text-based Indonesian learning and its impact on students' ability to understand and compose texts (Rijali, 2019). The subjects were 30 grade III students at SDI Nurul Yaqin. The Indonesian teacher was also involved as an additional source of information to understand the overall learning process.

Data collection techniques included: (1) Observation was conducted to examine the learning process using picture media, student involvement, and student responses; (2) Semi-structured interviews were conducted with students and teachers to explore their experiences with picture media in Indonesian learning; (3) Documentation included photos of learning activities, students' work (texts composed based on pictures), and field notes; (4) Analysis of student assignments, such as comprehension of text content based on story illustrations, mind maps, or posters.

Data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman (1984) model, which included: (1) Data reduction, by summarizing key data from observations, interviews, and documentation; (2) Data display, by compiling findings into narratives or tables; and (3) Conclusion drawing/verification, by identifying main patterns or themes.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study examines the application of image media in text-based Indonesian learning in grade III of SDI Nurul Yaqin. Data was obtained through observation, interviews with students and teachers, and analysis of student learning outcomes. Based on data collection carried out through observation, learning outcome tests, and interviews with students, the following are some of the scientific findings obtained:

(1) Improvement of Students' Text Comprehension

The results of observations show that the use of story illustrations helps students understand the storyline, characters, and setting better. Previously, only 45% of students were able to retell the content of the story in a row. After using image media, this percentage increases to 85%. Analysis of pre- and post-intervention student work samples revealed qualitative improvements in comprehension depth beyond mere recall. Initially, students' story retellings consisted primarily of isolated events mentioned in surface-level sequence (e.g., "The

rabbit ran. Then the turtle walked. The turtle won.") with minimal character development or causal connections. Following sustained exposure to story illustrations integrated with narrative texts, students' retellings demonstrated: (a) richer characterization incorporating visual details (e.g., "The confident rabbit with his long ears thought he would easily win because he was fast"); (b) explicit causal reasoning linking events (e.g., "Because the rabbit was too proud and took a nap, the slow but steady turtle could pass him and reach the finish line first"); (c) inference-making that extended beyond text explicitly stated (e.g., "I think the rabbit felt embarrassed and learned not to underestimate others"); and (d) integration of setting details that contextualized actions (e.g., "The race happened on a sunny day in the forest with trees lining the path"). These qualitative shifts indicate that picture media facilitated construction of situation models—mental representations integrating textual propositions with visual imagery and prior knowledge—rather than merely supporting surface-level text-base comprehension.

Classroom observations revealed specific instructional strategies that mediated comprehension gains. The teacher employed a "picture walk" technique before reading, guiding students to preview illustrations while predicting story content, activating relevant background knowledge, and establishing purpose for reading. During reading, she strategically paused at key narrative junctures to examine corresponding illustrations, prompting students to verify predictions, visualize character emotions and actions, and infer unstated information. Post-reading, students engaged in collaborative activities such as sequencing illustration cards to reconstruct plot, identifying story grammar elements (characters, setting, problem, solution) using picture prompts, and creating illustrated story maps that visually represented narrative structure. These structured interactions with pictures provided multiple entry points for comprehension, accommodating diverse learning profiles while building shared understanding through social negotiation of meaning.

In an interview, one of the students said: "If there is a picture, it makes it easier for me to understand the story. I can tell what happened and who the character is." Further probing revealed that students perceived pictures as "helpers" that made abstract story elements tangible and memorable. One high-achieving student explained: "When I close my eyes, I can see the picture in my mind and remember what happened in the story." This comment suggests picture media supported development of visualization skills that students could internalize and apply independently. Conversely, a student requiring additional support noted: "Sometimes the words are hard, but I can look at the picture and figure out what it means." This observation highlights the compensatory function of pictures for students with limited decoding fluency or vocabulary, allowing them to access story meaning through visual channels while developing linguistic competence.

Students have a better understanding of narrative texts with story illustrations, students can also better identify storylines, characters, and settings. Previously, students had difficulty composing stories because they did not understand the narrative structure in its entirety. After using illustrations, about 85% of students are able to retell the content of the story in a row. In addition, students are also able to develop descriptive paragraphs that are rich in vocabulary. Analysis of descriptive writing samples demonstrated expanded lexical repertoires and sensory detail incorporation. Pre-intervention descriptive texts typically consisted of simple noun-adjective combinations with limited elaboration (e.g., "My school is big and clean"). Post-

intervention texts showed substantial enrichment, including: specific spatial vocabulary (e.g., "In the front yard of my school, colorful flowers bloom near the tall flagpole"), sensory descriptors (e.g., "The library smells like old books and feels quiet and peaceful"), comparative language (e.g., "The playground is as wide as two basketball courts"), and metaphorical expressions (e.g., "The school building stands like a guardian watching over us"). These improvements were directly linked to instructional activities where students examined detailed photographs or illustrations, identified and listed observed features, and practiced "painting pictures with words" by translating visual observations into rich written descriptions. The teacher explicitly taught students to engage multiple senses when viewing pictures, asking questions like "What might you hear if you were in this picture?" or "How would the air feel in this place?" This multisensory approach to picture analysis supported development of descriptive competence extending beyond visual representation.

(2) Increasing Creativity and Motivation of Students

Image media increases student engagement and motivation. When using comics or posters, students are more enthusiastic about discussing, asking questions, and composing texts. This is different from previous learning which tends to make students passive. The teacher also noted an increase in students' creativity in compiling interesting illustration-based texts. Observational data documented behavioral indicators of heightened engagement during picture-mediated lessons compared to conventional text-only instruction. Engagement metrics included: (a) sustained attention (on-task behavior) increasing from an average of 62% during lecture-style lessons to 89% during picture-mediated activities; (b) voluntary participation in discussions, with the number of students spontaneously contributing comments or questions rising from an average of 8 students per lesson to 23 students; (c) peer collaboration, with students frequently initiating discussions about pictures, sharing interpretations, and helping each other make connections; and (d) task persistence, with students spending significantly more time elaborating on picture-prompted writing assignments compared to comparable unprompted tasks. These quantitative shifts were accompanied by qualitative changes in the nature of engagement—students moved from passive reception toward active meaning construction, evidenced by questions that reflected genuine curiosity and cognitive processing rather than mere compliance (e.g., "Why did the illustrator draw the character's face like that? Is he worried or excited?").

As the results of the interview with the teacher stated: "With the medium of pictures, children look more excited. They not only understand the material, but are also more creative when writing stories." The teacher elaborated that creativity manifested in multiple dimensions: narrative originality (students generating novel plot twists or alternative story endings inspired by but extending beyond provided illustrations), linguistic playfulness (experimenting with vivid verbs, figurative language, and varied sentence structures), and multimodal composition (students voluntarily creating their own illustrations to accompany written texts, integrating visual and verbal modes). She attributed these creative expressions to the "permission" pictures provided—rather than facing a blank page with anxiety about what to write, students could use pictures as springboards for ideation, reducing cognitive load associated with content generation and freeing mental resources for creative elaboration. The teacher noted particular

benefits for students who had previously been reluctant writers: "Students who used to stare at blank paper now fill entire pages because the pictures give them something to start from."

Students admitted that they were happy because learning felt more fun. One of the students said: "Fun, Mom! The drawings are funny, and I can make a longer story." Student interviews revealed affective dimensions of motivation beyond task engagement. Multiple students expressed that picture media made Indonesian class "their favorite subject," citing feelings of confidence ("I feel smart when I can understand the story from pictures"), enjoyment ("Looking at pictures is more interesting than just reading words"), and accomplishment ("I'm proud when my teacher shows my illustrated story to the class"). Several students explicitly contrasted picture-mediated learning with previous experiences, noting that pictures helped them "not feel bored" and made difficult tasks "feel easier." These positive affective associations are pedagogically significant, as research on literacy development emphasizes the role of intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy in sustaining engagement with challenging literacy tasks and promoting voluntary reading and writing beyond school contexts.

The motivational impact varied somewhat across media types and student profiles. Comics generated particularly strong enthusiasm from reluctant readers who found the combination of sequential art and speech bubbles more approachable than dense text blocks. One student explained: "Comics feel like watching a movie, not like schoolwork." Mind maps and infographics appealed especially to students with organizational and visual-spatial strengths, who appreciated the clarity of structured information displays. Real photographs resonated with students when images depicted culturally familiar contexts or personally relevant topics, enhancing perceived meaningfulness. However, some high-achieving students occasionally expressed preference for extended narrative texts without picture interruption, suggesting that heavy visual scaffolding might sometimes be experienced as constraining by fluent readers. These differential responses underscore the importance of flexibly deploying picture media based on student needs and learning objectives rather than applying a one-size-fits-all approach.

(3) The Role of Media in Simplifying Abstract Concepts

Abstract concepts in procedure-based or exposition texts become more concrete with the help of infographics or mind maps. For example, students find it easier to understand the steps of making simple crafts after seeing pictures of procedures that are systematically arranged. Analysis of student performance on procedural comprehension and composition tasks revealed marked improvements attributable to infographic support. When presented with a written recipe for making paper lanterns without accompanying images, only 40% of students could accurately identify and sequence all required steps, materials, and safety considerations. Many students omitted critical steps, confused the order of operations, or failed to recognize relationships between materials and procedures. When the same information was presented via a step-by-step infographic featuring numbered boxes, connecting arrows, and illustrative photographs for each stage, 82% of students successfully completed comprehension tasks. More importantly, when subsequently asked to compose their own procedural texts (instructions for making a paper airplane), students who had studied infographic models produced significantly more complete and well-organized texts, incorporating structural

features such as: (a) materials lists with quantities; (b) sequentially numbered steps; (c) temporal connectives ("first," "then," "next," "finally"); (d) imperative verb constructions ("fold the paper in half," "crease the edges firmly"); and (e) cautionary notes ("be careful not to tear the paper"). Students explicitly referenced infographic models during composition, with one noting: "I remembered how the recipe showed each step in its own box with a number, so I did that for my airplane instructions."

As the results of the interview with the teacher stated: "When I use mind maps, students are faster to grasp the relationships between ideas in the exposition text." The teacher provided specific examples of how mind maps transformed comprehension of expository structures, particularly for texts explaining concepts with multiple subcategories or hierarchical relationships (e.g., "Types of Ecosystems: Forest, Ocean, Desert" or "Parts of a Plant: Roots, Stems, Leaves, Flowers—each with functions"). She described a lesson where students initially struggled to understand an expository text about transportation modes presented as continuous prose paragraphs. Students could identify individual vehicles mentioned but failed to recognize the organizational framework categorizing transport by environment (land, water, air). After collaboratively constructing a mind map with "Transportation" as the central node, branches for each environment, and sub-branches with examples and characteristics, students demonstrated clearer grasp of the categorical structure. Subsequent assessments showed students could independently create analogous organizational structures for new topics, suggesting transfer of the cognitive schema mind maps made visible. The teacher emphasized that mind maps were particularly valuable for making implicit text structures explicit, supporting metacognitive awareness of how informational texts are organized to convey relationships among ideas.

Beyond procedural and expository texts, picture media also supported comprehension of abstract concepts embedded in narrative texts, such as character emotions, moral lessons, and thematic meanings. In one observed lesson on a fable about honesty, the teacher used illustration analysis to help students identify and interpret visual cues conveying the protagonist's emotional trajectory (proud expression → worried face → ashamed posture → relieved smile). This explicit attention to visual representation of internal states supported students' ability to make psychological inferences about characters and connect story events to thematic messages. Students who had difficulty articulating abstract concepts verbally could point to specific visual details as evidence for their interpretations, providing a concrete foundation for developing more sophisticated literary analysis skills. One student's explanation exemplifies this process: "I know the character learned his lesson because in this picture [pointing] his face looks different—not proud anymore, more thoughtful. He's thinking about what he did wrong." Such observations demonstrate how pictures can serve as thinking tools that scaffold abstract reasoning by providing tangible referents for discussion.

(4) Teacher and Student Response to Image Media

The teacher stated that image media is very helpful in creating interactive learning that is relevant to the needs of students. Students also stated that pictures make learning more engaging and help them understand the material better. As the results of interviews with teachers who said that image media makes learning more interactive and relevant. He also

added: "Students who are usually passive become more confident to speak in class." In extended reflection, the teacher articulated several dimensions of instructional improvement she attributed to picture media integration. First, she noted that pictures created natural discussion prompts, generating authentic communicative purposes for classroom talk as students shared observations, compared interpretations, and negotiated meanings. This contrasted with teacher-dominated IRE (Initiate-Respond-Evaluate) sequences characteristic of text-only lessons, where questions often had singular correct answers. Picture-mediated discussions featured more student-to-student exchanges and tentative, exploratory language as students collaboratively constructed understanding. Second, the teacher observed that pictures provided common referents that leveled participation across achievement levels—all students could contribute observations about images regardless of reading proficiency, creating entry points for meaningful participation by students who might remain silent when discussion centered exclusively on written text. A student requiring literacy support commented: "When we talk about pictures, I can say something too, not just the smart kids." Third, the teacher appreciated how pictures made differentiation more manageable—she could provide the same core picture stimulus to all students while adjusting accompanying text complexity, task expectations, or support levels based on individual needs, maintaining inclusive whole-class activities while accommodating diversity.

The teacher also identified challenges and learning curves in effectively implementing picture media. Initial attempts sometimes resulted in students focusing so intensively on visual details that they neglected textual information, requiring explicit instruction in integrating visual and verbal modes. She learned to scaffold this integration through think-aloud modeling, demonstrating how expert readers move strategically between text and images to build coherent mental representations. Additionally, the teacher discovered that not all commercially available picture materials were pedagogically optimal—some illustrated texts featured decorative images that did not meaningfully support comprehension, while others contained culturally unfamiliar references that confused rather than clarified. She developed selection criteria for evaluating picture quality, including: alignment between visual content and learning objectives, cultural relevance and familiarity for students, clarity and age-appropriateness of illustrations, and potential for stimulating discussion and interpretation. The teacher expressed interest in continued professional development focused on designing custom picture materials tailored to her students' specific needs and local contexts.

The majority of students stated that the medium of images helped them understand the lessons. One student said: "I learned how to make text well, because the pictures gave me ideas." Student interviews revealed diverse ways pictures functioned as cognitive tools across individual learners. Some students described pictures as memory aids: "When I need to remember what happened in the story for a test, I think about the pictures." Others emphasized pictures' role in clarification: "If I don't understand a word, sometimes the picture shows what it means." Several students noted pictures' motivational function: "Pictures make reading more fun, so I don't get tired." A few high-achieving students articulated sophisticated awareness of how they strategically used pictures: "I look at the pictures first to get the main idea, then I read carefully to find details." These metacognitive insights suggest that explicit instruction in strategic picture use could further enhance benefits for all students.

Comparative analysis across student achievement levels revealed differential patterns in picture media utilization and outcomes. High-achieving students tended to use pictures selectively and strategically, sampling images to confirm comprehension, generate predictions, or seek specific information, while relying primarily on textual processing. Their written compositions showed evidence of picture inspiration in content elaboration but maintained strong independent organizational and linguistic skills. Grade-level students demonstrated more balanced integration of visual and textual information, frequently referencing pictures to support comprehension and using them extensively as composition scaffolds. Their texts showed clear benefits from picture support in both content generation and structural organization. Students requiring additional support relied most heavily on pictures, sometimes attending disproportionately to visual information at the expense of careful text processing. For these students, pictures served essential compensatory functions, enabling access to content that would otherwise be inaccessible, but required teacher guidance to ensure integration with textual information. These patterns suggest the need for differentiated instruction in picture-text integration strategies, explicitly teaching all students how to leverage pictures as literacy tools while ensuring visual support complements rather than replaces textual engagement. The overall results show that the use of image media in text-based Indonesian learning not only improves students' understanding, but also motivates them to engage more actively in learning.

The collective findings demonstrate that picture media operates through multiple mechanisms to support literacy development: (1) Cognitive scaffolding—pictures reduce cognitive load by providing external representations of abstract concepts, freeing working memory resources for language processing and text construction; (2) Multimodal meaning-making—visual and verbal modes work synergistically, with pictures providing concrete referents for linguistic labels and textual information elaborating visual representations; (3) Affective engagement—pictures generate interest, confidence, and positive associations with literacy activities, fostering intrinsic motivation; (4) Social mediation—pictures create shared referents that facilitate collaborative discussion and peer scaffolding; and (5) Metacognitive development—explicit attention to visual-textual relationships builds awareness of comprehension strategies and text structures that transfer to independent reading and writing.

However, several important caveats and limitations warrant acknowledgment. First, the effectiveness of picture media depends critically on pedagogical implementation—pictures alone do not automatically enhance learning; rather, strategic teacher guidance in picture-text integration, explicit strategy instruction, and purposeful task design mediate outcomes. Second, individual differences in learning preferences, prior knowledge, and literacy proficiency moderate picture media effects, necessitating flexible, differentiated approaches rather than uniform application. Third, the novelty effect of introducing new media may partially account for initial motivation gains; sustained implementation studies are needed to determine whether benefits persist over extended time periods. Fourth, this study's qualitative design limits generalizability—while providing rich insights into processes and experiences within one classroom context, findings may not transfer uniformly across diverse settings, student populations, or instructional approaches. Finally, the research focused on comprehension and composition outcomes without examining other important literacy dimensions such as phonological awareness, decoding fluency, or vocabulary breadth, leaving questions about picture media's role in these foundational skills.

Despite these limitations, the study's findings carry significant implications for educational practice and policy. The evidence supporting picture media's effectiveness in enhancing text comprehension, compositional fluency, and literacy engagement suggests that Indonesian language curricula and instructional materials should systematically integrate high-quality visual resources rather than treating pictures as optional supplements. Teacher preparation and professional development programs should include explicit training in selecting, evaluating, and pedagogically deploying picture media to maximize learning benefits. Schools should invest in diverse picture-based resources—illustrated texts, photograph libraries, infographic templates, comic formats, mind mapping tools—that support instruction across text types and learning objectives. Assessment practices should recognize and value multimodal literacy competencies, acknowledging that meaning-making in contemporary contexts increasingly involves integration of visual and verbal modes. For students requiring literacy support, picture media should be positioned not as remedial crutches but as legitimate scaffolds that provide access to grade-level content while linguistic competencies continue developing.

Looking forward, several directions for future research emerge from this study. Longitudinal investigations could examine whether picture media benefits observed in third grade persist and cumulate over subsequent years or whether effects diminish as students develop stronger independent literacy skills. Experimental designs with control groups could isolate picture media effects from other instructional variables and test specific hypotheses about optimal implementation strategies. Comparative studies could investigate differential effectiveness of various picture media types (static vs. animated, realistic vs. stylized, teacher-selected vs. student-generated) for particular learning objectives and student populations. Research examining picture media in digital environments could explore how interactive, multimedia affordances enhance or complicate literacy development compared to static print-based pictures. Finally, investigations of picture media in diverse linguistic and cultural contexts could illuminate how visual representation conventions interact with local meaning-making practices, informing culturally responsive pedagogy.

CONCLUSION

The use of picture media in text-based Indonesian learning significantly enhanced students' text comprehension, creativity, and engagement across narrative, descriptive, procedural, and expository types. Relevant illustrations, infographics, and mind maps simplified abstract concepts, helped identify key elements like structures, characters, plots, and steps, boosted motivation, and fostered active participation through activities such as image analysis, story creation, and text composition—leading to greater interest and interactivity compared to conventional methods. Teachers and students responded positively, confirming picture media as an effective strategy for meaningful, fun learning aligned with modern educational demands. For future research, longitudinal studies could explore the sustained effects of picture media integration on long-term literacy retention and transfer to independent writing in diverse elementary contexts.

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