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The Effect of Picture Series on Students Reading Comprehension of Narative Texts : A Study of Eleventh Grade Students at Senior High School

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Abstract

Reading comprehension is an important skill in English learning, yet students may experience difficulties in understanding information and constructing meaning from narrative texts. This study aims to investigate the effect of using picture series on the reading comprehension of narrative texts among eleventh-grade students at SMA Yos Sudarso Metro Lampung. This study employed a quantitative approach with a pre-experimental one-group pre-test–post-test design. The participants were 17 eleventh-grade students from Class XI B. The research instrument was a multiple-choice reading comprehension test consisting of 42 valid items developed based on six reading comprehension indicators. Data were collected through a pre-test, three treatment sessions using picture series, and a post-test. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, the Shapiro–Wilk normality test, and a paired-samples t-test. The results showed that the students' mean score increased from 77.76 in the pre-test to 85.35 in the post-test, with a mean difference of 7.588 points. The paired-samples t-test showed a statistically significant difference between the students' pre-test and post-test scores, with a t-value of 6.595, 16 degrees of freedom, and $p < .001$. These findings indicate that students obtained higher reading comprehension scores after learning narrative texts through picture series. The findings suggest that picture series can serve as visual support in narrative reading instruction by helping students connect visual information with the sequence and content of a narrative text.

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1. Introduction

Reading is an important skill in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning because it enables students to obtain information, develop knowledge, and construct meaning from written texts. Reading comprehension is a complex process that involves recognizing information, integrating ideas, making inferences, and constructing meaning from a text (Grabe, 2009; Grabe & Stoller, 2019). Brown (2004) explains that reading assessment involves examining learners' ability to understand and interpret information presented in texts. Appropriate instructional support may also help learners process and understand textual information during reading activities (Fathi & Afzali, 2020). In the present study, a preliminary observation at SMA Yos Sudarso Metro Lampung indicated that eleventh-grade students experienced difficulties in reading comprehension, particularly in understanding vocabulary, finding specific information, and making inferences. These difficulties may hinder students from constructing meaning and fully understanding information presented in narrative texts.

One type of text commonly taught in English learning is narrative text, which presents a sequence of events involving characters, settings, conflicts, and resolutions. Anderson and Anderson (2003) explain that narrative texts are organized through a sequence of events and are intended to engage readers through the development of a story. Comprehending narrative texts requires students to construct meaning from the relationships among events and to understand information presented throughout the text. In the context of the present study, preliminary observation at SMA Yos Sudarso Metro Lampung indicated that reading activities were predominantly text-based and provided limited visual support. This condition suggests the need to consider instructional media that can provide additional support for students when processing narrative texts. Picture series can provide visual representations of characters, settings, actions, and sequences of events, allowing students to connect visual information with the written content of a narrative text. Therefore, picture series may serve as a visual medium to support students' reading comprehension of narrative texts.

Several studies have investigated the use of picture series in reading comprehension. Indriati and Rukmini (2016) examined the effectiveness of picture series and graphic organizers in helping tenth-grade students comprehend narrative texts and found that picture series could support students' reading comprehension. Hidayah, Setiyadi, and Hasan (2018) also investigated the use of picture series to improve students' reading comprehension of narrative texts and reported improvement after the implementation of picture series. Firmansyah (2020) further reported that the use of picture series could improve students' ability to comprehend narrative texts.

More recently, Favorita, Astutik, and Hatip (2023) examined the effect of picture series on students' reading comprehension of narrative texts using a quasi-experimental design involving 64 students. Alqy and Zuhriyah (2023) also investigated the effectiveness of picture series in teaching reading comprehension using a pre-experimental one-group pre-test–post-test design with tenth-grade students. Their findings showed improvement in students' reading comprehension following the use of picture series. Taken together, these studies indicate that picture series has been used as visual support in reading instruction and has shown potential to support students' comprehension of narrative texts.

Recent research has further explored the use of picture series and visual sequencing in reading instruction. Fikni et al. (2026) examined picture-series-based storytelling as a means of supporting students' reading comprehension and reported positive perceptions of its use in EFL learning. Pane and Napitupulu (2026) investigated the use of picture series to improve narrative reading comprehension among tenth-grade students at a vocational high school and reported improvement following the implementation of picture series. Waas and Areni (2026) also investigated the use of picture series to support students' reading comprehension and reported improvement following picture-series-assisted instruction. Farida (2026) examined the integration of picture sequence with the Question–Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy among tenth-grade EFL students and reported improvement in narrative reading comprehension following the integrated instruction.

Although Farida's study combined picture sequence with QAR rather than examining picture series as a single instructional medium, the findings demonstrate the continued exploration of visual sequencing as support for reading comprehension. Taken together, these studies provide evidence of the potential of picture series or visual sequencing for supporting reading comprehension while showing variation in participants, educational settings, and instructional approaches.

Despite these findings, a gap remains concerning the use of picture series to support narrative reading comprehension among eleventh-grade students in a general senior high school context. The studies reviewed above have primarily involved seventh- or tenth-grade students and have included different instructional settings, such as vocational schools and integrated instructional approaches. Therefore, further evidence is needed concerning the use of picture series with eleventh-grade students in an Indonesian EFL classroom, particularly in a general senior high school context. The present study addresses this gap by investigating the use of picture series in narrative text instruction among eleventh-grade students at SMA Yos Sudarso Metro Lampung. The reading comprehension instrument was developed using several indicators to ensure adequate coverage of students' comprehension of narrative texts; however, these indicators functioned as components of the measurement instrument rather than separate outcomes of the study.

Based on the identified gap, this study aims to examine changes in students' reading comprehension of narrative texts before and after learning through picture series among eleventh-grade students at SMA Yos Sudarso Metro Lampung. The study focuses on changes in students' overall reading comprehension scores before and after the implementation of picture series in narrative text instruction. Therefore, the research question is formulated as follows: Is there a significant difference between students' reading comprehension scores before and after learning narrative texts through picture series? The novelty of this study lies in examining picture series as a visual medium for supporting narrative reading comprehension among eleventh-grade students in an Indonesian EFL classroom context, specifically at SMA Yos Sudarso Metro Lampung.

2. Method

This study employed a quantitative approach using a pre-experimental research design with a one-group pre-test–post-test design. The design was used to examine the effect of using picture series on students' reading comprehension of narrative texts by

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comparing their reading comprehension scores before and after the treatment. The research was conducted in five meetings from August 31 to September 4, 2026. The procedure consisted of three stages: pre-test, treatment, and post-test. The pre-test was administered to measure the students' initial reading comprehension, followed by three treatment sessions using picture series. After the treatment sessions, a post-test was administered to measure the students' reading comprehension following the intervention.

The study was conducted at SMA Yos Sudarso Metro Lampung during the 2026/2027 academic year. The main participants were 17 eleventh-grade students from Class XI B who participated in the entire research procedure. Before the main study, the research instrument was tried out on 25 students from Class XI A. The study was conducted as part of the researcher's Practical Teaching Experience (PPL) and was carried out during regular English classes with permission from the supervising English teacher. No separate ethics committee approval or formal parental/guardian consent was obtained specifically for this classroom-based study. To protect students' privacy, their identities were replaced with participant codes (e.g., S1, S2, and S3) in the research data and reporting, and the results were reported in aggregate form without identifying individual students.

Data were collected using a multiple-choice reading comprehension test focusing on narrative texts. The initial instrument consisted of 50 items, with five answer options for each item. The items were developed based on six reading comprehension indicators: determining the main idea and purpose, finding specific information, understanding vocabulary, making inferences, understanding reference, and understanding text structure and text type. These indicators were used as the basis for developing the test items to cover different components of students' overall reading comprehension of narrative texts.

Before the main data collection, the instrument was tried out on 25 students from Class XI A. Item validity was examined using the corrected item-total correlation obtained from the reliability analysis in IBM SPSS. A value of 0.279 was used as the retention threshold. Items with corrected item-total correlation values of 0.279 or higher were considered valid, whereas items with values below 0.279 or negative values were considered invalid. Based on this criterion, eight items (items 3, 11, 18, 22, 23, 24, 46, and 50) were excluded, resulting in 42 retained items. The 42 retained items were subsequently used as the final instrument for the main study. Each correct answer was assigned one point, while an incorrect answer received zero points. The students' scores were calculated using the formula: Score = (number of correct answers / 42) × 100. The same 42-item denominator was used for both the pre-test and post-test..

Data collection was conducted in five meetings, with each meeting consisting of two 45-minute periods (90 minutes). On August 31, 2026, the students completed the pre-test using the 42-item final instrument without picture series as additional visual support. The second, third, and fourth meetings, conducted from September 1 to September 3, were used for three treatment sessions. Each treatment session lasted 90 minutes and used one researcher-developed picture series consisting of sequential or fragmented pictures selected to represent key characters, settings, actions, and events in the narrative text.

The instructor guided the students to observe the picture sequence, connect visual information with the narrative text, and respond to questions and prompts. Students worked individually and in groups depending on the learning activity and completed guided reading and comprehension tasks. In the final treatment session, students worked with a researcher-developed picture series based on *Snow White*. They interpreted the sequence of events, developed sentences or a short narrative, presented and read their work aloud, and completed reading comprehension questions. On September 4, 2026, the students completed the post-test using the same 42-item instrument as the pre-test and without picture series as additional visual support. Because the same items were used in both tests, possible practice and familiarity effects were considered when interpreting changes in students' scores.

The data were analyzed using IBM SPSS. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the students' pre-test and post-test reading comprehension scores. The Shapiro–Wilk test was used to examine the normality of the data because the study involved 17 students. A paired-samples t-test was then employed to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between the students' reading comprehension scores before and after learning through picture series. The significance level was set at 0.05. Given the one-group pre-test–post-test design without a comparison group, the statistical findings were interpreted as evidence of within-group changes following the instructional intervention rather than as evidence that picture series alone caused the changes.

3. Result

The results of this study present the students' reading comprehension scores before and after the implementation of picture series. The data obtained from 17 eleventh-grade students were analyzed using descriptive statistics, a normality test, and a paired-samples t-test. The results of the analysis are presented in the following tables.

The descriptive statistics provide an overview of the students' performance on the pre-test and post-test, including the number of students, minimum score, maximum score, mean, and standard deviation. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Pre-test and Post-test Scores

Test	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std.Deviation
Pre-Test	17	55	90	77.76	9.66
Post Test	17	72	93	85.35	6.509
Valid N (listwise)	17				

As shown in Table 1, the pre-test scores ranged from 55 to 90, with a mean score of 77.76 and a standard deviation of 9.666. Meanwhile, the post-test scores ranged from 72 to 93, with a mean score of 85.35 and a standard deviation of 6.509. The results indicate an increase in the students' mean reading comprehension score from the pre-test to the post-test.

The normality test was then conducted to examine the distribution of the pre-test and post-test scores. The Shapiro–Wilk test was used to determine the normality of the data. The results are presented in Table 2.

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Table 2. Tests of Normality

Test	Kolmogorov Smirnov Statistic	df	Sig.	Shapiro Wilk Statistic	df	Sig.
Pre-test	*.198*	*17*	*.076*	*0.932*	*17*	*0.233*
Post-test	*.128*	*17*	*.200*	*0.927*	*17*	*0.194*

Based on Table 2, the Shapiro–Wilk significance value was 0.233 for the pre-test and 0.194 for the post-test.

The paired-samples statistics were subsequently used to compare the mean scores obtained by the students before and after the treatment. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Paired-Samples Statistics

	Mean	N	Std.Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Post-test	85.35	17	6.509	1.579
Pre-test	77.76	17	9.666	2.344

Table 3 shows that the mean score of the students increased from 77.76 on the pre-test to 85.35 on the post-test. The standard deviation of the post-test scores was 6.509, compared with 9.666 on the pre-test.

The paired-samples t-test was used to examine the difference between the students' pre-test and post-test scores. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Paired-Samples Test

Pair	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Post-test – Pre-test	7.588	4.744	1.151	5.149	10.027	6.595	16	.000

Table 4 shows that the mean difference between the post-test and pre-test scores was 7.588. The paired-samples t-test produced a t-value of 6.595 with 16 degrees of freedom and a significance value of $p < .001$. These results indicate a statistically significant difference between the students' reading comprehension scores before and after the implementation of picture series.

4.Discussion

The results of this study show that the use of picture series was followed by an improvement in students' reading comprehension of narrative texts. The mean score increased from 77.76 in the pre-test to 85.35 in the post-test, with a mean difference of 7.588 points. The paired-samples t-test also showed a statistically significant difference between the students' scores before and after the treatment, with a t-value of 6.595, 16 degrees of freedom, and $p < .001$. These findings indicate that the students obtained higher reading comprehension scores after learning narrative texts through picture series. Thus, the research question concerning the effect of picture series on students' reading comprehension of narrative texts was addressed through the comparison of their pre-test and post-test performance.

The improvement in students' reading comprehension can be understood from the function of picture series as visual support during reading activities. Narrative texts contain a sequence of events involving characters, settings, actions, problems, and resolutions. When these elements are presented through a sequence of pictures, students can obtain visual information that corresponds to the events described in the text. The pictures can help students visualize the development of the story and connect one event to another. This is particularly relevant to narrative reading because understanding relationships among events is important for constructing the overall meaning of a text. In the present study, the picture series provided an additional source of information that students could connect with the written narrative.

The finding is consistent with Favorita, Astutik, and Hatip (2023), who investigated the use of picture series in teaching narrative reading comprehension. Their quasi-experimental study reported an effect of picture series on students' reading comprehension of narrative texts. The similarity between their findings and the present study suggests that picture series can function as visual support when students are required to comprehend narrative texts. However, their study involved seventh-grade students, whereas the present study involved eleventh-grade students at SMA Yos Sudarso Metro Lampung. Therefore, the present findings provide additional evidence from a different educational context concerning the use of picture series for narrative reading comprehension.

The present finding is also consistent with previous research on the use of picture series in narrative reading comprehension. Indriati and Rukmini (2016) reported that picture series could support students in comprehending narrative texts, while Hidayah, Setiyadi, and Hasan (2018) found improvement in students' narrative reading comprehension after the use of picture series. Firmansyah (2020) similarly reported that picture series helped students comprehend narrative texts and contributed to more engaging reading activities. These findings are consistent with the improvement observed in the present study and provide support for the use of visual sequencing as a means of assisting students in processing narrative information.

More recent studies also support the use of visual materials in reading instruction. Fikni et al. (2026) reported that picture-series-based storytelling could support students' reading comprehension in an EFL context. Waas and Areni (2026) likewise found positive results from the use of picture series in reading instruction. Pane and Napitupulu (2026) reported improvement in narrative reading comprehension following the use of picture series among vocational high school students. Farida (2026) also found improvement when picture sequence was integrated with the Question–Answer Relationship strategy. Although the instructional approaches and educational contexts differed from the present study, these findings strengthen the view that visual sequencing can provide meaningful support when students process narrative information.

The reading comprehension instrument in the present study was developed based on six indicators: determining the main idea and purpose, finding specific information, understanding vocabulary, making inferences, understanding reference, and understanding text structure and text type. These indicators were used to ensure that the test covered different components of overall reading comprehension. The indicators were not treated as separate research outcomes. Instead, the scores from the items representing these indicators were combined to measure students' overall reading

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comprehension of narrative texts. Therefore, the statistical analysis in this study focused on the overall pre-test and post-test scores rather than comparing students' performance for each indicator separately.

The treatment activities also provided students with opportunities to interact with narrative texts through both visual and written information. During the treatment sessions, students were guided to understand narrative texts and their sequence of events with the support of pictures. In the final treatment session, the students worked with a picture series based on the story of *Snow White*. They interpreted the sequence of pictures, developed sentences or a short narrative based on their understanding, presented their work in front of the class, and read it aloud before completing reading comprehension questions. These activities allowed students to connect the visual sequence with the content of the narrative. The students were also required to organize their understanding of the story before responding to the comprehension questions. Therefore, the improvement in the post-test scores can be discussed in relation to the opportunities students received to process narrative information through both visual and written representations during the treatment sessions.

Despite the improvement found in the students' scores, the findings should be considered within the context of the study. The study involved only 17 students from one class at SMA Yos Sudarso Metro Lampung, and the treatment was conducted in three sessions. Therefore, the findings represent the participants and research context examined in this study and cannot be directly generalized to all eleventh-grade EFL students or other educational settings. Future research may involve a larger number of participants, different schools or educational contexts, and a longer treatment period. Further research may also examine each reading comprehension indicator separately to provide a more detailed understBAanding of how picture series may support different components of narrative reading comprehension.

5. Conclusion

This study concludes that the use of picture series was followed by an improvement in the reading comprehension of eleventh-grade students at SMA Yos Sudarso Metro Lampung. The students' mean reading comprehension score increased from 77.76 in the pre-test to 85.35 in the post-test, with a mean difference of 7.588 points. The paired-samples t-test showed a statistically significant difference between the students' pre-test and post-test scores, with a t-value of 6.595, 16 degrees of freedom, and $p < .001$. These findings indicate that the students obtained higher reading comprehension scores after learning narrative texts through picture series.

The findings also indicate that picture series can serve as visual support in narrative reading instruction by helping students connect visual information with the sequence and content of a narrative text. However, the findings are limited to the 17 students involved in this study, the specific educational context of SMA Yos Sudarso Metro Lampung, and the three treatment sessions implemented during the research.

Suggestions

Based on the findings and limitations of the study, future researchers are recommended to conduct similar studies with a larger number of participants and in different educational contexts to provide broader evidence concerning the use of picture

series in reading comprehension. Future studies may also employ a longer treatment period and examine each reading comprehension indicator separately to obtain more detailed information about how picture series may support different components of narrative reading comprehension. For English teachers, picture series may be considered as an alternative visual medium for supporting students in learning narrative texts, particularly in activities that require students to understand the sequence of events and connect visual information with written text.

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