

Improving Seventh Grade Students' Storytelling Skills through Picture Series Media at SMP Negeri 1 Dusun Hilir

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Article Info	Abstract
Received: 2026-02-04	<i>This classroom action research investigated how picture-series media improved the learning process and storytelling performance of seventh-grade students at SMP Negeri 1 Dusun Hilir. Fourteen students participated in two cycles, each involving planning, action, observation, and reflection. The researcher collaborated with the Indonesian language teacher. Data were collected through classroom observation, questionnaires, field notes, documentation, and a storytelling performance assessment, and were analyzed descriptively using qualitative and quantitative evidence. Picture-series media were used to scaffold idea generation and narrative sequencing. Reflection after Cycle I led to speaking warm-ups, role-play, intonation practice, teacher modeling, and more contextual picture prompts in Cycle II. The learning process became more active and collaborative, while students demonstrated greater confidence and willingness to perform. Mean storytelling scores increased from 59 in the pre-action stage to 68 in Cycle I and 79 in Cycle II; 93% of the students met the stated achievement criterion by Cycle II. Improvements were also reported in fluency, alignment between story content and the pictures, pronunciation, intonation, and expression. Within this class and research period, picture-series media supported both the learning process and students' storytelling achievement.</i>
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1. Introduction

Language enables people to communicate, think, and express ideas and feelings. In formal education, language learning is commonly organized around listening, speaking, reading, and writing, which develop through sustained and purposeful practice. Speaking is a productive skill through which learners convey ideas orally in ways that listeners can understand. Storytelling is an important form of speaking because it requires learners to select content, arrange events coherently, use appropriate language, and communicate with confidence. Tarigan (2008) emphasizes that effective speaking develops through direct and continuous

practice rather than through conceptual knowledge alone.

In Indonesian language instruction, storytelling provides opportunities for students to communicate experiences, feelings, and information in a structured and meaningful manner. It also supports confidence, audience awareness, and social interaction. Nevertheless, the preliminary condition in Grade VII at SMP Negeri 1 Dusun Hilir indicated that storytelling instruction had not produced the expected level of performance. Based on an interview with the Indonesian language teacher on September 1, 2025, many students had difficulty generating ideas, arranging events in sequence, and speaking fluently in front of the class. Students were frequently hesitant, embarrassed, or nervous, and their stories tended to be interrupted, repetitive, or dependent on written notes.

These difficulties were associated with both learner-related and instructional factors. Some students treated storytelling as an ordinary activity that required little preparation, although effective performance demands control of ideas, language, sequence, voice, and expression. At the same time, limited use of instructional media reduced the amount of concrete support available for students who needed help developing and organizing a story. Consequently, students participated passively and had few opportunities to practice storytelling in an engaging and systematic way.

Visual media can provide concrete prompts that focus learners' attention and support the organization of otherwise abstract ideas. Arsyad (2011) explains that instructional media can clarify information and increase learner interest, while Sadiman et al. (2008) note that visual resources may make learning experiences more accessible and purposeful. In storytelling instruction, a sequence of pictures can function as a narrative scaffold: each image suggests an event, the order of images supports chronology, and the complete sequence helps students construct a coherent beginning, development, and ending. This support may reduce the cognitive burden of finding a topic and allow students to concentrate on fluency, pronunciation, intonation, and expression.

Previous classroom studies have also indicated the potential of visual resources for storytelling. Ariyanti (2008) examined animated folk-tale films in storytelling instruction, while Kurniasari (2010) used wordless comics to improve junior secondary students' storytelling performance. These studies demonstrate the instructional value of visual prompts, but they involve different forms of media and different classroom settings. The present study therefore offers a context-specific contribution by examining picture-series media in a Grade VII classroom and by evaluating changes in both the learning process and the students' storytelling scores through successive action cycles.

Accordingly, this study addressed two questions: (1) How did picture-series media improve the process of storytelling instruction for Grade VII students at SMP Negeri 1 Dusun Hilir? and (2) How did the media improve the students' storytelling achievement? The study aimed to improve classroom participation, confidence,

narrative organization, and storytelling performance through a planned and reflective classroom intervention. Its practical contribution lies in evaluating a low-cost form of visual support that can be adapted by Indonesian language teachers in comparable classroom contexts

2. Method

This study employed Classroom Action Research to improve an identified instructional problem through cycles of planning, action, observation, and reflection. Action research is appropriate when classroom practitioners seek to examine and improve their own instructional practices in a systematic and iterative manner (Madya, 2006). The study followed the cyclical model attributed in the original manuscript to Kemmis and McTaggart. The researcher implemented the instructional actions and participated in observation, while the Indonesian language teacher served as a collaborator.

The study was conducted at SMP Negeri 1 Dusun Hilir during the first semester of the 2025/2026 academic year, specifically in September 2025. The participants were 14 Grade VII students. The class was selected on the basis of preliminary observation and an interview with the Indonesian language teacher, which indicated limited storytelling ability, low confidence, difficulty generating ideas, and weak participation in storytelling activities.

The action was completed in two cycles. Each cycle consisted of planning the lesson, implementing the action, observing teacher and student activities, and reflecting on the results to determine the next instructional step. During Cycle I, the teacher introduced picture-series media through the theme "Activities at School." Students examined the sequence, discussed it in groups, prepared a simple narrative, and told the story orally. The teacher monitored the activity, provided verbal encouragement, and gave feedback on students' language and delivery.

Reflection on Cycle I showed that several students still used monotonous intonation, displayed limited facial expression, and relied on notes. Cycle II therefore incorporated speaking warm-ups, role-play, intonation practice, teacher modeling, and a more contextual picture series entitled "An Adventure at the Zoo." These revisions were intended to increase spontaneity, expressive delivery, and confidence while retaining the picture sequence as the principal narrative guide.

Data were collected through classroom observation, questionnaires, field notes, documentation, and a storytelling performance assessment. Observation and field notes were used to record students' attention, participation, cooperation, confidence, and willingness to perform. The questionnaire was used to obtain students' responses to the learning process. Documentation supported the record of classroom activities. The performance assessment covered fluency, alignment between the story and the picture sequence, pronunciation, intonation, and expression.

Qualitative data from observations, questionnaires, field notes, and

documentation were analyzed descriptively to identify changes in the learning process across the two cycles. Quantitative performance scores were summarized through mean scores and the proportion of students who met the achievement criterion. Process success was defined in the original study as student activity reaching a good or very good category at a minimum level of 75%. Achievement success was defined as at least 75% of the students attaining the Indonesian language learning objective criterion (KKTP) of 75.

3. Results

Before the action, students experienced difficulty developing ideas and communicating them orally. Many were reluctant to speak because they feared making mistakes and were not accustomed to telling stories without a written text. Their stories were frequently fragmented, repetitive, and weakly organized.

During Cycle I, the “Activities at School” picture series provided a visible sequence that helped students identify events and construct a basic narrative. Group discussion gave students time to formulate sentences before performing. Observation indicated that students became more attentive to the instructional media, more willing to ask questions, and more prepared to attempt storytelling. The activity also encouraged students to listen to their peers and cooperate in organizing the story. Nevertheless, some students continued to rely on notes, used limited facial expression, and spoke with monotonous intonation.

The Cycle I reflection informed the revisions applied in Cycle II. Speaking warm-ups, role-play, intonation practice, teacher modeling, and positive verbal reinforcement were added. The “An Adventure at the Zoo” picture series was also more closely connected to familiar experiences. During this cycle, classroom interaction became more active, participation was distributed more evenly, and students appeared more confident when performing in front of the class. Students used the pictures as prompts rather than as substitutes for oral production, and they showed greater willingness to improvise and express emotion.

Across the two cycles, the learning process therefore changed from hesitant and teacher-dependent participation toward more active, collaborative, and confident storytelling. The qualitative evidence suggests that the combination of visual sequencing, peer preparation, modeling, practice, and constructive feedback supported this change.

Table 1. Mean Storytelling Scores across the Action Stages

Stage	Mean score	Students meeting KKTP
Pre-action	59	Not reported
Cycle I	68	Not reported
Cycle II	79	93%

As shown in Table 1, the mean storytelling score increased from 59 in the pre-action stage to 68 in Cycle I and 79 in Cycle II. The Cycle II mean exceeded the stated KKTP of 75, and 93% of the students met the achievement criterion. These findings show a progressive descriptive improvement across the stages of the intervention.

Table 2. Reported Changes in Storytelling Assessment Components

Assessment component	Pre-action	Cycle II	Change
Fluency	61	82	+21
Alignment of story content with pictures	61	83	+22
Pronunciation, intonation, and expression	55	74	+19

The component scores reported in the original manuscript also increased between the pre-action stage and Cycle II. Fluency rose from 61 to 82, alignment between story content and the pictures rose from 61 to 83, and the combined score for pronunciation, intonation, and expression rose from 55 to 74. These changes corresponded with the observed reduction in pauses and repetition, clearer narrative sequencing, and greater use of vocal and facial expression.

4. Discussion

The findings indicate that picture-series media supported students by providing a visible narrative structure. Before the intervention, students had difficulty identifying ideas and arranging them in a coherent order. The picture sequence reduced this initial barrier because each image represented a potential event and the complete set provided a chronological framework. This interpretation is consistent with Arsyad's (2011) view that visual media clarify information and with Sadiman et al.'s (2008) explanation that media can make learning experiences more concrete and accessible. In the present study, the pictures did not replace language production; instead, they functioned as prompts from which students developed an oral narrative.

Improvement in the learning process was also related to the way the media were integrated into classroom interaction. Group discussion allowed students to rehearse ideas with peers, teacher modeling demonstrated expected performance, and repeated practice created opportunities to improve delivery. These activities reflect Tarigan's (2008) emphasis on direct speaking practice and Haryadi's (1997) treatment of speaking as a skill that develops through purposeful performance. Positive feedback and familiar themes also appeared to reduce anxiety and encourage students to participate more confidently.

The progressive increase in mean scores from 59 to 68 and then to 79 suggests that the intervention produced meaningful descriptive improvement within the class. The component results further show that the strongest changes were not limited to one dimension: students improved in fluency, narrative-content alignment, and expressive delivery. The findings are broadly consistent with earlier

classroom studies in which visual media supported storytelling, including animated folk-tale films (Ariyanti, 2008) and wordless comics (Kurniasari, 2010). The contribution of the present study is its use of picture series as a simple and adaptable form of visual scaffolding within a two-cycle action-research process.

The Cycle II results also illustrate the importance of reflection in Classroom Action Research. The picture series alone did not immediately resolve all performance problems. Monotonous intonation, limited expression, and dependence on written notes remained after Cycle I. The addition of speaking warm-ups, role-play, intonation practice, and teacher modeling addressed these specific weaknesses. This iterative adjustment is consistent with the improvement-oriented purpose of action research described by Madya (2006). Thus, the results should be attributed to the integrated instructional process rather than to the pictures as an isolated material.

The findings have practical implications for Indonesian language instruction. Picture-series media are relatively inexpensive, can be adapted to familiar themes, and can support learners who need concrete assistance in developing oral narratives. Teachers can increase their value by combining them with peer discussion, explicit modeling, repeated performance, and constructive feedback. However, the results should be interpreted cautiously. The study involved one class of 14 students, was conducted in two cycles, did not include a comparison group, and relied on the researcher's participation in the intervention and observation. The original manuscript also does not provide the complete scoring rubric, score range, or assessor-agreement procedure. Consequently, the findings demonstrate context-specific classroom improvement and should not be treated as evidence of broad causal or statistical effectiveness.

5. Conclusion

Within the Grade VII class at SMP Negeri 1 Dusun Hilir, the use of picture-series media improved both the storytelling learning process and the reported learning outcomes. The visual sequences helped students generate and organize ideas, while group discussion, modeling, practice, and feedback increased participation, confidence, fluency, and expressive delivery. The mean storytelling score rose from 59 in the pre-action stage to 68 in Cycle I and 79 in Cycle II, and 93% of the students met the stated achievement criterion in Cycle II. These findings support the use of picture-series media as a practical classroom strategy when it is integrated with structured speaking activities. Because the study was limited to a small, single-class action-research setting, its conclusion should remain specific to the participants, instructional procedures, and research period reported.

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