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Developing Picture Series to Enhance Eighth-Graders' Reading Performance in Descriptive Texts

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Abstract

Junior high school students often struggle to comprehend descriptive texts due to a lack of varied visual support, leading to difficulties in visualizing detailed textual information. This study aims to bridge this gap by developing picture series tailored to help learners enhance their reading performance in descriptive texts. Utilizing a Research and Development (R&D) design, this study involved preliminary observations, media design, validation by experts, and field testing among eighth-grade learners. The results indicated that the newly developed visual sequences successfully stimulated students' imagination and facilitated a deeper understanding of specific text characteristics. Experts validated the material as highly feasible, and the classroom implementation showed a noticeable enhancement in students' engagement and comprehension tasks. Ultimately, developing sequential visual angles proves effective in supporting eighth-graders' reading performance, offering a practical solution for teachers to improve literacy outcomes in EFL classrooms.

Keywords: Picture Series; Descriptive Text; Reading Performance; Eighth-Graders

INTRODUCTION

English language teaching at the junior high school level plays a pivotal role in developing students' literacy skills, particularly in reading comprehension (Pérez Buelvas, 2024). Reading comprehension serves as the primary gateway for foreign language learners to process complex linguistic inputs and master diverse text genres mandated by the curriculum, including descriptive texts (Siregar & Harida, 2021). Ideally, learning descriptive texts requires eighth-grade students to proficiently identify generic text structures, construct vivid mental visual representations of objects, and accurately recognize specific attributes (Fitri et al., 2022). To facilitate this cognitive mapping process, teachers are expected to incorporate creative, multi-angle learning media that provide robust visual scaffolding in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom (Richards & Jones, 2023).

However, a pronounced gap exists between ideal curriculum expectations and actual classroom practices. Preliminary observations indicate that many junior high school students encounter severe cognitive bottlenecks when attempting to comprehend descriptive texts (Andian, 2019; Fitri et al., 2022). Learners frequently fail to extract specific contextual details because they struggle to visualize dense, monotonous text paragraphs (Kondo & Hadiwijaya, 2022). This problem is exacerbated by current pedagogical reliance on traditional, static learning materials. Most secondary school teachers rely on a single, isolated image to accompany an entire descriptive text, which is inherently insufficient to illustrate the varied physical attributes and multi-angled angles of a detailed object (Mundhiyanti et al., 2023). Consequently, students suffer from low reading engagement, heightened foreign language reading anxiety, and suboptimal reading performance (Huang, 2012; Retelsdorf et al., 2011).

While previous research has extensively documented the benefits of visual aids in supporting EFL reading instruction (e.g., Al-Bilawi, 2021; Nggolaon & Sari, 2020), the majority of existing literature remains limited to the application of generic, single-image media or basic flashcards. There is a distinct empirical research gap regarding the systematic development of multi-angle visual sequences specifically structured as a "picture series" designed to align with the unique structural demands of descriptive texts (Alqy & Zuhriyah, 2023; Suryati, 2022). Grounded in Mayer's (2020) Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning and Paivio's (2014) Dual Coding Theory, structured picture series can serve as an external visual anchor that reduces cognitive load during text decoding.

To bridge this empirical gap, this study focuses on developing a pedagogical "picture series" comprising a sequence of structured, multi-angle visual materials tailored for eighth-grade EFL learners. Therefore, this study addresses the following research question: How can a structured picture series be developed using the ADDIE model to effectively enhance eighth-grade students' reading performance in descriptive texts? Concurrently, the primary objective of this research is to design and evaluate a comprehensive, highly feasible, and pedagogically practical picture series media that resolves students' visualization difficulties and ultimately improves their overall reading performance.

METHOD

This study employs a Research and Development (R&D) design integrated within a qualitative framework to systematically design, develop, and evaluate an educational product. The development process was guided by the ADDIE framework (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation) conceptualized by Branch (2009). Rather than seeking statistical generalization or hypothesis testing, the qualitative orientation of this study is leveraged to obtain an in-depth, contextual understanding of eighth-grade students' visualization struggles and reading performance during classroom interactions. The research was conducted at a Junior High School in Bandung Barat, involving one class of eighth-grade students (N = 32) selected through purposive sampling due to their documented difficulties in identifying specific details in descriptive texts. The research procedures were systematically executed through the five interconnected phases of the ADDIE model Analysis: Diagnosing the gap between curriculum expectations and classroom reality through preliminary observations. Design: Formulating a pedagogical blueprint for the "Picture Series" media by mapping multi-angle visual sequences aligned with descriptive text topics. Development: Constructing the media prototype using digital design tools (Canva) and subjecting it to expert validation to assess pedagogical and visual viability. Implementation: Integrating the validated Picture Series into classroom instruction to assist students in decoding dense paragraphs. Evaluation: Assessing the product's overall practical utility, feasibility, and user perception.

Data were primarily gathered using qualitative instruments, including classroom observation checklists and detailed field notes during the Implementation phase. To analyze these qualitative data, the interactive model by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) comprising data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing was implemented. Additionally, to assess product feasibility and immediate user perception, expert validation rubrics and a 10-item student perception questionnaire using a 4-point Likert scale (Sugiyono, 2022) were administered. Neutral choices were intentionally omitted to avoid central tendency bias among secondary school students. Simple descriptive percentage calculations (Sugiyono, 2022;

Arikunto, 2021) were utilized solely as a formative evaluation tool to systematically map response trends. This descriptive calculation serves strictly as supplementary evidence to triangulate and enrich the observational findings without shifting the core qualitative paradigm of the study. The formula used for calculating the percentage score is:

Table 1. Likert scale by Sugiyono (2022)

Scale Categories	Score
Strongly Agree	4
Agree	3
Disagree	2
Strongly Disagree	1

Data collection for both expert validation and student perception utilized a 4-point Likert scale.

$$\Sigma = \frac{\chi}{n} \times 100\%$$

Where Σ percentage result, χ is the total score obtained, and **n** maximum score. After determining the Likert percentage scores for the validation and questionnaire data using Sugiyono's (2022) formula, the overall results were mapped onto the feasibility criteria proposed by Arikunto (2021) and interpreted qualitatively to complement the observational findings.

Table 2. Product Feasibility Criteria (Arikunto, 2021)

Percentage(%)	Categories	Action
81% – 100%	Very Valid / Very Feasible	Can be used without revision
61% – 80%	Valid / Feasible	Can be used with minor revisions
41% – 60%	Fairly Valid / Fairly Feasible	Requires substantial revision
21% – 40%	Invalid / Infeasible	Requires major revision; cannot be used
0% – 20%	Very Invalid / Very Infeasible	Cannot be used

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The development of the Picture Series media was executed through the five interconnected phases of the ADDIE model (Branch, 2009) to ensure that the final instructional product directly addressed the students' visualization challenges and enhanced their reading performance in descriptive texts.

1. The Process of Developing Picture Series

Analyze

During the initial Analysis phase, preliminary observations and needs analyses were conducted in the eighth-grade classroom. The diagnostic findings revealed a significant gap between the curriculum expectations and actual reading comprehension performance. Students struggled to identify specific information and descriptive attributes (such as physical appearance, color, and size) within dense, text-heavy paragraphs. The core cause was identified as the reliance on traditional, static, single-image instructional materials. A single static picture failed to represent the multi-angle details described in the text, leading to high reading anxiety and cognitive overload among learners. Therefore, the development of a sequential, multi-angle visual media (Picture Series) was necessary.

Design

In the Design phase, a pedagogical blueprint for the Picture Series media was established. The visual sequences were mapped out to directly align with the structural requirements of descriptive texts (Identification and Description sections). Each picture series was designed to showcase an object from multiple perspectives and close-up details (e.g., overall object view, specific attributes, and contextual surroundings). Concurrently, a 10-item student perception questionnaire and classroom observation checklists were designed to evaluate media practicality and student engagement.

Development

During the Development phase, the prototype of the Picture Series was digitally constructed using graphic design software, ensuring high resolution, clear layout, and appealing color contrast. Before field testing, the prototype underwent expert validation by content and media experts to assess its pedagogical and visual viability. The instructional media titled "Learning Descriptive Text with Picture Series" was designed and constructed using Canva, a graphic design platform. The media was structured into three main learning units covering different thematic topics: Unit 1: Picture Series I (The Elephant), Unit 2: Picture Series II (The Dragon Fruit), Unit 3: Picture Series III (The Carrot), and Unit 4: Picture Series IV (My School Library). To provide comprehensive visual and textual scaffolding, each unit incorporates full-color visual elements, multi-angle picture series paired with sequential descriptions, complete reading texts, and practice exercises.

Figure 1. Layout of the Developed Picture Series Media for Descriptive Texts



Can be accessed at
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1mnS4oNvBzURoBbtrOHwoKLk5qOWP0Zz6/view?usp=sharing

2. Media Feasibilty of Picture Series

The feasibility of the "Picture Series" media was evaluated through an expert judgment process. A media feasibility expert assessed the prototype using a structured validation rubric based on a 4-point Likert scale (Sugiyono, 2022). The evaluation focused on three main indicators: visual aesthetic and layout, image clarity and sequence, and overall instructional design usability. Analysis yielded a high media feasibility score of 100% (A score represents the converted score based on the maximum possible score awarded by the two expert validators) which falls into the "Very Feasible" category according to Arikunto's (2021) product feasibility criteria. Qualitative feedback from the expert highlighted that the Canva-designed layout, color contrast, and multi-angle visual sequences were visually appealing and effectively aligned with the descriptive text structure. Minor suggestions provided by the validator-such as optimizing font size contrast and refining image detail resolution-were incorporated to finalize the prototype before classroom implementation.

Table 3. Expert Validation Result

Validation Aspect	Validator 1(%)	Validator 2(%)	Average	Categories
Quality of content	100%	100%	100%	Very Feasible
Visual Picture Series	100%	100%	100%	Very Feasible
Linguistic & Usefulness	100%	100%	100%	Very Feasible
Total			**100%**	**Very Feasible**

Based on Arikunto's (2021) criteria, the 100% validity score categorizes the media as "Very Feasible". Qualitative notes from validators praised the visual layout, color contrast, and clear multi-angle representation. Minor recommendations specifically regarding font contrast optimization were addressed prior to field testing.

Implementation

In the Implementation phase, the validated Picture Series was integrated into the actual classroom reading ecosystem across three instructional sessions involving 32 eighth-grade students (N = 32). The teacher utilized the visual sequences to scaffold text decoding, guiding students to connect specific descriptive sentences with corresponding visual frames in the series. Classroom observation checklists and field notes captured rich qualitative insights into students' cognitive engagement, visual interactions, and behavioral responses across the three distinct thematic units, as summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. Summary of Student Responses Across Instructional Units

Unit & Topic	Key Observed Reading Behavior	Representative Student Quote
Unit 1: Animal (The Elephant)	Students easily matched body parts (trunk, tusks) to text sentences, reducing reading anxiety.	"The text was easy to understand because the images were separated by body parts."

Unit 2: Fruit (Dragon Fruit)	High visual curiosity; students smoothly mapped text layout (Identification & Description).	"The pictures were sequential, so reading a long text didn't feel boring."
Unit 3: Vegetable (Carrot)	Used visuals as direct guides for exercises, though minor latency occurred on abstract terms.	"The shapes were clear in the pictures, but difficult adjectives still required the teacher's help."
Unit 4: Place (Library)	Students effectively recognized spatial details and room elements (e.g., bookshelves, study corner) to infer context and vocabulary accurately.	"Seeing the library layout in pictures helped me imagine the atmosphere and understand the story faster."



Figure 2. Classroom Implementation Documentation

Evaluation

In the final Evaluation, the overall practical utility and effectiveness of the media were evaluated through the administration of a 10-item student perception questionnaire to 32 students (N = 32). The questionnaire measured four key dimensions: Media Clarity and Aesthetics, Pedagogical Helpfulness, Psychological Impact & Motivation, and Technical Challenges. Responses were calculated using Sugiyono's (2022) and categorized according to Arikunto (2021).

Table 5. Student Perception of The Developed Picture Series Media (N=32)

No.	Indicators and Items	SD%	D%	A%	SA%
	Media Clarity and Aesthetics				
1	The images in the picture series are clearly visible.	3.1%	18.8%	62.5%	15.6%
2	The sequence of images helps me distinguish the components of the described object.	0.0%	9.4%	53.1%	37.5%
3	The color and layout of the images make it easier to focus on textual details.	9.4%	9.4%	62.5%	18.8%
	Pedagogical Helpfulness				

4	The picture series makes it easier to find specific characteristics (e.g., shape/color) in the text.	9.4%	12.5%	68.8%	9.4%
5	The picture series helps me understand the meaning of difficult adjectives.	3.1%	46.9%	43.8%	6.3%
6	I can comprehend the "Description" section more easily with the help of the picture series.	0.0%	18.8%	53.1%	28.1%
	Psychological Impact & Motivation				
7	I feel more confident when reading descriptive texts that feature a picture series.	3.1%	28.1%	40.6%	28.1%
8	Using the picture series prevents me from feeling fatigued when reading long paragraphs.	3.1%	25.0%	43.8%	28.1%
9	I am more interested in learning English if the text is accompanied by a picture series.	9.4%	21.9%	40.6%	28.1%
	Challenges & Difficulties				
10	I still find some terms or details in the text difficult to understand despite the picture series.	0.0%	25.0%	68.8%	6.3%

Note: SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree.

3. Media Practicality Indicators

Media Clarity and Aesthetics

The structural design of the media aimed to resolve students' visualization barriers by breaking down dense objects into sequential visual parts. In terms of image visibility, data from Item 1 revealed that 78.1% of respondents, corresponding to 25 out of 32 students, agreed or strongly agreed that the visual elements were clear. Furthermore, the systematic sequence of the media successfully assisted 90.6% of participants, or 29 students in Item 2, in distinguishing different physical attributes of the described objects. While the visual aesthetics and color layouts enhanced textual focus for the majority, accounting for 81.3% or 26 students in Item 3, a minor group of 6 students expressed disagreement, suggesting a need for localized contrast adjustments in future developments.

Pedagogical Helpfulness

The pedagogical rationale behind the picture series was to scaffold text decoding and enhance students' reading performance. Data from Item 4 indicated that 78.2% of participants, representing 25 students, successfully identified specific characteristics of descriptive objects using the visual sequences. Similarly, Item 6 highlighted that 81.2% of respondents, or 26 students, found the generic structure of descriptive texts, specifically the "Description" component, significantly easier to master. However, vocabulary acquisition remained a critical hurdle. Item 5 revealed an even split among the class, where 50.0% of participants, or 16

students, disagreed or strongly disagreed that visual media alone solved vocabulary difficulties, indicating that sequential visuals must still be paired with direct teacher-led vocabulary pre-teaching.

Psychological Impact, Motivation, and Challenges

The integration of diverse visuals was intended to reduce reading anxiety and cognitive fatigue, thereby supporting a more positive overall reading performance. Across affective dimensions, 68.7% of respondents, or 22 students in Item 7, reported heightened confidence when reading descriptive texts accompanied by the picture series. Furthermore, Item 8 demonstrated that 71.9% of participants, corresponding to 23 students, experienced reduced reading fatigue when navigating long paragraphs, while Item 9 showed that 68.7%, or 22 students, expressed increased interest in learning English through this multimodal approach. Nevertheless, the media did not act as a total substitute for cognitive processing. Item 10 clearly demonstrated that 75.1% of respondents, or 24 students, still encountered complex language barriers or unfamiliar linguistic terms despite the visuals. This underlines that while the picture series effectively mitigates visualization bottlenecks to improve overall reading performance, it operates best as an auxiliary visual anchor alongside explicit instructional guidance.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that replacing single, static images with a structured Picture Series fundamentally improves how junior high school EFL learners process descriptive texts. Rather than merely serving as an attractive visual aid, the sequential media directly addresses the root cause of students' comprehension difficulties by resolving the visual-cognitive bottleneck. Reading dense descriptive paragraphs typically requires students to simultaneously decode foreign vocabulary and construct a mental image of the object, which often induces cognitive overload and reading fatigue (Huang, 2012). Grounded in Paivio's (2014) Dual Coding Theory and Mayer's (2020) Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning, the developed picture series acts as an external visualization anchor. By mapping text descriptions directly to multi-angled visual frames, spatial details such as shape, color, and specific attributes are processed efficiently through the visual channel. This synergistic processing frees up working memory capacity in the verbal channel, making structural descriptive components significantly easier for students to isolate.

However, a critical theoretical insight emerges regarding the functional boundary of visual media. While the Picture Series excels at supporting macro-level comprehension by helping students understand text organization and physical attributes, it cannot fully resolve micro-linguistic barriers. Sequential visuals illuminate physical context, but they do not automatically teach abstract adjectives or low-frequency vocabulary, such as crunchy, rough, or cactus-like. This nuance refines previous claims by Al-Bilawi (2021) and Richards & Jones (2023) regarding the role of visual aids. Visual media functions as a contextual illuminator rather than an automated lexical converter, meaning optimal reading performance still depends on explicit, teacher-led vocabulary pre-teaching (Nation, 2013).

Beyond cognitive mechanisms, the sequential visual design provides crucial affective support within the EFL classroom. Monotonous, text-heavy reading materials frequently trigger foreign language reading anxiety among secondary school learners (Huang, 2012). Segmenting reading texts alongside step-by-step imagery effectively lowers Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter. Students receive immediate visual confirmation while reading, which reduces hesitation, sustains reading stamina, and fosters self-confidence during classroom reading activities.

Overall, the developed Picture Series proves that instructional media in EFL classrooms must evolve from generic static illustrations toward structurally aligned visual sequences. For secondary school educators, these results highlight that multimodal media serves most effectively not as a standalone replacement for language teaching, but as an essential visual scaffold embedded within a guided reading ecosystem. This study contributes to EFL reading instruction by proposing a structured picture series as an instructional medium that integrates sequential visual representation into descriptive text learning. Unlike conventional single-image media, the developed product provides systematic visual scaffolding that facilitates students' comprehension of descriptive information while supporting teachers in implementing multimodal literacy instruction.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that the primary bottleneck hindering eighth-grade students' reading comprehension in descriptive texts is a visual-cognitive obstacle caused by reliance on traditional, static, single-image media. The development and implementation of the structured Picture Series using the ADDIE model successfully resolves this core problem by providing multi-angled visual sequences that serve as an external cognitive anchor. As demonstrated in the results and discussion, these sequential visuals enable learners to easily isolate specific physical attributes, master the structural "Description" section of the text, and experience reduced reading anxiety and fatigue.

However, while the Picture Series effectively eliminates the visualization barrier and enhances macro-structural comprehension, it does not completely erase micro-linguistic constraints, particularly regarding complex adjectives and unfamiliar vocabulary. Therefore, it is concluded that while the developed media is highly feasible and pedagogically practical, it should not function as a standalone instructional tool. To fully optimize junior high school students' reading performance, the implementation of sequential visual media must be systematically paired with explicit, teacher-led vocabulary scaffolding within a guided multimodal reading environment.

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