

Developing Students' Narrative Writing Skill Through “Islamic Picture Series” in an Islamic Senior High School

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Abstract

This study aimed to discover whether the use of Islamic Picture Series could improve the narrative writing skills of Islamic high school students in Makassar. The method of the study was pre-experimental with one group pre-test and post-test design. The population of the study was 10th Grade students of SMA IT Wahdah Islamiyah Putri Makassar, South Sulawesi in 2020/2021 academic year. Eighteen (18) students were selected as samples of the study using random sampling technique. The instrument of this study was a writing test which administered as a pre-test and post-test. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data. The results of data analysis showed that the post-test mean score was 91.8. This was greater than the pre-test mean score (87.2). Furthermore, the significant value of this study (0.000) was smaller than the alpha level (0.05). This means that H₀ is rejected and H₁ is accepted. Therefore, it can be concluded that Islamic picture series could be used as media in developing the students' narrative writing skill of 10th Grades of SMA IT Wahdah Islamiyah. This study implies that Islamic Picture Series possesses a positive outcome towards fostering Islamic students' writing skill in senior high school context.

Keywords: Islamic picture series, Narrative writing, Islamic Senior High School

INTRODUCTION

In foreign language learning, normally there are four language skills need to be mastered, namely: writing, speaking, reading, and listening. Among of those four language skills, writing is a challenging skill for many English learners. Watcharapunyawong and Usaha (2013) discovered that it is the most challenging for foreign English learners to master out of the four skills because it needs both syntactic and semantic knowledge. In addition, many aspects and processes need to be considered in writing which made writing a complicated skill (Mayasari, 2014).

On the other hand, Islam encourages its people to write. The following is a hadith about writing as Narrated by Abdullah ibn Amr ibn al-'As: “I used to write everything which I heard from the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ). I intended (by it) to memorise it. The Quraysh prohibited me saying: Do you write everything that you hear from him while the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) is a human being: he speaks in anger and pleasure? So I stopped

writing, and mentioned it to the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ). He signaled with his finger to him mouth and said: Write, by Him in Whose hand my soul lies, only right comes out from it”. Another hadith that mentions the important of writing is narrated by Ubada b. as-Samit reported God’s messenger as saying: “the first thing God created was the pen. He told it to write and when it asked Him what it should write He told it to write what was decreed, so it wrote what had taken place and what would take place to all eternity.”

It is clear that writing in both general and religious perspective is an important skill to develop. Writing skills in English classes has been taught in various ways and can be taught through visual materials. According to (Negrilă & Ionel, 2012, p. 2), “writing does not have the expressive possibilities of speech mode where a speaker can revise ideas or clarify them. An examination of the writing process reveals that the way we approach the writing task and the form our writing takes depends on the purpose, context and audience”. Furthermore, Klimova (2013) mentioned writing is interesting to second language learners but they do not get enough experience and practice in formal writing. For this reason, teachers should give more attention to the students’ formal writing development during classes. It is up to the teachers to use the appropriate strategy in helping the students through the challenges of writing. In addition, based on my observation during PPL (teaching practice for teacher candidate student) for about three months in one Islamic school in Makassar, I discovered that most of the students experienced difficulties in making narrative writing. One of the main problems is the students experienced difficulties in expressing their ideas in logical ways.

Related to this phenomenon, many scholars have proposed ideas to encourage the students to write. One of them is by using visual materials, such as picture. Byrne (1988), for example argued that visual material is good tool for writing practice because it is attractive and simulating. Furthermore, the use of picture series in developing students’ writing skills also suggested by Asrifan (2015, p. 245) when he said: “teaching using picture story is very suitable to be applied to the students of senior high school as a media in writing and also is very helpful for the students in generating and organizing their ideas in writing through picture”.

In foreign language teaching, in fact several studies have been conducted on the use of picture series in developing students’ language skills. For example, studies by Purwatiningsih (2015) where the authors used picture series to improve students’ speaking ability, Amsiana, Suparman, and Sudirman (2014) in improving reading comprehension, and Litasari (2010) in improving students’ writing skills.

Despite picture series has been used in language teaching, to date no study has been found specifically assess the use of Islamic picture series in teaching writing. Therefore, this current study would like to fill this gap.

Islamic Picture Series Approach to Teaching

This study specifically uses Islamic picture series as an aid (teaching media) in developing students’ narrative writing. Picture series can be defined as “some pictures representing continuous events of a story with important information” (Rachmawati, Zuhri, & Kurniasih, 2013, p. 2)

Using picture series has many advantages because according to Wright (1989) pictures can be an important influence for students in motivating, in conceptualizing the language

use and in giving reference. Also, according to Raimes (1983), the advantages of using pictures as a strategy are pictures brings the class shared experience in learning, pictures encourage students in using common English vocabulary and language, it can be benefited as a basis for many tasks, and provide a simulating focus for students' attention because people like looking at pictures. Picture series is also a convenient strategy a teacher can use in the classroom. Wright (1989) mentioned that using pictures in learning is convenient for teachers with : (a) any type of class or students (b) limited time for preparation, (c) limited money or complicated media, and (d) limited time and examination syllabus to follow.

Strategies in Using Picture Series

Raimes (1983) suggested some strategies in using pictures in the classroom:

- a) Using many types of pictures for a whole class discussion that will be then used as writing material. The pictures can be in form of posters, textbook pictures, magazine pictures, or simple pictures drawn on the class board.
- b) Provide audience for student writers who are also students. This can be done by splitting the class into two and giving them each a different picture.
- c) Students for this activity can find a partner or small groups to work with and each group or pair gets a different picture to work on. They must then tell the rest of their classmates about it and this provides students with a real communicative task.
- d) The students provide pictures for themselves for real communicative tasks in the class. The pictures chosen by the students might have personal meaning for them to write about in the classroom for instance their own drawing or favorite art work or their family photo.
- e) The students are asked to imagine and visualize the scene or situation before the moment in the picture and predict the next, or to infer the cause of the situation that is presented in the picture and guess what the outcome will be. Students can make predictions, inferences, and suppositions beyond the picture itself.

The suggested strategies that was adapted in the current study were strategies on points a, c, and e. From strategy in point a, in this study, the Islamic picture series strategy was used for a whole class discussion that was then used as writing material. From the strategy on point e, the students were asked to imagine, visualize and analyze the scene or situation of the picture series. They made inferences about each picture in the Islamic picture series and the Islamic picture series as a whole. Finally, from the strategy on point c, the students worked in small groups to discuss the Islamic picture series they were given and a representative tells the rest of the class about the quick story they come up with from the Islamic picture series given.

According to Litasari (2010), using picture series as a teaching strategy for narrative writing has improved the narrative writing ability of SMA Negeri 2 Banjarbaru students. After applying the picture series strategy, both the students' test scores and their achievement in writing a narrative text have improved. They were also more focused and were actively participating in the writing lesson because the picture helped increase students' attention since they are colorful and more enjoyable, therefore they could convey their idea more easily.

Previous findings by Mayasari (2014) at SMPN 2 Wonosari also showed improvements in the students' writing ability when using picture series as strategy in the class learning process. It improved students' writing ability in many aspects such as the vocabulary, organization, writing content, language use, and mechanics. It can also improve students' motivation because picture series attract the students' interest and is able to engage them during class. Lastly, picture series helped the students in generating, developing, and organizing ideas in writing.

As mentioned previously, picture series is a sequence of images that narrates a story. Many kinds of stories can be created into picture series. In this study, the stories or narrative in the picture series includes Islamic elements. The Islamic picture series can be based on stories from the Qur'an and hadiths about the prophets or their companions or their people, and also based on stories that teach Islamic values. Using Islamic element in picture series is a great advantage especially for Islamic schools because teachers can integrate learning English and Islam in the learning process and also students can learn both Islam and narrative writing at the same time.

METHOD

The study applied the pre-experimental design for the study in which the authors used pre-test and post-test design for one group along with treatment in the procedure. The result of the test conducted was compared and calculated after the treatment to find out the effectiveness of Islamic picture series in developing students' narrative writing skills. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010, p. 260), "The experimental method is clearly the best approach for determining the causal effect of an intervention". But, on the other hand, it is not possible to check if the result of the data is due to treatment or external factors using pre-experimental study design (Pandey & Pandey, 2015).

This study focused on Islamic picture series in senior high school in Makassar. SMA Islam Terpadu (SMA IT) Wahdah Islamiyah Makassar was selected as setting of the study since it is one of Islamic senior high school in Makassar which gave the authors permission to take data in the school. The study conducted at the school from April to May 2021.

The study population was Grade 10 students of SMA IT Wahdah Islamiyah Putri Makassar. From a population of 96 senior high school students, the authors took samples using random sampling technique since Grade 10's in Indonesian senior high schools have narrative writing as one of their English learning materials. Eighteen (18) students of the same class in year 10 represented the population of this study.

There were two variables of this experiment study. The first one was the independent variable, the Islamic picture series as a teaching strategy. It is the teaching aid that helps students develop their narrative writing skills. The second was the dependent variable, the student's narrative writing skills. The dependent variable is affected by independent variable.

The study instrument of this study was writing test. The tests were given twice; in the beginning of the study (pre-test), and in the end after treatment (post-test). These tests were conducted to measure the students' narrative writing skills development. The test in the end or after the treatment result was compared to the students' score before the treatments was implemented. The authors gave the students narrative writing exercise for the pre-test and was told to write a narrative based on a given topic and without any pictures yet (see Volume 20 Number 2 (2021)

appendix 5). The post-test was also a narrative text exercise but with Islamic picture series and with instructions to write a narrative about the picture series that were given (see appendix 6).

The data were collected from April 16, 2021 until May 28, 2021. For the data collection, the authors conducted three steps: pre-test, treatments, and post-test. The description of each of the procedure is as follows:

1. Pre-test

The pre-test was conducted in one meeting to find out the students' narrative writing ability before the treatment. The procedure of the pre-test was as follows:

- a. The authors introduced the study to the students and explained the procedure of the pre-test.
- b. The students were asked to write a short narrative text based on a topic related to Islam.
- c. The students write their own narrative text.
- d. The student submitted the narrative they have written.

2. Treatment

The treatment was conducted after the pre-test has been done. The authors conducted the treatment of using Islamic picture series four times which was in four meetings. The narrative writing material was taught and discussed using the Islamic picture series strategy. The students were expected to be engaged in the activities and learning proses.

The procedure of the treatment was as follows:

- a. On the first meeting, the authors explained the Islamic picture series strategy they use in learning narrative writing.
- b. The students were asked to analyze the Islamic picture series displayed.
- c. The Islamic picture series was described and discussed as a class. The students made inferences about the Islamic picture series displayed on the screen.
- d. The authors gave an example of a narrative from the picture series and discussed the story with the students.
- e. For the second meeting, the first and third step was repeated but the students made narrative texts based on the picture series that is displayed together as a whole class.
- f. On the third meeting, the students were given Islamic picture series to describe.
- g. The authors explained the procedure of the activity.
- h. The students described the pictures of the Islamic picture series and told the rest of the class about the quick story they come up with from the Islamic picture series given.
- i. For the fourth meeting, the 5th step until the 8th step was repeated except the Islamic picture series used in the learning was different.

3. Post- test

After the treatment, the students were given a post-test to find out how their narrative writing skills have developed after the treatment. The post-test outcomes were then compared with pre-test. The procedure of the post-test is as follows:

- a. The authors explained the procedure of the post-test to the students.
- b. The students were asked to write a short narrative text based on the Islamic picture series given.

- c. The students write their own narrative text using the Islamic picture series.
- d. The student submitted the narrative text they have written.

The collected data from tests was analyzed using the procedures in the following:

- 1. The narrative test results by the students was assessed based on the assessment of writing table by Weigle (2002, p. 116) and after the assessment, the overall scores of the students were classified into the following criteria:

Table 1
Students’ Score Classification

Score	Classification
90-100	Excellent
75-89	Good
61-74	Fair
51-60	Less
X<50	Poor

(Depdiknas, 2015, p. 214)

- 2. The students’ scores or findings were organized into tables and the frequency and rate percentage of students’ score was computed. The mean scores of each aspect of writing from the finding such as the content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanic was calculated including the overall the pre-test and post-test.

The Islamic picture series is an effective strategy if there is improvement of the students’ post-test scores compared to the students’ pre-test scores. For this, the authors used paired t-test to test the hypothesis. It is needed to see if there is statistically a significant difference of the tests. McMillan and Schumacher (2010, p. 303) stated that “paired t-test is used in situations in which the subjects from the two groups are paired or matched in some way. A common example of this case is the same group tested twice as in a pretest-posttest study”. To calculate the t-test, the authors used the Statistical Product and Service Solution 25 (SPSS 25 version) software to analyze the findings of the study. Data such as the mean score of the overall findings, standard deviation, and t-test value was calculated using the SPSS 25 analysis software.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

As mentioned previously in the hypothesis, there are two possible outcomes that the study predicted. The first outcome is the H0 (Null Hypothesis) where the use of Islamic picture series is not effective in improving the students’ narrative writing skill. The second is the H1 (Alternative Hypothesis) in which the use of Islamic picture series is effective in improving the students’ narrative writing skill. The criteria for hypothesis testing is that if the Sig (2-tailed) or level of significance is lower than the alpha level (Sig < α), it can be indicated that the students score of writing ability between pre-test and post-test was significantly different and surely improved. The result can be seen in following Table 2.

Table 2. Pre-post test results

Test	Mean	Standard Deviation



Pre-test	87.22	4.17
Post-test	91.83	5.36

The pre-test mean was 87.22 while the post-test had a mean of 91.83 of the maximum score of 100. The mean of both the test indicate there is an improvement of the scores that the students gain in the writing tests. The standard deviation of the pre-test is 4.17 and 5.36 for the post-test. This means that the scores students gain in the post-test are more spread out from the mean or average score.

There are five aspects of writing the authors assessed in the students’ writing tests. The results showed on table 3 below are the increase in the mean scores of the two tests except for the mechanics aspect. The most significant improvement of the aspects is on the students’ writing content, the lowest improvement is on the organization just by 0.78 differences, and the mechanics showed a small deterioration.

Table 3. The Mean Scores and Levels of the Writing Aspects

Writing Aspects	Max. Score	Pre-test		Post-test Mean		Difference
		Mean score	level	Mean score	level	
Content	30	25.83	Good	27.61	Excellent	1.78
Organization	20	18.28	Excellent	19.06	Excellent	0.78
Vocabulary	20	17.28	Good	18.500	Excellent	1.22
Grammar	25	21.89	Good	22.83	Excellent	0.94
Mechanics	5	3.94	Fair	3.83	Fair	-0.11

In this study, the mean is statistically significant at α level = 0.05 because the level of significance or Sig = .000 is not larger than the alpha level or $\alpha = 0.05$ (Sig < 0.05). So the H1 (Alternative Hypothesis) is accepted meaning that the use of Islamic picture series is effective in improving the students’ narrative writing skill.

The results were also tested using the non-parametric test for two related sample because the data distribution for the posttest turned out non normal. The data above showed that there are difference between the pretest and the post-test after the students had undergo the treatment of using picture series in developing their narrative writing skills which showed significant effect because the p value is not greater than the alpha level (p<0.05). By this data calculation, it can be concluded that Islamic picture series was effective to be used as media in teaching and learning narrative writing.

Discussion

The data analysis result showed that the use of Islamic picture series as media in teaching and learning has significant effect on the development of student’s narrative writing. The students’ narrative writing showed improvement in most of the writing aspects with writing content being the highest improvement among the other aspects. This will be discussed further in the next point of this discussion part. The mean scores of the



post-test of 91.83 increased from the pre-test of 87.22, an improvement with difference as much as 4.61. By using paired t-test and 2-paired non-parametric test for both the pre-test and the posttest, the data analysis result showed that there was significant difference or effect between the two tests. Furthermore, from the results of the t-test, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted. The students had studied narrative writing previously because it was the topic for the semester when the study was conducted and the authors was given the opportunity to apply the Islamic picture series strategy to further develop the students' narrative writing skill.

In relation to previous studies, the finding of the current study support the finding of the previous study which was conducted by Khotimah, Daud, and Burhansyah (2017). The study used pre-test-post-test control group design and found that the experimental group showed significant improvement in the mean scores of the pre-test and the post-test.

CONCLUSION

Based on the result of data analysis of findings and discussions in the previous chapter, the study concludes that the students' narrative writing skill developed after using Islamic picture series in the treatment and that Islamic picture series was effective to be used as media in learning narrative writing.

The study suggests English teachers especially teachers of Islamic schools may apply the Islamic picture series as media in learning narrative writing. For future study, it would be better to find more samples so that the results can be maximized. In addition, it would be better if the study steps are done offline so that the authors can supervise the students while writing process so the result can be more accurate.

Despite the improvement of the scores, the data result of the post-test was more spread from the mean score than the pre-test. This might be the reason to why the post test data was detected as non-normal using the SPSS normality test. The limitations when conducting the study was that due to the pandemic in 2021, school was done online so the studying for this study was also conducted online.

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