



## The Merits of Using Serial Pictures in English Language Learning

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### I. Introduction

In today's rapidly evolving educational landscape, the integration of visual tools in language instruction has become not only beneficial but essential. As educators strive to meet the diverse needs of learners and respond to changing pedagogical trends, the use of visual aids has proven to be an effective strategy for fostering engagement, comprehension, and retention—particularly in the context of learning English as a second or foreign language. Among the array of visual tools available, serial pictures, which are sequences of images that narrate a story or illustrate a step-by-step process, have emerged as a particularly valuable and versatile resource in the language classroom.

Serial pictures provide learners with meaningful contextual support, bridging the gap between abstract language and concrete understanding. Through visual storytelling, these image sequences offer rich, contextualized input that aids in the acquisition of vocabulary, reinforcement of grammatical structures, and the development of narrative skills. Students are not only exposed to new language in context, but they also have opportunities to practice using it in structured and creative ways. For example, when interpreting or describing a series of pictures, learners must consider verb tenses, logical sequence markers (e.g., first, then, after that, finally), descriptive language, and cohesive devices—thereby strengthening their overall linguistic competence.

Moreover, serial pictures cater to a variety of learning styles, making them especially beneficial in mixed-ability classrooms. Visual learners benefit from the imagery that helps solidify language concepts, auditory learners gain from the accompanying oral descriptions and discussions, and kinesthetic learners can be engaged through activities like rearranging picture cards or acting out scenes. These tools are particularly impactful for young learners and beginners, as they rely heavily on concrete representations to make sense of new language. However, their usefulness extends to more advanced learners as well, offering opportunities for

sophisticated storytelling, critical analysis, and creative expression.

In addition to supporting language acquisition, serial pictures encourage the development of key 21st-century skills, such as creativity, critical thinking, and communication. When students are asked to infer what is happening in a picture sequence, predict outcomes, or create their own narratives based on a visual prompt, they are engaging in higher-order thinking. These tasks require them to go beyond surface-level description and delve into interpretation, justification, and imagination. Furthermore, working with serial pictures often involves pair or group work, which fosters collaborative communication skills and allows learners to negotiate meaning, share perspectives, and build confidence in using the language.

This article delves into the multifaceted benefits of using serial pictures in English language instruction. It outlines practical strategies for integrating these tools into everyday lessons—ranging from simple descriptive tasks to complex project-based learning activities. It also highlights how serial pictures can be adapted for various age groups, proficiency levels, and learning contexts. Ultimately, by incorporating serial pictures into the English classroom, educators can create more engaging, inclusive, and effective learning experiences that not only enhance language skills but also inspire students to become more thoughtful and expressive communicators.

### Why should use Picture?

There are several research studies investigating the benefit of using picture in language learning. They are as follows.

The first is Pribadi, Chozin, Aini, Yulianti, and Tarihoran (2024). They found that using pictures in English language instruction increased vocabulary retention and understanding, motivation and interest, and improved language skills by offering contextual signals and encouraging interaction. It means that incorporating pictures into English language



instruction is a highly effective strategy that supports cognitive, emotional, and communicative aspects of language learning. It helps learners remember vocabulary, understand meaning in context, stay motivated, and use language in interactive and meaningful ways.

The second one is Nur'aini (2019). She found that There was a significant difference in students' vocabulary acquisition before and after they were taught using flashcards at the junior high school level. This means that the use of flashcards as a teaching tool had a measurable and positive impact on students' ability to learn and retain new vocabulary. Prior to the intervention, students demonstrated a more limited range of vocabulary, as reflected in their pre-test scores. However, following a series of structured vocabulary lessons that incorporated visual and interactive flashcard activities, students showed noticeable improvement in their vocabulary mastery, as seen in the post-test results. This indicates that flashcards can be an effective instructional strategy in language learning, especially for junior high school students who benefit from engaging, visual learning aids that support memory retention and active recall.

The third one is Hidayati (2010). She found that there was significant effect of learning by using pictures map toward students' ability in writing descriptive paragraph. It means that the integration of picture maps as a learning strategy appeared to enhance students' descriptive writing skills in a meaningful way. Picture maps, which visually organize information using images and keywords, provided students with a clear framework to generate and structure ideas. By engaging with visual stimuli, students were better able to activate their imagination, recall relevant vocabulary, and arrange their thoughts coherently. This visual support seemed especially effective in helping students describe objects, people, or scenes in detail, as the images served both as prompts and organizational guides. Furthermore, the use of picture maps encouraged active participation and creativity, making the writing process more engaging and less intimidating, particularly for visual learners or those who struggle with generating ideas through text alone. As a result, students produced more vivid, well-organized, and content-rich descriptive paragraphs. The data suggests that incorporating picture maps into the writing instruction process can significantly contribute to the development of students' descriptive writing skills.

The fourth researcher is Wibowo (2009). He found that using pictures to explain material during teaching proved to be highly effective, particularly in enhancing the learning process of English vocabulary.

Visual aids such as images, illustrations, and diagrams help create a more engaging and memorable learning experience for students. When learners see a picture associated with a new word, they are more likely to understand and remember its meaning. This is especially beneficial in vocabulary acquisition, where connecting a word with its visual representation reinforces comprehension and retention. Moreover, pictures can bridge language barriers and support learners at different proficiency levels by offering context clues that words alone may not provide. The use of images not only grabs students' attention but also caters to different learning styles, especially for visual learners who process information more effectively through images. As a result, incorporating pictures into teaching strategies can significantly improve students' vocabulary development and overall language learning outcomes.

The fifth study is by Erniwati, Mertosono, Rofiqoh, and Gente (2019). They found that picture series effectively improve students' writing skills in descriptive, narrative, recount, procedure, explanation, and spoof texts. It means that picture series serve as powerful scaffolding tools that cater to different learning styles, lower students' writing anxiety, and improve their confidence. By offering concrete visual stimuli, picture series support students in mastering the structure, language features, and purpose of various text types, making them a valuable asset in any language classroom.

The sixth is Vigara (2022). She found that There was a significant difference between classes taught using picture media in writing biographical recount texts and those taught using conventional methods. Students who were exposed to picture-based media showed noticeably higher engagement, creativity, and comprehension. The visual stimuli helped them better understand the structure of a biographical recount, including key elements such as orientation, events, and reorientation. Pictures served as effective prompts that sparked ideas and made it easier for students to recall and organize factual information about a person's life. This method also supported students with lower literacy levels, enabling them to participate more confidently in the writing process. In contrast, conventional teaching methods—such as textbook-based instruction and lecture-style explanations—often lacked the interactive and stimulating elements necessary to fully engage learners. As a result, students in those classes tended to struggle more with organizing their ideas, maintaining interest, and using appropriate language features in their writing. Overall, the integration of picture media not only enhanced



students' writing performance but also made the learning process more enjoyable and meaningful.

The seventh study also investigating the use of picture in language learning is Mulia (2008). She found that there was a significant difference between teaching present continuous tense using picture and one without using picture. It means that Students who were taught using pictures showed a better understanding of the tense structure and usage, as the visuals helped them connect actions with ongoing events in a more concrete and meaningful way. The use of images appeared to enhance student engagement, comprehension, and retention of the grammatical concept, making abstract ideas more accessible. On the other hand, teaching the present continuous tense without pictures relied heavily on verbal explanation and rote memorization, which proved to be less effective for many learners, especially those with visual learning preferences. This suggests that integrating visual materials into grammar instruction can significantly improve learning outcomes, particularly for language learners who benefit from contextual and illustrative teaching methods.

The eight research also focused on the use of picture in language learning was conducted by Chairena (2007). She found that there was a statistically significant difference in the improvement of students' writing ability between those who were taught using visual aids, specifically pictures, and those who were taught without any visual support. The use of pictures as instructional tools appeared to enhance students' engagement, stimulate their imagination, and provide concrete references that made the writing process more accessible and meaningful. Students who received instruction with pictures were better able to generate ideas, organize their thoughts coherently, and use descriptive language in their writing tasks. In contrast, students taught without pictures showed slower progress and often struggled with idea development and expression. These findings suggest that integrating visual elements into writing instruction can play a crucial role in improving students' writing skills, particularly in generating content, vocabulary usage, and overall composition structure.

The ninth study also investigating the use of picture in language learning is one carried out by Apsari (2017). She found that teaching writing by using picture series can improve students' ability in writing recount text. It means that picture series serve as visual prompts that help students organize their thoughts and structure their narratives in a coherent and sequential manner. By observing a sequence of images, students are encouraged to describe events in

the order they happened, which is a fundamental aspect of recount writing. This approach not only aids in enhancing their storytelling skills but also stimulates their creativity and vocabulary development.

Another study investigating the use of picture in language learning is Muhsinin, Rahaman, Hassan, and Manu (2024). They found that there was improvement of positive responses in the teaching-learning process of vocabulary through pictures as media and that the students were also motivated in teaching-learning process during the implementation of pictures. It means that there was a noticeable improvement in the number and quality of positive responses from students during the teaching-learning process of vocabulary when pictures were used as a supporting media. This indicates that visual aids, particularly images, played a significant role in enhancing student engagement and comprehension. The use of pictures helped to bridge the gap between abstract vocabulary and concrete understanding by providing visual context, which made it easier for students to remember and internalize new words.

The last researcher also carrying out a study about the use of picture in language learning is Hasanah (2015). She found that using picture in teaching grammar can make exercises and activities more interesting and more interactive. In other words, using pictures in teaching grammar can make exercises and activities not only more interesting but also more interactive and engaging for students. Visual elements provide a context that helps learners understand abstract grammar rules more concretely. For example, a picture showing people performing different actions can be used to teach verb tenses like the present continuous or past simple. Instead of relying solely on text-based exercises, teachers can encourage students to describe what they see in the picture, promoting active language use and creativity. Moreover, pictures can spark discussions, comparisons, and storytelling, all of which reinforce grammar points in meaningful ways. This approach caters to visual learners and adds variety to lessons, which can increase motivation and participation. Ultimately, integrating pictures into grammar instruction transforms routine grammar drills into dynamic, student-centered learning experiences.

Based on what has been presented in previous paragraphs, it can be concluded that using picture in English language classes provide some benefits that enable the classes to be interesting and enjoyable. Therefore, using picture in English language classes is really suggested.



### Final Remarks

English language classes may not be boring for English language students. There are many factors contributing to make students enjoy the classes. One of them is using suitable teaching media. The teachers can choose media that can support their teaching to be interesting and enjoyable and one of media that can be used and suggested is picture. Many research studies have proven its effectiveness in teaching and learning process. The media do not only help teachers to do their best in providing the fascinating and pleasant teaching, but also help students to be motivated and enjoy teaching-learning process.

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