



EXPLORING THE EFFECTIVENESS VISUAL STIMULI TO IMPROVE WRITING SKILL OF EIGHT GRADERS

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ABSTRACT

Writing is frequently regarded as the most challenging language skill for junior high school students to acquire. Many learners face difficulties in articulating their ideas in written form, often due to limited vocabulary, inadequate grammatical knowledge, and a lack of motivation. This Classroom Action Research was designed to enhance students' writing proficiency through the integration of visual stimuli as an instructional technique. Conducted over two cycles with a cohort of 14 eighth-grade students at SMP Sultan Agung Batam, the study employed various instruments, including pre-tests, post-tests, classroom observations, and analysis of students' written work. The findings revealed that visual stimuli significantly facilitated idea generation and led to improvements in both sentence construction and vocabulary usage. The students' mean writing score rose from 52.86 in the pre-test to 67.64 in the post-test. These outcomes suggest that incorporating visual stimuli into writing instruction can serve as an effective pedagogical approach to strengthening students' writing competence at the junior high school level.

Keywords: *Writing skills, Visual stimuli, Guided writing, Motivation, Classroom Action Research*

1. INTRODUCTION

Writing is a fundamental skill that junior high school students must develop as they begin to articulate their thoughts with greater independence in English. Nevertheless, many learners continue to face considerable challenges in mastering this skill. At SMP Sultan Agung Batam, for instance, a significant number of eighth-grade students encounter difficulties when tasked with writing assignments. Some are unsure how to begin, others express a lack of interest, and many struggle to generate ideas. These obstacles contribute to low engagement in writing activities and often result in outputs that fall short of the expected academic standards.

Several studies have shown that using visual media, like pictures or picture series, can help students find inspiration, organize their ideas, and

make writing more enjoyable. Visuals give students something concrete to look at, which helps them build ideas and write more clearly. Gayatri and Gaffar, (2023) and Agustawati et al. (2024), and others has proven that visual aids can improve students' writing skills and also increase their motivation.

In the classroom, when students are given a picture to look at before writing, they usually become more excited and curious. They start asking questions, making up stories, or even laughing at what they see. This kind of reaction is a good sign, because it shows they are engaged and interested. Compared to writing with no help or inspiration, having visual support makes the activity feel less stressful and more fun. That's why this research focuses on how visual stimuli combined with guided

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writing can help students feel more confident and motivated when learning to write in English.

Writing is one of the most challenging skills for junior high school students, especially when it comes to expressing their ideas clearly and coherently. At SMP Sultan Agung Batam, eighth-grade students struggle significantly with writing tasks. Many students face difficulties in developing ideas, and presenting them clearly in writing.

As a result, their writing often lacks clarity, depth, and coherence. This condition was also found by Ayu et al. (2023) and Kusuma et al. (2023), who reported that students who did not meet the creative thinking indicators in writing tasks felt bored, lacked motivation, and relied heavily on parental supervision to complete their assignments. Similarly, Gayatri and Gaffar, (2023) noted that student participation in writing activities was very low during the initial learning cycle, with only 18% of students actively involved. Widyaningrum et al. (2019) and Ida Royani and Sihombing (2024) also observed that in early stages of writing activities, only 43% of students reached the minimum standard, which reflected their low achievement and enthusiasm toward writing tasks.

These findings reflect the real conditions faced in many classrooms, where students often feel disconnected from traditional writing instruction and struggle to find inspiration. Thus, there is an urgent need to explore more stimulating approaches, such as visual-based strategies, to support students in developing their writing skills with greater interest and confidence.

Several researchers have shown the effectiveness of visual stimuli in improving students' writing ability. Gayatri and Gaffar, (2023) demonstrated that using picture series significantly enhanced students' participation and writing performance, as learning became more enjoyable and meaningful. Uli Banjarnahor et al. (2023) also reported a substantial increase in students' scores when using visual picture sequences to support descriptive writing. In a study conducted by Agustawati et al. (2024), the use of picture media led to significant improvements in writing, with statistical evidence confirming that students performed better after the intervention. Meanwhile, Erniwati et al. (2022), through a literature review, emphasized that picture series were effective across different student groups, including those with hearing impairments, as they encouraged idea development and improved students' writing structures. Listyani (2019) highlighted that visual images boosted both creativity and narrative writing ability, providing new insights for writing teachers. Mukramah et al. (2023)

showed that picture and text prompts helped students organize their ideas more clearly and elaborate their sentences effectively. Furthermore, Widyaningrum et al. (2019) found that writing skills improved significantly across three learning cycles, rising from 43% to 90.5% student achievement by the final cycle. Lastly, Ayu et al. (2023) linked visual-based writing tasks to improved creative thinking indicators, particularly in fluency, originality, and elaboration. Altogether, these studies suggest that incorporating visual media into writing instruction can effectively support students' engagement, idea development, and overall writing quality.

Numerous studies have demonstrated that visual aids, such as pictures or image prompts, can effectively enhance students' writing abilities. However, the majority of this research has been conducted at the senior high school level or has focused narrowly on specific text types, such as recount or descriptive writing. Additionally, many of these studies have primarily emphasized the students' final writing scores, often overlooking how visual prompts contribute to idea development during the writing process. This current study shifts the focus to eighth-grade junior high school students, aiming not only to improve their writing outcomes but also to foster greater confidence, interest, and creativity through the use of guided writing supported by visual stimuli. The objective is to evaluate the effectiveness of this combined approach in strengthening both the motivation and skills of students in writing. It is anticipated that this method will stimulate more enthusiastic participation, assist in idea generation, and support clearer sentence construction, ultimately resulting in significant improvements in students' writing performance.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Definition of Writing

Writing is a fundamental language skill that plays a significant role in both education and communication. Writing is recognized as one of the four fundamental language skills Jaja (2024), essential for expressing ideas, emotions, and intentions in a structured text form. According to Zahra and Febria (2023), writing is a very important skill in learning English. It helps students express their ideas, thoughts, and feelings using words. Writing is not just about grammar it also involves thinking and planning. Students need to do steps like brainstorming, organizing, drafting, and revising.

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Because of this, writing is needed in all subjects, not just in English class.

Uli Banjarnahor et al. (2023) emphasize that writing is a means to convey thoughts and information through written language, transforming oral messages into structured compositions. Furthermore, Agustiawati et al. (2024) point out that writing skills are indispensable in both education and the professional world. Writing serves as a communication tool, helping individuals express ideas, opinions, and emotions effectively across various contexts. According to Nasution et al. (2024), writing requires a high level of cognitive engagement to express meaningful ideas, reflect personal thoughts, and construct knowledge. Mukramah et al. (2023) highlight that writing enables learners to organize their ideas systematically and communicate them effectively. In this regard, writing serves multiple purposes: it functions as a tool for academic expression, allowing students to present arguments and findings clearly Rosdiana et al. (2024) as a medium for personal expression, enabling individuals to convey opinions, emotions, and experiences Suharyat and Lusiana (2023) and as a mechanism for developing critical thinking, as students engage in the recursive process of drafting and revising (Widyaningrum et al., 2019; Mahesti et al., 2025).

To produce meaningful and effective writing, students must master various components. These include technical elements such as grammar, syntax, punctuation, spelling, and capitalization (Mukramah et al., 2023; Jaya et al., 2025). In addition, coherent paragraph structure, appropriate vocabulary selection, and the logical organization of ideas are crucial aspects of strong writing (Rehman et al., 2025; Jaya et al., 2025a). These components work together to support clarity and purpose, whether in academic essays or personal reflections. Patty (2024) also emphasizes that students often face difficulties due to limited mastery of essential components such as grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, and vocabulary. Moreover, the ability to maintain cohesion and coherence in writing is equally important to ensure the ideas flow smoothly and logically.

Despite its importance, writing remains one of the most challenging skills for students to master. Gayatri and Gaffar (2023) assert that many learners struggle with express their ideas, thoughts, and feelings in both fictional and non-fictional formats. This difficulty can stem from a variety of sources. On the technical side, students often make errors in

grammar, punctuation, and vocabulary use (Rehman et al., 2025; Fadilah et al., 2023). Cognitively, the writing process can be overwhelming, especially when students must manage content development and structural planning simultaneously (Zhang et al., 2025).

Supporting these discussions, several recent studies have provided insights into the complexities of writing. Rehman et al. (2025) investigate both linguistic and psychological challenges in academic writing. Zhang et al. (2025) explore writing difficulties among postgraduate students and emphasize the need for instructional support. Vandermeulen et al. (2024) also emphasize that writing is an intricate process that involves memory, attention, reading, motivation, and goal-setting. Writing styles may differ from one student to another; some prefer to plan more, while others rely on revision. These personal approaches show that writing is not static it is flexible and varies depending on the writer and the context.

In conclusion, writing is an important skill that helps students share ideas, feelings, and knowledge. To write well, students need to understand grammar, vocabulary, and how to organize their writing clearly. Writing can be difficult because it involves many parts and steps. Every student has their own way of writing some like to plan first, while others prefer to revise a lot. Because writing is not the same for everyone, teachers should give support that fits each student's needs to help them become better writers.

2.2 Visual Stimuli

Visual stimuli are pictures, photos, or other visual media used to get students' attention, help them get ideas, and make writing easier and more creative. They can inspire students to think, imagine, and start writing. In English classes, visual stimuli are often called visual aids. These are tools like pictures, videos, or maps that help teachers explain lessons in a fun and easy way. According to Hussain et al. (2023) and Kress and Leeuwen (2020), visual aids can make students curious and help teachers explain ideas better. These tools make learning more interesting and help students enjoy writing activities.

Visual stimuli refer to images, pictures, or other visual media that are used to provoke thought, spark imagination, and inspire writing. Using visual stimuli in the classroom has been shown to enhance students' motivation and creativity. According to Gayatri and Gaffar (2023), the use of picture series in

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writing activities made learning more enjoyable and increased student participation.

Uli Banjarnahor et al. (2023) found that students' descriptive writing abilities improved significantly when visual aids were incorporated into the learning process. Similarly, Agustawati et al. (2024) reported that the use of pictures led to a measurable improvement in students' writing skills, as confirmed through statistical analysis.

A literature review by Erniwati et al. (2022) also highlights that picture series help students organize ideas better and encourage more structured writing, even for students with special needs, such as those with hearing impairments. Mukramah et al. (2023) support this view, noting that pictures and text prompts enable students to develop ideas more clearly and elaborate sentences more effectively. Moreover, Widyaningrum et al. (2019) observed that the integration of visual media significantly improved students' writing performance across multiple learning cycles. Ayu et al. (2023) emphasized that visual-based writing tasks enhanced creative thinking, helping students demonstrate fluency, originality, and elaboration in their writing.

Thus, visual stimuli provide an effective and engaging strategy to enhance students' writing abilities by offering concrete, relatable contexts for idea development and expression. According to Mukramah et al. (2023) and Listyani (2019) picture prompts help students understand ideas, improve visual thinking, and organize their writing. Writing prompts, both in text and picture form, help students write more clearly and follow steps when doing writing tasks.

Not only pictures or photo series, but digital tools that have visual features can also be used as visual stimuli. For example, Lady Pratiwi (2023) and Afifah and Hasanudin (2023) found that using Kahoot a colourful and interactive quiz app helped students improve their writing. Their scores increased from 65.30 in the pre-test to 72.48 in the first post-test, and then to 88.82 in the second post-test. The students also became more interested, active, and focused during the lesson. This shows that even fun and digital visual tools can help students write better. In conclusion, using visual stimuli helps students understand the topic better and guides them to write step by step until they can finish a complete text.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts the Classroom Action Research (CAR) framework, which involves planning, action, observation, and reflection, with the aim of improving students' writing skills through the use of visual media. CAR is a reflective and systematic approach supported by the Ministry of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform No. 16 of 2009, enabling teachers to address classroom challenges and enhance professional development. According to Wulandari et al. (2019), CAR helps identify problems and implement effective teaching strategies, while Meesuk et al. (2020) views it as a bridge between theory and practice. Tanduklangi et al. (2019) further emphasizes that CAR integrates pragmatism, critical thinking, and interpretive approaches, making it a flexible method for improving classroom instruction. This study applies CAR to support students' writing development through engaging visual-based instruction.

3.2 Participants

This research was conducted in the eighth grade of SMP Sultan Agung Batam, with a total of 14 students who were officially registered during the research period. To collect the data, the study used several instruments, including a pre-test and post-test to measure students' writing progress, classroom observations to monitor their engagement and participation, and document analysis to evaluate the content, structure, and language use in their writing tasks.

3.3 Instrument and Data Collection

This research used several instruments to collect the data, including pre-test, post-test, classroom observation, and document analysis. The pre-test was given before the learning activity to see the students' basic writing ability. Then, the students joined guided writing activities using visual media as the treatment. After the treatment, they did the post-test to show any improvement in their writing skills. Besides that, the teacher also did classroom observation to see how the students responded and participated during the activities. The students' writing results from both tests were also analysed to check changes in vocabulary, structure, and ideas. These instruments helped show how visual media supported students' motivation and writing performance.

3.4 Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed using Microsoft Excel to calculate the mean scores of students' writing performance. The improvement was measured by comparing pre-test and post-test results. Additionally, qualitative observations were documented to provide insights into students' motivation and engagement levels.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**4.1 Result**

This study utilized various instruments to assess the intervention's effectiveness, including pre- and post-tests to measure writing proficiency, classroom observations to monitor engagement, and document analysis to evaluate students' written work. Initial test results showed varied writing abilities, with many students struggling in grammar and organization, highlighting the need for differentiated instruction. Observations also indicated low motivation at the outset, leading to the use of visual tools like PowerPoint to boost interest and creativity in writing.

Table 4.1 Presents the Pre-Test Results Data from 13 Respondents before being Given Treatment, Reference By Pramilaga et al. (2024)

Groups	N	Mean
Pre-Test	14	52,85714286

The pre-test, administered through a writing task following instruction with whiteboard media, aimed to gauge students' baseline narrative writing skills prior to the introduction of visual PowerPoint-based instruction. Results from 14 participants revealed an average score of 52.86, well below the school's Minimum Completion Criteria (KKM) of 80. Based on the scoring rubric, 10 students were categorized as Basic, 3 as Intermediate, and only 1 as Advanced, highlighting a wide disparity in writing proficiency.

Students at the Basic level commonly faced issues such as unclear or irrelevant content, incomplete structure, inconsistent use of past tense and conjunctions, poor coherence, and frequent mechanical errors. Intermediate-level students demonstrated clearer content and structure, though

they still made grammatical and coherence-related errors. The Advanced-level student showed strong narrative skills, with clear organization, consistent grammar use, logical flow, and minimal mechanical mistakes.

These findings underscore the need for differentiated instructional strategies. Consequently, the planned treatment involves using PowerPoint to reinforce core writing features such as temporal expressions and auxiliaries, supported by interactive Q&A sessions and writing exercises with direct feedback. These steps aim to address key writing weaknesses and improve student performance across all proficiency levels.

Table 4.2 Presents the Post-Test Results Data from 13 Respondents after Given Treatment, Reference by Pramilaga et al., (2023)

Groups	N	Mean
Post-Test	14	67,64285714

Following the use of a visual PowerPoint-based instructional strategy, the post-test was conducted to assess improvements in students' writing skills. The average score rose from 52.86 (pre-test) to 67.64, indicating significant progress, though still below the school's Minimum Completion Criteria (KKM) of 80. Many students at the Basic level showed notable improvement in content clarity, organization, and reduced grammatical and mechanical errors. Intermediate students produced more structured and cohesive texts, while Advanced learners maintained strong performance with well-developed, accurate writing. Classroom observations revealed increased motivation and participation, driven by the engaging visual approach. Overall, the findings affirm the positive impact of visual media on enhancing students' writing proficiency, though continued support is needed to meet academic standards.

To assess students' initial writing ability in recount texts, a pre-test was conducted. The assessment used a rubric based on five criteria: content, generic structure, language features, organization, and mechanics. Each criterion had a maximum score, and the total maximum was 100. The rubric used is presented in the following table.

Table 4.3 Scoring Rubric for Recount Text – Holiday Experience Reference by Phetsangkhad & Prakai, (2022)

Assessment Criteria	Basic (1)	Intermediate (2)	Advanced (3)	Max
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				Score
1. Content (Relevance & Clarity)	Unclear or irrelevant, hard to understand.	Adequate, mostly clear.	Clear, detailed, interesting recount of a holiday experience.	30
2. Generic Structure (Orientation, Events, Re-orientation)	Incomplete or missing.	All parts present, not fully developed.	Complete and well-structured with clear beginning, events, and closing.	20
3. Language Features (Past tense, Action verbs, Time connectives)	Many errors.	Some errors, but understandable.	Consistent use of past tense, proper verbs, and connectives.	20
4. Organization (Coherence & Flow)	Sentences disconnected, ideas jump around.	Ideas somewhat connected.	Smooth flow and clear connections between sentences.	15

Score Table

Score Range	Level	Description
80–100	Advanced	Meets or exceeds standard (KKM)
65–79	Intermediate	Close to standard, revision recommended

Based on this rubric, students' recount writing in the pre-test was assessed and categorized into three levels: Advanced (80–100), Intermediate (65–79),

and Basic (10-65). The results are shown in the following table.

Table 4.4 Students' Pre-Test Scores and Performance Levels

No	Student Name	Score	Level	Remarks
1	Student 1	35	Basic	Several ideas but lacks full paragraph form.
2	Student 2	60	Intermediate	Organized but can improve in details.
3	Student 3	35	Basic	Unclear organization and many grammar issues.
4	Student 4	40	Basic	Short and not structured properly.
5	Student 5	40	Basic	Only one sentence. Lacks detail and structure.
6	Student 6	45	Basic	Some structure, many grammar mistakes.
7	Student 7	45	Basic	Simple but not structured as a paragraph.
8	Student 8	65	Intermediate	Has a story and structure. Still needs improvement.
9	Student 9	70	Intermediate	Long and clear, though grammar needs improvement.
10	Student 10	75	Intermediate	Clear idea, many grammar errors.
11	Student 11	50	Intermediate	Good sequence, can be more detailed.
12	Student 12	90	Advanced	Very complete, clear, and well organized.
13	Student 13	40	Basic	Too short and lacks detail.
14	Student 14	55	Basic	Short but follows the topic. Needs better paragraph structure.
	Mean	52,86		

The pre-test results showed that most students encountered considerable difficulties in writing recount texts. Out of 14 students, only 1 reached the Advanced level, demonstrating good understanding of recount structure, appropriate use of past tense, and clear organization of ideas. These students were able to write detailed and interesting holiday stories with minimal grammatical and mechanical errors. Meanwhile, 3 students fell into the Intermediate category, showing fairly organized writing but still needing improvement in language accuracy and

detail. Their narratives were understandable but sometimes lacked fluency and depth.

On the other hand, the majority of students, 10 in total, scored at the Basic level, indicating major challenges in expressing ideas clearly and structuring their writing. Their recounts were often short, incomplete, and contained frequent errors in grammar—especially past tense usage—and mechanics such as spelling and punctuation. These issues disrupted the coherence and meaning of their texts. The overall average score of 52.86 was below

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the school's minimum passing standard, confirming the need for focused instructional support. This baseline data highlights the importance of using

engaging visual stimuli in the intervention to help students improve their writing skills effectively.

Table 4.5 Students' Post-Test Scores and Performance Levels

No	Student Name	Score	Level	Remarks
1	Student 1	70	Intermediate	Shows good improvement. Paragraph contains multiple ideas in a sequence.
2	Student 2	75	Intermediate	Improved. Clear sequence of events and more detail than pre-test.
3	Student 3	40	Basic	Content inappropriate. Needs guidance.
4	Student 4	35	Basic	Some improvement. Still lacks structure.
5	Student 5	63	Basic	Wrote one sentence, but saw a good sequence.
6	Student 6	65	Intermediate	Good improvement. Story has structure and detail.
7	Student 7	70	Intermediate	Clear paragraph. Better detail and length than pre-test.
8	Student 8	68	Intermediate	Improved. Simple but structured story.
9	Student 9	73	Intermediate	Clear, long narrative with sequence. Grammar still needs work.
10	Student 10	75	Intermediate	Shows improvement. Better structure and content.
11	Student 11	50	Basic	Content includes inappropriate topic. Needs supervision.
12	Student 12	90	Advanced	Excellent writing. Very detailed, emotional, and well-structured.
13	Student 13	68	Intermediate	Improved from pre-test. Simple but well-organized.
14	Student 14	65	Intermediate	Clear sequence. Shows improvement from pre-test.
	Mean	67,64		

The post-test results showed a notable improvement in students' writing performance, with the average score rising by around 15 points and many students progressing from the Basic to Intermediate level. Students exhibited enhanced organization, clearer content, and improved accuracy in grammar and mechanics. Notably, Student 12 consistently reached the Advanced level, demonstrating strong mastery in recount writing. The use of visual media (PowerPoint) as an instructional tool proved effective in boosting both students' writing proficiency and motivation. Although the average score had not yet met the KKM benchmark of 80, the overall upward trend indicates that the intervention had a positive impact. Continued use of visual strategies and sustained writing practice are recommended to support students still below the competency threshold. Future interventions should target these learners to ensure all students achieve the expected writing standards.

4.2 Discussion

The results of this study demonstrate a significant improvement in students' writing ability

after receiving instruction using visual media through PowerPoint presentations. This is evidenced by the comparison between the students' pre-test and post-test scores. The average score on the pre-test was 52.86, which falls below the school's Minimum Mastery Criterion (MMC) of 80. Most students were at the Basic level of writing proficiency, with only one student reaching the Advanced level, and a few students at the Intermediate level. Common issues identified in the pre-test included unclear content, incomplete text structures, inappropriate grammar usage particularly in using the past tense and conjunctions as well as numerous mechanical errors such as spelling and punctuation. These findings are consistent with Fahmi and Rachmijati (2021), who noted that writing is one of the most difficult skills for second language learners to master due to its complexity in grammar, structure, and content development.

Following the intervention using visual media, particularly PowerPoint, the students' post-test scores showed a marked improvement, with an average score of 67.64. Several students moved from the Basic to the Intermediate level, indicating better

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organization, clearer content, fewer grammatical and mechanical errors, and improved narrative coherence. Students at the Intermediate level showed enhanced cohesion and logical flow, while those already performing well managed to maintain the quality of their writing. These results align with Flower and Hayes (2019) Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning, which states that combining words and images helps students to process and retain information more effectively, thereby improving their learning outcomes, including writing performance.

Classroom observations also revealed increased student motivation and engagement throughout the learning sessions. The use of visual media allowed students to visualize ideas and organize their writing more effectively. This supports the argument by Widyaningrum et al. (2019), who emphasized that visual materials in language classrooms can stimulate students' imagination, encourage discussion, and support vocabulary development, all of which contribute to improved writing skills.

Although the post-test results show progress, the average score still did not reach the MMC. This suggests the need for ongoing support and more intensive writing practice to ensure that all students meet the required academic standards. The findings imply that visual media, while effective, should be integrated with continuous teacher guidance and scaffolding strategies to maximize learning outcomes in EFL writing classrooms.

5 CONCLUSION

The findings of this study suggest that the integration of visual stimuli, such as images and PowerPoint media, can positively influence students' writing performance in recount texts. The improvement observed in students' post-intervention writing indicates that visual aids support learners in organizing ideas more effectively, using appropriate grammatical structures particularly past tense and improving overall writing accuracy. However, not all students were able to reach the desired proficiency level, highlighting the need for sustained instructional support and longer-term interventions.

These results imply that visual media can serve as an effective pedagogical tool in English language classrooms, especially when teaching narrative or recount genres. Nonetheless, its implementation should be accompanied by consistent writing practice, constructive feedback, and scaffolding from teachers to ensure deeper learning and skill mastery.

For future practice, educators are encouraged to continue incorporating engaging visual aids in writing instruction while also designing structured and interactive activities that address individual learning needs. Future research may explore the long-term effects of visual-based instruction across different text genres, levels of proficiency, and learning contexts. It is also recommended that further studies involve larger and more diverse participant groups, as well as prolonged treatment periods, to yield more comprehensive and generalizable insights into the effectiveness of visual stimuli in enhancing students' writing abilities.

6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Students' increased enthusiasm and engagement during writing activities demonstrated that visual media can enhance motivation and creativity in learning. Their active participation and positive response to the use of pictures and PowerPoint media contributed greatly to the improvement in writing performance throughout the research.

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