

UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF USING VISUAL INSTRUCTIONAL MEDIA IN WRITING CLASSES: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY

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ABSTRACT: Writing is a fundamental skill in English language learning, yet it remains one of the most challenging aspects for students to master. In response, visual instructional media have increasingly been integrated into writing classes to support engagement and improve outcomes. Despite this, limited research has explored university students' perceptions and experiences with such media in writing instruction. This study aims to fill that gap by examining students' perception of using visual instructional media in their writing class, focusing on past experiences, current usage, and future implications. This research employed a qualitative approach using narrative inquiry to capture the detailed experiences of two English education students at the one of private university in Indonesia. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews via Zoom meeting and analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns in the students' narratives. The interviews explored how participants engaged with visual media over time and how these experiences influenced their perceptions and learning processes in writing classes. Results revealed participants found students' perception of using visual instructional media significantly enhances the effectiveness of writing classes in both cognitive and affective aspects. Cognitively, visuals helped students understand abstract concepts, organize ideas, and write more creatively. Affectively, visuals boosted confidence, motivation, and engagement in class activities. Overall, the study highlights the potential of visual media to enhance engagement and improve writing performance, as reflected in students' perceptions on past experiences, present practices, and future implications. However, given the study's limited scope, further

research is encouraged to investigate the long-term effects of visual media integration on students' writing development and academic achievement. Given the study's limited scope, further research is needed involving more diverse contexts should involve student populations across various educational settings to enhance generalizability. Moreover, exploring how visual media can be adapted for different disciplines and educational levels would offer deeper insights for curriculum development and teaching innovation.

Keywords: student's perceptions, visual instructional media, writing class

Introduction

Writing is particularly complex as it requires organizing thoughts into coherent text (Inayah et al., 2022). Strong writing skills are crucial, especially in academic contexts, as they reflect students' ability to express their understanding and mastery of content (Sarifah & Apsari, 2020). To support students in developing writing competence, teachers often rely on instructional strategies, including the use of media to make learning more engaging and effective. Instructional media, particularly visual media, have been shown to play a significant role in enhancing student engagement, comprehension, and creativity in writing classes (Purnamasari et al., 2021).

While numerous studies have explored the effectiveness of visual media in improving writing outcomes most of these studies focus on learning results rather than exploring students' perceptions and experiences, particularly at the university level. Understanding students' perceptions is essential, as it shapes their attitudes, motivation, and responses to instructional methods. Students' past experiences, current engagement, and future expectations toward media use can offer valuable insights for instructional improvement.

Many studies have examined the use of visual media in writing classroom. (Harisma et al., 2019) investigated the impact of project-based learning with visual media on the writing skills of tenth-grade vocational students in Cimahi. (Winola, 2021) aimed to understand how teachers use instructional media in the classroom, identify challenges they face, and explore the strategies they employ to overcome these problems. (Al Fauzi et al., 2024) investigated seventh-grade

students' perceptions of visual literacy in English language learning at a middle school in Jember, Indonesia. (Santoso & Sholihah, 2017) research to evaluate students' writing skills using visual media of students of Muhammadiyah University of Metro.

From these previous studies, the researcher wants to develop existing theories and research related to the topic of this study. Despite these insights, limited research has specifically examined students' perceptions with visual instructional media in writing classes. Understanding their past experiences, current perspectives, and future implications can provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of visual instructional media in supporting writing development. This study aims to bridge this gap by investigating students' perceptions using visual instructional media in writing classroom. This evaluation is crucial for both teachers and students, as it helps determine whether the developed learning media effectively achieves its intended learning objectives and enhances the overall writing learning experience.

Method

This research used a qualitative approach, specifically narrative inquiry. A qualitative method captures the personal and human aspects of life experiences and presents them narratively (Abrar, 2019), allowing for deeper contextual understanding (Bolkan et al., 2020). Narrative inquiry is a key way to understand how people see the world (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

The participants in this study were two undergraduate students enrolled in the bachelor's degree program in English Language Education, Faculty of Education, at the one of private university in Indonesia. Two participants, referred to by the pseudonyms Yasmin and Sarah. At the time of the research, both participants were in their sixth semester of study. The selection process prioritized specific eligibility criteria, ensuring that participants had prior experience in an academic writing course. Both participants had successfully completed the compulsory writing course. Additionally, the researcher considered their academic performance in the writing course, with both participants achieving an average grade of B+, which indicated their proficiency in academic writing and further

justified their selection. Moreover, their willingness to participate and share their experiences was a key factor in their selection, ensuring meaningful engagement in the study.

The interviews were conducted online via Zoom meeting, scheduled based on mutual agreement. Each session lasted around 30–45 minutes. During the live session, participants completed a Microsoft Word document containing 11 open-ended questions, guided by the researcher. This approach allowed for immediate clarification, follow-up questions, and richer data through both written and verbal responses. The interview questions were translated into Bahasa Indonesia to ensure clarity and ease of understanding. They were structured based on Dewey’s theoretical concept of the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), temporality considers past experiences, present perspectives, and future implications with visual instructional media in writing classes.

For data analysis, the researcher used thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to identify patterns and themes. This common method in qualitative research helps turn complex data like interviews into meaningful insights (Lochmiller, 2021).

Findings

This chapter presents the findings of the study based on the thematic analysis process, which follows (Braun & Clarke, 2006) steps approach. The findings are organized according to the themes that emerged from the data analysis, providing a comprehensive understanding of the participants’ perspectives.

1. Past Experience on the Students’ Perception of Using Visual Instructional Media in Writing Classes

Table 1. Summary of Findings on Past Experience

Topics	Focus of Perception	Participants Quotes
	Cognitive Perception - Non-visual methods were rigid and limited holistic understanding - Focus was mostly on technical accuracy and structure.	<i>Sarah: “The learning process felt rigid and rather boring due to the lack of visual stimulation.”</i> <i>Yasmin: “It could get boring,</i>

Past Experiences		<i>especially when the material was long or hard to visualize.”</i>
	Affective Perception • Monotonous and uninspiring. • Decreased motivation and creativity.	<i>Sarah: “I was also less motivated to explore ideas creatively... more rigid and overly structured.”</i> <i>Yasmin: “Although it took longer. When I started using visual methods, I felt more excited.”</i>

In conclusion, the findings from students’ past experiences indicate that non-visual instructional methods were generally perceived as rigid, monotonous, and less supportive of holistic understanding. From a cognitive perspective, students acknowledged that while conventional strategies such as reading and note-taking helped them grasp technical aspects like structure and accuracy, these methods failed to facilitate deeper comprehension of narrative flow and broader contextual meaning.

From an affective perspective, the absence of visual stimulation contributed to feelings of boredom, reduced motivation, and restricted creativity. Students felt constrained in their ability to explore ideas more freely, resulting in writing that was overly structured and less expressive. The monotonous nature of traditional approaches not only dampened enthusiasm but also hindered the development of innovative thinking in writing tasks.

2. Present Experience on the Students’ Perception of Using Visual Instructional Media in Writing Classes

Table 2. Summary of Findings on Present Experience

Topics	Focus of Perception	Participants Quotes
	Cognitive Perception • Visual media support understanding of structure, cohesion, and idea organization.	<i>Sarah: “Visual media like slides, infographics, and moodboards help me understand coherence and narrative structure more quickly because I can see the concepts visually.”</i> <i>Yasmin: “Using slides and mind maps makes it easier to grasp key ideas and organize my thoughts, which improves how I</i>

Current Experiences (Visual Media Integration)		<i>structure my writing."</i>
	Affective Perception - Higher engagement, creativity, and confidence. - Helps address writer's block and boredom.	<i>Sarah: "I feel more enthusiastic and creative when using visual media."</i> <i>Yasmin: "I usually feel more confident because I can explain things more clearly and interestingly."</i>

The findings suggest that students' current experiences highlight the positive and transformative role of visual media in writing instruction. From a cognitive perspective, visual tools such as infographics, slides, charts, and mind maps significantly supported students' ability to comprehend abstract concepts, strengthen textual cohesion, and structure narratives more effectively. Both participants emphasized that visual media enabled them to organize ideas with greater clarity, thereby improving the overall quality of their writing. They also demonstrated flexibility in choosing specific types of visual tools according to the objectives and contexts of their academic tasks, indicating that visual media were not used randomly but rather strategically to maximize learning outcomes.

From an affective perspective, visual media fostered higher levels of motivation, confidence, and creativity in the writing process. Students expressed feeling more enthusiastic and inspired when incorporating visual elements, which helped them overcome common challenges such as writer's block and lack of interest. Overall, the integration of visual instructional media created a more dynamic and supportive learning environment, enhancing both cognitive comprehension and affective engagement in writing tasks.

3. Future Implications on the Students' Perception of Using Visual Instructional Media in Writing Classes

Table 3. Summary of Findings on Future Implications

Topics	Focus of Perception	Participants Quotes
	Cognitive Perception - Visuals seen as bridging theory and practice when used meaningfully. - Risk of reduced deep thinking with overuse.	<i>Sarah: "Visuals should not merely serve as decoration... students were also involved in creating visuals themselves."</i> <i>Yasmin: "I stop thinking deeply... not be trained enough</i>

Future Implications (Evolving Role)		<i>to develop ideas independently.”</i>
	Affective Perception - Balanced use is needed. - Concerns over loss of focus and motivation if visuals are unclear or excessive.	<i>Sarah: “A balance between content and visuals must be maintained.”</i> <i>Yasmin: “If the visuals are unclear... I lose focus and motivation.”</i>

These findings indicate that the reflections on the future role of visual instructional media reveal both optimism and caution. From a cognitive perspective, visual tools are seen as having strong potential to bridge theoretical knowledge with practical application, especially when students are actively engaged in creating visuals as part of the learning process. However, concerns remain regarding the risk of overreliance on visuals, which may inadvertently reduce students’ capacity for deep thinking and limit the development of independent ideas.

From an affective standpoint, participants underscored the importance of balanced usage. While visual media can stimulate interest, motivation, and enjoyment in learning, unclear or excessive use may instead cause distraction, reduce focus, and diminish motivation. Overall, the future implications suggest that visual instructional media will continue to play an important role in writing education, provided it is implemented thoughtfully, purposefully, and in balance with critical and independent thinking skills.

Discussion

This discussion explores university students' perceptions of using visual instructional media in writing classrooms. This study provide a nuanced understanding of university students’ perceptions regarding the use of visual instructional media in writing classes, analyzed through both cognitive and affective lenses across past, present, and future experiences. The following discussion integrates empirical data from the interviews with relevant literature to contextualize and complicate the interpretation of these results.

1. Past Experiences

Prior to the use of visual instructional media, students mostly experienced conventional, text-heavy teaching methods such as lectures, reading assignments, and note-taking. Cognitively, these methods helped in understanding basic grammar or structure, but lacked support for conceptual clarity and deeper writing skills. This aligns with (Wardaya, 2018) who argue that visual aids can simplify abstract material and enhance comprehension.

Students described difficulties in engaging with writing, consistent with (Schunk, 2012) cognitive learning theory that emphasizes learning is constructed through experience and interaction. The narrative inquiry framework by (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), grounded in Dewey's philosophy, supports this: prior negative experiences with non-visual methods shaped their current expectations and attitudes toward learning.

Affectively, students reported boredom, fatigue, and low motivation states linked to limited emotional engagement. (Krathwohl et al., 1964) and (Pekrun et al., 2002) emphasized that affective perception (e.g., enthusiasm or anxiety) plays a pivotal role in learning effectiveness. These insights are reinforced by (Galatsopoulou et al., 2022), who highlight how student motivation is shaped by teaching design and delivery.

2. Current Experiences

Today, the integration of visual media, like infographics, PowerPoint slides, mind maps, and videos enhances the learning process. Students stated that these tools not only helped them structure their ideas but also stimulated creativity and reduced writing anxiety. Cognitively, visual media assist students in organizing essays, articulating arguments, and overcoming writer's block. These tools also promote critical thinking and expression. According to (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001), such scaffolding enhances learning by helping students construct meaning actively. This is further confirmed in (Hidayanti et al., 2019), who found that visual support reduced difficulties in writing expository texts.

(Kurniasih et al., 2020) also emphasized that visual-based writing process approaches reduced anxiety and helped students focus on content development. Students in this study shared similar experiences, describing how selecting and using visuals strengthened their ability to explain concepts clearly.

Affectively, students reported higher motivation, increased confidence, and satisfaction in producing visually enriched work. The affective benefits were also seen in (Asnas & Hidayanti, 2024), where students expressed confidence when using visual writing prompts and templates as coping strategies.

3. Future Implications

Looking ahead, students anticipate a greater role for visual media in writing education. They believe visuals will support idea generation, concept clarity, and logical structure. Sarah emphasized the value of co-creating visuals, suggesting this deepens engagement and personalizes learning an approach echoed by (Mirnawati et al., 2024) who showed that student-generated media improve autonomy and cognitive growth.

This vision aligns with (Seaman, 2019), who view experiences as temporal, relational, and situated within specific educational contexts. Visuals serve as cognitive tools that help bridge past learning with future application. However, students also cautioned against overreliance on visual aids. Yasmin warned that poorly designed or excessive visuals could distract from core writing skills. This perspective is supported by (Kurniasih et al., 2020), who warned that without pedagogical clarity, scaffolding can reduce learners' independence and creativity. Affectively, visuals are expected to sustain enjoyment and confidence, but students stress that visuals must be intentional, relevant, and pedagogically grounded.

Conclusion

The results of this study revealed that students' perception of using visual instructional media significantly enhances the effectiveness of writing classes in both cognitive and affective aspects. Cognitively, visuals helped students better

understand abstract writing concepts, organize their ideas logically, and develop creative approaches to writing tasks. Affectively, they increased students' confidence in expressing ideas, motivation to participate, and overall engagement during class activities. These findings are reflected in students' past experiences, their current use of visual media, and their implications for the future.

Overall, this study highlights the transformative role of visual instructional media in enhancing the effectiveness of writing class. Compared to traditional methods, visual tools provide more engaging, interactive, and student-centered learning experiences. They not only improve comprehension and creativity but also foster higher levels of confidence and motivation among students. The findings suggest that integrating visual media into writing instruction is not merely a complementary strategy but a necessary innovation in modern education. Therefore, educators should adopt and adapt visual tools thoughtfully, ensuring they serve as meaningful aids rather than distractions, to maximize their potential in supporting students' academic growth.

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