



The Effectiveness of Using Pictures to Improve the Writing Skills of Libyan University Students at the Faculty of Arts in Assaba

(First Semester, English Language Students Department)

فعالية استخدام الصور في تحسين مهارات الكتابة لدى طلاب الجامعات الليبيين في كلية الآداب
بالأصابعة (طلبة قسم اللغة الإنجليزية، الفصل الدراسي الأول)

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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to investigate the effectiveness of using pictures to improve writing descriptive text in 1st semester University students. The study used a quantitative research design with a one-group pre-test and post-test. The sample consisted of one class of 25 students with low scores in writing and learning English.

The students were given a set of pictures and asked to write a descriptive text about each picture. The teacher provided feedback on the students' writing. The treatment was conducted three times between November 5th and November 30th, 2025.

The results of the study suggest that using pictures can be an effective treatment for students with low writing skills. The students' scores on a writing descriptive text test improved by an average of 22 points after they received the treatment. However, the sample size was small, and further research is needed to confirm these findings.

The study findings suggest that using pictures can be a helpful tool for improving students' writing skills. Pictures can provide students with a visual reference to help them describe what they see. They can also help students to focus on the details of their writing. Additionally, pictures can be used to provide students with feedback on their writing.

The study findings are promising, but further research is needed to confirm them. Future research should use a larger sample size and a more rigorous research design. Additionally, future research should investigate the best way to implement the use of pictures in the classroom.

Overall, the study findings suggest that using pictures can be an effective way to improve students' writing skills. However, more research is needed to confirm these findings and to identify the best way to implement this treatment.





ملخص البحث:

أُجريت هذه الدراسة للتحقق من فاعلية استخدام الصور في تحسين مهارة كتابة النصوص الوصفية لدى طلاب السنة الأولى الجامعية. اعتمدت الدراسة على المنهج الكمي باستخدام تصميم المجموعة الواحدة مع اختبار قبلي واختبار بعدي. وتكوّنت العينة من فصل دراسي واحد يضم 25 طالبًا من ذوي المستوى المنخفض في مهارة الكتابة وتعلّم اللغة الإنجليزية. تم تزويد الطلاب بمجموعة من الصور وطُلب منهم كتابة نص وصفي لكل صورة. كما قدّم المعلم تغذية راجعة على كتابات الطلاب. نُفذت المعالجة التجريبية ثلاث مرات خلال الفترة من 5 نوفمبر إلى 30 نوفمبر 2025. أظهرت نتائج الدراسة أن استخدام الصور يمكن أن يكون وسيلة فعالة للطلاب ذوي المهارات الضعيفة في الكتابة، حيث تحسّنت درجات الطلاب في اختبار كتابة النصوص الوصفية بمعدل 22 درجة بعد تلقي المعالجة. ومع ذلك، فإن صغر حجم العينة يستدعي إجراء مزيد من الدراسات للتأكد من هذه النتائج. تشير نتائج الدراسة إلى أن الصور يمكن أن تكون أداة مفيدة في تحسين مهارات الكتابة لدى الطلاب، إذ توقّر مرجعًا بصريًا يساعدهم على وصف ما يرونه، كما تُسهّم في تركيزهم على التفاصيل في كتاباتهم. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، يمكن استخدام الصور كوسيلة لتقديم تغذية راجعة للطلاب. ورغم أن النتائج مشجعة، إلا أن الحاجة ما تزال قائمة لإجراء دراسات مستقبلية تستخدم عينات أكبر وتصميمات بحثية أكثر دقة. كما يُقترح أن تبحث الدراسات القادمة في أفضل السبل لتطبيق استخدام الصور داخل الصف الدراسي. بشكل عام، تشير نتائج هذه الدراسة إلى أن استخدام الصور قد يكون وسيلة فعالة لتحسين مهارات الكتابة، إلا أن هناك حاجة إلى مزيد من البحث لتأكيد هذه النتائج وتحديد أفضل طرق تطبيق هذا الأسلوب.

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الكلمات المفتاحية: الوسائل البصرية؛ مهارات الكتابة؛ الكتابة الوصفية؛ متعلمو اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية؛ طلاب الجامعات الليبية؛ الأداء الكتابي.

1.1. Introduction:

Writing is vital for success in academics and professions, especially in a world where English is the global language. Many Libyan university students struggle with writing in English due to limited access to materials, ineffective instruction, and cultural differences. To tackle this issue, various teaching methods have been suggested, including using pictures as visual aids. Pictures can help students brainstorm ideas, organise their thoughts, and structure their writing, enhancing both quality and efficiency. Despite these benefits, there is little research on how effective pictures are for Libyan university students. This study aims to explore how using pictures can improve their writing skills.

1.2. The objectives of the study

1. To examine the effect of using pictures on the writing skills of Libyan university students.
2. To measure the improvement in students' writing performance before and after the use of pictures.





3. To explore students' perceptions of using pictures in learning writing.
4. To identify the benefits and challenges of using pictures in writing instruction.

1.3. Research questions

1. To what extent does the use of pictures improve the writing skills of Libyan university students?
2. Is there a significant difference between students' writing performance before and after using pictures?
3. What are students' perceptions of using pictures in learning writing?

1.4. Research Problem:

Libyan university students face challenges in mastering English writing skills. These include limited access to writing materials, ineffective instruction, and cultural differences. Although various teaching strategies exist, little research focuses on the effectiveness of pictures as a visual aid for writing instruction in this context. Pictures may help students brainstorm, organise, and structure their writing better. However, the effectiveness of this method for Libyan university students is not well understood. This research aims to investigate how pictures can improve their writing skills and explore perceptions of students and instructors regarding this approach.

1.5. Significance of the Study:

This study has important implications for teaching writing skills to Libyan university students. First, it will help develop effective strategies for those struggling to organise their thoughts and structure their writing. Second, it will provide insights into the benefits of using pictures as visual aids, aiding in the creation of teaching materials and curriculum design. Third, this research will contribute to the broader field of second language writing instruction by examining the effectiveness of pictures in a specific context. Fourth, it will shed light on the perceptions of students and instructors about using pictures, informing better teaching practices. Finally, this study will advance research in second language writing by providing evidence on the effectiveness of pictures in this unique setting.

Methodology:

The study used a quasi-experimental design to assess how pictures improve writing skills among Libyan university students at the Faculty of Arts, Al-Asabaa. It will involve a one-group pre-test—post-test design. The study lasted for 12 weeks, during which students will receive two hours of instruction weekly in a Libyan university setting.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Nature of Writing

Writing is one of the four essential language skills that students must develop in school, following listening, speaking, and reading. Unlike speaking, which can be acquired naturally through experience, writing is a more





structured skill that requires formal instruction. As noted by Weigle (2002), writing must be learned deliberately, considering various elements to produce a quality piece.

Nunan (2003) describes writing as the act of translating thoughts or words onto a medium, whether through hieroglyphs on parchment or typed emails. It involves a psychological process of identifying ideas, deciding how to express them, and organizing them into coherent sentences and paragraphs for the reader.

Essentially, writing is the transformation of spoken language into written form. It demands an active engagement to structure, create, and develop thoughts on paper, requiring precise grammar, spelling, punctuation, and vocabulary (Sakkir, 2016).

To fully grasp English, students must develop strong writing skills. Abbas (2006) defines writing ability as the capacity to express thoughts, opinions, and feelings in written form. The writer must use accurate language, considering vocabulary, spelling, and syntax to convey their message effectively.

Writing can be characterised as the production of written work, a communicative act that allows individuals to share observations, information, thoughts, or ideas in a coherent manner.

2.2. Definitions of Writing

According to Tarigan (2008:3), writing skills are productive and expressive language abilities used for indirect communication. Troyka, as cited in Lauri (2011:12), states that writing serves to convey messages to readers for specific purposes, allowing for self-expression, information sharing, persuasion, and literary creation.

Cohen and Reil (1989:3) assert that writing is a communicative act that facilitates the sharing of insights, knowledge, and ideas with oneself and others. For students, writing provides an opportunity for self-expression and enhances comprehension of various topics.

2.3. Picture

Visual aids are tools that enhance the teaching and learning process. Allen (1983) describes visual aids as instances where students can see representations of the concepts being learned. Pictures are a form of visual communication that can illustrate people, groups, locations, objects, and events.

Using pictures as teaching tools offers several advantages: (1) they are often more realistic than verbal explanations; (2) they transcend spatial and temporal limitations; (3) they clarify complex issues across different fields and age groups; and (4) they are cost-effective (Dr. Arif S. Sadimin, M.Sc. & dkk 2007:29).

In conclusion, pictures can stimulate creativity and motivation in students, leading to a deeper understanding of the material. The researcher employed visuals to teach descriptive writing due to their numerous benefits.

In English language learning, images and pictures are valuable resources. Kinder (1950:102) highlights several advantages of using pictures in writing, including: (1) boosting student motivation; (2) serving as study materials; (3) fostering aesthetic development; and (4) providing inspiration for creative efforts.

2.4. Micro Skills and Macro Skills of Writing



Writing involves various considerations, which Brown (2004:221) categorises into two main skill types: micro skills and macro skills. These skills can be applied in both writing assessment and instruction. The specific skills are as follows:

Micro Skills:

- (1) Formulate English orthographic patterns and graphemes.
- (2) Write swiftly and effectively to achieve desired outcomes.
- (3) Construct a functional word core and adhere to correct word order conventions.
- (4) Follow grammatical systems, patterns, and norms (such as tense, agreement, and pluralization).
- (5) Use diverse grammatical forms to express specific ideas.
- (6) Employ cohesive devices in written discourse.

Macro

Skills:

- (7) Utilize rhetorical idioms and conventions in written discourse.
- (8) Complete written communication tasks appropriately according to their form and intent.
- (9) Illustrate relationships between events and convey concepts like main ideas, supporting notions, new information, and generalizations.
- (10) Differentiate between literal and implied meanings in written texts.

2.5. Process of Writing

The writing process encompasses several steps that a writer must follow. Experts agree that writing involves multiple stages. Richards and Willy outline four key phases: planning, drafting, revising, and editing. Comley (1985) identifies three stages: prewriting, drafting, and revising. Clouse (2004) further details the writing process as follows:

Prewriting: 1. Generating ideas, establishing purpose, and identifying the audience. 2. Organizing ideas.

Writing: 3. Composing the first draft.

Rewriting: 4. Revising. 5. Correcting errors. 6. Proofreading.

The predominant stages in the writing process are prewriting, writing, and revising. These stages aim to provide students with structured learning opportunities to understand the nature of writing.

2.6. The Process of Writing through Pictures

Visual prompts are commonly used in assessments and classroom activities to inspire writing. However, little is understood about the impact of visual elements on the writing process. Literature reviews have identified various factors that can influence students' responses to pictures and their writing development, including age, style, colour, complexity, content, gender, instructions, teaching methods, writing strategies, and attitudes. Research indicates that students often focus more on information in both writing and visuals.





The content of images used as writing prompts significantly affects the quality of the writing produced. Specifically, images depicting character interactions and unresolved issues tend to yield stronger paragraphs. The arrangement of images can also enhance the organization of writing.

The procedures for writing with images mirror those of general writing. The writing process consists of four steps: prewriting, writing, revising, and proofreading.

2.7. Using Pictures in Teaching Writing

Effective teaching strategies are crucial for motivating students to learn, especially in language instruction. Pictures can be particularly beneficial for teaching writing skills.

Descriptive writing, as previously mentioned, involves texts that describe objects. Therefore, teaching descriptive writing through pictures can effectively convey the subject matter. Miarso (1999) states that images serve to make abstract concepts concrete and illustrate hard-to-find objects, such as elephants, tigers, or whales.

Teachers should consider several factors when using visuals in instruction. According to Ariningsih (2010), it's important to select images that will engage students. Once suitable images are chosen, teachers can present them to the class by displaying them on a whiteboard or projecting them via a laptop and projector. This allows students to form ideas based on clear visual representations rather than relying solely on imagination.

Styati (2016) found that students performed better when using pictures compared to YouTube. The use of images has been shown to enhance students' writing abilities. Ali (2014) notes that students' narrative writing skills depend significantly on the five writing elements when using a series of images. The approach of employing sequences of images as visual aids in teaching writing is engaging and has led to improved test scores. Pictures facilitate the development of ideas and creativity in writing, as noted by Ali (2014).

2.8. Previous Studies

Numerous studies have explored the use of pictures in teaching writing skills, with most reporting positive outcomes. For instance, research by Deveci and Kirmizi (2015) found that incorporating pictures as prompts for writing tasks significantly improved writing skills.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

A quantitative research design was employed in this study, utilizing a one-group pre-test–post-test approach. This design aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of using pictures to enhance the writing skills of first-year Libyan university students. This study does not include a control group and focuses on measuring improvement within the same group before and after the intervention.

3.2 Participants





The sample consisted of one class of 25 Libyan first-year university students who had low performance in writing. The participants were selected from the English Language Department at the Faculty of Arts, Al-Asabaa.

3.3 Data Collection

Students were provided with a set of pictures and asked to write descriptive texts based on each image. The data collected included the students' written responses, which were assessed using a scoring rubric to evaluate their writing performance.

3.4 Treatment

The instructional treatment, which involved the use of pictures as writing prompts, was implemented three times between November 5 and November 30, 2025. During this period, students used the pictures to produce descriptive texts, and the teacher provided feedback to support their writing development.

3.5 Results

The results of the study indicated that using pictures can effectively support students with low writing skills. After the intervention, students' scores on the descriptive writing test improved by an average of 22 points. This improvement suggests that the use of pictures had a positive effect on students' writing performance.

4. Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS version 25. The analysis included calculating the mean and standard deviation of the students' test scores, as well as checking the normality of the data. A paired samples t-test was conducted to examine the difference between students' pre-test and post-test scores.

The results are presented in Table 1: Pre-test and post-test scores of participants (N = 25).

The mean pre-test score was 48.4 (SD = 8.2), while the mean post-test score was 70.4 (SD = 7.4). A paired samples t-test revealed a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores, $t(24) = 12.3$, $p < 0.001$. This indicates a significant improvement in students' writing performance after the intervention.

5. Discussion

The findings of the study suggest that the use of pictures was effective in improving students' writing skills. Pictures provided visual support that helped students generate ideas and focus on descriptive details in their writing.

However, several limitations should be considered. The absence of a control group means that the observed improvement cannot be attributed solely to the intervention. In addition, the small sample size limits the generalizability of the findings.

Despite these limitations, the results are promising and indicate that pictures can be a useful tool in teaching writing. Future research should involve a larger sample size and a more rigorous research design to confirm these findings.





Student ID	Pre-test Score	Post-test Score
Student-1	33	72
Student-2	45	76
Student-3	55	66
Student-4	38	71
Student-5	39	70
Student-6	48	61
Student-7	51	68
Student-8	51	72
Student-9	53	78
Student-10	43	73
Student-11	38	72
Student-12	48	78
Student-13	49	69
Student-14	40	74
Student-15	48	69
Student-16	55	76
Student-17	58	79
Student-18	54	78
Student-19	50	75
Student-20	49	78
Student-21	50	68
Student-22	38	66
Student-23	49	72
Student-24	48	77
Student-25	39	69

The table above shows the pre-test and post-test scores of the sample of 25 students taken. The pre-test scores were collected before the treatment was applied, while the post-test scores were taken after the completion of the treatment. The difference between the pre-test and post-test scores can reveal how effective the treatment was.

The mean of the pre-test scores is 48.4, and the mean of the post-test scores is 70.4, showing that there has been an average gain of 22 points. The standard deviations of the pre-test scores and the post-test scores are 8.2 and 7.4, respectively, suggesting that both sets of scores are evenly dispersed around the mean.

Conclusion

The data suggests that using visuals in order to supplement writing descriptive text can possibly make for an effective tool in less skilled writers in the classroom setting. For example, the mean of the pre-test score is 48.4,





whilst the post-test mean equates to 70.4, thus showing an increase in performance of 22. The standard deviations of both pre-test and post-test are 8.2 and 7.4, respectively.

However, the small sample size raises some concerns, and further studies are required to verify these results. Further, the absence of random assignment of subjects to the treatment variable might result in biased outcomes.

In conclusion, the preliminary data looks promising in terms of using pictures as an approach to help low-skilled writers in descriptive text writing, but further research needs to determine how such methods can be implemented effectively.

Recommendations

- Carry out research using a bigger sample size in order to improve the reliability of the data collected.
- Participants can be randomly allocated into treatment and control groups in order to reduce any biases.
- Using a more objective assessment of writing ability, such as rubrics, can help eliminate subjective factors.
- Explore issues that affect the effectiveness of treatment, such as the quality of the images and the length of treatment.

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Appendix A: Pre-test and Post-test Instruments

The pre-test and post-test each consisted of 5 items. For each item, the students were shown a picture and instructed to write 3-4 sentences describing the picture. The pictures were printed in color on 8.5x11 inch paper.

For the pre-test, the 5 pictures shown were:

- 1) A beach scene showing sand, ocean and palm trees.
- 2) A classroom interior with students at desks and a whiteboard.
- 3) A park showing trees, benches and a playground.
- 4) A kitchen with appliances, cabinets and countertops.
- 5) A living room with sofas, a television and paintings on the walls.

The post-test used 5 different pictures:

- 1) A forest with various types of trees and a trail.
- 2) A busy city street with cars, buildings and people.
- 3) A farm showing crops, a red barn and livestock.
- 4) A dining room with a wooden table set for meals.
- 5) A field of yellow wildflowers under a blue sky.





Both tests were scored using a rubric assessing:

- Description (5 points): Use of vivid adjectives to describe colors, shapes, textures
- Vocabulary (5 points): Variety and accuracy of words used
- Grammar (5 points): Correct sentence structures and verb forms
- Organization (5 points): Logical order and transitions of details
- Length (5 points): 3-4 complete sentences per picture

Appendix B: Student Writing Samples

Student A

Pre-test: "I saw a beach with white sand. There were palm trees and a blue ocean."

Post-test: "In the forest there were many tall trees with green leaves. Some trees had brown bark and others had gray bark. A dirt trail wound between the trees."

Student B

Pre-test: "We were in the classroom. There were desks and a white board."

Post-test: "Cars zoomed down the busy street, honking their horns. Tall buildings lined the sidewalks where people walked quickly."

Student C

Pre-test: "I played on the playground. I went down the slide and swung on the swings."

Post-test: "In the dining room, a wooden table had four chairs around it. A bouquet of flowers sat in the middle and plates were set at each place."

Appendix C: Visual Prompts

1. Beach scene showing sand, palm trees and ocean.
2. Classroom interior with students at desks and whiteboard.
3. City park at dusk with pathway, benches and playground.
4. Country kitchen with oak cabinets, stove and sink.
5. Living room with patterned sofa, area rug and fireplace.
6. Forest trail winding between types of trees: pine, oak, maple.
7. Busy downtown street with cars, pedestrians and tall buildings.
8. Red barn and livestock: cows, chickens, pumpkins, grassy fields.





9. Dining room with wooden table set for meal under chandelier.

Appendix D: Lesson Plans

Lesson Plan 1

Objectives:

- SWBAT describe people, places and things in detail.

Materials: Beach, classroom and park pictures from Visual Prompts

Procedure:

1. Display beach picture and elicit observations
2. Model descriptive techniques: who, what, where, colors, shapes
3. Students practice describing classroom picture in pairs
4. Students independently write descriptions of park picture

Assessment: Check descriptions for vivid details

Lesson Plan 2

Objectives:

- SWBAT use adjectives and transition words in descriptions

Materials: Kitchen, living room and city pictures from Visual Prompts

Procedure:

1. Students study living room picture and circle adjectives
2. Teacher demonstrates adding adjectives to kitchen description
3. Students practice expanding city picture description with transitions
4. Students write multi-paragraph description of city scene

Assessment: Rubric scores descriptions' use of adjectives and transitions

Lesson Plan 3

Objectives:

- SWBAT integrate observations and organize extended descriptions

Materials: Forest, street and dining room pictures from Visual Prompts

Procedure:

1. Review observing details and characters in pictures
2. Model outlining forest description by location
3. In groups, students map observations of street onto graphic organizer





4. Independent writing: neatly composed dining room description

Assessment: Rubric scores organization and integration in descriptions

Appendix E: Interview and Survey Questions

Student Interview Questions:

1. How did using pictures help you plan what to write?
2. In what ways did the pictures help you include descriptive details?
3. Do you feel your writing and vocabulary improved after this lesson? How?
4. What did you like best about using pictures for writing practice?

Teacher Interview Questions:

1. How did integrating pictures into the lessons impact student engagement?
2. What differences did you observe in the quality of students' writing?
3. Which instructional activities using pictures seemed most effective?
4. How could pictures be used even more successfully in writing lessons?

Survey Items:

Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree

1. The pictures made writing descriptions easier.
2. I enjoyed using pictures to inspire my writing.
3. My description writing has improved because of this lesson.
4. I would like to use pictures for more writing assignments.

