



Exploring Students' Pictorial Representation of Reading Texts Through Gallery-Based Summarizing in a Basic Reading Course

Nunik Herani Wulandari¹, Anitha Thalib Mbau²

¹ Universitas Cipasung, Tasikmalaya, Indonesia

² Universitas Tompotika Luwuk, Banggai, Indonesia

Corresponding Author : ✉ nunikhwulandari@uncip.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Reading comprehension requires students not only to identify information but also to construct, organize, and retain meaning. This study examines how undergraduate students create pictorial representations of reading texts through a Gallery-Based Summarizing activity in a Basic Reading course. Using a qualitative approach, the study analyzed semi-structured interviews with seven undergraduate students at a university in West Java, Indonesia, supplemented by observational notes collected during the creation of pictorial summaries and the subsequent gallery walk. The analysis revealed four themes. Students used deliberate comprehension strategies before drawing, particularly rereading texts and marking keywords. The drawing process involved initial planning, chronological organization of ideas, and deliberate selection of symbols to represent textual information. Students also experienced difficulties in visualizing abstract concepts and selecting information within limited visual space. Despite these challenges, participants reported greater engagement with the texts, increased attention to previously overlooked details, and support for information retention. All seven participants achieved the highest performance category, with a mean score of 14.29 out of 16. Overall, the findings suggest that Gallery-Based Summarizing offers a multimodal approach to reading that connects textual processing, visual meaning-making, and peer interaction. The activity may therefore provide an alternative technique for Basic Reading instruction, particularly for supporting active engagement and the transformation of textual information into visual representations.

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INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension is a key skill for undergraduate EFL learners, yet it remains challenging, particularly in introductory courses such as Basic Reading. Students need to move beyond decoding words and sentences to construct, organize, and retain meaning from longer texts. In Indonesian university contexts, these challenges may involve vocabulary and sentence

structure as well as identifying important information, organizing ideas, and reproducing meaning. Reading strategy instruction is therefore an important component of EFL pedagogy. Previous studies have shown that strategies such as skimming, scanning, predicting, questioning, summarizing, inferencing, visualizing, and monitoring comprehension can support EFL learners' reading comprehension (Al Awabdeh et al., 2026; Dong et al., 2026; Li et al., 2022; Rezai et al., 2023; Suhaila et al., 2025). However, strategy instruction may affect learning outcomes differently, as improvements in comprehension do not necessarily correspond to changes in motivation or self-efficacy (Li et al., 2022). Puripunyanich (2025) similarly reported that instructors in foundation English courses commonly emphasize reading strategies, vocabulary, and while-reading activities. The issue, therefore, is not simply whether strategies are used, but how learners enact them to construct meaning from texts.

Visualization is particularly relevant to this process because it involves representing textual information through images, symbols, spatial arrangements, or other visual forms (Borges et al., 2025). Transforming verbal information into visual representation may encourage learners to process relationships among ideas rather than rely solely on verbal processing (Atta et al., 2025). This perspective is consistent with Dual Coding Theory, which proposes This view is consistent with Dual Coding Theory, which conceptualizes cognition as involving interconnected verbal and non-verbal systems for processing language and imagery (Paivio, 2010). Research has reported instructional benefits associated with visual representation. Qi & Jiang (2021) , for example, found that graphic organizers supported EFL learners' reading comprehension, particularly among students with moderate proficiency. Asilestari et al. (2025) reported a large effect of visual information-based materials on literal comprehension in higher education, while Lasekan et al. (2024) found that combining metacognitive strategies with visual media supported comprehension and metacognitive control among pre-service EFL teachers. Thamrin et al. (2025) likewise reported gains in reading scores and motivation following visualization strategies. Nevertheless, visual support is not automatically beneficial, as excessive or complex visual information may increase processing demands (Atta et al., 2025).

An important distinction is whether visual representations are provided by teachers or generated by learners. Learner-generated visualization requires students to identify important information, organize ideas, and select symbols or images to convey meaning. Abstract concepts, relationships, emotions, and causal processes may require more interpretive or metaphorical representation than concrete information. Thus, visual representation involves not only

illustration but also decisions about what meaning to select and how to represent it. Although visual-prompt scaffolding has been associated with comprehension and motivation (Wang et al., 2021), existing research has largely emphasized learning outcomes rather than the representational decisions learners make. Learner-generated visuals may therefore provide insight into how students actively transform textual information into visual structures through planning, selection, and organization.

Summarizing is similarly important because it requires learners to identify and organize a text's central meaning. In EFL contexts, summarizing instruction has been associated with improved identification of main ideas, important details, and paraphrasing (Ahn, 2022; Yahia & Egbert, 2023). Reading-to-Learn scaffolding has also supported students' understanding of key ideas and aspects of summary quality, although effects may vary across different dimensions of summary performance (Li et al., 2025). Mallahi (2022) emphasized the importance of explicit instruction, modeling, and scaffolding in summary development. However, verbal summarizing can be challenging for EFL learners who rely heavily on source texts and reproduce their wording rather than construct their own representation of meaning (Li, 2025). Alternative forms of summarizing may therefore offer additional ways for learners to demonstrate comprehension. For example, Pinandito et al. (2021), found that a kit-build concept map approach with explicit links to source information outperformed traditional summarization. However, the short intervention limits conclusions about longer-term effects. Compared with verbal summarizing and concept mapping, pictorial summarizing has received relatively limited attention.

The social presentation of learner-produced representations provides another dimension to this process. Collaborative learning has been associated with reading-related outcomes such as identifying main ideas, making inferences, understanding vocabulary in context, and learner engagement (Vega-Abarzua et al., 2022; Wahyurianto & Sylvia, 2024). Multimodal and collaborative strategies may also support proficiency, engagement, and motivation (Salamanti et al., 2023). A gallery walk allows students to display, view, and discuss learning artifacts with peers and has been used as a cooperative technique within differentiated instruction (Muttahidah et al., 2024). However, gallery walk research has generally examined it as a broad cooperative or differentiation strategy rather than as a structured component of reading summarization. Limited attention has been given to activities in which students create pictorial summaries of specific texts and subsequently exhibit and discuss them with peers.

This limitation points to a specific gap in the literature. Although visual support, summarizing, and collaborative learning have each been examined in EFL reading, they have largely been studied separately. Visual-support research has often focused on teacher- or researcher-provided visuals and comprehension outcomes, while summarizing research has predominantly examined verbal summaries and summary quality (Ahn, 2022; Atta et al., 2025; Li et al., 2025; Qi & Jiang, 2021). Gallery walk research, meanwhile, has mainly addressed cooperative or differentiated learning (Muttahidah et al., 2024). Less is known about how learners experience transforming reading texts into pictorial summaries and then exhibiting them for peer viewing and discussion. This process involves meaning-making decisions concerning what information to retain or omit, how to organize ideas spatially, how to represent abstract concepts, and how to interpret peers' representations.

To address this gap, the present study examines Gallery-Based Summarizing, a descriptive label for an activity in which students transform a reading text into a pictorial summary and then exhibit and discuss it through a gallery walk. The pictorial summary is treated not merely as an illustration but as a representation of how students interpret and reorganize textual information. At the same time, the gallery walk extends the process through peer viewing and discussion. This process-oriented approach complements the outcome-focused emphasis of previous research by examining how reading, summarizing, visual representation, and social interaction are connected within a single classroom activity.

Accordingly, this study examines how undergraduate students in a Basic Reading course construct pictorial representations of reading texts through Gallery-Based Summarizing. It explores the comprehension strategies students use before creating visual summaries, their decisions when transforming textual information into visual form, the challenges they encounter, and their perceptions of how the activity supports understanding and retention. Through thematic analysis of interview and observation data, the study provides empirical insight into Gallery-Based Summarizing as an integrated multimodal activity for Basic Reading instruction.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study investigated students' experiences of constructing pictorial representations of reading texts through a Gallery-Based Summarizing activity in a Basic Reading course at Cipasung University, Tasikmalaya, West Java, Indonesia. A qualitative case study design was employed to gain an in-depth understanding of how students experienced and enacted the activity within their

classroom context. The case was bounded by one classroom, one course, one instructional activity, and seven undergraduate students. This approach was appropriate because the study focused on students' experiences, reading strategies, representational choices, and difficulties rather than differences in comprehension outcomes or statistical measurement of effectiveness (Creswell, 2017). The activity consisted of two integrated stages: students first transformed assigned reading texts into pictorial summaries and then displayed and discussed their summaries through a gallery walk.

The participants were seven undergraduate students enrolled in the Basic Reading course. All seven students who participated in the activity were included because it involved the entire class. Their inclusion provided first-hand accounts of their reading strategies, visual representation processes, difficulties, and perceptions of the activity. The small participant group was consistent with the case study orientation, which emphasized an in-depth understanding of a bounded classroom phenomenon rather than statistical generalization (Subedi, 2021; Zarestky, 2023). Three complementary instruments were used: a semi-structured interview guide, observational field notes, and an assessment rubric. The interview guide explored students' reading strategies, visual representation decisions, difficulties, and perceptions before, during, and after the activity, while field notes documented observable behaviours such as rereading, keyword annotation, sketching, organization of ideas, presentation, and peer interaction (Creswell, 2017). The pictorial summaries were assessed using a four-criterion rubric covering content accuracy, organization and sequencing, symbolic and visual clarity, and communicative effectiveness. Each criterion was rated from 1 to 4, with a maximum score of 16. The scores were used only as complementary descriptive information and were not statistically compared. Because all summaries were scored by the first researcher, inter-rater reliability was not established.

Data collection followed five sequential stages. First, the instructor introduced Gallery-Based Summarizing, explained the task, and assigned a reading text to each student. Second, students independently read their texts while the researchers observed their reading behaviours and recorded field notes. Third, students transformed the main ideas into free-layout pictorial summaries using hand-drawn or image-based representations, while the researchers observed their planning and organization of ideas. Fourth, students displayed and discussed their summaries during a gallery walk, with relevant presentation and peer-interaction behaviours documented. Finally, the summaries were assessed using the rubric, followed by semi-structured interviews with all seven participants. The interviews explored students' reading

strategies, visual representation decisions, difficulties, and perceptions of the activity's contribution to understanding and retention.

The qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis based on Braun & Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework. The researchers first familiarized themselves with the interview transcripts and observational field notes, generated initial codes, grouped related codes into potential themes, and reviewed, refined, defined, and named the themes before developing an analytic narrative supported by relevant data extracts. Interview transcripts served as the primary source for identifying students' reported experiences, while observational field notes provided contextual and corroborating evidence. Assessment scores were summarized descriptively and used only to contextualize the qualitative findings. Trustworthiness was strengthened through triangulation of data sources, detailed descriptions of the setting, participants, activity, and procedures, and systematic documentation of coding decisions, theme development, coding records, and thematic memos. Before data collection, participants were informed about the study purpose, procedures, voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw at any stage. Informed consent was obtained, and confidentiality was maintained through participant codes (M1-M7) and pseudonyms in the findings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results

Analysis of interview transcripts and observational field notes from seven participants (M1-M7) generated four themes: (1) comprehension strategies before visual creation, (2) the visual representation process, (3) challenges in pictorial summarizing, and (4) perceived effects on reading comprehension. All seven pictorial summaries were rated in the highest performance category (Sangat Baik/Very Good), with a mean score of 14.29 out of 16. Table 1 summarizes the themes, key findings, and representative participants. The following subsections present the findings in relation to the relevant theoretical and empirical literature.

Table 1.
Summary of Themes and Key Evidence

Theme	Key Finding	Representative Participants
Text Comprehension Strategies	Multiple re-readings; keyword annotation; mental visualization	All participants; especially M1, M3, M5

Theme	Key Finding	Representative Participants
Visual Representation Process	Pre-drawing planning; chronological sequencing; symbolic selection	M1, M2, M3, M4, M5, M7
Challenges Encountered	Difficulty visualizing abstract concepts; information overload and selection	M1, M3, M4, M7
Impact on Reading Comprehension	Deeper text engagement; discovery of new information; enhanced retention	All participants

Comprehension Strategies Before Visual Creation

All participants reported using strategies before creating their pictorial summaries, particularly rereading the assigned text and identifying or annotating keywords. They explained that rereading helped them understand the content, while annotations helped identify information to represent visually. Observation records supported these accounts, showing participants returning to specific sections and referring to their annotations during reading and planning. Thus, participants did not move directly from reading to drawing but repeatedly consulted the text when deciding what to include. A variation appeared in M5 (Alya), who emphasized mental visualization rather than annotation by forming a mental image of the narrative as the basis for her summary. These findings indicate that preparation occurred across participants, although the strategies used varied.

Visual Representation Process

Participants described recurring activities during pictorial-summary creation, including preliminary planning, sketching, arranging information, sequencing ideas, and connecting elements. Six participants engaged in explicit planning or sketching before completing their summaries. Chronological sequencing was particularly common in narrative texts, with characters, events, and consequences presented in their order of occurrence. Participants also deliberately selected symbols, pictures, icons, and labels according to the meanings they intended to convey and, in some cases, their recognizability to others. M6 (Yulianti) differed by arranging text labels nonlinearly as personal reference points for recalling the text rather than as a sequential representation for an audience.

Challenges Encountered During Pictorial Summarizing

Two recurring challenges emerged: visualizing abstract concepts and managing limited visual space. Participants found concepts such as political stability, leadership impact, and internal struggle difficult to represent because they required appropriate images or symbols to convey less concrete meanings. Limited space also required them to decide which information to retain, omit, or condense rather than reproduce the entire text. Observation records showed repeated movement between the original text and the developing summary, including rereading, checking information, and revising visual representations. Thus, pictorial summarizing involved an ongoing process of selecting and refining meaning rather than simply transferring textual information into images.

Perceived Impact on Reading Comprehension

All participants perceived the activity as encouraging deeper engagement with the reading texts. They reported paying closer attention to information, noticing previously overlooked details, and using images, symbols, and spatial arrangements to support retention. Creating the summaries also required them to revisit the text and identify relationships among ideas. The gallery walk provided an additional opportunity to view and compare peers' summaries, enabling participants to notice differences in interpretation, organization, and visual representation. Complementary assessment data showed that all seven summaries received ratings in the highest performance category, with a mean score of 14.29 out of 16. These scores are presented as descriptive evidence of task performance rather than as evidence for statistical comparison.

Overall, the findings reveal four interconnected patterns: deliberate reading strategies before visual production, planned selection of visual representations, challenges in visualizing abstract content and managing limited space, and perceived support for engagement, detail recognition, retention, and comparison of interpretations.

Discussion

The findings suggest that Gallery-Based Summarizing involves a sequence of meaning-making processes rather than a simple transition from reading to drawing. Students engaged with the text, selected and organized information, transformed it into visual representations, and encountered peers' interpretations through the gallery walk. This process-oriented perspective extends previous research by highlighting how reading, visualization, and social comparison operate within a single instructional activity.

All participants reread the text and identified or annotated keywords before drawing, indicating that pictorial summarizing depended on active engagement

with the verbal text. Rather than replacing conventional reading, the activity prompted students to return to the text to determine what should be represented visually. From the perspective of Dual Coding Theory, verbal and non-verbal representations function as interconnected systems for processing information (Paivio, 2010). The movement from rereading and annotation to pictorial representation can therefore be understood as a shift from primarily verbal processing toward additional visual representation.

This finding is consistent with research suggesting that reading strategies and visualization can support EFL reading comprehension (Lasekan et al., 2024; Li et al., 2022; Thamrin et al., 2025). However, the present study highlights the processes preceding visualization rather than focusing only on comprehension outcomes. M5's use of mental visualization instead of annotation further suggests that students may employ different self-initiated strategies when preparing textual meaning for visual representation.

Students' planning, sequencing, and deliberate symbol selection indicate that pictorial summarizing involved more than artistic production. They identified central information, established relationships among ideas, and selected visual forms to communicate their interpretations. This relates to research on graphic organizers and scaffolded summarizing, which emphasizes organizing key ideas to support EFL reading comprehension (Li et al., 2025; Qi & Jiang, 2021). The present findings extend this perspective by showing that organization can occur through spatial and symbolic arrangements as well as written language.

From a social semiotic perspective, meaning emerges through the selection, arrangement, and interpretation of signs within particular contexts (Jewitt, 2017). M6's nonlinear arrangement illustrates that visual summaries may serve different purposes: communicating an interpretation to others or functioning as a personal aid for recall. Thus, the pictorial product was not simply a visual translation of the text but an interpretation shaped by the student's intended use.

Two challenges were particularly evident: representing abstract concepts and managing limited visual space. Abstract ideas, relationships, emotions, and causal processes required students to select symbols or images that could convey fewer concrete meanings. This finding complements research showing that visual materials can support comprehension while also creating additional processing demands when visual information is difficult to interpret (Atta et al., 2025; Wang et al., 2021). The present study identifies a more specific challenge: students had to determine not only what information was important but also how abstract meaning could be made visually interpretable.

Limited space created a second demand. Students had to decide what information to retain, omit, and condense rather than reproduce the source text. Unlike conventional written summarizing, the visual format constrained the amount of information that could be included. Although this study did not compare pictorial and written summaries and therefore cannot establish that the format prevents copying, the findings suggest that spatial constraints may encourage explicit information-selection decisions. Information density was consequently part of the comprehension and summarizing process rather than merely a matter of poster design.

The gallery walk added a social dimension to individual text transformation. By viewing peers' summaries, students recognized that the same text could be organized and represented differently. This aligns with research connecting collaborative learning with engagement and comprehension-related outcomes in EFL contexts (Vega-Abarzua et al., 2022; Wahyurianto & Sylvia, 2024) and with the sociocultural view of learning as mediated through interaction (Vygotsky, 1980).

Unlike conventional collaborative learning, however, students first constructed individual interpretations and compared them afterward. The gallery therefore functioned not only as a display space but also as a space where alternative interpretations became visible for comparison (Muttahidah et al., 2024).

Taken together, Gallery-Based Summarizing integrates three processes often examined separately: textual comprehension and summarizing, learner-generated visual representation, and social comparison. Its contribution therefore lies less in demonstrating superior effectiveness than in showing how these processes are interconnected. The high assessment scores should be interpreted cautiously because they describe task performance among seven participants and do not establish causal or comparative effects. Pedagogically, instructors may provide scaffolding for representing abstract concepts and organizing information within limited space, while retaining the gallery walk to encourage comparison of interpretations.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how undergraduate students in a Basic Reading course constructed and experienced pictorial representations of reading texts through Gallery-Based Summarizing. The findings indicate that the activity connected textual reading, metacognitive planning, visual representation, and social interaction. Students generally reread texts, identified keywords, planned their representations, and selected symbols to convey key ideas. They also

experienced difficulties in visualizing abstract concepts and selecting information within limited visual space, which prompted further rereading and reference-seeking. The gallery walk extended the process by enabling students to compare representations and construct meaning through peer interaction.

The main contribution of this study is its process-oriented account of pictorial summarizing in an EFL reading context. Rather than viewing visual summaries only as learning products, the study shows how reading, summarizing, visual representation, and social interaction operate as interconnected processes within a single instructional activity. Pedagogically, instructors may need to provide explicit guidance on representing abstract concepts and selecting and organizing information within limited space so that students can focus on meaning rather than drawing.

Several limitations should be considered. The study involved all seven students in one Basic Reading class at a single institution, limiting transferability to other EFL contexts. The absence of formal member checking also limited confirmation of participants' interpretations of the interview findings. Therefore, the findings should be understood as a context-specific account of students' experiences rather than evidence of the general effectiveness of Gallery-Based Summarizing.

Future research could involve larger and more diverse groups across institutions, proficiency levels, and text types. Comparative studies could examine Gallery-Based Summarizing alongside conventional written summarizing. At the same time, further research could investigate how peer viewing, discussion, and feedback during gallery walks contribute to comprehension and meaning-making. Such research could clarify when, how, and for whom Gallery-Based Summarizing may be appropriate in EFL reading instruction.

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