

## The Role of Visual Media in English Language Learning in Primary Schools: A Literature Review

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### ABSTRACT

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**Background:** English learning in elementary school plays an important role in preparing students to face the demands of globalization, where English serves as an international language for communication and access to knowledge. However, the learning process at this level still faces several challenges, particularly in delivering abstract materials that are not aligned with students' cognitive development. Elementary students are at the concrete operational stage, which means they understand better through visual and contextual experiences rather than abstract explanations. Therefore, appropriate learning strategies are needed to support their understanding. Visual media such as pictures, flashcards, and videos can provide concrete representations of language concepts. These media are considered effective in enhancing students' comprehension, motivation, and engagement in learning activities. Hence, the use of visual media becomes an important aspect to be explored in improving English learning outcomes.

**Objectives:** This study aims to analyze the role of visual media, including pictures, flashcards, and videos, in improving students' comprehension, motivation, participation, and learning outcomes in English learning at the elementary school level

**Methods:** This research employs a literature review method by analyzing 20 relevant academic journal articles published within the last five years. The data were collected from Google Scholar and other reputable academic databases.

**Results:** The findings indicate that visual media significantly improve students' vocabulary mastery, listening skills, motivation, and classroom participation. Visual representation helps students understand abstract concepts more easily and retain information for a longer period.

**Conclusions:** Visual media are an effective instructional strategy in teaching English at the elementary school level. Although there are some challenges in implementation, such as limited facilities and teacher competence, these can be addressed through proper planning and training.

## INTRODUCTION

The English language learning in elementary schools is an important part of efforts to prepare students to face the growing demands of globalization. English serves not only as a tool for international communication but also as a means of accessing various sources of knowledge and technology. Therefore, introducing English from an early age is essential to ensure students can build a

strong foundation of language skills. However, in practice, English learning in elementary schools often faces challenges, particularly in delivering material that is appropriate for students' cognitive developmental stage, which is still in the concrete operational phase.

At this stage of development, students tend to find it easier to understand information

presented concretely and visually compared to abstract, verbal explanations. This requires teachers to employ learning approaches that deliver authentic and meaningful learning experiences for students. One relevant approach is the use of visual media in the learning process. Visual media such as images, flashcards, and videos can present information more clearly, engagingly, and easily understood, thus helping students grasp English material more effectively. The use of visual media not only plays a role in improving students' understanding of learning materials but also contributes to increasing student motivation and engagement in the learning process. Visually engaging presentations of material can create a more enjoyable and less monotonous learning environment. Students become more active in participating in learning, either through observing, imitating, or interacting with the media used. This condition shows that visual media has great potential in creating more interactive and student-centered learning.

On the other hand, implementing visual media in English learning also presents various challenges. Limited facilities, such as a lack of technological devices, are one factor that influences the optimal use of media, particularly video. In addition, the teacher's ability to design and utilize learning media creatively is also a determining factor in the success of using visual media. Without careful planning, the use of visual media has the potential to be less effective in supporting the achievement of learning objectives.

Studies on the use of visual media in English learning in elementary schools are important to provide a more comprehensive picture of its effectiveness. This research examines various forms of visual media used in learning and examines their role and contribution to improving student learning outcomes. It also examines their impacts, challenges encountered, and possible approaches to optimizing their use in the learning process.

## METHOD

This research employed a literature review method, which aimed to examine, analyze, and synthesize various previous research findings related to the use of visual media in English learning in elementary schools. This method was chosen because it provides a comprehensive overview of the phenomenon under study by integrating various scientific findings published in academic journals.

The data sources in this study were obtained from 20 national and international scientific journals indexed in the Google Scholar, SINTA, and other reputable journal databases with

a publication period between 2020 and 2025. The selection of journals was based on several criteria, namely relevance to the research topic, publication quality, and contribution to the study of visual media in English language learning. This aims to ensure that the data used has a high level of validity and reliability.

The data collection process involved several stages: literature identification, article selection, and content analysis. During the identification stage, researchers collected various articles related to visual media in English language learning. Next, a selection process was conducted to select the most relevant articles to the research focus. The selected articles were then analyzed in depth to identify patterns of relationships, similarities, and differences in the research findings.

The data analysis technique was conducted descriptively and qualitatively by grouping research findings into several categories, such as the role of visual media, the types of media used, their impact on learning outcomes, and the obstacles and solutions in their use. This approach enabled researchers to develop a systematic and structured synthesis. Through this method, research is expected to provide a significant contribution to the development of more effective and innovative English learning strategies, especially at the elementary school level.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### The Role of Visual Media in English Learning

Visual media plays a crucial role in English learning in elementary schools because it bridges abstract concepts into concrete ones, making them easier for students to understand. At the concrete operational development stage, students tend to understand things through direct experience and clear visualizations, so the use of media such as images, flashcards, and videos is very helpful in the learning process. Suryanida & Suyantiningsih (2022) stated that the use of audiovisual media can increase student engagement because the material is presented in a more engaging and understandable manner.<sup>1</sup> This shows that visual media makes a significant contribution

<sup>1</sup> Suryanida, Y., & Suyantiningsih, "Utilization of audio-visual media to increase learning activity of elementary school students". *Journal of Elementary Education*, Vol.13, No 2(2022), page. 145–156.

in improving the quality of learning. Furthermore, visual media also plays a role in enhancing student interaction with learning materials. When students are presented with visually engaging material, they tend to be more focused and actively engaged in the learning process. This creates a more lively and less monotonous learning environment than the one-way lecture method. Al Wiyah & Umami (2024) explained that the use of visual media can significantly increase student engagement<sup>2</sup>. Thus, visual media can encourage the creation of more interactive learning.

Visual media also helps improve students' cognitive abilities, particularly comprehension and memory. Information presented visually is easier for the brain to process than verbal information. This is because visualization allows students to connect new information with previous experiences. Wasito et al. (2022), stated that the use of visual media can improve student learning retention<sup>3</sup>. Therefore, visual media is very effective in helping students remember material in the long term.

Apart from cognitive aspects, visual media also has an impact on students' affective aspects, such as motivation and interest in learning. Students who learn with interesting media tend to be more enthusiastic and don't get bored easily. This makes them more active in learning and makes it easier to understand the material presented. By increasing their motivation to learn, students will more easily achieve their desired learning goals. On the other hand, visual media also helps teachers deliver material more effectively and efficiently. Teachers can explain difficult concepts more simply through visual aids. This makes the

learning process more focused and easier for students to understand. Thus, visual media is a crucial component in creating quality English language learning.

### The Use of Images in English Learning

Images are one of the simplest yet most effective visual media in English learning, particularly in vocabulary recognition. Through images, students can directly grasp the meaning of words without the need for complex translation, making learning more natural and understandable. Syahid et al. (2024), stated that the use of images

<sup>2</sup> Al Wiyah, S., & Umami, N. "The influence of using visual media on student engagement in English language learning," *Journal of Language Education*, Vol.9, No.1(2024), page.25–34.

<sup>3</sup> Wasito et al., "The influence of visual media on students' memory in English learning," *Journal of Education and Learning*, Vol.11, No.3 (2022), page 201–210.

can improve students' vocabulary recall due to the direct connection between visuals and word meanings.<sup>4</sup> This shows that pictures have a very important role in learning English.

Besides helping in understanding the meaning of words, images also play a role in providing context to the use of language. When students see pictures related to certain objects or situations, they can understand how the words are used in everyday life. Rahmawati et al. (2023), showed that the use of images can significantly improve students' vocabulary mastery.<sup>5</sup> This shows that pictures not only help in memorizing, but also in understanding the contextual use of language. The use of images can also attract students' attention, thereby increasing focus in learning.

Students tend to be more interested in material presented visually than in lengthy verbal explanations. With images, students become more actively engaged in learning. This makes the learning process more interactive and enjoyable. However, the use of images also has limitations. If the images used are uninteresting or irrelevant to the learning material, their effectiveness will be reduced. Furthermore, monotonous use of images can also lead to student boredom. Therefore, teachers need to choose images that are varied and appropriate to learning needs. So, images are a very effective medium for learning English, particularly for vocabulary recognition. However, their use needs to be combined with other media to make learning more varied and less monotonous.

### Using Flashcards in English Learning

Flashcards are a highly effective learning tool for helping students understand and remember English vocabulary through simple yet meaningful visual and text associations. These tools typically consist of cards containing images and words, making it easier for students to grasp the meaning of words directly without the need for complex translation. Harahap and Harahap (2024) state that using flashcards can significantly improve students' vocabulary comprehension, making them ideal for use at the elementary school level.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Syahid et al., "The use of pictures in improving students' vocabulary master," *Journal of English Language Teaching*, Vol.10, No.2 (2024), page.89–98.

<sup>5</sup> Rahmawati et al., "The use of image media in learning English vocabulary," *Journal of English Language Education*, Vol.8, No.2(2023), page.134–142.

<sup>6</sup> Harahap, M. K., & Harahap, R., "The effectiveness of flashcards in teaching vocabulary to elementary students," *Journal of Language Teaching*, Vol.12, No 1(2024), page.55–64.

In learning practice, flashcards are often used in various interactive activities such as games, drills, and matching activities. These activities encourage students to learn not only passively but also actively engage in the learning process. Wulandari and Prasetyo (2022) explain that the use of flashcards can increase student participation in learning, making the classroom atmosphere more lively and enjoyable.<sup>7</sup>

Furthermore, flashcards also play a crucial role in improving students' memory through enjoyable repetition. Repetition is a crucial strategy in language learning because it helps students retain information in long-term memory. Fatimah et al. (2025) stated that the use of flashcards can increase students' learning motivation, making them more enthusiastic about participating in learning.<sup>8</sup>

However, the use of flashcards also has challenges, especially if they are used monotonously without variation. Students can feel bored if the activities they do are not varied and not interesting. Therefore, teachers need to develop various variations in the use of flashcards so that learning remains interesting and not boring. Therefore, flashcards are a very effective medium in learning English, especially in improving vocabulary mastery and student engagement, but their use needs to be adjusted to the teacher's creativity.

### Using Video in English Learning

Video is a visual medium that combines elements of images, sound, and movement, thus providing a more complete learning experience compared to other media. This media is very effective in improving students' listening and speaking skills because students can see and hear the use of language directly in real contexts. Munir (2023) stated that the use of videos can help students understand pronunciation and intonation better, so it is very useful in learning English.<sup>9</sup>

Additionally, videos also provide real context in language use. Students can see how language is used in everyday situations, such as simple conversations, children's songs, or animated stories. Destiadi et al. (2024) showed that the use of videos can improve students' understanding of learning materials<sup>10</sup>, because students not only memorize but also understand the use of language in real contexts. Videos can also increase students' interest in learning because they are attractive and not boring. Students tend to be more interested in learning that involves audio and visuals simultaneously. Lestari et al. (2024) stated that the use of video can significantly improve students' listening skills, making this medium very effective in learning English.<sup>11</sup>

However, the use of video also has obstacles, especially related to facilities such as electricity, projectors, and other technological devices. Not all schools have access to these facilities, so the use of video cannot be implemented optimally in all places. Therefore, video is a very effective medium in learning English, especially in improving students' communication skills, but its use needs to be adjusted to the conditions of the available facilities.

### Comparison of Visual Media Effectiveness

Comparison of the effectiveness of visual media in English learning shows that each type of media has different advantages according to the learning objectives to be achieved. Picture media and flashcards are more effective in vocabulary learning because they provide a concrete visual representation of the words being studied. This makes it easier for students to understand and remember the vocabulary. Hidayat et al. (2022) stated that visual media can significantly improve student learning outcomes because it provides a more realistic learning experience.<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile, video media is more effective for learning listening and speaking skills because it combines audio and visual elements simultaneously. Through videos, students can see and hear language use in real contexts so that learning becomes more

<sup>7</sup> Wulandari, S., & Prasetyo, D., "Using flashcards to increase student participation in English learning," *Journal of Elementary Education*, Vol.14, No 1(2022), page. 78–86.

<sup>8</sup> Fatimah et al., "The effect of using flashcards on students' learning motivation," *Journal of Educational Innovation*, Vol. 15, No.1 (2025), page.45–53.

<sup>9</sup> Munir, F.S., "The use of video in teaching English pronunciation," *Journal of English Education*, Vol.11, No.2 (2023), page.102–110.

<sup>10</sup> Destiadi, R., Hidayat, T., & Nugraha., "The effectiveness of using videos in English learning," *Journal of Educational Technology*, Vol.16, No.1 (2024), page. 67–75.

<sup>11</sup> Lestari et al., "The impact of videos on students' listening comprehension," *Journal of English Learning*, No.9, Vol.2 (2024), page.120–129.

<sup>12</sup> Hidayat et al., (2022). The influence of visual learning media on student learning outcomes. *Indonesian Journal of Education*, 11, No.2(2022), page.210–219

meaningful. This makes it easier for students to understand the use of language in everyday life.

However, the effectiveness of visual media cannot be determined definitively because it depends heavily on learning objectives and student characteristics. Each student has a different learning style, so a variety of media is necessary in learning. Sumesari and Suartama (2021) stated that a combination of learning media can increase learning effectiveness.<sup>13</sup>

Besides that, the combination of visual media can also create a more interesting and varied learning experience. For example, the use of images to introduce vocabulary can be combined with flashcards and videos to strengthen students' understanding. This approach makes learning more effective and less boring. Thus, the use of a combination of visual media is the most effective strategy in learning English in elementary schools because it is able to meet various students' learning needs.

## The Impact of Using Visual Media on Learning Outcomes

The use of visual media in English learning has a very significant impact on improving students' understanding of the learning material. Visual media helps students understand abstract concepts in a more concrete way, making them easier to understand. When students see images, flashcards, or videos, they can immediately relate the information to real-life experiences. Andari et al. (2023) showed that the use of audiovisual media can significantly improve student learning outcomes because it facilitates the process of understanding the material.<sup>14</sup>

Apart from increasing understanding, visual media also has an impact on increasing students' learning motivation. Students who learn with interesting media tend to be more enthusiastic and excited in participating in learning. This happens because visual media is able to create a learning atmosphere that is fun and not monotonous. Pratiwi et al. (2023) stated that the use of visual media can significantly increase students' learning motivation.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Sumesari, N., & Suartama., "Development of multimedia-based learning media," *Journal of Educational Technology*, Vol. 13, No.3 (2021), page.156–165.

<sup>14</sup> Andari et al., "The influence of audio-visual media on elementary school students' learning outcomes," *Journal of Elementary Education*, Vol.14, No.2 (2023), page. 99–108.

<sup>15</sup> Pratiwi et al., "The influence of visual media on students' learning motivation," *Journal of Education and Psychology*, Vol.12, No.1 (2023), page. 65–73.

Another visible impact is increased student participation in the learning process. Students become more active in asking questions, answering questions, and participating in various learning activities. This shows that visual media is able to create more interactive and student-centered learning. Furthermore, visual media also improves students' memory of learning materials. Information presented visually is easier to remember than verbal information because it involves more than one sense in the learning process. This allows students to retain the material for a longer period of time. Therefore, the use of visual media has a very big impact on student learning outcomes, both from cognitive and affective aspects, so it is very important to apply it in English learning in elementary schools.

## Obstacles in Using Visual Media

The use of visual media in English language learning is not without various obstacles that can hinder its effectiveness in the learning process. One major obstacle is limited school facilities, particularly for the use of technology-based media such as video. Not all schools have equipment such as projectors, computers, or adequate internet access to support the use of these media. Nasution et al. (2025) stated that limited facilities are a major obstacle to the use of technology-based learning media, resulting in uneven implementation across all schools.<sup>16</sup> This is further supported by Hidayati and Astuti (2023), who stated that limited facilities and infrastructure are a major obstacle to the use of digital learning media in elementary schools.<sup>17</sup>

In addition to limited facilities, teacher competency in using visual media is also a significant obstacle. Not all teachers have the ability to design and use learning media effectively. Many teachers still use conventional learning methods due to a lack of training and experience in using visual media. Firmansyah et al. (2024) stated that teacher competency significantly influences the success of learning media, making improving

<sup>16</sup> Nasution et al., "Obstacles to the use of technology-based learning media in elementary schools," *Journal of Elementary Education*, Vol.15, No.1 (2025), page. 23–32.

<sup>17</sup> Hidayati, N., & Astuti, D., "Obstacles to the Use of Digital Learning Media in Elementary Schools," *Journal of Educational Technology*, Vol.15, No.2 (2023), page. 101–110.

teacher competency crucial.<sup>18</sup> This aligns with the opinion of Saputra and Lestari (2022), who explained that many teachers still experience difficulties in operating and integrating technology-based media into the learning process.<sup>19</sup>

Another obstacle is time constraints in the learning process. The use of visual media, especially videos, often takes longer than traditional learning methods. Teachers must be able to manage their time effectively so that the use of media does not interfere with the delivery of other materials. If not managed properly, the use of visual media can actually reduce the effectiveness of learning. Furthermore, differences in student ability levels also pose a barrier to the use of visual media. Not all students have the same ability to understand material presented through visual media. Some students can grasp the material quickly, while others require more time. This can lead to inequalities in the learning process if not addressed effectively.

Another obstacle is the lack of creativity in the use of visual media. The use of monotonous and unvaried media can lead to students feeling bored and disinterested in learning. Therefore, teachers need to develop variations in the use of visual media to keep learning engaging and effective. Thus, obstacles in the use of visual media do not only come from facility factors, but also from teacher, time, and student factors, so that appropriate solutions are needed to overcome them.

### Solutions in Using Visual Media

To overcome the various obstacles in using visual media, appropriate and applicable solutions are needed to ensure optimal learning. One solution is the use of simple media such as printed images and flashcards, which do not require high technology. These media remain effective in supporting learning, particularly in vocabulary recognition, and can therefore be used in various school settings.

Furthermore, improving teacher competency is crucial. Teachers need to be provided with training and workshops on the use of learning media to enable them to create creative and innovative learning. With training, teachers will better understand how to use visual media effectively in learning. Another solution is more

effective learning time management. Teachers need to plan the use of visual media well to avoid disrupting the allocated learning time. Careful planning will help teachers utilize their time optimally, resulting in more effective learning. This is supported by Putra and Dewi (2024), who stated that optimizing the use of learning media can be achieved through teacher training and the use of media tailored to school conditions.<sup>20</sup>

Furthermore, teachers also need to adapt the use of visual media to student characteristics. Learning must be designed in such a way as to accommodate differences in student abilities. This way, all students can effectively participate in the learning process. Another solution is to increase creativity in the use of visual media. Teachers can combine various media, such as images, flashcards, and videos, to make learning more engaging and less monotonous. This way, various obstacles to using visual media can be overcome through appropriate strategies, ensuring that visual media can still be used effectively in English learning.

### CONCLUSION

The use of visual media plays a significant role in improving the quality of English learning at the elementary school level. Visual media such as images, flashcards, and videos can bridge abstract concepts into more concrete ones, making them easier to understand for students at the concrete operational stage. Thus, visual media serves not only as a teaching aid but also as an effective learning strategy to support the achievement of learning objectives. Furthermore, visual media has been proven to have a positive impact on students' cognitive and affective aspects.

From a cognitive perspective, visual media helps improve students' understanding, memory, and vocabulary mastery. Meanwhile, from an affective perspective, the use of visual media can increase students' motivation, interest, and active participation in the learning process. This indicates that learning involving visual elements tends to be more engaging, interactive, and less monotonous than conventional methods.

However, the implementation of visual media in learning is not without various obstacles, such as limited facilities and infrastructure, a lack of teacher competence in utilizing the media, and limited learning time. Furthermore, differences in student characteristics and abilities also pose

<sup>18</sup> Firmansyah et al., "Teacher competence in the use of learning media," *Journal of Teacher Education*, Vol.10, No.2 (2024), page.140–149.

<sup>19</sup> Saputra, R., & Lestari, E., "Analysis of Teacher Difficulties in Using Technology-Based Learning Media," *Journal of Elementary School Teacher Education*, Vol.11, No. 3 (2022), Page.145–153.

<sup>20</sup> Putra, A., & Dewi, M., "Strategies for Optimizing the Use of Learning Media in Elementary Schools," *Journal of Educational Innovation*, Vol.14, No.1(2024), page.55–64.

challenges to the optimal use of visual media. Therefore, careful planning and strong adaptability are required by teachers to ensure effective media use.

To optimize this, various strategic solutions are needed, such as utilizing simple, easily accessible media, improving teacher competency through training, and developing creativity in combining various types of visual media. With the right strategy, visual media can be utilized optimally to create more effective, innovative, and student-centered learning. Therefore, the use of visual media is an important approach to improving the quality of English language learning in elementary schools.

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