

THE ROLE OF DIGITAL IMAGES IN ENHANCING VOCABULARY TEACHING: INSIGHTS AND BENEFITS FOR YOUNG LEARNERS

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ABSTRAK

Penguasaan kosakata merupakan bagian penting dalam pembelajaran bahasa asing, namun metode pengajaran tradisional sering kali sulit mempertahankan minat pembelajar muda karena mereka membutuhkan pengalaman belajar yang lebih menarik dan bermakna. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji peran citra digital dalam meningkatkan pengajaran kosakata melalui pendekatan narrative literature review terhadap delapan artikel jurnal terpilih. Dari beberapa studi yang telah ditinjau, dapat disimpulkan bahwa penggunaan citra digital, seperti media berbasis Canva, video animasi, dan permainan pembelajaran interaktif, secara konsisten meningkatkan pencapaian kosakata, motivasi belajar, serta partisipasi aktif siswa dalam kegiatan pembelajaran. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa integrasi pembelajaran kosakata berbasis citra digital memberikan manfaat pedagogis yang bermakna bagi pembelajar muda, terutama apabila didukung oleh strategi pembelajaran yang tepat dan pemilihan media yang sesuai dengan tingkat perkembangan siswa.

Kata kunci: Citra digital, pengajaran kosakata, pembelajar muda, media visual, literature review

ABSTRACT

Vocabulary mastery is an essential part of foreign language learning; however, traditional teaching methods often struggle to maintain young learners' interest because they require more engaging and meaningful learning experiences. This study aims to explore the role of digital images in enhancing vocabulary teaching through a narrative literature review of eight selected journal articles. From several reviewed studies, it can be concluded that the use of digital images, such as Canva-based visuals, animated videos, and interactive learning games, consistently improves vocabulary achievement, learning motivation, and students' active participation in classroom activities. The study concludes that integrating digital image-based instruction offers meaningful pedagogical benefits for young learners, especially when teachers apply appropriate instructional strategies and select media that match students' developmental needs.

Keyword: Digital images, vocabulary teaching, young learners, visual media, literature review

INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary acquisition plays a crucial role in language development, particularly for young learners, as it forms the foundation for listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills (Cerezo et al., 2016). For children in the early stages of

education, learning vocabulary is not only a process of memorizing words but also involves engagement, learning context, and meaningful sensory experiences that support comprehension (Smith & E. J., 2024). Therefore, instructional approaches that provide concrete experiences and

visual support are essential to meet the learning characteristics of young learners. In many classrooms, vocabulary instruction is still dominated by traditional techniques such as memorizing word lists, using static flashcards, and relying on text-based explanations (Nasution & Rahim, 2022). Although these approaches may benefit older learners, they often fail to maintain young learners' interest and may limit their ability to understand vocabulary meaningfully. Consequently, students may experience difficulty remembering vocabulary and using it in communicative contexts.

With the rapid development of educational technology, digital tools have become increasingly integrated into language learning environments. One instructional medium that has gained significant attention is digital images, which can be presented through slideshows, educational applications, videos, or interactive whiteboards (Chen et al., 2024). Digital images provide clear visual representations that help learners associate new vocabulary with familiar objects or situations, thereby supporting comprehension and memory retention (Hoque, 2018). In addition, digital images contribute to more engaging and motivating classroom environments because colorful visuals and contextual illustrations can attract learners' attention and increase participation (Siregar, 2022). From a theoretical perspective, the effectiveness of visual media in vocabulary learning is supported by dual coding theory, which explains that information processed through both verbal and visual channels is more easily retained in memory (Sadoski, 2005). Research also indicates that visual input combined with meaningful verbal explanation strengthens comprehension and facilitates long-term vocabulary retention (Pellicer-Sánchez et al., 2020). Furthermore, previous studies demonstrate that both traditional visual media such as flashcards and modern digital visuals significantly enhance students' vocabulary achievement and engagement (Darmawan, 2024; Lieberman et al., 2009).

Despite these advantages, the integration of digital images into vocabulary teaching also presents several challenges, including limited access to digital devices, teachers' readiness to use technology effectively, and the need to carefully select appropriate images for learners'

developmental levels and cultural contexts (Suci, 2022; Sering & Khan, 2022). Therefore, it is important to explore how digital images are implemented in real classroom practices and how teachers perceive their instructional benefits and limitations.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to explore the use of digital images in teaching vocabulary to young learners by examining both the benefits and challenges experienced by teachers. The findings are expected to provide practical insights for teachers and curriculum developers in designing engaging vocabulary instruction and integrating digital visual media effectively in elementary language learning contexts (Kodriyah & Islamiah, 2025; Ma, 2023).

METHOD

This study employed a narrative literature review to explore previous research on the role of digital images in enhancing vocabulary teaching for young learners. A narrative review was selected because it allows researchers to bring together and interpret findings from different studies, helping to identify recurring themes and patterns across the literature rather than examining each study separately (Snyder, 2019; Green et al., 2006). This approach also follows established guidelines for conducting literature reviews as systematic research methods that emphasize synthesis and interpretation of prior studies (Jesson et al., 2011).

A total of eight peer-reviewed journal articles were selected for analysis. The articles were collected from academic databases and open-access journal platforms using targeted keyword searches, including *digital images*, *visual media*, *vocabulary teaching*, *young learners*, and *English language learning*. To ensure relevance and timeliness, only peer-reviewed articles published between 2018 and 2025 were included in the review.

The selected studies were chosen based on their focus on the use of digital or visual media specifically for vocabulary learning and their discussion of instructional benefits, learning outcomes, or classroom implementation involving young learners. Each article was carefully examined and grouped into thematic categories according to recurring findings related to the use of digital images in vocabulary instruction, such as vocabulary retention, student engagement, and instructional effectiveness. These themes were then synthesized and discussed narratively in the Results and Discussion section. As this research is

based on a literature review, published journal articles served as the primary source of data rather than participants or direct classroom observations.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the five reviewed articles indicates consistent evidence that visual and digital image-based instructional media significantly enhance vocabulary learning outcomes. Visual media such as flashcards, digital pictures, and multimedia visual tools help learners understand vocabulary more easily because they provide contextual and concrete representations of lexical items. These representations facilitate deeper cognitive processing, which contributes to improved vocabulary retention and comprehension.

In addition to cognitive benefits, visual instructional media also positively influence students' affective engagement. Students who learn vocabulary through visual-based activities demonstrate higher motivation, increased

participation, and more active classroom interaction compared to those who rely solely on text-based instruction. However, the effectiveness of digital image integration depends on teachers' ability to design structured learning activities that effectively combine visual media with interactive learning strategies.

Based on the analysis of five reviewed journal articles, the findings reveal that the integration of digital images and visual media in vocabulary instruction contributes significantly to vocabulary acquisition among young learners. The synthesis of the studies generated three themes that consistently appeared across the reviewed literature.

To provide a clearer overview of the reviewed studies, Table 1 presents a summary of the five selected journal articles, including the authors, publication year, research methods, and key findings related to the effectiveness of digital images in enhancing vocabulary teaching for young learners.

Table 1. Summary of Reviewed Articles

No	Authors	Focus	Method	Key Findings
1.	Feranty et al. (2024)	Flashcards for vocabulary learning	Classroom Research Action	Flashcards significantly improved students' vocabulary scores and engagement.
2.	Astuti (2023)	Visual media in vocabulary learning	Experimental	Visual instructional media improved vocabulary comprehension.
3.	Teacher Technique Study	Teacher strategies in vocabulary teaching	Qualitative	Visual teaching strategies enhanced vocabulary understanding.
4.	Digital Vocabulary Study	Digital media in vocabulary learning	Mixed method	Digital visual tools increased participation and retention.
5.	Pateşan et al. (2019)	Vocabulary acquisition theory	Literature review	Vocabulary learning improves through contextual and visual exposure.
6.	Choiron & Rohman (2024)	Animated Video for Vocabulary	Classroom Research Action	The use of animated videos successfully improved students'

				English vocabulary mastery and enthusiasm.
7.	Astuti et al. (2024)	Canva-assisted Learning	Classroom Research Action	Canva media effectively increased students' vocabulary achievement and interest in learning.
8.	Kurniasari et al. (2024)	Wordwall and WordSearch games	Classroom Research Action	Interactive game-based visual media improved vocabulary retention and students' active participation.

Visual Media Improves Vocabulary Retention

Several studies indicate that visual media such as pictures, flashcards, and digital illustrations help learners remember vocabulary more effectively. Visual representation strengthens the connection between meaning and word form, enabling learners to store information in long-term memory. Research on flashcard implementation shows significant differences in vocabulary achievement between experimental and control groups, indicating the effectiveness of visual-based instruction (Fitriyani & Nulanda, 2017) the reviewed studies indicate that visual media such as pictures and flashcards effectively enhance vocabulary retention by helping learners associate words with concrete meanings. However, the effectiveness of visual media is strengthened when combined with repeated practice and structured learning activities.

Digital Images Increase Student Engagement and Motivation

The reviewed studies demonstrate that students become more active and motivated when teachers use attractive visual media. Pictures, cartoons, and digital presentations create enjoyable learning environments, which increase participation and attention during vocabulary learning activities. Visual media has been shown to significantly enhance engagement and motivation, especially in young learner classrooms (Siregar, 2022) that digital images increase students' motivation and classroom participation because visually attractive materials create more enjoyable learning

environments. Nevertheless, variation in visual activities is necessary to maintain sustained engagement. Effective Integration Depends on Pedagogical Strategy

Although digital images are beneficial, the effectiveness of their use depends on how teachers design instructional strategies. Studies emphasize that structured learning activities such as interactive flashcard practice, contextual picture presentation, and guided vocabulary exercises produce better outcomes than simple picture exposure. When properly integrated into lesson plans, image-based instruction significantly improves vocabulary test scores (Luardini et al., 2020) The findings emphasize that the success of digital image-based instruction depends on teachers' pedagogical strategies. Proper integration of images into structured learning tasks leads to better vocabulary learning outcomes than the use of visuals without instructional planning.

Synthesis of Findings

Overall, the findings confirm that digital images play a crucial role in supporting vocabulary teaching for young learners by strengthening memory retention, increasing learning motivation, and enhancing instructional effectiveness. However, the impact of visual media is strongly influenced by teacher competence in selecting appropriate media and integrating it into structured learning activities. Therefore, future research should investigate how different types of digital imagery and instructional strategies interact to optimize vocabulary learning outcomes across different educational levels.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this narrative literature review, digital images have a meaningful

contribution to vocabulary teaching for young learners because they help students understand words more easily, remember them longer, and stay more engaged during learning activities. Visual materials such as pictures, flashcards, and digital illustrations create learning experiences that are more concrete, interactive, and enjoyable, which naturally encourages students to participate actively. Nevertheless, the success of using digital

images depends greatly on how teachers design and integrate them into well-structured learning activities that match instructional goals. Therefore, thoughtful pedagogical planning and appropriate media selection are essential to ensure that digital visual media can fully support effective and motivating vocabulary development in young learner classrooms.

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