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# The role of visual aids and multimedia in primary english education: a literature review

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**ABSTRACT**

Teaching English at the primary school level is a foundational stage in developing pupils' language competence. However, students often struggle with vocabulary acquisition when taught through traditional, verbal-heavy methods. This study employs a qualitative literature review method to explore the role of visual aids and multimedia in enhancing English instruction. The analysis reveals that visual media, such as flashcards, posters, and realia, provide essential cognitive support by linking linguistic forms to concrete meanings. Furthermore, the integration of digital multimedia—including videos and interactive applications—significantly boosts student motivation, engagement, and oral communication skills. While digital tools offer authentic language exposure, their effectiveness depends on thoughtful instructional design, teacher competency, and adequate school infrastructure. The study concludes that a strategic combination of traditional visual aids and modern multimedia creates a more interactive and meaningful learning environment conducive to long-term vocabulary retention and 21st-century skill development.

**Keyword: english language teaching; visual aids; multimedia; primary education**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Diellal, O. (2025) states that teaching English at the primary school level represents a crucial stage in building pupils' future language competence. At this early age, children are in a developmental phase that allows them to absorb new languages more naturally, especially when appropriate teaching methods are applied. In the era of globalization, English has become an essential tool for communication, education, and professional development. As a result, many educational systems have introduced English at the primary level to provide learners with an early foundation. However, the teaching and learning process does not always achieve the desired outcomes. One of the main challenges faced by young learners is vocabulary acquisition, even though vocabulary forms the basis of all language skills, including speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Without sufficient vocabulary knowledge, pupils struggle to understand lessons and express their ideas effectively.

In primary classrooms, traditional teaching approaches that rely heavily on verbal explanation and textbook-based instruction often fail to maintain pupils' interest and motivation. Young learners require interactive, engaging, and visually stimulating activities that match their cognitive and emotional characteristics. For this reason, teachers are encouraged to adopt creative strategies that make learning more meaningful and enjoyable. One effective approach is the use of visual aids, such as pictures, flashcards, posters, diagrams, real objects, and other visual materials. Visual aids help pupils associate words with concrete images, making abstract concepts easier to understand and remember. They also enhance retention by engaging more than one sensory channel, which strengthens memory and comprehension.

Furthermore, the integration of visual aids can create a dynamic classroom environment that promotes active participation and reduces anxiety often associated with learning a foreign language. Pupils become more

confident when they can rely on visual support to understand meaning and express themselves. Although many studies highlight the general benefits of visual materials in language learning, further investigation is needed to explore their specific role in teaching English vocabulary at the primary school level. It is important to examine how teachers use visual aids in their classrooms, what types of materials are most effective, and what challenges they encounter during implementation. Therefore, exploring the use of visual aids in teaching English vocabulary to primary school pupils is essential for improving instructional practices and enhancing the overall quality of language education.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using a literature review (library research) method. The qualitative approach was selected because the purpose of this article is to explore, analyze, and interpret various theories, concepts, and previous research findings related to English language teaching and learning. This study does not focus on collecting numerical data or conducting experimental procedures; instead, it emphasizes an in-depth understanding of existing scholarly discussions through the critical analysis of academic sources.

The data used in this research are secondary data obtained from various scientific references, including reputable journal articles, academic books, conference proceedings, and other scholarly publications relevant to the field of English language education. The selection of sources was based on their relevance to the research topic, the credibility of the publisher, theoretical contribution, and recency of publication. This was done to ensure that the discussion presented in the article reflects current developments in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT).

The data collection process was conducted in several stages. First, the researcher identified keywords related to English language learning, teaching strategies, instructional media, and language skills development. Second, relevant literature was searched, screened, and selected according to predetermined inclusion criteria. Third, the selected sources were thoroughly read and categorized into major themes, such as the development of language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), vocabulary acquisition, communicative competence, and instructional approaches.

The data were analyzed using a descriptive-analytical technique. In this stage, the researcher described the main ideas found in the literature and then critically examined them by comparing different perspectives, identifying similarities and differences, and synthesizing the findings into structured and coherent arguments. The analysis also aimed to identify research gaps, emerging trends, and practical implications for English language teaching practices. Therefore, this study does not merely summarize previous works but integrates them into a comprehensive and systematic discussion.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, the researcher conducted cross-checking among multiple sources and applied reference triangulation to strengthen the analysis. By examining various viewpoints and empirical studies, this research seeks to minimize bias and enhance the credibility of the conclusions presented in the article.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *A. The Role of Visual Media in Improving English Vocabulary Mastery*

Vocabulary is the core element of language competence. It enables learners to comprehend texts, construct sentences, and engage in meaningful communication. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings, vocabulary mastery becomes particularly crucial because students often have limited exposure to authentic language outside the classroom. When lexical knowledge is insufficient, learners may understand grammatical patterns but still struggle to express ideas effectively or participate confidently in classroom discussions.

For this reason, visual media has gained increasing attention in language pedagogy. Visual materials do more than decorate instructional content; they provide cognitive support that helps learners connect linguistic forms with concrete meanings. Qodirjonova and Shokirova (2026) explain that pictures, diagrams, and multimedia elements function as contextual anchors, strengthening word retention by linking verbal input to visual memory. Instead of memorizing isolated word lists, students associate vocabulary with recognizable images, situations, and experiences.

The effectiveness of visual media can be further understood through Dual Coding Theory, which suggests that verbal and visual information are processed through two interconnected systems in the brain. When a learner encounters a new English word accompanied by a relevant image, both systems are activated

simultaneously. This dual encoding increases the probability that the word will be stored in long-term memory. In other words, learners are not relying solely on abstract linguistic processing; they are building multiple cognitive pathways that reinforce understanding.

In addition, Cognitive Load Theory provides another explanation for why visual support is beneficial, especially for young learners. Children have limited working memory capacity, and extensive verbal explanations may overwhelm their cognitive resources. Well-designed visuals reduce unnecessary mental effort by presenting meaning directly and intuitively. As a result, learners can devote more attention to integrating new vocabulary into their existing knowledge structures rather than struggling to decode lengthy explanations.

In classroom practice, visual media appears in various forms. Flashcards and thematic posters remain practical and widely used tools for vocabulary reinforcement. Flashcards, in particular, are effective for repetition and recall activities because they present information in a clear and focused manner. Djellal, O. (2025) emphasizes that such visual aids contribute to inclusive and engaging primary-level instruction by maintaining learners' attention and simplifying complex concepts. Beyond printed materials, the use of realia—real-life objects brought into the classroom—creates authentic and multisensory experiences. When students physically interact with items such as fruits, classroom tools, or household objects, vocabulary learning becomes more meaningful and concrete.

Technological developments have further expanded the role of visual media. Videos, animations, and interactive multimedia presentations provide dynamic exposure to vocabulary within realistic communicative contexts. According to Daribaevna (2026), video-based instruction allows learners to observe how words are used naturally in social situations, which enhances both comprehension and appropriate usage. Additionally, graphic organizers such as mind maps and semantic maps help students visualize relationships among words, fostering deeper conceptual understanding rather than rote memorization.

Nevertheless, the success of visual media depends on thoughtful instructional design. The mere inclusion of images does not automatically lead to improved learning outcomes. Azhari et al. (2024) argue that visually enriched materials must be aligned with learners' cultural backgrounds, proficiency levels, and instructional objectives. Poorly selected visuals may distract learners or create cognitive overload instead of supporting comprehension. Therefore, teachers must evaluate the relevance, clarity, and pedagogical purpose of each visual element used in instruction.

In conclusion, visual media plays a significant role in enhancing English vocabulary mastery among young EFL learners. By integrating visual and verbal input, educators can create cognitively efficient and engaging learning environments that support long-term retention. While challenges related to design and resources may arise, the strategic and well-planned use of visual media offers substantial benefits for vocabulary development and communicative competence.

***B. Integrating Multimedia Tools to Boost Students' Motivation and Engagement***

The rapid development of technology has transformed educational practices, shifting classrooms from teacher-centered environments toward more interactive and student-centered learning spaces. In this evolving context, multimedia tools have become increasingly relevant, particularly in elementary education. By combining text, images, audio, animation, and interactive features, multimedia materials provide richer learning experiences compared to traditional lecture-based instruction. For young learners who are accustomed to digital environments, such integration can significantly enhance attention and participation.

One of the most notable impacts of multimedia integration is the improvement of students' learning motivation. Engaging visual displays, interactive quizzes, and animated explanations stimulate curiosity and reduce boredom. When students are emotionally and cognitively involved, they are more likely to participate actively and persist in completing tasks. Yonanda et al. (2024) found that the implementation of interactive multimedia applications led to a significant increase in students' average test scores, demonstrating that enhanced motivation can translate into measurable academic achievement.

Beyond motivation, multimedia also strengthens student engagement, which is essential in 21st-century education. Modern pedagogical approaches such as flipped classrooms and project-based learning rely heavily on students' active involvement. Multimedia tools support these approaches by allowing learners to access materials independently, revisit explanations when needed, and explore content at their own pace. This flexibility accommodates diverse learning styles and encourages greater learner autonomy.

In the context of language learning, multimedia plays a particularly important role in creating a more authentic linguistic environment. Through videos, podcasts, and interactive software, students are exposed to real accents, cultural expressions, and communicative contexts that textbooks alone cannot fully provide.

Mukhtarkhanova et al. (2023) emphasize that multimedia not only delivers more comprehensive information but also stimulates learners' imagination and creativity. For many EFL learners who lack direct exposure to native speakers, multimedia serves as a valuable bridge to real-world language use.

Moreover, multimedia integration supports the development of essential 21st-century skills, commonly known as the "4C" skills: creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration. Interactive simulations and digital problem-solving activities encourage students to analyze information and make decisions. Online discussion platforms and collaborative digital projects create opportunities for teamwork and communication beyond the physical classroom. Zarei and Fabregas (2024) argue that innovative teaching strategies incorporating technology are crucial for enhancing EFL/ESL learners' problem-solving abilities and critical thinking skills. In this sense, multimedia functions not only as a presentation tool but also as a platform for higher-order learning.

Despite these advantages, the integration of multimedia must be approached carefully. Its effectiveness depends on both content validity and interface design. Multimedia materials should undergo proper validation by subject-matter and media experts to ensure accuracy, clarity, and usability. Practicality is equally important; tools that are difficult to operate may discourage both teachers and students from sustained use.

Challenges such as unstable internet connections, limited access to digital devices, and insufficient teacher training remain significant obstacles in many educational settings. Additionally, over-reliance on AI-generated content may reduce opportunities for deep analytical thinking if not guided appropriately by educators. Therefore, multimedia should complement, not replace, the teacher's role in facilitating meaningful learning experiences.

A systematic development framework, such as the ADDIE model (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation), can help ensure effective multimedia integration. By following structured stages of planning and evaluation, educators can align technological tools with instructional goals and learners' needs. The use of pretests and posttests further provides empirical evidence of the impact of multimedia on student learning outcomes.

Integrating multimedia tools into English language instruction offers substantial benefits for enhancing students' motivation and engagement. When implemented strategically, multimedia fosters interactive learning, supports authentic language exposure, and develops essential 21st-century competencies. Although technical and pedagogical challenges persist, thoughtful and balanced integration can create a more meaningful and enjoyable educational experience for learners.

### *C. The Impact of Digital Visual Media on Young Learners' Listening and Speaking Skills*

The impact of digital visual media on the listening and speaking skills of early childhood learners and elementary school students is closely related to how pictures, videos, and interactive displays attract attention, increase motivation, and provide a more meaningful language context. Digital visual media, such as moving images, instructional videos, digital flashcards, interactive comics, and educational video platforms, help children connect language sounds with visual forms so that vocabulary, pronunciation, and comprehension can be processed and remembered more easily. When children see objects, characters, or situations in visual form while listening to explanations or dialogues in English, they are encouraged to imitate, answer simple questions, or describe what they see. As a result, listening and speaking skills develop simultaneously through concrete and contextual activities.

On the other hand, the use of digital visual media also acts as a trigger for speaking confidence because children feel more interested and do not become bored as quickly as they do with conventional methods such as lectures or the use of the blackboard alone. They experience a learning atmosphere that is more enjoyable, interactive, and aligned with their familiarity with technology. Consequently, oral participation increases in the form of question-and-answer activities, simple dialogues, and short presentations in front of their peers.

However, several studies indicate that although there is an increase in speaking skill scores (for example, in aspects of comprehension, grammar, and vocabulary) after the use of digital visual media, the difference is not always statistically significant when compared to classes taught using conventional methods. This is particularly evident when the duration of treatment is short, practice frequency is limited, and the sample size is small. This means that digital visual media tends to be effective in increasing motivation, attention, and engagement, and provides moderate improvement in certain aspects of speaking. However, it does not necessarily lead to strong improvements in all components of oral skills, such as fluency and pronunciation, without support from other structured teaching strategies, intensive practice, and consistent teacher feedback.

In addition, the integration of digital visual media in learning requires teachers to select and design materials that are relevant to the age and language proficiency level of the learners. These materials should be combined with techniques such as role-play, picture-based discussions, video-based storytelling, and language games. This ensures that the visual and audio input received by the children effectively develops listening skills (through meaningful instructions and dialogues) and speaking skills (through activities such as describing pictures, retelling stories, or engaging in dialogues using vocabulary presented in the media).

Affective factors such as self-confidence, motivation, and anxiety must also be considered. Attractive media alone are not sufficient if children are still afraid of making mistakes or feel shy about speaking. Teachers need to create a supportive classroom climate so that children feel safe to try, make errors, and continue practicing. Thus, the impact of digital visual media on children's listening and speaking skills is promising and generally positive, but its effectiveness depends greatly on the duration of use, the quality of instructional design, active student involvement, the teacher's role as a facilitator, and the continuity of practice that allows repeated and meaningful exposure to spoken language.

### *D. Challenges and Best Practices in Implementing Visual Multimedia in Primary Schools*

The implementation of visual multimedia in primary schools presents both significant challenges and promising opportunities to enhance the quality of learning. Numerous studies indicate that the use of media such as animated videos, interactive images, digital presentations, and educational applications can help young learners understand abstract concepts more concretely, increase their attention span, and encourage active participation in the classroom. However, in practice, many primary schools face limitations related to infrastructure, including the lack of computers or projectors, unstable internet connections, and minimal technical support. In addition, teachers' competence in utilizing technology varies widely. Some teachers are not yet accustomed to designing multimedia-based materials or integrating them effectively into pedagogical strategies, causing multimedia to function merely as a supplementary tool rather than as a meaningful instructional medium. Other challenges arise from the students' side, such as short attention spans, a tendency to be distracted by entertaining elements, and differences in levels of digital literacy.

To address these obstacles, the implementation of well-planned and sustainable best practices is necessary. Teachers need regular professional training in multimedia instructional design, technology-based classroom management, and active learning strategies that focus on student engagement. Visual materials should be designed to be simple, contextual, and aligned with children's cognitive development stages, for instance through a combination of images, sounds, and interactive activities such as quizzes or educational games. Multimedia integration must also align with learning objectives rather than merely following technological trends, ensuring that every use of media serves a clear pedagogical purpose. Institutional support from schools and collaboration with parents also play an important role, particularly in providing adequate facilities and guiding children's use of technology at home. Findings from educational research published in *Research and Innovation in Applied Linguistics* highlight that the success of classroom technology implementation largely depends on teacher readiness, the availability of resources, and student-centered instructional approaches. With careful planning, sufficient training, and systemic support, visual multimedia can become an effective tool for creating more engaging, interactive, and meaningful learning experiences in primary education.

Moreover, the characteristics of primary school students themselves pose additional challenges. Children at this age generally have relatively short attention spans and are easily distracted by overly complex or entertainment-focused visual elements. If multimedia tools are not designed according to their developmental stage, students may lose focus or become passive learners. Differences in digital literacy skills among students also affect learning effectiveness, as not all children are equally familiar with using technological devices. On the other hand, excessive dependence on gadgets raises concerns about eye health, social interaction, and time management. Therefore, the use of multimedia should be balanced so that it supports, rather than replaces, direct interaction between teachers and students.

To overcome these issues, systematic and continuous best practices must be implemented. Teachers should receive intensive training in technology-based instructional design, ranging from creating simple yet effective visual media to managing digital classrooms and evaluating the impact of multimedia on learning outcomes. Learning materials should be contextual, relevant to students' daily lives, and not overly complex to ensure ease of comprehension. The use of colors, images, animations, and sounds must be proportional to maintain focus rather than cause confusion. Active learning approaches such as group discussions, educational games, collaborative projects, and interactive quizzes can be integrated with multimedia so that students remain actively involved instead of becoming passive viewers.

Support from schools and parents is also a key factor in successful implementation. Schools should provide adequate basic facilities, ensure the availability of technological devices, and allocate time for teachers to collaborate and share best practices. Meanwhile, parents can assist by supervising technology use at home to ensure that children use devices wisely and productively. The synergy among teachers, schools, and families helps create a consistent learning ecosystem both inside and outside the classroom. Research further emphasizes that technology integration becomes more effective when accompanied by teacher competency development, institutional support, and student-centered approaches. Overall, although the implementation of visual multimedia in primary schools involves various challenges, its potential benefits are substantial. When properly managed, visual multimedia can serve as a strategic means to foster more adaptive, innovative, and meaningful learning experiences for young learners.

## 4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, visual aids and multimedia tools play a transformative role in primary English education by making abstract concepts more accessible and engaging for young learners. This research highlights that visual media facilitates better vocabulary mastery through dual coding, in which verbal and visual inputs reinforce memory and comprehension. Moreover, the transition toward multimedia-based instruction has proven effective in increasing students' motivation and participation, providing a bridge to authentic language use that textbooks alone cannot offer.

Despite these benefits, successful implementation faces challenges such as limited technological resources and varying levels of teachers' digital literacy. Therefore, for visual multimedia to reach its full potential, it must be implemented through a student-centered approach, supported by continuous professional training for teachers and institutional synergy between schools and parents. Ultimately, well-planned integration of these media ensures a more adaptive, innovative, and enjoyable learning experience for elementary students.

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