

THE EFFECT OF VISUAL AIDS ON VOCABULARY RETENTION AMONG 9-YEAR-OLD EFL LEARNERS

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Abstract. Vocabulary teaching is considered to be one of the most important steps for young language learners. Use of visual aids like pictures, flashcards, videos, realia, and digital images in EFL classrooms is becoming more common, as they are believed to improve students' understanding and memorization. In this research how digital aids can influence on students' vocabulary acquisition will be examined. Moreover it investigates in what way visual materials affect on 9-year-old students' vocabulary acquiring process. This qualitative review is mainly based on academic articles, educational investigations and methodological resources connected with use of visual materials among primary school students. According to findings, visual aids can boost learners' motivation, attention, understanding and help to create long-term vocabulary retention. Besides that, they help teachers to engage more students in the lesson and make them interact with each other effectively. Despite the positive sides, visual aids may have their own drawbacks, as many teachers are becoming reliant on them, neglecting other classroom activities, which are crucial for students' cognitive abilities. This study summarizes that the role of visual aids in teaching vocabulary to 9-year-old learners is vital only if it is integrated with other methods effectively.

Keywords: visual aids, vocabulary retention, EFL learners, young learners, vocabulary teaching, flashcards, language acquisition, primary education, English language learning.

Introduction. Vocabulary is one of the basic steps to language learning since it helps students express their opinion on different things, enhance reading comprehension and get along with each other during the lesson. Since primary school students have not experienced the English atmosphere enough to have a proper lexical basis, they may find vocabulary a bit challenging to acquire. In order to overcome this problem, teachers are required to find more effective ways of teaching vocabulary in order to enable students to learn in a fun and more memorable way so that they could learn effectively.

Visual aids including pictures, flashcards, posters, videos, real objects, gestures, and multimedia resources have become very common as a teaching tool in classrooms as they help students to connect the new words with their visual equivalents. This tool is especially beneficial for young learners, as they tend to memorize colourful detailed materials rather than long and abstract explanations or definitions. From the psychological aspect, it is also said that combination of visual and verbal teaching methods can strengthen child's memory. Nowadays, the importance of visual materials in EFL classrooms is rising, so teachers started using flashcards, cartoons, animations, and interactive digital tools to introduce and practice

new vocabulary. This kind of visual support helps students to attain new knowledge at fast-paced way and transfer it to long-term memory section. Furthermore, visuals increase students' participation and engagement in the classroom.

Although there is a reasonable number of advantages of visual aids, the drawbacks of theirs still continue existing. For instance, in some educational institutions instructors may not have access to digital devices or challenges to find appropriate materials to be effective. Moreover inordinate usage of visual aids may lead to students inability to develop independent language processing. For this reason, it is important to examine both benefits and drawbacks of visual aids in teaching vocabulary.

This study aims to examine how visual materials affect on learners' vocabulary acquisition and contribute effectively in primary education classrooms.

Methodology. The findings analyzed in this study mainly used quantitative and quasi-experimental research designs to examine how effective are visual materials for teaching vocabulary to 9-year-old learners. The article by Shafagh Jalali and Farnaz Sahebkhair describe how 60 Iranian school students were divided into experimental and control groups. The experimental group that had been taught vocabulary through visual aid such as pictures, posters, websites, and objects, at the same time the other control group had been taught with traditional methods like bilingual dictionaries and translations. Pre-tests and post-tests aimed at measurement of improvement in vocabulary acquisition.

Similarly, other studies reviewed in the article, such as Hashemifardnia et al. (2020) and Eslahcar and Khodareza (2012), also applied experimental methods with control and experimental groups, where they applied flashcards, visual vocabulary applications and audiovisual materials in order to enhance the students' process of acquiring vocabulary. Majority of the investigators were reliant on pre-tests and post-tests to compare how students of different groups performed during the experiment

Discussion. The findings of three studies illustrate that visual aids have positive influence on teaching vocabulary among primary school students. Jalali and Sahebkhair (2024) found that students who learned through visual materials performed significantly better than those taught in traditional ways. Besides, Hashemifardnia et al in 2020 reported that visual materials helped students to boost their vocabulary knowledge, whereas Eslahcar and Khodareza in 2012 said flashcards had more effect on vocabulary acquisition of young learners.

Despite the fact that, all three studies confirm about how effective are visual aids, the types of materials used vary reasonably. One study focused on digital applications, the otherwise on use of flashcards, and the third one supported the use of multimodal materials like websites and images. This difference suggested that there is no single visual tool can be applied universally, rather learners' needs, motivation and learning environment define how beneficial are they. Visual materials assist in increasing students' attention, engagement, and memory retention because learners connect words with images and real-life situations. Nevertheless, overuse of visuals may lead students to distraction of real language content. Therefore, teachers should try to keep balance between visual support and language practice.

Benefits of visual aids. Visual materials enhance vocabulary and long-range memorization. Learners are able to keep lexical units in mind more easily by looking at visual images of words. According to educational research, it has been observed that, combination of verbal clarification with pictures reinforce memory and cognitive text analysis.

Another important advantage is maintaining an engaging learning atmosphere. It is necessary for teachers to apply interactive games, narration, matching tasks and multimedia

presentations to promote learners' participation and communication. Visual aids can be beneficial in various ways of studying, especially for non-active or timid individuals as they will participate more and feel more confident in classroom environment.

Challenges and limitations. Studies have shown that visual aids have certain drawbacks even though they have many benefits. The primary obstacle is that, in some educational institutions, classroom resources and technology facilities are insufficient. In many schools access to projectors, digital equipment and printed materials are limited.

Another concern is teachers' readiness and practice. Many teachers are unaware of how to successfully apply visual aids in vocabulary lessons. In some circumstances, visual materials are used for decorative purposes rather than an institutional ones.

Furthermore, abnormal level of dependence on visual aids can lead to reduction in student's opportunities to develop imagination and independent interpretation skills. Hence, visual materials should be used alongside other teaching techniques, including speaking activities, repetition and real-life learning activities.

The future of vocabulary teaching with visual aids

The research demonstrates that, visual resources will remain essential role in today's EFL education. Innovation in technology such as interactive whiteboards, educational applications, animated videos and online games offer teachers a wider range of possibilities to create engaging lessons for vocabulary acquisition.

Future language teaching methodologies are expected to combine traditional classroom instruction with digital visual tools to enhance learning outcomes. Yet, proper application requires proper teacher training, access to teaching materials, and careful lesson planning to ensure that visuals support meaningful language learning.

Conclusion. Studies have shown that, visual aids affect positively on vocabulary memorization among 9 years old EFL learners. Learners are able to understand, memorize and apply new vocabulary more effectively with visual resources such as pictures, flash cards, videos and realia. The research suggests that, educational visuals produce more dynamic and learner-centered educational environment. Younger students benefit significantly from visual depiction as they create conceptual vocabulary more specific and understandable. Moreover, educational strategies support various learning styles and promote active participation in classroom tasks.

Nevertheless, various challenges still remain, including a lack of resources, inadequate teacher development and the risk of excessive dependence on visual aids. Thus, teachers are supposed to use visual supports intentionally and blend to various communicative teaching styles.

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