

تضمين التمثيلات المرئية في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية: الحروف والكلمات للمتعلمين الصغار

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مستخلص الدراسة: استكشفت هذه الدراسة فاعلية استخدام التمثيلات المرئية في تدريس الحروف الأبجدية والكلمات الكاملة لـ 32 طالباً من طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية في المدارس الابتدائية كلغة أجنبية ممن تراوحت أعمارهم بين 6 و7 سنوات. واستخدمت الدراسة تصميم الاختبار القبلي والبعدي لمجموعة واحدة لتحديد مستويات احتفاظ الطلاب بالمعلومة، كما استخدمت طريقة دراسة الحالة لتقييم تجربة تعلمهم. وقد طُبِّق الاختبار قبلياً وبعدياً، بعد تدخل دام 21 أسبوعاً استخدمت فيه التمثيلات المرئية؛ ثم أعيد تطبيقه بعد أسبوعين من انتهاء التدخل لقياس درجة الاحتفاظ، وأجريت مقابلات شبه مقننة وجهاً لوجه. وقد أظهرت النتائج وجود تأثير إيجابي للتمثيلات البصرية على تجربة التعلم لدى الطلاب. واستناداً إلى نتائج الدراسة، يُوصى بأن يدمج المعلمون التمثيلات المرئية بشكل أكثر منهجية في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية للمتعلمين الصغار لتعزيز الاحتفاظ بالمعلومات والمشاركة في الفصل الدراسي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الصور، الحروف الأبجدية، اكتساب المفردات، الاختبار المفاهيمي.

Integrating Visual Representations into the Learning of English as a Foreign Language: Letters and Words for Young Learners

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Abstract: This study explored the effectiveness of using visual representations in teaching the alphabet and whole words to 32 primary-school English as a Foreign Language students (ages 6–7). A one-group pretest-posttest design measured students' retention levels, while a case study approach evaluated their learning experience. A conceptual test served as the pretest and was readministered two weeks following the 21-week intervention using visual representations to assess retention. Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were also conducted. Results indicated a positive effect of visual representations on students' learning experience and retention. Based on these positive outcomes, systematic incorporation of visual representations into the EFL curriculum for young learners is recommended to enhance retention and student engagement.

Keywords: pictures, alphabet, vocabulary acquisition, conceptual test.

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Introduction

Visual learning strategies, such as picture mnemonics, may offer valuable support in early literacy development by providing children with visual clues. These strategies could also foster children's imagination, creativity, and problem-solving skills, potentially cultivating a more positive attitude toward language learning. Children acquire knowledge from birth through implicit visualization (Eilam, 2012). As they mature, they use a range of types of visual input (regarding what is to be seen in their environment) to gain insight into the surrounding world. It has been estimated that 75% of information that a child's brain processes is received visually (Raiyn, 2016). Due to children's capacity to learn via visual images, it is reasonable for teachers to seek to integrate visual representation into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning for young learners (Donaghy & Xerri, 2017). Scrivener (2011) characterizes young learners as having low attention and concentration but high curiosity, enthusiasm, and desire for fun. Recent research (e.g., Saleem, 2013; Ilomo & Ilomo, 2021), using both quantitative and qualitative techniques of data gathering, found that EFL learners in primary schools respond enthusiastically to visual learning material, actively participating in activities where such material was used, and improving their ability to memorize new information. Evidence from these studies suggests that visual representation kindles young children's interest in language learning, holds their attention, and ultimately enhances their knowledge. Thus, as is shown below, rather than reflecting on the issue of whether to integrate visual aids into EFL learning—the value of which has already been established—the EFL teacher should focus on the choice of effective and relevant visual aids and on ways of properly incorporating them into a lesson design. The benefits of visual representation in language learning are particularly highlighted by researchers investigating cognitive theory (Kannellopoulou, Kermanidis, & Giannakouloupoulos, 2019). In line with this theory, visuals provide EFL teachers with the opportunity to create input that satisfies learners' interests, needs, and levels of language proficiency. Krashen's (1985) input hypothesis categorizes such input as comprehensible input, meaning that visuals make inputs understandable for learners with the use of specific clues and thus facilitate their language acquisition. According to Krashen's (1985) hypothesis, the gap between a learners' current and future language levels can be filled if appropriate materials and strategies are chosen by the educator. Here, "appropriate" means a combination of knowledge that is familiar to young learners and new knowledge (Li, 2023). Some critics have challenged Krashen's (1985) asserted theoretical implications and instead claim that comprehensible input does not always improve students' language knowledge (Gu, 2017), but the input hypothesis is important because it provides the rationale for using visual representation.

Another important cognitive theory that justifies the integration of visual aids into language teaching is Paivio's (1986) dual-coding theory. This theory is based on the central premise that the combination of visual and

verbal elements triggers specific cognitive processes in the human brain and facilitates processing of information in young learners. This theory holds that a young learner processes and preserves information in two subsystems that are closely intertwined, namely, the verbal and visual (Kusumawati & Rachmawati, 2017; Li et al., 2022). Where both subsystems are activated at an early age, they improve learners' ability to retain the meanings of words and recall them when necessary. The success of multimodal input of this type in EFL learning can be explained by noting that each of the two subsystems complements the other, influencing the memory by means of two different channels, enabling young learners to derive meaning from new information.

Vocabulary is an essential aspect of language learning (Li et al., 2022), being a prerequisite for reading, writing, speaking, and listening. However, EFL teachers may lack confidence in choosing methods for vocabulary teaching (Li et al., 2022). Visual aids can be an effective tool for increasing the young learners' vocabulary knowledge because they help language teachers clarify vocabulary items in a vivid and meaningful manner. This can be confirmed through the findings of studies conducted by Khafidhoh and Carolina (2019) and Sofyan (2021). In their respective investigations of visual aids, the researchers found that visual images (especially pictures) improved learners' achievement in English vocabulary and expanded their interest in language learning. Similar results were observed by Strauber et al. (2020), who explored the effects of an intervention involving a mixture of words and pictures with young Canadian learners. The participating children in the treatment group far outperformed those in the control group, showing that the inclusion of pictures in learning materials can contribute to rapid vocabulary acquisition. From these findings, the researchers concluded that pictures provide young learners with the opportunity to develop associations between words and meaning.

The work of Strauber et al. (2020) makes clear that pictures provide learners with helpful cues and can motivate them to extend their vocabulary. This is especially true for high-frequency words that can be difficult to understand through phonic decoding. In addition, including of visual aids in one's instruction helps students whose learning style is primarily visual, and it can help them achieve vocabulary acquisition more rapidly (Novawan, 2010). Through integrating visuals into vocabulary learning, EFL teachers can add creativity to learning and adapt their teaching to the interests and needs of their young learners. In Azma's (2017) study, conventional methods of vocabulary instruction, focusing on definitions, translation, and synonymy, were found to be ineffective relative to instruction based on visual aids. The researcher found that integrating 35 cards that had printed words and pictures on them into vocabulary lessons greatly promoted the participating Iranian EFL learners, providing them with interesting and creative tasks.

The first step in English instruction toward literacy with young EFL learners is teaching the English alphabet (Manjili, 2013). If young learners fail to acquire this

knowledge, they will experience reading difficulties for the remainder of their language learning (Piasta & Wagner, 2010). Because the ability to read and write with ease is tied to good knowledge of letter formation and good letter recognition, the EFL teacher's responsibility is to find the best method of teaching it (Karimkhanlooei & Seifiniya, 2015). This necessarily includes providing an understanding of letter forms, the names of letters, and how they are written (Piasta & Wagner, 2010). One effective method of doing this that has recently been developed is to teach the English alphabet with picture mnemonics (Dilorenzo et al., 2011). Stanley and Finch (2018) compared traditional alphabet books that feature pictures to flashcards that have picture mnemonics, concluding that picture mnemonics are a better tool for teaching the alphabet. The strategy of picture mnemonics involves presenting a picture with the shape of a letter, combined with a demonstration of its sound. For instance, the letter *g* may be represented using a picture of glasses and the letter *f* with a picture of a flower, to invoke learners' associations between letters and objects. Thus, young learners can visualize a letter, retain it in their minds, and grasp the relationship between the written letter and the spoken sound (Novawan, 2010; Stanley & Finch, 2018).

Sehlberg, Barendregt, and Rubens (2011) concluded that picture mnemonics make learning the alphabet more interesting and enjoyable. Dakhiel and Rub (2017) found that using picture mnemonics had positive effects on children with learning disabilities who were beginning to learn the English alphabet. In particular, picture mnemonics helped children with learning disabilities distinguish, memorize, and use English letters. These learners often have difficulty distinguishing between letters with similar forms, and the use of picture mnemonics is a good one for facilitating the transfer of information from their working memory to their long-term memory. Dakhiel and Rub reported positive results from the juxtaposition of learning and memory strategies in picture mnemonics, allowing learners to reconcile old and new information using visuals.

Pictures are considered effective visual instruction materials for use with young EFL learners (Novawan, 2010; Khafidhoh & Carolina, 2019; Sofyan, 2021). This effectiveness can be attributed to the fact that pictures make learning interesting and enjoyable, and they can be used in different learning settings. Because young learners may be unable to understand the meaning of unfamiliar words and phrases, pictures provide the necessary clarification (Sofyan, 2021). Sofyan (2021) showed that the use of pictures improved young learners' mastery of English vocabulary by increasing their learning motivation. In particular, learners' productive vocabulary (measured by word use, word form, and word meaning) was more extensive in the posttest than in the pretest. Based on these findings, the researcher recommended that teachers adapt their practices to benefit learners by integrating pictures into teaching instruction. However, note that Novawan (2010) asserts that such visuals only benefit young EFL learners if they are transformed into instructional aids that have specific purposes and if a learner-centered approach is employed.

One effective EFL learning method is a program called Itchy's Alphabet (Dilorenzo et al., 2011). This application uses a picture mnemonics strategy, in which each picture has the shape of a specific letter. Dilorenzo et al. (2011) found evidence that Itchy's Alphabet improves young learners' ability to identify initial letter sounds, segment single words into individual sounds, and decode unknown words. As a result of the recent interest of EFL teachers in Itchy's Alphabet, more empirical evidence should be obtained from different EFL settings. Vocabulary learning employing dual-coding video clips is another effective practice, which is supported by the work of Wong & Samudra (2019). Using dual-coding theory, the researchers used educational media, and they were able to significantly improve the ability of preschoolers with low language proficiency to identify words.

In spite of the benefits of visual representation for EFL learning, some challenges and limitations should be addressed. First, many EFL teachers tend to use pictures, not as a central component of English learning, but rather for decorative purposes (Novawan, 2010; Donaghy & Xerri, 2017). Second, the use of visual representation in EFL learning relies on young learners' ability to accurately interpret the various parts of a given image and realize meaning from them (Donaghy & Xerri, 2017). The wide variation in children's abilities and personalities means that some children may lack visual literacy skills and may make mistakes in the construction of meanings. Educators also express the concern that low-ability learners require additional cognitive resources to process both verbal and visual information than high-ability learners do (Li et al., 2022). Therefore, the use of visual representation does not guarantee superior vocabulary acquisition. Karastathi (2016) claims that many TESOL conferences discuss the use of digital tools in English learning but devote insufficient attention to means of improving children's visual literacy. Third, Whitcher (2013) found that EFL teachers may not always use image-based tools correctly or effectively.

To overcome these obstacles, EFL teachers must spend time to increase their own expertise in visual literacy through training and to direct their efforts toward transforming their young learners into active viewers (Karastathi, 2016). Active viewing denotes the learner's ability to analyze visual ideas that are expressed through pictures. It is likewise important for EFL teachers to participate actively in open dialog and share what they have found to be the most effective practices in this field (Whitcher, 2013). This can allow them to recognize the ways in which visual instruction benefits learners at different levels of language proficiency. The need to discuss the use of visuals with EFL learners and to explain the benefits of visual aids for alphabet and vocabulary learning to them should also be taken into consideration (Whitcher, 2013). Finally, EFL teachers should reflect critically on the integration of visual representation for each learning setting to determine whether a given strategy benefits all young learners (Dilorenzo et al., 2011).

Language learning is indispensable for children, both inside and outside the classroom. It equips them to communicate effectively, acquire new knowledge, and establish connections with individuals from diverse cultures. However, it can also pose challenges, especially for young children. Among the most formidable obstacles is remembering newly acquired language. In language instruction, “the retention of what has been taught may depend on the quality of teaching, the learners’ interest, or the materials’ meaningfulness” (Richards & Schmidt, 2013, p. 498). Numerous factors impact retention in children learning a language, including age, as younger children tend to possess superior language learning abilities due to their brain development stage, in which their brains are more adaptable to new linguistic input. However, they also exhibit shorter attention spans and may be more susceptible to distractions (Daloğlu et al., 2009). Children who are motivated to learn tend to retain what they have learned to a greater degree; therefore, visual and hands-on activities can enhance retention, as they make the language more tangible and meaningful (Hulstijn, 2001).

Thoughtfully designed visuals capture attention and spark learner interest, making learning enjoyable and encouraging active engagement. Learners tend to remain attentive when information is presented in an esthetically pleasing and visually stimulating way (Kuo et al., 2014). Visual stimuli enable superior memory retention. Research has shown that visual information is processed more efficiently and has a greater likelihood of being remembered than purely textual information (Mayer, 2014). Images and visual cues can serve as mental anchors and make it easier for learners to recall information later. Visuals can provide a clear overview of a topic, highlight key points, and organize information in a structured manner. This enables learners to grasp the main ideas quickly and cultivate a deeper understanding of the subject matter.

Statement of the problem

The traditional methods of teaching EFL to young learners often rely on memorization and repetitive practice. These methods may not fully engage students. Research suggests that visual representations can enhance comprehension and retention by simplifying complex information and making learning more interactive and engaging. However, there is limited empirical evidence specifically addressing the effectiveness of visual representations in teaching young EFL learners the letters of the alphabet and whole words. This study aims to fill this gap by exploring the potential effectiveness of using visual representations to teach the letters of the alphabet and whole words. It focuses on learners aged 6 to 7 years, analyzing how visual representations can enhance their ability to retain vocabulary and evaluate their overall learning experience.

To address these aims, the following research questions will guide this study:

1. Is there a significant difference between the pretest scores posttest scores that the students

achieve learning the letters of the alphabet and whole words with visual learning materials?

1. What is the students’ level of retention for words taught using visual learning materials?
2. What are the students’ views on their experiences of learning using visual support material?

Methods

Research design

In this study, a single-group pretest and posttest design was used to investigate how well the integration of visual material supported the learning of alphabet letters and words in first-year students, as well as their levels of retention. For a more detailed description of the visual material, please refer to Appendix A. The case study method, which is a qualitative method, was used to identify students’ views on their own learning experiences with visual material. Quantitative and qualitative methods were employed in combination to ensure data reliability. The findings from the quantitative analysis outlined the general trend, while the insights from the qualitative analysis provided us with a more detailed picture of the students’ perspective. A concept test was given as a pretest. Following 21 weeks of teaching, the same test was given again but as a posttest, and then it was readministered again 2 weeks later to establish the students’ level of retention. In the case study, face-to-face interviews were conducted with five pupils during the week after the final tests were administered.

Visual material design















To design the visual material, the researcher followed the following steps:

1. **Conceptualize the design:** The researcher sketched out a rough idea for the picture design for each letter.
2. **Choose a clear, readable font:** The researcher chose a simple font that is easy to read, avoiding overly decorative or cursive fonts, which can be difficult for children to decipher.
3. **Incorporate bright, vibrant colors:** The researcher chose bright and varied colors to make the visual presentation more engaging and to ensure that there would be sufficient contrast between the text and the picture to enable readability. The researcher also ensured that the visual presentation was age-appropriate for the students and ethically sound by consulting with language-teaching experts in the field.
4. **Include fun elements:** Using Adobe Illustrator, the researcher assembled shapes, characters, animals, and themes that would appeal to children.
5. **Adjust and refine:** After completing the outlines of the images, the researcher filled them with colors and then re-examined each picture to judge it as a whole, adjusting the size, spacing, and positioning of letters until they were satisfactory.

6. **Conduct a pilot study:** The researcher used the designs with six students aged 6 and 7 years to determine how they would interpret a certain type of imagery and assessed their ability to recall information in the pictures.

7. **Evaluation and findings:** The researcher analyzed the data collected from the pilot study and made adjustments to the materials based on the findings (see Table 1 below).

Table 1 Results of the pilot study

Student comments	Visual presentation before adjustment	Visual presentation after adjustment
None of the students knew what visual representation meant.		
Five students said it was a jet, and one said it was an airplane.		
Four students did not know what the visual representation meant, and two said it was a kiwi.		
None of the students knew what visual representation meant. One said it was a dinosaur.		
None of the students knew what the visual representation meant, and all said it was eggs.		
Three of the students said that it meant that it was raining, and another said that it was an umbrella. Three did not know what was represented.		
None of the students knew what visual representation meant.		

Participants

This study involved participants from Madinah, Saudi Arabia, all enrolled at Almotaz Bellah school. For the pilot study, six students aged 6 and 7 years were selected from this school. The main study expanded to include 32 students from the same age group and school. All participants were native Arabic speakers who had no

prior formal instruction in English, ensuring a homogeneous starting point for the research.

To gain deeper insights, a qualitative case study was conducted with five students randomly chosen from the main study sample at Almotaz Bellah school. This group allowed for more in-depth exploration of student experience.

Data collection

Concept test

- **Pretest:** This was a concept test consisting of 15 matching questions and 15 multiple-choice questions administered to the participants at the beginning of the study. It provided a baseline measure for students' understanding of the letters of the alphabet and the associated words.
- **Posttest:** The same concept test was administered to the participating students after 21 weeks of teaching. This allowed the impact of the integration of visual representations on learning to be assessed.
- **Retention test:** The same concept test was administered a third time to the participating students 2 weeks after the implementation of the visual representation intervention. This provided a measurement of students' long-term retention of knowledge.

Case studies

Face-to-face interviews were conducted for the case study. These were individual semistructured interviews conducted with eight participants randomly selected from the sample within one week after they had completed the final test. This provided in-depth insight into the students' perspectives on their learning experiences with visual representation.

Control of Extraneous Variables

Several steps were taken to minimize the influence of extraneous variables:

- **Standardized Presentation:** Visual representations were meticulously documented (Appendix A) and presented to all students using a uniform script and trained presenters.
- **Timeframe:** The short timeframe (2 weeks) between the posttest and delayed posttest

minimized the impact of external events on learning, aligning with the school schedule and allowing focused intervention.

- **Qualitative Data Triangulation:** Qualitative data from student interviews provided additional insights and supported the quantitative findings.

Data analysis

Statistical analyses were conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, Version 23, developed by IBM Corporation, located in Armonk, New York, USA. The research used exploratory factor analysis to confirm the construct validity of the survey instrument. In addition, the instrument's reliability was assessed using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The psychometric properties of the test items, incorporating 30 items in total, were evaluated through calculating their difficulty and discrimination coefficients to ensure their appropriateness.

In all, descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were computed. Furthermore, a paired sample t-test was adopted to assess the differences within the paired observations. Furthermore, to the quantitative analysis, this researcher qualitatively examined interview transcripts to extract themes, patterns, and insights for the students' learning experiences. This qualitative analysis was focused on understanding the ways in which visual representations facilitated students' engagement with the material and supported their learning process.

Validity and reliability:

1. Validity

Table 2 shows that all item loadings on the factor were >0.40 , indicating a high degree of construct validity for the test.

Table 2 Correlations matrix for the items

Item No.	Correlations	Item No.	Correlations
1	0.50**	16	0.57**
2	0.56**	17	0.77**
3	0.68**	18	0.62**
4	0.71**	19	0.63**
5	0.79**	20	0.59**
6	0.54**	21	0.65**
7	0.47**	22	0.83**
8	0.44**	23	0.79**
9	0.50**	24	0.64**
10	0.70**	25	0.74**
11	0.50**	26	0.51**

Continue / Table 2

Item No.	Correlations	Item No.	Correlations
12	0.42**	27	0.59**
13	0.70**	28	0.59**
14	0.76**	29	0.54**
15	0.73**	30	0.44**

**Statistically significant at (0.05 = α)

Verifying the psychometric properties of achievement test items:

To verify the psychometric properties of the achievement

test, the difficulty coefficients and discrimination coefficients were calculated. Table 3 shows the results of the analysis:

Table 3 Values of difficulty and discrimination coefficients for achievement test items

Item No.	Difficulty coefficients	Discrimination coefficients	Item No.	Difficulty coefficients	Discrimination coefficients
1	0.33	0.48	16	0.53	0.55
2	0.47	0.52	17	0.47	0.73
3	0.57	0.63	18	0.60	0.58
4	0.63	0.67	19	0.50	0.58
5	0.53	0.77	20	0.47	0.58
6	0.60	0.48	21	0.43	0.63
7	0.57	0.42	22	0.60	0.79
8	0.47	0.39	23	0.53	0.75
9	0.50	0.46	24	0.57	0.62
10	0.40	0.68	25	0.43	0.70
11	0.60	0.47	26	0.57	0.47
12	0.63	0.39	27	0.47	0.54
13	0.40	0.68	28	0.47	0.58
14	0.57	0.72	29	0.50	0.49
15	0.50	0.69	30	0.53	0.38

Table 3 indicates that the difficulty and discrimination coefficients of all items were 0.33–0.63, and 0.38–0.79. These values were evaluated against the predetermined criteria for item selection, which allowed the researcher to accept all items in the achievement test (30 items).

2. Reliability

Table 4 shows that the value of the reliability coefficient was high (0.943), but this was acceptable, being above the permissible limit (0.70) (Pallant, 2005). Thus, the study tool was suitable for application to achieve the purposes of the study.

Table 4 Reliability test (Cronbach's alpha) for all variables

Tool	No.	Cronbach's alpha
Test	30	0.943

Results and discussion

Quantitative results

The first research question was as follows: Is there a significant difference ($0.05 = \alpha$) between the pretest

scores of the students and the posttest scores they achieved after being taught the letters of the alphabet and whole words using visual learning materials?

Table 5 Means, standard deviation, and t-test for pre- and posttest results

Test	N	Mean	Std. deviation	t-test value	Significance (Sig)	Eta Square
Pretest	30	2.28	2.02	50.73	0.00**	0.274
Posttest		27.84	1.82			

**Statistically significant at ($0.05 = \alpha$).

It is noted from the results of Table 5 that the students mean performance is 2.28 out of 15 matching questions and 15 multiple-choice questions, with an SD of (2.02), while the value of the mean of the students' performance in the posttest was 27.84, with a standard deviation (SD) of 1.82. The value of the t-test (50.73), with the difference showing $p < 0.00$, indicating statistical

significance. The results of the analysis shown in Table 5 indicate that students' performance quite a bit higher in the posttest, after the intervention.

The second research question was as follows: What is the students' retention level for words taught using visual learning materials?

Table 6 Means, standard deviations, and t-test results

Test	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Value (t-test)	Significance (Sig)
Posttest	30	27.84	1.82	0.442	0.662
Retention test		27.81	1.79		

**Statistically significant at ($0.05 = \alpha$).

The results shown in Table 6 indicate that the mean performance of the students in the posttest was 27.84 (SD = 1.82) out of 15 matching questions and 15 multiple-choice questions, in addition to the mean performance of the students on the retention test was 27.81 (SD = 1.79) out of the same set. The values of the means were close, indicating a similar level of performance. The t-test value (0.442) resulted in a significance level of 0.662, which was not statistically significant at $\alpha = 0.05$. Therefore, the students' retention level for words taught using visual learning materials was high.

Qualitative results

Enhanced learning experience with visual presentation

The first prominent theme that emerged from the interviews was the positive impact that using visual presentation can have for English learning. The students expressed their enthusiasm and engagement when their teachers incorporated pictures into the learning process. For instance, in Interview 1, the student mentioned that

learning with the visual presentation was more enjoyable and effective, as it helped in remembering words. Likewise, in Interview 4, the student described how looking at colorful and vibrant pictures made the learning experience akin to reading a storybook, enhancing their interest and increasing their participation in the class.

Improved word retention through visual representation

The students consistently highlighted how the combination that the combination of new words with corresponding pictures helped them recall and understand the vocabulary more effectively. In Interview 3, the student recalled learning words such as yard, jet, and pen from the pictures, emphasizing the role of the visual representations in their learning. Similarly, in Interview 5, the student mentioned that the visual presentation of an octopus drawn with the letter *O* helped them remember the word, indicating

that visual representations could act as memory cues for the students.

Preference for visual learning over traditional methods

The preference for learning English using pictures in place of traditional methods such as books and writing emerged as a recurring theme. The students expressed a clear preference for visual learning, citing reasons such as reduced mental fatigue, enhanced understanding, and increased excitement. In Interview 2, the student mentioned that learning with pictures made them feel intelligent and capable of learning English on their own, indicating a sense of empowerment by means of visual learning. Likewise, in Interview 5, the student explicitly stated a preference for learning with pictures over "boring books," emphasizing the enhanced excitement and understanding that came with the visual representations.

Engaging and interactive learning environment

The interviews also highlighted the role that visual presentations have in creating engaging and interactive learning environments. In the interviews, the students expressed their enjoyment in guessing the meanings of words that were depicted in the pictures, which made learning into a game-like experience. This interactive element added a layer of enjoyment and participation to the learning process, as noted by the student in Interview 5, who described how the use of pictures turned learning into a game, making it more colorful and interesting.

The findings of this investigation are congruent with those of Strauber et al. (2020), who explored the efficacy of a picture-embedded approach for the acquisition of sight words. Strauber et al. demonstrated that the integration of visual representations not only facilitated word acquisition but also stimulated learners' motivation to broaden their lexicon. This is corroborated by Novawan (2010), who acknowledged the advantages of integrating pictorial representations in vocabulary learning.

In addition, the results agreed with the research conducted by Hulstijn (2001) and Kuo et al. (2014). Those studies suggest that learners' enthusiasm for a subject matter is positively correlated with improved memory retention. From this, it can be concluded that pedagogical strategies that incorporate visual stimuli and interactive engagement will likely enhance the retention of educational material.

A thematic analysis of the interviews revealed the overwhelmingly positive impact of the use of visual representation for young learners. The themes of enhanced learning experience, improved word retention, preference for visual learning, and the engaging and interactive environment underscored the significant role of visual representations for the creation of a dynamic and effective learning environment for young English language learners, as confirmed by Sofyan (2021), Novawan (2010), and Khafidhoh & Carolina (2019).

Conclusions and recommendations

The use of visual representation in EFL learning proves undeniably effective, such as enhancing learning experiences, boosting word retention, and catering to visual learners. By creating a dynamic and engaging

environment, integrating visual representation can play a crucial role in promoting the success of young learners. EFL learning should prioritize the incorporation of visual representations. These enable young learners to construct new knowledge more rapidly and effectively. They act as invaluable tools for the visualization of abstract concepts, leading to enhanced memory retention. To create compelling and effective learning experiences, teachers should incorporate well-curated and aesthetically pleasing visual aids. Pairing written text or numbers with relevant images and figures promotes deeper comprehension, longer-term memory retention, and future recall. Further research is needed to explore the long-term effects of visual representation in EFL learning, particularly in diverse cultural contexts. Future studies should investigate the optimal balance between visual and traditional teaching methods, as well as the impact of technology-enhanced visual aids on language acquisition. Additionally, research into age-specific visual learning strategies could provide valuable insights for tailoring EFL instruction to different developmental stages.

Limitations of the Study

This study provided valuable insights into the effectiveness of visual representations in teaching alphabet letters and whole words to young EFL learners. However, it was not without its limitations. One significant constraint was the focus on a narrow age range (6-7 years), which may not have accurately represented the broader population of young language learners. To enhance the generalizability of the findings, the study might have benefited from a wider age range encompassing various stages of early language development.

Moreover, the research's emphasis on alphabet letters and whole words meant that it offered only a partial view of the language learning process, limiting its ability to address other crucial aspects such as grammar, syntax, or communicative competence. These limitations highlight the need for further research to offer a more comprehensive understanding of visual representations' role in EFL education across various language components and developmental stages.

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Appendix A

<p>Aa Apple</p>	<p>Bb Bear</p>	<p>Cc Cow</p>
<p>Dd Duck</p>	<p>Ee Egg</p>	<p>Ff Fish</p>
<p>Gg Goat</p>	<p>Hh Hat</p>	<p>Ii Ink</p>
<p>Jj Jet</p>	<p>Kk Kiwi</p>	<p>Ll Lion</p>
<p>Mm Monkey</p>	<p>Nn Nest</p>	<p>Oo Octopus</p>
<p>Pp Pen</p>	<p>Qq Quilt</p>	<p>Rr Rabbit</p>
<p>Ss Sun</p>	<p>Tt Tiger</p>	<p>Uu Umbrella</p>
<p>Vv Vase</p>	<p>Ww WOLF</p>	<p>Xx FOX</p>
<p>Yy Yard</p>	<p>Zz Zebra</p>	