

## **Using Pictures to Improve Students' Vocabulary in Fifth Grade of SD Negeri Wakarleli**

<sup>1</sup>Nice Violeta Salmon, <sup>2</sup>Salmon James Hukom, <sup>3</sup>Yulina Tiwery

<sup>1,3</sup>Program Studi Diluar Kampus Utama, Universitas Pattimura  
<sup>2</sup>English Education Studi Program, FKIP, Universitas Pattimura  
Corresponding email: [salmonnice69@gmail.com](mailto:salmonnice69@gmail.com)

### **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to improve student's vocabulary mastery in the fifth grade of SD Negeri Wakarleli using pictures as visual media. The research was conducted as Classroom Action Research (CAR) in two cycles involving 20 students. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected using observation checklists and pre-tests/post-tests. The findings indicate a significant improvement in students' vocabulary acquisition through pictures, especially in fruits and occupations. The results show that in the second cycle, more students reached 'excellent' and 'very good' levels of vocabulary mastery compared to the first cycle. These results suggest that using pictures as teaching media improves vocabulary acquisition.

**Keywords:** *Vocabulary, pictures, visual media, Classroom Action Research*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Vocabulary is a fundamental aspect of language learning, particularly in foreign language contexts where students must acquire new words to communicate effectively in the target language. In English lessons, many students struggle to understand and retain vocabulary, which affects their overall language skills. As Wilkins (2002) pointed out, little can be conveyed without grammar, but without vocabulary, nothing can be communicated. The importance of vocabulary in language learning cannot be overstated, as it plays a critical role in listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

In the context of SD Negeri Wakarleli, students have shown difficulties in mastering English vocabulary, mainly because English is not used in their daily lives. This study explores using pictures as a visual aid to help students understand and remember new vocabulary. By associating words with images, students can better retain the meaning of new words, making learning more engaging and effective.

Vocabulary acquisition is widely recognized as a fundamental aspect of language learning, serving as the basis for developing other language skills, such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Learners cannot effectively convey their thoughts and ideas without an adequate vocabulary. Researchers like Wilkins (1972) emphasize that 'while without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed.' This demonstrates the critical role that vocabulary plays in language proficiency.

In the Indonesian context, English is a foreign language, and its instruction begins at a young age in elementary school. However, students often face significant challenges in learning vocabulary, partly due to the lack of immersion and daily practice in English outside the classroom. As observed in SD Negeri Wakarleli, students struggle to retain and apply new vocabulary in English lessons, which impacts their ability to communicate in the target language. Traditional methods of vocabulary instruction, which rely heavily on rote memorization and repetition, are ineffective in engaging students and promoting long-term retention.

Visual media such as pictures have been proposed as an alternative approach to vocabulary teaching to address this issue. Pictures serve as visual stimuli that capture students' attention and provide concrete representations of abstract words, making the vocabulary more accessible and memorable. According to research by Mayer (2001), visual aids help learners create mental images that enhance comprehension and retention. Using pictures in vocabulary instruction can help students better associate words with their meanings, and it has been particularly effective in teaching young learners whose cognitive development is closely linked to visual processing.

This study explores how using pictures can improve the vocabulary acquisition of fifth-grade students at SD Negeri Wakarleli. By integrating pictures into vocabulary lessons, we seek to address the challenges of low student motivation, limited retention, and poor vocabulary mastery in English lessons.

The research focuses on two action research cycles to measure the impact of picture-based instruction on students' vocabulary test scores and engagement in the classroom.

## **METHOD**

This research was conducted using Classroom Action Research (CAR), consisting of two cycles: Cycle I focused on occupations, and Cycle II focused on fruits. Each cycle involves four stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection. The research was conducted with 20 fifth-grade students from SD Negeri Wakarleli. Data collection methods included pre-tests, post-tests, observation sheets, and documentation. Pre-tests were administered to assess students' initial vocabulary mastery, while post-tests measured improvement after the intervention using picture media.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The study revealed a significant improvement in students' vocabulary mastery through picture media. Pre-test and post-test results from both cycles were compared to assess progress. The findings from this research indicate that picture media significantly improved students' vocabulary acquisition across both cycles. Before the intervention, most students scored in the 'Very Poor' category, indicating a lack of basic vocabulary knowledge. In Cycle I, the focus on occupations as a vocabulary theme allowed students to associate the names of different jobs with corresponding images, making the vocabulary more tangible and relatable.

By the end of Cycle I, although some improvement was observed, 75% of students remained in the 'Poor' category. This suggests that while using pictures facilitated better comprehension, additional reinforcement was needed to ensure students could fully internalize the vocabulary. The observations during this cycle revealed that students were more engaged

when presented with pictures. Still, they struggled with pronunciation and sentence construction, hindering their overall post-test performance.

In Cycle II, introducing fruit-related vocabulary, which students were more familiar with, significantly improved test scores. By the end of the second cycle, 60% of students had achieved ‘Excellent’ scores, and the remaining 40% were in the ‘Very Good’ category. This dramatic improvement highlights the effectiveness of visual media in enhancing vocabulary retention and understanding, particularly when the vocabulary is related to familiar objects in the students’ environment.

Qualitative data from classroom observations also indicated that students were more motivated and participated actively in the lessons when pictures were used. The interactive activities, such as the ‘Guess the Picture’ game, encouraged students to practice the new vocabulary in a fun and engaging way, contributing to their improved performance. Additionally, repeating key vocabulary items throughout the lessons helped reinforce students’ understanding and retention.

These findings are consistent with previous research on the effectiveness of visual media in vocabulary instruction. For instance, Elzy (2013) found that using pictures in teaching vocabulary to young learners resulted in higher test scores and greater student engagement. Similarly, Jannah (2023) reported that colour pictures helped students better understand and retain new vocabulary, improving pre-test and post-test test results.

Regarding cognitive development, pictures align with Paivio’s (1986) Dual Coding Theory, which suggests that information is better retained when processed through both verbal and visual channels. By presenting vocabulary in both written and visual forms, students can create stronger mental connections between words and their meanings, which leads to better recall during tests and real-life applications.

*Figure 1: Comparison of Pre-Test and Post-Test Results (Cycle I)*

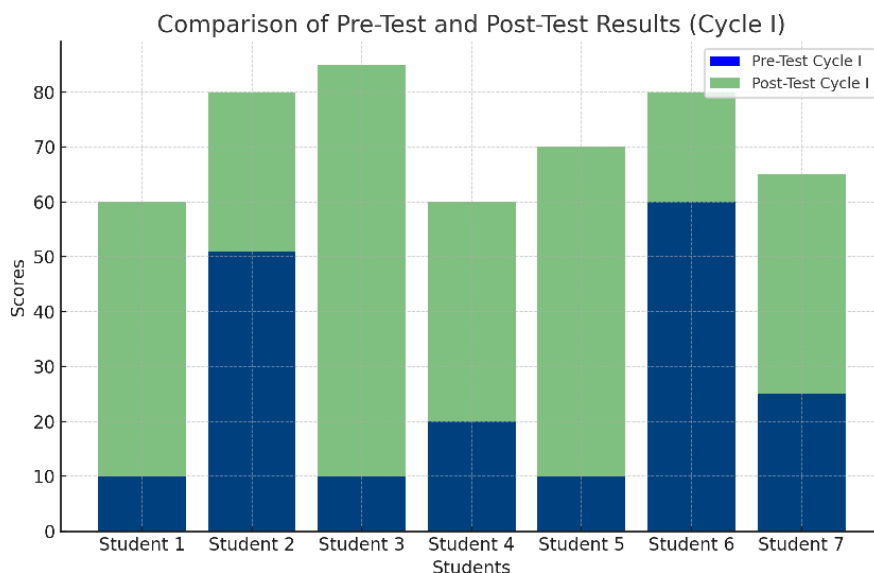
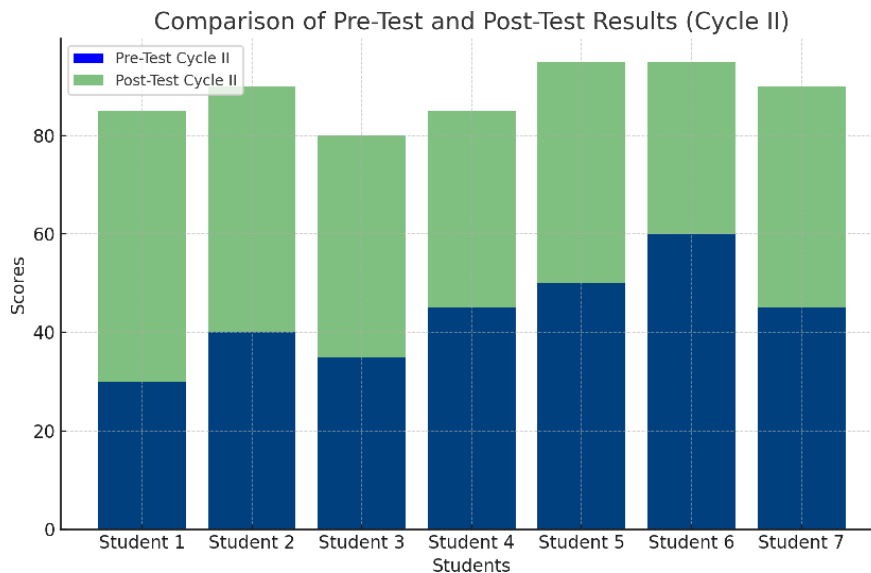


Figure 2: Comparison of Pre-Test and Post-Test Results (Cycle II)



## CONCLUSION

This study demonstrated that using picture media significantly improves students' vocabulary acquisition. Students showed substantial progress from the first to the second cycle, with post-test results in Cycle II revealing that 60% of students achieved 'Excellent' scores, and 40% achieved 'Very Good' scores.

Vocabulary acquisition is widely recognized as a fundamental aspect of language learning, serving as the basis for developing other language skills, such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Learners cannot effectively convey their thoughts and ideas without an adequate vocabulary. Researchers like Wilkins (1972) emphasize that 'while without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed.' This demonstrates the critical role that vocabulary plays in language proficiency.

In the Indonesian context, English is a foreign language, and its instruction begins at a young age in elementary school. However, students often face significant challenges in learning vocabulary, partly due to the lack of immersion and daily practice in English outside the classroom. As observed in SD Negeri Wakarleli, students struggle to retain and apply new vocabulary in English lessons, which impacts their ability to communicate in the target language. Traditional methods of vocabulary instruction, which rely heavily on rote memorization and repetition, are ineffective in engaging students and promoting long-term retention.

Visual media such as pictures have been proposed as an alternative approach to vocabulary teaching to address this issue. Pictures serve as visual stimuli that capture students' attention and provide concrete representations of abstract words, making the vocabulary more accessible and memorable. According to research by Mayer (2001), visual aids help learners create mental images that enhance comprehension and retention. Using pictures in vocabulary instruction can help students better associate words with their meanings, and it has been

particularly effective in teaching young learners whose cognitive development is closely linked to visual processing.

This study explores how using pictures can improve the vocabulary acquisition of fifth-grade students at SD Negeri Wakarleli. By integrating pictures into vocabulary lessons, we seek to address the challenges of low student motivation, limited retention, and poor vocabulary mastery in English lessons.

The research focuses on two cycles of action research to measure the impact of picture-based instruction on students' vocabulary test scores and engagement in the classroom.

This study has demonstrated that using pictures as a teaching tool is highly effective in improving the vocabulary acquisition of fifth-grade students at SD Negeri Wakarleli. The significant improvement in post-test scores across both cycles indicates that visual media enhances comprehension and increases student engagement and motivation. By making abstract vocabulary concepts more concrete, pictures help students understand and remember new words better.

In light of these findings, it is recommended that teachers incorporate visual aids, such as pictures and other multimedia tools, into their vocabulary lessons. This approach is particularly beneficial for young learners, who are more responsive to visual stimuli and interactive learning activities. Additionally, teachers should provide ample opportunities for students to practice new vocabulary through games, quizzes, and group activities, as this helps to reinforce learning and ensure long-term retention.

Future research could explore the use of other forms of visual media, such as videos and animations, to further enhance vocabulary learning. Moreover, studies could investigate how the use of visual aids impacts vocabulary acquisition in older students or different subject areas.

## **REFERENCES**

- Allen, V. F. (2000). *Techniques in teaching vocabulary*. Oxford University Press.
- Al-Ja'afari, I. S., & Region, S. S. (2009). Using pictures in teaching vocabulary in Grades fifth and six classrooms. *Researching English Language Teaching and Teacher Development in Oman*, 132-139.
- Beck, I. L., McKeown, M. G., & Kucould, L. (2013). *Bringing words to life: Robust vocabulary instruction* (2nd ed.). Guilford Press.
- Brown, A. (2022). *Personalized learning in language education*. [Publisher].
- Cameron, L. (2001). *Teaching languages to young learners*. Cambridge University Press.
- Carolina, A. (2019). Using pictures for teaching vocabulary to junior high school students. *English Language Teaching Educational Journal*, 2(1), 32-38.
- Chun, D. M., & Plass, J. L. (1996). Effects of multimedia annotations on vocabulary acquisition. *The Modern Language Journal*, 80(2), 183-198.
- Coady, J., & Huckin, T. (1997). *Second language vocabulary acquisition: A rationale for pedagogy*. Cambridge University Press.
- Duff, P. A. (2008). *Case study research in applied linguistics*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Gass, S. M., & Selinker, L. (2008). *Second language acquisition: An introductory course* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- Gibbons, P. (2002). *Scaffolding language, scaffolding learning: Teaching second language*

- learners in the mainstream classroom. Heinemann.
- Graves, M. F. (2006). *The vocabulary book: Learning and instruction*. Teachers College Press.
- Handayani, N. F. (2018). Improving English vocabulary for second graders using pictures at SD Pangudi Luhur Jakarta. *Journal of English Teaching*, 4(1), 37-53.
- Harmer, J. (2007). *The practice of English language teaching* (4th ed.). Longman.
- Jones, B. (2022). Prioritizing vocabulary in language learning. *Journal of Language Education*, 10(2), 123-136.
- Larsen-Freeman, D., & Anderson, M. (2011). *Techniques and principles in language teaching* (3rd ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Lee, C. (2022). Enhancing vocabulary acquisition through authentic language input. *Language Learning Research*, 5(3), 245-259.
- Lee, J., & Macaro, E. (2013). Investigating age and cross-linguistic influence as factors in third language acquisition: The case of Korean-English bilingual learners of Mandarin Chinese. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 16(3), 325-344.
- Lightbown, P. M., & Spada, N. (2013). *How languages were learned* (4th ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Liu, J. (2010). The Use of Images in Vocabulary Teaching. *Journal of Education and Learning*, 4(1), 43-50.
- Marzano, R. J. (2004). *Building background knowledge for academic achievement: Research on what works in schools*. ASCD.
- Mayer, R. E. (2016). *E-learning and the Science of Instruction: Proven Guidelines for Consumers and Designers of Multimedia Learning* (4th ed.). Wiley.
- Mayer, R. E. (2005). Cognitive theory of multimedia learning. In R. E. Mayer (Ed.), *The Cambridge handbook of multimedia learning* (pp. 31-48). Cambridge University Press.
- Nation, I. S. P. (2001). *Learning vocabulary in another language*. Cambridge University Press.
- Nation, I. S. P. (2013). Learning vocabulary in lexical sets: Dangers and guidelines. *TESOL Journal*, 4(2), 181-190.
- Pertiwi, N. (2021). *Improving students' vocabulary by using picture slides in teaching and learning at the eighth grade of SMP Negeri 4 Banjarmasin school year 2019/2020* (Doctoral dissertation, Universitas Islam Kalimantan MAB).
- Richards, J. C., & Schmidt, R. (2010). *Longman Dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics*. Pearson Education.
- Rohman, I. M. (2016). *The effectiveness of using pictures in teaching vocabulary*. (Unpublished undergraduate theses). Semarang: UIN Walwasongo.
- Schmitt, N. (2010). *Researching vocabulary: A vocabulary research manual*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Smith, D. (2022). Contextualizing vocabulary instruction for language learners. *Language Teaching*, 15(1), 56-72.
- Thornbury, S. (2002). *How to teach vocabulary*. Pearson Education Limited.
- Ur, P. (2012). *A course in English language teaching* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.