

## **THE STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF USING VISUAL LITERACY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING: A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY**

<sup>\*1</sup>Fatih Al Fauzi, <sup>2</sup>Anggun Saputri, <sup>3</sup>Ribut Sabartono

<sup>1,2,3</sup>*Universitas Islam Jember*

<sup>1</sup>fatih.alfauzi16@gmail.com, <sup>2</sup>Anggunpatri28@gmail.com, <sup>3</sup>ributsabartono74@gmail.com

### **Abstract**

English as a global lingua franca presents challenges for students in understanding the language in Indonesia, where English is taught as a foreign language. This study aims to explore students' perceptions of the use of visual literacy in English language learning. The use of visual literacy, such as images and videos, has been shown to help improve students' comprehension and engagement in the learning process. The research method used is a descriptive qualitative approach involving seventh-grade students at a middle school in Jember, Indonesia. Data were collected through observations and interviews. The results showed that visual literacy has a positive impact on students' understanding of English language material. Students find it easier to grasp concepts when supported by visual media. Additionally, the use of visual literacy also increases students' motivation and interest in learning, making the learning process more interactive and enjoyable. In the independent curriculum, English language learning encompasses six skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing, reflecting, and presenting, all of which can be supported by the use of visual literacy. Visual literacy not only facilitates the understanding of vocabulary but also encourages students to think critically and creatively through visual interpretation. This creates a more dynamic learning environment and fosters active participation from students. The conclusion of this study is that visual literacy can be an effective tool in enhancing the quality of English language learning, particularly in helping students to understand or remember vocabulary and enhancing students' English language skills.

**Keywords:** *Students' Perception, Visual Literacy, English Language Learning*

### **INTRODUCTION**

English is considered the first global lingua franca (Çelik & Kocaman, 2016). English has become an integral part of every existing field. In Indonesia, English is a foreign language (Lowenberg, 1991). Nevertheless, English has been applied to schools in Indonesia (Mappiasse & Sihes, 2014). In the decision of the Head of the Standard, Curriculum, and Assessment Body of Education of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology No. 008/h/kr/2022 On Access to Learning in Early Childhood Education, Primary Education, and Secondary Education, on the independent curriculum, English is taught starting at the level of primary and secondary education (SD/MI/Package A Program; SMP/MTs/Package B Program; and High School/MA/Package C Program). In the independent curriculum, learning English covers six language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, contemplating, writing, and presenting integrally in a variety of types of text. However, to develop these abilities, students face various challenges in understanding English language learning. The problems they face include difficulty in pronouncing words as they are influenced by their first language (Praistiana & Budiharto, 2020). Johnson (2005) Some factors of students' difficulties in understanding English learning are as follows: 1) lack of English language skills, 2) academic achievement gap, 3) lack of language and culture connection, and 4) lack of experience in interacting with English.

Problems in learning English must be solved wisely to avoid the gap between theory and practice. In the first sense of learning, teaching is defined as showing or helping someone learn to do something by giving instructions, guiding, and providing knowledge with output

for student understanding (Brown, 2007). For students, to understand the learning provided by the teacher, it is important to pay attention to what students need (Rizzuto, 2017). There is a need for learning methods that support teaching materials to help ensure that teaching materials are well delivered to students and can increase the effectiveness of language learning (Tomlison, 2012). One of the methods of learning English that has been applied runs on visual literacy. Visual literacy is a kind of learning that uses visual media for student understanding (Benjamin, 2016). In ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) teacher training, visual literacy is equally important as it serves as the foundation for language learning (Britsch, 2012). Because of technology and multimedia, teachers are using more pictures and videos to help students understand and enjoy learning, especially in subjects like English.

Previous research has carried out several studies on this issue. Asheim (2022) conducted a study in Bergen using "The Rabbits" picture book to enhance visual literacy skills in 7th-grade EFL students. The mixed-methods research, involving 14 students over three lessons, used questionnaires and student drawings analyzed with Bloom's Taxonomy. Despite varying questionnaire results possibly due to COVID-19 disruptions, the study revealed strong student commitment, engagement, and active participation in discussions, leading to valuable insights for both the researcher and teacher. The second related study was done by Kaya (2020) in Turkey titled "The Impact of Visual Literacy Awareness Education on Verbal and Writing Skills of Middle School Students." Using a pretest-posttest design with a control group, the study involved 17 students in the experimental group and 18 in the control group. Data were collected using the Written Expression Evaluation Scale (WEES) and the Effective Speech Skills Scale. Results showed that visual literacy education significantly improved students' writing and verbal skills, supporting previous findings that visual elements enhance student understanding and academic achievement. The third study was conducted by Budiharto, Laili, and Fujiono (2019) at MTs. Qurrotul Uyun, Indonesia, titled "Utilisation of Visual Literacy through Pictures to Motivate Students to Learn English." The study found that using visual literacy with pictures effectively motivated seventh-grade students to learn English, making lessons more engaging and enjoyable. Techniques included using PowerPoint to display images with English words, reading aloud, and visual aids. The studies highlight the effectiveness of using visual elements such as picture books, visual literacy awareness education, and visual aids in improving student engagement, comprehension, and academic achievement. Although previous research has explored visual literacy in English language learning, none has specifically focused on students' perceptions and experiences of visual literacy in English language learning.

Based on the background, this research can contribute to English language learning by providing visual literacy that can be a media for learning English. This research aims to inform readers, particularly students and those interested in learning English, that there are numerous enjoyable and effective methods for learning the language, one of which is through the use of visual literacy. It also seeks to demonstrate to educators that visual literacy has a significant impact on English learning. The researcher hopes that this study will offer new perspectives to teachers on the application of visual literacy in classroom activities and serve as a valuable reference for future research.

For this particular reason, this research utilize a qualitative descriptive study to gain an in-depth understanding of students' perceptions of the implementation of visual literacy in

English language learning. By conducting a descriptive study on The students' perceptions of visual literacy in English language learning, this thesis aims to contribute to existing knowledge on effective English language teaching methodologies and provide practical recommendations for improving English language education practices.

This research use several theories to know students' perceptions. According to Gregory (1980), human perception is formed through an active inference process that involves making hypotheses about what is in the surrounding environment based on the sensory information received. It refers to the process that allows us to extract information obtained from the senses (Rogers, 2017). It involves the process of transforming information received by the sensory panels into internal representations that guide the way a person thinks and acts. Kant defines that the cognition of the reality of knowledge acquired is the result of several given media (Danielyan, 2023). Additionally, perception does not just happen; the perceptual process consists of three main stages: selection, organization, and interpretation (Kenyon & Sen,2014). Arbib & Yaari(2004) states that student's perception of learning is important as it aids educators and researchers in comprehending their students' understanding and responding to the information provided to them. This insight proves beneficial for improving teaching methods and educational strategies. Meanwhile, Marx (1983) students' perceptions of teacher behavior and instructional stimuli were found to be related to their achievement and cognitive strategies in the classroom. It can be concluded that the way students view the materials given can affect their academic performance and the cognitive approach they use in learning (Kalita,2023).

Visual literacy is considered important to students of the 21st century because contemporary culture today relies heavily on images and visual media as the primary form of communication (Lundy & Sthepenz,2015). Visual literacy is about understanding and making sense of visual images and texts. A Skill that enables a person to understand and use visuals deliberately to communicate with others, Debes, 1969:27 (in Avgerinou & Ericson, 1997). There are many visual aids, such as images, graphics, diagrams, colors, designs, and videos (Ali & Ahmed, 2019). Illustrated books, magazines, newspapers, and films are also useful for visual literacy. Visuals require critical thinking skills like synthesizing, evaluating, and analyzing (Abboud,2017). They help students connect what they see with their experiences and support their interpretations with evidence (Shivers, Levenson, & Tan, 2017). The use of visual literacy can help in guessing the meaning of new words, motivate students to memorize the significance of vocabulary, and help students overcome the difficulties of using vocabulary (Ali & Ahmed,2019). The aim of visual literacy, according to Barley in "A New Look at the Loom of Visual Literacy" (p. 14), is to help students become skilled at understanding visuals, express themselves effectively using visuals in writing, understand the rules and structure of visual language, be familiar with visual literacy tools, and translate between visual and verbal languages (Ladevich,2016).

Based on research conducted by Asheim (2022), students appeared more enthusiastic and enjoyed the learning process more when English lessons incorporated visual literacy. This led to more effective learning. Similarly, Suryanto (2014) found that using visual literacy in English lessons helped improve students' English skills. Ali & Ahmed (2019) also noted that visual literacy aids students in recognizing and remembering new English vocabulary. This, in turn, helps students understand the meaning and information in English texts and improves

their writing skills. Thus, visual literacy has many positive impacts on students' comprehension of English lessons taught by teachers.

## **METHOD**

This study, conducted on seventh-grade students of SMP 11 Ma'arif Bangsalsari Jember in the 2023/2024 academic year, used a qualitative, descriptive approach. Qualitative methods are ideal for exploring participants' perceptions and interpretations of their environment. According to Creswell & Guetterman (2019), qualitative research involves analyzing text for patterns and main ideas. Creswell & Creswell (2018) emphasize that writing a qualitative research method section includes explaining the study's purpose, discussing the design, reflecting on the researcher's role, using diverse data sources, following data recording protocols, analyzing data in multiple steps, and ensuring accuracy through proper documentation.

The research observed one English teacher and students from two classes, VII-A and VII-B, each with 25 students. From these students, the researcher selected 4 from each class, totaling 8 students, for data collection through interviews (Mayer, 2015). Participants were purposefully selected based on their relevance to the research questions and their ability to provide diverse perspectives related to the phenomenon being studied. These criteria ensured the inclusion of participants who could offer valuable insights into the research topic (Joan Sargeant, 2012). Considering diverse perspectives is crucial for understanding the phenomenon under study (Warren, 2011).

The interview sessions aimed to explore students' perceptions and gather in-depth information about the use of visual literacy in English learning. This process allowed the researcher to capture a more comprehensive understanding of the participants' experiences and perspectives. Here is the table describing the participants in this research:

Table 1. Participant description

<b>No.</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Class</b>
<b>01.</b>	Participant 1 (P1)	Female	VII A
<b>02.</b>	Participant 2 (P2)	Female	VII A
<b>03.</b>	Participant 3 (P3)	Female	VII A
<b>04.</b>	Participant 4 (P4)	Female	VII A
<b>05.</b>	Participant 5 (P5)	Male	VII B
<b>06.</b>	Participant 6 (P6)	Male	VII B
<b>07.</b>	Participant 7 (P7)	Male	VII B
<b>08.</b>	Participant 8 (P8)	Male	VII B



## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Findings**

#### **Identification of Students' Perception of the Use of Visual Literacy in English Language Learning**

The researchers classify student perception into several sections according to the data collection process.

a. **Assisting in Understanding the Learning Materials**

Students expressed that the use of visual literacy helps them understand the taught material. This perception can be seen as follows:

*"I am a beginner in learning English at junior high school. Initially, I didn't like it because I found it difficult to understand. However, after the teacher explained using images or videos, I understood the material being taught."*(P1)

*"Learning becomes easier to understand compared to lessons that only use text."* (P3)

This statement is supported by the opinions of students P4, P5, P6, P7, and P8, who also found that using visual literacy helped them understand English learning materials more effectively.

b. **The Learning Process Became More Engaging and Enjoyable**

Students focus and enjoy the learning process if the teaching materials are engaging and enjoyable. Based on this, here are the students' perceptions of the statement:

*"The lessons become exciting and engaging."*(P2)

*"Yes, the lessons become interesting because the images and videos keep me from feeling sleepy in class."*(P6)

These perceptions are also supported by students P7 and P8. Meanwhile, students P1 and P5 expressed the following perceptions:

*"Yes, the lessons become interesting because images and videos eliminate drowsiness in class."* (P1)

*"A fun learning experience because I never studied English before and initially did not like it. After learning English using visual literacy, the lessons became exciting."* (P5)

c. **The Students Can Enhance Their English Listening Skills**

Listening is a crucial component of language skills for understanding and interpreting auditory information. It involves comprehending the context and information conveyed through the sense of hearing. Therefore, students need to master this skill. This can be enhanced through supportive media to facilitate students' understanding of the information presented, in line with their proficiency level at the junior high school level. This point is conveyed by the perception of P3 and P8:

*"I can understand the information conveyed in English audio because the teacher also presents pictures and animated videos during our listening lessons."* (P3)

*"I find myself enjoying and understanding listening lessons more because our teacher accompanies them with images or videos."* (P8)

d. **The Students Can Improve Their Speaking Skills**

As it is well-known, speaking is also a crucial aspect of English proficiency that needs to be mastered. Below is the expression of perception from P6 based on the interview findings:

*"I find it easier to imitate English conversations that I watch from videos." (P6)*

e. The Students Can Increase Their Vocabulary

This influence arises from the use of visual media, which aids students in comprehending meanings and remembering the vocabulary being learned. Consequently, it enhances their vocabulary knowledge. This statement is supported by the perception of P2 as follows:

*"Images and videos help me understand the meanings of words written in English." (P2)*

P4, P5, and P7 also express perceptions consistent with the statement above:

*"visual and video representations make it easy for me to remember vocabulary. So, I've memorized many words now." (P4)*

*"The images or videos help me remember English vocabulary that I see in them, so I get to know many new words, which then inspires me to create English stories."*

*"I find it easy to recognize and remember English vocabulary that I learn through pictures or videos." (P7)*

## **Discussion**

Research on the use of visual literacy in English language learning indicates that its utilization has a positive impact on the classroom learning process. Students' perceptions regarding how it helps them comprehend the learning materials stem from the effect of using visual media, which provides them with comfort in the classroom. Consequently, students become more focused during teacher instruction. It is evident that the use of visual literacy aids students in understanding complex English language concepts that may be difficult to grasp verbally, as stated by Duchak (2014).

Other findings indicate that the use of visual literacy also plays a role in making the learning process more engaging and enjoyable for students. This statement aligns with the results of a study conducted by Budiharto, Laili, & Fujiono (2019) where students felt that learning became more engaging and enjoyable, leading them to be more interested and active in their studies. In learning, students' motivation and interest are crucial for their academic success (Kalita, 2023). Furthermore, the effective use of visual media can stimulate students' interest, thus enhancing the quality of learning to be more effective, in line with the role of visual literacy in language learning as discussed by Benjamin (2016).

Additionally, visual literacy improves various English language skills (Suryanto, 2014). For instance, in listening lessons, images and animated videos help students understand audio information better. Visual aids also enhance speaking skills; conversation videos make it easier for students to mimic and practice English conversations (Kaya, 2020). Visualizing conversations helps with pronunciation and focused listening.

Finally, when it comes to building English vocabulary, using visual media also has a positive impact (Ali & Ahmed, 2019). Students find that pictures and videos help them remember and learn new words. This shows that using visual aids can make it easier to memorize vocabulary, improving students' ability to use these words in different situations, including writing.

From this discussion, it can be concluded that qualitative research on students' perceptions of using visual literacy in English language learning has significant implications for enhancing the effectiveness of English language instruction. This highlights the

importance of integrating visual media in language learning contexts, not only to facilitate understanding of the material but also to stimulate student interest, develop listening and speaking skills, and increase English vocabulary proficiency.

## **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

### **Conclusion**

Research on using visual literacy in English language learning shows it significantly enhances instructional quality. According to Thulasivanthana (2020), incorporating visual literacy, such as images and videos, can boost students' motivation and English language skills. Visual literacy captures students' attention, keeping them focused and making the material easier to understand, which improves their language skills. Visual literacy helps clarify complex concepts, increases interest, and stimulates effective learning and instruction.

### **Suggestion**

Overall, using visual literacy in English learning offers many benefits. It helps students understand the material better, makes learning more engaging, and improves their English skills. Including visual media in English education enhances student learning and teaching quality.

## **REFERENCES**

- Ali, M. A., & Ahmed, M. A. (2019). The Role of Visual Literacy in Teaching English Vocabulary: A Case Study in Khartoum State Secondary Schools English Language Teachers. *SUST Journal of Educational Sciences*, 20(1), 181-184.
- Arbib, S. B., & Yaari, E. (2004). Printed Versus Internet Plagiarism: A Study of Students' Perception. *International Journal of Information Ethics*, 1-7. <https://doi.org/10.29173/irrie272>
- Asheim, E. (2022). Using the Picturebook *The Rabbits* to Teach Visual Literacy in A 7th Grade EFL Classroom. *Høgskulen på Vestlandet*.
- Avgerinou, M., & Ericson, J. (1997). A review of the concept of Visual Literacy. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 280-291. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23796529.2011.11674687>
- Benjamin. (2016). Visual literacy in English language teaching. *Cambridge University Press*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/J.1545-7249.2009.TB00197.X>
- Britsch, S. (2012). Image as language: Teacher-created photographs and visual literacy for English Language Learning. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 113-121. <https://doi.org/10.1177/183693911203700215>
- Brown, H. D. (2007). *Principles of Language Learning And Teaching*. United States of America: Pearson Longman.
- Budiharto, R. A., Laili, A., & Fujiono. (2019). Pemanfaatan Visual Literacy melalui Gambar untuk Memotivasi Siswa Belajar Bahasa Inggris. *JURNAL PENGABDIAN PADA MASYARAKAT Jurnal Pengabdian Pada Masyarakat*, 129-136. DOI: 10.30653/002.201942.125

- Çelik, Ö., & Kocaman, O. (2016). Barriers Experienced by Middle School Students in the Process of Learning English. *International Journal of Psychology and Educational*, 31-46. <https://doi.org/10.17220/ijpes.2016.01.003>
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches Fifth Edition*. London: Sage.
- Creswell, J. W., & Guetterman, T. C. (2019). *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research sixth edition*. New York: Pearson.
- Danielyan, N. (2023). Immanuel Kant was the First Epistemological Constructivist. *SHS Web of Conferences*. <https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/202316107004>.
- Dhingra, M., & Dhingra, V. (2011). Perception: Scriptures' Perspective. *Journal of Human Values*, 63-72. <https://doi.org/10.1177/097168581001700104>
- Duchak, O. (2014). Visual Literacy in Educational Practice. *Czech-Polish Historical and Pedagogical Journal*, 41-48. doi: 10.247/cphpj-2014-0017
- Gregory, R. L. (1980). Perceptions as Hypotheses. *Philosophical Transactions of The Royal Society*, 181-197. <https://doi.org/10.1098/rstb.1980.0090>
- Joan, S. P. (2012). Qualitative Research Part II: Participants, Analysis, and Quality Assurance. *Journal of Graduate Medical Education*, 1-3. <https://doi.org/10.4300/JGME-D-11-00307.1>
- Johnson, C. J. (2005). Making Instruction Relevant to Language Minority Students at the Middle Level. *Middle School Journal*, 10-14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00940771.2005.11461521>
- Kalita, R. (2023). Education and Motivation: How to Make Students Interested? *International Journal for Multidisciplinary research*, 1-4. <https://doi.org/10.36948/ijfmr.2023.v05i02.1744>
- Kaya, M. (2020). The Impact of Visual Literacy Awareness Education on Verbal and Writing Skills of Middle School Students. *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies*, 71-80. <https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.iels.v.8n.2p.71>
- Kenyon, G. N., & Sen, K. C. (2014). The Perception Process. *The Perception of Quality*, 41-50. doi:10.1007/978-1-4471-6627-6\_5
- Ladevich, L. (2016). *Visual Literacy*. National Council of Teachers of English.
- Lowenberg, P. H. (1991). English as an additional language in Indonesia. *World Englishes*, 127-138. doi:0.1111/j.1467-971x.1991.tb00146.x
- Lundy, A. D., & Stephens, A. E. (2015). Beyond the Literal: Teaching Visual Literacy in the 21st Century Classroom. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 1057-1060. doi: 10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.01.794
- Mappiasse, S. S., & Sihes, A. J. (2014). Evaluation of English as a Foreign Language and Its Curriculum in Indonesia: A Review. *English Language Teaching*, 113-122. doi:10.5539/elt.v7n10p11310.5539/elt.v7n10p113
- Marx, R. W. (1983). Student perception in classrooms. *Educational Psychologist*, 145—164. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00461528309529271>
- Praistiana, P. J., & Budiharto, R. A. (2020). Difficulties Faced by Middle School Students In English Pronunciation. *The Ellite Of Unira*, 13-21.



- Rizzuto, K. C. (2017). Teachers' Perceptions of ELL Students: Do Their Attitudes Shape Their Instruction? *The Teacher Educator*, 182-202. doi:10.1080/08878730.2017.1296912
- Rogers, B. (2017). *Perception: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University.
- Sakanti, D., & Widodo, P. (2020). Movie watching as visual literacy attainment .*LingTera*, 7(2), 149-156. doi:https://doi.org/10.21831/lt.v7i2.22813
- Shivers, J., Levenson, C., & Tan, M. (2017). Visual Literacy, Creativity and the Teaching of Argument. *Learning Disabilities: A Contemporary Journal* 15(1), 67-84.
- Suryanto. (2014). How Can Visual Literacy Support English Language Teaching? *Lingua, Jurnal Bahasa & Sastra*, 35-42.
- Thulasivanthana, U. (2020). Incorporating Visual Arts into English. *International Journal of English*, 52-56. https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8591-2356
- Tomlison, B. (2012). Materials Development for Language Learning and Teaching. *Language Teaching*, 143-179. doi:10.1017/s02614448110005