
Exploring The Impacts of Visual Aids On English Language Learning At Politeknik Tuanku Sultanah Bahiyah, Kulim

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Abstract

English proficiency is a critical component of academic success and professional development within Malaysia's polytechnic, where both functions as a compulsory subject and as a medium of instruction. However, students frequently encounter challenges acquiring the language. This study examines the impact of visual aids on English language learning among semester 5 students at Politeknik Tuanku Sultanah Bahiyah, Kulim (PTSB). It investigates the impacts of visual aids such as pictures, online tools, videos, and PowerPoint slides in improving comprehension, motivation and engagement. The research was conducted using a structured questionnaire adapted from validated instruments and administered to 53 respondents. The data has been analysed using SPSS. The findings demonstrate that integrating visual aids significantly improve English learning by making lessons more engaging and improving students' understanding and motivation. Recommendations are provided for incorporating visual aids into English language teaching.

Keywords : *Pedagogical tools; TVET; Visual aids*

I. INTRODUCTION

In Malaysia's polytechnic system, English is a core subject that supports academic development and employability. Among the English courses offered are Communicative English and Technical English. Students are required to take at least two English papers during their studies, depending on their programme structure.

English is the language of business and industry. Most job interviews, emails, reports, and presentations are conducted in English. Students are required to communicate effectively to thrive in the workplace, especially in multinational companies. During internships or interviews, students are often expected to speak confidently and write clearly in English. English is the medium of instruction for many technical subjects. If students have poor English, they may struggle to understand lecture notes, exam questions, or reference materials.

Many textbooks, research papers, and technical manuals are in English, thus strong reading and writing skills help students learn better.

English competency is not only essential for academic success but also for communication in the workforce. Despite being a compulsory subject, many students face difficulties in learning English due to limited vocabulary, poor comprehension skills, and low motivation. Many students have low

to intermediate English proficiency when they first enrol at polytechnics. As a result, educators must find effective strategies to improve learning outcomes.

Visual aids such as images, videos, charts, and real objects have been widely recognized for their potential to make learning more engaging and accessible. In polytechnic settings, where students are practically oriented, the use of visual and multimedia content can align learning with real-world applications. According to Shabiralyani et al. [1] visual aids are important in education system. Visual aids are those devices which are used in classrooms to encourage students learning process and make it easier and interesting. They are those sensory objects or images which initiate or stimulate and support learning. For example, visual aids such as animation videos, pictures, maps, charts and models as motivation tools increase interest on reading literary text, which in turn smoothens the learning to students. In addition, visual aids can be defined as tools that use visual elements, such as images, charts, graphs, and videos, to enhance understanding and retention of information. Visual aids can significantly improve comprehension for English language learners by providing visual context and support to verbal communication. [2].

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This study is guided by Cognitive Load Theory (CLT), developed by John Sweller [3]. It is a theory about how people learn based on how much information their working memory can handle at one time. It provides a framework for understanding how visual aids can be used effectively in English classrooms at the polytechnic level and help educators design instructional materials that are easy to understand and don't overload the learner's mind. So, teachers were encouraged to avoid to overloading students with words alone while teaching but might use pictures and words to elaborate difficult concepts. By reducing unnecessary cognitive burden and supporting meaningful processing, well-designed visual aids can enhance students' comprehension, retention, and application of English language skills.

Several studies have highlighted the advantages of integrating visual aids in classroom learning. As reported by Shabiralyani et al. [1], using visual aids as a teaching method stimulates thinking and improves personal understanding of the areas of learning when they experience a successful and pleasant learning in the classroom. Students consider visual aids helpful and relevant when they clearly relate to what they are learning in the course content.

Similarly, Hamad [4] concluded that one can draw the conclusion that employing visual aids in the classroom as a kind of pedagogical support helps to improve the atmosphere of learning there. Learning settings that are too monotonous can be replaced with effective use of visual aids. When students have positive and enjoyable learning experiences in the classroom, it deepens their understanding of the content and broadens their overall knowledge.

Other studies have emphasized the link between visual aids and active participation. Dalali and Mwila [5] found out that the use of visual aids in teaching and learning process is said to lead to active participation of students in the teaching and learning process which in turn influences their academic achievement. Visual aids used in teaching and learning should possess the essential qualities of effective instructional tools, such as adequate size for visibility, clear readability, and relevance to the topic being presented. These findings are consistent with observations from Noha [6] where students who were initially hesitant to participate gradually gained self-confidence and became more interactive when visual aids were incorporated. Visual aids acted as 'understanding and participation boosters' enabling learners to engage more actively in reading, speaking and classroom discussions.

Abd Karim and Mustapha [7] conducted a study on digital mind map to stimulate learning of technical skills, as it is becoming increasingly popular in today's pedagogical visual aids among TVET students. The respondents mostly agreed that the digital mind map allowed them to learn easier and faster in their studies. Likewise, Lim and Tan Chia et al. [8] reported that the role of infographics in EFL students' multimodal literacy and reading comprehension. Their study revealed that the use of infographics significantly improved learners' comprehension of texts, as the combination of visuals and textual information made complex ideas more accessible. It indicates that visual aids not only enhance students' ability to process and retain information but also promote deeper engagement in English language learning. When these two studies were compared, collectively, these findings reinforce the view that visual aids not only facilitate learning but also promote deeper engagement and understanding across diverse educational contexts. Several studies have demonstrated that visual aids do more than just facilitate comprehension, they also significantly enhance students' motivation. For example, As Sabiq's [9] classroom action research rising from 57% to 90% of students expressing high motivation when audio-visual media were used in English reading classes. Similarly, a study conducted at MSU [10] revealed that multimedia tools not only captured attention but inspired students to engage more creatively with English learning tasks.

III. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

1. To identify the types of visual aids commonly used in English language classes in polytechnics.
2. To evaluate the impact of visual aids on students' comprehension, motivation, participation and overall achievements in English classroom.

IV. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What types of visual aids are used in polytechnic English classrooms?
2. How do visual aids influence students' understanding, motivation and participation in English class?

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A) Research design

This study used a quantitative research in which structured questionnaires were distributed to selected respondents.

B) Population and sample

Conducted at Politeknik Tuanku Sultanah Bahiyah (PTSB). The target population consisted of Semester 5 students who had undertaken three English courses

during their studies at the polytechnic. This group was selected because they were considered to have sufficient exposure to the English language and were therefore able to provide informed responses regarding the use of visual aids in their learning experiences, making them suitable respondents for the study.

C) Data collection instrument

The instruments that the researcher uses are structured questionnaire (Likert-scale), ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5), was employed for perception and impact related items. The researcher has adopted different types of questions which are from Singh et al. [11] and Dalali and Mwila [6]. Moreover, the questionnaires that are adapted are from a valid and reliable source. To ensure content validity, the adapted questionnaire was reviewed by two subject-matter experts in English language teaching.

VI. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The quantitative findings of this research that have been gathered from the responses were analysed by using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) application.

Section A: Demographic Information

In total, there were 53 respondents with 73.6 percent are male and 26.4% are female.

Section B: Frequency and types of Visual Aids

Table 1

ITEM	MEAN	SD
2. How often does your English lecturer use visual aids in class?	4.7	0.55

Table 1 shows the frequency and types of visual aids. The descriptive analysis produced a mean score of 4.70 (SD = 0.55), indicating that respondents generally perceived their English lecturers as frequently and consistently integrating visual aids into classroom teaching.

Table 2

ITEM		
3. What types of visual aids are most commonly used in your English class? (You may choose more than one option)		
VISUAL AIDS	MEAN	SD
Pictures or Flashcards	0.68	0.47
PowerPoint Slides	0.98	0.14
Videos/Films(e.g. YouTube)	0.59	0.50
Charts/Graphs/Infographics /Posters	0.53	0.50

Real objects (e.g : Phamplets/Brochures/Toys)	0.43	0.50
Online tools (e.g., Kahoot, Quizzes)	0.94	0.24
Whiteboard drawings	1.00	0.00
Mind Maps	0.45	0.50

Table 2 shows the types of visual aids used in English class. The descriptive analysis of the multiple-response data revealed that whiteboard drawings (M = 1.00, SD = 0.00), PowerPoint slides (M = 0.98, SD = 0.14), and online tools (M = 0.94, SD = 0.24) were the most consistently used visual aids in English classes, as reflected by their high means scores and minimal variability in respondent responses.

Other visual aids such as pictures or flashcards (M = 0.68, SD = 0.47), videos (M = 0.59, SD = 0.50), and charts/graphs/posters/infographics (M = 0.53, SD = 0.50) indicated moderate use, but with greater variability, suggesting differences among lecturers' practices. Meanwhile, mind maps (M = 0.45, SD = 0.50) and realia (M = 0.43, SD = 0.50) recorded lower mean values, showing that these aids were less frequently adopted.

Overall, the findings suggest that although traditional tools like whiteboard drawings and PowerPoint slides continue to dominate, the integration of online tools is also highly prevalent, whereas other aids are used inconsistently across classes.

Section C: Student Perception on Visual Aids

Table 3

ITEM	MEAN	SD
4. I believe that lecturers should always prepare visual aids for their teaching and learning process.	4.75	0.43
5. I consider that visual aids will lead to my active participation in class	4.53	0.54
6. I believe that visual aids can help me to understand the lesson easily.	4.47	0.60
7. I believe that the classroom should be covered with different kinds of visual aids.	4.66	0.47
8. I believe using visual aids frequently can improve my academic performance.	4.38	0.59
9. I believe when my lecturer involves visual aids in the learning process, I can finish all the tasks easily.	4.28	0.63

10. I believe visual aids make me more motivated in class.	4.36	0.59
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Table 3 shows the respondents perception on visual aids.

For item number 4, the results indicated a mean score of 4.75 (SD = 0.43), demonstrating strong respondents support for the use of visual aids in the teaching and learning process, with very little variation in their responses.

For item number 5, the findings revealed a mean score of 4.53 (SD = 0.54), indicating that respondents generally agreed that visual aids enhance active participation with relatively low variability in responses. Agwu, and Ogochi [12] had also reported that motivation in learning process, is enhanced when using visual aids besides active participation during lesson presentations.

For item number 6, the result showed a mean of 4.47 (SD = 0.60), indicating that respondents generally agreed that visual aids enhance their comprehension of lessons. This aligns with Singh et al. [11] who found that visual tools can be significantly support the learning process by making lesson content easier for respondents to comprehend.

For item number 7, the analysis produced a mean of 4.66 (SD = 0.47), indicating a strong level of agreement among respondents. This suggests that respondents place significant on having variety of visual aids in their learning environment.

For item number 8, the analysis showed a mean score of 4.38 (SD = 0.59), suggesting that respondents generally agreed that visual aids positively contribute to their academic achievement, with relatively low variability in responses.

For item number 9, the descriptive statistics indicated a mean of 4.28 (SD = 0.63), reflecting overall agreement among respondents. This implies that respondents generally recognize the effectiveness of visual aids in helping them accomplish classroom tasks efficiently.

For item number 10, the descriptive statistics revealed a mean score of 4.36 (SD = 0.59), indicating that respondents generally agreed that visual aids boost their motivation in the classroom. The finding indicate that students hold very positive perceptions of visual aids in teaching and learning.

All items scored above 4.28 on a 5-point scale, indicating strong agreement overall.

The highest agreement was that lecturers should always prepare visual aids (M = 4.75, SD = 0.44).

The lowest agreement, though still positive, was the belief that visual aids help them complete tasks easily (M = 4.28, SD = 0.63).

Standard deviations were all below 0.65, suggesting low variability and relatively consistent responses.

This indicates that respondents view visual aids as essential tools for understanding lessons, encouraging participation, boosting motivation, and supporting their overall academic performance.

Section D: Overall Impact

Table 4

ITEM	MEAN	SD
11. In your opinion, how important are visual aids in English language learning?	4.62	0.48

Table 4 shows the importance of visual aids.

For item 11, the descriptive statistics revealed a mean score of 4.62 (SD = 0.48), reflecting strong agreement on the importance of visual aids. This shows that respondents almost unanimously recognize visual aids as an essential element of effective English learning.

Table 5

12. Would you like your lecturer to use more visual aids in the future?		
RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
YES	53	100
NO	0	0

Table 5 shows the frequency distribution of responses. For item 12, all 53 respondents (100%) indicated that they would like lecturers to incorporate more visual aids in future lesson. It confirms that respondents unanimously support the expanded use of visual aids in English language teaching.

Despite these findings, this study has certain limitations. The research was conducted in only one polytechnic, which limit the generalizability of the result to another context. Students' perceptions and lecturers' practices in different institutions may vary due to difference in teaching styles or resources. To address this limitation, future research should be conducted across multiple polytechnics and involve the scope in this way would strengthen the validity of the finding and offer broader insights for improving teaching practices across the polytechnic system.

VII. CONCLUSION

Visual aids are highly effective in enhancing English learning in polytechnic. The findings demonstrate that visual aids are highly valued by students, which also significantly improve comprehension, motivation, participation and overall academic achievement. It is consistent with Andayani [13] who found that visual media can effectively enhancing cognition in students, particularly in the context of English education.

Students consistently reported that lecturers' use of visual aids, including whiteboard drawings, PowerPoint presentation, and online tools, makes lessons more engaging and easier to understand. Traditional aids like pictures, videos, and charts were also beneficial, although their usage was less consistent. The highest agreement among students was on the importance of lecturers preparing visual aids for teaching, while the lowest, though still positive, related to their role in helping students' complete tasks efficiently.

Additionally, descriptive statistics further indicate that visual aids not only facilitate understanding but also stimulate active participation, boost motivation, and contribute positively to academic achievement. Students strongly agreed on the necessity of incorporating a variety of visual aids in classrooms, reflecting a clear preference for interactive and visually rich learning environments. Importantly, all respondents expressed unanimous support for increased use of visual aids in future lessons.

The study confirms that visual aids are essential pedagogical tools in polytechnic English classroom. Their strategic and consistent integration into teaching can significantly improve learning outcome, engagement and motivation. Lecturers are therefore encouraged to continue using diversifying visual aids to create more effective and stimulating learning experiences in English language instruction.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed for enhancing the use of visual aids in English language teaching at polytechnics. Firstly, lecturers should consistently prepare and integrate a variety of visual aids, such as PowerPoint slides, whiteboard drawings, videos, charts, and online interactive tools, to support lesson delivery and maintain student engagement. To accommodate different learning styles, lecturers should use a combination of traditional tools (e.g., pictures, realia, flashcards) and digital tools (e.g., mind maps, Kahoot, online quizzes), ensuring lessons are interactive, stimulating, and accessible to all students. In addition, polytechnic management should provide training programs to equip lecturers

with skills to design and implement effective visual aids, including multimedia and digital resources to enhance teaching quality and learning outcomes. Finally, future research could explore the long-term impact of visual aids on academic performance, motivation, and skill acquisition in other subjects, as well as investigate the effectiveness of emerging technologies like augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) in polytechnic education.

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