



English Teachers' Perceptions of The Role of Visual Literacy in Students' Reading Comprehension (A Case Study at SMA N 2 Batang in the Academic Year of 2024/2025)

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ABSTRACT

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This study investigates how English teachers perceive the role of visual literacy in students' reading comprehension at SMA Negeri 2 Batang. The background of this study stems from the challenges faced by students in understanding complex English texts and the limited use of visual media in teaching by teachers. The purpose of this study is to determine how teachers apply visual literacy in teaching, as well as to understand their views on the benefits and challenges faced. Using a qualitative approach and case study method, data was collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The results of the study indicate that visual literacy, such as images, videos, and infographics, can significantly improve students' comprehension and motivation to learn. The teachers stated that the use of visual media helps students connect text with context, enriches learning experiences, and fosters reading interest. However, its implementation still faces several challenges, such as time constraints, facilities, and teachers' skills in selecting and integrating visual media effectively into teaching materials. Therefore, appropriate training for teachers and balanced learning strategy planning are needed so that visual literacy can be used not merely as an addition but as an integral part of the reading-learning process. With proper management, the integration of visual literacy can strengthen students' overall English literacy skills.

Visual Literacy, Reading Comprehension, English Teachers' Perception

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INTRODUCTION

Reading skills are the foundation of language teaching and other subjects. Reading is not merely a passive activity, but rather an active thinking process that helps students understand the meaning of words, phrases, and sentences in various types of texts, enabling them to draw conclusions from what they read (Sinurat et al., 2024). Reading comprehension is the ability to reconstruct the message contained in the text being read. (Dewi et al., 2021). This comprehension is closely related to the ability to remember what has been read. Reading comprehension skills are very important in helping students learn many things. Through effective reading activities, it is hoped that

students can understand the meaning of the text and benefit from the reading experience.

With advances in technology and learning media, reading comprehension is no longer limited to written text alone. The visual literacy approach is now one way to enrich the reading experience by utilizing visual elements such as images, graphics, and videos to help students understand and interpret information more deeply. Visual literacy has become an important skill that everyone needs to master in today's digital age, where information is increasingly conveyed through visual content. Visual literacy is generally understood as the ability to comprehend visual language forms and utilize that understanding to communicate and interact with the surrounding environment (Pratiwi et al., 2019). This means that visual literacy encompasses a person's ability to translate and interpret the meaning of a visual message and compose a meaningful visual messages. In the context of English language learning, visual literacy plays an important role in enriching students' reading experience by presenting visual elements that can clarify the meaning of the text.

Unfortunately, many students still have difficulty understanding English texts due to complex sentence structures, unfamiliar vocabulary, and a lack of context to support comprehension. As a result, many students are unable to fully understand the texts they read. In situations like this, an innovative approach is needed to make learning more effective and enjoyable. One approach that is gaining increasing attention is visual literacy. The application of visual literacy in reading activities can be an interesting and enjoyable method for students, thereby increasing their motivation and participation in the learning process (Eutsler, 2021).

The previous studies have shown that visual media greatly help students understand written texts, especially complex material. For example, research conducted by Syarafina (2019) It was found that high school students in Pekanbaru were quite capable of understanding images, but still had difficulty critically processing and conveying visual meaning. There is also research conducted by Purandina, (2022) in two elementary schools in Tabanan, Bali, which shows that teachers have a positive perception of digital literacy in English language learning, despite facing obstacles such as limited devices and student access. Meanwhile, students who learn with the help of images and videos feel more interested, confident, and understand English material better. (Fauzi et al., 2024)

The use of visual media increases student motivation and improves their understanding of English lessons. However, this study focuses more on the students' perspective. Although teachers play an important role in creating and directing the learning process, research is still limited from the teachers' point of view. Teacher perception is very important in the learning process because it not only influences the actions and decisions taken by teachers, but also provides significant insights in the

field of education (Nurhayati & Samiati, 2018). Teacher perception includes everything related to how teachers handle or overcome various deficiencies that arise in learning situations (Nella Syahputri et al., 2019). And from the teachers' side, especially in secondary schools such as SMA Negeri 2 Batang, some teachers still rely on conventional methods such as direct text translation or exercise questions. The use of visual literacy is still not optimal due to limitations in understanding, time, and access to appropriate visual media.

Based on this background, this study aims to highlight English teachers' perceptions of visual literacy in reading instruction at SMA Negeri 2 Batang. This study not only seeks to find out how teachers apply visual media in the classroom, but also how they view its benefits and the obstacles they face.

To obtain a complete picture, this study used a qualitative approach with a case study method, and data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation. The findings of this study are expected to contribute significantly to the development of reading learning strategies that are more contextual, enjoyable, and relevant to the needs of today's students.

RESEARCH METHOD

The researcher used a qualitative approach with a case study method, as it aims to gain an in-depth understanding of English teachers' perceptions of the use of visual literacy in reading comprehension. This approach was chosen so that the researcher could directly explore the experiences, views, and practices of teachers in the school environment. Qualitative approaches often use techniques such as in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and content analysis to collect and analyze descriptive data (Merriam, 2015). Case studies allow researchers to delve deeper into specific phenomena in real and complex contexts. With this approach, researchers can collect data from various sources, such as observations, interviews, and documents, to better understand the processes or events being studied (Yin as cited in Hollweck, (2015). In addition, case studies provide an opportunity to directly observe teaching practices, so that the research results can be more contextual and applicable in the world of education.

The research was conducted at SMA Negeri 2 Batang, a senior high school in Batang Regency, Central Java. This location was chosen because it has sufficient facilities to support the use of visual media in the teaching and learning process. However, in practice, not all teachers use visual media to their full potential. Therefore, this school was considered suitable as a research site. The study involved English teachers at the school, with the sample consisting of three teachers actively teaching reading skills and known to have previously used visual literacy in the learning

process. The sampling technique employed was purposive sampling, which involves intentionally selecting teachers deemed relevant to the research topic.

Data was collected through two methods: classroom observation and interviews. Classroom observation was used in this study to see how teachers used visual literacy in reading instruction and how students responded to it. Observation, also known as surveillance, involves focusing attention on a particular object using all of the senses. Observation is a method of collecting data using the five senses, accompanied by detailed recording of the object of study (Prawiyogi et al., 2021)

In addition, observation helped researchers identify the methods and approaches used by teachers and evaluate student responses, including their level of engagement, understanding, and motivation to learn.

In this study, interviews were used to find out how teachers view visual literacy and the difficulties in implementing it. According to Busetto et al., (2020), an interview is a technique that researchers employ to get opinions based on people's subjective experiences. This method was chosen because it allowed researchers to delve deeper into the experiences and perspectives of teachers.

Data analysis was conducted using an inductive approach, which involved filtering data, grouping it into main themes, and then identifying the patterns that emerged. Triangulation was performed by comparing the results of observations, interviews, and documentation to ensure data accuracy. Additionally, the researcher conducted follow-up checks with teachers if any information was unclear. This ensured that the data obtained truly reflected the actual situation.

This study has methodological limitations due to the small number of participants and its restriction to a single school. This may limit the generalizability of the findings to broader contexts. Nevertheless, this study is expected to provide a deeper understanding of teachers' perceptions and the use of visual literacy in reading instruction.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The presentation of results and discussion is divided into several sections based on the main focus of the research, so that readers can more easily understand the meaning and implications of each finding.

Result

1. Teachers' Understanding of Visual Literacy

Based on the results of the interviews, it appears that teachers generally understand the concept of visual literacy. They agree that visual literacy is the ability to understand information found in visual media such as images, videos, graphics, and other visual elements used in the learning process. Teacher 1 defines it as the ability to understand something from what is seen, whether it be

images or text. Teacher 2 emphasises that visual literacy includes the use of images and videos to help students understand reading material. Teacher 3 adds that visual literacy also includes students' ability to analyse information through images. These findings indicate that teachers not only understand the concept in theory but also see the practical benefits of its application in learning activities. This is in line with Pratiwi et al., (2019) opinion, who states that visual literacy is the ability to understand and use visual symbols in interaction with the environment. Therefore, understanding this concept is an important first step in using visual-based learning strategies. These results also align with the views of Fauzi et al., (2024), who state that visualisation is highly effective in English language learning because it helps students understand the context of complex texts. This indicates that knowledge of visual literacy is not only theoretical but can also be applied by teachers in learning.

2. Visual Literacy in Learning

In teaching practice, teachers use various forms of visual media, especially images and videos. All three teachers stated that they often use these media, both in presentations, explanations of material, and as aids before students read the text. The application of visual literacy is not done for all types of texts. Teachers only use visual media for certain texts that require a deeper understanding of context, such as descriptive, narrative, advertising, or news texts. For expository or argumentative texts, they rely more on discussion and explanation because it is considered more appropriate for training critical thinking skills. Additionally, there are various ways to utilise them. Some teachers ask students to discuss the images or videos directly before introducing the text, while others use visuals to create initial interest and prepare students for reading the text. This demonstrates that teachers have different strategies, but all aim to enhance students' interest and understanding. This approach is in line with Syarafina (2019) view, which states that the appropriate integration of visual media can improve students' comprehension of reading content.

3. Teachers' Perceptions of Visual Literacy

English teachers at SMA Negeri 2 Batang have a positive view of the use of visual literacy in reading instruction. They believe that visual media such as images and videos help students understand texts more easily, especially for students who have difficulty understanding vocabulary or sentence structure in English. Visualisation is also considered to stimulate discussion, boost students' confidence, and make it easier for them to understand the content of texts. In addition, teachers see that visual media has the ability to attract students' attention and increase their motivation to learn. Learning becomes more interesting and interactive, which makes students more actively involved and

more focused. However, they emphasise the importance of using media wisely and appropriately. Not all material is suitable for visual presentation; therefore, students still need to be trained to read independently without relying on images. Although most teachers welcome the use of visual literacy, a teacher argue that this approach should not be used too often because high school students are already at a higher stage of cognitive development. She believes that at this level, students should begin to familiarize themselves with more complex texts and be required to improve their analytical skills when reading texts without relying too much on visual aids. Therefore, visual literacy may be better used as a supplement rather than as the primary approach for teaching students to read.

4. Challenges in Implementing Visual Literacy

Although visual literacy provides tangible benefits in reading instruction, teachers still face several obstacles in its implementation. One of the main challenges is time constraints. Teachers find it difficult to prepare relevant visual media due to their busy schedules and the numerous learning objectives that must be achieved. In addition to time, teachers must also select the appropriate visual media to match the material. Not all reading topics in the curriculum have suitable supporting visual media. Teachers must be selective and careful in choosing media to ensure they align with learning objectives and student characteristics. Another challenge mentioned is the potential for students to become overly reliant on images or videos. Teachers worry that excessive use of visuals may cause students to lose their ability to read and think critically independently. On the other hand, the use of digital devices also presents technical barriers, such as students being distracted by opening other apps during lessons. Overall, these findings indicate that the success of implementing visual literacy in learning does not only depend on the availability of the media itself but also on the teacher's ability to plan lessons, select appropriate media, manage time, and guide students to remain focused during the learning process.

5. Students' Responses and Results

The use of visual literacy in reading instruction has received positive feedback from students. Teachers report that students become more interested and engaged when material is presented through images or videos. They also become more focused, less easily bored, and more active in learning. Visualisation helps students understand the context of the text before reading it in full, which makes them feel more confident and prepared. Visual literacy helps students be more active in class and improves their understanding. Teachers observe a change in students' attitudes from being passive to more enthusiastic when visual media are used. Students are more willing to ask questions, respond to questions, and

engage in discussions. Students are also more motivated to read. Learning becomes more interesting and enjoyable with images and videos. Therefore, it can be concluded that visual literacy not only helps students understand what they read but also makes the classroom more lively and encourages them to actively participate in the learning process. These findings are consistent with Richard E. Mayer's Multimedia Learning theory, which states that people learn more deeply when ideas are expressed in words and pictures rather than in words alone. (Mayer, 2002)

Discussions

The results showed that teachers understood the concept of visual literacy well and could integrate it into their teaching. These results support Pratiwi et al., (2019) idea that visual literacy encompasses the understanding and use of visual symbols in communication and interaction. Observations and interviews showed that English teachers at SMA Negeri 2 Batang understood the importance of visual literacy and used it to teach students to read, especially through the use of images or videos. The use of visual media was proven to help students understand reading material more easily and increase their interest in learning.

The strategies used by teachers show variations in their approaches to using visual media. Teachers 1, 2, and 3 have different patterns of visual integration, but they still adhere to the dual-channel principle of (Mayer, 2009) Multimedia Theory which states that information processing will be more effective if it is conveyed simultaneously through verbal and visual channels. The use of images, videos, and accompanying verbal explanations demonstrates this. In addition to enhancing the appeal of the material, this approach helps to clarify the meaning and context of the reading material presented.

Furthermore, these results are supported by previous literature, such as the study by Fauzi et al., (2024), which confirms that visualization greatly helps students understand complex texts. Although different in focus, the results of this study are also related to Purandina, (2022) study on digital literacy, in which teachers play an important role in integrating new technologies and media to support English language learning. Both studies emphasize that teachers' understanding of modern forms of literacy is crucial to the success of students' learning processes in the digital age.

Visual literacy can be one method to improve students' reading comprehension, especially at the secondary school level, where the texts read tend to be more complex. Visual media not only enhance students' learning experiences but also create a more interactive and engaging learning environment when used correctly. Therefore, schools need to provide facilities and professional development for teachers in the use of visual media.

This study also has several limitations. Data was only collected from one school and three teachers, so the findings may not necessarily represent the general situation. Additionally, this study focused solely on teachers' perceptions and practices, without directly assessing the impact of visual media use on improvements in student learning outcomes. Therefore, future research is recommended to involve more participants from various school levels and regions, as well as incorporate quantitative data to measure the impact more objectively.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that visual literacy plays an important role in helping students' reading comprehension in English language learning in high school. The use of visual media such as images and videos has been proven to increase students' motivation, engagement, and understanding of texts. Although teachers face challenges such as time constraints, limited resources, and concerns about student dependency, they have successfully integrated visual media. The results indicate that visual literacy is a relevant teaching approach and should be supported by training and policies that promote the optimal use of visual media in the classroom.

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