

THE USE OF SHORT STORIES WITH VISUAL MEDIA IN TEACHING ENGLISH FOR THE PRIMARY LEVEL IN SDN 55 PEKANBARU.

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ABSTRACT

The use of appropriate teaching media is important in improving young learners' interest and understanding in English learning. One of the teaching strategies that can support English instruction at the primary level is the integration of short stories and visual media. This study aimed to investigate the implementation of short stories with visual media in teaching English at SDN 55 Pekanbaru, as well as to identify students' responses, advantages, and challenges found during the learning process. This study employed a qualitative descriptive method involving classroom observation and semi-structured interviews with the English teacher. The findings indicated that the use of short stories supported by visual media helped students become more engaged and motivated during classroom activities. Visual media also supported vocabulary development and students' comprehension of the learning material. However, several challenges were identified, including limited vocabulary mastery among students and inadequate technological facilities in the classroom. In conclusion, the integration of short stories and visual media can create a more interactive and meaningful English learning environment for young learners. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to apply creative and visually supported teaching strategies to improve students' participation and understanding in English.

Keywords: Short Stories, Visual Media, Young Learners, English Teaching, Vocabulary

A. Introduction

English has become one of the most important international languages used in communication, education, technology, and global interaction. In Indonesia, English is introduced from an early age to help students develop basic communication skills and prepare them for future academic and social

needs. At the primary school level, English teaching should be conducted through interesting, meaningful, and interactive learning activities because young learners tend to learn more effectively when they are engaged emotionally and visually. Therefore, teachers are required to use appropriate teaching strategies and media that can attract students'

attention and improve their understanding of the material.

One of the effective methods in teaching English to young learners is the use of short stories. Short stories provide simple language, interesting plots, and contextual vocabulary that can help students improve their reading, listening, speaking, and vocabulary mastery. Through stories, students can also develop imagination, creativity, and moral understanding. In addition, stories create a more enjoyable classroom atmosphere that encourages students to participate actively in learning activities. However, young learners often face difficulties in understanding English texts because of limited vocabulary and a lack of concentration during the learning process (Cameron, 2017).

To overcome these challenges, visual media can be integrated into the teaching of short stories. Visual media such as pictures, illustrations, flashcards, animations, and slides can help students understand word meanings and story content more easily. Visual elements also make learning more attractive and reduce students' boredom during classroom

activities. The combination of short stories and visual media is considered suitable for primary school students because children generally respond positively to colorful and concrete learning materials. This approach can stimulate students' motivation and support better comprehension in English learning (Sudjana & Rivai, 2019).

At SDN 55 Pekanbaru, English teaching at the primary level still faces several challenges, especially in maintaining students' interest and participation during classroom instruction. Some students have limited vocabulary mastery and experience difficulties in understanding English texts when teachers only use conventional teaching methods. Therefore, it is necessary to apply innovative teaching strategies that can create a more engaging learning environment. The use of short stories supported by visual media is expected to help students understand the material more effectively and increase their enthusiasm for learning English.

Several previous studies have discussed storytelling techniques and visual media in language learning, but

research specifically on integrating short stories with visual media at the primary level in Indonesian elementary schools remains limited (Masood & Ahmed, 2022; Shabani, 2022). Therefore, this study is important to investigate how short stories combined with visual media are used in teaching English at SDN 55 Pekanbaru and how this approach influences students' learning experiences. Based on these considerations, the researchers are interested in conducting a study entitled "The Use of Short Stories with Visual Media in Teaching English at the Primary Level at SDN 55 Pekanbaru."

Based on the background of the study, the research questions are formulated as follows: (a) How are short stories with visual media implemented in teaching English at the primary level at SDN 55 Pekanbaru? (b) What are the students' responses toward the use of short stories with visual media in English learning? (c) What are the advantages and challenges of using short stories with visual media in teaching English to primary school students? This study aims to describe the implementation, identify student responses, and

analyze the advantages and challenges of this instructional approach.

This study is expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions to English language teaching at the primary school level. Theoretically, the findings may enrich the literature on teaching English to young learners through short stories and visual media. Practically, the study may serve as a reference for teachers seeking alternative strategies to improve classroom interaction and student motivation in English learning.

B. Research Method

This study adopted a qualitative descriptive research design to examine the implementation of short stories and visual media in English language instruction at the primary school level. Following Creswell and Poth (2018), a qualitative approach was deemed appropriate because the study sought to generate in-depth descriptions of natural classroom phenomena without experimental manipulation of variables. The descriptive dimension enabled the researchers to systematically document the teaching processes,

instructional strategies, learner responses, and contextual challenges as they occurred in the authentic classroom setting. This design aligns with the interpretivist paradigm, which prioritizes meaning-making and contextual understanding over statistical generalization (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The study was conducted at SDN 55 Pekanbaru, a public elementary school situated in Pekanbaru, Riau Province, Indonesia. The school was selected based on purposive criteria, specifically the availability of an English teacher actively implementing story-based instruction with visual support. Data collection took place during the even semester of the 2025/2026 academic year, specifically in April 2026, and was scheduled in accordance with the institution's academic calendar and the English teacher's instructional timetable.

The participants of this study were selected using purposive sampling, a technique commonly employed in qualitative inquiry to identify information-rich cases relevant to the research focus (Patton, 2015). Two categories of participants

were involved: (a) Fifth-grade students (Grade V) at SDN 55 Pekanbaru who actively participated in English lessons involving short stories and visual media; and (b) English Teacher Miss Nadya Ratih Ekatiwi S. Pd, the fifth-grade English teacher, selected as the key informant for the interview component due to her sustained experience in implementing story-based instruction with visual aids.

Two research instruments were developed and employed to collect empirical data. First, a structured observation checklist was designed to systematically document the teaching and learning process during the observed lesson. The instrument was organized into four primary domains: (a) the implementation of short stories, (b) the use of visual media, (c) story-based activities such as singing and chanting, and (d) students' behavioral and cognitive responses, including indicators of interest, active participation, comprehension, and vocabulary acquisition. Each observable indicator was accompanied by behavioral descriptors and a three-column rating format ("Yes", "No", and "Notes") to allow for both structured and narrative documentation of classroom events.

Table 1 presents the sample structure of the observation checklist used in this study.

Table 1. Sample Structure of the Observation Checklist

Aspect Observed	Observed Indicator	Yes	No	Notes
Use of Short Stories	The teacher reads/tells a short story	✓		Goldilocks story used
	The story is age-appropriate and contextual	✓		
Use of Visual Media	Flashcards/picture cards displayed	✓		Bright, colorful visuals
	Visuals match story vocabulary	✓		
Story Activities	Reading/Speaking related to the story	✓		High energy, students engaged
	Comprehension questions asked	✓		
Students' Responses	Active participation observed	✓		Most students raised their hands
	Students demonstrate vocabulary recall	✓		

Second, a semi-structured interview guide was developed to elicit the teacher's professional perspectives on the instructional strategies under investigation. The

interview protocol comprised four thematic clusters: (a) types and rationale for the selection of visual media, (b) the teacher's pedagogical views on short stories for young learners, (c) perceived benefits of the integrated approach for student

learning outcomes, and (d) challenges encountered during implementation. The semi-structured format was selected to balance consistency across topics while allowing for flexible

probing and follow-up questions (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018).

Data were collected through two complementary techniques. First, the researchers conducted a non-participant classroom observation of a complete English lesson session in which a short story was taught using integrated visual media. Throughout the session, the research team systematically completed the observation checklist and recorded descriptive field notes of classroom discourse, student engagement

patterns, and the teacher's instructional decision-making. Second, following the classroom observation, the researchers conducted an individual semi-structured interview with Miss Nadya Ratih Ekatiwi S. Pd lasting approximately 25 minutes, conducted in a combination of Indonesian and English. The session was documented using a digital audio recorder and subsequently transcribed verbatim for analytical purposes.

The collected data were analyzed using the interactive model of thematic analysis proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which involves three iterative analytical activities: (a) Data Condensation identifying and coding key passages from transcripts and field notes; (b) Data Display reorganizing condensed data into structured matrices and thematic tables to enable pattern recognition and cross-source comparison; and (c) Conclusion Drawing and Verification deriving analytical conclusions from convergent patterns across both data sources. To enhance credibility and trustworthiness, the researchers

employed data source triangulation and member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 2016)

C. Result and Discussions

1. Implementation of Short Stories with Visual Media

The classroom observation revealed that the English teacher, Miss Nadya Ratih Ekatiwi S. Pd, implemented a structured lesson using the short story "Goldilocks and the Three Bears" as the central learning material. The lesson was organized into three main phases: pre-activity, whilst-activity, and post-activity. During the pre-activity phase, the teacher introduced key vocabulary through colorful flashcards displayed at the front of the classroom. Each flashcard contained an image paired with the corresponding English word, enabling students to establish a visual-verbal connection before encountering the vocabulary in the story context (Ellis & Brewster, 2022).

During the whilst-activity phase, the teacher narrated the short story while simultaneously pointing to the corresponding visual materials displayed on the board. The integration of storytelling with visual

support appeared to maintain students' attention throughout the session. Comprehension questions were interspersed throughout the narration to assess and reinforce students' understanding. Students were also invited to participate in chanting activities related to the story content, which created a high-energy and participatory classroom atmosphere. The post-activity phase included a brief review of the story's vocabulary and a question-and-answer session to consolidate learning. As shown in Table 1, all observed indicators were met during the lesson, confirming the comprehensive implementation of the integrated approach.

2. Students' Responses

Toward the Use of Short Stories with Visual Media

The observation data indicated predominantly positive student responses toward the integrated use of short stories and visual media. Most students actively raised their hands when the teacher posed comprehension questions, demonstrating both engagement and willingness to participate. Students were observed demonstrating

vocabulary recall by correctly identifying objects depicted in the flashcards and using newly learned words in simple sentences. These behavioral indicators suggest that the integration of visual media with story-based instruction effectively fostered active learning among young learners.

The teacher confirmed these observations during the post-observation interview, noting that students generally showed more enthusiasm during story-based lessons compared to conventional text-based instruction. She also reported that visual media, particularly the colorful flashcards and picture cards, helped reduce students' anxiety about speaking in English, as the visual cues provided scaffolding for their verbal responses. This finding is consistent with Harmer (2021), who argues that visual scaffolding significantly reduces the affective filter for young language learners, thereby facilitating more confident and spontaneous language production. Furthermore, Shin and Crandall (2018) emphasize that story-based activities inherently motivate young learners by embedding language learning within emotionally engaging narratives.

3. Advantages and Challenges of Using Short Stories with Visual Media

Several advantages of integrating short stories with visual media were identified through the combined analysis of observation and interview data. First, the approach effectively increased student motivation and engagement, as evidenced by the active participation observed throughout the lesson. This is aligned with Collie and Slater (2016), who assert that literature-based instruction, including the use of short stories, creates a meaningful and emotionally resonant context for language learning. Second, visual media facilitated vocabulary development by providing concrete, memorable representations of new words, which aligns with findings reported by Kilickaya and Krajka (2019). Third, the narrative structure of the short story provided a meaningful context for language use, allowing students to encounter and process vocabulary in a naturalistic and emotionally engaging manner (Brewster, Ellis, & Girard, 2016).

However, the study also identified several challenges

associated with this instructional approach. The most prominent challenge was students' limited vocabulary mastery, which occasionally disrupted the flow of story comprehension and required the teacher to provide additional explanations in Indonesian. A second challenge pertained to the inadequacy of technological facilities in the classroom. The absence of a projector or interactive display screen limited the teacher's ability to present digital visual media, compelling her to rely exclusively on printed flashcards and handmade visual aids. This constraint reduced the variety and quality of visual stimulation available during the lesson, which may have limited the full realization of the approach's pedagogical potential.

These findings corroborate those of Masood and Ahmed (2022) and Shabani (2022), who found that while short story-based instruction yielded significant gains in vocabulary learning, the effectiveness of the approach was contingent upon the availability of adequate instructional support materials. Similarly, Nurhasanah and Sobandi (2016) emphasize that learning interest is strongly mediated by the quality and

relevance of learning media employed, suggesting that improvements to classroom facilities could substantially enhance the outcomes of the integrated approach documented in this study. The findings also resonate with Phillips (2018), who underscores the importance of providing visually rich, multi-sensory learning environments for young learners to maximize engagement and retention.

D. Conclusion

This study investigated the implementation of short stories with visual media in teaching English at the primary level at SDN 55 Pekanbaru. The findings demonstrate that the integration of short stories and visual media creates a more interactive, engaging, and meaningful English learning environment for young learners. The approach effectively improved student engagement and motivation, supported vocabulary development, and fostered active participation during classroom activities. Students responded positively to the use of colorful flashcards and story-based activities, demonstrating improved vocabulary recall and reduced anxiety in English

communication. However, the study also identified key challenges, including students' limited vocabulary mastery and inadequate technological facilities in the classroom, which constrained the full realization of the approach's pedagogical potential. Based on these findings, English teachers at the primary level are encouraged to regularly incorporate story-based instruction integrated with rich visual support into their teaching. School administrators are also recommended to invest in classroom technological infrastructure to enable the use of digital visual media. Future research should explore the long-term effects of this integrated approach on students' overall English language proficiency across different grade levels and school contexts.

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