



TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE USEFULNESS OF VOCABULARY PICTURE CARDS IN TEACHING ENGLISH VOCABULARY TO STUDENTS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

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ABSTRACT

English vocabulary learning is an important part of language development, especially for students with intellectual disabilities who often require concrete and visual learning support. Among various instructional media, vocabulary picture cards are widely used because they provide visual representations that may facilitate vocabulary learning. This study aimed to explore teachers' perceptions of the usefulness of vocabulary picture cards in teaching English vocabulary to students with intellectual disabilities. The study employed a qualitative case study design involving one English teacher at a Special Needs School in Deli Serdang, Indonesia. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis, and were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed three major themes. First, picture cards were perceived as useful for attracting students' attention, accelerating vocabulary understanding, and encouraging participation. Second, picture cards were considered feasible because they were practical, flexible, easy to combine with other teaching methods, and durable for long-term use. Third, several challenges were identified, including difficulties in visualizing abstract vocabulary, limitations in developing advanced communication skills, and maintaining students' attention from boredom. Overall, vocabulary picture cards were perceived as valuable instructional media when integrated with broader teaching strategies.

Keywords: Intellectual disabilities, teacher perceptions, vocabulary picture cards

INTRODUCTION

English plays an important role in education because it provides access to information, communication, technology, and global knowledge (Harmer, 2007). In Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language and is considered an important subject for developing students' communication skills (Lauder, 2008). One of the most fundamental components of English learning is vocabulary because students need vocabulary to understand meaning and express ideas in both spoken and written communication (Nation, 2001; Schmitt, 2000). According to Alqahtani (2020), vocabulary knowledge is the foundation of language proficiency because learners cannot communicate effectively without sufficient vocabulary. Similarly, Thornbury (2002) emphasized that limited vocabulary often becomes a major barrier for language learners even when they have basic knowledge of grammar. Therefore, vocabulary instruction is an essential part of English language teaching, particularly for learners who require additional support during the learning process. In educational contexts that promote equal access to learning opportunities, as encouraged by the United Nations (1948) and UNESCO (1994), effective vocabulary instruction should also be available for students with special educational needs, including students with intellectual disabilities.

Teaching English vocabulary to students with intellectual disabilities presents unique challenges because these learners often experience limitations in intellectual functioning, adaptive behavior, memory, attention, and learning speed (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Hallahan, Kauffman, and Pullen (2015) explained that students with intellectual disabilities generally learn more effectively when instruction is concrete, structured, repetitive, and supported by visual materials. Vocabulary learning requires learners to understand, store, and recall new words, processes that can be difficult for students who have cognitive and memory limitations (Nation, 2001; Schmitt, 2000). For this reason, English teachers in special education settings are encouraged to adapt their teaching strategies and instructional media to match students' learning characteristics. Westwood (2011) further argued that concrete learning materials help reduce cognitive difficulties and improve comprehension among students with special educational needs. Consequently, the use of visual support has become an important approach in teaching English vocabulary to students with intellectual disabilities.

Among various forms of visual media, picture cards are frequently used because they provide direct visual representations of vocabulary items and support meaningful learning experiences. Wright (1989) stated that pictures can make language learning more understandable and engaging by connecting words with concrete images. This view is supported by Paivio's (1991) Dual Coding Theory, which suggests that learners remember information more effectively when verbal information is combined with visual representation. Likewise, Mayer (2009) argued that multimedia learning can improve comprehension by reducing cognitive load and facilitating information processing. Several studies have reported positive outcomes from the use of picture cards and other visual media in vocabulary instruction. Rahman (2021) found that picture cards helped learners improve vocabulary mastery through repeated visual exposure. Hidayati (2021) reported that picture-based instruction supported vocabulary learning among students with intellectual disabilities. Similar findings were also reported by Fitriani and Jannah (2022), Sari (2022), and Ismail and Samad (2020), who concluded that visual learning strategies could enhance vocabulary learning and classroom engagement among students with special educational needs.

Although previous studies have demonstrated the educational value of picture cards and visual media, most research has primarily focused on students' vocabulary achievement, learning outcomes, or instructional effectiveness. Comparatively fewer studies have examined how teachers perceive the usefulness and practical implementation of picture cards in real classroom settings. This issue is important because teachers play a central role in selecting, adapting, and evaluating instructional media during the teaching process. Borg (2003) explained that teacher cognition, including beliefs, perceptions, and professional knowledge, strongly influences classroom practice and instructional decision-making. Richards and Lockhart (1994) similarly argued that teachers' perceptions affect how teaching methods and learning materials are implemented in practice. Recent studies on teacher perception in English language teaching have shown that teachers' views significantly influence classroom instruction (Setiawan, 2020; Kusuma, 2023). However, research focusing specifically on teachers' perceptions of picture card use for students with intellectual disabilities remains limited. Furthermore, studies that simultaneously explore the usefulness, feasibility, and challenges of picture cards within Special Needs Education (SLB) contexts are still scarce, particularly at the junior high school level in Indonesia. This gap indicates the need for a more in-depth qualitative investigation from the teacher's perspective.

Based on these considerations, the present study aims to explore teachers' perceptions of the usefulness of vocabulary picture cards in teaching English vocabulary to students with intellectual disabilities. Specifically, the study investigates how teachers perceive the

usefulness of picture cards for supporting vocabulary learning, how they evaluate the feasibility of using picture cards in classroom practice, and what challenges they encounter during implementation. The study employs a qualitative case study design (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2018) involving an English teacher in a Special Needs School (SLB) in Deli Serdang. Data were collected through classroom observation, document analysis (Bowen, 2009), and semi-structured interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), and analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). By focusing on teachers' experiences and perceptions, this study contributes to the growing body of research on English language teaching for students with intellectual disabilities and provides practical insights into the use of visual media in inclusive and special education contexts.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore teachers' perceptions of the usefulness of vocabulary picture cards in teaching English vocabulary to students with intellectual disabilities. According to Creswell (2013), a qualitative case study is appropriate for investigating a bounded system in depth within its real-life context. Similarly, Yin (2018) stated that case study research is suitable when researchers seek to understand a contemporary phenomenon in its natural setting. This design was selected because the study focused on one English teacher and one specific instructional context in a Special Needs School (SLB). Rather than measuring students' achievement or comparing instructional treatments, the study aimed to obtain a detailed understanding of how vocabulary picture cards were used in classroom practice and how the teacher perceived their usefulness, feasibility, and challenges. The qualitative approach allowed the researcher to collect rich descriptive data and gain a deeper understanding of classroom experiences related to vocabulary instruction for students with intellectual disabilities.

The study was conducted at a Special Needs School (SLB) at the junior high school level in Deli Serdang, Indonesia. The participant was one English teacher who had direct experience teaching students with intellectual disabilities and regularly used vocabulary picture cards during English lessons. The participant was selected through purposive sampling because this technique allows researchers to choose information-rich cases that can provide detailed insights into the research topic (Patton, 2015). Three criteria were used in selecting the participant: having more than three years of teaching experience in an SLB setting, teaching English to students with intellectual disabilities, and consistently using picture cards in vocabulary instruction. Ethical considerations were carefully addressed throughout the study. Prior to data collection, the participant received information regarding the purpose and procedures of the study and voluntarily signed an informed consent form. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by using pseudonyms and removing identifiable information from all research records. The participant was also informed of the right to withdraw from the study at any stage without any negative consequences (Creswell, 2013).

Data were collected through non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Two classroom observation sessions were conducted, with each session lasting approximately 80 minutes. During the observations, the researcher recorded field notes focusing on the teacher's instructional procedures, the use of vocabulary picture cards, students' responses, and classroom interactions. In addition, one semi-structured interview lasting approximately 50 minutes was conducted to explore the teacher's perceptions regarding the usefulness, feasibility, and challenges of using picture cards in vocabulary instruction. Semi-structured interviews were selected because they provide flexibility for exploring participants' experiences while maintaining consistency across key topics (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The interview was audio-recorded with the participant's permission.

and later transcribed for analysis. Furthermore, lesson plan documents related to vocabulary instruction were collected and analyzed to examine planned learning objectives, classroom activities, and the integration of picture cards in instructional practice. Document analysis was employed because it provides valuable contextual information and supports data triangulation (Bowen, 2009).

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the procedures proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). First, the researcher repeatedly read the observation notes, interview transcripts, and lesson plan documents to gain familiarity with the data. Second, relevant segments of data were coded according to topics related to picture card use, vocabulary learning, usefulness, feasibility, and instructional challenges. Third, similar codes were grouped into broader themes and subthemes. Fourth, the themes were reviewed and refined to ensure that they accurately represented the data and addressed the research questions. Fifth, each theme was clearly defined and interpreted in relation to existing literature. Finally, the findings were presented and discussed using evidence from observations, interview excerpts, and document analysis. To enhance trustworthiness, the study applied data triangulation by comparing information obtained from multiple data sources, including observations, interviews, and lesson plans (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Creswell, 2013). Member checking was also conducted by allowing the participant to review important interview interpretations to ensure the accuracy and credibility of the findings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Theme 1. Perceived Usefulness of Vocabulary Picture Cards

Sub-theme 1. Attracting Students' Attention and Increasing Focus

The findings revealed that vocabulary picture cards were perceived as effective in attracting students' attention and increasing their focus during English vocabulary learning. The teacher explained that students with intellectual disabilities tended to respond more positively to colorful and visually clear materials than to verbal explanations or textbook-based instruction alone. This perception was supported by classroom observations, which showed that students directed their attention to the picture cards during vocabulary activities and appeared more willing to follow the teacher's instructions. In addition, the lesson plan presented in Figure 1 indicates that picture cards were intentionally integrated into the opening stage of instruction to stimulate students' interest and prepare them for learning.

H. Langkah-Langkah Pembelajaran			
Tahap Pembelajaran	Alokasi Waktu	Teacher's Activities	Student's Activities
Opening Activity	10 Minutes	Teacher greets students politely. Teacher checks students' attendance. Teacher prepares students psychologically for learning. Teacher asks simple questions related to classroom objects. Teacher shows several vocabulary picture cards to attract student attention. Teacher explains that students will learn English vocabulary using picture cards.	Students respond to greetings. Students answer simple questions. Students observe the vocabulary picture cards. Students prepare for learning activities.

Figure 1. Excerpt from the lesson plan showing vocabulary picture cards used in the opening activity to attract students' attention.

"Wah, kalau soal itu Ibu berani bilang kartu bergambar ini pengaruhnya besar kali buat narik perhatian anak. (Wow, when it

comes to that, I'd say these picture cards really do a great job of grabbing kids' attention)." – Teacher A, Interview #1

According to the teacher, it is suggesting a strong belief in the attention-grabbing function of picture cards. This finding is consistent with Wright (1989), who argued that pictures naturally attract learners' interest and create a more engaging learning environment. It also supports Mayer's (2009) Multimedia Learning Theory, which explains that visual information can facilitate learners' processing of instructional content. For students with intellectual disabilities, visual support is particularly important because they often experience difficulties in maintaining attention and processing information efficiently (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Hallahan et al., 2015). The finding is further supported by previous studies reporting that visual media helped students with special educational needs maintain concentration and participate more actively during English lessons (Fitriani & Jannah, 2022; Hidayati, 2021; Ismail & Samad, 2020). From the perspective of teacher cognition, Borg (2003) suggested that teachers develop perceptions based on repeated classroom experiences and observations of student behavior. Therefore, the teacher's positive perception in this study appears to reflect consistent classroom experiences showing that vocabulary picture cards effectively attracted students' attention and increased their learning focus during vocabulary instruction.

Sub-theme 2. Accelerating Understanding of New Vocabulary Meaning

The findings revealed that vocabulary picture cards were perceived as effective in accelerating students' understanding of new English vocabulary meanings. The teacher explained that students with intellectual disabilities often experienced difficulty understanding unfamiliar words when instruction relied mainly on verbal explanations. However, when vocabulary items were accompanied by pictures, students were able to connect the words with their meanings more quickly and required less repetition from the teacher. This perception was supported by classroom observations, which showed that students responded more confidently when identifying vocabulary presented through picture cards. In addition, the lesson plan presented in Figure 1 demonstrates that visual representations were intentionally incorporated into vocabulary instruction to facilitate comprehension.

"Anaknya jadi cepat nangkep karena ada gambarnya tadi. (The child caught on quickly because of the picture)." – Teacher A, Interview #2

As stated by the teacher, it is indicating that pictures helped students understand new vocabulary more easily. This finding is consistent with Paivio's (1991) Dual Coding Theory, which suggests that learners process information through both verbal and visual channels. When vocabulary is presented together with images, learners develop multiple representations of meaning that support comprehension and retention. Similarly, Mayer (2009) argued that learning becomes more effective when visual and verbal information are combined. In the context of vocabulary learning, Nation (2001) and Thornbury (2002) emphasized the importance of establishing clear connections between word forms and meanings to facilitate vocabulary acquisition. For students with intellectual disabilities, visual support is particularly valuable because cognitive and language processing difficulties may limit their ability to understand abstract verbal explanations (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Hallahan et al., 2015). The finding also supports previous studies showing that picture-based instruction enhanced vocabulary comprehension among students with special educational needs (Fitriani & Jannah, 2022; Hidayati, 2021; Sari, 2022) and contributed to more effective vocabulary acquisition through visual representation (Al-Seghayer, 2021). From the perspective of teacher cognition, Borg (2003) explained that teachers' instructional beliefs are shaped by classroom experiences and observed learning

outcomes. Therefore, the teacher's positive perception in this study appears to reflect repeated observations that picture cards enabled students to understand new vocabulary meanings more quickly and accurately during English vocabulary instruction.

Sub-theme 3. Encouraging Student Participation and Active Engagement

The findings revealed that vocabulary picture cards were perceived as effective in encouraging student participation and active engagement during English vocabulary learning. The teacher explained that students with intellectual disabilities were generally more willing to respond, answer questions, and participate in classroom activities when picture cards were used as learning media. Rather than remaining passive listeners, students showed greater enthusiasm in identifying pictures, matching vocabulary items, and interacting with the teacher and their peers during learning activities. Classroom observations supported this perception, as students frequently raised their hands, pointed to pictures, and attempted to answer questions related to the vocabulary presented. In addition, Figure 1 demonstrates that picture cards were incorporated into interactive learning activities that required students' direct involvement rather than passive observation.

"Kalau pakai kartu gambar, anak-anak jadi lebih mau ikut kegiatan dan mencoba menjawab pertanyaan. (When we use picture cards, the children are more willing to participate in the activities and try to answer the questions)." – Teacher A, Interview #3

According to the teacher, it is indicating that picture cards helped create a more participatory learning environment. This finding aligns with Cameron (2001), who argued that meaningful language learning occurs when learners actively engage with learning materials and classroom activities. Similarly, Harmer (2015) emphasized that active participation increases learning opportunities because students become directly involved in the learning process rather than merely receiving information. For students with intellectual disabilities, engagement is particularly important because active involvement can help maintain attention, strengthen understanding, and support language development (Hallahan et al., 2015; Westwood, 2011). The finding is also consistent with previous studies reporting that visual media promoted learner interaction and classroom participation among students with special educational needs (Fitriani & Jannah, 2022; Ismail & Samad, 2020; Rahman, 2021). Furthermore, Gagné (1985) highlighted the importance of learner participation as a condition for effective learning, while Borg (2003) explained that teachers often evaluate instructional effectiveness based on students' observable responses and engagement. Therefore, the teacher's positive perception in this study appears to be shaped by repeated classroom experiences showing that vocabulary picture cards encouraged students to participate more actively and become more engaged in English vocabulary learning activities.

Theme 2. Perceived Feasibility of Picture Cards

Sub-theme 1. Practicality and Flexibility in Classroom Use

The findings revealed that vocabulary picture cards were perceived as practical and flexible instructional media for teaching English vocabulary to students with intellectual disabilities. The teacher explained that picture cards were easy to prepare, organize, carry, and use during classroom instruction. In addition, the same set of picture cards could be applied in different learning activities, such as vocabulary introduction, matching exercises, question and answer sessions, review activities, and classroom games. This perception was supported by classroom observations, which showed that the teacher could quickly incorporate picture cards into various stages of instruction without requiring complex equipment or extensive preparation. Furthermore, Figure 2 demonstrates that picture cards

were integrated into multiple learning activities within the lesson plan, indicating their flexibility in supporting different instructional objectives.

Vocabulary Introduction Stage	15 Minutes	Teacher shows one picture card at a time. Teacher pronounces the vocabulary clearly and slowly. Teacher asks students to repeat the vocabulary several times. Teacher points to real classroom objects related to the vocabulary. Teacher gives gestures and visual support.	Students listen carefully. Students repeat vocabulary together. Students observe the pictures and classroom objects. Students imitate teacher pronunciation.
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Figure 2. Excerpt from the lesson plan showing the use of vocabulary picture cards in different learning activities.

"Kartu gambar ini praktis karena bisa dipakai di banyak kegiatan pembelajaran yang berbeda. (These picture cards are versatile because they can be used in many different learning activities)." – Teacher A, Interview #4

According to the teacher, it is suggesting that the media could be adapted to diverse classroom situations. This finding aligns with Harmer (2007), who emphasized that effective instructional media should support teachers in delivering learning objectives efficiently while remaining adaptable to classroom needs. Similarly, Richards and Lockhart (1994) argued that teachers continuously select and modify instructional resources based on their practicality and suitability for particular learning contexts. For students with intellectual disabilities, flexible instructional media are especially valuable because learning activities often need to be adjusted according to students' attention, comprehension, and participation levels (Hallahan et al., 2015; Westwood, 2011). The finding is also consistent with previous studies reporting that visual media can be effectively adapted across different instructional activities and classroom settings (Fitriani & Jannah, 2022; Kusuma, 2023; Setiawan, 2020). From the perspective of teacher cognition, Borg (2003) explained that teachers develop positive perceptions of instructional resources when those resources consistently support classroom practice and facilitate learning processes. Therefore, the teacher's positive perception in this study appears to be influenced by repeated experiences showing that vocabulary picture cards were practical to manage and sufficiently flexible to accommodate different teaching activities and learning needs.

Sub-theme 2. Combining Picture Cards with Other Methods

The findings revealed that vocabulary picture cards were perceived as instructional media that could be effectively combined with various teaching methods and classroom activities. The teacher explained that picture cards were rarely used as a stand-alone medium and were often integrated with repetition exercises, question and answer activities, matching tasks, vocabulary games, and guided practice sessions. This flexibility allowed the teacher to adjust instructional strategies according to students' learning needs, classroom conditions, and lesson objectives. Classroom observations supported this perception, as picture cards were frequently used together with verbal explanations, reinforcement activities, and interactive tasks that encouraged students' participation. In addition, Figure 2 demonstrates that picture cards were incorporated into different stages of instruction and were combined with various learning activities rather than being limited to a single teaching procedure.

"Biasanya kartu gambar ini Ibu gabungkan dengan tanya jawab, permainan, atau kegiatan mencocokkan gambar supaya anak-

anak lebih aktif. (I usually combine these picture cards with Q&A sessions, games, or picture-matching activities to get the children more involved)." – Teacher A, Interview #5

According to the teacher, it is indicating that the teacher viewed picture cards as complementary tools within broader instructional practices. This finding aligns with Richards and Lockhart (1994), who argued that teachers continuously adapt instructional resources and teaching techniques to achieve learning objectives more effectively. Similarly, Harmer (2007) emphasized that successful language teaching often involves combining multiple instructional approaches rather than relying on a single method. For students with intellectual disabilities, instructional flexibility is particularly important because learners may respond differently to specific activities and often require varied learning experiences to maintain engagement and understanding (Hallahan et al., 2015; Westwood, 2011). The finding is also consistent with previous studies showing that visual media become more effective when integrated with interactive learning activities and teacher support (Fitriani & Jannah, 2022; Hidayati, 2021; Ismail & Samad, 2020). From a multimedia learning perspective, Mayer (2009) suggested that learning outcomes can be enhanced when different instructional supports work together to facilitate understanding. Furthermore, Borg (2003) explained that teachers' perceptions are shaped by classroom experiences that demonstrate the practical value of particular instructional resources. Therefore, the teacher's positive perception in this study appears to reflect repeated experiences showing that picture cards functioned most effectively when combined with other teaching methods, enabling more adaptive and responsive vocabulary instruction for students with intellectual disabilities.

Sub-theme 3. Media Durability for Long-Term Use

The findings revealed that vocabulary picture cards were perceived as durable instructional media that could support long-term use in English vocabulary learning. The teacher explained that picture cards could be used repeatedly across different lessons, topics, and academic periods without requiring frequent replacement. When properly stored and maintained, the cards remained in good condition and could be reused for vocabulary introduction, review activities, matching exercises, and classroom games. This perception was supported by classroom observations, which showed that several picture card sets had been utilized in multiple learning sessions. In addition, Figure 2 demonstrates that the same instructional media could be incorporated into various learning activities, reflecting their long-term usability and sustainability.

"Kalau dijaga baik-baik, kartu gambar ini bisa dipakai lama dan tidak perlu sering membuat yang baru. (If you take good care of them, these picture cards will last a long time, and you won't have to make new ones very often)." – Teacher A, Interview #6

According to the teacher, it is indicating that durability was considered one of the practical advantages of the media. This finding suggests that picture cards were not only useful for instructional purposes but also efficient in supporting continuous classroom implementation. For students with intellectual disabilities, repeated exposure to vocabulary items is particularly important because learning often requires reinforcement and frequent review to strengthen understanding and retention (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Hallahan et al., 2015). In this regard, durable instructional materials enable teachers to provide consistent learning experiences without repeatedly preparing new resources. This finding is consistent with Nation (2001) and Thornbury (2002), who emphasized that vocabulary acquisition develops through repeated encounters with words over time. Similarly, Westwood (2011) argued that learners with special educational needs benefit from systematic repetition and continuity in instructional support. Previous studies also

reported that picture-based media can remain effective across multiple learning activities when teachers adapt them to different instructional objectives (Fitriani & Jannah, 2022; Hidayati, 2021; Sari, 2022). From the perspective of teacher cognition, Borg (2003) explained that teachers often evaluate instructional resources based not only on learning outcomes but also on their practicality and long-term usefulness in classroom settings. Therefore, the teacher's positive perception in this study appears to be shaped by repeated experiences showing that vocabulary picture cards remained functional, reusable, and supportive of sustained vocabulary instruction over time.

Theme 3. Challenges in Implementing Picture Cards

Sub-theme 1. Difficulty in Visualizing Abstract Vocabulary

Although vocabulary picture cards were perceived as beneficial for teaching concrete vocabulary, the findings revealed that the teacher experienced difficulties when using them to teach abstract vocabulary. The teacher explained that picture cards were highly effective for presenting words that represented visible objects, animals, places, or daily activities because students could directly associate the visual image with the target vocabulary. However, challenges emerged when the lesson involved abstract concepts such as feelings, qualities, values, or ideas that could not be easily represented through a single picture. Classroom documents and lesson plans also reflected this limitation, as picture cards were predominantly utilized for concrete vocabulary items rather than abstract language concepts.



Figure 3. Lesson Plan Excerpt Showing the Use of Picture Cards for Concrete Vocabulary Instruction.

The findings suggest that the effectiveness of picture cards depends on the nature of the vocabulary being taught. According to Paivio's (1991) Dual Coding Theory, learning becomes easier when verbal information can be supported by clear visual representations. However, abstract concepts often lack direct visual equivalents, making it more difficult for learners to construct meaningful associations between images and word meanings. Similarly, Mayer (2009) argued that visual materials support comprehension when learners can establish clear connections between visual and verbal information. For students with intellectual disabilities, this challenge may become more significant because they often benefit from concrete and observable learning experiences rather than abstract explanations (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Hallahan et al., 2015; Westwood, 2011). The finding is consistent with previous studies reporting that visual media are particularly effective for concrete vocabulary but may be less suitable for abstract language concepts without additional instructional support (Fitriani & Jannah, 2022; Hidayati, 2021; Rahman, 2021). Furthermore, Nation (2001) and Thornbury (2002) emphasized that different vocabulary types require different instructional approaches, and some words demand contextual explanation beyond visual representation alone. From the perspective of

teacher cognition, Borg (2003) noted that teachers' perceptions are influenced by practical classroom experiences that reveal both the strengths and limitations of instructional resources. Therefore, the teacher's perception in this study indicates that while picture cards remain valuable vocabulary learning tools, their effectiveness decreases when teachers attempt to represent abstract vocabulary that cannot be easily visualized through images.

Sub-theme 2. Limitations in Advanced Communication Skills

The findings revealed that vocabulary picture cards were perceived as having limitations in supporting the development of advanced communication skills among students with intellectual disabilities. The teacher explained that picture cards were effective for introducing vocabulary, helping students recognize word meanings, and encouraging responses to simple questions, but they were less effective in promoting longer conversations, sentence construction, and more complex language use. Classroom observations showed that students could generally identify and mention vocabulary items presented through picture cards, yet they often needed additional guidance when required to use the vocabulary in meaningful communication. This finding was also reflected in the lesson plan documents, which primarily emphasized vocabulary recognition, matching activities, and simple question-and-answer tasks rather than extended communicative interaction.

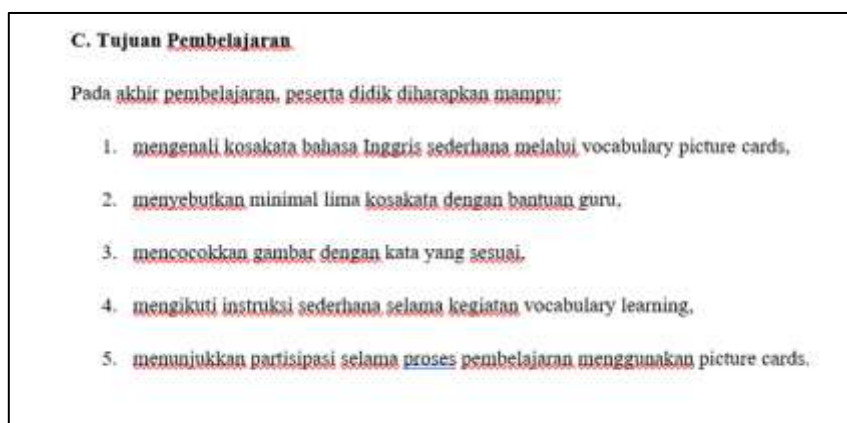


Figure 4. Lesson Plan Excerpt Showing Vocabulary Identification and Practice Activities.

These findings suggest that picture cards function mainly as a supportive medium for vocabulary learning rather than as a stand-alone tool for developing higher-level communication abilities. According to Nation (2001) and Schmitt (2000), vocabulary knowledge is an essential foundation for language learning, but effective communication also requires learners to apply vocabulary in meaningful contexts. Similarly, Harmer (2015) and Ellis (2008) argued that communicative competence develops through language use, interaction, and opportunities to express ideas rather than through vocabulary exposure alone. For students with intellectual disabilities, limitations in cognitive and language processing may create additional challenges in producing extended spoken language, making further instructional support necessary (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Hallahan et al., 2015). Previous studies have also reported that visual media are valuable for supporting vocabulary acquisition but should be combined with communicative activities and teacher scaffolding to facilitate broader language development (Ismail & Samad, 2020; Wulandari, 2023). From the perspective of teacher cognition, Borg (2003) suggested that teachers evaluate instructional resources based on their ability to achieve specific learning outcomes. Therefore, the teacher in this study perceived that vocabulary picture cards were highly useful for building basic vocabulary knowledge but required integration with other teaching strategies to support the development of more advanced communication skills.

Sub-theme 3. Maintaining Students' Attention from Boredom

The findings revealed that maintaining students' attention over an extended period remained a challenge despite the use of vocabulary picture cards in classroom instruction. The teacher perceived that picture cards were effective in attracting students' attention at the beginning of learning activities and in stimulating initial interest toward vocabulary lessons. However, when the same cards or similar activities were used repeatedly, some students gradually showed signs of reduced attention and participation. Classroom observations indicated that several students became less responsive after prolonged exposure to the same learning procedures, requiring the teacher to modify activities, introduce games, or combine picture cards with other instructional techniques. This finding was also reflected in the lesson plan documents, which incorporated various supporting activities alongside picture cards to sustain students' engagement throughout the lesson.

- G. Karakteristik dan Adaptasi Pembelajaran untuk Students with Intellectual Disabilities**
1. Guru menggunakan instruksi singkat dan sederhana.
 2. Guru mengulang kosakata beberapa kali.
 3. Guru menggunakan gambar yang konkret dan jelas.
 4. Guru memberikan waktu respon lebih panjang.
 5. Guru memberikan bantuan individual kepada siswa yang mengalami kesulitan.
 6. Guru menggunakan penguatan positif seperti pujian verbal.
 7. Jumlah vocabulary dibatasi agar siswa tidak mudah kehilangan fokus.

Figure 5. Lesson Plan Excerpt Showing Variation of Learning Activities with Picture Cards.

These findings suggest that while picture cards are useful attention-getting tools, they may not be sufficient on their own to maintain students' engagement continuously. According to Harmer (2007), effective language instruction requires variation in learning activities to sustain learners' interest and motivation. Similarly, Cameron (2001) emphasized that young and special needs learners often respond more positively to diverse and interactive learning experiences than to repetitive instructional routines. For students with intellectual disabilities, maintaining attention can be particularly challenging because limitations in concentration and information processing may affect sustained engagement during learning activities (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Hallahan et al., 2015). Previous studies have also reported that visual media are most effective when accompanied by activity variation, interaction, and teacher facilitation rather than being used repeatedly in the same manner (Fitriani & Jannah, 2022; Ismail & Samad, 2020; Kusuma, 2023). From the perspective of teacher cognition, Borg (2003) argued that teachers continuously evaluate and adapt instructional resources based on students' classroom responses. Therefore, the teacher in this study perceived that vocabulary picture cards remained valuable instructional media, but their effectiveness in maintaining students' attention depended on how creatively they were integrated with different activities and teaching strategies to prevent boredom and sustain engagement throughout the learning process.

CONCLUSION

This study indicates that the teacher perceived vocabulary picture cards as valuable instructional media for teaching English vocabulary to students with intellectual disabilities because they helped attract students' attention, facilitate vocabulary understanding, encourage classroom participation, and support practical classroom implementation. At the same time, the findings also revealed several limitations, particularly in representing abstract vocabulary, developing advanced communication skills, and maintaining students'

attention over extended periods without activity variation. These findings suggest that vocabulary picture cards can play an important role in supporting inclusive English language instruction when they are used as part of a broader instructional approach rather than as a stand-alone teaching tool. The study contributes to the growing body of research on visual media in special education by providing insights into teachers' perceptions and classroom experiences in teaching English vocabulary to students with intellectual disabilities. However, the findings are limited to the experiences of a single participant in one educational setting, which may restrict the transferability of the results to other contexts. Therefore, future studies are recommended to involve more participants from different schools and educational backgrounds and to examine the effectiveness of vocabulary picture cards in combination with other instructional strategies to support broader language development and communication skills among students with intellectual disabilities.

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