

Enhancing English Language Learning through Teaching Aids

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Abstract

Language teaching has often been criticized as theoretical, boring, and uninteresting. To counteract this, teachers employ diverse approaches, including the use of teaching aids—tools that engage students' auditory and visual senses. This study explores the impact of teaching aids on English language learning in secondary classrooms. It emphasizes the significance of visual aids, assesses their effectiveness, and identifies challenges in their usage. The study uses a mixed-methods approach, including a questionnaire and pre-/post-test comparisons, to demonstrate how beneficial teaching aids are for student motivation, engagement, and the lesson's expected learning outcomes.

Keywords: Teaching Aids; English Language Learning; Visual Aids; Second Language Acquisition; Vocabulary Acquisition

Introduction

English language teaching has been criticized for its monotonous and theoretical nature. In response, educators have adopted various methods to enhance student engagement, among which teaching aids play a critical role. According to Good's Dictionary of Education, as cited in Kundu (2017), a teaching aid is "anything by means of which the learning process may be encouraged or carried out through the senses of hearing or sight". According to Chen (2025), Teaching aids include traditional tools such as blackboards, flashcards, charts, and pictures, and modern media like radio, television, and projectors. As Patesan, Balagiu, and Alibec (2018) observe, students no longer accept passive learning; they demand active involvement. Yunus, Salehi, & John (2013) further assert that visual aids promote authentic interaction with literary texts, enhancing communication and comprehension. Teachers of Grade 11 English Language Teaching (ELT) at the first author's school highlighted challenges in successfully guiding pupils in expanding their vocabulary. Students' overall language proficiency was shown to be hindered by limited vocabulary, particularly in understanding and expression. The first author of this study started to look at methods for improving vocabulary instruction after realizing this difficulty. The study specifically examined the use of both conventional and contemporary teaching aids to encourage vocabulary acquisition, raise student interest, and boost retention.

This study's focus on the function of teaching aids in language acquisition is shaped by several research questions and objectives. Discovering if teaching aids are helpful for vocabulary acquisition, how they encourage students to interact with the English language, and whether their use results in noticeable improvements in students' competence levels are the goals of the research topics. According to these

inquiries, the study's goals are to highlight the value of teaching aids in the classroom, optimise the advantages of various visual aids, and pinpoint the issues and difficulties related to their application in instruction. Therefore, this study investigates the effectiveness of teaching aids in improving language learning among Grade 11 students, particularly in the context of post-pandemic disengagement. By comparing two student groups—one taught with teaching aids and the other without—the research assesses academic performance and student attitudes toward the teaching aids used.

Materials and Methods

The study was conducted at a government national school in the Southern Province of Sri Lanka. Twenty Grade 11 students (10 per class, balanced by gender) with Sinhala as their mother tongue and English as a second language were selected. For practical and methodological reasons, a sample of 10 students was chosen from each class (A and B) of about 40 for this study. Firstly, the first author/researcher was able to give each student more individualized help and closer attention by working with a smaller group than she could have with the full class. Second, it was easier to monitor, assess, and document the progress of ten students in detail due to the study's time and resource limitations. Third, purposive sampling was used to select the ten participants who had special difficulty in vocabulary acquisition. This made it possible to observe the efficacy of teaching aids more clearly and guaranteed that the study would concentrate on the people who would gain the most from the intervention. As a result, the study was more focused, practical, and trustworthy for its intended scope due to the smaller sample size.

Data Collection Tools and Methods

Students were taught vocabulary over five consecutive 40-minute lessons within two weeks. Class A was taught using teaching aids, which were designed based on Alduais' (2012) recommendations, while Class B was taught the same words written on the blackboard, and their meanings were presented orally. Both the pre-test and the post-test were designed in the same way to evaluate specific vocabulary items such as gender nouns, baby animals, classroom items, household items, synonyms, and antonyms. Pre- and post-tests were administered to both groups, which provided quantitative data. A student questionnaire was designed in students' L1 to assess the attitudes towards visual aids using a 5-point Likert scale. Part A of the questionnaire was related to the students' personal data, and Part B of the questionnaire was based on the 5 statements related to my study. The responses were tabulated in Table 1 and visualized using pie charts for analysis.

Results

Questionnaire Analysis

Table 1

Analysis of the responses given for the questionnaire.

Comment	The use of teaching aids gets my attention	The use of teaching aids activates participation	The use of teaching aids helps understanding	The use of teaching aids makes lessons memorable	The use of teaching aids is necessary
Strongly agree	8	12	17	5	7
Agree	10	8	3	15	10
Disagree	2	0	0	0	3

Strongly disagree	0	0	0	0	0
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Graphical representation of the responses given for the questionnaire

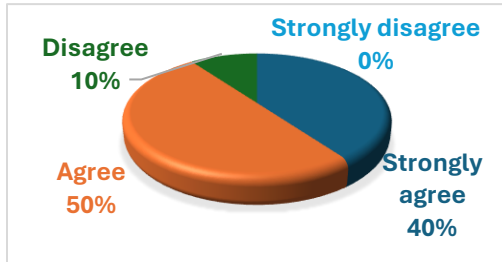


Figure 1
The use of teaching aids gets my attention.

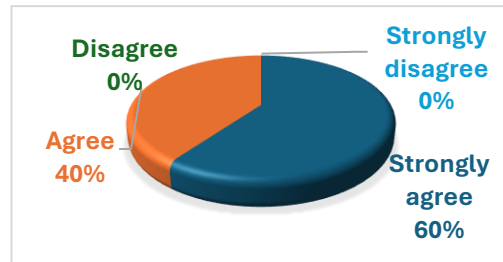


Figure 2
The use of teaching aids activates participation.

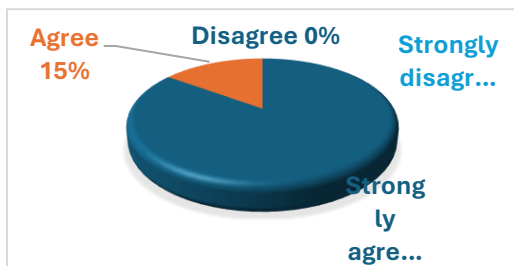


Figure 3
The use of teaching aids helps understanding

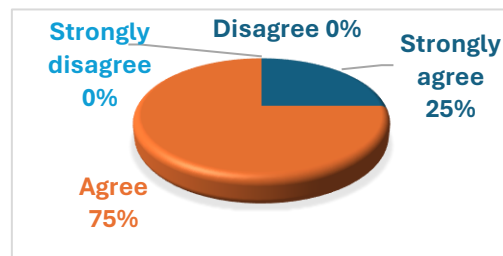


Figure 4
The use of teaching aids makes lessons memorable

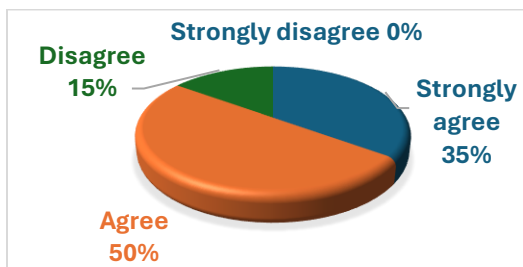


Figure 5
The use of teaching aids is necessary.

The results of the questionnaire demonstrate that students have favorable opinions on visual aids for learning. There was universal approval among respondents, with 85% strongly agreeing and 15% agreeing that teaching aids improve understanding. With 40% agreeing and 60% strongly agreeing, teaching aids were also found to increase participation, suggesting that they promote active engagement in the classroom. Similarly, only 10% of students disagreed with the 90% who agreed or strongly agreed that teaching aids capture their attention. All the students agreed or strongly agreed that using teaching aids made the lessons more memorable. Lastly, although 15% disagreed with the majority of answers (85%), the data shows that students generally value visual aids for engagement, comprehension, and retention.

Graphical representation of the test scores

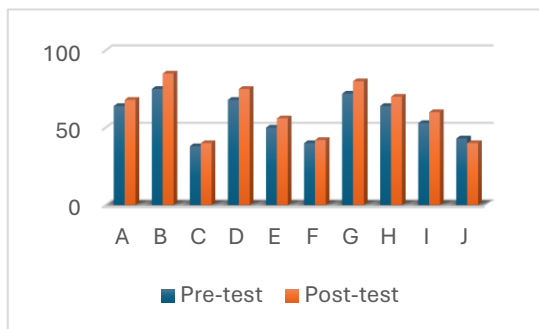


Figure 6

Test scores of Class A (With Visual Aids)

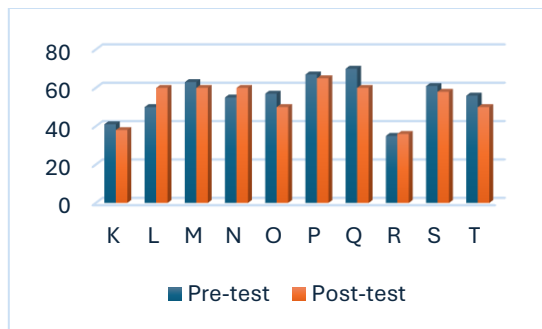


Figure 7

Test scores of Class B (Without Visual Aids)

The majority of students have improved according to the pre-test to the post-test data in Table 2 (Class A with teaching aids), with significant advances made by Students B (75 to 85) and G (72 to 80). The general trend in Class A is upward, indicating the beneficial impacts of teaching aids, even though a small number of pupils only displayed minor increases. Table 3 (Class B without teaching aids), on the other hand, displays a range of outcomes. While some students, like Student L (50 to 60), show little improvement, others, like Student O (57 to 50) and Student Q (70 to 60), show a decline. Compared to Class A, Class B's performance generally seems less stable and exhibits more instances of lack of progress or decreased performance.

Discussion

The findings of this study offer valuable insights into the effectiveness of teaching aids in learning vocabulary among Grade 11 ESL students at a Sri Lankan government national school. The comparison of pre- and post-test scores between Class A (with teaching aids) and Class B (without teaching aids) demonstrates that students who received teaching aids improved their vocabulary test results more consistently and significantly. Almost all students in Class A improved to some extent, with gains ranging from minor (e.g., Student C: 38 to 40) to large (e.g., Student B: 75 to 85, Student G: 72 to 80). Student J was the only exception, and his score was slightly decreased. In contrast, Class B (without teaching aids) produced more variable outcomes. Some students, such as L and N, improved their scores, while others, such as K, O, Q, S, and T, showed declines. These inconsistent findings indicate that typical teaching methods alone may not be sufficient to support uniform vocabulary development among students. The average score improvement in Class A was higher and more consistent than in Class B, supporting the conclusion that teaching aids improve the efficacy of vocabulary learning. These findings support Alduais' (2012) argument that teaching aids help contextualize and reinforce new language, boosting retention and comprehension.

The questionnaire data support the positive impact of teaching aids. A considerable number of students strongly agreed or agreed with statements emphasizing the benefits of teaching aids in attracting attention (90%), encouraging participation (100%), boosting knowledge (100%), and making lessons memorable (100%). Notably, 85% of students agreed or strongly agreed that teaching aids are useful for learning. These attitudes indicate that teaching aids do more than only help cognitive processes; they also increase students' emotional and motivational involvement with the topic. When students find lectures more interesting and

memorable, they are more inclined to invest in their education, which can lead to improved academic achievements.

Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Results

Together, the test score comparisons and responses to the questionnaire make a persuasive case for using teaching aids in second language training. The observed increase in test results, when combined with favourable student attitudes, emphasizes the cognitive and affective benefits of teaching aids in the classroom. While this study's scope was limited to only 20 students from one school, it provides a solid foundation for suggesting the use of visual aids in English language teaching in similar educational environments. Future research might increase the sample size, investigate long-term effects, and analyze teachers' opinions to provide a more complete picture of teaching aids' usefulness in language instruction. Finally, as proposed by Chung (2023), the results of this study also prove that the use of teaching aids improves vocabulary acquisition and student engagement, making them an effective tool in language classrooms.

Limitations

Limitations of this study include the small and context-specific sample size, the use of short-term pretest-posttest measures, and the students' unfamiliarity with modern teaching aids. Furthermore, there is no triangulation of teacher feedback or long-term observation; instead, the conclusions are mostly reliant on student impressions. Finally, the study lacks a systematic comparison across several teaching aid categories, which limits the data's generalizability.

Conclusion

This study investigated the way teaching aids impact vocabulary acquisition in Grade 11 pupils at a government national school in Sri Lanka. The results clearly show that the usage of teaching aids improves students' learning outcomes and attitudes toward English language learning.

Quantitative data revealed that students in Class A who were taught with teaching aids experienced greater and more consistent improvements in vocabulary test scores than those in Class B who were taught without them. The qualitative data supported these findings, demonstrating substantial student support for teaching aids as a means of improving attention, involvement, understanding, and cause memorability. Overall, the findings demonstrate the efficacy of teaching aids as a pedagogical tool in second language learning. They not only help with language recall but also make studying more engaging and enjoyable. To improve both academic achievement and student motivation, educators should integrate teaching aids into English language teaching approaches more systematically, particularly in the Sri Lankan ESL classroom.

Recommendations

Promoting the use of contemporary technological teaching aids and encouraging students to create their own teaching aids as part of the learning process are crucial for improving the efficacy of language instruction. Incorporating these tools into teaching practices is essential for promoting learning. Teachers also need to receive sufficient training on modern instructional technology. In order to improve teaching quality and student engagement, more institutional support is also needed to enable the continuous and meaningful use of teaching aids in the classroom.

Suggestions for Future Research

Although this study clarifies the role of teaching aids in language learning, there are still many areas that need more research. Future studies could look at how teaching aids affect a broader range of language skills, such as reading comprehension, writing, speaking, and listening, in addition to vocabulary development. These studies could also take into account the opinions and experiences of teachers to offer useful insights into implementation challenges and best practices. Furthermore, determining if gender or individual learning preferences—such as kinesthetic, visual, or auditory—have an impact on how well teaching aids work could help educators adapt their methods to meet the demands of a wide range of students. The research of technologically enhanced teaching aids, such as interactive whiteboards, augmented reality, and multimedia presentations, is another exciting avenue that could provide novel methods for teaching languages. A more comprehensive understanding of the function of teaching aids in promoting language acquisition in a variety of circumstances would be possible if these aspects were addressed.

Acknowledgment

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