

The Use of Picture in Teaching Vocabulary for Junior High School at SMP Anugerah Tondano

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: 12 March 2026	Vocabulary mastery is an essential component of English language learning because vocabulary enables learners to understand instructional materials, express ideas, and communicate effectively. However, students at SMP Anugerah Tondano experienced difficulties in understanding English materials, translating words, and answering questions because of limited vocabulary mastery and low interest in the learning process. This study aimed to determine whether the use of pictures could improve the vocabulary mastery of eighth-grade students at SMP Anugerah Tondano. The study employed a quantitative pre-experimental method using a one-group pre-test and post-test design. The participants were 12 eighth-grade students, consisting of seven male and five female students. Data were collected using a 15-item multiple-choice vocabulary test administered before and after the treatment. The treatment involved teaching English vocabulary through pictures as instructional media. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics by calculating the mean scores of the pre-test and post-test. The findings showed a substantial improvement in students' vocabulary achievement after the implementation of picture-based instruction. The total pre-test score was 33, with a mean score of 2.75, whereas the total post-test score increased to 148, with a mean score of 12.33. The post-test results indicated that four students achieved the maximum score of 15, while the remaining students obtained scores ranging from 9 to 14. The improvement suggests that pictures provided meaningful visual support that helped students recognize, understand, and remember English vocabulary. Therefore, the use of pictures can be considered an effective instructional medium for improving vocabulary mastery and creating a more engaging English learning environment for junior high school students.
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1. Introduction

English is the first foreign language taught in Indonesia. In learning a foreign language, vocabulary plays an important role. According to Liando (2009), Indonesian has adopted English as a tool of communication to establish relations with other countries. Many countries use English as a communication tool to communicate internationally, including Indonesia (Wahyuningsih & Untsa, 2023). Teaching English as a foreign language covers four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Pradhani, 2025).

Vocabulary is one of the important aspects of English learning and is one of the essential components of a language. According to Kaloke et al. (2022), vocabulary plays an important role in language because it provides a basic foundation for people to communicate with one another. Aarts et al. (2014) explain that vocabulary is commonly understood as a set of words. In English language teaching, vocabulary is very important to learn because students with a larger vocabulary repertoire may find it easier to understand and use English. Pangaila et al. (2021) define vocabulary as a collection of words in a language that a person understands and uses to express ideas or intentions. In a language system, structure can be viewed as the skeleton, while vocabulary represents the flesh or content of the language. Vocabulary is therefore fundamental to mastering language skills because words constitute essential elements of sentences (Li, 2024). Suriani (2006) states that vocabulary knowledge is fundamental to reading comprehension because readers cannot fully understand a text without knowing the meanings of most of its words. Increasing vocabulary is a basic part of the educational process, serving both as a means and an end (Katushemererwe et al., 2025). Similarly, Hatch and Brown (1995) emphasize that vocabulary provides a foundation for language development and plays a fundamental role in communication. In other words, by mastering vocabulary, people are better able to express their opinions and ideas. It can therefore be concluded that vocabulary consists of words that can be organized into sentences and used in conversations. Vocabulary is an important component of language because it is involved in all four language skills (Sari et al., 2024).

In the teaching and learning process, teachers are expected to create a supportive and engaging classroom environment. However, teachers may sometimes rely on conventional teaching methods that provide limited opportunities for active student participation (Nadila et al., 2025). After giving explanations, teachers may ask students to answer questions based primarily on the material presented. Such practices may cause students to pay less attention and feel bored during the learning process. Students are introduced to new words by the teacher and classmates, which they then apply in classroom activities (Rhamadina et al., 2023). Therefore, vocabulary learning that relies mainly on seeing and memorizing words may not always be effective for English language learners. Lee and Mak (2025) emphasize the importance of creating a classroom atmosphere in which students are able to construct knowledge and reflect on what they are learning.

In the teaching and learning process, instructional media can help teachers and students achieve their learning objectives. According to Liando and Martha (2019), media can provide an effective way to pose assessment questions for students and can also be used for mediated classroom presentations and projects. In addition, instructional media can support teachers' explanations and help students understand learning materials. Celce-Murcia (2001, p. 461) states that media are tools or physical objects used by teachers to motivate students by bringing aspects of real life into the classroom and presenting language in a more complete communicative context. Aruperes et al. (2018) also explain that media can be used to facilitate students' learning of English. Hamalik (1994) states that instructional media can be used to motivate students in the learning process. These perspectives indicate the importance of using appropriate media in teaching and learning activities. Various types of media can be used to support vocabulary learning, one of which is pictures.

Learners tend to remember material better when it is presented through visual aids (Silva,

2022). Through pictures, teachers can introduce vocabulary based on what students see. The use of pictures as instructional media can also provide an indirect learning experience because when students observe a picture, they may acquire new vocabulary while focusing on its visual content.

The use of pictures in the teaching and learning process can make learning more enjoyable and help prevent students from becoming bored. Pictures can make vocabulary materials more meaningful and can help students remember new words. They can also function as useful educational tools that make learning more engaging (Abdurahimova & Abdukhamidova, 2026). Kreidler (1965, p. 1) explains that pictures can be useful to language teachers because they create situations outside the classroom, introduce students to unfamiliar cultural aspects, and provide reality to concepts that might otherwise be understood only verbally. Through the appropriate use of pictures, teachers can provide opportunities for students to develop their vocabulary skills.

Hornby (2000, p. 1991) defines a picture as a printed or drawn representation that shows a scene, person, or thing. Similarly, Sinclair (1990, p. 1080), in the *Collins COBUILD English Language Dictionary*, defines a picture as lines and shapes that are drawn, painted, or printed on a surface to represent a person, thing, or scene, as well as a photograph. The criteria for pictures used to teach vocabulary include ensuring that the pictures are large enough to be seen by all students, that pictures of individual objects or people are as simple as possible, and that some pictures contain colors. There are many ways to make students interested in what they are learning. Teachers can create or use instructional media because pictures can help students acquire and develop their language skills. Therefore, the use of pictures in vocabulary teaching may help students understand learning materials and improve their vocabulary achievement.

In general, students may experience difficulties in understanding learning materials because of limited vocabulary mastery. Some students at SMP Anugerah Tondano have difficulty translating learning materials and answering questions. When answering questions, some students are not sufficiently careful in interpreting the questions provided by the teacher, and they also show limited interest in the learning process. Based on these problems, this study aims to determine whether the use of pictures can improve students' vocabulary mastery.

2. Method

The research is a pre-experimental research using one group pre-test and post-test design. The research use quantitative research through pre-test and post-test design was used in collecting the data in order to know whether the technique used is effective or not (Winanti & Kartikawati, 2025). Pre-test will give before treatment and posttest after treatment.

Tabel 1. One-Group Pretest-Posttest Research Design

Pretest	Treatment	Posttest
Y1	T	Y2

The design is illustrated as follows:

- Applying Y1, which is pretest to know the students' prior knowledge of vocabulary.
- Applying the treatment (T) that is teaching vocabulary by using pictures.
- Applying Y2, which is posttest to know the students' achievement after the treatment (T).

The subject of study is class VIII in SMP Anugerah, where the students consist of 7 male students and 5 female students consist of 12 students. The kind of test is multiple choice test, the total number is 15 items. The test based on the material given.

In analyzing the data the researcher used Arikunto Suharsimi, (2003). She applies the following formula:

$$\bar{x} = \frac{\sum x}{n}$$

Where:

$\bar{x}$ = The mean of the students

$\sum x$ = The total score

n = The number of students

3. Results and Discussion

This study employed a pre-experimental one-group pretest–posttest design to investigate the use of pictures in teaching English vocabulary. The study involved 12 students from Grade VIII at SMP Anugerah Tondano. The students received vocabulary instruction using pictures as the teaching medium. Data were collected through a pretest administered before the treatment and a posttest administered after the treatment. The results of both tests were analyzed descriptively to identify changes in students' vocabulary achievement following the implementation of picture-based instruction.

Students' Pretest and Posttest Scores

Table 1 presents the individual scores obtained by the students in the pretest and posttest.

Table 1. The Score of Students in Pretest (T1) and Post-test

Student number	Pre-test	Post-test
1	1	9
2	2	9
3	2	9
4	2	11
5	3	11
6	3	12
7	3	13
8	3	14
9	3	15
10	3	15
11	4	15
12	4	15
Total	33	148

The results in Table 1 indicate a noticeable difference between the students' pretest and posttest scores. In the pretest, the students obtained scores ranging from 1 to 4, with a total score of 33. Following the treatment using pictures, the posttest scores ranged from 9 to 15, with a total score of 148. This descriptive comparison indicates that students demonstrated higher vocabulary scores after receiving vocabulary instruction through pictures.

Frequency Distribution of Pretest Scores

The frequency distribution of the students' pretest scores is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Frequency Distribution of Pretest Score

Score (X)	Tally	Frequency (F)	%
1	I	1	8,33 %
2	III	3	25 %
3	IIII I	6	50 %
4	II	2	16,6 %

As shown in Table 2, one student (8.33%) obtained a score of 1, three students (25.00%) obtained a score of 2, six students (50.00%) obtained a score of 3, and two students (16.67%) obtained a score of 4. Thus, the score of 3 was the most frequently obtained pretest score. The total pretest score was 33, resulting in a mean score of 2.75.

Frequency Distribution of Posttest Scores

The frequency distribution of the students' posttest scores is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Frequency Distribution of Posttest Score

Score (X)	Tally	Frequency (F)	%
15	IIII	4	33,33%
14	I	1	8,33%
13	I	1	8,33%
12	I	1	8,33%
11	II	2	16,66%
9	III	3	25%

Table 3 shows that four students (33.33%) obtained the highest posttest score of 15. Three students (25.00%) obtained a score of 9, two students (16.67%) obtained a score of 11, and one student (8.33%) obtained each of the scores of 12, 13, and 14. The distribution indicates that the majority of students obtained relatively high scores after the treatment. Compared with the pretest results, the posttest distribution demonstrates a substantial upward shift in students' vocabulary scores.

Mean Score of Pretest

The mean score of the pretest was calculated using the following formula:

$$\bar{X} = \frac{\sum X}{N}$$

$$X = 33$$

$$N = 12$$

$$= \frac{33}{12}$$

$$= 2,75$$

Mean Score Posttest

$$\bar{X} = \frac{\sum x}{N}$$

$$X = 148$$

$$N = \frac{148}{12}$$

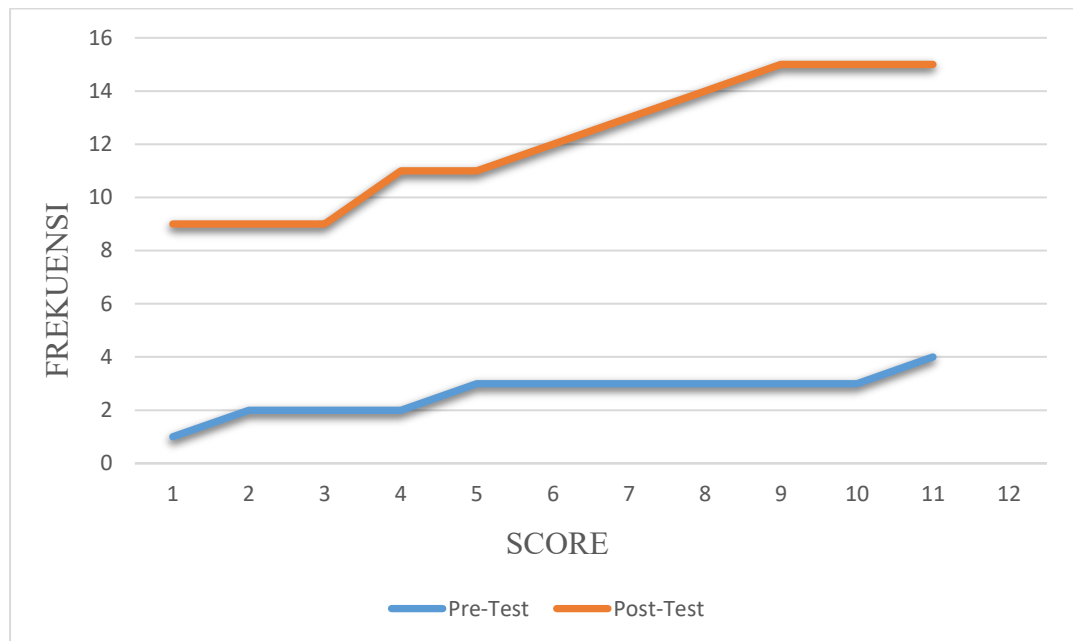
$$= 12,33$$

Therefore, the mean score of the students' posttest was **12.33**.

Comparison of Pretest and Posttest Results

The comparison between the pretest and posttest results indicates an increase in students' vocabulary scores after the implementation of picture-based instruction. The mean score increased from 2.75 in the pretest to 12.33 in the posttest. The total score also increased from 33 to 148. The difference between the two mean scores indicates that students achieved higher vocabulary scores following the treatment. Figure 1 presents the frequency polygon illustrating the distribution of the students' pretest and posttest scores.

Figure 1. Frequency polygon of the pre-test and post-test



The frequency polygon further illustrates the difference between the pretest and posttest distributions. The pretest scores were concentrated within the range of 1–4, whereas the posttest scores were distributed between 9 and 15. This shift provides descriptive evidence of improved vocabulary performance following the implementation of picture-based vocabulary instruction.

The findings indicate that the students' vocabulary scores were higher after they received instruction using pictures. Before the treatment, the students demonstrated relatively limited vocabulary achievement, as reflected in the pretest mean of 2.75. After the treatment, the mean score increased to 12.33, and all students obtained posttest scores between 9 and 15. The findings therefore suggest that the use of pictures provided useful support for students in learning and recognizing English vocabulary.

The improvement may be related to the visual support provided by pictures during the learning process. Pictures can help students associate words with concrete visual representations, making vocabulary more accessible and easier to remember. In this context, students were not required to rely solely on verbal explanations or memorization because the pictures provided contextual and visual cues that could support their understanding of new vocabulary.

The importance of vocabulary learning is also supported by Harmon, Wood, and Keser (2009), who stated that learners' vocabulary development is an important aspect of their overall language development. Vocabulary plays a fundamental role in English learning because an adequate vocabulary enables students to understand language input and express their ideas more effectively. Therefore, providing students with meaningful and accessible ways of learning vocabulary is important for supporting their broader language development.

The findings also suggest that picture-based instruction can contribute to a more engaging classroom learning environment. Visual materials may attract students' attention and encourage them to participate in vocabulary-learning activities. In particular, the use of a word list combined with pictures can provide students with both verbal and visual representations of vocabulary items. Such a combination may help students understand the meaning of words and recall them more easily during learning activities.

The posttest results provide descriptive evidence that the students performed better after the treatment than before it. The increase from a mean score of 2.75 to 12.33 indicates a substantial difference in the students' observed vocabulary scores. In addition, the posttest distribution shows that four students achieved the maximum observed score of 15, while the remaining students obtained scores between 9 and 14. These results suggest that the students were able to demonstrate greater vocabulary achievement after participating in picture-based instruction.

The findings indicate that the use of pictures was associated with improved vocabulary performance among the Grade VIII students of SMP Anugerah Tondano. The visual nature of the medium appeared to support students' vocabulary learning and create a more engaging learning atmosphere. However, because this study employed a one-group pretest-posttest design without a control group, the findings should be interpreted as evidence of improvement following the treatment rather than definitive evidence that pictures alone caused the improvement. Further research involving a control group, a larger sample, and comparable pretest and posttest measurement scales would provide stronger evidence regarding the effectiveness of pictures in teaching English vocabulary.

4. Conclusion

Based on the findings and data analysis, the use of pictures in teaching English vocabulary was associated with an improvement in the vocabulary achievement of Grade VIII students at SMP Anugerah Tondano. The students' total score increased from 33 in the pretest to 148 in the posttest, while the mean score increased from 2.75 to 12.33. The posttest results also showed that all students obtained higher scores than those observed in the pretest, indicating a positive change in their vocabulary performance following the implementation of picture-based instruction.

The findings suggest that pictures can provide useful visual support in vocabulary learning by helping students associate vocabulary items with concrete visual representations. The use of pictures may also make vocabulary learning more meaningful and engaging, thereby encouraging students to pay attention to the learning materials and participate in classroom activities. This is consistent with the view that vocabulary development is an important component of overall language development (Harmon et al., 2009).

Therefore, picture-based instruction can be considered a useful teaching medium for supporting English vocabulary learning among junior high school students. English teachers are encouraged to incorporate appropriate and contextual pictures into vocabulary instruction to make learning more accessible and engaging. However, because this study involved only 12 students and employed a one-group pretest-posttest design without a control group, the findings should be interpreted with caution. Further studies involving larger samples, control or comparison groups, and more rigorous statistical analyses are recommended to provide stronger evidence concerning the effectiveness of pictures in teaching English vocabulary.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest related to this research, its authorship, or publication.

Authors' Contribution

Dewi Novayanti Sihombing: Conceptualization, Investigation, Data curation, Formal analysis, Methodology, and Writing – original draft.

Sanerita Tresnawaty Olii: Conceptualization, Methodology, Supervision, Validation, and Writing – review & editing.

Rinny Rorimpandey: Supervision, Validation, Visualization, and Writing – review & editing.

All authors contributed to the interpretation of the findings, reviewed the manuscript, and approved the final version for publication.

Statement of the Use of AI

AI tools were used solely for translation and language assistance during the preparation of this manuscript. The authors remain fully responsible for the accuracy, interpretation, originality, and conclusions presented in the manuscript.

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