EFL Adult Learners' Perception of Learning English Vocabulary through Pictures at a Private English Center

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Abstract— Nowadays, there has been a significant increase in the establishment of language centers due to the growing demand from learners. Many job opportunities require strong language skills, particularly proficiency in English. Vocabulary plays a crucial role in effective English communication, and the techniques employed for teaching vocabulary hold considerable importance in language instruction. Different methods yield varying outcomes, and students' perceptions of these methods can differ. This study aimed to explore the perception of adult students regarding learning English vocabulary through pictures. To gather data, a mixed-method design was utilized, comprising a questionnaire survey involving 100 learners and semi-structured interviews conducted with 10 learners. The study findings revealed that, according to the majority of students, learning vocabulary through pictures brings benefits such as increased motivation, improved vocabulary acquisition, and enhanced memory. However, the study also identified challenges associated with learning vocabulary through pictures, including issues related to image quality, difficulties in pronunciation, and struggles in distinguishing between concrete and abstract words.

Keywords— perception, EFL adult students, benefits, challenges, visual aids, picture.

I. INTRODUCTION

English has become a key to the globe as a result of globalization, which indicates that mastering English is necessary to internationalize a nation (Rintaningrum, 2018). People seek to get a better job based on their speciality or age. However, in order to find a better job and compete with other candidates, or to keep a current job, a person should learn a second language as an advantage (Raewf & Mahmood, 2021); since many businesses and organizations want to be global in business, which appears to demand multilingual employees (Stein-Smith, 2017). In any language, vocabulary is one of the most important aspects of being able to communicate; having a wide vocabulary makes it easier to acquire abilities such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Susanto, 2017). The use of effective methods to transmit knowledge to students has become increasingly important (Tamura, 2006). According to Porter and Margaret (1992), the using pictures of teaching vocabulary help students to easily absorb and commit knowledge to long-term memory.

(Wileman, 1993) asserts that humans have the ability to sense and absorb a lot of information through visual cues like pictures. Since it encourages student learning, the use of visual aids in the classroom, such as pictures or real objects, is a desirable and advantageous strategy. Therefore, teachers teach vocabulary through pictures make students absorb easily. However, some students have negative views regarding learning language using pictures because they find it difficult (Lai Thi Dao, 2021). While numerous research on students' perceptions at high schools, colleges, and universities have been conducted and the participants are primary or secondary students. It is acknowledged that there is a lack of research on the same topic with adult students generally at private English centers. Therefore, the aim of the study was to explore the adult students' perceptions of pictures being used as visual aids in their English classes at a private English center. The study aimed to investigate the following

research question:

What are adult students' perception of the benefits and challenges of learning English vocabulary through pictures inthe English class at private center?

II. A BRIEF LITERATURE REVIEW

According to McShane and Glinnow (2005), one of the key elements of psychology was perception since it

allows us to understand the many types of phenomena that exist in our surroundings. Individuals perceive things differently. There were both positive and negative effects. The process of acquiring information about and making sense of the world around us was known as perception. It is said that someone would get information from their environment throughout the perceiving process. The individual would then interpret the information obtained. As a result, perception gives us the ability to grasp and interpret the information that is around us. Vocabulary was one of the linguistic factors considered important for language competence. According Aqahtani (2015), as languages are built on words, teaching vocabulary is essential to learning a language. Without words, it is practically impossible to acquire a language; even human communication is founded on words. Visual aids are defined as "items that serve to clarify or make a lesson simpler to comprehend and remember (pictures, models, charts, maps, films, slides, real objects, etc.).To put it another way, visual aids are various things that individuals may apply for learning purposes in order to understand or learn something. Visual aids, on the other hand, are regarded as representations used to grasp or improve a subject, giving pupils direct experiences. One of these useful tools is the picture (Hill 1990). In additionto providing images of reality, pictures may also provide some humor to the classroom. It is sometimes unexpected how much additional activities using graphics might influence a lesson. Pictures may be used in a variety of ways for teaching foreign languages, including expanding one's vocabulary.

Wright (1990) pointed out, using pictures in teaching vocabulary language help motivating and drawing learner's attention. They convey a clear sense of the language's context and a particular reference point or stimulus. Without motivation, the teaching-learning process will not be successful. It suggests that employing visual aids to engage pupils in the learning process is more successful. It can have a positive impact on their performance, particularly in terms of vocabulary. One form of media that might assist the teacher in engaging the students and boosting their enthusiasm is pictures. Hidayanti (2022) conducted a study to investigate students' perceptions of learning vocabulary via lists of tables with images and to

learn about the growth of students' vocabulary in learning vocabulary through lists of tables with pictures. The outcomes of learning vocabulary through a list of tables with images were quite helpful in improving their vocabulary, and they also believed that there is no problem in learning. According to Koren (1997), learning foreign words with visuals might be simpler and more remembered than words without pictures. As a result, many teachers in English language schools utilized pictures to help students develop theirvocabulary and speaking abilities.

Afianti (2009) carried out research with the goals of this final project being to explain the use of pictures in teaching vocabulary to the fifth grade of SDN 01 Bolon, to highlight the difficulties of the use of pictures, and to present the solutions for the problems. The challenges include the size and clarity of the images, the time constraints,and the lack of adequate instructional aids. A study was conducted by Nurmala and Suryaman (2022) to investigate students' perceptions of flashcards as a medium for assisting their vocabulary knowledge in junior high school. This descriptive qualitative research method employs a narrative inquiry methodology. Three grade 9 junior high school students from one of East Jakarta's schools participated in the study. According to the findings of this study, studentshad good attitudes toward utilizing flashcards as learning material, including reasons, techniques, and advantages and downsides. most students responded positively to the use of flashcards as a medium to assist them in studying vocabulary; students felt joyful, and useful by utilizing flashcards as a learning companion, successful in using them, and supportive of students' metacognitive growth. However, the usage of flashcards experienced various challenges, such as pupils having difficulties pronouncing what was written on the card, necessitating continued monitoring of the continuous learning process. Nelson and Schreiber (1992) indicated that concrete words are more easily remembered than abstract ones. The embodied method, along with dual coding theory (Paivio, 1986), proposed that concrete words (representing actual things) were more involved with physical associations based on the visual receptors, whereas abstract words (representing concepts and ideas) were more involved with emotional associations based on affective experiences (Vigliocco et al., 2014).

III.   METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research site and participants

The data were collected at a private English center. It is an English center dedicated to teaching communication. The total number of students was 100 students, including 50 beginner level students and 50

elementary level students.. The students were EFL adult students ranging in age from 18 to 40. The survey had 100 students, 38 of whom were male, accounting for 38% of the total. The other 62 students were all female, accounting for 62% of the total. There were 34 students below 25 years old, which accounted for 34% of the total students. 55 students aged from 25 to 35, which accounted for 55% of total. The remaining 11% (11 students) were over 35 years old. More than a third (33 students, equivalent to 33%) had studied English for fewer than 3 years. 18 students (18%) had studied English for a period between 3 and 5 years. Furthermore, 49 students (49% of the total number) had been studying English for more than 5 years. In terms of the duration of learning English at the English center, the periods were divided into three categories: Fewer than 3 months, 3-6 months, and over 6 months. 54 students (or 54% of the total),had studied communicative English for fewer than 3 months. The other two groups, comprising 23% each, include those who have been studying for a duration between 3 to 6 months and those who have been studying at the center for over 6 months, respectively.

3.2. Research instrument

The study employed a mixed-method approach, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative elements. Two tools, namely a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview, were used to gather data. To ensure the accuracy and consistency of the data, an expert in the field of English language studies reviewed the questionnaire and interview questions prior to their distribution among the study students. The questionnaire has two parts. Part I included 7 questions elicited background information of the students, including their age, occupation, time period of learning English and gender. Part II included 21 questionnaire items. The questions asked the students' perception of the benefits and challenges of vocabulary learning using pictures. The questionnaire used a 5-point Likert scale, including Strongly disagree (SD); Disagree (D); Neutral (N); Agree (A), and Strongly agree (SA). The measurement of Cronbach's Alpha yielded a score of .87, indicating the reliability of the question items. Additionally, an interview was conducted to validate the responses provided in the questionnaire.

3.3. Procedures for data collection and analysis

In terms of data collection procedures, it was crucial to ensure that the questionnaires were understandable and valid. Therefore, it was necessary to assess, review, and modify them before they were given to the students. . The students spent roughly ten minutes reading and responding to the questions. Based on the

feedback received, various aspects of the questionnaire, such as unclear language, grammatical errors, and typographical errors, were modified. 100 students participated in the survey and 10 students volunteered to join the semi-structured interview. It took the students around 15 minutes to complete the final version of the questionnaire and 10 minutes to answer the final interview questions. A total of 100 students took part in the survey, while 10 students willingly participated in the semi-structured interview. The students required approximately 15 minutes to complete the final version of the questionnaire and 10 minutes to respond to the interview questions. To analyze the questionnaire data, the researchers utilized "descriptive statistics" using SPSS Statistics version 22, calculating mean scores and standard deviation. The mean scores were used to interpret the students' level of utilizing strategies for language acquisition development as follows: M = 1.00–1.80 (strongly disagree); M = 1.81–2.60 (disagree); M = 2.61–3.40 (neutral); M = 3.41–4.20 (agree); M = 4.21–5.00 (strongly agree). For the analysis of interview data, "content analysis" was employed. The interviewees were assigned codes B1, B2, B3, B4, B5, E1, E2, E3, E4, and E5. The researchers encoded the interviewees' responses using these codes and categorized them into broader themes.

IV.   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Results

This section presents both qualitative and quantitative data collected to address the research question. The presentation starts with the quantitative data followed by the qualitative data. Table 1 provides an overview of the six categories of benefits and challenges identified by the students in learning English vocabulary through pictures. These categories were found to be moderately utilized, with mean scores ranging from 3.18 to 4.45. Among the benefits, the category of "increasing motivation" received the highest mean score (M = 4.45, SD = .469). The categories of "enhancing vocabulary acquisition" and "supporting memorization" obtained slightly lower mean scores with M =

4.31 and 4.30, and SD = .656 and .687, respectively. As for the challenges, the category of "Poor quality of picture design" received the highest mean score (M = 4.23, SD = .733). The remaining categories, namely "difficulty with pronunciation" and "difficulty in differentiating abstract versus concrete vocabulary," obtained lower mean scores of M = 3.31 and 3.18, with SD = 1.288 and 1.411, respectively.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of benefits and challenges of learning English vocabulary through pictures.

No.	The benefits and challenges of learning English vocabulary through pictures	N=100		Level (extent)
		Mean	**Std. Deviation**	
1	Increasing motivation (IM)	4.45	.469	Moderate
2	Enhancing vocabulary acquisition (EA)	4.31	.656	Moderate
3	Supporting memorization (SM)	4.30	.687	Moderate
4	Poor quality of picture design (PD)	4.23	.733	Moderate
5	Difficulty with pronunciation (DP)	3.31	1.288	Moderate
6	Difficulty in differentiating abstract versus concrete vocabulary (DV)	3.18	1.411	Moderate
	Total	**3.96**	**0.874**	**Moderate**

Regarding "increasing motivation" feature perceived by adult students. The two items including "Using pictures make classes more interesting" and "Using pictures in lessons increase my interest in learning vocabulary" received the highest mean scores (M= 4.55, SD=.52) and (M=4.51, SD=.50) respectively. The remaining items " The use of pictures draws my attention to learning vocabulary", "The use of pictures encourages me to take part in learning vocabulary activities", "When I learn vocabulary through pictures, I feel motivated", " The use of pictures strongly encourages me to interact with teachers" received a high mean score (M=4.46, SD=.64), (M=4.42, SD=.65), (M=4.40, SD=.58) and (M=4.41, SD=.66), respectively. It indicates that the majority of students strongly believed that using pictures to teach was beneficial in increasing motivation. In addition, qualitative data from the interviews revealed students' similar opinions as follows: "*I wish that the teacher taught vocabulary through pictures when I was a primary student, I would like English more. Learning English with pictures is very interesting and lively, making me more focused on the lesson."(E4). "When learning vocabulary with pictures, I feel less bored, feel more engaged in the lesson, increase my motivation to learn vocabulary, I really enjoy participating in class activities."(E3). "The visuals stimulate my senses, make me feel more excited when learning vocabulary, promote participation in classroom games as well as interaction with teachers."(B3).*

Regarding "Enhancing vocabulary acquisition" feature, all three items were utilized moderately, with the item "Pictures make me better understand the meaning of words" receiving the highest mean score (M = 4.35, SD = .744). The remaining items, "When I look at the picture I can guess the meaning of vocabulary easily" and "The pictures displayed could support my imagination," obtained high

mean scores of M = 4.27 (SD = .790) and M = 4.32 (SD = .750) respectively. It indicates that the majority of students strongly believed that using pictures to teach was beneficial enhanced acquisition. The qualitative data from the interviews provided further support for the quantitative data, as follows: "*Learning vocabulary through pictures helps me understand words more clearly and not be confused when naming the same thing but with slightly different characteristics. For example tables and desks. Pictures that clearly show the characteristics of that difference help me understand the word better."(B5)* E2, E3, and E4 students agreed that using pictures when learning vocabulary made it easier for them to associate words with pictures, stimulated their imagination, and aided them in understanding the meaning of words. "*When looking at pictures, my brain feels more interested, increases association, the brain is forced to work to understand the meaning of words, I can find a connection between the picture and the teacher's explanation. the word member understands the meaning of the word." (E3)*

Regarding the "Supporting memorization" aspect, all five items were moderately utilized, with the item "Using pictures helps me recognize the meaning of words" receiving the highest mean score (M = 4.39, SD = .863). The remaining items, "Working with pictures helps me retrieve vocabulary easily" and "I can read the words faster when teachers use pictures to review vocabulary," obtained similar high mean scores of M = 4.29 and SD = .832, .880, respectively. This indicates that the majority of students strongly believed that using pictures to teach vocabulary was beneficial in supporting memorization. The qualitative data from the interviews further supported this notion. For instance, B5 expressed, "*I feel that my vocabulary has significantly improved by learning words through pictures."*

Moreover, using pictures for vocabulary learning helped students recognize words more quickly and apply them in real-life situations. B3 explained, *"I can recognize words faster when the teacher shows pictures, and my response time significantly increases when learning and reviewing vocabulary through picture-based games."* Similarly, E1 and E3 students agreed that pictures were particularly useful for learning abstract vocabulary, which can otherwise be challenging to remember. One student, E3, stated, *"Pictures stimulate my brain and help me remember abstract wordsfor a longer period."*

In relation to the "quality of picture design" aspect, both items were moderately utilized, with the item "I find it challenging to perceive when pictures are not clear" obtaining the highest mean score (M = 4.27, SD = .763). The other item, "It becomes difficult to observe the pictures when they are small in size," received a high mean score of M

= 4.19 and SD = .813, indicating that most students strongly agreed that using pictures for teaching purposes becomes challenging when the quality of picture design is poor. The qualitative data from the interviews provided further support for this observation. For instance, B3 mentioned, *"When I am seated far away from the teacher, I cannot clearly see the picture, which makes it difficult for me to guess the meaning of words and identify them."* E3 also added,*"I lose interest when the picture is blurry and unattractive, which makes it uninviting to learn vocabulary."*

In relation to the "Difficulty with pronunciation" aspect, all three items were moderately utilized. The item "I struggle with pronouncing vocabulary without the support of teachers" received the highest mean score (M = 3.46, SD= 1.473). The other items, "I find it challenging to pronounce the words correctly" and "I tend to mispronounce words when learning vocabulary through pictures," obtained high mean scores of (M = 3.28, SD = 1.408) and (M = 3.20, SD = 1.385) respectively, indicating that most students strongly agreed that using pictures for teaching faced challenges in pronunciation. The qualitative data from the interviews further supported this finding. For example, E5mentioned, *"When the teacher presents the words with pictures and pronounces them, I am able to pronounce them correctly. However, if the teacher shows the same picture to review the word the next day, there is a high chance thatI will pronounce it incorrectly."* However, some students reported that using pictures to learn vocabulary helps them remember the words and the correct pronunciation. B1 mentioned, *"I find it easier to pronounce words when the teacher uses pictures to teach vocabulary, as the teacher's pronunciation leaves a better impression on me."*

Regarding the "Difficulty with abstract and

concrete words" aspect, both items were moderately utilized. The item "Understanding abstract vocabulary through pictures is challenging" obtained the highest mean score (M = 3.22,SD = 1.501). The other item, "Visualizing abstract vocabulary through pictures is difficult," received a high mean score of M = 3.15 and SD = 1.445, indicating that students found it challenging to use pictures for teaching abstract and concrete words. The qualitative data from the interviews further supported this finding. For example, E1 mentioned, *"I can easily recognize specific words like table, chair, red, blue, etc. However, for abstract words such as goal, dedication, grace, etc., it is difficult for me to understand the meaning of words through pictures without the teacher's explanation."* Similarly, student B1 also agreed with this idea: *"I can easily grasp the meaning of words through pictures. Using pictures stimulates my imagination, so I enjoy learning vocabulary through pictures."*

4.2 Discussion

The following section provides a discussion of the study findings. The results indicated that when it comes to learning vocabulary through pictures, students perceived several benefits. These benefits included increased motivation, improved vocabulary acquisition, and enhanced memory. However, there were also challenges encountered in vocabulary learning through pictures, such as low image quality, difficulties in pronunciation, and the struggle to differentiate between concrete and abstract words. These findings align partially with a previous study conducted by Nurmala and Suryaman (2022). In their research, Nurmala and Suryaman emphasized the positive attitudes of students towards using flashcards as a learning tool, highlighting the reasons, approaches, benefits, and limitations. Students expressed positive opinions about flashcards, finding them enjoyable, helpful, effective, and supportive of their metacognitive development. Nevertheless, challenges were also identified, including pronunciationdifficulties and the need for consistent monitoring of the learning process.

Regarding adults' motivation, research shows that students felt more motivated, engaged in lessons, and more interested in participating in classroom activities when learning vocabulary. with pictures. These findings are in line with the study conducted by Wright (1990), which emphasized that pictures provide a clear understanding of the language context and serve as a reference point or stimulus. Without motivation, the effectiveness of the learning process is greatly compromised. Therefore, incorporating visual aids to actively engage students in the learning process proves to be a more successful approach. Pictures have a positive impact on students' vocabulary performance. Lai Thi Dao (2021) further supported this notion by asserting that the use of pictures enhances student

motivation. The integration of pictures fosters increased student motivation, as evidenced by their active participation in the lesson, including answering questions and responding to the teacher's explanations.

In terms of vocabulary acquisition, the students expressed a strong consensus that they were able to absorb vocabulary more effectively when using pictures. The visual element facilitated their imagination and enabled them to quickly infer the meaning of words. This aligns with the findings presented by Hidayanti (2022) in their article, where they emphasized that utilizing pictures as a learning tool for vocabulary not only enhanced enjoyment but also resulted in faster comprehension and retention compared to other methods. The immediate connection established between the vocabulary and the accompanying pictures, especially when presented by the teacher, proved to be particularly impactful for the students.

In relation to the influence of pictures on memory, the majority of students concurred that pictures played a significant role in enhancing their ability to remember words for a longer duration and retrieve them more effectively. These findings are consistent with the research conducted by Armstrong (2000), Hashemi and Pourgharib (2013), and Nait Chabane and Lounis (2017), which have demonstrated the positive impact of pictures on improving word memorization.

In terms of the challenges encountered, the findings indicate that using pictures to teach vocabulary presents certain difficulties, such as poor image quality, pronunciation issues, and the ability to differentiate between concreteand abstract words. Specifically, when it comes to adults' perception of poor quality design, the students agreed that small and blurry pictures made it challenging for them to observe, recognize, and internalize the vocabulary. These findings align with the research conducted by Afianti (2009), which also highlights challenges related to image size, clarity, time constraints, and the availability of appropriate instructional aids.

In terms of pronunciation, the students expressed agreement that they faced difficulties in pronouncing words accurately when relying solely on pictures. This finding is supported by the research conducted by Muliati, Islamiah, and Aprizani (2020), who also concluded that using visuals for vocabulary acquisition poses challenges in achieving correct pronunciation. Additionally, Nurmala and Suryaman (2022) highlighted that the use of flashcards presented various challenges, including difficulties in pronouncing the words depicted on the cards.

Another challenge observed in vocabulary learning through pictures is the struggle to distinguish between abstract and concrete words. The students acknowledged that it was more challenging for them to recognize and understand abstract words compared to concrete ones when presented in picture form. This finding aligns with the results obtained by Bates and Son (2021), who discovered that students tend to have better recall of concrete words than abstract words. Furthermore, De Groot and Keizjer (2000) found that abstract words are more easily forgotten compared to concrete words.

Similar to the survey findings, the results obtained from the interviews revealed that the majority of students agreed on the numerous benefits of using pictures for vocabulary learning. These benefits encompass increased motivation, enhanced word acquisition, and improved memory retention. The students expressed that learning vocabulary through pictures stimulated their motivation, captured their attention, and facilitated longer-term word recall. These findings align with prior research conducted by Dao Ra Ta Na and Nguyen Huynh Trang (2022) and Ta Thanh Nam and Lap Quan Trinh (2012). Dao Ra Ta Na and Nguyen Huynh Trang (2022) emphasized the positive influence of visuals on vocabulary retention and student motivation, while Ta Thanh Nam and Lap Quan Trinh (2012) underscored how visual aids contribute to better comprehension, classroom engagement, and student interest.

However, the students also identified several challenges associated with vocabulary learning through pictures. These challenges encompassed issues related to low image quality, difficulties in pronunciation, and struggles in understanding the meaning of abstract words. The students found it challenging to learn vocabulary through pictures when the images were small, blurry, and when differentiating between abstract and concrete words was difficult. These findings align with previous research conducted by De Groot and Keizjer (2000), Muliati and Aprizani (2020), and Afianti (2009). De Groot and Keizjer (2000) discovered that students tend to encounter more difficulty in remembering abstract words compared to concrete words. Muliati and Aprizani (2020) emphasized the challenge of accurately pronouncing words when utilizing visuals for vocabulary acquisition. Afianti (2009) identified additional challenges, including image size and clarity, time constraints, and a lack of adequate instructional aids when learning vocabularythrough pictures.

V. CONCLUSION

The current study aimed to examine the perception of adult learners regarding the acquisition of English vocabulary through the use of pictures, as well as to investigate whether there are any variations in this perception among learners with different levels of English

proficiency. The researcher focused on two key aspects: the advantages and challenges associated with learning vocabulary through pictures. The benefits of utilizing pictures include increased motivation to learn vocabulary, improved acquisition of vocabulary, and enhanced memory retention. On the other hand, the challenges identified encompass issues related to the quality of pictures, difficulties in pronunciation, and struggles in recognizing abstract words.

The study's findings have several implications for both students and teachers. For students, it is important to address the difficulties they encounter when learning vocabulary through pictures, such as pronunciation challenges and difficulties in understanding word meanings. To alleviate these difficulties, students should focus on the teacher's pronunciation during vocabulary instruction, engage in regular memorization and revision exercises to improve pronunciation accuracy. Furthermore, students can enhance their learning experience by previewing the topics they will be studying, facilitating better connections between words and pictures, and facilitating easier identification of word meanings. For teachers, it is crucial to ensure clear pronunciation when introducing vocabulary and to create activities that provide ample opportunities for students to practice and remember words. Incorporating the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) on the pictures can also be beneficial in assisting students with pronunciation. Careful preparation of pictures, including using clear colors and drawings, and ensuring they are large enough for students to easily see and comprehend, can further enhance the effectiveness of visual aids in vocabulary learning. To address the challenges experienced by students, it is essential for learning material designers to actively gather feedback from both teachers and students. This feedback can provide valuable insights into the obstacles faced by learners, such as unfamiliar or complex topics, and unclear or unengaging pictures that impede the learning process. By actively seeking and incorporating feedback, designers can make necessary modifications, replacements, or removals of content that is deemed unintelligible. Additionally, they can introduce more suitable and relevant learning materials that effectively support vocabulary acquisition through pictures.

Given the constraints of time and resources, it is important to acknowledge that the survey conducted for this study had limitations. The sample size was limited to only 100 students from a single campus, which may not fully represent the broader population of adult students at the private English Center. Therefore, it is necessary to exercise caution when generalizing the characteristics observed in this sample to adult students on a larger scale. The findings of this study may have limited applicability and further research involving a more diverse and representative sample

is recommended to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the topic.

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