LEVERAGING PICTURES FOR ELT: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

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Abstract

The integration of pictures in English Language Teaching (ELT) has been widely acknowledged as an effective strategy to enhance language acquisition. This systematic review aims to synthesize existing empirical studies on the use of pictures in English Language Teaching (ELT), focusing on their effectiveness, influencing factors, and implementation challenges. Following the PRISMA guidelines, 30 studies from reputable academic databases, including PubMed, Mendeley, ScienceDirect, Taylor & Francis, and Connected Paper, were analyzed for the period from 2020 to 2025. The findings suggest that pictures play a crucial role in enhancing vocabulary acquisition, writing, reading comprehension, and speaking skills. Additionally, their effectiveness is shaped by learner characteristics, the type of visual media, instructional strategies, technology integration, and socio-geographical contexts. The study also highlights that using pictures fosters student engagement and facilitates meaningful learning experiences, especially when combined with digital tools. However, challenges such as limited infrastructure, inadequate teacher training, and insufficient visual representation in textbooks persist in specific contexts. The review highlights the importance of adaptive and technology-driven approaches in enhancing the role of pictures in English Language Teaching (ELT), thereby ensuring their relevance across diverse learning environments.

Keywords : *English language teaching, multimodal learning, pictures in ELT, technology in language learning, visual aid.*

INTRODUCTION

The use of visual media in the context of English language teaching (ELT) has emerged as a powerful pedagogical strategy over several decades. The integration of images in ELT serves a dual purpose; firstly, they function as a visual aid, effectively capturing students' attention, and secondly, they provide a meaningful context for comprehending complex language concepts. In the contemporary digital era, the application of visual media in ELT has undergone significant diversification and increased accessibility. Encompassing a range of tools and resources, from essential flashcards to

sophisticated interactive infographics and technologically advanced visual representations. Research has shown that incorporating images into language learning can significantly enhance vocabulary comprehension, speaking ability, writing skills, and cultural understanding. Through visual stimulation, students can establish stronger cognitive associations with language materials, facilitating long-term retention and applying language knowledge in authentic communication contexts (Ghoushchi et al., 2021).

Recent advancements in technology and pedagogical research have led to a significant increase in the use of images in English Language Teaching (ELT). The accessibility of a vast array of high-quality photos on various digital platforms has been enhanced, providing educators with a wealth of resources to improve the learning experience. Furthermore, visual-based teaching methods have evolved substantially, from rudimentary illustrations to sophisticated interactive tools facilitating active and collaborative learning. In addition, a growing body of research has identified more structured methodologies for integrating images into the ELT curriculum, including visual narrative techniques, project-based learning with visual elements, and multimodal activities. Consequently, students are no longer passive recipients of visual information; instead, they are invited to analyze, interpret, and create visual content as part of the language learning process. Consequently, the integration of images in contemporary ELT has evolved from a mere teaching supplement to an integral component in developing comprehensive language literacy (Liang, 2021).

As demonstrated in previous studies, the use of pictures has significantly impacted various aspects of English language learning. For instance, Harmer (2015) emphasized that pictures have the power to convey meaning directly without translation, making them highly effective for vocabulary acquisition and conceptual understanding. Similarly, Permatasari & Andriyanti (2021) highlighted that pictures in ELT enhance learners' emotional engagement and foster a personal connection with the learning material. Additionally, Wright and Bowers (2010) Note That Pictures are a powerful visual stimulus for speaking, writing, and critical discussion activities. Recent (Honaker & Miller, 2024) Research has demonstrated that integrating digital images within a multimodal learning approach significantly improves student participation and engagement. These findings collectively confirm that the planned and systematic implementation of pictures in ELT enriches the learning experience and directly contributes to achieving measurable language learning objectives.

The present study will systematically review worldwide research on using pictures in English Language Teaching. The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) methodology will be applied to evaluate studies from international databases, including PubMed, Mendeley, ScienceDirect, Taylor & Francis, and Connected Paper, that have been published within the last five years. This approach will enable the identification of best practices in image utilization for ELT, as well as the uncovering of existing research gaps and opportunities for further development (Hui et al., 2020). This systematic review is anticipated to be a comprehensive reference, integrating theoretical concepts with practical applications. Thus, it will provide a robust, evidence-based foundation for pedagogical innovations that employ pictures in English language teaching across diverse learning environments (Liando et al., 2022).

The present study aims to address key research questions regarding the use of pictures in teaching English. Firstly, the extent to which pictures effectively teach English must be ascertained. Secondly, what are the factors that influence the success and challenges of implementing images in English language learning? The present study synthesizes findings from previous research through a systematic review, thereby providing a comprehensive framework that supports the effective integration of pictures in ELT and addresses key factors affecting their implementation (Wulandari & Sholihin, 2020).

METHOD

Description of Sample

This study adhered to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines in the search strategy (Moher et al., 2009). It employed predefined keywords selected by the authors, based on the topic of the systematic literature review. The keywords used in the search included "leveraging pictures," "English language teaching," "ELT," "visual aids in language learning," and other related variations (Ghoushchi et al., 2021). Data sources were obtained from various reputable academic databases, including Mendeley, PubMed, ScienceDirect, Taylor & Francis, and Connected Papers. The study covered a specific period, i.e., articles published between 2020 and 2025 that met the inclusion criteria.

Procedure

This research procedure was carried out in four systematic stages. First, the author conducted an extensive literature search using reputable electronic databases such as Science Direct, Mendeley, PubMed, Taylor & Francis, and Connected Paper with the keywords: "pictures in ELT," 'visual aids in English teaching,' 'image-based language learning,' 'visual resources in TEFL,' and 'pictorial materials in ESL/EFL' (Bartram, 2020). Second, the initial search results, comprising 735 articles, were selected based on predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Third, 30 articles that met the requirements were analyzed in depth using the content analysis method, with a focus on the research methodology, pedagogical approach, practical implementation, and reported outcomes. Fourth, the findings from the content analysis were thematically categorized and interpreted to identify patterns, trends, and pedagogical implications of using images in English language teaching.
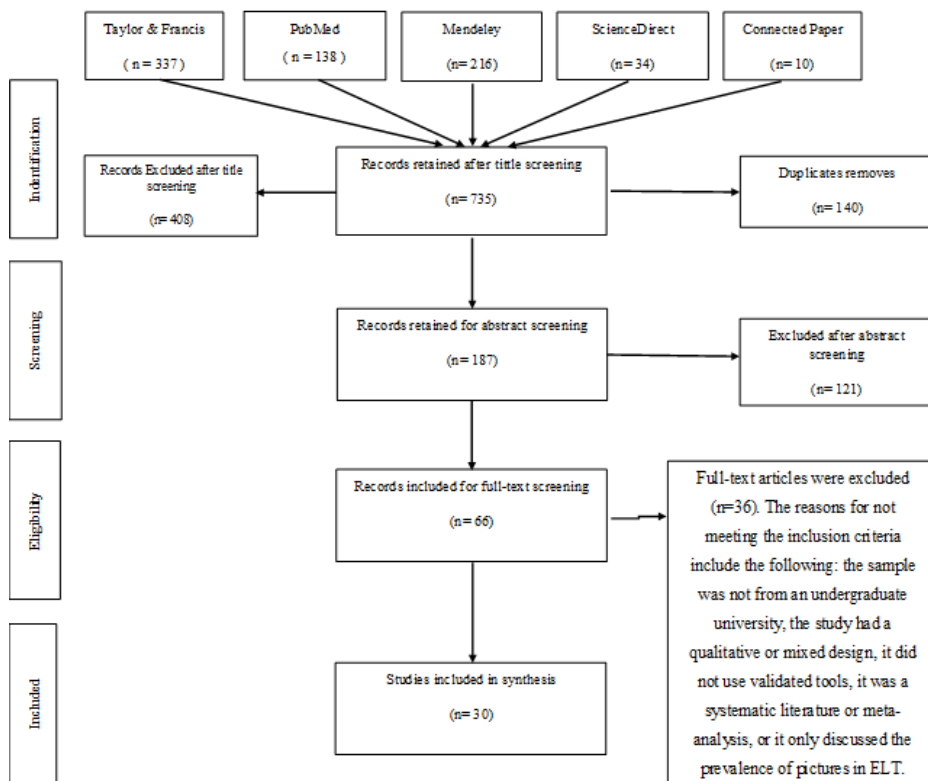
Study Selection Criteria

This review analyzed recent empirical studies by setting several inclusion criteria, namely: 1) Articles obtained from academic databases such as Mendeley, PubMed, ScienceDirect, Taylor & Francis, and Connected Papers, 2) Articles published in the period 2020 to 2025 to ensure the currency of the findings, 3) Articles that discuss the use of pictures in English language teaching (ELT), 4) Articles written in English, and 5) Articles that are original and available in full text. Meanwhile, the exclusion criteria in this study include 1) Studies that do not specifically address the utilization of pictures in ELT, 2) Articles that were only literature reviews or meta-analyses without empirical data, and 3) Articles that were not available in full-text.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

A systematic search on five online research platforms found articles about using pictures in English language teaching (ELT) after an initial screening stage based on titles and abstracts. Articles were eliminated as they did not directly address the corresponding topic. Next, a full-text evaluation of the remaining 735 articles was conducted, in which 705 additional articles were excluded for not fulfilling the inclusion criteria, such as not being based on empirical studies or not being available in full-text (Durrant et al., 2020). Finally, 30 articles that met all inclusion criteria were further analyzed in this study. The research results of each platform are described in Table 1. This report adheres to the Preferred Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analysis (PRISMA) reporting guidelines. Meta-analysis

(PRISMA) reporting guidelines (Moher et al., 2009). The PRISMA flow diagram (Figure 1) describes the article selection process.

Figure 1. PRISMA Flowchart of the selection process.

| Taylor & Francis (n = 337) | PubMed (n = 138) | Mendeley (n= 216) | ScienceDirect (n= 34) | Connected Paper (n= 10) |

Identification

Records Excluded after title screening (n= 408)

Records retained after tittle screening (n= 735)

Duplicates removes (n= 140)

Screening

Records retained for abstract screening (n= 187)

Excluded after abstract screening (n= 121)

Eligibility

Records included for full-text screening (n= 66)

Full-text articles were excluded (n=36). The reasons for not meeting the inclusion criteria include the following: the sample was not from an undergraduate university, the study had a qualitative or mixed design, it did not use validated tools, it was a systematic literature or meta-analysis, or it only discussed the prevalence of pictures in ELT.

Included

Studies included in synthesis (n= 30)

After completing the selection process, the distribution of articles by year of publication was analyzed. The following table presents the frequency of studies published in the selected period.

Table 1. Year of Publication Selected Study

Year of Publication	Total Articles
2020	12
2021	6
2022	7
2023	4
2025	1

The distribution of articles by year is presented in Table 1, providing an overview of the publication years from 2020 to 2025. The data shows that most studies were published in 2020, with 12 articles, followed by 2022, with seven articles, and in 2021, with six articles. However, there was a notable decline in publications in 2023 (4 articles) and 2025 (only 1 article). These results suggest that research interest in utilizing images for ELT peaked in the earlier years but gradually declined in the latter years. The pattern shows that research focus on using pictures in ELT has changed over the years, which may be influenced by differences in participant characteristics, research approaches, and geographical distribution of studies.

Characteristics of Participants

Research addressing the use of pictures in English language teaching involves various groups of participants, ranging from primary-level students to university students and teachers. Some studies focus on junior high school and kindergarten students, such as the research by (Leonardo et al., 2022). In Indonesia (Güngör & Önder, 2023) Examined how pictures can improve writing skills and vocabulary acquisition in Turkey. Other studies involving university students, such as those by (Permatasari & Andriyanti, 2021) in Yogyakarta and (Peng & Chen, 2023) In China, it highlights model-based learning aspects. In addition, research also includes English language teachers, as in (Alimyar & Lakshmi G, 2021) Studies in India and Afghanistan examined the readiness and challenges of implementing technology in teaching. With a diverse range of participants, these studies demonstrate the relevance of using images in English language learning across various educational levels and academic backgrounds.

Approach and Type of Study

Various methodological approaches were used in these studies, reflecting the different ways the' role of pictures in English language learning is explored. Some studies utilized a quasi-experimental approach to measuring the effectiveness of images in improving language skills, such as the studies by (Navidinia et al., 2020) in Iran and (Hui et al., 2020) In Hong Kong. A comparison was made between the pre-test and post-test results. In addition, experiment-based research was conducted by (Honaker & Miller, 2024) in China and (O'Brien et al., 2022) In Singapore, the impact of picture-based technology on enhancing students' reading skills and learning motivation was investigated.

On the other hand, descriptive and qualitative approaches are also widely used, especially to understand teachers' and students' perceptions of using pictures. For example, a study by Rintaningrum (2023) in Indonesia employed interviews to investigate lecturers' perspectives on integrating technology into language learning. Other studies, such as the one by (Hussain, 2022) In Pakistan, the perceptions of teachers and students regarding images in textbooks were highlighted through observation and interview methods. Literature review-based studies were also used, such as in the studies by (Yasseen Shukr & Adnan Jameel, 2022) and (Honaker & Miller, 2024), who collated analyses from various sources to understand the effectiveness of images in English language teaching.

Overview across Countries

The following table presents the distribution of research by country of origin, along with the number of articles.

Table 2. Distribution Studies by Country

COUNTRY	TOTAL STUDIES
Indonesia	6
Iran	3
Turkey	2
China	3
Vietnam	1
Hong kong	1
Singapore	1
India	1
Afghanistan	1
Pakistan	2
Bangladesh	1
Uzbekistan	1

Malaysia	1
Japan	2
UK	1
USA	3

Based on Table 2 above, it can be seen that pictures in English language teaching have become an international concern and are used in various educational contexts in many countries. Studies in China, Iran, and Indonesia show how images in textbooks, classrooms, and digital technologies enhance English language learning in Asia (Liando et al., 2022). A digital technology-based, multimodal approach in China has been found to increase student participation in English classes. Meanwhile, research in Iran by (Ghoushchi et al., 2021) Examined the representation of images in English textbooks and found that most images had an indirect relationship with the text. In European and American countries, research has focused more on pedagogical approaches and visual representations in teaching materials. In the UK, studies (Birdsell, n.d.2020) and (Bartram, 2020) Highlighted how textbook images can enhance critical understanding and student engagement. Meanwhile, a study integrating technology into English language teaching in the United States can increase teachers' and students' confidence in utilizing images as learning tools.

Utilizing images in English language teaching presents many challenges in developing countries such as Pakistan, India, and Afghanistan (Alimyar & Lakshmi G, 2021). Although most teachers have a positive attitude towards using technology and images, they still face technical challenges and difficulties in engaging students. A study by (Hussain, 2022) Pakistan has demonstrated that images in English textbooks have great potential to increase student motivation, but teachers often underutilize them. Although the benefits of pictures in English language learning have been widely recognized globally, their implementation still faces various barriers depending on each country's social and educational context.

Predictors of Image in ELT

Based on the analysis of various studies, several factors contribute to the successful integration of images in learning, including learner characteristics, type of visual media, teaching methods, technology used, and social and geographical context. By understanding these factors, this research aims to provide deeper insights into the optimal conditions that support the use of pictures in English Language Teaching (ELT) and the implications for teaching practices at various educational levels and regions.

Learner Characteristics

Learner characteristics, including age, education level, and language background, influence the effectiveness of using pictures in English language

learning. At the early childhood education level, research indicates that children aged 5-6 years experience improved vocabulary through the English Picture Vocabulary Test (EPVT) (Güngör & Önder, 2023). Another study of bilingual children in Singapore found that picture-based apps helped improve reading skills (O'Brien et al., 2022). Meanwhile, in Hong Kong, picture books containing EMPATHICS elements were shown to improve kindergarten children's verbal and syntactic creativity (Hui et al., 2020). In addition, at the secondary school level, the use of pictures in classroom action research has been shown to improve the writing skills of junior high school students in Indonesia (Leonardo et al., 2022).

At the university level, students tend to be more comfortable using role-play methods than pictures in cross-cultural communication (Permatasari & Andriyanti, 2021). However, the picture-based learning model still shows a positive correlation with language learning among university students in China (Peng & Chen, 2023). In addition, for culinary studies students, images help them understand English vocabulary more effectively (Wulandari & Sholihin, 2020). In education, students receiving technology-based training are more confident using images as learning tools (Stafford-levy & Wiburg, 2020). Meanwhile, most teachers have a positive attitude towards image-based technology, although they still face technical and time constraints in its use (Alimyar & Lakshmi G, 2021). In Indonesia, English lecturers recognize the benefits of pictures in improving students' language skills, but their use is still limited (Rintaningrum, 2023).

Type of Visual Media Used

The type of visual media used in learning also affects the effectiveness of images in ELT. (Birdsell, n.d.) In Japan, it was found that visual metaphors in textbooks can improve students' critical thinking skills (Prayudi et al., 2021). Brown (2022) analyzed 7,350 images in ELT teaching materials and found a lack of representation of older people and gender bias in the photos. Honaker & Miller (2024) demonstrated that Wordless Picture Books (WPBs) can help students with limited formal education improve their literacy. Moreover, (Karya et al., 2022) I found that the Picture-Based Learning (PBL) method in Indonesia can improve the speaking skills of grade XI students by providing strong visual support. On the other hand, textbook analysis by (Ghoushchi et al., 2021) In Iran, it was found that pictures in ELT textbooks often lacked a direct connection to the verbal text, which could hinder students' comprehension. Last, (Rahikummahtum & Nurkamto, 2022) found that images in high school textbooks primarily represented students' social lives, with a predominance of male representation.

Teaching Methods and Approaches

The teaching method applied is a significant factor in determining the effectiveness of using pictures in English language learning. Previous research has shown that various learning theories, including behaviorism, constructivism, and connectivism, further strengthen the effectiveness of English language learning using pictures (Balchin & Wild, 2022; Yasseen Shukr & Adnan Jameel, 2022). Additionally, research in China indicates that multimodal learning approaches incorporating digital technology can increase student participation by 20% compared to traditional methods (Durrant et al., 2020). This finding is in line with the results of other studies, which state that the use of pictures in learning to write can improve writing skills, vocabulary understanding, and grammatical structures better (Alaei, 2019; Karya et al., 2022). Thus, the successful integration of images in language learning depends not only on the existence of the visual medium itself but also on how images are strategically used in teaching methods that suit the characteristics of learners and learning objectives. Furthermore, integrating technology such as interactive software or image-based learning applications can further strengthen the effectiveness of this method, especially in the context of digital learning.

Technology in Picture-Based Teaching

Picture-based applications with multisensory and mnemonic elements can improve bilingual children's phonics skills. In Malaysia, picture-based technologies were used more frequently in regular classrooms than in computer labs. Durrant et al. (2020) found that digital picture books can facilitate digital identity transition and social interaction for various age groups. Bowman et al. (2020) examined the use of tablets in picture-based learning in the United States and found that users with low literacy levels adapted to the technology effectively.

Wu (2022) found that classes implementing technology-based multimodal methods had higher success rates than traditional classes in China. Bartram (2009) in the UK highlighted that image-based technology has become integral to English language teaching in schools, regardless of whether they have limited resources or full access to technology. In addition, Masud et al. (2025) in Bangladesh demonstrated that deep learning models combining CNN and RNN can enhance image comprehension in language teaching, with the best performance achieved by the InceptionV3 + BiLSTM + Attention model.

Geographical and Social Context

Geographical and social environments also affect the effectiveness of using pictures in English language learning. Brown (2022) in Japan found that images in textbooks tend to underrepresent certain age groups, such as older people, which can impact the relevance of the material to students' real lives. Hussain and Khan (2022) in Pakistan found that the use of pictures in English textbooks is often

suboptimal, as teachers rely more on verbal explanations. Alimyar and Lakshmi (2023) found that in India and Afghanistan. However, although teachers had a positive attitude towards image-based technology, they faced obstacles such as limited internet access and high time burdens. Rintaningrum (2023) in Indonesia found that English lecturers still face limitations in integrating image-based technology into their teaching. Beckett et al. (2020) in the United States showed that technology-based teacher training can increase confidence in using images as learning tools.

Table 3. Summary and characteristics of the final studies selected

No.	Author & Country	Mean Characteristic	Variable & Study Design	Measure	Findings
1.	Retention Dao Ra Ta Na, Nguyen Huynh Trang (2022). Country: Vietnam	Grade 7 students at Duyen Hai Ethnic Dormitory Junior High School	Vocabulary teaching method (using pictures vs. traditional method without pictures), Improvement in vocabulary test scores, Quasi-Experimental study	Vocabulary Tests, Student Attitude Questionnaire	Using pictures in vocabulary learning in ELT is more effective than traditional methods without pictures. Pictures improve students' vocabulary comprehension, motivation, and retention. Students prefer picture-based methods to methods without visuals.
2.	Celik Korkmaz (2020) conducted a study at Uludag University in Turkey.	The study involved 101 third-year ELT students (75 females, 26 male) from Uludağ Üniversitesi, who evaluated 20 picture storybooks focusing on themes of friendship, helping others,	The study employed a mixed-method design, utilizing a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire and semi-structured interviews to assess ELT student teachers' self-evaluation of their created picture storybooks.	The study utilized a 23-item questionnaire with two main categories (essential literary elements and English language teaching criteria for children), which demonstrated high reliability (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.93) and was supplemented by expert evaluation and interview comparisons.	The ELT student teachers generally evaluated their picture storybooks as successful regarding text-image relationships, educational themes, and cover design, but identified weaknesses in creativity, imagination stimulation, and detail provision. Comparing their evaluations with expert evaluations revealed that some aspects were overrated or underrated by the participants, highlighting the need for further training in creativity and the effective use of picture storybooks in teaching English to children.

		and environmental awareness.			
3.	(Shafagh Ghaushchi, Hushang Yazdani, Hamidreza Dowlatabadi, Musa Ahmadian, 2021) Country: Iran	Population: English textbooks Samples: 50 from English textbooks (Visions & Prospects). Unit Analysis: Sentences in verbal and image mode.	Communication modes, Verbal and visual representation, ELT textbooks **Study Design:** Multimodal discourse analysis	Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG), Kress & van Leeuwen's (KvL)	Verbal Mode: Relational processes most often appear; visual Mode: Non-human objects appear in a row; verbal-visual Mode interaction: 48% of images have an indirect relationship with the text, 24% of images have no ties with text
5.	(Hossein Navidinia, Amir Raies Ozhan, and Armin Younesi, 2020) Country: Iran	34 EFL Pre-Intermediate Sixties	images, EFL writing teaching **Study Design:** Quasi-experimental, Writing test (pre-test and post-test).	Number of words written, Number of grammatical errors, Number of cohesive devices	Using images in writing instruction significantly improved* the length of writing, grammatical accuracy, and the use of cohesive devices in EFL students' writing.

6.	(Burcu Güngör & Alev Önder, 2023) Country: Turkey	251 of 5-6-year-old children from different English programs with different intensities (low, medium, high).	English Picture Vocabulary Test (EPVT), receptive and expressive vocabulary, and the English of preschool children **Study Design:** Test development & validation	Receptive test and Expressive test. Test reliability was measured with KR-20 (0.89 for receptive, 0.91 for expressive).	The present study set out to ascertain the validity and reliability of the EPVT as a tool for assessing the vocabulary of young children learning English as a foreign language. The study found that the test is child-centered, easy to use, and effective in determining vocabulary development. The study's findings demonstrate that a more contextualized and communicative approach to learning results in better expressive vocabulary development than an approach focusing on mechanical repetition.
7.	(Anna N. N. Hui, Bonnie Wing-Yin Chow, Eva S. M. Chan, Man-Tak Leung, 2020) Country: Hong Kong	78 kindergarten children: 39 children in the experimental group and 39 children in the control group	Use picture books with EMPATHICS elements (Emotion, Meaning, Perseverance, Agency, Time, Habits of Mind, Intelligence, Character Strengths, and Self Factors), Dialogical reading techniques, Receptive vocabulary, Syntactic complexity, and Verbal creativity. **Study Design :** Quasi-experimental: Pre-test, mid-test, post-test.	Receptive Vocabulary: Measured using the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test IV (PPVT-IV). Syntactic Complexity: Measured using the Edmonton Narrative Norms Instrument (ENNI). Verbal Creativity: Measured through a storytelling task.	Both groups showed a significant increase in receptive vocabulary. The experimental group showed a more substantial increase in syntactic complexity. Both groups experienced increased verbal creativity, but the experimental group showed a more significant increase.

8.	(Beth A. O'Brien, Reneé Seward, Dongbo Zhang, 2022) Country: Singapore	90 kindergarten children	See the Word Reading application, the phonics learning tool, and the Word Reading, decoding, and spelling skills. **Study Design:** Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT).	Pre-Intervention Tests, Tests During & After Intervention	A digital-based application that combines multisensory and image mnemonic elements effectively improves the phonetic skills of bilingual Chinese children who learn to read in English.
9.	(Nihta Vera Frelly Liando, Devilito Prasetyo Tatipang, Grandy Tamboto, Maria Poluan, Maissy Manuas, 2022) Country: Jambi, Indonesia	- Participants: 15 grade VII students - Instrument: Multiple choice test (25 questions) - Installment-installment score pre-test: 52.87 ScorePost-Test: 81,53	images, learning media, students' vocabulary mastery **Study Design:** Pre-experimental design with one group pre-test and post-test	Changes in scores between pre-test and post-test The data was analyzed using the average formula	Images as a learning medium can effectively improve the mastery of English vocabulary for junior high school students

10	(Keeping Up with the Kardashians, 2020) Country: Jakarta, Indonesia	Two English teachers who teach first grade at the Qur'an Learning Center	Teaching strategies, vocabulary **Study Design:** Qualitative descriptive	Semi-structured interviews in two separate sessions. Interview transcription, data organization, coding, categorization, and interpretation	-Teaching strategies: games, songs, learning media (pictures).
11	Fata, Bahri, & Muridhal (2018), Indonesia (Aceh)	One English teacher and 36 EFL learners at Syiah Kuala University Focus on picture media implementation in teaching writing, the Curriculum 2013 context (scientific approach)	Teacher's perspective on using pictures in an EFL writing class, student participation **Study Design:** Qualitative study (interviews, observation, field notes)	Interview with one English teacher, Observation and field notes of 36 EFL students, Triangulation method for data collection	- The teacher believes pictures are effective as media for teaching writing - Students showed enthusiasm and active participation when pictures were used - Pictures help students develop vocabulary and writing skills - Picture media aligns with the 2013 curriculum requirements - Implementation through PowerPoint and printed materials was effective - Pictures enhance student motivation and interest in writing
12	(Indah Permatasari & Erna Andriyanti, 2021)	22 first-semester students of Metallurgical Engineering	English language teaching, Intercultural communication competence of students. **Study Design:** Classroom Action Research	Classroom observation Interview Written test Oral test Assessment rubric from INCA and the Association	Students improved pronunciation, grammar, and use of paralinguistic features in speaking. Students are more comfortable with role play compared to written tests Students' motivation to write is still low, a challenge that needs further research

				of American Colleges and Universities projects	
	Country: Yogyakarta Indonesia				
13	(Dian Muhammad Rifai & Sukma Shinta Yunianti, 2021) Country: Surakarta, Indonesia	Students of the culinary study program at STP Sahid Surakarta	drawing, English teaching, vocabulary, English skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) **Study Design:** Qualitative descriptive	Observation and Assessment of the Four English Skills	The use of pictures in English learning can: Increasing students' interest in learning English. Make it easier for students to remember English vocabulary. Enrich English teaching techniques, especially in culinary study programs.

14	(Paris Jiwa Karya, Kenza Takarroucht, Kufakunesu Zano, Alex Zamorano, 2022) Country: Central Lombok, Indonesia	20 students of grade XI	Picture-based learning (PBL), speaking learning **Study Design:** Research & Development (R&D)	Questionnaires and speaking tests	This study shows that Picture-Based Learning can improve students' speaking skills by providing visual support and increasing their engagement in learning.
15	(Zabihullah Alimyar & Suvarna Lakshmi G, 2023) Country: India and Afghanistan	3% have a Ph.D., 47% have an M.A., 49% have a B.A.	Technology, Attitudes, beliefs, challenges, Language learning, and the COVID-19 pandemic. **Study Design:** Quantitative descriptive	Cronbach Alpha	Teacher Readiness: - The majority of teachers have a positive attitude towards the use of technology in teaching. - Many use Google Classroom, Zoom, YouTube, WhatsApp, and other learning tools. Key Challenges: Difficulties in student engagement, Technical issues, Time load, Student evaluation.
16	(E. Carol Beckett, Keith Wetzel, Ines Marquez Chisholm, Ron	19 education students and 24 teachers who have taught	Staff Development, Technology Integration, Language Teaching Strategies **Study Design:** Quantitative and qualitative approaches,	Quetioner Likert-scale - Observation of the implementation of the Unit of Practice (UOP)	The training increases participants' confidence and skills in using technology - Participants actively use online platforms to share ideas and resources

Zambo, Ray Buss, Helen Padgett, Mia Kim Williams, Mary Odom, 2020) Country: United States		Pretest-posttest with questionnaire	- Analysis of the use of online discussion platforms (Blackboard)	- The main difficulty is recruiting participants and matching mentors with students before the program starts - This model is considered adequate but requires schedule adjustments to be more flexible.

17	Urmonova Nigorakhon Muminovna (2021, Uzbekistan) conducted research at the National University of Uzbekistan in Tashkent.	The study focuses on utilizing pictures in foreign language classes to improve speaking, listening, writing, vocabulary, spelling, and pronunciation skills by motivating students, clarifying context, and facilitating oral communication.	Effectiveness of using pictures in foreign language learning. **Study Design:** Descriptive-theoretical approach based on psychoanalytic theory	- No quantitative experiment; the article is conceptual and descriptive. - Based on literature regarding the use of pictures in language education.	- Effectively using pictures can increase student motivation and help them understand and retain new vocabulary. - Pictures aid in learning language structures, vocabulary, communication functions, situational language use, and speaking and writing skills. - Picture-based activities enhance classroom interaction and make learning more engaging. - Pictures are suitable for learners of all levels, including those with special needs.
18	(Kevin Balchin & Carol Wild, 2020) Country: Malaysia	22 high school English teachers	Technology, English teaching **Study Design:** Qualitative	Online surveys (questions related to technology, accessibility, barriers) - Online interviews (asynchronous, based on technology usage scenarios)	Technology Normalization: It has started, but has not been fully achieved. Contextual Factors: Technology is commonly used in ordinary classrooms, not computer labs.

19	(Nianfan Peng & Xixi Chen, 2023) Country: China	368 students from English-language institutions in China	Model-Based Learning (MBL), Culture Congruence (CC), Effective Culture Adoption (ECA), Innovation Adoption (IA) **Study Design:** Quantitative	MBL: 4 item skala (Martinez-Lopez et al., 2017) CC: 3 item skala (Chen et al., 2021) ECA: 6 item skala (Lam et al., 2021) IA: 5 item scale (Oduro, 2020) ELITE: 5-item scale (Vyatkina, 2016).	MBL has a positive relationship with culture congruence (CC) and effective culture adoption (ECA); CC, ECA, and IA are positively associated with ELT. CC has a positive relationship with IA CC and ECA act as partial mediators.
20	(Ratna Rintaningrum, 2023) Country: Indonesia	7 English lecturers	Technology, English Language Teaching and Learning **Study Design:** Qualitative Study	Interviews, Data analysis.	Increase the speed of answering questions. Facilitate access to resources and learning materials. Improve English language skills in various aspects (writing, reading, listening, speaking), supporting independent and collaborative learning.

#	Author / Country	Population	Concepts / Study Design	Data / Methods	Findings
21	(Abigail C. Durrant, David S. Kirk, Wendy Moncur, Kathryn M. Orzech, Robyn Taylor, Diego Trujillo Pisanty, 2020) Country: UK	- Young Adults (18-21 years old) - New Parents (New parents with children under 2 years old) - Recent Retirees (Retirees in the last 5 years)	Life stages, digital identity **Study Design:** Experiential study with a phenomenological approach and research through design	Data was collected through workshops and picture books	- Digital Personhood: People undergo digital identity transitions at various stages of life - Visual Storytelling: Picture books help build dialogue between academics and stakeholders.
22	(Dan Wu, 2022) Country: China	College students who take English courses.	A multimodal learning model is based on digital technology, learning motivation, and improving English skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing). **Study Design:** Experimental with a two-class comparison	- Observation of student involvement in the classroom. - Test learning outcomes before and after implementation. - Evaluate teaching methods and class quality.	- Using multimodal methods increases student participation and learning outcomes in English language skills. - Classes with multimodal methods have a higher success rate than traditional ones. - Student performance increases by about 20% after applying this learning method
23	(Weijun Liang , 2021) Country: China	English language lecturers with teaching experience between 1 and 16+ years	Use of technology, Lecturer perception, Obstacles faced **Study Design:** Single case study with a mixed-method approach	Survey Interview	The most widely used technologies, such as Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, Moodle, and WeChat, and new technologies like Kahoot! and Second Life, are rarely used for interactive learning.
24	(Cassandra Bowman, Joseph Lunyera, Aviel	12 people who own a mobile device and use it every day	tablet-based educational tools, **Study Design:** Observation of participant performance	Number of navigation errors in categories: - No errors (no errors) - Noncritical error (self-correctable error)	This tablet-based educational tool can be accepted and used by CKD patients, especially those with low levels of health literacy. However, further studies are needed to evaluate its impact on patient health outcomes.

Alkon, et al., 2020) Country: United States			- Critical errors - Experience evaluation	

25	(Adiba Masud, MD. Biplob Hossain, MD. Habibullah, Mehrin Ananya, M. Shamim Kaiser, 2025) Country: Bangladesh	Using a combination of CNN (VGG19, ResNet50v2, Inception v3) and RNN (LSTM, GRU, BiLSTM). - The dataset consists of 8,000 images, each with five captions in Bengali.	Deep learning model (CNN-RNN with attention mechanism), Quality of generated captions (measured by BLEU, METEOR, ROUGE) **Study Design:** Experimental, deep learning-based	Model evaluation is performed with the following metrics: - BLEU-4*: 43% - Mitier*: 39% - *ROUGE*: 47%	Models combining InceptionV3 + BiLSTM + Attention* show the best performance. This model outperforms previous research in the quality of Bengali captions.
26	(Kautsar Rahikummaht um, Joko Nurkamto, Suparno, 2020) Country: Indonesia	142 visual images from two high school English textbooks	Visual images, English textbooks, pedagogy, and learning. **Study Design:** *Critical Discourse Analysis* (CDA)	Representational Mode, Interactive Mode, Compositional Mode	**Representational Mode:** There are more human images than non-human images. Gender representation shows male dominance. Images represent students' social lives **Interactive Mode:** Most images use an eye perspective, creating an equal relationship with the reader. They also have backgrounds, increasing realism and credibility.
27.	(Brian J. Birdsell, 2020) Country: Japan	Images in ELT textbooks	Visual metaphors, ELT textbooks, understanding, critical thinking, and student creativity	⬚ analysis based on conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) and multimodality	Images in ELT textbooks are often used only as decoration and are not utilized for developing critical thinking. Metaphor visuals can increase student engagement and support a deeper understanding of the material. Visual metaphors

			Study Design: Conceptual approach and semiotic analysis	(Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001). ⬚ Identify three types of visual metaphors (monomodal and multimodal) that can be used in language learning.	in language learning can improve students' critical thinking.
28	(Mahnaz Mostafaei Alaei, Amir Kardoust, Abdulbaset Saeedian, 2020) Country: Iran	14 EFL students	visual scaffolding, learning to write, Study Design: Quasi-experimental	Questionnaires, Semi-structured interviews	Visual scaffolding makes it easy to understand vocabulary and grammatical structure. Charts help students distinguish the nuances of word meaning Students find it easier to understand text accompanied by images Converting text to graphics is the most challenging part The three main principles of scaffolding (contingency, fading, and transfer of responsibility) are fulfilled
29	(Charles Allen Brown, 2022) Country: Japan	7,350 images from ELT (English Language Teaching) teaching materials	Visuals, ELT teaching materials Study Design: Quantitative and qualitative content analysis	Representation indicator: Number and proportion of images by age group Stereotype analysis: Older people are described as active vs. passive, healthy vs. weak, independent vs. dependent	There is a lack of representation of the elderly (3.2%), although the elderly in Japan account for almost 30% of the population. There is also gender bias in representation: Older women are less likely to appear (1.1%) than older men (2.1%). There is also a lack of intergenerational interaction, especially between the elderly and children (only 1.8% of total interactions). Some

					images challenge stereotypes by showing active older adults more often than men. **Negative stereotypes remain**, for example, the elderly are seen as weak, dependent, or less able to keep up with technological developments.
30	(Sajjad Hussain, Dr. Haji Karim Khan, 2022) Country: Pakistan	English teachers and elementary school students	Pictures, English Textbooks, Student Motivation **Study Design:** Qualitative	Aspects measured: How often do teachers use pictures in learning. Teachers' perception of the benefits of images in learning Student responses to the use of images in the classroom	⬚ Teachers recognize the benefits of images in learning but rarely use them effectively. ⬚ Students are more motivated and active when images are used in learning. ⬚ Pictures help students understand complex concepts without lengthy explanations.

This study aims to synthesize findings from previous studies on the use of pictures in English Language Teaching (ELT). This study compiles and analyzes 30 studies that examine the effectiveness of images in English language learning from diverse perspectives, including learner characteristics, types of visual media, teaching methods, technology integration, and geographical and social contexts. By collating the findings from multiple studies, this study aims to identify patterns, trends, and key factors contributing to the successful use of pictures in English language learning.

Pictures in ELT have been proven effective in improving various aspects of language skills, especially vocabulary, writing, reading, and speaking. Studies examining the use of pictures in children's learning (Güngör & Önder, 2023; Hui et al., 2020) Demonstrate that pictures can enhance vocabulary recall and stimulate verbal creativity. Pictures help improve writing skills and reading comprehension at the secondary and college student levels, as shown in studies by (Leonardo et al., 2022) and (Navidinia et al., 2020). In addition, (Karya et al., 2022) Picture-based learning (PBL) improved students' speaking skills by providing more concrete visual support.

However, the effectiveness of pictures in ELT depends not only on their use alone but also on other factors such as the design of teaching materials, teaching methods, and technological readiness. The lack of inclusive visual representations in textbooks can limit the effectiveness of images in supporting learning. Studies by O'Brien et al. demonstrate that integrating images with digital technology leads to more interactive learning and increased student participation. Meanwhile, studies in developing countries, such as those conducted by Hussain (2022), indicate that infrastructure constraints and a lack of teacher training remain the primary challenges in utilizing images as learning tools.

For the most part, the use of pictures in ELT has been extensively researched on individuals who are English language students, college students, and teachers. Studies such as those conducted by (Leonardo et al., 2022; Liando et al., 2022) Examined the effectiveness of pictures in improving junior high school students' skills, especially in vocabulary acquisition and writing ability. Meanwhile, university students benefit from using images, especially when it comes to understanding English terminology in fields such as culinary and metallurgical engineering. From the teaching side, studies by (Alimyar & Lakshmi G, 2021) Highlight how teachers and

lecturers utilize images in the learning process, despite still facing technical and methodological challenges.

The effectiveness of using images in ELT depends on their presence and how they are presented and contextualized in the teaching materials. Research shows that images in ELT textbooks often do not have a direct connection to the accompanying text, thus not optimally supporting students' comprehension (Nguyen, 2023). This mismatch can hinder learning, as students may struggle to connect visual information with the language concepts they are learning. Conversely, suppose images are used strategically, such as in a visual scaffolding approach. In that case, they can serve as aids that clarify concepts, strengthen vocabulary understanding, and assist in grammatical structures. Thus, educators need to ensure that images in teaching materials are not merely decorative elements but have pedagogical relevance that supports the effective learning of English.

Furthermore, research also shows that the effectiveness of images in ELT depends not only on the teaching materials but also on the teaching methods applied. (Murdiono et al., 2020)Wu (2022) and O'Brien et al. (2022) found that integrating images with digital technology can improve student interaction in English language learning. Research by Jiwa Karya et al. (2022) showed that the Picture-Based Learning (PBL) approach contributed to the improvement of students' speaking skills, while the study by Leonardo et al. (2022) showed that the use of pictures in Classroom Action Research improved junior high school students' writing skills after two learning cycles. Thus, although pictures have been widely used in various ELT contexts, variations in the design of materials, teaching methods, and the technologies that support them remain the primary factors influencing their success.

Although many studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of pictures in ELT, some previous studies have shown that their use does not always have a significant impact on English language learning. Brown (2022) and Korkmaz (2020) found that image representations in ELT textbooks often overlook inclusivity factors, such as age and gender representation, which limit students' engagement in learning. In addition, research by Ghoushchi et al. (2021) in Iran revealed that nearly half of the images in textbooks lacked a direct connection to the accompanying text, thereby not contributing optimally to students' understanding. The study by Hussain and Khan (2022) in Pakistan also revealed that, although teachers are aware of the

benefits of images, they rarely utilize them effectively due to limited training and a lack of integration into the curriculum.

Furthermore, some studies indicate that although pictures can enhance certain aspects of language learning, their impact may not be long-lasting or consistent across all language skills. For example, research by Permatasari and Andriyanti (2021) showed that although pictures helped improve students' speaking and understanding of intercultural communication, their writing motivation remained low. Similarly, research by Liang (2021) in China indicates that although lecturers have a positive attitude towards image-based technology, its application in the classroom remains limited due to the lack of flexibility in teaching methods. The study by Rahikummahtum et al. (2020) on analyzing images in high school textbooks also found that, although images can support comprehension, biased visual representations can lead to social perception imbalances among students.

While some studies highlight the limitations of using pictures in ELT, others suggest various approaches that successfully utilize pictures as learning aids. The research in this systematic review shows that pictures are used as illustrations in textbooks and integrated into more interactive and multimodal teaching methods. For example, Jiwa Karya et al. (2022) found that the Picture-Based Learning (PBL) approach significantly improved students' speaking skills by providing more concrete visual support. On the other hand, (Ika Apriani Fata, Syamsul Bahri, 2020) Emphasized the effectiveness of visual scaffolding, where pictures were used to help students understand vocabulary and grammatical structures more deeply.

In addition, using images in the form of visual metaphors in textbooks can stimulate students' critical thinking skills more effectively than ordinary decorative images that lack strong contextual meaning. Studies have shown that multimodal analysis can be used to understand the relationship between verbal and nonverbal elements in language learning (Ghoushchi et al., 2021). When images in textbooks serve as additional illustrations and have a meaningful connection to the teaching material, they can help students develop a deeper understanding of language concepts. Thus, integrating visual elements, if done with the right strategies, can enhance students' interaction in the classroom and enrich their learning experience by linking text, sound, and visual elements in a more effective learning whole.

With these diverse approaches, it is clear that the effectiveness of images in ELT largely depends on how they are integrated into the teaching methods employed. However, there is still a need for further exploration of how different visual strategies can be adapted to the specific needs of learners at varying levels of education. Therefore, in addition to considering the diversity of existing approaches, developing more adaptive and responsive methods to the challenges of image-based English language learning is also essential.

As approaches to using images in ELT have evolved, technology has played an essential role in maximizing the potential of images as learning tools. Whereas images were previously more often used as static illustrations in textbooks, technology now enables them to be integrated with interactive elements, such as animations, digital applications, and artificial intelligence-based platforms. Research by (O'Brien et al., 2022) Demonstrated that a picture-based application incorporating multisensory and mnemonic elements significantly enhanced the reading skills of bilingual children. Similarly, (Urmonova N .M., 2021) I found that classes with technology-based multimodal learning methods had higher success rates than traditional classes, as students were more engaged in learning through a combination of text, sound, and digital images.

Additionally, several studies have highlighted how picture-based technology can support various language skills, particularly in writing and speaking. Studies have shown that integrating pictures with the technology-based Picture-Based Learning method can improve students' speaking skills more effectively than the traditional approach (Karya et al., 2022). This demonstrates that incorporating technology into image-based learning serves as a visual aid and an interactive medium, enriching students' learning experience. With the right approach, image-based technology can encourage active student engagement and help them develop communication skills more effectively. Along with these improvements, technology has enhanced the use of images in ELT, opening up new opportunities for more dynamic, visually based teaching strategies. However, although technology offers solutions to the limitations of images in traditional learning, its implementation still faces challenges, especially regarding accessibility and educator readiness. Therefore, further discussion is needed on the barriers faced in using image-based technology in ELT and the strategies that can be implemented to overcome them.

While technology has opened up numerous opportunities for utilizing images in ELT, there are still challenges that need to be addressed for the implementation to be more effective. One of the primary challenges is the limited access to technology in some developing countries. Studies by (Alimyar & Lakshmi G, 2021; Hussain, 2022) Although teachers have a positive attitude towards using image-based technology, they still face barriers, including limited infrastructure, a lack of training, and technical constraints in digital learning tools. In addition, research by (Liang, 2021) Although English lecturers in China perceive integrating images into learning positively, interactive technologies such as Kahoot! and Second Life are rarely used due to limited resources and a lack of pedagogical readiness.

In addition to barriers to implementation, another challenge is the lack of research that explicitly explores how pictures can be adapted for more inclusive learning. Most studies still focus on using photos in a regular classroom context without considering how pictures can help students with special needs, such as those with dyslexia or visual processing disorders. The study by (Permatasari & Andriyanti, 2021) This suggests that pictures can enhance speaking skills and improve understanding of intercultural communication, but their impact on writing skills remains limited. Therefore, future research should delve deeper into how pictures can be adapted to enhance all language skills in a balanced manner, including reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

On the other hand, technological advancements also present new opportunities for research in this area. The study by Masud et al. (2025) demonstrated that deep learning models integrating images with natural language processing can enhance the effectiveness of visual-based teaching. Additionally, research by Wu (2022) suggests that multimodal technology-based classes have higher success rates compared to traditional methods. Therefore, future research can explore how these technologies can be further adapted in various English learning contexts.

CONCLUSION

This systematic review found that incorporating pictures into English Language Teaching (ELT) significantly enhances language learning, particularly in vocabulary acquisition, writing skills, reading comprehension, and speaking ability. Images

enhance cognitive engagement, support long-term retention, and foster a more interactive learning experience. However, their effectiveness is affected by several factors, including learner characteristics, type of visual media, teaching methods, technology integration, and social and geographical context. The review also identified key challenges in applying images in ELT, including limited infrastructure, inadequate teacher training, and insufficient visual representation in teaching materials. These barriers can hinder the optimal utilization of images, especially in educational environments with limited resources. Therefore, to maximize the potential of images in ELT, educators should adopt adaptive and technology-based strategies that cater to the diverse needs of learners at various educational levels and learning environments. Future research should explore more effective pedagogical frameworks and technological advancements to enhance the integration of pictures in language teaching.

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