


Elementary EFL Students' Cognitive and Affective Responses to Visual Illustrations in English Sentence Construction

 <https://doi.org/10.31004/jele.v11i2.2309>

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A B S T R A C T

Writing English sentences is challenging for elementary EFL students due to limited vocabulary, complex grammatical structures, and difficulties in generating ideas. This study explore fifth-grade students' responses to the use of visual illustrations in English sentence writing activities and how these illustrations help students understand context and construct sentences. This study used a qualitative descriptive approach involving 25 students and one English teacher. Data were collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation, and were analyzed through data condensation, data display, and drawing/verifying conclusion. The findings show positive affective responses to the use of visual illustrations, such as increased motivation, enthusiasm, and confidence in writing English sentences. Cognitively, visual illustrations helped students understand context, generate ideas, and construct sentences more easily. However some students experienced difficulties interpreting the meaning of the illustrations and generating ideas, indicating differences in learning styles and the need for additional teacher guidance. These findings suggest that visual illustrations support students' both emotional engagement and cognitive development when supported by appropriate instructional guidance.

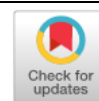
Keywords: *Visual Illustrations, Students' Responses, English Sentence Writing, Elementary School*

Article History:

Received 30th March 2026

Accepted 22nd April 2026

Published 23rd April 2026



INTRODUCTION

As an international language, English plays a vital role. English is taught as a Foreign Language (EFL) in many countries to help students develop global communication skills. Therefore, mastery of English language skills, including writing, is crucial for students in an EFL context. Writing is a way to express ideas that include all abilities and knowledge in written form (Peter & Singaravelu, 2021). Writing is a means of expressing thoughts, feelings, and ideas using English grammar, structure, and vocabulary in written form.

For students, writing skills are very important. For EFL learners, writing skills play a crucial role in language development. Writing activities encourage students to read more, develop critical thinking skills, and help them become more independent in their learning (Kozhakhmet, 2022). Improving writing skills from an early age is very important so that children can communicate fluently in various contexts and achieve academic success in the future (Yokubjonova, 2024). However, due to the complexity of vocabulary, spelling, grammatical structure, and pronunciation, writing is often considered the most difficult skill among other English language skills (Rao, Srinivas, 2017), especially for elementary school students who do not yet have an adequate vocabulary.

A sentence is a series of words that has at least a subject and predicate and functions to convey an idea or meaning. In learning writing, students are first introduced to simple sentences, which consist of a subject and a predicate and can stand alone because it already has a complete meaning (Maulana et al., 2024). Students at the elementary school level are still in the early stages of writing development, so they are not yet guided to create compound,

complex, or compound-complex sentences and are still in the process of learning to write simple sentences in English.

Writing simple sentences is still difficult for some elementary school students. This is due to a lack of understanding of grammar, limited vocabulary, and difficulty in organizing and developing ideas (Fikni et al., 2025). The lack of interesting learning media that suits the character of elementary school students is one of the main causes of this problem. Therefore, appropriate instructional media are needed to help students generate ideas and understand sentence construction more easily.

Teaching English to young children requires teachers to implement strategies tailored to each student's learning characteristics. Young children, such as elementary school students, learn through various learning styles, including auditory, tactile, and visual. Therefore, teachers need to use learning media that support these learning styles (Nunan in Oktavia et al., 2022). In this context, visual media is crucial because it helps students receive and understand information more effectively. This is why visual illustrations can be used as supporting media to help elementary school students generate ideas and construct English sentences.

According to Piaget, Fifth-grade elementary school students (around the age of 10-11 years) are in the concrete operational stage of cognitive development, at this stage, children already apply logical thinking rather than abstract thinking (Piaget in Rabindran & Madanagopal, 2020). In other words, visual and concrete media can help students learn more effectively. Visual illustrations, such as pictures, drawing or digital illustrations, can bridge abstract vocabulary with concrete meaning, making it easier for students to understand words and write sentences based on real-world contexts.

This is also supported by visual learning theory, which emphasizes the importance of visual representations in learning. One of the theories supporting this idea is Dual Coding Theory by Paivio which states that humans process information through two representational systems: verbal (words) and non-verbal (pictures or visuals) (Clark & Paivio, 1991). Our visual and auditory systems may preserve memories (Paivio in Wooten et al., 2024). When verbal and visual systems are used together, information delivery becomes more effective because they reinforce each other. Visual illustrations help students, especially elementary school students who still rely on concrete objects to find ideas for writing English sentences.

Learning media are things used to help the learning process work smoothly and be more effective. In the process of learning English, especially in schools, the use of instructional media is very important so that the learning process in the classroom runs more effectively (Aisyah & Haryudin, 2020). English instructional media are divided into three categories, namely audio, visual, and audiovisual (I. D. Lestari et al., 2018). The first is audio media, which only contains sound and can only be heard, the second is visual media, with this media, people can understand something through their sight. Visual media can provide students with a genuine visual experience through pictures, objects, models, etc. (Baidawi, 2016). The last is audiovisual media, which displays moving images accompanied by sound, allowing people to understand something through both sight and hearing. This study uses visual media because it employs visual illustrations such as pictures and digital illustrations.

Visual illustrations refer to visual materials such as objects, charts, written texts, or other visual representations used in the teaching and learning process as tools to support understanding and improve student learning outcomes (Syafryadin, 2021). Illustration is a graphic art that occupies a position between graphic design and fine art (Zeegen, 2009). Images or other visual forms used in visual illustrations with attractive colors can give readers a positive first impression before they understand the written text. In addition, visual illustrations presented alongside the text serve as a complement that can increase reader interest while helping to clarify the meaning of the information conveyed (Zulia et al., 2022).

Several studies have shown the benefits of visual illustrations in English language learning. (Sultangubieva & Adiletova, 2024) showed that illustrations serve to increase motivation, memory, understanding, and vocabulary mastery; (Sakunchinwattanachai et al., 2024) emphasized that illustrations can increase students' reading scores and increase student

learning satisfaction; (Ajibade, 2012) emphasized that illustrations help to understand and make the learning process more interesting; (Zirak et al., 2022) found that visual media help students acquire ideas, expand vocabulary, and reduce anxiety when writing; (Fitria & Pratiwi, 2020) stated that students prefer looking at images more than anything else. Images essentially help motivate students and can arouse their interest in the lesson; (Dewi, 2025) asserts that visual media such as digital illustrations, images, etc. can help students improve their writing skills. Visual media can increase their motivation to write so that it is easier to generate idea, increase vocabulary, and organize the structure of writing; and (Rahmadani et al., 2025) prove that images effectively help students construct sentences more clearly and purposefully. However, most previous studies have focused on the effectiveness of visual media in improving writing skills or learning outcomes, while limited studies have specifically explored elementary students' responses to the use of visual illustrations in English sentence writing activities.

The active role of students, whether in discussions or question and answer sessions during the learning process, is the meaning of student response (Husaini, 2020). Response is an attitude, whether it be acceptance, rejection, or indifference, or more simply, a reaction (Fatmawati & Anjarsari, 2021). Responses are divided into two types, namely verbal and nonverbal responses (V. T. Lestari et al., 2025). This study covers two types of responses, namely verbal and nonverbal. Verbal responses are seen when students say words, answer teachers' questions, or convey ideas based on visual illustrations before writing them down. Meanwhile, nonverbal responses were seen through their actions, such as looking at the visual illustrations intently, pointing to certain parts of the visual illustrations, nodding when they understood the instructions, or showing enthusiasm when using the pictures as a medium for writing.

Therefore, this study attempts to fill this gap by focusing on students' responses, both verbal and nonverbal, toward the use of visual illustrations in learning to write English sentences at the elementary school level. Based on this background, this study aims to know the responses of fifth-grade students to the use of visual illustrations in English sentence writing activities and how do visual illustrations affect the way students understand and construct English sentences during the learning process. Furthermore, the results of this study are expected to provide deeper insight of how visual illustrations can help students learn to write English sentences better, as well as provide practical input for teachers to create a more interesting, interactive, and meaningful learning atmosphere for elementary school students.

METHOD

In this study, researcher uses a qualitative approach. Qualitative approach is a research method used to gain an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon by asking participants general questions and then collecting their answers in the form of words or images. The information obtained is then analyzed to identify themes and descriptions. After that, the researcher interprets the meaning based on the data obtained, then interprets the meaning of the information based on personal understanding and previous research (Creswell, 2012, p. 626). In this study the researcher use descriptive method, descriptive asks about characteristics, how something happens, or how variables are distributed without changing or manipulating any variables and describes the situation as it is (Ary et al., 2010, p. 640). Descriptive qualitative research includes the description and analysis of circumstances and settings used to explain the findings in a research paper (Hancock in Indah et al., 2021).

This approach was chosen because it is suitable with the objectives of this study, which are to know the responses of fifth-grade students to the use of visual illustrations in English sentence writing activities at SDN Ponteh 1 and to understand how visual illustrations help students understand context and construct English sentences during the learning process at SDN Ponteh 1.

Research Settings

This research was conducted at SDN Ponteh 1. The location was chosen based on the consideration that the school had already implemented English language learning in fifth grade using visual illustrations in writing lessons, particularly in writing sentences in English. In addition, this school was selected because the learning phenomena found in the classroom were relevant to the focus of this study, particularly students responses in witing English sentences using visual illustrations. This research was conducted from 17 January 2026 to 27 February 2026, during the English language learning process in the classroom.

Data Source

This study involved 25 fifth-grade students and one English teacher at SDN Ponteh 1. Observations were made of all fifth-grade students and the English teacher during the learning process. Meanwhile, interviews were conducted with the English teacher and 15 students selected using purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a sampling technique in research conducted by deliberately selecting research subjects based on certain considerations. The subjects selected were those who were considered capable of representing the characteristics of the population and providing information relevant to the research objectives (Ary et al., 2010). The selection of students was based on their writing skills, level of activity in learning, and recommendations from the English teacher.

Data Collection Procedures

In this study, observation, interviews, and documentation were used to collect data. Observation is a technique for obtaining data by observing places and people at the research location to obtain research data (Creswell, 2012, p. 624). Observation was conducted to observe the responses, participation, and behavior of students during English sentence writing activities using visual illustrations. The observation focused on several aspects such as students' attention to visual illustrations, students' participation in classroom, students' verbal and non-verbal responses, and students' ability to construct simple sentences.

Semi-structured interviews use open-ended questions that are planned but remain flexible and allow for follow-up questions to arise during the conversation (Elhami, 2022). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with English teachers and selected students to determine their responses, understanding, and views on the use of visual illustrations in writing English sentences. The interview questions focused on students' opinions about visual illustrations, their difficulties in writing English sentences, and how visual illustrations helped them generate ideas, and their motivation during learning activities.

Documentation was used as supporting data. Documents are records of information either private or public that are collected by researchers to understand the topic under study to support research result like personal journals, newspaper, diaries, and minutes of meetings (Creswell, 2012, p. 620). In this study, the documents collected included student worksheets, photos of classroom activities, portfolios that could provide additional information regarding the development of students' writing skills, as well as various visual illustrations used in learning, such as pictures, drawing, digital illustrations, etc.

Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis consist of three main stages, namely data condensation, data display, and drawing/verifying conclusion (Miles & Hubberman, 2014, p.31-33). Data analysis in this study was conducted in three stages, namely (a) data condensation, by selecting and focusing on data relevant to the research objectives; (b) data display, by presenting data in descriptive and narrative forms; and (c) drawing/verifying conclusion, namely interpreting research findings and ensuring their consistency with the data obtained.

In the data condensation stage, the researcher selected relevant observation notes, interview transcripts, and documentation that were relevant to the research focus, particularly how do fifth-grade students respond to the use of visual illustrations in English sentence writing activities and how do visual illustrations affect the way students understand and construct English sentences during the learning process. Observation data were reduced by identifying students, verbal responses (such as answering questions and expressing ideas) and nonverbal responses (such as paying attention to the visual illustrations, showing enthusiasm

and participating actively). Interview data were condensed by selecting statements related to students' perceptions, learning experience, and challenges in using visual illustrations. Documentation data were reduced by selecting students' worksheets and writing samples to identify how students' constructed sentences and understood the meaning of the visual illustrations.

In the data display stage, the data were organized into themes based on the research questions. The first theme focused on students' responses to the use of visual illustrations, including their motivation, enthusiasm, attention, and participation during the writing activities. The second theme focused on how visual illustrations helped students understand the context, generate ideas, and construct English sentences. In addition, challenges experienced by several students in interpreting the meaning of the illustrations and generating ideas were also categorized to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the learning process. Finally, conclusions were drawn by identifying patterns related to students respond to the use of visual illustrations in English sentence writing activities and how do visual illustrations affect the way students understand and construct English sentences during the learning process. Researchers also identified several challenges experienced by some students during the learning process to provide a more complete interpretation of the findings.

Data Validity

To ensure data validity, this study uses triangulation of data sources and methods. Triangulation of data sources is collecting data from various sources such as from different times, places, and informants. Triangulation of method is where researchers use several data collection methods, such as observation, interviews and documents (Miles & Hubberman, 2014, p. 262). Data source triangulation is conducted by Comparing data obtained not only from one student but from 25 fifth-grade students and one English teacher to obtain more reliable information about students' responses and learning experiences. method triangulation is conducted by comparing the results of observations, interviews, and documentation. Method triangulation was conducted by comparing the results of observations, interviews, and documentation. To answer the first research question about students' responses, the researcher used data from observations, interviews and documentation. Meanwhile, to answer the second research question regarding how visual illustrations affect students' understanding and sentence construction, the researcher used data from observations, interviews, and documentation. These steps were taken to increase the credibility of the research results.

Member checking was also conducted by confirming several interview results with the participants to ensure the accuracy of the data. Member checking is the process of asking research participants to ensure that the data and research results are in accordance with their experiences to ensure trustworthiness (Ary et al., 2010).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

How do fifth-grade students respond to the use of visual illustrations in English sentence writing activities at SDN Ponteh 1?

Implementation of Visual Illustrations in Teaching Activities

Based on observations made during the learning process, fifth-grade students at SDN Ponteh 1 responded positively to the use of visual illustrations in writing English sentences. Students appeared quite active during the learning process, both verbally and nonverbally. To clarify these findings, the results of observations of teacher and student activities are presented in the following table.

Table 1. Teacher Activity Observation

Observed Aspects	Yes	No	Notes
The teacher explains the purpose of using visual illustrations		✓	Teachers only explain the material

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The teacher displays or distributes visual illustrations clearly	✓	visual illustrations are printed and distributed to students one by one
The teacher gives easy-to-understand instructions	✓	
The teacher helps students understand the content of the visual illustrations	✓	
The teacher gives example sentences based on the visual illustrations	✓	
The teacher gives students the opportunity to ask questions	✓	The teacher answers all questions asked by students regarding the material and visual illustrations in easy-to-understand language.
The teacher provides feedback while students are writing sentences	✓	
The teacher motivates students during learning	✓	Teachers do not give words of motivation directly to students, but students are sufficiently motivated by the teaching methods used by teachers
The teacher uses learning time effectively	✓	
The teacher closes the lesson with a summary	✓	

Based on Table 1, it can be seen that the teacher has implemented most aspects of learning using visual illustrations well. The teacher provides clear instructions, helps students understand the content of the illustrations, provides example sentences, and provides opportunities for students to ask questions. However, the teacher has not directly provided verbal motivation to students, but even so, the learning method used has been sufficient to increase student learning motivation. In general, the teacher's activities indicate that the use of visual illustrations has been implemented quite well and regularly in teaching English sentence writing.

This finding is also supported by documentation showing students paying attention to the visual illustrations during the learning process.



Figure 1. Teacher Explain the Material Using Visual Illustrations

Before starting the lesson, the teacher provides visual illustrations such as pictures or illustrations obtained from the internet. Then, in class, the teacher explains the learning material using printed visual illustrations that are shown to the students. These visual illustrations are used as a starting point before the students were asked to write simple sentences in English, with the aim of helping them understand the context or get a clear picture and idea of what they will write in English sentences later on.



Figure 2. Visual Illustrations Used

Students' Verbal and Non-Verbal Responses toward Visual Illustrations

Students' responses during the lesson were also observed to determine how visual illustrations influenced their engagement in the learning process. The results of the student activity observations are presented in the following table.

Table 2. Students Activity Observation

Observed Aspects	Yes	No	Notes
Students pay attention to the visual illustrations carefully	✓		
Students ask questions related to the visual illustrations	✓		Students are very active in asking questions.
Students answer the teacher's questions about the visual illustrations	✓		
Students show enthusiasm while using the visual illustrations	✓		
Students discuss the visual illustrations with their peers	✓		Especially when there are questions from the teacher.
Students can verbally explain what they see in the visual illustrations	✓		Students also remember it easily.
Students show nonverbal responses (pointing, nodding, smiling, raising hand)	✓		
Students are able to write sentences based on the visual illustrations	✓		
Students appear more confident when writing sentences	✓		
Students complete the writing sentences task on time	✓		

Based on Table 2, it can be seen that students showed a very positive response to the use of visual illustrations. This is evident from the students' attention to the images provided by the teacher, their active participation in asking and answering questions during the learning process, and their ability to write sentences based on the illustrations provided. Furthermore, students also demonstrated nonverbal responses such as pointing to images, nodding, smiling, and raising their hands. These findings indicate that visual illustrations can increase students' active participation in learning.

The results from observation are also supported by interviews with several fifth-grade students at SDN Ponteh 1. The students revealed that with visual illustrations, writing sentences in English became easier, more interesting, enjoyable, and less boring. The students got ideas more quickly because they understood the context through the visual illustrations provided as aids. The students also revealed that their confidence in writing sentences in English had increased.

"Visual illustrations can help me understand the meaning of a question, make it easier to construct sentences in English, and make learning more enjoyable." (Mila)

"I feel happy when studying, especially when the visual illustrations used are cartoon images." (Sila)

"Visual illustrations can help me find ideas to write about, making writing sentences in English much more exciting and easier." (Fara)

"With the help of visual illustrations, I became more confident in writing English sentences. Learning to write in English turned out to be not as complicated as I had imagined, and I became more excited." (Indah)

"Learning also feels more enjoyable. I hope that in the future, teachers will use visual illustrations more often." (Putra)

"Learning to write using visual illustrations is very enjoyable and makes it easier for me, especially when working on questions to compose English sentences based on pictures. When my teacher uses visual illustrations, I feel happy and motivated to study longer." (Santi)

"I feel happy and excited when using visual illustrations." (Dhea)

"I feel happy when learning English using visual illustrations. Learning becomes more interesting, I become happier and more excited, and learning to write sentences also becomes more enjoyable." (Arin)

"If I were asked about my opinion, English is difficult, especially in writing, but even though it's difficult, I'm still like it because when the teacher use visual illustrations, writing sentences in English becomes easier and fun." (Caca)

"...I also became more confident in writing English sentences...." (Indah)

"...I became much more confident with my answers or the sentences I constructed..." (Ido)

"...I didn't find any difficulties and became more confident. Visual illustration made me want to continue learning." (Rafkha)

"...I also feel more confident about the sentences I write. In the future, I want to continue using pictures to learn English." (Isti)

"...Writing sentences in English has become easier and enjoyable. I feel more confident writing when there are pictures to guide me. The material taught by my teacher is also easy to understand and remember, which makes me even more enthusiastic about learning." (Caca)

Based on the interview results, it can be concluded that most students felt that visual illustrations made learning more enjoyable, engaging, and easier to understand. Students also stated that visual illustrations helped them to find ideas and increased their confidence in writing English sentences. This indicates that visual illustrations not only help cognitively but also increase students' motivation to learn.

However, a small number of students showed a different response. These students still gave positive responses, but they also expressed dissatisfaction with the method and the possibility of boredom if it was used continuously.

"...However, in the future, I hope there will be other ways to learn English, because if I keep using visual illustrations, someday I will get bored too." (Syifa)

"...But I think this method is a little boring. I prefer other methods that are more exciting, because sometimes I find it difficult to get clues and understand the meaning of the pictures." (Alif)

These findings indicate that although visual illustrations are effective for most students, teachers still need to consider a variety of learning methods to suit the various learning styles of students.

How do visual illustrations affect the way students understand and construct English sentences during the learning process at SDN Ponteh 1?

The Role of Visual Illustrations in Helping Students Construct English Sentences

To determine how visual illustrations help students understand context and construct English sentences, researchers also observed students' writing during the lesson. The results of these observations are presented in the following table.

Table 3. Observation of Students Writing Results

Observed Aspects	Yes	No
The sentence matches the content of the visual illustrations	✓	
Students use appropriate vocabulary	✓	

The simple sentence structure is correct	✓
Students are able to write sentences with minimal assistance	✓
There is improvement compared to previous writing that did not use visual illustrations.	✓

Based on Table 3, it can be seen that most of students were able to write simple sentences that aligned to the visual illustrations provided. They were also able to use appropriate vocabulary and use correct simple sentence structures. Furthermore, they were able to complete writing assignments with minimal assistance from the teacher. This indicates that visual illustrations help students understand the context before writing.

In addition to the observation results, the results of interviews with students also showed that visual illustrations helped them understand the context and find ideas before writing English sentences.

"Visual illustrations can help me understand the meaning of a question, making it easier to construct sentences in English." (Mila)

"...I can find ideas for writing more quickly because the clues are already in the picture...." (Syifa)

"I got a clues from the pictures, so I'm no longer confused about writing sentences in English." (Vivi)

"Visual illustrations help me find ideas to write about, making composing sentences in English much more exciting and easy. I no longer feel like it's a struggle." (Fara)

"I get a lot of clues from the pictures, so I am no longer confused about writing sentences in English. I can understand what to write because the visual illustrations give me ideas." (Vivi)

"When using visual illustrations like pictures, writing in English becomes easy because I understand quickly and get ideas." (Dhea).

"Using visual illustrations makes writing sentences in English easier. Visual illustrations help me construct sentences. Before using visual illustrations, I found writing in English very complicated, but after using visual illustrations, I no longer find it difficult." (Sila)

"Visual illustrations really help me write sentences in English." (Putra)

"Writing sentences in English becomes easier when using visual illustrations because I quickly understand the images and questions and get ideas to write about." (Rafkha)

"If the teacher uses visual illustrations, writing sentences in English becomes easy and enjoyable." (Caca)

Interview results with students showed that visual illustrations helped students grasp ideas more quickly, understand questions more easily, and reduce their difficulty in writing sentences in English. Based on this, it can be seen that visual illustrations act as a stimulus that can aid students' thinking processes.

In addition to interviews with students, the results of interviews with English teachers also strengthen the findings of this study.

"Some students in the fifth grade at SDN Ponteh 1 already have a good basic vocabulary, but nevertheless, they still often find it difficult to construct sentences in English." (Ms.Felycia)

"In my opinion, visual illustrations are very appropriate for elementary school students, because visual illustrations help students understand the context and find ideas before writing sentences in English. They also find it easier to remember the material." (Ms.Felycia)

"With visual illustrations, students become more enthusiastic, motivated, enjoy and do not get bored easily when they learn to write sentences in English which is usually considered difficult and boring. The students also understand the materials quickly and became more active both verbally and non verbally." (Ms.Felycia)

Based on interviews with teachers, visual illustrations were found to be very helpful for students in understanding context, discovering ideas, and increasing learning motivation. Teachers also stated that students became more active during the learning process.

The documentation also shows that students were actively writing sentences based on the given illustrations. The students' writing products indicate that they were able to construct simple English sentences based on the visual illustrations.

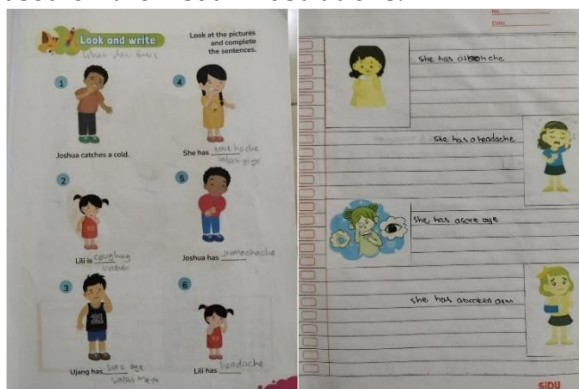


Figure 3. Student Worksheets and Student Writing Samples.

After the teacher finished explaining the material, the students were asked to complete a worksheet provided by the teacher. The documentation data shows that the students were able to complete the worksheet well based on the visual illustrations provided by the teacher. In this worksheet, students were asked to write simple sentences in English based on the pictures. Visual illustrations can help students understand the context and get ideas about what to write so that they can construct sentences in English well. This can be seen from the students' writing, which corresponds to the pictures or illustrations. They also use sentence structure and are able to choose appropriate vocabulary.

Challenges in the Use of Visual Illustrations

Several obstacles were also found in the use of visual illustrations in learning as expressed by several students in the interview results below.

"With visual illustrations, I can get the idea, but sometimes I can't, even though there are pictures as clues, I still don't understand." (Vivi)

"In my opinion, this method is boring. I prefer other methods that are more exciting, because sometimes I find it difficult to get clues and understand the meaning of the pictures." (Alif)

These findings indicate that not all students can immediately grasp the meaning of visual illustrations. Therefore, teachers need to provide additional guidance to students who experience difficulties.

In line with the statements from several students, teachers also encountered obstacles when teaching using visual illustrations.

"Each student has a different learning method. Some children are not comfortable with visual illustrations; they still feel confused and do not understand what the pictures mean. Therefore, I have to provide them with special guidance." (Ms.Felycia)

According to the results of interviews with teachers, the obstacles encountered were related to differences in students' learning styles. There were a small number of students who were not suited to using visual illustrations and still had difficulty understanding the meaning of the images provided. To address this obstacle, teachers had to provide special guidance to these students.

Discussion

Students' Verbal and Non-Verbal Responses toward Visual Illustrations

Based on the results of the study, visual illustrations had a positive impact on students' responses and their ability to understand and construct English sentences at SDN Ponteh 1. this is in line with research findings from (Sakunchinwattanachai et al., 2024) that explains that the use of illustrations is effective and can help students in learning English by providing an

interesting approach. The students also showed satisfaction with the use of illustrations for reading comprehension. Based on observations during the learning process, students responded positively both verbally and non-verbally. This is because students' interest in learning will increase with the use of visual illustrations (images/illustrations) (Fitria & Pratiwi, 2020). Visual illustrations can motivate students to learn to write sentences in English, in addition to that, students' memory, understanding and vocabulary mastery also increases, this is in line with research by (Sultangubieva & Adiletova, 2024). Verbally, the students showed high enthusiasm. They listened carefully to the teacher's explanations, actively asked questions, and answered the teacher's questions. In addition, non-verbally, students showed positive responses, such as raising their hands when they wanted to ask questions, nodding when they understood, smiling, pointing at pictures, and being more confident in writing English sentences. This shows that visual illustrations such as digital images/illustrations can create a more enjoyable and interesting learning atmosphere and support students' active involvement in learning to write English sentences.

Students' Perceptions of Visual Illustrations in Writing English Sentences

The results of interviews conducted with 15 fifth-grade students at SDN Ponteh 1 showed that on average, students stated that with visual illustrations, learning to write in English, which they initially thought was very difficult, became more enjoyable, interesting, and not boring. The majority of students said that visual illustrations motivated them to actively engage in learning to write sentences in English. One example is what was expressed by Mila, a fifth-grade student at SDN Ponteh 1, she said that visual illustrations can help her to understand the meaning of a question, make it easier to construct sentences in English, and make learning more enjoyable. Most of the other students also stated that visual illustrations helped them understand the context, making it easier for them to find ideas that would help them write English sentences. This positive response shows that, in addition to serving as a supporting medium, visual illustrations also increase students' motivation and confidence in writing sentences in English. The visual illustrations here can reduce students' anxiety when writing sentences in English (Zirak et al., 2022) students no longer feel hesitant because the visual illustrations have provided clues about what they should write.

The Role of Visual Illustrations in Helping Students Construct English Sentences

In terms of sentence structure, fifth graders at SDN Ponteh 1 are still learning to write simple sentences. Some students already have basic vocabulary knowledge, but still have difficulty when asked to write sentences in English. With visual illustrations, students can connect between abstract vocabulary and its concrete meaning. Compared to just using words only, using visual illustrations such as pictures, drawing or digital illustrations can make students to understand a word more easily, because they can associate the word with real-world contexts and make it easier for them to write sentences based on what they see. This finding is in line with Piaget's Concrete Operational Stage theory, which states that students aged 10-11 years old learn more easily through concrete and visual objects than through abstract concepts (Piaget in Rabindran & Madanagopal, 2020). This can be seen from the students' ability to write English sentences according to the content of the pictures, using the appropriate vocabulary and correct simple sentence structures independently without needing much help from the teacher.

The results of this study also support Dual Coding Theory by Paivio which states that Humans process information through two representational systems: verbal (words) and non-verbal (pictures or visuals) (Clark & Pivio, 1991; Wooten et al., 2024). Students not only receive verbal explanations of the material from the teacher, but also receive visual illustrations in the form of pictures and digital illustrations provided by the teacher. This combination helps students process information more effectively, making it easier for them to understand the context and construct English sentences based on the visual illustrations provided. These results are also align with previous studies by (Ajibade, 2012), visual illustrations can make the learning process more interesting so that students quickly understand the learning material.

From the interview conducted with Ms. Felycia, an English teacher at SDN Ponteh 1, the use of visual illustrations in teaching elementary school students, including fifth graders, how to write sentences in English is very appropriate, because visual illustrations can help students to understand the context and find ideas before writing sentences in English. They also find it easier to remember the material. With visual illustrations, students become more enthusiastic, motivated, enjoyed, and do not easily get bored when learning to write sentences in English, which is usually considered difficult and boring. They also understand the materials quickly and became more active both verbally and non-verbally. Visual illustrations such as pictures and digital images can help students improve their writing skills by helping them find ideas, expand their vocabulary, and organize their writing (Dewi, 2025). Furthermore, images can help students construct sentences more clearly and purposefully (Rahmadani et al., 2025). With the ideas obtained with the help of visual illustrations, students can write sentences in English in a more organized and clear way.

However, there were several obstacles encountered in this study. Some students, such as Vivi and Alif, stated that the repeated use of visual illustrations could make them feel bored and confused about the meaning of the pictures. Alif himself said that he often found it difficult to draw conclusions from the pictures. These results show that, although it is true that visual illustrations can help most students, learning style preferences remain an issue that needs to be addressed. Teachers need to vary the use of visual illustrations with other interpersonal methods so that learning remains interesting and accommodates all student styles.

Overall, the results of this study are in line with previous findings that visual illustrations can increase student motivation, understanding, and writing skills. Visual illustrations help students find ideas, understand context, and construct sentences with more confidence. Students also showed very positive responses to the use of visual illustrations in learning to write English sentences. Therefore, the use of visual illustrations can be an effective learning strategy in teaching English sentence writing in elementary schools, especially for students who are still in the concrete thinking stage.

CONCLUSIONS

This study indicates that the use of visual illustrations plays a significant role in supporting English sentence writing among elementary-level EFL students. The findings indicate that students showed both affective and cognitive responses during the learning process. Affective responses were reflected in students' active participation, enthusiasm, and engagement, while cognitive responses were evident in their ability to understand context, generate ideas, and construct sentences based on the visual input. The results showed that visual illustrations not only encourage active student participation during the learning process but also help students understand the context and express ideas in written form. By connecting abstract language concepts with concrete visual representations, students are able to construct sentences more meaningfully and confidently. However, the findings also indicate that not all students benefit equally from visual illustrations, as some have difficulty interpreting images due to different learning styles. Therefore, teachers need to provide additional guidance and combine visual illustrations with other teaching strategies to accommodate diverse students. Overall, visual illustrations can be considered an effective and engaging approach to teaching English sentence writing at the elementary school level if implemented appropriately.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to express sincere gratitude to the principal, the English teacher, and the fifth-grade students of SDN Ponteh 1 for their cooperation and participation in this study. Special appreciation is extended to the English teacher for the valuable support and assistance during the data collection process. The author also wishes to thank the academic supervisors and all parties who provided guidance, suggestions, and encouragement throughout the completion of this research and the preparation of this manuscript.

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