

Enhancing young learners' english vocabulary learning with gamified flashcards: A community service at SD St. Theresia Marsudirini 77 Salatiga

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Abstract

English learning for young learners requires concrete, interactive, and age-appropriate learning materials. The use of gamified flashcards, combined with audiovisual learning, is an effective method. Twenty-eight second-grade students at St. Theresia Marsudirini 77 Elementary School in Salatiga participated in this community service program. The student group conducted classroom observations, interviewed English teachers, and created modified flashcards for the games *Act It Out* and *Fast Four*. Results showed that students were enthusiastic, actively participated, and were able to remember and use vocabulary in simple contexts. Teacher feedback confirmed that the flashcards were easy to understand, well-designed, and appropriate for the students' needs. Despite limitations such as the need for simpler instructions for young children, the program demonstrated that creative teaching tools and gamification can make English learning more enjoyable, meaningful, and effective. The program emphasized the importance of using physical visual aids in early English education to support vocabulary development and build children's confidence in communication.

Keywords: Young Learners, Audio Visual Aids, Vocabulary Learning, Gamification

Abstrak

Pembelajaran bahasa Inggris untuk anak-anak membutuhkan materi pembelajaran yang konkret, interaktif, dan sesuai usia. Penggunaan kartu flash yang dimodifikasi, dikombinasikan dengan pembelajaran audiovisual, merupakan metode yang efektif. Dua puluh delapan siswa kelas dua di Sekolah Dasar St. Theresia Marsudirini 77 di Salatiga berpartisipasi dalam program pengabdian masyarakat ini. Kelompok mahasiswa melakukan observasi kelas, mewawancarai guru bahasa Inggris, dan membuat kartu flash yang dimodifikasi untuk permainan *Act It Out* dan *Fast Four*. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa siswa antusias, berpartisipasi aktif, dan mampu mengingat serta menggunakan kosakata dalam konteks sederhana. Umpan balik guru mengonfirmasi bahwa kartu flash mudah dipahami, dirancang dengan baik, dan sesuai dengan kebutuhan siswa. Terlepas dari keterbatasan seperti kebutuhan akan instruksi yang lebih sederhana untuk anak-anak kecil, program ini menunjukkan bahwa alat pengajaran kreatif dan gamifikasi dapat membuat pembelajaran bahasa Inggris lebih menyenangkan, bermakna, dan efektif. Program ini menekankan pentingnya penggunaan alat bantu visual fisik dalam pendidikan bahasa Inggris usia dini untuk mendukung pengembangan kosakata dan membangun kepercayaan diri anak-anak dalam berkomunikasi.

Kata kunci: Anak-anak, Alat Audio Visual, Pembelajaran Kosakata, Gamifikasi

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1. Introduction

Audio-Visual Aids (AVAs) have become essential in English language classrooms. AVAs are media that combine sound and visual elements, engaging both the senses of hearing and sight, and are used in the classroom to enhance students' ability to absorb materials and create a more interactive and effective learning environment (Indrayanti et al., 2023). AVAs include blurbs, graphics, recordings, diagrams, flashcards, and films (Namaziandost & Nasri, 2019). The use of AVA in teaching and learning not only increases learners' motivation and confidence but also serves as a supplementary tool to emphasize the lessons and make classroom activities more enjoyable (Waad & Younus, 2022). In addition, a study by Al-aqad et al. (2021) found that AVAs improve English language acquisition by providing meaningful lessons and a variety of methods that encourage participation and enhance effectiveness. AVAs are also a vital and fruitful teaching tool for learning English as they keep students' attention, expand their vocabulary, and help them become more confident and fluent speakers (Wazeema & Kareema, 2017).

In English language classes, AVAs are also important, especially for young learners. To effectively introduce new concepts to young learners, teachers need to provide concrete, engaging experiences that develop independence, self-confidence, and skills such as questioning and discovery (Yilmaz et al., 2024). These experiences make language learning more impactful. Young learners learn not only from explanations but also from what they see, hear, and, most importantly, from being able to touch and engage with the learning materials (Harmer, 2007, p.82). The use of physical visual aids, including three-dimensional (3D) objects, is more effective in helping young learners to learn. Visual teaching aids provide children with direct sensory experiences that help young learners process information, construct mental models linked to their environment, and develop motivation to explore and learn (Lo & Wang, 2024). These hands-on engagements maintain learners' attention, memory, and active participation, while also making learning more enjoyable (Nguyen & Pham, 2024; Oladele, 2024). Therefore, incorporating AVAs into early education is crucial for language development and for building motivation and confidence in communication, as elementary schools do not frequently employ AVAs to their full potential.

Despite the widespread recognition of AVAs as useful resources for learning English, elementary school students still need physical visual aids to gain maximum benefit from the classroom learning process. Strong visual signals help learners better understand and remember content when it is presented visually (Alabi, 2024). Without visual aids, it can hinder students' ability to actively engage in classroom activities. This underscores the need for practical methods that emphasize hands-on AVAs in early English language learning, as experienced by the students at SD St. Theresia Marsudirini 77, Salatiga. To meet the need, the primary school joined hands with the English Language Education Program at Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana in a community service program titled "Optimizing the Use of AVAs to Teach English to Young Learners." This community service project is based on an implementation study showcasing the practical use of Audio-Visual Aids (AVAs) in early English language

learning. By using gamified flashcards as physical visual aids, the program at SD St. Theresia Marsudirini 77, Salatiga, effectively translates theory into classroom practice to meet learners' needs. The study highlights that AVAs are more than just theoretical tools, they serve as impactful materials that enhance vocabulary learning.

The purpose of this community service project is to support teachers and learners by implementing physical visual aids (gamified flashcards) at SD St. Theresia Marsudirini 77, Salatiga, especially in Grade 2. This project aims to improve students' vocabulary acquisition, as indicated by Putri et al. (2023) that flashcard usage boosts students' English vocabulary understanding better. Additionally, Wulandari (2025) proved that flashcards improve language acquisition by matching words to pictures and strengthening memory through repetition.

2. Method

This community service program was part of the Audio-Visual Aids for Language Teaching class in the academic year 2025/2026, from the English Language Education Program at Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana. The student team consisted of four students and one lecturer, and started the program in the second week of January 2026. The program began with the student team receiving a briefing to observe and interview a school about the use of audiovisual aids (AVAs) in their English class. The purpose of this step was to gain information about the AVA needs of the teacher and students at the target school. The target audience for this community service was 28 second-grade students at a Catholic elementary school called SD St. Theresia Marsudirini 77 in Salatiga, Central Java.

The student team worked collaboratively under the supervision of a lecturer, with each member assigned specific responsibilities to ensure the program's effectiveness: Student 1 contacted the school and teacher, developed the product ideas, and led the classroom demonstration; Student 2 managed the observation checklist, recorded classroom data, and supported product development; Student 3 also handled observation notes and took a led the demonstration of the product to students; Student 4 documented all community service activities, led the teacher interview for needs analysis, and designed the visual aspects of the product using *Canva*. This clear division of responsibilities made coordination more convenient and ensured that the program met the target school's pedagogical and practical needs. The team aims to see how AVAs improve students' English vocabulary.

The student team reached out to the English teacher and requested permission to conduct an observation and interview there. This communication was done on January 21, 2026, through *WhatsApp*. Then, the team received permission to conduct the class observation and interview on January 28, 2026.

Observation

The team created a checklist to help them see how the AVAs were used in class during the observation session. The list includes questions about the facilities and circumstances of the school, as well as the students' and teachers' needs, as shown in Figure 1.

1. **School Conditions & Facilities:**
 - **AVA tools:** Whiteboard, projector, speakers, computer, posters, flashcards, digital devices
 - **Technical support:** Internet support for AVAs? YouTube, downloaded videos, wordwall, spinwheel
 - **Resource availability:** Are AVAs provided by the school or self-made by teachers?
 - **School support:** Does the school encourage AVA use or provide training for teachers?
2. **Learners' Needs:**
 - **Students' engagement:** Are students attentive, motivated, and participating actively? Interested when watching video
 - **Language proficiency:** How well do students understand and use English? They can repeat what the video says ex. "When I say ..."; they can repeat the teachers' pronunciation; they can match the adjectives with the pictures given; they can read the simple sentences correctly (good pronunciation and can write their own sentences well according to the adjective paper given)
 - **Learning styles:** Do students respond better to visuals, audio, movement, or text? They respond to the video, so yes
 - **Challenges observed:** What difficulties do students face when using English (pronunciation, vocabulary, comprehension, confidence)? Most of them wants to try speaking in English, but there's one who is shy because he's still learning to read so the teacher guides him
3. **Teachers' Needs: ✓**
 - **Teaching methods:** What strategies are used to teach English? Mix (teacher n student centered), eliciting before starting an activity, game based learning
 - **Use of AVAs:** Are audio-visual aids used effectively? Yes, use video, flashcard, spinwheel for picking students randomly (who will read in front)
 - **Classroom management:** How does the teacher handle discipline, attention, and participation? Use "1, 2 eyes on me" for getting students' attention, give chances for those who haven't answered her questions, point out students who make noises when someone is speaking but let them talk with their friends when teaching

Figure 1. Observation Checklist Used by The Student's Team

On January 28, 2026, at 09.30 AM, the class started. The teacher introduced the topic, which was adjectives. She engaged students through videos, including a song video called *The Opposite Song*, to practice pronunciation and opposites. Learners then worked with a set of 16 adjectives given by the teacher. Practiced recognition and played a memory game using *Wordwall*. After that, they did a mini picture quiz using *Bamboozle*.

After playing, students practiced describing their classmates with he and she sentences using the previous 16 adjectives. The teacher also gave them the opportunity to practice reading in front of the class. The session then concluded with repeating *The Opposite Song*.

Based on the classroom observation, the second-grade students at SD St. Theresia Marsudirini 77 showed enthusiasm when learning through songs, games, and interactive lessons, as well as active participation and a strong willingness to engage in the activities provided by their teacher. The English teacher further stated that this class of students has a strong interest in learning English, as evidenced by their willingness to practice basic sentence structures and discover new vocabulary. Their high level of energy, interest in engagement, and positive views on learning English reveal their potential to gain much from interactive, gamified visual aids that can sustain their concentration and channel their enthusiasm toward meaningful language acquisition.

Interview

The student team and the English teacher did the interview in the school library. The team asked the teacher using a list of 20 questions they had made beforehand, as listed in Figure 2.

1. Do the teachers make lesson plans before class? Yes.
2. What book/e-book used as the reference material? Books from the government and add things from the internet. She doesn't use exercises from the government book because the level is too easy for the students at this school so she makes more challenging exercises.
3. How would you describe the English proficiency level of most Grade 2 students? Most students' English is very good. Only one or two students who have difficulties so others can follow the lessons easily.
4. What are the most common difficulties students face when learning English (e.g., vocabulary, pronunciation, attention span)? Speaking because they are shy and unconfident.
5. How motivated are students during English lessons? By using games, students are eager to learn. They always ask what games they will play at the beginning before class starts. But the teachers still balance the learning process by alternating game time.
6. How does the teacher make the activities suitable for each class? Finding exercises that can boost the class needs. For example, in grade three, it is hard to ask them to speak in English so the teacher give activities that require

Figure 2. A Few Interview Questions Used by The Student Team

The team conducted the interview and recorded the voice for needs analysis purposes. The interview results showed that teachers prepared lesson plans, drawing from government books and online resources to create more challenging exercises to suit the elementary students' strong English proficiency. While most Grade 2 learners follow lessons easily, speaking remains the main difficulty due to shyness, though games and AVAs, such as videos, songs, and pictures, help motivate participation and build confidence. Teachers adapt activities to class needs, provide extra support for struggling students, and regularly use audiovisual media. Which they have been trained to apply effectively. It really helped the team answer the questions used in the report they prepared after conducting the observation and interview at the school.

Moreover, after the student team reported back to their lecturer on the observation and interview results, they were instructed to create visual aids for second-grade students as the second project.

Designing The Game

On February 4, 2026, the student team decided to make gamified flashcards containing the 16 adjectives for *Act It Out*, a game in which players guess the word shown on the card by describing it without saying the actual word. The selection of gamified flashcards was based on the concepts of gamification and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Flashcards allow active recall and multisensory learning (visual, kinesthetic, and verbal), while gamification encourages motivation, peer interaction, and meaningful language use. The team added another rule: describe only using face

expressions, body language, and hand gestures, or describe using all of those. The lecturer gave them ideas for the game *Quartet*, in which players must collect four cards of the same category. Then, the team rebranded the game name from *Quartet* to *Fast Four*. They changed it to match the original game name and how the game goes; players have to collect four cards as fast as they can, and a quartet is four.

Since that day, the student team started designing the game using *Canva*. They started by designing the flashcard. Using different card background colors, interesting pictures made from Canva elements, and clear fonts so students can read easily. The student team named the whole game *Express Four*. Express from the *Act It Out*: expressing the adjectives using what is written on the card. And, four from the *Fast Four*; collecting four of the same adjective cards. Figure 3 shows the final product that the team made. The team made the visuals colorful to attract learners' interest during learning.



Figure 3. Express Four Cards and Packaging Design

Aside from playing both games, it could be used for vocabulary drilling. By showing each card to students, they could focus on clear pronunciation, picture recognition, and practice with antonyms. Additionally, as a tool to help make simple sentences, such as “My mom is beautiful” or “My dog is fast.”

3. Results

On February 18, 2026, the student team visited the school again to conduct simulations of the fun activities using the gamified flashcards they had created for 1 lesson period (35 minutes). Again, the purpose of these gamified flashcard activities is to increase students' vocabulary and speaking confidence through interactive flashcard activities and multimedia learning (Khan, 2022). The team started the session with a short review. During it, the team triggered the students by asking, “Do you remember the adjectives that you have learned previously?” and they successfully answered with various adjectives. At first, the plan was to involve six students as the samples, but

following the teacher's suggestion, the simulation was extended to the entire class. This adjustment led to greater participation and allowed us to observe how the activities worked in a larger group setting.



Figure 4. Act It Out Demonstration

Figure 4 represents the teams' demonstration in class. Students could implement the rules of the game with the guidance of the student team. During the first activity, *Act It Out*, students demonstrated a good recall of previously learned adjectives. With guidance from the English teacher, six students (three boys and three girls) participated in the first round, followed by the whole class. The students showed enthusiasm, particularly in guessing and answering during the activity. Most of them wanted to answer, so they raised their hands, waiting to get picked by the student team. This suggests that gamified learning strategies can effectively stimulate engagement and increase vocabulary knowledge (Syamsiyah & Ma'rifatulloh, 2023; Wulantari et al., 2023).

The second activity, *Fast Four*, was conducted the following day, on February 19, 2026, with four students during break time. Figure 5 represents students' contributions in demonstrating the game at school. Initially, the students struggled with instructions, but after practice, they began to play independently. Interestingly, rather than competing, these four students engaged in cooperative behavior, sharing cards and helping one another. The activity successfully encouraged students to use simple English expressions, such as "Do you have...?", in their responses to peers.

The teacher's feedback on the community service activity was highly positive. She stated that the flashcards and activities were useful and suitable for lower-grade students, such as second graders, because they were clear, simple, and visually appealing. According to her, integrating games and multimedia made the learning process more enjoyable and interesting. The students were not only listening, but also doing activities. She also explained that the activities provided opportunities for students to practice speaking. Even though many students gave short answers, they were willing to try. She emphasized that learning through games made the students more active, excited, and motivated during the lesson. Regarding the specific activities,

the *Act It Out* game was considered highly effective. The teacher shared that she had implemented similar games in both grades. The card-based game *Fast Four* was also considered interesting and well-prepared. And she pointed out that it would likely be more effective in higher grades, particularly for students who can understand the rules of the game more quickly.



Figure 5. Fast Four Demonstration

However, there were still some challenges. The limited number of flashcards led the team to conduct the activities in small groups rather than involving the entire class. Although this required extra preparation, it enabled more effective student participation. Some students also needed clearer instructions to understand the rules of the games. To address this, the team simplified the instructions, provided clear demonstrations, and conducted brief simulations before starting the games. Overall, this project demonstrates that simple, creative teaching media can make English learning more meaningful for young learners and help them acquire vocabulary.

4. Conclusion

This project provides a practical illustration of how gamified flashcards and multimedia activities can be integrated into real classroom contexts to support vocabulary acquisition and gradually foster speaking confidence among young learners. Evidence drawn from classroom observations and teacher feedback indicates that students were motivated to participate, collaborate, and practice pronunciation through interactive games such as *Act It Out* and *Fast Four*. While the approach enhanced engagement and offered meaningful learning experiences, certain limitations were observed, including the limited number of flashcards and the need for clearer instructions. These findings highlight both the potential and the challenges of using interactive visual aids in early English education, suggesting that with more materials and simpler rules, participation could be broadened and effectiveness further enhanced.

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