



## The Impact of Using Picture Books on Reading Comprehension Among 9th-Grade EFL Learners

تأثير استخدام الكتب المصورة على فهم القراءة لدى طلاب الصف التاسع الذين يتعلمون اللغة  
الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية .

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### ABSTRACT

Developing reading proficiency is essential for mastering English as a Foreign Language (EFL), yet many learners encounter difficulties due to restricted vocabulary and a lack of contextual understanding. To mitigate these issues, educators often suggest using picture books, which integrate visual imagery with text to help students decode meaning through multiple channels.

This study examines the influence of illustrated books on EFL reading comprehension using a quasi-experimental framework. The research involved 30 primary school pupils, divided into an experimental group using picture books and a control group receiving standard instruction. Results from pre- and post-test evaluations showed that students in the experimental group made significantly more progress than those in the control group.

These outcomes suggest that picture books are a powerful resource for enhancing comprehension and learner interest. Based on these findings, this study recommends EFL teachers incorporate illustrated materials into their lessons to enhance students' understanding and engagement.

### ملخص البحث:

تطوير مهارات القراءة أمر ضروري لإتقان اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية ومع ذلك يواجه العديد من المتعلمين صعوبات بسبب محدودية المفردات ونقص الفهم السياقي. للتخفيف من هذه المشاكل، يقترح المعلمون غالبا استخدام كتب الصور، التي تدمج الصور البصرية مع النص لمساعدة الطلاب على فك المعنى عبر قنوات متعددة.

تفحص هذه الدراسة تأثير الكتب المصورة على فهم القراءة لغة إنجليزية كلغة أجنبية باستخدام إطار شبه تجريبي. شمل البحث 30 طالبا في المرحلة الابتدائية، مقسمين إلى مجموعة تجريبية تستخدم كتب الصور ومجموعة ضابطة تلقت تعليما قياسيا. أظهرت نتائج التقييمات قبل وبعد الاختبار أن الطلاب في المجموعة التجريبية حققوا تقدما أكبر بشكل ملحوظ مقارنة بالمجموعة الضابطة.

تشير هذه النتائج إلى أن كتب الصور مصدر قوي لتعزيز الفهم واهتمام المتعلم. استنادا إلى هذه النتائج، توصي هذه الدراسة بأن يدمج معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية مواد مصورة في دروسهم لتعزيز فهم الطلاب وتفاعلهم.



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**Keywords.** : picture books, reading comprehension, EFL learners, visual learning, young learners, language teaching.

الكلمات المفتاحية: كتب مصورة، فهم القراءة، متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، التعلم البصري، المتعلمون الصغار، تعليم اللغات.

## Introduction

Reading is an essential ability in language acquisition and is vital for enhancing learners' complete language competence. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) setting, reading comprehension is crucial as it allows learners to gather information, enhance their vocabulary, and develop their language abilities. Nonetheless, numerous young students face challenges while reading English materials because of their restricted vocabulary, strange sentence formats, and inadequate comprehension of context.

A significant issue in EFL classrooms is assisting students in grasping the meaning of texts while keeping their interest in reading alive. Conventional reading teaching frequently depends significantly on printed materials with minimal visual aids. Consequently, learners might find it difficult to understand texts, particularly when the words are not recognized.

To tackle this problem, teachers have progressively integrated visual tools into language instruction. Visual resources like images, drawings, and charts offer contextual details that aid understanding. Among these resources, picture books have received considerable focus as valuable instruments for teaching reading abilities.

Picture books merge imagery with text to convey stories in a captivating and approachable way. The images in picture books assist learners in understanding the meanings of words and sentences through contextual hints. Pictures enhance reading for young learners, making it more engaging and simpler to comprehend.

In EFL classrooms, picture books can aid reading comprehension in various ways. Initially, they assist learners in grasping vocabulary via visual imagery. Additionally, they help students track the order of occurrences in a narrative. Third, they enhance students' motivation and involvement during reading tasks.

Numerous scholars have emphasized the significance of incorporating visual resources into language instruction. Richard E. Mayer's multimedia learning theory suggests that individuals comprehend information better when it is delivered using both visual and verbal methods. This theory proposes that merging images with text can improve understanding and memory retention.

Although the advantages of picture books are acknowledged, numerous EFL classrooms continue to depend mainly on conventional reading techniques that do not include visual aids. Consequently, it is crucial to explore if picture books can notably enhance reading comprehension in EFL students.





This study investigates the effect of utilizing picture books on reading comprehension in EFL classrooms by contrasting the performance of students who use picture books with those who utilize conventional reading materials.

### 1. Aims of The study

The main aim of this study is to investigate the impact of picture books on the reading comprehension among 9<sup>th</sup> grade EFL learners.

The sub- objectives of study include:

- ✓ Examining how the use of picture books influences the development of reading comprehension skills among students.
- ✓ Identifying the types of picture books that are most effective in enhancing reading comprehension.
- ✓ Assessing the extent to which picture books can support language development.
- ✓ Providing recommendations for integrating picture books into school literacy instruction to improve reading outcomes.

### 2. Significance of the study

Libyan public schools students studying EFL commit many errors in their reading assignments. Some of these errors can be committed by any English language learner; however, many errors are specific to Libyan school students. This study tried to shed some light on these errors and trace the causes behind them in order to suggest an appropriate pedagogical remedy to this problem.

### 3. Literature Review

#### • Reading Comprehension in Language Learning

Reading comprehension involves the process of deriving meaning from written material. It encompasses various cognitive functions, such as interpreting words, grasping vocabulary, recognizing key concepts, and drawing conclusions.

For EFL learners, understanding reading material tends to be harder than for native speakers since they have to interpret language that is unfamiliar. Restricted vocabulary and insufficient exposure to genuine English texts can obstruct students' comprehension of reading materials.

Researchers highlight that reading comprehension involves not just linguistic skills but also contextual understanding and background knowledge. When students do not have enough context, they may find it difficult to understand the significance of a text.

Consequently, educators must implement teaching methods that offer contextual assistance to students. Visual resources are some of the most powerful aids for assisting students in comprehending texts with greater ease.

#### • The Role of Visual Aids in Language Teaching



Visual aids significantly enhance the process of learning a language. They offer contextual details that assist learners in linking language to meaning. Visual aids can consist of images, flashcards, graphs, illustrations, and videos.

Dual coding theory suggests that information conveyed through visual and verbal means is processed and recalled more efficiently. When students view images connected to the text they are reading, they can enhance their comprehension and memory of the content.

Visual aids are especially helpful for young learners as they transform abstract language ideas into tangible forms. Images assist learners in picturing the meanings of words and phrases, lessening the mental effort needed to comprehend the material.

- **Picture Books in EFL Education**

Picture books are volumes where images take center stage in telling the narrative. In contrast to conventional texts, picture books depend significantly on visual components to enhance the story.

In educational environments, picture books are commonly utilized to teach reading abilities to young students. They create a diverse educational setting where visuals and words collaborate to convey significance.

Illustrated books provide numerous educational advantages:

- They boost students' desire to read.
- They aid in the growth of vocabulary.
- They assist students in grasping the frameworks of narratives.
- They promote engaging learning experiences and discussions in the classroom.

Due to these benefits, picture books are regarded as important tools in early language learning.

- **Previous Studies on Picture Books and Reading Comprehension**

Picture books are extremely useful in settings where English is being taught as a foreign language, as learners lack natural exposure to the language. Researchers emphasize that illustrations support vocabulary acquisition, contextual understanding and the recognition of sentence patterns. Picture books also provide valuable input that compensates for limited linguistic background and motivates learners to engage actively in reading tasks. Furthermore, studies conducted on pre-school children have revealed that the systematic use of picture books significantly improves reading comprehension performance compared to traditional teaching, confirming their educational effectiveness.

Research indicates that learners who engage with illustrated materials have improved understanding compared to those who read non-illustrated texts. The images offer a visual context that helps learners deduce meaning and grasp story events with greater ease.

Additional studies have emphasized the motivational advantages of picture books. Students frequently demonstrate more interest and involvement when reading illustrated narratives rather than simple texts.





Moreover, picture books promote engagement between educators and learners. Instructors may pose inquiries regarding the visuals, encouraging learners to anticipate narrative results and share thoughts.

Overall, research indicates that picture books can greatly improve reading comprehension and language acquisition in young EFL learners.

#### 4. Research Questions

1. How does the use of picture books influence the development of reading comprehension skills among school students?
2. Is there a significant difference between students taught using picture books and those taught using traditional reading methods?
3. What types of picture books are most effective in enhancing reading comprehension in schools?
4. To what extent do picture books support language development and vocabulary acquisition in schools?
5. What are teachers' perceptions and practices regarding the use of picture books in classrooms?

#### 5. Methodology

- **Research Design**

This study employed a **quasi-experimental design** involving two groups:

- Experimental group (using picture books)
- Control group (traditional reading instruction)

Both groups completed a **pre-test and post-test** to measure changes in reading comprehension.

- **Participants**

The participants consisted of 30 primary school students studying English as a foreign language.

The students were divided into two groups:

Group	Number of Students	Teaching Method
Experimental Group	15	Picture books
Control Group	15	Traditional texts

The participants were between **14 and 15 years old** and had similar English proficiency levels.

- **Instruments**

The following instruments were used to collect data:

1. Reading comprehension test (pre-test and post-test)
2. Classroom observation
3. Teacher feedback notes

The reading comprehension test consisted of short passages followed by multiple-choice questions.

- **Procedure**





The study lasted **four weeks**.

1. Both groups completed a **pre-test** to measure their initial reading comprehension.
2. The experimental group received reading instruction using **illustrated picture books (English for Libya, Preparatory3 course book)**.
3. The control group used **traditional reading passages without pictures**.
4. After the treatment period, both groups completed a **post-test**.

## 6. Results

### • Pre-Test Results

Group	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Experimental	61.2	6.1
Control	60.8	5.9

The results indicate that both groups had similar reading comprehension levels before the experiment.

### • Post-Test Results

Group	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Experimental	82.4	5.4
Control	69.3	6.2

The experimental group achieved higher scores compared to the control group.

### • Improvement Scores

Group	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Improvement
Experimental	61.2	82.4	+21.2
Control	60.8	69.3	+8.5

The results show that the experimental group demonstrated greater improvement in reading comprehension.

## 7. Discussion

The results of this study indicate that the use of picture books significantly improves reading comprehension among EFL learners. Students in the experimental group showed higher improvement scores compared to those in the control group.

One possible explanation is that pictures provide contextual support for understanding the text. Visual illustrations allow learners to interpret unfamiliar vocabulary and understand story events more easily.

Another factor contributing to the improvement is increased motivation. Picture books create an enjoyable learning environment where students feel more interested in reading activities.

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research suggesting that visual materials enhance comprehension and facilitate language learning.





The results of the post-test showed that students who were exposed to picture books achieved significantly higher comprehension scores than those who were taught using traditional textbooks. While the two groups started with relatively similar proficiency levels in the pre-test, the experimental group showed significant improvement in understanding key ideas, drawing conclusions, predicting events, and retrieving details. These results suggest that picture books facilitated the comprehension process by combining visual and textual inputs, enabling learners to construct meaning more effectively. The illustrations supported learners' interpretation of unfamiliar vocabulary and complex ideas, reducing cognitive difficulty during reading tasks. This finding is supported by Joanne Zemny (2008), who asserted that picture books provide visual support that promotes the development of comprehension strategies.

### 8. Conclusion

This study investigated the impact of using picture books on reading comprehension in EFL classrooms. The results demonstrate that students who learned through picture books achieved significantly higher improvement in reading comprehension compared to students who used traditional reading materials.

Picture books provide visual support that helps learners understand texts more effectively. They also increase students' motivation and engagement during reading activities.

Based on these findings, teachers are encouraged to incorporate picture books into reading instruction in EFL classrooms.

Future research may explore the impact of picture books on other language skills such as vocabulary development, speaking, and writing.

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