

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF VOCABULARY MEMORY THROUGH SHORT ANIMATED VIDEOS AS AN ENGLISH LEARNING MEDIA

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Article History Submission: May 30, 2026 Review: June 13, 2026 Revised: June 18, 2026 Accepted: June 20, 2026 Published: June 24, 2026	The purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions and live experiences of fifth-grade students regarding their vocabulary memory retention when short animated videos (3–5 minutes) were integrated as learning media. The method used is descriptive qualitative with a case study design. The research data were gathered at SD N 17 Palembang through semi-structured interviews, non-participant classroom observations, and simple stimulated recall tasks. The participants were selected through purposive sampling, focusing on six expressive fifth-graders. The results of the thematic analysis showed that the students possessed highly positive perceptions and vivid cognitive experiences. The implementation of short animated videos successfully transformed vocabulary learning from a text-heavy chore into an active visual stimulation, facilitated dual-sensory anchoring via the dual-coding of visual movements (<i>imagens</i>) and auditory cues (<i>logogens</i>), contextualized vocabulary through narrative placement, and drastically lowered the students' affective filter by minimizing learning anxiety. In relation to the results of the study, it is suggested for primary English teachers to transition from rote-memorization drills to context-rich, brief multimedia integration to optimize young learners' long-term lexical retention. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk menginvestigasi persepsi dan pengalaman langsung siswa kelas lima mengenai retensi memori kosakata mereka ketika video animasi pendek (3–5 menit) diintegrasikan sebagai media pembelajaran. Metode yang digunakan adalah deskriptif kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus. Data penelitian dikumpulkan di SD N 17 Palembang melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur, observasi kelas non-partisipan, dan tugas <i>stimulated recall</i> sederhana. Partisipan dipilih menggunakan teknik <i>purposive sampling</i> yang berfokus pada enam siswa kelas lima yang ekspresif. Hasil analisis tematik menunjukkan bahwa siswa memiliki persepsi yang sangat positif dan pengalaman

	kognitif yang kuat. Implementasi video animasi pendek berhasil mengubah pembelajaran kosakata dari tugas berbasis teks yang menjemukan menjadi stimulasi visual yang aktif, memfasilitasi penjangkaran ganda sensorik melalui pembentukan kode visual gerakan (<i>imagens</i>) dan isyarat auditori (<i>logogens</i>), mengkontekstualisasikan kosakata melalui penempatan narasi, serta menurunkan <i>affective filter</i> siswa secara drastis dengan meminimalkan kecemasan belajar. Terkait dengan hasil penelitian, disarankan bagi guru bahasa Inggris dasar untuk beralih dari latihan hafalan mekanis ke integrasi multimedia pendek yang kaya konteks guna mengoptimalkan retensi leksikal jangka panjang anak.
Keywords	<i>Short Animated Videos; Vocabulary Memory; Young Learners; Case Study.</i> <i>Video Animasi Pendek; Memori Kosakata; Pembelajar Anak; Studi Kasus</i>

Introduction

English is an important language that must be mastered by every student who wants to succeed in their studies or for their future because English plays a role as a means of global communication, science, technology, and academic advancement. Recognizing this vital importance, the educational system in Indonesia has increasingly integrated English instruction at the primary school level, either as a local content subject (*muatan lokal*) or as an integral part of the emerging *Kurikulum Merdeka* framework. In the architecture of foreign language acquisition, vocabulary is universally recognized as the foundational building block. As noted by linguist David Wilkins (1972), while very little can be conveyed without grammar, absolutely nothing can be conveyed without vocabulary. Vocabulary mastery is directly proportional to a learner's ability to develop the four core language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

However, teaching English vocabulary to young learners (YL), particularly fifth-graders who are typically aged between 10 and 11 years old, presents a unique set of pedagogical and cognitive challenges. According to Piaget's theory of cognitive development, children at this age are in a transitional phase within the concrete operational stage. While they are beginning to develop logical and systematic thinking, their cognitive processing still heavily relies on concrete objects, immediate visual stimuli, and contextual clues to make sense of abstract linguistic concepts (Piaget, 1972). Furthermore, young learners are characterized by a notoriously short attention span, high physical energy, and a

need for immediate relevance in their activities (Scott & Ytreberg, 1990). They are natural meaning-seekers who learn best through holistic experiences rather than isolated, structured grammatical drills (Cameron, 2001).

Unfortunately, standard vocabulary instruction in many Indonesian public primary schools often runs counter to these psychological and developmental traits. Preliminary observations at SD N 17 Palembang revealed that English vocabulary teaching predominantly depends on traditional, teacher-centered methods. Students are frequently subjected to mechanical rote-memorization tasks, where they are asked to copy bilingual word lists from textbook pages, memorize them out of context, and translate them directly into Bahasa Indonesia. This traditional drill-and-practice approach detaches vocabulary from its authentic communicative application. Consequently, while students might manage to memorize words temporarily for an immediate spelling test or quiz, this information is stored only in their working memory and undergoes rapid decay (Atkinson & Shiffrin, 1968). Because the vocabulary fails to transfer into their long-term memory, students struggle to recall or apply the words in subsequent lessons (Thornbury, 2002). This recurring memory failure leads to low vocabulary retention, rapid disengagement, and a growing perception among fifth-graders that learning English is an intimidating and monotonous chore.

To address this pedagogical breakdown, modern English Language Teaching (ELT) advocates for the integration of technology-enhanced language learning, specifically through the utilization of audiovisual media such as short animated videos. Short animated videos offer a dynamic combination of rich visual imagery, vibrant colors, expressive moving characters, sound effects, and contextualized spoken narratives. From a cognitive perspective, the efficacy of this media is deeply rooted in Allan Paivio's Dual-Coding Theory (1986). This theory posits that the human brain processes information through two separate but interrelated channels: a visual-nonverbal channel and an auditory-verbal channel. When young learners watch a short animated video, they do not just hear an abstract English word; they simultaneously witness the physical action, see the object, and absorb the emotional context surrounding it (Mayer, 2001). This dual presentation reduces the cognitive load on the working memory and facilitates the mental mapping required to secure new lexical items into long-term memory (Mayer, 2009).

Furthermore, short animated videos can encapsulate complex contextual meanings in a brief duration (3 to 5 minutes), making them highly efficient for primary school settings where classroom time is strictly limited. The storytelling aspect inherent in animation creates an immersive, low-anxiety learning atmosphere. When students are emotionally invested in a short cartoon narrative, their affective filter—as conceptualized by Stephen Krashen (1982)—is significantly lowered. A low affective filter maximizes their receptivity to comprehensible input, allowing vocabulary acquisition to occur naturally, enjoyably, and unconsciously rather than as a forced academic obligation (Krashen, 1985).

Despite the abundance of quantitative research proving that animated videos can statistically increase students' test scores (e.g., Hidayat & Azizah, 2021; Pratama, 2023), there remains a notable gap in the literature regarding the qualitative dimensions of this

pedagogical intervention. Most existing studies focus purely on measurable outcomes (pre-test and post-test scores), leaving the subjective experiences of the learners largely unexplored. Numerical data alone cannot explain how children navigate their memory retrieval, what specific visual or auditory elements of animation trigger their recall, or how they perceive their own cognitive journey during the retention process. The author raises this problem because of the critical need to give a voice to the young learners themselves. Investigating how fifth-graders at SD N 17 Palembang perceive and experience short animated videos will provide a realistic, localized, and student-centric view of digital media implementation in public primary schools. The purpose of this study is to explore and describe fifth-grade students' internal perceptions and actual firsthand experiences of vocabulary memory retention during and after learning English through short animated videos at SD N 17 Palembang.

Method

Research is a process of formulating questions, problems, or hypotheses; collecting data or evidence relevant to these questions/problems/hypotheses, and analyzing or interpreting these data (Nunan, 1992). In this study, a descriptive qualitative case study method was deployed. Qualitative research presents and analyzes data in words to gather an in-depth understanding of human behavior and the reasons that govern such behavior (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study seeks to describe to what extent and how the fifth-graders of SD N 17 Palembang experience the cognitive and affective processes of vocabulary memory retention through digital multimedia.

The subject and site of this study were the fifth-grade primary school students (*Kelas I*) at SD N 17 Palembang during the 2025/2026 academic year. This study utilized purposive sampling to select information-rich participants who could intensely manifest the phenomenon of interest (Patton, 2015). A sample of six expressive students was chosen based on consultation with the classroom English teacher to ensure data saturation during qualitative inquiries.

The source of data was the verbal expressions, behaviors, and conceptual recall descriptions provided by the students during the implementation of 3-to-5-minute short animated videos targeting concrete nouns, verbs, and adjectives. To get the data of this research, the researcher used three instruments: semi-structured interview guides, a non-participant observation checklist matrix, and simple stimulated recall task materials. The qualitative instruments were proven valid based on face validity, ensuring that the child-friendly instructions and interview prompts directly looked right and measured the targeted psychological dimensions (Brown, 2004).

In collecting the data, the researcher first conducted non-participant classroom observations while the teacher incorporated short animated videos into the vocabulary lessons, recording students' physical gestures, attention focus, and affective feedback in field notes. Following the lessons, face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted in *Bahasa Indonesia* to eliminate language barriers. During the interviews, simple stimulated

recall tasks were integrated by showing students screenshots or 30-second clips of the videos to trigger their cognitive memory pathways.

The qualitative data generated from transcripts and field notes were analyzed using Thematic Analysis following the six-phase framework of Braun and Clarke (2006): (1) familiarization with data through verbatim transcription, (2) generating initial open codes, (3) searching for broader themes, (4) reviewing candidate themes against the whole dataset, (5) defining and naming final themes, and (6) producing the academic narrative report. To ensure qualitative trustworthiness, data source triangulation (interviews, observations, and recall tasks) was used for credibility, a thick description of SD N 17 Palembang was provided for transferability, and a clear audit trail was maintained for dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Results and Discussion

Students' Experiences and Perceptions Based on Thematic Analysis

The data analysis revealed four major qualitative themes that address the fifth-graders' internal perceptions and live experiences of vocabulary memory retention at SD N 17 Palembang.

1. Shift from Monotonous Memorization to Visual Stimulation (Perceptions)

Before using short animated videos, the participants perceived English vocabulary lessons as a stressful, text-heavy chore characterized by mechanical translation drills. The introduction of 3-to-5-minute animated videos radically inverted this perception. Students expressed that the colorful moving graphics captured their attention and made learning feel like an entertaining experience rather than forced academic labor. For example, Participant 2 stated: *"Usually we just copy words and memorize them, which gives me a headache. But with the cartoon, the characters move and the colors are bright, so I love staring at the screen."* Classroom observations confirmed this shift; students leaned forward and maintained constant eye contact with the projector screen, showcasing heightened behavioral engagement.

2. Dual-Sensory Anchoring as a Memory Catalyst (Experiences)

The second theme captures the explicit cognitive experiences of the fifth-graders during vocabulary recall tasks. Students consistently explained that they did not retrieve words as flat textual scripts. Instead, they experienced an immediate mental recall of a simultaneous visual image and an acoustic element. During the stimulated recall task, when shown a screenshot of an animated puppy slipping, Participant 1 instantly recalled the target word: *"That is 'clumsy' (ceroboh)! I immediately remembered when the dog slipped and there was a funny 'boing' sound. I imagined that funny face during the quiz, and I instantly knew the word."* Another student remembered the adjective *"furious"* because they could still mentally hear the loud roar of the cartoon giant whose face turned bright red.

3. Contextual Narrative Placement Over Isolated Drilling (Experiences)

Students reported that traditional vocabulary lists left them confused about how to use English words. Short animated videos resolved this by embedding words inside a brief narrative arc. The children experienced the words as living components of a story. Participant 3 highlighted this narrative tracking: *"If the teacher just says 'huge' means big, I get confused with 'large'. But in the video, 'huge' was used when the rabbit looked up at a giant carrot as tall as a tree. I remembered the story, so I know 'huge' means extraordinarily big."*

4. Lowering the Emotional Barrier to Lower Anxiety (Perceptions)

The final theme concerns the classroom's affective climate. Standard translation practices often induced situational anxiety among the fifth-graders, causing mental blocks due to fear of making mistakes. The humorous and engaging nature of the cartoons lowered their emotional barrier. Participant 6 noted: *"I am usually afraid of being called by the teacher and laughed at by friends. But watching the cartoon made the room relaxed. We laughed together. So I was brave enough to raise my hand because it felt like playing a guessing game."*

The Synthesis of Findings and Theoretical Discussion

The qualitative findings gathered from SD N 17 Palembang offer significant empirical validation when analyzed through the theoretical lenses of Paivio's Dual-Coding Theory and Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis.

Traditional vocabulary methods at the school relied heavily on single-code verbal drilling, which quickly overloaded the fifth-graders' limited working memory and caused rapid memory decay (Atkinson & Shiffrin, 1968; Baddeley, 2000). When short animated videos were introduced, they presented information to both the visual/nonverbal channel and the auditory/verbal channel simultaneously (Paivio, 1986). As seen in the stimulated recall tasks, when a student heard a target word while witnessing a synchronized physical cartoon action, their cognitive architecture formed parallel *images* and *logogens*. These independent codes underwent referential processing, cross-reinforcing each other across both channels. According to Mayer's Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning (2009), this multimodal presentation effectively distributed the cognitive load, preventing working memory exhaustion and facilitating smooth consolidation into long-term memory.

[Traditional Method] -> Text Only -> Verbal Channel Only -> Cognitive Overload -> Rapid Decay

[Animation Method] -> Video + Audio -> Dual Channels Active -> Referential Processing -> Long-Term Schema

From an emotional perspective, the findings perfectly illustrate Stephen Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis. Traditional rote-drilling raised the students' affective filters, creating a psychological barrier born of anxiety and low motivation. Even if input was comprehensible, it was blocked from reaching the *Language Acquisition Device (LAD)* (Krashen, 1985).

The short animated videos brought the filter down by wrapping the target vocabulary in humorous, low-stress storytelling. This safe classroom climate maximized input receptivity, allowing organic and long-term vocabulary retention to take place naturally.

Conclusion

Most of the fifth-grade students at SD N 17 Palembang have held highly positive perceptions toward short animated videos, viewing them as a motivating medium that relieves learning stress. Cognitively, the students experienced vocabulary memory retention as a dual-anchored process, utilizing visual movements and synchronized sound effects as immediate retrieval cues to pull concrete nouns, verbs, and adjectives from their long-term memory. Embedding vocabulary within 3-to-5-minute story arcs provided immediate conceptual relevance over traditional isolated drilling.

Based on the research findings, there are several suggestions for primary English instruction. Teachers should minimize text-heavy, decontextualized rote drilling and strategically integrate brief, multimodal animated clips that match children's developmental operational stages. School administrators are advised to support this digital transition by providing basic projector facilities and organizing targeted digital literacy workshops for teachers under the *Kurikulum Merdeka* framework. Finally, future researchers are encouraged to conduct longitudinal qualitative studies to evaluate the durability of dual-coded vocabulary retention over longer extended periods.

Declarations

I hereby declare that the disclosed information is correct and that no other situation of real, potential or apparent conflict of interest is known to us. I undertake to inform you of any change in these circumstances, including if an issue arises during the course of the meeting or work it (2026).

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