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ENGLISH TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES WITH VISUAL MEDIA IN SUPPORTING EARLY READING COMPREHENSION OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA: A CASE STUDY

Fara Audina Lubis[1], Emeliya Sukma Dara Damanik [2]
[1,2] Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Medan, Indonesia

fara0304222073@uinsu.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This study explores English teachers' experiences in using visual media to support the early reading comprehension of students with dyslexia in inclusive elementary EFL classrooms. While previous studies have largely focused on the effectiveness of visual media or multisensory approaches, limited attention has been given to how teachers adapt and implement visual media in authentic classroom contexts. Employing a qualitative case study design, this research involved two English teachers from an inclusive elementary school in Indonesia. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, non-participant classroom observations, and document analysis and analyzed using Braun & Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis. Three interrelated themes emerged: (1) teachers' instructional experiences in supporting students with dyslexia, (2) the implementation of visual media in early reading instruction, and (3) student engagement and contextual factors affecting the use of visual media. The findings indicate that visual media increased students' participation, motivation, and access to meaning when integrated with teacher guidance, pronunciation modelling, repetition, guided reading, and peer support. However, increased student engagement did not necessarily lead to independent reading comprehension, as learners continued to require explicit teacher mediation to connect visual representations with decoding, pronunciation, vocabulary, and textual meaning. These findings demonstrate that visual media functioned as instructional scaffolds rather than substitutes for systematic reading instruction. The study contributes to the literature on teacher cognition, multimedia learning, and inclusive EFL pedagogy by demonstrating how teachers' experiential knowledge shapes adaptive instructional practices for learners with dyslexia. Practically, the findings highlight the importance of structured multimodal instruction, teacher professional development, and dyslexia-responsive curriculum design in supporting inclusive early reading instruction.

Keywords: Dyslexia, Early Reading Comprehension, Inclusive Education, Visual Media

INTRODUCTION

Early reading comprehension is a fundamental component of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning at the elementary school level because it provides the foundation for students' subsequent academic achievement and language development. At this stage,

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reading comprehension involves not only decoding written symbols but also constructing meaning through the interaction of textual information, prior knowledge, vocabulary, and cognitive processing (Niu et al., 2025). This process is particularly demanding in EFL contexts because young learners must develop basic literacy skills while simultaneously acquiring competence in a foreign language (Wang et al., 2021). Consequently, learners who experience persistent difficulties in early reading may encounter long-term challenges in vocabulary development, classroom participation, and broader academic learning.

The practical problem becomes more complex for students with dyslexia. Dyslexia is a neurodevelopmental learning difficulty characterized by persistent problems in accurate and fluent word recognition, decoding, and spelling despite adequate intelligence and educational opportunities (Yuxin, 2024). One of its primary contributing factors is a deficit in phonological processing, which limits learners' ability to associate sounds with letters, recognize words accurately, and comprehend written texts effectively (Qomariyah et al., 2025). In EFL contexts, differences between English orthography and learners' first language may further intensify these difficulties, particularly when students encounter unfamiliar phoneme–grapheme correspondences and irregular word forms (Vimochana et al., 2023). In classroom practice, teachers often identify students as potentially having dyslexia when they consistently read more slowly than their peers, mispronounce familiar words, confuse visually similar letters (such as b and d), make repeated decoding errors, struggle to recognize previously learned words, and demonstrate limited comprehension of simple texts despite receiving regular instruction and practice. Because a substantial proportion of their cognitive resources is allocated to word recognition, fewer resources remain available for understanding and interpreting textual meaning (Wong et al., 2021). This explanation is consistent with Georgiou et al. (2022), who found that learners with dyslexia experience significant difficulties in reading comprehension compared to both chronological-age peers and reading-level peers. This condition highlights the need for instructional approaches that reduce decoding demands and provide alternative pathways for meaning construction.

One instructional approach that may address these difficulties is the use of visual media. Pictures, flashcards, illustrated texts, graphic organizers, infographics, videos, and other visual materials provide semantic cues that can help students understand words and texts without relying entirely on phonological decoding. Visual support enables learners to connect written language with recognizable objects, actions, settings, and experiences, thereby allowing them to focus more effectively on comprehension. For students with dyslexia, visual input may compensate for phonological weaknesses and facilitate access to meaning when conventional print-based instruction remains challenging (Nijakowska, 2022).

From a cognitive perspective, multimodal instruction can enhance learning by engaging verbal and visual processing channels. According to Multimedia Learning Theory, combining verbal and visual information can improve understanding, retention, and learner engagement because it is processed through interconnected yet distinct cognitive channels (Mayer, 2021). Visual materials may also support learners in predicting text content, recognizing relationships between ideas, activating prior knowledge, and understanding unfamiliar vocabulary. These processes are particularly important in early reading

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comprehension, as young learners generally depend on concrete representations and contextual cues to interpret written texts. In addition, recent evidence suggests that multimodal support, including audio-assisted and visual-supported reading, can improve reading strategies and performance among learners with dyslexia (Knoop-van Campen et al., 2021). In EFL classrooms, visual media may therefore function as instructional scaffolding that bridges linguistic gaps caused by limited vocabulary, unfamiliar grammar, and difficulties in decoding.

Recent studies have demonstrated the potential of visual and multisensory instruction for supporting language learning among learners with dyslexia. While Agustina et al. (2023) emphasized the role of flashcards in simplifying linguistic input, strengthening memory, and improving reading comprehension, Al Hadhrami et al. (2022) highlighted the broader effectiveness of multisensory instruction in increasing learners' engagement and comprehension through multiple sensory channels. Similarly, Folia & Malisiova (2025) found that visual support facilitated vocabulary acquisition and contextual understanding, while Asilestari et al. (2025) showed that visual-based reading materials improved learners' comprehension and classroom engagement in Indonesian EFL settings. Collectively, these findings indicate that visual scaffolding may reduce linguistic processing demands and improve comprehension. However, these studies primarily focus on instructional effectiveness and student outcomes rather than on teachers' classroom experiences and instructional decision-making.

Other studies have examined visual media, learning disabilities, and teaching practices from different perspectives. Turmudli et al. (2025) reported that visual literacy-based media improved elementary students' motivation, participation, and ability to organize ideas; however, their study focused on writing skills and general learners rather than students with dyslexia. Kurnia and Hilmansyah (2025) explored teachers' perceptions of multisensory teaching techniques and emphasized the importance of instructional creativity and learning adjustments; however, the study did not specifically examine the implementation of visual media in supporting early reading comprehension. Stevani and Tarigan (2022) discussed the theoretical characteristics of dyslexia without investigating practical classroom responses to these challenges. Likewise, Fitriana and Permanasari (2025) explored English teaching practices without specifically focusing on learners with special educational needs. Meanwhile, Rahmadhani and Damanik (2025) found that English teachers used visual, auditory, and kinesthetic strategies to support vocabulary development among students with dyslexia, but their study remained limited to vocabulary learning rather than early reading comprehension. These studies suggest that although dyslexia and multimodal teaching have received growing scholarly attention, limited research has examined how teachers specifically experience and implement visual media to support early reading comprehension in authentic EFL classrooms.

Although previous studies have extensively discussed visual media, dyslexia, and language learning, few studies have specifically explored English teachers' lived experiences in implementing visual media to support the early reading comprehension of students with dyslexia in elementary school contexts. Existing studies have largely focused on learning outcomes, vocabulary development, or general multisensory strategies, while limited

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attention has been given to teachers' instructional experiences, decision-making processes, and classroom adaptations. Consequently, limited understanding remains regarding how English teachers identify students' reading difficulties, select and adapt appropriate visual media, and integrate these materials into authentic classroom practices. This gap is significant because the effectiveness of visual media depends not only on the materials themselves but also on how teachers mediate and integrate them into meaningful instructional sequences.

The effectiveness of visual media is also closely related to teachers' experiences, knowledge, and instructional decisions. Visual materials do not automatically improve students' comprehension merely because they are presented in the classroom. Teachers must identify students' reading difficulties, select appropriate forms of visual support, adapt materials to learners' abilities, determine how the media should be presented, and integrate them into purposeful reading activities. Borg (2003) explains that teacher cognition encompasses teachers' beliefs, knowledge, experiences, and decision-making processes, all of which shape classroom practice. Similarly, Shulman's (1987) concept of pedagogical content knowledge emphasizes teachers' ability to transform subject matter into forms that are accessible and understandable to particular learners. Schön (1983) further highlights reflective practice, through which teachers continuously evaluate and adjust their instructional strategies in response to classroom situations. These perspectives indicate that teachers' experiences are essential for understanding how visual media are selected, adapted, implemented, and evaluated in inclusive EFL classrooms.

Therefore, this study seeks to address this gap by exploring English teachers' lived experiences in using visual media to support the early reading comprehension of students with dyslexia in elementary EFL classrooms. Based on the identified research gap, this study addresses the following research question: "How do English teachers experience and implement visual media to support the early reading comprehension of students with dyslexia in elementary school?" This study contributes to the literature by integrating four interrelated dimensions: dyslexia, early reading comprehension, visual media, and teachers' lived experiences within authentic elementary EFL classroom contexts. Rather than focusing solely on the effectiveness of particular instructional media or students' measurable learning outcomes, this study examines how teachers interpret reading difficulties, select and adapt visual materials, implement them in classroom activities, and reflect on their use. Through a case study involving a small number of English teachers, the study is expected to provide in-depth and contextually grounded insights rather than broad generalizations. The findings are also expected to contribute to the literature on teacher cognition and inclusive English language teaching and to offer practical insights for teachers in designing more adaptive and supportive early reading instruction for students with dyslexia.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design to explore how English teachers experienced and implemented visual media to support the early reading comprehension of students with dyslexia. A qualitative case study was considered appropriate because the study sought to generate an in-depth understanding of teachers'

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lived experiences, instructional decision-making, and classroom practices within their real educational context rather than to produce statistical generalizations (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The bounded case was one Islamic elementary school in Binjai, Indonesia, which was purposively selected because it implements inclusive education and accommodates learners with diverse educational needs. Conducting the study in the participants' natural teaching environment enabled the researcher to examine the implementation of visual media in authentic elementary EFL classrooms.

Purposive sampling was employed because the study required participants who possessed direct experience with the phenomenon under investigation (Patton, 2015). The inclusion criteria required participants to (1) teach English at the selected school, (2) have direct experience teaching students with dyslexia, and (3) regularly use visual media during reading instruction. Two English teachers participated in the study. Teacher 1 taught Grades 1–3, while Teacher 2 taught Grades 4–6, allowing the study to capture experiences across different stages of elementary reading development. Although only two participants were involved, this sample size is consistent with qualitative case study research, which emphasizes depth, contextual richness, and information-rich cases rather than numerical representation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Pseudonyms were assigned to protect participants' identities throughout the study.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, non-participant classroom observations, and document analysis, allowing methodological triangulation across multiple sources (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The interview, observation, and document-review protocols were developed directly from the research question and relevant theoretical perspectives, including teacher cognition, multimedia learning, and inclusive EFL instruction. All three instruments addressed four common areas: teachers' recognition of students' reading difficulties, the selection and adaptation of visual media, classroom implementation, and perceived benefits and challenges. Using parallel areas of inquiry enabled systematic comparison between teachers' reflections, observed classroom practices, and documented instructional planning, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of teachers' experiences.

Each participant completed an individual semi-structured interview lasting approximately 40–45 minutes. Open-ended questions encouraged participants to describe how they identified reading difficulties, selected visual media, organized learning activities, evaluated students' responses, and modified instruction according to students' needs. With participants' consent, all interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Classroom observations employed a non-participant approach in which the researcher observed naturally occurring English reading lessons without intervening in the instructional process. Observation focused on the types of visual media used, instructional sequences, teacher–student interactions, students' observable responses, and instructional adaptations provided for learners with dyslexia. Detailed field notes documented both significant classroom events and contextual factors that complemented the interview data. Document analysis included lesson plans, teaching modules, illustrated texts, flashcards, worksheets, and other instructional materials to examine how visual support was incorporated into instructional planning and connected to early reading activities. After

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obtaining permission from the school and informed consent from all participants, interviews, observations, and document collection were conducted sequentially. Emerging findings from interviews informed subsequent observations and document review without altering the study's central focus. All transcripts, field notes, and documents were systematically organized according to participant, grade level, date, and data source to facilitate traceability throughout the analysis.

Data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis. The researcher first familiarized herself with the data by repeatedly reading interview transcripts, observation notes, and instructional documents. Meaningful data segments related to teachers' experiences and the implementation of visual media were then coded inductively while remaining guided by the research question. Similar codes were subsequently grouped into candidate themes that represented recurring patterns across the dataset. These themes were continuously reviewed against both the coded extracts and the complete dataset to ensure coherence, internal consistency, and conceptual distinctiveness. Themes that overlapped were merged, while weak or unsupported themes were refined or discarded. Finally, each theme was clearly defined, named, and developed into an analytical narrative supported by evidence from interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. Throughout the analytical process, the three data sources were compared to identify converging findings, complementary evidence, and inconsistencies, thereby strengthening the credibility of the interpretations.

To ensure trustworthiness, the study adopted Lincoln & Guba (1985) criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was enhanced through methodological triangulation and member checking, whereby participants reviewed interview transcripts and preliminary interpretations to verify their accuracy. Transferability was supported by providing detailed descriptions of the research setting, participants, and instructional context. Dependability was established through a comprehensive audit trail documenting the research procedures, coding process, theme development, and analytical decisions, while confirmability was strengthened through reflexive note-taking to ensure that interpretations remained grounded in the collected data rather than researcher assumptions. Ethical considerations included obtaining formal school permission, informed consent from all participants, voluntary participation, confidentiality through the use of pseudonyms, and the secure storage and academic use of all research data.

RESULTS

This study explored English teachers' experiences in implementing visual media to support the early reading comprehension of students with dyslexia in an inclusive elementary EFL classroom. Data were generated from semi-structured interviews with two English teachers, non-participant classroom observations in Grades 1B and 5B, and an analysis of instructional modules used at the research site. Across the three data sources, three interconnected themes emerged: (1) teachers' instructional experiences in identifying and supporting students with dyslexia, (2) the implementation of visual media as instructional scaffolding for early reading, and (3) students' responses and contextual factors influencing the effectiveness of visual media. The convergence of interview,

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observation, and document data showed that visual media supported classroom participation and vocabulary learning; however, meaningful reading comprehension continued to depend on sustained teacher mediation and individualized instructional support.

Teachers' Instructional Experiences in Supporting Students with Dyslexia

Both participants reported that their understanding of dyslexia was developed primarily through classroom experience rather than formal professional preparation. Neither teacher had received specialized training in dyslexia or special education. Instead, they gradually recognized students' learning characteristics through continuous classroom observation and instructional reflection. Across interviews and classroom observations, the participants consistently identified persistent decoding difficulties, weak independent reading, unstable attention, limited classroom participation, and dependence on teacher assistance as the main challenges influencing their instructional decisions.

Teacher 1 (T1), who taught Grades 1–3, explained that although the student was sometimes able to imitate pronunciation after teacher modelling, comprehension remained the greatest difficulty, particularly during English reading activities.

> *"The student can read to some extent, but understanding is the difficult part, particularly in English lessons."*

According to T1, copying words from the board did not necessarily indicate comprehension because the student frequently required repeated modelling, letter-by-letter guidance, and pronunciation support before attempting to read independently. These perceptions were consistent with the Grade 1B classroom observation. During a vocabulary lesson on fruits, the student participated only after receiving direct teacher assistance, remained passive during whole-class interaction, and was unable to rearrange scrambled letters into an English word without individual guidance. When teacher support was temporarily withdrawn, the student's attention quickly shifted away from the learning activity.

Teacher 2 (T2), who taught Grades 4–6, described comparable learning characteristics in the upper-grade classroom. The student experienced difficulty following lengthy whole-class explanations, reading English words accurately, and maintaining attention throughout the lesson. Nevertheless, T2 observed that learning became more manageable when instruction was delivered individually and divided into smaller learning stages.

> *"When the material is explained step by step, the student can follow it. However, it is difficult when the explanation is delivered to the whole class. When the student is approached individually and provided with assistance, the task can be completed."*

Classroom observation in Grade 5B supported this account. The student responded minimally during whole-class questioning but attempted to pronounce unfamiliar words after receiving direct teacher guidance. The observation further showed that the student could often recognize the meaning represented in an illustration while still experiencing difficulty reading or pronouncing the corresponding English words accurately. These

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findings indicate that visual recognition alone did not immediately translate into independent reading performance.

Across both classrooms, teachers responded by continuously adapting their instructional practices rather than implementing formal intervention programs. The adaptations included slowing the instructional pace, modelling pronunciation repeatedly, breaking learning tasks into smaller steps, approaching students individually, providing emotional encouragement, and using peer assistance when continuous one-to-one support was not feasible. T2 also reported gradually modifying classroom management practices by becoming less verbally demanding and incorporating icebreakers and educational games to sustain students' attention and motivation.

Taken together, evidence from interviews and classroom observations indicates that teachers' instructional practices were shaped primarily by practical classroom experience and ongoing reflection rather than specialized professional preparation. The participants consistently adapted their instruction in response to students' observable reading difficulties, demonstrating that effective support for learners with dyslexia relied on continuous instructional adjustment and individualized teacher mediation rather than the implementation of predetermined intervention procedures.

Implementation of Visual Media in Early Reading Instruction

Across interviews, classroom observations, and instructional documents, visual media emerged as an integral component of early reading instruction rather than as stand-alone teaching resources. Both teachers consistently integrated pictures, illustrated textbooks, flashcards, picture-based texts, videos, songs, worksheets, and digital displays with teacher modelling, oral repetition, guided reading, questioning, and written exercises. Rather than expecting visual media to independently improve students' reading ability, the participants employed these materials as instructional scaffolds that helped students connect visual representations with English vocabulary before engaging in reading activities.

The types of visual media varied according to students' grade levels, instructional objectives, and classroom facilities. Teacher 1 primarily used colored pictures, picture cards, illustrated texts, videos, and song videos to introduce basic vocabulary in the lower grades. Teacher 2 employed illustrations from textbooks, flashcards, digital videos, audio-supported materials, educational games, laptops, Bluetooth speakers, and smartboards when available to support vocabulary development and sentence comprehension in the upper grades. Table 1 summarizes the visual media identified across interviews, classroom observations, and instructional documents.

Table 1. Visual media used in English reading instruction

Visual media	Documented use in the classroom
Pictures and illustrations	Introducing fruits, body parts, daily activities, greetings, adjectives, animals, and classroom objects
Picture–word combinations	Associating visual representations with English vocabulary and expressions

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Illustrated textbooks and worksheets	Matching pictures with words, completing sentences, tracing vocabulary, and arranging letters
Picture cards and flashcards	Introducing vocabulary and eliciting oral repetition
Videos and songs	Presenting vocabulary, modelling pronunciation, and attracting students' attention
Digital media (laptop and smartboard)	Displaying images, videos, questions, and interactive activities

Although different media were employed, both teachers followed a comparable instructional sequence. Lessons generally began by introducing a topic through visual representations before students were exposed to written English words or short texts. Teachers then modelled pronunciation, encouraged oral repetition, asked comprehension questions, and guided students through reading and written activities. As explained by Teacher 1:

> *"The lesson topic is introduced first. After that, a picture and its name are presented. I pronounce the word, and the students repeat it. The text is then provided, and I read it before asking the students to follow."*

Classroom observations confirmed this instructional pattern in both Grade 1B and Grade 5B. Visual materials consistently served as the starting point for introducing new vocabulary and activating students' prior knowledge before reading tasks were presented. During lower-grade instruction, pictures of familiar objects enabled students to associate English vocabulary with concrete representations before attempting written activities. In the upper grades, illustrations, textbook images, videos, and interactive digital materials supported the introduction of descriptive vocabulary and sentence construction before students completed reading and writing exercises. When students with dyslexia experienced difficulty following the initial instruction, both teachers modified the learning sequence by repeating explanations, slowing pronunciation, providing additional examples, or offering individual guidance.

Document analysis further demonstrated that visual support was systematically embedded within instructional planning. The teaching modules incorporated picture-supported activities such as Look and Say, Listen and Say, Read and Match, Write and Say, Trace the Words, and Let's Sing, indicating that visual media formed an essential component of planned early reading instruction rather than supplementary classroom materials. Visual illustrations were consistently combined with vocabulary practice, dialogues, matching activities, tracing exercises, songs, and collaborative learning tasks to strengthen students' understanding of English words and expressions. However, while the modules provided extensive visual support for general classroom instruction, they contained no explicit adaptations specifically designed for students with dyslexia. Instead, the individualized adjustments described by the participants, including simplified explanations, repeated modelling, additional processing time, and one-to-one guidance, were implemented responsively during classroom instruction rather than formally documented in lesson plans.

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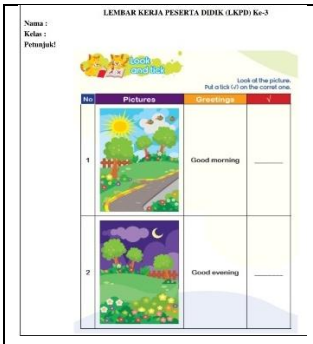
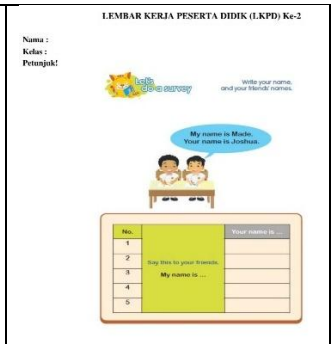
			
Visual scenes for time-based greetings (morning, afternoon, evening)	Picture-supported dialogue for modelling greetings	Illustrations with simple sentences and clear font	Activity using gestures and visuals to practice speaking

Figure 1. Examples of visual media in the teaching module

The examples presented in Picture 1 illustrate how visual representations, simple sentences, and contextual illustrations were systematically incorporated into the teaching modules to support vocabulary learning, oral practice, and early reading activities. These materials provided concrete visual references that complemented teacher explanations and guided reading instruction.

Taken together, evidence from interviews, classroom observations, and instructional documents indicates that visual media primarily functioned as instructional scaffolds embedded within broader teaching practices. Their effectiveness depended not on the media themselves but on how teachers integrated them with modelling, guided reading, questioning, repetition, and individualized instructional support to reduce decoding demands and facilitate early reading activities for students with dyslexia.

Students' Engagement and Contextual Factors Affecting the Use of Visual Media

Across the three data sources, both teachers perceived visual media as effective in increasing students' attention, motivation, and classroom participation. However, the findings consistently showed that greater engagement did not automatically lead to independent reading comprehension. Although pictures, videos, songs, and games encouraged students with dyslexia to participate more actively in classroom activities, they continued to experience considerable difficulty in decoding English words, reading independently, and understanding written texts without sustained instructional support.

Teacher 1 explained that colorful pictures, picture cards, songs, and collaborative activities reduced students' reluctance to participate during English lessons. Rather than remaining passive, the student became more willing to engage in classroom activities alongside peers.

> *"The main change is that the student becomes more willing to join classmates, although the material may not yet be fully understood."*

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Nevertheless, T1 emphasized that increased participation did not eliminate the need for continuous teacher guidance.

> *"When I do not provide sufficient attention, the student does not write. Continuous assistance is necessary. Although the task is the same as the tasks completed by classmates, I still need to remain beside the student."*

Teacher 2 reported similar experiences. Pictures, videos, and digital materials attracted students' attention and facilitated initial understanding of lesson content, yet the student with dyslexia required information to be presented gradually and repeatedly before completing learning tasks independently.

> *"The student understands the material gradually. The entire task cannot be completed independently, but one part may be understood after it is explained separately."*

These perceptions were consistently supported by classroom observations. In both Grade 1B and Grade 5B, visual media successfully encouraged classroom participation and verbal responses from most students. In contrast, students with dyslexia generally remained passive during whole-class questioning and attempted to read or pronounce English words only after receiving direct teacher guidance. While the lower-grade student could repeat vocabulary following teacher modelling, independent reading, letter arrangement, and written task completion remained difficult. Likewise, the upper-grade student frequently recognized the meaning represented in pictures but continued to experience difficulty reading or pronouncing the corresponding English vocabulary accurately. These findings demonstrate that visual recognition preceded reading comprehension but did not independently resolve decoding difficulties.

To address these challenges, both teachers consistently combined visual media with individualized instructional support. Repetition, pronunciation modelling, letter-by-letter guidance, simplified explanations, task segmentation, emotional encouragement, and peer assistance were integrated into daily classroom practice. Group work was particularly useful in the lower grades because it encouraged participation while allowing the teacher to provide individual support when necessary. In the upper grades, peer assistance and additional instructional time enabled the student to complete parts of classroom assignments that could not be finished independently.

The findings also revealed several contextual factors influencing the implementation of visual media. Both teachers identified limited instructional time, classroom management demands, environmental distractions, and restricted access to technological facilities as challenges that reduced opportunities for individualized support. Although visual media were available, teachers found it difficult to maintain continuous one-to-one assistance while simultaneously managing the learning needs of the entire class. Consequently, both participants suggested that students with dyslexia would benefit from additional instructional support provided by teaching assistants or specialized learning support personnel.

Document analysis further demonstrated that although instructional modules contained abundant visual materials and general remedial activities, they were designed

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primarily for regular learners and did not explicitly include adaptations for students with dyslexia. Individualized modifications such as simplified reading tasks, additional processing time, repeated modelling, and flexible instructional pacing were implemented by teachers during classroom instruction rather than formally documented within the curriculum materials.

Overall, the convergence of interview, classroom observation, and document analysis indicates that visual media functioned primarily as tools for increasing engagement and providing concrete learning support rather than as independent solutions for improving early reading comprehension. The effectiveness of visual media depended substantially on teachers' instructional decisions, continuous scaffolding, and responsive classroom adaptations. These findings suggest that successful support for students with dyslexia requires not only appropriate visual resources but also sustained teacher mediation and inclusive instructional practices that address learners' individual reading needs.

DISCUSSION

This study explored how English teachers experienced and implemented visual media to support the early reading comprehension of students with dyslexia in inclusive elementary EFL classrooms. Unlike previous studies that primarily examined the effectiveness of visual or multisensory instruction from students' learning outcomes, the present study focuses on teachers' instructional experiences, decision-making processes, and classroom adaptations. The findings indicate that visual media functioned not merely as supplementary instructional resources but as pedagogical scaffolds integrated with pronunciation modelling, guided reading, questioning, repetition, individual assistance, and peer support. Their contribution to reading comprehension depended not only on the materials themselves but also on how teachers interpreted students' learning needs and purposefully mediated instructional interactions.

The findings demonstrate that teachers' instructional decisions were largely shaped by classroom experience rather than formal preparation in dyslexia or inclusive English language teaching. Neither participant had received specialized training; instead, they gradually developed an understanding of students' reading difficulties through repeated observation and classroom interaction. Teachers recognized recurring characteristics such as decoding errors, limited independent reading, unstable attention, reluctance to write, and dependence on assistance, and these observations subsequently informed their instructional decisions. This finding reflects Borg's (2003) concept of teacher cognition, which explains that classroom practice is influenced by teachers' professional knowledge, beliefs, previous experiences, and interpretations of learners' needs. Within the present study, experiential knowledge became the principal basis for adapting instruction in response to students' diverse reading difficulties.

These instructional adaptations also illustrate Schön's (1983) concept of reflective practice and Shulman's (1987) pedagogical content knowledge. Rather than applying predetermined instructional procedures, teachers continuously evaluated students' responses and modified classroom activities accordingly. When students struggled to read unfamiliar words, teachers slowed the pace of instruction, separated letters, repeated

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pronunciation, simplified explanations, and divided tasks into smaller stages. Songs, games, and peer-supported activities were introduced when students became disengaged. Such practices demonstrate that inclusive instruction is a dynamic process requiring continuous reflection and the transformation of instructional content into forms that are more accessible for learners. However, reliance on classroom experience also revealed limitations. Some characteristics used by teachers to identify dyslexia reflected behavioral responses, such as inattention or reluctance to participate, rather than the core characteristics of dyslexia itself. As noted by Roitsch and Watson (2019) and Snowling et al. (2020), dyslexia is primarily associated with persistent difficulties in phonological processing, decoding, accurate word recognition, and spelling. Therefore, while classroom experience enabled teachers to respond adaptively to students' needs, it should be complemented by systematic professional development. This interpretation is consistent with Folia and Malisiova (2025), who reported that many foreign-language teachers feel insufficiently prepared to teach learners with developmental dyslexia, and with Padmadewi et al. (2024), who emphasized the importance of teacher competence and institutional support in inclusive education.

Another important finding concerns the implementation of visual media during early reading instruction. Across interviews, observations, and document analysis, teachers consistently introduced pictures, illustrations, videos, songs, and picture–word combinations before presenting written English vocabulary or reading tasks. This instructional sequence enabled students to activate prior knowledge and establish initial semantic understanding before processing unfamiliar written language. Rather than functioning as isolated teaching aids, visual media were consistently integrated with oral modelling, pronunciation practice, guided reading, questioning, and written activities. Consequently, visual media functioned as instructional scaffolds that gradually supported students in constructing meaning from written English.

This finding can be explained through Mayer (2021) Multimedia Learning Theory, which proposes that learning is strengthened when verbal and visual information are processed through complementary cognitive channels. Similarly, Paivio (1990) Dual Coding Theory suggests that verbal and visual information are represented through interconnected cognitive systems, allowing learners to develop multiple pathways for understanding new concepts. In the present study, visual media enabled students to establish initial semantic representations before engaging with written English words, thereby reducing some of the linguistic demands associated with unfamiliar vocabulary. These findings support the argument presented in the Introduction that visual media can bridge linguistic gaps by connecting written language with meaningful visual representations.

Nevertheless, the findings also indicate that visual media alone were insufficient to improve reading comprehension. Students still required explicit teacher guidance to connect pictures with pronunciation, decoding, spelling, and meaning. Simply recognizing an object or activity represented in a picture did not necessarily indicate comprehension of the corresponding English word or sentence. Accordingly, the effectiveness of visual media depended not only on their visual characteristics but also on how teachers deliberately integrated them into meaningful instructional sequences. This interpretation supports Lopez and Campoverde's (2018) argument that visual materials provide semantic support

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for learners with dyslexia while extending Agustina et al. (2023) findings by demonstrating that visual cues become pedagogically meaningful only when combined with explicit teacher mediation. Furthermore, the instructional practices documented in this study were more accurately characterized as multimodal than exclusively visual because pictures were consistently integrated with listening activities, oral repetition, tracing exercises, educational games, collaborative learning, and guided reading. This finding is consistent with Rahmadhani and Damanik (2025), who emphasized the value of combining visual, auditory, and kinesthetic strategies when supporting learners with dyslexia.

A particularly important finding of this study is the distinction between student engagement and independent reading comprehension. Both teachers consistently reported that pictures, songs, videos, and educational games attracted students' attention, increased their willingness to participate, and reduced their reluctance to engage in classroom activities. Classroom observations similarly showed that students with dyslexia became more willing to observe learning materials, repeat vocabulary, and participate in classroom interactions when visual or audiovisual resources were incorporated into instruction. However, these positive behavioral responses did not consistently translate into independent reading comprehension. The lower-grade student was able to imitate pronunciation after teacher modelling but remained unable to decode unfamiliar words independently or complete written tasks without assistance. Likewise, the upper-grade student could recognize the meaning represented in pictures yet continued to experience difficulty reading and pronouncing the corresponding English words accurately. These findings indicate that increased classroom participation should not automatically be interpreted as evidence of successful reading comprehension.

This distinction is pedagogically significant because participation and comprehension represent related but different dimensions of learning. Visual media successfully promoted behavioral engagement by attracting attention, reducing boredom, and encouraging students to participate in classroom activities. They also supported comprehension by providing contextual cues that helped learners recognize objects, actions, and situations before processing written language. Nevertheless, independent reading comprehension remained constrained by persistent decoding difficulties associated with dyslexia. These findings support the interactive view of reading comprehension, which requires learners to integrate decoding processes with meaning construction. As explained by Wong et al. (2021), learners with dyslexia often allocate substantial cognitive resources to recognizing words, leaving fewer cognitive resources available for higher-level comprehension. Consequently, visual media reduced part of the linguistic burden by providing contextual information, but they could not replace systematic instruction in phonological awareness, decoding, vocabulary development, and sentence comprehension. Rather than functioning as independent instructional solutions, visual media should therefore be understood as instructional scaffolds that facilitate access to meaning while foundational reading skills continue to develop.

Teacher mediation emerged as another essential factor influencing the effectiveness of visual media. Throughout classroom observations, teachers consistently directed students' attention to visual information, modelled pronunciation, repeated vocabulary, clarified

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meanings, and adjusted instruction according to students' responses. Individual guidance proved particularly important because students with dyslexia often remained passive during whole-class instruction but became more responsive when explanations were delivered personally and in smaller instructional stages. Teachers also provided emotional encouragement and flexible instructional support, creating opportunities for students to participate without fear of making mistakes. These findings reinforce Rahmadhani and Damanik's (2025) conclusion that affirmation, reduced pressure, and flexible instructional support contribute positively to learners' engagement. Peer assistance further complemented teachers' instructional efforts by encouraging students to begin tasks and remain involved in classroom activities, although successful peer learning still required teacher monitoring to minimize distraction and maintain meaningful participation.

The document analysis further revealed that although instructional modules incorporated numerous visual resources, including illustrations, picture-supported dialogues, worksheets, tracing activities, songs, and games, they were primarily designed for regular learners and did not explicitly include adaptations for students with dyslexia. Individualized strategies identified during interviews and observations, such as simplified explanations, additional processing time, repeated modelling, smaller instructional stages, and emotional encouragement, were implemented responsively by teachers rather than systematically embedded within lesson planning. This finding further illustrates Shulman's (1987) concept of pedagogical content knowledge by demonstrating how teachers transformed standard instructional materials into more accessible learning experiences according to students' reading needs despite limited curricular guidance for inclusive education.

Taken together, the findings contribute to the existing literature in several important ways. First, they extend research on teacher cognition by demonstrating that teachers' experiential knowledge mediates the implementation of visual media in inclusive EFL classrooms. Second, they refine Multimedia Learning Theory by showing that visual media become educationally meaningful only when integrated with explicit teacher mediation rather than functioning as independent instructional resources. Third, the study distinguishes behavioral engagement from independent reading comprehension, suggesting that these constructs should be considered complementary but separate indicators when evaluating instructional effectiveness for learners with dyslexia. Finally, by integrating dyslexia, early reading comprehension, visual media, and teachers' lived experiences within one analytical framework, the study provides a more comprehensive understanding of inclusive early reading instruction than previous studies that focused primarily on instructional effectiveness or student learning outcomes.

The findings also have important implications for inclusive EFL practice. Visual media should be integrated systematically with pronunciation modelling, guided reading, vocabulary instruction, decoding practice, and comprehension checking rather than being used solely to increase students' interest or classroom participation. Teachers should distinguish observable participation from genuine comprehension by incorporating learning activities that require students to demonstrate understanding beyond oral repetition or picture recognition. Furthermore, instructional materials should include explicit adaptations

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for learners with dyslexia, such as simplified text layouts, repeated exposure to key vocabulary, additional processing time, flexible assessment procedures, and structured multisensory learning activities. Professional development programs should strengthen teachers' knowledge of dyslexia, inclusive pedagogy, and evidence-based reading instruction, while schools should provide appropriate instructional resources and collaborative support to facilitate individualized learning within inclusive classrooms.

CONCLUSION

This study explored English teachers' experiences in implementing visual media to support the early reading comprehension of students with dyslexia in inclusive elementary EFL classrooms. The findings demonstrate that visual media functioned not merely as supplementary instructional resources but as instructional scaffolds whose effectiveness depended on teachers' professional judgement, classroom experience, and continuous instructional adaptation. Rather than relying on visual materials alone, teachers integrated pictures, illustrations, videos, and other visual resources with pronunciation modelling, guided reading, repetition, questioning, individual assistance, and peer support to facilitate meaning construction. A key finding is that increased classroom engagement did not necessarily indicate improved independent reading comprehension. Although visual media successfully attracted students' attention and encouraged participation, learners with dyslexia continued to require explicit teacher mediation to connect visual representations with pronunciation, decoding, vocabulary, and textual meaning. These findings highlight the central role of teachers in transforming visual media into meaningful learning experiences and demonstrate that the effectiveness of visual media depends on how they are selected, adapted, and integrated into inclusive reading instruction.

This study contributes to the literature by integrating teachers' lived experiences, dyslexia, early reading comprehension, and visual media within authentic elementary EFL classrooms. It extends the literature on teacher cognition by illustrating how teachers' experiential knowledge shapes instructional decisions in inclusive settings and contributes to multimedia learning by showing that visual media become effective when combined with purposeful instructional mediation rather than functioning as independent instructional tools. Practically, the findings suggest that teachers should integrate visual media with explicit reading instruction, systematic decoding support, and ongoing comprehension assessment, while schools should strengthen professional development related to dyslexia, inclusive pedagogy, and evidence-based reading instruction and provide adequate instructional support for inclusive classrooms. As this study involved only two English teachers in one inclusive elementary school and focused on teachers' experiences rather than standardized measures of students' reading development, the findings are context-specific. Future research is therefore recommended to involve more diverse educational settings, include students' and parents' perspectives, employ longer observation periods, and examine the effects of visual media on different dimensions of reading development, including decoding, reading fluency, and reading comprehension, among learners with dyslexia.

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