



## VISUAL LITERACY SKILLS AMONG SECOND GRADE STUDENTS AT SDN CIPANAS

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### ABSTRACT

Visual literacy plays a vital role in supporting cognitive and language development, particularly in early primary education. This study investigates how visual elements—specifically color, shape, and depicted events—influence second-grade students' understanding of visual texts at SDN Cipanas. Employing a qualitative case study approach, the research explores how children interpret meaning from images within authentic learning contexts. The findings reveal that students are particularly responsive to primary, secondary, tertiary, and neutral colors, which aid in recognizing and interpreting the content of visual material. Familiar forms—such as human figures, natural elements, and everyday objects—also contribute to students' ability to identify narrative cues. Moreover, sequences of events illustrated within images enable students to construct logical storylines. Notably, even when presented with uncolored images, students demonstrated the ability to interpret and describe content independently. These insights highlight the pedagogical potential of designing image-based instruction that enhances visual interpretation skills. The study underscores the importance of visual literacy as a foundational competency in digital-era learning and offers implications for improving critical thinking, linguistic expression, and creativity in early childhood education.

**Keywords:** image reading, cognitive development, visual literacy, primary education, early-grade learners

### INTRODUCTION

At the elementary education level, particularly in second grade, the ability to read images plays a vital role in supporting students' cognitive and language development (Jeni et al., 2022). This skill goes beyond simply recognizing shapes or colors—it also involves understanding the implied meaning behind images. Observations at SDN Cipanas reveal a wide range of students' abilities in interpreting visual elements. Some students are able to connect visual components like color, facial expressions, and background settings with specific narratives or concepts. However, many students only describe visual elements literally, without linking them to a broader context.

This variation is influenced by several factors, such as how often students are exposed to visual media at home and school, the role of teachers in guiding visual interpretation, and the students' limited vocabulary, which makes it difficult for them to express the meaning of images accurately. A lack of varied or relevant learning media also hinders the development of visual literacy skills.

Several studies have shown that using visual media, such as picture stories, can significantly improve students' reading skills. However, there is still a lack of research that directly connects image reading skills with students' cognitive and language development—especially in local contexts like SDN Cipanas. Previous research has rarely explored how social environments, including teachers and parents, shape students' visual interpretation abilities (Sitalawati, 2020). Moreover, few studies have examined how students' vocabulary limitations and motivation affect their ability to understand images deeply.

Observations conducted in class IIB at SDN Cipanas show that many students still struggle to recognize and name pictures, even though these skills are fundamental to understanding visual meaning in learning. Interviews conducted on January 15, 2025, also revealed that colorful and high-contrast images tend to capture students' attention. Visuals that are familiar to their daily environment—such as objects found in the classroom or at home—help students connect images with their personal experiences.

However, teachers face a major challenge: many students still cannot identify the terms or concepts represented by the images they see. Although they may recognize visual forms, their limited vocabulary makes it difficult to grasp the meaning behind the images. Therefore, more contextual and interactive teaching strategies are needed to help students relate images to familiar concepts and experiences.

There is a strong link between image reading ability and overall reading literacy. Students who can interpret images tend to better understand picture-based stories and can create narratives based on visual prompts. According to the data, around 90% of class IIB students have already acquired basic reading skills, which is an important foundation for further developing visual literacy.

Based on this background, this study focuses on analyzing the visual literacy skills of second-grade students at SDN Cipanas in Sukabumi City. The main focus is on how visual elements—such as color, shape, and events depicted in the image—affect students' understanding. The aim of this research is to develop more effective and contextual visual learning approaches, aligning with findings by Safira et al. (2022), which highlight the essential role of visual media in helping students grasp academic content.

Theoretically, this research is expected to enrich the body of literature on visual literacy in elementary education and to offer a new conceptual framework linking visual media, language development, and students' cognitive abilities (Masitoh et al., 2023). Practically, the findings of this study can serve as a guide for teachers to design more engaging and relevant learning experiences, and as a reference for curriculum developers in crafting instructional materials that meet the needs of students in the digital age.

Without this research, there is a risk of overlooking the gap in visual literacy skills among second-grade students at SDN Cipanas. This gap could potentially hinder the development of students' critical thinking and their ability to adapt to 21st-century learning challenges. Therefore, this study is necessary as a strategic step to strengthen students' visual literacy foundations from an early age.

## **METHOD**

According to Helmanto (2024), case study research is one of the qualitative research approaches that is often used to gain an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon, group, or for a particular individual in a real-life context. In the field of Education, case studies are often used to examine unique or specific situations that occur in schools, classes or other institutions. This approach provides researchers with the



opportunity to explore various aspects of the situation being studied in a comprehensive and in-depth manner.

## Research Location

The research took place at Cipanas Elementary School, Sukabumi City, located at Jl. Pramuka No. 1, Cikondang, Citamiang District, Sukabumi City, West Java.

## Data Sources

The research data in this study is qualitative. This research, including a case study, includes the following research data:

**Interview Data.** Interviews are the primary data collection method in case studies. In this study, interview subjects consisted of randomly selected second-grade students and their second-grade homeroom teachers.

Interviews can be structured, semi-structured, or unstructured, depending on the research needs. Interview data allows researchers to obtain the perspectives and experiences of various individuals related to the case.

**Observation Data.** Direct observation allows researchers to observe and record behavior or interactions in the field. Observations can be participatory, where the researcher is directly involved in the activity, or non-participatory, where the researcher merely observes from the outside.

**Documentation and Archives.** Case studies often utilize data from various documents, such as academic records, school reports, lesson plans, or correspondence. These documents provide additional information relevant to the phenomenon being studied.

**Secondary Data.** In addition to primary data, researchers can also use secondary data from previous research or available statistical data. This data can be used to compare the results of case studies with more general situations or support the interpretation of primary data (Helmanto, F., 2024)

## Data Collection Procedures

Data collection was conducted through several stages:

- a. **Preparation Stage:** In this stage, the researcher identified research subjects (students and homeroom teachers), prepared an interview guide and observation checklist, and requested permission from the school to conduct the research.
- b. **Primary Data Collection:** Conducted through interviews to gain initial insights, followed by observations during learning sessions. Secondary data collection was then conducted by accessing school documents and previous research findings.
- c. **Secondary Data Collection:** Accessed school documents and previous research findings.
- d. **Data Processing:** Interview data was transcribed for thematic explanation, observation notes were compiled to highlight student behavior patterns, and documents and secondary data were compared to support the research findings.
- e. **Analysis and Reporting:** Analysis was conducted to identify factors, challenges, strategies, and students' ability levels in picture literacy.

## Data Analysis

According to Helmanto (2024), the data analysis procedure includes several systematic stages, namely:

- a. Familiarization with the Data: Researchers read and review the data repeatedly to become familiar with its content and context. At this stage, researchers record initial thoughts or impressions that arise.
- b. Initial Coding: Researchers identify and mark important elements of the data by assigning labels or codes. These codes are words or phrases that reflect important aspects of the data.
- c. Searching for Themes: After the data is coded, researchers look for themes or patterns that emerge from the codes. Themes are broader categories and encompass various interrelated codes.
- d. Reviewing Themes: Researchers determine whether the identified themes are relevant and reflect the overall meaning of the data. Irrelevant themes can be revised or combined.
- e. Defining and Naming Themes: At this stage, researchers assign more specific and clear names to each theme to represent the essence of the data.
- f. Reporting: Researchers develop an in-depth narrative to explain the themes discovered and how they relate to the research question.

### **Data Validation**

The validity of the data in this study was ensured through member checking, where participants were involved in the verification process. This technique allowed researchers to confirm whether the interpretation of the data obtained aligned with the participants' experiences and perspectives. Thus, member checking increased the validity of the study by ensuring that the data used was accurate, consistent, and accountable. The active participation of respondents in data checking also helped identify potential misunderstandings or biases during the analysis process.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Research Findings**

This study aims to analyze the literacy skills of reading images in grade II students of SDN Cipanas, by emphasizing three main sub-foci, namely: image color, image shape, and events in the image. The findings were obtained through data collection using image media that had been developed and analyzed with the help of the ATLAS.ti 9.1.3.0 application, which was then reviewed to see the extent to which students were able to recognize and understand these visual elements.

The following are the overall research findings:

#### **1. Image Color in Image Reading Literacy**

Color is the first visual element observed in this study. Color has a significant influence on students' interest and understanding in reading images. The results of the analysis show that grade II students show certain tendencies in choosing colors when working on image media sheets. The colors that appear are classified into four main categories: primary colors, secondary colors, tertiary colors, and neutral colors.

- a. Primary Colors: Red (7 students), blue (18 students), and yellow (7 students) are used to mark the main objects. This color generally attracts students' attention because of its striking and strong appearance, for example in objects such as the sky, flowers, and kites.



- b. Secondary Colors: Mixed primary colors such as green (29 students), orange (1 student), and purple (6 students) add visual diversity and seem to arouse students' curiosity. Green is predominantly used to depict grass and the surrounding nature.
- c. Tertiary Colors: Mixed colors such as pink (15 students), pink and white (2 students), red and white (1 student), and other variations are used to add emotional depth and contrast to the image. Pink, for example, is often used on dolls or butterflies.
- d. Neutral Colors: White (35 students), brown (5 students), black (3 students), and cream (1 student) are used as balancing elements in the composition of the image. White is the most dominant color, often used to depict clouds or parts of a doll's body.

The following table summarizes the number of students based on the colors they choose in the image media.

Table 1. Number of Students Based on Color Selection in Images

No	Color	Number of students
1	White	35
2	Green	29
3	Blue	18
4	Pink	15
5	Red	7
6	Yellow	7
7	Black	3
8	Orange	1
9	Brown	5
10	Purple	6
11	Black and white	1
12	Red and white	1
13	White Pink	2
14	White brown	1
15	Green and white	1
16	Purple and black and white	1
17	Cream	1
	Total	134

The dominance of white, green, and blue reflects students' preference for visual elements that they can easily recognize in their surroundings such as the sky, grass, and other everyday objects. This shows that color has an important contribution in attracting attention and shaping students' visual understanding of the contents of the image.

## 2. Image Forms and Their Influence on Visual Understanding

Based on the research results, the following are the findings of data on the form of writing of class II students:

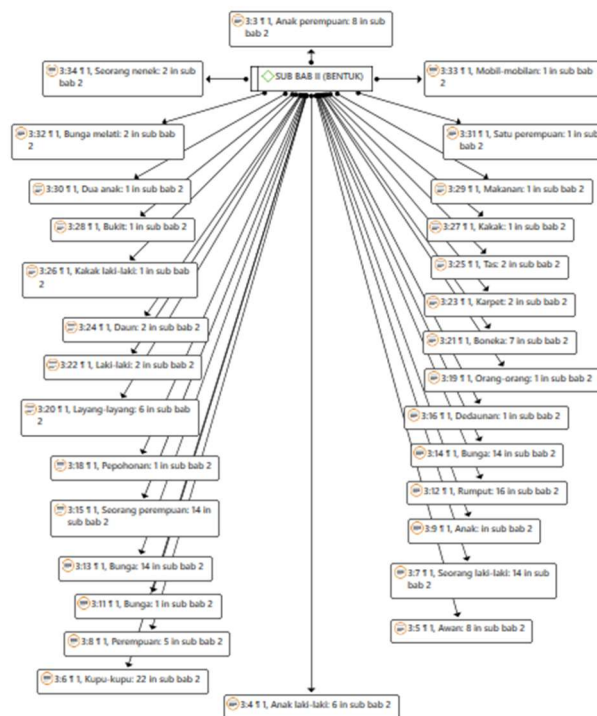


Figure 1. Shape Finding

The forms used in image media also influence students' visual literacy process. The findings show that students find it easier to understand images that depict objects or characters that are familiar to their daily lives. Forms such as boys and girls, butterflies, dolls, kites, grass, flowers, and clouds are often recognized quickly by students.

- a. Boy and Girl Figures: Representation of characters with different genders makes it easier for students to identify and build emotional closeness to the contents of the visual story.
- b. Butterflies and Clouds: As imaginative natural elements, these forms help students associate images with exploration experiences in the surrounding environment.
- c. Dolls and Kites: These play objects reflect students' daily lives and support them in understanding the simple narrative flow in the image.
- d. Grass and Flowers: These supporting elements are used as a background to strengthen the environmental context and make the image more familiar and realistic.

The students' ability to recognize these shapes shows the connection between visualization power and concrete experiences that children have. The image shapes that are relevant to their lives can help improve understanding and speed up the visual reading process.

### 3. Events in Pictures as Triggers for Contextual Understanding

Based on the research results, the following are the findings of data on event from the writings of class II students:

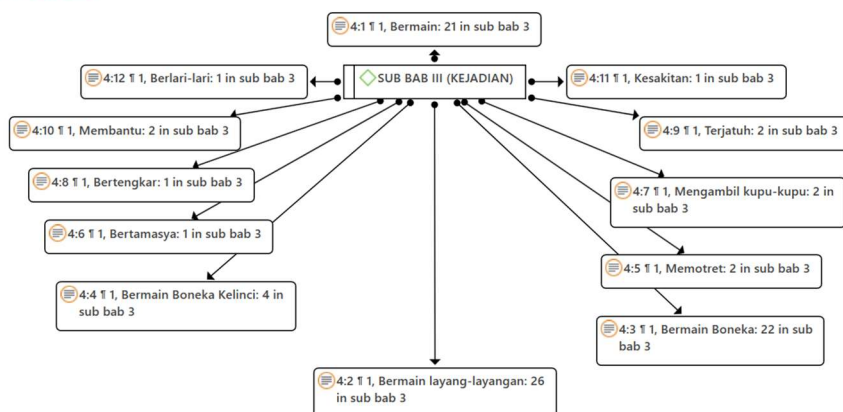


Figure 2. Event Data Findings

Events or activities in pictures also play an important role in improving students' picture reading literacy. Findings show that various activities visualized in pictures, such as flying kites, playing with dolls, taking pictures, and going on an outing, help students understand narratives and build connections between visuals and real experiences.

- a. Playing Kites: This activity visualizes children's social interactions and fun outdoors, making it easier for students to recognize the atmosphere and purpose of the activities in the picture.
- b. Playing Dolls and Rabbit Dolls: This visualization helps children understand emotions through toy objects, while building personal relationships with the picture.
- c. Taking Pictures: This activity introduces the concept of observing the environment, enriching children's visual experiences and expanding their understanding of the meaning of documentation.
- d. Going on an outing: This activity presents an atmosphere of togetherness and joy, which is closely related to the holiday experiences that students have had.

In general, students find it easier to understand pictures that contain concrete events that they have experienced. This shows that the representation of activities in pictures is very helpful in forming meaning and improving students' narrative understanding of visual media.

Based on these findings, this study aims to Understand the literacy skills of reading pictures of grade II students at SDN Cipanas. Showing that the color, shape and event of the picture have a significant influence on children's interest and understanding in reading pictures and this study is in line with (Ni Putu Liana Maharani, 2023) which states that the use of picture media can help students understand learning materials. Attractive visual media can increase students' interest in the contents of the picture, while training cognitive understanding and encouraging the development of various life skills that are useful in everyday life. Pictures as a learning medium have great potential to facilitate students' thinking processes more deeply and meaningfully.

However, this study presents an update with a focus on the extent to which students' visual literacy skills are seen when they are faced with illustrations without original color references. In the process, students are asked to interpret and tell the contents of the picture through writing, without the help of colored visuals that usually support perception. Thus, this study explores students' abilities to understand and express the meaning of pictures independently, and how this reflects their picture reading literacy.

## CONCLUSION

The results of the study showed that the elements of color, shape, and events in the image greatly affect the literacy skills of reading images in grade II students of SDN Cipanas. Attractive colors, relevant shapes, and contextual events have been proven to be able to improve students' understanding and involvement in visual-based learning. Therefore, it is important for teachers to choose and design image media that are in accordance with the visual characteristics and experiences of students so that learning becomes more effective and meaningful. Visuals have an important role in conveying messages and shaping understanding, as explained in the Picture Theory of Language by Ludwig Wittgenstein in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. According to this theory, language (including visual representation) works like an image that depicts reality or facts in the world. In this context, visuals not only function as a complement, but also as the main tool for conveying meaning directly and efficiently. Visuals are able to simplify complex ideas into forms that are easily understood by the human senses. Therefore, understanding how visuals can represent reality is very important in the world of visual communication, design, and media.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all those who have supported and contributed to the success of this research. First and foremost, I would like to thank the principal and teachers of SDN Cipanas for providing me with the opportunity to conduct this research and for their continuous support throughout the process.

My heartfelt thanks go to the students of the second grade at SDN Cipanas, whose participation and enthusiasm made this study possible. Without their cooperation, this research would not have been feasible. I also wish to acknowledge the invaluable assistance of my research advisor and peers for their guidance, feedback, and encouragement.

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