

## Fostering Engagement and Basic Vocabulary through Mini Booklets in Elementary English Learning

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**Abstract:** Engaging young learners in English language lessons while fostering vocabulary development is a key challenge in elementary education. This study investigates the use of mini booklets, designed with colorful illustrations, as a tool to enhance student engagement and support vocabulary acquisition among first-grade students at SD 1 Margorejo. A qualitative case study approach was employed, involving 12 students as participants. Data were collected through observation sheets and teacher reflection notes to examine how the mini booklets influenced classroom dynamics and learning outcomes. The findings indicate that the use of mini booklets significantly increased students' engagement and vocabulary acquisition. Students demonstrated higher motivation, improved word retention, and increased participation in learning activities. The interactive nature of the mini booklets, incorporating visual aids and contextualized learning, contributed to their effectiveness. The study suggests that mini bookletd can serve as an effective supplementary tool in early English education.

**Key words:** mini booklets, student engagement, vocabulary learning, elementary English education

### INTRODUCTION

Teaching English to young learners requires strategies that are both engaging and developmentally appropriate. Traditional methods, such as rote memorization and teacher-centered instruction, often fail to maintain students' interest, resulting in limited vocabulary retention and practical application. To address these challenges, researchers emphasize the importance of interactive and visually engaging materials that enhance language learning, particularly for elementary students (Nation, 2013; Permana, 2020). Among these tools, mini booklets have emerged as a promising medium that integrates visual appeal, structured activities, and interactivity into the learning process.

The researchers' observations during a Community Service Program (KKN) provided valuable insights into the potential of mini booklets as effective teaching tools. Elementary students who received the booklets responded with enthusiasm, actively engaging with the activities and demonstrating increased motivation (Hidayati & Rahman, 2023). These observations inspired further exploration of mini booklets in formal classroom settings, specifically for first-grade students. For this study, the booklets were redesigned to align with the first-grade English curriculum, focusing on foundational topics such as greetings, numbers, colors, and family members. By incorporating visually appealing and interactive elements, the booklets aim to create an engaging and effective learning experience.

Although the benefits of visual aids and interactive tools are widely acknowledged in language education, the specific use of mini booklets as a comprehensive teaching tool remains underexplored. Existing studies frequently highlight tools like flashcards or posters but rarely examine the multifaceted role of mini booklets in improving both engagement and vocabulary

acquisition. Furthermore, most of this research has been conducted in Western contexts, leaving a significant gap in understanding how these tools function in culturally specific settings such as Indonesia (Cheung & Slavin, 2012; Fadillah & Mufidah, 2021).

Teaching English at SD 1 Margorejo presents several challenges, including limited teaching time and a lack of interactive teaching media. As a local content subject, English is taught with restricted hours, requiring teachers to maximize learning within a short period while keeping students engaged. Additionally, the availability of engaging and interactive teaching materials is limited, affecting students' motivation and learning outcomes. In today's digital era, young learners tend to be more interested in visually appealing and interactive materials. During the time this study was conducted, students were highly engaged with card games, and other interactive activities.

Mini booklets have proven to be an effective and enjoyable teaching tool for young learners. Their compact format, combined with visual elements such as illustrations and interactive exercises, successfully captures student' attention. Activities like matching words with pictures, coloring, and simple reading tasks align well with learning preferences of first-grade students. Recent studies suggest that visual media, such as booklets, are effective for educational purposes. Some research even indicates that booklets may be more effective than videos in certain educational contexts. For example, a study by Handayani and Yulaikah (2019) found a significant difference in the effectiveness of booklet and video media, where students who used booklets scored higher on average. Thus, integrating mini booklets into English instruction can enhance student engagement and learning effectiveness, especially in early English education.

This study addresses these gaps by exploring how mini booklets foster engagement and enhance vocabulary retention in first-grade classrooms. It also provides practical insights for educators seeking innovative, student-centered teaching tools that are culturally relevant and tailored to the needs of young learners. Previous studies underscore the importance of interactive materials in improving learning outcomes (Chen et al., 2011; Chodidjah & EYLC Team, 2021). This research contributes to the broader field of early language education by presenting a replicable model for integrating mini booklets into classroom practice. It emphasizes the potential of these tools to address challenges related to low engagement and limited vocabulary retention, particularly in the Indonesian context. The findings aim to inform future studies and guide educators in adopting culturally relevant teaching strategies that cater to the developmental and linguistic needs of young learners.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative case study approach to investigate how mini booklets enhance engagement and vocabulary retention among first-grade elementary students. The case study design was chosen to provide a detailed exploration of the learning process and to capture the dynamics of student interactions with the mini booklets. Through this approach, the study aims to provide meaningful insights into the practical application of these tools in real classroom settings. This method aligns with previous research that emphasizes the importance of qualitative insights into educational practices (Cheung & Slavin, 2012).

The participants consisted of 12 first-grade students from SD 1 Margorejo, aged between 6 and 7 years. The students represented a range of learning abilities, including those who were highly active and high-performing, moderately skilled learners, and a few who needed additional support. This diversity allowed the study to observe how the use of mini

booklets impacted learners with varying needs and abilities, similar to studies that explore the effects of teaching materials on different student demographics (Hidayati & Rahman, 2023).

Data for this study were collected using two main instruments: observation sheets and teacher reflection notes. The use of observation sheets is consistent with methodologies employed in prior research, which highlight the significance of direct observation in assessing student engagement and learning outcomes (Chen et al., 2011). Teacher reflection notes provided additional qualitative data, supporting findings from studies that utilize reflective practices to enhance teaching effectiveness.

### **Data Collection**

Data were collected using three instruments:

#### **1. Classroom Observations**

The researcher observed students' engagement, participation, and responses while using the mini booklets.

#### **2. Teacher Reflection Notes**

The classroom teacher documented student progress, challenges, and learning outcomes during the implementation of mini booklets.

#### **3. Student Feedback**

Informal interviews and discussions were conducted to understand students' perceptions and enjoyment of the learning activities.

The researcher conducted data collection over three classroom sessions, each focusing on specific topics from the mini booklets:

#### **1. Session 1: Greetings, Numbers, and Colors**

In the first session, students were introduced to the mini booklets and participated in activities involving greetings, numbers, and colors. The researcher observed and recorded their engagement and participation, while the teacher noted reflections immediately after the session.

#### **2. Session 2: Shapes, Family Members, and School Supplies**

The second session covered shapes, family members, and school supplies. Students engaged in activities such as matching shapes with their names, drawing family members, and identifying school supplies. As in the first session, the researcher documented observations systematically, while the teacher reflected on the students' progress and learning outcomes.

#### **3. Session 3: Body Parts, Jobs, and Places in Town**

The final session focused on body parts, jobs, and places in town. Students participated in activities such as matching body parts to words, tracing job titles, and designing a shop for their imagined town. The researcher maintained the same approach, observing students' interactions and engagement, while the teacher captured reflective notes on their progress.

The researcher provided guidance throughout all sessions to ensure inclusivity, reflecting best practices identified in previous studies that emphasize the role of teacher support in facilitating effective learning environments (Schmitt, 2021).

### **Data Analysis**

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis, focusing on two key aspects:

#### **1. Student Engagement**

Patters related to participation levels, enthusiasm, and attention span were identified from observations and teacher reflection notes.

## 2. Vocabulary Retention

Student responses and activities were examined to assess how well they retained and used new vocabulary.

The data from observation sheets and teacher reflection notes were analyzed using thematic analysis. This approach is aligned with established methods in educational research that focus on identifying patterns related to engagement and vocabulary development (Fadillah & Mufidah, 2021). By organizing data into broader themes, the study offers valuable insights into how mini booklets contribute to improving engagement and vocabulary retention in a classroom setting.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *Result*

This study explored the role of mini booklets in fostering student engagement, participation, and vocabulary retention in elementary English learning. The findings, based on observation sheets and teacher reflection notes, provide a comprehensive understanding of how these tools influenced classroom dynamics and learning outcomes.

### 1. Engagement and Participation

The use of mini booklets significantly enhanced student engagement and participation during English lessons. Observation sheets revealed that most students were highly engaged throughout the sessions, demonstrating enthusiasm for interactive tasks such as tracing, matching, and drawing. The colorful visuals and hands-on activities captured their attention, helping them stay focused.

In the first session, students were excited about tasks related to greetings, numbers, and colors, particularly when they could trace and match words with pictures. During the second session, students enjoyed drawing shapes and personalizing their pencil cases, while in the final session, activities like designing shops and drawing dream jobs further boosted their participation.

Teacher reflections noted that while most students participated actively, a few required additional guidance to complete their tasks. Structured activities and consistent encouragement helped keep these students involved.

**Table 1: Observation Summary Across Sessions**

Session Topics	Engagement	Participation	Interaction	Understanding
Greetings, Numbers, and Colors	Very High	Very Active	Good	Good
Shapes, Family Members, and School Supplies	Very High	Very Active	Excellent	Excellent
Body Parts, Jobs, Places in Town	Very High	Very Active	Excellent	Good

## 2. Vocabulary Retention

The mini booklets played a significant role in improving students' vocabulary retention by providing opportunities for contextualized and interactive learning. Based on teacher reflection notes and observation sheets, students' vocabulary retention was categorized into three groups: high-performing, moderate-performing, and low-performing.

High-performing students consistently recalled and applied new vocabulary confidently. They often completed tasks quickly and supported their peers. Moderate-performing students required more time and repeated practice, but they showed gradual improvement with consistent support. Low-performing students struggled with retention and needed structured guidance to master vocabulary, particularly for unfamiliar words.

**Table 2. Individual Student Performance**

Student ID	Engagement	Participation	Vocabulary Retention	Notes
Student 1	Medium	Moderate	Fair	Needed extra time to complete tasks.
Student 2	Medium	Moderate	Fair	Required repeated instructions.
Student 3	High	Active	Good	Confidently used new vocabulary.
Student 4	High	Active	Good	Actively helped peers.
Student 5	High	Active	Good	Consistently focused and attentive.
Student 6	Medium	Passive	Minimal	Needed constant redirection due to hyperactivity.
Student 7	Medium	Moderate	Fair	Improved with extra guidance.
Student 8	High	Active	Good	Highly engaged and enthusiastic.
Student 9	Medium	Moderate	Fair	Gradually improved through repetition.
Student 10	High	Active	Good	Excellent focus on tasks.
Student 11	Medium	Moderate	Fair	Struggled with vocabulary recall.
Student 12	Medium	Passive	Minimal	Distracted easily, needed consistent support.

High-performing Students: This group demonstrated a strong ability to recall and use vocabulary confidently during activities. For instance, students in this category consistently pronounced words correctly, such as 'kitchen,' 'doctor,' and 'triangle,' and often incorporated

them into sentences without prompting. They also actively participated in peer discussions, using new vocabulary contextually. Teacher notes highlighted that these students excelled in creative tasks like describing their dream jobs and designing shops in their towns.

**Moderate-performing Students:** Students in this category showed fair retention, requiring repeated exposure and guidance. While they could recognize and recall simpler words like 'book,' 'pen,' and 'family,' they struggled with abstract or less familiar terms, such as 'eyebrow' and 'living room.' Visual aids and repetition were key strategies in helping these students retain vocabulary. Tasks such as matching words with pictures and tracing helped reinforce their learning over time.

**Low-performing Students:** This group faced challenges in retaining and applying new vocabulary. They often required step-by-step instructions and consistent teacher support to complete tasks. While they made progress with simpler words like 'red' and 'mom,' they had difficulty grasping more complex vocabulary. For example, during the activity on body parts, students in this group needed repeated explanations and examples to recall words like 'cheek' and 'arm.' Despite these challenges, these students showed incremental improvement when tasks were simplified and paired with engaging visuals.

### **3. Classroom Dynamics and Challenges**

The classroom presented a dynamic and collaborative environment, influenced by the varying needs and learning paces of students. High-performing students frequently excelled in structured activities, completing their tasks ahead of schedule and often assisting peers. This peer-to-peer interaction not only encouraged collaboration but also built confidence among moderate-performing students, who benefited from additional guidance and examples provided by their classmates.

Moderate-performing students showed engagement but required more targeted support, especially in complex tasks such as writing sentences or understanding new vocabulary. Meanwhile, low-performing students, particularly those exhibiting hyperactivity, needed consistent redirection to remain focused. Teachers adapted their strategies to address these challenges, providing scaffolding, visual aids, and step-by-step instructions to meet the diverse needs of all learners.

Additionally, balancing the pace of activities was critical. Faster learners thrived when given extra challenges, such as creative tasks or bonus questions, which kept them motivated. Slower learners, on the other hand, responded positively to repeated instructions and examples. Despite these challenges, the classroom environment remained supportive and inclusive, with students helping one another and engaging actively in their learning journey.

### **4. Visual Evidence of Engagement**

The use of mini booklets generated visible enthusiasm among students, as reflected in both their participation and engagement. Photographs taken during the lessons provide compelling evidence of this excitement. For example, students can be seen holding their booklets with pride, eager to showcase their work to teachers and peers. Activities like drawing dream jobs or personalizing their pencil cases allowed students to express creativity while practicing new vocabulary.

In one observed instance, a group of students collaborated on identifying and matching vocabulary words related to school supplies. Their active involvement pointing at pictures, asking for clarification, and sharing their answers demonstrated the effectiveness of interactive learning tools. Teachers also noted that even less active students found joy in these activities,

with some showing unexpected levels of focus when working on visually engaging tasks.

Overall, the photographs and observations highlight the role of mini booklets in transforming the classroom into a lively and inclusive learning environment. These materials not only supported individual learning but also encouraged teamwork and a sense of accomplishment among students.

**Figure 1. Students Using Mini Booklets**



### ***Discussion***

This section discusses the findings of the study, focusing on how mini booklets influenced student engagement, participation, and vocabulary retention. The results are also compared to prior research to provide further insights.

#### ***Engagement and Participation***

The mini booklets proved to be highly effective in fostering engagement and participation among first-grade students. Observation sheets consistently rated engagement as 'Very High,' and students displayed enthusiasm during interactive tasks like matching, tracing, and drawing. Teacher reflections emphasized that the colorful visuals and structured activities helped maintain student focus throughout the sessions. Research by Suryani, Prasetyo, and Hidayat (2023) found that interactive materials, such as booklets, encourage self-directed learning and active student participation. Compared to traditional worksheets, mini booklets allow students to explore language in a fun and meaningful way, improving both motivation and retention.

This aligns with research by Chen, Quadir, and Teng (2011), who found that visually engaging and interactive tools significantly enhance young learners' motivation. Similarly, Nation (2013) highlighted the importance of multisensory materials in addressing the developmental needs of early learners. Hidayati and Rahman (2023) also noted that structured, student-centered resources like booklets foster active participation, particularly in elementary language education.

Mini booklets have been shown to significantly increase student engagement in English learning. Anirah, et al. (2022) found that visual learning media play a crucial role in enhancing student motivation and comprehension in elementary education. Additionally, Handayani and Yulaikah (2019) compared the effectiveness of booklets and videos in education and found that students using booklets demonstrated better learning retention and engagement. These findings

align with this study, where first-grade students showed enthusiasm and active participation while using mini booklets. Moreover, visual-based materials like mini booklets help learners associate words with images, reinforcing memory and comprehension (Fadhilah and Ramadhani, 2023).

Collaborative learning dynamics further strengthened engagement. High-performing students frequently assisted their peers in completing tasks, creating a supportive environment. This finding aligns with Kusuma and Widiastuti (2024), who reported that interactive booklets encourage peer interaction and collaboration. Moreover, personalized activities, such as drawing dream jobs, supported by Chodidjah and EYLC Team (2021), increased participation by allowing students to connect learning with their interests.

### ***Vocabulary Retention***

Vocabulary retention improved significantly across all student groups due to the contextualized and repetitive nature of the mini booklet activities. High-performing students confidently recalled and applied new vocabulary, while moderate performers demonstrated improvement through repeated exposure. Low-performing students initially struggled but showed gradual progress with consistent teacher support and visual aids.

Students who used mini booklets showed better vocabulary retention compared to those who learned through traditional rote memorization. Rahmawati et al. (2023) found that incorporating contextual and visual learning strategies significantly improves vocabulary acquisition in young learners. Similarly, Pratama and Susanto (2022) emphasized that interactive materials enhance word recognition and long-term retention among early-stage language learners. This study supports these findings, as students demonstrated improved recall of vocabulary after engaging in booklet-based activities, such as matching words with pictures and storytelling exercises.

While flashcards and posters are often used for vocabulary teaching, recent studies suggest that booklets provide a more structured and context-rich learning experience. According to Mulyani and Ardiansyah (2023), flashcards help with word recognition, but mini booklets offer contextual learning, allowing students to see words in sentences and illustrations, which significantly enhances comprehension and recall.

This finding is consistent with Schmitt (2021), who emphasized that repeated exposure to vocabulary in meaningful contexts is critical for retention. Visual aids, highlighted by Sunusi and Bhat (2021), were instrumental in helping students grasp complex terms like 'eyebrow' and 'cheek.' Creative tasks, such as designing shops, further reinforced vocabulary learning, echoing the findings of Fadillah and Mufidah (2021). Visual elements play a crucial role in vocabulary retention. Susanto and Wijayanti (2022) argue that images help activate cognitive associations, making it easier for students to remember and apply new words. This aligns with the findings of this study, where students were more likely to recall vocabulary when they saw it alongside engaging illustrations.

Additionally, moderate and low performing students benefited from scaffolded activities and step-by-step instructions. These strategies align with the recommendations of Cheung and Slavin (2012), who found that differentiated instruction supports learners with



diverse needs. The findings also mirror the results of Fitriani and Rahman (2023), who demonstrated that tailored materials enhance vocabulary retention for young learners.

### ***Classroom Dynamics and Challenges***

The classroom dynamics observed in this study highlighted both opportunities and challenges in managing diverse student needs. High-performing students thrived in structured activities and often took on leadership roles, assisting their peers. However, moderate and low-performing students required additional teacher intervention to remain engaged.

These findings support the arguments of Wang and Huang (2017), who stressed the importance of adapting teaching strategies to heterogeneous classrooms. Visual aids and movement-based activities, such as games and songs, effectively addressed the needs of hyperactive students, consistent with Sholah's (2022) observations. Teachers also noted the value of peer-to-peer learning, which Ridha and Mufidah (2021) described as a critical component in fostering inclusive classroom environments.

One notable challenge was managing the pace of activities to accommodate both fast and slow learners. Extension tasks for high-performing students and scaffolded support for low-performing students were necessary to maintain a balanced classroom dynamic. This reflects the findings of Sukmawati and Anwar (2022), who emphasized the need for differentiated pacing in elementary classrooms.

### ***Implications for Practice***

The findings highlight the practical value of mini booklets as an effective teaching tool in elementary English education. By integrating visuals, structured activities, and cultural relevance, mini booklets address common challenges such as low engagement and limited vocabulary retention. Permana (2020) argued that interactive tools tailored to young learners' developmental stages are more effective than traditional rote learning methods, a conclusion supported by this study.

Additionally, the adaptability of mini booklets underscores their potential for broader application. Ma'arif and Claudia (2021) called for more research on tools that cater to diverse learner needs, a gap that this study addresses. The findings also align with Taufikurohman (2018), who highlighted the importance of integrating interactive tools into everyday classroom practice.

### ***Contribution to Literature***

This research contributes to the growing body of knowledge on interactive learning tools by focusing on an underexplored context: Indonesian elementary classrooms. Previous studies, such as those by Kayyis and Kholifah (2021) and Fitriani and Rahman (2023), have largely focused on secondary education. By contrast, this study demonstrates the effectiveness of mini booklets in fostering engagement and vocabulary retention among younger students.

The findings reinforce Usman's (2020) assertion that localized and culturally relevant teaching materials improve learning outcomes. Moreover, the study builds on the work of Fitria and Rahman (2020), who emphasized that interactive booklets are particularly effective for vocabulary acquisition and speaking skills. By presenting a replicable model, this research provides practical recommendations for educators seeking innovative, student-centered teaching strategies.

## CONCLUSION

This study has established that mini booklets are an effective resource for enhancing student engagement and vocabulary retention among first-grade learners. The findings indicate that the colorful designs and interactive features of these materials captured students' attention and promoted a collaborative learning environment. High-performing students demonstrated strong vocabulary recall and application, while moderate and low-performing students showed gradual improvement with appropriate guidance.

Additionally, the research highlights the importance of integrating culturally relevant teaching materials to enrich the learning experiences of young learners in Indonesia. Utilizing mini booklets facilitates dynamic lessons that cater to diverse learning needs, ultimately fostering a more inclusive educational environment.

For future research, it is recommended to focus on implementing mini booklets specifically for students with special needs or those who are less active in the classroom. Grouping these students together could enhance guidance and support, allowing for more effective instructional strategies that address their unique challenges. This approach aims not only to improve engagement and vocabulary retention but also to contribute to creating an inclusive educational setting where all students can thrive.

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