

Digital Flashcards to Boost Children's Interest in English Communication

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Abstract. This study examines the effectiveness of combining digital flashcards with the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach to enhance interest and communication skills in English among elementary school children. Conducted at SD Negeri 058116 Kwala Sawit in Tangkahan, a rural tourist area in North Sumatra, the research employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) model to test the impact of this innovative method in an under-resourced educational setting. The study involved 56 grades 5 and 6 students who completed two planning cycles: implementation, observation, and reflection. Results indicated a substantial increase in students' interest and engagement, with a 10.25% improvement in learning interest. Moreover, student proficiency in conversational English rose, as 72% of fifth graders and 78% of sixth graders demonstrated correct responses in practical dialogues after the intervention, a rise from the initial 40%. This study offers insights into the potential of digital, interactive tools to support language acquisition, especially in rural or resource-limited environments. These findings suggest that digital flashcards, combined with CLT, can provide a sustainable and engaging approach to language learning, fostering enthusiasm and communicative competence in young learners.

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INTRODUCTION

In the current era of globalization, the capacity to communicate in English has become an essential skill. This is not only a means of international communication but also a key to gaining access to various economic, educational, and social opportunities (Siregar, 2023). For example, according to the British Council, English is spoken by over 1.5 billion people worldwide, making it the third most spoken language globally. This widespread use facilitates the interchange of information and broadens the horizons of understanding between nations, allowing individuals to interact across cultures and countries (British Council, 2022).

This is becoming more pertinent, particularly in tourist destinations that possess significant economic potential, such as Tangkahan Village in Langkat Regency, North Sumatra. Tangkahan Village is renowned for its exceptional natural tourism attractions, including the Gunung Leuser National Park, which attracts thousands of tourists annually. However, despite these attractions, the limited proficiency of English among the local community, particularly school-age children, remains a substantial impediment to maximizing the extant tourism potential (Siregar, Harahap & Kusmanto, 2022).

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A survey conducted by the Langkat Tourism Board in 2022 indicated that 70% of international tourists prefer destinations where locals can communicate in English. Furthermore, studies have shown that improving English proficiency in tourist destinations can increase tourist satisfaction by 20% and boost local revenues by up to 30% (Langkat Tourism Board, 2022). Therefore, enhancing the English language skills of the local community in Tangkahan Village is crucial for capitalizing on its tourism potential and driving economic growth.

The significance of fluency in English in tourist destinations is not restricted to interactions with foreign tourists (Warni, & Apoko, 2022); it also has a long-term effect on the local economy. In accordance with this, research conducted by Galela (2014) and Zulkarnain (2016) demonstrates that local communities, particularly those in the tourism sector, can gain a competitive edge by enhancing their English language proficiency. Nevertheless, in regions like Tangkahan, the lack of interest and motivation to learn English is a significant impediment that must be surmounted.

This research endeavors to integrate digital technology, specifically digital flashcards, with the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) model. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is a model of English language learning (ESL) that emphasizes the development of communication and interaction skills. For instance, it is used to facilitate interactions between local residents and travelers in the context of education and tourism development. This approach encompasses a variety of language skills, including grammar, conversation, listening, and reading (Dewi, & Setiana, 2020). The objective of language instruction is to cultivate communicative competence, which is the capacity to employ language in a variety of contexts and situations (Husna, 2022). Consequently, language use is not restricted to the four language skills; rather, it encompasses a variety of abilities within a comprehensive communication framework, contingent upon the role and participants of the circumstance, as well as the purpose of the interaction.

It is anticipated that the enhancement of English language proficiency among village children will not only influence educational advancements (Yulianto, 2023) but also fortify the local economy by facilitating the more effective utilization of tourism potential. Furthermore, the acquisition of an adaptive and competitive national character in the context of global challenges will be significantly influenced by the effective acquisition of the English language at a young age (Tursunova, 2024). Consequently, this investigation addresses not only pedagogical aspects but also broader socio-economic dimensions that are anticipated to have a lasting effect on the community in Namo Sialang Village.

Interest is one of the determinant factors that influence the effectiveness of instruction and learning activities during the learning process. Learning interest is not inherent; rather, it is fostered by external stimuli that foster inquiry and interest in a subject, as stated by Nurfadhillah, Ningsih, Ramadhania, and Sifa (2021). This interest is significantly impacted by the active engagement of the teaching staff, learning media, and teaching methods in the context of English language learning. Consequently, it is imperative that educators continue to create strategies that can enhance student motivation and engagement, particularly during the primary school years, which are a critical period in the development of language skills.

(Nursyam, 2019) underscores that students who demonstrate a strong interest in learning are inclined to devote more attention to the learning process, which in turn motivates them to study more diligently and accomplish superior outcomes. This bolsters the argument that the development of students' language skills can be significantly influenced by an increase in interest in learning English (Siregar, 2023). External factors, such as the utilization of innovative learning media, such as digital flashcards, are crucial in the development of an interactive and engaging

learning experience. In addition to enhancing students' comprehension of language structure and vocabulary, this method also enhances their communication skills.

Digital technology has altered the nature and scope of education, resulting in the implementation of information technology integration policy strategies in education worldwide (Nursyam, 2019). Digital flashcard media is one of the media that has been produced as a result of today's interactive technology. Flashcards are intended to establish a learning environment that is both engaging and enjoyable, which not only encourages students to be more engaged and attentive during the learning process but also enhances their level of engagement in the learning process (Yüksel, et al., 2022). Glenn Doman, a pioneer in the application of flashcards, has conducted research on the science of infant brain development. The objective of this medium is to promote the cognitive development of children through interactive reading activities that are intended to be enjoyable (Hasanah, 2018). Glenn Doman explains that the flashcard method is designed to achieve the following objectives: 1) Improve literacy comprehension and aid in the recognition of words and sentences; 2) Generate new information by utilizing existing schemas; and 3) Achieve instrumental effects, such as the simplicity of acquiring a skill, such as the ability to read.

Quizlet is an example of a broadly popular flashcard website that provides a variety of features for the creation and study of flashcards online. Quizlet provides an educational platform that enables students to learn independently, utilizing both smartphones and computers (Pham, 2022). Quizlet is an e-learning platform that is optimized for smartphones and is suitable for students of all academic levels and disciplines. The platform offers several specific features that enhance the learning process, such as:

1. Customizable Flashcards: Students can create their own flashcards with text, images, and audio, making the learning experience personalized and engaging.
2. Study Modes: Quizlet offers multiple study modes, including Learn, Flashcards, Write, Spell, Test, and Match, which cater to different learning styles and reinforce knowledge through varied practice methods.
3. Interactive Games: Features like Quizlet Live encourage collaborative learning and make studying more interactive and fun.
4. Progress Tracking: Students can track their progress over time, identify areas for improvement, and stay motivated.
5. The utilization of this digital learning media can enhance the efficiency and engagement of the learning process, thereby enabling students to achieve superior learning outcomes (Sari, 2019).

The innovation of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is anticipated to serve as a practical solution for enhancing the English communication skills and interests of children in SD Negeri 058116 Kwala Sawit, Namo Sialang Village, a remote tourist destination. The utilization of technology-based learning media, such as digital flashcards, not only enables interactive and engaging learning but also has the potential to establish a more effective and efficient learning environment (Wulandari & Chadafi, 2022). This enriched learning environment will enable students to learn independently and collaboratively with greater enthusiasm. By integrating CLT with digital tools, this research aims to create a robust framework that enhances student engagement and language acquisition through practical and enjoyable means.

The speaking abilities of students can be enhanced through the implementation of the CLT approach through communicative activities, including pair work, role-play simulation, storytelling, playing cards, group work, describing images, and telling stories. The central tenet of the CLT approach is to examine language as a tool for communication rather than as a scientific

discipline (Mangaleswaran, & Aziz, 2019). The instructional design of the CLT approach also takes into account communicative competence.

The problem formulation of this study is centered on two primary questions: the first is the effectiveness of digital flashcards as a learning media when combined with the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) model, and the second is the efficacy of digital flashcards in increasing the interest of children in learning English at SD Negeri 058116 Kwala Sawit in Tangkahan. The goals of this research are to recognize effective learning techniques that incorporate the CLT model with digital flashcards and to illustrate the efficacy of this approach in enhancing students' motivation and interest in English language acquisition. The study endeavors to provide valuable insights into innovative educational practices that improve language acquisition among young learners by addressing these concerns and objectives.

METHOD

This research employs the Classroom Action Research (CAR) method, which is designed to enhance learning practices (Vista, Chasanatun, & Kustini, 2023). CAR is a systematic, iterative process involving cycles of planning, action, observation, and reflection. One of the critical components of CAR is the reflection and evaluation strategy, which analyzes and evaluates data collected throughout the research. The research method follows the spiral model proposed by Stephen Kemmis and Robin McTaggart, where the procedure consists of two cycles. Each cycle is divided into three stages: the planning stage, the implementation and observation stage, and the reflection stage.

In the first stage, the planning phase, the activities include preparing learning tools focused on the theme 'Basic Conversation,' drafting lesson plans (RPP) with various sub-themes, organizing teaching materials for dialogues between students and tourists, and developing learning media in the form of digital flashcards integrated with the CLT approach. During the second stage, which involves implementation and observation, the planned learning devices are applied using the CLT method with the help of digital flashcards. Observations are conducted based on observation sheets to assess how well the actual learning process aligns with the planned curriculum. The third stage is the reflection phase, where researchers evaluate the successes and challenges of the learning process. This reflection serves as a foundation for improving the next cycle.

The study targets 56 students in grades 5 and 6 at SD Negeri 058116 in Namo Sialang Village, Kec. Tangkahan, Kab. Langkat. These students were selected because SD Negeri 058116 is the only elementary school in the area closest to the Tangkahan natural tourist site. The focus is on grades 5 and 6, as these students have already been introduced to English, unlike grades 1 to 4, who have not yet started learning the language. The goal is to implement digital flashcards in conjunction with the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach to enhance students' interest in English communication. Data analysis involves systematically sorting and processing data and transforming it into meaningful insights (Ibrahim, 2015).

Table 1. Likert scale of learning interest contribution

Assessment Aspect	Description	The Score
SA	Strongly Agree	4
S	Agree	3
D	Disagree	2
SD	Strongly Disagree	1

The first step of this study was to conduct research to find the most suitable digital flashcard platform for use in the English learning process at SD Negeri 058116 Kwala Sawit. After evaluating various options, the research team selected www.Quizlet.com as the preferred platform due to its variety of interactive learning features tailored to the needs of elementary school students. This platform provides flashcards with images, text, and sounds that support English vocabulary recognition in a visually engaging manner. The primary focus in selecting this platform was ensuring that the digital media chosen could actively engage students in learning English vocabulary and concepts in an accessible way.

Once the appropriate digital flashcard platform was determined, the next step involved developing a learning method based on the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach, integrated with the use of digital flashcards. The CLT method emphasizes the active development of English communication skills through real-life interaction simulations. In this combined approach, digital flashcards serve as a tool to introduce new vocabulary and sentence patterns in an interesting and contextualized way. The learning materials were divided into themes and subthemes, followed by the introduction of vocabulary and phrases using flashcards. Students engaged in pair work and played games that reinforced the use of the vocabulary they had learned.

A socialization session was conducted for students before the implementation of this learning method. The purpose was to raise awareness of the importance of mastering English, particularly in a tourist village like Tangkahan. This socialization aimed to highlight the long-term benefits of English proficiency, especially when interacting with foreign tourists and taking advantage of economic opportunities. During this session, the community was also introduced to the plan to incorporate digital flashcards as part of an innovative language learning initiative. Before implementing the learning media, the research team distributed a questionnaire to measure students' initial interest and ability in English. This questionnaire provided baseline data that would later be compared to post-implementation results, allowing researchers to track improvements in students' engagement and skills after using the CLT method assisted by digital flashcards. The data was collected through a pre-and post-intervention survey, which included both closed and open-ended questions to gather quantitative and qualitative data.

To analyze the collected data, the research team used the paired sample t-test, a statistical method that compares the means of two related groups to determine if there is a statistically significant difference between them. This test was chosen because it is appropriate for evaluating the impact of the intervention by comparing students' performance and interest levels before and after the implementation of the digital flashcards.

The specific steps involved in the data analysis were as follows:

1. Pre-Intervention Data Collection: Baseline data was collected through the initial questionnaire administered to the 56 students in grades 5 and 6 at SD Negeri 058116.
2. Implementation of Intervention: The CLT approach assisted by digital flashcards was implemented over a period of three months.
3. Post-Intervention Data Collection: After the implementation, the same questionnaire was distributed to measure the changes in students' interest and ability in English.
4. Statistical Analysis: The paired sample t-test was conducted to compare the pre-and post-intervention scores, determining the effectiveness of the intervention.
5. Interpretation of Results: The results were interpreted to assess whether the intervention had a significant impact on improving students' English communication skills and interest in learning the language.

The learning media implementation then commenced, with the CLT method integrated with digital flashcards applied in the classroom. Students interacted with flashcards displaying images,

text, and sounds, aiding their understanding of new vocabulary and English concepts. Several learning sessions were conducted, during which students actively participated in simulated conversations and role-plays, all designed to enhance their communication skills. To facilitate the process, the students were divided into six small groups, each mentored by a member of the research team. This allowed for closer observation and personalized guidance tailored to each student's needs. Research team members used observation sheets to record students' progress.

After the learning process was completed, a second questionnaire was distributed to assess improvements in students' interest in learning and English language skills. The data collected from this post-implementation questionnaire was then analyzed and compared to the initial data, providing insights into the effectiveness of the learning method and the overall impact of digital flashcard-based learning on student outcomes.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Learning Plan with Combination of CLT Model and Digital Flashcard Media

The combination of conversational learning techniques (CLT) with digital flashcards demonstrated encouraging outcomes in terms of communication skills. The students were given real-life scenarios in which they could apply the vocabulary and sentence structures that they had acquired as part of the implementation of the CLT approach, which placed an emphasis on real-life interaction. With the use of digital flashcards, students were able to practice and improve their language abilities in a meaningful setting through the use of activities such as role-playing and paired conversations. When it comes to fostering students' confidence in their ability to use a foreign language, Mangaleswaran and Aziz (2019) emphasized the significance of communicative activities like role-playing and simulations. The students actively participated in speaking activities, which improved their verbal communication talents, which is supported by this study, which provides evidence in favor of their thesis. Through the utilization of digital flashcards as a visual aid, students were able to acquire a more comprehensive understanding of the vocabulary, which resulted in improved communication during the exercises performed.

A visual and interactive approach to teaching vocabulary and sentence structure is the goal of the usage of digital flashcards, which are intended to enhance the Common Language Teaching (CLT) methodology. The intention of this implementation procedure is to make the educational experience of the students more pleasurable and productive. First, the contents will be separated into a number of primary categories, such as "Vocabulary," "Greetings," and "Asking." Sub-themes are then derived from each of these topics after they have been broken down. Following that, each of these topics is further subdivided into a greater degree of specificity. Digital flashcards are provided when introducing vocabulary that is associated with each subtheme. In the case of the "Vocabulary" topic, for instance, the flashcards provide students with the opportunity to more effectively correlate visuals with words by displaying pictures of animals alongside text and noises that provide the names of the animals in English.

Table 2. The combination of CLT and Digital Flashcard Lesson Plan

No	Component	Description
1	Theme	Vocabulary
2	Subtheme	Animals, Clothes, Body parts, Vehicle, and Colours
3	Learning Objectives	Increase students' English vocabulary related to the learning theme.

4	Early Activities	1. The teacher will introduce the material. 2. Introduction of digital flashcards about the vocabulary being taught.
5	Core Activities	1. Students are divided into groups. 2. Each group uses flashcards in paired practice and simulated conversation. 3. The teacher gives examples of conversations related to the subtheme.
6	Closing Activities	1. Evaluate the results of the group discussion. 2. Conclusion and reflection of learning.
7	Learning Media	Digital Flashcards (images and text).
8	Evaluation	Oral tests related to the use of vocabulary in conversation.

Students participate in paired practice, conversation simulation, and role play throughout each and every learning session, which is the CLT strategy that is utilized. The usage of digital flashcards presents students with an opportunity to comprehend and commit to memory terminology that is utilized during interactions.

2. Increasing Students' Interest in English Language Learning

The use of digital learning media, such as flashcards, has been shown to be helpful in drawing students' interest in learning foreign languages, including English. This is a trend that has coincided with the development of technology. According to the findings of research carried out by Faizah and Wardani (2024), the utilization of technology-based learning media not only boosts the level of interest among students but also expedites the process of comprehending new ideas. Interactivity and visualization, which are more intriguing than traditional learning approaches, are the reasons for this surge in interest.

Table 3. Results of increased student interest

Test	Class	Students	The Score
Pre-Test	V	23	721
	VI	37	1.016
	Total		1.737
Post-Test	V	23	819
	VI	37	1.095
	Total		1.915

The quantitative data collected is based on the table.1 highlights a significant increase in students' interest in learning English after implementing digital flashcards. Before the intervention, students in grade V scored an average of 721, while those in grade VI averaged 1,016, totaling 1,737. After introducing digital flashcards, the average score for grade V rose to 819, and for grade VI to 1,095, bringing the total to 1,915. This reflects an average increase of 10.25% in student interest levels, showing that technology not only serves as a learning tool but also enhances motivation and engagement in the learning process.

In order to verify the significance of this improvement, a paired sample t-test was conducted. This statistical test compared the pre-and post-intervention scores to determine whether the increase in interest was statistically significant. By comparing the mean scores of both cycles, the paired t-test confirmed a meaningful increase in student engagement levels with a confidence level of 95%, indicating that the combined use of CLT and digital flashcards positively impacted students' understanding and retention of vocabulary and concepts. This approach proved successful for language acquisition, supporting prior findings on the effectiveness of technology-based learning tools in educational settings. As Ibrahim (2015) suggested, the integration of technology in education significantly improves students' learning outcomes by offering a diverse range of learning stimuli.

A considerable rise in students' interest in English was observed, with an average increase of 10.25%, as a result of the installation of digital flashcards, according to the findings of this study. The findings of the post-test included a conversational skill assessment in which students were asked to participate in brief dialogues. Initially, only 40% of students were able to respond correctly in English, but after the intervention, 72% of grade V and 78% of grade VI students could respond accurately and use new vocabulary contextually. This increase in scores by over 30% highlights the effectiveness of digital flashcards in enhancing not only vocabulary but also practical English communication skills, supporting the conclusion that digital flashcards and CLT provide a robust framework for language acquisition in classroom settings."

In addition, the utilization of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach in conjunction with digital flashcards contributes to a more favorable environment. Students have a greater chance of comprehending and remembering the topics and terminology that are taught when educational activities use visual media. Mangaleswaran and Aziz (2019) conducted a study that indicated that a technology-supported CLT strategy has the potential to dramatically increase language abilities. This finding is consistent with their findings.

When taken as a whole, the application of his method is not only beneficial in enhancing the level of interest that students have in studying English, but it also makes a contribution to the enhancement of the quality of education in distant locations where access to contemporary learning methods is restricted. The application of this method across two cycles proved effective in enhancing students' interest and communication skills in English. Each cycle consisted of a series of structured steps—planning, implementation, observation, and reflection—designed to ensure gradual improvement and adaptation of teaching methods based on observed results. Over the course of these two months, with each cycle spanning approximately one month, students engaged in continuous learning activities that reinforced their use of English vocabulary and communication skills. This duration allowed students ample time to practice and assimilate new vocabulary, making steady progress toward better communication outcomes.

The findings suggest that conducting multiple cycles is beneficial in solidifying the communication improvements initiated by the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach and digital flashcards. This phased approach allowed for adjustments after each cycle, enhancing the quality of education, particularly in regions with limited access to contemporary learning methods.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this research indicate that the use of digital flashcards in conjunction with the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) strategy at SD Negeri 058116, Kwala Sawit, resulted in a considerable improvement in both the level of interest and the communication abilities among students in the English language. As a consequence of the introduction of technology into standard

instructional procedures, students displayed a higher level of involvement, which led to a significant rise in their degree of motivation to gain knowledge. The visual and interactive nature of digital flashcards, in conjunction with the organized engagement provided by CLT, enabled students to develop a more profound knowledge of sentence structures and vocabulary, establishing an environment conducive to language acquisition.

While this study effectively measured improvements in interest and communication skills, it did not delve into other aspects of language learning, such as grammar, fluency, or reading comprehension. Further research could explore the broader impact of this approach on overall language proficiency, including the mastery of grammar, the ability to speak fluently, and the understanding of written texts. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), combined with digital flashcards, has proven to be an effective approach in increasing student interest and enhancing English language communication skills. The interactive, visually appealing nature of the flashcards, coupled with communicative activities, created a more engaging learning environment that fostered better language acquisition. Mangaleswaran and Aziz (2019) found that a technology-supported CLT strategy can significantly improve language abilities, which aligns with our findings.

Moreover, the system demonstrated remarkable effectiveness in overcoming the specific challenges associated with teaching in a rural location with limited access to modern educational materials. The fact that students successfully enhanced their involvement and confidence in their ability to speak English using digital technologies indicates that such technologies have the potential to transform language learning, even in resource-limited contexts.

The results of this investigation offer valuable insights into the practical benefits of utilizing digital media in English language instruction. Future research should explore the scalability of this approach to other educational settings, particularly in under-resourced areas. Continuing to investigate similar technology integrations in locations where conventional resources are scarce will increase student interest and mastery of the subject. These findings should be used to inform educational policies and curriculum development aimed at improving English language instruction in rural communities across Indonesia. It is recommended that this approach be adopted to provide students with more engaging and effective language learning experiences.

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