

**THE USE OF SILENT WAY THROUGH DIGITAL FLASHCARDS:
BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES**

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ABSTRACT

The 1970s marked the emergence of innovative pedagogical approaches, notably Caleb Gattegno's Silent Way, as a response to the shortcomings of traditional learning methods like the Grammar-translation approach, which persist today. This research investigates the advantages and challenges of implementing Silent Way at an English Club in Bandung. Two English teachers from the English Club comprised the study cohort, and a qualitative case study served as the chosen methodology. The researcher meticulously processed the analysis through multiple stages. The researcher closely examined the observations to capture detailed insights, while also condensing interview transcriptions for quick reference, contributing to a robust dataset. By combining data from both observations and interviews, this comprehensive approach guided the conclusions of the study, which were presented within the research framework. The findings underscore numerous benefits associated with the utilization of the Silent Way in teaching English to children within an English club. Particularly noteworthy is its capacity to heighten engagement, boost students' confidence, and enhance critical thinking skills. Nonetheless, the study identifies certain internal and external factors as impediments to the full-scale implementation of this teaching method.

Keywords: Caleb Gattegno, Digital Flashcards, English Club, EYL, Silent Way

A. INTRODUCTION

Teaching English to young learners is crucial in today's globalized world. Children can gain many future opportunities by learning English from an early age (Avezova, 2022). While, some believe learning English earlier is better, success depends on how it is taught to children (Kaniadewi, 2022). As it is widely acknowledged that learning a second language or a foreign language is more effective and easier during childhood (Paradis, 2008; Suryantari, 2018). Regarding the teaching of English in Indonesia, the government made a significant change in the 2013 Primary School Curriculum by eliminating English as a school subject. Consequently, students at the primary level are deprived of English language learning within the school system. Furthermore, a child's environment and experiences significantly impact their development, with early literacy experiences being crucial for success in school and beyond (Scull et. al, 2013). Thus, to support young learners effectively, teachers must get to know their students well (Přibilová 2008).

By understanding a child's needs, skills, and difficulties, teachers can implement personalized and evidence-based strategies for developing literacy and learning. In summary, a supportive environment and strong early education are essential for their growth. By understanding the characteristics and needs of young learners, teachers can effectively engage students and facilitate their development. According to Bland (2019), young learners are curious and energetic, with an innate passion for learning and exploring the world around them. In addition, as children age, their enthusiasm for learning tends to decrease (Bland, 2019). To engage young learners, teachers should incorporate movement and physical activities into lessons, such as singing, playing games, coloring, and crafts (Iswandhary, 2021). Teachers must provide care and meet children's needs so they can focus on learning (Aghni, 2022). Teachers must comprehend children's language acquisition and keep them motivated (Avezova, 2022). Lessons should be fun and active as children learn through play and imitation. Reading helps children develop vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar while demonstrating that reading is enjoyable (Miller et al., 2018). Therefore, it can be concluded that as language learning for young learners needs to be creative and fun. In other words, simply lecturing to young learners is ineffective; teachers should aim to spark children's curiosity by facilitating exploratory learning (Gopnik et al., 2015).

The Chomskyan revolution in linguistics attracted linguists and language educators to explore the "deep structure" of language, which encompasses the underlying syntax and semantics governing its surface manifestations. This deliberate focus on the emotional and interpersonal dimensions of language acquisition led to the formulation of pioneering methods that effectively harness the pivotal role played by psychological factors in the language learning process. In this context, "capitalizing" entails adeptly utilizing the potential of these psychological factors, including emotions and motivations, to enrich the language learning encounter. The paradigm shift gave rise to pioneering pedagogical strategies that greatly diverge from the conventional "one-size-fits-all" approach. Rather, they can be accurately characterized as "designer" techniques – ingenious and customized methodologies intricately fashioned to address the specific requirements, inclinations, and characteristics of each learner. These methods transcend traditional norms, guaranteeing a heightened and individualized learning expedition. One such method, highlighted by Nunan in his book, is the Silent Way (Nunan, 2004).

Moreover, the application of the Silent Way approach transcends the mere utilization of gestures and silence, as it incorporates a structured framework derived from Gattenno's procedures. Firstly, the teacher initiates the introduction of novel language concepts through the use of physical objects or purposeful gestures, ensuring a tangible and engaging learning experience for students (Step 1). Subsequently, students are actively encouraged to employ the newly acquired language skills in meaningful interactions with their peers, promoting communication as a pivotal aspect of the learning process (Step 2). To facilitate comprehension, the teacher leverages an array of visual aids, including color-coded sound charts, word rods, and Fidel charts, thereby providing comprehensive support for student learning (Step 3). In tandem with this, students engage in various tasks and activities designed to solidify their language proficiency and promote practical application (Step 4). Throughout this dynamic journey, the teacher remains a guiding presence, offering valuable feedback and tailored assistance to students as required, thus ensuring a cohesive and effective learning experience (Step 5) (Barnard et al., 2002).

It can also incorporate silence in conjunction with multimodal texts or media, such as flashcards. The utilization of flashcards within the Silent Way method serves various

purposes. Firstly, they aid learners in visualizing the sounds, words, and sentences of the target language. By employing distinct colors, shapes, and sizes, flashcards can represent different linguistic features, such as vowels, consonants, stress, intonation, and word order, among others. Secondly, flashcards facilitate learners in independently and interactively practicing their pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. Learners can craft their own sentences, questions, and dialogues using flashcards and assess their performance by checking for errors. Thirdly, flashcards contribute to the development of learners' critical thinking and problem-solving skills. They can be instrumental in discovering patterns, rules, and exceptions within the target language and in making comparisons and contrasts between different linguistic forms (Teng & He, 2015).

There are several previous studies that discuss the Silent Way. Budiharto (2018) did a study on "The Role of Silent Way Method to English Teaching in a Private Islamic Middle School." The research was conducted in secondary school students in Pamekasan, Madura, using a qualitative action research design. The study revealed that the Silent Way was able to better engage the students in the learning process, resulting in these students being able to learn English better. Moreover, the second study is by Abrar et. al., (2018) entitled "If our English isn't a language, what is it?" Speaking English is a challenge for Indonesian EFL pre-service teachers. He did this study in order to capture the experiences of Indonesian EFL student teachers in speaking English at one public university in Jambi, Indonesia. This study employed a qualitative approach and a number of data collection techniques such as interviews, observations, and document analysis, which helped to provide a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon being investigated. The research emphasized the idea that developing one's ability to speak English is a difficult task, involving a number of factors that were beyond creative ways of teaching, but also involving sociocultural issues.

While the aforementioned studies, both delve into the Silent Way and its implementation within classroom settings, it is important to note that these investigations primarily engaged young adolescents rather than children and were conducted within formal educational contexts. Hence, this study endeavours to investigate the benefits and challenges of employing Digital Flashcards within the framework of the Silent Way method for English language instruction.

B. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative design using a case study technique to understand the effectiveness of the Silent Way teaching method in English instruction. The research took place in Bandung at the CEC English Club, chosen for its accessibility and resonance with the study's goals. The focus on familiarity, inspired by Brennen (2018), supports qualitative research by building rapport and credibility. The study involves two teachers from the English club who shared teaching responsibilities. The teachers collaborated on creating materials, selecting methods, and managing documentation, promoting a dynamic teaching approach. The study utilized case study methodology, involving observation and interviews to gather data. Creswell (2008) advocates for a case study design that incorporates observation, interviews, and document analysis. Classroom observations occurred on two occasions, exploring the Silent Way's application and student interactions. Interviews with three teachers and three students provided diverse perspectives.

Data analysis followed a multi-stage process. Observations were reviewed for nuances, forming foundational insights. Interview transcriptions were condensed for easy revisitation,

contributing to a robust dataset. The combined data from observations and interviews informed conclusions drawn from the study, presented within the research framework. This comprehensive approach sheds light on the Silent Way's implementation and interpretation in education.

C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section highlights the benefits and challenges encountered when teaching English using the Silent Way. The findings of the study are thus organized based on these two themes: Benefits of using Silent Way assisted by Flashcards and Challenges of using Silent Way assisted by Flashcards.

1. Benefits of using Silent Way assisted by Flashcards.

Using the Silent Way to teach children has been associated with several notable benefits, which can be categorized into three main areas: increased enthusiasm for learning, enhanced confidence in self-expression, and a more engaging verbal learning experience. Additionally, when digital flashcards are incorporated into the Silent Way approach, educators gain access to a wealth of advantages, including convenience and expanded teaching resources.

a. Increased Enthusiasm for Learning:

One of the most significant advantages of implementing the Silent Way approach in the education of children lies in its ability to cultivate a profound sense of enthusiasm and interest in the language acquisition process. This heightened level of engagement becomes evident through various observable cues, including the children's facial expressions and their utilization of verbal cues, such as expressions of excitement and requests for repetition. Based on the observations conducted by the researcher, it is apparent that the children exhibit a notable eagerness to participate in the learning process. This can be observed as all students enthusiastically engage in the activities, with none remaining disengaged.

Furthermore, the researcher also noted a noteworthy transformation in three students who initially displayed shyness but were motivated to participate due to the captivating experiences they witnessed. Our investigation centered on the experiences and insights provided by two educators, namely Teacher A and Teacher B. These educators offered valuable perspectives on how the Silent Way method, when coupled with the use of digital flashcards, enhanced students' enthusiasm for learning.

Teacher A conveyed that the implementation of the Silent Way method with digital flashcards led to a noticeable increase in students' eagerness for learning. She underscored how students frequently sought repetitions of the activities, expressing their enthusiasm with phrases such as "One more time, please!" Teacher A herself found the experience gratifying, stating, "However, I found that using Silent Way can be quite enjoyable, both for me and the kids. When I used Silent Way with flashcards featuring interesting pictures, the students became more enthusiastic." This alignment between the enjoyment experienced by both the teacher and the students highlights the intrinsic appeal of this pedagogical approach.

Teacher B echoed this sentiment, emphasizing that transitioning from theoretical understanding during college to practical application was an enjoyable and fulfilling experience. She noted that the children were notably enthusiastic about the Silent Way approach, remarking, "The kids were quite enthusiastic about it too." This transition from

theoretical pedagogy to practical application underscores the method's efficacy in fostering student engagement.

Furthermore, the versatility of the Silent Way approach facilitates its seamless integration with various teaching strategies. This includes activities such as mime games and the association of terminology with relevant images discussed during the lessons. Such versatility aligns harmoniously with the well-established concept that children are inherently drawn to activities that involve discovery and guessing. Consequently, the Silent Way approach capitalizes on this natural inclination, making it a valuable asset in language education for children.

(Budiharto, 2018).

b. Enhanced Confidence in Self-Expression:

An inherent advantage of employing the Silent Way pedagogical approach with children lies in the marked enhancement of their self-confidence in linguistic expression. This transformative shift is facilitated through a series of exercises that encourage students to convey words through gestures or pointing, thereby nurturing a more expressive communicative competence. Although some students may initially harbor reservations, their reluctance tends to wane as they witness their peers confronting similar challenges and deriving enjoyment from deciphering one another's non-verbal cues.

Analysis of the observational data conducted by the researcher reveals that approximately three students initially exhibited shyness but eventually embraced active participation in all learning activities. At the outset of the lessons, they often declined participation, stating their inability to guess or demonstrate words from the flashcards, typically doing so about five times. However, after a brief period, they began to respond, influenced by observing their peers effortlessly providing answers. Subsequently, these students exhibited increased self-assurance. These findings are further substantiated by insights garnered from interviews conducted with Teacher A.

Teacher A offered an illuminating perspective that exceeded initial expectations. He remarked, "Initially, I thought they would stay quiet too, but the classroom became lively, and the kids were eager to answer and follow instructions. Even the initially quiet ones became active. Maybe they didn't want to be left behind by their peers."

This excerpt from Teacher A's interview underscores a remarkable transformation. It highlights how initially reserved students metamorphosed into active and eager participants in classroom activities when the Silent Way method was implemented. This shift not only signifies an enhancement in students' confidence regarding self-expression but also serves as a testament to the adaptability and efficacy of the Silent Way approach. It instills a profound sense of self-assurance in young learners, encouraging them to engage more actively and confidently in the language-learning process (Garwan & Priyanti, 2021; Jannah, 2018).

c. More Engaging Verbal Learning

Despite the initial expectation of silence on the part of teachers, the Silent Way method paradoxically transforms the learning process into a more verbal and engaging endeavor. It encourages students to shift their focus towards the learning process itself, rather than merely striving for a final grade. For instance, when utilizing colored paper as symbolic

representations of words, students actively engage in discussions to decipher the words associated with each color.

Another intriguing aspect of the Silent Way approach is that it fosters increased verbal communication among students compared to traditional verbal instruction by the teacher. In the researcher's observational findings, it is evident that all students engage in substantial verbal exchanges and inquiries when the teacher demonstrates an aspect of the instructions presented on the flashcards. These students, despite having limited vocabulary, consistently make efforts to speak and guess. This engenders curiosity and a genuine desire to uncover the underlying principles, rather than relying solely on rote memorization (Negara et al., 2014).

d. Accessibility and Convenience

The integration of digital flashcards into educational practices offers a multifaceted advantage, characterized by increased accessibility and operational efficiency. In the modern educational landscape, digital flashcards have emerged as a valuable and convenient teaching resource. These versatile tools are readily accessible, often obtainable from online sources, thereby obviating the need for traditional printing and cutting processes. This convenience carries substantial benefits, especially for educators grappling with time constraints or limited access to printing facilities.

Our research delved into the experiences of educators, unveiling how the adoption of digital flashcards within the framework of the Silent Way method significantly streamlined their instructional preparations. One teacher aptly noted, "...For me, using the Silent Way method with digital flashcards is quite helpful. It has reduced my preparation time because I no longer need to print and cut paper for flashcards." This firsthand account underscores the considerable reduction in the time and effort required for instructional material preparation, highlighting the remarkable efficiency that digital flashcards introduce into the teaching process. It ensures that teaching aids are readily available without logistical hurdles (Ramdhani, 2022).

e. Enhanced Teaching Efficiency

In the framework of the Silent Way method, effective communication hinges heavily on the visual cues provided by educators, often taking the form of images or colors. However, the exigencies of time can occasionally impose limitations on the breadth and depth of these cues. This challenge finds a dynamic solution in the integration of digital flashcards, which serves to expand the pedagogical toolkit within a compressed timeframe.

Our research inquiries brought to light the transformative potential of digital flashcards, as encapsulated by the testimony of a teacher who aptly stated, "However, in terms of effectiveness, it's really good. I can easily find and use flashcards as I like without the need to print them." This statement underscores the profound impact of digital flashcards on teaching efficiency. Educators can now effortlessly access an expansive array of visual resources without the cumbersome task of printing, enabling them to introduce a rich diversity of images, patterns, and color palettes into their instructional repertoire. (Wahyuni & Vourezky, 2021).

In conclusion, the Silent Way approach, when complemented by digital flashcards, offers a comprehensive set of benefits for both educators and young learners. It enhances enthusiasm for language learning, builds self-confidence, and fosters a more engaging verbal learning

environment. Additionally, the accessibility and efficiency of digital flashcards serve as valuable tools in facilitating effective teaching within the Silent Way method.

B. Challenges of Using Silent Way Assisted by Digital Flashcards

While the integration of digital flashcards into the Silent Way teaching approach offers numerous advantages, it is important to acknowledge the challenges that educators and students may encounter. These challenges can be categorized into two main areas: the need for precise instructions in the Silent Way approach and initial student hesitancy and lack of confidence. Additionally, device limitations when catering to larger groups of students pose practical challenges.

a. Need for Precise Instructions

A pivotal aspect of implementing the Silent Way approach in language instruction is the crucial necessity for precise and unambiguous directives. The significance of clear guidance cannot be overstated, as it plays an integral role in ensuring that students can fully grasp and effectively execute the provided instructions.

Our examination of the challenges encountered by educators employing the Silent Way method underscores the paramount importance of precision in instruction. During our observations, we identified a particular instance where a teacher faced difficulties at the outset of using the Silent Way. In this scenario, the teacher delivered a relatively lengthy set of instructions that proved to be somewhat unclear to the students. Consequently, the students struggled to comprehend the instructions, prompting the teacher to reiterate them two or even three times. This experience serves as an illustrative example of how the efficacy of the Silent Way approach can be compromised when instructions lack the requisite clarity, resulting in student confusion and hesitancy.

A teacher's candid reflection further exemplifies this challenge: "Another potential challenge lies in the clarity of instructions. For instance, when engaging in activities like the mime game using pictures, I may not have provided a clear enough explanation, leading to students remaining silent. At times, I find myself having to explain the instructions repeatedly." This admission underscores the notion that when the Silent Way method is not complemented by precise directives, students may encounter difficulties in deciphering the intended activities. For example, during activities involving subtle color pointing, students may misinterpret the teacher's instructions, possibly due to rushed communication or language barriers.

b. Initial Student Hesitancy and Lack of Confidence

Another formidable challenge encountered by educators embracing the Silent Way approach revolves around the initial hesitancy and lack of confidence that some students exhibit. This hesitation typically manifests when students are called upon to actively participate or demonstrate their understanding during learning activities. During the early stages of implementing this method, students may manifest shyness and reluctance when it comes to inquiring or showcasing their grasp of the subject matter in front of their peers. This reticence can be traced back to various factors, including the novelty of English classes and the fact that many students are encountering the language for the very first time.

Teacher A, in shedding light on this challenge, candidly expressed, "Well, for me, since I don't use Silent Way very often, my main concern is that the students initially remain quiet. They need to be prompted first. Then, once it gets lively, the students become active." This

teacher's insightful observation underscores the initial reluctance often encountered among students as educators introduce them to the Silent Way method.

Yet, research posits a hopeful narrative. It suggests that with the passage of time and repeated efforts, students typically surmount their initial shyness and gradually cultivate confidence in the learning process. This transformative journey is further facilitated through the integration of digital flashcards, which prove invaluable in enhancing the accessibility and engagement of the learning experience. Digital flashcards bridge the gap between initial hesitation and active participation, affording students opportunities to interact with the material in a less intimidating and more interactive manner (Jayanti & Sujarwo, 2019).

c. Challenges Related to Device Limitations

Incorporating digital flashcards into the framework of the Silent Way approach introduces practical challenges, particularly concerning device limitations, especially in the context of larger student groups. Insights derived from interviews with educators shed light on the difficulties that can arise when attempting to cater to more than ten students simultaneously engaged with digital flashcards. In such scenarios, the selection of appropriate devices assumes paramount importance. Larger screens often become a necessity to ensure that all students can effectively view and actively engage with the flashcard-based instructional materials. This challenge underscores the critical importance of considering scalability when integrating digital tools into technology-enhanced teaching methodologies.

During the observations, researcher noted that teachers encountered difficulty in displaying flashcards using their smartphones. This naturally posed a hindrance, as it resulted in a considerable amount of class time being spent on navigating the phone to show the flashcards. This challenge was also acknowledged by Teacher B during the interview.

Teacher B succinctly articulated this challenge, stating, "My primary challenge is that my device is too small. It seems that using a tablet for digital flashcards would be more convenient, ensuring that students can clearly see the content. With only a smartphone at my disposal, it's less effective. I have to show the pictures up close, sometimes necessitating movement around the classroom. So, using a small device like my phone is less efficient. Using a tablet would likely offer a better solution. However, overall, I still prefer using digital flashcards over the laborious process of preparing traditional paper flashcards."

Teacher B's remarks encapsulate the practical obstacles educators may face when utilizing digital flashcards in larger classrooms. The limitations imposed by smaller devices call for adaptations in teaching strategies to ensure equitable access to instructional materials.

Nevertheless, these device-related challenges also emphasize the overall preference for digital flashcards as a teaching resource. Despite the constraints, educators appreciate the convenience and efficiency offered by digital tools compared to the labor-intensive process of preparing traditional paper flashcards.

In conclusion, while the integration of digital flashcards into the Silent Way teaching approach brings forth numerous benefits, it is vital to address the challenges that may arise. Clear and precise instructions are essential to ensure effective communication, and educators must be mindful of initial student hesitancy and lack of confidence. Additionally, when working with larger groups, device limitations need to be carefully considered. Striking a

balance between leveraging the advantages and addressing these challenges is paramount to creating a more effective and engaging learning environment. This study highlights the importance of adaptability and thoughtful implementation in technology-enhanced pedagogy.

D. CONCLUSION

To conclude, the investigation centered around "Enhancing English Club Learning With Digital Flashcards: Benefits And Challenges" illuminates a spectrum of advantages and obstacles associated with this unique pedagogical approach. The Silent Way, when coupled with digital flashcards, offers a range of advantages. Initially, it sparks children's enthusiasm, as evidenced by their animated reactions and vocal interactions, thereby fostering a dynamic learning atmosphere.

The integration of interactive techniques, such as mime games and associations with terminology, further enhances engagement. Additionally, the Silent Way method nurtures students' self-confidence by encouraging participation in exercises that rely on non-verbal cues. This newfound confidence bolsters their communication skills and expressive abilities. Furthermore, the strategy cultivates verbal engagement, motivating students to actively partake in discussions to unravel the nuances of the language. However, this approach is not without challenges. Clear, well-structured instructions are vital to prevent confusion and ensure a comprehensive grasp of learning objectives. Moreover, initial hesitancy and self-assurance issues may arise, especially in activities involving public performance.

While these challenges tend to diminish with practice, the incorporation of Digital Flashcards into the Silent Way adds a layer of complexity. These digital aids offer diverse learning materials, heightening engagement. Nevertheless, device constraints present a potential obstacle, particularly in larger classes where equitable access to digital resources poses a challenge. Striking a harmonious balance between the benefits and challenges is key to establishing an effective and enriching English language learning environment using the Silent Way approach in conjunction with digital flashcards.

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