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THE IMPORTANCE OF USING VISUAL MATERIALS IN EFL CLASSES

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Abstract: *This article is based on the theoretical data on the use of visual aids and informs about the importance of using them in EFL classroom. Visual aids help to clarify, establish, and correlate the main point of the lesson.*

Key words: *visual aid, pictures, videos, educational outcomes, diagrams, charts, tables.*

Students can use a variety of visual forms to develop skills like speaking and writing, including tables, graphs, charts, diagrams, pictures, you tube videos to communicate written or spoken messages. Giving oral speeches on a specific topic improves their speaking ability, whereas structuring ideas on a written form or creating fictional dialogues, for instance, enhance their writing.

By simply viewing a PowerPoint presentation not only have the students the opportunity to acquire information visually transmitted by the teacher or fellow students but also they become more interested and involved in the activities in class. The language acquisition can be achieved by using meaningful visuals that are more helpful in the students' memorization of new vocabulary or structures. Along the academic semesters the visual materials used help the teachers show the students the culture of the foreign language, the customs and the body language so meaningful during the real-life communication, the military traditions or logistics specific to English speaking countries.

1. **Theoretical background**

As well as Mannan emphasize the fact that using visuals 'help the teacher to clarify, establish, correlate and coordinate accurate concepts, interpretations and appreciations, and enable him to make learning more concrete, effective, interesting, inspirational, meaningful and vivid'[25]. Moriarty suggests an explanation asserting that it is specific to human beings

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[25] Mannan, A., Modern Education: Audio-Visual Aids. New Delhi: Anmol Publications, 2005, pp. 14-16.

to develop their visual language skills before the verbal language development "[26] providing a possible explanation for "the need of pictorial information rather than textual among young students "as he explained. Paivio, on the other hand, put forward his own hypothesis based on the idea that "cognitive growth is stimulated by the balance between verbal and visual experiences in the early stages of learning"[27] while Arif and Hashim's own research confirmed that "pictures gained better attention than words", and that "pictures became the main clue in interpreting the meaning of the words"[28]. Experts and educators alike concur that images stimulate readers' motivation, curiosity, and interest.

Most language teachers appear to concur that adding visual aids and bringing the real world into the classroom can "make learning more meaningful and more exciting"[29]. Teachers should realize the fact that the best approach "to obtain information, construct knowledge and build successful educational outcomes" is through visual literacy, according to Bamford. Regardless of whether we agree or not that "visual images are becoming the predominant form of communication across a range of learning and teaching resources,"[30] she claims that this is "due to the increase of the number of images in the world" and defines visual literacy as "the ability to construct meaning from visual images".

Experts concur that visual aids help both teachers and students in the teaching-learning process and can enhance the appeal of a class for them. Therefore, Carney and Levin suggested that by acting as "metal scaffolds for the students and helping teachers to correlate and coordinate accurate concepts, visual materials make a difference" in the teaching and learning process[31]. Moreover, visual aids such as pictures and videos can act as a connection between the mother tongue and English, so direct translations are not needed" and neither "the excessive explanations and translations"[32]. Every teaching method employed in the classroom

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[26] Moriarty, S.E., 'Visual Communication as a primary system' Journal of Visual Literacy, Vol. 4, no. 2, 1994, pp. 11-21.

[27] Paivio, A. and Clark, J.M., Usage of Multimedia Visual Aids in the English Language Classroom 'in Dual-Coding Theory and Education' Educational Psychology Review, Vol. 3, no. 3, 1991, p. 52

[28] Arif, M., and Hashim, F., Young Learner s Second Language Visual Literacy Practices. Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press, 2009.

[29] Brinton, D.M., 'The use of Media in Language Teaching', in Celce-Murcia, M. (ed.) Teaching English as a second or foreign language (3rd ed., pp. 459-475). Boston: Heinle and Heinle, 2001.

[30] Bamford. Anne: The visual literacy white paper https://www.aperture.org/wpcontent/uploads/2013/05/visual-literacy-wp.pdf , retrieved March 8, 2018

[31] Carney, R.N and Levin, J.R., 'Pictorial Illustrations still Improve students' Learning from Text' Educational Psychology Review, Vol. 14, no. 1, March, 2002.

[32] Brinton, D.M., 'The use of Media in Language Teaching', in Celce-Murcia, M. (ed.) Teaching English as a second or foreign language (3rd ed., pp. 459-475). Boston: Heinle and Heinle, 2001.

throughout the years —including *the direct approach, the audio-lingual method,* and *the comprehension-based approach* —has relied on the use of visual aids or tape recordings to stay away from using mother tongue in class. *The Communicative Language Teaching* stressed the need for real life objects or texts to lend authenticity to the communicative situation as: "Nonnative speakers (both inside the classroom and outside the classroom) make use of the here and now objects in the immediate environments"[33].

2. Using visuals in the language Classroom

If teachers want their students to learn effectively, they should implement media-based elements into their lessons and as Brinton put forth that "use media materials when variety is called for, when they expedite your teaching task and serve as a source input, and/or when they help you to individualize instruction and appeal to the variety of cognitive styles in your classroom. But above all, use media to involve students more integrally in the learning process and to facilitate language learning by making it a more authentic, meaningful process."[34]

The advantages of the visuals and the reasons why images aid in understanding and learning are also, explained by Levin and Mayer. They put forth a set of principles known as the seven "C". They claim that images enhance the text's concentration, compactness, coherence, comprehensibility, correspondence, and codability.[35]

3. Visuals used in Power point presentation

The fact that students prefer "colored visuals, pictures that contain a story, that can be related to previous experiences and that can be 'associated with places, objects, persons, events or animals of which they are familiar" is already acknowledged by teachers. According to Canning-Wilson, "Nowadays, teachers can use different resources to support their explanations turning them into attractive information. We have noticed that well prepared slides increased students' motivation, got their attention, and brought clarification of the situations presented or of the information communicated. We also can involve students in academic discussions based on academic content by:

— 	responding to factual and inferential questions.

— 	demonstrating comprehension of inferential or abstract questions that are based on academic content.

9. Brinton, D.M., 'The use of Media in Language Teaching', in Celce-Murcia, M. (ed.) Teaching English as a second or foreign language (3rd ed). Boston: Heinle and Heinle. (p. 130), 2001.
10. Levin, J.R. and Mayer, R.E., 'Understanding illustrations in text', in Brinton, B.K., Woodward, A. and Brinkley, M. (eds.). Learning from textbooks, Erlbaum, 1993, pp 95-113.

— analyzing and evaluating visual texts and multimedia texts that use visuals;

— providing data or clarifying information on given topics;

— supporting a conclusion or finding by stating facts or logical reasons."[36]

Conclusion:

The students' acquisition and learning improve, the classes become more attractive and interactive, in short, visuals make the materials to be taught clearer and the learning more accessible. The visual aids help English-language learners build their vocabulary, speaking, listening as well as the writing skills, making them more creative and develop their deep thinking. Effective use of visuals can be beneficial and can lead to permanent learning as well as help the content delivery.

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