

USE AND IMPORTANCE OF ILLUSTRATION AS MATERIALS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Abstract

The purpose of this descriptive study is to point out the importance of using illustrations as supplementary materials in Foreign Language Teaching. The study is composed of three main sections: importance of Foreign Language Teaching, importance of illustrations as materials, and use and significance of illustrations in Foreign Language Teaching.

Based on related previous research, it has been found out that illustrations used as supplementary materials in Foreign Language Teaching are unsatisfactory and slipshod. Besides this, it has also been revealed that illustrations are made indiscriminately and by one illustrator. The view which states that illustrations will positively contribute to the understanding of texts, concretization of abstract notions and teaching of linguistic attainments like grammar has been supported in this study..

Finally, it has been foreseen that use of illustrations in language education will make Foreign Language Teaching more enjoyable and long lasting.

Keywords: Foreign Language Teaching, illustrations, visual materials.

Yabancı Dil Öğretiminde Resmin Materyal Olarak Kullanımı ve Önemi

Öz

Bu betimsel çalışmanın amacı, resmin yabancı dil öğretiminde yardımcı materyal olarak kullanımının önemini belirtmektir. Çalışma üç ana bölümden oluşmaktadır: Yabancı Dil Öğretiminin Önemi, Resmin materyal olarak önemi ve Yabancı Dil öğretiminde resmin kullanımı ve önemi.

Daha önceki ilgili çalışmalara dayanarak, yabancı dil öğretiminde yardımcı materyal olarak kullanılan resimlerin tatmin edici olmadığı ve gelişigüzel hazırlandığı farkedilmiştir. Bununla birlikte, resimlerin baştan savma ve tek bir çizir tarafından yapıldığı görülmüştür. Çalışmada resimlerin, metinlerin anlaşılmasına, soyut kavramların somutlaştırılmasına ve dilbilgisi gibi dilbilimsel becerilerin kazanılmasına olumlu bir şekilde katkı sağladığı görüşü desteklenmektedir.

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Son olarak, dil eğitiminde resim kullanımının, yabancı dil öğretimini daha eğlenceli hale getireceği ve daha kalıcı kılacağı öngörülmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yabancı Dil Öğretimi, resimler, görsel materyaller.

1. Introduction

Language is a means of communication whether it is spoken or written. We not only learn our mother tongue but also other languages to communicate. Learning a language other than our mother tongue is among the basic needs of today's globalized world. Now, the world has been in a constant flux in terms of technology and communication. Besides, the world is getting smaller and becoming a global village. Therefore, it has been a must to get in touch with other nations. For this reason, we must learn at least one foreign language aside from our mother tongue to maintain good relations with other societies and to meet our needs. In parallel to changes in communication and technology, changes in language teaching have also emerged. As Lessard-Clouston (1997) notes, in the past, people learned a foreign language to study its literature. Now, it has been more than merely teaching the literature for its own sake and there are many reasons for learning a new language: personal development, cultural, educational and economical reasons.

An illustration may be defined as a displayed visualization form presented as a drawing, painting or photograph that is used to make some subject more pleasing or easier to understand. Illustrations are among the mostly used materials in FLT. Because, teachers need visual materials in order to supplement their language teaching. Mere instruction is not sufficient, on its own, to make an effective language teaching. The more we appeal to learners' senses, the better learners will learn a language. Especially, visual materials are of vital importance to evoke learners' senses for effective learning. Underwood (1989) also emphasizes the importance of visuals by taking the issue of visual memory. It is possible for learners to place in memory what they have seen through visual memory. They help learners contextualize the language, learn the language in a realistic and authentic way, gain autonomy and engage themselves in learning affectively and cognitively.

2. Importance of foreign language teaching

To begin with, language is a social institution, both shaping and shaped by society at large or in particular the 'cultural niches' (Eleanor Armour-Thomas & Sharonann Gopaul-McNicol, 1998). Language education means the teaching and learning of a language. The term covers one's mastery of her or his native language but the term is mostly associated with second language acquisition, which is the learning of a second or foreign language aside from one's mother tongue.

The need to learn a foreign language is virtually as old as human history. The origins of modern language education date back to 17th century. The study and te-

aching of Latin were the origins of language education at that time. However, first studies with regard to FLT started in the 18th century by determining and forming the rules of the target language. The study of modern languages was not included in the curriculum of European schools until 18th century. Innovation in FLT started in the 19th century and continued rapidly in the 20th century with a number of different but often conflicting methods. Each method tried to supersede the previous or contemporary methods for the better teaching of languages.

Previously, language learning was thought to be a simple part of education or a mental exercise through learning grammar and literature of the target language. People have come to realize over time that their mother tongue is not sufficient for all their needs. Now, people have many reasons to learn foreign languages such as work conditions, family and friends, study or research, travel, required course, linguistic interest and etc.

People of all ages are now trying to learn at least one foreign language, especially at a younger age. For that matter, Rindone, (1944, p. 166) stresses “ Learning a Foreign Language in Childhood is a “Must”. It is advantageous in many ways: it helps people find jobs easily and earn more, communicate better, understand cultural differences and develop tolerance towards people of different backgrounds, improve social relationships and linguistic skills. Some of them may be explained in detail as follows:

- It helps people solve everyday problems associated with travel in foreign lands and the travelers have a more pleasant experience and greater understanding both of the local people and of their culture. Every language people master will enhance their delight and lessen their frustration and isolation as they travel around the world.
- It helps learners improve cultural understanding. In a sense, foreign language teaching is foreign culture teaching. We should be cognizant of the fact that ‘[i]f we teach language without teaching at the same time the culture in which it operates, we are teaching meaningless symbols or symbols to which the student attaches the wrong meaning...’ (Politzer, 1959: 100-101).
- It helps learners develop mental ability. Once, learning a foreign language was regarded as a mental discipline for developing intellectual capacity. One of the goals of foreign language study is to benefit from mental discipline and intellectual development that result from foreign language study. Besides, a number of studies in bilingual education seem to lead to the conclusion that foreign language study can aid and even accelerate the cognitive development of the brain.

3. Use and Importance of Illustration as Materials

Common knowledge tells us that using materials in education increases productivity in terms of both quality and quantity. Course materials used in the classes not only ease the work of the teachers but also motivate students to participate in the

classes (Safran, 2000). Therefore, stimulants that will attract students' attention and give the message effectively at the earliest should be used.

Çilenti (1991), claims that many stimulants should be used in education. According to Philps quoted in Çilenti, when the time factor is kept constant, people remember %10 of what they read, %20 of what they hear, %30 of what they see, %40 of what they discuss, %50 of what they both see and hear, %80 of what they see, hear and tell and, %90 of what they see, hear, touch and tell. Learning experiences may be reinforced by using many stimulants and materials. And, illustrations constitute an important part of these stimulants.

The current volume of information is processed quickly and effectively in the information age we are in. Visualization is gaining more importance for daily life as well as education in this fast-paced and intensive information era. Many people have the idea that visual materials can be understood rather easily by a wider audience compared to written materials. Besides, visual materials are more universal than written materials as a means of communication (İşler, 2003). As visuality gains the quality of being a universal language, it is necessary to learn this language. Visual materials may be used in many different fields of education by utilizing supporting role of illustrations.

Yalın (1999, pp.86); explains the benefits of visual materials used in classes as follows:

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| •To make comparison, | • To emphasize important points, |
| •To explain the concepts, | • To make statistics and other data more understandable |
| •To attract group attention, | • To shrink or enlarge objects to see clearly, |
| •To emphasize a point, | • To support verbal messages |
| •To clarify one point of view, | • To visualize things hard to revive in mind |
| •To show relations, rules or formulas | • To benefit from diversity and change, |
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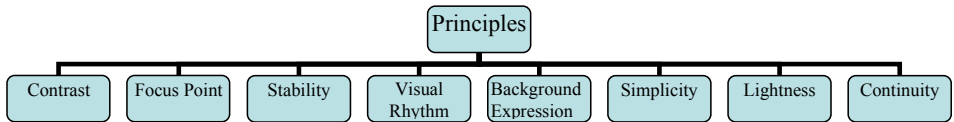
4. Use and Significance of Illustration in Foreign Language Teaching as Materials

Fidan and Erden (1996) stress the importance of various visual materials used in teaching-learning process, claiming that they help learners acquire knowledge and skills quite easily. As in many areas of education, visual materials may also be used effectively in FLT, especially to concretize abstract concepts, to easily remember what is learned and to attract children's attention.

The visual materials to be used in FLT should have certain characteristics: they should be selected properly according to the age of learners; topics covered in the

classes, and be in harmony with the subject materials to be used. Moreover, materials to be used in foreign language classes should be prepared by taking the elements of visual arts into consideration, and the number of illustrators should be more than one. One illustrator is not enough to create suitable visual materials, which should carry all the necessary features of a good illustration. Ceylan and Yigit (2003, 90) explain the principles which should be taken into account while preparing the visual materials as shown in figure 1 below:

Figure 1: Principles of Visual materials



Also, the texts in course books should be supported with illustrations in order to support written text and passages visually. In this way, language becomes concrete and easy to understand. Illustrations should be used in conformity with purposes instead of using them for their own sake. Hence, elements of visual arts should be used with the intention of improving learners' creative and critical thinking, problem solving, and developing empathy and expression skills (Güçlü, 2001, p. 21).

According to Karabağ (2003), answers to the questions below should be sought while choosing a material to use in foreign language classes:

- Were pictures, graphics and shapes used in the material? If so, how?
- Were pictures, figures, charts and graphics chosen properly?
- If printed, is quality of printing high?
- If used together with the text, is there any implicit message or hidden curriculum in the content of the text and in the presentation of visual sources?
- How are drawings, photographs, maps, pictures and charts associated with each other?
- Can illustrations make it possible to associate with previously covered subjects?
- Or, do they just make the page appear more colorful and interesting?

Additionally, Yalın (1999), states that visual materials prepared for primary school children and used in FLT should be as simple as possible. Simple pictures, cartoons, diagrams and charts should be preferred instead of real pictures. Too much detail or closeness to reality not only makes learning difficult but also distracts learners' attention in the matter of what worths learning. Usta (2001), agreeing with this view, states that illustrations used as materials need to be clear, readable, understandable easily by the receiver of the message and be in the form of drawing attention into the most important aspects of the message.

Table 1, below, summarizes FLT methods and approaches, and whether they take advantage of using visual materials in classes.

Table 1: FLT Methods & Approaches and Use of Illustrations

Methods & Approaches	Use of Illustrations	Purpose
The Grammar Translational Method	X	Not stated
The Direct Method		To teach vocabulary
The Oral Approach		To assist learners to internalize the rules and sentence structures
The Audio-lingual Method		To present speech patterns and drills
Communicative Language Teaching		To start the dialogs, sentence fragments and so on
Total Physical Response		To give visual instruction, to make connections between words/sentences and actions
Community Language Learning		To facilitate language learning process
The Natural Approach		To make classroom activities as meaningful as possible

As it is seen in Table 1, a great majority of the FLT methods and approaches use illustrations for different purposes in concordance with their principles. This shows us that illustrations play an important role in language teaching, especially in the teaching of vocabulary, considering the purposes of using illustrations. Chun and Plass (1996) examined the effectiveness of different types of annotations in vocabulary learning and found that picture annotations were more effective as cues for the recall of the target words than verbal definitions and video.

Conclusion

The general conclusion to be drawn from this paper is that the traditional materials, methods and techniques should be questioned in terms of their visuality in FLT. Moreover, illustrations should be used more carefully and accurately in the materials. Illustrators should also be educated about creation and application of such learning tools. It is assumed that FLT may improve positively when the above mentioned factors are taken into account before preparing and using the materials.

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