

The Importance of Image in Teaching a Foreign Language

Ratier Alfred Aroquianadin*

Ph. D. Scholar, Department of French, Pondicherry University & M. A. in French in Translation and Interpretation and M. Phil. in French

Abstract – The present paper aims to study the importance of images in teaching a foreign language to the learners learning a foreign language. Using books as a study material is the traditional method which is being followed in the classrooms across the world.

In the recent years, researches made by language specialists confirms that learning a foreign language is easier and interesting if a psychological approach is adapted while a foreign language is being taught to learners of that language .Most of the learners appreciate classes where they involve themselves in learning through activities rather than traditional methods .Since the activities pushes the students and motivates them to learn in unconventional ways, the teachers are also motivated to find new methods in learning. This paper proves that the use of images help learners learning a foreign language in an easy and efficient way.

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INTRODUCTION

The traditional teaching method involves the usage of books as the study materials in classrooms everywhere around the world .It is noted that language teachers frequently used pictures, images taken from various sources like books, magazines and newspapers, in order to facilitate learning process with a clear vision to understand. The teachers also draw pictures on the board for a better explanation which helps the learners to visualize it. Some classes which are equipped with infrastructures can be used by projecting Power Point slides or displaying pictures with explanation. As per the studies of Psycho Linguistics and Socio Linguistics, it has been revealed that most of the young generation prefers informal teaching approaches rather than conventional teaching methods.

The use of images and photographs in a foreign language (French) class is more interesting and easier which ultimately helps the learners in understanding the meaning and the context effortlessly. According to research findings to get the fluency of a new language, everything must be associated with an image to remember it easily in a short period of time.

In the Alliance Française of Pondicherry (French Institute) it was noted that most of the professors stated that they did not give much importance to images while they were teaching French. As a

consequence, we presume that the beginners of that language struggled a lot in their initial stage. A very common issue faced by professors in that institution in over the years is that the students who are competent cannot communicate appropriately. Consequently, the processes involved in fluent conversational interaction need to be also considered. Therefore, this research investigates the influence of using pictures for oral expressions as a teaching strategy that may help students to improve their communicative skills.

The purpose of this study is to determine the use of picture description enhances the student's communication skills in French as a foreign language. The selected group for this study is the professors working in the Alliance Française of Pondicherry who teach French as a foreign language.

A survey was conducted in different classes and the professors of those classes were being interviewed to accomplish this study.

We believe that the findings of the study will help foreign language teachers and language institutes to take pragmatic steps for an efficient teaching methodology.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

While attempting in learning a foreign language, students struggle because there is a lot to

remember: the grammar rules and many vocabularies have to be memorized. Forgetting what is being taught is the inherent human weakness and hence the present study wants to overcome such difficulty by making some pragmatic and scientific plans.

It is an established belief that the use of images and pictures gives a quick understanding and helps the foreign language students to learn many things easily. However, this method of teaching might not be practiced everywhere.

But some scientific studies below prove that images play a major role for an efficient learning.

Many Modern linguistic researches made in the recent times have insisted repeatedly that visuals have profound effect for learning foreign languages.

The Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA) has done a huge research in the field of teaching languages .The reports of the studies shows that 'Gestures and pictures' had a very positive result in foreign language learning.

According to the studies made, it shows that language learners were learning easily when several senses are stimulated at the same time.

Scientific experiments prove that people memorize foreign language terms without any difficulty on seeing visuals and gestures. Scientists suggested that including images in written comprehension exercises and oral reception exercises helps the learners in globalizing the context and remember easily in a way that will not forget what they learn.

Hence to clarify the studies of the impact of pictures on language learning:

Language specialists strongly recommend that pictures should be an important part for an efficient teaching

How can French language teachers make use of the pictures in the class?

Using pictures in the classroom can create a lively ambience in oral sessions. The uses of images are good supporting materials for the lessons, and they can act as useful prompts to help students when they are practicing oral expressions. So in what ways pictures can be used in a language class?

Here are a few proposed activities with visual aids during the lessons:

- ▶ The curious and inquisitive minds of the students can be put into use, when the teacher shows a photo or a part of the video and ask them to guess the topic or activity to be done.

- ▶ The game *Pictionary*, which is a well-rounded game, entertains and at the same time works on skills for children as well as adults, it also helps to build rapport between the students. This game works on the perception, understanding as well as the linguistic skills of the players.
- ▶ The creativity or the creative thinking in students can be initiated by encouraging them to build stories on given pictures. And also we can use pictures of paintings; this builds the vocabulary when asked to describe what they see and how they can be interpreted. Since each student have different aspects, sharing their vision will definitely lead to an animated class.
- ▶ Comic books are a great source; they use the art of conveying the story with minimal language. Hence a sequence can be given and the students can be asked to fill in the dialogue boxes.
- ▶ The classroom environment is one important thing to consider for effective communication. To set the tone in a classroom and put the students in the right mindset to grasp the lesson, pictures can be used as a sort of warm-up exercise to get the mind running and active to the lesson or content to be followed.
- ▶ In any class, there is usually someone who is shy or quiet. So how can you draw them out of themselves and encourage them to practice speaking? If you ask your students – it doesn't matter how old they are - to draw a mask, put it on and pretend to be someone else, they may feel less self-conscious. Putting themselves into somebody else's shoes can give students the chance to express themselves in a more forthright way.

RESEARCH METHOD

To get my data mixed methods was followed; which involved a combination of both qualitative and quantitative research at the data collection or during the data analysis. A questionnaire was designed for the professors .Observation in the language class was also made to collect the data.

Data collection procedure

For the data collection I distributed the questionnaire to all the professors working in that institution.

Then I consulted the experienced professors by scheduling different appointments with them.

Data instrument:

The professors' interview is considered to be a vital data instrument to demonstrate the importance of images in teaching French at AF Pondicherry.

Data analysis:

15 teachers were being interviewed by me in Alliance Française de Pondichéry in order to find the different perceptions regarding the importance of using images for teaching French. From different responses I found that:

We enquired the professors about the necessity of using images or pictures in teaching French.

All (100%) of the professors have agreed that images have a very positive role in teaching classrooms. They acknowledged that the use of images not only helps a learner but also facilitate the task of a teacher. They further stated that images/pictures are extremely useful in language class.

Using images/pictures made the learners enthusiastic and actively participate in the class.

When they were asked if they regularly use images in French class?

The interviewed professors acknowledged the positive effect of images in language class but 75% of them replied that they were not able to use pictures or images regularly in their class. 15% of the professors replied that they irregularly use pictures or images in their classes. Only 10% of the professors interviewed gave a positive reply that they were using regularly visual aids in their classes.

In response of the question behind their reluctance of using images in the language class, one part of the surveyed group reported

The use of showing or displaying images in certain class created some extra hassle. A considerable time was needed for the class preparation which demanded the professors to spend extra time and energy.

Sometimes it is very costly for them. The authority do not offer financial grant in every classroom for the infrastructure. Moreover, professors had to forgo their leisure time to prepare the suitable images for the coming classes.

I was interested to know whether the students appreciate the use images in their language class, than all the professors gave their opinion

Almost every professor accepted that students do enjoy classes more when images were used in the

classes. They also said that students were greatly encouraged when pictures or images were used in speaking skill class.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The above data reveals that the use of images / pictures /photographs in language class was more effective and easy. A large number of learners were motivated. Professors were also satisfied when they used appropriate images in their class.

CONCLUSION

From the above study we conclude that the images have a tremendous impact on language learning.

The foreign language teachers need to understand this immense effective method of language teaching approach. It is needed to be considered that one picture is worth a number of words. So the language teachers should use images in their classes. Besides some difficulties, the institutional heads should realize the impact of using images in the class and pragmatic steps need to be taken by the language teachers to adopt the use images in their class.

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Corresponding Author

Ratier Alfred Aroquianadin*

Ph. D. Scholar, Department of French, Pondicherry University & M. A. in French in Translation and Interpretation and M. Phil. in French

ratier.alfred@gmail.com