

# Impact of Images on Young Learners' Second Language (L2) Acquisition

Mohammad KafilUddin

Assistant Professor of English, CENURC, International Islamic University Chittagong

Mohammed HumayunKabir

Associate Professor, Department of English Language & Literature, IIUC

## Abstract

This paper aims at exploring the impact of images or photographs on young learners when they attempt to learn a foreign language in KSA. Traditionally books are most common teaching materials that we find being used in the classrooms across the globe. With the passage of time, language specialists discovered that learning a foreign language becomes easier and smoother if some psychological aspects are considered while young learners are taught. Young learners do not admire or appreciate a highly disciplined classroom teaching environment rather they welcome fun activities in the classroom. So teachers can seize the opportunity and capitalize it when they teach young children in KSA. This paper found that images help learners learning a foreign language more easily and efficiently

## Introduction

Books are the traditional teaching materials that we commonly observe in the classroom teaching around the world including KSA. We have noticed that teachers have always used pictures, images or graphics taking from different sources like books, newspapers and magazines, to facilitate learning. The images or pictures that language teachers frequently use may be in the form of flashcards, large wall pictures, cue cards, photographs, illustrations, etc. In some contexts where budget is available teachers may also afford to use PowerPoint slides, images from Over Head Projector (OHP) or projected mobile phone/ computer images. We also notice that teachers draw pictures on the black/white board to help with explanation and language work.

The studies of Psycho Linguistics and Socio Linguistics have revealed that children admire informal teaching approaches more than conventional teaching methods. Using images or photographs in the classrooms for teaching foreign language (English) makes the classroom teaching interesting and enjoyable which ultimately helps the learners to acquire the language more effortlessly. Researcher findings that to get fluent in a new language, think in pictures. It is also advised that when learning a foreign language, tie new words to bold images and old memories.

In KSA we notice that our language teachers do not give importance on using images while they teach English. As a consequence, we presume that, our children have to struggle a lot when they attempt to learn English in their earlier school life. We will survey different schools and interview language teachers to accomplish the study. We believe that the findings of the study will help our teachers and education administrators a lot. It will help them taking pragmatic steps to make foreign language teaching effective.

## Literature Review:

If we attempt to learn a foreign language, we struggle because we have too much to remember: too much grammar, too many arbitrary linguistic rules and far too much vocabulary. Forgetting what we learn is our inherent human weakness that we want to defeat by making some pragmatic and scientific plans.

It is an established belief that images help our foreign language learners to learn it smoothly and easily. However, this is not widely practiced in different teaching contexts. Below, we mention some scientific studies which assert that images help the learners to learn a foreign language more easily and effectively:

A good number of Modern linguistic researches have repeatedly insisted that visuals have profound effect on foreign language learning. Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA) has done a mammoth research in this field of language teaching. This study has convincingly exposed that 'Gestures and pictures 'boost foreign language learning'

It underpins that language learners learn more easily when several senses are stimulated at the same time. Scientists ran experiments and have shown that people memorize foreign language terms more effortlessly when they see images and gestures. The study suggests adding images to learning by reading and listening helps the learners significantly to acquire a language.

The results of the research indicated that remembrance was better when the words had been learned with gestures and pictures. Here we summarize such a study below to clarify the impact of pictures on language learning:

Modern language experts underline that pictures should be used to teach foreign language efficiently.

Now a days we come to know about the use of virtual album for teaching purpose. We can find huge e-resources which are abundant with virtual album related materials.

Language teachers are well aware of the value of using drawings and photographs as teaching tools which they can collect from virtual album. We know pictures offer visual support for all kinds of modules. Virtual album can support learning in the following manners:

- Familiarizing and practicing vocabulary for notions or things like 'lightning', 'mountains' and 'elephants' that usually aren't placed in the classroom (and can't easily be brought in);
- Showing situations and actions where several things are going on at the same time;
- Reinforcing and practicing particular grammatical constructions.

Additionally, pictures can:

- permit a teacher to plan a sensible combination of passive and active activities and of group and individual work;
- rouse students' imaginations and enthusiasm and inspire students' participation in the course by adding another aspect to the learning skills and strategies students are able to use;
- provide an easy and entertaining way to familiarize a wide array of cultural information to students

The Virtual Picture Album (or VPA) is a computer collection of digitized photographs and drawings, accompanied by beneficial descriptions and ideas for ways to integrate these pictures into numerous in-class and out-of-class activities. There is even a small collection of sample exercises using pictures from the VPA, which teachers can use or modify for their own purposes.

Image Detective is another version of using images for language teaching and learning purpose. Here images are used for generating different productive language skills i.e. writing and speaking skills. We know that it is an online media literacy activity which could be adapted to use. First, the teacher or student poses a question about the photo. Next, the student identifies clues in the photo that help them answer the question. Then, the student investigates background information on the picture and/or topic it represents. Finally, the student makes his/her conclusion.

### **Using Images to Generate Writing**

Using images to prompt writing is an important tactic we use with our English-Language Learners. We often use images to push language development and thinking skills within a thematic unit.

First, students describe in writing what they observe, trying to record as many details as possible. It helps if students have a copy of the image on which they can write. Then the teacher asks students to write as many questions they can think of about the image and the details they have listed. Once students have shared their questions with a classmate, the teacher asks them to use the inductive process (described above in the Picture Word Inductive Model) to organize these questions into categories (for example, questions about feelings/emotions or historical questions) and then to add more questions to each category. These questions could serve as writing entry points for students to develop longer writing pieces based on the image.

Study has revealed that these types of inquiry activities are an effective instructional practice for improving the writing of adolescent learners.

Five Card Flickr Story is another photo instrument for producing writing. It lets one pick five photos from a group of pre-selected images from Flickr and then write a story about them.

Another tool, Pic-Lits, lets users pick an image from a selection and then "drag-and-drop" words onto the image. The user's creation can then be saved with a link posted, or it can be embedded. The words learners can choose from are labeled by their parts of speech, and once they drop the word on the image they can see all the different verb conjugations and choose one. They can write a poem or describe the picture.

### **Using Images for Speaking Practice**

Fotobabble is the most simple photo and audio recording tool we've found for online speaking practice. Students can choose a photo and record their description of it with Fotobabble. Students can listen to their recording at the beginning of the year, and then record it again later to see the progress that they have made. It can also be posted on a class or student blog, and others can leave comments.

Below, we also mention a very prominent and widely appreciated British Council led study which was conducted by Larissa Albano, regarding the value of using pictures in English teaching classrooms. She explains how using pictures as a teaching aid can help language teachers engage their students.

### **How English language teachers can use pictures in class**

Using pictures in the classroom can make speaking in English fun. Pictures can be successful study aids during lessons, and they can act as useful prompts to help students when they are practising speaking.

So how can teachers use pictures in the classroom? Here are seven tips for bringing visual aids into your lessons, each starting with one of the letters in 'picture' to help you remember them.

**Predict:**

Students can look at pictures or watch the first part of a video in order to predict what the topic of the lesson or the activity will be about.

**Interact:**

The game *Pictionary*, in which players have to guess specific words based on their team mates' drawings, and other mingling games with pictures are fun activities that can be used with both children and adults to review the vocabulary they have learnt. In order to engage students, teachers can show a video or a picture only to half their class, and ask them to describe to the other half what they can see. This second group will then have to try to report what the other students have seen, as accurately as they can. Everyone will see something slightly different from the others, and the activity will strengthen their rapport.

**Create:**

Students can write or tell a story by using a sequence of pictures, or, if the teacher wants to really fire their imagination, the students can create a story based on just a single picture. This exercise can be particularly interesting and productive if the teacher encourages students to use specific tenses (such as past simple vs past continuous), vocabulary or functional language in their story - for example, describing a conversation at the train station.

**Talk:**

At the beginner level, some students' faces go blank when they are asked to answer a question. Teachers can avoid prolonged silence and prevent their students from feeling embarrassed by providing them with a picture. They can break the ice by asking the students to describe what they can see in the picture.

**Understand:**

What's the easiest way to explain the meaning of a word? Show it! Classrooms may be fully equipped, but they can't hold everything. If there's an item or object that you want to show your students to help them remember the word for it, try showing them a picture. Flashcards are an invaluable resource for teaching or revising vocabulary. They can be easily downloaded or created online.

**Reflect:**

Not only does a picture give you the chance to reflect on what you can see, but it also represents the opportunity to develop your other senses by considering what you can hear, smell and touch. This is a useful exercise for teachers who are preparing their students for a speaking exam. Most of the time, speaking exams are in pairs and students worry that they may run out of words because their partner will have already said everything about the picture they have been shown. By using their other senses, your students can add new information and will be able to avoid repetition.

**Enact:**

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 practise 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.

### **3.1 Research Method**

In order to get my data I have followed mixed methods. Mixed methods involve different combination of qualitative and quantitative research either at the data collection or at the analysis the data. We designed questionnaire for teachers .We shall also observe language classrooms to collect data.

### **3.2 Data collection procedure**

In order to collect the data I will make a schedule to distribute the questionnaire. Then I make appointments with some experienced teachers of different schools.

**Data instrument:**

I think teachers' interview will be considered a vital data instrument to realise the importance of images in teaching English in KSA.

### **4.Data analysis:**

I have interviewed 15 teachers with a view to finding their perception regarding the importance of using images for teaching English in KSA. After analyzing their responses I found that :

***When I asked the teachers if they feel the necessity of using images or pictures in teaching English.***

All (100%) of the teacher participants agreed that images have a very positive role in English teaching classrooms. They acknowledged that the use of images not only helps the learner to learn a language but also makes teaching sooth. They further opined that images/pictures are extremely useful in language class. The use of images/pictures make the learners enthusiastic and active in the classroom.

***When asked whether they use images regularly in English class?***

Though the teacher participants overwhelmingly acknowledged the positive effect of images in language class, 75% of the respondents replied that they do not use pictures or images regularly in the English class. 15% responded said that they irregularly use pictures or images in their classes. Only 10% of the teacher participants said that they regularly use images in their classes.

***In response of the question behind their reluctance of using images in the language class, the participants said:***

using images in the class creates some extra hassle in the class. They need to spend extra time and energy. Sometimes it is very costly for them. The authority do not offer financial grant. Moreover, they have to sacrifice their leisure time to prepare the suitable images for the upcoming class.

***When I wanted to know whether the students like to use images in their language class, the participants replied in the following manner:***

Almost every participant granted that students do enjoy classes more when teachers use images or pictures when they teach English. They also said that students are greatly encouraged when pictures or images are used in Speaking skill class.

## **4.2 Findings**

From the above data it is revealed that the use of images / pictures / photographs makes language class more effective and smooth. It makes the learners more motivated. Teachers also can get some breathing space if they can use appropriate images in language class.

## **4.3 Recommendations**

We do believe that pictures makes language learning easy. Harmer(2007:178-79) very clearly and convincingly stated the ways how teachers can use pictures in language classrooms. Our language teachers can follow those eight tips when they teach in KSA. Davies and Pearse(2000:155-160) thoroughly discussed the ways and means of using objects, pictures, drawings, etc. in language class. Our language teachers may also benefit from this, I reckon. On top of that Cameron(2001:6-65) elaborately discuss their techniques of using images in language class.

## **5. Conclusion**

That the images have a tremendous impact on language learning is understood from the above study. We reckon, Saudi teachers need to understand this immensely effective method of language teaching approach. They need to consider that a picture is worth a thousand words. We hope our language teachers will practice this reality whenever they will engage in teaching. Besides, the education administrators should also realize the impact of using images in the class and they need to take pragmatic steps to engage language teachers to use images in their class.

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