




PICTURES AS MEDIA TO TEACH ENGLISH LANGUAGE FOR YOUNG LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

Pictures have been one of the most influential sources, especially, in teaching and learning an unknown language. The use of pictures has great implications for teaching and learning the English language to non-natives. The current study aimed to explore the use of pictures to teach the English language in primary schools. The researchers, following the norms of qualitative research, used class observations and interviews as the tools for data collection. The findings of the study reiterated that the use of pictures in language teaching is quite helpful; however, the teachers under observation, often, did not make use of pictures found in the textbooks to teach the English language. The teachers can make their lectures and classroom activities more lively, interesting, and fruitful by employing the pictures found in the textbooks they use to teach the English language.

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INTRODUCTION

English as an international language is used in many countries over the world including Indonesia. In Indonesia, English is the first foreign language which has played an important role in the development of Indonesia; it is used as a means of communication when Indonesian people communicate and cooperate with a people from other countries. It shows that English in Indonesia is very important.

Because of its important position, in the Indonesian educational system, English has been taught at school from the first of junior high school up to third grade of senior high school and some semesters at universities.

Learning English is not easy for students. They often find difficulties to express their idea or catch the meaning of words in paragraph because of their lack of vocabulary. Nagaraj (1996:183) stated that in many ESL classes, even where teachers have devoted much time to vocabulary teaching, the results have been disappointing. So, they need to choose one of the techniques which are the best for students in order that students get more effective vocabulary learning.

There are several kinds of media. In this final project the writer will try to present one of several media or techniques that can be used by the students in learning English vocabulary; this is called pictures. The writer's consideration is supported by the statement of Finocchiaro and Bonomo which says:

“The students understand and retain the meaning of a word better when they have been shown or have touched some object associated with it.” (Finocchiaro and Bonomo, 1973: 163).

There are two kinds of aids that are used in language teaching; these are Visual Aids and Audial Aids (Asma, 2016; Padhi, 2021). Visual Aids are the materials or types of equipment that are used to

show the object in the absence of it, for instance, a picture of an elephant substitutes the real elephant. So Visual Aids are numerous, some of them are television, video player, pictures, flash-cards, etc., these help the teacher to substitute real-life objects with the help of any of the above given visual aid.

Pictures as a part of visual aids are used as a technique in teaching English vocabulary at elementary schools. Pictures in a image or likeness of an object, person, scene, reproduced, on flat surface, especially by painting or photography a mental image or impression to an idea, Webster (1983:1357). From the explanation above, through pictures the students of elementary school can learn and memorize the lesson faster, especially in vocabulary.

The researchers have observed that most language teachers do not use pictures from textbooks for the teaching of different language components due to this their performance is sometimes unsatisfactory. For this study, the First Author visited two schools in an urban setting of Pakistan to explore how the language teachers were using pictures given in the textbooks for language teaching.

After completing the research and analyzing the data the researchers have recommended some ways to improve language teaching, and methodology, with the help of pictures found in textbooks. These recommendations are based on class observations, and informal interviews, which have been conducted by the researcher during the research. Thus, the study aimed to explore how the language teachers used pictures, given in the textbooks, for language teaching at the primary level in Pakistan, and how it helped to maintain learners' motivation in learning.

RESEARCH METHODS

The researchers used a qualitative approach for this research (Merriam, 1998). The qualitative approach of research focuses on the analysis of subjective data and on the other hand the focus of the quantitative approach is on the analysis of objective data (Berg, 2001; Cohen et al., 2007; Creswell, 2012).

The study was conducted in one of schools in Cirebon Village. This study was mainly based on classroom observations and informal interviews. The researchers used semi-structured interviews, and classroom observations to collect the data. The researchers paid five visits to each of the schools in connection with the interviews and observations.

A total of six interviews (three with each of the teachers) and ten observations (five in each classroom) were carried out. Data analysis was a continuous process during the data collection (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The researchers used thematic analysis (Creswell, 2012) to generate the research report. All the interview data were transcribed initially and then coded under various sections and sub-sections (Berg, 2001; Creswell, 2012).

The qualitative nature of the study enabled the researchers to get an insider's views and generate rich and in-depth data for the analysis. Data from two different sources (interviews and observations) helped the researchers to triangulate the findings and to maintain the rigor and trustworthiness of the findings (Berg, 2001; Creswell, 2012; Scott & Morrison, 2006; Tavakoli, 2013). The researchers followed the ethical guidelines and considerations of social science research (Khan, Hussain & Alam, 2021). The teachers' participation was voluntary. Anonymity and confidentiality of the data, individual teachers, and their schools were maintained in all respects during the data collection, analysis, and reporting.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Research Result

After analysing the observation data it was found that the teachers in the study did not often use pictures found in the textbook for the teaching of the English language to young learners at the primary level. Use of Pictures Increased Learners' Motivation The researchers observed that children were really very interested in the pictures found in the textbook and they took part very enthusiastically in every

activity in which the teachers used the pictures found in the textbook. After the observations, the researcher asked some questions from the children about the pictures found in their textbooks. They told him that they liked the pictures found in their textbook and they enjoyed taking part in the activities in which the teachers used any picture in the classroom.

The researchers observed that the teachers sometimes made use of pictures for language teaching, but they did not exploit them in an effective way. A student mentions: I like pictures very much! Sometimes, I draw pictures. I draw pictures of my home, my school, and the trees. whenever I see pictures in the books, I get excited. Our classroom has some charts of birds etc. I like them. Another student expressed! I wish all of our books could have pictures in them. one day our teacher showed us pictures, and asked many questions about them.

We enjoyed answering the questions. I like the colours in the pictures. I like flowers and I like the pictures of flowers in books. The young learners also mentioned to the researcher that when teachers show something like, pictures or realia they enjoy those class activities more as compared to those activities where pictures are not used. Thus, it was found that students get more interest in teaching and reading when the textbooks have pictures in them. They enjoy discussing the pictures and also drawing pictures according to their interests.

Discussion

Pictures are found everywhere. They can be drawn either on the blackboard or chart paper or even cutouts (Nagaraj G, 1996: 188).

According to Gerlach and Elly (1980: 273), a picture may also be worth a thousand years or a thousand miles. Through pictures, learners can be shown people, places, and things from areas for outside their own experiences. Pictures can also represent images from ancient time or portray the future. We will support this statement if we realize that every time we see pictures, there must be something we want to say about the pictures.

For most people, Brown et al (1977: 179-180) stated, pictures provide feeling that they make contacts with the real world. Perhaps, there are millions of individuals all over the world who have never seen an ocean except in some kind of pictures. The picture may be used to clarify their imagination about ocean. They will show how the real ocean looks like.

This section presents the findings of the study. The findings include teachers' perceptions of the use of pictures in teaching, the benefits of the use of pictures, and issues related to them.

The Theory Practice Gap

The teachers in the study perceived the fact that the pictures found in the textbook for young learners are very helpful for language teaching, but during classroom observations, the researchers observed that they had not been actually using those pictures often in the classrooms. A teacher explained:

Pictures are good resources for explaining the concepts to students. Most of the textbooks at the primary level have pictures in them. They help us in explaining concepts. Pictures also enhance children's motivation and interest. It depends upon the teachers to use the pictures.

Effective use of Pictures in the Classrooms

The researchers reached the conclusion that pictures can bring the real world inside the classrooms.

The teachers perceived that when the pictures are related to the text the classroom environment becomes lively, and effective learning takes place. They expressed that the pictures gave great exposure to such things which are not possible to be brought inside the classroom, for instance, the sea or beach, etc. In this way, pictures can give exposure to a large number of objects, things, places, or people which

are not possible to be brought into the classroom. They further mentioned that when the teacher did not use pictures and spent a lot of time explaining things verbally, which became tiresome and boring for both the teacher and students.

On the other hand, when the teacher used pictures for such activities, the job of the teacher became easier and the purpose of the lesson was easily and effectively achieved. The researcher's classroom observations also reinforced the idea. For instance, one of the teachers was to teach the word 'train' so she showed the picture found in the textbook that did not take much time for the students to understand the meaning of the word. The researchers believe that the language teacher at the primary level can exploit pictures from textbooks to teach the English language properly. Another teacher used the picture of a village setting from the textbook. Through the picture, the teacher explained village life. However, it could have been more interesting if the teacher could have asked questions from the students about what they could see in the picture.

The teacher could have developed a few questions to ask so as to elicit responses from the students. Thus, it is to conclude that teachers need guidance and professional training to use pictures effectively and efficiently in the classrooms. To conclude, the researchers found that the teachers were not properly trained, and they did not know how to use them (pictures) in an effective way. Both of the teachers made use of pictures for a very short time to relate them to the real world, but they could not use the pictures effectively for the teaching of language items. Whenever they used the pictures the students took part in the activities very enthusiastically, but when the teachers relied only on verbal explanations the young learners lost interest. The pictures (found in the textbook) could be used as effective tools for transforming knowledge.

The use of pictures eliminates monotony in the class by bringing an active and lively atmosphere to the classroom. Findings show that learning with pictures increases learners' motivations towards learning and retaining knowledge for a longer period of time (Aljuhani & Maroof, 2019; Baker, 2015). As pictures give a holistic understanding of real objects or the real world in a short span of time by making the very concept or object clear to young learners. The use of pictures requires lesser efforts on the part of the teacher as well as on the part of the learners (Ahmed, 2018; Baker, 2015; Khafidhoh & Carolina, 2019; Rezaie & Barani, 2010).

However, when teachers do not have pictures (either magazine or flash card pictures, etc.) they have to rely solely on wordy explanations which either makes the classes monotonous or creates boredom, and makes the learners confused about the object or idea under discussion. Hence, if the teachers only rely on wordy explanations, they may not make a lively and vibrant classroom setting. On the other hand, if they use pictures, they can explain things effectively (Harmer, 2013; Macwan, 2015; Padhi, 2021). Thus, the use of pictures has a great influence on the teaching and learning of a language (Ahmad, 2012; Asma, 2016; Khafidhoh & Carolina, 2019; Vetriselvi, 2016).

The young learners cannot stick to an activity for long as they often get distracted, they demand novelty and something striking which can be sensed by them, and then they get ready to learn the tasks in question (Al'Omairi & Al Balushi, 2015). If the teacher gives something to see the young learners, they really enjoy doing the tasks and they respond very quickly and eagerly (Byrne, 1984; Mueen, 1992; Mushtaq et al., 2022; Ratnaningsih, 2019). The use of pictures from their textbook arouses interest in them and they are motivated to learn whatever the teacher is going to teach.

The pictures attract the attention of young learners (Al'Omairi & Al Balushi, 2015) and in this way, they learn the language components in an effective way which makes them capable of retaining the knowledge in their minds for a longer period of time (Aljuhani & Maroof, 2019). The use of pictures is a bit technical. The teacher should know when, where, and how to use pictures for teaching a particular language component. If s/he is capable enough to exploit the pictures effectively then teaching and learning become fun. As pictures need fewer explanations and less effort on the part of the teacher to explain and as well as on the part of the students to understand (Kanwal, 2021; Ratnaningsih, 2019).

Mostly in teaching both the teacher and the students have to undergo lots of effort to learn something, here ‘much effort good result’ is the slogan but on the other hand, the use of pictures reverses this slogan into ‘less effort better result’ and that is true.

The teacher just shows the picture and asks the students to interpret (in most cases) and if they cannot interpret the real message or meaning of the picture then the teacher gives hints or sometimes a brief explanation which usually suffices, and students do not need to ask for more explanation of the picture in question (Khafidhoh & Carolina, 2019; Rezaie & Barani, 2010). A concept retains in one’s mind when one sees the thing oneself with one’s own eyes or if one experiences it.

Therefore, the knowledge or information retains or stays in one’s memory of what one has experienced (Aljuhani & Maroof, 2019). A learner cannot experience or see real objects all the time, but one can get illustrations or pictures of them which fulfill the need to know about them. Pictures do this job very efficiently and their use helps the learners to learn and memorize concepts, objects, or things in a very proficient way. Pictures not only help to retain knowledge but also help in transferring the meaning or knowledge to others quite easily and effectively (Ahmed, 2018). We can call the pictures to be a sort of knowledge transfer tool which is very useful and important in language teaching, especially to young learners (Kanwal, 2021).

CONCLUSION

Pictures are great resources for language teachers. It is not possible for teachers to bring each and everything in the class for demonstration. They can bring some of the things as realia. However, some of the things are impossible to be brought into the classrooms, for example, a marketplace, an elephant, a museum, a bus, etc. All such things can be shown to young learners with the help of visual aids, especially with the help of pictures. Pictures make the task easy for the teacher to give examples of the real world. As every child has his/her textbook with him/her so they can see certain pictures which the teacher asks them to look at. It also helps the teacher to maintain discipline in the class and the students to get exposure to the real world.

This study, thus, found that the use of pictures in the primary classroom in language teaching increases learners’ motivation and the classrooms become active and vibrant. However, it was found that teachers’ own capacity and understanding of how to use pictures as language teaching resources is vital. In this study, the teachers generally lacked the pedagogical knowledge (Al Jawad, 2021) of using the picture in the classrooms. Therefore, it is imperative to train teachers in the use of resources. Also, teacher education programs in the country need to focus on training prospective teachers and resource development, utilization, and preservation.

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