

"Visual Literacy" And Its Efficiency

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In the following we elucidated and documented our position concerning "Visual Literacy", as the concept (metaphor) is currently understood in educational technology.

The term visual seems to be wholly redundant: Literacy ordinarily refers to the knowledge and skills necessary for the encoding/decoding of print(writing), and print (writing) is ordinarily perceived visually. Indeed, it seems quite evident that what is intended by the original phrase is not visual literacy, but visual-iconic literacy. We employ the terms "iconic", "representational" and "pictorial" non-arbitrarily to refer to signs like pictures etc. that share some criterial attributes with their referent exemplars, most typically expressed as an isomorphism of visual contour. (See Knowlton, 1966)

We insist on the effectiveness of the learner's visual literacy in raising the level of socio-cultural behavior (including linguistic performance), as well as enhancing the efficiency of learning materials.

Firstly, some findings from experimental research are introduced, the results of which indicate that the examinees differ greatly in the ways they see things and guess things from the visual stimuli.

The phrase "visual literacy" frequently functions as no more than a uniting symbol for otherwise noncommunicative interest groups. This, of course, can be a most important function. As far as the learner's visual literacy is concerned, when they watch audio-visual materials for language learning, it should enhance the efficiency of learning activities, as well as improve their socio-cultural behavior.

Since visual literacy's metaphorical nature derives from its implied relationship to verbal literacy, it is appropriate to examine visual literacy in terms of this relationship. When discussing lan-

guage, it is necessary to define the sign vehicle, or code, in which the language is embodied. One becomes literate through conscious and deliberate effort; the proficiency is not simply acquired as is the case with speech. We shall return to this issue. The point here is that "literacy" implies learning. For verbal literacy, we refer to learning a finite set of signs and a finite set of rules governing arrangement of those signs.

Comparing the terms verbal literacy and visual literacy reveals some obvious differences. A generalized comparison of sign types and sensory modes common to the two types of literacy. What follows is a more detailed comparison of the verbal and pictorial sign systems, with specific attention to the phonological, syntactic, and semantic components of each. These we called "situational factors" to promote the quasi-experiences.

The kind of evidence seems to argue for the visual literacy position-viz., that "picturing" is a skill that must be explicitly taught if it is to be acquired.

In language learning, audio-visual materials play the major of providing experience of encountering many situations and recognizing "situational factors" there, and the less important role of being a source of knowledge.

Visual literacy (as well as we called visual-iconic literacy) is regarded as consisting of, firstly, the ability to perceive messages which the picture intendedly conveys; secondly, the ability to express things by means of visual devices. Those abilities are supported by the process of "uniting", i.e., a process to make conscious of what is recognized, or to derive information from it. Attaining visual literacy means improving the ability of uniting. Visual materials are expected to serve learners quasi-experiences of behaving in situation, and consequently to improve the learner's visual literacy, as well as the recognition of situational factors.