

ENHANCING SPEAKING AND LISTENING SKILLS THROUGH THE EFFECTIVE USE OF VISUAL MATERIALS

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ABSTRACT

In today's world, having knowledge and strong proficiency in a foreign language has become essential, making the process of foreign-language learning more relevant than ever. Yet many students struggle to communicate primarily due to insufficient vocabulary. Analysis of common vocabulary exercises shows that challenging tasks often overlook the intentional development of lexical skills, which significantly affects learners' overall vocabulary competence. Enhancing this competence requires various supportive methods, and broad use of visualization—especially at the intermediate level—plays a crucial role, as foreign languages are acquired under non-natural learning conditions..

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Between the ages of 8 and 14, learners experience a significant rise in self-awareness, cognitive growth, and exposure to new experiences. During this period, core mental processes—thinking, memory, and attention—develop actively. Using visualization helps structure learners' activities and sustain their focus. Presenting material through sensory-visual means enhances cognitive engagement, reduces fatigue, and fosters greater enthusiasm for acquiring a new language.

When teaching a foreign language, learners' memory capacities should be carefully considered. Classroom visualization techniques help students retain various types of information more effectively. Using visual support makes spoken content easier to grasp, deepens comprehension of the topic, and creates a foundation for applying knowledge in practice.

Visual learning, one of the most rational approaches, stems from how students perceive, interpret, and generalize information. Visual aids also influence learners on an emotional level, as the visual system is thought to be more responsive. As the Russian saying goes, "it is better

to see once than to hear a hundred times.” In terms of information processing, the efficiency of hearing is about five times lower than that of sight, which explains why visually obtained information is absorbed quickly, easily, and more reliably. When teaching a foreign language, learners’ memory capacities should be carefully considered. Classroom visualization techniques help students retain various types of information more effectively. Using visual support makes spoken content easier to grasp, deepens comprehension of the topic, and creates a foundation for applying knowledge in practice.

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Visual support facilitates the formation of mental representations that can later develop into concepts. Various forms of illustration stimulate interest in learning a foreign language and strengthen memory, attention, and observational abilities. Drawings, photographs, diagrams, tables, and other visual items function as external tools of perception, while contextual factors—such as the surrounding language environment—shape internal perception. Visibility represents the mental reconstruction of these objects as they appear in visual form; in essence, references to “visibility” refer to how these items are pictured in the mind. Strong and vivid visuals create the impression of living images and help form associative links because they evoke emotional responses in learners. Visibility may be objective, auditory, or visual; subjective visibility, in particular, supports the development of foreign-language thinking. In practice, teachers often notice that children grasp concepts more quickly and participate more actively when images are incorporated. Visuals add dynamism to instruction, and as learners listen to a story based on an illustration, they become motivated to comment or answer questions, which helps them understand foreign-language meaning more effectively.

As the topic is introduced, the teacher can place cards on the board featuring short texts alongside corresponding images. After reading, students infer the meaning of the text through the visuals, which boosts engagement and supports motor memory. At the start of the lesson, clarity techniques—such as phonetic warm-ups—are also useful. For example, when working with poetry, learners can create visual representations of the content. Games may also be used to assess vocabulary and sentence-building skills: students receive small flyers with pictures arranged so that each new word begins with the final letter of the previous one, and their task is to create as many sentences as possible using these words.

Developing speaking and listening skills is one of the most challenging aspects of language learning. Since speaking depends on listening, listening becomes an essential component of oral communication. Speaking occurs first and simultaneously with listening, while listening is shaped by spoken input. In foreign-language teaching, listening is therefore treated as an independent and important type of speech activity.

Listening tasks are most effective when learners can see the speaker as well as hear them. Beginners usually focus on repeating what they hear rather than verifying

understanding, and excessive questioning can hinder genuine comprehension. If the learner is pressured to respond immediately, they may prioritize answering over processing the message, which complicates the development of listening skills. Effective listening practice relies on comparison, differentiation, and recognition.

Regarding the use of technical tools for listening instruction, none of them alone can ensure full success. The best outcomes come from combining appropriate tools, each selected according to the nature of the task and the learners' cognitive level.

Visual learning—rooted in how learners perceive, interpret, and apply information—forms a core foundation of the educational process, as visual aids enable students to build mental representations that enhance cognition, observation, aesthetic sensitivity, and memory [1, 102-109]. Because graphic tools naturally attract attention and stimulate learners more effectively than verbal methods, many scholars emphasize their role in boosting motivation and illustrating the real-world relevance of content, particularly for young children who respond strongly to images when learning a foreign language [2, 239]. As a result, visual materials become a powerful driver of mental activity and engagement, supporting interest, comprehension, retention, and the consolidation of knowledge. Their importance is especially evident at the initial stage of vocabulary acquisition, where learners rely on visual cues to grasp meanings, forms, and usage of new words, laying the foundation for durable memory and effective long-term mastery [3, 118-139].

Semantics can be conveyed through both translational and non-translational methods, and the choice of approach for introducing a new lexical unit may depend on factors such as learners' linguistic competence, educational background, cognitive abilities, and the teacher's methodological skills and available instructional strategies. As a non-translational technique, visual semanticization relies on images, gestures, or object demonstrations rather than native-language explanation, enabling meaning to be communicated directly and intuitively. In primary education, this method is especially effective because it aligns with children's concrete thinking, supports stronger associative connections, enhances creativity and guesswork, and suits the subject-based nature of early vocabulary learning [4, 480].

Most lexical themes taught in primary school—such as movement verbs, animals, school items, or food—contain meanings too diverse to be fully clarified through translational semantics, which is why grouping concrete verbs, objects, numbers, emotions, prepositions, and shapes visually becomes more effective; theory suggests many visual strategies (topic-based objects, pictures illustrating quantities, or even motor actions like clapping to represent numbers), yet teachers must choose the simplest and most practical option aligned with the word's nature (movement verbs shown through actions, emotions through facial expressions, prepositions through object placement), ensuring learners clearly grasp the meaning in context, while also recognizing that visual semantics, though helpful, can be time-consuming, subjective, and less consistently reliable than translation. [5, 336].

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