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**THE DEVELOPMENT AND COMPARISON OF  
PICTORIAL MATERIALS AND TRADITIONAL  
MATERIALS ON THE ACHIEVEMENT OF MIDDLE  
SCHOOL IRANIAN STUDENTS**

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### **Abstract**

*This study was designed to investigate the effects of the visually based teaching materials, especially pictorial story materials on the oral/written proficiency level of Iranian students at 3<sup>rd</sup> grade of middle school. Quantitative method of data analysis was used for analyzing the data gained from 100 subjects that were put into experimental and control groups. The materials used in this research were current traditional and developed pictorial story teaching materials that were presented to control group (A) and experimental group (B), respectively. After the treatment, the researcher held two sets of oral/written posttests and her assistant and the results were analyzed using t-test. The first and second null hypotheses stating that there is no difference in the achievement of those students who received pictorial story teaching materials and those who received current traditional materials were rejected ( $p < .05$ ). Based on the results, it was revealed that pictorial story teaching materials helped the experimental group achieve a higher level of oral/written proficiency in contrast with traditional teaching materials. However, in spite of the effectiveness of pictorial story teaching material, this technique is time consuming and needs to consider extra time and equipment to be implemented.*

**Key words:** oral proficiency, written proficiency, pictorial story teaching material, traditional teaching material.

## چکیده

بکارگیری داستانهای مصور، یکی از راه های کسب تجربه آموزشی جدید و خلاصی از کتابهای درسی کسل کننده میباشد . متاسفانه کتابهای درسی زبان انگلیسی رایج در سیستم آموزش و پرورش ایران، از انواع مطالب آموزشی نوین بی بهره اند . مکالمه، واژگان و دستور زبان انگلیسی به روشی دشوار و ناخوشایند به دانش آموزان ارائه میشود، که خود موجب خستگی و دل زدگی آنان میشود . این تحقیق در نظر دارد که تاثیر استفاده از مطالب آموزشی دیداری در قالب داستانهای کوتاه مصور را بر پیشرفت مهارتهای شفاهی و کتبی دانش آموزان پایه سوم راهنمایی بررسی نماید. جهت تجزیه و تحلیل اطلاعات بدست آمده از صد دانش آموزی که در قالب دو گروه آزمایشی و کنترل در این تحقیق شرکت نموده اند، از روش کمی آماری استفاده میشود. مطالب آموزشی ارائه شده در طول پروژه تحقیق عبارتند از کتاب زبان درسی رایج در سیستم آموزش و پرورش و مطالب آموزشی داستانهای مصور که به ترتیب به دانش آموزان گروه کنترل و تجربی ارائه میشود. پس از پایان دوره آموزشی، دو آزمون شفاهی و کتبی جداگانه توسط محقق و دستیارش برگزار میشوند و نتایج به روش تی تست تجزیه و تحلیل میگرددند. فرضیه های ارائه شده در این تحقیق بیان میدارند که مطالب آموزشی داستانهای مصور در مقایسه با مطالب سنتی کتب درسی موجود، تفاوت معناداری در دانش زبانی دانش آموزان ایجاد نمی نماید. بر پایه نتایج به دست آمده این تحقیق آشکار شد که مطالب آموزشی داستانهای مصور به دانش آموزان گروه تجربی کمک کرد تا در مقایسه با دانش آموزان گروه کنترل، به سطح بالاتری از مهارتهای شفاهی و کتبی زبان انگلیسی دست پیدا کنند. با این وجود، علی رغم اثرات مفید استفاده از مطالب آموزشی داستانهای مصور، این تکنیک آموزشی نیازمند تخصیص زمان و تجهیزات آموزشی بیشتر میباشد.

**کلمات کلیدی:** مهارت شفاهی زبان، مهارت کتبی زبان، مطالب آموزشی داستانهای مصور،

**مطالب آموزشی سنتی**



# *Chapter I*

## *Introduction*

## *Chapter one*

### *Introduction*

#### *1.1. Background*

Teaching English has been a historical challenge in human history. Throughout the teaching history, there have been different claims from many resources regarding teaching styles. Most of these resources claim that all learners have individual attributes relating to their learning processes. According to Reid's (1995) definition, learning styles are internally-based characteristics of individuals for the intake or understanding of new information. Although some people may rely heavily on visual presentation, others may prefer spoken language; still others may respond better to hands-on activities. Therefore, it is evident that people learn differently and at different paces because of their biological and psychological differences (Reiff, 1992). Naturally, these differences in learning abound in any ESL/EFL settings where students come from different cultural and educational backgrounds.

Most of the research conducted by O'Brien (1989), Oxford and Ehrman (1993), and Kroonenberg (1995) on learning styles are based on the assumption that learners receive information through their senses and prefer some senses to others in specific situations. Brown (1994) states that usually students learn more effectively when they learn through their own initiatives. When their learning styles are matched with appropriate approaches in teaching, then their motivation, performances, and

achievements will increase and be enhanced. Thus, researchers and educators try to establish optimal environmental and psychological climates that foster learning by allowing students to learn in accordance with their own preferred learning styles.

According to Reid (1995), visual learners prefer seeing words or ideas in writing, e.g. reading handouts or the whiteboard. They learn better by reading than by listening to someone. Visual learners prefer that information be presented visually in pictures, diagrams, flow charts, time lines, films, and demonstrations rather than in spoken or written words. As Dale (1969) said, most people extract and retain more information from visual presentations than from written or spoken prose, while most language instruction is verbal, involving predominantly lectures, writing in texts and on chalkboards, and in language laboratories.

Some studies show that identifying a student's style and then providing instruction consistent with that style contribute to more effective learning (Zhang De-gui, 2008). The present study aims to shed light on the way the visually-based teaching methods, specially as pictorial story teaching materials interact with the achievement of middle school Iranian students.

### ***1.2. Statement of the problem and Purpose of the study***

English is formally taught as a foreign language to Iranian students from the first year in Middle school. Students have about three hours of formal instruction in English every week. Traditionally, the teaching of English in Iranian schools is dominated by a teacher-centered, book-centered, Grammar-Translation method. Teachers use a combination of Grammar-Translation method and Audio-Lingual method in most schools, which are not based on modern visually-based teaching styles. Many English teachers experience student reluctance when they introduce the

current traditional instructional activities in the classroom. In my opinion, the basis for such reluctance to learn English materials may be that learners are not generally motivated enough to learn them, and they always complain of boring and frustrating time they spend in English classes at school. Besides, it is argued by many teachers that the way materials have been developed limits their capability in choosing effective teaching techniques and strategies, and they believe that appropriate materials increase the motivation of learners. Nunan (1989) points out that accommodating learners' needs and interests is vital in designing a learner-centered curriculum. Beside the pleasant and supportive classroom atmosphere, it is necessary to make the curriculum pleasant and relevant for the learners. Many students do their homework and engage in all sorts of learning activities, even when a subject is not very interesting. Obviously, these students share the belief of the curriculum makers that what they are being taught will come in handy. In order to inspire learners to relate to most learning activities, we should find out their goals and the topics they want to learn, and try to incorporate them into the curriculum. In recent years, many innovative techniques and strategies have been introduced in the field of foreign language teaching. One of these techniques is story telling.

Storytelling has existed as long as humanity has had language. Many English language teachers all over the world have used story-telling techniques, specially using images for teaching purposes.

The researcher chose Short stories because they help students learn the four skills\_ listening, speaking, reading and writing\_ more effectively as a result of the motivational benefit embedded in the stories. The art of storytelling can be an enjoyable tool for practicing both listening skills and verbal expression. Storytelling is

a way to emphasize the uniqueness of each person's imagination. Then imagination can generate language.

With short stories, instructors can teach literary and cultural aspects after listening to a story. Appropriate images, pictures and visual elements will have a complementary function here. Both young people and adults tend to enjoy being taught through pictorial stories. Using pictorial stories is one way of 'escaping' from the boring course books and adding new learning experiences.

The researcher as an English language teacher developed new pictorial story materials according to current existing syllabus in Middle English course books (3<sup>rd</sup> grade). She tried to teach them to her students and find out if this technique can have influential effects on the learners' achievement. Another question was whether the technique used in the new materials was more time consuming.

### ***1.3 Research questions***

In order to examine if the pictorial story teaching materials can have influential effects on achievement in oral/written skill of the learners, the following research questions were asked:

- 1- Is there any significance difference in the achievement in ***oral skill*** between those students who received pictorial story teaching materials and those who received current traditional materials?
- 2- Is there any significance difference in the achievement in ***written skill*** between those students who received pictorial story teaching materials and those who received current traditional materials?

3- Is Using pictorial story-telling materials more time consuming than traditional materials?

#### ***1.4. Research hypotheses***

To provide answers to the research questions, the following null hypotheses were stated:

1. There is no significance difference in the achievement in *oral skill* between those students who received pictorial story teaching materials and those who received current traditional materials.
2. There is no significance difference in the achievement in *written skill* between those students who received pictorial story teaching materials and those who received current traditional materials.

#### ***1.5. Significance of the study***

Since Pit Corder's (1966) groundbreaking "The Visual Element in Language Teaching", a number of methodologists have written books showing the importance of various kinds of pictures in English language teaching (Haleem, 1991). A section called 'Pictures and Images' leads off the chapter on 'Educational Technology and Other Teaching Equipment' in the third edition of the ELT industry's standard teacher's textbook (Harmer, 2001). Articles on using visuals of one kind or another still appear regularly in the various journals for ELT professionals (Brand, 1997; Cundale, 1999; Porcaro, 2001). In addition, of course, British ELT course books have moved on from the picture-free times of E.Frank Candlin in the 1960s, through the early black-and-white line drawings of Broughton and O'Neil in the 1970s, to the

current range of materials, which are full of stylish colour drawings and state-of-the-art photographs.

Given this plethora of words about using visuals, and the vast quantity of pictures available in the current English teaching course books, this research seeks to examine what use is actually made of visually based pictorial materials in Iranian Middle school English text books. Moreover, it tries to find out what kind of effect such materials have on EFL learners' achievement in contrast with current traditional materials. The results of this study can be beneficial for authorities in education in their plans and strategies.

### ***1.6. Limitations of the study***

In interpreting the results of this study some points need to be taken into account:

- Because of limited facilities in the city and limited coworkers in the study, the study was performed on a small sample of students in one school. Performing this research in other schools needed more teachers to work in extra times without any additional salary. This problem appeared as a major limitation of this study.
- As a female teacher the researcher was allowed to work in female schools and no male teachers accepted to participate in this research and dedicate the time of their classes to pictorial story materials.

### ***1.7. Definition of key terms***

#### ***Oral proficiency:***

Oral proficiency level is the ability of the student in orally presenting his/her learned issues as fluently as possible based on standard indexes. It is a rational

concept based on the student's demographic characteristics such as grade, age, geographic, and home country. Such fluency is assessed by standard tests in each grade (Chomsky, 2003).

In this research, the oral proficiency level refers to the level of oral proficiency defined by standard tests from the Ministry of Education of Iran. A standard test is performed among the samples of the study and results are plotted based on the standard scaling pattern. (See Appendix 2)

### ***Written proficiency:***

This is the ability of the student to write his/her assignment as fluently as possible based on standard indexes. Such fluency is closely related to grammatical knowledge and many other sociolinguistic factors (Peterson, 2003).

In this research, the written proficiency level refers to the level of proficiency defined by standard tests from the Ministry of Education Of Iran. A standard test is performed among the samples of the study and results are plotted based on the standard scaling pattern. The test can be found in appendix 2.

### ***Pictorial story teaching material:***

These may contain any number of stories. The pictures would function as guided oral composition pieces and help students develop oral narration practice helping them to recognize, remember and reproduce some relevant details through narration. Oral compositions help students in linking events in a chronological order, making logical conversations, using appropriate vocabulary, and using intonational adjustments, all the while keeping up the excitement of each event in the story (See Appendix 3).



***Traditional teaching material:***

This teaching material is derived from old-fashioned teaching methods in English teaching literature. It mostly includes verbal face-to-face teaching by teacher without any teaching equipments or with very simple teaching aid instrument. (ERIC, 2002)

## *Chapter II*

### *Review of Literature*

## ***Chapter 2***

### ***Review of Literature***

#### ***2.1. Introduction***

This research is an attempt to find out if visually-based teaching materials can have influential effects on the learners' achievement. To put the research in a manageable scope, the study confines itself to the role of pictorial story materials in the achievement in oral/written skill of Middle school students (3<sup>rd</sup> grade). Therefore; in this chapter the following topics will be reviewed: learning styles and related subsections, theories of visual learning, pictorial story materials followed by related enlightenments for teaching with special focus on visual learning methods, and the results of previous studies on teaching with the aid of visually based teaching methods especially as pictorial story materials.

#### ***2.2. Learning Styles***

Brown (2000) says:

The way we learn things in general and the way we attack a problem seem to hinge on a rather amorphous link between personality and cognition; this link is referred to as cognitive style. When cognitive styles are specifically related to an educational context, where affective and physiological factors are

intermingled, they are usually more generally referred to as **learning styles**.

(p.113)

In some sources i.e., (Williams & Burden, 1997) learning styles are related to individual characteristics and individual differences. A great deal has been written in language teaching books and journals about the importance of considering individual differences in learning a foreign language. In a comprehensive review of the literature on this topic, Oxford and Ehrman (1993) suggest that teachers of a second language need to identify and comprehend significant individual differences in their learners if they are to provide the most effective instruction possible. Sharp (2004) believes that in order to provide successful instruction, teachers need to learn to identify and understand their students' individual differences.

### ***2.2.1. Theoretical background***

In this part, some dominant theories about learning style are presented. Kinsella (1996) states that a learning style is multidimensional and Reid (1992) classified its elements into five stimulus categories such as environmental elements (sound, light, temperatures, and design), emotional elements (motivation, persistence, and responsibility), physical elements (perception, intake, time, mobility), sociological elements (self, partner, team, mentor, varied), and psychological elements (global/analytical, impulsive/reflective). Clearly, learning styles include not only the cognitive domain, but also the affective and physiological domains (Oxford, Hollaway, Horton-Murillo 1992).

Most of the researches conducted by O'Brien (1989), Oxford and Ehrman (1993), Kroonenberg (1995) on learning styles are based on the assumption that learners