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The use of Iconic Signs to Improve Secondary School Pupils' Speaking and Writing skills: A Case Study of Third-Form Pupils in Goma.

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The objective of this study is to prove the effectiveness of teaching English through using Iconic Signs in Goma secondary schools.

Methodology: In order to carry out the research, the study employed field work for data collection, using the triangulation method to ensure greater scientific rigor and obtain enriched data. Questionnaires were used to gather teachers' perceptions regarding the use of iconic signs, while the interviews were conducted during both the pre-test and post-test phases. During the distribution of the questionnaires, the participants included six hundred and thirty-six learners and fifteen teachers. In the experimental phase, one hundred and fifteen participants took part from the beginning to the end of the experiment. Finally, the experimentation was carried out in the year 2025.

Findings: The study found that icons were not consistently integrated into English language teaching. Their use was concentrated mainly in the presentation stage, accounting for 40% of vocabulary lessons and 53.33% in reading comprehension lessons, whereas the practice and production stages received limited attention. Icons were particularly underutilized in grammar, pronunciation, and composition writing lessons, where many teachers reported not using them at all. Although this integration was limited, the findings indicated that learners' language abilities benefited from the use of icons. These results highlight the pedagogical value of icons and the need for their greater integration into classroom instruction, particularly beyond the presentation stage.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: This study, through experimentation, demonstrated the potential of icons in improving pupils' speaking and writing skills. The study specifically sought to examine the extent to which nonverbal communication can support the verbal communication through various activities based on the use and exploitation of iconic signs.

Keywords: *Iconic Signs, Speaking, Writing, Pupils and Goma.*

INTRODUCTION.

In recent years, multimodal approaches to language teaching have emphasized the utility of combining linguistic and visual resources to facilitate learning. Within the framework of social semiotics, iconic signs refer to images, pictures, illustrations, and other visual representations that resemble the objects, actions, or concepts they represent. Thus, they also contribute to meaning-making alongside written language (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2021). In English Language Teaching (ELT), iconic signs are increasingly recognized as important resources because they support learners' comprehension, stimulate classroom interaction, and provide scaffolding for language oral and written production.

Images have long been regarded as important resources in English language teaching. Research has highlighted their capacity to enhance learner' understanding of instructional materials, facilitate vocabulary acquisition, and foster creativity and engagement (see, Bezemer & Kress, 2009; Goldstein, 2008, Torrez (2021). However, several researchers have pointed out that the pedagogical potential of images remains largely underutilized (Donaghy & Xerri, 2017; Hurst, 2014; Romney & Bell, 2012).

Moreover, research on multimodal learning suggests that visual resources enhance second-language acquisition by facilitating vocabulary development, supporting text comprehension, and helping learners organize ideas for oral and written communication (Jewitt, 2014; Lim-Fei and Tan, 2017; Yu and Liu, 2022). Images can serve as cognitive and linguistic scaffolds by activating prior knowledge, generating discussion, assisting learners in planning spoken and written discourse. Through these processes, iconic signs reduce learners' cognitive load and provide meaningful prompts for language production, thereby promoting speaking and writing proficiency. Consequently, the integration of iconic signs into reading comprehension activities may contribute to the development of productive skills, particularly speaking and writing.

Despite these documented benefits, studies indicate that visual resources in ELT classrooms are often used superficially. Teachers frequently employ pictures merely to illustrate vocabulary or clarify textual information rather than engaging learners in the interpretation of visual meanings and the production of language based on visual stimuli. As a result, the multimodal potential of textbook images remains underexploited. Hodge and Ferrara (2022) note that semiotic resources promote the interpretation of meanings and the production of language through multimodal communication. Although previous studies have demonstrated the contribution of visual resources to vocabulary acquisition, learner engagement, and reading comprehension, relatively little attention has been paid to how iconic signs embedded in reading texts can be exploited to foster productive skills, particularly speaking and writing, among secondary school learners in EFL contexts. Furthermore, research on the pedagogical use of textbook icons in Congolese secondary schools remains scarce, which highlights the need for further investigation in this area.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the English curriculum recommends the use of visual materials such as pictures, charts, slides, and films, to facilitate natural language acquisition. Nevertheless, classroom observations and previous studies suggest that English teaching continues to rely predominantly on text-based approaches, with limited integration of visual and multimodal resources. This situation may contribute to the persistent difficulties learners experience in developing productive skills.

In secondary schools in Goma, concerns have repeatedly been raised regarding learners' limited ability to communicate effectively in English, even after several years of instruction. Classroom observations and teachers' reports suggest that productive skills remain insufficiently developed among many learners. Informal classroom observations indicate that many pupils experience difficulties expressing orally and in writing. While English textbooks used in Grade 3 Humanities General Streams contain numerous icons accompanying reading texts, these visual resources are rarely exploited beyond vocabulary explanation. Given that Grade 3 represents a critical stage in learners' language development, the systematic use of iconic signs may provide opportunities to strengthen reading comprehension while simultaneously enhancing speaking and writing skills. At this level, learners are expected to demonstrate greater independence in oral and written communication as preparation for higher academic demands, making the development of productive skills particularly important. Therefore, this study investigates how the use of iconic signs in reading comprehension activities can contribute to the development of productive skills among Grade 3 secondary school pupils in Goma.

Research Problem

In secondary schools in Goma, particularly in Grade 3 Humanities General Streams (Scientific, Pedagogy, and Literary sections), English textbooks contain icons (images accompanying English texts) intended to strengthen comprehension and language development. Research in multimodal and social semiotics has demonstrated that the integration of visual and verbal modes enhances learners' comprehension, meaning-making, and language production in second learning contexts. (Jewitt, 2014; Lim-Fei and Tan, 2017; Yu and Liu, 2022). Images and icons provide contextual support that helps learners interpret texts, generate ideas, and engage in oral and written communication.

Despite their pedagogical potential, icons are frequently neglected during reading comprehension activities. Studies have shown that, in many English language Teaching (ELT) classrooms, visual resources are often used superficially as aids for vocabulary explanation or classroom decoration rather than as semiotic resources for discussion, interpreting, and language production (Kress, 2010; Huang and Ferrara., 2022). Consequently, teachers tend to focus predominantly on the written text while overlooking the meaning-making potential of images. This practice limits pupils' opportunities to engage with visual texts, discuss interpretations, and respond creatively to

multimodal prompts. As a result, learners are deprived of opportunities to develop deeper text comprehension and meaningful speaking and writing skills.

Furthermore, empirical research on the pedagogical use of images and visual semiotics in English classrooms remains limited in East and Central Africa, particularly in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Existing studies in the region have largely concentrated on general language teaching methods and learners' achievement, with relatively little attention given to the role of textbook icons in fostering productive language skills. This creates a gap in the literature regarding the contribution of iconic signs to English language learning in the Congolese secondary school context.

However, the DRC English curriculum emphasizes the importance of images in language learning, stating: "L'utilisation des moyens visuels tels que images, tableaux muraux, diapositifs et films donne un support favorable à l'acquisition naturelle de langue," which translates as: "The use of visual aids such as pictures, wall charts, slides and films provides support for natural acquisition." Although the curriculum recognizes the significance of visual materials in language teaching, many teachers do not fully implement these recommendations. Instead, pictures and images are generally used as basic visual aids to clarify word meaning and reinforce vocabulary. To address this gap, the present study investigates how the effectiveness use of icons in English reading comprehension activities can enhance pupils' speaking and writing skills in secondary schools in Goma.

Research Questions

The present study attempts to answer a main question and two secondary questions.

Main question: How do icons affect pupils' productive skills?

Secondary questions:

1. What are the insufficiencies in secondary school teacher's use of icons in their teaching practices?
2. Does the use of icons actually contribute to the enhancement of students' productive skills?

In order to address the above research questions, the following hypotheses have been postulated as provisional responses to the research questions:

Assumption 1: Teachers do not use appropriate icons effectively across all stages of the lesson.

Assumption 2: The use of icons positively contributes to the development of students' productive skills; however, this assumption needs to be empirically verified through experimentation.

Objectives

Global objective

The primary objective of this study is to raise teachers' awareness of the importance of icons in the development of student's productive skills. Specifically, this study aims to:

1. Identify the weaknesses in teacher's use of icons in language classes;
2. To verify through experimentation whether the use of icons can actually foster learners' productive skills and engage learners in oral and written communication.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of iconic signs is rooted in semiotics, the study of signs and meaning-making. According to Saussure (1916), a sign consists of two components: the signifier (the form of the sign) and the signified (the concept it represents). Saussure viewed the relationship between the two elements as arbitrary and based on social convention. In contrast, Peirce (1931-1958) proposed a triadic model composed of the representamen (the sign), the object (what the sign refers to), and the interpretant (the meaning constructed by the receiver). This model emphasizes the active role of interpretation in communication.

Peirce classified signs into three categories: symbols, indexes, and icons. Symbols are signs whose meanings are established through convention, such as words or traffic signs. Indexes have a direct causal or physical connection with what they represent, for example, smoke indicates fire. Icons, however, are signs that convey meaning through resemblance. A photograph, drawing, or map is considered iconic because it visually resembles the object it represents.

In language education, icons are particularly valuable because they facilitate comprehension through visual representation. Mayer (2008) argues that visual materials enhance learning by helping learners connect verbal and non-verbal information. Similarly, Harmer (2015) emphasizes that pictures and photographs stimulate communication and support language acquisition. Visual aids help learners understand vocabulary and concepts in meaningful contexts rather than through isolated memorization (Baha, 1992)

Icons may take several forms. Pictorial icons include photographs, drawings, and illustrations that visually resemble real objects. Onomatopoeic icons are words that imitate natural sounds, such as buzz or meow. Gestural icons involve body movements that resemble the actions or ideas they communicate. Other forms of iconic representations include cartoons, illustrations, and pictograms, which are widely used in educational materials because they simplify complex information and make learning accessible.

The notion of iconicity extends beyond visual resemblance. Moreno Cabrera (2020) argues that languages also contain iconic elements in sound symbolism, word order, reduplication, and other

linguistic structures. This perspective challenges the traditional view that language is entirely arbitrary and suggests that some linguistic forms naturally reflect aspects of meaning.

Approaches to the interpretation of icons

Several theoretical approaches explain how learners interpret icons accompany texts. One important approach is pictorial semiotics, which studies images as systems of signs. It examines how elements communicate meaning and interact with written language. Though pictorial semiotics, images are understood not merely as decorations but as meaningful components of communication.

Another relevant approach is intertextuality, which refers to the relationships between a text and other texts or cultural references. According to Kristeva and later scholars, meaning is constructed through connections among texts, they often draw upon their cultural background, previous knowledge, and exposure to other visual and textual materials. Thus, a single image may generate multiple interpretations depending on the learner's experiences.

Closely related to intertextuality, a concept developed by Genette, Hypertextuality describes the relationship between a new text(hypertext) and an earlier text (hypertext) from which it derives meaning. In educational contexts, images can function as hypertexts by visually expanding, reinterpreting, or reinforcing the content of written texts. The interaction between images and texts creates a multimodal learning environment that facilitates understanding and engagement.

Additional perspectives include the cognitive approach, which examines how learners process visual information, and functional analysis, which focuses on the roles icons play in guiding attention, highlighting key information, and supporting comprehension. These approaches suggest that icons can act as cognitive shortcuts that help learners interpret and retain information more effectively.

Empirical Literature

Empirical researches have demonstrated the educational value of visual materials in language learning. Research indicates that images enhance learners' comprehension, motivation, vocabulary acquisition, and productive language skills. Mayer's Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning suggest that combining words and pictures promotes a full understanding because learners process information though both verbal and visual modes.

Many studies have found that visual aids increase learner participation and stimulate oral communication. Pictures and illustrations provide concrete contexts for discussion, and facilitates learners' description, interpretation, and expression of opinions. These activities contribute significantly to the development of speaking competency. Likewise, visual prompts support writing as they generate ideas, organize thoughts, and provide contextual cues that facilitate expression.

Research on textbook design also highlights the importance of effective illustrations. Daoud and Celce-Murcia (1979) argue that illustration should be clear, important, realistic, and related to the

accompanying text. Well-designed images create favorable conditions for reading comprehension and language practice, whereas unclear or unrelated visuals may confuse learners and lower instructional quality.

In addition, studies on multimodal learning emphasize that the combination of textual and visual elements improves retention and understanding. Learners tend to remember information more easily when concepts are presented through both words and images. Visual materials also increase motivation by making lessons more attractive and interactive.

Despite the growing recognition of visual literacy and multimodal teaching, the use of iconic signs remains underexplored in many educational contexts, particularly in developing countries. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, few studies have specifically examined how iconic signs can enhance secondary school learners' productive skills in English. This gap justifies the present study, which investigates the contribution of iconic signs to the improvement of speaking and writing skills among third-form secondary school pupils in Goma.

To put it in a nutshell, this reviewed literature demonstrates that iconic signs occupy a central position in semiotic theory and educational practice. Theoretical perspectives from Saussure, Peirce, and scholars explain how icons convey meaning through resemblance and interaction with textual elements. Approaches such as pictorial semiotics, intertextuality, and hypertextuality provide useful frameworks for understanding the interpretation of images in educational contexts. Empirical studies further show that visual materials improve comprehension, motivation, participation, and language production. However, limited research has explored the use of iconic signs in English language teaching within the Congolese context, which highlights the need for further investigation.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

Research Design

A mixed-methods design was used to conduct the research investigation. The qualitative research method was used to collect both teachers' perceptions and learners' perceptions. Meanwhile, the quantitative research method was applied to quantify and both teachers' and learners' perceptions were also analysed through the content analysis.

Sampling

The investigation dealt with two schools: Moria Institute and Complexe Maman Mulezi. At these sites, both the pre-test and the post-test were administered. Initially, four schools were selected purposively, taking into consideration certain criteria such as the organization of general streams: pedagogy, scientific, and literary streams, the availability of teachers for the experiment and the schools' acceptance of the experiment. Nevertheless, only two schools were finally retained because, in the other two schools, the teachers involved in the experiment left to join the army, as Goma has experienced war and insecurity for some time.

In selecting the schools from which the control and the experimental groups would be obtained, two small pieces of paper were prepared, one bearing an odd number and the other an even number. Then, two class leaders from each school were invited to participate in the selection process. The even-numbered paper referred to the experimental group, and the odd-number paper referred to the control group. Thus, the classification of classes was carried out.

Method

The present study used fieldwork as the main method of investigation. The Field work was carried out by means questionnaires and the learners' self-assessment of their level before the test. The questionnaire preceded the experiment in order to determine exactly what both teachers and learners were expected to know.

Since exactly most respondents tend to provide opinions that they do always put into practice, the experiment was conducted cross-check their views. In administering the questionnaire, both the closed- ended questions and the open-ended questions were used to obtain accurate information about the teaching and learning practices.

In order to obtain appropriate views and reliable answers, a pilot study was conducted to eliminate unnecessary questions. Two schools, Institut Mihini and Institut Hekima were given questionnaires for the pilot study, and these schools were not among the fifteen schools selected during the research proper. Furthermore, selecting learners for the study, a non- probability sampling technique was used, as students were selected based on their availability. The presence of learners in class was uncertain since the town was engulfed by war and insecurity at that time. In total, 636 students were selected from the fifteen schools.

Techniques of Data Analysis

Content analysis was used to examine the opinions of teachers and learners in the so-called "General streams". Content analysis to the interpretation of messages expressed through both teachers' and learners' views regarding the research questions. It involves a detailed examination of meanings, intentions, an underlying subtexts contained in various responses, whether written or recorded. The responses were collected from different sources, including questionnaires and interviews during the pre-test. It is also important to note that the research was quasi-experimental, as respondents were not randomly assigned to the groups.

FINDINGS

The findings revealed positive perceptions of icons and images among both learners and teachers. Learners reported that images support language learning in several ways. While 36.16% indicated that images help them remember concepts, statements and the main ideas of texts more quickly, 18.39% stated that images facilitate the understanding of difficult concepts. Furthermore, 11.32% believed that images make vocabulary more memorable, and 12.89% reported they help them learn more quickly. Only 5.66 % of respondents considered images unhelpful for learning. These

findings suggest that learners perceive icons as valuable tools for enhancing comprehension, memory, and motivation.

Learners also expressed a strong preference for the use of images in reading comprehension (38.52%) and vocabulary lessons (32.07%). Smaller percentages favored their use in pronunciation (9.43%), grammar (8.64%), dictation (6.28%), and composition writing (5.03 %). This indicates that learners associate visual resources primarily with activities that support comprehension and meaning-making.

Regarding classroom practices, learners reported that teachers most frequently use images before reading activities (31.8%), followed by after-reading activities (25.0%) and while-reading activities (18.9%). However, 24.3% of respondents indicated that teachers use images only superficially during lesson introductions without fully exploiting their pedagogical potential throughout the lesson. Similarly, in composition lessons, 37.9% of learners stated that teachers do not use images at any stage of instruction.

Teachers' responses confirmed the limited integration of icons in English language teaching. In vocabulary lessons, images were used primarily during the presentation stage (40%). Reading comprehension showed the highest level of integration, with 53.33% of teachers using images during presentation activities. In contrast, grammar and composition writing lessons displayed the lowest levels of instruction, with 46.66% of teachers reporting that they did not use images at any stage of instruction. Likewise, 40% of teachers indicated that they did not use images in pronunciation stage, while their use during practice and production activities remains limited.

Teachers described various strategies for incorporating icons into classroom activities. These included using pictures as discussion prompts, asking learners to interpret textbook images, introducing new structures through drawings, and employing visual stimuli to generate curiosity and interaction. Such practices demonstrate that icons can function as effective resources for promoting communication and learner participation.

The findings further revealed that icons positively influenced learners' motivation and language development. Classroom observations during the experimental phase showed that learners were highly engaged in image-based activities and demonstrated a greater willingness to participate in discussions. Images reduced anxiety, encouraged collaboration, and created meaningful opportunities for communication. Learners were particularly motivated when discussing visual representations that reflected familiar real-life situations.

The results also demonstrated that icons contributed to the development of productive skills. Approximately 65% of learners reported that storytelling through pictures helped them retell text scenarios. During event-description activities, 53% successfully described events represented in pictures, while 40% completed texts using visual prompts. Furthermore, 65% of learners indicated that images enhanced their creativity and writing abilities. In addition, 60% reported that images reinforced contextual understanding and facilitated comprehension.

These findings can be interpreted through Dual Coding Theory and Fuzzy Trace Theory. The combination of verbal and visual information appears to facilitate comprehension, retention, and language production. Images create memorable mental representations that support vocabulary recall, text comprehension, speaking activities, and writing tasks. Consequently, the findings highlight the pedagogical value of icons in English language teaching and underscore the need for their systematic integration across presentation, practice, and production stages of instruction.

DISCUSSION

In this section of the study, the results are treated in terms of the integration of content and language, multimodal scaffolding, learner's confidence, traditional practices, technology.

Learners' motivation increased due to the visual stimuli provided by icon-based activities, which are related to the CLIL principles that focus on content-based language learning. This strongly indicates that integrating visual materials enhances learner engagement in communicative tasks. Therefore, lessons based on images represent valuable opportunities that teachers should not neglect in English learning. Discussing the CLIL approach, it involves the integration of content and language, emphasizing that both can be taught simultaneously within a single lesson design. CLIL includes four principles, often related to 4Cs: *Content* (what is taught), *Communication* (language use), *Cognition* (thinking skills), *Culture* (Cultural awareness and Context). These principles strongly support multimodal teaching through the use of various semiotic resources such as icons, gestures, symbols, and written texts to construct meaning.

Fernández-Fontecha, A., O'Halloran b, K.L, Wignell, P. and Tan, S. (2019) explored this approach by examining multimodal scaffolding within CLIL contexts. They advocate the provision of "message abundance", which can be achieved through mediational texts and artefacts that structure and support the learning process during a lesson. (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005, as cited in Fernández-Fontecha and O'Halloran, 2019). Fernandez-Fontecha and O'Halloran, et al. also highlighted an interesting approach when examining the interplay between text and semiotic resources. Nonverbal tools became especially important because learners find it easy to communicate through writing without worrying about mistakes. Minimized anxiety supports previous research findings that visual clues enhance language learners' confidence

This also reinforces the principles of Dual Coding Theory (1986). Proposed by Allan Paivio, this theory explains how the human minds processes information through two channels: the verbal channel and the nonverbal channel. Cognition occurs in these two independents but connected modes: the verbal mode for language, and the nonverbal mode for mental imagery. According to this theory, people learn and remember information more easily when it is presented at the same time in both forms.

The finding that many teachers continue to rely on traditional teaching indicates the need for professional and genuine reflective practice. Reflective practice involves the continuous and systematic examination of every day teaching and learning activities in order to improve the

instructional strategies, adapt learning styles and refine assessment methods.

However, as argued by BENADE, L. (2015), in *Teachers' Critical Reflective Practice in the Context of Twenty-First Century Learning*, reflective practice is often misunderstood. Most teachers reduce it to merely thinking about lesson planning and checking whether students achieve expected results at the end of the term or academic year. Benade focuses on authentic critical reflective practice, which goes beyond this narrow conceptualization of reflective practice. It requires teachers not only to limit their view on educational objectives, but also on contextual influences that may occur during the learning process.

Specifically, he identifies two major pressures shaping contemporary education: the emphasis on high-stakes testing and the influence of neoliberal managerialism, which promotes a management style centered on performance measurement, accountability, and quantifiable outcomes.

In the similar vein, teachers should also engage in reflective practice concerning documents they use and the methodologies they implement in the classroom. Taking into account the realities of the twenty-century, specifically the growing importance of visual literacy, it is surprising that some teachers fail to recognize the pedagogical value of the images in the classroom. The experience conducted in the experimental groups demonstrated that teachers need to adopt a more critical and innovative stance by improving and redesigning their lessons. This would enable learners to explore new learning opportunities, particularly the pedagogically exploitation of icons and other visual resources.

Regarding technology, research clearly highlights the importance of teacher's creativity and resourcefulness. Unreliable learning resources may impede learners' linguistic development. When learners are exposed to outdated textbooks or inconsistent input, their language acquisition may be slowed. Conversely, teachers' effective use of technology in the language classroom can enhance learners' motivation. For instance, when learners used images from the internet to support the text "*Health*" in *Go for English*, they were first exposed to visuals familiar from their daily lives, which facilitated interaction and engagement in language learning.

What contemporary language teachers in Education or those teaching English as a foreign language must bear in mind is that technology is becoming increasingly important in today's professional and academic contexts. Learners are using digital tools more extensively than ever, making very resource surrounding them potentially significant for language support. A tension exists, however, between teachers' need to keep up with the world advances, and the slow pace of governmental or institutional support. This is evidenced by the lack of teacher training programs aimed at equipping educators with the skills to integrate Information and Communications Technology. Dudeney and Hockly (2007, p.5) support this view, noting that teacher training programmes often ignore ICT instruction and that, as a result, teachers may lack competence or knowledge beyond that of their students when it comes to utilizing technology effectively in the classroom. Dudeney and Hackly (2007, pp.7-8) note that, even though the use

of ICT by language educators is not yet widespread globally, technology is a key factor. Internet access is increasingly available in private homes or public spaces such as internet cafés; The younger generation is growing up using technology; English, as a widely used language, is now employed in technologically mediated situations; Technology provides new opportunities for authentic tasks and real materials, as well as easy access to a wide range of ready-made ELT resources. Negative attitudes that teachers may have towards technology can stem from several factors, including a lack of adequate training in the use of technology and insufficient facilities. These attitudes may also result from teachers' inability to perceive the advantages of using technology in classroom environments see Dudeney and Hockly, 2007, p.9).

Overall check

Recalling the research questions formulated for the study, it can be asserted that the research sought to answer the following particular issues: «*what are the shortcomings in secondary school teachers' use of icons in the teaching?*» As previously mentioned, teachers acknowledged the ineffective use of icons in the classroom. This situation can be attributed to two main reasons: some teachers overlook these important didactic tools that could reinforce learners' creativity; other teachers are not simply aware of the significance of icons in language learning. Hence, it was important to sensitize teachers on the effective use of icons.

The results revealed a number of issues related to the use of icons in language teaching and learning, specifically the inconsistent integration and low frequency of use. For instance, in the table 25, it was highlighted that that 20% teachers do not use images at all stages of the lesson. While 26,6 % use them only during productive skills and 20% limit their use to productive tasks. Furthermore, the results indicate a clear underutilization of icons, as 6,6% of teachers use them minimally throughout the lesson, 13,33% do not use them at all to support reading for comprehension, and 40% of teachers do not use them for writing tasks. This is an evidence of underutilization. In addition, a significant proportion of teachers 33% of teachers avoid using entirely icons in grammar lessons.

- Regarding the second main question, “*Does the efficient use of icons actually contribute to enhancing productive skills?*”. Thanks to the results obtained during the posttest for both the control and the experimental groups, it can be confirmed that the efficient use of icons contributes to enhancing learners' speaking and writing skills.

Kuzu (2016, p. 37) after he has made experiment about employing images in English language teaching and learning process, he found out that learners are performed much better in experimental classes. He conducted research with a dependent group of 40 7th-grade students in a school within Turkey's Ministry of Education. It is reported that every student developed two texts for caricature analysis. One of the experiments was based on the traditional approach, while the other was based the semiotic method. After analyzing the scores allotted to each text, the results revealed that textual analysis based on the semiotic theory was more promising for the writing skills of students than

the traditional writing method. Comprehending the subject, getting the message, and multidimensional interpretation, such was the three areas of evaluation.

CONCLUSION

This study indicates the usefulness of semiotics, specifically Edusemiotics, in English language teaching and showed how icons can support the development of learners' productive skills. The results showed that both the experimental and control groups were homogeneous at the pretest stage, with no statistically significant differences in their performance. However, the results of the posttest demonstrated a significant improvement among learners who were exposed to icon-based instructions, confirming that the effective use of icons enhances speaking and writing skills. The study also found that learners were highly motivated by interpreting icons that accompanied the texts, which made the learning more engaging and meaningful. Consequently, English teachers are encouraged to integrate visual resources and picture-based materials into their lessons to improve language learning outcomes. Finally, further research is recommended on semiotic analysis models, the adaptation of icons to the Congolese context, and the development of teaching materials that make greater use of visual signs in English education.

Recommendations

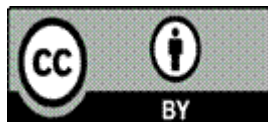
In view of the findings above, English teachers are encouraged to adopt a variety of exercises in their daily teaching practices in order to address learners' diverse needs and enhance their language skills. They should also collaborate with highly qualified and experienced colleagues to learn and implement innovative teaching strategies. Furthermore, teachers are advised to regularly administer both oral and written assessments to monitor learners' progress and improve their proficiency in English. Finally, participation in ongoing professional development workshops is strongly remain informed about effective and contemporary language practices.

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