ВИЗУАЛЬНАЯ ГРАМОТНОСТЬ В ОБУЧЕНИИ ИНОСТРАННЫМ ЯЗЫКАМ

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Аннотация. В статье исследуется визуальная грамотность в высшей школе. Определены факторы, которые влияют на постепенное замещение принципа наглядности технологией визуальной грамотности. Определено понятие «визуальная грамотность», выделены компоненты визуальной грамотности при обучении иностранным языкам. Автор подкрепляет теоретическое исследование разработанными заданиями, нацеленными на формирование визуальной грамотности у студентов.

VISUAL LITERACY IN TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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Abstract. Visual literacy in higher education is researched in the article. The factors that influence the gradual transformation of the visuality method into the technology of visual literacy are elicited. The definition of the concept "visual literacy" is stated, the components of visual literacy in teaching foreign languages are determined. The author supports the research by the examples of the tasks on students' visual literacy skills formation.

Key words: visual literacy; higher education; visual language; visual thinking; visual learning; visual communication; multimodal perception; technology; foreign languages.

Today's university students represent Generation Z that is characterised by active discovering, experiencing, constructing, sharing, and creating meaning from information with one click. In a short time, universities will face a new, even more technically and digitally sophisticated audience – Generation Alpha that was born since the year of 2010 in a completely image-saturated environment. On average, Alpha representatives get initial skills in digital literacy, including the Internet, touchscreens, the huge technical potential of tablets, smartphones, etc., earlier than they obtain any knowledge in reading and writing. At the same time, this category of youth demonstrates a lack of competence in the interpretation and evaluation of images for effective communication.

Due to the facilitation of digital technology, modern students may observe unprecedented growth of such visual information as digital images and other non-textual formats. Gradually image is getting a status of a mode of knowledge representation that contributes a lot to visual communication. Thus, contemporary culture is a visual culture.

It has become obvious that the 21st-century pedagogy and methodology in higher education should include at least some elements of **visual literacy** education in the curriculum disciplines to generate visually literate people who will be able to read and use visual language including the ability to successfully decode, interpret and evaluate visual messages, encode and compose meaningful visual communication [1, pp. 61–89].

We share the idea of some national and foreign scientists stating that the visual presentation of information is one of the most effective ways of knowledge transmission, perception, and further operation [1, 2]. In case of rational usage of

methods of visualisation, students can reach higher cognitive activity levels, learn subject content with the elements of creativity, and construct, not "just get", information. In terms of foreign language education, through visual literacy students develop their communicative competence. For instance, they may create and use visual literacy to communicate effectively in a cross-cultural environment and by sharing their knowledge and expertise, contribute significantly to a global dialogue.

Educators' communities should admit that visual literacy develops in parallel with visual communication technologies. A complication of communication forms and channels along with increasing cultural and linguistic diversity in the world leads to a new understanding of the concept of "literacy". Undoubtedly, the more historically complicated means of people's visual perception are getting, the more different and higher level of everyone's competence in the perception of visual information is required. Being literate does not mean only reading and writing a text anymore: it also includes such new skills as multiple reading, looking at audio-visual and digital media, interpreting, etc. Thus, we may state that nowadays visual literacy is gradually getting its educational value and becomes a value itself in the modern system of education.

The term "visual literacy" was first formulated and coined in 1968 by John Debes – the founder of the International Visual Literacy Association. In 1969 the concept was finalised at the 1st National Conference on Visual Literacy in Rochester, USA during the discussion and promotion of the concept of visual literacy and related fields. It was stated that visual literacy competence can be developed due to the multimodal approach in education contributing to everyone's differentiation and interpretation of visible actions, objects, and symbols [3, p. 69; 4, p. 11].

There is a set of definitions for the concept of "visual literacy" in modern pedagogy. After some scholars (A. V. Fedorov, T. V. Milyushenko, et. al.) we share the idea that visual literacy that is formed in the process of visual education and based on the knowledge of media culture comprises a set of skills to analyse and synthesise visual reality, "to read" a media text [4, p. 11; 5, p. 16].

Referring to visual literacy as a component of foreign language communicative competence formation, it must be admitted that modern multimodal perception of information requires new pedagogical methods and technologies in education generally, and in teaching foreign languages particularly. To support this idea, we may refer to some foreign language curricula that along with the traditional four types of speech activity (reading, listening, speaking, writing), also include some new, typical of modern media education types – viewing and visually representing. It gives an argumentative basis to state that the role of the visibility principle in teaching foreign languages (TFL) is gradually decreasing in favour of new methods of visual literacy formation.

Multimodal perception of information makes it possible to demonstrate people's productive skills of speech activity via images, e. g. while sending an appropriate emoji, an addresser "writes a text", and an addressee "reads it" by getting this emoji and understanding its meaning.

After B. A. Seels who researches visual literacy as a combination of three main elements – visual learning, visual thinking, and visual communication, T. V.

Milyushenko contributes by eliciting one more component in terms of TFL – visual language. Thus, visual literacy competence in a foreign language environment comprises the combination of four elements in the following order: visual language, visual thinking, visual learning, and visual communication [4, p. 12].

Visual language is determined as a skill of perceiving visual images, their decoding in the form of a certain meaningful language system, and its further transformation into verbal images as certain words.

Though the term "**visual thinking**" is defined differently in pedagogical, psychological, philosophical, and media research, it is reasonable to support the idea that in TFL the transformation of visual image and its subjective meaning is observed. As a result, an individual creates a new verbal image that is characterised by a certain meaning in correspondence with logical links.

The process of **visual learning** accompanies people's communication and provides everyone with an opportunity of sharing the experience in different contexts – both objective and subjective. The diversity of context integration leads to a more precise understanding of a visual image via creating analogical models and images along with its further interpretation, the influence of individual emotions, and certain analytical reflections.

Visual communication can be defined as interaction among the participants of the visual perception process. In TFL methods communication can be defined as a specific type of an activity that is characterised by information exchange among the participants of certain language communities for achieving common understanding and interaction. In terms of visual literacy in TFL, the complex process of communication includes certain preparatory work with a visual image by its decoding via visual language, the analysis of this language through visual thinking and learning, and the transmission of processed information to the participants of interaction for more effective and precise foreign language communication [4, p. 12–13].

It is reasonable to state that the modern academic environment requires a certain emphasis on visual literacy skills interlinked with critical thinking, images, and practices that aim at valuing and implementing visual representations instead of traditional text-based literacy teaching.

The communicative approach, that takes one of the leading positions in TFL methodology, is supposed to be an appropriate environment for visual literacy, whereas visual literacy as a technology contributes and supplements foreign language competence formation. Thus, a single closed cycle of developing these skills is observed. Besides, some researchers (W. H. Levie, R. Lentz) support the scientific inference that the human mind analyses and interprets visual images faster than texts, and that images are retained in long-term memory longer than texts.

To achieve image transformation in FLT practice from the method of visibility into the visual literacy technology the application of certain approaches to language activities on analysing and designing different types of images can be used (Table 1).

Table 1. – Examples of TEFL[5] Tasks on Visual Literacy Skills Formation

#	Visual Images	Examples of Tasks
1	*Marketplace in Vitebsk* by Marc Chagall (1917) *Taken from open Internet resourses*	1. Ask students to make up some questions that aim at further thinking over what is going on in the picture and discuss them afterward. 2. Divide the image into four squares and ask students to describe a certain square with lexis denoting the three categories: people, things, actions. Compare the results with other students. Analyse the difference between the initial perception of an image and after collaboration with others. 3. Ask students to describe one of the buildings in detail and let others guess which one is described. 4. Ask students to describe the image in different ways: through its objects, colours, season, mood, historical period, etc. 5. Ask students to express their attitude to the image in terms of different aspects: a piece of art, a marketplace, a city, etc. 6. Ask students some questions related to the image using certain grammar structures. 7. Ask students to make up some sentences with certain lexis.
2	*Taken from open Internet resourses*	Look at the elements that comprise the branding process (on the right) and discuss which of them take the key position for these businesses (on the left). 1. Customer. 2. Location. 3. Product. 4. People. 5. Brand Identity. 6. Competitors. 7. Online Messaging [6, p. 149].

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[5] TEFL – Teaching English as a Foreign Language

3	*Designed by* Ann Bachilo (2021)	*Case Study: Branding in Digital Marketing* The group of undergraduates from Belarus State Economic University – Ann Bachilo, Darya Ersh, Alexandra Volkova, and Kseniya Levkovich, the Faculty of Marketing and Logistics, are involved in a social initiative – start-up ***ARt glaZ*** – that is aimed at increasing cultural awareness of citizens. The students offered to use augmented reality glasses for museum and gallery visitors. Here you can see the visual advert of this product which is a key element of the students' marketing strategy. Think of any initiative you would like to take part in, a product or service it will include, your marketing strategy, and a visual advertising [6, p. 170].
4	*Taken from open Internet resourses*	Follow the requirements below to design a poster of ***a training course for Information Technology/Economics specialists*** (in an electronic or printed form). Cover such issues as: target audience; learners' needs; training goals; course overview and content; course format; duration and schedule; admission requirements; tuition; skills gained; endorsement. 1. The language of the presentation of the course should be English. 2. The presentation of the training course should be accompanied by a poster. 3. The presentation of the course should not surpass a seven-minute time limit [7, p. 162].

To sum up, visual literacy in higher education is based on the 21st century literacy and, it develops in parallel with contemporary visual communication technologies that are interlinked with foreign language communicative competence.

The analysis of the tasks containing digital images (Table 1) supports the conclusion that while looking at something, everyone is not only engaged with a certain visual image but also interacts with other related images, their own bodies, other people, human-made or natural objects and possessions, the social contexts they look at. It gives all the participants of an educational process an opportunity to realise that everyone understands the same visual expressions in their own ways that differ from one person to another.

Thus, it may be stated that visual literacy is a new scientific direction in pedagogy and a new educational value in terms of teaching foreign languages. And it is essential for the academic community to dedicate themselves to visual education by reviewing traditional approaches in teaching foreign language practices that will enable students to perceive and interpret visual messages, create meaning for them, and develop foreign language competence through visual communication in the context of visual culture.

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