

# The Importance of Visual Thinking in Learning a New Foreign Language

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**Abstract:** *The purpose of this article is to show the importance of visual thinking in learning a foreign language. Optical illusions are powerful tools to develop visual thinking. The majority part of thinking is based on words, which are part of the activity of the left hemisphere. To use the right hemisphere in visualization and solution of the problems, a new method is needed, thinking through visual language. Each day creative people are needed, so visual thinking is a challenge for society nowadays. Visualization, perception, are necessary tools for the development of visual thinking. Visual thinking is a simple activity which helps students to express themselves, extend their vocabulary, and at the same time develop their visual thinking.*

**Keywords:** Optical Illusions, Perception, Visualization, Strategies

## 1. Introduction

To enable our students to become creative people and to handle the challenges of life one of the most important strategies which are easily used in class is visual thinking. Through this strategy, we help them to see beyond the surface and to go deeper so they understand what is not said directly or which is not said at all. Teachers should use optical illusions to help students become aware of their perceptions and to understand that they differ from one another. We don't always believe what we see. Like in life, things can be seen from different points of view. What we think about a certain issue depends on the point of view that we see it. Sometimes we feel confused and we need others' help to see things. This is similar to optical illusions which have always something hidden which is not seen. Very rarely we see everything that is supposed to be seen immediately. So, we have to look at it for a long time or sometimes ask others to understand everything hidden in optical illusions.

## 2. Objectives

- To highlight the importance of visual thinking.
- To help teachers to develop these skills in teaching a foreign language.
- To help students be creative and to think critically.
- To better understand and speak a foreign language.
- To develop students' intellectual potential.

## 3. Strategies of visual thinking

Strategies of visual thinking are initially used by Housen. According to him "Through visual thinking, we get various answers and we can make open questions like, what do you see in this picture?" (Abigail Housen, 1992).

These theories can be used to develop critical thinking in learning foreign languages. We can start with the question above. Later on, we encourage the conversation. In this way the students:

- Can develop self-assurance.
- Can analyze, describe, discuss and interpret what they see in a picture or a photo.
- Can conclude.

To achieve these goals, teachers use these methods in which they ask their students to discuss what they see. This is how we can suggest:

- Look at every aspect of the picture.
- Take part in the discussion.
- Draw conclusions based on evidence.
- Make a distinction between that what you see and that what you think you may see.
- Develop your point of view.

In this process, we should understand that teachers are the facilitators of the process.

## 4. Drawing and visual thinking

As we said above the majority part of thinking is based on words which are part of the activity of the left hemisphere. To use the right hemisphere in visualization and solution of the problems, a new method is needed, thinking through visual language.

*"So when I win, I don't repeat my tactics but I rearrange them in situations in different ways."*(Michael Michalko, 1991)

Because we think in two different ways through visual thinking and verbal thinking, we know the power of structures, forms, and pictures. Frames of the language are technics of visual thinking and its nature is a tool to see new and different relationships through attributions. This language consists of symbols that replace the words. What is important is what the graph means to you.

*"Thoughts are not beneficial until we express them to others."*(Cited Mark Twain, 1835 - 1910).

I had a black and white picture of a miner's room. I asked my students what they see without giving any information at all. If it was a man or a woman and the reason why they thought so. One of the students said that is a man because there were no decorations and if it was a woman she would put something even though she was poor. Someone else said that if it was a woman, she would put something to remind her of her family, maybe children's photos.

So the students saw details and felt confident to bring a new perspective to the photo. As a result, we can say that visual thinking is a simple activity but which helps them to think deeply.

When children are asked what they see, they start with the obvious things. But if we as teachers ask them to go deeper in details and to use their imagination also, we see that they are willing to talk more, to think deeply, and amazingly express themselves. The job of teachers is to provide students with all the necessary tools so they feel comfortable while communicating with native speakers.

## 5. Perception

We hear, we, we taste, we feel due to our senses. This process happens so spontaneously that we think that perception is a passive process. However, perception is more active than passive. It helps us to build, interpret and draw conclusions about information we get.

*"Perception is the process of drawing conclusions. Through them, we build our own version of reality. However, our version of reality can change from our experiences, education, cultural values". (Abigail Housen 1992).*

Teachers of foreign languages should use optical illusions to help students with their perceptions. From these activities, they understand that people perceive the same things differently. We don't believe always what we see. Like in life, things are seen from a different point of view. What we think about a certain topic depends on the way how we see it. Sometimes we are confused and we need other people's help to see things. This is similar to optical illusions. They always hide something. We don't get the message at first glance, that's why we look at it for a long time to find out everything hidden in there. Optical illusions are tricky. They amaze us because they make us understand that the world is not exactly how we see it. Artists use optical illusions. Julian Beaver, known as "Pavement Picasso" use chalk to create these illusions in the pavements. The effect is so convincing that the people try to avoid the holes in the street. Knowing the importance of optical illusions and how they influence critical thinking. I use it in my classes. I have found that they are encouraging means to develop their creativity and to encourage students to talk more in foreign languages.

It is a fact that we perceive things differently. It is also important to encourage students to speak by giving them some definitions and allowing time to speak about them. They can develop critical thinking through learning a foreign language. They can also enlarge their vocabulary and bring examples from everyday life. So the purpose is to think

deeply, to develop critical thinking, to reflect, and to find the right ways to express themselves. They understood that the images are perceived differently not only inside the classroom but also outside. It is a good way to practice verb structures also.

## 6. Conclusion

Visual thinking is really important in learning a foreign language. It is not only how we see the world but also how we interpret things. Visual thinking makes students more creative and makes the lesson even more interesting. It doesn't happen spontaneously. Critical thinking is closely related to creative thinking. Creative thinking is not something that we are born with but we can develop that. Teachers of foreign languages should encourage students to go to the depth and find out the meaning of it. Students should be taught not to learn by heart and not to get the knowledge passively, but to be involved and insist until they are clear enough about the lesson. Through visualization, optical illusions, perceptions they enrich their vocabulary, to become aware of their perceptions, and understand that they differ from one another.

But what is more important they develop self-esteem, analyze, describe what they see, and discuss it. They reflect, they find the right ways to express themselves. These exercises also help them understand that images are perceived differently not only in the classroom but also in everyday life. Through these exercises, we check knowledge and understand their perception of different things.

The usage of visual thinking positively affects the learning of a foreign language because in this way students think deeply and their judgments are not superficial. Consequently, this leads to the enrichment of vocabulary and the proper use of grammatical structures. I support the view that the development of visual thinking only brings advantages in a lesson and helps students to think deeply and not be superficial and it is the teacher who plays the main role in their development.

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