Chapter 3

Developing Visual Literacy Skills Through Library Instructions

Nevzat Özel
Ankara University, Turkey

ABSTRACT

Visual literacy skills have become an inevitable part of life in today’s world. Technological innovations leading to new literacy skills have changed traditional ways of communication and made it necessary to learn and understand symbols, pictures, photos, illustrations, diagrams, infographics, pictograms, simulations, graphical interfaces, digitized images, and other visual tools. Therefore, it is very significant to teach individuals about visual literacy skills: the ability to understand, interpret, evaluate, organize, and construct visual information. Infographics are essential tools for learners. One of the most prominent institution to teach visual literacy skills is libraries. Visual tools, strategies, and methods should be applied in library instructions for users to realize these skills. The aim of the chapter is to show the importance of visualization, visual literacy, and infographics and present suggestions regarding how to develop the visual literacy skills of learners by libraries.

INTRODUCTION

The interests and attention in visuals have grown constantly because visuals or visualization can be observed everywhere in life and related with many disciplines. Moore and Dwyer (1994, p. ix) point out “scholars interested in the way visuals transmit information, emotion, and data are not limited to any one discipline because of the universal nature of images.” Especially adoption of new information and communication technologies has enhanced its application. When we go back to its roots, its long history can be seen apparently.

Visuals are essential tools to understand the messages and meanings of words, concepts, ideas or expressions. Words, especially complex ones, are not enough alone to get the message. Thanks to the images, it becomes easier and faster to make interpretation and perception. Why visuals or visualization matters is explained by Card, Mackinlay and Shneiderman (1999, pp. 579-581) with numerous benefits. Visuals improve memory and make resources accessible, reduce the time to spend on research informa-

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-4990-1.ch003
Visual communication is an indispensable part of this digital age. From media to internet, it has a great role in sending and understanding messages. Visual learning which delivers educational content more effectively is also among the basic learning types. Both visual communication and learning are closely concerned with visual literacy.

Today it is suggested that a person should have different literacy types in the process of communication and learning such as “information literacy”, “digital literacy”, “computer literacy”, “media literacy”, “technology literacy”, “political literacy”, “cultural literacy”, “multicultural literacy” and “visual literacy”. All of them are equally important and necessary to be a competent and sophisticated person in this digital age. However, especially visual literacy may come into prominence since it is related to and part of every literacy type. When we critically read images or use them to increase comprehension, we realize the fundamentals of other literacy competencies. The statement by Velders, de Vries and Vaicaityte (2007) supported this idea. They announce “the development of visual competencies is fundamental to normal human learning and through the creative use of these competencies, he is able to communicate with others”.

WHAT IS VISUAL LITERACY?

The integration of visuals into today’s teaching and learning environment has been increasing with the help of technology such as computers, laptops, televisions, tablets, and smart phones. Visual literacy, one of the most important competence of the other literacy skills, can enrich and facilitate learning and understanding of information. It deals with the process of recognizing words and messages conveyed via images; for example, pictures, photos, charts, diagrams, graphics, tables, icons, websites, videos, symbols, maps, signs, pictograms, etc. Recently, infographics has come to the fore in this sense.

There is a more common point to be made here about the definition. Visual literacy is, in short, an ability to perceive, comprehend, construe and evaluate visual messages and images. There are numerous definitions as visuals are all around us and used in different disciplines. The first and the most comprehensive definition was made by Debes (as cited in Velders, de Vries and Vaicaityte, 2007, p. 1):

Visual Literacy refers to a group of vision-competencies a human being can develop by seeing and at the same time having and integrating other sensory experiences. The development of these competencies is fundamental to normal human learning. When developed, they enable a visually literate person to discriminate and interpret the visible actions, objects, symbols, natural or man-made, that he encounters in his environment. Through the creative use of these competencies, he is able to communicate with others. Through the appreciative use of these competencies, he is able to comprehend and enjoy the masterworks of visual communication.

According to Tillman (2012, p. 9) it is the capability of appreciating, utilizing, resolving, assessing and producing visual material as a fundamental part of a whole. Stokes (2002, p. 1) describes visual literacy “as the ability to interpret images as well as to generate images for communicating ideas and concepts”. National Research Council (2000) characterizes visual literacy from a different point of view and clearly states that it is a sophisticated concept that has to do with the skills of monitoring; inquiring;
Related Content

Interacting with Augmented Reality Mirrors
Cristina Portalés, Jesús Gimeno, Sergio Casas, Ricardo Olanda and Francisco Giner Martínez (2016). Handbook of Research on Human-Computer Interfaces, Developments, and Applications (pp. 216-244). www.igi-global.com/chapter/interacting-with-augmented-reality-mirrors/158873?camid=4v1a

A Critical Review of Social Screen Time Management by Youngsters in Formal Educational Contexts

Returning to the TV Screen: The Potential of Content Unification in iTV

An Exemplary Interface for All
Francisco V. Cipolla-Ficarra, Alejandra Quiroga, Jim Carré and Jacqueline Alma (2018). Technology-Enhanced Human Interaction in Modern Society (pp. 79-102). www.igi-global.com/chapter/an-exemplary-interface-for-all/189838?camid=4v1a