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# Semantic And Cognitive Utility Of Illustrations In Fifth Grade Textbook

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### Abstract

If the text shapes the pole of the teaching-learning process, and the center of its starting along with all other linguistic activities. So the rest of the means constitute the necessary mount to reach understanding of the reading text. The most significant of these means is the image, which has become the inescapable mediator for approximating the concepts of the text in an era called the era of the image. So how did the educational system view the educational picture in the textbook for the fifth year of the primary school? And to what extent can the educational picture be invested in understanding the reading text? And was the textual approach achieved in both texts, considering the image as a text as well?

**Keywords:** textbook, educational picture, text, significance.

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### Introduction

Nothing resides in memory as do images. A student was quoted saying that an image is not better than a thousand article, it's better than a million. Learners process information way easier through images than through any other medium. Images are processed as information through sight, which then invokes the brain to a number of signifiers (meanings) that reside in memory. This process creates memory storage of learners. Learners ceaselessly try to identify their surrounding and relate to them visually by associating meanings them. Perhaps, this explains the reason why the Algerian ministry of education decided to include images/pictures as a didactical instrument in textbooks, particularly primary education. At this stage, learners acquire knowledge in different styles and means. It is worth bringing home the fact that images/pictures in textbooks serve didactical purposes more efficiently if, when needed, relate to the text

provided. Therefore, this study aims at investigating the extent to which pictures in fifth year primary school relate to the text provided.

### 1- Definition

The online Etymology Dictionary defines image as “piece of statuary; artificial representation that looks like a person or thing”. In the Holy Quran, the word (صورة) is translated into ‘form’, which is what in image is. Allah says “In whatever Form He wills, does He put thee together.” Al-Infitar. Image also means, etymologically, “from Latin *imaginem* (nominative *imago*) "copy, imitation, likeness; statue, picture," also "phantom, ghost, apparition," figuratively "idea, appearance," from stem of *imitari* "to copy, imitate". It can be seen that the word image means imitation, likeness, and assimilation. Every image is expected to be analogous to something or someone and hence has a correlation to him/it. Kafi (2005) defines image as something that “refers to a statue or artificial representation that stimulates the visual sense through which the world is processed”. Fadel frames it as “signifier that depends on a tripartite system of relations: (1) the material of expression, which are the colors and spaces, (2) the forms of expression, which refers to representation of people and things as forms, and (3) the content of expression, which includes the cultural content of the image and the semantic structures that form this content”.

It can be noted from the previous definitions that an image is an accurate reflection of a particular text. The correlation between the text and an image does not allow multiple interpretations, but rather signifies a specific and unified content. It usually is directed towards specific audience.

### 2- Definition of a Text

The online Oxford Dictionary defines text as “The wording of anything written or printed; the structure formed by the words in their order; the very words, phrases, and sentences as written.”. The Online Etymology Dictionary defines text as a word “from Latin *textus* "style or texture of a work," literally "thing woven," from past participle stem of *texere* "to weave, to join, fit together, braid, interweave, construct, fabricate, build”. Definition of the word text translates unity and continuity in harmonious and homogeneous manner. Whereas in Arabic it refers to lifting up; to lift things up on top of each other. Such a lifting up has to be well-carried out, or else they will fall. Definition of text in Arabic and English emphasise of unity and organisation in both languages.

Halliday defines text as “A text is a passage of discourse which is coherent in these two regards: it is coherent with respect to the context of situation, and therefore consistent in register; and it is coherent with respect to itself, and therefore cohesive.” Haliday perceives text, spoken or written, as a cohesive unit that organises words and sentences; a semantic unit codified in through words and sentences. Hassan believes that two elements give a text unity: the three elements mentioned earlier by Haliday, as well as cohesion. The last, she maintains, linguistic items of which texts are constituted are meaningfully interconnected in sequences. Al-Mesdi explains that the text is the cohesive interconnectedness of linguistic elements that result in an organic unity. Because it is so it is treated as other organic beings are treated, and each element of this unit cannot be removed or replaced without breaking the unity.

De Beaugrand, when comparing the text to the sentence in terms of their functions, concluded that the sentence, from his perspective, do not make a text. It is not possible to view the text as a composition of morphemic or symbolic units. The text represents a human endeavour, where an individual intends to produce a text and directs the listeners to build various types of relationships upon it. The text is, he

elaborates, not confined to mere syntactic structures, but rather reveals specific social positions. In this context, he states that: "Social norms apply more to texts than they do to sentences. Social awareness applies to facts, not to grammatical rules. The social labeling of specific structures affects only a small portion of the overall rules, but only appears through non-essential factors in specific situations."

### 3- Criteria For Selecting Images for Textbooks.

Pictures/images have always been an efficient tool for teaching. There has been even a more growing interest in images as tools for teaching due to their roles in processing information, particularly to primary school pupils. Pictures help learners understand texts and arrive at pieces of information through interpretation and hence provoke imagination for more meanings. Pupils do so by associating meanings to pictures, which by and by creates storage of knowledge. A picture is a visual aid material through which pupils naturally, even favourably by the majority, use to understand the content of lessons of different modules. Experts argue that people remember 30 % to 40 % of what they see, which become their own learnt pieces of information.

Educational pictures/images is defined by Lebough (2016) as a teaching tool that can be used in the three phases of the teaching process. It can be used in a warm up or presentation phase; it can be used the practice phase; it can be used in the production phase. Teachers can use, he elaborates, textbook pictures as a tool so that pupils explore something, to infer a piece of information, or even evaluate and check understanding a particular element of a lesson. (Lebough, 2016, p 142).

Dr. Al-Abid accounted for a set of criteria for selecting and adopting pictures for textbooks in a journal article entitled "The Importance of Images in The Teaching and Learning Process". An image/picture cannot be pedagogically utilised unless it is adopted with specific aspects that allow it to be functional, not just a singular element but a whole gestalt of it. It is worth bringing home the fact pupils ought to possess cognitive skills that permit making sense of a picture. These criteria relate to pictures elected, learner as well as producer. Pictures ought to have fond and form; they are supposed to be attractive, constant, thought-provoking, organised, culturally-specific and well-positioned. They should be selected by experienced and expert individuals. Learners ought to be attentive and motivated. Learners are expected to make the most out of pictures provided that the previous criteria are taken into account. Moreover, teachers should know how to use pictures efficiently, and break down the processing of the meaning of the picture in relation to the text so that pupils arrive at the desired outcome.

#### Characteristics of Text:

R. De Beaugrande accounted for seven characteristics of texts.

- a. **Cohesion:** It concerns syntactic cohesion where surface elements appear in a way that results in a progressive occurrence of events, leading from a previous element to a subsequent one, thus achieving cohesive relationships that can be recovered. Cohesion devices include syntactic structure of compounds, phrases, and sentences, as well as factors such as repetition, pronouns, conjunctions, ellipsis, and connectors. Cohesion cannot be achieved without reference, conjunction, and ellipsis.
- b. **Coherence:** It refer to the interconnectedness of the ideas in the text, which requires logical sequencing of ideas to achieve unity. Interconnectedness includes logical elements such as causality, generality, and specificity, as well as information about the organization of events, actions, topics, and situations, aiming for cohesion in relation to the human experience. Unity is supported by the interaction of the information presented in the text with prior knowledge about the world.

- c. **Intentionality**: it is the first thing that a writer thinks about because there is always a purpose for writing a text. "A text is not a random structure, but rather an intentional work designed to be coherent and cohesive in order to achieve a specific goal. In other words, it is a planned work aimed at achieving a particular purpose." (Awd, p 50)
- d. **Acceptability**: as the name implies, it refers to the reader's background which, in a sense, guides his/her willingness to accept the text or not to.
- e. **Situationality**: every text has a particular situation that provokes writing it, or a context to refer to. It refers to a situation that can be relived through the text. "The text is a work through which that particular situation can relived or even modified." (De Beaugrande, p 104).
- f. **Intertextuality**: which refers to the relationship of the produced text to other texts read by the writer. Kristeva (1997) says that "positing that all signifying systems, from table settings to poems, are constituted by the manner in which they transform earlier signifying systems. A literary work, then, is not simply the product of a single author, but of its relationship to other texts and to the structures of language itself. "[A]ny text," she argues, "is constructed of a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (Kristeva, 1997, p 66). The same principle applies to all texts, not only literary texts.
- g. **Informativity**: every text offers pieces of information in a way or another; in fact, many consider informativity a determining characteristic of texts. However, it differs from text to another depending on the type of the text and the purpose of writing.

There are commonalities between characteristics of texts and those of pictures/images. Both texts and pictures should be coherent, intended for a purpose and accepted by the receivers. Without these traits texts and pictures fail to achieve the educational purpose.

### 3-1- Pictures/Images as a Form of Language:

Pictures do not manifest mere efforts of a painter, a reflection of light through a particular device, or the like. It is an entity that has cognitive significance and can indeed be translated to other languages in particular contexts for a specific purpose. The same applies to texts, as they both are languages. More to a point, correlation between language and pictures have always been, historically, there. Many pictures have been translated to a language. This correlation was affirmed by Barthes (1994) who speculated that the signs system is manifested/ expressed verbally and orthographically. As such, he expounded, all pictures in cinema, television, advertisements, comic books, newspapers, etc. form a compositional relationship with language. Therefore, it is safe to suggest that a form of correlation has to be formed between oral or written texts and pictures/images. If texts (oral or written) require pictures to be well-understood, so do pictures, which require texts to anchor a particular meaning and do not allow multiple interpretations.

Texts have been in a need of pictures to anchor their meaning. Pictures need texts to explicate them as well. As such, both present parcel elements of the learning and teaching process, in news forecasts, arts and newspapers. Texts and pictures synchronise to produce a harmonious meaning that make the intended meaning, at least ostensibly, direct and clear. Experts aver that pictures and texts have an integrative relationship, each of which asserts the meaning the other seems to portray. Pictures asserts what the text communicates, and the text describes what goes beyond the picture. When the image and text are in congruence, the semiotic meaning becomes potent, and it is attained. The meticulous selection of the image holds immense significance since a misalignment in image choice may undermine attaining the objective, impeding the writer's ability to elucidate the intended message.

Images/pictures elevate the text from superficiality to depth, as it possesses significant presence to impact the senses as well as emotional and existential aspects within individuals.

Pictures/images cannot be considered pedagogical unless we adhere to a set of criteria that make them more effective, especially those related to gestalt principles. Additionally, learners themselves should possess a range of abilities and experiences that aid in the interpretation of the image. We can reduce these shared laws between pictures, recipients, and creator in the following points: Constancy and attentiveness. These criteria and the teacher's mastery of delivering the meaning to learners in accordance with the central text will yield fruitful results and fulfill their educational function. Such pictures will serve as aids in clarification, communication, and comprehension.

Pictures have always been efficient in the educational setting due to the presence and attraction they drive. These attributes and others gave picture significance and validity inasmuch as portraying ideas and meanings are concerned. Therefore, many civilisations have been reported to make use of the particularities pictures offer, especially in the field of education. Educationalists have recently embraced new approaches in teaching methods, such as the use of conceptual maps that emphasise drawing and the use of expressive pictures. Concept mapping relies on visual learning as one of its fundamental aspects. Therefore, utmost care should be given to pictures, even to the extent of replacing words with visuals because the memory recalls images before words. Texts are amenable to interpretations; readers ought to have knowledge sufficient that allows arrive at the texts' meaning. In such instances, imagination deciphers locked symbols; symbols that primary school pupils cannot arrive at their meaning. Pictures lubricate the process of understanding when accompanied to texts. To sum up, a picture's meaning is bound up by the accompanying text, and text's meaning narrows as long as it is accompanied by a picture.

### **The Function of Illustrations in Textbooks:**

#### **- Communicative Competence**

Illustrations serve more than a pedagogical purpose, with a text; they contribute to fulfil other functions as well. Illustrations develop communicative skills of pupils when they are asked to orally discuss the content of the provided illustration. Searl, Grice, Strauss have all pointed out that the primary function of language is to communicate. Accordingly, pupils learn to, for instance, use the negative instead of the imperative, praise instead of to criticize. Pupils learn how to use the aforesaid functions of language without difficulty or complexity, as long as an illustration is provided. Communication between the writer or illustrator and the recipient involves a reciprocal exchange of knowledge, ideas, and emotions. It is imbued with significant and influential semantic exchanges that affect learners cognitively and emotionally.

A single illustration possesses the capacity for expression in multiple languages, granting it greater potency than written text. Due to its inherent polysemy, it is accompanied in educational textbooks by a text, which facilitates the attainment of intended meanings. The interplay between the text and illustration can be reciprocal, with the text depending on the accompanying illustration, or conversely, the illustration relying on the text. This phenomenon is acknowledged in pedagogical activities. To explicate this notion, we can cite the perspective of Roland Barthes, who affirms that the linguistic text accompanying an illustration serves two functions: anchoring, explicating, or solidifying, and complementary or alternating functions.

#### **- Paratextual Constraint**

An illustration may have multiple meanings because of cognitive as well as referential an illustration holds. Background of the receiver and context allow interpretations; however, the provided text limits the run-on of

thoughts, and it specifies a particular meaning in the stead of another. For a text and an illustration to possess a singular semantic purpose away from manifold interpretations, “the text guides the reader through the various significations of the image, avoiding some and connecting others through precise distribution, often leading towards a preselected meaning.” (Barthes, 1997, p 66)

#### - **Inter-semiotic Complementarity**

Which refers to the suitability of the illustration with the text to the extent that each complete the meaning intended by the other, or limits possible meanings to suit the compatibility with the other element.

Pupils develop other skills in relation to communicative competence by the use of illustrations in the teaching and learning context. Pupils learn to describe, narrate, tell stories, etc. it is well-established that primary school pupils start learning to express themselves by commenting on illustrations. Through these skills, pupils acquire the confidence to engage in dialogues and infer meaning as well as to have meticulous, or at least precise, observation skills. Pupils, as a result, overcome individual obstacles.

#### - **Educational Function.**

Technological development and the development of new methods and approaches of teaching have but increased the value of illustrations as a tool of teaching primary school pupils. Notably in the early years of this phase, there cannot/ should not be a text without an illustration, or the opposite.

#### **Characteristics of Illustrations:**

Illustrations have certain characteristics that distinguish them from figures. They can be specified as the following:

**Amenability to Interpretation:** if all literary texts were written with the intention of the author who tries to communicate their intention by being as accurately as he can, illustrations have meanings even more than arrange of interpretations for texts. These meanings can be arrived at through the background of the receiver.

**Accessibility:** Al-Hchicha (1994) maintains that illustrations “must have a meaning that can be translated through the provided text. As such, these illustrations ought to be clear, accurate and simple in a way that does not permit queries or ambiguities that cannot be answered by pupils. Moreover, they should visually appealing to pupils who naturally have a propensity for colours. Needless to mention that illustrations can be visually appealing if they are accurate and consistent. That is to say, they are designed in a way that takes into consideration colour harmony and homogeneity of lines. It is essential that there is harmony between the text and the illustration, thus.

#### **Types of Pedagogical Illustrations:**

Inasmuch as pedagogy is concerned, there are three main kinds of illustrations.

- 1- **Photographs:** they are actual images captured by a camera. It has Latin origin, and it's composed of two parts: photo, which means light, and graph, which means writing. Photographs provide real-life examples (of people, animals and things), visual reference and contextual information. Photographs transmit minute details in terms of shape and colour of the thing presented.
- 2- **Caricatures:** they are visual representations of people or things with emphasis on exaggerated features in order to ridicule, deride, criticize, or satirise someone or thing. Carter (1996) stated that caricatures invoke laughter, they communicate ideas through scathing criticism to traditions, people, etc. which is

rather humorous as well. Caricatures provide visual representation of contexts and characteristics of historical period of time. However, it is not very common in primary school textbooks.

- 3- **Icons:** they are visual representations that present specific concepts, objects and devices constantly used by people.
- 4- **Illustrative Paintings:** these are “paintings produced by artists who engaged in painting them spiritually and emotionally using various means of colouring as well as different devices to create a harmony between colours, shapes and the idea” (Abid, 2012, p 107).

### **Illustrations in Year Five primary School:**

We noticed that the Arabic language textbook of fifth grade contains many illustrations, but we focused on those accompanied by texts. These illustrations, it's worth noting, vary considerably concerning size, shape, and colour. Some were spot-illustrations, others half-page illustrations, etc. Interestingly, all illustrations suited the provided text; a factor that is highly significant and more expressive (especially social discussions) for pupils. Such an interest in illustrations by textbook designers showcases the validity of them-illustrations- in deepening understanding. Illustrations are efficient didactical tools in the process of teaching and learning.

Distribution of Illustrations in Arabic Textbook, Fifth Grade.

	Units	Number of Texts	Number of Illustrations
1	Humanistic Values	03	25
2	Social values and services	03	33
3	Values of Nationalism	03	21
4	Sustainable development	03	33
5	Health and Nutrition	05	42
6	Science and discoveries	03	39
7	Traditional stories and tales	03	34
8	Adventures and Travels	02	21
	Total		248

The total number of illustrations, as can be seen in the table, is 284 distributed on eight units. All illustrations were selected to meet the ideas communicated in each unit and suitable for a fifth-grade textbook. There are photographs, numerical illustrations, and caricatures. Have these illustrations congruent with the provided texts?

### **Types of illustrations used in Fifth Grade Textbook of Arabic:**

Selected illustrations of primary schools' textbooks impact pupils in profound ways, even those of alphabets colours and shapes. Many illustrations are used in our sample, some of which half-page sized in the first pages of units to guide pupils' attentions to the desired outcome. Other illustrations accompanied either oral or other activities. Our study focuses on illustrations accompanied by texts. Each unit has two reading texts as objects of analysis as well as sixteen illustrations distributed in the sample. Some have been chosen for analysis.

#### **1- Unit One: Humanistic Values.**

There are three texts in this unit, classmate, way to happiness, and cooperation at school. Illustrations in relation to these texts are mainly illustrative paintings made by experts in the field. In the first image, a group of students is depicted, with males wearing blue smocks and females wearing pink smocks, which are the colors mandated by

the Ministry of Education in educational institutions. The students are standing in the schoolyard, with smiles on their faces. At the forefront of the group, there is a child with a different skin color, symbolizing diversity. This illustration goes in accordance with the saying of the Prophet Muhammad: An Arab has no virtue over a non-Arab, nor does a non-Arab have virtue over an Arab, a red skinned person is not more virtuous than a dark-skinned person nor is a dark-skinned person more virtuous than a red skinned person except through Taqwa”.

Illustration in the second text show students in the schoolyard surrounding two people: one dressed in a formal suit (the manager), and another holding papers (the teacher). The values aimed to be instilled through this illustration is cooperation. The illustration revolves around the concept of cooperation among the students of the same school, love for others, and the dedication to forming a small community where the meanings of love and brotherhood are deeply rooted. The individuals in this community are characterised by virtuous ethics and the avoidance of gossip and selfishness.

## **2- Unit two: Social Life.**

This unit, too, has three texts: noble jobs, dedication at work, and career. The first text is accompanied by an illustrative painting, and the second by a photograph of a refuse collector. The last job is chosen advisedly so as to inculcate values of respect, appreciation and the need for each other regardless of job affiliations. Without refuse collector, disease is more likely to spread and substances will be wasted. The text contains a number of action verbs and descriptions (hard, sweeping, dirt, wastes, etc) that can be seen in the provided illustration. The first text in this unit contains traits of the refuse collector and the two illustrations resonates well with the text. However, the text does not provide elaborations on the imperativeness to misbehave or mistreat refuse collectors, and even help them when necessity arises.

On the other text, the intended meaning revolves around career, but the illustration provided contains a family gathering around traditional food. A more suitable illustration could have been, for instance, of a mechanic.

## **3- Unit Three: National Identity.**

This unit has three texts: Takfarinas Addressing Us, Peoples of a Single Nation, and A Precious Land. Three illustrations accompany the first text: a night on his horse, a battle during the Romans for the other two. The text is an imagined dialogue between a night and a little girl; the main purpose is to introduce some roman warriors.

The second text has an illustration of an old man with facial wrinkles in a nostalgia in front of a school. The illustration shows the old man recalling some memories and filled with regret. The text provided with the illustration accounts the war-crimes of the French government during colonialism and her dedicated efforts to divide the Algerian people. The third text stresses the values of love and respect for the country, in the hope that next generations carry these values with them. The provided illustration (illustrative painting) has two men separated with a notable distance from each other, and old women and a child.

## **4- Unit Five: Health and Nutrition:**

Unlike other units, this unit has four texts. The first text is entitled The Valley of Life, the second No Entrance, the third The Best Doctors: Fruits, and Vegetables Juice. The illustrative painting of components of blood with a text. The second text has an illustrative painting of blood circulation. The veins appear red, indicating the purity and clarity of the blood. The purpose of this text is to alert the learner to the importance of maintaining a healthy body, which can be achieved through following a proper dietary regime. This text is supported by a third passage that discusses a healthy diet focused on consuming nutritious juices made from fresh fruits and vegetables.



Accompanying the text are four illustrations, each depicting a juice made from fresh fruits and vegetables. The text revolved around the components of blood. Therefore, we can say that the images carry related connotations to the concepts conveyed in the text.

### **5- Unit Six: Science and Discoveries:**

The three texts in this unit are entitled: 1) pure genius 2) The Story of Penciling, and 3) wicked Robot. The last illustration is rather alien to daily life of Algerian pupils. The first text accounts for the life of Al-Bairouny, who was an astronomer, and a specialist in pharmacy as well. He was rather encyclopedic. The three illustrations of the first text show him contemplating space in one, and the other two he sits in his laboratory with his equipment. The second text accounts for the life of Alexander Flemming who invented Penciling with a photograph of him as an illustration, and another illustration (infographic) of some parasites. The second text is about a wicked robot of an illustrative painting of a family gathering, a crippled boy newt to a robot.

### **Have the Illustrations of Fifth Grade Textbook of Arabic achieved their Purpose?**

Reading a text begins after interpretation of the provided illustrations, perhaps as a warm up. Barthes (1994) perceived images as an incarnation of the self whereas writing is the dissemination of it. Many pictures/images (illustrations in our study) have elements that lead to a particular meaning.

The first illustration of unit one which shows groups of happy and smiling pupils well placed in the page and the harmony of colours refers to life at school and relates to the text. As such meaning is enforced. Illustration three of unit three a wrinkled face of an old man seemingly filled with regret and nostalgia. In the same illustration, a number of happy pupils in front of a building with a waving Algerian flag. These elements and details lead to interpretations that revolve around a small range to topics.

Illustration three of unit five of four photographs of natural fruit juice that indicate looking after one's health. Discussion of the illustration certainly leads to opinions on avoiding canned juice and the verse promotions they receive. Therefore, the illustration raises awareness of the necessity to look after health and promote such values in society.

Many researches consider the relationship between the text and the illustration as compositional. Each supplants and asserts necessary information about the other. Texts write what's in the illustration, and the last presents visual representation of the former. Therefore, it can be said that the illustrations fulfilled the educational function to ingrain values such as cooperation and respect in pupils.

### **Conclusion**

The new reformations of the Algerian Educational Ministry have been well in place; that they did by using modern approaches to teaching, these approaches have improved the process of teaching and learning, especially by making the most of illustrations in textbooks. We made the following observations in our study of fifth grade textbook of Arabic.

- Many illustrations form a compositional relationship with the text which makes easier to understand and read.
- There exists no disparity between text and the provided illustrations.
- The illustrations were within the reach of pupils' cognitive skills, relates to their interests and time frame.
- Specialists in pedagogy acceptedly selected topics, texts, as well as illustrations.

- Though our study highlights illustrations, we notice that the curriculum asserts the concept of identity in addition to ethical values that form a respectable citizen who aims to improve constantly and loves his/her country.
- Illustrations efficiently assist understanding texts because they provide meaning whenever ambiguity arises in texts.
- Compositional relationship between text and illustration narrows the scope of interpretations and makes arriving at the intended meaning easier. In case the illustration and text are not compatible, the task of pupils hardens.
- Compositional relationship of text and illustration in the educational setting, for the intentionality is of higher value.
- Illustration elevates the status of the text because pictures/images in general have a profound impact on senses and emotions. Moreover, illustrations deepen understanding and penetrate memory.

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