USING PHOTOGRAPHS TO ENHANCE STUDENTS' FUNCTIONAL COMPETENCE IN ESP FOR THE SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

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Abstract. *The aim of this paper is to explore the potential use of photographs as a teaching material in English for specific purposes (ESP) instruction for university students of the social sciences and humanities, primarily for enhancing students' functional competence. Therefore, particular attention has been given to the so-called macrofunctions, the mastery of which is indispensable in these fields of study. Building on the traditional use of images in foreign language teaching, we seek to identify the common denominators of the aims of social sciences and humanities studies and ESP instruction for these disciplines, on the one hand, and of the nature of photographs as a means of visual communication and expression, on the other. A three-dimensional model (descriptive, subjective-affective, hypothetical-analytical) for approaching photographs in ESP instruction has been proposed and an analysis of student responses to a range of questions corresponding to the three dimensions has been conducted in order to illustrate the potential of photographs as a teaching tool in achieving the shared objectives of ESP instruction and the academic study of the social sciences and humanities.*

Key words: *photographs, ESP, social sciences and humanities, macrofunctions, functional competence, model*

1. INTRODUCTION

As early as 1863, Dr. Hugh Diamond – a British psychiatrist, pioneer in the use of photography in psychiatry, and editor of the first journal dedicated to photography – *The Photographic Journal*, noted, while writing about the International Exhibition held a year earlier in London, that there was "scarce a branch of art, of science, of economics, or indeed of human interest [...], in which the applications of this art [photography] have not been made useful" (Edwards 2006, 10-11). Although the importance of photographs, and images in general, in teaching foreign languages has long been recognized, their possible role and potential in teaching ESP in the fields of the social sciences and humanities appear to have been insufficiently explored. In this paper, we will look at what makes photographs a potentially effective tool in teaching ESP, particularly in social sciences and humanities disciplines. In order to address this question, we will first attempt to

identify the intersection of the aims of the academic study of these disciplines, the aims of teaching foreign languages for specific purposes, and of photographs as a visual medium of communication and expression.

We will begin with a brief overview of the use of photographs/images[1] in foreign language teaching and then consider the significance of photographs in two social sciences and humanities disciplines, namely, anthropology and history. We will then highlight the potential role of photographs in light of the general and specific objectives of teaching ESP. By presenting the specific aims of ESP instruction at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, and correlating these aims with the objectives of the academic study of the social sciences and humanities at this Faculty, we will seek to show how photographs can be used to help achieve these aims.

An analysis of the existing literature and a qualitative content analysis of students' responses to questions regarding two specific photographs, have demonstrated how a multi-dimensional approach to photographs can contribute to achieving some partial goals in ESP instruction, particularly the development of so-called macrofunctions as components of functional competence (itself part of pragmatic competence) as referred to in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR, 126). Macrofunctions include categories such as description, narration, commentary, interpretation, argumentation, persuasion, explanation, etc., an integral component of spoken and written discourse. Various authors and sources rafer to them using different terminology, emphasizing that the realization of these functions occurs through communicative acts. In this context, Austin (1963) speaks of speech acts, Widdowson (1979) refers to rhetorical acts, while Jordan (1997, 6) talks of so-called specific academic concepts/functions (e.g., definition, description, exemplification). De Chazal introduces the term "basic elements of text" (2014, 126-130), which include argumentation, establishing causal relationships, comparison and contrast, definition, narration, and more. The expression of these functions requires knowledge of appropriate grammatical structures and vocabulary.

In analyzing student responses to questions about photographs, we have particularly focused on these (macro)functions, which are indispensable for language use in professional and academic discourse. In this regard, a potential model for approaching photographs in teaching ESP for the social sciences and humanities will be presented, drawing on two existing approaches to the use of images within two different contexts, one being the interpretation of non-textual sources in the field of history, and the other the development of visual literacy in language instruction. The proposed model has been applied in teaching ESP to students of the humanities and social sciences at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade. The sample of student responses (collected from 41 respondents) to questions about two photographs that can be approached from different perspectives (historical, anthropological, sociological, phychological), has been analyzed and classified according to the (macro)functions identified in the students' responses.

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[1] The distinction between image and photograph will not be addressed in this paper – the term image will be used when it occurs in the cited literature, while this paper deals solely with the use of photographs.

2. The Image/Photograph in Foreign Language Teaching

Images – or visual representations of events, people, and objects – have a long tradition in foreign language teaching. In Europe, drawings with pens were used as early as the 15th century to illustrate vocabulary, and the first foreign language textbook containing illustrations was compiled by Jan Comenius in 1658. According to this author, the function of images was to allow learners to learn through all their senses, helping them to better remember what they have learned (Hecke, Surkamp 2015, 19). Until the 1960s, images primarily served to develop speaking skills and to visualize language content. It was then that one of the seminal books on using images in the language classroom was published, namely, Pit Corder's *The Visual Element in Language Teaching* (1966). The author argues against using visual aids in language learning as mere supplements or decoration, and explores their role as a means of communication and integral tools for effective language teaching. He makes a clear distinction between "talking about images" (merely describing images) and "talking with images" (responding personally to images) (Donaghy, Xerri 2017, 1), while considering that "language is not knowledge, but a set of skills" (Corder 1966, 5). Corder's book was followed by a number of other influential theoretical and practical resource books (Donaghy, Xerri 2017, 1).

Within the audio-visual method of language teaching, images became an integral part of textbooks, and their primary role was to facilitate the semantization of listening texts, show language contexts, functions and content, carrying a considerable potential to motivate students and capture their attention (Lingsch, Bauer 1971). With the advent of the communicative method, images were used not only to motivate students but also to act as stimuli for writing and speaking. It was only in the late 1980s that the need to develop awareness of the specificity of the image as a medium and to make the interpretation of images an integral part of foreign language teaching was recognized (Schwerdtfeger 1989, 24). A number of practical resource books have been published since, one of the most cited being Wright's *Pictures for Language Learning* (1990). The author argues that "one picture can serve as reference or stimulus in order to promote five different teaching emphases" (1990, 2-3), i.e. structures, vocabulary, functions, situations, skills, thus opening up a vast space for exploring the use of photographs for achieving specific teaching aims.

The "visual turn" of the 1990s and the rapid development of information and communication technologies over the last few decades have led to a dramatic increase in the amount of visual content and disrupted the traditional dominance of text over images. Images have been increasingly used to depict content, mediate information and knowledge, while in foreign language teaching they are increasingly viewed from the perspective of semiotics as independent texts, carriers of meaning that provide information about reality beyond the image itself, thus requiring interpretation and analysis of their formal characteristics (Hecke, Surkamp 2015, 22). Among the most important resource books on the use of images published in this period are Goldstein's *Working with Images* (2008) and Keddie's *Images* (2009), the latter offering concrete practice for learners of different levels of language proficiency. *The Image in English Language Teaching* (Donaghy, Xerri 2017) includes a selection of papers, all urging teachers to "use images critically and creatively" (ibid., 8-9). The authors observe that although there has been a gradual shift towards a more critical and creative use of both still and moving images in ELT coursebooks and the ELT classroom, images are still not being fully exploited as multimodal texts, and there is little effort to develop learners' visual literacy.

3. Photography and Photographs in the Social Sciences and Humanities

Although there are many areas within the social sciences and humanities where photography plays a significant role, this paper will briefly look at its role in two disciplines, specifically history and anthropology, in an attempt to find its appropriate role in ESP instruction for students of these disciplines.

In the fields of anthropology and history, photography replaced drawing and became a witness of the objective whose "testimony could override almost any degree of disbelief" (Goldberg 1991, 19). In anthropology, photography was initially used in the study of the human body, retaining this role with the advent of the first field studies, but then increasingly began to focus on the lives of the populations being studied – as it captured details about various aspects of life in communities (such as clothing, artifacts, etc.) with much greater precision than written words could. As the focus of anthropology shifted from the body to culture, humans started to be viewed primarily as bearers of social/cultural and not genetic heritage, and photography quickly ceased to be a "mute accomplice of time," and the very "muteness of what is hypothetically understandable in photography makes it so attractive and provocative" (Sontag 1973, 18).

Given that there are multiple participants in the creation of meaning of a photograph, and that it is always the product of certain social, historical, or political circumstances, its meanings can be many and varied. Therefore, one of the first questions that, for example, a historian might ask when encountering a photograph is whether it will be read the same way it was read by people at the time it was created. Since every observer brings with them their cultural identity, gender, religion, and race, we can conclude that no interaction with non-textual material is neutral (Armstrong 2016, 11-13).

Thus, how should one approach a photograph as a non-textual source? Armstrong (2016, 14) suggests three stages in approaching the source: defining, describing, and analyzing. Defining involves answering the questions of who, when, and why, in order to get closer to the main issue, which is what type of source it is and who it was intitially intended for. In the description phase, the personal, individual, and characteristic of the observer form a different time is inevitably introduced, thus becoming "colored." The analysis phase involves understanding the entire historical context and the social, economic, political, and cultural circumstances in which the source was created.

4. The Aims of ESP Instruction and Social Sciences and Humanities Studies at the Faculty Of Philosophy, University of Belgrade

The 2021 ESP curriculum at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, is designed to enable the achievement of its primary objective: "equipping students to use a foreign language for specific purposes. This entails mastering skills such as reading comprehension of scientific and professional literature, extracting relevant information, oral and written communication (e.g., note-taking, writing a report, summarizing), and translating specialized texts for personal use. ESP instruction also involves mastering the language structure, stylistic characteristics of general academic language, and the language of specific academic disciplines: philosophy, sociology, psychology, pedagogy, andragogy, history, art history, anthropology and ethnology, arhaeology, and classical studies" (https://www.f.bg.ac.rs/ksj).

To support our view on the place of photography in ESP instruction in the social sciences and humanities, we will attempt to identify the common objectives of the academic study of these disciplines at the Faculty of Philosophy. The overarching objective is to enable students to acquire and develop the theoretical and practical knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes necessary for professional practice and further academic advancement in a specific field. In order to achieve this aim, students are expected to develop critical thinking and the ability to understand and interpret human reality, social, cultural, political, historical, and psychological processes and phenomena, and to contextualize them both within individual disciplines and across disciplines. This entails developing analytical and interpretative skills, which include the ability to describe, define, and compare phenomena and problems, understand their causal relationships, present and develop arguments, etc. (the study programs can be accessed on the Faculty of Philosophy's website: www.f.bg.ac.rs).

6. A MODEL FOR APPROACHING PHOTOGRAPHS IN ESP FOR THE SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

As mentioned in the introductory section, this paper offers one possible model for using photographs as a teaching tool in ESP for the social sciences and humanities. In proposing this model, the aims of ESP instruction where communicative competence in these academic disciplines is of particular importance, as well as the objectives of social sciences and humanities studies, have been taken into account. The proposed model partially draws on Goldstein's approach to images in developing visual literacy in ELT, as well as Armstrong's above-mentioned approach to non-textual sources in the field of history. Goldstein (2016, 9-10) offers a range of questions that can be posed to students, belonging to different dimensions: perceptual-affective, structural-compositional, and critical-ideological. The model proposed in this paper also includes three dimensions – descriptive, subjective-affective and hypothetical-analytical.

The students in our sample were asked to answer a number of questions supplied within this model about two photographs. Our sample consisted of 41 second-year undergraduate students at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade, of whom 23 were history students, 8 anthropology students and 10 psychology students. Two photographs published in LIFE Magazine in 1938, depicting scenes from a psychiatric hospital in New York State, were chosen for this task due to their authenticity, thought-provoking potential and the subject matter's relevance to all three groups of students. The focus of the content analysis of student responses were the phrases and other structures used to express the various functions discussed earlier in this paper, and only incidentally the vocabulary used to express these functions. Bearing in mind that the students in the sample were in the B1-C1 range of English language proficiency, the questions provided within the three dimensions of the model allowed students at all these levels to respond adequately drawing on their language reservoirs. The answers were provided in written form to facilitate analysis and their style is therefore more characteristic of the written medium than the spoken one, although, of course, photographs can be used to elicit both oral and written language production.

Below the two photographs reproduced here, which were used as visual stimuli in this task, the three dimensions of the proposed model – descriptive, subjective-affective and hypothetical-analytical – are presented, together with a selection of students' responses to questions designed to elicit language related to the respective (macro)functions.

6.1. Descriptive

Questions
1. Describe what you can see in the photograph.
2. What do you notice first in the photograph and why?
3. What is happening in the photograph?
4. What is the atmosphere like in the photograph?

Function	Phrases and structures	Vocabulary
Describing people	*I can see five men..., There are three patients in straightjackets..., They seem to be sedated..., Two of the men appear to be visitors...*	*patient, inpatient, nurse, caregiver, medical staff, visitor, straitjacket; restrained, distressed, discontented, immobilized, relaxed*
Describing objects	*The room contains..., There is a screen next to the door..., The chairs are arranged..., The bathtubs are located..., The bathtubs are covered with some kind of canvas fastened on the sides...*	*hospital room, bathtub, treatment, screen, cloth, newspaper, brick walls*
Describing places	*This is a hospital room..., They are sitting in the corner of what is probably a waiting room..., The photo depicts a treatment area in a hospital...*	*ward, hospital ward, institution, asylum, clinic, mental hospital*
Describing the atmosphere	*The atmosphere is calm..., It is melancholic..., It gives off a 20th century vibe..., They look desperate...*	*tense, depressing, grim, sad, sinister-looking, oppressive, calming, worrying, disturbing*
Desribing actions	*The three men in straitjackets are sitting..., Only two of them are looking at the camera..., The patients are lying in bathtubs and receiving some kind of treatment..., They are attended by a nurse...*	*immobilized, punished, staring, suffering, relaxing, being treated, waiting*

6.2. Subjective-affective

Questions
1. What impression does the photograph leave on you?
2. What feeling does the photograph evoke in you?
3. What does the photograph remind you of?
4. What was your immediate association when you saw the photograph?

Function	Vocabulary, phrases and structures
Emotion/ Impression	*It evokes in me an uneasy feeling...* *I think that the photo is very emotionally intense...* *It makes me feel grateful that today's approach to mentally ill people is more humane...* *The photograph evokes a sense of melancholy...* *The scene leaves an impression of despair...* *It makes me wonder why the three men are tied up...* *I'm intrigued by the fact that special bathtubs are being used for treatment...* *My first impression was that all is very calm and peaceful, but maybe the patients are sedated...* *The way the patients in straightjackets are just left to sit there leaves me feeling concerned they aren't getting the right care...*
Association/ Connection	*It reminds me of the mental hospital in the film One flew over the coockoo's nest...* *It would be interesting to comapre this hospital with modern ones...* *I think the scene has similarities with old-fashioned treatment of people with skin disease in baths that I read about...* *The photograph reminds me of some stories my grandfather told me about how he visited his uncle in a mental institution...* *My first association when I saw the photograph was with prisons and I feel that being in an asylum can be sometimes worse than if you are in a prison...*

6.3. Hypothetical-Analytical

Questions
1. In what context was the photograph taken?
2. Who might have commissioned the photograph?
3. For what purposes was the photograph made?
4. Who might be the target audience of the photograph?
5. What does the photograph say about the individual, event, or society?
6. What meanings can the photograph have for different observers?
7. What might have happened before or after what is depicted in the photograph?
8. What might have been left outside the frame of what is shown in the photograph?
9. What might the message of the photograph be?
10. What attitudes and viewpoints can be inferred from the photograph?
11. Is the photograph a stereotypical, anachronistic, or idealized depiction of the phenomenon/subject?
12. What could be added to the photograph and why?
13. What would you do if you were in the place of one of the people in the photograph?
14. Describe the similarities and differences between the two photographs (in terms of subjects/ scenes/ situations/ emotions/ atmosphere/ phenomena/ scenes).

Function	Examples
Hypothesis/Assumption	*It is possible that the photographer wanted to shed light on the conditions in hospitals...* *Perhaps the person who took the picture aimed to evoke a feeling of sympathy or compassion in the viewer...* *The photographer might have wanted to document the different types of treatment in asylums, perhaps to raise awareness in the public...* *After the picture was taken, the men in the bathtubs might have got dressed and returned to their rooms feeling calmer...* *I'm guessing there is some additional medical apparatus that has been left out of the frame so as to not distract from the focus on the baths...* *If the men are in straightjackets because of violent behaviour, then the photograph could be showing a form of punishment...* *If I were in the place of the nurse, I would try to treat the patients with respect and empathy...* *Maybe other patients who were not in straitjackets [have been left out of the photograph] because they were not as interesting...*
Analysis	*The photo highlights the difference between how mental patients and ordinary patients were treated in 20th century hospitals...* *For the modern viewer, it provides an insight into the reality of mental health institutions, probably before or just after World War 2...* *The photograph shows that vulnerable individuals have always been oppressed by society...* *This is certainly not an idealized depiction of the subject, because it seems very ordinary and even depressing...*
Inference/Interpretation	*The fact that the patients are restrained suggests that they were seen as a potential threat...* *It is difficult to say who are the two men sitting behind the patients, they probably don't work in the hospital because they don't have uniforms but they don't look like visitors either...* *I would say that the message conveyed by the picture is that anyone of us could one day be in the place of these patients...*
Cause and effect	*Because of the patients' expressions, the image creates an unsettling feeling...* *As a result of their restricted movement, the patients are pretty helpless...* *The patients are obviously a danger to themselves or other people and had therefore been put in strait jackets...*
Comparison/Contrast	*Both photographs depict patients in medical settings, but with different emotional tones...* *All patients on both photographs are young white men whose movement is limited by the straitjackets or the canvas...* *In contrast to the restrained patients in the first photo, the patients in the bathtubs seem calm and relaxed...* *Unlike the patients who are receiving treatment in the bathtubs, the men in the straitjackets are not attended by any medical staff...* *The atmosphere in the second photo comes across as being more hopeless and desperate...* *The men in the bathtubs seem to be sedated, whereas the men in straitjackets are not...*

7. CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper is to highlight the usefulness of using photographs in ESP instruction in the fields of the social sciences and humanities, and to offer a possible model for approaching them in this type of instruction, specifically with the aim of enhancing students' functional competence. The model was created on the basis of two existing approaches to photographs, one in the field of history and the other of visual literacy in ELT, and has been adapted to the specific objectives of ESP instruction for students of the social sciences and humanities, thus achieving an integrated approach to learning.

The results of the content analysis of the sample of students' responses to a range of questions formulated within this proposed model have shown its effectiveness in eliciting a wide range of phrases and structures for expressing functions the mastery of which lies at the core of the aims of all social sciences and humanities studies, as well as ESP instruction. Since these aims largely overlap, the analysis of photographs through questions posed within this model is intended to serve multiple interconnected purposes, encompassing descriptive accuracy, personal engagement, and critical inquiry.

First, by focusing on detailed description, students acquire and practise specialized vocabulary for articulating visual elements and describing scenes and contrasts, thereby enhancing their ability to observe and narrate with linguistic precision. This aligns with the broader aims of the social sciences, which emphasize systematic observation, documentation and analysis of human experiences. Beyond mere description, students are encouraged to engage personally with the photographs, expressing emotions, subjective reactions, and associations. This also fosters intercultural competence, as they interpret affective elements and relate them to their personal knowledge, experiences, and cultural backgrounds. In doing so, students refine their ability to communicate nuanced opinions in both oral and written discourse. Finally, moving beyond description and reaction, students engage in hypothetical and critical analysis, situating photographs within braoder social and historical contexts. By speculating about the origins, purposes and implications of a photograph – such as its intended audience, potential biases, framing, etc. – students can apply their academic inquiry skills and analytical thinking, and further increase their interdisciplinary awareness. Thus, this multi-perspective approach supports both the aims of ESP – by enhancing functional competence and academic language proficiency – and the goals of social sciences and humanities studies, particularly in their shared focus on developing communicative, analytical, and critical thinking skills.

The proposed model for approaching photography can be practically applied in ESP instruction in the fields of the social sciences and humanities through various communicative activities, such as discussions, debates, projects, presentations, etc. Future research could be directed towards designing a range of such activities, through which the potential of using photographs in ESP instruction as part of social sciences and humanities studies could be further exploited.

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