

**THE ROLE OF TEACHING AIDS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING
(FLT)**

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Abstract:

This article will explore the multifaceted role of teaching aids in foreign language teaching. It will examine their theoretical underpinnings in educational psychology and second language acquisition research, analyze their practical application across different language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), and evaluate the impact of technological evolution on their nature and efficacy. Ultimately, the discussion aims to affirm that the thoughtful selection and implementation of teaching aids are not merely optional enhancements but indispensable components of effective, learner-centered, and successful foreign language instruction in the 21st century. The process of acquiring a foreign language presents a unique cognitive and cultural challenge, requiring learners to navigate unfamiliar phonetic, grammatical, and semantic landscapes. In this complex journey, the traditional model of instructor-centered instruction, relying predominantly on textbooks and verbal explanation, has increasingly proven insufficient to meet the diverse needs of modern learners. This realization has propelled teaching aids from a peripheral supplementary role to a central position in contemporary pedagogical practice.

Keywords: Foreign language teaching (FLT), language teaching materials instructional materials , language learning tools

Introduction

The Role of Teaching Aids in Foreign Language Teaching

Teaching aids are not merely decorative or occasional additions to the language classroom; they are fundamental tools that shape the learning process. Their primary role is to bridge the gap between abstract language concepts and concrete understanding, thereby making language acquisition more effective, engaging, and accessible. Their roles can be categorized as follows:

Cognitive and Psychological Roles

Facilitate Comprehension and Retention: Aids provide visual, auditory, and kinesthetic stimuli that help learners understand and internalize new vocabulary, grammatical structures, and phonetic patterns. A picture, a chart, or a physical object (realia) creates a direct mental link to a word, bypassing cumbersome translation.

- **Reduce Anxiety and Affective Filter:** Engaging and supportive materials (like games, interactive apps, or videos) lower stress and build learner confidence. A relaxed learner is more open to input and willing to take risks in communication.
- **Cater to Multiple Learning Styles:** They address the needs of visual, auditory, read/write, and kinesthetic learners. A podcast benefits auditory learners, flashcards aid visual learners, and role-play props engage kinesthetic learners, ensuring no student is left behind.
- **Enhance Motivation and Interest:** Colorful, novel, and interactive aids break the monotony of textbook-only instruction. They spark curiosity and make lessons more enjoyable, which is crucial for sustaining long-term effort in language learning.

Linguistic and Communicative Roles

Provide Authentic Context and Culture: Authentic aids (menus, news clips, street signs, films) expose learners to language as it is used in real-life situations and by native speakers, including cultural nuances, slang, and non-verbal cues.

- **Stimulate Communication and Interaction:** Aids are often the catalyst for speaking and writing. A picture prompt can generate description, debate, or storytelling. A problem-solving game forces negotiation and collaborative language use.
- **Focus on Specific Language Skills & Systems:**

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- Vocabulary: Flashcards, word walls, and image-based software for presentation and drilling.
- Grammar: Charts, color-coded diagrams, and animations to visualize tense systems or sentence structure.
- Pronunciation: Audio recordings, phonetic charts, and speech visualization software for modeling and practice.
- Listening: Podcasts, songs, and videos with varying accents and speeds.
- Speaking/Conversation: Role-play cards, dialogue prompts, and simulation software.
- Reading/Writing: Graded readers, online texts, and tools for collaborative writing.

Practical and Pedagogical Roles

Save Time and Increase Efficiency: A well-designed chart or a digital quiz can explain a concept or check understanding much faster than a lengthy verbal explanation. They allow for efficient recycling and review of material. **Enable Differentiation and Personalization:** Teachers can use aids to provide extra support for struggling learners (e.g., vocabulary lists with pictures) or additional challenges for fast finishers (e.g., authentic articles or complex problem-solving tasks). **Support Classroom Management:** Clear visual schedules, timer apps, and grouping tools (like colored cards) help organize activities smoothly and transition between tasks, maximizing instructional time. **Act as a Scaffolding Tool:** Aids provide temporary support that is gradually removed as learners become more proficient. For example, a speaking frame with sentence starters can be used initially and later withdrawn as students gain confidence. **Characteristic of no-stress methods**

Teaching aids can be classified along multiple dimensions. The most common and useful classifications are based on sensory experience, technology level, and operational method.

Classification by Senses (Sensory Experience). This is the most fundamental classification, based on which senses the aid primarily engages.

Visual Aids: Appeal to the sense of sight. Examples: Chalkboard/Whiteboard, Charts, Graphs, Posters, Maps, Flashcards, Models, Real Objects (Specimens), Textbooks, Slides, Silent films, Infographics.

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- Audio Aids: Appeal to the sense of hearing. Examples: Radio, Audio Recordings (Podcasts, MP3s), Gramophone, Language Labs (audio component), Music and Sound Effects.
- Audiovisual (AV) Aids: Engage both sight and hearing simultaneously. Examples: Television, Films/Movies, Documentary Videos, YouTube clips, Interactive Whiteboards with sound, Animations.
- Audio-Visual-Tactile/Kinesthetic (Multi-sensory): Engage more than two senses, often including touch or movement. Examples: Models (to be handled), Simulators (flight, driving), Scientific Lab Equipment, Interactive 3D Models (on touchscreens), Role-play kits, Virtual Reality (VR) experiences.

Classification by Technology Level. This classification looks at the complexity of technology involved.

- Traditional (Non-Projected) Aids: Simple, low-tech, and often teacher-made. Examples: Blackboard, Charts, Realia (real objects), Flannel board, Magnet board, Puppets, Flashcards, Textbooks, Bulletin Boards.
- Projected Aids: Require a light source and projection to display an image on a screen. Examples: Overhead Projector (OHP) transparencies, Slide Projector, Filmstrip Projector, Document Camera (Visualizer), Modern Digital Projectors (for laptops/tablets).
- Electronic/Digital Aids: Require electricity and digital components. They form the core of modern educational technology. Examples: Computer/Laptop, Interactive Whiteboard (IWB), Tablets, Educational Software & Apps, PowerPoint/Google Slides, Simulations, E-books, Online Platforms (LMS like Moodle, Google Classroom).

Classification by Operational Method (How they are used). This focuses on the nature of interaction between the learner and the aid.

- Hardware: The physical equipment or devices used to present information. Examples: Projector, Computer, Microscope, Whiteboard, Radio, Tablet, VR Headset.
- Software: The content or programs that run on the hardware. Examples: PowerPoint file, Educational video, Simulation software, Mobile app, Audio podcast file, Website/URL.

Classification by Degree of Abstractness (Concrete ↔ Abstract). Based on Edgar Dale's "Cone of Experience," moving from direct, hands-on experience to purely symbolic communication.

- Direct & Purposeful Experience: Doing the real thing (e.g., gardening, a science experiment).
- Contrived Experiences: Models, simulations, and mock-ups that represent reality.
- Dramatized Experiences: Role-plays, plays, puppetry.
- Demonstrations: Seeing a process performed by an expert.
- Study Trips (Field Visits): Visiting a relevant location.
- Exhibits: Displays, museums, dioramas.
- Educational Television & Films: Moving images with sound.
- Radio, Recordings, Still Pictures (Photos, Charts): Static visual or pure audio.
- Visual Symbols: Diagrams, sketches, graphs.
- Verbal Symbols: Written or spoken words (most abstract).

Purpose-Driven Selection. Align with objectives: Choose aids that directly support learning goals. Address specific needs: Select tools that overcome particular learning challenges. Enhance, don't distract: Ensure the aid clarifies rather than complicates the topic.

Integration with Pedagogy

Plan integration thoughtfully: Incorporate aids into lesson structure, don't just add them. Complement teaching methods: Use aids that align with your instructional approach. Prepare transitions: Smoothly move between aids and other activities.

Appropriateness & Relevance

Age/level appropriate: Match complexity to learners' developmental stage. Culturally relevant: Use examples and contexts familiar to students. Contextually suitable: Consider physical environment and available resources.

Preparation & Technical Readiness

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Test beforehand: Check functionality, visibility, and audio before class. Prepare backup plans: Have alternatives if technology fails. Organize materials: Arrange aids for easy access during lesson.

Student Engagement & Interaction

Promote active learning: Design activities requiring student interaction with aids. Encourage manipulation: Where possible, let students handle physical aids. Foster collaboration: Use aids as tools for group work and discussion.

Multisensory Approach

Engage multiple senses: Combine visual, auditory, and tactile elements. Balance modalities: Cater to different learning styles without overwhelming. Reinforce through repetition: Present key concepts through different sensory channels.

Simplicity & Clarity

Avoid clutter: Use minimal text and clear visuals. Focus on key points: Highlight only essential information. Use clear labeling: Ensure text is readable and graphics are understandable.

Timing & Pacing

Reveal strategically: Introduce aids at optimal moments for maximum impact. Allow processing time: Give students time to absorb information from aids. Remove when not needed: Put aids away once their purpose is served.

Assessment & Reflection

Check understanding: Use aids to assess student comprehension. Evaluate effectiveness: Reflect on what worked and what didn't. Seek student feedback: Ask learners which aids helped them most

Accessibility & Equity

Ensure all can access: Consider students with different abilities. Provide alternatives: Offer different ways to access the same information. Avoid bias: Review aids for inclusive representation.

Implementation Tips:

Start simple: Begin with one well-used aid before incorporating multiple. Practice moderation: Don't overload lessons with too many aids. Maintain focus: Keep the

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learning objective central, not the aid itself. Develop proficiency: Become comfortable with aids before using them in class. Update regularly: Refresh outdated materials to maintain relevance

Teaching aids are tools to enhance learning, not replacements for effective teaching. The most sophisticated aid cannot compensate for poor instructional design, but a simple, well-chosen aid used strategically can significantly improve understanding and retention.

Conclusions

The effective integration of teaching aids in Foreign Language Teaching (FLT) is not merely a supplementary technique but a fundamental pillar of modern communicative and competency-based approaches. As explored throughout this article, teaching aids—ranging from traditional flashcards and realia to digital multimedia and interactive platforms—serve as indispensable bridges between abstract linguistic concepts and tangible, meaningful use.

When selected and employed in alignment with core pedagogical principles, these aids transform the language classroom from a passive environment of rote memorization into a dynamic, multisensory space for active exploration. They provide essential contextualization, making the target language vivid and relevant by connecting it to visual cues, authentic sounds, and real-world objects. More importantly, they facilitate the shift from learning about the language to using it for genuine communication, problem-solving, and cultural inquiry.

The most significant takeaways underscore that success lies not in the technological sophistication of the aid, but in its purposeful application. Effective aids lower the affective filter, motivate learners through engagement and variety, cater to diverse learning styles, and provide crucial scaffolding that guides learners from supported practice to independent fluency. They empower teachers to create immersive mini-environments where students can interact with the language in a low-risk, high-impact setting.

Ultimately, the future of FLT will continue to evolve with emerging technologies, from AI-driven language apps to virtual reality simulations. However, the foundational principles remain constant: teaching aids must be purpose-driven, student-centered, and seamlessly integrated into a coherent pedagogical framework. By thoughtfully harnessing the power of these tools, educators can move beyond teaching a language as a system of rules, and instead, cultivate confident, competent, and culturally aware

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communicators ready for a globalized world. The judicious use of teaching aids, therefore, is the key to unlocking not just linguistic proficiency, but also the joy and empowerment that come with true intercultural communication.

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