

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter reviews previous literatures and studies on visuals and language learning. It also covers the review of literatures on cartoons and language learning.

2.1 History of Visuals and Language

The human language is a visual language. The alphabets of our language are in the form of symbols which represent different sounds and the combination of these symbols and sounds form what is called a language. Based on the article from the www.resurrectisis.org website entitled 'Visual Language' :

"Our language is a work of art written in pictures. Our language is a visual language. Many words are pictures which are composed of pictures that are letters of the alphabet... The letters of the alphabet are all pictures. Our alphabet contains fifty-two pictures. Every letter, large and small, is a distinct picture having a meaning of its own. Letters that are pictures can combine to form words that are pictures of their meanings. That is visual language (2002: 1-2)."

Campbell (1966) as quoted by Hewes (1978) explained the reason why human language remains primarily a visual system of encoding information. According to Campbell, this is because humans remain largely visual in their thinking which they inherited from their primate ancestors. As acrobatic tree-dwellers, the primates'

visual control of their motor activity became very precise and this skill was then retained as they returned to the ground.

The ancient writings which are found in the form of visual writings written on the walls of caves, castles or buildings of the ancient times and even from the ruins of these structures, which were once homes of the ancestors, have helped us to learn more about the ancient history. Beneze (2000) who studied the ancient writing system explained that there are many kinds of ancient writings. Among them are hieroglyphic scripts which are largely consisted of symbols that communicate ideas directly, without the intervention of language.

Beneze (2000) classified the ancient writing systems into pictogram and logographic where a pictogram is a direct image of the object it represents and it does not represent the sounds of the spoken language such as the picture of a paddy field and a cow representing their actual objects. Ideograms are a form of pictograms that represents ideas which are linked to a particular object. The example given by Beneze is the picture of a sun which represents warmth, heat, daytime, etc. Beneze further explained that, an ideogram becomes a phonogram when it also stands for the sounds of the word. On the other hand, a logographic writing, which is also called 'word writing', is a writing system where the written character represents both the meaning and pronunciation of a word. This information highlights the importance of visuals as a major part of our language systems.

2.1.1 Definition of Visuals

Canning (2001) perceived that the concept of defining what constitutes a visual is complex by nature. Canning looked at more modern theories of visuals and their effects. Canning defined a visual as any projected or non-projected image which can be further classified into illustrations, visuals, pictures, perceptions, mental images, figures or anything that would help a learner see an immediate meaning. Canning explained that a projected image is a visual which is planned for and is used with an intended meaning. On the other hand, the non-projected visual is the effect of spontaneous occurrence of an image which is usually unplanned and also occurs as a result of triggered actions.

Cartoons, comics, photographs, films, pictures, posters, advertisements (in prints), paintings, newspapers, etc., are among the visual genres. Hill (1990) perceived visuals as kinds of photographic or drawn pictures which are found in various types of magazines. In a different view, Rose (2001) said that for some writers, visual is the most fundamental of all senses. Fyfe and Law (1988) as quoted by Rose (2001), said that human beings come to know the world as real for them through the ubiquitous processes of depiction, picturing and seeing. Rose (2001) suggested the reason why *'seeing comes before words'* as a child who looks and recognizes before he can even speak.

2.2 Visual Language

Visual language basically refers to the interrelationship between visuals and language. Visuals could elicit responses in which the use of words occurs to derive meaning. Horn (2000) defined visual language as a very close integration of words and visual elements which is seen as a truly new language with the distinct syntax and semantics.

An article on 'The Language of Design' by Cornell University defined visual language as the idea through which communication occurs through visual symbols as opposed to verbal symbols or words in understanding art and designs. In another article entitled 'Exploring Language' which was published by Learning Media Limited on behalf of the Ministry of Education New Zealand, visual language is referred to as communications which arise through the combination of visual elements with words. Hilligoss (1999) was of the opinion that the human visual conventions are closely tied to language and experience. Therefore the presence of verbal cues influences the way we interpret pictures.

Mulholland (1978) said that visual language is different from verbal language and can be understood through the understanding of the processing of verbal and visual message in the brain. Mulholland explained that verbal language processes occur dominantly in the left hemisphere and the non-verbal (visual) processes occur in the right hemisphere.

2.2.1 Visuals and Language Learning

Visuals are useful to language learners. According to Handono (1996), the role of pictures in helping the audiences in the learning process is undeniable. Visual materials help to create situations which could arouse interest among the language learners. Wright (1989) brought up an interesting issue regarding the use of visuals in the form of pictures in language learning. According to Wright, pictures are important in the concept of 'gap' where they build up the '*opinion gap*' and '*perception gap*'. The '*opinion gap*' is where the difference in opinion becomes the reason for learners to communicate whereas the '*perception gap*' refers to the difference in perception being the reason for them to communicate. So, visuals in the form of pictures which are used in the classroom help learners to be more interested in the learning process and be active participants of the classroom activities.

According to Hill (1990), visuals are a way to develop one's language ability. This is because, according to Stanislawczyk and Yavener (1976), visuals are the prime means of communicating using the language as they encourage students to express authentic ideas that are inspired by the pictures. In language learning, visual materials encourage the use of intrinsic language in verbal communication, hence making learning a natural process and not artificially invented or something that was imposed by teachers (Wright, 1976). Visuals help to aid and enhance the comprehension of verbal ideas and encourage interaction among learners as the

messages carried in the form of visuals could have a powerful impact on many people as well as entertaining them (Handono, 1996).

Visual materials have the potential of making the materials more interactive (Handono,1996). This is due to the quality of the visual materials which could also benefit the teachers as they provide a wide variety of contexts for the teaching items. They also help teachers to provide a convincing representation and simulations of real life situations by manipulating the language in the language classroom (Wright, 1976a; Moore, Koller and Arago,1994). Visuals bring images of reality into the unnatural world of language classroom which helps to widen the knowledge of the students (Hill,1990).

Findings of a lot of researches in this area suggest that visuals promote language learning since visuals have a lot of advantages. Hill (1990), Wright (1989, 1976) as well as Wittich and Schuller (1962), advocated that visuals are inexpensive as they are easily available in large numbers and at little or no cost. Visuals are available in most situations which can be taken from the local magazines, books or newspapers. Hill (1990) viewed visuals in language learning as something personal because they are selected by a teacher to suit her own classroom and teaching points. The impact of visuals is immediate and all students regardless of their age or background are able to respond in some way to the educational points being made (Doring, 2002).

According to Canning (2001), visuals which are most preferred by learners are related to their previous experiences, appeared in various colours, contained a story and could be associated with places, objects, persons, animals and events, which are familiar to the learners.

It is undeniable that visuals play an important role in eliciting responses from the students and encouraging them to actively use the language. But, it is important to bear in mind the language ability of the students in ensuring the effectiveness of the use of visuals in language learning. It is important to note that in deciding to use pictures or any visuals for any activity done in the classroom, the pictures must be efficient in achieving their purpose regardless of the age of the students (Wright, 1976). As reminded by Stanislawczyk and Yavener :

“Visuals have value in encouraging the creative use of language. The choice of a picture, however, is extremely important, since it must represent situations the students can handle linguistically. Of course, they cannot be expected to discuss a picture that is beyond their preparation” (1976 :12).

Hill (1990) emphasized on the benefits of the use of visuals if they are well chosen. Hill believed that well-chosen visuals could evoke immediate responses from learners in any class. These responses are personal and authentic reactions which are vital in making language learning meaningful. The other benefit of using visuals in language classroom is they are always fresh and varies in format and style and the subject matter is always a surprise as learners would have no clue of what is

coming up next in their lesson. Furthermore, visuals are well known for their flexibility where they can be used for almost every aspect of language teaching. This is also agreed by Wright (1976) who believed that pictures can be used in any emphasis of the syllabus the students and teachers are following.

In teaching the language skills, Wright (1976) advocated that visual materials have a broad function in teaching writing skills. They help to motivate students and create a context within which written text will be more meaningful (Wright, 1989; Handono, 1996). Apart from that, visual materials provide students with information which they can refer to, including objects, actions, events and relationship. These materials also provide the non-verbal cues, guide and motivation to written composition. As viewed by Wittich and Schuller (1962), in order to motivate students, pictures which are used in classroom instruction must be highly interesting, dramatic and unusual. According to them, a good composition or a good overall organization of a composition reflects an effective picture which is a fundamental characteristic in using pictures in language learning.

Visuals tend to be miniatures of the referent and the process of miniaturization resulted in the distinct morphological characteristics of the referent. Therefore, visuals could still be recognized and with the help of linguistic systems, pictures could also be understood (Sigel, 1978).

On the other hand, in a guided composition, the main function of visual materials is to guide the students to communicate their ideas and opinions using their store of foreign language. The principal criterion is to actually provide an interesting stimulus for the students which could help them express their ideas or opinions with their grasp of the foreign language (Wright, 1976). Wittich and Schuller (1962) in their discussion on communication and pictures postulated that *"pictures can arouse interest, stimulate discussion, raise questions, supply information and ideas and otherwise contribute to learning"* (1962:72).

Wright (1989) was of the opinion that since writing and speaking are both productive skills, visuals in the form of pictures can be used in similar ways in teaching the two skills. Among the roles of pictures in speaking and writing are they can be used to motivate the students and make them want to pay attention and take part in the learning process. They can contribute to the context for they could bring the world into the classroom. Pictures can be described, interpreted or responded to in an objective or subjective way. In addition, pictures can also cue responses to questions and at the same time stimulate and provide information as students can refer to the pictures for more information during conversation, discussion or even story telling sessions.

Moore, Koller and Arago (1994) looked into the integration of art in language learning where the teaching of second language was done through and with art. The activities carried out in the classroom were highly student-centered

and student-initiated which involved a great deal of imagination and creativity on the part of the students. The students' works of art are referred to as student-created artwork, student-created visuals and student-created images. Student-created images could enhance language learning since students are more involved in the learning process, making them confident and productive as they share their piece of work with their friends during presentation. This also helps to motivate the students in their learning as their ability in art is recognized. The classroom environment becomes more conducive (classroom atmosphere becomes more positive and supportive), students are able to perform tasks which demands cognitive processes and the quality of their written and spoken language improves. According to Moore et al. (1994), this kind of activity helps the teachers to know the students better – their personality, interests, preferences and experiences which help in developing a more individualized teaching instructions and plans. The students' artworks are authentic, vivid and meaningful which help learning to take place.

“Used with careful consideration for the age, language proficiency level, needs, interest, and experiences of the students, art-inspired learning experiences can play an invaluable role in the second language classroom. Educators who recognize this can incorporate art activities into their instruction to enliven and enhance language learning. In doing so, they can mobilize the language student's whole learning potential rather than over-using the verbal thinking strategies upon which most education focuses so one-sidedly” (Moore, Koller and Arago 1994 : 83).

Bucklelew (2003) implemented another approach in using visuals in language learning which is called 'the postcard activity'. The students were trained to select and study a painting from the postcards during each session. They were required to list details of the paintings during brainstorming sessions, such as colours, lines, shapes, figures and their first impressions of the paintings. Then, the students were to write about a page describing why the painting or the picture was like themselves, their family, friendship, school and so forth. This activity revealed that students were able to engage writing and reading with the use of art. It also managed to provide students with a new and exciting ways of seeing themselves in relation to the world which in turn motivates the students in their learning. Connections between art and language were successfully established during the activities. The language seemed to improve as the activity progresses, the classroom participation among the students was remarkable and the students started to build up vocabularies related to art and practised using them as they write their piece of writing.

Despite all the positive influences that visuals have on language learning, there are also limitations which could hinder the learning process. Handono (1996) presented the limitations of visuals. According to Handono, a few audiences who are 'visually illiterate' may not be able to interpret visuals using the usual pictorial conventions and some visuals are difficult to visualize or just cannot be visualized therefore could contribute to the failure of the learning process. It is apparent that some visuals or illustrations are very culture specific, hence may not be understood by others from different culture. Some visual metaphors and symbols are not

universal. They may have different meanings to different people depending on their level of knowledge and visual exposures which could yield different interpretation of visuals, misunderstanding and breakdown in communication.

There are a few measures that can be followed to ensure the effective use of visuals as suggested by Handono (1996). According to Handono, visuals must be clearly presented in order to communicate meaning and to convey messages precisely so that they can be understood and correctly interpreted. As people understand and are attracted to pictures which are familiar to them, therefore, the visuals chosen should reflect the cultural context of the audience. Visuals need to be realistic. The people and objects portrayed in the visuals must appear in the form of day-to-day occurrences which are familiar and easier to recognize. This is certainly better than anatomical drawings, map, schematic drawing, engineering design or pictures that do not resemble things that people normally see. Handono (1996) also suggested the use of appropriate colours and symbols that suit the target audience as they are essential in order to have effective visuals.

Sigel (1978) explained about the comprehension of pictures and postulated that, *"to comprehend is to understand"* (1978:95). Therefore, in order to comprehend a picture, Sigel suggested one to extract meaning from the picture and to relate to it as a representation of a referential object or event, either in the knowledgeable past or as projected in the future. Sigel emphasized that comprehension must be distinguished from recognition, in which recognition refers

to merely identify or label a picture and does not imply or require understanding. When a child labels a cat or its mother in a picture, the child only recognizes. Sigel (1978) insisted that such recognition cannot be presumed to be comprehension and therefore, the labelling of a picture does not necessarily indicate comprehension of the meaning of words.

Sigel (1978) discussed at great length the comprehension of pictures which he said was a cognitive function where pictures can be presented in various media. Sigel proposed the term 'conservation of meaning' which meant that the alterations of media will create a different form of picture, but it does not alter the basic meaning of the picture. Sigel's (1978) explanation is similar to Piaget's notion of conservation of quantity, number or other physical properties. In the case of pictures, according to Sigel, the conservation of meaning refers to the phenomena where the meaning of an object remains despite the transformation of the media in which it presented. Hence, Sigel emphasized that the medium alters only the form, but does not alter the meaning.

2.2.2 Creativity and Language Learning

Creativity is also important in teaching and learning as it helps to motivate the students to learn more and to encourage teachers to teach effectively (Cropley, 2001). On the part of the teacher, creativity is essential to facilitate teaching hence making it more effective as teaching are made more interesting and enjoyable.

Interesting and enjoyable learning experiences influence students to be more attentive in their learning. They also reduce stress, help students to understand their lesson and motivate students to learn.

2.2.3 Visuals and Memory

In discussing image and memory, Paivio (1978) referred to the well-established finding which says that pictureable material is generally easier to learn and remember than less pictureable material. To be more specific, Paivio explained that pictures are generally more memorable than words, and, concrete and high-imagery words are more memorable than low-imagery words. In short, memorability of materials depends on pictureability or image arousing value of the materials (Paivio,1978). Handono (1996) believed that pictures are very much needed because simple and clear pictures can remain longer in our memory, hence become easily re-expressed whenever required.

Paivio (1978) postulated that pictures are generally easier to remember than words. This is due to the non-verbal character of visuals where the visuals or non-verbal memory processes have some intrinsic mnemonic advantage over the verbal ones. Paivio (1978) further explained that the reason pictures are easier to remember is because they are presumed to be stored in two ways – as memory pictures and as memory word. *“Simply stated, two memory traces are better than one”* (Paivio,1978:116). However, Wittich and Schuller (1962) posit that words and

pictures are usually better than either words or pictures alone and the combinations of appropriate visual and verbal materials are required for teaching tasks to be effective.

A long-term memory information concerning the appearance and functions of things which includes shapes, sizes, colours of animate or inanimate objects in all their infinite variety is called visual knowledge (Paivio,1978). Such knowledge seemed to be visual and non-verbal in form which could be manipulated and shaped by human actions. Paivio (1978) was of the opinion that visual processes which involve visual literacy, visual scholarship or visual knowledge cannot be understood or even studied in isolation. This is due to the fact that all non-verbal information processing systems require linguistic knowledge. Paivio (1978), therefore, believed that this results in the association between words and things which makes language extremely interesting and important from the psychological point of view.

Paivio (1978) presented a few experiments done on the application of visual imagery to the learning of foreign languages using imagery mnemonics. According to Paivio, these experimental studies had demonstrated that visuals significantly speed up learning of foreign language vocabularies among university students.

Shepard (1978) advocated that, a visual image is the most perfect form of mental representation as far as the shape, position, and relations of objects in space are concerned. So, according to Shepard, the vivid mental images have a greater

tendency to engage the affective and motivational systems as they are more effective psychologically as compared to pure verbal encodings in corresponding the external objects and events. So, vivid mental images that one pictures, which are related to object or event, determine the powerful emotions such as fear, anger and desire, rather than the abstract verbal reasoning.

"The more you know, the more you sense. The more you sense, the more you select. The more you select, the more you perceive. The more you perceive, the more you remember. The more you remember, the more you learn. The more you learn, the more you know" (Lester,2000:5).

Lester (2000) emphasized that the greatest aid of clear seeing for sharp focusing is not through the naked eyes, or with the help of glasses, or even telescope, but it is the process of sensing, selecting and perceiving which require curious, questioning and knowledgeable mind.

It is only natural that we tend to remember things or pictures that are extraordinary, special and unique or especially something that has the ability to attract attention and also which are meaningful to us. We form a mental image of what we see and hear. A meaningful image is likely to become a part of our long term memory (Lester, 2000). Lester postulated that, *"pictures that are so powerful could affect in the viewer remember their content provided that their mind actively using the images or pictures"* (2000:5).

Lester (2000) quoted the work of Huxley (1942) who formulated the formula of clear vision which consisted in three main stages. They are sensing, selecting and perceiving. The process of sensing in a simple way means 'to look' which is to allow enough lights to enter the eyes so that the surrounding objects can be seen immediately. In the process of selecting, the human brain selects or isolates what needs to be stored in the memory. This explains why we have a proportion of remembered to forgotten images. The brain deliberately and unconsciously sorts all the possible images and selects those that become a part of our long-term memory (Lester, 2000:3). The last stage of Huxley's visual theory as presented by Lester is to perceive, where we try to make sense of the visuals we select. In order for the visuals to be part of our long-term memory the meaning of the visuals must be highly considered.

In relation to learning, visuals which are used in the learning process must be made meaningful to the learners in order for learning to take place and to make sure that they become a part of the learner's long term memory so that learning will be enhanced.

2.2.4 Visual Perception

Hilligoss (1999) in discussing visual perception said that :

“One approach to what we see comes from the psychology of sensation, perception and memory. Vision takes in more sensory data than any other means of sensation. The eyes constantly move in small jumps in a process called ‘foveal vision’, which brings images into focus onto the area of clearest focus of the eye, the fovea. Then, in the process called perception, the brain interprets the data. Within hundredths of a second the eyes can take in data the brain processes in less than half a second” (Hilligoss, 1999:7).

‘Visual perception’ is an active thinking process of planning and interpreting sensory data from the eyes, hence, making us not as passive viewers. So, perception is a cognitive activity (Hilligoss, 1999). Arnheim (1969), an influential theorist of perceptual psychology and art, as quoted by Hilligoss (1999), perceived visual perception as an active concern of human mind which is necessary for human survival. Arnheim (1969) believed that visual perception is not a passive recording of stimulus material.

According to Arnheim (1969) as quoted in Hilligoss (1999), as human being, we normally direct our attention which is an integral part of visual perception. We will look around and find ‘focal points’ where we tend to focus on a few selected items instead of looking at everything around us. By doing this, according to Arnheim (1969), we ignore much of other sensory information. This is called

‘filtering’. The filtering processes are presumed to protect the mind from being swamped with irrelevant information.

Our past experience plays an important role in seizing on and interpreting what we have focused on in our selected field of vision (Kostelnick and Roberts (1998), as quoted in Hilligoss, 1999). As humans we use our visions to accomplish goals as we normally know what we want to see or will see as we look around (Hilligoss, 1999).

Coe (1996) as quoted in Hilligoss (1999) was of opinion that readers take in a document’s visual design and images immediately. Coe (1996) brought up the term *‘image memory’* which is our memory of particular images as well as our own constructed *‘mental images’* of pictures, events and visual-related words. It is also one of our most enduring types of memory. The lasting memories of images are applied across the documents we encounter, thus the designs affect readers’ first impression of genre, interest and importance (Hilligoss, 1999).

Hilligoss (1999) summarized that, *“we see what we expect to see”*, which describes the way we plan and focus our attention visually. Many studies of eyewitness accounts of crimes confirmed what Arnheim (1969) theorized, as quoted in Hilligoss (1999). Arnheim theorized that our ability to focus comes with the ability to filter out visual information plus the ability to interpret what we do focus on in terms of what is familiar to us.

Hilligoss (1999) quoted Dragga and Gong (1989) as saying that from the psychological aspect of seeing there is evidence that the eyes tend to focus on the illustrations before the text, and notice pictures (representational illustrations) before more abstract illustrations. Hilligoss (1999) also quoted Coe (1996) who said that images are also easier to recall from memory than non-image data. According to Shneiderman (1998) as revealed by Hilligoss (1999), visual representations allow us to grasp spatial relationships and actions more quickly than the verbal explanations.

Coe (1996) and Shneiderman (1998) as quoted in Hilligoss (1999) shared the same opinion that, people seem to have different ways that they learn best which is regarded by psychologists as 'cognitive style'. Coe (1996) was of opinion that learning primarily through visual means or imagination differs from the learning styles that emphasize analytical reasoning. Coe (1996) believed that our visual conventions are closely tied to language and experience, therefore, the presence of verbal cues influences our interpretation of pictures. This is agreed by Wittich and Schuller (1962) who said that the interpretation of pictures are influenced by the viewer's past experience with pictures as well as his own cultural and social backgrounds.

As human, we often look and often focus on what is familiar to us and filter the rest. Things that are familiar to us which are normally in our focal attention would be our accumulated memories and experience. This includes our mental

models or schemata. These mental models are highly organized into networks and categories of information, so that we can recognize many visual forms, from photographs to types of documents, almost at an instant (Hilligoss, 1999).

Wright (1976) emphasized on two major issues of visual perception. In order for visuals to be well perceived by language learners, they must possess clarity together with recognition and expression qualities. Visual materials must be clearly seen by the learners, therefore the size, shape, colours and their presentations are among the aspects to be paid attention to when preparing them for teaching. Recognition and expression qualities could only be achieved if the visual materials are clearly seen. When visuals are seen clearly by the learners, the content could easily be recognized and interpreted.

Sigel (1978) depicted Arnheim's (1974) opinion on vision (perception). Arnheim perceived vision or perception as a creative activity of the human mind and the act of perceiving which is accomplished at the sensory level yielded the human understanding of visuals.

2.2.5 Visuals and Brain Lateralization

Witelson (1976) as quoted by Mulholland (1978) claimed that :

“Laboratory research, especially in the last decade, has confirmed clinical evidence that for most humans, verbal language processes occur predominantly in the left hemisphere; that is, there is a relative dominance of the left cortex for verbal language. Research also shows “superiority” of the right cortex for spatial and musical (i.e non-verbal) cognitions” (1978:87).

Mulholland (1978) explained about Electroencephalographic (EEG) investigations in discussing brain lateralization and visual language. According to Mulholland, during cognitive activity, more alpha rhythm produced in the right EEG shows more verbal cognition whereas more alpha rhythm produced in the left EEG shows more visual or non-verbal cognitions.

Witelson (1976) further explained that Electroencephalographic (EEG) and other studies have shown sex differences in the lateralization of verbal and non-verbal functions. In general, men show greater lateralization of non-verbal processes than women, and men show lateralization at an earlier age than women. According to Mulholland (1978), this study suggested the hypothesis that women may process visual language differently from men which is similar to sex differences in lateralization of visual-spatial processes.

2.3 Cartoons as Visual Aids

Melor (1999), Ting (2003), Ashkenas (1995), Davis (1997), Lester (2000), Wittich and Schuller (1962) and Chiasson (2002) postulated and agreed that cartoons and their genres contained humour. Despite being perceived as a light reading material and synonym with negative influence in the development of language or even non-suitable educationally, cartoons which are well chosen will have a remarkable impact in the learning of language. Melor (1999) believed that both cartoons and comic strips present humour which is much needed by the learners and teachers of second language to enliven the classroom atmosphere and making learning more enjoyable and meaningful.

“The power of cartoon lies in its compactness, its simplification of issues and the considerable of interest which can be aroused by sharply drawn illustrations laced with humour. It is a predigested source of information with a strong visual impact (Wittich and Schuller, 1962;136).

Humour which can be gained through pictures especially cartoons could provide a valuable motivational technique since they could arouse students’ interest and help to establish a much more relaxed relationship between students and the teacher (Wieggers, Gooters and Tormo, 1996).

Hilligoss (1999) commented that cartoons and comics which are popular genres of drawings are exaggerated for the sake of humour. Chiasson (2002) shared the same opinion with Melor (1999) who said that the focus on the use of cartoons in the language classroom could add the element of humour in it. According to Chiasson (2002), humour can contribute a great deal to the second language classroom. It enables teachers to create an affective or positive classroom environment and is also a source of enjoyment for teachers and students. Language in cartoons is seen as authentic which reflects the real life situations. Furthermore, humorous situations in classroom allow students to express themselves without fear of ridicule and criticism. Therefore, the level of anxiety and stress is reduced and students are encouraged to take more risks in using their second language which in turn will motivate them to learn. Doring (2002) in discussing humour in cartoons advocated that humour both in visuals and verbal forms is a useful device for gaining and maintaining students' attention and interest in learning.

Swabey (1970) referred to comic as a quality of nature or art that provokes merriment or laughter. This quality which exists in comic or any form of caricature including cartoons, will certainly help in making learning more fun and enjoyable. Chiasson (2002) quoted Dickinson (2001) who said that classrooms which welcome laughter help bring learning to life.

According to Doring (2002), his previous teaching experiences demonstrated that it is difficult to encourage students especially those of the first year in university

to discuss concepts openly in classroom discussions. However, the use of cartoons found to offer an effective means to develop students' particular skills. As a neutral resource, cartoons are able to elicit responses from the students and the students could joke about possible interpretations as well as react to possible exaggerations of the cartoons. *"In interacting with the cartoon stimuli, they are refining their own learning and understanding while at the same time be encouraged to develop critical higher order of cognitive skills"* (Doring, 2002:2).

Melior (1999) was of opinion that 'Lat' cartoon is a popular cartoon which presents social problems or male-female relationships in a humorous way and is appropriate for teaching. This is in agreement with Ashkenas (1995) who stated that comics which contain humour, is appropriate for teaching. In another opinion, Davis (1998) perceived cartoons as authentic materials which are a form of educational entertainment.

Despite the fact that cartoons offer a lot of positive influences and advantages in language learning, cartoons also have their negative qualities. Davis (1998) mentioned that it was often believed that comic books were so educationally unsound that their use would lead to mental stagnation. Lester (2000) also mentioned that cartoons are often considered as unworthy of serious attention and perceived as junk for children. Cartoons and its genre are often regarded as non-educational materials. Even that so, many studies such as Davis (1998), Wieggers, Gooters and Tormo (1996), Doring (2002) and Ting (2003), have shown that if they

are chosen and planned properly, cartoons could yield a remarkable learning experience to the learners. This is because according to Davis (1998), comic strips and comic books have a widespread appeal to all age groups and levels of society as they reflect authentic language and culture.

The reasons why comics are so attractive as an educational teaching tool are because there is a built in desire to learn through comics and easy accessibility in daily newspapers and bookstands. Furthermore, as an authentic medium, comics depict real-life language of people from all levels and society in an ingenious way. Comics provide a variety of visuals and linguistic elements and codes that are appealing to students with different learning styles (Davis, 1998).

The article on 'Exploring Language' which is published by Learning Media Limited on behalf of The Ministry of Education of New Zealand, discusses on visual language and static images. The article mentioned that cartoons and comics are static images which literally mean visual images that do not move. As static images, cartoons and comics communicate by combining visual elements with words. The visual images in cartoons and comics, according to this article help to reinforce or augment the narrative, create humour, provide commentary or subtext, or simply deliver messages. The visuals represented by cartoons or comics themselves contribute a great deal in conveying meanings and sometimes, in this case, the help of written text is not necessary.

Ting (2003) used cartoons in teaching English to a group of Italian adult learners. In spite of the age, the students enjoyed the learning process as much as the young learners when taught using cartoons. The use of cartoons had successfully helped to elicit responses from these adult learners hence making learning more meaningful to them. Ting claimed that the use of cartoons in language learning is not limited to the young learners only. The appropriate use of cartoons will certainly motivate any learners regardless of their age. The cartoons become a useful tool in gaining and maintaining their attention and interest in the classroom. Cartoons can be used to motivate the students as they are naturally effective and readily attract attentions and arouse interests among the students provided that the chosen cartoons are appropriate to be used in classroom instruction (Wittich and Schuller, 1962).

Wittich and Schuller (1962) lined the factors to consider before selecting cartoons as a teaching material. The cartoons must be understandable by the students, therefore, it has to be appropriate to the level of the students and has to be in a simple form. Cartoons that are used in the classroom need no captions as the picture alone could convey the message. This kind of cartoons helps to provide an open discussion about the message or messages it presents. The cartoons also need to present clear symbolic meaning so that the learners could understand, hence, helps to facilitate the learning process.

It is important to note that, like any teaching strategy, the use of cartoons can become meaningless if they are over-used. Just as humour, there needs to be a careful balance (Doring, 2002). *“Cartoons are an excellent starter and as a means to an end but like any use of humour in teaching, is a resource, not the product”*(Doring, 2002:4).