

*The Journal of
Nagasaki University of Foreign Studies
No. 26 2022*

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英語教科書における顔のイラストの位置的傾向

マーティンソン ラース

長崎外大論叢

第26号
(別冊)

長崎外国語大学
2022年12月

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概要 (Abstract / Short Outline)

This paper examines positional tendencies for illustrated depictions of faces found in fourteen Japanese EFL elementary textbooks. This analysis uncovered significant differences in how these images tend to manifest on the left- and right-hand sides of two-page spreads. It is argued that this may reflect different presentational strategies employed by textbook publishers for the early and late stages of a lesson and that this apparent systematicity may suggest some form of “visual grammar” that constrains how pedagogic images tend to be positioned.

本論文では、日本の小学校の英語教科書14冊に掲載されている顔のイラストの位置的な傾向を分析した。その結果、見開きページの左側と右側で、顔写真の位置関係に大きな違いがあることが判明した。この事実は、授業の初期と後期で教科書出版社が採用する視覚戦略の違いを反映している可能性がある。またこの明らかな系統性は、教科書における画像やイラストなどの配置を制約する何らかの「視覚文法」の存在を示唆している可能性がある。

Keywords

Multimodal Communication, Corpus Studies, Semiotics

1. Introduction

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) educators have a wealth of linguistic reference materials available through which to enhance their understanding of how syntax manifests to serve different communicative functions. The same cannot be said for pedagogic illustrators and material designers who wish to better understand the semantic implications of the positioning of *graphic* forms, as this area has received far less academic attention. This is unfortunate considering the prominence of images in EFL textbooks, particularly at the elementary level. This research paper seeks to contribute to a better understanding of image positioning tendencies within this genre and to reflect upon their semantic significance.

Research was conducted by cataloguing the x-y positions of illustrated depictions of faces found in Japanese elementary EFL textbooks and using this data to identify spatial patterns. This analysis uncovered significant differences in image positioning between the left- and right-hand

pages of two-page spreads. It is argued that these results may be a reflection of the different presentational strategies that textbook designers employ for the early and late stages of a lesson.

This paper is structured as follows. Section 2 reviews academic literature related to *Spatial Semiotic Concepts* that are salient to the purposes of this paper. Section 3 describes the *Methodology* used to select the images for analysis and systematically quantify their page positions. Section 4 will present the *Analysis* through a summary of the quantitative *Results* and qualitative *Interpretations* thereof. Finally, Section 5 will serve as a *Conclusion*.

2. Spatial Semiotic Concepts

The systematic nature of *linguistic* communication is often described in terms of grammar. Some academics (e.g., Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006; Cohn, 2013) assert that similar rule systems apply to visual modes of expression as well, with some form of “visual grammar” constraining how graphic forms combine into meaningful wholes. This section will describe three “grammatical” patterns related to image positioning with a focus on how these can manifest in the textbook genre. Section 2.1 will discuss the linguistic concept of *Given and New* and describe how it can manifest spatially. Section 2.2 will address *Emoji Syntax* through a discussion of how visual depictions of faces can contribute to discourse. Finally, Section 2.3 will discuss the semantic potential of the *Center and the Margin*.

2.1 Given and New

For linguistic communication, discourse is commonly organized to start with information which is known to the listener (i.e., *given*) and then progress to information that is *new* to them (Willis, 2003: 35; Machin, 2007: 139-141). According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 179-185), this communicative norm also manifests in visual compositions. They argue that *given* information often appears on the left and *new* information often appears on the right, at least for cultures with left-to-right writing conventions (Ibid.: 181). While Japanese is traditionally written vertically from right to left, in many contexts it is written horizontally from left to right, and all of the textbooks analyzed in this paper conform to this latter convention. Accordingly, the correlation between “left and right” and “given and new” could well be relevant to discussion of these textbooks as well.

Figure 2-1 provides a schematic representation of a visual composition that seems to conform to this semiotic concept. This composition serves as the visual complement to a self-introduction listening activity. The girl (represented by grey shape “A” in Figure 2-1) is a recurring character that has appeared in the textbook before and therefore it could be argued that she represents *given* information. Accordingly, she is placed towards the *left*. A photograph of the piano (represented by grey shape “B”) visually evokes a part of the girl’s self-introduction speech, which is presumably *new* information to the audience. As such, it is arranged to the *right*.

While Kress and van Leeuwen use an entirely different model to interpret the semantic significance of top and bottom (see Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006: 186-193), these positional



① 美紀の自己しょうかいを聞こう。



Figure 2-1: *Given* and *new* being expressed spatially from left to right (schematic representation of composition from Suzuki and Takano 2020a: 10).

attributes could also be considered in terms of *given* and *new* for the textbook genre. As shown in Figure 2-2, textbook pages were often laid out in horizontal “strips” with the intention that activities are to be completed from the top of the page to the bottom. It is therefore not unreasonable to imagine that the *top* of the page could also serve as *given* information and the

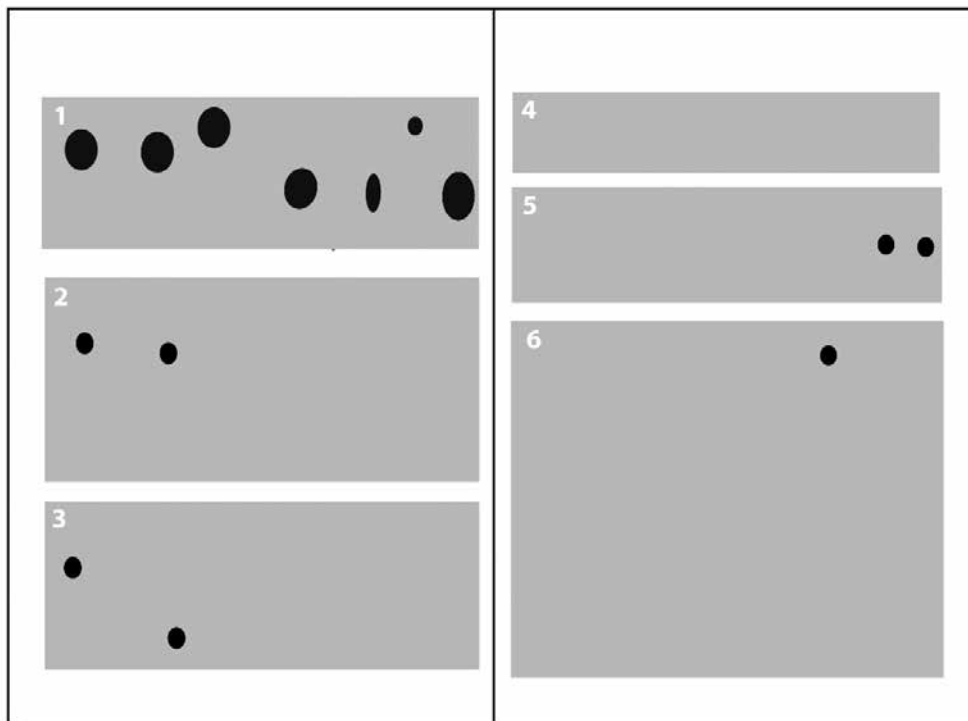


Figure 2-2: Schematic representation of a two-page textbook spread (based on Yoshida, 2020a: 122-23). Grey shapes represent activities with the white numbers representing their order in the pedagogic sequence. Black ovals represent facial depictions of “main characters” (see Section 3.1).

bottom as new.

2.2 Emoji Syntax

Many of the most commonly used emoji are faces (Ljubešić and Fišer, 2016; Cramer, de Juan and Tetreault, 2016), so literature related to emoji syntax and function may provide insight that is relevant to this paper's research focus.

Emoji are often used to modify the tone of the preceding statement or offer an evaluation of its content (Cramer, de Juan and Tetreault, 2016) as is exemplified in Figure 2-3. In this capacity, emoji are often syntactically arranged to come *after* the statement they are responding to and thus often appear towards the right. In this sense, the *right* side of a visual composition can function as a space where an evaluation or reaction to the *left* is made.

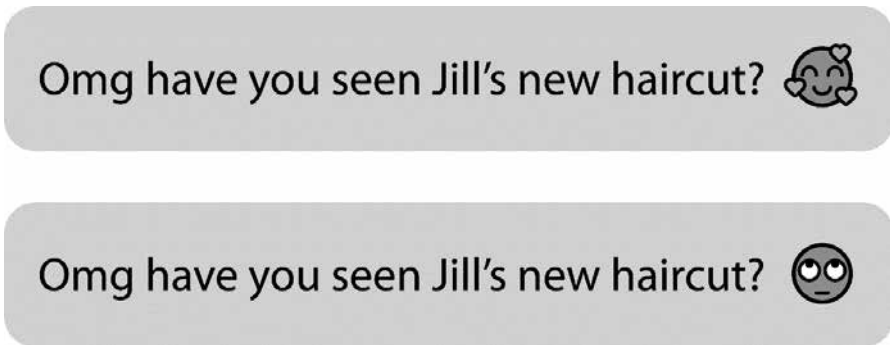


Figure 2-3: Contrived examples of emojis modifying the tone or offering an evaluation of the text that precedes them (created for this paper).

2.3 Center and Margin

The final semiotic concept discussed here is that of the *center* and the *margin*. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 196) characterize the center as “the nucleus of the information” to which the margins are “subservient”, “ancillary”, and “dependent.” Figure 2-4 provides an example of this



Figure 2-4: A contrived illustration that exemplifies a center and margin spatial relationship (created for this paper).

compositional relationship, with a girl in the central position and images that represent foods that she likes in an ancillary role along the margins.

This concept is arguably also applicable to page layout in general, specifically with relation to the composition of two-page spreads. Bringhurst (1996: 165) argues that one of the purposes of outside margins in books is to “protect the textblock, leaving it easy for the reader to see and convenient to handle. (That is, they must leave room for the reader’s thumbs).” Perhaps in consideration of this practical concern, for centuries books have frequently been designed with larger margins on the outside of the page (Ibid.). As printing technology evolved to allow for images to be printed in books, the precept of “protecting the textblock” has endured, with text often being positioned towards the center of a two-page spread and images bleeding off the outside edges (e.g., Figure 2-5). This compositional norm could be seen as a manifestation of the center-margin semiotic relationship. In most books, the text is the primary conveyor of meaning and thus is placed towards the center. The images are subservient to the text and are included only to illustrate some aspect of it or provide supplementary visual information. Accordingly, they are relegated to the outside margins.

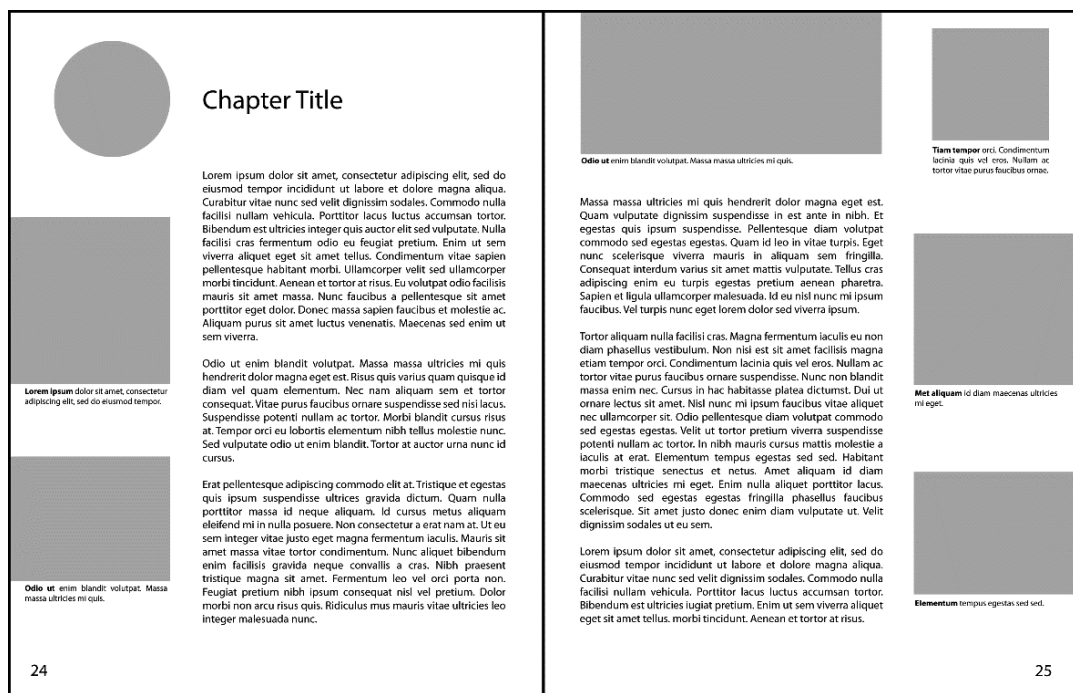


Figure 2-5: A contrived two-page textbook spread with the text positioned towards the *center* and the images (represented in grey) positioned along the *margins* (created for this paper).

3. Methodology

The previous section presented five figures (2-1 ~ 2-5) to serves as visual exemplars of how the three discussed semiotic concepts can manifest in textbooks. Isolated examples such as these have illustrative value, but they do not necessarily reflect broad compositional trends. As Chandler (2002: 221) notes, semioticians are often guilty of cherry-picking images in order to “illustrate the

points they wish to make rather than applying semiotic analysis to an extensive random sample” and that “much semiotic analysis is loosely impressionistic and highly unsystematic”. This paper sought to avoid these pitfalls by approaching its visual analysis in a manner that was extensive, systematic, and empirical. This was facilitated by cataloguing positional data for hundreds of textbook illustrations and using that data to identify compositional patterns that might not have been apparent through a less systematic or more subjective approach.

This section will detail the method employed to this end. Section 3.1 will describe the *Scope* of the images analyzed and discuss the rationale for its restriction. Section 3.2 will then discuss the *Procedure* employed to determine positional data in a systematic manner.

3.1 Scope

The visual data analyzed in this paper was derived from fourteen EFL textbooks (Table 3-1). These comprise every fifth- and sixth-grade English textbook approved for use in Japanese public elementary schools for the 2020-2021 school year by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (2019: 21).

Textbook	Editor(s)
Blue Sky Elementary 5	Kageura, O.
Blue Sky Elementary 6	Kageura, O.
CROWN Jr. 5	Sakai, H.
CROWN Jr. 6	Sakai, H.
Here We Go! 5	Koizumi, M. & Kagata, T.
Here We Go! 6	Koizumi, M. & Kagata, T.
Junior Sunshine 5	Suzuki, H. & Takano, K.
Junior Sunshine 6	Suzuki, H. & Takano, K.
Junior Total English 1	Yoshida, K.
Junior Total English 2	Yoshida, K.
New Horizon Elementary English Course 5	Allen, M. T., Ano, K., & Hamanaka, M.
New Horizon Elementary English Course 6	Allen, M. T., Ano, K., & Hamanaka, M.
One World Smiles 5	Kanamori, T., Matsumoto, S., & Honda, T.
One World Smiles 6	Kanamori, T., Matsumoto, S., & Honda, T.

Table 3-1: The textbooks analyzed in this paper. Bibliographic details provided in *References*.

A systematic examination of *all* of the graphic forms contained in the textbooks would have been invariable, so the scope was restricted to be more manageable. The visual data selected for analysis was ultimately limited to only include the faces of the textbooks’ *main characters* (i.e., the named, recurring characters that are introduced in the opening pages of each textbook).

This specific subset of visual data was chosen for the following reasons. The pedagogic focus of the textbooks is “primarily to develop listening and speaking skills” (Nemoto, 2018: 34) and accordingly conversations were frequently visually expressed. With so many “face-to-face” interactions being depicted, faces could be considered representative of the textbooks’ communicative focus.

The scope was further restricted to just the main characters in order to limit it in a manner that wasn't arbitrary. Each textbook has a cast of main characters that are visually depicted dozens if not hundreds of times. Their universal inclusion and the frequency with which they were depicted suggest the main characters' central importance to each textbook's visual strategy. All told, the fourteen textbooks collectively included more than 2,500 visual representations of main characters, which provides a data set robust enough to draw tentative conclusions but still small enough to manually catalog. Determining positional data for this quantity of images required a systematic approach to ensure that results would be consistent. The procedure through which this was conducted will be discussed in the following section.

3.2 Procedure

Physical copies of the textbooks were first scanned at a high resolution (600 dpi) so that image positions could be precisely measured. These digitized pages were used to summarize image position using a three-step process. First, visual depictions were evaluated to ascertain if they were intended to represent one of the main characters. Next, the spatial boundaries of eligible faces were systematically defined. Third and finally, the central point of the facial plane was used to quantify each face's relative x-y position on the page. The following three subsections will describe each step in this process in detail.

3.2.1 Determining Eligibility

The first instance in a given textbook in which a main character was visually depicted and explicitly named served as the *reference image* for them. All other faces found throughout the textbook were compared to these reference images to determine if they were intended to represent one of the main characters. Using this procedure, a total of 2,529 faces were identified as being eligible for inclusion in the image position data set. The spatial boundaries of these faces (i.e., their "facial planes") were then established in the following manner.

3.2.2 Defining the Facial Plane

The facial planes were defined as rectangles, all sides of which were either parallel or perpendicular to the edges of the page. Figure 3-1 provides an example of a facial plane and will be used to discuss how their edges were established.

The *top* horizontal edge of each facial plane was positioned to intersect with the *topmost point of all of the depicted facial features* (typically the highest point of one of the eyebrows) (e.g., Point A in Figure 3-1). The *bottom* horizontal edge was positioned to intersect with *the lowest explicitly depicted point on the head*, typically the tip of the chin (e.g., Point D).

The positions of the two vertical edges were determined based on whether the point where *the earlobe attaches to the head* (e.g., Point B) was explicitly depicted or not. When that point *was* depicted, the vertical line on that side of the facial plane was positioned to intersect with that

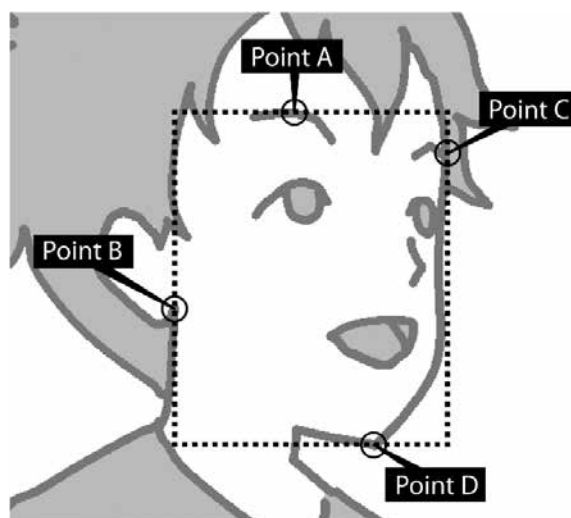


Figure 3-1: An example of a facial plane and the four points used to define it (schematic representation of detail from Yoshida, 2020a:122).

point. When the point at which the earlobe attached to the head was *not* explicitly depicted, then the vertical edge was instead positioned to intersect with *the furthest extreme that depicts skin on the head*. (e.g., Point C).

3.2.3 Determining Position

Once the facial plane had been established, its central point was used to describe its x-y position of the face on the page. Absolute units of measurement could not be used for comparative purposes due to inconsistent page sizes from publisher to publisher, so a relative scale was established to describe horizontal and vertical positions as outlined below.

1) Relative horizontal position. This percentage-based value describes the horizontal position with 0 representing the left edge of the textbook page and 100 representing the right edge. This was calculated using the formula shown in Figure 3-2. In this example, the relative horizontal position for the face is 14.92%, reflecting that it is fairly close to the left edge of the page.

2) Relative vertical position. This attribute was determined in the same manner as the relative horizontal position, only using y-axis values, with 0 representing the top edge of the page and 100 representing the bottom.

Once positional data for all 2,529 eligible faces had been determined, it was analyzed in the manner discussed in the following section.

4. Analysis

Analysis was conducted in two stages. Section 4.1 presents the *Results* of quantitative analysis and Section 4.2 provides *Interpretations* of the possible semantic significance of these results with

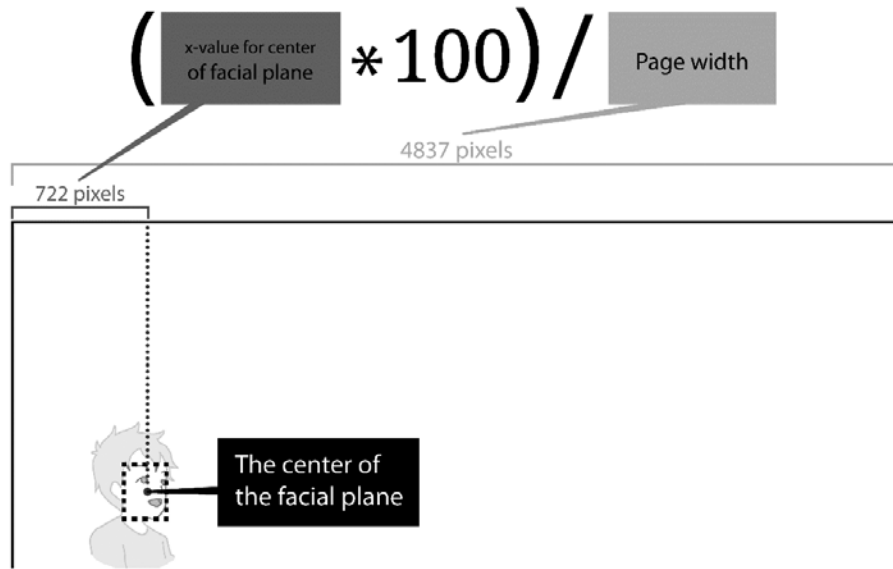


Figure 3-2: Top: The formula used to determine the relative horizontal page position.
 Bottom: The formula applied to the facial plane shown in Figure 3-1.

particular reference to the semiotic concepts discussed in Section 2.

4.1 Results

The distribution of main character faces differed significantly between the left- and right-hand pages of two-page spreads. The left-hand pages contained 62% (1,571) of the faces with the right-hand pages containing 38% (958). This general tendency was reflected on a per-textbook basis as well. As shown in Table 4-1, twelve of the fourteen textbooks had more faces on left-hand pages,

Textbook	Eligible faces on left-hand pages	Eligible faces on right-hand pages
Blue Sky Elementary 5	91	120
Blue Sky Elementary 6	134	104
CROWN Jr. 5	50	18
CROWN Jr. 6	58	19
Here We Go! 5	162	76
Here We Go! 6	174	90
Junior Sunshine 5	60	40
Junior Sunshine 6	49	18
Junior Total English 1	259	123
Junior Total English 2	330	219
New Horizon Elementary English Course 5	100	59
New Horizon Elementary English Course 6	50	25
One World Smiles 5	23	23
One World Smiles 6	31	24
TOTAL	1571	958

Table 4-1: Distribution of faces for left- and right-hand pages. The largest value of each row is highlighted in grey.

leaving just one with more on right-hand pages and one with exactly equal distribution.

The relative positions within the page also show significant differences between left and right. Figure 4-1 shows left- and right-hand pages represented as grids of 10 x 13 squares (a ratio chosen because it is proportionally similar to the textbook page sizes). Inside each square is the total number of faces that were positioned at that relative area of the page (as ascertained using the *relative horizontal* and *vertical position* values [Section 3.2.3]). Each square has been shaded to create a “heat map” of high image density areas (in dark grey) and low image density areas (in light grey) relative to the total number of images contained within the page. The data from Figure

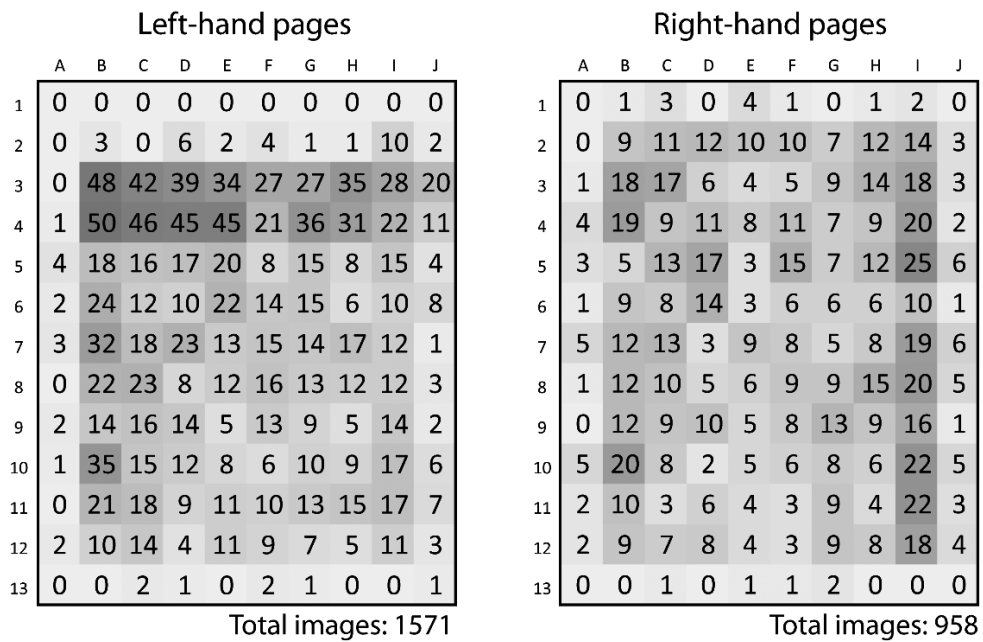


Figure 4-1: Distribution of faces for left- and right-hand pages.

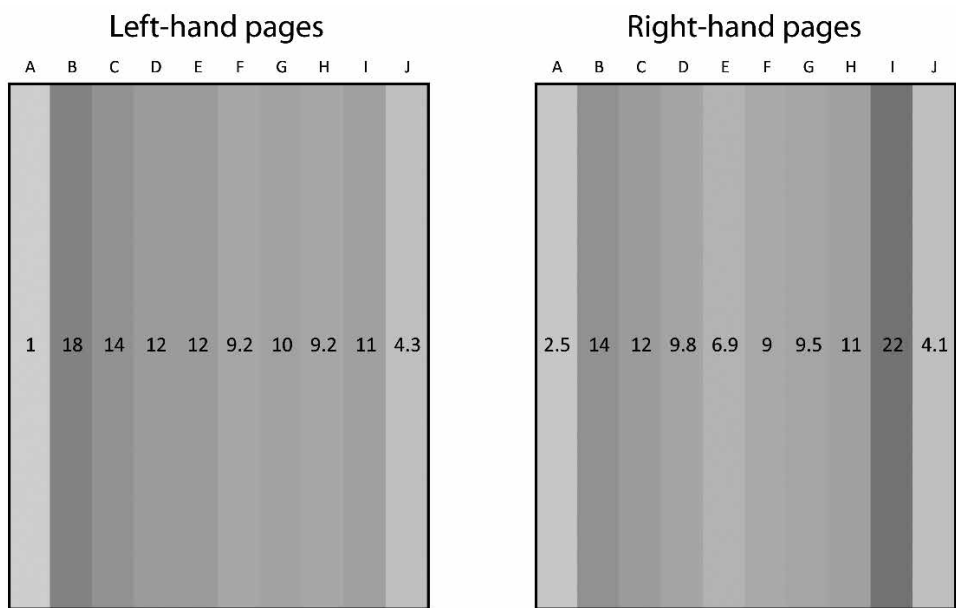


Figure 4-2: Image distribution along ten vertical columns. Numbers represent percentages.

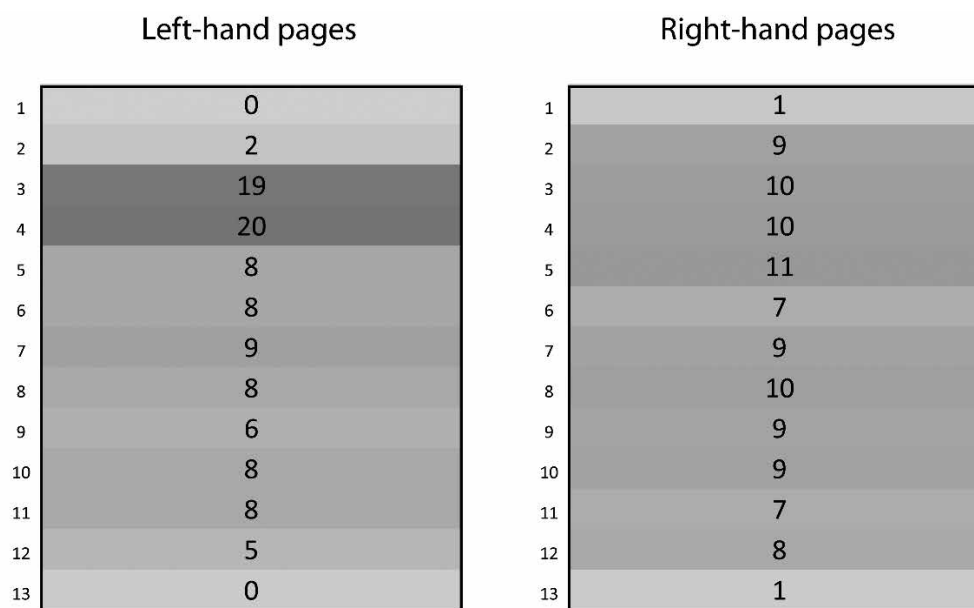


Figure 4-3: Image distribution along thirteen horizontal rows. Numbers represent percentages.

4-1 was then used to create Figures 4-2 and 4-3 which respectively summarize general horizontal and vertical tendencies for image distribution.

As Figure 4-1 shows, left-hand pages show a high concentration of images forming a band that stretches across Rows 3 and 4, with a particularly dense cluster along the left side of that band. Figure 4-3 shows just how frequently images tended to cluster along that band, with almost 40% of left-hand-page images being positioned within it. For positioning along the x-axis, Figure 4-2 shows that images on left-hand pages were most frequently positioned at Column B and then steadily decrease in frequency until roughly the middle of the page, after which they hovered between 9% and 11% (discounting the large drop in Column J).

For right-hand pages, image distribution was more sporadic, particularly when contrasted with the left-hand-page 10 x 13 heat map (Figure 4-1). For top-to-bottom distribution (Figure 4-3) the differences between rows on right-hand pages weren't as pronounced as those on left-hand pages; discounting Rows 1 and 13, all of the rows in right-hand pages were within a few percentage points of each other. For horizontal image placement however, right-hand pages had more pronounced image distribution tendencies, with Column I containing a particularly dense concentration of images (Figure 4-2).

4.2 Interpretations

The differences between left- and right-hand pages might be explained by considering them as interrelated two-page spreads, the left side of which would often be presented *earlier* in a lesson than the right side. Finding a single authentic two-page spread from one of the textbooks that perfectly exemplifies the trends illustrated in Figures 4-1, 4-2, and 4-3 was not possible, since those figures summarize the positions of thousands of images. However, the schematic representation of

a two-page spread in Figure 2-2 (with main-character faces being represented as black ovals) reflects the positional tendencies to a certain extent and thus will be used as a concrete example for the following discussion.

The main characters recur throughout the textbooks, so it could be argued that they represent *given* information which is often positioned towards the *left* and the *top* (Section 2.1). The high concentration of main character depictions on left-hand pages (Table 4-1) and their tendency to appear towards the top-left of those pages (Figure 4-1) thus might be interpreted as them being frequently positioned to introduce the pedagogic target of the two-page spread.

The left-hand page of Figure 2-2 provides anecdotal support for this interpretation. The cluster of seven depictions of main characters near the top (in grey box “1”) are a part of a three-panel comic used to establish the lesson’s topic. Additionally, the main characters in grey boxes “2” and “3” in Figure 2-2 are positioned towards the left margin, which allows those characters to “introduce” the listening and speaking activities to the right of them.

The right-hand pages had a more sporadic distribution of images (Figure 4-1) that were more evenly distributed vertically (Figure 4-3). This might be due to divergence in how topics are visually presented in the latter half of a lesson. Different topics require unique visual strategies in their presentation and it is not unreasonable to imagine that these differences would become more pronounced the longer the lesson progresses, resulting in less cohesive clusters of images on the right-hand pages.

This however does not account for the high concentration of images in Column I of the right-hand pages (Figure 4-2). This tendency might be partially explained by the book design convention of placing images along the outside margin when they are supplemental to the main text (Section 2.3). Main characters were less frequently depicted on right-hand pages (Table 4-1) which could suggest they are less salient in the latter half of the lesson. In Figure 2-2, the two main character depictions in grey box “5” are simply smaller copies of depictions that first appeared in grey box “1”. The depictions in grey box “5” are not a crucial component of what is being presented. Instead they serve an auxiliary, almost decorative function, with an otherwise imageless writing activity to their left taking “center stage” both through its close proximity to the center of the two-page spread as well as through its relevance to the pedagogic target at that point in the lesson.

It may also be that main characters are frequently instantiated in Column I to evoke a sense of thinking back on the lesson as it comes to a close, similar to how facial emoji often serve as a reaction to, or assessment of, the content that precedes them (Section 2.2). This interpretation is supported by the tendencies displayed in the heat maps from Figure 4-1. Unlike the left-hand pages, the highest-density cells on the right-hand pages are frequently found not only on the right, but also on the lower two-thirds of the page. This might suggest that in addition to “introducing” the pedagogic topic at the top-left part of left-hand pages, main characters are frequently brought back in the lower-right portion of right-hand pages to “reflect back” on what was studied just prior to the end of a lesson.

5. Conclusion

The prevalence of illustrations in elementary-level EFL textbooks could be viewed as a tacit admission of the communicative contributions that non-linguistic forms are able to make to the genre. Research such as that described in this paper may be able to provide insight into both the form and function of these prominent graphic elements.

That said, any conclusions based on this paper's findings should be tentative. The highly restricted scope limits how much can be generalized from what was presented here. Additionally, since only the central point of each facial plane was used to describe position, other potentially significant spatial attributes such as image size are not reflected in this analysis. Finally, no claims about the educational efficacy of different visual compositions can be made as that is outside the scope of what was researched.

What can be confidently asserted, however, is that the significant differences in image positioning between the left- and right-hand pages described in Section 4.1 are clearly not the result of chance. This apparent systematicity across multiple textbooks could be seen as support for the notion that some form of “visual grammar” constrains how these images tend to be positioned, perhaps similar to how conventional grammar constrains the arrangement of words in linguistic communication. If this is the case, a better understanding of the compositional rule systems that govern image placement could be valuable not only to textbook designers, but perhaps more broadly to educators who arrange images for other pedagogic purposes, be it for PowerPoint presentations, worksheets, or arrangements of flashcards on a blackboard.

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