

Analysing the Types of Visuals in Textbooks of Geography and German Language: Considering the Instructional Functioning of Photographs

Tomas Janko and Karolina Peskova

Masaryk University, Czech Republic

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ABSTRACT This study makes effort to analyse visuals as an essential part of school textbooks which can serve as key didactic means for visualising and mediating ideas to young pupils and also for supporting their exploration of the educational content. Based on two related investigations the study compares frequencies of types of visuals in selected science (geography) and foreign language (German) textbooks which are commonly used at Czech lower secondary schools. On the basis of a synthesizing approach the aim is to draw considerations about the instructional effectiveness of visuals in different school subjects. As a research method a quantitative content analysis based on the systems of categories as a research instrument was used. The inter-rater reliability of the systems of categories was verified. The research sample consisted of 794 visuals in 4 geography textbooks and 585 visuals in 4 German as a foreign language textbooks for lower secondary schools. The quantification of categories of visuals showed a significant dominance of photographs in the analysed textbooks in comparison with other types of visuals. Despite its educational importance this finding may be interpreted differently in respect to both subjects (geography, German language). Thus beneficial educational functions of photographs in foreign language subjects are compared to the limits of photographs as means for explaining abstract and complex processes in geography.