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**The Role of Visual Metaphors in Enhancing Cultural  
Learning: A Multimodal Analysis of BBC Learning English**

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## ***Dedication***

*To my parents,*

*To my sisters and brothers,*

*To my best friends Lyes and Thiziri,*

*To my binomial Sabrina,*

*To all my loved ones.*

***Massicilia***

*I dedicate this work to my supportive parents,*

*Beloved siblings, my binomial Massicilia,*

*My closest friends.*

***Sabrina***

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## Abstract

The present study examines the role of visual metaphors in enhancing cultural learning using the BBC Learning English platform. The objectives of this research are to examine Algerian EFL students' perceptions of visual metaphors on the BBC Learning English platform. It aims to explore how these visual elements contribute to a more immersive and culturally contextualized learning experience. Furthermore, the study investigates how different types of visual metaphors enhance understanding of cultural concepts. This dissertation uses the Mixed Methods Research that combines quantitative and qualitative methods. For data collection, we used two tools: a questionnaire and a corpus analysis method known as Kress and Van Leeuwen's Grammar of Visual Design (1996-2006). The questionnaire data is analyzed following Descriptive Statistical Method and Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA). For the corpus analysis, Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory (1980) functions as the theoretical framework for examining metaphor use, while Kress and Van Leeuwen's GVD theory provides the analytical framework. The results of the study indicate that visual metaphors in BBC Learning English are effective in enhancing students' understanding of cultural concepts. EFL students find these tools helpful in simplifying abstract ideas, engaging with cultural content, and improving idiomatic expressions retention, varying based on individual cultural background and language proficiency.

**Key words:** *BBC Learning English, Conceptual Metaphor Theory, Cultural Learning, Visual Grammar Theory, Visual Metaphors.*

## **List of Abbreviations**

- **BBC:** British Broadcasting Corporation
- **CMT:** Conceptual Metaphor Theory
- **GVD:** Grammar of Visual Design
- **TD:** Target Domain
- **TEYL:** Teaching English to Young Learners
- **SD:** Source Domain
- **MS:** Middle School
- **QCA:** Qualitative Content Analysis

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# *General Introduction*

## **Statement of the Problem**

In our interconnected world, cultural competence plays a crucial role in language learning. Grasping cultural nuances enhances communication and fosters a deeper understanding among people globally. However, many conventional language classes often overlook cultural education (the instruction of values, beliefs, practices, and social norms from various cultures) resulting in students lacking a comprehensive understanding of the cultural context underlying the language. This deficiency in cultural education can result in misunderstandings and a superficial grasp of the language being acquired. To address this issue, visual metaphors, which use images to represent abstract concepts, provide a unique and powerful means of conveying cultural information. They help learners connect language and culture by showing complex ideas in a simple, visual way. Thus, these metaphors can make cultural concepts more relatable and memorable, improving the learning process.

Teaching has improved greatly in recent years as a result of the incorporation of technological tools that allow for more engaging and effective information transfer. Notably, BBC Learning English, a popular online platform noted for its unique and engaging content, frequently uses visual metaphors in its teaching materials. These visual features have great instructional significance because they are intended to help with both language acquisition and culture learning.

Visual metaphors are a powerful communication tool. According to Williams (1997), a visual metaphor is “one image or set of images used in place of another to suggest an analogy between the two images or sets of images” (p.1). Essentially, this means using one image or a series of images to represent another concept. This makes complex ideas easier to understand by using images that people can relate to or feel something about.

Numerous studies have explored the use of visual representations in language education. One of them titled “English Language Teachers’ use of Visual Representation and its Effectiveness in Enhancing Pupils’ Vocabulary: “The case of first year middle school in Tizi-Ouzou” which was conducted by Amezali Nora and Djidda Kahina (2016) at the University of Mouloud Mammeri Tizi-Ouzou. The aim of their study was to investigate how the use of visuals impacts the vocabulary development of first year MS students and the results confirmed that indeed using visuals to teach vocabulary effectively integrates them into lessons, enhancing students’ lexical knowledge.

Another research was carried out by Amrouche (2022), focusing on pictorial and multimodal metaphors in Algerian and non-Algerian political cartoons representing illegal immigration. The study aimed to explore how cartoonists from different cultural backgrounds conceptualize the issue visually and multimodally. The results showed that both Algerian and non-Algerian cartoonists depict illegal immigration negatively and use similar conceptual metaphors. Other techniques, like metonymy and personification, also helped create meaning in the cartoons.

A similar work entitled “Visual Metaphor in Early Second Language Education” was conducted by Levunlieva (2023) at the South-West University “NeofitRilski”, Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria. The main objectives of this study was to demonstrate how images and visual metaphors help provide context in English language textbooks for young learners (TEYL) and to explore how these visuals are used in two course books published in 2014 and 2020. The study deduced that visual metaphors in teaching English to young learners (TEYL) serve a dual purpose: they minimize tension in the classroom and promote language development by improving relationships between teachers and students, as well as among students, additionally this streamlined technique saves time and resources during the learning process.

It is important to emphasize the increasing amount of research on the use of visual representations in the realm of EFL teaching.. However, the field of cultural learning has been relatively overlooked and has not been thoroughly investigated. Thus, this study concentrates on the role of visual metaphors in enhancing cultural learning specifically using the BBC Learning English platform as a multimodal tool. By addressing this research gap, it is important to understand how these visual metaphors enhance cultural learning and optimize them for improved educational results.

### **Aims and Significance of the Study**

The primary objective of this study is to uncover the impact of visual metaphors on learners' comprehension of cultural behaviors and norms within English-speaking societies,, using BBC Learning English as a multimodal case study. It is to explore how visual metaphors help us understand and appreciate different cultures better. Relying on Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) and Kress and van Leeuwen's Visual Grammar Theory (1996), a selection of visual content is interpreted and analyzed to see how metaphors contribute to the representation and understanding of cultural concepts. This analysis serves three main aims. First aim is to identify the visual metaphors present in the selected content and analyze how they are made and work to convey cultural information using the Grammar of Visual Design (GVD) framework. The second aim is to explore how the students feel about visual metaphors in relation to cultural learning. The third and last aim is to look at how visual metaphors influence the development of intercultural competency in viewers.

The significance of this study stems from its potential to improve our knowledge of the role of visual metaphors in cultural learning and intercultural competency. This study will add to the existing literature on visual metaphors in instructional media, revealing how these

metaphors can effectively transcend cultural boundaries and increase understanding. By investigating audience perceptions and the impact of visual metaphors, the study hopes to inform educational initiatives and media production practices that can promote more intercultural awareness and competency.

## **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

To achieve the objectives mentioned above, the following research questions have been developed to direct our study.

**Q1:** How do students perceive visual metaphors in BBC Learning English in relation to their understanding of cultural concepts?

**Q2:** Are there cultural nuances, such as values, behaviors, and societal norms, reflected in the visual metaphors used on the BBC Learning English platform?

**Q3:** How do different types of visual metaphors (e.g., images, videos, illustrations) influence students' language competencies and their understanding of cultural concepts?

The following hypotheses have been proposed as potential answers, anticipating the outcomes of this study:

**H1:** The students perceive visual metaphors in BBC Learning English as effective tools for enhancing their understanding of cultural concepts.

**H2:** There are distinct cultural nuances in the use of visual metaphors on BBC Learning English platform.

**H3:** Different types of visual metaphors (images, videos, illustrations) significantly enhance both students' language competencies and their understanding of cultural concepts?

## **Research Techniques and Methodology**

In this study, dedicated to examining the role of visual metaphors in enhancing cultural learning specifically on the BBC Learning English platform as a multimodal, a mixed method approach is employed; it uses both qualitative and quantitative methodologies for data collecting and analysis. The data are collected using two research tools, namely an online questionnaire designed to capture the students' experiences and perceptions regarding visual metaphors on the BBC Learning English platform. The information gathered is analyzed quantitatively with the Descriptive Statistical Method and qualitatively using Qualitative Content Analysis .In addition to a Multimodal Analysis of a set of ten (10) images from this platform, with a particular focus on idiomatic expressions as they are predominantly featured in the visual metaphors. These images are examined to see how visual metaphors contribute to cultural learning, following the framework of Kress and van Leeuwen's Visual Grammar Theory (2006).

## **Structure of the Dissertation**

This dissertation follows a traditional-simple model. It consists of four chapters in addition to a General Introduction and a General Conclusion. The General Introduction summarizes the research, its significance, and the methodology used. The first chapter is Review of Literature, offers core theories and earlier research relevant to the study's key concepts. Chapter two is titled Research Design, provides a detailed description of the research approach and the corpus. Chapter three is Presentation of the Findings, outlines the results of the study. Finally, in Chapter four is Discussion of the Results; the findings are interpreted and analyzed in light of the study questions and hypotheses. The dissertation closes with a General Conclusion, which summarizes the key concepts and findings of the study.

# *Chapter One*

## *Review of the Literature*

## **Introduction**

This chapter reviews the main concepts related to visual metaphors and their influence in enhancing cultural learning. It is divided into three main sections: definition and characteristics of visual metaphors, their role in language learning, and their impact on cultural understanding. The first part discusses visual metaphors, their features by drawing on theoretical perspectives, and the cognitive processes involved in understanding visual metaphors. The second part discusses the role of visual metaphors in language learning with a focus on their use in educational materials and their effectiveness in multimodal learning environments. Finally, the chapter explores the impact of visual metaphors in enhancing cultural learning and analyses the relationship between idiomatic expressions and culture.

### **1. Visual Metaphors**

#### **1.1. Definitions and Characteristics**

A visual metaphor is a rhetorical and artistic technique where one image is used to represent another concept. It helps viewers understand difficult ideas through familiar visual elements. Zeesham (2015) suggests that “visual metaphors are highly structured images that stimulate viewers to understand one concept in terms of another concept” (p.75). That is to say, through the use of images, visual metaphors connect two different ideas, making one concept easier to grasp. It is like using a picture to explain something complex by comparing it to something more familiar.

Additionally, Lakoff (1993) adds to this by saying that “visual metaphors allow us to understand and experience one kind of thing in terms of another” (p.5). This implies that by drawing comparisons between unfamiliar and familiar topics, visual metaphors help analyze and comprehend complicated ideas by making them easier to understand and more related to

our current knowledge. Through the use of parallels and pictures, visual metaphors improve our ability to recall material more vividly and understand its meaning.

According to Kress and Leeuwen (2006) “visual metaphors transform the way we perceive reality shifting our focus from conscious choices to automatic actions or transformations” (p.62).They argue that visual metaphors help us navigate through state changes, blurring the line between options and providing an alternative perspective to the world. Similarly, Hermine Feinstein (1982) considers that “metaphors have the ability to deepen our comprehension of the meaning of experience, shaping our perception of reality” (p.28).So, metaphors allow us to see things from different angles and gain new insights. Not only they enhance our comprehension, but also they shape how we perceive and interpret the world around us.

Phillips and McQuarrie (2004) state that “visual metaphors have the power to influence our attention, memory, and even bring about changes in our attitudes” (p. 119).This means we understand one thing by comparing it to another. Lakoff and Johnson (2003) and Forceville (2002) explained that this process “involves selectively mapping attributes from a source entity onto a target entity” (p. 252).This suggests using visual elements to show certain qualities of a subject, by taking attributes from one thing and applying them to another. This approach improves the viewer’s comprehension and perception of the intended message. It is used to convey difficult ideas and concepts in a variety of visual media, such as infographics, advertisements, and teaching materials.

## **1.2. Theoretical Perspectives**

### **1.2.1. Conceptual Metaphor Theory**

Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), developed by Lakoff and Johnson in their influential work "*Metaphors We Live By*" (1980), argues that metaphors are not only aesthetic language devices but fundamental cognitive tools. They are essential for understanding and expressing abstract concepts. According to Lakoff and Johnson, "metaphors are much more than devices of the poetic imagination used for artistic and stylistic purposes. In the way people conceptualize abstract concepts and ideas both in thought and language, metaphor is an essential mode of understanding" (p.155). This perspective implies that metaphors extend beyond artistic and stylistic use; they play a crucial role in how we conceptualize and understand abstract concepts. Metaphors serve as fundamental modes of understanding in both our thoughts and language.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) state that "metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature" (p.3). In other words, metaphor is not just a linguistic tool, but rather it affects the way we think and perceive the world. It has a crucial role in understanding and communicating various aspects of life. Its widespread use in language makes effective communication essential. However, if the right metaphors are not used, it can be difficult to get ideas across clearly when speaking.

Moreover, CMT suggests that metaphors help us in understanding and communicating complex concepts through mapping abstract ideas onto concrete ones. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue that metaphors are so embedded in our everyday language that "people do not realize they are using metaphors until it is pointed out to them" (p. 37). Research indicates that

people often struggle to express ideas effectively without using metaphors, highlighting the significant role of metaphors in language.

Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) determines between two domains: the “*Source Domain*” and the “*Target Domain*”. The Source Domain is a concrete area, while the Target Domain is more abstract. CMT says we use what we know from the SD to make sense of the TD i.e. It is related to using something familiar to comprehend something less familiar. Lakoff and Johnson explain this phenomenon in their own terms saying “The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of things in terms of another. The concept is metaphorically structured, and consequently, the language is metaphorically structured” (p.5). For example in the metaphor “*Love is a Journey*”, “*Journey*” is the Source Domain and help us understand “*Love*”, the Target Domain, by comparing it to a journey with a starting point, obstacles, and destinations to reach.

### **1.3. Cognitive Processes Involved in Visual Metaphor Comprehension**

#### **1.3.1. Cognitive Linguistics Approaches**

Cognitive linguistics is a field that investigates how language is processed in the mind and how it influences our thoughts and experiences. It provides a comprehensive understanding of language processing. As defined by Rao (2021), “it is an interdisciplinary branch of linguistics with a combination of knowledge and investigation adopting from cognitive psychology, neuropsychology, and linguistics” (p.1). According to Evans and Green (2006) “it involves both production of the language and comprehension of language” (p.112). This means that it explores the connection between language, cognition, and the brain, helping us understand how we produce and understand language.

Cognitive linguists say metaphors are crucial in human language. A metaphor is understood as a cognitive phenomenon wherein one conceptual domain is organized and understood in terms of another. This was proven by Evans (2004) who argues that “metaphor is the phenomenon where one conceptual domain is systematically structured in terms of another” (p.33). This conceptual mapping allows us to make sense of abstract ideas by relating them to more familiar experiences. Metaphors provide a framework for structuring our understanding of the world. It enables us to conceptualize abstract ideas through the use of language.

Furthermore, Toncar and Munch (2001) propose that “metaphors have a greater impact on cognitive elaboration compared to literal messages” (p.58). This expresses the way metaphors inspire our thoughts through engaging in deeper thinking and analysis. Metaphors stimulate our cognitive processes by linking complicated ideas to more tangible ones. As a result, we put more mental effort in understanding and interpreting metaphorical messages, which boosts our thinking, creativity, and critical analysis, and helps us grasp the deeper meaning behind them.

### **1.3.2. Mental Imagery and Schema Activation**

#### **a) Mental Imagery**

Mental imagery is the process of reactivating a sensation without the original stimulus being present. As Holt (1964) described it “as a weak re-activation of a sensation in the absence of the corresponding stimuli” (p.2). This means we can recall sights, sounds, and other sensory experiences just by thinking about them. As also argued by Person (2015) “the term ‘mental imagery’ refers to representations and accompanying experience of sensory information without a direct external stimulus” (p.590). So, the ability of creating sensory experiences within the mind enables individuals to enhance their internal sensory experiences; that improves cognitive tasks, memory, and problem-solving.

Moreover, mental imagery can be described as conscious simulation of experiences that engage multiple senses. The process works by partially reactivating brain areas used during past real experiences. Kosslyn et al. (2006) explain that mental imagery occurs “when a representation of the type created during the initial phases of perception is present but the stimulus is not being perceived; such representations preserve the perceptible properties of the stimulus and ultimately give rise to the subjective experience of perception” (p.4). This denotes that mental imagery creates mental images similar to the original experience of a stimulus, even if the actual stimulus is not there. These mental representations keep the main features of original stimulus and affect how we perceive it.

## **b) Schema Activation**

Schema activation is a cognitive process where textual stimuli help readers pull out useful information from their memory, which improves understanding. According to Li and Cheng (1997) “Schema activation is generally recognized as the process in which some textual stimuli signal the direction or area for the reader to look for and evoke the relevant schema from memory into the present reading task” (p.295-296). This process underscores the interaction between the text and the reader’s prior knowledge .It enables the reader to construct meaning effectively by integrating new information with existing cognitive framework.

The concept of schema activation is essential for understanding how individuals process and interpret information. An (2013) suggests that:

One assumption about schema activation is that some words, or groups of words, or the title of a text, are highly suggestive and they can signal a certain schema. Textual stimuli affect a schema in two ways. If a stimulus is highly suggestive of a certain schema, that schema as a whole can be activated. For instance, the mention of a fire brigade may activate a ‘fire accident’ schema. But more often than not, one such stimulus is insufficient for schema activation; it can just remind one of a certain slot which can fit into several schemata (p.131).

This means that textual stimuli can strongly suggest a schema, influencing it in two ways. If a stimulus strongly indicates a specific schema, the entire schema can be activated. However, a single stimulus may not fully activate a schema and remind someone of an aspect that fits multiple schemas. This highlights the nuanced nature of how textual cues interact with our mental frameworks to facilitate schema activation and comprehension during reading tasks.

## **2. Visual Metaphors in Language Learning**

### **2.1. Visual Aids in Language Education**

Visual aids serve as an important factor for teachers in teaching foreign languages. These aids facilitate clear explanations of complex concepts and introduce diversity into teaching methods. Patesan et al. (2018) argue that “the benefits in using visuals in teaching are huge, ranging from grabbing and maintaining attention to motivating students to engage with the lecture’s particular topic and helping them to retain information” (p.356). This emphasizes the major advantages of using visual aids in education. The benefits of this approach are in attracting students’ attention, encouraging active participation in the lecture, and aiding in the retention of information.

Anderson and Shifrin (1980) say that “the more concrete the word is, the easier it is to find and uses a picture for its illustration” (pp. 331-348). This means that images work better for words that are easy to picture, such as objects that can be easily visualized. Consequently, concrete language is crucial in educational settings for creating accurate visual aids and improving the clarity and effectiveness of these illustrations by selecting suitable words.

Besides, Underwood (1989) suggests that “an ordinary principle and opinions for human learning is visual memory” (p.20). This means that people remember and understand information better when they see it. Visual aids can help with memory retention,

understanding, and recalling information. Therefore, the use of visual elements in teaching and learning practices can make learning more effective.

## **2.2. Visual Metaphors and Language Learning Materials**

One way to use the image as a teaching tool in the classroom is through the use of visual metaphors. Weninger and Kiss (2013) stress the importance of using images beyond only visual aids. They argue that “images need to be more than mere visual reinforcement or space-fillers. They need to be used as icons or symbols of things in their own right, as the explicit focus of attention in a meaningful pedagogic task” (pps. 710-11). This means images should be more than just decorations; they should actively help teach. Levunlieva is also consistent with this idea saying that “teaching English to young learners (hereafter TEYL) nowadays can be streamlined by a more effective and expedient use of visual images and visual metaphors, which are an integral component of students’ everyday learning” (p.6). For instance, an image of a tree with various branches identified with different vocabulary terms can be used as a visual metaphor in TEYL classrooms to represent the idea of “growth” in learning. Such visual metaphors in education enhance the learning process through providing a meaningful context for instruction.

Researchers have recently acknowledged that communication and knowledge construction are not limited to language but also involve a multimodal perspective. As suggested by Jewitt (2009) “the need to be attentive to the full range of communicational forms people use – images, gestures, gaze, posture and so on – and the relationship between them” (p.14).

So visual metaphors in this view help language learners engage more creatively and critically with lessons, fostering a deeper understanding of the content.

## **2.3. The Effectiveness of Visual Metaphors in Language Learning**

### **2.3.1. Multimodality and Language Learning**

The idea of multimodality was created during the past 20 years to take into consideration the various resources that are employed in communication to convey meaning. “The phrase refers to a diverse and expanding field of study as well as a phenomenon of human communication. The combination of various semiotic resources, or modes, in text and communicative events, such as still and moving images, speech, writing, layout, and/or proxemics, is known as multimodality” ( p.2).

It is further emphasized by Kress and Leeuwen (1996), who underline that “communication rarely occurs through a single mode of language” (p.163). It involves incorporating various modes such as visual alongside language, enhancing our understanding of communication by emphasizing the significance of other semiotic resources in meaning-making. We may better comprehend how communication works and how meaning is created by taking into account these various approaches.

As Kress and Van Leeuwen state that this has always been the case, Elisabetta Adami draws attention to the fact that all forms of communication involve many modes by nature (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996, as quoted in Adami, 2015, p.4), communication uses a variety of techniques to transmit meaning, whether it takes place synchronously or asynchronously, in person or at a distance. But historically, the dominance of spoken language, particularly written language, has limited the variety of communication tools, leading to significant progress in speech and writing, while education and research primarily focus on characterizing and teaching linguistic rules. “In the context of language learning, multimodality plays a significant role” (p.166). That is to say, learning a new language also means using other forms of communication like tone, gestures, and facial expressions, which helps us understand the language and its culture better.

Supporting this perspective, the first research about Multimodality in Algeria was done by Yassine (2012), who looked at how culture is presented in three Algerian EFL text books: *Think it Over* (1989), *Comet* (2001), and *New Prospects* (2007) examined how these text books use both words and visuals to communicate. It highlighted how important multimodality is in helping students understand not only language but also culture. As Yassine's study says:

...it also contributes considerably to the analysis of EFL textbooks which on one hand are growing multimodal by including loads of images and on the other hand acting as cultural diffusion and intercultural communication through the different cultural elements (home, target, international) they portray (p. 43).

This shows that using different forms of communication in textbooks helps students learn both language and culture.

### **3.2. Cultural Semiotics (Connection between Language, Culture, and Visual Representation)**

Cultural semiotics looks at how signs and symbols, like language, images, and gestures, carry meaning in different cultures. For example, white can signify purity in Western cultures but grief in Eastern ones. Jinshuan Long and Jun He explain "Cultural semiotics is the study of culture as a symbol or semiotic system...It involves the definition of the essential characteristics of culture" (p.1269). Essentially, it helps us understand how symbols shape and reflect what makes each culture special.

In the 1980, Yuri Lotman changed cultural studies by focusing on how meaning comes from a network of signs and symbols, rather than just language or texts. He looked at how culture influences our understanding and communication (Schonle, 2006, P. 6).

Additionally, Lotman described culture as shared, non-genetic memory that must be learned and passed on through symbols. Culture involves both the content of memory, like

values and traditions, and the process of how this memory is formed and shared ( Lotman & Uspensky, 1978 (1971), pp.211-231).To fully grasp culture, we need to see how language and visual symbols fit into this framework ( Kovecses, 2009) explains that:

...We can approach the issue of the relationship between culture and language from a more unified perspective if we assume that both culture and language are about making meaning, that is, if we make meaning the central element and, indeed, the central issue, in the study of both culture and language (p.739).

This understanding of culture is closest to that given by Geertz (1973), who notes that “Man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun. I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretative one in search of meaning” (p.5). In other words, both views agree that understanding how meanings are created and interpreted is essential for studying culture and language. They highlight that meaning is central to both fields.

Some believe language is a key part of culture, while others see them as separate but closely connected. Some argue that culture deeply influences language, reflecting all cultural aspects (Rabiah, 2012, p.8).

According to Gee (1993, p.7), human language is the consequence of man’s long evolutionary history. Human language is distinct because humans are fundamentally the same. They share the same type of eyes, brain, and biological background. Human evolution has shaped how humans acquire and use specific languages.

Visual representations like symbols and pictures act as a form of language, conveying ideas and emotions without words and carrying cultural meanings. Gombrich (1963, as cited in Ryhner et al., 2000) notes that “images and symbols have meaning and appear in different forms. They function as visual codes or emblems and evoke a sense of artistic and cultural value. Such visual metaphors require a cultural context for interpretation. He gives the

example of the traffic lights in which the color red is coded to signal ‘stop’ and green ‘go’ ” (pp. 85-101).

These elements come together to show the challenges and connections in human societies. By studying this, we better understand human experiences and the variety of cultures worldwide.

### **3.3. Intercultural communication theories**

Intercultural communication involves people from different cultures interacting with each other .It combines ideas from anthropology , sociology, and linguistics to cover all types of communication , both spoken and unspoken . For example, in the U.S., a firm handshake with eye contact and a smile is common, while in Japan, people often bow, with the depth and length of the bow showing respect or formality.

Hall (1914-2009) is known as the first to explore this area, showing that culture is not a fixed force but is shaped by people’s influence and can belong to multiple, overlapping cultures (p.31-62). In short, individuals help create and belong to multiple cultures at the same time.

Another important scholar who investigated intercultural communication is Howard Giles with his ‘Communication Accommodation Theory’ that looks at how people adjust their language and communication style based on who they are talking to. It is often used to study intercultural interactions. According to this theory, people change their speech in two main ways: convergence, where they adapt to be more like their conversation partner, which reduces social distance; and divergence, where they highlight differences, increasing social distance. In intercultural communication, people often try to bridge these cultural gaps to lessen the impact of differences (Giles &Ogay, 2007, as cited in Whaley &Santer, 2007, pp. 293-310).

### **3.4. The impact of visual metaphors on cultural understanding**

Visual metaphors help people understand culture by making complex ideas easy to see and grasp. They allow people from different backgrounds to understand concepts that might be hard to explain with words.

Berger (1970) in *“Ways of Seeing”* says, “Seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognizes before it can speak” (chapter1), this highlights how important visual perception is in our understanding of the world and how visual representations shape our cultural views and interpretations.

Understanding culture means recognizing and appreciating the differences shown through visual metaphors. These metaphors use images to express ideas, reflecting the viewer’s cultural perspective. According to Hall “The multiple hidden dimensions of unconscious culture” (p.2) may be identified in metaphors, as they are often deeply linked to the culture of their creators. These visual elements show ideas that reveal the cultural values and beliefs of a community.

Throughout history, people have used symbols and images to share their culture. These can include language, clothing, food, and architecture. By sharing these elements, people build social bonds and pass on their values and ideas. Symbols and images help preserve and transmit culture from one generation to the next. (“How does visual communication improve culture?” 2022).

In another instance, images can be understood in many different ways and can significantly affect how people view other cultures. They can help overcome barriers and encourage better communication and understanding between cultures (“How does visual communication improve culture?” 2022).

Visuals in general are important for understanding culture because they can challenge stereotypes and offer a more detailed and realistic view of people from different groups. They highlight diversity and complexity, promote open-mindedness, reduce prejudice, and increase empathy and inclusiveness. (“5 Visual Literacy Questions for Multicultural Learning”, 2023).

### **3.5. Idiomatic Expressions**

An idiom is a phrase or expression that has a figurative meaning different from the literal meanings of its individual words. Weinreich (1969) defines an idiom as “a complex expression whose meaning cannot be derived from the meanings of its elements” (p.13). This makes idioms hard to understand just from the words themselves instead they need cultural context for interpretation. For example, “break the ice” means to start a friendly conversation, not literally breaking ice. Idioms are much like metaphors, they are not just a language feature but also show how people think.

Simpson and Mendis (2003) describe idioms as “a group of words that occur in a more or less fixed phrase whose overall meaning cannot be predicted by analyzing the meaning of its constituent parts” (p.423). This means idioms are phrases where the meaning is not obvious from the individual words. Similarly, Swinney and Culter (1979) give a resembling explanation to the previous one, where an idiom is “a string of two or more words for which meaning is not derived from the meanings of the individual words comprising that string” (p.523).

Chafe (1970) as cited by Bobrow and Bell (1973) points out that “many idiomatic expressions are ambiguous, with one interpretation (the literal meaning) deriving from the meanings of the words involved and the other (idiomatic meaning) following the Weinreich definition” (p.343). So, the expression’s overall meaning cannot be deduced from its part

since the literal interpretation comes from the individual word's meaning. This ambiguity in idiomatic expressions adds meaning and complexity to language use.

### **3.6. Idioms and Culture**

The idiomatic expressions are among the most significant and common ways that language is used to represent culture in everyday life. Yağiz (2013) distinguishes that:

Like other types of figurative language, idioms appear to be the natural decoders of customs, cultural beliefs, social conventions, and norms. Idioms, as a major component of native-like communication, enable a language learner to understand the thoughts, emotions and views of the speakers of target language. For this reason, learning idioms provides learners with a significant chance to acquire information about the underlying parameters of a language ( p.953).

That is to say, idioms are a type of figurative language that give insight into a culture's customs, beliefs, and social norms. They help language learners understand native speakers' thoughts and feelings. Learning idioms improves communication and provides a greater insight to the language and its culture.

Idioms are strongly tied to culture because they show the values, traditions, and ways of thinking of a community. They have meanings that are special to each culture, offering a glimpse into everyday life and social habits. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, an idiom is a phrase where the meaning is not clear just from the individual words. In other words, idioms use words in a way that is not meant to be taken literally. They help people express their thoughts and feelings differently than with regular words. To understand idioms, you need to know the culture or background behind them. Understanding idioms can be challenging, much like being "in over one's head", which means it is something difficult to do. ("Idioms: Language through Culture's Eyes", 2016).

Xiao chang (2009) examines how cultural influences English idioms. He explains that idioms are an important part of the English vocabulary. Xiao (2009) notes that idioms:

Reflect the environment, life, history and culture of the native speakers, closely associated with their innermost spirit and feelings. Idioms have so close relationship with historical background, economy, geography environment, custom.etc. Of the nation concerned that they more typically represent the cultural characteristics of a language than words (p.142).

In simpler words, using language well depends on knowing a lot of words, especially idioms.

Being skilled in English helps people communicate better with native speakers.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter reviews the role of visual metaphors in enhancing cultural learning. It defines key terms, explains cognitive processes involved in interpreting visual metaphors, and explores their use in language acquisition, including visual aids and learning materials. The chapter also examines visual metaphors and their impact on cultural understanding, cultural semiotics, and intercultural communication theories. It also covers idiomatic expressions, showing how they reveal cultural insights and improve communication.

*Chapter Two*  
*Research Design*

## **Introduction**

This chapter provides an in-depth examination of the methodological underpinnings of our study. It is divided into three main sections. The first one is “Procedures of Data Collection” and addresses the research method, the procedure used to collect data, the participants involved in the study, and the sole tool used for data collection which is a questionnaire complemented with a corpus analysis. The second section “Procedures of Data Analysis”, details the methods used to analyze the primary data, encompassing both the statistical analysis of the questionnaire and the visual analysis of the corpus. The last section focuses on the analytical framework used to guide our research which is the Visual Grammar Theory “*Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*”, by Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen (1996-2006).

### **1. Procedures of Data Collection**

The following section details the research methods used to gather the data needed for this study.

#### **1.1. Research Method**

Our study uses mixed-method research by combining both quantitative and qualitative methods. Östlund et al.(2011) describe it as follows” Mixed methods research , where quantitative and qualitative methods are combined , is increasingly recognized as valuable, because it can potentially capitalize on the respective strengths of quantitative and qualitative approaches”(p.369). Using both methods allows us to examine the topic from different angles. Quantitative data, gathered via an online survey, provided numerical insights into how effective visual metaphors are in cultural learning content, at the same time, qualitative data was derived also from the online survey and the analyzed BBC Learning English materials.

This explored the detailed interpretations and experiences of learners interacting with visual metaphors. By triangulating these diverse sources of data, we aim to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the role visual metaphors play in cultural learning, as well as to fulfill the objectives outlined at the start of our research.

## **1.2. Data Collection Procedure**

In an effort to understand the role of visual metaphors in enhancing cultural learning, we employed two main types of data collection procedures. First, we analyzed a corpus of 10 images from the BBC Learning English platform, focusing on visuals that depict various types of metaphors related to cultural themes. Second, we designed a questionnaire for English students at both Mouloud Mammeri Tizi-Ouzou and Blida 2 universities. The questionnaire consisted of both closed and open-ended questions to gather a diverse range of responses and was distributed online to ensure accessibility and encourage participation.

### **1.2.1. Description of the Corpus**

The present study consists of an analysis of ten (10) images which are collected from the BBC Learning English official Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/bbclearningenglish.multimedia?mibextid=ZbWKwL>), accessed on June 4th, 2024. The target audience for these images includes English language learners, educators, and anyone interested in improving their English skills and cultural understanding. The BBC Learning English platform is a free online resource created by the BBC to help people learn and improve their English. It offers lessons, videos, and activities that teach grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. The platform also uses news and stories to teach English and British English

The selection process was not random but employed purposive sampling to focus on highly creative images with rich metaphorical content. Each image was analyzed solely for its visual elements. The analysis provides a thorough comprehension of how visual metaphors communicate cultural knowledge. The corpus specifically focuses on idiomatic expressions that are visually represented.

### **1.3. Data Collection Tools**

To collect the necessary data for our research, we primarily relied on a questionnaire designed specifically for English students at Algerian universities. This questionnaire was made available on the universities' official pages. Before distribution, we confirmed that most students were familiar with using BBC Learning English.

Moreover, we also analyzed a corpus of ten images from the BBC Learning English platform. This mixed-method approach, combining quantitative data from the questionnaire with qualitative insights from the image analysis, allows for a comprehensive understanding of the role of visual metaphors in cultural learning.

#### **1.3.1 EFL Students' Questionnaire**

For this study, we used a questionnaire. A questionnaire is a tool with a set of structured questions designed to collect information from people for survey purposes.

Sekaran and Bougie (2016) say that “ A questionnaire is a preformulated written set of questions to which respondents' record their answers, usually within rather closely defined alternatives...Questionnaires can be administered personally, mailed to the respondents, or electronically distributed” (p. 252). In other words, a questionnaire is a list of written questions that people answer by picking from options. It can be given in person, sent by mail,

or shared online. In our case, we chose to use the online option because some students were taking their exams, and the other university (Blida 2) was located at a distance. Additionally, since there were not many students familiar with BBC Learning English, the online format made it easier to identify those who were and were not familiar with the platform making it more convenient for us.

We used the questionnaire with undergraduate and graduate students. It aims to gather information about how visual metaphors help in cultural learning based on the BBC Learning English platform. Regarding the piloting, we chose six students from different levels to answer the questions to check if they were clear and valid. The pilot study was successful and no changes were made since all the students claimed that the questions were clear. Then, we decided to put the questionnaire online thanks to Google forms whose link <https://docs.google.com/forms>, we succeeded in designing our questionnaire by following a variety of steps. After that, we shared the link of our questionnaire in two different universities' pages: M2 DIDACTICS – BLIDA 2 UNIVERSITY, (link: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/410241791244034/?ref=share&mibextid=NSMWBT>) and Département d'Anglais Officiel UMMTO, (link: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/777059252405288/?ref=share&mibextid=NSMWBT>). Additionally, it was shared in different Facebook groups designed specifically for the two universities, MMUTO and Blida 2, with the students of the department of English at the level of Algeria. The questionnaire was published on May 29, 2024.

The questionnaire we developed comprises twenty eight (28) questions, arranged into four sections. The first section is about student's experience with BBC Learning English, it consists of (04) multiple choice questions and two (02) open-ended questions. The second section addresses students' perceptions of visual metaphors, including seven (07) questions that range from open-ended to multiple-choice, allowing participants to share their individual

perspectives. The third section investigates the impact of visual metaphors on the development of intercultural competence, containing five (05) multiple-choice questions and one (01) open-ended question. Finally, the fourth section explores cultural learning through idiomatic expressions, as the corpus from BBC Learning English focuses specifically on visual metaphors of idiomatic expressions, this section consists of four (04) questions, two(02) are multiple-choice questions, one (01) closed-ended question, and one (01) open-ended question. As a result, we received fifty (50) answers.

## **1.4. Participants**

The participants in our study are students of English language at the Algerian Universities: Blida 2 and Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi-Ouzou (MMUTO). We selected the students based on our prior knowledge that they are already familiar with using BBC Learning English, rather than choosing them randomly. Thus, we used a convenience sampling method, ensuring that our participants met our criteria and were easily accessible to gather data on their perceptions of visual metaphors in educational content. They are grouped according to their level of learning with varying ages and interests. A total of fifty (50) participants answered the questionnaire, comprising 34 students from Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi-Ouzou and 16 from Blida 2 University.

## **2. Procedures of Data Analysis**

The data gathered from the students' questionnaire is analyzed and interpreted using a variety of data analysis methods. Descriptive Statistical Analysis is used to analyze the quantitative data, and the qualitative data is analyzed based on Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA). Next, we carried out a detailed analysis of the corpus, using the Visual Grammar Theory "*Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*", by Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen (1996-2006).

## **2.1. Descriptive Statistical Method**

A Descriptive Statistical Method (simple statistical calculation) is employed to handle the quantitative data and examine the responses gathered from the participants. To analyze this data, we used Microsoft Excel 2007 to organize it into pie charts, displaying both the number of responses and their corresponding percentages for easier interpretation. The percentage calculation is done as follows:  $X = (Z \times 100) \div Y$ , where X represents the calculated percentage, Z denotes the number of similar responses, and Y is the total number of participants. For example, if 40 out of 50 participants have used BBC Learning English for education, the frequency is calculated as  $X = (Z \times 100) \div Y = (40 \times 100) \div 50 = 80$ .

## **2.2. Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA)**

To interpret and analyze the qualitative data obtained from the student's questionnaire, we employed Qualitative Content Analysis. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) define QCA as "a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of the text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns" (p.1278). It involves identifying, coding, and interpreting meanings within the data to learn more about what is being studied. This approach helped us explore the details of qualitative data in a clear way, often revealing new perspectives and insights.

## **3. Analytical Framework**

### **3.1. Grammar of Visual Design**

Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996, 2006) developed the Grammar of Visual Design in their book *Reading Images: the Grammar of Visual Design*. This method includes three main aspects:

### 3.1.1 Representational Meaning

The representational meaning explains how in an image are connected to each other. It includes two types of actions that these participants are involved in:

<b>(1) Narrative Process</b>	<b>(2) Conceptual Process</b>
<p>This process involves the vector, which is “an oblique line formed by arrows, bodies, limbs, or tools, which connects participants” (Torres, 2015, p.246).The participants can either be shown as the ‘actor’, the one creating the vector, or as the ‘goal’, the one receiving it.</p>	<p>In conceptual process, there is no vector because it does not show actions or movement between the participants. Instead, it focuses on the relationships, characteristics, or identities of the participants, rather than showing them doing something.</p>

### 3.1.2. Interactional Meaning

Interactive meaning describes how the image engages with the viewer, it focuses on how the elements in the image relate to the real world, this features contact (Gaze) and distance, the third aspect (angle) is not included in this analysis.

<b>(1) Contact</b>	<b>(2) Social Distance</b>
<p>This can be either direct or indirect. If the elements in the image interact directly with the viewer, it is known as a demand image. This approach engages the viewer and creates a sense of connection, as if the elements are speaking directly to them. However, if there is no direct interaction and</p>	<p>This concerns how the size of the image frame determines if a shot is close-up, medium, or far away. Image creators decide whether to have people or objects look directly at the viewer or not, and whether to show them up close or from a distanced (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2006, p.124).</p>

the viewer is only meant to observe, it is called an offer image (Kress and Leeuwen, 2006, p.116).	
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**3.1.3. Compositional Meaning**

Compositional meaning relates to how an image is structured, blending both representational and interactional elements. Kress and Van Leeuwen categorize it into three connected systems:

<b>(1) Information Value</b>	<b>(2) Saliency</b>	<b>(3) Framing</b>
The information value looks at how things are placed in an image and their meanings. The right side usually presents new information, while the left side shows what the viewer likely already knows. The top part tends to represent more abstract concepts, while the bottom relates to more concrete aspects. The center highlights the main element, while the edges	Saliency is not easy to measure directly; it is the result of how different visual elements work together to guide the viewer’s attention, showing what is important and what stands out more than other parts (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996, p.212). It happens when elements are	Framing entails “the degree to which elements of an image are disconnected or connected together” (Ruppert, 2004, p.32). This means how elements in an image are either connected or separated, it is about using things like lines, borders, or empty space to show whether the parts of the image are meant to be seen as related or as separate from each other.

support and connect what is in the middle.	placed in front of others or are made larger or more colorful to stand out.	
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## **Conclusion**

This chapter has shed light on the research method and design that will govern the study. It has described the procedures implemented for data collection analysis. Additionally, it outlined the steps taken to analyze the collected data, ranging from converting numbers into percentages through simple statistical calculations to using Qualitative Content Analysis. It also introduced the framework used for the analysis of the corpus. The next chapter will present the research findings.

## *Chapter Three*

### *Presentation of the Findings*

## Introduction

This chapter is dedicated to presenting the findings of both the multimodal analysis of the BBC visual metaphors and the findings of EFL students' questionnaire. It is divided into two parts. The first part is concerned with the findings from the multimodal analysis, and the second part presents the results derived from the questionnaire.

### 1. Multimodal Analysis of BBC Visual Metaphors

**Figure 01: A storm in a teacup**



**Image Description:** The image shows a teacup with a small cloud above it, along with the phrase “a storm in a teacup.” This idiom means “making a big deal out of a small problem.”

#### Components of the Metaphor

- a. Source Domain:** The source domain is the **storm**. In this metaphor, the storm represents chaos or a significant issue, suggesting intensity and urgency.
  
- b. Target Domain:** The target domain is the **teacup**, which stands for something small or unimportant. Here, it refers to minor problems or trivial matters.

## Metaphorical Interpretation

The phrase “a storm in a teacup” illustrates how people can sometimes make a big deal out of small issues, creating unnecessary worry or drama. The teacup (target domain) highlights the smallness of the issue, while the storm (source domain) shows the exaggerated reaction to it.

## Cultural Context

This metaphor is common in British culture and serves as a reminder to maintain perspective and not let minor issues become overly complicated. It reflects a shared understanding that is important in communication and resolving conflicts.

## Visual Association

The image reinforces the metaphor by showing the small teacup alongside the larger storm cloud, emphasizing the idea of disproportionate reactions to minor troubles.

## Representational Meaning

Conceptual Representation	Metaphor
The image is a <i>conceptual representation</i> because it shows a metaphorical relationship between two objects: the small, ordinary cup (representing a trivial matter) and the cloud (representing the exaggerated drama of a storm). There is no action or narrative, just the juxtaposition of the objects to convey an idea.	The teacup symbolizes something small and mundane, while the cloud represents a brewing storm, a much larger event. Together, these elements metaphorically represent the idiom “a storm in a teacup,” suggesting that something minor (the cup) is being exaggerated into something major (the storm).

## Interactive Meaning

Contact (Demand vs. Offer)	Social Distance
<p>There is no direct interaction between the elements in the image and the viewer, meaning it is an <i>offer</i>. The viewer is invited to observe and reflect on the metaphor rather than being directly engaged by any of the objects.</p>	<p>The close-up shot of the subject in this image creates a sense of intimacy, placing the viewer in close proximity to her expression of frustration and exhaustion. This lack of social distance fosters personal engagement, making the emotional intensity of the idiom "blue in the face" more relatable and impactful. The tight framing emphasizes the subject's struggle and draws the viewer into her emotional experience, enhancing the metaphor's communicative effect.</p>

## Compositional Meaning

Information Value	Salience	Framing
<p><b>Center/Margin:</b> The teacup is likely in the center of the composition, symbolizing the small, central focus of the situation. The cloud hovers above, potentially drawing attention to the "storm" that is being made out of the small teacup. The centrality of both</p>	<p>The contrast between the teacup (small and ordinary) and the storm cloud (dramatic and large) creates salience. The viewer's eye is likely drawn first to the unusual presence of the cloud, emphasizing the exaggeration of the storm, and then to the</p>	<p>The objects are likely framed together within the same visual space, creating a strong connection between the teacup and the cloud. The absence of any other elements emphasizes the direct relationship between these two things, reinforcing the</p>

<p>elements emphasizes their metaphorical relationship.</p> <p><b>Top/Bottom:</b> The storm is at the top of the image, representing the exaggerated part of the situation. The teacup, at the bottom, represents the real, small, and concrete aspect of the matter. This top-bottom organization reinforces the idea that the storm is being “built up” over something trivial.</p>	<p>teacup, grounding the scene in something mundane.</p> <p>The simplicity and color contrast (a white teacup against potentially a darker or more dramatic cloud) help create salience, making both objects stand out as key elements of the metaphor.</p>	<p>metaphor that a small issue is being exaggerated into something dramatic.</p>
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**Figure 02: Blue in the face**

**Representational Meaning**

<b>Conceptual Representation</b>	<b>Metaphor</b>
<p>The image is a conceptual representation because it visually conveys a metaphorical idea between two things: the face and blue color. The woman covered in blue paint symbolizes the idiomatic expression “blue in the face,” which represents exhaustion due</p>	<p>The woman’s face and body are covered in blue paint, symbolizing the phrase “blue in the face.” This phrase refers to someone who is tired after trying to achieve something without any success. The woman’s exaggerated use of blue color on</p>

to fruitless effort. The image conveys the meaning of the expression through a state, illustrating not just the literal appearance but also the deeper concept of frustration and tiredness.	her face and body emphasizes the emotional and physical state associated with the idiom, connecting its visual metaphor to its meaning.
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### **Interactive Meaning**

<b>Contact (Demand vs. Offer)</b>	<b>Social Distance</b>
The image depicts a woman with her mouth open, indicating frustration. However, since she is not looking directly at the viewer, this image is classified as an offer. The viewer is invited to interpret the metaphor and the significance of being “blue in the face” without direct engagement.	The image features the woman with her mouth wide open, expressing frustration. However, since she is not looking directly at the viewer, this image is classified as an offer. The viewer is invited to interpret the woman’s expression and the significance of her being “blue in the face” without being directly engaged.

### **Compositional Meaning**

<b>Information Value</b>	<b>Salience</b>	<b>Framing</b>
<b>Center/Margin:</b> The woman’s face and upper body are likely in the center of the composition, making them the focal point of the image. This centrality emphasizes the metaphor of being “blue in the face” as the key message of the image.	The use of a bright blue color on a contrasting background immediately draws the viewer’s attention to the woman’s face. Her open mouth and the intensity of the blue color make her the most salient feature. It	The woman is framed alone within the image, with no other elements present. This isolation of the metaphor ensures that the viewer’s focus remains completely on her and the emotional state she represents.

<p><b>Top/Bottom:</b> The woman’s face is at the upper part of the image, while her body extends downward. This arrangement emphasizes the focus on her facial expression, which is central to conveying the idiom’s meaning</p>	<p>reinforces the metaphorical meaning of exhaustion and frustration.</p>	
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**Figure 03: The elephant in the room.**

**Representational Meaning**

<p><b>Conceptual Representation</b></p>	<p><b>Metaphor</b></p>
<p>The image is a conceptual representation because it visually illustrates a metaphorical idea rather than depicting a real-life scenario. The image of an elephant standing in the room with a group of people represents the idiom “the elephant in the room”. It refers to a significant problem that everyone is aware of but chooses to ignore. The focus is on the symbolic presence of the elephant, which embodies the unspoken problem.</p>	<p>The elephant in the room is a well-known metaphor used to describe an obvious problem that people avoid discussing. In this image, the elephant symbolizes the issue, while the group of people sitting around the table represents those who are aware of the problem but choose not to address it. The metaphor is made visually explicit by placing the elephant literally in the room with the group of people.</p>

## Interactive Meaning

Contact (Demand vs. Offer)	Social Distance
<p>The elephant does not make direct eye contact with the viewer; instead, it looks down and indifferent. The people in the room do not engage with the viewer; they are focused on their meeting. This lack of direct interaction makes the image an offer. It invites the viewer to observe the scene and consider the metaphorical meaning without being directly engaged.</p>	<p>The image is shown from a medium distance, allowing the viewer to see both the people at the table and the elephant standing off to the side. The distance creates a balanced perspective, allowing the viewer to acknowledge the ridiculousness of the situation (a literal elephant in the room) while viewing it as a metaphor for avoidance.</p>

## Compositional Meaning

Information Value	Salience	Framing
<p><b>Center/Margin:</b>The group of people seated at the table is centered in the composition, making them the primary focus of the scene. The elephant is placed on the margin as the unaddressed issue. This arrangement reflects the idea that the problem (the elephant) is present but not the focus of</p>	<p>The contrast between the large, gray elephant and the smaller, neutral-colored people around the table makes the elephant the most salient feature in the image. The elephant's size and color, despite being marginalized, capture the viewer's attention as a metaphorical issue that everyone is ignoring.</p>	<p>The elephant and the group of people are framed together within the same visual space, creating a connection between them. This framing emphasizes that the problem (the elephant) is in the same space as the people, underscoring the idea that they are choosing to ignore it despite its presence.</p>

<p>the group's attention.</p> <p><b>Top/Bottom:</b> The text is positioned at the top of the image, providing the viewer with the idiomatic expression “the elephant in the room” before they see the visual representation. This top-down organization guides the viewer from the text to the image, reinforcing the connection between the metaphor and its visual depiction.</p>		
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**Figure 04: In the dog house**

**Representational Meaning**

<b>ConceptualRepresentation</b>	<b>Metaphor</b>
<p>The image is a conceptual representation because it visualizes an idiomatic expression. The cartoon dog sitting in front of a doghouse is used to metaphorically convey the idiom “in the dog house”. This metaphor means being in trouble with someone, typically due to a mistake. The image does not depict an action, but instead represents a state tied to the metaphor.</p>	<p>The dog sitting outside the doghouse serves as a visual metaphor for the phrase “in the dog house.” The doghouse symbolizes a place of punishment and the dog represents someone who has fallen out of favor with another person. The dog’s position outside the doghouse reinforces the sense of being isolated.</p>

**Interactive Meaning**

<b>Contact (Demand vs. Offer)</b>	<b>Social Distance</b>
<p>The dog in the image looks directly at the viewer with a sad expression. This eye contact engages the viewer emotionally, inviting them to empathize with the dog’s situation. The dog’s look and expression convey a sense of guilt that goes along with the meaning of the idiom.</p>	<p>The image is shown from a close distance, allowing the viewer to see the dog’s expression clearly and feel a connection to its emotional state. This proximity enhances the viewer’s ability to relate to the dog’s predicament, making the metaphor more personal and emotional.</p>

## Compositional Meaning

Information Value	Salience	Framing
<p><b>Center/Margin:</b> The dog and the doghouse are centrally positioned, which make them the focal point of the image. This central placement emphasizes the metaphorical relationship between the dog (the person in trouble) and the doghouse (the place of disfavor).</p> <p><b>Top/Bottom:</b> The text “in the dog house” is placed at the top of the image. It guides viewer’s understanding of the visual metaphor. The dog and doghouse are located in the middle and lower portions of the image, visually reinforcing the meaning of the idiom.</p>	<p>The bright colors of the dog and the doghouse against the yellow background make these elements the most salient features in the image. The dog’s expressive eyes also stand out, drawing the viewer’s attention to its emotional state. This salience helps convey the key message of the idiom clearly and effectively.</p>	<p>The dog and doghouse are framed together in a simple, space, which emphasizes their connection and the metaphor they represent. The absence of other elements in the background ensures that the viewer’s focus remains on the dog and its situation. It reinforces the metaphor of being “in the dog house.”</p>

Visual metaphors play an important role in explaining idiomatic expressions by connecting familiar images with cultural meanings. Elements such as salience, framing, and

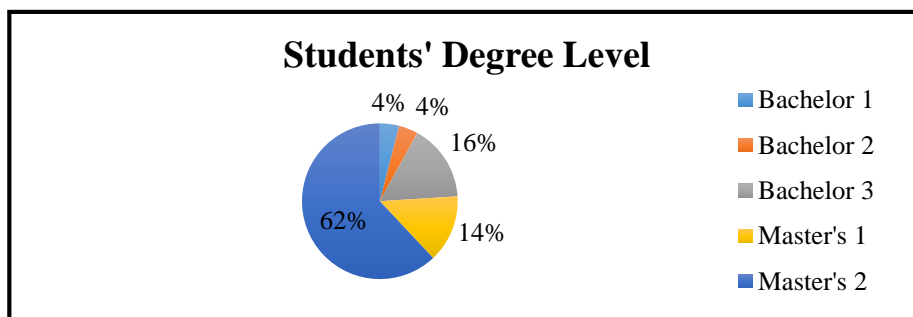
information value make these metaphors clearer and more engaging. For example, the metaphor “a storm in a teacup” shows how small problems can be blown out of proportion, while “in the doghouse” reflects being in trouble with someone. These visual representations not only make ideas easier to understand but also help learners connect emotionally with the concepts.

## 2. Presentation of the Questionnaire Data

The questionnaire data focuses on how students perceive these visual metaphors and how they influence their language learning and cultural understanding. Their responses provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of these metaphors across different levels of study.

### Section one: Background Information

#### Question 1: What is your current degree level?

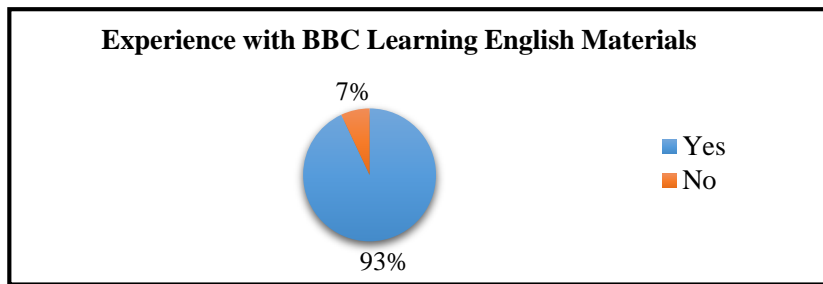


**Figure 01: *Students' Degree Level***

The pie chart illustrates the distribution of students by degree level. The majority (62%) are in their second year of Master's, followed by first-year Master's students (14%). Third-year Bachelor's students make up 16%, while both second-year and first-year Bachelor's students account for 4% each.

## Section two: Students' Experience with BBC Learning English.

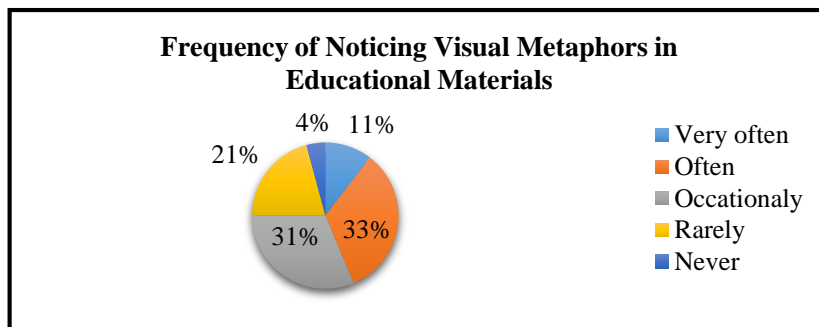
**Question 5: Have you used BBC Learning English materials before?**



**Figure 02: Experience with BBC Learning English Materials.**

The results of the pie chart indicate that a larger number of the students 93% are familiar with BBC Learning English and only 7% are not familiar.

**Question 7: How often do you notice visual metaphors in educational materials?**



**Figure 03: Frequency of Noticing Visual Metaphors in Educational Materials.**

The pie chart demonstrates that most of the students (33%) often do notice visual metaphors in educational materials. Nearly one-third of them (31%) notice visual metaphors occasionally, and only 11% reported that they very often notice them. However, a small percentage of students rarely and never notice them.

**Question 8: Do you find the visual metaphors in BBC Learning English clear and easy to understand, or do you find them complicated? Please explain why or why not.**

Most learners find visual metaphors in BBC Learning English clear and easy to understand. Arguing that the platform uses familiar imagery and simple symbols with nice colors to convey complex ideas. It helps making abstract concepts more relatable and easier to grasp. These metaphors provide clear explanations, facilitating students' learning processes and enriching vocabulary knowledge. Designed with an international audience in mind, they transcend cultural barriers and are accessible to diverse learners. Even if complicated, the metaphors are explained in words, making them clear and easy to understand.

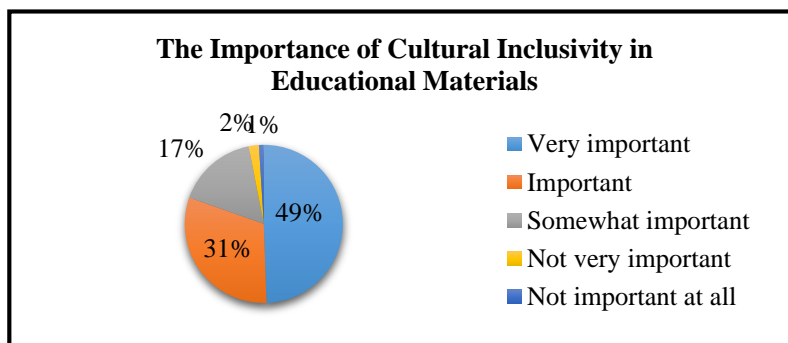
The learning style is particularly beneficial for those who are visual, as the metaphors are expressive and provide a clear idea of the topic. However, a minority find them complicated. For some, it is complicated because they do not understand English very well or because the metaphors require a deep understanding of the topic, cultural background, and multiple significations. Others find it difficult because English has a wide range of meanings, or the picture does not make the metaphor understandable. It is also complicated because it talks about their culture, and while focusing on visuals rather than writing or reading may improve listening, it can be difficult for those who do not like visual metaphors.

**Question 10: Do you think that your cultural background influences your understanding of visual metaphors in educational materials? Please explain.**

Most of the students agree that cultural background influences their understanding of visual metaphors in educational materials. They suggest that culture acts as a guide, it shapes their thoughts, beliefs and perceptions. Besides, they mention that cultural context and symbols significantly influence the perception of metaphors, as different cultures have unique symbols, contexts, and references that shape their interpretation. However, some of

them disagree about the influence of cultural background on understanding visual metaphors. They state that their cultural background does not influence their understanding because everyone can interpret things the same way.

**Question 11: How important do you think it is for educational materials to be culturally inclusive to learners from different backgrounds?**



**Figure 04: *The Importance of Cultural Inclusivity in Educational Materials.***

Figure 04 demonstrates that the majority of students 49% view cultural inclusivity in educational materials as very important. 31% see it as important, 17% think it is somewhat important, while only a small percentage of students consider it as either not very important 2% or not important at all 1%.

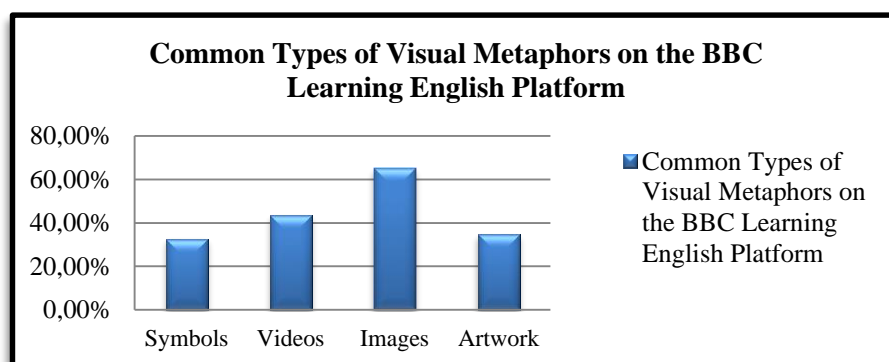
### **Section three: Perception of Visual Metaphors**

**Question 12: Do you believe that visual metaphors are helpful in understanding cultural concepts? Please elaborate.**

From the results gathered, the majority of the students find that visual metaphors are helpful in understanding cultural concepts. They emphasize that visual representation makes abstract ideas more concrete, basically by connecting with shared symbols and imagery. Some of them argue that visual metaphors facilitate understanding by simplifying complex ideas, making them easier to realize and remember. They are seen as an interesting

way to learn new things especially about culture. However, some of the learners see that visual metaphors are not effective in understanding cultural concepts. They note that visual metaphors can sometimes complicate understanding or that their usefulness might be limited, depending on the representation itself.

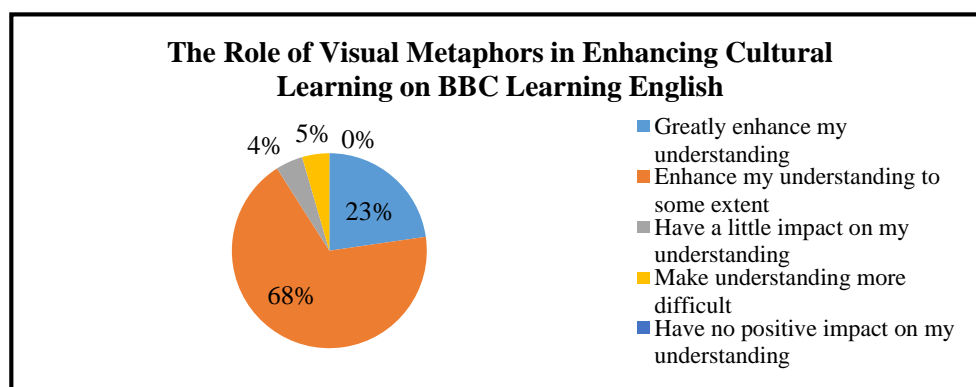
**Question 14: Based on your experience, what are the different types of visual metaphors commonly used in the BBC Learning English platform?**



**Figure 05: Common Types of Visual Metaphors on the BBC Learning English Platform.**

The results of this diagram demonstrate that the highest percentage is noticed in the scale of ‘Images’ with 65.20%. Then, it is followed by videos with 43.50%, artwork with 34.80% and symbols with only 32.60%.

**Question 16: How do Visual Metaphors contribute to your learning experience when exploring cultural topics through BBC Learning English?**



**Figure 06: The Role of Visual Metaphors in Enhancing Cultural Learning on BBC Learning English.**

Diagram 6 reveals that 68% of respondents see that visual metaphors enhance their understanding to some extent. Additionally, 23% believe that they greatly enhance their understanding. On the other hand, 5% of them find that they make understanding more difficult, while only 4% say they have a little impact on their understanding. However, no respondents believe that visual metaphors have no positive impact on their understanding.

**Question 17: In your opinion, what makes a visual metaphor effective or ineffective in enhancing cultural learning?**

The students shared different opinions on what makes a visual metaphor effective or ineffective in cultural learning. Many mentioned that an effective visual metaphor should be easy to understand, relatable and culturally relevant. For example, if a metaphor captures the learner's interest, it becomes easier to remember, especially if it is visually appealing and creatively represented. Some also noted that the effectiveness of a visual metaphor can depend on the learner's background and learning style, it can enhance understanding. But if it is not relevant or is seen in a negative light, it may not have the desired impact. Others indicated that simplicity and clarity are crucial for a metaphor to be effective.

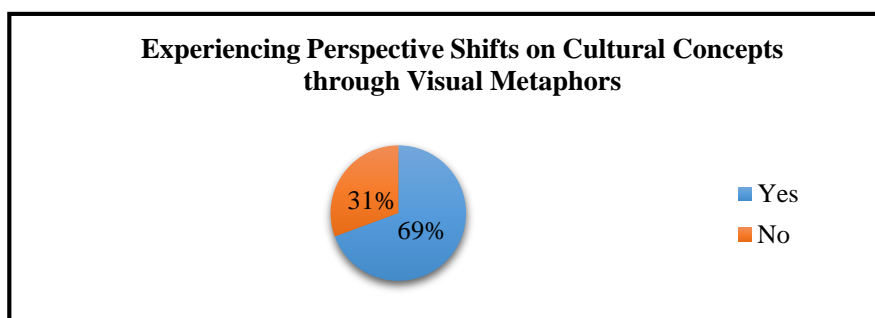
When a visual metaphor is straightforward and avoids unnecessary complexity, it facilitates better understanding and emotional connection. However, if the metaphor lacks clarity or cultural sensitivity, it may hinder the learner's ability to grasp the intended cultural concepts, making it ineffective. Cultural relevance and familiarity were also highlighted by some respondents. A metaphor that reflects common experiences and cultural details is more likely to be effective. But if it is too simple or does not capture the complexity of cultural differences, it may fail to convey the intended message. Additionally, poor design or the use of stereotypes can make a metaphor less effective and lead to misunderstandings.

**Question 18: Do you think BBC Learning English effectively incorporates cultural sensitivity in the use of visual metaphors? Please justify.**

Some students believe that BBC Learning English does a good job, noting that they avoid stereotypes and use images that are generally respectful of different cultures. They feel that these visual metaphors help bridge cultural gaps and make learning easier. Others were more neutral, saying that while BBC Learning English aims to be culturally sensitive, it may not always succeed. They think that sometimes, the metaphors might miss the mark or not fully respect cultural nuances. Furthermore, a couple of respondents expressed doubts, suggesting that there might be issues with how certain visual metaphors are used or that some cultural aspects could be overlooked.

**Section four: Investigate the Impact of Visual Metaphors on the Development of Intercultural Competence.**

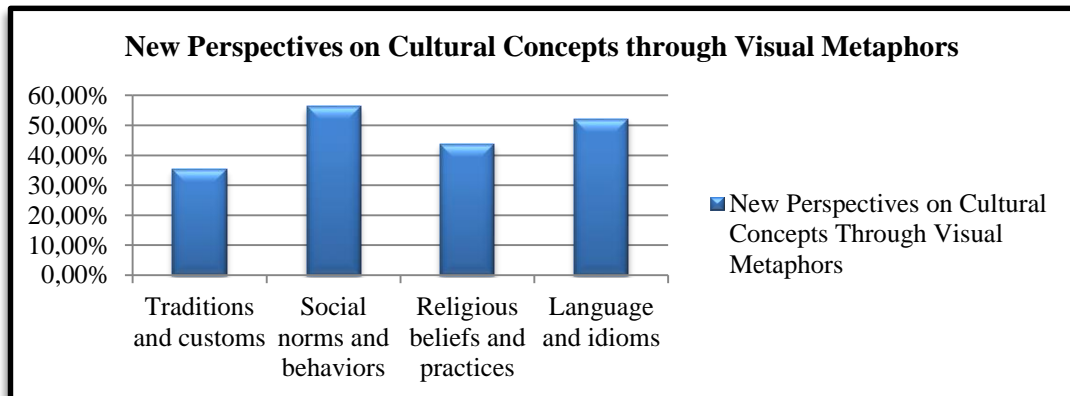
**Question 19: Have you ever experienced a shift in your perspective of cultural concept due to exposure to a visual metaphor?**



**Figure 07: *Experiencing Perspective Shifts on Cultural Concepts through Visual Metaphors.***

As it is displayed in the pie chart above, 69% of the students reported experiencing a perspective shift on cultural concepts through the use of visual metaphors. Whereas, 31% of them did not experience such shifts.

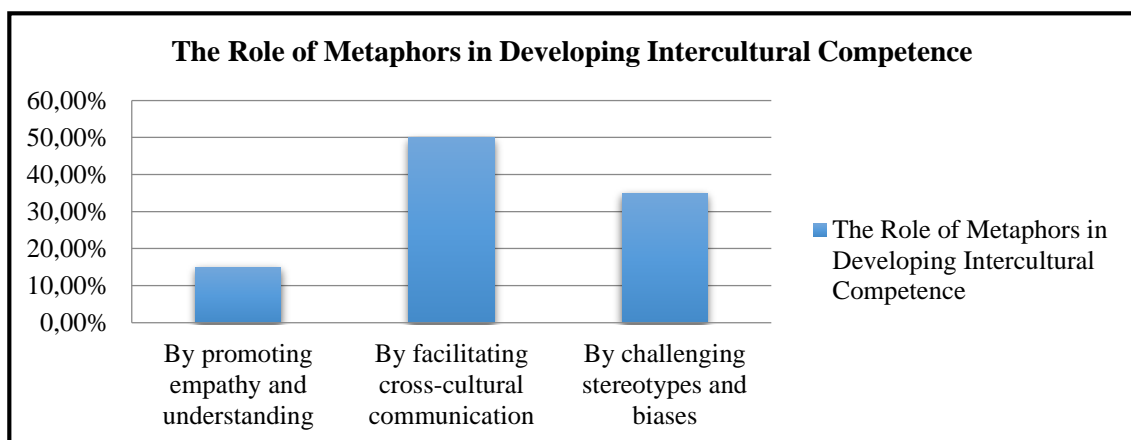
**Question 20: Which cultural concept did you gain a new perspective on after being exposed to a visual metaphor?**



**Figure 08: *New Perspectives on Cultural Concepts through Visual Metaphors.***

It is illustrated in the diagram that 53.30% of students gain a new perspective after being exposed to a visual metaphor related to social norms and behaviors, while 52.10% of them gain it through language and idioms. A greater part of the students (43.80%) claim that religious beliefs and practices also influenced by visual metaphors. Whereas a frequency of 35.40% respond that traditions and customs are affected by visual metaphors.

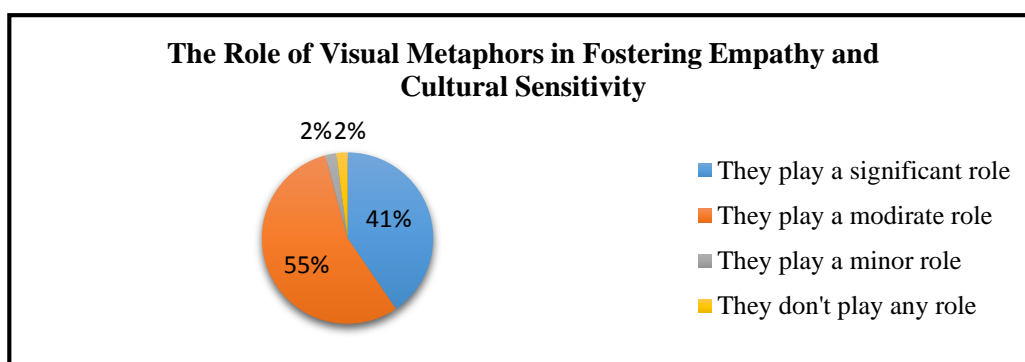
**Question 21: How can metaphors contribute to the development of intercultural competence?**



**Figure 09: *The Role of Metaphors in Developing Intercultural Competence.***

The chart indicates that the highest percentage 50% of respondents claim that metaphors are most effective in facilitating cross-cultural communication. Besides, 35% of them believe that metaphors help in challenging stereotypes and biases. Though, only 15% suggests that metaphors are less effective in directly promoting empathy and understanding compared to their role in communication.

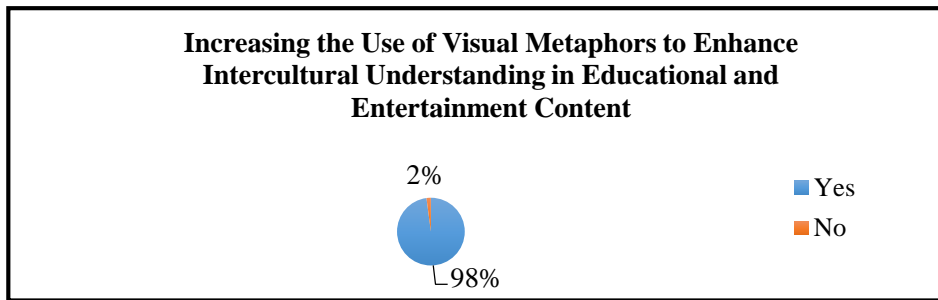
**Question 22: In your opinion, what role do visual metaphors play in fostering empathy and cultural sensitivity**



**Figure 10: *The Role of Visual Metaphors in Fostering Empathy and Cultural Sensitivity.***

The results of the pie chart reveals that 55% of the learners see visual metaphors as having a moderate impact in fostering empathy and cultural sensitivity, while 41% believe that they play a significant role. A small percentage 2% feels that they play a minor role and also don't play any role.

**Question 23: Would you like to see more visual metaphors used in educational content, documentaries, and entertainment programs to enhance intercultural understanding?**

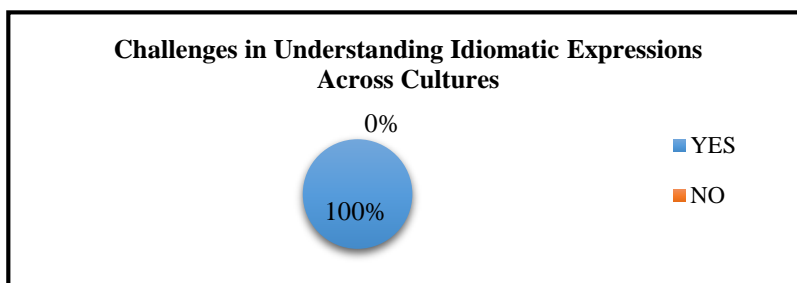


**Figure 11:** *Increasing the Use of Visual Metaphors to Enhance Intercultural Understanding in Educational and Entertainment Content.*

The analysis suggests that the majority of the learners 98% support to see more visual metaphors in educational content, documentaries, and entertainment programs to enhance intercultural understanding. However, only 2% of them do not support increasing the use of visual metaphors.

**Section five: Cultural Learning through Idiomatic Expressions.**

**Question 24: Have you ever encountered difficulties in understanding idiomatic expressions from different cultures?**



**Figure 12:** *Challenges in Understanding Idiomatic Expressions across Culture*

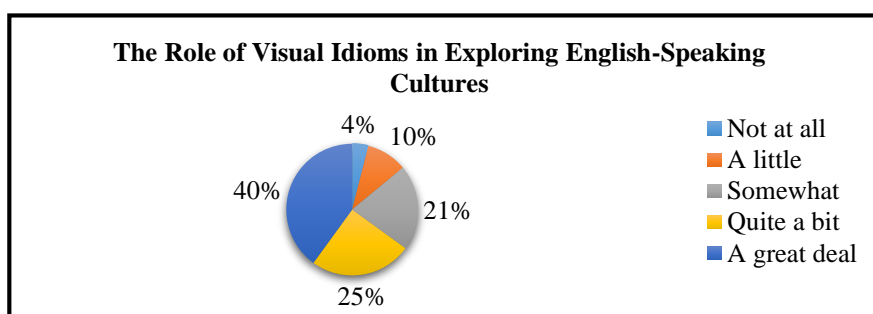
100 % of the students encountered difficulties in understanding idiomatic expressions from different cultures.

**Question 25: Do you feel more engaged with the cultural context of idiomatic expressions when they are visually presented? Why or why not?**

Several respondents answered that visual presentations make idiomatic expressions easier to understand and remember. Visuals help in capturing the meaning with the cultural

context behind the idioms. They also mentioned that visuals provide a clearer metaphor, which bridges the gap between the literal and figurative meanings. Visuals can evoke emotions, which help in understanding the deeper meaning of an idiom. Some of them mentioned that visuals are more engaging and fun, making the idioms more interesting to learn and easier to connect with. Visuals provide a sense of realness, which helps in better retention of the idioms. Besides, they help viewers see how idioms fit into everyday life, offering a glimpse into the culture from which they originate.

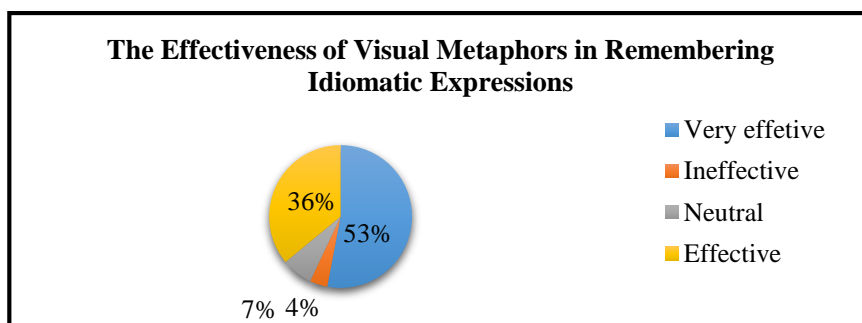
**Question 26: To what extent do idiomatic expressions presented visually help you gain insights into the culture of English-speaking countries?**



**Figure 13: *The Role of Visual Idioms in Exploring English-Speaking Cultures.***

According to the results obtained from the diagram 40% of the students have a great deal gaining cultural insights through visually presented idiomatic expressions. 25% reported that visual idioms help them understand English-speaking cultures quite a bit. 21% of respondents feel that visual idioms help them gain cultural insights somewhat. A smaller percentage, 10%, believes that visual idioms help them only a little in understanding English-speaking cultures.

**Question 27: How effective are visual metaphors in helping you remember idiomatic expressions and their meanings over time?**



**Figure 14: *The Effectiveness of Visual Metaphors in Remembering Idiomatic Expressions.***

The majority of learners (53%) believe that visual metaphors are very effective in helping them remember idiomatic expressions. 36% considers visual metaphors to be effective. 7% feel neutral about the effectiveness of visual metaphors, while only 4% finds visual metaphors ineffective in helping them remember idiomatic expressions.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter first presented the analysis of visual metaphors in the corpus using Kress and Van Leeuwen's Grammar of Visual Design (GVD). The framework helped examine how elements like composition, salience, and framing contribute to the representation of idiomatic expressions. Following this, data from fifty students who completed the questionnaire were shown through diagrams and descriptive texts. The next chapter will focus on discussing these findings.

## *Chapter Four*

### *Discussion of the Findings*

## **Introduction**

This chapter presents and interprets the findings from the multimodal analysis of visual metaphors, followed by the results gathered from the questionnaire distributed to the English students. These findings are analyzed in relation to the literature discussed in the first chapter, aiming to answer the research questions and to confirm or refute the hypotheses proposed in the general introduction. It is organized into two main sections: the first examines the corpus analysis results and connects them to the relevant literature, while the second discusses students' responses from the questionnaire.

### **1. Multimodal Analysis of BBC Visual Metaphors**

#### **1.1. Visual Metaphors in BBC Learning English for Cultural Insights from Idioms**

The visual metaphors analyzed in the BBC Learning English platform serve as instances of conceptual representations rather than telling a story. This fixed arrangement of objects, people, and settings give a unique opportunity for cultural learning by illustrating idiomatic expressions from English-speaking cultures. For example metaphors like “spill the beans” or “bury your head in the sand” (See Appendix 1) highlight abstract ideas like secrecy and avoidance, while also reflecting deeper cultural behaviors such as honesty and responsibility. Specifically, instances of conceptual representations serve EFL students through direct learning as they provide clear insights into cultural meanings and idiomatic expressions; cultural awareness, as they enhance understanding of cultural contexts; and simplicity, as they simplify complex ideas for easier comprehension and retention.

In this context, Lakoff's (1993) definition of metaphor as “a cross-domain mapping in the conceptual system” (p. 203) helps explain how these visual metaphors work by mapping

abstract concepts from one domain to another, making complex cultural ideas more understandable through visual means. This kind of visual presentation could make the cultural meanings behind these idiomatic expressions clearer, as learners are invited to think more deeply about their symbolic significance which can vary across cultures, meaning that symbols may carry different meanings based on the viewers' cultural background. Furthermore, we find that each image reflects cultural details tied to Western values such as individualism, equality, and the importance of free expression in daily life. The way these metaphors are designed emphasizes behaviors and attitudes that are central to English-speaking cultures, subtly exposing students to these cultural norms.

## **1.2. Visual Metaphors for Interactive Cultural Insights in BBC Learning English**

This section explores the way visual metaphors on the BBC Learning English platform engage viewers by inviting reflection and interpretation, and examines the proximity and social distance between the metaphors and the audience, through highlighting how this contact enhances cultural understanding.

### **1.2.1. Role of Gaze in Visual Metaphors for Enhancing EFL Students' Cultural Engagement**

When looking at the interactional meaning of these metaphors, whether or not there is contact makes a big difference. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) point out that “there is, then, a fundamental difference between pictures from which represented participants look directly at the viewer's eyes, and pictures in which this is not the case.” (p.55). Hence the results reveal that nine out of the ten images (Images 1, 2,3,5,6,7,8,9 and 10) are “offer” types (See Appendix 1), through this representation the viewer is perhaps only meant to observe the

underlying cultural nuances that these visual metaphors are carrying that originate from English-speaking cultures and societies, such as conflict management, addressing taboos, the balance between determination and futility and many others. However, (Image 04) acts as a “Demand” image, perhaps encouraging viewers to connect emotionally with feelings of guilt and responsibility, this direct approach fosters empathy and make them think about how people interact with each other. Thus, these metaphors help students learn about cultural norms related to conflict, communication, and emotional bonds by providing visual representations that make abstract concepts more relatable. For example, a metaphor like “the elephant in the room” illustrates the discomfort of addressing unspoken issues in communication, fostering discussions around conflict resolution. By putting Lakoff’s theory into practice, the images show how metaphors connect language and culture, ultimately enhancing the learning experience.

### **1.2.2. The Role of Social Distance in Visual Metaphors for Connecting Students to English Culture**

The results of the analysis of social distance show that (Images 2,4,5,8 and 9) reveal participants positioned close in an intimate social proximity to the viewers, drawing them into the metaphor’s emotional core, such as the guilt and need for reconciliation in “In the Dog House”. This closer perspective perhaps helps students connect with the emotions and social scenarios that are common in western cultures which in return enhances their understanding of how these feelings influence behavior and communication. As for images 1, 3, 6, 7, and 10 show more of a far personal distance, that creates a sense of detachment. For example the distant view in “Elephant in the Room” reflects western tendencies to avoid direct confrontation of uncomfortable issues. This perhaps could allow students to understand the cultural reluctance to address hidden problems openly. These different views show how the

details can affect how the viewer's feel connected to the metaphor. This supports Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) idea that "Metaphors are grounded in physical experiences, and the level of detail in an image can enhance this connection" (p. 118).

### **1.3. Compositional Meaning in Visual Metaphors as a Key to Cultural Understanding**

This section examines the way the compositional meaning of visual metaphors connects the representational and interactive elements of the images relying on the three interrelated elements information value, salience, and framing to enhance EFL students' cultural understanding.

#### **1.3.1. The Positioning of the Visual Metaphors in the Selected Images**

The positioning of the objects in the images helps show their deeper meanings by emphasizing key elements and their relationship.. In image 1 "A Storm in a Teacup", the elements are given importance by placing them in the center to possibly encourage viewers to reflect on the importance of perspective in conflicts. Similarly, image 2 "Bleu in the Face" positions the woman in the center to clearly see the frustrated look on her face which perhaps reflects the western communication and the exhaustion that arises from unsuccessful efforts. As regards image 3," The Elephant in the Room" the depicted group of people are positioned centrally, making them the primary focus , while the elephant is placed at the margin this arrangement emphasizes the cultural reluctance to address uncomfortable truths, prompting viewers to consider the consequences of avoidance.

Likewise, the dog and doghouse in image 4 "In the Dog's House" are given emphasis by being placed in the middle of the image in order to reflect western cultural norms regarding personal responsibility. Image 5 "Steal Someone's Thunder" (See Appendix 1)

places the hand gripping the lightning towards the bottom left, shifting the attention to taking something away, while still keeping the hand as the main focus in order to convey the cultural nuance of competition and the idea of undermining others, reflecting societal attitudes towards success and recognition. Image 6 “Pie in the Sky” also is positioned in the center to perhaps encourage viewers to reflect on the nature of hope versus reality in Western cultures. In image 7 “Stick Your Neck Out” the centralization of the giraffe’s neck likely conveys cultural values surrounding bravery and the importance of stepping outside’s one’s comfort zone. Just like image 7, image 8 “Spill the Beans” the elements are central this positioning suggests the cultural significance of honesty and transparency. Furthermore, image 9 “Bite the Bullet” centers on the mouth and bullet in order to invite the viewer to acknowledge the connotation of this positioning, which is to reflect on the cultural attitudes toward resilience and the need to confront hardships head-on. Finally, image 10 “Bury Your Head in the Sand” the men are placed in the center of the image, this positioning highlights the cultural tendency to avoid reality, perhaps encouraging viewers to reflect on the consequences of denial. These results show the central positioning of key elements emphasizes their importance in conveying the message. It draws the attention to cultural nuances embedded in these idioms and might facilitate the understanding of societal values and encourage viewers to reflect on their own experiences in relation to these cultural themes.

### **1.3.2. Salience of the Visual Metaphors in the Selected Images**

The second aspect of compositional meaning is salience. David Machin states that “Salience is where certain features in composition are made to stand out to draw the viewer’s attention.” (p.130). This suggests that important visual features can include color, size, and whether something is placed in the foreground or background.

Regarding CMT, “Certain features help in reinforcing the metaphorical concept” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p.178). In the analysis of the ten selected images, it shows that BBC Learning English employs color contrast, foregrounding, simple backgrounds, and strategic placement to enhance the effectiveness of these visual metaphors. In image 1, the teacup and cloud are positioned to create contrast, making them the most prominent features encouraging viewers to reflect on how small issues are exaggerated in Western culture. Same with image 2, the bright blue face stands against a purple background, illustrating the cultural value placed on clear emotional communication. Image 3, the elephant is made more noticeable by its size and color reinforcing the cultural tendency to overlook obvious problems.

As for image 4 the bright colors used make the dog and doghouse the center of focus against a less detailed background can perhaps emphasize the feelings of guilt and the need for accountability in personal relationships. Images 5, 6 and 7 are provided salience and this is by placing them in the foreground while the background remains subdued making them the focal point this technique may reinforce in the viewers the idea of taking risks or facing challenges, key cultural themes that resonate within Western contexts. For image 8 the use of bright colors for the beans and metal can contrasts with the simple pink background bringing it to the forefront highlighting the cultural importance of honesty and transparency. Same with image 9 featuring a red mouth biting a gold bullet with a black background, the strong colors aim to draw the attention to the key elements of the image likely reflecting societal attitudes towards resilience. Lastly, image 10 similar to the previous images, the portrayed men in formal attire with their heads buried under the sand are attributed salience by being placed in the center of the image encouraging viewers to think about the implications of avoidance.

These visual strategies not only enhance the cultural understanding of the metaphors but also support students’ language learning by prompting discussions about personal

responsibility, risk taking, and societal attitudes, thereby enriching their overall learning outcomes.

### **1.3.3. The Framing of the Visual Metaphors in the Selected Images**

The third aspect of the compositional meaning is called framing. Kress and Leeuwen (2006) explain it as the more elements in a composition are linked together, the more they are perceived as a single, cohesive piece of information (pp.203-204).

In the framing aspect, the selected images are perceived as unified apart from image 3 due to the lack of framing devices, such as dividing lines. This absence creates a visual connection between the elements, suggesting that they belong together in some way. In image 1, the teacup and storm cloud are placed close together emphasizing their connection reflecting a cultural tendency to dramatize small problems. As for image 2 it is identified individually, the woman's face stands out alone, this reinforces her emotional state without other distractions this perhaps encourages viewers to empathize with her situation. While in image 3 the elephant is placed aside from the people which means the image is disconnected since the elephant is placed separately this separation connotes the cultural tendency to overlook significant problems. As for image 4 frames the dog and the doghouse together which reinforces their connection and highlights themes of guilt and accountability in personal interactions. Moving to images 5 and 6 features elements framed against plain backgrounds, emphasizing the significance of each individual metaphor. This singular focus allows viewers to engage deeply with the themes of risk and confrontation, fostering a cultural understanding of resilience. Finally the images 8, 9, and 10 are all framed together, promoting a collective identification of the various metaphors. This grouping reinforces the idea that the themes of revealing secrets, facing challenges, and avoiding reality are interconnected aspects of cultural narratives. On the whole, the way the elements are framed helps show the

meanings of the visual metaphors and makes viewers think about the cultural messages they carry. It can reasonably be concluded that these images help students better understand social values and behaviors through these idioms, and contribute to enhancing their cultural learning experience.

## **2. EFL Students' Perceptions of BBC Visual Metaphors**

As regards the first research question on the students' perception of visual metaphors, most of them find that visual metaphors in BBC Learning English platform clear, simple, and also easy to understand. This is due to the use of familiar images and simple symbols that successfully convey complex ideas. This perspective highlights the role of visual metaphors in simplifying abstract concepts and aiding in vocabulary acquisition. However, a minority of students find that these metaphors can be confusing, often due to factors such as unfamiliar cultural references (e.g., idiomatic expressions that may not translate directly across cultures) or varying levels of depth required for interpretation (e.g., understanding nuanced meanings in context). This indicates that while visual metaphors are generally accessible, the effectiveness may vary based on a student's cultural background and language proficiency.

Additionally, the findings show that 43% of students consider themselves "familiar" with various cultures and 32% report having "some familiarity" (See Appendix 4). This level of cultural knowledge can shape how students interpret visual metaphors. Students who have been exposed to a wider range of cultural references might find it easier to understand these metaphors. This observation reinforces Kövecses (2017) who claim that "Context is a motivating force in the use of metaphors" (p.307-323), highlighting how cultural context shapes the interpretation of metaphors. This aligns with Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), which argues that metaphors are deeply rooted in culture and derive their meaning from shared experiences. Many students feel that their

cultural background plays a role in how they perceive visual metaphors, suggesting that cultural context and distinct cultural symbols are crucial for interpretation. However, a few students believe that visual metaphors can be understood universally, regardless of one's cultural background. This perspective is supported by Kövecses's (2010) argument in "Metaphor and Culture", where he suggests that "Such universal metaphors seem to result from certain commonalities in human experience. These commonalities constitute universal embodiment on which many conceptual metaphors are based." (p. 197-220). In other words, even with cultural differences, shared human experiences make visual metaphors understandable across different backgrounds, which explain why some students see them as universal.

When asked whether they believe that integrating cultural inclusivity in educational materials is important, most students recognized its importance. This suggests that many students prefer content that acknowledges and represents various cultures, indicating that cultural background can influence their understanding of visual metaphors. As Basnet (2024) in *Cultural Diversity and Curriculum* states:

Embracing cultural diversity in curricula is not a mere educational trend but a fundamental paradigm shift necessary for preparing learners to grow vigorously in an interconnected and diverse global society in the modern era. The merits of a culturally inclusive education are vast, ranging from cognitive development to the promotion of the social and emotional intelligence of an individual. (p.8).

Basnet's assertion reinforces the importance of cultural inclusivity in education, as it aligns with the students' preferences for content that reflects diverse cultural perspectives. By recognizing and integrating various cultural narratives into educational materials, educators can enhance students' cognitive and emotional engagement. This approach not only aids in understanding visual metaphors but also prepares learners to navigate and appreciate the complexities of a multicultural world.

### **3. Exploring Cultural Nuances in Visual Metaphors to Enhance Immersive Learning in BBC Learning English**

The results of the questionnaire show that visual metaphors help make abstract cultural ideas clearer and easier to understand. Students feel that these metaphors simplify complex concepts by linking them to familiar symbols and images from their everyday life. This reflects Lakoff's observation that many of our experiences and activities are metaphorical, and much of our understanding is shaped by these metaphors (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p.147). It comes to infer that by using visual metaphors, students can relate new ideas to their existing knowledge, enhancing their comprehension of cultural concepts.

However, not all students agree on the usefulness of visual metaphors. Some claim that visual metaphors complicate rather than simplify knowledge. A segment of students, specifically five of them claim that visual metaphors complicate rather than simplify their understanding of cultural concepts for instance one of them said 'sometimes the images make it harder for me to grasp the meaning because they seem unrelated to the text'. Furthermore, there has been criticism that the use of visual metaphors in BBC Learning English does not always include cultural understanding. While some students encourage BBC Learning English to use appropriate culturally related images to avoid stereotypes.

When exploring the impact of visual metaphors on understanding cultural concepts, students' answers provided valuable insights. The data from Question (12) indicates that a majority of students find visual metaphors effective in clarifying cultural ideas. They believe that visual representation makes abstract ideas more concrete by connecting them to shared symbols and imagery. For instance, one student mentioned, "Humans tend to understand more and be attracted more by pictures, so it is a good way to reflect cultural concepts." Another

student added, “Visual metaphors express thoughts and feelings that cannot be put into words, and most people tend to be visual”.

This is consistent with the analysis shown in Appendix 4, where 70.20% of respondents feel that visual metaphors simplify cultural concepts, while 51.10% believe they make these ideas more memorable. Furthermore, 46.80% of students find visual metaphors make learning more engaging. These numbers demonstrate a strong appreciation among students for the role of visual metaphors in facilitating cultural understanding. This view is shared by Patesan et al. (2018), who argue that the use of visuals in education offers substantial benefits. They note that visuals not only capture and sustain student attention but also motivate engagement with the subject matter and enhance information retention. (p. 356).

However, it is important to highlight that not all students share this view. One student said, “Depends, not all learners are visual learners. But for those who are, it could be very helpful to simplify an idea.” Another said, “I do not think they are widely important.” Thus this suggests that while visual metaphors are generally seen as beneficial, their effectiveness can vary depending on the learner’s individual preferences and the way the metaphor is presented.

As regards the role of visual metaphors in enhancing cultural learning, the analysis shows that (91%) of students (See Figure 11, p. 47) think that visual metaphors enhance their understanding of cultural concepts either moderately or significantly. According to our sample population which is 50 EFL students, this suggests that these metaphors are effective within this context. When asked about what makes a visual metaphor effective, students mentioned that it should be easy to understand, relatable, and culturally relevant. One of the learners said, “An effective visual metaphor in cultural learning is one that connects well with people, clearly shows cultural ideas, and can be understood across different languages.”

Another stated that “simplicity, relevance, and emotional impact are key to making a metaphor work.” On the other hand, others pointed out that if a metaphor is too complex and lacks cultural sensitivity, it can lead to misunderstandings therefore make the learning process harder.

Regarding how well BBC Learning English includes cultural sensitivity in their visual metaphors, most students think that they this aspect effectively. A participant who was supportive said that “BBC Learning English usually avoids stereotypes and uses images that most people understand and find respectful”. This reflects the idea that “educational environment that promote cultural diversity contribute to reduced bias and increased understanding among learners.”(Sleeter, 2018, as cited in Basnet, 2024, p.5).However, a short minority thought there might be occasional mistakes, suggesting that while BBC makes an effort to be culturally sensitive, there is still room for improvement.

Another key aspect of our study examined the impact of visual metaphors on learners’ intercultural competence and understanding of cultural differences. The results show that 69% of students experienced a change in their views on cultural concepts after being exposed to visual metaphors (See Figure 07, p. 45) this finding goes in line with Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) view that change may occur as a result of metaphors:

New metaphors have the power to create a new reality. This can begin to when we start to comprehend our experiences in terms of a metaphor, and it becomes a deeper reality when we begin to act in terms of it....Much of cultural change arises from the introduction of new metaphorical concepts and the loss old ones.(p.145).

In relation to the types of visual metaphors,students reported that images, videos, artwork, and symbols as the most common used on the platform. These types help them enhance their understanding and make the content more memorable. Yet, the effectiveness of a visual

metaphor related on its clarity, simplicity, and cultural relevance. As a consequent, a metaphor that is relatable and creatively designed is more likely to be effective.

The analyses also show that cultural relevance plays a crucial role in the effectiveness of visual metaphors. Metaphors that are culturally specific and reflect common experiences can help deepen students' understanding of cultural concepts. On the contrary, those that are simple can lead to misunderstandings and limit their educational impact.

#### **4. The Impact of Visual Metaphors on Language Learning Outcomes and Intercultural Competence Development**

The results demonstrate that 69% of students (See Figure 08, p.46) felt their understanding of cultural concepts changed after seeing visual metaphors. This suggests that these metaphors are important for improving cultural awareness. The significant changes noted in students' views on "social norms and behaviors" and "language and idioms" emphasizes the effectiveness of visual representation in conveying cultural messages. By connecting familiar imagery with these concepts, students may find it easier to engage with diverse cultural contexts.

Besides changing perspectives, visual metaphors also help in developing intercultural skills by improving cross-cultural communication. This is backed by 87.2% of students who think metaphors are especially good at this (See Figure 09, p.46). Additionally, 31.9% of students believe metaphors help challenge stereotypes and biases, while 25.5% sees that they play a moderate role in promoting empathy and understanding. This reveals that visual metaphors contribute both to changing perspectives and improving communication skills across cultures.

In relation to fostering empathy and cultural sensitivity, the results show that visual metaphors are generally viewed positively in terms of fostering empathy and cultural understanding. This is supported Ann Ware's idea that institutes that research has shown that metaphors are crucial to how we think, especially because they influence our emotions. Metaphors help us feel empathy and connect with sensitive topics that might be hard to understand. (Ware, 2023, p.914-937).

Furthermore, a majority of students (98%) expressed a desire to see more visual metaphors in "educational content", "documentaries" and "entertainment programs" in order to enhance their intercultural understanding (See Appendix 4). This result highlights a strong preference for using visual tools to connect with other cultures and make learning more engaging. As Underwood (1989) notes that visual memory is a fundamental aspect of human learning and understanding (p.20), which helps explain why students find visual metaphors so effective.

## **5. Understanding and Engagement with Idiomatic Expressions across Cultures**

As regards to students' engagement with idiomatic expressions, the results from Question 24 revealed that all students (100%) reported experiencing difficulties in understanding idiomatic expressions from different cultures. This underscores the challenges associated with cross-cultural language learning and proves what Solodka, et al (2021) said "The development of cross-cultural perspectives demands a consistent interpretative engagement of language use and meta-pragmatic awareness" (p.87).

Many students find visual presentations helpful in making idiomatic expressions easier to understand and remember. They argue that "visuals help capture the cultural context behind

the idioms” and others said that “they provide a clearer metaphor that bridges the gap between literal and figurative meanings”. Students also mentioned that “visuals are more engaging and evoke emotions, which aids in retention and understanding of the deeper meanings of idioms”.

When it comes to the effectiveness of visual idioms in providing cultural insights, a significant portion of students (86%) expressed that visually represented idioms greatly enhanced their cultural understanding. These findings suggest that visual representation can significantly impact learners’ grasp of cultural nuances. This validates Xiao’s (2009) observation that idioms reflect the environment, lifestyle, history, and culture of their speakers, thus culture is embedded within idiomatic expressions (p.142).

Finally, most learners (53%) believe that visual metaphors are “very effective” for remembering idiomatic expressions. This result goes in tune with Shaffer (2005) who claimed that “visual representation that was responsible for the higher mean scores of the Image group, but actually the presentation of the visual representation itself” (p.9). This suggests that visual metaphors aid in the retention of idiomatic expressions and their meanings over time.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed the results from the multimodal analysis of visual metaphors selected from the BBC Learning English platform. Along with the results from the online questionnaire administered to all levels of university education in the English departments of Tizi-Ouzou and Blida 2. Consequently, the discussion had addressed the research questions outlined in the General Introduction and also confirmed the advanced hypothesis. Based on the results of both the questionnaire and the corpus analysis it can be seen that visual metaphors in images significantly contribute to enhancing learning outcomes

and cultural understanding. BBC Learning English effectively uses both visual and linguistic elements in their images. Additionally, participant's responses suggest that many of them view the visual metaphors as a vital tool for cultural learning and cross-cultural communication.

## ***General Conclusion***

The current dissertation has investigated the role of visual metaphors in enhancing cultural learning, using the BBC Learning English platform as a multimodal study tool. The research was conducted with EFL students from Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi-Ouzou and Blida 2 universities.

The research study has pursued three main objectives. The first aim is to determine students' views on the visual metaphors used on the BBC Learning English platform in relation to cultural learning. The Second aim is to investigate the visual metaphors themselves and analyze how they are constructed and function within the framework of Grammar of Visual Design (GVD). Third and last aim is to examine the effectiveness of these visual metaphors in improving cultural learning by comparing their impact on learners from different cultural backgrounds. The analysis in this study was based on two main theories to meet its goal. We used the GVD theory as a methodological framework and we integrate CMT as a theoretical framework to explain the basic ideas behind metaphors.

However, for analyzing the 10 images chosen from the official BBC Learning English platform, the Grammar of visual Design (GVD) theory by Kress and Leeuwen (2006) was used. These theories helped the study look at how the visual metaphors are constructed and how they work to improve cultural understanding. Through both theories, the analysis focused on the visual grammar of the selected images, it emphasized the role of representational, interactive, and compositional meanings in the communication of cultural information.

The study has adopted the mixed method of research, combining both qualitative and quantitative research techniques to explore the role of visual metaphors in enhancing cultural learning. The data were gathered using two methods: an online questionnaire, distributed randomly via social media to EFL students of all levels from Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi-Ouzou and Blida 2 universities, 50 responses were collected. The second method was

a corpus analysis of 10 images selected from the official BBC Learning English platform. These images were analyzed using both Grammar Visual Design (GVD) theory and Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) to explore how visual metaphors contribute to cultural learning. The collected quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed using Descriptive Statistics for the numerical data and Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) for the textual and visual data.

The analysis of the data from the questionnaire and the images discussed earlier provides clear insights into the proposed hypotheses. It answered the first question ‘How do students perceive visual metaphors in BBC Learning English in relation to their cultural understanding and language learning skills?’ and confirmed the first hypothesis ‘The students perceive visual metaphors in BBC Learning English as effective tools for enhancing cultural understanding and language learning skills’. For the second question, ‘Are there cultural nuances, such as values, behaviors, and societal norms, reflected in the visual metaphors used on the BBC Learning English platform?’ the second hypothesis, which proposed that ‘there are distinct cultural nuances’ is also confirmed. The corpus analysis demonstrated that BBC Learning English frequently incorporates idiomatic expressions that highlight specific cultural elements that are embedded in the idioms although there are some other cultural elements but they are not commonly featured as idioms. As for the third research question ‘How do different types of visual metaphors (e.g., images, videos, illustrations) influence students’ language competencies and their understanding of cultural aspects?’ it confirmed the third hypothesis ‘Different types of visual metaphors ( images, videos, illustrations) significantly enhance both students’ language competencies and their understanding of cultural aspects’, the findings support this hypothesis as students generally see the visual metaphors as valuable tools for learning about both language and culture.

The limitations we encountered in our study were as follows. First, our sample size was of a small scale, given how difficult it was to find a large number of students who use the BBC Learning English at the level of Algeria. Therefore, the sample only consisted of (50) students from the English departments at Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi-Ouzou and Blida 2 university. As a result, our findings cannot be generalized to the whole population. Second, we faced a limitation with the BBC Learning English platform, which mostly features visual metaphors for idiomatic expressions. This focus restricted the scope of our study, so we could only analyze visual metaphors related to idioms rather than a broader range of cultural nuances. Also, it was too late in the research process to change the title to match the focus on idiomatic expressions, even though the emphasis had shifted.

Based on the results from the questionnaire and the analysis of visual metaphors, this study suggests some practical ideas and future research directions. First, visual metaphors are helpful in understanding cultural aspects, particularly idioms in this study. However, this approach could also be useful for other cultural elements. Therefore, it is recommended to include visual metaphors in teaching to improve cultural learning. As well as using different visual aids like images, videos, illustrations can make lessons more interesting and engaging. For future research, it could look into other possible platforms that integrate visual metaphors in their materials to teach about culture and investigate other cultural aspects that can be shown through visuals or explore the same topic in different settings. Additionally, other research tools could be used like an experiment or classroom observations to get a clearer picture of how visual metaphors help in learning about cultures and languages.

In conclusion, this research shows that visual metaphors play a helpful role in teaching cultural aspects to Algerian EFL students. They make it easier to connect language and culture, which leads to a more engaging learning experience. For Algerian students, who may

not have much exposure to English culture, these metaphors help them better understand cultural norms, values, and idiomatic expressions.

Moreover, the visual representation of idiomatic expressions contributes to clarify abstract cultural concepts by making them accessible to learners from different cultural backgrounds. Algerian students benefit from these visual cues, because they provide a contextualized learning environment through reinforcing cultural awareness.

However, it is important to note that, while visual metaphors are helpful in facilitating cultural learning, their present scope, which is mostly focused on idiomatic phrases, limits the range of cultural aspects they may cover. In general, this study confirms that visual metaphors are an effective approach for teaching English culture to EFL Algerian learners.

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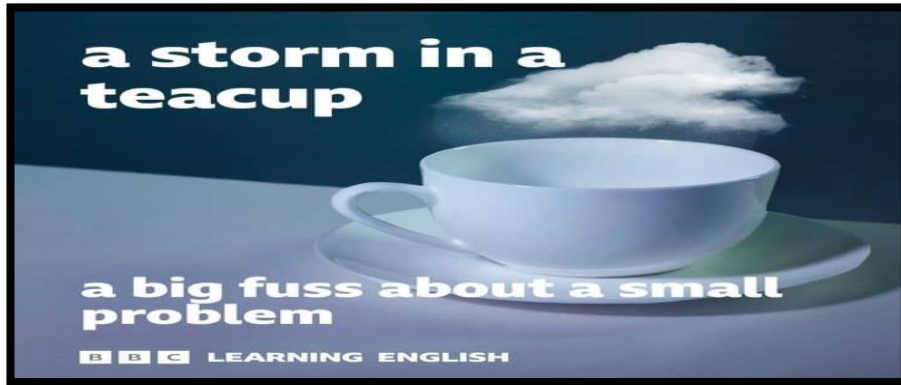
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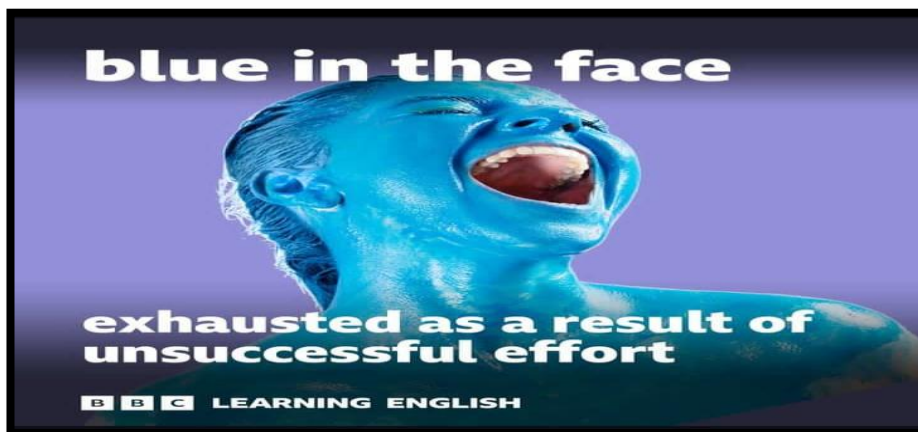
# *Appendices*

**Appendix 1: The images selected from BBC Learning English platform**

**Figure 01**



**Figure 02**



**Figure 03**

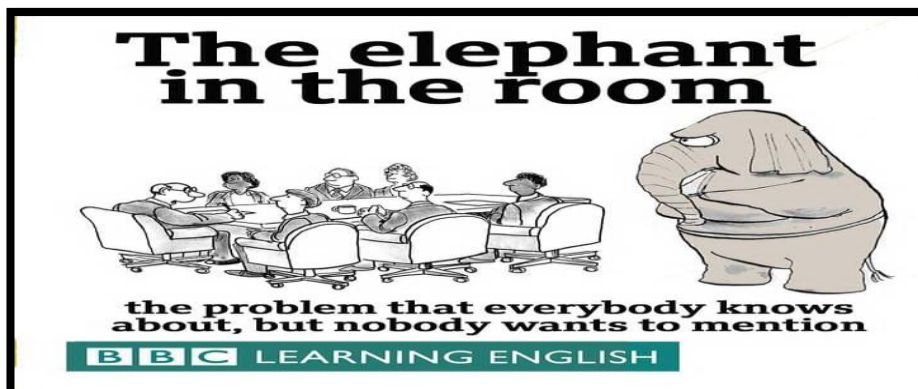


Figure 04



Figure 05

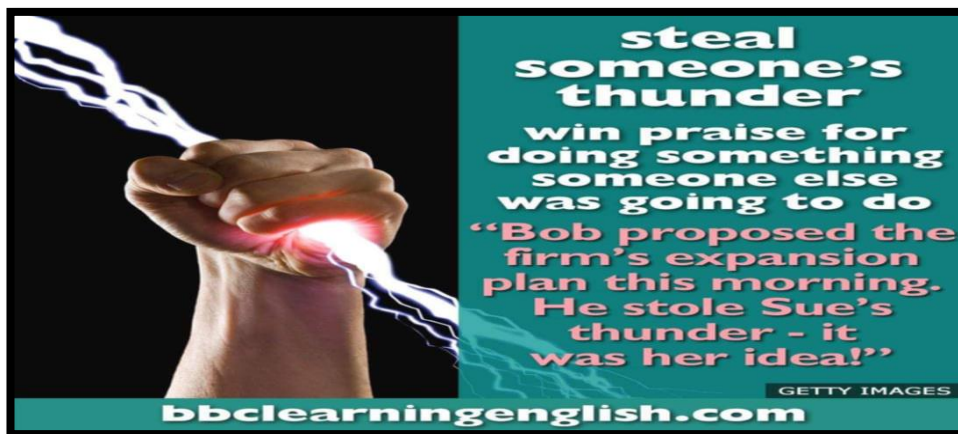


Image 06



Figure 07



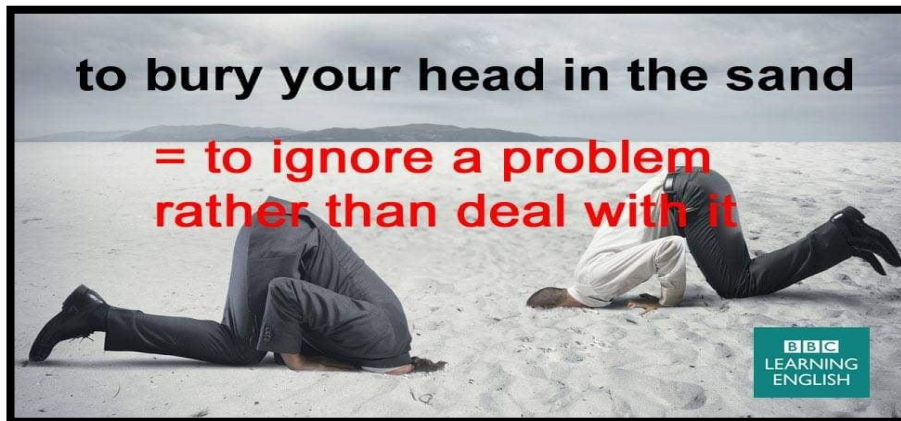
Figure 08



Figure 09



**Figure 10**



## Appendix 2: Students' Questionnaire

# Questionnaire

**Title:**The Role of Visual Metaphors in Enhancing Cultural Learning:  
BBC Learning English

### Introduction:

Dear participants,

We kindly invite you to participate in a study exploring the role of visual metaphors in enhancing cultural learning within the context of BBC Learning English. Please take a moment to respond to the following questions. Rest assured, your responses will remain anonymous. Your insights and perspectives are valuable for the current study, so please feel free to express your opinion openly and honestly.

Thank you for your appreciated contribution and for taking the time to participate in this research endeavor.

Instructions: Please ensure to check the right answer(s) and provide detailed responses where required.

Sincerely, Ms, Sabrina Messaoudi.

Ms, MassiciliaBelkalem.

Master two students in Didactics of Foreign Languages.

MouloudMammeri University of TiziOuzou.

**NB:** Visual metaphors are representations where one image or object is used to symbolize or stand for something else, conveying abstract ideas or concepts through visual imagery. For example, an image of planet Earth melting like an ice cream cone can symbolize the idea of environmental degradation and climate change.



Figure: Visual metaphor of the melting planet Earth

## **Section one: Background Information**

1) What is your current degree level?

Bachelor 1

Bachelor 2

Bachelor 3

Master 1

Master 2

2) In which region of the country do you live?

.....

3) Do you have access to the internet?

Yes

No

4) If yes, do you use it for studying English?

.....

## **Section two: Experience with BBC Learning English**

5) Have you used BBC Learning English materials before?

Yes

No

6) What kind of educational materials do you watch?

Documentaries

Entertainment programs

Cartoons

Other

7) How often do you notice visual metaphors in educational materials?

Very often

Often

Occasionally

Rarely

Never

8) Do you find the visual metaphors in BBC Learning English clear and easy to understand, or do you find them complicated? Please explain why or why not.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

9) How familiar are you with different cultures?

Very familiar

Familiar

Somewhat familiar

Not very familiar

Not at all familiar

10) Do you think that your cultural background influences your understanding of visual metaphors in educational materials? Please explain

.....  
.....  
.....

11) How important do you think it is for educational materials to be culturally inclusive to learners from different backgrounds?

Very important

Important

Somewhat important

Not very important

Not important at all

**Section three: Perception of Visual Metaphors**

12) Do you believe that visual metaphors are helpful in understanding cultural concepts? Please elaborate.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

13) Can you recall any specific visual metaphors used in BBC Learning English materials that helped you understand cultural concepts better? Please describe one or two examples.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

14) Based on your experience, what are the different types of visual metaphors commonly used in the BBC Learning English platform?

- Symbols
- Videos
- Images
- Artwork
- Other

15) How do visual metaphors influence your understanding of cultural concepts?

- They make it easier to understand
- They make it more engaging
- They make it more memorable
- Other (Please specify).....

16) How do visual metaphors contribute to your learning experience when exploring cultural topics through BBC Learning English?

- Greatly enhance my understanding
- Enhance my understanding to some extent
- Have a little impact on my understanding
- Make understanding more difficult

Have no positive impact on my understanding

17) In your opinion, what makes a visual metaphor effective or ineffective in enhancing cultural learning?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

18) Do you think BBC Learning English effectively incorporates cultural sensitivity in the use of visual metaphors?

Yes

No

Justify.....  
.....  
.....

**Section four: Investigate the impact of visual metaphors on the development of intercultural competence.**

**NB:** Intercultural competence refers to the ability to effectively communicate and interact with individuals from different cultural backgrounds. It involves understanding and appreciating cultural differences, adapting to new cultural contexts, and resolving intercultural conflicts.

19) Have you ever experienced a shift in your perspective of cultural concept due to exposure to a visual metaphor?

Yes

No

20) Which cultural concept did you gain a new perspective on after being exposed to a visual metaphor?

Traditions and customs

Social norms and behaviors

Religious beliefs and practices

Language and idioms

Other (please specify)

.....

21) How can metaphors contribute to the development of intercultural competence?

By promoting empathy and understanding.

By facilitating cross-cultural communication.

By challenging stereotypes and biases.

Other (Please specify).....  
.....

22) In your opinion, what role do visual metaphors play in fostering empathy and cultural sensitivity?

They play a significant role

They play a moderate role

They play a minor role

They don't play any role

23) Would you like to see more visual metaphors used in educational content, documentaries, and entertainment programs to enhance intercultural understanding?

Yes

No

24) Is there anything else you would like to share regarding visual metaphors, cultural learning, or BBC Learning English?  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

### Section five: Cultural learning through Idiomatic Expressions

**NB:** An idiomatic expression is a phrase or expression whose meaning cannot be understood from the literal meanings of its individual words. In simpler terms, it is a group of words that have a special meaning when used together. For example, “under the weather” means “feeling sick or unwell, “rather than being literally under the weather.

25) Have you ever encountered difficulties in understanding idiomatic expressions from different cultures?

YES

NO

26) Do you feel more engaged with the cultural context of idiomatic expressions when they are visually presented? Why or why not?

.....  
.....  
.....

27) To what extent do idiomatic expressions presented visually help you gain insights into the culture of English-speaking countries?

-Not at all

-A little

-Somewhat

-Quite a bit

-A great deal

28) How effective are visual metaphors in helping you remember idiomatic expressions and their meanings over time?

-Very effective

-Ineffective

-Neutral

-Effective

-Very effective

## Appendix 3: Multimodal Analysis

### Image 05: Steal someone's thunder

#### Representational Meaning

Conceptual Representation	Metaphor
<p>The image is a conceptual representation because it visualizes the idiom “steal someone's thunder.” The lightning bolt, often associated with thunder, is being grasped by a fist. It symbolizes the act of taking away someone's impact or attention.</p> <p>/This representation is non-narrative, focusing on the metaphorical relationship between the elements (the hand and the lightning) to convey the idiomatic meaning.</p>	<p>The lightning bolt represents “thunder,” which is a metaphor for someone's success.</p> <p>The fist grabbing the lightning symbolizes the act of taking away that success.</p> <p>Together, these elements convey the idiom “steal someone's thunder,” meaning to take credit or attention away from someone else, especially when that person was the original source of an idea.</p>

#### Interactive Meaning

Contact (Demand vs. Offer)	Social Distance
<p>There is no direct engagement with the viewer; it is an “offer.” The viewer is invited to interpret the metaphor by observing the static image of a hand holding a lightning bolt. The image does not directly "demand" a response, but</p>	<p>The image is presented at a medium-close distance, showing enough detail in the hand and the lightning to make the metaphor clear. This distance positions the viewer as an observer who can understand the metaphorical action (grasping the thunder)</p>

rather presents an idea for contemplation.	without feeling involved.
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### Compositional Meaning

Information Value	Saliency	Framing
<p><b>Center/Margin:</b> The fist grasping the lightning is centered in the composition, indicating its importance as the focus of the visual metaphor. The central positioning emphasizes the concept of taking (grasping the thunder) as the key idea.</p> <p><b>Top/Bottom:</b> The lightning bolt extends from the top of the image down to the fist, suggesting the act of taking something powerful (thunder) from a higher source. This top-bottom organization reinforces the idea of taking power or attention.</p>	<p>The bright white lightning bolt against a darker background and the contrasting colors of the text make both the visual and verbal elements stand out. The lightning captures the viewer's attention, followed by the fist, which serves as a concrete action of stealing.</p>	<p>The elements (the fist and the lightning) are closely framed together, creating a visual connection between the action (grabbing) and the object (thunder). This framing reinforces the metaphor by linking the act of stealing to the concept of thunder, leaving no room for alternative interpretations</p>

## Image 06: Pie in the Sky.

### Representational Meaning

<b>Conceptual Representation</b>	<b>Metaphor</b>
The image conceptually represents a metaphorical connection between two objects: a pie (symbolizing something desirable) and the sky (symbolizing something distant or unattainable). There is no narrative or action, just the comparison of these two objects to express an idea.	The pie stands for something tempting and good. While the sky represents something that is unlikely to happen. Together, these elements symbolize the saying “pie in the sky”, meaning something appealing (the pie) that is unlikely to be achieved (as it is up in the sky and out of reach).

### Interactive Meaning

<b>Contact (Demand vs. Offer)</b>	<b>Social Distance</b>
There is no direct connection between the pie and the sky in the image and the viewer, which makes it an offer. The viewer is simply invited to look at and think about the metaphor without being directly involved by the elements.	If the image shows the pie way up in the sky, seen from afar, it highlights how out of reach the pie is. The distance between the viewer and the pie in the image reflects the idea that while the pie looks tempting, it is not something they can easily get. This setup makes the viewer only observe, thinking about how the pie, though desirable, is something they probably will not attain. This distance drives home the metaphor of ‘pie in the sky’ as something nice but unlikely to happen.

## Compositional Meaning

Information Value	Saliency	Framing
<p><b>Centre/Margin:</b> In the ‘pie in the sky’ image, the pie is usually shown in the middle or slightly off-center. This makes it the main focus, highlighting its importance in the metaphor of something desirable but out of reach. The sky, which forms the background, emphasizes how distant the pie is, showing that it is not easily attainable.</p> <p><b>Top/Bottom:</b> The pie is placed high up in the sky, indicating that it is far away and not easily reachable. This high position makes it clear that the pie represents something tempting but unlikely to be achieved. The sky’s vastness around reinforces the idea that the</p>	<p>The difference between the pie (vibrant yellow) and the vast less detailed (blue sky) creates saliency. The viewer first notices the pie because of its vibrant appearance against the empty sky. This contrast makes the pie stand out and highlights its desirability and unattainable nature.</p>	<p>The pie is shown clearly against the sky, making it the main thing to look at. Without other distractions, the viewer’s attention is focused on the pie and its high, distant position. This setup reinforces the idea that the pie is a far-off goal that is hard to get.</p>

pie is out of reach.		
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**Image 07: Stick your Neck Out.**

**Representational Meaning**

<b>ConceptualRepresentation</b>	<b>Metaphor</b>
The image features a giraffe with its long neck out, serving as a conceptual representation of the metaphor “stick your neck out”. There is no action or narrative happening in the image, it is a straightforward depiction	The giraffe’s long neck symbolizes taking a risk and stepping out of one’s comfort zone. By showing the giraffe illustrates the idea of “sticking your neck out”, suggesting that just like the giraffe reaches out with its neck, a person is putting themselves in a more vulnerable and risky position.

**Interactive Meaning**

<b>Contact (Demand vs. Offer)</b>	<b>Social Distance</b>
In the image of the giraffe with its extended neck, there is no direct interaction between the giraffe and the viewer, so it functions as an offer. It allows the viewer to observe and think about the idea of “sticking your neck out” without being directly engaged.	The giraffe’s neck is shown prominently, often from a medium to long distance, which emphasizes its extended length and the metaphorical idea. This distance keeps the viewer in an observational role, allowing them to contemplate the concept of taking risks and stepping out of their comfort zone without feeling personally involved. The

	viewer remains a passive observer, reflecting on the metaphor rather than engaging directly with the image.
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### Compositional Meaning

Information Value	Saliency	Framing
<p><b>Center/Margin:</b> The giraffe is likely positioned centrally in the frame. This placement emphasizes the giraffe's neck as the focal point, highlighting the metaphor of "sticking your neck out" as the main idea. The central positioning makes the metaphorical concept stand out.</p> <p><b>Top/Bottom:</b> The giraffe's neck is shown stretched outward, often positioned toward the top of the image. This placement strengthens the idea of going beyond normal boundaries. The giraffe's high neck suggests</p>	<p>The giraffe's long neck stands out because it is displayed very prominently. The neck contrasts sharply with the simpler background, making it the main focus. This strong contrast immediately draws the viewer's eye to the neck.</p> <p>Its length and position clearly highlights the idea of taking risks, making the metaphor "sticking your neck out" easy to understand.</p>	<p>The framing is set to focus on the neck within the visual space. The giraffe is placed centrally, and its neck is clearly emphasized, with the background kept simple. This clear framing guarantees that the neck dominates the visual space, accentuating the metaphor of "sticking your neck out".</p>

that taking risks involves extending oneself beyond usual limits.		
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**Image 08: Spill the Beans.**

**Representational Meaning**

<b>Conceptual Representation</b>	<b>Metaphor</b>
The image is a conceptual representation because it illustrates a metaphorical connection between two objects: the open can (which stands for a source of hidden information). There is no action or narrative, just the placement of these objects to express an idea.	The can symbolizes something that was once closed off and secret, while the spilled beans signify information that has been uncovered. Together, these elements metaphorically capture the phrase “spill the beans”, indicating that a secret (the beans) has been let out from its container (the can) and can no longer be contained.

**Interactive Meaning**

<b>Contact (Demand vs. Offer)</b>	<b>Social Distance</b>
The image of the open can with spilled beans does not interact directly with the viewer, so it serves as an offer. The viewer is invited to look at the image and think about the idea behind “spill the beans”, without being directly involved with the can or the beans	The image shows the can and spilled beans from up close, the viewer can easily see the details and understand the metaphor.  This close view lets the viewer observe the image and think about revealing a secret without feeling directly involved.

## Compositional Meaning

Information Value	Salience	Framing
<p><b>Center/Margin:</b> The can is likely positioned in the center of the composition, making it the main focus. The beans scattered around emphasize the act of revealing something. The central placement of the can highlights its role as the source of the secret, while the spread of beans around it stresses the idea of information being spilled out.</p> <p><b>Top/Bottom:</b> The can is placed with its lid down and open at the top right, with the beans spilled out in front of it. This central placement points out the idea of information being released from a specific source. The</p>	<p>The difference between the can (lying on its side with the lid open) and the scattered beans (which are spread out and messy) makes the image stand out. The viewer's attention is first drawn to the spilled beans, which highlights the idea of revealing information. The visible contrast between the open can and the beans helps make the metaphor of "spilling the beans" clear.</p> <p>The bright colors of the beans and the can catch the viewer's eye, clearly transmitting the idiom "spill the beans". The pink background helps highlight these main elements and</p>	<p>The can the spilled beans are framed together within the same visual space, focusing the viewer's attention on both elements. This arrangement highlights the direct relationship between the can and the beans, reinforcing the metaphor that once a secret (the beans) is spilled from its source (the can), it cannot be contained again.</p>

arrangement visually	makes them more	
represents how the beans, which were once inside the can, are now spread out, demonstrating the act of spilling secrets.	noticeable.	

**Image 09: Bite the Bullet**

**Representational Meaning**

<b>Conceptual Representation</b>	<b>Metaphor</b>
The image is a conceptual representation since it depicts a metaphorical interaction between two objects: a mouth biting onto a bullet. There is no action or narrative unfolding; only the blending of various elements to communicate a message.	The mouth symbolizes the act of facing something difficult and unpleasant, while the bullet represents the tough situation. Together, these elements metaphorically represent the idiom” bite the bullet”, it suggests that someone is confronting a hard situation with resolve and courage.

## Interactive Meaning

<b>Contact (Demand vs. Offer)</b>	<b>Social Distance</b>
<p>There is no direct interaction with the viewer, so it serves as an offer. The viewer is encouraged to observe and interpret the metaphor “bite the bullet” without any direct involvement from the mouth or the bullet itself.</p>	<p>Since the image likely shows the mouth and the bullet from a close-up view, it allows the viewer to see the details clearly and understand the metaphor. This close-up view keeps the viewer in a reflective role, it encourages them to consider facing a tough situation without making them feel personally involved.</p>

## Compositional Meaning

<b>Information Value</b>	<b>Saliency</b>	<b>Framing</b>
<p><b>Center/Margin:</b> The mouth biting the bullet is positioned in the center of the image, making it the center of attention. This central placement stresses the main idea of the metaphor, focusing on the act of facing a challenge.</p> <p><b>Top/Bottom:</b> Because the</p>	<p>In this image, saliency is created by the strong contrast between the bright red mouth and the black background. This color difference makes the mouth and bullet stand out, drawing the viewer’s attention to these main elements.</p> <p>The simplicity of the color</p>	<p>The mouth and bullet are framed together in the center of the image, this arrangement strengthens their relationship and draws attention to the metaphor of ‘bite the bullet.’ The lack of additional details in the background helps emphasize the mouth and bullet as the main parts of the image.</p>

<p>mouth and bullet are centered, there is no significant top or bottom arrangement. This equal placement highlights the importance of both elements, it implies that the act of facing the challenge (the mouth) and its difficulty (the bullet) are equally important.</p>	<p>scheme ensures that the focus remains on the key parts of the image.</p>	
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**Image 10: To Bury your Head in the Sand**

**Representational Meaning**

<b>Conceptual Representation</b>	<b>Metaphor</b>
<p>The image is a conceptual representation because it shows a metaphorical relationship between two objects: the men in formal wear (representing individuals in denial) and the act of burying their heads in the sand (symbolizing their refusal to confront a problem).</p> <p>There is no action or narrative, just the visual metaphor illustrating the idea of avoidance.</p>	<p>The two men symbolize people who are ignoring a problem, the sand in this context stands for the act of avoiding the issue. Together, these elements metaphorically represent the idiom “to bury your head in the sand”, and this suggests that the men prefer to remain oblivious rather than face their problems</p>

## Interactive Meaning

Contact (Demand vs. Offer)	Social Distance
<p>There is no direct interaction between the elements of the image and the viewer, so it acts as an offer. The figures in the image do not interact immediately with the observer, instead, they invite observation of the metaphor</p>	<p>The image shows the men from a distance that allows the viewer to take in the whole scene; this is to make it clear that the focus is on their actions rather than their individual identities.</p> <p>This distance creates a sense of detachment, which makes it easier to think about the idea of avoiding problems without feeling personally involved with the characters.</p>

## Compositional Meaning

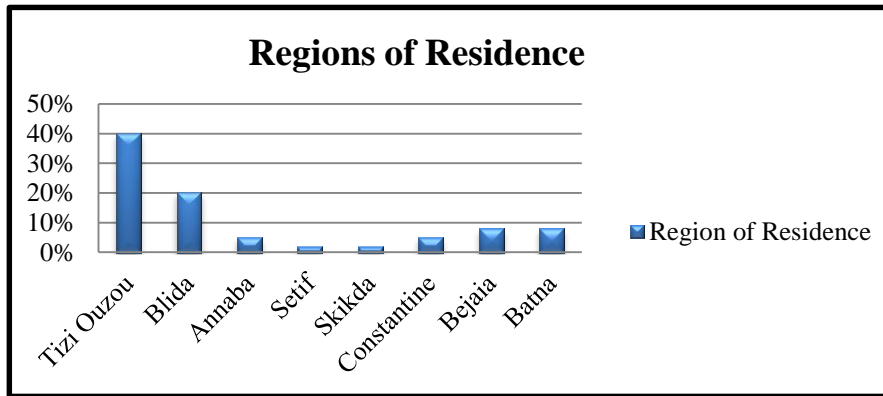
Information Value	Salience	Framing
<p><b>Center/Margin:</b> The men are centrally positioned in the image, emphasizing their actions as the main focus. Their heads buried in the sand symbolize the act of choosing to ignore something, while the surrounding environment like the mountain and the sky provides context but</p>	<p>The contrast between the formal wear of the men and the simple background of the sand, mountains, and the sky makes the scene stand out. The viewer's eye is drawn to the strange image of well-dressed men with their heads buried in the sand.</p> <p>This unusual sight makes the metaphor of "burying your</p>	<p>The image frames the men together in the center, with no other significant elements competing for attention. The distant mountain and cloudy sky add to the setting but do not distract from the main scene.</p> <p>This tight framing reinforces the connection between the two men's actions; it</p>

<p>does not overshadow their actions.</p> <p><b>Top/Bottom:</b> The heads of the men are closer to the bottom of the image, buried in the sand, representing their attempt to hide from reality. The sky and distant mountain above symbolize the broader world and the reality they are ignoring.</p> <p>This top/bottom arrangement highlights the contrast between their limited view (the sand) and the open world above them, reinforcing the idea of avoiding larger issues</p>	<p>head in the sand” clear and memorable.</p>	<p>accentuates the shared nature of their ignorance and makes the metaphor more impactful.</p>
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## Appendix 4: Questionnaire Analysis

### Section one: Background Information

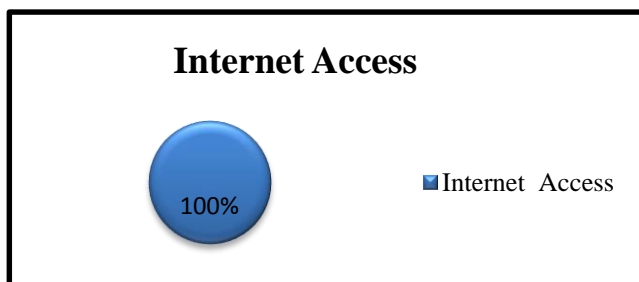
#### Question 2: In which region do you live?



**Diagram 01: Regions of Residence.**

The results show that the majority of the students live in Tizi-Ouzou, while the rest of them are from the eastern regions of Algeria.

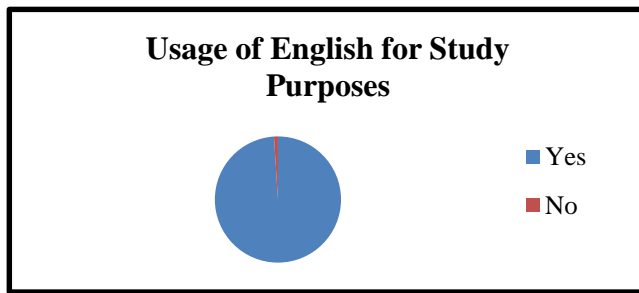
#### Question 3: Do you have access to the internet?



**Diagram 02: Internet Access**

All of the students have access to the internet.

**Question 4: If yes, do you use it for studying English?**

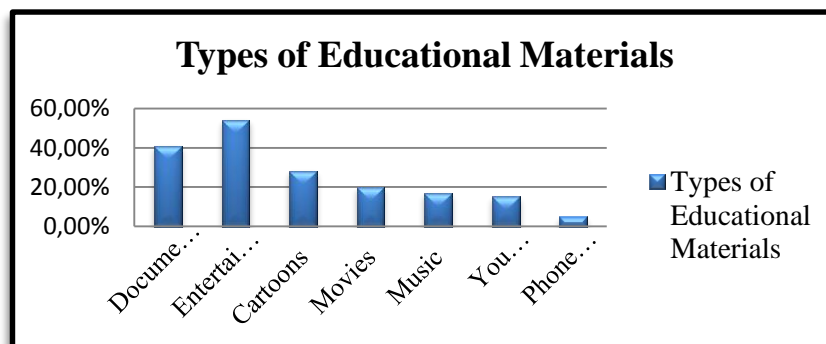


**Diagram 03: Usage of English for Study Purposes.**

Most of the students use the internet for studying.

## **Section two: Students' Experience with BBC Learning English**

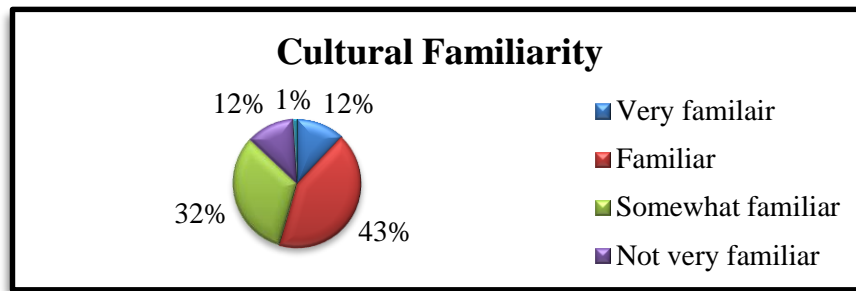
**Question 6: What kind of educational materials do you watch?**



**Diagram 04: Types of Educational Materials.**

The analysis revealed that entertainment materials are most commonly used, with the highest percentage 54.30%. Documentaries also have a significant usage rate, with 41.10% being the second most popular type of educational material. Cartoons and movies are widely utilized (cartoons 28.30% and films 20%). Then, there is music with 17%, YouTube with 15%, and phone applications with only 5%.

**Question 9: How familiar are you with different cultures?**



**Diagram 05: Cultural Familiarity.**

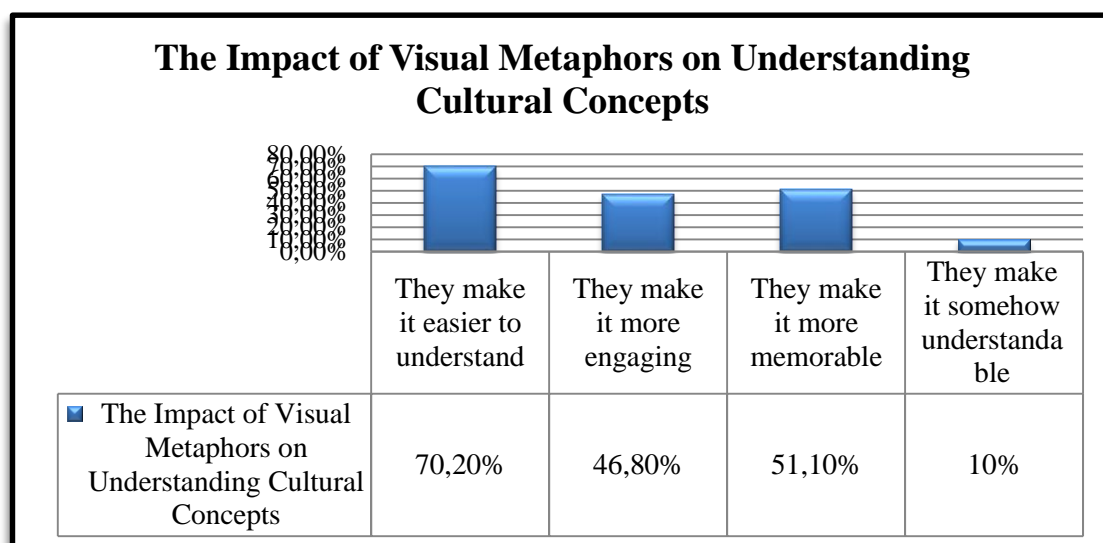
The results of the diagram show that 43% of students are familiar with different cultures. 32% of them are somewhat familiar. Additionally, 12% are either very familiar or not very familiar. However, only 1% is not familiar.

**Section three: Perception of Visual Metaphors**

**Question 13: Can you recall any specific visual metaphors used in BBC Learning English materials that helped you understand cultural concepts better? Please describe one or two examples.**

Some individuals provide examples such as images representing financial abuse by the rich, the "melting pot" to illustrate multiculturalism, and the iceberg model of culture to represent observable and hidden cultural aspects. Others mentioned visual metaphors like the clock metaphor for levels of formality, planet earth depicted as orange to signify a hot month, and cultural symbols like the Virgin Mary or the cross.

**Question 15:How do visual metaphors influence your understanding of cultural concepts?**



**Diagram 06: The Impact of Visual Metaphors on Understanding Cultural Concepts.**

The results obtained in question 15 denote that 70.20% of respondents believe that visual metaphors make cultural concepts easier to understand.51.10% make it more memorable, 46.80% make it more engaging, while only 10% make it somehow understandable.

**Section five: Cultural Learning through Idiomatic Expressions.**

**Question 28:Is there anything else you would like to share regarding visual metaphors, cultural learning, or BBC Learning English?**

Some participants offer positive feedback and additional thoughts on the importance of visual metaphors in cultural learning. Several responses emphasized the power of visual metaphors in enhancing cultural understanding, and making learning more engaging. Others commented on the effectiveness of BBC Learning English in promoting cultural sensitivity through its content. While, most of them wishes best of luck to conduct the survey.