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The Interdisciplinary Pictorial Material of Greek Religious Textbooks - A Chance to Meet the Otherness

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Abstract:

Introduction: Religious textbooks are always at the front of the Greek educational reality, following the broader tendency of a school study grounded on textbook culture. The present paper focuses on the visual structure of the Greek secondary religious textbooks (in the three grades) and answers the following questions: What kinds of visuals are used in the textbooks? What exactly does the substance of these things consist of? Where can they go, exactly? Moreover, how do linguistic and visual structures relate to one another?

On the other hand, the "otherness" problem is also analyzed through the results provided by the implication of the mixed method used. The latter is accumulated in the assumption of the dynamics of the visuals and their capacity to stimulate the participation of the students through their content. The otherness definition follows two main paths: one of an interdisciplinary approach during the learning process and another concerning the personal stimulation of all students through an inter-social and interreligious level. The hypothesis is confirmed through the interesting results of the present research.

Methods: For research purposes, it has been used Atlas ti. The software was available for the qualitative type of research. However, there are various accounts of interesting quantitative magnitudes for comparisons.

Results: The primary outcome focuses on a frequency balance among the grades using traditional and more modern visuals in their textbooks.

Discussion: Pictures could offer an outstanding pedagogical service when used creatively and effectively. The latter means that the meanings of the day's lesson could be conveyed through visuals to all the students (international students included). Then the religion teacher could initiate a debate in class or assign a

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related artful thinking activity (providing motivation and inflaming students' participation.
Limitations: The first twenty pages of each religious textbook have been used for research. The above restriction consisted of a research choice to avoid a broader statistical data account, which was not the primary goal to achieve.
Conclusions: Disregarding the dominant research frequencies and locations and going further from the correlations issues between textual and visual formations as depicted, it might be interestingly argued that the modern and abstract tendencies and options of Grade A and B's religious textbooks consist of a pole of appealing of the otherness in an individualistic and spiritualistic level of discussion.

Key words: visuals, interdisciplinary approach, otherness, connection, correlation.

Introduction

Education Textbooks are a critical helping tool for students, especially in (upper)secondary education worldwide (Kumar, 1986, pp. 1309-1311). A similar situation occurs in the Greek educational system as well; for the last fifty years, textbooks have been the leading education basis and the primary source of material for students to help them approach the requirements of their final semester exams (Issitt, 2004, p. 683). The former could not be the only aspect of the education dream for advanced education and learning prospect. Final exams and learning could not be considered as similar parameters or magnitudes disposing of the exact measurement and critique. On the contrary, rich literature is on the run about the matter (Efu, 2018, p. 73). The academic negotiation in the current situation is centered on the learning issue, paying particular attention to the visualization tools utilized in the religious textbooks used within the framework of the Greek educational system (Aisami, 2015, p. 539). The interaction between text and visuals is intriguing, influencing students' learning.
In the last ten years, Greek religious textbooks have adopted a visual approach to the textual theological material, harmonizing text and images (Aisami, 2015) and using several religious image themes and topics for the cause of learning through visual experience. Nevertheless, the visual material may differ in content, location, dimension, and relation or accordance with the text. The questions asked and answered in the appropriate academic research manner were: What kind of visual material was used throughout the twenty pages of each textbook examined? What is the central frequency of development of the referred visuals? Is their textbook location a critical issue? Is there any relationship between the textual and the visual schemes?

All of the inquiries mentioned above were examined via the prism of research in the context of a more comprehensive approach to the Greek educational system. The titles of each researched textbook per grade are: a) A Grade: A Trip of a Lifetime - The Meeting of God and Man through the Biblical Narratives, b) B Grade: The Church's Course of Life through History, and c) C Grade: The Testimony of the Orthodox Church in the Modern World.

1 Methodology

The pictorial school material is considered pedagogically significant (Carney & Levin, 2002, pp. 5-6). However, its deep process is still skipped, mainly prioritizing the textual context analysis and formation in the school praxis. The prior reality of the Greek religious textbooks was considered under severe account in the present review's academic attention. Either way, visuals serve the purpose above by cultivating a dynamic task series grounded on critical thinking, motivation, participation, abstract mentality, imagination, and collaboration occasioned by a picture. The present research is grounded on a mixed methodology. It examines seminal frequencies of the religious textbooks' illustrations, their captions as their content, and their content relevance with their neighbour chapter as well.

Specifically, the present analysis focuses on the religious textbooks of the three secondary school grades (A, B, and C) and the first twenty pages of each one. Rather than focusing on each textbook's specifics, the idea for a bloated database sprang from examining a tiny but representative sample of each one and then having the opportunity for an intergrade comparison. However, still, only the most significant outcomes are presented. The three religious textbooks were uploaded to the ATLAS ti suite, a qualitative analysis software. The first twenty pages of each textbook were marked for review. Consequently, according to the book's content, every visual element was selected and identified by its kind and subject using a particular coding system (Williams & Moser, 2019, p. 47). The latter means that every code retrieved a sum of Information concerning the visual elements, including the primary index, for further adherences.

2 Results

The textbooks research took place from April 5th to April 15th, 2023, and the first twenty pages of each textbook (per grade) were taken under the research lens. The objectives of the research conducted were: a) to define the kind of visuals used, b) the existence of the correlation between visuals and text, c) their textbook location and the possible significance of it, and d) the visualizing stimulation involvement and the possibility of creating a broader engagement of

all the members of the classroom if possible. The findings of the research, in brief, are the following:

Concerning the Grade A religion textbook results, photographic material (31.25%), hagiographical material (25.00%), and codex scanning photos (18.75%) are the most prominent visual data, according to the findings. On the other hand, there is an absolute percentage similarity between the drawing map and sketch visuals (6.25%).

Hagiography covers the most significant part (64.29%) compared to photo visuals (14.29%). The traditional way of visualizing is the most prominent in the first twenty pages of the grade B textbook.

The photo-visual objects dispose of a prominent position in the context of Grade C's religion textbook (38.89%). This means that the modern illustration tendency is quite vivid and highly positioned in contrast to the hagiographic-visuals, estimated at 18.27%. The difference between them both is approximately 10%, which is significant. It is also observed that modern hagiographic visuals are statistically quite close to the latter (16.67%), which messages that modern art depiction tendency is strongly preferable. Kids in Grade C may seem more mature and better familiarized with stylish art visuals than their younger classmates. Furthermore, an illustration contradiction emerges between Grade B and C optical frequencies since there is a massive contradiction between the hagiographic tendency of Grade B (64.29%) and photo-visuals (38,89%) of Grade C. Grade B religion textbooks seem to encapsulate hagiographic primarily material.

In contrast, the Grade C textbook includes a significant quantity of photo illustrations. Concerning the frequency matter among the three textbooks, an illustration peculiarity frames the preferable visual philosophy.

2.1 Captions' correlation results

The next step of the present research was to discover the possible dynamical correlations between the three religious textbooks' visual materials and their textual chapters (Unsworth, 2001, p. 3). Therefore, the statistical results of the established qualitative correlations between captions and chapters will provide a noteworthy overview of the qualitative linkage between images and textual formations throughout the religious textbooks.

The methodology was simple and focused on finding any correlation between the visual and the chapter title. If there was no caption, there was no connection to discuss. Direct connectivity between them both attested to a direct correlation, and a consequence pattern was characterized as a consequent correlation between them. Moral and ethical relationships were also used as links between comparable notions. Researching a relationship is a multi-dimensional work (Atkinson, Bauer, & Gaskell, 2000, p. 71) for someone to obtain since

objectivity and subjectivity are mixed in various ways. The latter was the path of the present research regarding the quantitative estimation after the qualitative one as a pointer of the existing linkages' magnitude. The results are below:

Table 1

Caption's correlations

Grades	*Total number of items*	*Number of correlations*	*%*
Grade A	9	5	55.55%
Grade B	14	11	78.57%
Grade C	18	9	50.00%
Total	41	25	60.97%

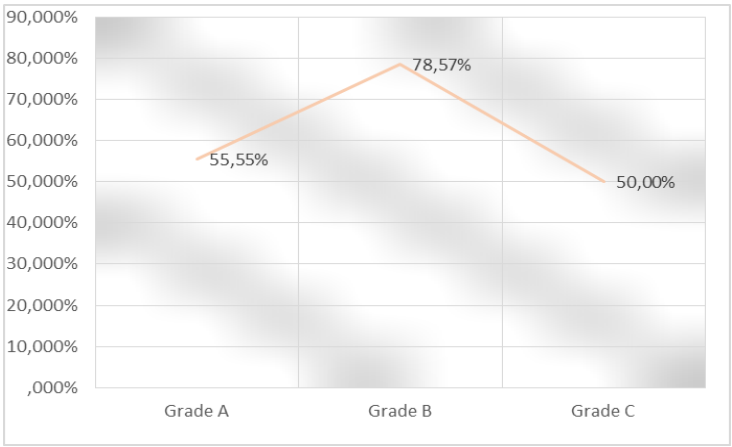


Figure 1. Caption's correlations.

Grade B reaches the maximum correlation point (pictures with textual formations) at 78.57%; on the contrary, Grade A and B religion textbooks dispose of 50% accumulatively at their first twenty pages. Abstract picture themes, the unsuccessful content relationship between text and images, lack of captions, or inaccurate topics of images are the main reasons which frame a low correlation index. However, the above sample generates a general idea about the illustration technique used. On the other hand, their pedagogical utility might dispose of a few different functionalities concerning the reception issue. The latter could be pointed out directly below in the conclusions section.

3 Discussion

The argument that *"There is not only one way of seeing things around, and a better knowledge-building is enhanced through a broader learning experience"* knocks on the door of the modern learner and studentship, and a wide variety of learning approaches support the current school curriculum trends. A similar occasion tends to be implicated in the Greek (upper)secondary curriculum, although other exterior social (at the most) limitations seem to activate negative educative results (for example, school board extensive opinion diversions, education political union interventions, or significant management decisions). When persisting monolithically to one kind of teaching approach while a new one is not thoroughly examined, the education system needs a great magnitude of truthfulness. It is like a little kid being allergic to something, and its parents look after treating the allergy but not avoiding the cause creating it. In some way, the same occurs in the Greek educational reality since learning is a multi-dimensional process grounded in many discipline inter-relationships. The latter is called the interdisciplinary approach (Deneme & Ada, 2012, p. 885). Religious subject could be included in this necessary educational process.

It concludes the core rendezvous point of various cognitive realms like history, archeology, sociology, law, physics, philosophy, and more (Deneme & Ada, 2012). As referred to in this context, knowledge is connected to other cognitive areas, in contrast to the old-fashioned scientific and teaching approach based on interpreting the world through the lens of only one discipline each time. The above scientific exclusion ensured several consequences: a) psychological ones, since the advocates of a view fanatically insist on their point, mostly connecting persistence with selfishness; b) communicational ones, since the advocates of a view unfairly interrupt a fruitful communication with other scientific or philosophical cultures' representatives c) scientifical ones since the advocates of a viewpoint do not allow themself to see other aspects of truth and d) sociological ones, since the advocates of a viewpoint exclude themself for the socialization processes.

The latter point provides much food for thought. Knowledge is not an absolute item ready to be known as a product for direct consumption but the method of introducing an unknown object to the subject for research to find additional possible aspects of life. That is called conceptual learning to most authors (Duit & Treagust, 2003, pp. 25-62). In that concept, cognition is based on a direct epistemological or realistic philosophy like Bernard Russel's concerning the immediate awareness and concentration on the object and natural facts expressed by language (Russell, 2013, p. 1) for interpreting the world. On the other hand, cognition is bridged now with Relativism from a sociological point of view. Philosophical Relativism is not only the tool through which object-given relationships are under the lens of research, but even more, human is the

protagonist in making relationships happen to produce actual consequences and knowledge (Lave, 2018, p. 201). A human conversation or a scientific debate might be the crossroad of exchanging not only ideas and methodologies in a technical way of speech but an intercultural meeting through which a way of thinking probably emerges as an exchanging cultural currency. The intercultural currency is framed and supported through pictorial material in the context of religious textbooks. Furthermore, a question emerges: How can that occur?

Firstly, religious discipline disposes of the advantage of combining and using diverse scientific areas and information fields through which a comparative approach to the reality of God is supported. The contemporary religious curriculum in (upper)secondary schools is no longer based on strictly memorizing dogmatic principles but on applying them in free discussion to benefit the pupils as individuals and as future members of an organized and democratic society (Mercer & Littleton, 2007, p. 1). Learning the object itself is not prohibited, but it seems more beneficial to understand the studying object in light of its broader context. Therefore, illustration strategies in religious textbooks support contextual knowledge (Levin et al., 1993) in combination with classroom groups or interactive creative tasks. Educational textbooks of most scientific fields provide many illustrations enhancing contextual knowledge in science and humanities. Simultaneously are consonant with the pedagogical directives that have been formulated by a group of educational textbook specialists tending to make the textual material more approachable and appealing.

Besides the fact that illustrations may help students resolve inquiries of theirs (Bodrova & Leong, 1996, p. 56), the former might turn out to be a proper stimulation for the more weakened students and students with special needs to (re)activate their hidden skills and participate equally in the educational activities (Bodrova & Leong, 1996, pp. 26-27). Indeed, modern classrooms include students of various backgrounds and unequal capacities, and the teacher should find the balance point to institute the classroom dynamics by adding more capabilities or enhancing existing ones. Individual teaching is not feasible in the frame of a systemic classroom[1]. For that reason, simultaneous educational help is provided under certain legal and pedagogical circumstances in Greece to help needy students trail the rest of their classmates following the general learning stream. On the other hand, another ready-to-be-used solution is at hand. The textbook illustrations could be used as the vantage point for making simple

[1] Systemic classroom is the one that involves many interactive students from different cultures (Mercer, 2010, p. 2).

learning tasks for all students to participate in and to build a prior non existed learning background for the class (Bodrova & Leong, 1996).

A vivid example might be the didactic usage of the miraculous biblical cure of the blind man by Christ. When the deepening learning process of the current biblical account might lead to boring situations (even though miracles of Christ are never dull to say in class), religion teachers could take the lead and initiate a diversified didactic strategy by proposing to their students to search the Internet for a photo based on that miracle or more, if they are able to, and make a collage in their religious notebook keeping their comments underneath. They could even sketch that alternatively or even make a poster with all their work done included. Theoretically, in such a case, contextualization takes the place of textualization, which is precisely what might occur during similar circumstances when an image is employed pedagogically. Students can connect themselves with each unit's content and broaden their knowledge experience creatively and productively (Johnson, 2002, p. 12).

The connection with the art discipline was more than evident in the above case. There are also many other cases in which textbook pictures cite other essential and appealing to-use subjects (Jewitt, 2008, pp. 252-253). For instance, a picture of a protestant, catholic, or Orthodox mission endeavor could demonstrate the possible relation with the materialistic and, therefore, medical needs of the third-world populations, starting a debate concerning the best social-world politics could be adapted and implemented and how the whole process could be realized. The poverty, famine, illnesses, lack of medicine and education, the need for clean water provision, and other requirements could easily make a case for a sociological discussion regarding the religious subject in class in the context of a democratic classroom (Darder, 2017).

A textbook picture of space, earth, and other planets also consists of a beautiful motive for a profound didactic connection between the biblical creation process and the future perspective of humankind with the help of science. In that frame, the conquering of space and the vision of space travels could inflame students' curiosity, fantasy, and argumentation moods and nourish the class climate for starting to make group presentations on peculiar scientific topics. In such a way, religion class could be grandly opened to different argumentation and scientific debate enriching students' experience and skills.

The point of creating a diversified didactical ground is not only the link between religious discipline and others of the school curriculum. The interdisciplinary methodology, of course, aids a great deal in the didactic and learning process and multiplies the methods and approaches of the reference topics. One can learn from one another, and several mistakes could also be avoided among teammates. There is also an additional essential concept adherent to visual stimulation and learning. Older textbooks were based on textual formation, and their

visualizations were limited enough, especially in (upper)secondary education; consequently, students were obliged to work independently and deliver their homework on a fixed time. Individual learning was the only one planning blocking students to themselves.

On the contrary, when textbooks introduced several illustrations, their content was enriched, and their size grew thicker. Firstly, students needed to familiarize themselves with what to do with the illustrations to some point, and only some questions might emerge about their content on behalf of the RE teachers. Gradually, teachers were instructed to use visual material and broaden the textbook learning content even more (Johnson, 2002). Students then start making links and additions to their existing notes or knowledge. Note-taking simultaneously with listening and participating formatted the new style of didactic approach (Sahlström, 2002, pp. 51-52). In that situation, a strong initialization was required to support the students' arguments, and the latter was successful thanks to the graphics and illustrations. A more exciting advancement was observed through oral communication and debate-making in the classroom cause of the new approach (Sahlström, 2002). Students used to make their stand and participate more energetically in the learning process, while the character of learning was converted from passive to active. The connection of the pictures with the texts inflamed a new connection among the students. It is necessary to be mentioned that social connections are a complicated social situation depending on several factors and variables like human character, social environment, circumstances, social theme chat and chemistry, mood, health, way of thinking, mental condition, ethics, social views, and many more. A similar frame holds in education as well. However, the educational system and didactic strategies could advance themselves and create processes and presuppositions of cultural, social, and scientific interest and poles of appeal (Bryk & Schneider, 2004, p. 4); textbook illustrations are part of such a concept. Students are not expected to be converted to social or scientific learners through methods and books; their intention and attitude are the first-class mechanisms to link them with knowledge (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 2014).

Bond enhancement in class is one branch of the case, while the other accepts students of different nationalities (Kirova & Prochner, 2015, p. 382). In religious education, social bond broadening and enhancement of social relationships for advancing school life are included in the calling of all educators, especially those of humanities and theology disciplines. The biblical message of Christ for people to love one another seems undisputed (Ferrini, 2021, p. 27). While everyday practice and social logic cultivate individualistic rituals and cynical viewpoints for life methods and human beings' attitudes and usage, their teachers and parents make the difference in a new formation to teach them otherwise. Even said, the practice appears to be much more problematic given that social cruelty

can occasionally come from within families. However, the current school philosophy develops a systematic approach to intercultural issues through integration classes or cultural school projects throughout the school year in the context of an accumulative logic. In every case, during religion classes, students from different cultures should be motivated to participate in the whole learning dynamics of the classroom (Francis, 1992). The same principle should be a part of every school discipline throughout the school curriculum. Nevertheless, the language communication problem hinders the achievement of the learning and socialization goals.

Pictures could offer an outstanding pedagogical service when used creatively and effectively. The latter means that the meanings of the day's lesson could be conveyed through visuals to all the students (international students included). Then the religion teacher could initiate a debate in class or assign a related artful thinking activity (Chemi, 2014, pp. 370-383), providing motivation and inflaming students' participation. The above concept includes only the outline meaning of the visual methodology since a whole new communicational and pedagogical philosophy is developed beneath it. Visual elements of the textbooks include particles of general communicational planning through which every picture may function as a language tube. The architecture of an image is a hidden narration that emerges via its drawn elements (Hullman & Diakopoulos, 2011, p. 2231). The latter may be the letters or the phrases structuring the picture narration. In the first reading, conceptual sketching includes several autonomous features, but still, in the context of a drawn canvas, autonomy could easily be considered a part of their secret or bizarre relationship. The game of the visual elements could be transmitted in class as a pedagogical game or a communicational challenge (Hullman & Diakopoulos, 2011) since the visual alphabet has generated new modes of thinking in the kid's brain, ready to provide new stimulations and responses in the classroom. The concept is the conversion of the textual alphabet into a visual one or vice versa, depending on the didactic occasion. Consequently, astray students with a low-class participation index gradually grasp a more dynamic learning approach in class. In addition, international students are increasingly linked with the rest of the class members (Dursun & Sevim, 2022, pp. 141-142), advancing their communication interactions and social capacities and making their class work even better.

The old accounts about prehistoric humankind using the first visual imprints for communication are a practical example of how visuals had been used through the deep human past as a communicational or a reminiscent coin. That was the first pedagogy through which primordial survival and messaging were served. Complicated situations demanded creative methods to be handled. The same principle could work for a modern-day classroom coping with the current demands.

4 Limitations

The present research analysis thoroughly examines the first twenty pages of the visual content in each religious textbook of Greek secondary education is A, B, and C grades only, willing to provide a significant sampling of the structure philosophy of the Greek religious textbooks. This selection was made for two reasons: a) to grasp a representative sample of the visuals provided from the three textbooks' grades and b) to have greater time flexibility regarding the process of the results.

Conclusions

After analyzing the twenty pages of visual material included in each of the three secondary religion textbooks referred to, some critical conclusions emerged, which are displayed below:

a) Connectivity is the primary sense in which knowledge and cognitive functions in the central education system in Greece work. The connectivity philosophy concerns how notions and optical displays may present themselves as connected to the human mind. Understanding is grounded on connectivity.

b) Visual textbook stimulations are considered a primary element in the educational context. They are divided into two basic categories: those that add educational information to the current textual material and those that appeal to students' attention and aesthetics.

c) Visual religion textbook location is seminal; every image position serves different pedagogical functions. Right, and left side locations to enhance connectivity functions, either encouraging students to add knowledge to their existing cognitive background or to simplify or consolidate their current textual material. Moreover, connectivity disposes of an abstract learning character since it stimulates the brain to do additional personal thinking or cultivate its critical potential. That is the point of textbooks' low index visual correlation (50-55%) embracing ½ of the twenty pages examined, which might serve the above abstract learning purpose. Simply put, a picture of conceptual content might distract attention and generate thoughts or extract memories. The latter function is legitimate in the context of religious education.

d) In addition, the center location serves as a supplementary or an emphasizing learning tool. Texts are interrupted via higher or lower-page central visuals enhancing the main messaging of the text provided. Lower-central visuals could serve low-content text significance, while higher leveled page visuals serve high-content purporting. Still, the latter argument is not a direct scope

of the present analysis and illustrates an assumption that may need to be studied in another research context.

e) Concerning the frequency results, it is regarded as seminal to be referred to in Grade A, modern photo visuals cover 31,25%; in Grade B, traditional Orthodox hagiography covers 64,29%; and in Grade C, photo illustrations cover 38,89%. It is also noticeable that there is almost a balance between Grade B (Traditional Orthodox hagiography illustration) and Grade A and C (modern photo-illustration).

f) Regarding the frequency of textbook location results, it is noticeable that Grade A's favorite visual location is a central position (56,25%), Grade B's favorite location is the left position (42,86%), and Grade C's is the center location (50,00%). Therefore, the preferable and dominant locations regarding the three religion textbooks are the center and left spots of the books.

g) The correlation issue being developed between visuals and textual formations was examined thoroughly. Abstract picture themes, the unsuccessful content relationship between text and images, lack of captions, or inaccurate topics of images are the main reasons which frame a low correlation index. However, the above sample generates a general idea about the illustration technique used. On the other hand, their pedagogical utility might dispose of a few different functionalities regarding the reception issue, the stimulation of the brain, and the generating ideas enhancing the students' capability.

h) Disregarding the dominant research frequencies and locations and going further from the correlations issues between textual and visual formations as depicted, it might be interestingly argued that the modern and abstract tendencies and options of Grade A and B's religious textbooks consist of a pole of appealing of the otherness in an individualistic and spiritualistic level of discussion.

i) Finally, the "otherness" idea could also be embraced in educational activities of the Greek (upper)secondary schooling by linking the religious visual textbook's stimulations with other school disciplines structuring a whole new mindset for the students, including all their background knowledge in the same cognitive package. The latter demands multi-level individual work on behalf of the Greek teacher and working in groups among teachers of different disciplines, finding new areas of pedagogical communication and interaction.

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