

DESIGNING AND EXPLOITING COMICS FOR VOCABULARY TEACHING IN FRENCH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE: A PEDAGOGICAL CASE STUDY¹

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Abstract

This article presents a theory-informed pedagogical case study documenting the design and classroom exploitation of comics for vocabulary teaching in French as a foreign language (FLE). Drawing on research in communicative language teaching, visual semiotics, and vocabulary pedagogy, the study focuses on how comic-based visual materials can be integrated into vocabulary-focused classroom activities. Rather than aiming to measure learning outcomes, the article adopts a reflective classroom inquiry approach, analysing pedagogical design choices, modes of classroom exploitation, and learner engagement as observed in instructional practice. Two classroom examples are examined to illustrate how comics function as mediating resources for lexical inference, contextualisation, and oral interaction. The paper concludes by discussing pedagogical affordances, limitations, and implications for reflective teaching practice and future classroom-based research in language education.

Keywords: French as a foreign language; Vocabulary teaching; Visual materials; Comics; Classroom-based research.

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1 Introduction

In contemporary foreign language education, vocabulary development remains a central concern, as lexical knowledge underpins learners' ability to comprehend and

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² *Author's note.* The pedagogical framework informing this article was developed in a broader form in *Enseigner le français à travers l'image* (Avasiloei, 2024). The present article offers a focused classroom-based case study and does not reproduce the analyses presented in the book.

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produce meaningful discourse. Research in second and foreign language learning has consistently highlighted the role of vocabulary as a key component of communicative competence (Nation, 2001; Richards, 2015). Alongside traditional text-based approaches, visual materials have become increasingly prominent in language classrooms, reflecting broader changes in communication practices and educational resources. Images, photographs, illustrations, and comics are now common features of language textbooks and supplementary materials.

Within communicative language teaching, visual support is often used to provide contextual cues, stimulate interaction, and facilitate meaning-making. From a cognitive and pedagogical perspective, images can help learners associate lexical items with concrete or situational references, supporting comprehension and retention by anchoring language in meaningful contexts (Paivio, 1991; Wright, 1989). For this reason, visual materials have been widely discussed in didactic literature and are frequently employed in classroom practice.

Despite this widespread use, the pedagogical role of images—particularly comics – remains underexplored with regard to how they are actively exploited through classroom task design rather than merely included as illustrative material. While a number of studies acknowledge the motivational and affective value of images in language learning (Tagliante, 1994; Joly, 1999), fewer contributions provide detailed, practice-oriented accounts of how visual documents are integrated into vocabulary-focused activities in real classroom contexts.

This article is situated within language education research that seeks to bridge theoretical perspectives and pedagogical practice through context-sensitive inquiry. It adopts a theory-informed pedagogical case study approach to document the design and classroom exploitation of comics for vocabulary teaching in French as a foreign language (FLE). Rather than aiming to measure learning outcomes or establish causal relationships, the study focuses on pedagogical design choices, modes of classroom exploitation, and learner engagement as observed in instructional practice. By offering a reflective account of classroom-based activities, the article aims to contribute to reflective teaching practice and to ongoing discussions on the pedagogical use of visual materials in foreign language education.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Images and vocabulary learning in foreign language education

The use of images in foreign language teaching has long been associated with vocabulary development, particularly in beginner and intermediate contexts. Lexical learning requires learners to form stable associations between linguistic forms and meanings, and visual materials can support this process by providing concrete or contextual referents. Research in language education has consistently underlined the importance of vocabulary as a foundation for communicative competence (Nation, 2001), making the question of how vocabulary is taught pedagogically significant.

From a cognitive perspective, visual input has been shown to support learning by complementing verbal information. Dual coding theory suggests that information processed both verbally and visually may be more easily retained, as it is encoded through multiple channels (Paivio, 1991). In the language classroom, images can therefore function as mediating tools that support comprehension and recall, particularly when learners encounter new lexical items in context rather than in isolation.

The pedagogical use of images in language education has also been examined in broader didactic and communication studies, which emphasise the role of visual documents in meaning construction and interpretation (Angeniol & Morieux, 2006; Cadet, Charles & Galus, 1996; Husson, 2002; Huyghe, 1965).

In applied linguistics and language teaching methodology, visual materials are frequently recommended as aids for introducing vocabulary, stimulating discussion, and supporting comprehension. Wright (1989) emphasises that images are not merely decorative elements but pedagogical resources that can prompt interaction, prediction, and inference. Similarly, Richards (2015) notes that vocabulary instruction benefits from contextualised presentation, in which learners are encouraged to infer meaning through situational cues rather than rely solely on translation.

However, while the pedagogical value of images is widely acknowledged, much of the literature treats visual materials in a general sense, without distinguishing clearly between different types of images or examining how they are exploited through specific classroom tasks. This tendency is particularly evident in studies that focus on motivation or learner engagement but provide limited insight into task design and classroom practice.

2.2 Images in communicative language teaching

Within communicative language teaching (CLT), images are often used to create meaningful contexts for interaction. CLT prioritises language use over language description and encourages learners to engage in tasks that resemble real-life communication (Littlewood, 1981; Savignon, 2001). Visual materials can support this approach by offering shared reference points that facilitate interaction and negotiation of meaning.

In this framework, images may serve several pedagogical functions: they can introduce a topic, provide contextual support for vocabulary and grammar, stimulate oral production, or serve as prompts for narrative or descriptive tasks. Tagliante (1994) highlights the importance of images in communicative classrooms, noting that visual documents can encourage learners to speak even when their linguistic resources are limited. By relying on what they see, learners may compensate for gaps in vocabulary through paraphrase, gesture, or collaborative meaning-making.

Nevertheless, communicative language teaching literature often discusses images at a relatively abstract level, focusing on their general usefulness rather than on concrete modes of classroom exploitation. Textbooks frequently include images,

yet teachers may not always exploit their full pedagogical potential, using them primarily as illustrations rather than as central components of language tasks.

This observation points to a gap between the presence of images in teaching materials and their systematic exploitation in classroom practice. Addressing this gap requires closer attention to how specific types of images—such as comics—are integrated into vocabulary-focused activities that align with communicative principles and classroom realities.

2.3 Comics as a specific type of visual document

Among visual materials, comics occupy a distinctive position due to their combination of images, text, and narrative structure. Comics present language in context, often embedded in dialogues that reflect everyday situations, emotions, and social interactions. This multimodal nature makes them particularly suitable for language teaching, as learners can rely on visual cues, character expressions, and situational context to interpret meaning.

In language education, comics have been discussed as authentic or semi-authentic documents that can expose learners to colloquial language, pragmatic conventions, and culturally embedded meanings (Runge & Sword, 1987). Unlike isolated images, comics offer a sequence of frames that create a storyline, allowing learners to follow events over time and anticipate outcomes. This narrative dimension can support vocabulary learning by situating lexical items within meaningful contexts.

From a pedagogical perspective, comics can be exploited in various ways: learners may be asked to predict dialogue, reconstruct missing text, describe characters or situations, or retell the story from a different point of view. Such activities encourage active engagement with language and promote the use of vocabulary in context rather than through rote memorisation.

Despite these advantages, comics remain underrepresented in research literature compared to other visual materials such as photographs or videos. When they are discussed, the focus is often placed on motivation or creativity, while detailed documentation of their use for vocabulary-focused classroom activities remains limited. As a result, there is a need for practice-oriented accounts that examine how comics can function as structured pedagogical tools in foreign language classrooms.

2.4 Semiotic perspectives on image and meaning making

The pedagogical use of images in language teaching can also be examined from a semiotic perspective. Images convey meaning through a combination of iconic, linguistic, and cultural signs, which learners interpret based on their prior knowledge and contextual cues. Joly (1999) emphasises that images are not neutral representations but complex semiotic constructs that invite interpretation.

In the context of language teaching, this implies that learners do not simply “decode” images but actively construct meaning through interaction with visual and

linguistic elements. Eco (2002) similarly argues that images are open to multiple interpretations, depending on the viewer's cultural background and experience. This interpretive openness can be pedagogically productive, as it encourages discussion, negotiation of meaning, and reflection on language use.

Comics, in particular, rely heavily on visual semiotics: facial expressions, gestures, spatial organisation, and symbols all contribute to meaning. These elements can support vocabulary learning by providing additional cues that facilitate lexical inference, especially when learners encounter unfamiliar items. At the same time, the interpretive nature of images underscores the importance of teacher mediation in guiding learners to articulate interpretations and link visual cues to linguistic forms.

From a reader-response perspective, meaning emerges through interaction between text, image, and reader, rather than being fixed in the document itself (Cornea, 1998).

From a semiotic perspective, images should therefore be treated not as secondary or decorative elements, but as integral components of meaning-making in the language classroom. This view supports the pedagogical exploitation of comics as resources that combine visual, linguistic, and cultural dimensions within vocabulary teaching.

2.5 Classroom exploitation and pedagogical design

While theoretical discussions provide valuable insights, language education research increasingly emphasises the importance of classroom-based inquiry that documents actual teaching practices. Small-scale, exploratory studies can offer situated knowledge about how pedagogical tools function in specific contexts, even when they do not aim for broad generalisation.

In this respect, classroom exploitation refers to the ways in which teaching materials are transformed into learning activities through task design and teacher mediation. Coste (1975) stresses that the pedagogical value of a document lies not in the document itself but in how it is used in the classroom. This principle is particularly relevant for visual materials, whose potential depends largely on the pedagogical scenarios designed around them.

Research in language education recognises that reflective, classroom-oriented inquiry can contribute to professional knowledge by documenting pedagogical design choices, classroom implementation, and instructional affordances (Popescu, 2025). Such approaches prioritise transparency and contextual relevance over experimental control, making them especially appropriate for examining the classroom use of materials such as comics.

Despite this recognition, relatively few studies provide detailed, practice-oriented accounts of how comics are exploited for vocabulary teaching in foreign language classrooms. This gap highlights the need for pedagogical case studies that illustrate concrete modes of classroom exploitation and reflect on their instructional implications.

Drawing on the literature reviewed, the present study positions itself as a theory-informed pedagogical case study documenting how comics are designed and exploited as visual support for vocabulary teaching in FLE. Rather than evaluating effectiveness in quantitative terms, it focuses on pedagogical design, classroom implementation, and observed learner engagement, with the aim of contributing to reflective teaching practice and further classroom-based research.

This approach is consistent with media education perspectives, which stress the importance of critical and pedagogically mediated engagement with visual documents in educational contexts (La Borderie, 1999; Margerie & Porchier, 2002).

3 Context and Pedagogical Design

3.1 Pedagogical approach and design rationale

This article adopts a theory-informed pedagogical case study approach situated within language education research. Its primary aim is not to measure learning outcomes or establish causal relationships, but to document and reflect on pedagogical practices related to the use of visual materials—specifically comics—in the teaching of French vocabulary.

The task-based and participatory nature of the activities also aligns with active learning principles in pedagogy (Mucchielli, 2008).

Such an approach is consistent with reflective classroom inquiry in language education, where attention is directed towards pedagogical design, classroom exploitation, and instructional decision-making rather than statistical generalisation. The focus is therefore placed on transparency of pedagogical choices and on the description of how teaching materials are transformed into learning activities within a specific classroom context.

3.2 Classroom context and learners

The pedagogical case study was conducted in a French as a foreign language (FLE) classroom with learners at a lower-intermediate proficiency level, for whom vocabulary development represents an ongoing instructional priority. The classroom reflects a regular instructional setting rather than a controlled experimental environment.

No attempt was made to establish a representative sample, as the purpose of the study is not to generalise findings beyond the immediate context. Instead, the classroom is approached as a pedagogical site in which teaching materials and activities can be designed, implemented, and reflected upon in relation to their instructional potential.

3.3 Teaching materials

The teaching materials examined in this study consisted of comic-based visual documents selected for their relevance to learners' linguistic level and their potential to support vocabulary-focused classroom activities. The comics featured short dialogues and situational contexts depicting everyday interactions, allowing learners to draw on a combination of images, text, and narrative progression to construct meaning.

Material selection was guided by the following pedagogical criteria:

- accessibility of visual content
- relevance to everyday communicative situations
- presence of contextual cues supporting lexical inference
- suitability for vocabulary-focused classroom tasks

The comics were not used as isolated texts, but as central supports for task-based classroom activities designed to encourage lexical comprehension, oral interaction, and contextualised language use.

3.4 Pedagogical procedure and classroom exploitation

The classroom exploitation of the comic-based materials followed a structured pedagogical sequence designed to integrate visual observation, vocabulary exploration, and oral interaction in line with communicative teaching principles.

The sequence typically involved the following stages:

1. Pre-task observation, during which learners were invited to observe the images and predict the situation, characters, and possible themes.
2. Vocabulary-focused activities, such as identifying key lexical items, matching words to visual elements, or inferring meaning from contextual cues.
3. Oral interaction activities, including guided discussion, dialogue reconstruction, or role-play based on the comic scenes.
4. Post-task reflection, in which learners revisited vocabulary in context and discussed interpretations of the visual narrative.

This pedagogical sequence allowed images to function not merely as illustrations, but as central resources around which vocabulary instruction and classroom interaction were organised.

3.5 Sources of pedagogical observation

In keeping with the reflective nature of the pedagogical case study, observation focused on classroom processes and pedagogical artefacts rather than on formal testing. The sources informing the analysis included:

- the teaching materials and task designs developed for the lessons;
- observation notes recorded during classroom activities;
- examples of learner responses and interactions occurring during tasks.

These sources were used to document how comics were exploited pedagogically and how learners engaged with vocabulary through visual support in the classroom context.

3.6 Reflective analysis

The analysis was qualitative and descriptive, grounded in reflective interpretation of classroom observation and pedagogical practice. Attention was directed towards identifying recurring patterns related to:

- the ways learners drew on visual cues to infer lexical meaning;
- the types of vocabulary elicited through comic-based tasks;
- learner engagement during image-supported activities.

Rather than quantifying outcomes, the analysis focused on interpreting pedagogical affordances and classroom dynamics. This reflective approach aligns with classroom-based inquiry traditions in language education, where the aim is to generate situated insights that may inform teaching practice and future pedagogical exploration.

3.7 Ethical considerations and scope

Ethical considerations were addressed through respect for learners' anonymity and the use of classroom observation exclusively for pedagogical reflection. No personal data were collected or reported.

The pedagogical case study is necessarily limited in scope. Its context-specific nature means that observations cannot be generalised to other teaching settings, and no claims are made regarding vocabulary acquisition outcomes. These limitations are acknowledged as inherent to reflective classroom inquiry and do not detract from the study's pedagogical focus.

4 Data Collection and Interpretation

The use of comics as a pedagogical resource for vocabulary teaching involves the observation and interpretation of classroom practices in order to understand how learners engage with visual support and lexical input. In the present pedagogical case study, observation is grounded in classroom interaction, learner participation, and the pedagogical exploitation of selected comic strips. Rather than aiming to measure learning outcomes, the analysis focuses on how comics are used to support lexical inference, contextualisation, and oral expression in instructional practice.

To illustrate this approach, the section presents two classroom examples based on the exploitation of comic strips. The first example draws on a teacher-created comic designed to introduce vocabulary related to emotions, while the second uses an authentic comic strip by a French cartoonist to develop lexical fields, speech acts, and speaking skills.

4.1. Example 1: Teaching emotion-related vocabulary through a comic strip

The first example focuses on a short comic strip created for instructional purposes, entitled *Emotions in Action / Émotions en action*). The strip consists of six panels, each representing a distinct emotional state conveyed through facial expression, body language, and contextual cues.

Description of the comic strip

- **Panel 1**

Image: A character with a broad smile, raised eyebrows, and open arms.

Dialogue: “I feel so happy when I see my friends!” (*heureux / content*)

- **Panel 2**

Image: The same character with a frowning face and crossed arms.

Dialogue: “But sometimes, things do not go as planned. I get sad.” (*triste*)

- **Panel 3**

Image: The character scratching his head, appearing perplexed.

Dialogue: “When I do not understand something, I feel confused.” (*confus / perplexé*)

- **Panel 4**

Image: The character blushing and looking down.

Dialogue: “Meeting new people makes me a bit shy.” (*timide*)

- **Panel 5**

Image: The character with wide eyes and an open mouth.

Dialogue: “Wow! That movie was so scary! I feel frightened.” (*effrayé / apeuré*)

- **Panel 6**

Image: The character looking determined, with clenched fists.

Dialogue: “When faced with a challenge, I become determined to overcome it.”

Pedagogical exploitation and interpretation

The pedagogical exploitation of the comic strip followed a structured sequence designed to support vocabulary development through guided observation, contextualisation, and active language use. This sequence reflects a progression from visual engagement to lexical production, in line with communicative and meaning-oriented teaching approaches.

Engagement and visual interpretation

The sequence began with a whole-class discussion aimed at engaging learners in the interpretation of emotions represented in each panel of the comic strip. Learners were invited to identify the emotions portrayed and to justify their interpretations by referring to facial expressions, body language, and situational context. This initial stage encouraged learners to mobilise inferencing strategies and to articulate meaning based on visual cues rather than relying on direct translation.

Introduction of emotion-related vocabulary

Following this exploratory phase, emotion-related vocabulary (*happy, sad, confused, shy, frightened, determined*) was introduced. Lexical items were systematically

associated with the corresponding panels of the comic strip, allowing learners to establish explicit form–meaning relationships (*mise en relation forme–sens*). Vocabulary presentation was thus embedded in a meaningful visual context rather than treated as isolated lexical input.

Contextual understanding and semantic elaboration

The visual and narrative context of the comic strip was then used to deepen learners' understanding of the target vocabulary. Through guided discussion, learners explored when and how each emotion might be experienced in everyday life (*ancrage expérientiel*). This stage supported semantic elaboration and helped learners move beyond image-bound interpretation towards more flexible and transferable lexical knowledge.

Sentence formation and lexical reuse

Learners were subsequently encouraged to produce original sentences using the newly introduced vocabulary (e.g. *I felt determined when I faced a challenging task*). This phase promoted active lexical reuse (*réemploi actif du lexique*) and allowed the teacher to observe emerging patterns of use in both oral and written production.

Role-play and embodied interaction

A role-play activity followed, in which learners acted out different emotions depicted in the comic strip. This task reinforced vocabulary through embodied interaction, combining gesture, intonation, and situational context. Such activities contributed to lowering affective barriers and supporting oral participation.

Discussion and reflective exchange

The sequence continued with a guided class discussion focusing on learners' subjective experiences of emotions. Learners were encouraged to share personal reactions and to express feelings using the newly learned vocabulary, fostering meaningful oral interaction and pragmatic awareness.

Creative writing and visual production

As a final stage, learners were assigned a creative writing task in which they produced their own comic strip or short narrative incorporating emotion-related vocabulary. This activity allowed learners to apply their lexical knowledge in a self-generated context, integrating visual creativity with linguistic expression.

Observation and pedagogical assessment

Learners' engagement and vocabulary use were monitored through classroom interaction, discussions, and written production. Assessment focused on learners' ability to use the target vocabulary appropriately in context rather than on formal testing procedures. This approach is consistent with the reflective and pedagogical orientation of the present case study.



Figure 1. *Emotions in Action*: didactic comic strip created for vocabulary teaching

4.2 Example 2: Vocabulary and speech acts through an authentic comic strip

The second classroom example involved the exploitation of an authentic comic strip by Georges Wolinski, centred on the theme of Mother's Day. The situation depicts a son whose behaviour has driven his mother to exasperation, offering a familiar and humorous scenario likely to resonate with learners. The comic strip provided a rich pedagogical context for vocabulary work related to holidays, gifts, family relationships, and social interaction.

Pedagogical exploitation and interpretation

The pedagogical sequence began with an activity focusing on global comprehension and narrative reconstruction. Learners were asked to fill in missing dialogue bubbles and to propose a suitable title for the comic strip. Suggested titles included *Mother's Day*, *My Adored Son*, and *Oh, What a Beautiful Present!*. This initial task encouraged hypothesis formation and interpretive engagement while allowing learners to draw on both visual cues and prior knowledge.

The next stage focused on vocabulary development, with particular attention to colloquial and idiomatic expressions. Learners explored the meaning of the expression *500 balles* and were invited to identify synonyms for *foutre le camp*. These items served as entry points for discussing variation in language register. Learners were then asked to classify synonyms according to register, distinguishing between standard forms (*partir*, *s'en aller*, *quitter*) and familiar or informal

expressions (*prendre le large, se tirer, se barrer, mettre les bouts / les voiles*). This activity fostered lexical expansion while raising awareness of pragmatic appropriateness.

Another vocabulary-focused task involved explaining the expression *au-dessus de mes moyens*, which prompted learners to reflect on figurative meaning and socio-cultural context. Rather than providing direct definitions, the teacher guided learners to infer meaning from the comic's situation, reinforcing contextualised lexical understanding.

Beyond vocabulary work, the comic strip was exploited to practise speech acts, particularly those related to requesting and asking for permission. Learners were asked to formulate appropriate utterances for a series of everyday situations, such as explaining a broken car, reporting a lost wallet or glasses, borrowing a newspaper on a train, or requesting a window seat on a plane. This phase linked lexical knowledge to pragmatic competence and encouraged learners to consider tone, politeness, and situational appropriateness.

A subsequent classroom stage focused on character description and opinion exchange. Learners were invited to describe the characters' behaviour and attitudes and to engage in a guided debate about being in favour of or against Mother's Day. This activity supported argumentative discourse and provided further opportunities for lexical reuse in meaningful interaction.

Pedagogical scope and interpretive observations

Classroom observation suggests that the use of an authentic comic strip facilitated learner engagement by combining humour, visual cues, and culturally familiar situations. The integration of vocabulary work, register awareness, and speech-act practice within a single pedagogical sequence supported contextualised language use and sustained interaction. As in the previous example, vocabulary use was monitored through classroom participation and learner production, without recourse to formal assessment procedures, in keeping with the reflective and pedagogical orientation of the case study.

Corpus and material selection

The corpus examined in this article consists of a limited number of comic strips selected for their relevance to everyday situations likely to arouse learners' interest. The materials were drawn from the work of humouristic cartoonists such as Jean-Maurice Bosc, Claire Bretécher, Chimulus (Michel Faizant), Frank Margerin, and Georges Wolinski. Although limited in size, this corpus enabled the design of a wide range of pedagogical activities targeting vocabulary development, pragmatic competence, and oral interaction.

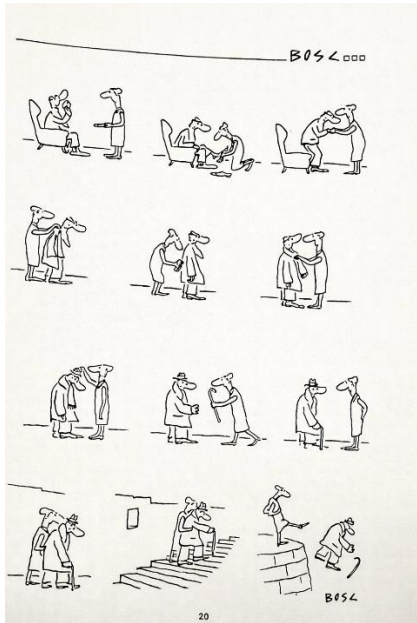


Figure 2. Treacherous wife

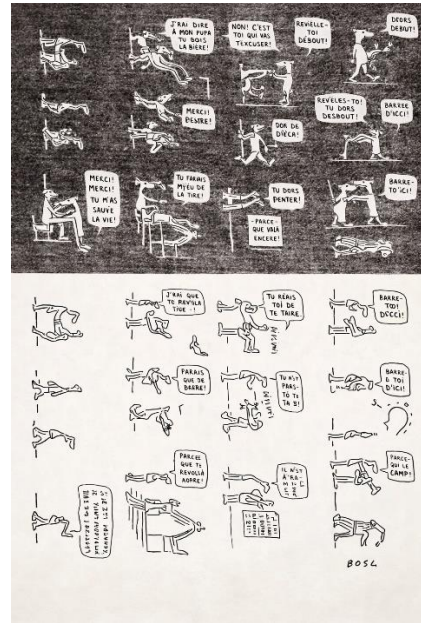


Figure 3. Living together

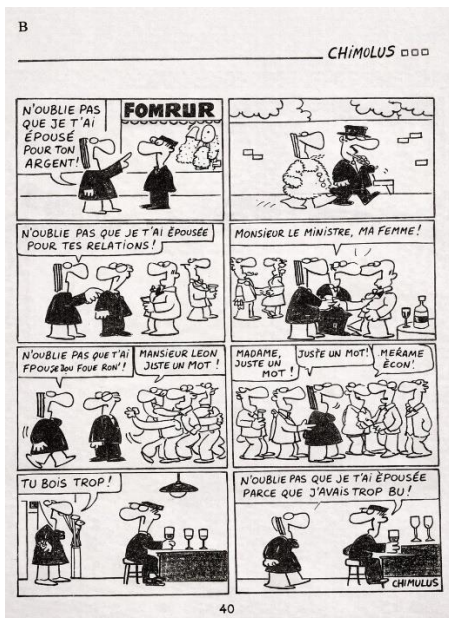


Figure 4. A couple



Figure 5. Racism

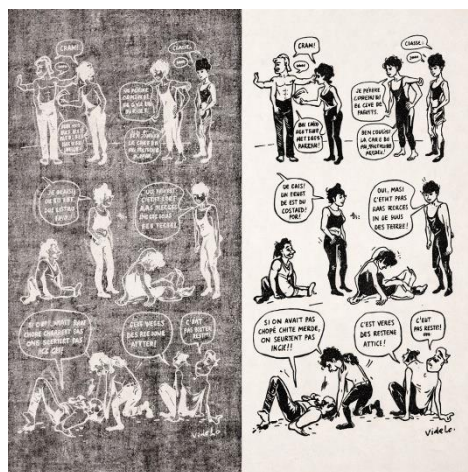


Figure 6. *Mother's Day*.
Comic strip by Georges Wolinski, used for classroom exploitation

5 Discussion

The present pedagogical case study set out to examine how comics can be exploited as visual support for vocabulary teaching in French as a foreign language, with particular attention to classroom task design and learner engagement. The analysis of classroom observations across the two examples suggests that comics can function as mediating pedagogical resources when they are integrated into structured instructional sequences rather than used as simple illustrative elements.

One recurring observation across both classroom examples concerns the role of visual cues in supporting lexical interpretation. Learners frequently drew on facial expressions, gestures, and situational context to infer the meaning of unfamiliar or newly introduced vocabulary. In both the didactic comic focusing on emotions and the authentic comic strip centred on Mother's Day, images provided multiple semiotic resources that complemented verbal input and supported inferencing strategies. Rather than replacing linguistic explanation, visual elements appeared to scaffold learners' engagement with lexical meaning and encouraged active participation in meaning-making processes.

A second observation relates to the contextualisation of vocabulary. The activities designed around the comic strips allowed learners to encounter lexical items within coherent and meaningful situations. Tasks such as dialogue reconstruction, sentence formation, role-play, and opinion exchange enabled learners to reuse vocabulary in communicative contexts, thereby moving beyond isolated word lists. This was particularly evident in activities that combined lexical work with pragmatic functions, such as register awareness and speech-act practice, as illustrated in the exploitation of the authentic comic strip.

Learner engagement also emerged as a salient pedagogical dimension. The visual and narrative features of the comic strips provided shared reference points that facilitated oral interaction and supported collaborative work. Humorous or familiar situations depicted in the comics appeared to lower affective barriers and to encourage learners to participate more readily in classroom exchanges. While no claims are made regarding learning outcomes, classroom observation suggests that such engagement supported sustained interaction and lexical reuse during activities.

At the same time, the analysis underscores the central role of teacher mediation and pedagogical design. The pedagogical value of comics did not reside in the visual material alone, but in the way it was exploited through guided observation, targeted questioning, and carefully sequenced tasks. Without such mediation, images risk remaining decorative rather than pedagogically productive. These observations reinforce the view that visual materials must be embedded within a coherent didactic framework in order to support vocabulary-focused classroom work.

Finally, the scope of the present study must be acknowledged. The corpus of comic strips was limited, and the analysis relied on classroom observation and reflective interpretation rather than formal measurement. Consequently, the study does not aim to generalise findings or to demonstrate effectiveness in quantitative terms. Its contribution lies instead in providing a situated account of pedagogical design and classroom exploitation that may inform reflective teaching practice and serve as a basis for further classroom-based inquiry in language education.

6 Conclusions and Recommendations

This article has examined the use of comics as visual support for teaching French vocabulary, with a focus on pedagogical design and classroom exploitation. Drawing on a limited corpus of comic strips and on documented classroom activities, the study has illustrated how visual materials can be integrated into vocabulary-focused instruction in ways that support contextualisation, interaction, and learner engagement.

The pedagogical case study highlights several affordances of using comics in the foreign language classroom. First, visual materials provide contextual cues that support lexical interpretation and encourage inferencing strategies, allowing learners to engage with vocabulary in relation to meaningful situations rather than as isolated items. The combination of images, dialogue, and narrative structure offers multiple entry points into meaning-making and facilitates the establishment of form–meaning relationships.

A second pedagogical dimension concerns learner engagement. The use of comics introduces narrative, humour, and visual interest into classroom activities, which can contribute to a more relaxed and participatory learning environment. Tasks such as dialogue reconstruction, role-play, discussion, and creative writing

enable learners to reuse vocabulary actively and to articulate personal experiences and viewpoints, thereby supporting sustained classroom interaction.

From a pedagogical perspective, the study underscores the importance of contextualised vocabulary work and of teacher mediation. The pedagogical value of comics does not lie in the visual material alone, but in the way it is embedded within a coherent didactic sequence and supported by guided observation, questioning, and task design. When exploited in this way, comics can function as mediating resources that support vocabulary use, pragmatic awareness, and oral expression, particularly at lower and intermediate proficiency levels.

The scope of the study must nevertheless be acknowledged. The analysis is based on a limited number of classroom examples and relies on reflective observation rather than quantitative measurement. Consequently, no claims are made regarding vocabulary acquisition outcomes or generalisability. Future research could build on this work by examining a wider range of visual materials, exploring different learner populations, or combining reflective classroom inquiry with complementary empirical approaches.

In conclusion, the study contributes a situated pedagogical account of how comics can be designed and exploited as visual resources for vocabulary teaching in French as a foreign language. By documenting concrete classroom practices and pedagogical choices, it aims to inform reflective teaching practice and to contribute to ongoing discussions on the role of visual materials in foreign language education.

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