



How Do Learners Interact with Photos, Graphics, and Maps in Geography Textbooks while Completing a Learning Task?

Wie interagieren Lernende visuell mit Fotos, Grafiken und Karten in Geographieschulbüchern während der Bearbeitung einer Lernaufgabe?

¿Cómo interactúan los estudiantes con fotos, gráficos y mapas en los libros de texto de Geografía mientras completan tareas de aprendizaje?

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Zusammenfassung Diese von einem Fragebogen begleitete Eye-Tracking-Studie untersuchte visuelle Informationsselektionsprozesse Lernender auf Fotos, Grafiken und Karten von Geographieschulbüchern während des Bearbeitens zweier Aufgaben. Hierfür wurden Daten von 58 Lernenden (14-17 Jahre) analysiert. Die Datenauswertung zeigte, dass erfolgreiche Aufgabenlösungen durch eine effektive und effiziente Informationsselektion gekennzeichnet waren: u.a. relevante Textabschnitte, statt den gesamten Text durchzulesen sowie die Integration aufgabenrelevanter Abbildungen in die Aufgabenbearbeitung, auch wenn Abbildungen häufig nur kurz betrachtet wurden. Die Studie liefert Einblicke sowohl in die Usability aktueller Geographieschulbücher, als auch in Herausforderungen in Bezug auf die Wissenskonstruktion, die sich aus visuellen Parametern abgebildeter Fotos, Grafiken und Karten ergeben können. Darüber hinaus wird Optimierungspotenzial von Abbildungen in Geographieschulbüchern hinsichtlich einer lernförderlichen Integration von Abbildungen und Aufgaben in Lernmedien elaboriert.

Schlüsselwörter Visuelle Aufmerksamkeit, Aufgaben, Fotos, Grafiken, Karten, Eye-Tracking

Abstract This paper presents the results of an eye-tracking study accompanied by a questionnaire investigating learners' visual information selection of textbook elements while completing two tasks. Data from 58 students (14–17 years) were analyzed. The study revealed that participants who successfully completed the tasks also selected relevant information effectively and efficiently. Among other things, they considered relevant text and integrated relevant images into task-processing. The study provides insights into current Geography textbooks and their usability (challenges) regarding photos, graphics, and map usage to construct geographical knowledge and elaborates optimization potential regarding image usability and a learning supporting integration of images and tasks.

Keywords visual attention, textbook tasks, photos, graphics, maps, eye-tracking

Resumen Este artículo presenta los resultados de un estudio de seguimiento ocular acompañado de un cuestionario que investiga la selección de información visual de los elementos de libros de texto por parte de los alumnos mientras completan dos tareas. Se analizaron los datos de 58 alumnos (14-17 años). El estudio reveló que los participantes que completaron con éxito las tareas también seleccionaron información relevante de manera efectiva y eficiente. Entre otras cosas, consideraron texto relevante e integraron imágenes relevantes en el procesamiento de tareas. El estudio proporciona información sobre los libros de texto de Geografía actuales y su (desafíos de) usabilidad con respecto a fotos, gráficos y uso de mapas para construir conocimiento geográfico y elabora el potencial de optimización con respecto a la usabilidad de la imagen y una integración de apoyo al aprendizaje de imágenes y tareas.

Palabras clave atención visual, tareas de libros de texto, fotografías, gráficos, mapas, seguimiento ocular





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1. Introduction

In Geography, which is a method- and media-intensive school subject (DGfG 2020), images are considered powerful tools for teaching geographical concepts (WIDDOWSON & LAMBERT 2006) and essential instruments for geographical knowledge construction (LAMBERT 2008).

Textbooks remain indispensable tools for learning and are the most important and frequently utilized educational medium in schools (KNIGHT ET AL. 2017; FUCHS & BOCK 2018; HEMMER ET AL. 2020a). In response to the multimodal turn (BUCHER 2013), current Geography textbooks have become complex constructs containing multiple visual and textual representations (BUCHER 2013; TRAHORSCH ET AL. 2019).

Research demonstrates that images in learning media can bridge the gap between scientific theories and the experienced world, thus supporting content understanding, attracting and guiding attention, and potentially positively affecting memory and text comprehension (HANNUS & Hyönä 1999; Arneson & Offerdahl 2018; STILLER ET AL. 2023). Studies examining the multimedia effect (MAYER 2014) confirm that learning based on both image and text is usually more effective than opting for either image or text (EITEL & Scheiter 2015; Schnotz et al. 2017a; Lindner ET AL. 2018). Therefore, it is hardly surprising that recent empirical evidence on Geography teaching practices has uncovered the use of photos and images as one of the most frequently utilized teaching practices in Geography lessons (HEMMER ET AL. 2020a). These results follow previous research findings, revealing that Geography teachers consider images important didactic instruments in their classrooms (KLEINER 2015).

However, previous research also disclosed learners' challenges in successful knowledge construction with photos, decoding pictorial information from graphic visualizations, and integrating images with text meaningfully in the respective learning context (BALLSTAEDT 2017; SCHEITER ET AL. 2018; SEUFERT 2019).

Overall, various factors can impact learners' attention to textbook images. Thereby, influencing factors can be intrinsic, such as the perceived usefulness of a depicted image on a textbook spread for content comprehension, or extrinsic, such as a textbook task (HYÖNÄ 2010; MAGNER ET AL. 2016). Consequently, both visual design aspects and task parameters may affect students' information selection when learning with textbooks. Therefore, textbook design and textbook tasks are central elements in guiding learners' visual attention through textbook resources. However, EMHARDT ET AL. (2020) identified limited knowledge on how learners visually interact with textbook resources when completing a task.

Moreover, the way learners interact with images in educational media is still a marginal topic in educational research (BALLSTAEDT 2017). Issues of how image parameters may affect students' learning have not yet been fully explored (STILLER ET AL. 2023).

BEHNKE's (2016a; 2016b; 2017) exploratory eyetracking study analyzed participants' visual attention to text, graphics, and photos depicted on five different Geography textbook spreads on the nutrition cycle in the tropical rainforest, finding that learners dedicated scant visual attention to the depicted photos and limited attention to the graphics. In contrast, continuous text received marked focus, particularly when students completed tasks from the textbooks' exercise section. However, BEHNKE's (2016a; 2016b; 2017) studies has several limitations, such as a small sample size (20), heterogeneous sample composition (secondary school students and university students), and the item structure of the accompanying questionnaire. Nevertheless, BEHNKE's (2016a; 2016b; 2017) results are consistent with empirical evidence from Educational Psychology regarding learners' limited attention to images in multimedia learning and with some students even feeling distracted by images in learning media (Schmidt-Weigand et al. 2010; Schnotz et AL. 2014; SCHEITER ET AL. 2014; EITEL 2016).

By investigating attentional processes on pictures in Geography textbooks during task solving, this study takes a first step towards further developing concepts on how images in Geography textbooks can best support the construction of geographical knowledge. Therefore, the present study builds on BEHNKE's (2016a; 2016b; 2017) exploratory results as well as on the theoretical model of Usability Parameters of Well-designed Geography Textbook Visuals (BEHNKE 2021) while aiming to explore the following research questions:

Q1: How do the usability parameters of photos, maps, and graphics affect visual information selection during task processing?

Q2: What visual information selection patterns characterize content comprehension and textbook tasks?

Q3: Which visual information selection patterns characterize correct and incorrect task processing?

Addressing these research questions requires a multidisciplinary exploration of concepts, theories,

and empirical evidence (Section 2) followed by a detailed description of both method and sample (Section 3). After having introduced the main findings (Section 4), the paper discusses them (Section 5) in light of the theoretical framework outlined in Section 2. Finally, some concluding thought, including limitations and an overall outlook (Section 6), close the paper.

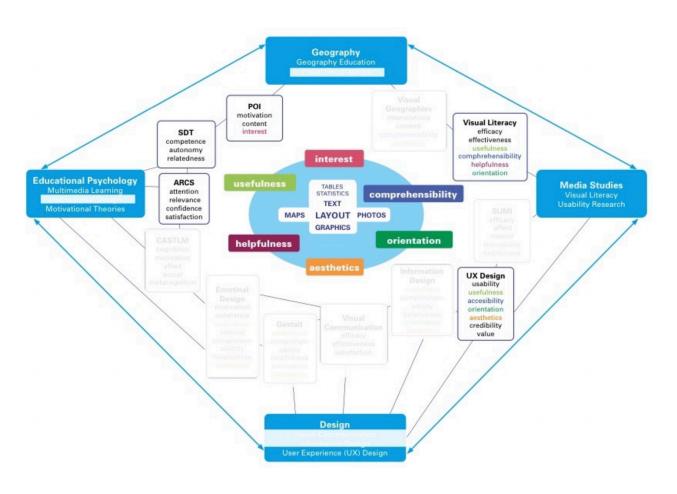
2. Theoretical Background

The theoretical model this study rests on originates from an exploratory eye-tracking study combined with a structured literature review focused on approaches, theories, and empirical evidence on learning-effective and motivating image design in educational media. Therefore, the following subsection first introduces the theoretical model (Sec. 2.1). Subsequently, additional facets of the interplay between visual attention, images in geographical learning media, and tasks in learning media further contextualize the model (Sec. 2.2). The last subsection (Sec. 2.3) discusses both challenges and potential of eye-tracking as a method to analyze learners' visual information selection when completing Geography textbook tasks that involve textbook visuals.

2.1 The Theoretical Model of Usability Parameters of Well-designed Geography Textbook Visuals

Exploring the critical parameters of learning-effective visuals in educational media, in general, and Geography textbooks, in particular, requires the consideration of both empirical results and theoretical models from a range of disciplines.

BEHNKE (2021) conducted a structured literature analysis to examine which theoretical approaches and empirical findings on multimodal learning could apply to images in Geography textbooks and which are critical parameters encompassing motivating, learning-effective images in educational media. Thereby, BEHNKE (2021) considered



results from a variety of fields, such as Geography (Visual Geographies), Geography Education, Design (visual communication, information design, user experience design), Educational Psychology (multimedia learning, instructional design, motivational theories), and Media Studies (visual literacy, usability research).

Based on her results, the author developed the model of Usability Parameters of Well-Designed Geography Textbook Visuals (Fig. 1, cf. ВЕНИКЕ 2021). The model rests on six usability parameters for visuals in learning media, namely usefulness (to achieve learners' goals), interest (relevant content, new perspectives), aesthetics (visual appeal), (quick and easy) orientation, helpfulness (supporting task processing and content comprehension), and comprehensibility (image content connects to topics). Consequently, visuals featured in educational media designed for the school subject Geography that exhibit these six usability parameters are considered as conducive and motivating for learning. A confirmatory factor analysis (ВЕНИКЕ 2022) validated the six usability parameters of well-designed Geography textbook visuals.

Using the example of visuals in Geography textbooks, subsection 2.3 further contextualizes the theoretical model by examining interrelations and reciprocities between textbook visuals, textbook tasks, and learners' visual attention to discontinuous textbook elements.

2.2 Interrelations between Learners' Visual Attention, Textbook Images, and Textbook Tasks

Successful knowledge construction depends, among others, on learning media design and on how efficiently and effectively learners use the educational media for their knowledge construction (HELMKE 2014). Therefore, learners' targeted visual attention to relevant information, for example, on a textbook spread, is a first prerequisite for knowledge construction, which is done by filtering out irrelevant and selecting relevant information respective to learners' objectives (CARRASCO 2011; BI-SCHOF ET AL. 2019;). Thereby, learners' objectives vary from processing a given task featured in the textbook to comprehending the content of a textbook spread.

Research on learners' visual attention in multimedia learning (PETTERSSON 1995; 2000; HYÖNÄ, 2010; MAGNER ET AL. 2016; Emhardt et al. 2020) showed that both extrinsic and intrinsic factors may affect students' visual attention and information selection from textbook images. For example, references to images included in textbook tasks constitute an extrinsic factor, while students' individual perceived usefulness of images in relation to the educational objectives prescribed in tasks fall into the category of intrinsic factors. Usability research had repeatedly proven interrelations between perceived usefulness and visual attention (ORQUIN & MUELLER LOOSE 2013; BOJKO 2014; PADILLA ET AL. 2018).

Based on the DIN ISO 9241 norm definition of the term usability (ISO 2018) supplemented by BOJKO's (2014) definition of usability, the usability of a textbook image can be defined by the extent to which the image serves learners to achieve an objective, such as effectively, efficiently, and successfully completing a task. Here, the design of educational media is supposed to facilitate learners' knowledge construction and task processing by reducing cognitive load, guiding learners' attention (SEIDL 2018), and supporting learners in finding, understanding, and processing relevant information (HOLSANOVA 2014).

However, visual attention is not synonymous with effect (HEIMANN & SCHÜTZ 2017). For example, long visual attention to a graphic may indicate challenges in image decoding (CLINTON ET AL. 2017). In contrast, familiar image motifs are often observed briefly and superficially, and thus, relevant details are overlooked because viewers assume that they have already grasped the information coded in the image (illusion of full understanding) (PEECK 1993).

A further challenge concerning images originates from learners facing difficulties when asked to decode and interpret textbook images within a particular context required by a task (SCHEITER ET AL. 2018; SEUFERT 2019). Consequently, for many learners, images in educational media are challenging (WEIDENMANN 1989; 1994; HORZ & SCHNOTZ 2009; BAADTE & SCHNOTZ 2012). Therefore, research on multimedia learning has examined approaches to support learning with images and image-text combinations.

In this context, studies on emotional design and the Cognitive Affective Social Theory of Learning with Multimedia (CASTLM, cf. BEEGE 2019; STILLER ET AL. 2023) report positive effects of well-designed images on learning motivation (MÜNCHOW & BANNERT 2019), enhanced learning outcomes (WONG & ADESOPE 2021), and a decreased perceived difficulty of learning tasks (BROM ET AL. 2018). However, to be learning-effective, the design of learning materials must not overload learners' working memory (cognitive load theory, cf. CHANDLER & SWELLER 1991).

In conclusion, both learners' attention dedicated to textbook images and learners' visual information selection when working with textbook spreads are complex processes that may be affected by various extrinsic and intrinsic, affective, cognitive, and motivational factors (DUCHOWSKI 2007; CARRASCO 2011; HOLSANOVA 2014). These factors include the individual's perceived usefulness of textbook resources and the tasks in the learning media. Tasks are of particular importance for the aims of the present paper, reason why the following subsection dedicates special attention to eye-trackingbased approaches to studying how students work with tasks in Geography textbooks.

2.3 Eye-tracking, Visual Information Selection, and Geography Textbook Tasks

Tasks featured in educational media are essential pedagogical instruments for teaching and learning (BALLIS & PEYER 2012) and considered relevant instruments in the context of learning with images in Geography classrooms (UHLENWINKEL 2007). Textbook tasks promote, among others, self-regulated learning and aim to support problem-solving skills (LENZ 2015).

Based on the analysis of Geography textbooks, JANKO ET AL. (2018) presented empirical evidence revealing students' challenges to integrate geographical visualizations into problem-based textbook tasks. Therefore, further research on the interrelations between tasks and images seems particularly important for the school subject Geography.

Indeed, links between tasks and visuals featured on textbook spreads may affect learners' visual attention. Over the decades, several studies found that task structure, typology, and phrasing may impact learners' visual information selection (YARBUS 1967; RAYNER 2009; SCHNOTZ, ET AL. 2017b; EMHARDT ET AL. 2020). Thus, textbook task parameters may direct learners' visual attention (RAYNER 2009; EMHARDT ET AL. 2020). In addition, learners' skills and previous knowledge may also affect their visual information selection during task processing (KNIGHT & HORSLEY 2014; SCHEITER ET AL. 2018).

Eye-tracking as a research method enables the investigation of learners' visual attention by measuring eye movements, such as the location and intensity of learners' visual attention when processing a task on a textbook spread (HOLMQVIST ET AL. 2010; BOJKO 2014). Several studies explored the interrelations between visual perception, visual attention, and cognitive processing of visual information (Ноцмоліят ет ац. 2010; Кцеїм & Еттіндек 2019; Емнагот ет ац. 2020).

However, when examining the interrelations between tasks in educational media and learners' visual attention to textbook materials, there is a need to distinguish between eye-tracking tasks and learning tasks. On the one hand, typical eyetracking tasks are visual search, scene perception, or text reading (RAYNER 2009; HYÖNÄ 2010). On the other hand, textbook tasks often are complex as they may carry the imprints of pedagogical, thematic, and instructional factors that also affect learners' visual attention.

Furthermore, when analyzing eye-tracking data regarding visual information selection during task processing, it is important to consider how human beings receive and process visual information. Eye movements are generally divided into saccades and fixations. New information is acquired only during fixations (RAYNER 2009), and a person can only fixate on a small area at a time. Even though only a few fixations are sufficient to perceive a rough scene gist (LOSCHKY ET AL. 2018), at least 150 ms are needed to decode image properties (RAYNER 2009; RAYNER ET AL. 2009; LOSCHKY ET AL. 2018).

One of eye-tracking's advantages is that it gives insights into invisible processes, such as the identification of textbook elements observed during task processing regardless of their effect on learning outcomes (KNIGHT ET AL. 2014; CLINTON ET AL. 2017). Therefore, eye-tracking is useful to analyze visual attention but it is challenging to explain, based on eye-tracking data alone, why a participant observed or ignored a stimulus (BISCHOF ET AL. 2019). Long fixation durations, for example, on an image, can be a sign of both learners experiencing difficulties in image decoding (cognitive overload, SWELLER & CHANDLER 1994) or an indication of deep cognitive processing (CLINTON ET AL. 2017).

Hence, it is necessary to combine eye-tracking data with data obtained through other methods (e.g., questionnaires). Moreover, it is useful to interlink data collected by means of questionnaires to information on how learners interact with their learning materials (SASS ET AL. 2017; HÖRMANN 2019; EMHARDT ET AL. 2020) because their triangulation can provide more comprehensive insights (GUO ET AL. 2019).

The next section outlines in detail the operationalization that combines eye-tracking with questionnaire-based data collection.

3. Methods and Sample

Exploring the three research questions requires the triangulation of data originating from three sources, namely participants' eye movements (fixations), participants' answers (questionnaire), and three Geography textbook spreads (formal parameters). Because visual attention is, amongst others, task-dependent (see Section 2), tasks served to direct the participants' visual attention. Nevertheless, the focus of this study is on learners' visual attention to discontinuous text elements included in Geography textbooks and not on the assessment of participants' learning performance.

This section first describes the experiment design, offering details on participants, stimuli, apparatus, procedure, and set tasks (Section 3.1). It subsequently proceeds to presenting the questionnaire (Section 3.2) used for data collection to conclude by sketching data analysis (Section 3.3).

3.1 Experiment Design

The study presented in this paper examined how the participants observed three different Geography textbook spreads during an eye-tracking experiment. Afterwards, the participants assessed the visual design elements featured in the stimuli through a follow-up questionnaire.

3.1.1 Participants

From June to October 2019, a total of 69 students with normal or corrected-to-normal vision from four lower and upper secondary schools (14–17 years old, grades 9 and 10) of three German federal states participated in the experiment. The sample was distributed across three federal states, four secondary schools, and nine school classes to prevent bias. Learners' observation patterns across the sample remained outside of this study's scope.

Of the 69 datasets, eleven had to be excluded; ten due to eye tracking data loss (gaze sample rate under the 80% threshold) and one because of missing data in the questionnaire. Consequently, the final sample consisted of 58 datasets (29 females, 29 males, Mage 15.26 years, SDage 0.80). The conducted data collection took place on-site at the respective secondary schools. All students participated voluntarily without any remuneration. Data collection and processing was in compliance with the legal, ethical, and administrative requirements in place at state, institution, and university level.

3.1.2 Stimuli

The study used three stimuli (*A*, *B*, and *C*), consisting of three textbook spreads on three different topics (Figs. 2-4). Participants observed the spreads on a screen as a high-resolution PDF document in original size (two-page spread in full-color).

The stimuli selection rested on the following criteria:

(a) The three topics (1) earthquakes, (2) tropical rainforests, and (3) agriculture enabled thematic variability and a range of different image contents and visualization styles. (b) The textbook spreads originated from three current textbooks published by three different German textbook publishers (year of publication: 2015, 2017, 2018).

(c) The stimuli originated from different visual design concepts to investigate the influence of visual design features on learners' visual attention and information selection.

(d) Each spread contained continuous text, graphics, photos, and a map.

(e) All spreads featured similar tasks that referenced textbook visuals (recommendations to students to use specific visuals to solve the task in case).

(f) Students already acquired knowledge on the three topics prior to data collection.

(g) The curricular documents of the three federal states featured the three topics.

Given that tasks and usability parameters of textbook visuals may affect learners' information selection, all photos, graphics, and maps featured in the textbook spreads *A* (Fig. 2), *B* (Fig. 3), and *C* (Fig. 4) are specified in Fig. 5 in relation to their usability to complete the tasks.

The three stimuli's (spreads *A*-*C*) formal visual parameters (Fig. 5) target different visual attention distribution during task completion. In the categories photo and map, the three stimuli show considerable differences both in the relevance of their image contents and the adequacy of the image parameters with possible impact on task processing.

While spread A mainly depicts images (photos, graphics, and a map) with relevant content of adequate size, placement, and quality to complete tasks 1 and 2, spread C's photos are primarily decorative and void of relevant information for processing the set tasks. The same applies to the map (inadequate size, placement, and mainly decorative) and photo M3 (decorative) on spread B.

Furthermore, there are marked disparities between the three stimuli concerning the appropriateness of depicted graphics for the respective addressees (14–17-year-old secondary school students). For example, graphic M3's childlike illustration style as well as its closeness to photo M4's content (doubling of information) might also affect the participants' visual attention to the depicted textbook resources.

Investigating textbook images' formal design and usability parameters is significant because relevance, usefulness, and image quality may potentially affect learners' visual information selection when processing textbook tasks linked to discontinuous text (MAGNER ET AL. 2016).

A further important aspect is the differing *num*ber of references featured in the textbook tasks to be solved as part of task 2, since task parameters

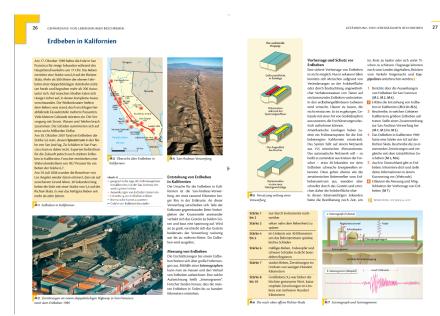
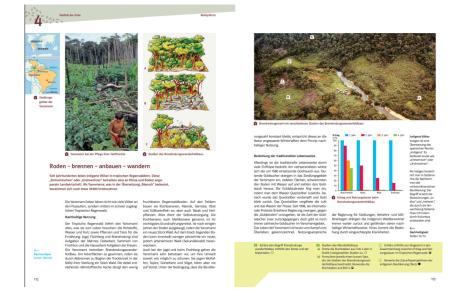
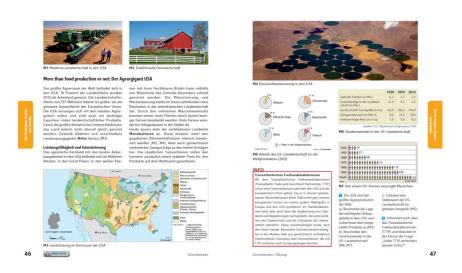


Fig. 2. Stimulus A (Source: © Cornelsen, Germany, FISCHER ET AL. 2018, pp. 26–27)







ZGD 1•23 BEHNKE

20

may affect learners' visual information selections (Yarbus 1967; Rayner 2009; Емнагdt et al. 2020).

While spread *A* lists three resources (M3-M5), spread *C* only refers to the pie charts in M5, and spread *B*'s tasks do not contain any material references. The number of material references also might affect participants' visual attention and information selection processes during task completion.

Finally, it is important to consider the three stimuli's formal page layout organization because page layout may attract and guide or impede visual attention and information selection (HEIMANN & SCHÜTZ 2017; SEIDL 2018; WONG & ADESOPE 2021). Spread A's structure rests on a three-column layout. The continuous text is arranged in three narrow text columns with subheadings structuring the text blocks and key words highlighted in bold offering guidance. Spread B follows a two-column layout with an additional margin column. The continuous text is located at the bottom of the doublepage spread, while discontinuous elements populate the top. Two subheadings structure the continuous text that does not contain any highlighted keywords. The margin column presents further explanations and definitions. Finally, spread C's twocolumn layout structures the continuous text using one subheading. Keywords appear highlighted in bold. While the continuous text populates the left page, discontinuous text constituting the materials appears on the right page. Photos are positioned at the top of the double-page spread.

3.1.2 Apparatus

A Tobii Pro X3 120 remote eye-tracker with a 120 Hz sampling rate, running Tobii Studio software, collected the participants' eye movement data. Participants observed the stimuli on a Dell Latitude 5580 laptop (15.6"; 1920x1080 pixels with a 60 Hz refresh rate) at a viewing distance of approximately 60 cm. Eye movement data from both eyes were recorded. An IVT filter algorithm with a minimum fixation duration of 150 ms was applied for fixation detection (according to RAYNER 2009 and RAYNER ET AL. 2009). Eye movement data were processed with Tobii Studio 3.4.8.

3.1.3 Procedure and Set Tasks

Following an introduction to the procedure, participants went through a 5-point calibration. Subsequently, participants worked on two tasks.

Once task 1 appeared on a grey screen, the participants were asked to first observe the textbook spread which was to appear on the screen and, subsequently, to determine what was presented on the spread (visual search and content comprehension task). During observation, participants' eye movements were recorded. After observing each textbook spread, the participants completed a multiplechoice test on stimuli content with three possible answers. Following the completion of the multiplechoice test, participants were presented with task 2, namely a task from the exercise section of the stimuli. The same textbook spread appeared a second time, and the participants were required to solve a textbook task featured in the stimulus. Each participant observed three textbook spreads with three different topics, solved three textbook tasks, and completed three multiple-choice tasks.

There was no overall time limit. Each participant decided how much time to dedicate to each task. The test was randomized. Each participant observed the stimuli in a different order, but each textbook spread (*A*, *B*, and *C*) was presented twice in a row (task 1 and task 2).

After the eye-tracking experiment, the participants completed a questionnaire (see Section 3.2) evaluating each stimulus' layout, photos, graphics, maps, and continuous text. While filling in the questionnaire, participants were provided with full-size color copies of the three stimuli (spreads *A*, *B*, and *C*).

3.2 Questionnaire

The questionnaire (39 questions) measured how students evaluated the three Geography textbook spreads' visual design elements on a 5-point Likert scale (5=very good to 0=not at all).

Item consolidation rested on the principles of empirical social sciences (cf. KIRCHHOFF ET AL. 2010 and PORST 2014). Each item originated from the theoretical model (Fig. 1), the structured literature analysis, and the explorative eye-tracking study's findings (BEHNKE 2016a; 2016b; 2017). Following the categories layout, photos, graphics, maps, and text (Fig. 1), the participants evaluated the three textbook spreads with different designs and content in line with the theoretical model's (Fig. 1) six usability parameters usefulness, interest, aesthetics, orientation, helpfulness, and comprehensibility. The participants reasoned which textbook spreads they rated as most and least favorable for their learning using two open questions.

The scale for measuring learners' rating of the textbook visuals is reliable (Cronbach's alpha: layout. 775, photos .854, graphics .906, maps .920, and continuous text .852).

3.3 Data Analysis

The analyzed data originated from three sources: (1) three Geography textbook spreads (three topics, three designs)

	Spread A (Earthquake in California)	Spread <i>B</i> (Deforestation/Slash & burn)	Spread C (More than Food production or not- The Agricultural Giant USA (orig.)			
Task 1 What is the textbook spread about? Multiple-choice	Possible Answers (a) San Francisco is an earthquake-prone area. (b) Florida is an earthquake-prone area. (c) California is not an earthquake-prone area.	Possible Answers (a) The Yanomami are using the rainforest sustainably. (b) The Yanomami damage the rainforest through slash-and-burn agriculture. (c) The Yanomami are indigenous people of Papua New Guinea.	Possible Answers (a) The best agricultural areas in the USA are in California. (b) The agricultural area of the USA is smaller than that of the EU. (c) The agricultural heartland of the USA is in the Great Plains.			
Task 2 (Textbook Exercise)	2 Explain the origin of earthquakes in California (M3-M5).	1 Explain the term slash-and-burn agriculture with the help of the text and the materials.	1c Explain the importance of US agriculture in global comparison (M5).			
	References M3 map M4 photo M5 graphic	No references! content for task solution M3 graphic M4 photo M5 graphic	Reference M5 graphics further useful information M3 map			
Photos	2 photos M2 Content: Earthquake damage on an urban highway Caption: destruction of a highway in San Francisco after the 1989 earthquake M4 Content: oblique aerial view of the San Andreas Fault Caption: San Andreas Fault Relevance for Task 1: both photos contain relevant information Relevance for Task 2 M2 = relevant information M4 = relevant information	2 photos M2 Content: foreground: Yanomami harvesting crops; background: rainforest Caption: Yanomami cultivating their crops Relevance for Tasks 1 & 2: irrelevant, decorative/illustrative M4 Content: oblique aerial view, landscape, forest clearing areas in different stages, marks: A-E Caption: slash-and-burn landscape with different stages of slash-and-burn agriculture Relevance for Tasks 1 & 2 doubling information of M5; poor contrast, letters difficult to identify, lacks legend, slash-and-burn islands are difficult to distinguish	3 photos M1 Content: harvested field, combine harvesters; foreground: two farmers Caption: US/modern agriculture M2 Content: red wooden house on a hill, meadow and fence Caption: traditional farming M3 Caption: oblique aerial view of a large field with carousel irrigation Caption: carousel irrigation Caption: carousel irrigation in the US Relevance for topic comprehension: decorative Relevance for Tasks 1 & 2 decorative with unspecific content			
		Challenge relevant information is not recognizable				
Graphics	2 graphics M5 Content: schematic infographics: four steps of the dislocation of Earth crust blocks during earthquake Caption: dislocation along a fault line Relevance for Tasks 1 & 2 relevant	2 graphics M3 Content: three-part illustrative graphic, three stages of slash-and-burn agriculture, no explanatory text Caption: stages of slash-and-burn agriculture Relevance for Tasks 1 & 2	2 graphics M5 Content: six pie charts, US share of world production (wheat, soya, milk, corn, cotton, meat) Caption: US share of agriculture of global production Relevance for Tasks 1 & 2			
	M7 Content: infographic top: complex infographic; functioning of seismograph bottom: seismograph and seismogram Relevance for topic comprehension: additional information Relevance for Tasks 1 & 2 additional information	doubling information of M4 Challenge relevant information might be overlooked due to childish illustration style and missing text labelling M5 <i>Content:</i> bar chart: yield and lifecycle of slash-and-burn agriculture (four years/four crops) <i>Caption:</i> yield and lifecycle of slash-and-	Relevant Challenge data need to be decoded and related to other countries; comparative data from other countries are missing M7 Content: bar chart with pictograms depicting the increase in agricultural production per farmer since 1940 Caption: people supplied by a US farmer			
		burn agriculture Relevance for Tasks 1 & 2 relevant information Challenge unclear division of axes and columns might cause difficulties in allocation and understanding	Relevance for Tasks 1 & 2 additional information Challenge year is missing; design is old-fashioned			
Maps	one map M3	one map M1	one map M3 Content: thematic map of land use in the			
	Content: reduced thematic map of California earthquakes and San Andreas Fault Caption: Earthquake in California Relevance for Tasks 1 & 2 relevant	Content: two small overview maps: one world map, one map of Brazil with Yanomami settlement area Caption: Yanomami settlement area Relevance for Tasks 1 & 2 additional information; localization of the Yanomami area	Content: thematic map of land use in the US; map of Germany for comparison Caption: land use in the US heartland Relevance for Tasks 1 & 2 relevant			

Spread C

(2) questionnaire (39 questions)

(3) eye movement data (fixations)

Each element of the stimuli was marked as an area of interest (AOI), grouped by media type and color-coded by media type (text=red, map=green,

4. Results

This section first introduces the result obtained through the questionnaire (cf. Section 3.2) presented to the participants as part of the experiment (Section 4.1) followed by eye-tracking data exploring visual information selection patterns (Section 4.2).

4.1 Participants' Evaluation of Images Featured on Spreads *A*–*C* (Questionnaire)

Students evaluated the photos, graphics, and maps depicted on spreads *A*-*C* by answering questions based on items derived from the developed theoretical model (Fig. 1), namely the usability parameters usefulness, orientation, comprehensibility, interest, help-fulness and aesthetics and the visual Geography textbook elements photos, graphics, and maps.

graphic=blue, photo=yellow). Defining the AOI allows the separate data analysis of each marked textbook element. This enables data evaluation of both individual AOI and AOI groups, such as photos, graphics, and text.

Overall, the participants rated image usability with 3.12 in the medium range. Aesthetics (3.58) and easy orientation (3.50) were rated the highest, interest was medium (3.26), and the participants considered the images of all three spreads less helpful (2.81) and useful (2.71).

Students rated maps' usability lowest overall, but the score of 2.84 still falls in the middle range. From all discontinuous text elements, map usability is the most heterogeneously rated (A: 3.09; B: 2.25; C: 3.17).

4.2 Visual Information Selection Patterns

The collected eye-tracking data offers information on participants' fixations on the three stimuli's elements (Section 4.2.1), fixation duration on (dis -)continuous text (Section 4.2.2), and on scan paths during task processing (Section 4.2.3).

	Photos		Graphics		Maps			Means per usability		
	A Mean (SD)		C A Mean Mean (SD)	A	В	C	A	В	С	factor
				Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean	
Usefulness	2.85 (1.32)	2.67 (1.55)	2.53 (1.50)	3.04 (1.32)	2.59 (1.50)	3.50 (1.21)	2.53 (1.51)	1.82 (1.52)	2.86 (1.50)	2.71
Orientation	3.81 (1.02)	3.45 (1.12)	3.31 (1.15)	3.72 (1.23)	3.29 (1.46)	3.40 (1.38)	3.83 (0.99)	3.00 (1.38)	3.69 (1.07)	3.50
Comprehensibility	3.52 (0.81)	2.98 (0.81)	2.71 (0.81)	3.49 (1.17)	2.79 (1.31)	3.45 (1.16)	2.69 (1.30)	1.78 (1.39)	2.90 (1.16)	2.92
Interest	3.88 (1.29)	3.45 (1.14)	3.27 (1.12)	3.43 (1.15)	3.05 (1.21)	3.36 (1.10)	3.26 (1.15)	2.38 (1.30)	3.26 (1.24)	3.26
Helpfulness	3.38 (1.39)	2.88 (1.58)	2.57 (1.55)	3.38 (1.41)	2.53 (1.45)	3.26 (1.43)	2.52 (1.48)	1.72 (1.54)	2.52 (1.48)	2,75
Aesthetics	3.68 (0.96)	3.81 (1.12)	3.72 (1.08)	3.66 (1.15)	3.31 (1.29)	3.71 (1.17)	3.72 (1.17)	2.79 (1.31)	3.78 (1.11)	3.58
Mean per stimulus (A, B, C)	3.52	3.21	3.02	3.45	2.93	3.45	3.09	2.25	3.17	3.12
Mean per textbook element	3.25		3.28		2.84					

Scale: 5-point Likert scale: 5=very high to 0=not at all; Mean=averaged across 58 participants

4.2.1 Fixations on the Stimuli's AOI

Figs. 7–9 show the participants' visual attention distribution, namely participants' fixation duration (mean) in seconds on each AOI and the number of participants (in total) who skipped them. The color coding follows the typology of components (see Section 3.4). Images required to solve task 2 are outlined in red. Figs. 7–9 showcase the data on participants' visual attention distribution (fixations) both separately and triangulated with the three spreads' textbook elements' formal visual parameters (Fig. 5) and participants' evaluation of the usability parameters of photos, graphics, and maps (Fig. 6).

Students fixed the longest on spread A's continuous text when solving both task 1 and 2 (Fig. 7). Nevertheless, there are marked differences between task 1 and 2 concerning the observed and skipped elements. In task 1, students focused on M1 (report about an earthquake in San Francisco) for the longest duration (28.3 s), followed by the continuous text (left page 22.69 s, right page 16.25 s). In task 2, the participants mainly fixated on the continuous text (left) and task section, while they skipped more frequently both M1 (21 participants) and the continuous text on the right (ten participants).

Although the participants rated the usability of spread A's photos depicting relevant information (M2 San Francisco earthquake destruction, M5 San Andreas Fault), as medium to high (Fig. 5), in both tasks, they received little visual attention (task 1: M2=1.52 s, M4=1.01 s, task 2: M2=1.14 s, M4=1.01 s).

Despite three references to discontinuous text in the task (map M3, photo M4, graphic M5) and relevant information to complete the task (Fig. 5), the participants observed M3 and M4 only briefly. 20 participants even skipped the map M3 and 24 photo M4.

Among the depicted visuals, graphic M5 obtained the longest fixation duration for both task 1 and 2 at approximately 4.8 s each.

The participants paid little attention to the map in both stages, despite the participants' medium rating for their usability (3.09), relevant content, and task reference (Fig. 5). A total of 20 participants even skipped the map in task 2.

While observing spread *B*, students fixated on the continuous text, particularly on the left page, for the longest time (47.25 s). All participants fixated on the continuous text on the left page while solving both task 1 and 2 (Fig. 8).

The participants' visual attention to spread *B*'s photos, graphics, and map was limited and short. While the mean fixation durations on the images differed slightly between task 1 and 2, they had

marked differences in the number of participants who skipped images; for example, 22 participants skipped the map in task 1 and 50 in task 2. Spread *B*'s graphics and map achieved medium (graphics: 2.93) and low (map: 2.25) ratings for their usability (Fig. 6).

Neither the continuous text of spread *B* nor the exercises were linked to depicted discontinuous elements, such as photos, graphics, or the map (Fig. 5). Instead, there is a general indication in the textbook tasks to utilize depicted resources while solving the task.

Continuous text on spread *C* received, both for task 1 (47.59 s) and 2 (23.97 s) the longest fixation duration (Fig. 9). The photos were observed only for short durations (task 1: M1=0.54 s, M2=0.60s, M4=1.13 s; task 2: M1=0.26 s, M2=0.30 s, M4=1.13 s) and skipped frequently in both tasks (task 1 M1=19, M2=21, M4=9; task 2: M1=52, M2=51; M4=42). Spread *C*'s photos are mainly decorative (Fig. 5) with low ratings for their usability (Fig. 6).

Compared to the other images featured on *C*'s spread, the participants observed the map for the longest time while processing task 1 (5.19 s). The map takes up about one third of the left page (Fig. 5) and contains relevant information for topic comprehension (Fig. 5). Nevertheless, six participants skipped the map in task 1 and 19 in task 2, although students rated its usability at 3.17-a value falling into the medium range (Fig. 6).

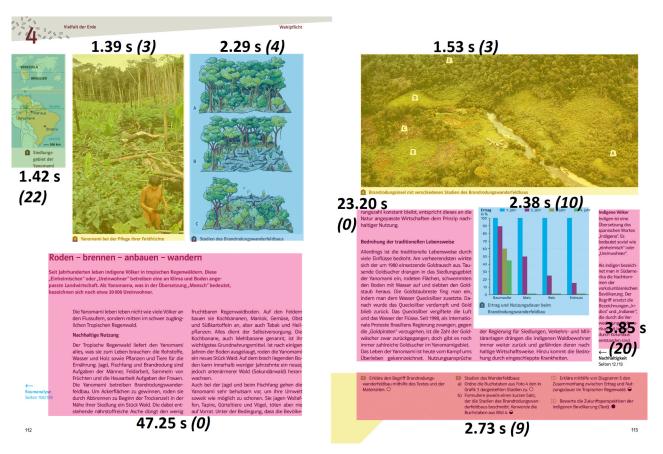
Graphic M5 (11.13 s) was the most extensively fixated image while processing task 2. Despite the material reference in the task (Fig. 5) and medium-high ratings (3.45) for usability (Fig. 6), three participants skipped M5 (Fig. 9).

4.2.2 Fixation Duration on Continuous and Discontinuous Text During Task Processing

Figs. 10–12 illustrate the main findings regarding the participants' visual information selection during task processing for spread *A* (Fig. 10), spread *B* (Fig. 11) and spread *C* (Fig. 12). Each of these figures presents the participants' fixation duration in seconds on the AOI. The upper bar (green) represents the correctly solved tasks, and the lower bar (red) shows the fixation duration in seconds for participants who failed to correctly solve the tasks. In each of the Figs. 10–12, chart I depicts the participants' fixation duration for task 1, while chart II for task 2. Discontinuous elements required to solve task 2 are marked with red boxes.

Participants who solved task 1 correctly, observed spread A's task-relevant elements longer than the task-irrelevant ones (Fig. 10 chart I). For example, while correctly solving task 1, students observed the continuous text (left page) and text mate-

Task 1 (content comprehension and visual search): What is the textbook spread about?



Task 2 (textbook task): Explain the term slash-and-burn agriculture with the help of the text and the materials.

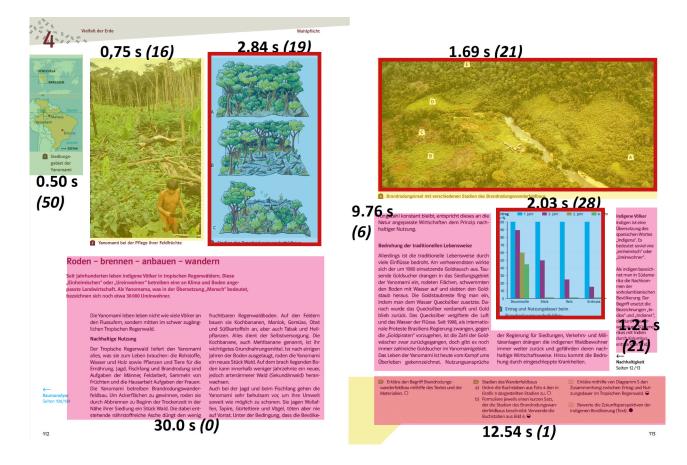
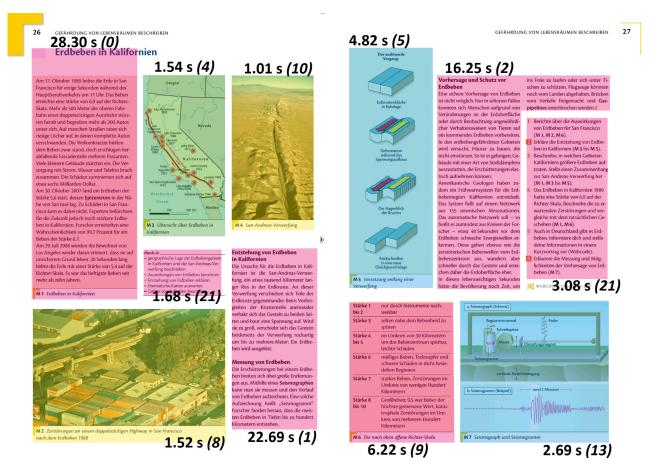


Fig. 7. Spread *A* (tasks 1 & 2) (source: author; background image: *A*: © Cornelsen, Germany, FISCHER ET AL. 2018, pp. 26-27)

ZGD 1•23 BEHNKE

Task 1 (content comprehension and visual search): What is the textbook spread about?



Task 2 (textbook task): Explain the origin of earthquakes in California (M3-M5).

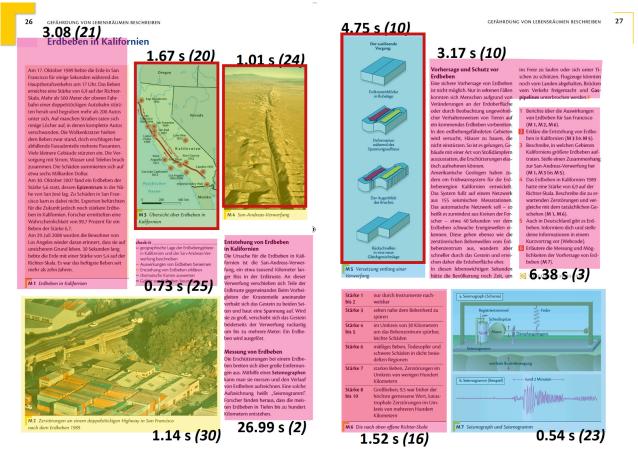


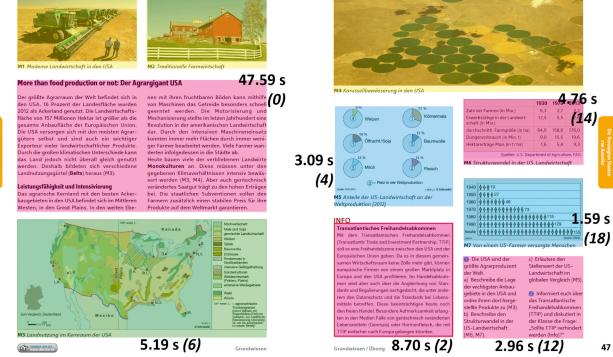
Fig. 8. Spread *B* (tasks 1 & 2) (source: author; background image: *B*: © Klett, Germany, BARRICELLI ET AL. 2017) pp. 112–113)

ZGD 1•23 BEHNKE

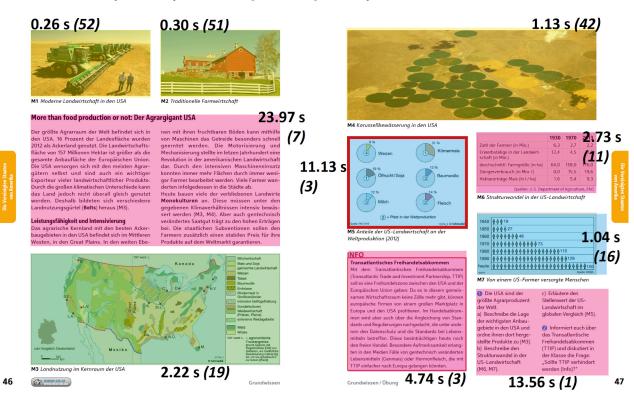
0.60 s (21)

0.54 s (19)

46



Task 2 (textbook task): Explain the importance of US agriculture in global comparison (M5).





rial M1 for more than twice as long as those who failed to solve the task (correct answer: continuous text left=25.11 s, text task 1=27.84 s; incorrect answer: continuous text left=13.2 s, text M1=11.59 s). Additionally, students solving task 1 correctly also

focused on map M3 and photo M2 for slightly longer (correct answer: M3=1.07 s, M2= .08 s; incorrect answer: M3=0.92 s, M2=0.81 s) (Fig. 10 chart I). Students who failed to solve task 1 correctly, exhibited longer fixation durations on irrelevant infor-

ZGD 1•23

mation, such as table M6, graphic M7, and the check-it box (correct answer: M6=1.81 s, M7=1.68 s; incorrect answer: M6=4.93 s, M7=2.14 s) (Fig. 10 chart I).

The differences between the two groups of students become even more evident when analyzing the data corresponding to task 2 (Fig. 10 chart II). Students who failed to correctly solve task 2 focused

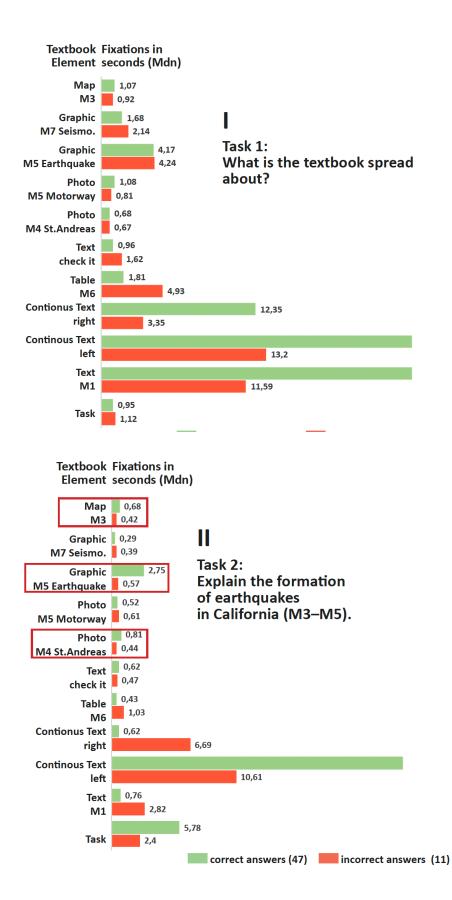
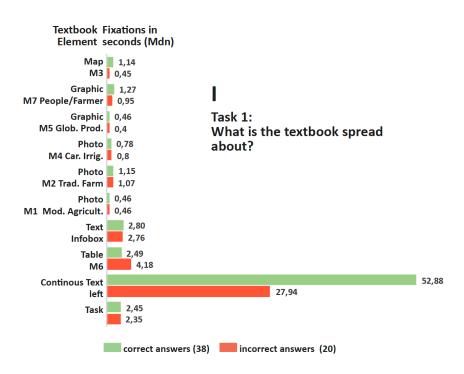


Fig. 10. Spread B: Comparison of fixation durations on continuous and discontinuous text for participants who solved the task correctly (green) and those who failed to do so (red)(Source: author)

much longer on irrelevant information, such as text material M1 (correct answer=0.76 s; incorrect answer=2.82 s), table M6 (correct answer=0.43 s; incorrect answer=1.03 s), and main text right (continuous text on the right page); correct answer=0.62 s; incorrect answer=6.69 s). Participants who solved

task 2 (Fig. 10 chart II) correctly, observed relevant elements, such as continuous text (left page), three times longer, graphic M5 five times longer, photo M2 twice as long, and the map slightly longer (correct answer=0.68 s; incorrect answer=0.42 s) (Fig. 10 chart II).



Textbook Fixations in Element seconds (Mdn) Map 0,68 M1 0,42 0,29 Graphic M5 Life Cycle 0,39 Task 2: Graphic 2,75 Explain the term slash-and-burn M3 Slash/Burn 0,57 agriculture utilising the text and 0,52 Photo materials. M4 Slash/Burn 0,61 0,81 Photo M2 Yanomami 0,44 0,39 Text 1,27 Side Note 1.97 **Contionus Text** 16,81 right 32,09 **Continous Text** 19,98 left 10,02 Task 14,49 correct answers (41) incorrect answers (17)

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ZGD 1•23

Fig. 11. Spread A: Comparison of fixation durations on continuous and discontinuous text for participants who solved the task correctly (green) and those who failed to do so (red)(Source: author)

Spreads B's fixation durations (Fig. 11) also display differences between participants who solved the tasks correctly or failed to do so. Markers of correct task 1 completion (Fig. 11 chart I) are markedly longer fixation durations on continuous text (correct answer: main text left=48.77 s, main text

right=24.01 s; incorrect answer: continuous text left=29.73 s, continuous text right=6.52 s), and slightly longer observation of graphic M5 (correct answer=1.27 s; incorrect answer=0.95 s) (Fig. 11 chart I).

Textbook Fixations in Element seconds (Mdn) Map 1,14 M1 0,45 Graphic 1,27 M5 Life Cycle | 0,95 Task 1: Graphic 1,31 What is the textbook spread M3 Slash/Burn 1,33 about? Photo 1,15 M4 Slash/Burn 1,07 Photo 1,08 M2 Yanomami 1,09 1,83 Text Side Note 1,13 24,01 **Contionus Text** 6,52 right 48,77 **Continous Text** 29,73 left 1,24 Task 1.68 **Textbook Fixations in** Element seconds (Mdn) Map 0,78 M3 0,45 Graphic 0,67 M7 People/Farmer 0,95 Task 2: Graphic 3,66 M5 Glob. Prod. 0,4 Explain the place value Photo 0,47 of the US agriculture (M5) M4 Car. Irrig. 📕 0,8 Photo 0,22 M2 Trad. Farm 📕 1,07 Photo 0,34 M1 Mod. Agricult. 0,46 1,19 Text 1,22 Infobox 1,13 Table 1,98 **M6** 26,52 **Continous Text** 12,18 left 12,93 Task 13,02 correct answers (36) incorrect answers (22)

Fig. 12. Spread C: Comparison of fixation durations on continuous and discontinuous text for participants who solved the task correctly (green) and those who failed to do so (red) (Source: author)

30

While solving task 2 (Fig. 11 chart II), students giving incorrect answers exhibited longer fixation durations on spread *B*'s exercise section and continuous text (right) (correct answer: task=10.02 s, main text right=1.97 s; incorrect answer: task=14.49 s, main text right=16.81 s). In contrast, correct answers relied on an observation of the task-relevant graphic M3 for almost five times longer.

While working with spread *C*, those students who solved task 1 correctly, had considerably longer fixation durations on the task-relevant continuous text when compared with students who failed to solve the task (Fig. 12 chart I). Fixation durations on task-relevant images, such as graphic M5 (referred to in task 2), were nine times longer (correct answer: 3.66 s; incorrect answer: 0.4 s) and visual attention to decorative photos, such as M2 (correct answer: 0.22 s; incorrect answer: 1.07 s) was almost five times shorter when students solved the task correctly (Fig 12 chart II).

In summary, the results on participants' fixation durations on task-relevant AOI constituting the three stimuli revealed differences between students succeeding or failing to solve the two tasks.

4.2.3 Scan Paths During Task Processing

In addition to the numeric data on the participants' fixation duration (Figs. 13-15), scan paths visualize participants' attention distribution on the stimuli, offering further insights into the learners' visual information selection connected to task solving (Figs. 13-15). However, conclusions about participants' observation patterns should not be drawn solely based on visualizations, such as scan paths. It is necessary to interpret scan paths together with the numerical data on the participants' eye movements, such as fixation duration (Figs. 13-15), while also including further information, such as the stimuli's formal parameters (Fig. 5). Moreover, eye movements are individual and remain under the influence of various determinants (cf. Section 2). Therefore, it is difficult to define one universal eye movement pattern per task solution. Despite these differences, it is possible to identify commonalities of eye movement patterns between correct and incorrect task completion. The red dots in Figs. 13-15 represent fixation duration (the larger the dots, the longer the fixation duration), while the red lines depict saccades.

The scan paths of stimulus *A* (Fig. 13) visualize numeric data on the participants' fixation duration (Fig. 11) and saccades when observing the textbook spread. The visualizations for correct answers given for tasks 1 (Fig. 13 I) and task 2 (Fig. 13 III) show a focus on task-relevant continuous text and images (task 1: map M3, photos M2, M4; task 2: graphic M5), while non-relevant elements, such as table M6 and graphic M7 remained either unconsidered or below the threshold of 150 ms (cf. Sections 2.3 and 3.1.2) (Fig. 13 II & III).

As shown in Fig. 13 III, the scan path of a student who correctly solved task 2 mainly focused on three AOIs of stimulus *A*, namely the task itself, graphic M5, and a section of the continuous text featured on the left page. The map M3 and the photo M4 received considerably less attention. Thus, although task 2 referenced three visuals (M3, M4, and M5, Fig. 5), participants' visual attention displayed an uneven distribution with an accentuated focus on graphic M5 and marginal consideration of M3 and M4.

The scan paths of the students who failed to solve tasks 1 and 2 (Fig. 13 II & IV) show a broader dispersion of visual attention and less focus on the task-relevant elements. In fact, students' attention covered the entire continuous text and included irrelevant images (graphic M7 and table M6).

Stimulus *B*'s task 2 was free from any references to continuous or discontinuous text featured on the spread (Fig. 5). Similar to the data on the participants' fixation durations on continuous and discontinuous text included in stimulus B (Fig. 10), the scan paths (Fig. 14) visualize marked differences between the participants who solved the tasks correctly and those who failed to do so. Here, the participants' visual attention mainly focused on task-relevant text passages in the scan paths representing the task solutions (Fig. 14 | & III).

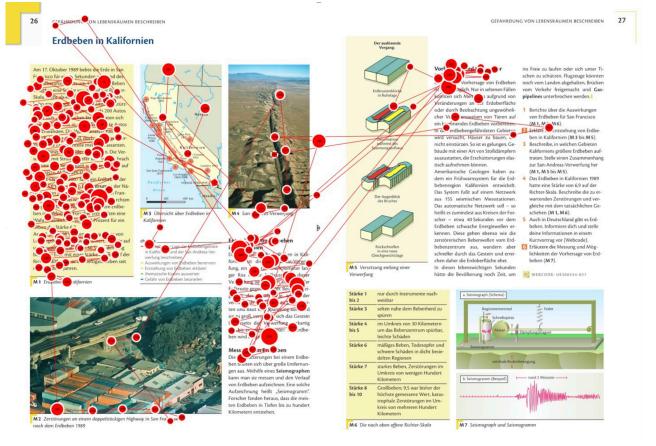
The exemplary scan path visualizing recorded during the successful processing of task 1 (Fig. 14 I) shows long and frequent fixations on the discontinuous text depicted on the left page. At the same time, the map (M1) remained unconsidered while the two photos (M2 & M4) and the two graphics (M3 & M5) received only superficial attention. In the case of correctly solved task 2 (Fig. 14 III), the participant focused only on a few AOIs, such as the task, one continuous text passage located on the left page, and graphic M3. However, graphic M3 received significantly lower attention than the continuous text. While the two photos (M2 & M4) received a few fixations, the map (M1) remained unconsidered.

The scan paths of students who failed to correctly solve tasks 1 and 2 displayed a broader distribution of visual attention over the entire continuous text, including the irrelevant information. Furthermore, numerous and long fixations on the textbook task was a common feature of scan paths depicting the visual attention of students both correctly and incorrectly solving task 2. However, fixation duration on the task was considerably longer when participants gave an incorrect answer (Fig. 14 II & IV).

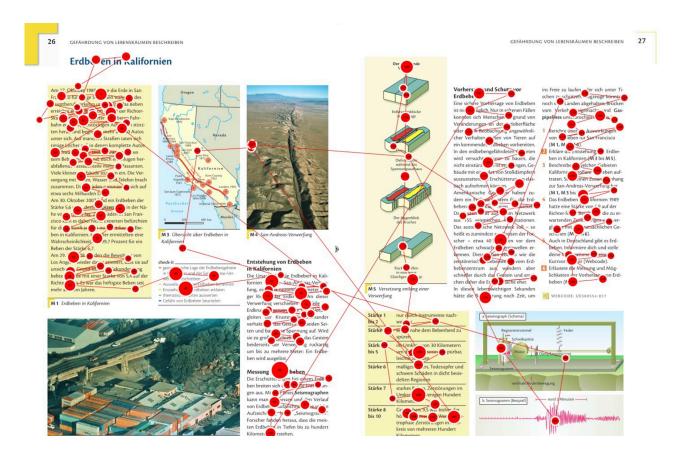
Visualizing the data on participants' fixations and saccades while working with stimulus *C* (Fig.

Task 1 (content comprehension and visual search): What is the textbook spread about?

I: Correct answer (TP 15)



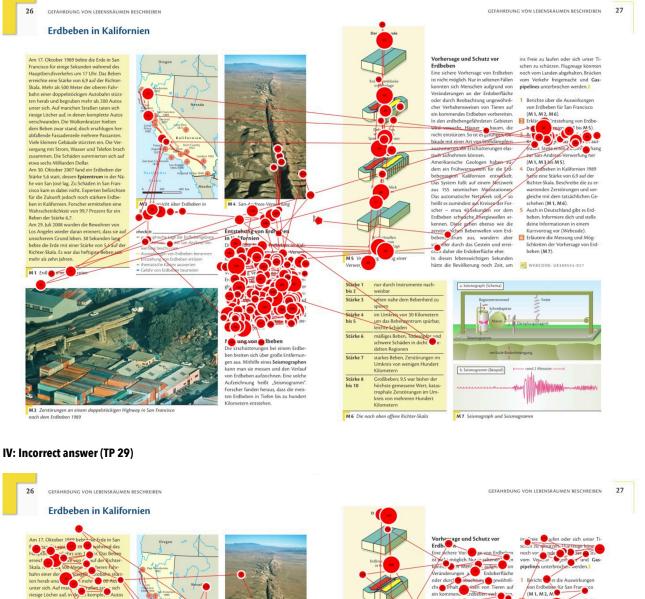
II: Incorrect answer (TP 29)





Task 2 (textbook task): Explain the origin of earthquakes in California (M3-M5).

III: Correct answer (TP 23)



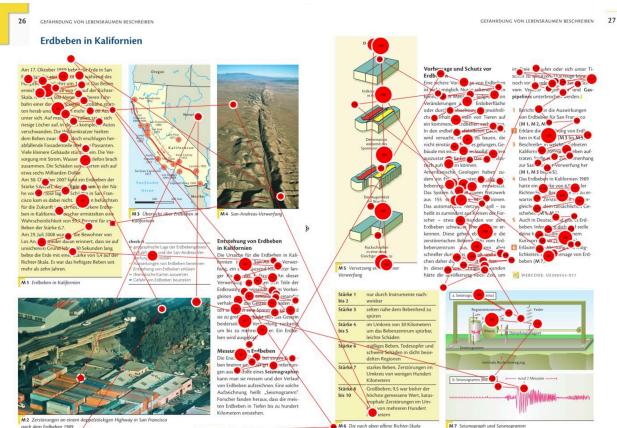
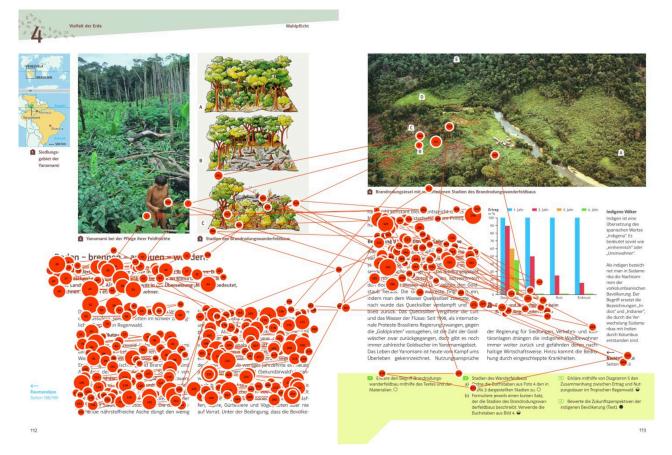


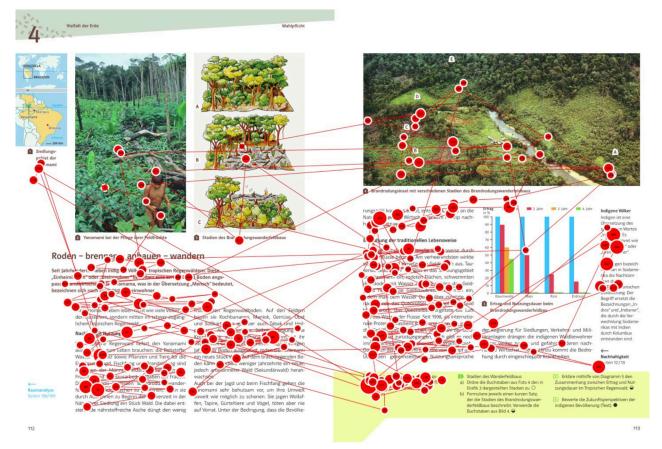
Fig. 13 (Fortf.). Scan path of spread A (Source: author; background image: © Cornelsen, Germany, FISCHER ET AL. 2018, pp. 26-27)

Task 1 (content comprehension and visual search): What is the textbook spread about?

I: Correct answer (TP 15)



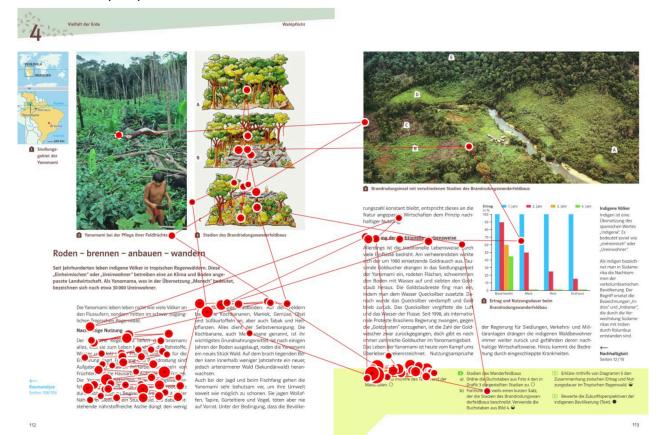
II: Incorrect answer (TP 29)





Task 2 (textbook task): Explain the the term slash-and burn agriculture using the text and materials.

III: Correct answer (TP 23)



IV: Incorrect answer (TP 29)

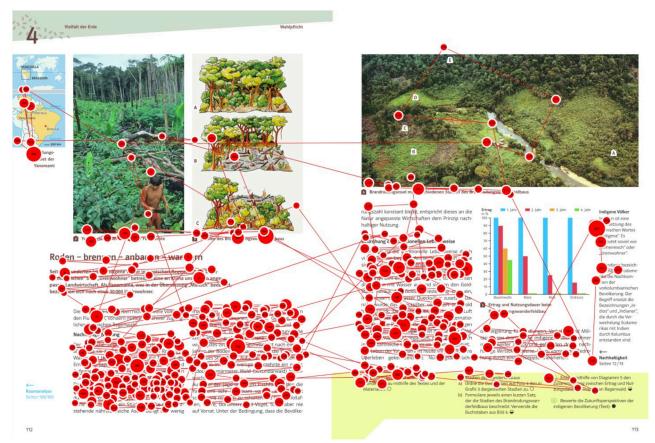
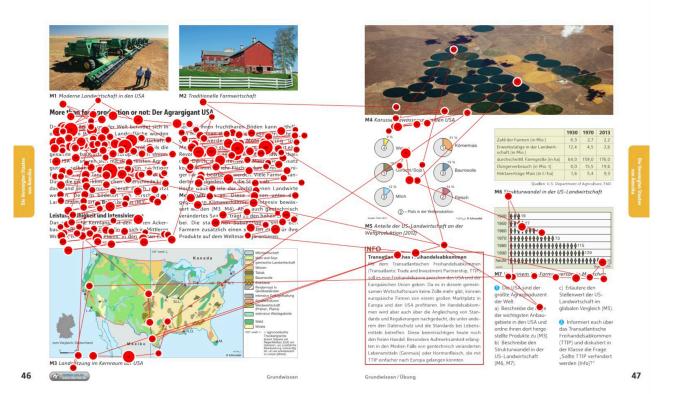


Fig. 14 (Fortf.). Scan path of spread *B* (Source: author; background image: © Klett, Germany, BARRICELLI ET AL. 2017, pp. 112-113)

I: Correct answer (TP 15)



II: Incorrect answer (TP 29)

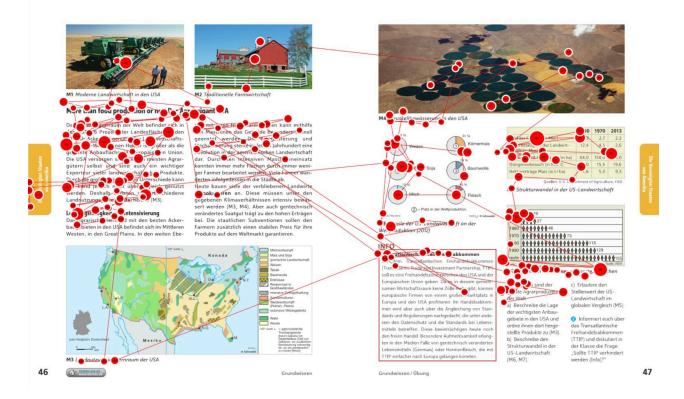
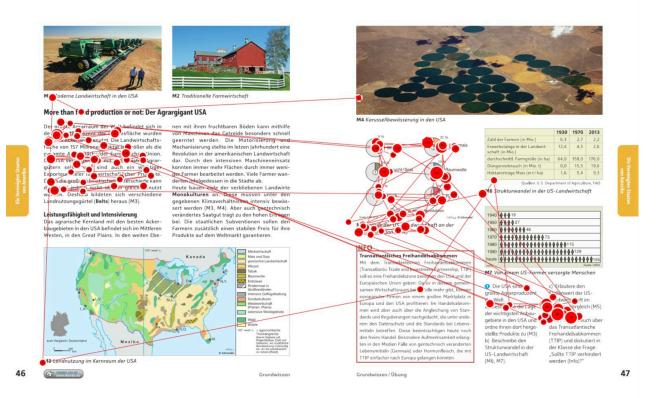


Fig. 15. Scan path of spread C (Source: author; background image: © Westermann Gruppe, Germany, FLEISCHHAUER ET AL. 2015, pp. 46-47)

ZGD 1•23 BEHNKE

Task 2 (textbook task): Explain the origin of earthquakes in California (M3-M5).

III: Correct answer (TP 23)



IV: Incorrect answer (TP 29)

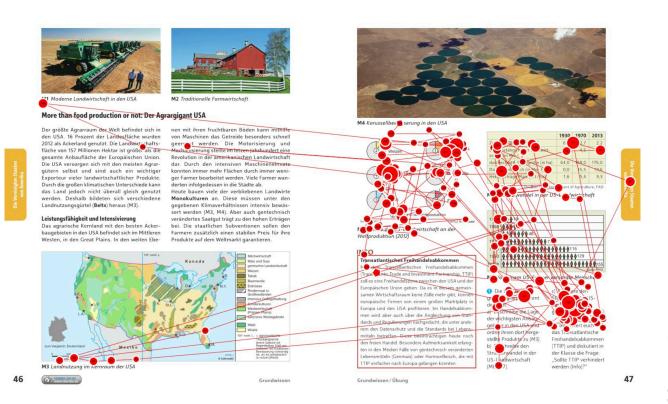


Fig. 15 (Fortf.). Scan path of spread C (Source: author; background image: © Westermann Gruppe, Germany, FLEISCHHAUER ET AL. 2015, pp. 46-47)

37

15), the exemplary scan path for a correctly answered task 1 (Fig. 15 I) shows a marked focus on task-relevant continuous text. The participant considered both the map (M3) and the graphics M5 and M7 (albeit much shorter than the continuous text), dedicated some attention to photo M4, and skipped photos M1 and M2 entirely.

The scan path depicting incorrect task solution for task 1 (Fig. 15 II) shows considerably less attention turned to the continuous text and participants considered all three photos. The scan paths show that the photos M1, M2, and M4 received more frequent fixations compared to fewer fixations during correct answers (Fig. 15 I). Despite it being void of useful information (Fig. 5), participants regarded the table M6 in detail.

Regarding task 2, the exemplary scan path of a participant who correctly solved the task (Fig. 15 III) shows focused attention on three AOIs, namely the task itself, graphic M5 (the only image reference in the task), and a relevant section of the continuous text.

5. Discussion

This section discusses the findings introduced in the previous section according to the present study's three research questions.

Q1: How do the usability parameters of photos, maps, and graphics affect visual information selection while performing tasks?

The usability parameters of various types of discontinuous text (photos, maps, and graphics) affected participants' visual information selection during task processing in four main ways.

First, the results (Figs. 2-15) show that the participants prioritized their visual attention to both continuous and discontinuous text featured on textbook spreads according to their usefulness. Data generated by means of the questionnaire evaluation (Fig. 6) proves that the participants considered the photos, graphics, and maps included in Geography textbooks to be relevant for their learning. However, the participants rated the usability of the three types of discontinuous text differently while processing the three stimuli. Hence, the participants were able to assess the usability of the images included in the three stimuli in light of their learning objectives, as shown by the low ratings (B & C) and limited attention dedicated to decorative images and irrelevant information.

Second, when compared with photos and graphics, maps received the lowest rating. The rating is consistent with the eye-tracking data, which The scan path exemplifying incorrect task solving (Fig. 15 IV) also shows considerable attention given to graphic M5. However, participants also considered table M6 and graph M7-both containing irrelevant information. Participants also dedicated more visual attention to the task itself as their peers who succeeded in correctly solving task 2 and left the continuous text unobserved. Although placed in a prominent position, the three decorative photos (M1, M2, & M4) received little attention whenever participants completed the tasks correctly (Fig. 15 I & III) and were observed more frequently whenever the participants failed to correctly solve the task (Fig. 15 II & IV).

The examples of the participants' scan paths (Figs. 13–15) combined with the data on participants' fixation durations (Figs. 10–12) illustrate that references to materials included in textbook tasks may affect learners' visual attention and information selection when working on textbook tasks.

revealed limited attention to maps (Figs. 7–15). Many of the participants even skipped the maps, despite the tasks referencing them as resources for task processing (spread A, task 2: 20 participants; Fig. 7), the map taking up a third of the textbook page (Figs. 4-5), or the maps presenting task-relevant content (spread C, task 1: six participants, task 2: 19 participants; Fig. 9). Participants dedicating little attention to textbook maps and concurrently rating their usability as limited, is an essential finding given the importance Geography as a school subject grants to maps during geographical knowledge construction (DGFG 2020). In a longitudinal study, HEMMER ET AL. (2020b) found that textbooks continue to lead the list of educational media used in Geography classrooms. Therefore, the results of this study are crucial because they highlight reduced visual attention to maps-one essential prerequisite for learning with media (CARRASCO 2011; GEISE 2011), such as maps. Possible explanations are both the redundancy of information presented in the various continuous and discontinuous text elements featured on textbook spreads and learners' challenges in decoding pictorial information from graphic representations (Bétrancourt et al. 2012; Ballstaedt 2017; Schnotz ET AL. 2017a; 2017b). Consequently, future studies should evaluate the distribution of information on textbook spread elements and measure both importance attribute and attention given to maps.

Third, the data triangulation of the learners' visual attention to images (Figs. 7-15), the stimuli's for-

mal image parameters (Fig. 5), and the questionnaire-based data (Fig. 6) demonstrate that usability parameters, such as perceived usefulness in relation to the learners' goals (content comprehension, task completion), are one determinant of participants' visual attention, especially in the case of depicted images (photos, graphics, maps) featured in stimuli *A-C*, when processing textbook tasks. The usability of a textbook image depends on formal parameters, such as size, placement, visualization style, image section, the perceived relevance of the image content in relation to the task, and the number of image references in tasks.

In contrast to maps, the usability parameters of graphics were rated highest overall by participants among the discontinuous elements. However, redundancies emerge from the duplication of information in graphics, photos, and continuous text. Thus, it is evident from the attention distribution (fixation duration, number of fixations) to the graphics of the stimuli that the participants distributed their visual attention based on perceived usability and not according to preferred visualization forms, such as graphics. It follows that more attention should be paid to the appropriateness and usability of information visualizations in textbooks, to increase their effectiveness for teaching and learning.

The usability parameters (Fig. 6) of depicted images (photos, graphics, maps) also provide explanations for low visual attention dedicated to stimulus A's photos (Fig. 7). Participants rated interest (3.88) and aesthetics (3.68) the highest, whereas their usefulness (2.88) ranked the lowest among the usability aspects of spread A's photos (Fig. 6). However, limited attention to stimulus A's photos combined with its low rating for usefulness may also be a sign of learners struggling to gainfully and effectively utilize the depicted textbook photos during textbook task processing (BALLSTAEDT 2017; SCHEITER ET AL. 2018; SEUFERT 2019). An alternative explanation for the limited attention dedicated to photo M4 might be the participants' altered visual attention due to increased cognitive load (Yarbus 1967; Chandler & Sweller 1991; RAYNER 2009; EMHARDT ET AL. 2020), resulting from the high number of references (three in total, M3-M5) to three different visual representations in the textbook task.

Fourth, the way participants processed textbook tasks, underlines the importance of image usability. As the results show, participants only observed more closely (fixation duration, number of fixations) those resources that they considered as relevant, useful and easily accessible for task processing (Fig. 6). These findings confirm previous studies on the importance of usability for visual attention processes presented by ΒΟJKO (2014), ORQUIN and MUELLER LOOSE (2013) and PADILLA ET AL. (2018) and particularly empirical results on links between usability and visual attention to images (MAGNER ET AL. 2016; BEHNKE 2021).

Overall, the results of the present study stress that perceived usefulness as an essential criterion for learners' attitudes towards a learning medium and, consequently, whether a textbook image is considered or ignored (cf. KNIGHT ET AL. 2017).

Q2: What visual information selection patterns characterize content comprehension tasks compared with textbook tasks?

Participants showed different observation patterns in content comprehension tasks than in textbook tasks. Thus, the present study confirms that different task types exhibit different visual information selection patterns (YARBUS 1967; RAYNER 2009; EMHARDT ET AL. 2020).

First, while processing content comprehension tasks (task 1), the participants' mean fixation durations on continuous text were markedly longer than when they were working on the textbook tasks (task 2). While processing task 1, all participants considered the continuous text, and fewer participants skipped the discontinuous elements (Figs. 7–10) compared to task 2 consistent with results from SCHNOTZ ET AL. (2017a; 2017b) in terms of learners' visual focus on text and longer text reading times in general content comprehension tasks compared to markedly shorter fixation durations on text in explicit tasks.

Second, despite the limited visual attention given to discontinuous text compared to the continuous text, there were still clear differences in fixation durations, the number of fixations, and the number of participants who skipped the images when comparing the three stimuli (A-C), their AOIs, and tasks 1 and 2. Differences in visual attention distribution to the AOI within a stimulus and between the stimuli A, B, and C as well as between tasks 1 and 2 may be attributed to different task types, hence inducing distinct information selection patterns (YARBUS 1967; RAYNER 2009; EMHARDT ET AL. 2020), such as content comprehension tasks (task 1), which habitually induce global coherence formation strategies, while textbook tasks referring to discontinuous text commonly cause task-specific information selection strategies (SCHNOTZ ET AL. 2017a; 2017b).

Third, in the content comprehension tasks (task 1), participants considered images, albeit very briefly, more often and ignored them less frequently than in the textbook tasks (task 2). In contrast, while solving textbook tasks, participants mainly focused on continuous text but with shorter mean fixation durations compared with task 1, focusing their visual attention on a few selected images. Here, perceived usability of the individual AOI, image content, formal image and task parameters, and the number and quality of material references can determine whether and how much visual attention is paid to discontinuous textbook elements (MAGNER ET AL. 2016; KNIGHT ET AL. 2017). Consequently, participants' limited visual attention to the photos, graphics, and maps during task processing may have been caused, on the one hand, by usability aspects, such as image content and formal image parameters and, on the other hand, by learners' abilities to effectively use images during task processing.

Fourth, pictorial and textual information was frequently duplicated on stimuli A, B, and C (Fig. 5). However, decoding photos, graphics, and maps is cognitively more demanding (SCHEITER ET AL. 2014; SCHNOTZ ET AL. 2014; BALLSTAEDT 2017) than picking information from continuous text, leading learners to focus on the text and skip picture information (SCHNOTZ ET AL. 2017a; 2017b; 2014). Therefore, although participants rated the pictures positively in the questionnaire (Fig. 6), they might have considered them less often when solving the tasks because of redundancies in image and text information. Another possible explanation is the illusion of full understanding (PEECK 1993) stating that familiar image motifs are often observed briefly, reason why relevant image content is not recognized.

Fifth, participants' visual attention patterns (Figs. 7–15) suggest several difficulties both in decoding pictorial information encoded in depicted photos, graphics, and maps and in integrating information from pictures and continuous text to solve the task. For example, a high number of fixations on a taskrelevant graphic (e.g., M5 on stimulus *C*) (Figs. 9, 12) combined with a low number of correct task solutions may (Fig. 12) indicate an attention comprehension gap (ST. AMANT & MELONCON 2015) or cognitive overload (SWELLER & CHANDLER 1994; CLINTON ET AL. 2017), potentially indicating learners' challenges in decoding the graphic (DE VRIES & LOWE 2010; SCHÜLER 2020).

Q3: Which visual information selection patterns characterize successful and unsuccessful task processing?

The results indicate four main visual information patterns that characterize successful task processing.

First, findings of this study show that participants successfully processed both tasks by giving correct answers effectively and efficiently based on information selected through identifying and using relevant continuous text and images. The participants who successfully completed both the content comprehension (task 1) and the textbook task (task 2) selected task-relevant text sections instead of reading through the entire continuous text and consulting all depicted discontinuous text elements.

Moreover-and this stands for the second pattern of successful task processing-the combined examination of the scan paths (Figs. 13-15) and participants' fixation durations (Figs. 10-12) suggests that successful and unsuccessful task-processing strategies can be also identified through visual attention patterns, such as the participants' fixations on taskrelevant elements, thus allowing for first conclusions to be drawn about learners' visual information selection. Therefore, insights into successful visual attention patterns in task solving can be used to train successful task-processing strategies in multimodal learning environments (JARODZKA ET AL. 2010; VAN MEEUWEN ET AL. 2014; SCHEITER ET AL. 2015; MCINTYRE ET AL. 2017). Nevertheless, caution is required when interpreting visual attention patterns based only on scan paths and fixations because, for example, a very high number of fixations and long fixation durations on textbook elements may also indicate challenges in task processing or image decoding (PAAS ET AL. 2010; CLINTON ET AL. 2017; Scheiter et al. 2018).

Consequently, scan paths and fixations need to be considered in conjunction with other data, such as formal visual parameters of the depicted textbook elements, task settings and a precise evaluation of the correct and incorrect task solutions.

Third, participants who included relevant images in task solving were more successful, even if they only briefly considered these images. Consequently, the present study showcases the multimedia effect (MAYER 2014), which states that knowledge construction based on the combination of image and text is more effective than alternatives unilaterally relying either on text or images. Therefore, the current study confirms the status of images as beneficial components of educational media. However, the study also shows that the multimedia effect does not occur automatically just because images and text are depicted together on a textbook spread. Instead, the effect size of the multimedia effect depends on whether the image and text parameters are appropriate designed in terms of their usability and relevance to facilitate the achievement of learning objectives, learners possess appropriate skills to beneficially utilize visuals for their learning and other factors such as learners' prior knowledge (SCHNOTZ ET AL. 2014).

Fourth, the present study has highlighted some challenges to successful task processing that may arise from the design parameters of the stimuli and learners' abilities to decode images, as well as to integrate images and text. Participants failing to successfully process the task exhibited long fixation durations on the task section (stimulus *B*, Figs. 3, 8, 11, 14)–a possible effect of missing references to the (dis)continuous text (Fig. 5). The differences in fixation duration and frequency of visual attention paid to continuous and discontinuous text may be justified, among others, by the presence and absence of image references in the tasks.

Tasks that fail to guide learners' attention may result in more demanding visual information selection and increased cognitive load (SWELLER & CHANDLER 1994; PAAS ET AL. 2010), leading to reduced visual attention dedicated to relevant resources (Weidenmann 1994; Horz & Schnotz 2009; BAADTE & SCHNOTZ 2012; BALLSTAEDT 2017). However, long fixation durations may indicate deep cognitive processing or increased cognitive load (CLINTON ET AL. 2017). Also, too many references in one task may increase learners' cognitive load (SWELLER & CHANDLER 1994), which can be why students will either observe only a selection rather than all references or will consider all resources only briefly (SCHNOTZ ET AL. 2017). Hence, knowledge about the determinants of visual attention in different tasks, such as the impact of image references, can serve to develop concepts that can help target the challenges in learning with current Geography textbooks, such as the integration of pictorial and textual textbook materials with geographical content (KLEINER 2015) and the evalua-

6. Conclusions and Future Research

This study aimed to investigate how usability parameters of discontinues text in Geography textbooks may affect learners' visual attention during the processing of content comprehension and textbook tasks. To this end, this study examined how learners visually interact with photos, graphics, and maps in Geography textbooks while completing two different learning tasks as well as how they assess the usability of depicted textbook resources in their learning. Using data triangulation, this study employed a summative within-subject eye-tracking study design and questionnaire to analyze the potential of images as beneficial components of geographical educational media.

The findings of this study confirm that certain task types induce differing visual information selection patterns (YARBUS 1967; RAYNER 2009; EMHARDT ET AL. 2020) and that visual information selection patterns are affected by image usability parameters as well as learners' abilities to successfully integrate pictorial information into knowledge construction with multimodal textbooks. tion of images in geographical contexts (LUKINBEAL 2014). Consequently, to foster knowledge construction, image references in tasks should be as specific as possible, limited in number and provide valuable information rather than duplicating text information.

Overall, the findings of this study regarding the image usability of current Geography textbooks and more knowledge of how learners visually interact with learning resources depicted in Geography textbooks while completing tasks is relevant for a media-rich subject, such as Geography (DGFG 2020), because significant parts of geographic knowledge are conveyed through geographical visualizations, such as maps, graphics, photos, schematic drawings, and diagrams (NORMAN 2012; SCHNOTZ ET AL. 2017). The present study shows that learners observe during task processing those images in Geography textbooks that they perceive as relevant, useful, and easily accessible concerning their current learning goal, which confirms prior research and the important role of usability for learning with multimodal learning media (Bojko 2014; Knight et al. 2017; Padilla et al. 2018). Moreover, the present study revealed learners' challenges in integrating textbook images successfully in the completion of tasks may be affected by usability parameters of textbook images, such as inadequate visualization style, irrelevant image content, inadequate placement, size, or too many or missing image references.

Based on the research questions, the key findings of this study demonstrate that participants considered photos, graphics, and maps in Geography textbooks as relevant learning resources.

However, the study revealed a disparity in participants' visual attention and participants' high ratings for visuals in the questionnaire, because during task completion, they focused their visual attention on continuous text and paid limited visual attention to photos, graphics, and maps. The data analysis, however, revealed marked differences in learners' visual attention between individual discontinuous text elements. During task processing, learners prioritized their visual attention to depicted resources (i.e., images and text) according to their perceived usefulness instead of generally preferred visualization types, such as graphics. Particularly regarding to discontinuous text, participants' visual information selection can be affected by the perceived usability of depicted resources (MAGNER ET AL. 2016; KNIGHT ET AL. 2017), the number and quality of material references in tasks, and

redundancies between pictorial and textual information as well as among photos, graphics, and maps (SCHNOTZ ET AL. 2014; 2017a; 2017b).

Taking the above into consideration, learners are consequently able to assess the usability of depicted resources in relation to their learning. This is evidenced by the fact that learners observed only the resources they considered relevant, useful, and easily accessible for task processing regardless of whether tasks referenced additional resources. Particularly in regard to maps, participants dedicated little attention and rated their usability as limited.

Findings revealed that participants faced several challenges while using depicted images to complete set tasks, such as having limited abilities to utilize pictorial information (DE VRIES & LOWE 2010; SCHÜLER 2020) and to effective integrate information from images and text (BALLSTAEDT 2017; SCHNOTZ ET AL. 2017a; SCHNOTZ & WAGNER 2017). Successful knowledge construction with multimodal textbooks requires learners to target relevant information and then access, identify, and organize it into a coherent model (BUTCHER 2014; SCHNOTZ 2014). This includes image decoding (BALLSTAEDT 2017), multimodal literacy (BUCHER 2013; HOLSANOVA 2020), graphicacy (DE VRIES & LOWE 2010), and targeted visual information selection strategies (RICE & DALLACQUA 2019).

This is reflected in the study, as participants who successfully completed tasks showed effectual information selection patterns by selecting task-relevant text sections and images as opposed to reading the entirety of continuous text and observing all depicted discontinuous text elements. Furthermore, these participants included relevant images in task solving even if they only briefly considered them. Consequently, the present study showcases the multimedia effect (MAYER 2014) and confirms that images are beneficial components of educational media. At the same time, this study demonstrates the critical role of image usability for learning with multimodal textbooks since the magnitude of the multimedia effect also depends on whether the image and text parameters are appropriately designed in terms of their usability and relevance to facilitate the achievement of learning objectives aside from learners' abilities to effectively utilize pictorial information for knowledge construction.

Formal visual image parameters mapped the usability of images in learning media. These parameters are especially relevant to the processing of textbook tasks involving images. This is due to the fact that inadequate image design (e.g., size, placement, image section, and visualization style) detached from learning objectives may influence students to opt out of considering such images (HOLMQVIST OLANDER ET AL. 2014; BALLSTAEDT 2017) regardless of whether they include geographic content relevant to the task. Therefore, knowledge of learners' image perception and learning-effective image parameters is relevant in a media-intensive school subject such as Geography (DGFG 2020). This is largely because studies have demonstrated that Geography instructors consider images important in teaching (KLEINER 2015) and empirical evidence revealed learners' challenges in constructing geographical knowledge by means of geographical visualizations (LUKINBEAL 2014; KLEINER 2015; JANKO ET AL. 2018). That said, images in educational media must be accessible, relevant, and useful to be beneficial.

The results of the current study highlight the importance of learning media design and well-designed textbook images in guiding learners' attention and support learning; pedagogically and visually well-designed textbook images may shape learners' attention and support knowledge construction as well as orientate, motivate, and assist them in focusing their attention (SCHNOTZ ET AL. 2009; HOLSANOVA 2014; BAYLEN & D'ALBA 2015; HEIMANN & SCHÜTZ 2017; SEIDL 2018). Consequently, the findings presented in this study align with current empirical evidence from Educational Psychology on the efficiency of well-designed educational media for teaching and learning (HOCH ET AL. 2021).

Thus, usability parameters of textbook images strongly influence whether textbook images are given visual attention as well as how effectively they are used in the learning process. As a consequence, they can shape geographical knowledge construction through geographical learning media.

To promote successful knowledge construction by means of geographical visualizations, it is useful to build learners' effective visual information selection strategies and visual skills. Additionally, it is beneficial to improve the usability of images in current Geography textbooks. BALLSTAEDT shares this perspective (2017, p. 53), stating that effective learning with textbook images requires that the addressees of the images be taught techniques for "indepth picture viewing" and that the textbook producers be provided with "well-founded guidelines for learning-effective image design".

This study used original textbook spreads from current textbooks as stimuli. It applied unaltered tasks from the exercise section (Task 2) and was conducted with the users of these textbooks. By doing so, this study provides insight into the usability of current Geography textbooks and the use of photos, graphics, and maps to foster geographical knowledge. These insights may be useful for researchers, Geography teachers, and Geography textbook authors because "[...] geography textbooks utilize a variety of visual resources including maps, drawings, graphs, tables and photographs. Thus, authors of geography textbooks are expected to be knowledgeable about and have the visual literacy to deal with these resources' (LEE ET AL. 2020, p. 11).

Finally, it is necessary to address several limitations of this study. First, the sample consisted of participants exhibiting a rather homogenous age structure, with an average of 15.26 years and a small standard deviation of only 0.80 years. As argued by BOUCHEIX ET AL. (2015), OUWEHAND ET AL. (2016), and SCHNOTZ ET AL. (2017a), visual information selection strategies may differ across age and gender. Future studies with larger sample sizes may investigate how age and gender affect learners' visual attention to textbook visuals. Second, this study had a limited variability of tasks; future work should address additional variables, such as various task types, optimized references to (dis -)continuous text in tasks, and references to different types of educational media. Such studies could analyze additional eye-movement parameters including time to first fixation and transitions. Third, the results presented in this study are based on an experimental design. Using prototyping in real classroom situations to investigate how optimized tasks and visualizations affect visual attention may provide valuable subject-specific insights. Fourth, future studies could devote more attention to the links between geographical content and (dis-)continuous text along a range of different variables, such as the students' preferred topics, methods, and regions (HEMMER ET AL. 2020b).

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ZGD 1•23

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