MULTIMODALITY & SOCIETY

Book Review

Sophia Diamantopoulou and Sigrid Ørevik (eds), *Multimodality in English Language Learning*. New York: Routledge, 2022, p. 280.

The last two decades have witnessed an increasing discussion on the changing of communication landscape, highlighting its multimodal natural state (Kress, 2010) deeply impacted by the advances in digital technologies. Accordingly, a great interest on how a variety of modes, along with the verbal, have been used, and therefore integrated, to convey meaning in communicative events, have also drawn the attention of researchers and educators everywhere. In and outside the academy, there is a strong consensus that pedagogical practices need now to be adapted to accommodate tasks and teaching materials that can respond to the 21st century demands, which also means that conceptions on what it is to be literate in this century needs to be reconsidered. Reading and writing (multimodal) texts are part of those conceptions. In this broad field, the volume *Multimodality in English Language Learning* addresses perspectives in teaching and learning English as an additional language (EAL), offering an umbrella of possibilities to work with multimodal texts in the classroom, at same time that brings together the view of English as a global language and its consequences in terms of interculturality, communicative skills and teacher education, which makes multimodality, as an approach, more applicable to that context.

That global view is extended to how the editors congregated scholars from five continents, as mentioned in the book's preface, to organize the multiple perspectives from all around the world in a volume that includes 18 chapters, arranged in five parts. As in a menu, that organization provides the reader a trajectory that goes from theoretical to practical issues while gives him/her freedom to choose which one of its independent chapters to read first.

The first part of the book presents theoretical perspectives on multimodality and teaching and learning English as an additional language (EAL). It begins with a chapter by the editors, Sophia Diamantopoulou and Sigrid Ørevik, in which they problematize teaching and learning of EAL in that contemporary changing communication landscape that brings along a multiplicity of multimodal resources from different domains, like culture and entertainment, not only educational ones, thus challenging learning contexts in terms of relations of power and agency, text production, pedagogy, and assessment. Grounded on multimodal social semiotics and systemic functional linguistics, the authors provide a clear and concise overview of the whole book when they explain how those aspects are dialectically interconnected and therefore implementing multimodality in EAL should also gather educators, policy makers, and researchers in that work. Following

that, they briefly introduce each part and its chapters, and conclude their own chapter by highlighting the assessment of students' multimodal semiotic work as a field that needs to be theorized. Part I also covers a multimodal design-oriented approach for the teaching and learning EAL, in which Steffan Selander raise important questions that can help to make sense of such scenario; English as a global language is reinforced in a multimodal literacies and sociocultural framework proposed by Eva Maagerø and Elise Seip Tønnessen who emphasizes the importance of a metalanguage to be used when working with multimodal English classroom; the understanding of grammar and games interrelationship anchored on social semiotics and systemic-functional language perspectives, by Andrew Burn; and, finally, the recognition that operationalizing English language policies, as in the two successful examples provided by the author – Bessie Mitsikipoulou, is an essential step to integrate multimodal and digital literacies in EAL classroom.

The theoretical issues beforementioned work as a background to the following parts/chapters in which the authors will bring examples of how to work with a variety of multimodal texts in EAL contexts. Again, that is presented as in a trajectory that starts with understanding their potential for meaning, followed by language pedagogies and text production. Finally, as in Part I, it ends by discussing the complexity of assessing learning but suggesting the recognition of multimodal texts as tools to promote digital, critical and cultural literacies.

As for understanding multimodal texts – Part II, Akisha Pearman and Arlene Archer discuss the creation of an EAL community in a teacher training video, which can be seen as an innovation once it brings the teachers as protagonist in this process. Meaning potential of moving images is also the focus of Anja Synnøve Bakken's chapter in which she discusses the development of critical and intercultural literacies when film pedagogies are adopted in EAL classroom. Hege Emma Rimmereide brings together language and literature to show the potential of graphical novels as significant pedagogic EAL teaching and learning resources to address and help understanding those literacies. The combination of elements – teachers as agents, still and moving images, language and literature – points to the perspective of a multimodal scenario in which modes and resources cannot be seen in isolation. Not surprisingly, that will permeate all the volume.

Part III focuses on language pedagogies and their potential to prompt multimodal tasks for EAL learning, thus highlighting the role of the teacher when designing the use of multimodal didactic teaching material, especially when mediated by digital technologies such as apps, tablets and computers. Fei Victor Lim and Weimin Toh propose a meta-functional framework that brings a metalanguage to help educators understand the affordances of educational apps to promote young children's literacy in an English learning context. A similar scenario is discussed by Sompatu Vungthong, Emilia Djonov, and Jane Torr, showing that rather than only improving students' language learning, the use of digital technologies, such as tablet-based instructional materials, reveals pedagogical discourses. Completing the circle, those pedagogical discourses, now represented in the wording of tasks, can shape students' choice-making process and, therefore, as Aud Solbjørg Skulstad argues, textbook authors and/or teachers should help students to develop their multimodal textual competence, as well as their genre awareness, which includes the affordances of the modes and the digital technologies.

As expected, that awareness leads to learners' production of multimodal texts, the focus of Part IV. Going beyond understanding its meanings, Xiaoqin Wu and Louise Ravelli examine whiteboard as a tool to mediate student's making of a multimodal text and its implication to English curriculum knowledge. Language and literature are brought together again, this time in Rumiko Oyama's model to explain how visual representations of literary texts, made by the students, can enhance their learning of both – English language and literature -, and turn that act of reading into a highly creative one. All the studies presented in this part of the book had undergraduate students as producers of the multimodal texts, but, remarkably, in this last one, Anita Normann's brings pre-services teachers in an EAL teacher training course as the actors who not only produced, but also reflected on their own making-meaning process of creating a digital storytelling, explaining their choices of modes, personalization of the story and, most importantly, their future pedagogic practices.

The beforementioned trajectory has its last stop, but not the end, discussing assessment of learner's multimodal texts in EAL learning context. Suggesting assessment as a key route to the recognition of semiotic work in the classroom, and after analyzing formative assessment practice in a Uruguayan EAL classroom, Germán Canale, proposes a redesign of assessment based on three key points that can be briefly summarized in three words - negotiation, pedagogies and reflection – and three actors – curriculum, students and learning artifacts. Connected with this idea of recognition, Maria Grazia Sindoni, Ilaria Moschini, Elizabetta Adami, and Styliani Karatza introduce the *Common Framework of Reference for Intercultural Digital Literacies* (CFRIDiL) by comparing it to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) and, more than that, showing how the former one is more suitable to answer to the 21st century literacies demands. Aligned with this critical view in relation to CEFR, Mari Carmen Campoy-Cubillo and Mercedes Querol-Julián propose a new framework for assessing listening comprehension in a multimodal perspective, as well as an enhanced version of CEFR. The authors then apply both new frameworks on the analysis of an informative video listening activity and conclude by highlighting the need for further research on this issue, and the fundamental role of a teacher training to better develop, implement and test multimodal listening assessment. Finally, in the last chapter of this part/book, Sigrid Ørevik also brings a framework for assessing students' multimodal text production, this time represented by persuasive posters, contributing to the studies on the topic that are still scarce since, as supported by the author, more attention has been given to assessing students' language competence despite their increasing exposure to multimodal texts. In her final remarks, she strongly recommends the embracement of "theories and pedagogies of multimodal meaning-making" by "education policies and teacher education" for a better understanding, and assess, EAL students' multimodal texts. This idea is reinforced by the editors when they say that assessing students' semiotic work is a problem that needs to be theorized. Moreover, it can be extended to all the debated issues in the volume.

Despite the increasing number of studies that investigate meaning potential in multimodal texts, including those meanings and texts produced by learners in official teaching and learning environment, a successful multimodal approach proper to attend the demands of the current century requires not only changes in the curricula, nor only in the

official documents, but also learners' and teachers' agency, like a multimodal chain that connects them all, been that last one only provided by a teacher training. Teachers, as well as learners, need to learn how to write and read multimodal texts.

It is worth to highlight the reconfiguration of communicative skills that, consequently, reflects redefinition of speaking/writing, reading, and listening, for example, that now come together with "representing", "viewing" and "watching", respectively. Besides the definition of multimodal listening presented by Campoy-Cubillo and Querol-Julián, that can also be adapted to other skills, the implication of that redefinition can be fully understood on Sindoni and her colleagues' words when they say that "learning a language would involve also learning visual literacies and practices associated with multimodal texts produced in that language" (Sindoni et al., p. 234), and, as such, it should be included in the syllabi English for international communication.

The focus on teaching and learning English as an additional language makes a great difference in the volume. In addition, overall, the book brings insightful thoughts about a range of topics and multimodal textual genres, which explains the metaphorical view of it as a menu under the multimodality and multiliteracies umbrella that gives rise to a series of questions yet to be answered. The curation of studies presented contributes to with some answers and, therefore, to the understanding of the changing contemporary communication landscape and its implications to the teaching and learning of EAL in the 21st century.

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