Multimodal literacy for teenage EFL students

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"[g]iven the importance of visually displayed information in so many significant social contexts, there is an urgent need for developing adequate ways of talking and thinking about the visual" (KRESS and van LEEUWEN, 1996, p. 33).

Nowadays literacy has been understood as a social practice, as a complex set of reading, writing and technological skills which joins verbal, visual, and other meaning-making resources. Williams and Hasan (1996), Rios (2009) and Kleiman and Baltar 2008) point to the social nature of literacy processes. The New London Group (1996) also argue that "literacy pedagogy now must account for the burgeoning variety of text forms associated with information and multimedia technologies".

Studies in many English-speaking countries have emphasised the relevance of visual grammar in English language contexts (UNSWORTH, 2001; KRESS, 2003). The New London Group (1996), for example, refer to "the increasing multiplicity and integration of significant modes of meaning-making, where the textual is also related to the visual, the audio, the spatial, the behavioral, and so on". Likewise, as suggested by Andrews (2004:63), "... it is the visual/verbal interface that is at the heart of literacy learning and development for both computer-users and those without access to computers".

Visual literacy can be linked to multimodality, which refers to the use of different semiotic resources to produce or interpret meanings. In this article, following Royce (2007), first I expand the notion of communicative competence to include multimodal communicative competence as an important skill for ESL/EFL[1] students to develop, in order for them to interact more effectively with members of English-speaking discourse communities. Then I provide readers with a brief discussion on the relevance of multimodality in ESL/EFL teaching and offer suggestions on how to relate visual literacy specifically to teenage learners of ESL/EFL, as found in video games and advertisements, drawing attention to pedagogical, task-based activities which can be incorporated in the EFL syllabus.

Multimodal communicative competence

Communicative competence, a well-known term in second or foreign language teaching and research, coined by Hymes (1972) and extended by Canale and Swain (1980), has undergone refinements regarding the specific skills and strategies involved (BROWN, 1994; KRAMSCH, 1995; WESCHE and SKEHAN, 2002). The different aspects related to the term converge to propose that learners need specific strategies and

skills in order to understand and produce oral and written texts. These strategies include use of appropriate language forms (lexis, grammar, syntax), pragmatics and negotiation of meaning, which must be adequate to the context of situation. Thus, if we refer to Halliday (1985; 1994)'s ideational, interpersonal and textual metafunctions, we could say that they allow us to perceive the link between grammar and functions of language, necessary requirements for any communication. As Christie (2002:11) explains, 'any language use serves simultaneously to construct some aspect of experience [related to the ideational metafunction], to negotiate relationships [related to the interpersonal metafunction] and to organize the language successfully so that it realizes a satisfactory message' [related to the textual metafunction, my comments].

Multimodal communicative competence involves the knowledge and use of language concerning the visual, gestural, audio and spatial dimensions of communication, including computer-mediated-communication. Literacy practices nowadays incorporate these semiotic meanings, which ESL/EFL learners should be familiar with. In a study of a Chinese immigrant's electronic textual experiences and the construction of his identity in ESL, for instance, Lam (2000: 458) emphasizes 'the contextual nature of reading and writing and the way literacy is intimately bound up with particular sociocultural contexts, institutions, and social relationships'. It seems that multimodal communicative competence will allow ESL/EFL learners to be better prepared for different literacy practices in their professional and sociocultural experiences with native and non-native speakers of English. In classes where students have easy access to the Internet, teenage students may interact with other students around the world through ORKUT, Facebook, fotologs, blogs, and other e-environments. The experience with different kinds of multimodal texts in the English-speaking world can become a very productive means for developing students' multimodal communicative competence in English.

The relevance of multimodality in ESL/EFL learning and teaching

Following Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) and The New London Group (1996), in relation to new demands in literacy, Kress (2003) explains:

> It is no longer possible to think about literacy in isolation from a vast array of social, technological and economic factors. Two distinct yet related factors deserve to be particularly highlighted. These are, on the one hand, the broad move from the now centuries-long dominance of writing to the new dominance of the image and, on the other hand, the move from the dominance of the medium of the book to the dominance of the medium of the screen. These two together are producing a revolution in the uses and effects of literacy and of associated means for representing and communicating at every level and in every domain. (KRESS, 2003:1)

With this new paradigm for learning, my concern in this article is to open up new possibilities for ESL/EFL teaching. ESL/EFL teachers need to understand that "[t]o communicate is to work in making meaning" (KRESS, 2003:11) and that "[v]isual structures realize meanings as linguistic structures do also, and thereby point to different interpretations of experience and different forms of social interaction (KRESS and van LEEUWEN, 1996:2).

Multimodality as a significant educational feature is also emphasized by Macken-Horarik (2004:24):

> Whatever the subject, students now have to interpret and produce texts which integrate visual and verbal modalities, not to mention even more complex interweavings of sound, image and verbiage in filmic media and other performative modalities

She emphasizes the need for learners to go beyond practical expertise in computer-based technologies of the school curriculum to encompass an understanding of semiotic frameworks of analysis, such as the grammar of visual design by Kress and van Leeuwen.

In order to implement visual meaning-making resources and reconceptualize literacy in EFL as a joint role of verbal and visual meaning-making, teachers should become familiar with basic principles of systemic-functional linguistics and understand the three basic metafunctions proposed by Halliday, as previously mentioned:

> We use language to talk about our experience of the world, including the worlds in our own minds, to describe events and states and the entities involved in them (the ideational metafunction). We also use language to interact with other people, to establish and maintain social relations with them, to influence their behaviour, to express our own viewpoint on things in the world, and to elicit or change theirs (the interpersonal metafunction). Finally in using language, we organize our messages in ways which indicate how they fit in with other messages around them and with the wider context in which we are talking or writing (the textual metafunction) (THOMPSON, 1996:28).

In terms of visual grammar (KRESS and van LEEUWEN, 1996; 2006), the ideational metafunction is known as representational, the interpersonal as interactive, and the textual, as compositional. Unsworth (2001:18) explains:

> *representational/ideational* structures verbally and visually construct the nature of events, the objects and participants involved, and the circumstances in which they occur;
> *interactive/interpersonal* verbal and visual resources construct the nature of relationships among speakers/listeners, writers/readers, and viewers and what is viewed;
> *compositional/textual* meanings are concerned with the distribution of the information value or relative emphasis among elements of the text and image.

Understanding the ideational, interpersonal and textual metafunctions in relation to verbal and visual semiotics and how they are jointly used in communication represents a valuable asset for EFL teachers and students.

Meaningful opportunities in multimodality for ESL/EFL learners

Whether an ESL/EFL course is designed for teenage or adult students, it must provide a link between linguistic form and function (understood here as language use, speech function). In ESL/EFL classes, the link between these two important aspects of language learning should be included in classroom activities, as "learners must acquire both to be fully competent in their second language" (DOUGHTY, 1998: 128). As SLA (Second Language Acquisition[2]) studies have shown, a focus on form which promotes meaningful communication seems to be the best practice. "Striking a balance between emphasizing accurate production of second language forms and promoting meaningful communication in real contexts has become a vital concern" (DOUGHTY, 1998:149). In this respect, using visuals and developing a metalanguage of visual literacy in the classroom may lead to meaningful language practice.

During the last thirty years or so, communicative language courses around the world have proliferated, and pedagogy has changed from "language in isolation to language as communication" (DOUGHTY, 1998:134), offering the opportunity for ESL/EFL learners to use the target language in class activities. However, even though "the tenets and methodologies of the communicative approach arguably constitute the dominant paradigm in current English language teaching" (POOLE, 2002:75), in many parts of the world EFL teaching is still focussed on forms only, on grammatical terminology per se, in detriment of the development of meaningful, fluent use of English. We see the need to be concerned with a focus on form as scaffolding, as a tool for interaction and practice, not as monotonous unstimulating lists of grammatical terms. The importance of social interaction in learning processes, a shift from "laboratory-based notions of learning" to learning within the learner's social world is also emphasised by Van Lier (1998:157). Van Lier refers to two types of interaction in the language classroom, teacher-learner interaction and learner-learner interaction, and concludes that teachers should attempt to 'make classroom interaction varied and multidimensional' (p. 178).

From a systemic-functional linguistic (SFL) perspective to second language pedagogy, interaction in the classroom is also important, and a fundamental premise is that "language development arises from general circumstances of use and communicative interaction" (PERRETT, 2000:93). Christie (2002), who analyses classroom discourse from SFL theory and Bernstein' work on pedagogic discourse, also sees the need for teachers to provide scaffolding and important pedagogic opportunities, make students understand technical language and integrate instructional and regulative registers[3]. From her analysis of several classes in the English-speaking world, she proposes an appropriate integration of the regulative and instructional registers, with teacher intervention to effectively help students to develop, classify and frame knowledge. She claims for "an education that values knowledge and that values the learner, by seeking to make available to learners as explicitly and unambiguously as possible significant and useful information and ideas" (CHRISTIE, 2002:179).

Meaningful interactional practice with students' active participation in class contributes to improve their competence in the foreign language. In recent communicative language teaching (CLT) two different trends have prevailed: task-based

instruction (TBI) and content-based instruction (CBI) (WESCHE and SKEHAN, 2002). According to Wesche and Skehan (2002), communicative classrooms usually give prominence to:

- Activities that require frequent interaction among learners or with other interlocutors to exchange information and solve problems;
- Use of authentic (nonpedagogic) texts and communication activities linked to real-world contexts, often emphasizing links across written and spoken modes and channels;
- Approaches that are learner-centered in that they take into account learners' backgrounds, language needs, and goals and generally allow learners some creativity and role in instructional decisions (WESCHE and SKEHAN, 2002:208)

These authors go on to say that in order to support the above mentioned aspects, CLT may include:

- Instruction that emphasizes cooperative learning such as group and pair work
- Opportunities for learners to focus on the learning process with the goal of improving their ability to learn language in context
- Communicative tasks linked to curricular goals as the basic organizing unit for language instruction
- Substantive content, often school subject matter from nonlanguage disciplines, that is learned as a vehicle for language development, as well as for its inherent value. (WESCHE and SKEHAN, 2002:208)

Both task-based and content-based activities can contribute to students' development of multimodal communicative competence, as they engage learners in negotiation of meaning through language use. While TBI activities foster interaction among learners to exchange information and solve problems in the foreign language, CBI is concerned with the "integration of school or academic content with language-teaching objectives… and can be effective for both language and content learning" (WESCHE and SKEHAN, 2002:220)

Incorporating multimodal skills in the teaching of English

One way for teachers to start the journey towards the use of visual literacy in the EFL classroom specifically for teenagers is to collect all different kinds of pictures from newspapers, magazines, leaflets so as to organize a data bank, in sets which may emphasize the three functions as proposed in Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996; 2006) grammar of visual design: representational (which corresponds to actions or concepts), interactive (which refer to the relations between the interlocutors) and compositional (arrangement of elements in a visual space, with subsets of different categories). Students are invited to contribute to the data bank, and this can become a motivating factor for interaction. Just as is done with professional databanks (MACHIN, 2004) students may create their own databank of pictures so as to integrate them in activities.

Whether EFL teachers who subscribe to forms of communicative language teaching tend to support task-based or content-based instructions (or even a combination

of the two), it seems that incorporating a multimodal approach can be a rewarding experience, as I point out (HEBERLE, 2006). My experience in EFL teacher training courses in Brazil has shown that teachers have responded positively to an integration of TBI or CBI with multimodality and multiliteracy. The main points emphasized are that:

1) The approach may give opportunities for groups or pairs of students to negotiate meaning in English, when they have to solve a problem. For instance, the teacher may assign them specific task-based activities which could include pictures of people, places or objects in advertisements. Students would have to choose one specific picture, giving reasons for their choices, based on their intuitions and interests but their analysis should be based on the multimodal metalanguage. Two interesting books on the use of multimodal metalanguage for educational purposes are Callow's (1999) and Unsworth's (2001);

2) Regarding a link with real world contexts and topics of students' interests, as proposed by CLT, students may be asked to bring their favourite magazines to class so as to discuss the visual-verbal synergy and the different meanings available in them. Heberle and Meurer (2007) present a brief multimodal analysis for EFL classes.

3) In terms of joining academic texts and EFL, following CBI, teachers may ask students to discuss aspects of their cultural heritage, such as of their town, their family background or any culture that interests them. They would have to carry out research in books and magazines, as well as in on-line museums and/or art galleries, and then present their findings in oral or written assignments. Christie (2002) provides a rich discussion of secondary school geography lessons which can be adapted to EFL classes.

4) Students may access different hyperlinks to http://www.allposters.com/ and choose a category to discuss (for instance, Entertainment or Art, as seen below). First they would give a general view of the category itself regarding the main topics listed and then they would select one picture for a more detailed analysis. Two of the categories are:

Entertainment

- ⊞ College
- ⊞ Comics
- ⊞ Humor
- ⊞ Movies
- ⊞ Music
- ⊞ People
- ⊞ Sports
- ⊞ Television

and

Art

☐ Contemporary Art

☐ Traditional Art

☐ Museum Art

☐ Photography

☐ Vintage Art & Style

☐ Fine Art Reproductions

☐ Artists

These different activities have been suggested by EFL teachers in Brazil, although more detailed findings still need to be reported. Engaging students in either task-based or in content based instructions, working with visuals and using the appropriate metalanguage, students may certainly be more involved and motivated to learn not only EFL and school content, but also be more aware of sociocultural aspects related to their own communities or other foreign communities, especially if their classes are multicultural.

Video games as a stimulus for learning English

Video games represent one of the most popular worldwide phenomena for teenagers, and if EFL teachers can increment aspects of these games in their classes, chances are that students may be indeed motivated to participate. These games may be a suitable and motivating resource for EFL students to use visual grammar and learn English. As suggested by Unsworth (personal communication) "[t]he first phase of the task with video games would involve understanding the game instructions and strategies in English –a good opportunity for collaborative peer work –and actually playing the game. Unsworth also adds that "[i]t is useful to start off using games that are based on movies since the background story and characters are likely to be well known to teenagers and they can use their background knowledge to assist them to negotiate the English and the new work on reading images grammatically".

The video game *Ultraviolet* is based on the movie released by Sony, at http://www.sonypictures.com/movies/ultraviolet/site/ (access June, 2010). In case the video game is no longer available, the teacher can use the film, available in video rental stores.

Picture 1 – Violet, from the film and video game *Ultraviolet*

While looking at this picture, the students can give suggestions as to what Violet is doing or what is going on. The picture is a clear example of a visual narrative representation, but also emphasizing the concept of beauty and power: Violet, an elegant long-haired, sexy brunnette is positioned in an oblique angle in relation to the viewers, but looking directly at the viewers, demanding a reaction from them, and pointing a sword towards us/them. In this case, viewers can foresee her courage and power. The teacher can also discuss different aspects of visuals with students, such as the colours involved, the descriptions of the scenes and the actions performed by Violet. For this specific game, as in the film, each frame could be used by groups or pairs of students for visual analysis and discussion. They can discuss the visual and the verbal actions.

In http://xbox.gamespy.com/ (access June 2010) the teacher and students can also find several games to analyse. For instance, students can watch demo videos of the game *The Godfather Xbox*. If students know the movie and/or the book, they can compare the similarities and differences between the different media.

Another popular game which may serve as an effective stimulus for the development of students' practice in visual grammar and in EFL is SimCity: (http://simcity.ea.com/about/simcity4/overview.php, (access March 2006 and June 2010). Unlike the other games mentioned above, this game seems particularly adequate if teachers are concerned with non-violence and a more peaceful setting. Here the players can act as mayor and carry out tasks to "govern" their "own virtual metropolis". Notice that on the site, shown below, there are a series of commands (imperative form) for students to examine, and visually speaking the player has power over the scenes, as s/he is looking down, from a high angle.

Overview of SimCity 4

Play God

• Sculpt mountains, gouge valleys, and seed forests to lay the groundwork for your creation.

• Drop a disaster anywhere in your city--set buildings ablaze, pelt your metropolis with meteors, unleash a twister, or wreak havoc with a volcano.

• Populate your terrain with animals that graze and roam … and sometimes stampede into your city!

Play Mayor

• Create, build and run the most realistic city you can imagine.

• Connect your metropolis with other cities you've created to form a massive region of SimCities, each sharing and competing for resources.

• Deploy police cruisers and fire trucks to the scene--you're up close and part of the action as they deal with fires, striking mobs, crime, and more.

Play With Your Sims

• Place your Sims in your city--they'll give you valuable feedback.

• Follow your Sims to work and home.

• Experience life in the big city, from mellow traffic to commuter hell, noontime crowds to nighttime calm.

These examples are just an illustration of the possibilities available for teachers. If they do not have easy access to the Internet in their classes, they can provide transparencies for the overhead projector and discuss them in class with their students. EFL students interviewed by Heberle (2006) explained that they learned a lot of English through video games, as they wanted to play but had to understand the instructions, the verbs related to actions and the descriptions of the scenes.

Different frames of the selected site for analysis can be used for classroom discussion. The class can observe the actions in the narrative sections and the teacher can then help students to construct a narrative with different frames, using specific metalanguage from visual grammar to make their stories vivid. Alternatively, students may be asked to examine the site outside class, as homework assignments, and bring pictures of their own favourite video games to comment on in class.

From different kinds of video games, besides analysing the scenes visually in terms of actions, the class can discuss the verbal actions, the wording used to describe the main characters and their missions. The class could, for instance, refer to the different kinds of interpersonal meanings, the verbal resources used to establish a relationship between the writers and the readers, following the APPRAISAL system network proposed by Martin (2000; MARTIN and ROSE, 2003; ROTHERY and STENGLIN, 2000), constituted by three broad options: attitude, amplification and source. Attitude includes AFFECT (related to feelings), JUDGEMENT (related to character) and APPRECIATION (related to value)[4].

Another discussion might be proposed regarding the visual and verbal meanings and violence, whether the violent scenes shown in a specific game can also be detected in the visuals. Based on APPRAISAL choices, students could examine different kinds of adjectives and explain how the visual representations correlate with the verbal choices.

From a critical discourse analysis perspective, reading involves a resistant, subversive, non-cooperative view of the text and its social-historical context (KRESS, 1989; WALLACE, 1995; HEBERLE, 2000). Video games such as *StarWars*, *Ultraviolet*, *The Godfather Xbox* and *Perfect Dark Zero* can be critically discussed in ESL/EFL classes in terms of representation of violence. Teachers might include the three general questions by Meurer (2001), regarding representations, relations and identities in these games. The questions are:

> (1) how does this text represent the specific 'reality' it relates to?
> (2) what kind of social relations does this text reflect or bring about?
> (3) what are the identities, or the social roles, involved in this text?

One might add a further question to query the textual metafunction as well. For instance:

> (4) How is the text organized to create certain representation(s), relation(s) and identity(ies).

Studying English through advertisements

In the twenty-first century, there is no need to state the pervasiveness of advertising in people's lives, whether we refer to billboards, TV, magazines, leaflets and other kinds of semiotic resources which reinforce the "promotional" character of contemporary culture (WERNICK, 1991; FAIRCLOUGH, 1995; 2003). Advertisements are "ubiquitous, an inevitable part of everyone's lives" (WILLIAMSON, 1978:11). Berger tells us:

> In the cities in which we live, all of us see hundreds of publicity images everyday of our lives. No other kind of image confronts us so frequently. In no other form of society in history has there been such a concentration of images, such a density of visual messages. (BERGER, 1977: 129)

To Wernick (1991:92-5), advertising has impacts on contemporary culture, and at the same time that "[w]e are bombarded with images which convert consumer goods and services into seductive tokens of psychological and social values", there is also an intertextual link with other ads, forming a promotional chain, a "communicative complex" not only with ads

but also with non-advertising contents" (WERNICK, 1991:92-5). Wernick (1991:181) extends the definition of advertising beyond its competitive, commercial, business and economic roles to a more comprehensive sense, to a broader cultural complex, referring 'not only to a type of message but to a type of speech, and, beyond that, to a whole communicative function which is associated with a broader range of signifying materials than just advertisements *stricto sensu*'.

Likewise, Cook (1992) emphasizes the prominence of advertising in contemporary society and how it provides information about our society, and Leiss, Kline and Jhally (1997: 5) see advertising as "an integral part of modern culture", linking "images of persons, products, and well-being".

Taking into account 'the promotional condition of contemporary culture' (Wernick, 1991:181), the fact that advertising combines and appropriates different symbols, discourses and cultural forms (LEISS, KLINE and JHALLY, 1997) and that new literacy programs include analysis of different semiotic/multimodal practices, teachers should encourage EFL students to explore the meanings in ads, applying the visual metalanguage proposed for the description of ads, along with the discussion of social values, lifestyles, and ideological meanings. As multiliteracy learning can be bound up with ESL/EFL learning since both processes involve learning how to understand and produce texts in different situations, it seems advertising can serve as an interesting literacy resource in the context of EFL learning.

Describing objects, places, people, feelings and actions is a very important function in ESL/EFL materials, and advertisements may provide a rich repertoire of topics for ESL/EFL classes. From *New Interchange Book 3*, for instance, some of the functions include describing personalities, past events, problems, challenges, frustrations, rewards and qualities for success. These different kinds of description can be integrated with the analysis of language/image relations in the advertisements.

Here are some suggested activities with ads.

Task 1: Matching words and pictures
Preliminary work by the teacher:
1. Select ten different ads which contain words, phrases or full clauses;
2. Write these words, phrases or clauses in separate individual cards;
3. Cross out these words or clauses from the ads so that students can't see them

In class:
1. The teacher spreads the ads and the written cards around the desks;
2. Students have to match the verbal and the visual meanings;
3. Class discuss the image/text relations, in terms of ideational meanings: are the pictures adding new information or complementing the verbal text?;
4. If desirable, class could discuss interpersonal/interactive meanings or still textual/compositional meanings too

This activity has been applied in different EFL classes in Brazil, and with a discussion of visual grammar, it has become a motivating factor for teenage students.

Task 2: Matching descriptions

Another task refers to a matching activity. On one pile (which can be spread out around the desks or given to groups of students) students will find short descriptions of pictures, containing metalanguage of visual grammar. We believe six or seven might be a reasonable number of ads for class discussion. The teacher can simplify the descriptions or pre-teach some of the potentially difficult vocabulary. After students discuss the ads and their corresponding descriptions, the class can give more details about the pictures, in terms of visual metalanguage. Depending on the ads selected and students' interest and motivation in the discussion, teacher and class can decide which specific kind of meanings will be preferred for analysis: the representational, the interactive or the compositional meanings.

The next step concerns analysis of the broader sociocultural context and possible questions here include:

1. What is the ad about? What are its representational meanings?
2. Who is the ad specifically addressed to and what kind of life style does the ad represent or suggest?
3. Are the image/language relations concurrent, in other words, is there an equivalence of participant-process-phenomenon-circumstance representation in the image and the language?
4. Who are the represented participants? Who is looking at whom? What kind of relationship is established between the represented participants and the viewer? Which personal characteristics (also known as attributes, in multimodal theory) or symbols are present in the ad?
5. What kind of clothes are the participants wearing? Are the clothes related to concepts such as elegance, romance, casual-ness (based on Hall, 1997), or adventure, danger, calmness, power, wealth, freedom, etc.?
6. What kind of background is there? Is there any part in the picture which is framed, separated from the central figure?
7. What sociocultural meanings are represented?   Are these meanings conveyed in the ad similar to social values in your community or country?

An alternative visual-verbal activity includes students' analysis of the three metafunctions, as proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996), and also used in multiliteracy studies by Unsworth (2001) and Callow (1999), following Halliday. Possible questions related to these metafunctions are:

- What is the picture about? Who are the participants involved, and what circumstances are represented in the photograph?
- What is the relationship between the viewer and what is viewed?
- How are the meanings conveyed? How are the representational structures and the interactive/interpersonal resources integrated into a whole?

After students answer these questions and present their analyses of the ads, the whole class can discuss broader social issues and the relevance of images to make people better understand them.

Conclusion: Visual-verbal tasks for ESL/EFL teenage learners

Teenagers may find that examining visual-verbal meanings can be stimulating in terms of their productive and receptive skills in English. I understand that applying visual literacy in the case of EFL teaching for teenagers represents a valid path for meaningful learning. Task-based or content-based instruction with analysis of images and their interpretive possibilities and classroom discussions around them, such as the ones suggested in this paper, hold the potential to expand students' skills in learning English.

What I am also proposing is the integration of visual literacy skills in students' learning, to make them understand and explore the notion that images are not evident and obvious, but socioculturally constructed (KRESS and van LEEUWEN, 1996; STENGLIN and IEDEMA, 2001). Thus visuals are not to be seen as a separate or add-on strategy, but as a valid tool in EFL teaching and learning. I hope to have emphasized the relevance of multimodal meaning-making in different literacy practices in teachers'and students' academic, social/cultural and civic life.

No doubt the classroom activities presented are just suggestions, not strict rules to be followed, and teachers need to take into account their own institutional demands but most importantly their own students' sociocultural and personal values. For this, it is important to redraw the disciplinary and cultural boundaries of foreign language study towards what Kramsch (1993:12) calls "the pursuit of communicative happiness". We believe that incorporating a multimodal, multiliteracy approach to the TESOL context may contribute to a better understanding of these boundaries.

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Notes

[11]. ESL stands for English as a Second Language, while EFL refers to English as a Foreign Language.

[2] According to Perrett (2000: 88) "In most schools of linguistics, apart from SFL, research into SLD [second language development] is commonly known as second language acquisition (SLA) research…Development is preferred by SFL linguists since it connotes the social nature of language learning".

[3] Based on Bernstein, Christie uses the term register and not discourse as Bernstein proposes. She also explains that regulative register refers to the mechanisms and management of classroom activities, and instructional discourse refers to academic content and its necessary skills.

[4] According to Martin and Rose (2003:22), "Appraisal is concerned with evaluation: the kinds of attitudes that are negotiated in a text, the strength of the feelings involved and the ways in which values are sourced and readers aligned… We use resources of APPRAISAL for negotiating our social relationships, by telling our listeners and readers how we feel about things and people".

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Abstract

Literacy nowadays is understood as a complex set of reading, writing and technological skills which joins verbal, visual, and other meaning-making resources. Visual literacy can be linked to multimodality, which refers to the use of different semiotic resources to produce or interpret meanings. In this paper, following Royce (2007), first I discuss the notion of multimodal communicative competence as an important skill for ESL/EFL students to develop, in order for them to interact more effectively with members of English-speaking discourse communities. Then I provide readers with a brief discussion on the relevance of multimodality in ESL/EFL teaching and offer suggestions on how to relate visual literacy specifically to teenage learners of ESL/EFL, as found in video games and advertisements, drawing attention to pedagogical, task-based activities which can be incorporated in the EFL syllabus.

Keywords: Multimodal literacy, semiotic resources, EFL teaching, visual   grammar.

Resumo

Letramento atualmente é entendido como um conjunto complexo de habilidades de leitura, escrita e de tecnologia, que inclui recursos verbais e visuais. Letramento visual pode estar ligado a multimodalidade, que se refere ao uso de diferentes recursos semióticos para produzir ou interpretar significados. Neste trabalho, com base em Royce (2007), primeiramente discuto a noção de competência comunicativa multimodal como fator importante para o estudo de inglês como língua estrangeira ou segunda língua, a fim de que os estudantes possam interagir mais eficazmente com membros de comunidades discursivas falantes de inglês. A seguir, brevemente discuto sobre a relevância da multimodalidade no ensino de inglês e apresento sugestões sobre como relacionar letramento visual especificamente para adolescentes aprendizes de inglês, através de videojogos e propagandas, com atenção voltada para atividades pedagógicas baseadas em tarefas, que podem ser incorporadas no programa da disciplina de inglês.

Palavras-chave: Letramento multimodal, recursos semióticos, ensino de inglês como língua estrangeira, gramática visual.