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Domínguez Romero, E., Bobkina, J., Stefanova Radoulska, S. & Herrero, C. (Eds.). (2023). *Rethinking Multimodal Literacy in Theory and Practice*. Berlin, Bern, Bruxelles, New York, Oxford, Warszawa, Wien: Peter Lang. ISBN: 9783631853917 (296 pages)

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This compilation of papers is aimed at providing insights into the multimodal theory and practice in teaching languages, serving as a tool for practitioners and offering the theoretical basis and effective multimodal activities for the language classroom. From a multimodal approach and the perspective of various disciplines, language is only one of the modes for meaning making and communication which is intrinsically linked to other pedagogical elements such as the agency of the participants, multiliteracies and critical thinking.

The volume is divided into two parts, comprising twelve chapters, and opens with an introductory section in which the authors state their purpose: “the overall objective of the volume is to contribute to the theoretical and practical development of the interconnection between a multimodal approach to pedagogies and multiliteracies development with special attention to teaching critical thinking skills” (2023, 8). The first part of this book refers to conceptualizing multimodality in literacy research and teaching while in the second part a multimodal framework for visual literacy and critical thinking instruction is addressed.

Under Part I, Dr. Frank Serafini opens Section 1, *Multimodal Analytical Perspectives on Literacy Research and Critical Teaching Experiences*, with an article dealing with the implications of multimodal theories for literacy research and pedagogy. Serafini reflects on the multimodal phenomena and what it means to be literate in our contemporary society. He concludes that literacy instruction requires expanding the construct of texts, literacy, and comprehension, challenging the current literacy practices, to include social semiotic theories and resources as part of modern forms of representation and communication. Students need to be able to understand the production, reception, and distribution of visual images and multimodal texts. Accordingly, the author suggests the use of analytical frameworks and the inclusion of a critical multimodal literacy curriculum, providing as example his previous works on picture books in elementary classrooms.

In the following chapter, Anna Constantino highlights the important role—sometimes neglected—that pedagogical materials and activities play in the English classroom, connecting classroom activities with the life outside the classroom. Constantino proposes an enquiry-based pedagogical approach through multimodal affordances, calling for exploratory practice and research in the language classroom. In the same line as Serafini, she advocates for a diverse,

inclusive, and expansive pedagogy from a socio-semiotic perspective on learning and teaching and a fundamental reframing of language pedagogy, pedagogy that ultimately gives learners and teachers agency as meaning-makers.

Karine Chevalier and Elvira Antón-Carrillo present in Chapter 3 enlightening “Transcultural Studies Project” about minorities, including content, outcomes, and assessment. The undergraduates, following a socio-cultural, project-based approach to foreign language learning (Gee, 2011) and multimodal semiotic theory (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006) rather than just a linguistic one, develop transnational multimodal meaning-making projects to deepen their knowledge of language, culture, and society, through topics on current cultural and social issues. Moving away from the expected reading and writing to researching for information and producing a multimodal ensemble, the final product of the project consists of a multimodal artifact—artistic or cultural object—a written accompanying essay or critical commentary, and an oral presentation. Through the case studies and the impressive artifacts created by multilingual students—dealing with immigration, family, and physical appearance—we can appreciate the impact and the richness of a multimodal approach to unite the learning of languages and the reflections of the students over topics of social impact, their own identities, lives, and personalities.

Esther Edo Agustín, in her study on gamified learning experiences, offers an exploratory study to explain the connection between language learning and visual literacy, putting together three main ideas: gamification, linguistic competence, and visual competence where the literature, the author confirms, is scarce. After an in-depth analysis of the existing scientific production connecting the three concepts, the author concludes that visual literacy and language learning can be motivational and engaging as gamification influences motivation and changes behaviours, making students emotionally involved and engaged. She argues that learning to read images and to understand not only their meaning but also the creative process that is behind each one, is also part of cultural competence. Therefore, working in class with visual resources is necessary to promote students’ critical thinking and leads to the development of students’ linguistic competences. We fully support her statement “*living in a digital world does not have to eclipse the importance of visual literacy*” (2023, 90) as indeed we are surrounded by non-digital visual input.

Closing this section, Dr. Contreras, from a gender perspective, firstly explores audiovisual literacy in didactic Spanish L2 materials through film education and its intercultural perspective in the teaching of Spanish, and secondly, provides a template—based on the existing materials from FILTA—to evaluate teaching materials linking audiovisual literacy and feminist parameters. Offering an innovative analysis of the current trends in the feminist film theory framework from the 1970s and the representation of women in cinema, she elaborates a critical overview of the existing Spanish L2 audiovisual materials focusing on whether they critically address the representation of women. The design of her template, a useful tool for language teachers, comprises a macro-evaluation for content and general objectives, and a micro-evaluation to examine the content of each unit. One interesting reflection raised by the author is the role of teacher training and teachers’ attitudes in their sometimes-questioned role as educators to raise feminist awareness.

Under Part 1 in Section 2, *Unlocking the Innovative Potential of Short Films and Self-Developed Videos in the Language Classroom*, Carmen Herrero and Isabelle Vanderschelden aim at promoting film and media literacy in modern languages teaching and provide teachers with invaluable resources and training. The authors, accumulating substantial experience in teaching languages through all kinds of films, have gathered qualitative data from several film literacy workshops for teachers and students and from FILTA—a very active and appealing Community of Practice—resulting in their Teacher Training Project, which included the successful school film review competition, explained in this paper. The content and format of

the project are based on the authors' pedagogical framework from FILTA study guides—freely available. Considering films “rich multimodal texts”, the authors provide practical examples on how to use short films in the language classroom by embedding them in the curriculum, in order to embrace multimodality and develop visual literacy, film and media literacy, critical thinking, and intercultural awareness.

Expanding upon prior research on short audiovisual productions but from a different angle, Elena Domínguez Romero and Jelena Bobkina present an exploratory research project in higher education, centred on the utilization of short videos as a means of enhancing listening skills. The project comprises three phases where the researchers initially elaborated, in collaboration with two museums in Madrid, six short videos conceived as multilingual and multimodal teaching tools for students of modern languages. Subsequently, they designed a methodological framework to facilitate the integration of audiovisual material, in the context of multimodal and multilingual teaching in the language classroom. Merging the role of the listener as an active participant and the tenets of metacognitive listening theories, they masterfully and originally combine the bidimensional nature of listening instruction, encompassing comprehension and acquisition, with Serafini's (2012b) framework for multimodal text analysis, embracing his notion of the listener as “reader-viewer” (Serafini, 2012a). The culminating phase of their study involves the practical implementation of these didactic units within a university classroom setting.

Section 1 of Part II, *Multimodal Framework for Visual Literacy and Critical Thinking Instruction*, begins with Cristina Maria da Silva Pinto Ferreira Fonseca designing, for a course on Design and Visual Communication at university, a curricular unit to increase students' visual literacy skills through the observation and reading of eight magazine covers on Covid 19. The focus is on the study of visual communication from the design of the covers, visual syntax and semantics, and critical thinking. Barry Kavanagh's contribution builds an appealing multimodal framework for a CLIL film and media literacy university course in Japan using Japanese Manga and anime Demon Slayer. Following Bobkina and Domínguez's (2013) multimodal framework for CLIL, Kavanagh designs a unit to explore the Japanese culture behind the Manga creation, fostering intercultural awareness and critical thinking, which contributes to the students' affective motivation for learning a language. Closing this section, Mancebo Suárez and Silvia Pellicer-Ortín elaborate on wordless picture books as multimodal texts for the primary EFL classroom. They design a didactic proposal to promote visual skills and multiliteracy by means of reading and composing in a communicative approach. Organised around a project-based learning structure, the authors unfold the intricate layers inherent in wordless picture books, unveiling their unforeseen complexity.

Section 2 looks at *Multimodality for Developing Visual Literacy in Teaching English for Specific Purposes* with two interesting articles. David Geneste aims at providing educators with a set of methodological principles and tools to exploit authentic multimodal resources in English for Vocational Purposes (EVP) classrooms. To this end, he elaborated a project, integrated into the curriculum of the course, consisting of several EVP activities based on one authentic resource, the IKEA website. By applying the three dimensions of perception, he designs activities using a register-based approach adapted to the text types with specific features used in the course such as catalogues or infomercials. We find this article is of great interest in the practice of EVP given that few studies on multimodality are aimed exclusively at vocational education and training. Continuing in ESP but from another perspective, Dr. Sánchez-Moya closes this compilation by exploring visual literacy and multimodal language learning through social media, specifically Instagram. With this interesting and innovative piece of research in online settings, Sanchez Moya demonstrates with feedback from the learners—outside tertiary education—that Instagram has the potential to help English language learners improve their overall language skills, vocabulary, and communication skills. The

findings confirm the overall satisfaction of the learners with the use of the visual grammar posts and stories on Instagram, being the visual character of the posts as the most valued feature.

This book conforms a great contribution to the field of multimodality, visual literacy and multiliteracies in language teaching which we foresee will be of interest to most practitioners in the times we are living where the image, still or moving, isolated or in conjunction with other modes, has become the main means of communication. Apart from leading experts and professionals elaborating on the current theories and trends in multiliteracies and multimodality, it provides practical, pedagogical and methodological frameworks not only for language teachers but also for a diversity of fields.

Furthermore, some recurring concepts are consistently addressed by most authors, underscoring their pivotal role within contemporary multimodal theory in language education. These fundamental notions encompass the delineation of modes of meaning-making, the active role of learner agency, intercultural awareness, and critical thinking skills. Delving into these discussions and frameworks is unquestionably valuable. It is certainly worth reading.

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