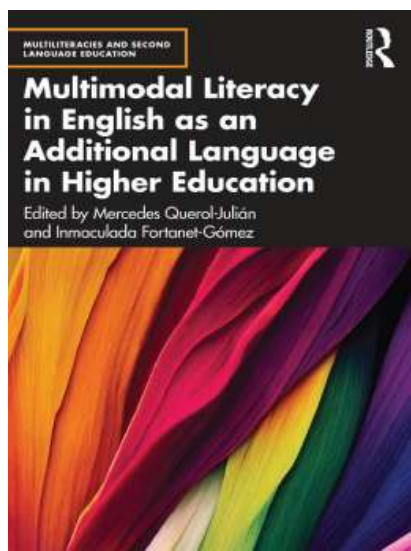


BOOK REVIEW



A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO THE UNIVERSITY CLASSROOM IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Mercedes Querol-Julián and Inmaculada Fortanet-Gómez (Eds.). MULTIMODAL LITERACY IN ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE IN HIGHER EDUCATION (2025), Routledge. 274 pp., ISBN 978-1-032-55274-3 (HBK); 978-1-032-55121-0 (PBK); 978-1-003-42987-6 (EPUB).
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Education in the present-day world tends to be increasingly diverse, complex, constructivist, digital, visual and international. Various semiotic modes and distant access are symbiotic with online learning and digital affordances, while its international character, especially in higher education, is well served by English as a global language. The book *Multimodal literacy in English as an additional language in higher education* is part of the series *Multiliteracies and Second Language Education*, focused on multiliteracies, teacher development and L2 learning, reflecting the current changes in the society. It aims to explore the relatively underresearched territory of multimodal literacy and multimodal pedagogies in higher education, particularly at university. The editors, Mercedes Querol-Julián and Inmaculada Fortanet-Gómez, are researchers into multimodal literacy, multimodal analysis and teacher professional development.

The three aspects of multimodal literacy are reflected in three parts of the book: Conceptualising multimodal literacy in higher education (Part I), Multimodal literacy pedagogies in EAL courses (Part II), and Multimodal literacy pedagogies and professional development (Part III).

Chapter 1, titled “Multimodal literacy at the university: The ins and outs of educating in English as an additional language” and written by the editors, provides an extensive literature review of the multimodal literacy discourse. It examines four key aspects of multimodal literacy in the English as an additional language (EAL) classroom, namely multimodality, multimodal genre analysis, multimodal pedagogy and teacher professional development. It pays credit to Kress’s (2010)

conceptualisation of multimodality and the concepts of mode as “a semiotic resource shaped to make meaning in a certain cultural context” (p. 4), multimodal affordances and intermodality. The editors also characterise four main approaches to multimodality: multimodal social semiotics (MSS), focused on sign-makers’ choices and social context, multimodal discourse analysis (MDA), with an emphasis on language, multimodal interaction analysis (MIA) and multimodal conversation analysis (MCA). This introductory chapter elaborates on integration of digital genres in multimodal pedagogy in ESP, EAP and EMI classrooms. The concept of *scaffolding* proposed by the Sydney school and Cope and Kalantzis’s (2000) framework, proceeding from experience (*situated practice*) to deconstruction (*critical framing*) to semiotic modes, scaffolding (*overt instruction*) and eventually to *transformed practice*, is highlighted as one of the principal procedures of multimodal pedagogies, along with teacher professional development for multimodal literacy – which is further explored in Part III of this book.

Len Unsworth in Chapter 2 (“Infographics, inter-semiosis, and multimodal literacy in science education”) looks into the increasing importance of images in research publications, in the communication of research to the public and in secondary and tertiary education. Unsworth highlights condensation, the ability to catch people’s attention, save time and include multiple dimensions within one “eyeful”, as particular benefits of this multimodal resource. The author outlines the concept of *mass*, the grouping of visual resources building technical and scientific knowledge (i.e., technicality) and those condensing the meaning (i.e., aggregation). Aspects of aggregation (or condensation) and of recognisability are essential criteria for genre analysis of infographics. Instructing students how to create and interpret condensed meaning is crucial for disciplinary literacy development, so Unsworth suggests employing the 5Cs strategy (concurrence, complementarity, connection, comparison and construction) when working with infographics.

Chapter 3 by Yingxue Liu and Fei Victor Lim (“Designing for multimodal literacy and socio-emotional learning through digital multimodal composing”) is devoted to multimodal literacy as one aspect of multiliteracies. Digital multimodal composing (DMC), applying digital affordances for the creation of digital artefacts, such as webpages, wikis, blogs, videos, podcasts, presentations, etc., is seen as instrumental in improving language learning, students’ learning autonomy and agency, relationship skills and decision-making. With emphasis on socio-emotional learning (SEL), Liu and Lim suggest a “pedagogical design of the SEL-integrated DMC University Classroom” (p. 47), rooted in the learning by design (LbD) framework for multiliteracies learning. The authors base their approach on four knowledge processes (experiencing, conceptualising, analysing and applying) and utilise Lim and Tan-Chia’s (2023) Learning Process framework as a practical guideline for designing a university multimodal literacies course. Liu and Lim stress the usefulness of a metalanguage for multimodal literacy, so-called “transpositional grammar” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2020), and its application in the course design of SEL-integrated DMC in the EAL curriculum. Discussion of challenges, especially the

students' limited linguistic repertoires and cultural remixing, contributes to a balanced view of DMC.

Transposition as the basis of transpositional grammar is the focus of attention in Chapter 4 ("Multimodality and transposition in collaborative language learning") by Anastasia-Olga (Olnancy) Tzirides, Vania Carvalho de Castro, Bill Cope and Mary Kalantzis. Transposition involves movement between different modes of meaning-making and analysing combinations of forms. Digital devices, serving as a *cognitive prosthesis* in the learning process, enhance human perceptive and meaning-making abilities. The case study in this chapter describes a Greek-English university online course with a multimodal brochure as a product. Using the digital social learning platform CGScholar and being assisted by machine translation (Google Translate, integrated in CGMap), the students' work was monitored by Learning Analytics, an artificial intelligence tool, which supplemented the self-assessment rubric. The project experience proves that digital tools and platforms, the "cognitive prosthesis" of multimodal literacy, can be organically integrated into a collaborative language learning (CLL) online classroom.

Part II is basically devoted to pedagogical applications of multimodal literacies. Chapter 5 by Dacia Dressen-Hammouda and Ciara R. Wigham ("A multimodal assessment grid to guide the design and evaluation of instructional video tutorials") examines the outcomes of a university course of multimodal literacy communication aimed at technical writing and information design. The students were guided to produce an instructional video tutorial, a common dynamic multimodal genre, and their performance was evaluated using an assessment grid, which one cohort had known in advance. The authors highlight the importance of integrating multimodal learning principles into the assessment grid as "modal competency criteria" (MCC). The multimodal assessment by L1 professional designers, addressing linguistic, aural, sound and music, aural-linguistic, visual and temporal aspects, was checked against students' self-assessment. The results, albeit with a small sample of students and reported difficulties of choosing between content learning, visual design and language proficiency focus, prove the benefits of integrating multimedia guidelines as the MCC within a multimodal assessment grid.

Another excellent example of a case study in the university classroom is discussed in Esther Ka-man Tong and Angel M. Y. Lin's Chapter 6 titled "Multimodality and mathematics literacy: Knowledge visualisation and construction through a bilingual mobile learning app." Mobile applications including multimodal resources were employed at a university in Hong Kong in CLIL-based classes as trans-semiotic scaffolding with students transitioning from Chinese-medium into EMI mathematics education. Tong and Lin employ the "concept and language mapping" (CLM) approach, drawing on the functional linguistic thematic pattern theory. The multimodal app with its scaffolding affordances manifests the advantages of integrating diverse semiotic resources and modes in CLIL lessons, as they clearly enhance students' translanguaging and trans-semiotising performance.

Chapter 7 by Alexandra Santamaría Urbieta and Elena Alcalde Peñalver (“Assessing multimodal discourse in digital storytelling for ESP: From theory to practice”) examines digital storytelling (DST) in higher education. Apart from being an efficient persuasive tool, DST contributes to knowledge construction, development of research, communication and interpersonal skills, and enhances motivation. The multimodal assessment tool was tested within a Financial Translation course, which included creation of a short film, combining audio and visual content. The three-stage methodology comprised instruction on DST and providing key words. The assessment tool addressed all relevant modes, and evaluation in five steps employed double marking to ensure objectivity. The results prove consistent evaluations and high scores in collaboration, cohesion and coherence, adequacy, vocabulary and editing, but deficits in proxemics and phonology. Similarly to Chapter 5, students definitely benefit from access to the assessment tool prior to designing their DST.

In Chapter 8 (“Enhancing multimodal literacy in ESP: A focus on digital multimodal composition for video game reviews”), Vicent Beltrán-Palanques and Nuria Edo-Marzá emphasise the necessity for teachers to adapt their aims and practices to the expanding digital multimodal discourse. The authors stress the need to apply intersemiotic relationships in developing multimodal literacy. Their multimodal composition project involved the genre of video game reviews in an ESP video game design and development programme. Based on the multimodal game-based approach, highlighting critical thinking, communication of interpersonal meaning and students’ activity in learning, the authors applied the three-stage Teaching-Learning cycle (Martin & Rose, 2005) proceeding from deconstruction to construction. The outcomes of the research showcase the enriching role of multimodal configurations, but also somewhat limited evaluative language and overlaps between some sections.

The shift from face-to-face to online teaching necessitates the development of teachers’ multimodal interactional competence (MIC), enhanced through reflexive practice and the improvement of trans-semiotising practices. Chapter 9 by Mercedes Querol-Julián (“Developing multimodal interactional competence in EMI lectures: Reflexive practice in an online international programme”) discusses EMI and digitalisation as popular tools of internationalisation. Apart from student mobility and internationalisation-at-home, online international programmes are a growing alternative. The author stresses the need for a student-centred approach, reflection, awareness and multimodality in EMI teacher training, and for interaction and raising semiotic awareness in EMI education. Querol-Julián bases her project on instructional teaching and coaching sessions observing the GROW model (Whitmore, 1992). The case study of personalised teaching coaching in an online international master’s programme examines video-recorded classes and relies on the teacher’s reflections in order to analyse MIC development and semiotic awareness.

In Chapter 10 (“Multimodal and digital literacies in EME professional development programmes to promote students’ interaction and engagement”), Natalia Norte explores English as a medium of education (EME) and asserts the importance of understanding the subject matter, applying suitable methodologies and particularly multimodality. The author applied Padlet (an online collaborative application) and Quick Responses (QR) codes for macroanalysis of the engagement episodes (EEs) of EME professional development programme participants and multimodal analysis of the performed modes, respectively. Moves and pedagogical functions in the EEs, namely contextualising, setting up, monitoring, eliciting and summarising, were observed in lessons on the use of humour in storytelling. Controlled vocabulary, timing, body posture, hand movements, etc. were monitored and a careful multimodal analysis identified repetition of moves in multimodal classes, inter-semiosis between verbal and non-verbal elements, and patterns of hand gestures and spatial dynamics.

Chapter 11 by Sigrid Ørevik, Aud Solbjørg Skulstad and Sophia Diamantopoulou (“Multimodality in EAL teacher education: An example from the Norwegian context”) strives to answer questions concerning the manner and degree of contribution of EAL education practices to multimodal education and its support from theory in the Norwegian context. Interviews with twelve EAL primary and secondary teacher educators examine the role of multimodality in teacher educators’ practices. The study outlines the traditional emphasis on texts, but with emerging mentions of “multimodal” or “multimedia texts.” Programme documents are confronted with accounts of teachers in the main five-year teacher education programme, addressing notions of multimodality, pedagogical use of multimodal texts, assessment of pre-service teachers’ multimodal expression and multimodality for critical thinking and literacy. The findings reveal a discrepancy between theoretical perspectives on multimodality, course descriptions for EAL teacher education and teachers’ reported knowledge and practices. The authors suggest that policymakers join faculty and researchers in formalising multimodal practices in teacher education and that attention be paid to the metalanguage and theory of multimodality.

The book under review sheds light into various aspects of multimodal literacies and related pedagogy for higher education. The first part overviews the theoretical approaches and strategies which have developed massively in the last few decades; the second part demonstrates applications of multimodal literacy in diverse disciplines, genres and modes, highlighting self-assessment, critical thinking, creativity and trans-semiotising. Finally, the third part shares experience from teacher training practice and makes practical suggestions.

The undisputed advantage of the volume lies in the plurality of approaches to multimodal literacy, its implementation and assessment. There is a certain imbalance between the chapters, ranging from an emphasis on theory and the establishment of appropriate methodology (especially Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 9) to empirical research on multimodal genres, classroom settings and topics, with

numerous textual examples, tables, and illustrations (especially Chapters 5, 6, 8 and 10). However, given the number of authors from different countries and the variety of genres and semiotic modes, this is probably unavoidable.

The abundance of sources and concepts and the terminologically challenging language may make the text difficult to access for non-specialists and certainly for students, but it will greatly enrich experts in the fields of education, multiliteracies and linguistics. On the whole, multimodality is an indispensable feature of modern education and this book helps us to understand it in its complexity for the benefit of learners, educators and researchers alike.

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