

MULTIMODALITY: AN ENGLISH TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGY FOR  
ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE IN COLOMBIA

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Firma

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## ABSTRACT

This chapter is a literature review, which explores multimodality theory to propose it as an English teaching and learning strategy in Colombia. In terms of second language learning, multimodality can be an useful strategy for English teaching, since it provides multicultural classrooms' realities which integrates ESL' students' perspectives, gives priority to their learning experiences and their identities (Ajayi, 2009). Therefore, it is possible to recognize that multimodality offers students a sensory perception process that can attend different learning styles, for it has a semiotic work that implies the joint of a variety of modes and communicative resources, which can maximize effect and benefit (Kress, 2010) to the student's second language communication.

In this sense, to understand multimodality as a strategy, it is necessary for teachers to recognize the features that globalization arises, such as the huge development of technology (The New London Group, 1996), the appearance of variety of languages in cities or the increased of intercultural relations. This fact has impacted on teaching and learning practices. For instance, there are new learning environments, which have been created after the ICT and the different literacy practices. This has caused a redefinition of what it is meant by communication; therefore it implies that there are new resources to perform it. It involves then, that education explores other strategies for language and communication (Álvarez, J. 2016) which are aware of the new social communication practices. That is the reason why, multimodality is a concept that, working as a strategy, would help teachers and students to integrate new communicative practices and ICT to the learning process of English as a second language, to get more meaningful practices. It means, to provide students meaningful learning experiences in the classroom.

**Key concepts:** multimodality, communication, second languages, teaching and learning strategy, meaning-making.

## INTRODUCTION

In Colombia there has been a growing interest in the English learning that has affected the teaching and learning practices. This has happened because of the different globalization processes which require societies to meet the market demands. English then, is seen as an essential element for Colombia to compete and be part of the academic, cultural, political and economic global dynamics. Improving citizens' English communicative competence ensures the country better market opportunities, since they would be able not only to value and discover different cultures (Martínez, 2008) but also to identify, comprehend and use the market strategies into their own benefits and the country ones but that is allowed by the use of English as a lingua franca, since it fosters interaction and mediation.

Colombian Ministry of Education (MEN) has then started to create policies in order to enhance the English teaching and citizens' competitiveness (Fandiño-Parra, Bermúdez-Jiménez & Lugo-Vásquez, 2012). By 2006, different projects were related to language learning such as ICT program, bilingualism national program, transitional bilingualism, the national bilingualism plan, curriculum guidelines and the national standards for English, among others (MEN, 1999; 2005; 2006). They have been part of those efforts to reach the objective of improving English teaching and learning in the country. Those policies have pushed the educative system and teachers to reconsider the way they promote English in educational institutions.

Moreover, thanks to those policies, English learning and teaching processes have had some changes in terms of methods, approaches and paradigms (Torres-Martínez, 2009), since Colombia has been forced to exceed over the years, some second language teaching and learning conceptions that have been sharply questioned by many scholars, researchers and teachers. One of those questionings is that the development of the English curriculum used to prior grammar, vocabulary, linguistic needs, or textbooks as the guide for the learning process instead of the communicative competence (Mei Yi Lin, 2008).

However, those changes have been influenced by foreign models like "the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB), the American Standards for Foreign Language Learning, the TESOL/NCATE ESL Standards for Pre-K-12 Students, and the Standards for Teachers of English Language and Literacy in Australia (...)" (González, 2007, p. 311) or the CEFR (2001). These copied models have become a difficulty for language teaching and learning, since it does not attend national and local needs. Besides poverty and social inequality, this might be other reason why, current statistics place Colombia as one of the countries with the lowest English proficiency (EF EPI, 2015).

Bearing that in mind, each social agent involved in the English learning and teaching practices, must suit them to the diverse contexts Colombian cities have. So the strategies used to learn, teach and create policies could be connected to the student's realities. Such premise plays a vital role, since that implies for The Ministry of Education, education administrators and teachers to recognize not only cultural settings, but also the way English is learnt by Colombian students in and outside classrooms; thus there will be a reconceptualization and recontextualization of the teaching and learning practices.

Current researches on languages have demonstrated that there are many different English manifestations outside classrooms (Ajayi, 2009; Knobel, 2001; Mora, Castaño, Gómez, Mejía-Vélez, Pulgarín & Ramírez, 2014; Mora, Chiquito, Giraldo, Mejía-Vélez, Salazar & Uribe, 2016; Street, 1995) that means, people are already using it as a common way to express their ideas, in different urban spaces of the cities, despite of the target native language. According to that, teaching practices must go beyond classroom practices and focus on the outdoors ones; which demands from the educative agents to understand their nature and integrate these practices to a contextualized learning process, in order to relate the student's classroom knowledge to the declarative one.

In that sense, literature on second languages has proved that in Colombia English already coexists with the citizens, so they do not need to enroll a course to be in touch with it. This takes place because people are starting to use English in a variety of ways, such as creating audiovisual materials, making arts, using the language as a commercial strategy, etc. in order to express themselves, whether they know the language or not. Nonetheless, the way people access to English is completely different to the way teachers take it to class because it responds to messages composed of many semiotic resources (Kress, 2010) it means, signs, symbols, modes, gestures, body language and others that are used "for communicative purposes" (Van Leeuwen, 2005, p.7) .

Besides that, a variety of modes and semiotic resources that are taking part of the use of English outside schools are also considered in this paper, for the purpose of establishing multimodality as a second language teaching and learning strategy. Since that term deals with the integration of modes such as color, sound, text, movement, among others to create a message (Mejía-Vélez & Salazar, 2014). This would also help teachers, scholars and researchers to reflect on some transformations that may be considered for second languages teaching and learning in Colombia.

### ***The path to multimodality as a strategy***

Along this chapter, Multimodality: An English teaching and learning strategy for English as a second language in Colombia, it will be possible to evidence how multimodality offers a viable answer to some of the Colombian English teaching and learning difficulties related to class practices, since it may satisfy today's student and local contexts needs. Hence, multimodality as a strategy for L2 teaching and learning, contributes to design meaningful

learning experiences at the classrooms, since it promotes contextualized practices that think of student's life.

To introduce all those aspects of multimodality as an English teaching and learning strategy, the chapter is divided into four parts. The first one introduces the concepts, which meet in conceptualizing multimodality as a teaching and learning strategy. The second part shows how this proposal works and the meaning-making process, which is the key concept to develop multimodality as a strategy. Moreover this part aims to justify why multimodality is a theory, which provides students meaningful learning experiences. The third part exemplifies through some real teaching experiences, the advantages students can have when using multimodality as a strategy. Finally, the fourth part draws the conclusions and further questions.



## CHAPTER I

### CONCEPTUALIZING MULTIMODALITY AS A TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGY

Human beings are constantly looking for a variety ways and means to express themselves; it implies then that communication turns volatile because it is dependent on the global context changes, such as the evolution of mass media, technology or the information exchange. As a result, the way people use the language has suffered a lot of transformations through time, such as the nature of messages, resources or means they use to do it. To comprehend these social changes, the semiotic field has brought various concepts, such as literacy and multimodality, that have been gaining importance in recent years because they help recognizing how a 21st century message is made and comprehend.

Literacy is a concept which has been conceived for many years, in a traditional sense, as the ability to recognize and produce a written word. In this sense, reading and writing refer to a decoding process that implies the capacity of relating sounds with graphic symbols. However, Literacy is a concept that goes beyond, since it is not only about the orthographic competence and recognizing of passages, but also about “the relationship between text and context” (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p.1)

That conception of literacy opens up a new field of study, focusing on reading and writing as social practices; or as Barton & Hamilton (1998) proposed, as the different ways people find to use language and communication in their lives. Therefore, literacy happens in the interaction among people. So it is part of human being routines and it is used as a mean to achieve social goals and to be involved in several cultural practices, which means not limiting them to academic and formal environments.

Taking that into account, literacy demonstrates that texts are not only letters or words, but also what humans can create and express using other resources. According to that, this conception leads teachers to move on from the old reading and writing practices –which implies non-significant tasks or formal methods- to the inclusive, open-ended, diverse and multimodal ones (Mills, 2009). Consequently, teachers have to reconsider first, the traditional concept of literacy, in order to improve their teaching and learning processes and engage their students. For this purpose, it is crucial to recognize and understand the nature of today’s communication that is as the devices (from paper and pencil to computers and cellphones) as the resources people use (colors, photographs, music, symbols, gestures, etc.)

In this sense, some questions arise: What is the language composed of? How are people's messages made? How can people read the literacy practices in the city? First of all, it has

to be considered that human language has never been simple, for instance, since the beginning of man's writing process, messages were formed by using different resources, like images, colors or symbols, as shown in image 1.

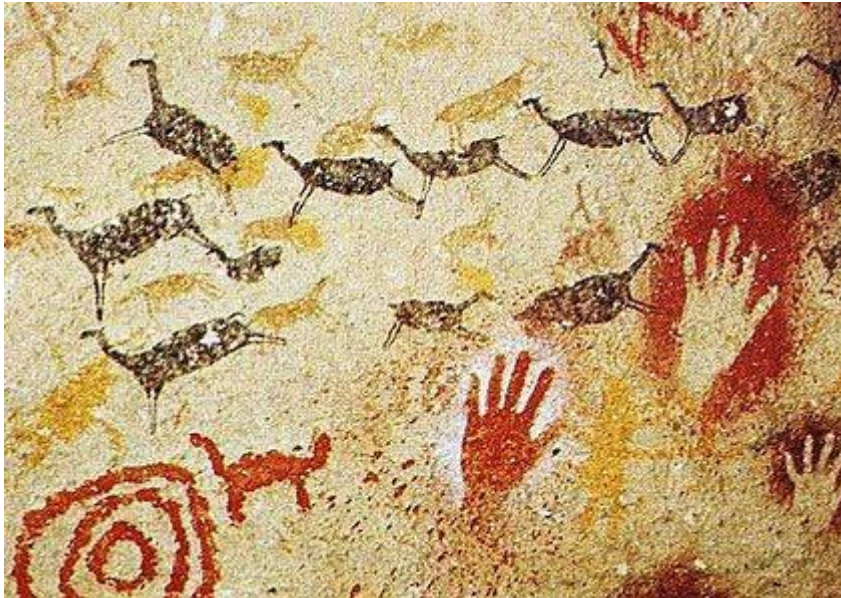


Image 1. Source: <http://michjmnz55.wixsite.com/historiaa/comunicacin-visual-en-la-prehistoria->

Besides colors and drawings, men have a variety of signs and modes that he uses to communicate like sound, signs, movement, etc. In order to understand the questions above mentioned, it is required to consider those semiotic resources which are part of the messages in the 21st century. It is possible then, to evidence that people are writing using more than letters, in fact, this is the least used resource when achieving a communicative aim. To name an example, in the advertisement people can see more image and color than letters. See image 2.



Image 2. Source: <https://www.coca-cola.com.co/es/home/>

As seen in the image 2, the letters of the advertisement take up a bit space comparing to the photograph. To understand this phenomena and the reason behind these alternative writing practices, there is a concept which deals with the comprehension of the function and use of every resource: multimodality. This helps teachers to analyze the literacy practices humans have, in order to move on from the traditional conceptions people have about communication to an updated one.

Multimodality then, is a concept that embraces different forms of communication, but also, in a broader sense, it includes “oral performance, artistic, linguistic, digital, electronic, graphic (...)” (Pahl & Rowsell, 2006, p. 6) means in order to create a message. Every resource has a function, as Kress (2010) argued, for instance, an image can simplify a long written text or colors can highlight important details. Each resource does a semiotic work and provides meaning to human communication.

According to this, multimodality enriches the way we conceive communication (Álvarez, 2016) and mainly, literacy. Likewise, it is important to consider why it is important to think about multimodality today, since it is reasonable to state that it has been part of the human language nature; so what does education wonder about the semiotic resources of today’s messages for? This is a determining question when thinking how to lead the students to contextualized communicative situations in the classroom, since their surrounding are composed of those semiotic resources.

Taking that into account, it is essential to understand, first of all, that the communication landscape has changed over the years. Now, people have many resources to make meaning because of the globalization process, that has brought a lot of shifts in terms of technology, culture, politics, economy and so on (Álvarez, 2016). This has caused that human being count with more than one or two resources to read and write. Currently, the appearance of ICT (information and communication technology) allows people to mediate their meaning-making with digital devices which make communication even more multimodal.

In that way, when doing tasks in the classroom mediated with ICT that include, inter alia, the use of videogames, the design of websites and e-dialogues; it is possible to foster creativity (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996) and also, it helps people to find and build knowledge in a complex way, based on the understanding of images, acronyms, icons, symbols, that at the same guide them “to shape and express their learning” (Luke, 2003, p. 400).

Under this sight, education must reflect about the student’s and teacher’s realities, which are –in this age- digital environments. For this purpose, English teachers have to comprehend and integrate into their teaching practices concepts like literacy (non-traditional reading and writing forms), multimodality (meaning-making through the use of a wide range of semiotic resources) and ICT (tools and means to process and share information) in order to take into account the student’s contexts and identities, so it would be possible to prior meaningful learning in the classroom.

As a final consideration for this first part, when talking about the importance of multimodality, it must be stated that it mainly deals with communication which is an aspect that is present in every human field; with the concept of literacy –a non-traditional way to understand reading and writing (Mora, 2014)-; and ICT, since this favors the multimodal communication. Those three concepts benefit the comprehension of multimodality as an English teaching and learning strategy that is going to be expanded below.

## CHAPTER II

### MULTIMODALITY AS A TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGY FOR ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE: THE MEANING-MAKING PROCESS

When thinking of second language learning there are many aspects to consider about. One of them is that L2 demands the learner to develop and find strategies (cognitive, metacognitive or motivational) which help him in the process. That is the reason why, this part of the chapter is mainly concerned about approaching multimodality as a strategy and how students and teachers can bear it in the process of teaching and learning English as a second language. For this purpose, first of all, it will be clarified how the concept of strategy is defined; secondly, how multimodality as a strategy works which discuss two main elements: an approximation to the concept of multimodality and the steps a learner and teacher have to follow.

The concept of strategy in the field of language learning has been explored, approximately, from the 70s, when some scholars such as Rubin (1975), Stern (1975), Hosenfeld (1976) or Naiman et al. (1978) questioned the role of a good learner in the process of L2 (Griffiths & Oxford, 2014). As a consequence of those studies, it was argued that a good learner is the one who develops strategies and monitors his learning and educative process.

Language learning strategies then, started to have a growing interest which has extended until the current age. However, the concept of strategy in L2 is still an idea hard to grasp, especially in countries with low competence in second languages, such as Colombia. In this sense, a language learning strategy is defined by Chamot (2004), as the conscious decisions, actions and procedures taken to accomplish a learning objective or task. This is part of cognitive and metacognitive processes that learners and teachers pass through, in order to mediate with teaching and learning practices.

To have a strategy for teaching and learning a second language, provides more meaningful practices, since that favors not only metacognition, as mentioned before, but also “ (...) cognitive, social, and affective processes involved in language learning” (Chamot, 2005, p. 112). In addition, it would help teachers and learners to success their language goals. At this point, it is reasonable to state that developing strategies for L2 plays a vital role when becoming competent in a specific language. Thus, teachers should guide learners to focus on what happens in the process of learning a language, rather than focus on learning the language as an isolated event (Anderson, 2002).

However, to develop strategies for second language depends also on many aspects like the recognition of strengths and drawbacks; unfortunately, the research on L2

strategies (Chamot, Barnhardt, El-Dinary & Robbins, 1999; Cohen, 1998; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990, 2011; Hsiao & Oxford, 2002; Rubin, 1981; Wenden, 1991; O'Malley et al. 1985) have paid more attention to describe and categorize the strategies (cognitive, affective, sociocultural-interactive, metastrategies, among other classifications) more than on how, through a strategy, a learner can achieve his goals and attend his needs .

As mentioned above, it is fundamental to take into account that a strategy is mainly susceptible to the context and the personal interest of the learner (Chamot, 2005). Accordingly, this part of the chapter focus on the concept of multimodality as a strategy for L2, since it helps not only to reflect about those characteristics (conscious decisions, interests and context) but also to stress the necessity of thinking about learning and teaching objectives in order to strengthen both processes. Bearing this in mind, multimodality as a strategy is based on student's needs, styles and learning objectives.

How multimodality as a for English as a teaching and learning strategy works

By a way of introduction, the concept of multimodality has been studied in the field of social semiotics since the 80's. It was the result of a change there was in the conception of discourse analysis, for it was mainly focused on talk and interaction (as seen in the research of Coulthard, 1977; Berry, 1981; Tannen, 1984) or text grammar (as seen in the research of Halliday and Hasan, 1976) which means cohesion when writing. However, from late 80's, the discourse analysis started to be interested in the study of semiotic resources, such as sound, visual representation, art, and many others (Ledema, 2003). That began to have importance thanks to the work of many scholars such as Van Leeuwen, 1984; Van Leeuwen, 1999; Hodge and Kress, 1988; Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1990; among others.

As a consequence of those changes, the social semiotics research led to develop the concept of multimodality (Kress, 2000; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001) which is based on the comprehension of communication from the study of the modes or the semiotic resources it has. This is the starting point when proposing multimodality as a strategy for second language learning and teaching, because in the moment that a learner is given a multimodal input or has to give an output, he must get through cognitive and metacognitive processes to comprehend the function of every resource in order to achieve a task or perform a communicative situation.

Regarding to those processes, teachers and students have to make decisions and take different actions that allow them to get to produce, understand and also integrates the modes a message can have. In the multimodality theory that is known as meaning-making. This concept refers to the way humans create and design meaning with the language codes they have, which have been mentioned before as semiotic resources. In this sense, a semiotic resource is a key idea when talking about meaning-making.

To understand meaning-making a bit better, it must be cleared what a resource is. For that matter, in the study of a semiotic resource, Halliday (1978) stated that language grammar is not only dealing with the correct use of rules to communicate in a certain language, but it is closely related to the resources there are in communication to make meaning. In this sense, according to Theo Van Leeuwen (2005) “semiotics resources are signifiers, observable actions and objects that have been drawn into the domain of social communication” (p. 4). From this perspective, a semiotic resource has a meaning potential which is given by the users, according to their specific necessities; or by the local context.

Therefore, to develop multimodality as a strategy for the teaching and learning processes implies to make sense of communication through the understanding of the meaning and function each semiotic resource has. For this purpose, teachers and students must first be aware of some common modes which play a vital role in the multimodal communication, such as images, music, written text, movement, transitions, color and gestures.

Over the last years, those modes have been approached and studied, in order to provide meaningful learning and teaching experiences within the field of second languages processes. In this sense, some research (Kress, 2000; Kress, 2010; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2002; Hamilton, 2000; Halliday, 1978; Jewitt, 2005; Jewitt & Oyama, 2001; Liu, 2013; Aldemar, 2016; Ajayi, 2009; Serafini, 2011; Jekosch, 2004) have analyzed the meanings and functions they can have; understanding those meanings and functions is the first action a learner must take in order to apply multimodality as a strategy. Concerning to some modes, the meanings, functions and potentials, according to those scholars are shown as follows:

**Image:** this mode usually expresses messages that are complex and longer in the written word. Consequently it helps texts to create coherence and cohesion. It establishes a connection between text and meaning (as Kress, 2000 argues “there is a semantic trade” (p. 339) among the other two modes –speech and text- summarized in an image). It has been also demonstrated that images as semiotic resources have a narrow link with culture; they are charged with values, interests and identities, whether individual or group. This is an identifiable fact, for instance, in pictures or photographs chosen to create advertisement; every banner, billboard, magazine announcement, TV commercial and so on, shows their local culture, in order to impact or have more significant messages among people. It is also what happens in the teaching and learning experiences. When students and teachers create or receive multimodal texts, they bring through images their cultural particularities, which help them to make more sense of their knowledge.

**Color:** overall, it is possible to say that color is used to highlight relevant elements of a message. To intensify those elements, it is important to think about what the characteristics of the colors such as tone, saturation, contrast or brightness are communicating. Moreover, Kress & Van Leeuwen (2002) in their article *Colour as a semiotic mode: notes for a grammar of colour*, presented a deeper understanding of the

functions of this semiotic resource. Firstly, color has a profound bond with groups (large or small) and personal identities. For instance, certain communities give each color a meaning which aims, somehow, to represent their particular interests and culture. As an illustration of this, it is known that each territory (whether a country, city, region, state or department) identifies itself with colors. In the case of Colombia, for example, there are three colors that represent the country and have different cultural values which communicate particular qualities of it; Yellow symbolizes the wealth of its land; blue represents as the sky as the many rivers and two oceans it has; and red commemorates the blood that Colombian people lost fighting for their freedom. So far, color as a semiotic result has the function of identify and communicate interests, for it is dependent of each context or person, so it is not used arbitrarily. Secondly, color has a close relation to the way humans feel (according to the work of Halliday, 1978) an interpersonal metafunction. It means that people use colors to express themselves in many fields. Some examples are the decisions people make about their dressing to attend certain events like business meetings, job interviews, weddings, night parties, among others. Finally, color also has a differentiation use, as it is observed in some text books in which every unit or module has a different color. Therefore, it helps to create text (or message) coherence and cohesion. To sum up, those three uses of colors as semiotic resources imply that in the meaning-making process, teachers and learners are exposed to many facts they have to analyze carefully to comprehend or integrate colors in multimodal communication.

Written text: this resource is the one that has more linguistic work (it means, it shapes some limitations the other modes might have) despite it is not the center of the meaning-making process (Jewitt, 2005). Generally, in a multimodal message, written text is used to express what it is harder to communicate with other modes like images, colors or sound (Kress, 2010); nonetheless, it has a close relation with them, since it is usually supported by those resources. That helps the text to be coherent and holistic. That interconnection among the written text and the other semiotic resources is helpful to create new literacy practices, becoming much more complex messages in terms of production and comprehension. As a result, language users get involved with cognitive and metacognitive processes and the language settings. Favoring association and encouraging people to represent their social and cultural world.

Sound: as a semiotic resource, Kress (2010) argues that it involves many different signs such as speech, music, soundtracks, drum languages or what is called whistle languages. Notably, that makes sound a code that demands to consider elements during the interpretation process like pitch, rhythm, intonation, timbre, volume, length, melody, harmony, and others. All of those qualities frame sound as a “communicative event” (Jekosch, 2004, p. 194), since it contains symbolic information that has to be decoded and it is especially connected to the world and culture that surround each person; that is the reason why sound is a sensory and emotional situation as well.



Motion and transition: these two resources are probably one of the benefits the 21st century new writing forms have. Thanks to the ICT and the huge development it has had during the last years, it is feasible to start moving from the traditional sense of writing, one mode made; to another one, screen-based. Digital devices have provided people the opportunity of communicating more multimodal messages, due to the possibility of using motion and transition as a semiotic resource. In this sense, these modes have a production and creation potentials that makes writing much more rich in terms of resources. But, the function of motion and transition go beyond what it was said before; when involving them in the communication process, the producer or the receiver of a message have to find out the meaning of every element (as length or speed) given.

Gestures: as it can be expected, gestures are inseparable from human communication, since it is certainly multisensory (Gogate, Bahrack, & Watson, 2000). On the basis of that, gestures are semiotic resources charged with information related mainly to culture. Hence, they vary depending on the context and they are useful for revealing specific and meaningful content (Roth, 2001) about a person or a group of people. On the other hand, gestures have a semiotic work that deals with extra features that result very helpful when communicating an idea (Winn & Snyder, 1996), since they are a essential to understand much better the meaning of a message. Besides, gestures also carry emotional states and feelings in order to locate communication in a metacognitive process.

The description of the previous semiotic resources, however, is not enough to comprehend the meaning-making process in order to develop multimodality as a teaching and learning strategy. Despite that, there are some aspects that can be concluded bearing each mode function in mind, such as: they are composed, at the same time, of signs and information related to culture, identity, emotion, cognition, metacognition and sensory perception. From this perspective, it can be addressed other main features involved in the comprehension process of the semiotic work of the resources, these will be developed below.

So far, meaning-making implies more than understanding each function mode in isolation. It is crucial to read between the lines, that means, to recognize “intersemiotic relationships” (Aldemar, 2016) which refers to the way the meaning of every resource is connected with the other modes and the multimodal text. These intersemiotic relations happen during the language users interaction that is when the semiotic choices have to be made (O'Halloran, 2011), but also when the resources are supporting, complementing and fitting one another.

At this point, it has been founded how multimodality can serve as a teaching and learning strategy for second languages. The steps to follow of the strategy are given thanks to the meaning-making process, as a brief summary, the actions that as teachers as students have to take are:

1. Find out the function of the different resources they are exposed to

2. Establish intersemiotic relationships, in other words, to “scrutinize” the semiotic system of a communicative message.
3. Integrate the semiotic resource to get a coherent and cohesive message

Thanks to these steps, teachers can help the learners to fulfill successfully multimodal communicative tasks.

#### Multimodality benefits for language teaching and learning

Having stated the previous basis, it can be declared that multimodality brings some benefits to language teaching and learning. One of those benefits relies on the link between language and culture. Second languages as a field of study reveals much research on that relation (Byram, 1989, 1997; Kramsch, 1998; Byram, Gribkova, & Starkey, 2002; Hinkel, 1999; Jiang, 2000) arguing that culture helps to frame social and cognitive thinking and that favors learning. Some scholars even affirm that it is impossible to learn languages without having the inclusion of the culture, because that is the primary mean to lead and build life, whether individual or social.

However, it has been demonstrated that, one of the issues Latin America countries, like Colombia, faces in term of second languages teaching and learning, relies on that language-culture relation. This means, the teaching and learning processes have given priority to foreign features, as the contexts and cultures in which the target language is spoken. So teachers have focused on exposing to the students, mainly, to English speaking countries contexts, such as United States, England, Australia, among others and have centered teaching and learning practices on them, causing descontextualized processes.

As a result of that issue, second languages teaching and learning started to be meaningless practices, since they became isolated from the student’s local culture and identity (Ramírez, Pamplón & Cota, 2012). This problematic has different implications; for instance, it decreases the interaction during a class, since the tasks do not attend to local needs nor interests; or students experiment a lack of motivation that affects their processes, since they are less able to establish associations with their real world that guide them to meaningful learning experiences.

Then, teaching and learning must be coherent with the learner surroundings, it means, contextualized. In general, the work of some authors like Baker, Hope & Karandjeff (2009a); Baker, Hope & Karandjeff (2009b); Berns & Erickson (2001); have concluded that “the best learning is that which can be used” (Baker, Hope & Karandjeff, 2009b, p. 7) and that it is important to have the students prepared to successfully perform in intercultural relationships and a multicultural world in which cultural diversity converges.

On account of the fact that the meaning-making process and its semiotic work is primarily associated with culture, there are grounds to believe that developing multimodality as a

strategy for L2 processes, offers the possibility of improving and changing those second language paradigms illustrated before. For this purpose, multimodality has the potential of providing diverse cultural experiences to students and teachers.

Ajayi (2009) support that advantage (cultural experiences) by stating that multimodality favors student's identities and perspectives, since they are demanded to use and interpret many modes and each of them are "intricately linked with the social, cognitive, cultural, and affective aspects of language learners" (p. 590). Consequently, multimodal classes helps teachers and students not only to integrate culture and have more contextualized practices, but also to define and know their own context.

Furthermore, multicultural classrooms carry other kind of benefits related to critical thinking. For instance, Ajayi (2008, 2009) propose teachers to engage students to analyze and interpret the social, cultural, political or ideological content of the multimodal production a language user can face inside or outside classrooms. Under this sight, it is reasonable to argue that multimodality also expands the traditional way of reading and comprehending texts and the world itself.

So far, it has been addressed three main advantages of multimodality as a strategy for L2 teaching and learning; they have to do, fundamentally, with contextualized practices, multiculturalism and critical thinking. Despite this, there are some other two, which are worth to be mentioned. One refers to the opportunity that multimodality has to favor audiovisual learning, taking into consideration that today's dynamics are specially mediated by digital environments and technologies. As a result of it, most of the communicative situations students are exposed to are screen-based (Jewitt, 2005).

The other one has to do with how ICT can be integrated to both processes, teaching and learning, thanks to multimodal tasks and performances. Nevertheless, it is important to think that the integration of the Information and communication technologies goes beyond using digital means or devices. It implies a conscious process in which technology involves learning goals and cognitive and metacognitive processes to achieve them. It is at this point, where multimodality helps ICT to make sense of digital devices in the educative practices.

There is another aspect that takes place when multimodality and technology work together for second languages teaching and learning. It has to be with the promotion of new forms of reading and writing. Since students and teachers can use easily different kind of semiotic resources, it is possible to go further than textbooks or one-mode texts, and access to non-traditional (text-text) forms of reading and writing that are built with diverse modes. Some examples can be observed in the design of videos, blogs, websites, and so on.

Digital multimodal tasks, students and teachers are involved in, are complex. This fact requires paying attention to semiotic resources like "alpha print, images, acronyms,

symbols, icons (...)" (Luke, 2003, p.400) which contribute learners and teachers to build their knowledge and express themselves. To sum up, using technology to read and write multimodal messages not only integrates ICT to the learning process, but also activates complex cognitive thinking.

The last advantage that will be shown is the way multimodality foster creativity and imagination. This statement is very related to the new ways of reading and writing previously shaped. Multimodality users and producers, besides interpreting the multimodal input they received, they have to go through a design process. Design, regarding to multimodality, has different implications. One of those is that creativeness plays a vital role when achieving the tasks or project aims, since due to it, it is possible for a learner to integrate modes more easily and find rapid solutions to issues he can tackle during the design process.

Bezemer & Kress (2008) refers to design as

(...) the (intermediary) process of giving shape to the interests, purposes, and intentions or the rethor in relation to the semiotic resources available for realizing/materializing these purposes as apt materials, complex signs, texts for the assumed characteristics of a specific audience. (p. 174)

Bearing that in mind, the user and producer (in the focus case of this chapter, teachers and students) when implementing multimodality as a strategy, are fostering their creativity thanks to all the factors they need not only to include, but learn to integrate coherently while designing a message or reading one.

Multimodality as a strategy, theoretically, carries a lot of benefits for L2 teaching and learning. It will depend on how teachers are prepared to mediate and design multimodal tasks, in order to get the students learn to go through all the factors that takes place in multimodal processes, such as what has been mentioned along this part of the chapter: meaning-making, cultural interpretation, semiotic work analysis, design, and others.

## CHAPTER III

### TEACHING EXPERIENCE

It has been deeply discussed some foundations to use multimodality to mediate second languages teaching and learning. Many of those were applied to a language course in a Colombian context, and it was possible to demonstrate multimodality as a strategy and evidence the previous benefits mentioned before. In 2016, it was developed a multimodal class project in an English course at a language center of a university in Medellin city. The students were taking the XI level of an English program for children and teenagers.

The project consisted of the design of an online newspaper in which students had to perform different tasks related to writing and oral production. The main task teenagers were asked to do was to look for the news, select relevant information and report them on their own writing. Once they had the text already done, they had to design the news, using the online editor Picmonkey. This was a weekly activity. Every class they reported orally the news they designed and received feedback from the teacher and their classmates, as for the written as for the oral production.

By the end of the course the students focused on creating an online website. To make it, they had to order the news per sections, they had to add transitions, music, images and think about the colors; the cohesion among resources, and other kind of aspects. When they finished, an oral presentation to the parents took place. One part of the final product is seen in image 3.

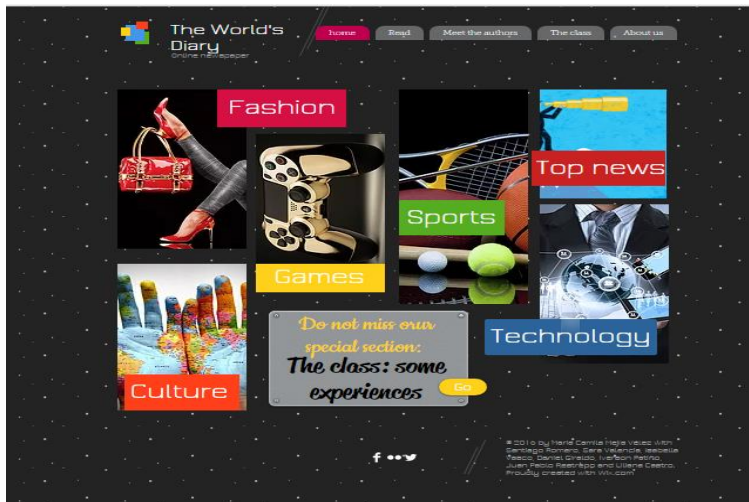


Image 3. Class project.

Thanks to this project it could be illustrated some of the considerations developed in this chapter. For instance, students showed they focus their attention to realities of their own context. In this case, they decided to design and write news about Colombian social and political issues that were happening at that time, as the dialogues of peace or Medellin's Flowers fair. It can be seen in image 4.

**Santos announce leadership for the campaigning of the plebiscite**

**The president Juan Manuel Santos invited to the leaders for talk about the plebiscite of peace. The reason of the leadership was talk about the agreements that the state of Colombia made with the Farc.**

**This leadership was made in Bucaramanga.**

**The leaders support the plebiscite of peace.**

**The president said to the leaders that is necessary know about the plebiscite and that is very important give some opinions about this.**

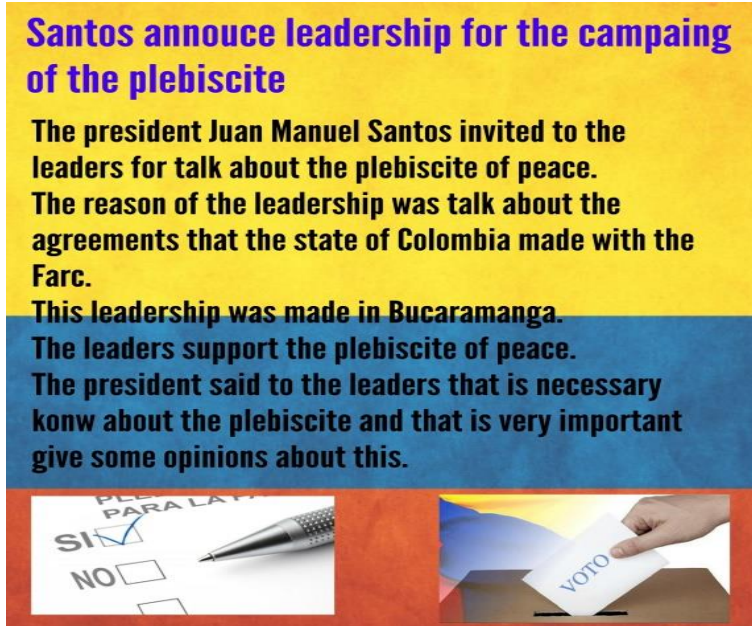


Image 4. Class production.

Students also brought to class their personal interests and identities. For instance, one of them decided to write about gaming, his main hobby, and talked about Pokemon Go once, since it was trendy at that time. Another student created news about one of his passions: sports. He wrote a text about his favorite team, Nacional, which had just won a continental tournament. See images 5 and 6.

**Nacional, the best of America**

the last July 27th Atletico Nacional defeated 1-0 to Independiente del Valle in the final of the copa libertadores. At the minute 8 Miguel Borja scored the only goal of the final and with this goal Nacional is the best of America. The team of Ecuador did a big tournament, this team was surprised in the final and in all moment in the tournament. this is the second occasion that Nacional win the copa libertadores, the last occasion was on 1989. The team of the coach Reinaldo Rueda think in the next international tournament that is the copa sudamericana and the world cup of teams on december in Japon, in that tournament Nacional is going to play to Real Madrid.

Image 5. Class production

**BE CAREFUL WITH POKEMON GO**

Curse with Pokemon Go. It's a new game for your mobile that is based on characters of video games as Pikachu and squirtle.

In these moment the game is very popular because it has many users in these same moments. Pokemon Go is the game that has more downloads in the United States leading Candy Crush. And in these moment the persons of United States are using Pokemon Go the double time than Facebook.

These game can cause damage, because combine the real world with the game.

Mike Schultz, broken his arm in the moment that he was in his plate and saw a police that broken his arm because in that moment that he saw the opportunity to break his state and he fall down.

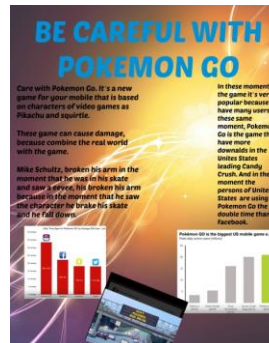


Image 6. Class production.

Despite of the English mistakes they might have, what is important here is how multimodality helped them to improve their communicative competence, following a process designed by the teacher, using a multimodal strategy. According to this, there are some aspects that arise from this project and worth to be highlighted. First of all, it was already state that this task allowed the students to have a contextualized learning and involved their personal likes and personalities. This was an advantage in terms of motivation and meaningful learning, since that guided them to establish connections with language aspects related to interaction; writing and oral production; and reading comprehension.

Moreover, once they included their own and context's realities, it was possible to debate around their news reporting and guide students to be critical and analytic through discussions and other communicative activities that were possible because of the multimodal texts they created. Secondly, feedback was more meaningful for them, because they were able to establish rapid associations and connections between the error and the news that were related to their local culture or likes. Then, the meaning they made was not easy to forget, students demonstrated during the course, a significant advance in their language proficiency.

Finally, the inclusion of ICT played a vital role in the development of the project. It was seen that students felt more motivated to achieve the goals and complete the learning actions thanks to the use of computers, internet, software editor, website design, among other tools and digital devices used to build the online newspaper. Their motivation was also a feature that contributes to foster autonomy and awareness of the learning process, so the teacher had only to fulfill a mediator role.

## CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER QUESTIONS.

From the literature review that has been carried out about multimodality, in order to propose it as a teaching and learning strategy for L2; it is possible to conclude that trends on the language field have changed dramatically because of the recent semiotic studies that have been exploring new forms of reading and writing. Literacy research demands to rethink the way English as a second language is taken to the learning process, that means teachers are asked by the nowadays dynamics to get prepared to design processes for audiovisual learners.

Bearing that in mind, the proposal of multimodality as a strategy can be readily used in practice, but only if – as Serafini (2011) says- teachers extent “their own understanding of a variety of perspectives, theories, and practices to comprehend [...] multimodal texts.” (p. 349). This way, teachers can lead their students not only to successfully make meaning and achieve the potential multimodality has for language teaching and learning; but also to improve their communicative competence.

However, further studies about multimodality are still required, mainly in a Colombian context where it is still difficult to get the educative system move from traditional conceptions of language teaching, to these new trends already said. For this, it is necessary to wonder how multimodality and non-traditional literacy practices can be included in the National Standards, guidelines and school curriculums. That is the first step to form students that be trained to face today’s realities.



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Image recovered from <http://michjmnz55.wixsite.com/historiaa/comunicacin-visual-en-la-prehistoria->

Image recovered from <https://www.coca-cola.com.co/es/home/>

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