Blogging: A multimodal perspective

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Introduction

Ubiquity of technology

New literacies

work, learn, play, communicate
Multimodality

- Spoken language
- Written language
- Static, moving images & music
Research questions

How do children make use of multimodality to add an additional layer of meanings in their journal entries?

What do the images and text mean to them?
Kress (2000) found that students used different kinds of representational resources, to write their Science report. When they were instructed to explain a plant cell that they had observed, they communicated their ideas visually and linguistically through the ‘orchestration of semiotic modes’ (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001) with each mode contributing to the overall meaning.
Literature review

Vincent (2006) found that children who are less proficient with verbal expression responded remarkably to multimodal work.

Guo, Azlinda & Tan (2011) claimed that when multimodal pedagogy was used, students applied their knowledge of meaning-making systems more effectively for an authentic audience.
Methodology

A case study approach was employed to “provide better bases for personal understanding of what is going on” (Stake, 1995)

- field notes
- textual analysis
- informal interviews
Participants

Three ten-year-old children who are studying in the same class

- low, middle and high proficiency group of pupils
- regular contributors to the journal entries
Theoretical framework

• Piercean model – visual representation
  → icon
  → index
  → symbol

• Barthes – image-text relation
  → anchorage (text elaborates the image)
  → relay (text & image are in complementary relationship)
  → illustration (image elaborates the text)
Research procedures

Objective

Expectations

Journal Topics
Weblink to pupils’ blogs

• [www.mylearningpod.org/2011bcps44](http://www.mylearningpod.org/2011bcps44)
Findings

Tree diagram drawn from analysis of the journal entries

"This is the person whom I'm blogging about," said Danny.

The gaze of the photographed participant, connect participant with viewer (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996)

'demand' (direct gaze)

'offer' 'Offers' the represented participant as items of info (van Leeuwen, 2005)

'metaphor' 'is like' rather than 'is' (Kress, 2010)

personal 'trademarks' to refer 'ripples' as 'friends', a cake as 'birthday celebration', 'mortar board and scrolls' as 'aspirations': indexicality is based on an act of judgement or inference (Hodge & Kress, 1998)

visual representation

'Symbol' favourite colours on solid objects to indicate 'a favourable day'

Traffic lights to refer to 'traffic jams'

'tension' with skyscrapers as background to denote the country, Singapore

Two fingers against a globe on the backdrop to show 'world peace'

Signs are always motivated by the producer's 'interest', and by the characteristics of the object (Kress, 1993:173)

image-text relation

'anchorage' use words, images of another somewhat similar objects, images which connotes another layer of meanings, to direct readers to a particular meaning. The words pick out one of the possible meanings of the image (Kress, 1993:173)

'relay' The text adds meaning and both text and image work together to convey intended meaning (van Leeuwen, 2005)

illustration use images as examples Images 'anchoring' text (Barthes, 1977)
Limitations & challenges

- Limited to static visual images.
- Guidelines to indicate their level of achievement in constructing meanings using various modes (Burke & Hammet, 2009)
- Teachers need to develop their professional capital on multimodality.
Implications for language teaching pedagogy

• Children should be taught to make semiotic choices that best fit their intended message.

• Guidelines to indicate their level of achievement in constructing meanings using various modes (Burke & Hammet, 2009)

• Teachers need to develop their professional capital on multimodality.
Conclusion

• Although children have a sense of semiotic awareness, they may or may not be explicitly expressed.

• Making meanings through multiple modes presents a need to redesign learning to allow everyone to cope with multimodality as a new form of literacy.
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Thank you