Coordonator Luiza Marinescu

Language and Literature:
Modernization and Modernity
Limbă şi literatură:
modernizare şi modernitate

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Coordonator Luiza Marinescu

Language and Literature: Modernization and Modernity
Limbă şi literatură: modernizare şi modernitate

*Colecţia aşezată sub genericul **Multilingvism şi culturi în dialog**, reprezintă o selecţie de lucrări semnificative pentru calitatea şi exigenţele activităţii ştiinţifice din Facultatea de Litere a Universităţii* Spiru Haret *şi din alte instituţii academice din ţară sau din afara ei. Autorii sunt distinşi academicieni, cercetători şi cadre didactice universitare din România şi din diferite alte zone ale Europei.*

Prezentăm în această colecţie aspecte actuale privitoare la multilingvism şi dialogul intercultural, care constituie unii dintre parametrii definitorii ai societăţii contemporane.

Diversitatea lingvistică şi culturală, precum şi multilingvismul sunt printre principalele valori ale Europei. Multilingvismul este considerat o punte de legătură între diferitele culturi, contribuind substanţial la dialogul intercultural. Se ştie că multilingvismul a funcţionat şi funcţionează ca o modalitate eficientă de interconectare a culturilor şi totodată este un mijloc de dialog cultural în accepţiunea cea mai largă a termenului. Comunicarea multilingvă şi dialogul între culturi aduc incontestabile servicii prosperităţii şi coeziunii naţiunilor din întregul spaţiu european.

Lucrările colecţiei de faţă propun o incursiune incitantă prin prisma unor cercetări riguroase în existenţa multilingvismului şi culturii în dialog, în diverse contexte ale societăţii. Ele sunt interpretări teoretico-aplicative ale fenomenelor lingvistice, culturale şi literare europene, franceze/francofone, engleze, germane, spaniole, portugheze, braziliene, româneşti şi basarabene moderne şi postmoderne din perspectiva multilingvismului şi interculturalităţii.

Colecţia îşi propune să ofere o abordare ştiinţifică şi analitică din punctul de vedere al lingvisticii, al literaturii, al culturii, istoriei şi civilizaţiei, al bilingvismului în contextul globalizării, cât şi al multilingvismului nativ şi instituţional, lăsând deschise cititorului reflecţia şi iniţiativa interpretării.

Conf. univ. dr. **Tamara CEBAN**

Coordonatorul Colecţiei
Multilingvism şi culturi în dialog

*The collection placed under the motto **Multilingualism and cultures in dialogue,** is a selection of significant works and demands for quality scientific work of the Faculty of Letters of Spiru Haret University and other academic institutions in the country or abroad. The authors are distinguished academicians, researchers and academics from Romania and from other parts of Europe. We present this collection current issues relating to multilingualism and intercultural dialogue, which are some of the defining parameters of contemporary society. Linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism are among the main values of Europe. Multilingualism is considered a bridge between different cultures, substantially contributing to intercultural dialogue. It is well known that multilingualism has worked and it works as an effective way of interconnection of cultures and also is a means of cultural dialogue in the broadest sense of the term. Multilingual communication and dialogue between cultures bring compelling services prosperity and cohesion of the entire European space nations. The collection aims to provide a scientific and analytical approach from the point of view of linguistics, literature, culture, history and civilization, globalization of bilingualism and multilingualism native and institutional, leaving open the reader's reflection and interpretation initiative.*

*Associate Professor **Tamara CEBAN***

CUPRINS – CONTENTS

EXPLORING THE SOCIAL NATURE OF MULTIMODAL TEXTS IN A LANGUAGE CLASSROOM USING TEXTS FROM INTERMÓN OXFAM

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Abstract

The main changes proposed by the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) in the last years and the increase of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) imply changes in the teaching-learning process at tertiary level. Consequently, the university classroom will take into consideration the importance of audiovisual culture in the XXI century in order to overcome the traditional forms of literary mainly based on written texts to develop multiliteracies in which the images, sounds and other semiotic resources are present in the classroom.

This paper intends to be an example of introducing multimodality at the University level. Students of the second year of the degree in English Studies at the University of Alicante were introduced to reading images by using authentic texts produced by the international NGO Intermón Oxfam in 2012. In this way, students learned to read multimodal texts in which images were very important in order to understand the meaning of the texts as a whole. Moreover, the nature of the texts under analysis helped students develop their critical thinking due to the fact that they portray the image of people from other cultures.

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1. Introduction

The creation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) has involved a major restructuring of university teaching so that students become active protagonists of their learning process and acquire a set of core competencies at the University for their incorporation into the labor market (Benito and Cruz, 2005; Bueno González and Nieto García, 2009; Martínez Lirola, 2007). Moreover, there have been profound changes in the field of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) recently. Thus, these changes have led to changes in modes of communication and also in the definition of 'literacy' [13] and its applications in educational contexts in the XXI century (Lemke, 2012; Livingstone, 2008; Merchant, 2009).

Consequently, the XXI century requires the development of new pedagogies and that the University becomes a customizable training and educational area to create competent, educated, responsible, reflective, critical and adaptable professionals. This implies a change from the 'teaching University' to the 'learning University' with the EHEA. In addition, there is also a change in emphasis from providing information (input) to the learning outcomes (output) (Ahmar and Mahmood, 2010; Torre Puente, 2008; Rué, 2007).

In this sense, the University has changed from being a place to acquire concepts to be a place where students acquire competences that will help them to be professionals ready for the demands of the labour market. Consequently, degrees must incorporate the acquisition of competences such as leadership, critical thinking, cooperation, etc. Using active methodologies is essential for the acquisition of the said competences. These methodologies highlight the exchange of ideas in the classroom thanks to students' engagement and their active participation in the

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[13] Literacy is the ability to use correctly the various skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing and interaction).

teaching-learning process (Ghaith, 2002; Johnson and Johnson, 1989; Johnson and Johnson, 2009; Johnson, Johnson and Smith, 2007).

The use of multimodal texts (i.e., those that use more than one mode of communication, for example, visuals, written texts, graphics, etc.) in the classroom requests the development of multiliteracies (Unsworth, 2001, 2008a, 2008b, 2010) so that students learn to read images and to observe how the different modes of communication combine. We decided to use multimodal texts from the NGO Intermón Oxfam[14] in order to observe the representation of other cultures. There are people whose contact with other cultures is just through the media (van Dijk 2009) and that is why these texts have power on the readers, as Martínez Lirola (2013: 196) states, „[t]he press has the power to transmit the said issues in one way or another, which invariably has an effect in the readers' ideology and opinion".

For this reason, the main objectives of this article are to introduce students to visual grammar (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006) and to observe the relationship between teaching with multimodal texts published by NGOs and the teaching of cultural aspects in the classroom. In other words, we intend to observe how people from the North and the South are represented in a sample of the magazines published by Intermón Oxfam. Our main research questions are the following: how can multimodal texts contribute to develop multiliteracies at tertiary level? and are cultural aspects introduced in the classroom by using texts produced by NGOs?

In addition, the main objectives of this paper are the following: to use texts produced by the NGO Intermón Oxfam to introduce social topics at tertiary level and to apply the basic principles of visual grammar and to observe the way people from the North and from the South appear represented in the texts under analysis; this will allow students to establish connections between texts and real life (O'Keeffe, McCarthy and Carter, 2007). In general, we intend to show that it is possible to portray people from the South in a positive way, without following the classical model of poverty, as Martín Nieto (2009: 5) makes clear: „The iconic collective imaginary of the Third World has been in the past by the image of communities ravaged by ethnic and armed conflict, natural disasters or

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[14] As of October 15, 2013, this NGO has been renamed Oxfam Intermón. For this research, we will continue calling it Intermón Oxfam because it is the name found in the journals analyzed.

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malnourished children. The abuse of these images in the media of developed countries creates a distorted picture of those developing as obvious causes of poverty and contributes to the promotion of stereotypes"[15].

The discourse produced by NGOs is important for mass media (Gómez Gil, 2005; González Luis, 2006) due to the news items they offer transmitting the reality of other cultures, especially of countries in the South. Analysing this discourse requests being critical in order to deconstruct the relationships of power between the different human beings represented (Escobar, 1995; Esteva, 2000; Viola, 2000). In this way students will improve their interpersonal competences and critical skills taking into consideration their individual characteristics.

After this introduction, this article has the following sections: the next section offers the theoretical framework of the paper; section 3 concentrates on the context, the participants in the study, the methodology used and the corpus selected. Section 4 offers a detailed analysis of two multimodal covers in which there are people from the North and from the South represented. Finally, the article finishes with a discussion and some conclusions.

2. Theoretical framework

The theory of multimodality has developed in recent years thanks to the work of Kress and van Leeuwen (2001, 2006), along with those of other authors (Baldry and Thibault, 2006; Bezemer and Jewett, 2010; Bowcher 2012, Jewitt 2009; Bowcher Royce and 2007, among others). The different elements composing multimodal texts have a purpose, a function in a given context (Baldry and Thibault, 2006; Martínez Lirola, 2010), i.e., they are designed the way they are and not another in order to achieve a specific goal, which varies depending on the communicative situation and its purpose. Consequently, they can be used to persuade, to convince, to give out information, etc. Each mode of communication is a semiotic resource that contributes to the development of meaning. In this sense, the image

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[15] Original quotation: "El imaginario icónico colectivo del Tercer Mundo ha pasado en épocas anteriores por la imagen de las comunidades asoladas por los conflictos étnicos y armados, los desastres naturales o por la infancia desnutrida. El abuso de estas imágenes en los medios de comunicación de los países desarrollados crea una imagen distorsionada de los que están en vías de desarrollo ya que obvia las causas de la pobreza y contribuye al fomento de los estereotipos" (Martín Nieto, 2009: 5).

plays a vital role in multimodal communication because its role is essential when it comes to capturing the attention of the audience (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006; Kress, 2010; Unsworth, 2010).

Studying the classroom as a context of multimodal learning allows us being aware of the potential that different modes of communication that are different from language have for learning, considering and comparing with the reading and writing of traditional texts printed on paper, (Bearne et al., 2007; Knox, 2008; Walsh, 2009), as Baldry and Thibault (2006: 21) make clear: „[…] multimodality refers to the diverse ways in which a number of distinct semiotic resource systems are both codeployed and co-contextualised in the making of a text-specific meaning".

3. Context, participants, methodology and corpus

The subject English Language III is a core subject taught in the degree English Studies at the University of Alicante; it is a six credit subject taught during the first semester. It is also offered as an optional subject for students of Arabic, French, Spanish and Catalan studies. For this reason the number of students registered in the subject in the academic year 2013-2014 was 140 divided in two groups of 70, whose level was heterogeneous. All students have passed English Language I and II in the first year and therefore their already have level B1. The students have to work with the five skills in order to obtain level B2 when they pass this subject and English Language IV in the second semester. Most of the students want to be teachers when they finish their degree.

As regards methodology, some basic notions of multimodality based on the model proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) were introduced so that students could write an essay based on the analysis of a multimodal text whose topic was social. In this way, new literacies were introduced into the classroom because students also had to prepare an oral presentation based on the social topic of the essay. Special attention was paid to the compositional metafunction so that students were able to analyse the information value, framing and salience of the multimodal texts under analysis.

We collected the publications of Intermón Oxfam called IO during 2012 and 2013 in order to observe the kind of news items that appear on them. Special attention was paid to the covers because this is the section that readers first see when they get the magazine. The magazine IO is published

once every three months and therefore, the number of magazines collected were eight (four in 2012 and four in 2013). At the end of the semester, i.e., in December 2013, once students had been introduced to visual grammar (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2008), they were divided in eight groups so that they could apply the main principles of visual grammar to the analysis of the cover of the magazine they had been given. Due to the limitations of this paper, we have selected only two texts out of the different covers selected. We will offer a detailed analysis of the cover and back cover of December 2012 because this is one of the few covers and back covers in which people of the North and from the South appear represented. In this sense, instead of talking about the discourse of development in general, we can observe the relationships between the North and the South that Intermón Oxfam shows. These texts are important to observe the similarities and differences in the way people from different cultures are represented, which is essential to analyse stereotypes.

4. Analysis: examples of multimodal analysis from Intermón Oxfam that contribute to critical thinking

This section offers a sample of the analysis that students registered in the subject English Language III of the degree in English Studies were able to do at the end of the semester. The analysis presented in the following paragraphs shows that students were able to apply the main principles of visual grammar introduced in the subject so that they could analyse basically texts in which images were very important in order to deconstruct their meaning. Moreover, choosing texts published by an internationally well-known NGO such as Intermón Oxfam gave students the opportunity of developing their critical thinking since the texts under analysis describe the situation of people from the North and the South. In this sense, the following texts are appropriate to introduce cultural aspects into the classroom and to observe the way Intermón Oxfam presents people from the North and the South and the way the North is portrayed as a consumer society (Barahona et al., 2013; Bauman, 2005).

4.1. Analysis of multimodal text 1

Cover n. 26. December 2012

Caption: © Pablo Tosco/IO.

The most prominent elements of this cover are the seven photographs that appear in it, located in the center of the page, which have been cut to create the word „Gracias" [16] , and the name of the publication, „Revista IO"[17]. In this issue, the NGO informs its members/readers on the various projects it has done during 2012. Thus, the organization aims to thank the people who, with various actions, have allowed complete its tasks.

At the top of the page we can find a series of headlines with a small size that deal with the content that the magazine is going to talk in this issue. In one of the headlines that appear at the top we read „Memoria 2011-2012. Qué hemos conseguido"[18].

This headline is one that seems to have more to do with the photos, because in this case we have not a caption to contextualize the images. Finally, at the bottom and centered so we can find the logo of the NGO.

In this case, the information value is difficult to unravel because the images have been cut out and we can barely see the context in which people have been portrayed. So, we are going to focus on how they have been represented. We can understand that the subjects portrayed in the images are partners or volunteers of the NGO in the North thanks to which it has been able to do its work. Thus, they have been individually photographed in close-up so that we can see their faces. Therefore the NGO put face and recognize the people who help it in its work. In this sense, we found that social distance established with the reader is nearby and also because individuals have been portrayed horizontally, on an equal footing. Also, the fact that everyone looks at the camera allows an interaction with the public.

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[16] "Thank you"

[17] "Magazine IO" (IO stands for Intermón Oxfam).

[18] "Bulletin 2011. What did we get".

The subjects have been portrayed to be seen but interact with the reader. In this case, we believe that the NGO identifies the people portrayed with the people who read the magazine: they have allowed it to continue its work in the South.

The only variation in the images that can be found is in the upper right image, where women have been portrayed represented a slight angle shot. Therefore, their image appears somewhat enlarged, but we believe that this is because it has been tried to portray the logo bearing on their t-shirts and collect part of the fund in which we can make out the word „Oxfam" and part of Trailwalker logo, the charity race that the NGO celebrates annually.

It seems interesting to note that in some cases (upper and lower right images) the people depicted appear wearing corporate NGO t-shirts. Thus, we find an identification between the North and the NGO. Also, we would like to emphasize that the man in the upper left image is placed in the context of an office, so that it refers directly to a stage that the reader easily associated with the West. Finally, we consider interesting to note that the number of men represented in the images is superior to women, six men and three women appear (if we consider the number of images women are only represented in two of them and men in five).

4.2. Analysis of multimodal text 2

Back cover n. 26. December 2012

The back cover of this issue follows the same structure as the cover and that is the reason why its analysis is interesting. In this case, the people portrayed are inhabitants of southern populations. The strategy that has been followed is similar to that employed in the multimodal text 1: close-ups that show the faces of the human beings represented; the horizontal representation makes possible that an equal footing is created with the reader; and the people represented face the camera so that they challenge the reader with their gaze. The only exception can be found in the image that forms the letter „I" where the person has been portrayed with a certain social distance and not looking at the camera. However, we note that, in this

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case, none of the people portrayed are wearing a t-shirt of the organization. Also in the top left image, we can find a man in an agricultural context, so that, if we compare this image with the found in the multimodal text 1 where we saw a man in an office, we can understand that the NGO creates a dichotomy between agriculture and Southern countries and contexts of office work and the North.

It is also interesting to note that if we opened the magazine so that we could see the front and back of the cover at the same time, the back would be to our left. Therefore, according to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), we realize that on the one hand, the NGO presents the fact of helping people in the South as known information; however, on the other hand, it emphasizes the new faces of the people who work with the NGO in the North by presenting them as new information. In this sense, we can understand that, while the organization thanks in the cover the people of the North for cooperating with Intermón Oxfam, on the back cover the said NGO thanks the people of the North on behalf of the people who have been helped in the South.

Another fact that should be kept in mind is that the number of men is higher than women in the cover. However, on the inside back cover, the situation is reversed: there are represented four women and three men. Thus, it could be inferred that women are in general more willing to receive help than men. Therefore, it could be understood that they assume a passive role while men, being those who offer help, play an active role.

5. Discussion and conclusions

Working with the texts presented in section 4 can be considered as a step in building an awareness of global citizenship. Moreover, the discussion around multimodal texts will also allow the development of critical skills among university students. Thus, these texts allow reveal the power relations that may be implicit in them paying attention to the different social actors represented. For example, even observing that the characteristics between people from the North and the South are similar in the multimodal texts analyzed in this article, we can also find that there are differences.

In this sense, there are more women than men represented in the back cover; on the contrary, there are more men in the cover. Consequently, it can contribute to victimize women in the South, considering them as the

beneficiaries of the development projects carried out by the NGO. Also, they, being portrayed as beneficiaries, acquire a passive role when the men of the North, who help them, become active agents. Similarly, several of the people represented in the North appear wearing NGO's t-shirts while none of the South appear wearing them. In this way, it is reinforced the dichotomy between the poor South and the solidarity of the North.

The two texts analysed offer a positive image of people from the North and the South. All the human beings represented interact with the audience because they look directly to the readers and there is just one face in each letter, with the exception of the people represented in letter A in the multimodal text 1, where there are two people.

There is no doubt that the texts selected contribute to the development of multiliteracies at tertiary level because students need to apply what they have learnt about visual grammar to the analysis of multimodal texts. Moreover, the texts selected from the magazine published by Intermón Oxfam are useful to introduce cultural aspects at the University because they present the reality of people from the South in contrast of that of citizens in the North.

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