CHAPTER 5

Exploring Multimodal Literacy in Language Teaching and Learning

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IN THIS CHAPTER, we present the research method we used to investigate multimodal literacy in an English-language classroom in a Norwegian lower secondary school. The analytic approach we present combines multimodal analysis with a design-oriented view on learning as a social meaning-making process. The analysis is applied in a small-scale qualitative study of multimodality and literacy in an English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom in Norway. In what follows, we present how we dealt with observations, interviews, and learning materials from work with the novel *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (Alexie, 2007) in a Year 10 classroom. In particular, this chapter aims to demonstrate the process from data to multimodal analysis and go behind the scenes of writing it up. Multimodality serves the double role as an object of study *and* an analytical approach.

Ingrid visited this classroom as part of her PhD research, and Elise, as one of her supervisors, followed her empirical work closely and took part in analyzing the material and in co-writing the journal article this chapter builds on. Hence, when Ingrid writes "I," she refers to her experiences in the classroom. Otherwise, we present ourselves as "we," referring to numerous discussions in our joint efforts to make sense of the processes observed and documented. The finished article, "A Design-Oriented Analysis of Multimodality in English as a Foreign Language" (Jakobsen & Tønnessen, 2018), was published in *Designs for Learning*, a Scandinavian open-access journal.

We start by tracing how the research idea began. An interest in images in texts used in English literature teaching led Ingrid to the seminal book *Reading Images* by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006). In this thorough introduction to multimodality, Kress and van Leeuwen point out that "most texts now involve a complex interplay of written text, images and other graphic or sound elements, designed as coherent . . . entities" (p. 17). They are quite uncompromising in their characterization of the consequences of overlooking multimodality as part of literacy:

> But the skill of producing multimodal texts of this kind, however central its role in contemporary society, is not taught in schools. To put this point harshly, in terms of this essential new communication ability, this new "visual literacy," institutional education, under the pressure of often reactionary political demands, produces illiterates. (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 17)

This same year, in 2006, a new national curriculum in Norway introduced multimodality as a main area of focus in the subject Norwegian (as first language/mother tongue). The curriculum referred to an expanded notion of text where writing, sound, and images work together in making meaning and gave a series of examples, including comics, advertising, web pages, and film (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2006). More generally, this curriculum has been coined a "literacy reform" (Berge, 2005), since basic skills such as reading, writing, and numeracy were highlighted across the curriculum. Hence, literacy and multimodality were regarded in this curriculum development as important characteristics that were connected explicitly for the mother tongue subject Norwegian but only implicitly in other subjects.

In *Reading Images*, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) present a metalanguage for exploring multimodal communication that also has inspired systematic exploration of other modes beyond images. This opened up my (Ingrid's) thinking about personal experiences as a student and, later, as a teacher. I felt that the English subject area was evidently multimodal in spite of the high status of written language in schools. I decided I wanted to know more about multimodality, and rumors that curriculum revisions in 2013 would bring multimodal texts into the English language subject—as mentioned earlier, already present in the Norwegian language subject—further motivated and spurred on my research project. After first contemplating a research design based on interventions, I decided that I could not attempt to change a practice that, in fact, was little researched from a multimodal point of view. I chose to begin, therefore, by asking, "What role does multimodality play in the English language subject area?" The Norwegian language subject curriculum employed a translated and slightly modified version of the expression "multimodal texts," and to maintain a wide scope, I decided to focus on multimodal literacy. Literacy is basic to education, "enabling individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in their community and wider

society" (UNESCO, 2004, p. 13). It not only involves texts but also includes the context in a way that not all approaches to textual analysis encompass to the same extent.

Multimodal Literacy

Our approach to literacy is inspired by perspectives commonly known as New Literacy Studies, resting on a basic understanding that literacy is a social practice (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Street, n.d.). This entails that our relations to texts—what they mean, how they can be used, and why one should bother about texts in the first place—are shaped and developed by the settings in which we live and learn. Another, and related, inspiration comes from The New London Group, an international group of scholars who met in New London (New Hampshire), in 1994, and produced a manifesto on the need for what they called "a pedagogy of multiliteracies" (New London Group, 1996, p. 60). The group's main argument was related to a changing context for literacy: In an increasingly globalized world, the normal state of affairs is multilingual and multicultural. At the same time, digital technologies change the way we communicate and the kind of texts we "read" and produce. One major change is through making modes other than writing, such as images and sound, available on the same technological platform. In this context, there is a need for a more diverse understanding of communication and meaning making. This is the rationale for introducing the plural term *multiliteracies* (New London Group, 1996, p. 64).

In search for a perspective that would be open to change and sensitive to practice, the New London Group introduced the term *design* in their metalanguage about literacy. One of the members, Gunther Kress, argues for design as a forward-looking concept in his book, *Literacy in the New Media Age*:

> Design does not ask "what was done before, how, for whom, with what?" Design asks, "what is needed now, in this one situation, with this configuration of purposes, aims, audience, *and with these resources*, and given *my* interests in this situation?" (Kress, 2003, p. 49, emphasis in original)

The New London Group sees design as a process where any literacy event makes use of *available design*. Examples may be not only semiotic resources such as the words and images we find in *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (Alexie, 2007) or technological resources made available on the computers all the students in the classroom we studied had access to but also conventions around the use of resources in a specific context. In the process of *designing* new meaning, the meaning-maker makes use of available design and transforms it for his or her purpose within a certain context. This results in the *redesigned*, a new meaning that more or less radically changes the patterns of meaning in use. In the next instance, the redesigned forms part of the available design

for future acts of meaning making. This ensures a dynamic view of literacy and how it constantly changes in a social context that itself is also always changing (New London Group, 1996).

This rather abstract metalanguage has been taken into the classroom in Staffan Selander and Gunther Kress's (2010) book, *Designs for Learning: A Multimodal Perspective* (our translation; a short account in English can be found in Kress & Selander, 2012). Here they distinguish between the teacher's design *for* learning and the students' design *in* learning. Design *for* learning on one (cultural) level includes plans and curricula, the practical organization of schools, textbooks and learning materials, and systems of evaluation and assessment. These norms, conventions, and preconditions frame the next level, which we are interested in: The activity in the classroom, which is designed in the teacher's lesson plan. Her choice of the literary text, of how to present it and her design of learning activities and tasks for the students, is all part of her design *for* learning. She is not, however, the only one to influence what is going on in the classroom. The students are offered what the teacher makes available in the classroom, but they make their own choices as to what they take in and how they answer the tasks given (or avoid answering them). In their act of design *in* learning, they transform the resources made available to them into knowledge they find interesting and relevant and, eventually, take away as new knowledge. We found this notion of design *for* and *in* learning interesting since it created a space for seeing the activities in the classroom from the perspective of the teacher and the learners, respectively. Selander and Kress (2010) include a third element that they call *signs of learning*. This is connected to assessment and involves what is valued and recognized as knowledge and learning in a particular context (Kress & Selander, 2012). What the teacher emphasizes in her assessment will at all times influence how and what the students choose to produce for assessment, and assessment affects both design *for* learning and design *in* learning.

Multimodal Studies of English in a Classroom Context

An often-referred-to classroom study is *English in Urban Classrooms: A Multimodal Perspective on Teaching and Learning* (Kress et al., 2005), conducted in the United Kingdom. In spite of the differences one must be aware of between English taught as a first language and English as a second or foreign language, there is plenty of inspiration to find in this study in terms of method as well as findings. The book reports from a large research project in which three English classrooms are analyzed from a range of different multimodal perspectives, such as classroom layout, displays on walls, voice, time, texts, and gaze and position in interaction, to name a few. In addition, the context, social aspects, and policy documents are taken into account in the analysis and discussion. The units of analysis vary from large teaching units to just a few seconds of classroom interaction in lessons. Among the findings is that English in school is in

transition "from being a subject that deals with values-as-meaning, into one in which meanings are becoming curricularized as knowledge" (Kress et al., 2005, p. 166). In terms of policy and education, this is a very interesting finding that deals with the overall question of what the English school subject (whether as a foreign language or not) is, can be, and ought to be. Another important aspect of the study is to show what a multimodal approach is able to accomplish. Findings from the studies in the book show that a multimodal perspective can uncover aspects that research on spoken or written language alone would not have done, such as how teachers adapt to the (perceived) ability of students without them stating this explicitly or how classroom wall displays shape learning, to give two examples.

Another important and inspiring publication is Jewitt's book (2006) *Technology, Literacy and Learning: A Multimodal Approach.* Jewitt poses important questions about how digital technology shapes education. Multimodal data collection, transcription, and analyses are at the heart of this study, and video observation is one of the methods used and discussed. Jewitt looks at pedagogy as design, and one of the aspects she examines is the use of CD-ROMs in English classes. She finds that digital technology does have an impact on pedagogic practices for both teachers and students and concludes that seeing both as designers of meaning can open things up for further pedagogic development.

Ethnographic Exploration: How It Looks in Practice

To find out more about the role of multimodality in EFL teaching in Norway, we decided to use an ethnographic approach and make observations of classroom practice. One reason behind this choice was the fact that we were looking at a phenomenon that is not explicitly embedded in the curriculum (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2013). We hypothesized that the lack of a common language and understanding of multimodal texts and multimodal literacy might render other research approaches, such as surveys or interviews, without attention to context difficult. After a pilot study (i.e., observation and interviews in a local school), Ingrid proceeded to collect data in two different schools. She observed two Year 10 classrooms (students at 15 to 16 years of age), which is the final year of obligatory education in Norway. We chose the second of these two classrooms as a case study for analysis in our published article, as it constituted a longer but still clearly delimited period of reading a novel in full. We elaborate on data collection in the next section.

Aiming to better understand the role of multimodality in the literacy practice of English in Norway, looking at lessons that were authentic, everyday lessons was important. The sampling of this school was purposeful in the sense that it was based on Ingrid's previous knowledge of the school and the teacher as being open to research but otherwise representative of the "common" that can be found in many places in Norway. The researcher stressed that the teacher was not to make any modifications or adapt anything

for the researcher but to continue with teaching as planned. The novel the teacher had chosen is in itself multimodal and contains so many drawings that it comes close to the genre of graphic novel. The unit plan extended over seven hour-long lessons including an introductory lecture by the teacher, silent individual reading, and activities such as writing a reading log and constructing and playing a Kahoot quiz about the novel. At the end of this unit, the students handed in a written product and took part in an oral conversation for assessment. This range of possible data well suited our multimodal analytic approach, which may be applied on different scales, from a large-scale view on the modes of communication in classroom interaction over time to zooming in at one particular text, such as a student assignment produced within this larger context. Indeed, for a satisfying empirical approach, I wanted to make sure my data covered both large and small-scale perspectives.

For the collection or construction of data, I decided to use observation, interviews, and artifact collection. First, a simple observation form guided my attention during my presence in the classroom, complemented with head-mounted cameras and one fixed camera that captured the whole classroom. There were two head-mounted cameras, and one boy and one girl were picked randomly among volunteers in the class to wear them during each lesson. Texts used and produced were also collected. All the students and their parents had given informed consent to participate, and the study was registered and approved by the relevant authorities. After the observation period, the students were interviewed, two at a time. As a prompt, the students were shown a still picture of the most prominent activity captured on film while they were wearing head cameras and were asked to describe and comment on the scene and what was taking place. We chose to audio record the interviews, rather than capture them on video, to make the situation more informal and to make the power-balance differential and affective filter as low as possible. Finally, when the observation period was finished, the teacher was also interviewed. She was given the interview questions beforehand to help her prepare, and the interview was conducted in Norwegian—again with the aim of leveling out a possible imbalance of power between this teacher and the researcher. As with the students, this interview was audio recorded.

Transcription and Handling Data

After observing the classroom through a period of 4 weeks, we ended up with a variety of data, as you often do in qualitative research. The data may seem overwhelming, especially when the approach is open (in new fields in which you may not know precisely what you are looking for). We applied an ethnographic approach to study one case in depth, which meant that we tried to gather as much information as possible about what was going on in the classroom during the period the class was reading *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (Alexie, 2007). A crucial moment in qualitative research

is when you are moving from collecting/constructing data into analyzing that data. Now it is time to turn back to the research questions and theoretical framework you started with. In some cases, it is also time to adjust the research question(s) because you now know more about what sorts of questions your material may be able to answer.

Transcription is not neutral, and the analysis inevitably starts with the way researchers handle their data material. We had an overall aim of examining what role multimodality plays in the English subject, and working toward more specific research questions, we started by mapping out our data. All our observation forms were coded in several cycles, first, looking at modes in play, then at the interplay between modes, and finally, by considering whether the observations could be characterized as prereading, while-reading, or postreading learning activities.

Planning to code the video recordings in a similar fashion as the observation forms, we watched all the recordings. Initially projected to be a central part of the data, it turned out the video material would rather serve as backing. Several episodes of interest could have been subjected to detailed multimodal analysis. We could have decided to take a close look at fragments of interaction in the classroom. Prompted by what we had seen from the observation forms, however, we decided to take a bird's-eye view on the video material, using it to support and expand the observation notes. The intention when entering the classroom was to learn more about the literacy practices they were engaging in, and by not going into depth on instances of interaction and keeping a larger perspective, we could say more about the design *for* and *in* learning (cf. Selander & Kress, 2010).

Next, the interviews were transcribed. Translation from Norwegian to English worked as a way of defamiliarizing the researcher from the context, as well as having the effect of making the researcher "taste" each word more carefully in the process. This was not an issue in the article but is worth keeping in mind for people who write and publish in a second language. The interviews were not coded. Rather, statements that could shed more light on the observations were highlighted. So were statements that "stood out." Generally, the interviews were important in how they allowed access to the thinking behind the spoken and written products of the students.

All the teaching material was collected, including the written assignments of students who consented to share their essays for research purposes. When we looked at these, we decided to go into depth and apply multimodal analysis to these essays. For one, the essays showed signs of learning that were more accessible than those from the video recordings. Moreover, we observed that some of the students had decided to use images, a mode not required by the teacher but one that the medium of the computer made available to them and that they chose to use. This incongruity kindled our interest. As with the observation forms, we approached the texts by tracing modes and interplay between modes. We looked at choice of image, positioning of image and writing in terms of layout, and the meaning communications of the multimodal ensembles.

After we had organized the observations, we could connect our interview material to the events we were particularly interested in studying. We had interviewed the

teacher about her design of the whole unit, and we had interviewed some of the students. Moreover, we had the students' explanations in their essays. This provided additional understanding of how the teacher and students, respectively, might have motivated their activities and literacy practices. For us, identifying tensions between the teacher's design *for* learning and the students' design *in* learning would be of interest to a discussion of the role multimodality plays in the language classroom.

Choosing the Analytical Focus

As mentioned earlier, we established early on that our theoretical framework was New Literacy Studies and that we wanted to view what we experienced in the classroom from a multimodal design-oriented perspective. The New Literacy Studies framework entails an understanding of literacy as a social practice, where the context in which you engage with texts, and the purpose for doing so, are fundamental for understanding what is going on. The design-oriented perspective made us aware that different agents were acting in this classroom and that the teacher and her students may have been driven by different interests and have had different understandings of what is going on.

In examining the data material and mapping it out as described earlier, it quickly emerged that multimodal practices played an integral role in this English classroom and that these practices were not the same from the teacher's and the students' points of view. This led to the following research questions: In what way does multimodality come into play, first, in the teacher's design for learning including her choice of learning materials and second, in the students' design in learning?

The teacher's design *for* learning could be studied from her lesson plans and supplemented by our observations of how it was executed in the classroom, as well as from her motivations and reflections expressed in her interview responses. We found the tasks she gave to her students particularly interesting from a design-oriented perspective because these could be studied in a direct connection to how the students actually responded to the tasks. Observing what the students *did* in response to the learning content presented and the tasks given by the teacher gave us a chance to study the students' design *in* learning. Because we wanted to study the multimodal literacy practices in this EFL classroom, we needed to take into account both what the teacher had meant to happen and what the students actually did.

Practices are not directly observable. Practices are patterns of behavior, habits, and ways of doing things that are established over time through repeated experiences with reading and writing, or making meaning from semiotic resources, as one would say within a multimodal framework. What *can* be observed are events in the classroom. We therefore found the terms *literacy practice* and *literacy event* (Barton & Hamilton, 2000) from New Literacy Studies useful as we approached our data analysis.

Analysis entails simplification to get a clear view of patterns in the material. To make sure this does not happen in a random way, we needed to find ways to organize and systematize our data. We decided to map out the literacy events we had observed in the classroom. As a working definition, we decided to call any activity that involved interactions with text (understood multimodally) a literacy event. Because events unfold in time, we anticipated that it could be useful to look into a time sequence that included pre- and postwork as well as the actual time spent with the text in question. In the classroom we observed, we encountered several texts. First and foremost was the literary text, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (Alexie, 2007), which was present during all 4 weeks of observation. In addition to this novel, there were other texts produced by the teacher as well as by the students. The teacher's unit plan expressed her designs *for* learning. It related to overarching documents such as the national curriculum with its aims and outcomes for the teaching of English on an institutional level. It also related to the novel and expressed the teacher's understanding of what it could afford for the teaching of English in her classroom. The students received the unit plan along with a copy of the novel, giving them an opportunity to prepare for working with the novel. Hence, the novel and the unit plan were texts on an overarching level, relevant all through the period we observed.

On a more detailed level, we found texts and activities limited to single lessons. The teacher's initial presentation of the novel and its author was densely multimodal, including meaning-making resources such as images, video, and written text in a digital presentation, which supplemented her oral discourse/lecture. An important text in her design for learning was the task she formulated for the students' written essays. These essays were one of the main textual contributions from the students' side, in which they could voice their responses to the novel. In addition, there was the oral conversation, or literature circle, about the novel, where the teacher and the students met in dialogue. The students also engaged in two other literacy events during their reading of the novel: They kept a written reading log, and they designed questions and answers for a Kahoot quiz they played in class.

Accordingly, based on the texts we had observed in the classroom, we could organize our observations into a series of literacy events, including agents and activities, as follows:

- Planning the sequence of lessons in a unit plan (teacher)
- Reading the novel (teacher and students)
- Presenting the novel and the author (production by teacher, reception by students)
- Writing a reading log (students individually)
- Designing questions and answers about the novel for a Kahoot quiz (students individually, assembled by the teacher)
- Playing Kahoot quiz (students collectively)

- Designing tasks for the students' written assignments (teacher)
- Writing the assignments (students individually)
- Oral conversation about the novel (teacher and students collectively)

During this sorting out of the material, it became clear that delineating a literacy event is not always straightforward. One question is where one event ends and the next one starts because events may overlap in different ways. We found that pre- and post-work with the text often linked to other literacy events. In fact, we found that literacy events often piggybacked on each other in a coherent didactic design, where one event may prepare for the next, as the preparation of questions and answers prepared for the common experience of playing Kahoot. In other cases, literacy events go on over time, intertwined with other events, as in the case of reading the novel and writing a log. Another challenge was that texts can appear in events on different levels. In our case, the most prominent example was the novel, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (Alexie, 2007), which was the object of study all through the sequence we studied. Thus, it was, in some sense, part of all the other events. To try to obtain an overview of events and levels, we constructed a model. It started with overlapping circles showing the different learning activities. Initially we used it as a thinking tool to outline the kinds of literacy events we had observed. Next, we found that using cogwheels allowed for a better representation of what we saw. The model shows, visually, how the events were connected and therefore dependent on each other (see Figure 5.1).

To face the challenge of levels we turned to theory again. Qualitative research (in contrast to quantitative research) is informed by theory all the way through. The theoretical framework is not just where you start when you design your project; it also guides your observations, your categorizations, your analysis, and your discussion. Jay Lemke, who has worked extensively with language in didactic contexts, has presented the notion of *time scales* as a tool to analyze different levels of activity and how they are connected. He starts one article with the intriguing question, "How do *moments* add up to *lives*?" (Lemke 2000, p. 273). In complex systems, the fundamental unit of analysis is a process, he claims, and in studies of people's meaning-making activities, these processes must be understood as part of a larger eco-social system (Lemke, 2000, p. 275). His example is from a science classroom, and his advice is to analyze scale hierarchies in groups of three levels at once (Lemke, 2000, p. 276). In a subsequent interview, Lemke explains that

> the model is essentially a "sandwich" with three levels in which you put whatever level you are interested in in the middle, and then you look at least one level above it, meaning longer than it, and one level below, meaning shorter than it. The meanings that you make or the actions and activities you do that typically take place at the level in focus, are themselves organizations out of smaller activities and actions or units of words or sentences below, and they are subject to the constraints and affordances of the longer

term activities that are going on at the time. (Lemke, in Andersen, Boeriis, Maagerø, & Tønnessen, 2015, p. 124)

This model helped us stay true to the understanding that literacy events must always be understood in a greater context, and it helped us distinguish the processes (literacy events) we had observed as different levels of activity.

Activity scale 1: *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* taken into the classroom as a didactic text (wheel 1).

Activity scale 2:
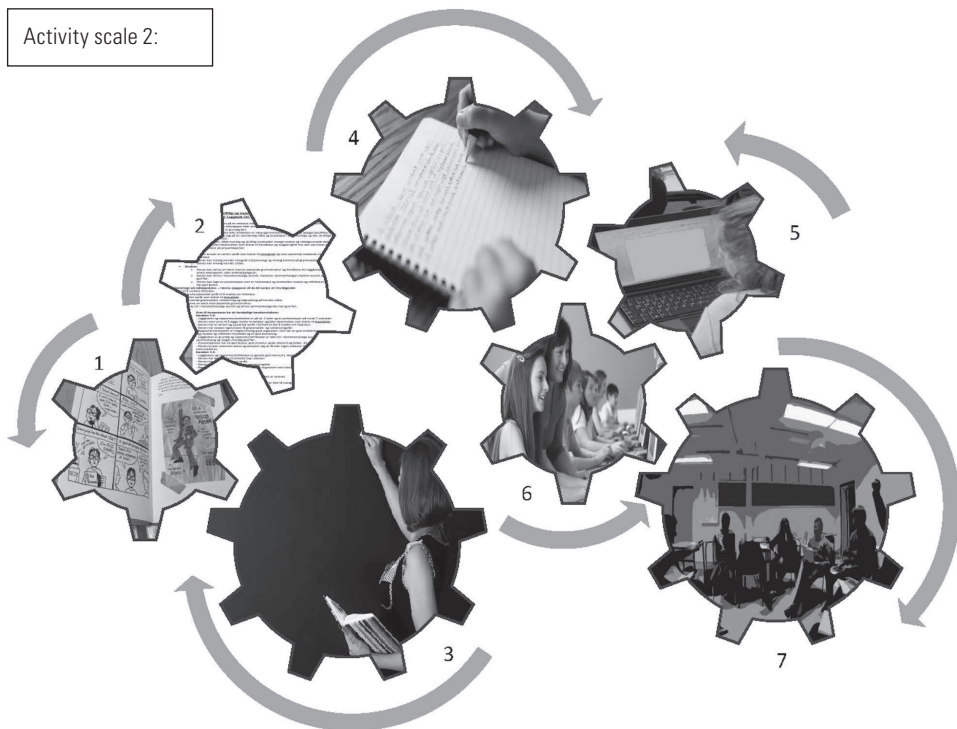
Activity scale 3: The written assignment (wheel 5)

Figure 5.1: Cogwheel model of the sequence of literacy events

Source: From Jakobsen and Tønnessen (2018, p. 45).

Note: In Activity Scale 2, the numbers represent the following: (1) the novel, (2) the lesson plan and assignment, (3) the teacher's lecture, (4) the student logs, (5) creating the written assignment, (6) the interaction when the teacher helps the students with their written assignments, and (7) the conversation in a circle.

The weakness of the model we ended up with is that it is not straightforward; it must be studied to be understood. The strength of the model is (hopefully) that it quickly conveys the idea that past learning is affected by new learning, that is, it emphasizes the dynamic character of learning that never ends. Moreover, the model contains the idea that students in their design *in* learning will turn the wheels in their own personal manner; they will respond according to their interest. By bringing in time scales, we felt the model became even more precise, although the playfulness of the design was toned down. In the end, as our model developed, we decided to use it as an illustration of our thinking in the article we published (see Jakobsen & Tønnessen, 2018). We now turn to the part of the process of writing up our study.

Making Sense of the Analytic Results

The main findings in our study were that the teacher used varied multimodal designs to stimulate her students' motivation, understanding, and learning, and we found that she regarded these as valuable teaching tools. We also saw that the basis for assessment were linguistic products: writing and speaking. In other words, we found that the students were given a more limited range of modes for producing texts than the assortment of modes they were offered during the learning process. Many students, however, included images and placed them purposefully in their essays without being asked to. We concluded that the students and the teacher adhere to different cultural patterns in their social semiotic formations (Lemke, 2000). Images and multimodal ensembles are regarded differently in the literacy practices in designs *for* learning and in designs *in* learning.

In writing up the study we structured our analysis according to the model we had made, that is, in three sections to match the three time scales. First, we needed to present the novel itself and the affordances it carried for English teaching in a multimodal setting. Second, we analyzed the sequence of lessons and how they could be seen as representing the literacy practices of the EFL classroom seen from the perspective of the teacher and students, respectively. Third, for the shortest time scale, we selected the written assignment for more detailed analysis. One reason for this latter choice was that this activity represented a meeting point between the teacher's design *for* learning and the students' design *in* learning. Another was our previous knowledge of the school culture we were studying. We knew from previous research (e.g., Løvland, 2006, 2011) that Norwegian school culture tends to value written language in the sense that written texts are seen as particularly apt for conveying knowledge in both textbooks and student work. Within this cultural view of the world, teachers give their grades based on written work, and sometimes also on oral presentations, when the subject content is language learning. All the other things that are going on in the classroom—speaking, singing, drawing, gesturing, dramatizing and moving around, and so on—may be encouraged

as supporting activities, but they are rarely considered part of the basis for assessment (Løvland, 2006). In this study, we wanted to find out how the multimodal ensemble functioned in the language classroom, and we anticipated that the teacher and the students might have different takes on that matter. This was why we decided to focus on the activity where the teacher's textual practice met the students' practices.

Multimodal Analysis of Students' Essays

We included copies of four selected student essays in the published article to show the layout and positioning of images. We reproduced them as blurred facsimiles to protect privacy. Three essays were on the topic of image and included the images they discussed. In addition, we chose to include a student essay (written by Julie) that was not about images but nonetheless used images to communicate multimodally. Our analysis of Julie's text can serve as an illustration of how a multimodal perspective on texts can give insights that go beyond what a text-focused analysis or evaluation shows. We interpret Julie's multimodal text as displaying an acute understanding of the novel, as well as complex communicative skills, despite some language slips. By highlighting the communicative competence that a multimodal approach to an essay can reveal, we wanted to exemplify what a multimodal approach to EFL can do.

In our article, the main focus was on the time scale of multimodal literacy practices in the classroom. In this chapter, we go more into depth in our analysis of Julie's understanding of the novel and her communicative skills.

In her introduction to multimodal analysis, Carey Jewitt (2014) refers to the linguist, M. A. K. Halliday, who saw language as realizing three metafunctions or types of meaning: *ideational* meaning representing our experiences in and of the world, *interpersonal* meaning about social relations between text and reader and within the text, and *textual* meaning, which organizes the text into a coherent whole (Jewitt, 2014, p. 25). In a multimodal text, the meaning comes forth as an interplay between the semiotic resources involved. In a school context, the most common combination is verbal language and images, which we find in textbooks, in the novel our students read, and in many of the students' written work. Both modes offer affordances for communicating meaning, and the way they are combined in the layout may extend and elaborate the meanings made by each mode (van Leeuwen, 2005, p. 230).

In Julie's book report (see Figure 5.2) images and words are combined to coherent *textual* meaning in a page design where the images are anchored or specified (van Leeuwen, 2005, p. 30; see also Barthes, 1977) by titles and captions. The book cover is inserted between the two text lines of the title, both representing the novel and introducing to the reader what the text is about. The drawing taken from the book accompanies Julie's cliffhanger question: "Will they ever be friends again? Or will Rowdy hate Arnold forever?" Finally, the image of the author is specified with the caption: "The book is written by Sherman Alexie." In this manner, Julie's written text is surrounded by elements

expected in a book report: an introduction of the book and a reference to the author. We observe how her multimodal composition realizes the *textual* metafunction by creating coherence through such resources as *size* and *color* highlighting the title and book cover (both in matching green) as the visually most salient elements and connecting verbal and visual meaning through proximity.

Making the book itself prominent through layout allows Julie to proceed directly to what she finds most central in the novel on page 2, where she presents main plot points and central characters in her verbal text. Initially, she presents Arnold as the main character and guides the reader through plot points that she finds interesting. This is first summed up as "a lot of pain" and "some ups too" before more details are given: a potential love affair, friendship, deaths in Arnold's family, his father's problems with alcohol, bullying, health problems, and artistic aspirations. Central characters are mentioned: Arnold, Penelope, Arnold's best friend Rowdy, and Arnold's father. In a few sentences, Julie shows that she understands the two most prominent *ideational* dimensions of narrative fiction: events and characters (Chatman, 1978, p. 26). She also shows some sense
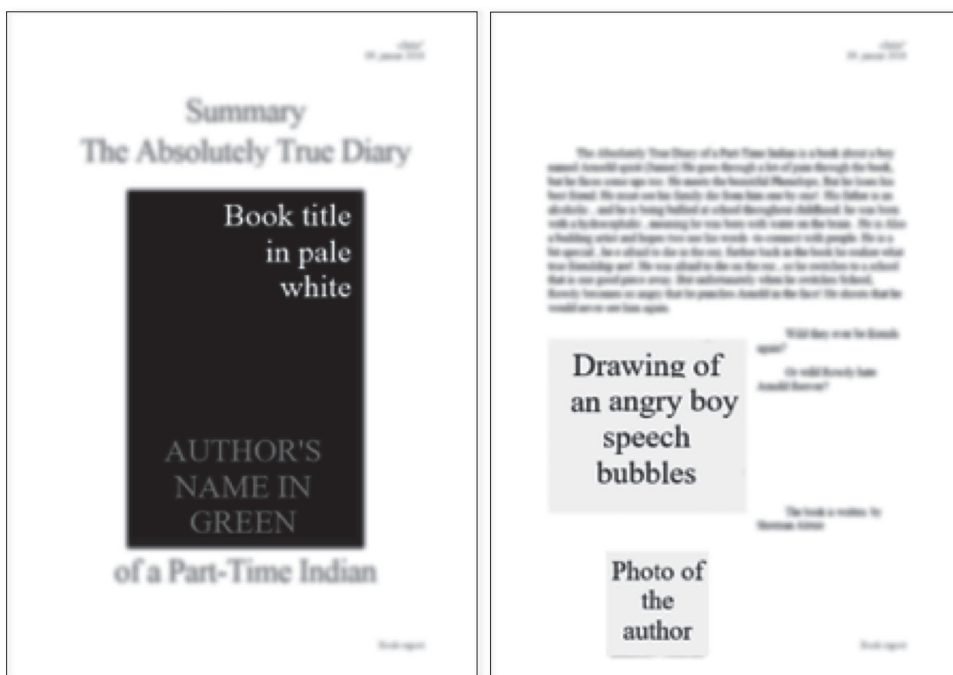

Figure 5.2: Modified pages of Julie's essay text

Note: This figure illustrates the placement of image and writing in Julie's layout. The original images are modified to prevent copyright infringement. Furthermore, Julie's text is blurred to the point of illegibility in accordance with the terms for consent to research.

Data Analysis, Interpretation, and Theory in Literacy Studies Research : A How-To Guide, edited by Michele Knobel, et al., Myers Education Press,
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of dramaturgy, leading her summary up to the central plot point where Arnold and Rowdy fall out and leaving the reader to wonder about how the conflict may be resolved. This dramaturgic peak is made even stronger because the situation is represented both verbally and visually, highlighted as a separate meaning cluster in the layout.

The *interpersonal* metafunction concerns the relations created both within the text and between text and reader. The relationships that Julie presents are of a kind that will be familiar to young readers: family, best friend, (potential) girlfriend, and schoolmates. This creates a relation of recognition for the reader. Julie's choice of images strengthens the interpersonal message. Both the image of Rowdy and the image of the author show an individual who looks directly at the viewer, calling for involvement.

Seeing Julie's book report as the result of a design process in the classroom makes asking what available design she has included and how she has recontextualized it in her redesign to create a new text interesting. She has combined the available design from the novel and that of the teacher's introductory lecture about Sherman Alexie with her own words in a text that responds to the task set by the teacher (i.e., to write a book report). Seeing genres as available design, Julie may know book reviews from other contexts. In the classroom, it is mainly an analytical genre expressed verbally, but it also resembles book reviews that Julie may know from newspapers, magazines, or web pages. The convention of presenting the book through an image of the cover may come from these kinds of contexts. So may the structure of the verbal text, which emphasizes presenting the plot without revealing the resolution of the conflict. This combination of available designs from contexts in and out of school may explain why Julie's text functions as an appetizer rather than an analysis with a conclusion.

As we have seen, a multimodal analysis of Julie's text in context may reveal her cultural repertoires of resources for literacy practices and how they may differ from cultural patterns expected in a school context. The teacher may focus on verbal language in her assessment of the written work, but a multimodal analysis that takes the whole range of meaning-making resources into consideration will reveal a broader picture of the potentials and shortcomings of Julie's literacy practices in the reception as well as the production of texts.

Ending up with an analysis of a fairly traditional writing task may seem a quite narrow outcome from the very rich material we generated across 4 weeks of observation. We could have made other choices, as discussed later. However, we find that an important point in our case study became to view this activity in light of the other levels of analysis: the choice of text and the design of lesson plans. In our context of teaching EFL, we also realized that the modes of written and spoken language were vital, in spite of our interest in multimodal communication. This understanding was rooted in curriculum documents at yet another level of context. At this point, we started getting a bigger picture of a complex interwoven structure of literacy events taking place within a school context ultimately governed and controlled by political documents.

The teacher, who follows curriculum guidelines, is a creative and highly skilled professional. Consequently, in our writing up for the article, it was important to clarify that our conclusion—namely, there is a multimodal potential, so to speak, that is not taken advantage of in this EFL classroom—is not a criticism of the teacher. Instead, our conclusion leads to a criticism of the policy documents that operate on the larger time scale and that emphasize written and spoken language as the significant signs of learning outcomes.

Concluding Reflections

What else could we have done with all the data our explorations generated? We could have focused on other literacy events, such as the teacher's introductory presentation or the students' oral activities, documented in detail with video cameras attached to the students' heads. The head-worn cameras show what the students looked at or in the direction of, and this gives a unique perspective on the interaction in the classroom with texts and with people. Another interesting perspective could be on the Kahoot quiz and how technological resources made the students collective designers of this learning activity. Alternatively, we could have chosen a more clear-cut perspective, viewing the classroom practices from either the teacher's or the students' vantage points. The students' perspective could, for instance, focus on their reception of the novel and how the images may have influenced their interpretation and supported their linguistic understanding. Indeed, the rich and varied data resulting from an empirical approach, all contributing to the understanding of multimodal communication in the EFL classroom, can be seen from several perspectives. On one hand, this requires critical reflections on the findings written out, compared to what might have appeared from a different perspective. On the other hand, it may be seen as part of the never-ending story of research, where every finding leads to new questions to explore.

Our findings contribute, on a general level, to the intersecting fields of literacy studies, multimodal studies, and educational studies. What we observed is similar to the conclusions of other studies both in Norway and internationally, in which teaching and learning activities include several modes in interaction, but the learning outcome is measured by written and spoken production. There is very little research on multimodality and EFL in Norway, and our article addresses this gap. We ended the article by calling for a change that would recognize multimodality in the curriculum. In this manner, we aimed to contribute to the level of policy development and, thereby, to changes in practices. Whether or not it is a response to our call, the latest curriculum revision (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2019), to be initiated from 2020, does bring in multimodal texts in English, and this time for production purposes, as well as for reading and learning.

Suggested Further Reading

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