Multiliteracies in the Classroom: The Formulaic Language of Comics

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Kress (2000):

- "TESOL professionals continue to act as though language fully represented the meanings they wish to encode and communicate" (p. 337). → "Are images there merely to entice the reader, to decorate, to please? Or do images now have full communicational roles?" (p. 337).
- "Language is no longer the carrier of all meaning" (p. 339).
- "The work of design: the intentional deployment of resources in specific configurations to implement the purposes of the designers" (p. 340).

The New London Group and the Theory and Pedagogy of Multiliteracies (1996)

Intercultural hermeneutics: Trying to understand discourses/texts in one's second language (L2)

English Language Learners/Multilingual Learners (ELLs/MLs) like comics: Challenges & complexity

ELLs/MLs as anthropologists → Multimodal social semiotics (Kress, 2010) → L2 cultural negotiation → The role of doubt → Intercultural personhood (Kim, 2008)

Comics in the classroom: What happens in the gutter?

Sequences and instructions: What is formulaic language?

The formulaic language *of* comics + The formulaic language *in* comics

- Idioms & vocabulary
- Phrasal verbs
- Conditionals and "wish" sentences
- Beyond lexis and grammar: ELLs/MLs as researchers
- Comics and history
- Comics and social change

Examples of multiliteracy-driven activities in the classroom (e.g., in a Communicative Language Teaching context):

Comics

1) Take a comic strip, cut it up, and have students rearrange the panels: What is happening here?
2) Remove one panel and have students add their own panel to the comic strip.
3) Read a story and have students draw a comic strip based on the narrative.
4) Expressivist writing: Students create their own comic books (e.g., based on their essays).
5) Discourse analysis: Manga, American comics, European comics, etc.

Going beyond comics

1) As a group, create a skit based on a comic strip or graphic novel that you have read.
2) Use Google Maps to walk around a US city. What ads and billboards do you see?
3) Narrate the process of putting a puzzle together (start with pictures, then add text).
4) Discuss theater in different cultures (e.g., kabuki vs. Chinese opera).
5) Write a script for a TV commercial.

References and recommended readings

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