

USE OF MULTIMODAL TOOLS IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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Artículo de Reflexión

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Teachers who teach English as a foreign language use various tools in their lessons in order to motivate their students; among them we can mention the use of videos, songs, video games, among others, that conjugate or interrelate the verbal with the nonverbal code to consolidate meanings and representations; therefore, these didactic materials are constituted as multimodal texts. This is why the present article reflects on the importance of incorporating these new formats of texts in the teaching of English as a foreign language. It is expected that this work will contribute to understand that greater use should be made of audiovisual media, and not only privilege the use of the language code, as long as it is clear how to use them to ensure a meaningful teaching-learning process.

Key words: teaching english, information and communication technologies (ICT), multimodal text, motivation, language learning.

USO DE HERRAMIENTAS MULTIMODALES EN LA ENSEÑANZA DEL INGLÉS COMO LENGUA EXTRANJERA

Resumen

Los profesores que enseñan inglés como lengua extranjera utilizan diversas herramientas en sus clases con la finalidad de motivar a sus estudiantes, entre ellas se pueden mencionar el uso de videos, canciones, videojuegos, entre otras, que conjugan o interrelacionan el código verbal con los no-verbales para consolidar significados y representaciones, por tanto, esos materiales didácticos se constituyen como textos multimodales. Es por ello que el presente artículo reflexiona sobre cuál es la importancia de la incorporación de esos nuevos formatos de textos en la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera. Se espera que este trabajo contribuya a entender que se debe hacer mayor uso de medios audiovisuales, y no privilegiar solamente el uso del código lingüístico, siempre y cuando se tenga en claro cómo utilizarlos en pro de asegurar un proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje significativo.

Palabras clave: enseñanza del inglés, tecnologías de la información y las comunicaciones (TIC), texto multimodal, motivación, aprendizaje del lenguaje.

USO DE FERRAMENTAS MULTIMODAIS NO ENSINO DE INGLÊS COMO LÍNGUA ESTRANGEIRA

Resumo

Os professores que ensinam o inglês como língua estrangeira usam várias ferramentas em suas aulas para motivar seus alunos, entre eles podemos mencionar o uso de vídeos, músicas, jogos, entre outros, que conjugam ou inter-relacionam o código verbal com o não-verbal para consolidar significados e representações, portanto, esses materiais didáticos são constituídos como textos multimodais. Espera-se que este trabalho contribua para a compreensão de que um maior uso de mídia audiovisual deve ser feito e não só privilegiar o uso do código linguístico, desde que seja claro como usá-los para garantir um processo de ensino-aprendizagem significativo.

Palavras-chave: ensino em inglês, tecnologias de informação e comunicação (TIC), texto multimodal, motivação, aprendizagem de línguas.

UTILISATION D'OUTILS MULTIMODAUX POUR ENSEIGNER L'ANGLAIS COMME LANGUE ÉTRANGÈRE

Résumé

Les professeurs qui enseignent l'anglais comme langue étrangère utilisent divers outils dans leurs cours afin de motiver leurs étudiants, parmi lesquels nous pouvons mentionner l'utilisation de vidéos, de chansons, de jeux vidéo, entre autres, qui conjuguent ou interrelient le code verbal et non-verbal pour consolider les significations et les représentations; ces matériaux didactiques sont donc constitués sous forme de textes multimodaux. C'est pourquoi le présent article reflète l'importance d'intégrer ces nouveaux formats de textes dans l'enseignement de l'anglais comme langue étrangère. On espère que ce travail contribuera à comprendre qu'une utilisation accrue devrait être faite des médias audiovisuels et non seulement privilégier l'utilisation du code de la langue, à condition qu'il soit clair comment les utiliser afin d'assurer un processus pédagogique significatif.

Mots-clés: apprentissage de l'anglais, technologies de l'information et de la communication (TIC), le texte multimodal, la motivation, l'apprentissage des langues

Introduction

Nowadays, the new Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) are being used as practice aids in the teaching process. As a result, Kress & van Leeuwen (2001) focus to the abundance of new forms of texts, called *multimodal*. These kind of texts not only use the verbal code, but also, other non-verbal texts such as pictures, (static or moving, 3d, etc.) and sounds, among others, in order to produce meanings, and further, they had reflected about the importance of these aids in the teaching and learning process, because this is an aspect that has not been taken into account in the education system yet, which still prefers the linguistics code as well.

The basic axiom of multimodality consists of the communicative interaction -in terms of production, reproduction and comprehension of discourses, it is evident, the use of several semiotic modes and resources that interact between them, in order to produce meanings. In that sense, the verbal is a semiotic system among others, and there are other sign systems that contribute a lot to the process of meaning.

Those discourses, thanks to the ICT, change into new formats of texts that mix verbal code with non-verbal (pictorial, sounds, *kinesics*, *proxemics*, etc.), not as a redundant aspect that presents the same concept from multiple codes, but as an amalgamation that enhances the meaning. Pardo (2014) states that the compilation of verbal and nonverbal codes in the speeches is the way of a natural and complex expression through the human beings construct meaning, for that reason all the speeches are multimodal.

According to Williamson and Resnick (2003), *multimodal texts* constitute in a new way to see the world that includes, in addition to the written text, images with own meaning, sounds that shows meaning and give to the texts the audiovisual character. In the same way, the authors argue that in order to get the comprehension of these kind of text, is essential to develop another kind of skill that is not only the simple decoding; some authors as Schnotz (2002) called it *multimedia competition*.

Schnotz (2002) proposes that teachers have to know how to use the multimedia text in the learning-teaching process because it could result an obstacle more than an effective tool to get a meaningful learning. As a consequence, it is very important to avoid confusing the use of this kind of texts as a tool that replaces the teacher, but also, it is important, to keep in mind that there is a relationship between the content, the instructional message and the cognitive system of the learner.

Consequently, Farias, Obilinovic & Orrego (2013) claim that one of the big concerns in the field of learning is about to research how to enhance the education through teaching materials using not only the linguistics code, but also use other kind of codes; because the role of the teacher is to design strategies to facilitate, propitiate, and guide the student to face the problems of the society by means of more efficient linguistics mechanisms, in the same way, it is important to show the links of codes of natural languages with other codes, and from others, teachers can teach languages, its means the linguistics codes which can be taught through physical activity.

Therefore, the motivation is important when a student is learning a new language; in spite of the fact that Gardner (1985) defines that motivation “refers to the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favorable attitudes toward learning the language” (p. 10). When a student is motivated toward the English learning, the process will be easier. Therefore, Castañeda (2014) considers that “Motivation is an essential factor in English language learning.” (p. 154).

Teachers can motivate their students by means of interesting classes and attractive materials that could help the teaching and learning process, in that sense, Ramos and Aguirre (2014), claims that:

materials conceived by teachers are intended to increase students' motivation, which also helps to decrease anxiety. This kind of materials fits in a much better way with the students' needs, since the topics and the type of exercises are designed considering students' previous knowledge and expectations. (p. 139).

The use of adequate materials in class contributes to the meaningful learning and motivates the students, because teachers can create their own materials according to the class, and nowadays technology could be a very useful tool to create interesting and meaningful materials to the class. According to Jiménez (2014), “[...] existe una relación mutua entre los actores del ambiente escolar cuya tarea es encontrar sentido en las actividades que se generan y ser conscientes del efecto de sus actuaciones en el equilibrio para que la motivación escolar se dinamice.” (p. 13).

1. Teaching

Castillo (2014) considers that the teacher must bring information to the class, related to previous knowledge of students, this process and the choice of teaching materials can obtain or promote motivation in the teaching and learning process. For this reason, teachers when prepare class must take into

account the both cognitive process, the previous knowledge and motivation, in order to create strategies, not only through the simple mechanical repetition of structures and rules in a decontextualized way or memory exercises that, by themselves, can not get a meaningful learning.

The figure 1, shows that it is more important the objectives that the same subject or topic, this is due, because as teachers, we should not privilege the content over the skills that students need to develop, because it does not have any sense giving a lot of information without understand its applicability in other contexts or information that has nothing to do with the real context of the student. For instance, it is better to avert to share a lot of topics, in order to teach topics which would be really meaningful for the students.

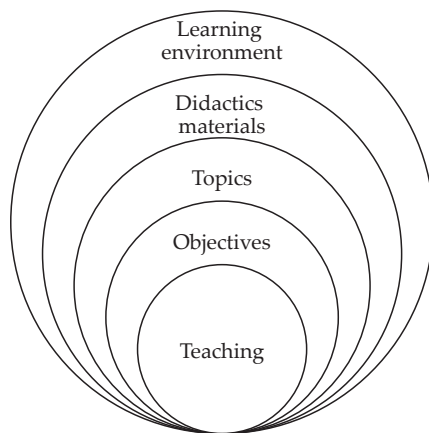


Figure 1. Aspects of teaching
From the authors

For an effective use of ICTs, teachers could utilize videos and songs in classes, it is essential to take into account several factors as the roles of the actors in the teaching-learning process and their interests (see figure 2) because, the choosing of a tool can directly influence the student motivation, for the reason that, since motivation, learning in class, would be meaningful, the motivation facilitates the development of the class and the teacher role, because the interest of the students would be first.

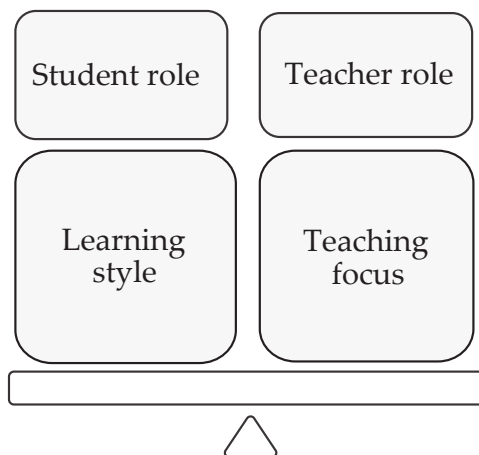


Figure 2. Aspects of teaching-learning process
From the authors

Likewise, an English teacher of a foreign language or second language, must be aware that not all the students learn in the same way, because some students assimilate from the visual aspect, others from the sound, others student learn from the tactile way, etc. Then teachers must analyze the results obtained from the implementation of a resource and also evaluate the importance and support of the tools used during the learning process.

In the same way, it is necessary to take into account the context for learning and some learner differences. According to Harmer (2007), teachers must know about the different contexts for learning. It is important to review the difference between English as a foreign language and English as a Second Language. The first one is learned when the student is in a different context from the language that he/she is learning, so the student can use English in trips, to communicate with people, while English as a second language is quite different because the learner is in the own context of English, so the students are sharing with a community that speaks English.

Harmer (2007) speaks about some contexts for learning English, such as the way of learning in Schools. English is part of the curriculum in Colombia, so, it is mandatory to teach English in public and private schools, the students have not choice, and in some schools there a lot of aids (audiovisual, text. books) but in other schools the students just have the board. So it is very important, that teachers, know how to motivate the students and be creative in the class in order to get motivations in the students, because sometimes they think that English is very difficult and sometimes they think that English is not necessary for their lives.

On the other hand, there is another context for learning English, face to face English teaching or one-to-one teaching, in this context the students have an specific need for learning English, then, the student has all the attention from the teacher, and teacher will guide the class according to the student needs. In large class, instead, students will have the opportunity to share information between them, practicing vocabulary, maybe sharing games in order to practice English, to develop workshops between them; in both cases it is necessary the motivations and responsibility from students.

Nowadays, there are big advances in technology to learn English. There are a lot of virtual courses, so it is very easy from learners to practice English from home with their own schedules. There a lot of advantages to learn in this way, but as mentioned above, students motivation is very important. This kind of learning has a lot of advantages, but the virtual programs to learn English, could be designed for people in general, but learning English in a real learning environment has some other benefits, for example students can ask immediately to their teacher about a word, pronunciation, or teacher can explain in different ways about a specific topic, and students can interact between them, so would be easier to acquire the language.

Harmer (2007) establishes some differences among learners such as the age, level and leaning styles. Talking about ages, learners can be described as children, teenagers or adults. When we speak about children, teachers have to focus in many aspects not only the in the topic, because children don't focus in one thing, so in this case teachers have to be very creative, to know the interests of the children, as their favorites shows, songs, games, in order to obtain the attention of the children. Usually they respond in a good way to the activities because they feel pleased with teachers' approval. It is important to mention, the special ability that young learners have to learn the language, so they can acquire pronunciation and vocabulary very fast.

Teenagers have a big difference with kids, because they already know their own interest and, consequently, they have the capacity to talk with more abstract ideas and give their own opinions. Teachers have to be very creative and use materials that teenagers like, sometimes they tend to be shyer than younger children, so it is necessary that teachers create several and fun activities in order to get the attention and motivation from the students.

Adults tend to be more disciplined because they already have their own needs, so they have to learn English for a specific thing. Sometimes, adults have some negative experiences about English learning, for this reason, they think that English could be difficult or they are afraid of learning In the same way, adults tend to be tired of a workday or maybe they are thinking about

other aspects. Then, adult learners need to feel motivated to acquire the language by means of aids that they can feel identified.

In general, learners from different ages have different characteristics (Harmer 2007), so the role of second or foreign language teacher is to find the appropriate aids and activities to encourage their students to learn English.

2. The use of songs in EFL class

According to Bastidas (2002) music is a tool very useful in the foreign language class, because it can get several feelings and emotions, and, in the same time music gives to the student relaxation by means of the rhythm; songs could help to students to low their stress and anxiety and can motivate to the students and facilitate the English learning process. According to Cullen (cited by Sevik, 2012):

Songs are significant teaching tools in teaching ESL/EFL because, as most teachers find out, students love listening to music in the language classroom and they often hold strong views about music. This affinity with music makes songs vital tools to create a safe and natural classroom ethos and to overcome feelings of shyness and hesitation on the part of the learners (p. 11).

English Learning as a second language through listening of songs is a complex process that requires attention and a big cognitive effort by students, because they can develop high comprehension levels (Reina, 2010).

According to Brown (2006) teachers don't have to confuse the listening with reading, because they are some different process, but sometimes they can be developed through similar pedagogical practices. Listening can be a big help to teach vocabulary and pronunciation, because it allows student to discriminate in an auditive way the phonemes (sounds of English) and reinforce the grammar structure of the language; besides, students could learn cultural aspects by means of the lyrics.

For that reason, teachers have to plan the class in order to make it more interesting for students, teachers have to be careful, in the same way, with the choosing of songs which will be taken to class, and therefore, to know very well how to develop the activity, because according to the class, students can or can't feel motivated.

According to Reina (2010), "the use of song in the classroom motivates the students to attend lessons and pay attention in class" (p. 130). However if the teacher uses very slow or fast songs students can lose motivation and interest

in the activity (Harmer, 2007) Due to, for choosing songs teachers need taking into account several factors (see figure 3) some of them are *the objectives* of the activity, the competence that teachers want to develop in their students, the *English level of the students*, because teachers have to take into account the previous knowledge of them, the *students musical likes*, sometimes students can choose a song between them, a song that all of them prefers, and finally the *cultural aspects* of the lyrics, in order to get a high comprehension level.

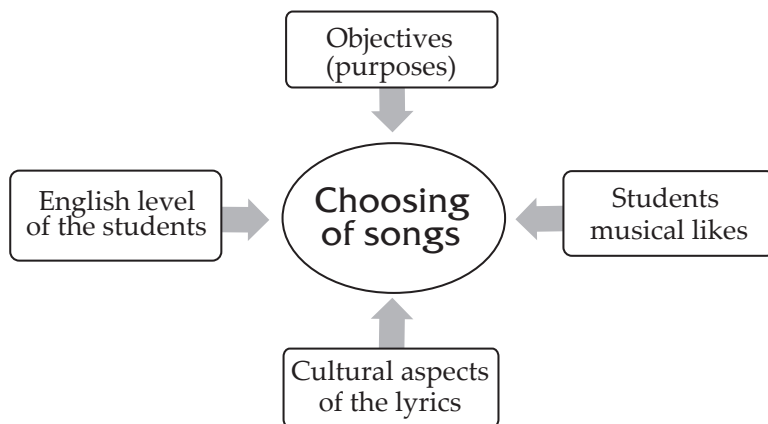


Figure 3. Key aspects for choosing songs
From the authors

Furthermore, there are a lot of activities with songs that teachers could prepare for students; because the activities could vary according to the students and the context. There are a lot of techniques that students can develop using songs; for example, they can listen to a song and complete lyrics of the songs, infer information, in the same way they can create new words and change the lyrics.

3. The use of images in EFL class

The use of images in the EFL class, according to Barragán and Gomez (2012) the use of images, more than a tool to facilitate the comprehension of abstract concepts, must be a tool that facilitates or promotes critical thinking of students; consequently, the image of acts, not only as a verbal support, but also provides elements to the meaning that do not facilitate the words. This is the reason why Pró 2003) states that the image had overstepped the limits of the written text.

For that reason, the use of pictures in class would be considered as a very important technique when we develop complex process of thinking in students (Barragán and Gomez, 2012) because when students interpret an image, the activity ask them not only relate an image with a meaning or referent, but also, the student must abstract aspects related to culture, this is the reason why, the use of images, can associate with inference process that implies other type of cognitive operations.

It is very important when teachers choose and use an image, (statics or in movement) is to know very well which is the objective to get, for instance, teachers could choose politic comics to potentiate the argumentation in students, because they would be able to show the meaning that images have; its context, (the social problematic) and according to that, take a critic position related to the exposed, and then students can argue, reply, debate, between others.

In the same way, another important factor that teachers have to take into account when they choose images is that they carry out with some grade of *iconicity* (Pró, 2003). There is a close relationship with the object the image represents, because when an image shows more realistic with a represented object can be defined and accumulated for the students with common characteristics. Generally these images are accompanied by the verbal code, could be in an oral or writing way, as a result. Teacher must choose some images that shows an equilibrated information, in other words, that the image shows a correlation between the verbal and iconic aspect, and in the last way the same message.

3.1 The use of videos in EFL class

For Gagné (cited by Castillo, 2014) Information Processing Theory, which is cognitive in nature, estimates that knowledge is represented in a variety of forms, including propositions, productions and images.

One interesting tool is the video. Teacher has to prepare the activities in order to give to students a useful class. As songs, the teacher has to be very careful choosing the videos. A video has to be appropriated and chosen according to the age and level of the students. One idea for choosing videos is to ask students about their favorite program or movie; so the teacher can choose a program, for instance, to show the thriller of a movie in English, a short movie, a part of a reality, among others.

According to the level of students, teacher can show the video with subtitles in English, in this way, the student can read and to listen the pronunciation at the same time. Yassaei (2012) says: "integrating videos into lessons creates enticing visuals and a special interactive environment in the EFL/ESL classroom. Teaching English through videos also allows teachers to be creative when designing language lessons" (p. 13). Teachers can use a video for many activities, the students can focus their attention in show that they really like, can train their listening, improve pronunciation as well, on their part, students can give opinions, create a possible ending of a short film, and create comics about the video.

Ferlazzo (2012) shares some ways to use videos with students in English class. He speaks about the "Critical pedagogy" that, basically is when teachers help students face their own problems, to think in a critical way, to learn according to the context (family, community). Teachers can choose a video about a problem of the community, could be a video about some news related to the context. After watching the video, they can ask for some activities, students can write and speak giving their opinions. Ferlazzo suggests some useful questions after watching these kind of videos:

- Who is doing what?
- What do they look like?
- Which objects do you see in the video?
- What is the problem in the video?
- Have you, your family, or friends ever experienced the problem? Describe what happened
- What do you think are the causes of the problem? Which solutions can you give?

Students can create a lot of creative presentations in order to give solutions, for example they can perform a situation, make a poster, design a comic; so, teachers have to take into account the English level of the students for designing the different activities.

Another activity the teacher can develop is "Back to Screen" so, in this way, teachers can pick a short video and divide the class into two groups. One person of the group will watch the video with the sound turning off, the other group will back to the screen, and people who is watching the video can tell the others what is happening, after some minutes, the students change role after all, students will share their experiences, discuss in the class about the video, write down some information, and finally everyone will watch the video with sound. This activity could be very fun and students can learn

and practice their different skills. Likewise, teachers can show the videos without any sound, so students can imagine the dialogues, and can write down creative dialogues, furthermore, students can perform the scenes and have a great experience in the class; obviously, the teacher has to lead the activity in a very organized way.

There are a lot of activities that teachers can develop with the use of videos, with all kind of students since young children to adults; for example, teachers can use videos with young learners, after the videos, children can draw about the video and can speak, with teenagers and adults they can write down their opinion about the videos; furthermore, students can debate about the video and later on their opinions.

Conclusions

The learning and teaching process of English as a foreign language is very effective due to the use of multimodal teaching materials, so, it is essential that teachers and schools have access to spaces that encourage the appropriate use of the materials in order to obtain motivation in students.

The use of multimodal texts, such as images, songs and videos allows a development of high levels of comprehension in the students, but to accomplish that goal, is necessary to take into account their previous knowledge, the objectives that teachers want to achieve, the development of the activity, among others factors in order to achieve a satisfactory exercise.

Teachers who use multimodal texts in their classes can facilitate the learning of information, retention and the comprehension from the students, because when teachers work with several ways or codes the relations of associations could increase and allow to the students keep and increase a long-term information.

However, it is very important, to be careful when we use some multimedia tools, because if students don't have certain previous knowledge the tools will become obstacles in the learning process. It is why, when someone is learning English can find difficulties to associate the written texts, image and sound (or music) in the same time, because it requires a more cognitive effort, and the sound could be a simple distraction. In that case, it is recommendable to use multimodal texts that relates image and written texts at the same time, and as Schnotz (2002) states the images can be used instead of the text and the opposite.

Finally, the effective use of the multimodal texts in EFL class depends in a big way of teachers, for that reason, it is necessary to prepare the class and to know deeply the objectives that, teachers want to get with students.

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