



# Pedagogy of Multiliteracies and Argumentation: An Online Attempt in the Letras Course

*Pedagogia dos Multiletramentos e Argumentação: Uma Tentativa Online no Curso de  
Letras*

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**Resumo:** Este artigo analisa uma proposta de reforma curricular que foi realizada na forma de um curso híbrido oferecido aos alunos do curso de Letras na UFPE. Os principais objetivos do curso foram ajudar os alunos a desenvolverem habilidades argumentativas colaborativas (LIBERALI, 2013) bem como multiletramentos (THE NEW LONDON GROUP, 1996/2000) em Inglês. É importante ressaltar que tanto as habilidades argumentativas colaborativas quanto os conceitos de multiletramentos foram simultaneamente o objeto de estudo e também o veículo através do qual o conhecimento estava sendo desenvolvido. Com base nos dados provenientes da parte online, nós investigamos nesse artigo como a Pedagogia dos Multiletramentos (THE NEW LONDON GROUP, 1996/2000) pode contribuir para a construção de conhecimento através da argumentação. Conclusões iniciais indicam que um curso baseado nos estudos de multiletramentos são mais propensos a oferecerem espaços no qual uma argumentação colaborativa possa ser desenvolvida.

**Palavras-chave:** Multiletramentos. Argumentação. Ensino de Inglês Online. Curso de Letras.

**Abstract:** This paper analyzes a curriculum reform proposal which took place in the form of a hybrid course offered to students of *Letras* at UFPE. The main aims of the course were to help students to develop their collaborative argumentation skills (LIBERALI, 2013) as well as their multiliteracies (THE NEW LONDON GROUP, 1996/2000) in English. It is important to highlight that both collaborative argumentation skills and multiliteracies concepts were simultaneously the object of study and also the vehicle through which the knowledge was being developed. Based on the data derived from the online part of the course, we investigate in this paper how the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies (THE NEW LONDON GROUP, 1996/2000) can contribute to the construction of knowledge through argumentation. Initial findings indicate that a course based on the multiliteracies studies is very likely to provide room for collaborative argumentation to be developed.

**Keywords:** Multiliteracies. Argumentation. Online English Teaching. Letras Course.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary world both the production and consumption of knowledge tends to become more and more decentralized or horizontal (LEMOS; CUNHA, 2003). To a great extent, this is due to the numerous technological novelties that surround us and allow people to exchange information in an ever-growing number of ways or *modes* (KRESS, 2010). If on the one hand, this unprecedented reality provides exciting new possibilities of acting and being in the world; on the other hand, it challenges us all with equally unprecedented questions, inevitably leading to new epistemological paradigms. As educators, we have great responsibility to address the demands this new world imposes on our students, so that they can find relevance in their learning contexts. In this scenario, this paper derives from a curricular reform proposal (DAMIANOVIC;LIMA, 2015 a, b; DAMIANOVIC; LIMA, 2016; LIMA, 2016) which was put into practice in the form of a hybrid course – online (LIMA, 2015)<sup>1</sup> and face to face – with students from the sixth term of the *Letras* Course<sup>2</sup>. Our aim with the course was twofold: to provide an opportunity for students to develop their collaborative argumentation skills (LIBERALI, 2013) in writing argumentative texts in English, as well as to develop the concept of multiliteracies (THE NEW LONDON GROUP, 1996/2000) – by living it.

We understand that field of Applied Linguistics has been a fruitful one to develop studies such as the one we propose, since it has been involved with cutting edge and innovative discussions about contemporary forms on the production of knowledge (MOITA LOPES, 2013). Different applied linguists in Brazil (FREIRE;LEFFA, 2013) advocate the need of an agenda that is responsive to the communication changes we are all going through, including contact with other fields of knowledge.

Freire and Leffa (2013) urge us to make use of a complex paradigm, which does not emphasize a linear or fragmented knowledge; on the contrary, this new paradigm will form the basis for us to better deal with the uncertainties, unpredictability and the instabilities of our current time, be these contexts online, offline or a mixture of both. In this respect, the authors have a particular concern with the technological formation of teachers while they are at Brazilian universities, how it has been implemented and if these institutions have been responding to the demands of a society which is in a digitalization process.

We agree with Freire and Leffa (2013) when they argue that the technological formation of the future teachers should not happen in a specific subject with this sole purpose, but rather be a constituent part of different subjects; the online course (LIMA, 2015) we propose would support students to develop the literacies they need to act in this new scenario in a critical way and make the most of their potentialities. This critical attitude has to do with the student being able to “make sense of messages from multiple language sources, as well as being able to produce messages, incorporating multiple language sources” (DIONÍSIO, 2011, p. 138).

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<sup>1</sup> Projeto de Pesquisa aprovado pelo CEP da UFPE no processo: 1.928.256

<sup>2</sup> At Universidade Federal de Pernambuco (UFPE)

Lankshear and Knobel (2006) bring us enlightening discussions on the difference between traditional literacies and new literacies. According to them, what differentiates the latter from the former is not only the new technologies or gadgets used by students or teachers, but mainly a new *ethos* that emerges. Ethos is understood here as the image speakers project of themselves in their discourse to please the audience and guarantee credibility (LIBERALI, 2013) and new *ethos*, as Rojo (2013b) reinforces, involves values which deal with discourses associated to more participative and collaborative practices and to a set of different designs required in education (KNOBEL; LANKSHEAR, 2007).

In this new *ethos* the technological tools are used to mediate and create relations; the focus is on what is collective and the authority is distributed; the space is open, fluid and in this scenario the texts are always changing. As educators, we should not ignore this reality that surrounds our students and us. Having this in mind, we can perceive this work as a teaching prototype (ROJO, 2013b) in which professors and students worked in co-authoring, creating some digital content that is the result of the interventions made by the different actors involved.

Beyond the walls of the university our students already make use of several information and communication technologies (ICT) in their personal lives or at work – creating new genres or reconfiguring some old ones, for instance – which implies and demands from them (and from educators) new literacies. Very often, these literacies have a highly multimodal treat which allows different groups from different cultural backgrounds to express their voices, as well as to interact with each other. To take account of these multimodalities and multiculturalism that is so intrinsic to our globalized society, The New London Group (1996/2000) coined the term *multiliteracies*.

Similar to what happens in other areas within the field of Applied Linguistics, multiliteracies studies can be developed from different perspectives. Rojo (2013a), for instance, traces an invaluable parallel between the studies initiated by The New London Group and the discursive genres from Bakhtin Circle, showing how they can reinforce each other, with special emphasis on the new genres that are emerging in the contemporary world. Departing from his studies in semiosis, Kress (2010) has developed comprehensive research in the field with special focus on multimodality, urging educators to take this trace of multiliteracies into account in different educational context.

Initial findings in our research indicate that there are still few investigations relating multiliteracies to argumentation studies. It is important to highlight that we perceive argumentation not only as the object of teaching, but mainly as the mean for the teaching/learning process, affecting the formation of those involved in educational contexts (LIBERALI, 2013). Therefore, the purpose of this article is to analyze how the pedagogy of multiliteracies contributes to the production of knowledge through argumentation.

## 2 THE PEDAGOGY OF MULTILITERACIES AND THE POSSIBILITY OF NEW DESIGNS

In order to address and make sense of the new linguistic demands of contemporary time, a Pedagogy of Multiliteracies, as proposed by The New London Group (1996/2000), should have two main scopes, namely *multiculturalism* and *multimodality*. The first term refers to the growing cultural and linguistic diversity which is now intrinsic to the globalized societies we live in. In this social context, different groups, from a variety of backgrounds, influenced by numerous factors such as age, gender, area of expertise, subject matter, religion, nationality, etc. are constantly interacting, producing and reproducing knowledge in ways that go beyond traditional conventions of meaning. Multimodality, on the other hand, accounts for the different modes used to convey meaning in nowadays texts. This reality is easily witnessed when we produce or consume texts composed of images, sounds, hyperlinks, etc., apart from the written word. The information communication technologies (ICT) play a key role in this scenario, broadening the possibilities of interaction among the different social and cultural groups. Thus, multimodality and multiculturalism are deeply related.

According to Kalantzis and Cope (2013, p.3), “in a Pedagogy of Multiliteracies, the grammar of writing is replaced by a more broad-ranging ‘design analysis’, in which capacities to mean the same things can be found across all modes”. Therefore, an invaluable concept brought by the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies is the one of *design*.

Differently from the term *grammar*, *design* has a dynamic perspective and comprises simultaneously the idea of product/morphology and construction/process (KALANTZIS;COPE, 2013). The multiliteracies perspective views *design* as covering three elements: the *available design* (what is given or already found), the *designing* (what one does to what is given, what you actually do to produce meaning) and the *re-designed* (how the context and the environment are transformed). The New London Group (2000, p. 19) reinforces the centrality of the term *design* in the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies, when they state that “different conceptions of education and society lead to very specific forms of curriculum and pedagogy, which in turn embody designs for social futures”.

This concept of *design* is perceived by the New London Group (1996/2000) as the *what* of the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies. In order to implement it, they propose four dimensions for this pedagogy which correspond to the idea of *how: situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing and transformed practice*<sup>3</sup>. In the *situated practice*, learners will interact with each other in a given community, by playing different roles, in meaningful ways. At this stage, the presence of experts is rather useful as they “can guide learners, serving as mentors and designers or their learning processes” (NEW LONDON GROUP, 2000, p. 33). *Overt Instruction* may be misled with direct transmission of knowledge, which in this case would be linked to the concept of a bank pedagogy as put by Freire (1970/1987). Conversely, it has to do with the teacher, for example, giving support to students to

<sup>3</sup> Kalantzis and Cope (2013) have already updated these terms for *experiencing, conceptualizing, analyzing* and *applying*, but we have chosen to use the original terms as we understand they are still quite elucidative.

achieve a certain task, while at the same time eliciting from them their previous knowledge. At this level, the use of metalanguage is used as a mean to help students to develop concepts by themselves. The third dimension, *critical framing*, happens when learners look back at what they have produced and learned in order to evaluate if what they have mastered is really meaningful and addresses the needs of their contexts. Critical framing leads to *transformed practice*, the stage when student will have the opportunity to transfer their knowledge to other contexts, to design new practices and set goals of their own.

These dimensions should not be understood as linear or an ordinary process to be followed in the order presented. They can coexist and at different moments one dimension or another will be more evident. We would rather look at them as a profitable framework for a consistent pedagogical action, or still as parameters to understand how knowledge can be processed.

The four dimensions presented reinforce our argument that a learning context which is based on the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies contributes to the production of meaningful knowledge. Concerning the question of how knowledge is built:

[...] Human knowledge is initially developed as part and parcel of collaborative interactions with others of diverse skills, backgrounds and perspectives joined together in a particular epistemic community, that is, a community of learners engaged in common practices centered on a specific (historically and socially constituted) domain of knowledge (THE NEW LONDON GROUP, 2000, p. 30).

Regarding the historical and social aspects of our times, Kalantzis and Cope (2015), in their studies about learning and media, reminds us that the new media is multimodal and therefore, the construction of meaning is also multimodal. Meaning is built with different modes being combined: photos, links, audio are not simply juxtaposed reinforcing each other, but rather constructing meaning in the form of new designs. These designs go beyond the texts that rely only on verbal language.

This is the context in which our learners are inserted, be it at home, at work or any other public space. Needless to say that in order to mirror this scenario and bring more relevance to what is taught in educational institutions, teachers should provide students with opportunities to rehearse these designs. It is our duty as teachers not to prevent our students from making use of the different tools available to represent knowledge in multimodal ways: “Our times require us to move beyond the handwriting book or the word processor (...) our learners should be working in the twenty-first-century world of web communications” (KALANTZIS;COPE, 2015, p. 378).

In this new era, it is what we can do together that matters and “the knowledge of a working group is greater than the sum of its individual members” (KALANTZIS;COPE, 2015, p. 383). Knowledge is no longer the result of individual intelligence, but mainly the product of assembled information produced by many individuals in the form written language, audio, videos, etc., leading us all to new paradigms in which producers and consumers are hard to be distinguished.

Despite the challenges, this new reality provides room for innovative educational practices with students working collaboratively to construct meaning and having a more active role in all stages of this process. With a view to creating “a more productive, relevant, innovative, creative and even life-transforming pedagogy” (KALANTZIS;COPE, 2013, p.2) a pedagogy of multiliteracies reinforces the important role of agency and sees openness to differences, changes and diversity as desirable characteristics to be developed in our learners.

We understand that some of the concepts and mainly the goals of a participatory and collaborative construction of knowledge proposed by the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies easily aligns with those envisioned by contemporary argumentation studies.

### **3 THE PEDAGOGY OF ARGUMENTATION AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF MEANINGFUL KNOWLEDGE**

Argumentation can be understood as the process through which interlocutors try to convince one another about a given topic; in this context the ones involved in a conversation or debate, for example, organize strategies in order to prove that their points are right or true. Perelman and Tyteca (1958/2005) argue that according to this view the role of argumentation would be to incite or increase adherence to one’s thesis.

In our research, however, we work with the concept of collaborative argumentation which intends to promote “the collective and collaborative production of new and relevant shared meanings to the community” (LIBERALI, 2013, p.108). From this point of view, the idea of superiority and the choice of a single truth over the others is put aside; instead, a dialogical perspective becomes a reference for practices in which different voices, representing a variety of social and historical contexts play together with the aim of producing new knowledge, validated by the group.

We understand that this perspective fully aligns with the proposals made by the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies, mainly in regards to the question of multiculturalism and the need to acknowledge the different knowledges brought to the classroom, be they from teachers, students or outside specialists. Therefore, educational institutions should be a fruitful environment to rehearse the multiple possibilities presented by real life.

The knowledges are multiple, varied, in constant transformation and ought to be recognized as valid in contexts, such as schools, universities, etc. In this scenario, the collaborative argumentation becomes a powerful tool to question ultimate truths, to create spaces for profitable disagreements and thus the construction of meaningful knowledge. As put by Liberali (2013, p. 109), “if the debate makes relevant and pertinent the thought and action that happen within the school context, it will have the potential to be expanded beyond the walls of schools”, paving its way to transformed practices (THE NEW LONDON GROUP, 1996/2000).

The use of argumentation in class should not be destined exclusively to topics that are generally perceived as debatable, but rather seen as a way to deal with and present the regular curricular contents, from varied areas, in the classroom. In this regard, contents such as mathematical formulas, historical facts or language structures can be taught based

on an argumentative pedagogy. In order this to happen, Leitão (2011) defends the idea that three main actions should be implemented in educational contexts: actions which create the conditions for argumentation to emerge; actions that support and expand argumentation and actions that legitimate the knowledge built. Expressing similar concerns, Mateus (2016, p.51) advocates the presence of some dialogical postures from those involved in the process:

- Disposition to analyze different points of view;
- Commitment to consider as legitimate every voice;
- Concern to assure the full participation of different perspectives and the creation of safe environments;
- Disposition to acknowledge the other as someone who knows something and has something to say;
- Commitment to the broadening of perspectives and to the shared understanding of alternative possibilities;
- Disposition to review own beliefs and “move from original place”;
- Value the difference<sup>4</sup>.

Departing from such perspective, educators are no longer assessors who simply ratify or attest what is produced by their students; instead, they become instigators responsible to create safe environments for debate, exchange of ideas and exercise of creativity (LIBERALI, 2013). Possible instabilities or the questioning of some knowledges given, at first, as stable and definite actually contribute to the formation of more critical and reflexive students, considering the fact that their final ‘product’ is the result of group scrutiny.

More than being able to memorize structures, formulas or static knowledge the students of the current time should be able to make decisions, by making use of various knowledges they have at their disposal and choosing that one, according to their own analysis, which will better meet the needs of their social and historical context. In this sense, a pedagogy of argumentation has a lot to contribute.

Mateus (2016) reminds us that those originally involved with the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies don’t make any direct reference to argumentation studies, however the way they understand education and their “dialogical-transformational-pluralist perspective” (MATEUS, 2016, p.44) allow us to develop researches in which both pedagogies are articulated, especially when it comes to denaturalizing everyday practices. In her own words: “Therefore, I place the pedagogy of argumentation within the practices of literacy and multiculturalism, with an emphasis on the reflections we promote about the values and ideologies that guide certain attitudes” (MATEUS, 2016, p.46).

In her researches about argumentation, Liberali (2013) proposes three categories for action and analysis that aim at understanding the realities of educational contexts but also to create possibilities for transformation. They can be summarized as follows: *enunciative characteristics* focus on the context in which a given event happens, how the place,

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<sup>4</sup> All the passages from sources in Portuguese were translated by the authors of this paper.

the time, vehicle, participants, content and objectives relate to each other; the *discursive characteristics* are understood considering four aspects – the organizational plan, the thematic organization, the sequential focus and the articulation among the ideas presented; *linguistic characteristics* focus on the materiality of the text that will compose the discourse. It is important to highlight that these characteristics may happen simultaneously and the predominance of one over another will vary from context to context. These categories also comprise a number of subcategories which will show their relevance according to the content that is being analyzed. In the following section, we will return to these issues.

#### 4 METHOD

This work is part of a larger project developed by the research group LIGUE/CNPq<sup>5</sup>, which aims to produce materials to teach English face to face and/or online in the Letras course, having as underlying theory the principles proposed by the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies (THE NEW LONDON GROUP, 1996/2000) and the argumentation studies (LIBERALI, 2013; MATEUS, 2016).

During the first semester of 2015, Lima (2015) developed an online material which was used with 14 students attending the course of English VI of the *Letras* course at UFPE. This material represented 1/3 or 20h of the whole course, with the remaining hours (40h) being delivered face to face. Our purpose with the online course was to give students the opportunity to develop their argumentations skills in English in a multiliterate context, at the same time they were studying about argumentation and multiliteracies. In other words, we catered for the idea of process-product happening simultaneously.

The content was developed and made available on the Edmodo Platform in three units. Each unit was composed of 4 tasks, in which the last task was always the production of a multimodal essay whose topic was: “*In a democratic society, every citizen should have the right to express any of their thoughts freely*”. Along the three units, students worked with the same topic, which means that they had to rewrite their original texts based on teachers’ and peers’ feedback. The other three tasks in each unit intended to give students support for the last task, they could be in the format of posts, or guided exercises in the format of worksheets and would provoke discussions and reflections about the content (argumentation, multiliteracies and the essays themselves). By the end of every unit, there was a moment for students’ reflection and feedback called *Expressing your Views* in the format of a survey through Google Forms. We understand that this study was developed within the framework of the Critical and Colaborative Research (MAGALHÃES, 2012) as it assumes the participation of the researcher in the act of keeping of altering the social reality.

For this paper, we depart from the four dimensions introduced earlier and proposed by The New London Group (1996/2000), namely, *Situated Practice, Overt instruction, Critical*

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<sup>5</sup> The research group LIGUE is coordinated by Prof. Phd. Maria Cristina Damianovic./ PPG Letras UFPE



*Framing* and *Transformed* practice and use them as categories to analyze different passages from the online material. It's important to reinforce here that these four instances represent the *how* in the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies, in other words, the way this new pedagogy could be implemented. As we have already stated, these dimensions do not necessarily occur in a linear way; they may occur together or the relevance of one over the other may differ according to the context. This flexibility was particularly useful during our analysis as it allowed us to select parts of the material that might not occur in a sequence, but would rather make evident the four dimensions. For methodological reasons and considering the extracts selected, we decided to analyze Critical Framing and Transformed Practice together.

In regard to the development of argumentation, we use the categories of *Enunciative characteristics*, *Discursive characteristics* and *Linguistic characteristics* as proposed by Liberali (2013) to analyze the extracts selected. We reinforce that these categories do not exclude one another and that they can be found in any of the four dimensions above. Therefore, due to methodological reasons and constraints of time and space, for this paper, we will make use of these categories relating to the four dimensions above as follows:

<b>Multiliteracies Dimensions</b>	<b>Argumentation categories</b>
Situated Practice	Highlight the Enunciative Characteristics (Context; Roles of interlocutors; Goals of Interaction; Content itself)
Overt Instruction	Highlight the Discursive Characteristics (Articulation of ideas)
Critical Framing and Transformed Practice	Highlight the Linguistic Characteristics (Lexical mechanisms; Nominal Cohesion; Valuing Mechanisms)

**Table 1:** Multiliteracies and Argumentation Categories  
 Fonte: LIMA, 2016

**5 ANALYSIS**

In this section, to facilitate understanding we use the abbreviation (TT) to indicate the tasks proposed by the tutor and the number following it indicates the order they appear in this paper. To refer to the students' answers we are using the abbreviation (SA) and the numbers following the "S" indicate they are different individuals.

5.1 SITUATED PRACTICE

Figure 1



Figure 1 (Fonte: <https://www.edmodo.com/home#/group?id=12787977>)

In this dimension the participants are supposed to be immersed in meaningful practices that are relevant for their communities. It sets the contexts in which experiences will be lived. The passages in figure 1 were all extracted from Unit 1 – Argumentation and Life (LIMA, 2015) – which means that their main goals were to make clear to students what they were expected to do along the course.

In TT1, the tutor made explicit to students that one of the texts they had contact with in a previous task was an essay. Actually, this was the genre we wanted students to master along the course. At this stage, we posed some questions in order to draw from students' previous knowledges about the genre at focus. By doing so, we intended to provide students contact with a genre that is required at academic contexts, as well as incorporating their previous experiences and voices.

In TT2, the tutor, playing the role of the expert or a mentor, directs students to the production of their first essay, presenting the topic to be developed and giving detailed information about the criteria that would be used to assess their production. If one looks closely at the items that should be included in the text, they will notice that we did not want the students provide a mere reproduction of well-known genre of an essay. Some elements attesting that are the requirements of a focus on collaborating to construct pluralism; the need to give support to a counter-argument and the inclusion of multimodal features. We understand that such approach allowed student to depart from familiar available designs (essays) to the production of the redesigned.

S1A shows how a member of the community can play different roles – one of the aims of situated practice. The person who wrote the extract plays the role of a student, answering the question to the tutor, but at the same time, as the text is a post and is available for the other peers, he/she might be playing as well the role of an expert for other students with less linguistic or content knowledge, for instance. Although in a very discrete way, we can envision elements of multiculturalism in this example from the material (LIMA, 2015), as students (despite being in the same group) will be in contact with peers with different backgrounds (students with no previous teaching experience, students who are novice teachers, students who are experienced teachers, etc.) which eventually contribute to the construction of shared knowledge.

## 5.2 ENUNCIATIVE CHARACTERISTICS

These characteristics focus on the place, moments of production, roles of interlocutors, goals of the interaction, the content itself and how all these elements relate to one another (Liberali, 2013), building the context.

In TT1, the tutor raises the topic of writing essays by university students, but instead of defending the importance of this genre in academic settings, the tutor invites the students to express their view on the topic as well as give them the chance to share the feelings or past experiences in relation to the topic. Considering this task is found in Unit 1 – Argumentation and Life, this option sets the tone for the kind of interaction that is expected along the course – a dialogical one; it shows that the roles of the interlocutors are the ones of co-authors in the production of knowledge. We can say that the tutor

intends to create an environment where different points of view can be voiced, emphasizing collaboration as a mean to build shared knowledge (LIMA, 2015)

The student's opinion is expressed in S1A. At first, the student played the role of a reader/consumer who had to give a response to the tutor (and the online community), but at the same time by sharing his/her opinions, the student becomes a producer of knowledge. We should not underestimate the fact that this text is in the format of a post and is available for all the online community which was taking the course. Given the fact that these arguments were posted by a student (S1), some other students might have embraced these ideas more easily simply because it came from a peer. In defense of the need to learn how to write essays, S1 refers to another role, which had not been mentioned earlier – “a teacher-to-be” (sic). This makes us believe that the enunciative characteristics also deals with elements that are not necessarily present in the immediate context, but that are equally valid as arguments.

In terms of contexts, we can think of some levels: the online environment, the course, the academia and the world as a whole. All of these dimensions have an influence on the way students receive and produce the content. The fact that the posts were shared online with the whole group might have put some pressure on the students in relation to the quality of they were going to share, be it in terms of content or linguistically. The academia as a broader context is made clear when the tutor choses a typical academic genre (an essay), or when the role of a “university student” is mentioned. Less straightforwardly, when the student uses the term “teacher-to-be”, he/she is also making a reference to the academic environment as they were students of the *Letras* course. The third level of the context refers to world in a broader sense. The topic of the essay was chosen in a clear reference to the discussions emerged by the terrorist attack that happened to the French Newspaper, Charlie Hebdo. So, freedom of speech was a topic being discussed outside the walls of the university, which contributed to the connection institution-real world.

### 5.3 OVERT INSTRUCTION

Figure 2

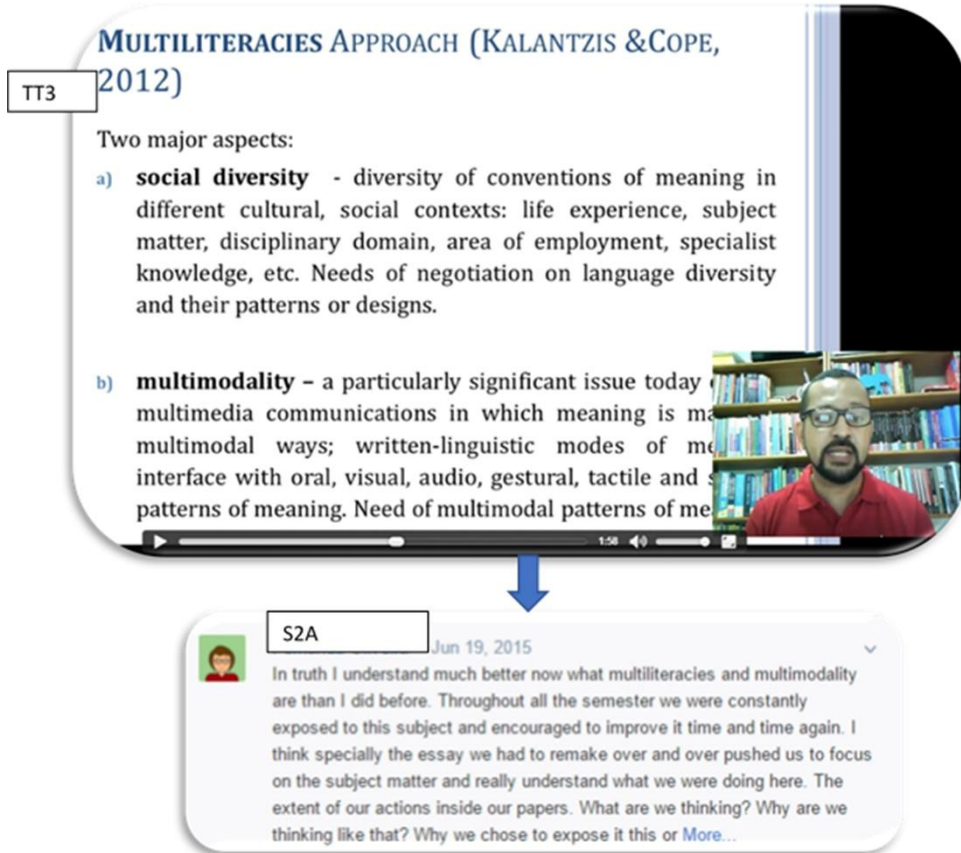


Figure 2 (Fonte: <https://www.edmodo.com/home#/group?id=12787977>)

There are moments when students need some *overt instructions* from an expert in order to achieve some tasks successfully (THE NEW LONDON GROUP, 1996/2000). Ideally this should be done in ways that students relate their previous knowledge to the new one.

In Unit 1 – Argumentation and Life –, we didn't provide any explicit explanation of the terms *multimodality* and *multiliteracies*, assuming, they were self-explanatory and used them in some of the tasks without major concerns. However, at a certain time along Unit 2 – Your voice, my voice: a sense of *wenness*, we realized that students were using those terms interchangeably or that different students were using the same terms, but referring to different things. In fact, this was due to our lack of experience with the studies of multiliteracies at the time we started the project. We decided then to expand the pedagogical sequence and make room to openly address the students' difficulties by explaining the terms. This moment can be seen in TT3, when through the use of video and a mini power point presentation on the online platform we made use of metalanguage

to develop the key concepts and theory that underlined the course. We see this episode as an example of a meaningful intervention that emerged from a real need. From that moment on, the misuse of the terms ceased. Had we explained the terms in the beginning of the course in a random way, perhaps students wouldn't have internalized them so satisfactorily.

#### 5.4 DISCURSIVE CHARACTERISTICS

The discursive characteristics are related to the way the text is displayed, how the ideas are presented in order to build an argument. Regarding that, Liberali (2013) proposes four different dimensions that can also be used as analysis categories – the organizational plan, the thematic organization, the sequential focus and the articulation among the ideas presented. These categories, like all the others mentioned here, are not intended to be used a priori but rather chosen according their relevance once the material is analyzed. Bearing that in mind and also considering the short length of the text (a post), for the extract in S2A we decided to focus only on the articulation among the ideas.

Students had had an explanation about the difference between the terms multimodality and multiliteracies as mentioned in the section above. After that, they were asked if the explanation had been effective. The student (S2) starts the response with a very straightforward and positive statement. He/she then gives support to the statement by presenting an explanation with a brief description of some of the actions done in the course (to remake the essays over and over again) and ends with the examples of some questions that helped them to build the new knowledge. Despite the length of the text, we can see that the student articulated his ideas as follows: straightforward statement – support to the statement with an explanation and description – examples.

## 5.5 CRITICAL FRAMING AND TRANSFORMED PRACTICE

TT4

One of the aims of the Multiliteracies approach is to **create a curricula** that “encourage students to be actively and purposefully engaged in their learning by setting them real intellectual and practical challenges” (Kalantzis & Cope, 2012), creating collaborative environments where meaningful choices are made.

Having this in mind, answer the following questions:

- a) As a student, do you think that this online course has achieved the objective above? Yes/No, why?
- b) As a teacher, has this course contributed to your teaching practice? Yes/No, why?
- c) As a person, has this course contributed to your living? Yes/No, why?

S3A

- a) As a student, do you think that this online course has achieved the objective above? Yes/No, why?  
Yes! As I said on my answer of task 1, this is exactly how I feel about this course.
- b) As a teacher, has this course contributed to your teaching practice? Yes/No, why?  
Yes! I also said something about this in my answer of task 1. Knowing about multimodality has influenced my teaching practice, and also to learn and think about its importance and meaning to classroom environment. But not only that. This course taught me to give my students a voice, to learn how to deal with the different perspectives and voices in the classroom; taught me to approach students according to their real life contexts (such as the use of internet, etc); to show them how they can improve themselves and help each other, etc.

**Figure 3** (Fonte: <https://www.edmodo.com/home#/group?id=12787977>)

The passage in TT4 was extracted from Unit 3 – Living-learning in a Multiliterate Way – and aimed to provide students with the opportunity to assess the course as a whole, positioning themselves critically in relation to what had been produced until then. The critical framing happens when we highlight the aims of the Multiliteracies Pedagogy (THE NEW LONDON GROUP, 1996/2000) in the heading of the task and invite students to use these aims as criteria to evaluate their production. It is valid to highlight that students had to attest the meaningfulness of their practices from three different perspectives: as a student, as a teacher and as a person. We understand that these multiple perspectives contribute to a more consistent analysis of the object, in this case the online course.

The critical framing leads the way to transformed practice, “the application of knowledge in the complex diversity of situations in the real world” (LIBERALI;SANTIAGO, 2016, p. 25). In this dimension, the participants have the chance to put into practice in other contexts the knowledge recently constructed, as well as design new practices and create their own goals.

Within this project course, we did not have the chance to follow students and observe how they applied the new knowledge in other environments, which would give us a better picture of whether the transformed practice took place or not. However, the testimonial in S3A seems to be an index that the student, in particular, is already making use of concepts such as multimodality and collaborative argumentation in other environments where he/she plays the role of a teacher.

## 5.6 LINGUISTIC CHARACTERISTICS

In S3A we focused on the materiality of the text and after analyzing the passage we identified three linguistic mechanisms used: lexical mechanisms, nominal cohesion mechanisms and valuing mechanisms to develop the argument.

In relation to some of the lexical items chosen, it is clear the student (S3) makes use of terms that are directly connected to the content developed along the course, both in the terms of what they were to learn as well as well terms that were used by the tutor as arguments to emphasize the relevance of the content. Some of these terms are: *multimodality, classroom environment, give students a voice, different perspectives, voices in the classroom and real life*. The choice for these terms creates a bond between the interlocutors as they were common terms used along the course to develop arguments in defense of pedagogies which include multiliteracies and besides that, it is very likely that the student will incorporate these items to their linguistic repertoire once the topic is raised in other contexts.

Nominal cohesion has to do with returning to a topic by making use of terms that were mentioned by other interlocutors. Examples of that in the passage are: *teaching practice, this course* and *students*. These three terms were used in the headings by the tutor and they were used again by S3 to develop the argument. This strategy (nominal cohesion) creates not only a linguistic cohesion in the text, but also some kind of link between the interlocutors.

Last, but not least, despite very briefly, when the S3 mentions the “importance and meaning” (sic) of multimodality to the classroom environment, it is understood that value is being given to content that was developed along the course. The student makes use of nouns, but it can be read as “it was important”, “it was meaningful”.

## 6 INITIAL FINDINGS

We started this paper by setting the scenario where our research emerged – a world in which the ways of interacting with texts (and with each other through texts) have changed significantly. This is, to a great extent, a result of technologies novelties available



in our societies, but also due to the ever-growing cultural diversity that surround us all. In order to deal with this reality, that offers endless possibilities as well as challenges never before seen, we need new pedagogical paradigms, which can be achieved through the combination of knowledges from different fields of study. We understand that the umbrella of the Applied Linguistics can offer this possibility, considering the studies being developed in this area that deal with recent linguistic phenomena.

Bearing this in mind, we offered an online course (LIMA, 2015) for a group of students of *Letras* at UFPE, in their sixth term, with the aim of providing them the opportunity to learn about and live the experience of multiliteracies and argumentation. Using the data from this material, our goal with this paper then was investigate if and how the construction of knowledge through argumentation can emerge from a material based on the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies.

Initially, we defended the argument that the four dimensions known as the *how* of the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies – Situated Practice, Overt Instruction, Critical Framing, Transformed Practice – provide an invaluable framework to be worked with argumentation studies. Actually, once a material, course or pedagogical sequence is developed considering what is proposed in dimensions, a collaborative argumentation perspective is very likely to be expanded. This shows that these two lines of study do not exclude one another, pretty much the contrary.

Analyzing the extracts chosen, we noticed that collaborative argumentation characteristics were present both in the tasks (TT1, TT2, TT3), as well as in the students' answers (S1A, S2A, S3A). This is a consequence of what we mentioned above – a multiliterate environment contributing to dialogue. The headings in the tasks selected invited the students to construct the content together with the whole group, which led to a more meaningful knowledge. The students' argumentations with different perspectives and backgrounds brought diversity to the content, a crucial element in the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies.

We could also observe that while students were learning *about* multiliteracies and argumentation they were, at the same time, developing argumentation skills – considering the context, the interlocutors, time (enunciative); different ways to articulate ideas (discursive) or specific lexical choices (linguistic), for instance, to make their points. This is to say that the construction of knowledge was happening through argumentation.

Despite the fact that the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies and the Argumentation studies have their own theoretical framework, we believe that these two lines of study still have a fruitful path together to elucidate and contribute to a number of phenomena of our time.

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