

From the Editors

SPECIAL ISSUE: MULTIMODALITY IN ELT

This issue addresses *Multimodality in English Language Teaching*. Multimodality refers to the combination of various communicative modes (sound, images such as graphs or pictures, video, written text, transcribed speech, etc.) within one text. We talk of multimodal text because understanding that text implies understanding the interaction among all its components in the different formats. The challenge for linguists working in the field of Language Teaching is the need to conduct theoretical research on both the multimodal text structure and on the possible ways to adapt and integrate these multimodal texts into the design of pedagogical material.

Five papers dealing with different perspectives of multimodality are included in this volume. The first two articles by Querol-Julián and Curado Fuentes deal with the use of multimodal corpora, and the other three explore the design and implementation of multimodal texts in the classroom. While the article by Busà suggests ways to implement multimodality to develop oral presentation skills, the fourth article by Varaala and Jalkanen discusses the issue of multimodal literacy and reading comprehension. Finally, Domínguez Romero and Maíz Arévalo propose ways to test and implement listening comprehension materials.

As mentioned above, two of the five articles use multimodal spoken corpora to examine ways in which such corpora may be utilised in two very different contexts. Advances in Corpus Linguistics have witnessed a progress from one-million-word corpora to over two-billion-word corpora that were named third generation corpora. The term *third generation corpora* is now increasingly associated with “a new generation of corpora: the multi-modal, multi-media corpus – that which combines video, audio and textual records of naturally occurring discourse” (Knight, Evans, Carter and Adolphs 2009: 1). The corpora used by Querol-Julián and Curado Fuentes belong to this category. The first article by Querol-Julián deals with a multimodal spoken corpus of conference lectures. The second article examines a corpus of English, Spanish and bilingual children’s conversations and investigates the use of children’s discourse for adapted

hypermedia content design. The corpus used for this study also contains the transcripts and media data associated to those conversations.

In the first article, *Multimodality in discussion sessions: corpus compilation and pedagogical use*, Querol-Julián analyses multimodal discourse in a corpus of spoken academic discussion sessions. She carries out a multilayered study of evaluation in two small comparable corpora of discussion sessions in conference paper presentations. The author seeks to find out new ways to analyse spoken texts from a multimodal perspective. The corpus used in this study includes the transcription of kinesic and paralinguistic features that co-express with the (also annotated) semantic evaluation performed by speakers in the corpus. She also identifies dialogic exchange patterns between discussants (becoming one of the first researchers to distinguish this speaker category in a corpus annotation scheme) and presenters. The article concludes by presenting possible pedagogical applications of her research and envisaging further research and applications.

In the second article, Curado Fuentes uses the CHILDES corpus to develop adaptive hypermedia content design. He explains how specific multimodal traits can be integrated within the design of pre-elementary school lessons. This author uses the CHILDES corpus as a source for analysing Spanish and English sub-corpora that are selected with this aim in mind. He shows how conversational patterns in collaborative situations in which children interact with adults are an interesting source of multimodal aspects that easily correlate with meta-discursive items and markers.

In her article *Sounding natural: improving oral presentation skills*, Busà suggests ways to improve oral communication by creating tasks which integrate several discourse modes. Her article describes an experimental approach to the use of multimedia texts in the university classroom, and she proposes the combination of different communication modes in spoken videos that are produced naturally by native speakers and which are not specifically designed for classroom use. Busà discusses how this combination has the added value of giving students a sense of reality in the tasks performed and in the way they envisaged classroom input as well as in the output they were asked to achieve. For this author it is essential not only to explain spoken discourse features but also to evaluate how students use them after receiving multimodal input. Thus, dependencies

between modalities (speech and gestures, for example) are analysed in order to raise students' awareness of the multimodal nature of communication.

The fourth article, *Changing spaces, expanding mindsets: towards L2 literacies on a multimodal reading comprehension course*, examines how content linking in multimodal texts creates new reading paths in which the reader is an active agent in the reading process. Thus, user-based modality choice or cross-references between modalities are examples of how the new mindset for reading texts in a multimodal environment may work. In their article, Varaala and Jalkanen tackle two main issues: the added value that multimodality may or may not bring to language learning, and the assignment categories that are meaningful from a learner's perspective. They point out how the volume of texts that are built on in a multimodal environment demands constant revision on the part of the teacher and suggest that check points should be an essential part in the design of a multimodal reading comprehension course.

Multimodality and listening comprehension: testing and implementing classroom material is also related to the teaching context. In this last article Domínguez Romero and Maíz Arévalo evaluate how information value, saliency and framing may be analysed in listening comprehension tasks that appear in two textbooks. Their research is carried out in two homogeneous groups of university students. With this aim in mind, they redesign a number of listening tasks so as to examine how these three parameters may or may not affect comprehension if multimodal design is changed. They conclude that in the case of listening skills, multimodality plays an important role in aiding students' comprehension and that there are multimodal variables that seem to affect the understanding of spoken text to a greater extent.

The volume ends with Yigitoglu's review of *Using CORPORA in the Language Learning Classroom: Corpus Linguistics for Teachers* and a comprehensive multimedia review carried out by Cardenas-Clarós on *Using English for Academic Purposes. A Guide for Students in Higher Education*.

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REFERENCE

- Knight, D., Evans, D., Carter, R. and Adolphs, S.** (2009) “HeadTalk, HandTalk and the corpus: Towards a framework for multi-modal, multi-media corpus development”. *Corpora*, 4 (1), 1-32.