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## **Introduction: Multimodality and Multiliteracies**

### **1. Preliminary Thoughts**

In education, the call for multiliteracies has been based on the growing multimodality of communication due to the incremental development of technology and globalization since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Multiliteracies include (critical) media literacy, visual, information, and technological literacy. However, multimodality is not a new phenomenon (cf. Jewitt 2009a, 3-4). Face-to-face interaction employs voice, facial expression, and gesture in combination with verbal exchange. In written communication, illuminated manuscripts date from the Middle Ages, illustrated religious and political prints from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, cartoons and picture stories from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, illustrated magazines, novels, and scientific publications from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and film from the 20<sup>th</sup>, to name just a few. Electronic multimedia texts only represent the most recent development to date in a long history of multimodal communication.

Multimodality in linguistics and semiotics is a fairly new approach rather than a new phenomenon as literary studies and linguistics have mostly focused on spoken and written language. However, in the analysis of media and communicative situations, such as newspapers, textbooks, television, film, websites, graphic novels, and teaching scenarios, multimodal linguistic and semiotic approaches overlap with, encroach upon, or draw on, among other disciplines, Communication Studies (Geise and Lobinger 2013; Müller 2003), Media Studies (Schröter 2014), Visual Studies (Elkins 2008; Mirzoeff 2007; Mitchell 1994), Cultural Studies (Evans and Hall 2009; Hall 2011; Storey 2015), Film Studies (Bordwell et al. 2017; Nelmes 2012), Art History and Art Education (Brassat and Kohle 2009; Glas et al. 2016; Nelson and Shiff 1996). Multimodal approaches are "strongly underpinned by social and cultural theories of representation and communication" (Jewitt 2009a, 5), but they do not often take notice of studies of intermediality favored by literary scholars, and vice versa.

Intermedial approaches in English Studies tend to deal with relationships between literature, music, painting, etc., i.e. media conventionally considered forms of aesthetic communication (see Rajewsky 2002; Rippl 2005, 2015; Wolf 1999, 2011, 2016). Intermedial approaches analyze the mixing and changing of media: (1) the combination of different media in one artefact, i.e. the visual reproduction of a picture in a printed text, or speech, sound, and image in film, etc.; (2) ways in which media are transformed into or represented in other media through the modes of 'appropriating' media, i.e. the ekphrastic description of a picture in a verbal text, or the structural imitation of music in fiction (Rippl 2015, 10-12; Wolf 1999, 51-70). In many cases, research concentrates on the fine-grained analysis of connections between 'texts' from different media. Some multimodal approaches deal with 'aesthetic' media such as graphic novels and films, but many of them cover non-fictional subjects and analyze these in a more comprehensive way, including the agents, space, and context of the

communicative situation.<sup>1</sup> In very general terms, it seems that intermedial studies have developed specific expertise in the ways selected *media* are combined and transformed into others, multimodal studies in the ways different *modes* are combined in specific communicative situations. Whereas marked intermediality – as opposed to the broad notion of intertextuality or intermediality as a core feature of any text – is often considered a feature of particular texts in literary studies, the multimodality of communication is taken as the rule rather than the exception in multimodal discourse analysis, interaction analysis, and social semiotics. It seems that neither English Literary and Cultural Studies nor TEFL have yet exploited to the full the analytic and didactic potential of intermedial studies or multimodal research. Multimodal approaches do not need to rival intermedial ones, but may support the fine-tuning of interpretation strategies.

In this introduction, it is impossible to compare and evaluate intermedial and multimodal approaches, both of which are heterogeneous (cf. Jewitt 2009b; Wildfeuer 2015, 14; 21-23). In addition, research on intermediality makes use of modes in order to distinguish between media (Elleström 2010b, 15-36), and research on multimodality resorts to media in order to explain how modes work (Stöckl 2016, 6-9). Here, we can only present a few core issues of multimodality which may trigger interest from literary and cultural studies as well as TEFL, then provide a survey of recent material on teaching multiliteracy through multimodal media, and finally introduce the contributions to this volume.

## 2. Multimodality

Social semiotics, one of the dominant approaches to multimodality, may be of particular relevance to teaching multiliteracy in English at educational institutions because of its broad interest in the individual's access to and participation in social communication, the critique of dominant forms of power, and the assertion of individual interest in designing meaningful texts from sketches to buildings (Kress 2010, 18-26). Social semiotics is based on Halliday's systemic functional linguistics and defines communication as the interaction of sign makers in social situations and cultural contexts, where texts are generated in particular media through drawing on semiotic modes, the codes of which are defined in normative discourses (Jewitt 2009b, 15-23). Considering language as a social semiotic system goes beyond the structuralist concept of a system of formal rules and stipulates that language fulfills three so-called *metafunctions*: (1) the *ideational* construction – or representation – of experience through categories for elements in the world and the configuration of these elements; (2) the enactment of *interpersonal* relationships and the communication of a stance towards the world; and (3) the *textual* organization of meaning through means such as cohesion and coherence. Social semiotics has generalized these features as core functions of all semiotic modes (Jewitt 2009b, 24; Jewitt et al. 2016, 34-35; Kress 2010, 87-88).

1 Multimodal approaches that focus on non-fictional genres are, for example studies of pictures and news in the mass media (Diekmannshenke et al. 2011) or on images and textbooks in multimodal teaching scenarios (Bezemer and Kress 2016; Norris 2012).

The term 'metafunction' was coined to avoid confusion with communicative functions, such as description or persuasion (Bateman et al. 2017, 49-50). However, it would be less misleading to use the term 'basic' or 'general' function rather than metafunction, as 'meta-' usually signifies reflexivity, for example in Wolf's meta-referential functions as reflections on and critique of representation and cultural frameworks of meaning production (Wolf and Bernhart 2006, 20; 31).

Core problems of multimodal approaches are, firstly, defining the basic concepts mode, text, media, genre, and discourse, and secondly, modeling the interrelationships between these in order to define their potential meanings in communicative situations. Which criteria are used in defining modes? Kress gives two answers, referring to social use and theoretical needs: (1) "*Mode* is a socially shaped and culturally given resource for making meaning" (Kress 2009, 54). In this perspective, "socially, a mode is what a community takes to be a mode and demonstrates that in its practices" (Kress 2009, 58-59). Consequently, Kress continues, image as a mode in social semiotics would be too general for photographers, cartoonists, or painters. (2) In semiotic theory, a mode needs to fulfill the ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions, which, for example, layout does in textbooks (ibid.; Kress 2010, 88-92).

Do modes have to function like a language in order to fulfil metafunctions? Does language deserve the privileged status of a master mode? Following Eco, Stöckl (2016, 14) argues that the complexity of semantics and grammar grants language a great potential in generating meaning and translating other semiotic modes. Consequently, the media linguist Stöckl employs syntax, semantics, and pragmatics in order to explore the functions of other modes. Conversely, the visual studies scholar Machin (2009, 189) alerts us with Mitchell to the danger of "linguistic imperialism" and calls for more detailed attention to the specific quality of visual communication. Speaking on behalf of social semiotics, Jewitt (2009b, 15) claims that language no longer serves as an anchor or model of other modes of communication, all of which serve particular functions in social, cultural, and historical contexts. Modes are defined according to the senses addressed, the material and technology employed, and the semiotic codes derived from a sociocultural framework (Elleström 2010a, 7-8; Stöckl 2016, 6; 9).

The definition of *basic or prototypical modes*, for example image, sound, and language, in analogy to the senses is too simple to be adequate because perceived phenomena transcend individual senses and do not correlate with particular artifacts (Bateman 2016, 41). Language can be seen in print and heard in speech, but even if considered as two different modes, the distinction according to the senses is not as clear as it seems because, for example, the perception of a speaker's face has an impact on what is heard (ibid.; Kress 2009, 58). Symbolic speech uses sound in a very different way than indexically specific, non-vocal and non-musical sound, or syntactically complex music (Stöckl 2016, 12). In a very general sense, an image and printed language share visual quality but differ to some extent in their ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions, such as spatial and temporal representation, the assertion or negation of a fact, and the structuring of visual or verbal signifiers (differences teased out, for example, in Magritte's painting *This is not a pipe*).

The material quality and components of each mode have potentials and limitations of making meaning in sociocultural situations, the so-called '*affordance*.' Sometimes,

a mode is called a '*resource*,' but more specifically, resources of a mode circumscribe its affordance, as do lines, shapes, color, etc., and the spatial relationships between these in images (Kress 2010, 82). Potentials need to be balanced against limitations: sound conveys attitude in speech, but speech can hardly represent simultaneity; color may express mood in painting, but painting cannot represent logical sequence very well – unless diagrammatic signs such as arrows are used (Kress 2009, 58; Bateman et al. 2017, 120-121). It seems that Kress dramatizes the change of affordances: "The uses of mode constantly reshape its affordances along the lines of social requirements" (2009, 58). The use of pitch to mark questions in English but different lexemes in Chinese has hardly changed over decades and therefore is more stable than Kress suggests.

If image, speech, and pitch are modes, what is the position of the media?<sup>2</sup> Social semiotics considers two aspects of *media* as relevant:

whereas 'medium' (in the singular) is commonly discussed in terms similarly [sic] to discussions of 'materiality,' i.e. the stuff in which communication is inscribed, or the 'in between' that carries communication, 'media' (in the plural) are more commonly characterised in the context of 'the mass media' or 'communications media' that are inherently linked more strongly to social institutions and the distribution of communicative events. (Bateman et al. 2017, 103)

This definition of the media resembles that of communication studies, which conceive of the media as the material basis or technology that "function as intermediaries that allow for the production, distribution, and reception of semiotic signs, thus enabling communication" (Rippl and Etter 2013, 192). Social semiotics, however, does not conceive of media as neutral channels of communication as they have an impact on modes and meanings. Basic modes need a material basis in order to be perceivable in the first place and can be realized in different material media, which allow for different forms of communication: an image can take the medial form of a sketch, a painting, or a photograph (Stöckl 2016, 8-9), each of which differ to some degree in the means and structures they offer to sign-makers, the ways of representing ideas or the world, and the forms of distribution and interpretation. In other words, meaning is generated in medially shaped communicative practices through modes 'inscribed' in material media (Bateman et al. 2017, 103; Stöckl 2016, 8-9). Bateman et al. (2017, 103-104) coined the term 'canvas' for the material (or virtual) interface of a medium, the dimensions of which shape communicative situations: "materialities may support either static or dynamic (re-)presentations" (e.g. photo versus film; Bateman et al. 2017, 104); materialities can be two- or three-dimensional (page or performance), transient or permanent (speech versus print), and can require the roles of a participant and/or an observer (face-to-face interaction versus reading).

In order to generate meaning, the '*design*,' i.e., choice and combination of modes in constructing a text, has to be combined with markers of genre and discourse. The '*text*' is a multimodal, semiotic entity which is considered as a complete unity due to

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2 There is a considerable – and confusing – overlap between modes in multimodality and basic media in Media Studies, which often define image, sound, text, number, and gesture as basic media that constitute elementary means of communication within generic and discursive cultural frameworks (Schröter 2014, 215).

its formal cohesion, semantic coherence, and framings by users of a certain social group (Kress 2010, 147-148). 'Genre' is "much more than a passive classificatory device: the existence of a genre in a culture is considered a relatively stable communicative strategy both for achieving some relevant social purposes and for allowing its practitioners to display that they are attempting to achieve those purposes" (Bateman 2016, 60-61). Genre as a communicative strategy frames texts in the shape of both formal markers and the social roles of its users, e.g., particular generic formulae for the beginning and ending frame the reading of a fairy tale as well as the distribution of asking and answering questions in an interview (ibid.; Kress 2010, 113; 152). In addition to the textual and social forms of genres, texts are embedded in discourses. Kress defines '*discourse*' in a rather loose way as the institutionalized production of knowledge that offers structured resources "for constructing epistemological coherence" in and through semiotic objects, such as texts or buildings (2010, 110). Broad definitions certainly support the wide application of the model to all sorts of multimodal texts. However, this smooth definition of a framed semiotic entity assumes an ideal case and ignores the potential ambiguity, discrepancy, and instability of multimodal ensembles or intermedial relationships (cf. Louvel 2011, 15; Louvel 2013, 13; 27).

How do these factors contribute to *multimodal communication*? The construction and interpretation of a multimodal text needs to pay attention to the composition or design of modes. There is a consensus that the meanings of different modes do not simply add up in a text. (Multimodal approaches seem to rule out the assumption that diverse modes and meanings may not add up at all). The combination of modes contributes more to meaning than individual choices within modes (Jewitt et al. 2016, 24-25). The composition of modes multiplies meanings, but how these meanings are 'made' and integrated is a matter of debate that develops on a sliding scale between the two poles of system and process.

Systemic or 'grammatical' models define the affordances of modes and develop prototypical relationships between modes based on particular meanings derived from intrinsic properties of modes and their combinations (Bucher 2011, 128; Stöckl 2016, 5). Stöckl (2016, 23-30) suggests specific steps for analysis: the identification of textual and intertextual structures, the stages of (communicative) actions, the structure of topics within frames of knowledge, and the multimodal relationships according to the criteria of rhetorical, logical, and discursive coherence as well as formal cohesion. In developing systems along these lines, some multimodal and intermedial approaches overlap (cf. Nöth 2016; Kress and van Leeuwen 2010; Rajewsky 2002; Stöckl 2016; Wolf 1999).<sup>3</sup>

According to Bucher (2011, 129-130), a typology assumes that individual modes possess meanings of their own, which can then be related to each other, but comes up with examples where neither text nor image are understandable on their own. Bucher sets up his dynamic-pragmatic approach in contrast to the systemic one: here, meanings are less the result of elements added up in typical ways but rather the result of processes of interpretation in communicative contexts. Interaction is neither located in

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3 Bucher (2011, 132-35) considers Kress and van Leeuwen's *Grammar of Visual Design* (2010) as a third way between systems and processes, but the title mentioned tends to focus on system, whereas Kress's recent monograph on multimodality (2010) presents a comprehensive, multifaceted model that grants importance to individual interest and interpretive process (see below).

the relationship between the modes of a text nor in the relationship between meaning-makers but in the relationship between the multimodal text and the recipient (Bucher 2011, 146). Reception works through non-linear and discontinuous problem-solving. Core problems of the recipient are in general terms for all forms of multimodal communication: identifying the 'author' and the form of communication, finding orientation in the process of communication, discovering the hierarchy in the structure of elements, navigating from part to part, framing and selecting meaningful elements, and combining elements in top-down and bottom-up interactive processing (Bucher 2011, 140-143).

Kress (2010) and Bateman et al. (2017) include system and process. In Kress' recent model of social semiotics, the participants in communication are considered to be social agents with choice from a vast array of modes, media, genres, and discourses in a fairly unstable and fluid contemporary environment. Individual interest is of key importance for the multimodal design of texts. In the framework of discourses and genres, a social agent assumes the role of the rhetor, who designs or orchestrates the multimodal ensemble of a text, which serves as a prompt for interpreters, who 'read' these texts according to their own design, framed through their own interest and engagement (Kress 2010, 132-33; 162-169; 175-76). Resources of modes and their affordances are culturally produced and individually reproduced and re-shaped (Kress 2010, 79-83). If Kress stresses the reader's design and interest in meaning-making, how important is the rhetor's design for successful communication? How much choice is there in the design of reception, and how has this changed with the advent of multimedia on television and computers? Certainly, 'monomodal' news or academic articles and a multimodal website prompt linear as opposed to non-linear ways of 'reading,' but it does not follow that a monomodal text forecloses choice. Readers may not read an article in a linear, sequential fashion but jump from the headline to the conclusion of the article, then go back to the introduction and select a few paragraphs for perusal. That said, the concept of 'readerly design' should not be mistaken as freedom from any constraints – unless design violates norms of communities of interpretation, genres, and discourses through ignorance or reading against the grain. Some readers take fiction for reality, but a novel, while inviting various interpretations, is not supposed to be read like a history book. In an operation theatre, for example, the nurse's design should not deviate too far from the head surgeon's and the patient's interest.

Bateman et al. (2017) consider defining the affordance of modes and meaning-making as individual problem-solving as too fuzzy. They stress the relevance of a community of users and of discourse semantics that fosters the interpretation of semiotic modes in context – rather than pragmatics – as core elements of semiotic meaning-making. The essential conditions of a working communication situation are: "1. we must know (or assume) some particular range of material regularities that are to be considered to be carrying semiotic activity; 2. this knowledge must be shared (possibly unequally) among a community of users, and 3. a scheme for deriving interpretations from the material regularities identified must also be shared" (Bateman et al. 2017, 86).

In particular, discourse semantics provides "interpretative mechanisms" that belong to "any semiotic mode as relating particular deployments of 'semiotically

charged' material to the contextualised communicative purposes they can take up" (Bateman et al. 2017, 116). According to Bateman et al. (ibid., 118-119), for example, Kress overgeneralizes the difference between writing and image, e.g. in students' sequential descriptions and spatial sketches of biological cell and nucleus. While Kress' general distinction holds true, they point out that in a scientific diagram the relative proportion and position of cell and nucleus would be meaningful in a measurable, objective sense that the sketch clearly lacks. Thus, discourse semantics allows for greater precision in the analysis of the meaning of and interaction between modes.

Since many, if not most, forms of communication are multimodal, concepts and implications of social semiotics deserve more investigation in approaches to teaching and learning English through all kinds of (inter-)cultural artifacts. In the following, we will give an overview of works on teaching multiliteracy through multimodal media, irrespective of their systematic foundation in a semiotic framework.

### 3. Multiliteracies

The internationally acknowledged concept of 'multiple literacies' as developed by the New London Group (2000) and elaborated on by other scholars, especially more recently by Kalantzis and Cope (2012), has expanded the pedagogical goal of teaching literacies: "This set of competences can be basically defined as understanding how certain text types (from print to visual media) create specific meaning via their generic media properties and/or their interplay with other media" (Volkman 2015, 237f.). In their latest publication, *Literacies* (2012), Kalantzis and Cope have shortened the term 'multiliteracies' by omitting the prefix 'multi,' because this term already contains all "communication demands of the twenty-first century" (2012, 13). However, as the overwhelming number of publications still use the term 'multiliteracies,' we do not regard the term as obsolete. Very often multiliteracies are associated with the skills of dealing with nonlinear texts, with visual or hybrid encodings in more than one semiotic systems. The implementation of internet, social media and mobile devices requires new teaching and learning methods. The advent of new media, multimodal literature, new socio-cultural challenges, and the inclusion of neglected reader groups have shifted attention to multiliteracies in the EFL classroom (cf. Viebrock 2016, 13). Learners do not only have to be able to read and write in the classical sense, they also have to be able to decode and produce all kinds of combinations of different semiotic systems.

Visual media have always had a place in teaching English, but their functions have changed over time. Historically, the use of pictures and images has always had a firmly established position in the EFL classroom (for a detailed historical outline see Hecke and Surkamp 2015, 19ff.). In the 19<sup>th</sup> century and in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, pictures were mostly regarded as an integral part of making learning more vivid and interesting. Images were seen as conducive to motivation, repetition of information and greater attentiveness. After the communicative turn in the 1970s and 1980s, pictures primarily served to create speaking and writing incentives in the foreign language. In the 1990s, with the advent of intercultural learning focusing on intercultural communicative competence, images were primarily used to provide insights into other cultures.

The progressive medialization of everyday life has had an impact on dealing with pictures and images in the EFL classroom. Images are increasingly viewed under semiotic aspects and perceived as independent meaningful 'texts,' which provide insights into 'external,' always already highly mediatized realities and must be decoded in an interpretative way. Today the variety of genres, the multimodality and the multimodality of text and material combination reflect the large number of forms of representation and symbolization involved in the development of cultural ideas, interpretive paradigms, and ways of acting (see Kress 2010; Hallet 2011, 107ff.).

Over the past decades innumerable publications on using visuals, images and (moving) pictures in the EFL classroom have been released, among them books on film (e.g. Blell et al. 2016; Lütge 2012; Viebrock 2016), picture books (e.g. Bland 2013; Bland and Lütge 2013)<sup>4</sup>, pictures in EFL teaching (e.g. Hecke and Surkamp 2015), graphic novels (e.g. Dong 2012; Ludwig and Pointner 2013), visual literacy (e.g. Michler and Reimann 2016), intermedial, (inter-)cultural literacy (e.g. Blell 2015), computer-assisted language learning (Heim and Ritter 2012; Marenzi 2014), gamification (Farber 2015; Gee 2007; Reinders 2012), etc. They all somehow relate to multimodal literacies even if many of them do not explicitly use the terms 'multimodality' or 'multiliteracies.' In the following the present state of research will be presented.

### Course Books

It is not surprising that the omnipresent cultural role of images is also reflected in teaching methods and the design of course books. One of the most convincing starting points for future discussions is Wolfgang Hallet's (2015a, 33ff.) approach, who – referring to Marcus Reinfried's taxonomy (cited in Hallet 2015a) – describes the different purposes pictures have in course books. He identifies numerous functions, such as the following:

- illustrative function, i.e., mere additions to the text
- semantic function for better understanding of contents, e.g. new vocabulary
- representational function, i.e., extracts of the target culture (photography or photorealistic graphic representation)
- cognitive function of making linguistic structures accessible to understanding until they are firmly installed in students' brains, e.g., timelines for learning tenses
- instructive function, i.e., clearly defined icons, pictograms and symbols which guide students through tasks, e.g. a pen for writing tasks
- aesthetic function, i.e., paintings and visual artefacts of more or less famous artists.

These functions show that there is a very specific viewing culture in EFL course books, not in the sense of a developed methodology of image comprehension but a purely didactic instrumentalization. It will be important to teach multiliteracies to student teachers at university in order to exploit to the maximum the multimodal material in and beyond course books.

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4 Since 2014 there is also the peer-reviewed online journal *Children's Literature in English Language Education* (CLELE) for scholars, teacher educators and practitioners involved in using and researching children's literature in the field of learning English with a strong focus on picture books: <http://clelejournal.org>.



### **Picture Books**

Since the advent of teaching English in German elementary schools, picture books have become very important in English language teaching methodologies for younger learners (Bland 2013; Mourão 2015). In a picture book, illustrations are as important as the words in telling the story. The interplay of narrative and illustration is integral to the book as a whole. Thus, picture books have a high potential for developing literary and visual literacy. While most picture books are written for younger children, in recent years, a number of excellent picture books for upper elementary and middle school readers have been published. What is more, the definition and categories of 'children's picture books' have also expanded in recent years. Especially for young learners with no or only limited exposure to the target language, stories and storytelling using original picture books offer a tremendous potential for developing not only literacy and (intercultural) communicative competence in the foreign language but also literacy, literary literacy and visual literacy (Bland 2015, 76ff.; Hempel 2015). Already in the 1970s, Bader stated: "A picture book is text, illustrations, total design; [...] a social, cultural historical product and foremost an experience for a child. As art form it hinges on the interdependence of pictures and words, on the simultaneous display of two facing pages, and on the drama of the turning of the page. On its own terms its possibilities are limitless" (Bader 1976, 1). Therefore, becoming acquainted with the act of interpreting picture books prepares students for dealing with comics, graphic novels, films and other multimodal and multimedial texts as well as multiliteracy in general (cf. Meyer 2013).

### **Multimodal Novels**

Since the 1990s, there has been a tendency in literary texts to integrate a wide range of non-verbal modes and non-fictional features, such as photographs, drawings, newspaper excerpts, etc. (cf. Hallet 2015b, 283). By supplementing the written word with other elements, these novels match the media use and reality of today's students at school and university, and may appeal to reluctant readers and learners of English. The multimodal novel has made its entry into EFL methodology in the last few years (e.g. Hallet 2015b). The monomodality of traditional genres such as literary novels, academic papers, official documents and reports has given way to texts which present diagrams, color illustrations and different typographies that may link to voice and video files. Thus, language teachers need to move from a purely linguistic explanatory frame of the reading process to a semiotic perspective in which the combination of visual material (as defined above) and verbal text calls for a multimodal interaction with the artifact.

In multimodal novels the textual world that is created and the narrative world that the reader constructs are fed from a variety of semiotic resources perceived through different senses. This way narration leads to a synchronization of/ or oscillation between reading and looking, or, as Hallet puts it, transmodal reading is characterized by the fact that the fictional world and thus the meaning of the text must be synthesized from different symbolic narrative forms (cf. Hallet 2014, 7).

### **Comics, Graphic Novels, Mangas**

Comics, graphic novels, and mangas have recently attracted more academic attention (see e.g. Elsner et al. 2013; McCloud 2006; Norris and Maier 2014; Serafini 2014;

Wolk 2008). In the past, comic books were often regarded with considerable suspicion but in "recent years, the proliferation of research on comics and graphic narratives has endowed this medium with some legitimacy" (Dong 2012, 5) or, as Wolk puts it, "comics have grown up" (Wolk 2008, 3). In the course of opening up the contemporary literary canon, comics and graphic novels have been increasingly acknowledged as artistic products worthy of scholarly attention (Hescher 2016; Ludwig and Pointner 2013). They are nowadays an integral part of EFL teaching (Hallet 2012; Ludwig and Pointner 2013; Elsner et al. 2013) not only in the fields of autobiographics (Hallet 2012; Ludwig 2015), gender studies (Dong 2012, 105-145), teaching and learning about 9/11 (Meyer 2012; Eisenmann 2013), but also in the form of literary adaptations, e.g. in teaching Shakespeare with comics, graphic novels and mangas (Fischer 2013; Grimm 2014).

The terminology in comic studies is by no means uniform. Some scholars (e.g. Fletcher-Spear et al. 2013; Ludwig and Pointer 2013) support the view that comics are a (popular) medium in their own right, although an independent media theory of comics and graphic novels has not yet been conceptualized and seems to be a desideratum (for further discussion see e.g. Hescher 2016, 30ff.). Furthermore, a clear distinction between comics, graphic novels and mangas has not yet been made. Very often Scott McCloud's definition of comics as "juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer" (2009, 20) is also applied to graphic novels, which can be defined as "book-length, high-quality comic books that introduce children and adults to a wide range of literary fiction and non-fiction subjects [...]" (Burdge 2006, 166). In addition to rich cultural knowledge and multiliteracy promoted through these highly diversified genres, they support the acquisition of all four sub-skills, i.e. speaking, listening, writing and reading, and thus help to achieve a general improvement in communicative competence (cf. Burwitz-Melzer 2013, 63).

## Film

Films are a widely appreciated medium in foreign language classrooms and have been employed in EFL teaching contexts for more than fifty years. Numerous publications have supported this development in recent years (e.g. Lütge 2012; Hecke and Surkamp 2015; Blell et al. 2016; Viebrock 2016). Language teachers have been using feature films, documentaries, etc., in their classes for decades, and there are a number of reasons why film is an excellent teaching and learning tool to enhance media literacy (cf. Eisenmann 2015, 318ff.). Films are motivating and provide students with examples of authentic and varied English used outside of the classroom. Films also enhance the learners' language skills by enabling them to listen to language while having visual clues to support verbal comprehension.

However, film literacy is more than listening plus viewing. According to Blell and Lütge (2004) it comprises four dimensions: perceptive competences, aesthetic and critical competences, intercultural competences and communicative competences. In their recently published volume *Film in den Fächern der sprachlichen Bildung* Blell et al. outline four areas of competences for foreign language learning defined as film-related language use, film analysis, contextualizing films linguistically and culturally and creating films (cf. Blell et al. 2016). All these competences, which are based on

world knowledge as well as knowledge about the constructions of film, can be summarized under the term multimodal literacies. Only recently have scholars of TEFL perceived films as multimodal texts which combine visual images and sound in a very particular way (Bateman and Schmidt 2014; Viebrock 2016, 13). The combination of visual and auditory semiotic systems enhances the development of multiliteracies.

### **Internet**

The worldwide impact of the internet and the extensive use of computers at schools have had a critical influence on educational environments (cf. Becker et al. 2016). Already ten years ago Coiro et al. noted about the influence of the internet in the *Handbook of Research on New Literacies*: "No previous technology for literacy has been adopted by so many, in so many different places, in such a short period, and with such profound consequences. No previous technology for literacy permits the immediate dissemination of even newer technologies of literacy to every person on the internet by connecting to a single link on the screen. Finally, no previous technology for literacy has provided access to so much information that is so useful, to so many people, in the history of the world" (Coiro et al. 2008, 2f.). That said, information overkill and misleading – or downright manipulative – information abounds on the Internet and more than ever requires sophisticated skills of selecting and evaluating information: in other words, the exponential growth of information meets the learners' comparably slow growth due to limited cognitive and educational resources.

The so-called Computer-assisted Language Learning (CALL) and Mobile-assisted Language Learning (MALL) refer to a variety of technology uses for language learning (cf. Heim and Ritter 2012; Rösler and Würffel 2014). The relevant technology includes CD-ROMS (containing interactive multimedia and other language exercises), electronic reference materials such as online dictionaries and grammar training programs, and electronic communication in the target language through email, blogs, wikis etc. (Eisenmann 2016).

Although today it may seem commonplace to write and read from a computer screen, little has been said about the implications of the new communication technologies and the teaching of language with regard to multiliteracies (Eisenmann and Ludwig 2016). By using more and more computer mediated communication (CMC), new types of texts are emerging that require not only the mechanical ability to decode graphemes from the printed page but also the ability to glean meaning from particular signs (e.g. emoticons), arrangements, layouts, coloring, linking possibilities, etc., which are available through the internet and in the products that incorporate multimodality, such as electronic dictionaries, computer games, (music) video clips, cartoons etc.

Computer-assisted e-learning has developed further into blended learning, a combination of online and face-to-face instruction. Digital learning is developing towards mobile learning, which ideally promotes autonomous learning independent from time and place (for a detailed description of the potential of edu-apps in the EFL classroom see Grimm and Hammer 2014).

### **Gamification**

While using games for supporting education and enhancing language learning is not a new phenomenon, the use of digital games is comparatively recent. Since the 1990s, there has been digital game-based learning (cf. Prensky 2001) and didactically

prepared language learning games (cf. Seidl 2015, 294f.), whose affective added value should help the learning progress. As a pedagogical strategy, gamification is basically new, but it has been used successfully in the business world. The basic idea is to make a task more interesting by using game mechanics, because the application of gaming metaphors to real-life (business) tasks influences the user's behaviour, improves motivation, and enhances engagement. Gamification has been associated with the increasing popularity of video games. It can be defined as the application of typical elements of game playing (performance of roles, rules of play, point scoring, etc.) to other areas of activity, specifically to engage users in problem solving (cf. Jones 2016, 157f.). The use of digital games presents us with a unique set of engaging tools and techniques based upon game mechanics, such as competition, narrative, missions and quests. Gamification uses game elements and game design techniques in non-game contexts (cf. Werbach and Hunter 2012). Despite the diversity of existing definitions, game designers and scholars agree that fun and engagement are at the heart of the gamification experience (cf. Gee 2007, 65; Farber 2015, 31; 75; Prensky 2001, 106; Zichermann and Linder 2013, xvii; 70).

Gee takes a more comprehensive approach to leveraging games for education. He does not only take into account game mechanics, but the entire gaming experience, including game characters, the narrative, the decisions a player has to make, how it 'feels' to play a game, the difficulty of the game, and many other aspects. Taking the interplay between all these aspects as a basis, he deduces 36 learning principles from video games (see Gee 2007, 1-15). The suggested principles should be applied to learning in school by using games again or by creating tasks according to those learning principles. Gee's main argument for gamification in the classroom is that students "are learning a new literacy" (2007, 17), which is by no means restricted to literacy as the ability to read and write but a step into today's "communicational system," in which "images, symbols, graphs, diagrams, artifacts, and many other visual symbols are particularly significant" (ibid.).

It is crucial to understand that gamification is not about using video games in school – it is the gamification of education itself. "[D]on't use games to teach students, turn school into a game," McGonigal demands (2011, 128). The idea is to borrow the key mechanics and participation strategies from multiplayer gaming to radically recreate formal learning environments (cf. Schallegger 2015, 386). Gamification projects in schools do not even need to be digital. Sheldon emphasizes this point by saying that a gamified classroom "can be designed in its entirety without ever requiring a student to turn on a computer" (2012, 210). Sheldon (2012) and Farber (2015) adopted Gee's view in the sense that gamification is neither about using video games in the classroom nor about technology, but about bringing learning principles from games to learning multimodal communication (cf. Sheldon 2012, 18). There are typical elements which are often referred to such as challenge, chance, competition, cooperation, feedback, rewards, winning or progression. These game elements can easily be extracted from a game content and applied to almost any field of EFL teaching. The idea is to take the engaging elements of gaming and implement them in the language learning process.

## Conclusion and Desiderata

The multiliteracies approach required by the multimodality of modern media has redefined goals of learning. Using multimodal communication every day through mobile devices and computers does not necessarily lead to self-reflexive and critical multimodal literacy if the stunning quantity of visual information trumps sophisticated analysis, interpretation, and comprehensive discursive participation, which should be the goal of all school education (cf. Hallet 2015a, 52).

Most of the above-mentioned methods and materials have already been implemented in many EFL classrooms, often, however, without resorting to a sustained theory of multimodality and intermediality, which could help expand and specify concepts and questions for more sophisticated analyses. Gamification, however, is a rather new phenomenon. Generally, two desiderata need to be addressed: Firstly, the integration of semiotic approaches to multimodality and intermediality and a comprehensive educational approach to multiliteracy in foreign language learning. Secondly, models of teaching multiliteracy have to be taught and implemented at university in order to enable the transfer to schools.

## 4. Contributions

All of the approaches to multimodality in face-to-face interaction, mass media, arts, text-books, and teaching scenarios are clearly of interest to studying English and acquiring multiliteracy. This thematic issue focuses on acquiring and practicing multiliteracy through multimodal and graphic novels, computer games, and the production of videos. Most of the contributions fruitfully combine a multimodal with an intermedial approach in cultural and historical contexts, offering rich reading experiences and many opportunities of rewarding work inside and outside the classroom towards developing critical media literacy and intercultural communicative competence.

In his contribution **Wolfgang Hallet** offers a comprehensive and systematic approach to multimodal fiction with respect to the cognitive construction of fictional worlds as well as the promotion of metafictional and metasemiotic insight next to epistemological skepticism. **Janice Bland** explores the teaching potential of Brian Selznick's multimodal blending of picturebook and novel in *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* with respect to reading literature in the context of intertextuality and intermediality. **Christian Ludwig** reveals how Mark Siegel's graphic novel *Sailor Twain or the Mermaid in the Hudson* (2012) creates a multi-level multimodal environment which comes very close to digital texts, using images (paintings), gestures (e.g. in public speeches), music (e.g. choir performances), as well as spoken and written language (linguistic landscapes, journals, newspaper articles, letters, and books). This graphic narrative is both multimodal and highly intermedial, drawing on a great amount of texts in the American cultural archive. **Achim Hesch** pays close attention to the interrelationship between the multimodal design and narrative layers in the intermedial construction of the metropolis Berlin in the 1920s and 1930s in Lute's graphic and historical *Berlin* novels. **Nicole Maruo-Schröder** explores the affordances of photography and graphic drawings that are combined in the graphic travel narrative, adventure story, report, and memoir *The Photographer*, which documents the Doctors without Borders' mission in Afghanistan in 1986. Its

conjunction of various genres and modes invites reflection on differences and the blurring of boundaries between word and image, subjectivity and objectivity, fiction and report, experience and memory in the context of the encounter between East and West. **Claudia Deetjen** nicely complements Maruo-Schröder's contribution on the *Photographer* as she reflects on Joe Sacco's comic journalism in the short text "The Unwanted," a critical response to the ideological discourse on refugees as a dangerous mass in the media. **Claudia Müller** suggests using so-called Serious Games with a specific educational purpose, viz. for Global Education in the EFL Classroom. The gameplay of a serious game requires that the player fulfills a mission while analyzing the relationships between various modes of representation and communication of characters coping with events in particular settings. The player is asked to proceed from recognition to judgement and action via his or her avatar in the virtual environment, for example by supporting individuals that need to escape political oppression and immigrate to a safe state. **Carmen Becker** and **Gabriele Blell** have developed a project of digital storytelling for student teachers. Their production of videos about relevant aspects of studying and teacher training profits from being close to the learners' private digital communication but requires the systematic implementation and reflection of multimodal meaning functions, such as agency, reference and interest, multimodal textual structure, and context.

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