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Lord of the Flies as graphic novel: multimodal pedagogies for prescribed literature in high schools

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Abstract

In this study, the affordances of a multimodal pedagogy for teaching the prescribed novel, *Lord of the Flies*, are investigated. The research site is a Grade 10 Visual Art classroom, with six learners serving as the core group. It involves a five-week teaching intervention, whereby participants are required to re-design or *re-semiotise* a particular scene from the novel into a comic book, or any multimodal narrative that includes both written and visual textual features. Participants' works are analysed in terms of their modal features − size, shape, colour, contour, texture, written text and overall design − and their semiotic relationship to the original, print-based novel. Finally, the researcher determines which text-related meanings or interpretations are gained, lost or transformed during this process of re-semiotisation, and discusses the possible implications of these for classroom practice.

This research may be described as *classroom ethnography* (Bloome, 2012) within the qualitative paradigm, offering an account of participants' actions in a real-life, everyday context. Data is collected through ethnographic techniques such as field notes, diary entries, artefact collection and, most crucially, interviews which are conducted before and after the re-semiotisation process. To analyse this data, the researcher draws extensively from literature in the fields of multimodality and social semiotics, particularly the seminal works of Kress (1993; 2000; 2005), Newfield (2009; 2014) and The New London Group (1996). Emphasis is placed on how participants use *semiotic resources* − in this case, materials acquired in the classroom, from the internet or other domains − to re-shape written texts so that they become more meaningful and accessible for learning.

Finally, the findings chapter presents the multimodal pedagogy as a useful outlet for learners' "own desires, fantasies and interests in the semiotic chain" (Stein, 2003, p. 115). Since participants are positioned centrally within the semiotic space, they can become self-regulated and active agents of meaning making − discovering a canonical text's themes, symbols, character relations or other sub-textual nuances in and through the visual mode. In the interests of continued research and application in the classroom, a *label method* is suggested to both track participants' gains and losses in meaning − upon completion of the entire process − and to determine their level of engagement with the novel's content. This involves presenting each learner's artefacts visually, with several labels pointing to the features that *speak back* most clearly to the source text.

Keywords: ● multimodal pedagogy ● social semiotics ● re-semiotisation ● chain of semiosis / meaning-making ● visual and written modes ● literature teaching and learning