

**ACCOUNTING FOR MULTIMODALITY IN AN EFL TEXTBOOK:
ANALYSING ACTIVITIES AND SUGGESTING WAYS TO APPROACH
MULTIMODAL TEXTS**

**DESVENDANDO MULTIMODALIDADE EM UM LIVRO DIDÁTICO DE ILE:
ANALISANDO ATIVIDADES E SUGERINDO FORMAS DE ABORDAGEM DE
TEXTOS MULTIMODAIS**

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Abstract: *Contributing to the discussion studies that refer to approaching multimodal texts in the EFL classroom have raised, this paper focuses on the exploration of the issue specifically related to the use of EFL textbooks. A brief overview of some of the main relevant literature is presented, followed by an analysis of some excerpts of an EFL textbook. One of the concerns in this paper is to reinforce the view that EFL learners need to be able to effectively deal with multimodal texts and that EFL teachers thus must be prepared to help their students with such a task. Adding to that view, a more specific matter here is to emphasise that departing from the work with multimodal texts inserted in the textbooks, available to use in the EFL classroom can be of great help in that endeavour. Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996) framework for the analysis of images and visual compositions is referred to in the analysis presented in this paper.*

Keywords: *Multimodal texts; EFL textbook; EFL classroom.*

Resumo: *Contribuindo para a discussão levantada em estudos que se referem à abordagem de textos multimodais na sala de aula de ILE, este trabalho foca a exploração dessa questão especialmente no que concerne a livros didáticos de ILE. Uma breve revisão da literatura relevante na área é apresentada, seguida de uma análise de alguns excertos de um livro didático de ILE. Uma das preocupações neste trabalho é reforçar a visão de que aprendizes de ILE precisam ser capazes de lidar efetivamente com textos multimodais e que professores de ILE devem estar preparados para auxiliar seus alunos com essa tarefa. Além disso, um ponto mais específico aqui é enfatizar que, partir do trabalho com textos multimodais disponíveis nos livros didáticos, pode ajudar muito nessa empreitada. A análise apresentada faz referência às categorias de Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) para a análise de imagens e composições visuais.*

Palavras-chave: *Textos multimodais; Livro didático de ILE; Sala de aula de ILE.*

1 Introduction

The development of new ways of interacting socially makes imperative the emergence of new literacies. Discussions relating to this issue, including the publication of papers presenting theoretical aspects and practical applications have been frequent since the mid-1990s, when the New London Group (1996) published an article on *the pedagogy of multiliteracies*, of which Cope and Kalantzis (2009) later reframe some aspects. A main premise

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in this new pedagogy relates to active citizenship – it is “centred in learners as agents in their own knowledge processes, capable of contributing their own as well as negotiating the differences between one community and the next” (COPE; KALANTZIS, 2009, p. 172). Being the agent in one’s own knowledge processes in contemporary society no doubt involves a lot more than interaction through verbal texts only. It is, therefore, urgent to go beyond traditional literacy practices and take into consideration semiotic resources other than verbal language, such as images, graphics, sounds and gestures, among others that realize meanings and are very frequently integrated with verbal texts (STENGLING; IEDEMA, 2001; UNSWORTH, 2001).

As to the role of school in actually engaging in this new pedagogy, the simple insertion of multimodal texts in class materials is not enough to guarantee that learners will develop the multimodal literacy skills they need to function well in contemporary societies. Since the publication of the New London Group’s article in 1996, several papers have been published that point to the need to equip teachers and students with adequate tools for analysing multimodal texts, which involve the knowledge and use of appropriate metalanguage (STENGLIN; IEDEMA, 2001; UNSWORTH, 2001, 2006; ROYCE, 2007; HEBERLE, 2010; BEZERRA, 2011). Most – if not all – of them refer to Kress and van Leeuwen’s (1996, 2006) *Grammar of visual design* (henceforth GVD), which presents a framework for the analysis of visual images based on Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), to be described in the next section.

That teachers be in charge of contributing to students’ development of skills to better understand and produce multimodal texts is not debatable. However, it seems reasonable to extend such a responsibility to other professionals whose work may also affect the implementation of didactic sequences in classrooms, as is the case of textbook authors and editors, among others. Such a contention is in line with Dionisio and Vasconcelos’s (2013) contributions in reading studies on multimodality, in which they also take into consideration the cognitive aspects of learning and comprehension.

Having briefly established the field where this text belongs, it is time to set its aims and mention what will be done here in order to try to achieve them. This paper was written with two main objectives, of which the first is to reiterate, and contribute to, the aforementioned notion that teachers need to be prepared to help their students to deal effectively with multimodal texts. The second one is to emphasise that the production of textbooks which take into consideration recent research on multimodality may be of great help in that endeavour. As to specific objectives, the first one is to offer an example of how a recently published EFL series

produced in Brazil presents activities with multimodal texts that may be used to foster the development of multiliteracy skills. An analysis of some of the activities from one volume of the series is thus presented. That leads to the second specific objective: to demonstrate how teachers can, having as a starting point the multimodal texts and the corresponding activities proposed for the visual compositions in the EFL textbook, add their own contributions in order to help students in the development of skills to approach multimodal genres. Finally, having in mind EFL textbook authors and editors, as well as teachers as didactic material producers, the third specific objective is to signal the need to develop textbooks, among other classroom materials, that take into account the urgency of students' multimodal literacy skills development. Hopefully this paper may also contribute as to how that could be achieved/improved.

In order to reach the aforementioned goals, first, a concise overview of the literature on multimodality is presented in the next section, followed by a summarised account of Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996) framework for the analysis of images and visual compositions. Then an analysis will be included of three multimodal texts from a textbook designed to teach EFL in regular schools in Brazil. Besides the analysis, suggestions will be made both in terms of editing to the unit excerpts concerning the material addressed at the students and of guidance for teachers on how to enhance students' multimodal literacy skills departing from the activities proposed in the textbook analysed and from any editing suggested.

2 Multimodality and EFL teaching

This section presents a brief review of some of the literature on multimodality and EFL teaching. Of special interest here are publications aimed at helping teachers and learners to cope with the demands of handling multimodal texts in class.

In working with multimodality, the notion that every text is inextricably linked with its context is supported here and it is thus imperative to work with a concept of genre. Meurer (2002) defines genres as

reasonably stable types of text, either oral or written, formal or informal, which can be recognized because of their rhetorical structure and function, that is, their organization and purpose. It is important to pinpoint that genres are characterized not so much by a *fixed* set of denotative semiotic components – made up of linguistic and, frequently, also visual elements – in a given sequential organization, but by co-occurring *clusters* of both denotative and

connotative semiotic components used to achieve given purposes in recognized social milieus. (MEURER, 2002, p. 65, author's highlights.)

Having this definition in mind, the analysis of any text must consider that all genres, multimodal or not, are contextually situated, that is, they are produced by someone with specific objectives and target readers, under certain circumstances that refer to specific sociocultural, political and economic contexts.

With the aim of introducing EFL teachers in the basics of multimodal text analysis, Stenglin and Iedema (2001) present a chapter in which they offer both theory and practical application examples. First, they describe, in a very reader-friendly way, the analysis framework from the GVD; then they actually demonstrate how to apply the set of tools reviewed, by presenting an analysis of some images and discussing how this can be implemented in the classroom. Following Kress and van Leeuwen (1996), a main concern in that chapter is to endorse the view that the meaning in images is socially constructed and thus not obvious or easily accessible to anyone.

In the same line, Heberle (2010) reinforces the need for teacher awareness as to how meaning making is realized in social interaction. She also introduces the metafunctions proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996), discusses the notion of multimodal communicative competence (ROYCE, 2007) and suggests interesting ways to foster the development of multimodal skills in the EFL classroom, especially with teenagers. Her suggestions for the implementation of activities to explore visual-verbal meanings include the collaborative organization of a picture data bank, by teacher and students, and ways to approach multimodal aspects in video games and in advertisements.

Bezerra's (2011) article also aims at demonstrating the relevance of a well-informed exploration of multimodal texts in the EFL classroom. He contends that "one of the aims of a project for multiliteracies [is] that students should have a chance to be introduced to descriptions of images, and other semiotic resources, in much the same way that their verbal literacy is fostered in schools" (BEZERRA, 2011, p. 169). He also presents an overview of the metalanguage from the GVD and then applies it to the analysis of a movie poster.

The three aforementioned papers all shed light on the urgency that students develop multiliteracy skills and on possible ways in which teachers can approach multimodal texts in their classes to help students to develop such skills, which include specific metalanguage for the analysis of visual images. In demonstrating possibilities of classroom work with multimodal texts, those authors' suggestions include a variety of tasks exploring different multimodal

genres that include pictures, drawings, movie posters, video games etc. Royce's (2007) chapter on multimodal communicative competence, drawing both on studies of multimodality and on Hymes's (1972) definition of communicative competence, expanded by Canale and Swain (1980), already highlighted the need to focus on multimodal literacy development as related to second language contexts. One of his concerns was with the types of multimodal texts found in textbooks. In the section of his chapter aimed at giving methodological suggestions, he explores an adaptation of a page-based extract from a textbook used to prepare students for entrance exams in Japan.

Finally, Cato (2013) investigated how two series of EFL textbooks developed in Brazil promote multimodal literacy. Her study focused on writing tasks and reading comprehension activities and placed special emphasis on the genres of comics, for instance, comic strips. The use of textbooks multimodal content to foster the development of the skills needed to deal effectively with multimodal genres is a concern in the present paper, too.

3 The framework in the Grammar of Visual Design

Most of the works reviewed in the previous section describe, explain and exemplify, to a greater or lesser extent, Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996) framework for the analysis of images and sound, with its particular metalanguage. The examination presented in those papers, therefore, somewhat helped in the organisation of the structure of the overview presented here. The inclusion of this overview here has the aim of introducing the categories proposed in the GVD, which will be used in the analysis of the multimodal genres selected.

Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996) work is based on SFL and considers three metafunctions involved in meaning making, which parallel those proposed by Halliday's (1994) *Introduction to Functional Grammar* (see also Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) revised edition). Unsworth (2006) presents the following macro-level summary of those metafunctions:

- *representational/ideational* structures verbally and visually construct the nature of events, the objects and participants involved, and the circumstances in which they occur;
- *interactional/interpersonal* verbal and visual resources construct the nature of relationships among speakers/listeners, writers/readers, and viewers and what is viewed;
- *compositional/textual* meanings are concerned with the distribution of the information value or relative emphasis among elements of the text and image. (UNSWORTH, 2006, p. 57)

Each of the three metafunctions is explained in more detail in the following subsections.

3.1 The representational metafunction

The representational metafunction may be realized in terms of narrative or conceptual representations. The former include actions and events, processes of change, reaction, thought and speech. The latter refer to “images that either classify (covert or overt taxonomy), show part-whole relationships (analytical structured or unstructured), or attribute/suggest values (symbolic)” (BEZERRA, 2011, p. 171). In narrative representations, there is always the presence of a vector, that is, a line departing from one or more of the participants in the image toward another participant (or other participants). In conceptual representations, there is no such vector.

In narrative representations depicting actions, the participant from whom the vector departs is called the *actor*, and the one to whom the vector is directed, the *goal*. A bi-directional vector would indicate that both participants play the role of actor and goal simultaneously. A narrative representation is called *transactional* when the viewer can see both actor and goal; when it is not possible to identify the goal of an action, the narrative is a *non-transactional* one.

In images depicting reactions, the vector departs from the eye level of one or more of the participants (human, animal, human-like being) and is directed to another/ others. In this kind of narrative representation, the participant who is glancing at somebody or something is called the *reactor*, while the participant that represents what is looked at is called the *phenomenon*. Reactions can also be transactional, when both reactors and phenomena are depicted in the image, or non-transactional, when the phenomena are not visually present in the image.

In narrative actions that depict thought or speech, there is the presence of thought clouds or speech bubbles, respectively, both also departing from one or more of the participants involved.

As to *conceptual* representations, an image that classifies is said to present an overt taxonomy if it is possible for the viewers to identify a superordinate, that is, if it is clear to the viewer what is being classified. The opposite would indicate a covert taxonomy with the superordinate being only implicit in the image.

In conceptual images that show part/ whole relationships, the participant representing the whole is the *carrier* and the parts are called *possessive attributes*. Conceptual images may

be structured analytical, if they include labels for the parts depicted, or unstructured analytical, when they do not display labels. A typical example of a structured analytical image frequently found in EFL textbooks is the image of a person with his/ her body parts labelled, generally used to teach the corresponding items of vocabulary. A house ground plan without labels in which it is possible to visualise the different rooms displayed, also common in some EFL textbooks, would be an example of an unstructured analytical image.

Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) also refer to different types of accuracy that can be attributed to some analytical images, namely topographical accuracy and topological accuracy. The first type of accuracy relates to the quality of an image representing with precision elements of the carrier such as spatial relations and relative location. Topological accuracy, in turn, is found when such precision is not depicted, even though the coherent relations between the carrier and its possessive attributes are represented.

Finally, conceptual images that attribute values refer to symbolic processes, that is, to what the participant represented is or means. When there are two participants in an image, the *carrier* is the participant to whom the meaning is established, and the participant that depicts the meaning or identity itself is called the *symbolic attribute*. In images depicting a single participant, this is the *carrier* and this type of process is called symbolic suggestive while the former process type is referred to as symbolic attributive.

In symbolic attributive processes, the attributes are objects that show one or more of the following features:

- salience, for example, being foregrounded or of a very big size;
- they are indicated in the image by being pointed at with the very purpose of showing their symbolic attribute to the viewer;
- they can be noticed as being out of place;
- it is possible to relate them to symbolic values.

3.2 The interactional metafunction

The interactional metafunction refers to the kinds of relationship that can be established between the image and the viewer, which can be classified as *contact*, *social distance*, *attitude*, *power*, and *realism*.

In terms of contact, images that depict a participant who looks directly at the viewer are called *demands*. In these cases, the participant is a human, human-like or an animal. Images

where no such participants are depicted or in which they do not directly engage in eye contact with the viewer are called *offers*.

The notion of *social distance* in analysing images has to do with the distances people usually keep from the ones with whom they interact in the material world. In the GVD it can be analysed in terms of close, medium, or long shots, where the closer the shot, the more involvement between the participants depicted and the viewer. According to van Leeuwen (2001, p. 97), social distance “also applies to representations of buildings, landscapes and other non-human participants”.

Attitude is the category that relates to point of view and is analysed in terms of the angles from which participants are represented in images. Involvement is identified in images that depict participants from a frontal angle, while detachment is indicated by an oblique angle.

Angles also indicate the issue of *power* in images. Participants represented from a low angle are analysed as being powerful, conversely, when they are depicted from a high angle, they are powerless – the viewer is left in a position of power –, and a similar level of power for both participants and viewers would be achieved with participants being depicted at eye-level.

Finally, *realism* has to do with modality, in terms of how faithfully an image depicts elements of the material world. In general, colour plays a major role in determining the realism in an image, and focus is another parameter to measure realism in visual depictions. In this matter, Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) and other authors who use their framework (e.g. STENGLIN; IEDEMA, 2001) have emphasised that what counts as an accurate representation is also socially determined and, therefore, may vary in diverse contexts. For instance, in the field of civil engineering, the design of a house ground plan does not depend on the application of colour to be accepted as accurately representing the actual plan of a house, other qualities, such as precise scale are the target in these cases. That surely would not apply to a set of pictures aimed at historical registers.

3.3 The compositional metafunction

The compositional metafunction refers to how the elements involved in the two other metafunctions relate to each other in an image, that is, it has to do with “the composition of the whole” (KRESS; VAN LEEUWEN, 2006, p. 176), and can be analysed in terms of *information value*, *salience*, and *framing*.

Information value refers to the placement of elements in the image. The layout of an image can be analysed concerning left and right, top and bottom, and centre and margin orientations. In images that are oriented in the horizontal axis, that is, those in which the placement of elements follow a left to right orientation, the participants on the left are the *given*, expected to be familiar to the reader. Conversely, those on the right are the *new*, elements with which the reader is not expected to be familiar, therefore demanding special attention.

In visual compositions structured along the vertical axis, elements presented at the top are referred to as the *ideal*, therefore conveying “the idealised or generalised essence of the information” (KRESS; VAN LEEUWEN, 2006, p. 187). In contrast, what is presented at the bottom represents the *real*, including specific information or details, or, in the case of a composition of text and image, that would be the place of images, graphs, charts or documentary information and directions.

When an element is placed in the centre of a visual composition, it is called the *centre*, as opposed to the other elements in the composition, referred to as *margins*. The *centre* carries, as the name suggests, the central information, while the *margins* relate to additional, peripheral information.

Salience refers to degrees of prominence the different elements in an image or a visual composition may show. In images, this is usually achieved through factors such as size, focus, colour contrast, and perspective (e.g., elements in the foreground are more salient than backgrounded ones).

Lastly, *framing* may show a stronger or weaker connection between the elements of a visual composition. The rationale being that “the stronger the framing of an element, the more it is presented as a separate unit of information” (KRESS; VAN LEEUWEN, 2006, p. 203).

4 Analysing attempts and suggesting ways to approach multimodal texts in an EFL textbook

Three multimodal texts will be analysed in this section. All of them were extracted from the first volume of *On Board* (SILVA; SARTORI, 2013), a series composed of three student’s book volumes and three corresponding teacher’s manuals, aimed at the teaching of EFL to students at *Ensino Médio* in Brazil. The first visual composition included in the analysis is from an activity in unit 5, which is titled *The language of advertising*. The two other visual compositions are used in two activities in a review unit called *Plus*, which comes after two main

units – units 5 and 6 – titled *The language of advertising* and *Politically correct?*, respectively. The analysis will include the content in the student's book and the corresponding teacher's manual related to each of the texts. When applicable, suggestions will be made for both volumes – student's and teacher's.

The reason why this series was chosen is the fact that I directly participated in the authorship and editing processes and had the opportunity to scrutinize an evaluation of the series by *Programa Nacional do Livro Didático* (PNLD). Knowing precisely why every genre was included in the material – how this was planned and actually executed in the end – helped in the reflection that yielded the need that the discussion of multimodality in EFL textbooks reaches not only researchers and teachers, but also the professionals involved in the production of such materials. In order to reproduce in this paper the multimodal genres and the activities referring to them as they are included in the volume chosen, and due to space constraints, a selection of such genres and activities had to be made. The idea was then to choose activities from units presented in the same thematic block in the textbook.

4.1 Multimodal text 1

Multimodal text 1, presented below, was extracted from activity 7 in unit 5 of *On Board 1* (SILVA; SARTORI, 2013, p. 65):

- 7 Look at the ad below and discuss possible answers for the following questions. Then, write down your conclusions.

ING 110_01



SKIN good enough to eat. Campaign Brief.
<www.campaignbrief.com/2008/02/skin-good-enough-to-eat.html>. Accessed: 25 Jun. 2012.

Figure 1: Multimodal text 1

In terms of the representational metafunction, what is depicted is a conceptual symbolic representation. The carrier is the sculpture of the woman and the attributes are the surface, visible objects the sculpture is made of – peaches. As to the interactional metafunction, an offer is presented to the viewer – the sculpture does not gaze at the viewer; it is a powerful image, depicted from a low angle; and the colours in it give this impression of realism. The information value in the composition takes a centre-margins orientation, with the sculpture being the centre and the slogan placed in a marginal position, adding information to the composition. The salience in the image is achieved through both the size of the sculpture in the photo, we can observe a person walking behind it, who becomes very short in comparison with the sculpture, and also for it is foregrounded.

There are three questions in the student's book related to the image:

- a) In your opinion, what's the sculpture made of?
- b) What do you think its objective was?
- c) How do the sculpture and the slogan relate? (SILVA; SARTORI, 2013, p. 65)

In the teacher's manual, the suggestions to the teacher concerning the above activity reads:

Read the instruction and make the objective of the activity clear to the students, namely to make them notice that one of the strategies in advertising is to cause impact, with the use of creative resources. Before you ask them to complete the activity, ask them if they know what type of product this campaign is about (it is an ad of cosmetics for the skin). This information will help them to define their answers. To check the answers, motivate a discussion with the students. (SILVA; SARTORI, 2013, p. 30, my translation.)

Even though the final question students are asked in the proposed activity indicates a relation between the image and the verbal text, it could have been emphasised that the slogan only makes sense in composition with the image. This would exemplify a further classification, in which this visual composition implies a type of *ideational complementarity* referred to as *augmentation* and explained by Unsworth (2006, p. 62): “where each of the modes provides meanings additional to and consistent with those provided in the other mode”. Being able to notice that the slogan or the image alone might not make sense would be a step further in the development of multiliteracy skills, since the very nature of the multimodal genre analysed has to do with the composition of image and verbal text.

Inserted in the unit where it was taken from, the visual composition serves its purpose and the questions asked the students about it, especially the final one, can be understood as one that actually approaches the genre as multimodal, since it calls students' attention to both semiotic modes in the composition. However, a few additional questions could be included in the teacher's manual that might help both teachers and learners to enhance their approach to multimodality. Besides questions that might lead to an understanding of the elements included in the analysis previously presented, students could be asked a few others, that might contribute to their critical analysis of the discourse in the composition, like these:

- a) Who is the target audience of the ad?
- b) Why do you think the sculpture is of a woman and why is she naked?
- c) How could you describe the woman in the sculpture in terms of physical appearance?
Is she young, middle-aged or old? What does she look like?
- d) Where is the sculpture displayed? Do you think the same effects would be achieved if the sculpture was placed indoors? Why/ Why not?
- e) What inferences can be made in relation to the pose in which the woman in the sculpture was made?
- f) How would you say women are represented in the advertising campaign, considering the wording in the slogan and the fact that the sculpture is of a naked woman?

A suggestion to be included in the student's book is that the essence of the aforementioned questions be taken into account in the final section of the unit, when students are challenged to produce an ad, in activity 1 on page 69. That could be done in the student's book with the insertion of a final command for the activity, like this:

Take in consideration the discussions we had along this unit and decide:

- a) what you are going to advertise and why (who is interested in advertising it);
- b) the target audience for the ad;
- c) how the image and the verbal text will relate in the ad;
- d) what elements should be given prominence, why and how this will be done;
- e) if it is important that any of the participants engage in eye contact with the viewers and why, etc.

The analysis presented here and the suggestions made are related to how the approach of the multimodal genre analysed could be enhanced through editing in the student's book and in the teacher's manual, in terms of what else could have been proposed. This does not mean, at all, that the teacher's role in planning and conducting his/ her class is to be neglected. On the contrary, the teacher's participation is of the essence to assist students in carrying out all the activities presented in the textbook, as well as in implementing the suggestions and their own interventions. Investigating how teachers and students actually deal with multimodal genres inserted in textbooks, however, is beyond the scope of this paper. The aim here is to discuss how the multimodal genres found in EFL textbooks can be used as a tool in the development of students' multimodal literacy skills, as well as to suggest some editing as mentioned above.

4.2 Multimodal texts 2 and 3

Multimodal texts 2 and 3 are used in two activities in a review unit immediately following unit 6. They were extracted from the teacher's manual, which includes the answers to the questions, as can be observed in the first activity. As with the example in the previous subsection, an analysis of the visual compositions in the two comic strips will be presented first. Then, some suggestions will be made, concerning how the work proposed in the activities could be expanded to consider a more effective approach of the visual compositions that might enhance students' development of multimodal literacy skills.

- 1 Read these comic strips. Then, complete questions a-c with the correct comparative form of the words in parentheses. Write one more question.



- a) Which comic strip is funnier ? (funny)
- b) Which is more creative ? (creative)
- c) Which is more politically correct ? (politically correct)
- d) _____

- 2 Now discuss the questions above with a classmate. Take notes. (SILVA; SARTORI, 2013, p. 80.)

Figure 2: Multimodal texts 2 and 3

As can be observed from the instructions for each activity, the multimodal texts were included there with two purposes: first students have to employ comparative forms to complete three sentences and create a new one, and then they have to discuss the questions in a pair-work activity. These are evaluative purposes since the activities are included in a review unit. In the teacher's manual, there is no guidance to the teacher in terms of how he/ she could help students in the analysis of the two texts. What is said in relation to activity 1 is that 'having as a starting point the critical reading of the two comic strips, students can practice the use of comparative adjectives' (SILVA; SARTORI, 2013, p. 36, my translation.). As to activity 2, there is just a brief explanation of what is expected from the students, saying that they are going to work in pairs to ask and answer the questions from the previous activity in order to share their opinion about the comic strips. An opportunity was missed in the textbook to include questions that might help students develop multimodal literacy skills.

In analysing the visual composition in the first comic strip, as to the representational metafunction, the first panel is a narrative representation displaying a *non-transaccional*

reaction – the viewer cannot see the phenomenon to which Monica, the reactor, is looking at. Even though, however, by reading the text in the speech bubble, explicit information is found that she is talking to Jimmy. In the second panel, the reaction is transactional since both participants, reactor and phenomenon, can be visualised by the viewer.

In what concerns the interactional metafunction, in terms of contact, we have an offer in the two panels, since in both the participants do not engage in eye contact with the viewer. The close shot in the first panel suggests more involvement between Monica and the viewer, while in the second panel, the long shot indicates more detachment between the participants and the viewer. The oblique angle from which the participants are depicted in the images does not involve them directly with the viewer, rather, it depicts a more detached offer.

Finally, in terms of the compositional metafunction, the visual composition as a whole follows the left to right orientation, the first panel representing the given – the character Monica as it is usually depicted in comic strips – and the second, the new, the character Jimmy wearing an apron and doing the housework and Monica carrying a briefcase. The elements in the second panel, where both participants are depicted, are strongly connected since there is no framing, apart from the borders that separate the two panels.

An important point students should be aware of in relation to this type of representation is that full comprehension of the comic strip content can only be achieved by meaning that stems from both the image and the verbal text (ideational complementarity again).

The analysis of the second comic strip in figure 2 follows a very similar pattern. In terms of layout, the composition is structured on the horizontal axis, with more familiar information on the left – the given, while the new is presented on the right. The same aspect of ideational complementarity can be observed between the modes of image and verbal text, once the content in the speech bubbles, especially in the second panel, only makes sense if we look at the image. However, this time the reaction is transactional in both panels, since both reactor and phenomenon are present in the two depictions. In terms of the interactional metafunction, we still have an offer in the two panels and in both the participants are depicted from a long shot and an oblique angle, just as in the other comic strip. Once again, there is a strong connection between the elements in each panel, since framing is not used.

A suggestion in terms of content editing, which could be included either in the student's book or the teacher's manual version of this unit in the textbook could be the insertion of a further activity. After having filled in the blanks in the sentences in activity 1 and having discussed the questions as required in the second activity, students could be asked to analyse

both visual compositions. This could be operationalised, for instance, through a simple activity command and a set of questions about each comic strip for students to answer and discuss in groups. An explicit suggestion is displayed in the following table:

Table 1 – Additional questions about comic strips 1 and 2

3. In groups, discuss the following questions about the comic strips.	
Questions about comic strip 1	Questions about comic strip 2
a) Who or what is Monica looking at in the first panel?	a) What kind of tree did Zeke expect Chuck Billy to be planting? Why?
b) What is Monica carrying? What does this represent in relation to “playing house”?	b) What is Zeke looking at in the second panel? How does he feel about it? Why?
c) What is Jimmy doing? What role does he take in playing house with Monica?	c) How does this relate to Chuck Billy’s answer to Zeke’s question?
d) Does the verbal text make sense without the image?	d) Does the verbal text make sense without the image?
e) How can you connect the comic strip with the discussions about political correctness along this unit?	e) How can you connect the comic strip with the discussions about political correctness along this unit?

Once again it should be emphasized that the suggestions made are in relation to the textbook itself, in the sense that it is recognized here as both a source of multimodal genres and as a guide on how to approach such genres, contributing to the development of multiliteracy skills. The active participation of teachers surely must be taken into account in working with textbooks or any other classroom materials. What is highlighted here, based on the analysis and suggestions presented, is that well-informed EFL textbooks can help to enhance teachers’ and students’ development of multiliteracy skills.

5 Conclusion

The notion that the development of multimodal literacy skills is a *sine qua non* of formal education nowadays is the backbone from which this paper emanated. The more the pedagogical work undertaken in class can reflect instances of experience outside school, the more it will contribute to the development of citizens better equipped to be effective agents in

society. I believe a great part of this has to do with approaches and didactic materials a teacher subscribes to in class, whatever the reason.

The idea to briefly refer to potential multimodal tasks included in an EFL textbook, analysing a few such activities and suggesting possible ways to enhance didactic work with multimodality departing from the EFL textbook had two motivations. The first comes from my own experiences as a textbook author and editor. The other one is that the very guidelines for the production of textbooks aimed at students in public regular schools in Brazil have been pointing, in the last few years, to the need of didactic materials that take into account effective ways to comprehend and produce multimodal texts (BRASIL, 2015). This is the case for textbooks to be produced for both the curricular discipline of Portuguese, the country's official language, and for foreign language textbooks.

Hopefully, the theoretical background referenced here and the analysis and suggestions presented will contribute somehow to the view that enhancing multimodal literacy skills are needed and quite possible, though surely not that easy, to achieve departing from the multimodal genres and corresponding activities found in textbooks.

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