Reading comprehension of literary texts using a multimodal language–image approach

Leibrandt Isabella [a*], University of Navarra, Institute of Languages Department, 31080 Pamplona, Spain

Abstract

The importance of multimodal reading comprehension from multiple perspectives is particularly reflected in the theoretical work that has been published in recent times. Expanding the perspectives students use to make sense of these multimodal texts is an important part of comprehension instruction. The study focuses on the textual linking of language and image with the aim of promoting the textual productive and receptive use of images, assigning a relevant meaning to the image in the literary context of use, complementing the literary text with the visual message, integrating language and contextualised images and including them in the process of overall comprehension. The project presented here in the form of an experience report shows the results of and provides suggestions for the procedural application of a multimodal text–image approach to reading comprehension of a literary text. It is based on the reading of F. C. Delius' novel *The Walk from Rostock to Syracuse.* This text lends itself to being explored in a multimodal way, as it pre-supposes implicit knowledge that includes certain historical and cultural contextual references.

Keywords: Images, intertextuality, literacy, multimodality, reading comprehension;

[*] ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE: Leibrandt Isabella, University of Navarra, 31080 Pamplona, Spain.
E-mail address: ileibrandt@unav.es / Tel: +34 948 42 56 00

1. Introduction

The importance of multimodal reading comprehension from multiple perspectives is particularly reflected in the theoretical work that has been published in recent times (Dehghani, 2021; Discutido & Especi, 2022). In this context, the term literacy is often extended to the multimodal character of contemporary texts and the necessary resources for their production and interpretation. The texts that adolescents encounter today are often multimodal, meaning they incorporate a variety of modes, including visual images, hypertext and graphic design elements, along with the written text. Expanding the perspectives students use to make sense of these multimodal texts is an important part of comprehension instruction (Serafini, 2011, p. 342).

From the point of view of reading didactics, this is both a benefit and a prerequisite for fostering adequate reading comprehension based on a variety of reading strategies. We emphasise the diversity of modes and perspectives, including visual, written, musical or spoken language, as the text used in the classroom is composed of a variety of these modes. Literacy, in its broadest sense, is understood here as a term that describes the resources for the production and reception of literary text. This is the point of departure for multimodality research, which assumes that communication and the constitution of meaning never take place exclusively in a single sign system but always combine different codes or modalities. It seems as if reading is undergoing a profound change; therefore, Philipp (2018, p. 2) formulates and sees that reading comprehension of multiple texts is increasing in importance.

From the perspective of reading didactics, this is an addition and, at the same time, also a condition for the targeted promotion of challenging reading comprehension based on diverse reading strategies. Hence, Alexander et al. (2012, p. 259) ask what it will mean to be a competent reader in the 21st century and what combination of knowledge, beliefs, abilities and processes competence will require. Research has shown that particular cognitive strategies such as visualising, summarising, asking questions and predicting are successful in supporting readers' comprehension of written texts (Kubieva, Sagiyeva, Sagiyeva, Salimgerey, & Baiseitova, 2021; Serafini, 2011, p. 342).

Multimodal texts consequently require an expanded concept of the text, which is not limited to linguistic characters alone but understands the communication that represents a composition of different modes as a coherent and cohesive textual unit (Harangus, 2019; Stöckl, 2016, p. 19). This involves a fundamentally new view of reading and writing, a multimodal concept of the text and literature.

For literature teaching, such a view opens up new dimensions for the analysis and interpretation of texts (Durmuscelebi & Kusucuran, 2018; Staiger, 2012, p. 41). However, Abraham (2014, p. 99) notes that linguistic action, especially in connection with images (in the sense of describing, narrating, explaining and interpreting), has not yet been reflected upon and studied enough by language didactics.

1.1. Conceptual framework

Multimodality is a lofty and vague term, according to Stöckl (2011, p. 45), for a comparatively simple and everyday phenomenon, that we find today in all kinds of texts and communicative actions that contain different sign systems (language, image and sound). Based on this, the author concludes that the following important components belong to multimodal competence:

1. The ability to assign a meaning to the image, which is relevant in the context of its use.
2. To understand the language text in comparison with the visual message.
3. To integrate the somaticised language and the contextualised image.
4. To include the pictoriality of language in the process of overall comprehension.

The term literacy in this context is often extended to the multimodal character of contemporary texts and the resources required for the production and interpretation of these texts. Learners should be able to receive the text with the help of all modes available to them and be allowed to express themselves to process the text's content in different ways and to communicate about it so that they actively participate in the reading process and personally experience the text as meaningful.

In this manner, reading should become more of a focus of teaching from the perspective of multimodality so that both learners and teachers can benefit from it. This article will show that multimodality as a text-image combination offers a variety of possibilities of expression and promotes reading comprehension, the possibility for involvement and finally the means to accompany and document processes.

Furthermore, multimodality refers to communication and testifies to the realisation that communicating as a co-constructive creation of meaning always functions based on several modes. In this context, verbal language is only one mode among others. Thus, learners can express themselves with the help of all the modes available to them to acquire a better visualisation of what they have read, communicate it and experience the reading process as meaningful (Wiesner, 2016, p. 3).

Therefore, multimodal learning in aesthetic education or literary mediation plays a major role when interferences between the image and the text are placed in a complementary and/or extensive relationship to each other and allow analogies to be made to contextual knowledge. Bucher (2011, p. 124) even claims that 'all texts are multimodal' and concludes that all communication analyses must be multimodal and should show how the meaning and significance of a communication contribution is composed of the different modes, not only being intertextual and intratextual but also intermodal.

1.2. Related research

Based on international visual research, one of the learning goals of the work with images at the beginning of the 21st century is to acquire visual literacy or visual competence (Hecke & Surkamp, 2010, p. 13). We refer here to the cultural paradigm shift of the visual turn, whereby it must be considered which images should be used for what and how in literature and foreign language teaching. Visual literacy is understood as the ability to communicate visually, i.e., not only to extract and understand visual information but also to create visual information and communicate with others (Dadashi, Soltani, & Rahimi, 2020; Hecke & Surkamp, 2010, p. 14).

Kress and van Leeuwen (1996, p. 183), therefore, demand that we pursue the breaking down of the disciplinary boundaries between the study of language and the study of images. The aim is to show that, in the context of a picture–text combination, illustrations decisively support the transmission of information and that pictures are used as advance organisers to activate cognitive schemata. In many literary texts, it is essential to call up the right context by using an image, so that the given textual information can be understood more easily (Barnitzky, 2006, p. 153).

The semantic function of visual elements is related to the representational function, which serves cultural, regional and intercultural learning in foreign language teaching (Rocha, 2022). These are illustrations and representations which are intended to illustrate sections of a foreign language culture, cultural–historical facts or ways and styles of life in a vivid way. Accordingly, to the intertextual references, the pictorial contents can refer as good as all sections of the cultural reality of a foreign language culture and, for example, convey images of city views or landscapes up to life and everyday situations.

Learning to view cultures consciously as a way of visualising culture serves in the foreign language didactic context to use images as important components in multimodal discursive processes and communicative situations. Cultural visual competence should become an indispensable component

of a general multimodal discursive ability to represent individual information conveyed in the text with pictures (Hallet, 2010, pp. 35–46).

For this purpose, images have their own, not only emotional but also cognitive function in literary comprehension, and text and image behave in a complementary way, i.e., they complement each other in their functions when the text describes what the image cannot show and the image shows what the text cannot describe (Rosebrock & Nix, 2010, p. 88). If the image fills gaps in the text or the text fills gaps left by the image, then we speak of complementary image–text relationships. In a certain way, image and text form their respective contexts.

Visual languages have the power to bring our senses together simultaneously and to impact our emotions. Through images, represented sensory impressions and emotional experiences can be communicated in a linguistically precise and meaningful way. Thus, Führer (2017, p. 150) distinguishes between images and pictures concerning the reception of images and emphasises that, in addition to the visible part of the pictures, the non-visible part (the imagination) also contributes decisively to comprehension.

If we use the terms 'image' or 'picture' here for the sake of simplicity, it should be, nevertheless, noted that different types of images are to be distinguished such as paintings, plans or drawings, mental images or dreams, memories, ideas as well as imaginary images, or also linguistic ones, such as metaphors and descriptions (Mguwata, 2020; Oomen-Welke & Staiger, 2012, p. 10).

1.3. Purpose of the study

The study focuses on the textual linking of language and image with the aim to promote the textual productive and receptive use of images, assigning a relevant meaning to the image in the literary context of use, complementing the literary text with the visual message, integrating language and contextualised images and including them in the process of the overall comprehension (Stöckl, 2016, p. 45).

2. Material and methods

2.1. Data

2.1.1. The walk from Rostock to Syracuse

The project presented here from a C1 German course is based on the reading of this fictional narrative. The novel by F. C. Delius proposed here was one of the great bestsellers of 1998. It tells the story of a German Democratic Republic (GDR) citizen, who provides insights into his life during the time of the divided/separated Germany. In the process, the repressive social climate that threatens to suffocate the narrator leads to his escape and the most outlandish wish to travel to Syracuse.

It draws on the authentic travelogue of Klaus Müller, who manages a daring escape by sailboat across the Baltic Sea to the West to fulfil his dream and make an educational journey through Italy and then return to the GDR. Learners thus experience life and travel in an unusual complexity and as a problem, when there was no freedom to travel to the West and the wall drew an insurmountable border between West and East Germany, the socialist-communist as well as Western capitalist Europe.

But the actual travelogue is also the story of a last classical German traveller to Italy and his educational journey along with the written text of Goethe and Seume. In particular, it is worth taking a look at the aforementioned role models for the protagonist's journey and reading them in excerpts. What cannot be ignored here is the fact that this text conveys an important amount of implicit knowledge, which includes a certain historical–cultural contextual knowledge that is necessary for today's learners to be able to place it in its Spatio-temporal context of origin. The extra-

textual information, both texts, and images are, therefore, necessary to be searched by learners, as it extends and deepens the reading in the form of learner-active contributions.

Accordingly, the intertextuality can be noted for this text above all, which makes this particular travel report an exciting and productive genre in the classroom, which can be supplemented by numerous other media offerings, especially in times of the Internet. The report's references to other texts, authors, songwriters and painters in terms of content are researched and presented by learners in connection with the references in the text.

Learners should focus on specific passages in the text that convey important information which is particularly interesting or require explanation and can be repeatedly brought up for discussion, because the narrative permanently establishes contexts, such as the lack of freedom to travel and the restriction of the individual rights in the GDR as a critique of the living conditions, and presents the protagonist's confrontation with the numerous difficulties in carrying out the journey.

2.2. Data analysis

In this context, I would like to present the integration method for the analysis of such a hybrid text, which is characterised by its constant intertextuality, so that it is both irreplaceable and extremely enriching to include additional material that provides the necessary extra information (Kammer, 2009 pp. 78–142). In this way, learners acquire additional knowledge and skills that correspond to the reading behaviour of an advanced and mature reader that only becomes a competent reader when, while reading, he recognises at which points an additional piece of information is needed to grasp the meaning of the text satisfactorily.

It is also possible that he is stimulated by reading to deal with a topic more closely, an author or a text type, and that he, therefore, looks for additional material. As already mentioned, it is worthwhile to provide or have searched for a whole range of materials, e.g., articles, interviews, videos and above all, pictures on the topics mentioned, as helpful background material. They will not only broaden the knowledge base, but they are necessary for the younger learners, who did not experience the division of Germany so that they can understand the socio-political background and understand the problems presented.

As a didactic introduction to the reading of Delius' *The Walk from Rostock to Syracuse*, the first step focuses on the analysis of the title, as it already contains an important question that gives the reader initial information and clues about the content and the plot, thus arousing a certain reading expectation right from the start. In the further course, the learners can check whether the events presented to meet their expectations or not.

By doing so, some assumptions can be evoked about what is to be expected in the text, which very quickly reveals a contradiction, contrast and incompatibility (the activity of a walk-in relation to the vastness of the route, the lack of freedom to travel in GDR times). This, from the beginning, draws attention to a conflict and a problem as a rift and discord, especially as the protagonist professes his love for his surroundings and the landscapes, he does not want to miss:

> *Just as you envy me Hiddensee, Rostock, and Güstrow, I envy you Hamburg, the Rhine, and Trier. I love Mecklenburg and the coast, I could not live without Brandenburg and Saxony, but I would like to take a trip to West Germany one day, and that would be my dream, to visit Italy (Delius, 1995, p. 58).*

In this statement, numerous references to localities and regions appear which learners must necessarily locate and also visualise to have an idea of what the protagonist is referring to. In addition, the learners must first deal with the motif of such a journey, which suggests a bold, courageous, daring, perhaps even heroic adventure, and they are led to a multi-layered cosmos of meaning and the actual problematic nature of such an undertaking in GDR times utilising the meaning of the word 'walk'.

3. Results

The following impulses guide the focus on different parts of the narrative in class as well as in written form on the class blog:

3.1. Topic: The walk from Rostock to Syracuse

- What does the term 'walk' mean? What is a walk for you? What is the difference between a walk, a hike, a journey or an educational trip? Have you ever done a long walk? Are there or were there famous walkers in your country? How far is it from Rostock to Syracuse? (Google Maps shows the distance: 2,331 km) What does traveling mean to you? What does it mean to Paul Gompitz? Present suitable pictures for these aspects and explain your associations.
- Change of perspective: What thoughts go through the protagonist's mind, what feelings does he have, what are his hopes and what is the reality described? Compare your associations with these and look for images that match the text.
- Walk poems: A worthwhile activity is to distribute different poems dedicated to the walk for participants to read aloud and talk about the evoked images of what they have seen, heard and felt in the context of a sensory aesthetic experience.

- Formulate your own opinion: Have you had experiences that fit the theme? Use the following expressions: The following example/image on this topic comes to mind: …/I would like to illustrate this with the following picture. Another/further/good example/image is: ...

Certainly, it quickly becomes clear that the protagonist's preparation and execution of the planned undertaking have little to do with the actual variety of meanings of a walk in the sense of a pleasurable foray into the countryside. Through this analysis of vocabulary and meaning, learners quickly become aware that it can be important to look very carefully at certain passages in the text.

Due to the politically conditioned circumstances, which pose an additional challenge to this difficult undertaking, the longest part of the narrative first contains the most important stages of the travel preparations from the planned to the realised escape across the Baltic Sea, and the second part contains the actual educational journey, Gompitz's impressions and experiences as well as his return.

The aim here is a topic-based approach, in which a topic relates to the context presented in the text. When selecting and implementing the reading, it is therefore essential to consider the age as well as the level of knowledge of learners, so that the teacher has to assess which text information learners need to work on and deepen based on their previous knowledge. According to Kammer (2009, p. 142), this method corresponds to the type of task known as problem discussion.

A topic is chosen for whose clarification of the understanding of the text is a prerequisite or whose treatment is important because it relates to an important textual context. As already pointed out, topics on the German separation and life in the GDR can be distributed here as an orienting guide for learners to seek additional information and construct visual connections. The themes of longing and the educational journey also prove to be a challenge for the learners here.

Furthermore, attention must be drawn to the hybridity of this travelogue, which oscillates between fact and fiction, between biography and literary text.

3.2. Topic: The German wall

Today the story would be easy to tell, something like this: In 1984, Paul Gompitz from Rostock decides to travel to Syracuse on the island of Sicily. The way to Italy is blocked by the highest and most annoying border in the world, and Gompitz does not yet suppose any trick to break through it.

He only knows that he will have to overcome walls and wires twice because he wants to return to Rostock in any case, if the adventure should succeed (Delius, 1998, p. 9).

How can learners today imagine 'the highest and most annoying border in the world? What did the wall look like? How big, and how long was it? Where did it run? These and other questions have to be answered by learners to have an idea of the situation at that time. Important intertextual references in the text are Intershop, Stasi, 25th anniversary of the building of the Wall. These instructions guided the students' search for images concerning this topic:

- Find pictures of the wall that divided Germany as well as current pictures of other walls that draw a border today and comment on them.

In finding pictures of the wall that divided Germany as well as current pictures of other walls that draw a border today and commenting on them, some examples from students are shown in Figures 1–3:

Figure 1. The wall of Berlin from the western side

Figure 2. Children playing at a wall

Figure 3. The separation by the wall in Berlin

3.3. Topic: The escape route from Paul Gompitz and the itinerary through Italy

Tomorrow at noon I will enter Italy via the Semmering through Styria behind Villach. Tomorrow I will see the Alps and the Adriatic Sea for the first time in my life. Hopefully, the weather will not worsen so that I can admire the Alpine peaks (Delius, 1998, p. 112).

These instructions guided the students' search for images concerning this topic and Figure 4 is an example:

- Use pictures to illustrate Gompitz's travel route. What impressions do you get from this, what impressions do you have now? How are they different? Where did you have problems understanding the book because of missing information? Follow Paul on his journey: look for the route, pictures and information. Afterwards, try to share your impressions of the journey with the others using pictures.
- An update on this same topic would be an image search and a presentation on today's refugee situations, the flight across the Mediterranean and refugees in Europe.

Figure 4. The protagonist's itinerary

3.4. Topic: Geographical names and places

Go on! Ravenna, Adriatic Sea, Terni. Why Terni of all places? All the great German travellers to Italy stopped there before the metropolis of Rome crashed down on their minds like hammers, Herder, Goethe, Seume, Schinkel, Mommsen and Nietzsche. So Gompitz also takes a rest day here (Delius, 1998, p. 117).

Students should research information and visualise places that are mentioned in the narrative (for example the Alps, the Adriatic Sea and Ravenna). Exemplary students' descriptions are the following:

- The Alps are the highest mountains in the interior of Europe. They stretch in an arc that is 1,200 km long and between 150 and 250 km wide from the Ligurian Sea to the Pannonian Basin. The entire Alpine region covers an area of about 200,000 km^2. It stretches about 750

km from west to east and about 400 km from south to north and is bordered by the Rhone Valley, the Swiss Plateau, the upper reaches of the Danube, the Little Hungarian Plain, the Po Valley and the Gulf of Genoa.

- The Adriatic Sea is also known as the Adria, Latin Mare Adriaticum Italian Mare Adriatico Bosnian Croatian Jadransko more or Jadran for short Slovenian Jadransko morje Albanian Deti Adriatik or Adriatiku for short Greek στη Θάλασσα του Αδριανού/ romanised sti Thálassa tou Adrianoú is the elongated northern lateral basin of the Mediterranean Sea between the Apennine Peninsula and the Balkan Peninsula. The Adriatic Sea extends south to the Strait of Otranto. It is named after the town of Adria in the Italian province of Rovigo.

- RAVENNA is a city in Italy with a population of 158,058 as of 31 December 2019. It is the capital of the province of Ravenna in the Emilia Romagna region. The city was originally located directly on the Adriatic Sea. As a result of silting up, the distance of the city centre from the coast is now about 9 km. The port is connected to the coast and the seaside resort of Marina di Ravenna by the Canale Candiano. Ravenna is the seat of an archbishop. From 402 to 476, the city was the main residence of the Western Roman emperors.

- In the following decades, Odoacer, Theoderic the Great and his successors also resided here. After the reconquest of Italy by Eastern Roman troops, Ravenna was the centre of an imperial exarchate (Exarchate of Ravenna) until its capture by the Lombards in 751. Since 1974, the city has hosted the annual Ravenna Jazz music festival in spring. In 1990, the Ravenna Festival was added, which is held in the summer and mainly features opera and classical music, but also dance, jazz, folk music, musicals, ballet, sacred music, electronic music, theatre and film, as well as various conventions and exhibitions.

I have reached my destination, but unfortunately not with the GDR passport. Many warm greetings from Syracuse! I am now a traveller in Italy. It should be normality, for many, it is a triviality, but for me, it was the highlight of my life so far. There is no feeling of having to say goodbye to Italy forever. All the experiences will remain firmly burned into his brain, he will have time to process everything and perhaps return with Helga once more in old age (Delius, 1998).

Figures 5 and 6 show the protagonist's itinerary to his dream destination Syracuse and the reference to the protagonist's longing for his wife.

Figure 5. The protagonist's itinerary to his dream destination Syracuse

Figure 6. The protagonist's longing for his wife

4. Discussion

As the examples show, it was important in the process of visualising the reading, that learners, in the course of this process, practiced the skills of perspective change and perspective adoption through the reception-aesthetic interaction with the text world, which is considered constitutive for foreign understanding (Nünning, 2007, pp. 128–138). The reading of the literary text should open up the possibility for them to participate in a fictional event in a foreign cultural world and the fate of the protagonist through their imagination. In the context of this approach, foreign understanding means being able to empathise with the world's understanding of the other. The special significance of literary texts for the promotion of foreign understanding lies in the fact that, due to fictionality, it enables readers to have a series of experiences that are impossible in reality. Learners could gain an insight into what the protagonist was thinking and how he felt because of the representation of consciousness.

Literary texts thus overcome the life world boundaries set for the reader and confront him or her with different perspectives. Through the multi-perspective approach based on the images learners had to look for, they are confronted with different ways of seeing the same event and have to deal with different points of view. So, they got a special opportunity to think themselves into the perspective of the historical events and had to try to understand them. This is the basis of the concept of perspective-taking, namely the ability to put oneself in someone else's shoes and to reconstruct a situation from their point of view. The treatment of this text with the help of pictures offers a wide range of possibilities to promote the ability to change perspectives through creative tasks. The interpretation of literary texts can be initiated and enriched by pictures, which additionally support the perception channels of sensory experience in the sense of a rich learning environment (Rymarczyk, 2007, p. 329).

Multimodal reading by searching for information on the Internet means almost being able to move directly to the real place; you can search for maps, and all kinds of information that can be used to make presentations related to the reading, present history, famous people who live or have lived, special offers such as a literary tour of the city, discover the city through films or audiovisuals, even songs or poems. All these resources serve to involve the student in the research and broaden his or her horizon.

Of special interest is the function, which advocates the use of pictures as a supplement to text comprehension, always depending on the learners and their age, and can be decisive for successful text comprehension. In the same way, Schnotz and Bannert (2003, p. 153) suggest that poor readers can construct a mental model from a text with pictures, whereas they would fail based on a text alone. Similar results have been found for adult learners' processing of expository texts.

Learners with low prior knowledge benefit from pictures in a text, whereas learners with higher prior knowledge seem to be able to construct a mental model of the described content also only from the text. These results and our findings suggest that pictures facilitate learning only if individuals have low prior knowledge and if the subject matter is visualised in a task-appropriate way. For the didactic use of images, the following questions can be helpful:

- What kind of action is to be performed with the picture?
- What is the content of the communicative action?
- What is shown in the picture?
- In what way is something shown in the picture?
- What are the presuppositions of the person who carries out the communicative action with the picture?
- What inferential relationships does he commit himself to by using the image?
- In what context of action is the image used?

We refer to the cognitive functions that relate to the perception and recognition of visible physical objects based on photos or paintings, and which are intended to serve as linguistic complements to names, indications of place or time, descriptions or assertions. For a true understanding of the pictures, the same criteria apply as for the comprehension of texts, e.g., the ability to establish references to other knowledge, to apply the acquired knowledge to other problems, and to be able to explain the content of what is depicted to the other course participants in one's own words.

Furthermore, in addition to the text's content, the pictures should open up areas of feeling and association, develop worlds of thought and imaginative activity, enable authentic language actions and promote communicative skills such as questioning, assuming, transferring, evaluating, generalising, abstracting, speculating and identifying; arouse curiosity, doubt and contradiction, and also expand the regional know-how. In addition, we enumerate the following functions of the illustrative pictures according to Levie and Lentz (1982, p. 218):

1. The attentional function: The readers are made aware of the texts and their attention is guided within the texts by the images.
2. The affective function: The pleasure of engaging with the text is increased in the readers, and their emotions and attitudes are influenced.
3. The cognitive function: The text comprehension is increased and additional information is provided.
4. The compensatory function: In particular, weak readers receive support in the reading and comprehension process through the pictures.

Another additional function is that, with the help of images, recipients take on different perspectives and thus arrive at different interpretations of the content, as well as learn to recognise and name parallels, differences and interactions between the images and texts. The integration of image and text comprehension processes as well as the interrelation of text and image speak for this handling of multimodal texts.

The competence required for this is called multimodal competence, which has the following components: The ability to assign a meaning to the image which is relevant in the context of use, to understand the language of the text in comparison with the visual message, to integrate the semanticised language and contextualised image and to include the imagery of the language and that of the text in the process of the overall comprehension (Stöckl, 2011, p. 45).

More complete comprehension of the text requires pictorial material from the past such as the interaction of the inner and outer images which can play a crucial role. In this sense, we can see that the image-text combinations promote the reflection on the text precisely as a result of their productive difference or supplementation, and expand the 'thought images' that learners have developed themselves. Since pictures trigger emotions, they intensify the literary reading process without pushing the basal written language of the text into the background.

Also, questions of interpretation can be ignited by the pictorial media which have been added to the text and in addition to their stimulus potential, have a hermeneutic function (Baum, 2005, p. 18). Seen in this light, the reflection on images in foreign language teaching can also be understood as an image interpretation.

We can conclude that it is not the individual picture itself that is important here, but rather the way it is seen by its viewers not only the object plays a role, but it is always the relationship that the subject establishes with the object (Rose, 2012, p. 2). We consider the following selection criteria and methods in the image-text combination to be helpful when texts and images are in different functional contexts:

- The illustrative function: The picture illustrates the contents of the text, i.e., it repeats certain statements of the text and thus makes it more concrete.
- The organisational function: The picture structures the text, clarifies the context and provides an overview.
- The interpretative function: The picture 'translates' the contents of the text that are difficult to understand. It can communicate certain information more efficiently than a long-winded description and can thus also have a text-substitute function. A task could be:
- Prepare the topic in class discussion, present a part of the picture, identify known elements, ask for information, hypothesise about unknown details, find a caption for the picture and write an accompanying text. Write a pre- and post-history of the picture, and present the context: When, where and why was the picture taken? Look for pictures with similar themes and make a collage.

However, above all, pictures should arouse feelings, i.e., repel or attract the viewer. Besides sensuality, it is the imagination that plays a major role in the discussion of aesthetic educational processes. Aesthetic experiences are also experiences that go hand in hand with the creation of inner images, when one forms one's picture of what is seen, heard or felt. In particular, the ability to form an image of something and of creating pictorial alternatives to the already existing images, i.e., the power of imagination, is crucial for the constitution of meaning and comprehension.

To understand, we need images that make abstract words or concepts tangible and symbolise them, argues Laner (2018, pp. 37–38). In the didactic application, several images must be available, so that the students can choose an image for their statements. The aim is to put into words ideas, and sensations, i.e., something complex and possibly initially indeterminate. This can be pinned up on a pin board so that the learners can read what the others have written. So, the first methodological step is to produce several statements; the second is to share them, so the last task can be: 'Write what you think so that the one who reads your text sees the picture in his inner eye – as you see it'. The following questions can guide this process:

- What draws your attention, and what triggers it in you?
- What mood or impression dominates?
- What questions does the picture raise?
- What details do you find exciting in the landscape, a background figure, a shape or colour?

To use text-picture combinations well, the following questions can be asked:

- Does the visualisation add real informational value over text?
- Should I ask the reader to consider the visualisation in light of specific questions?
- And it must also not be overlooked. How can the change of perspective be practiced and accomplished?

5. Conclusion

Is the major challenge of figuring out the words on the page? Or is the major challenge one of constructing a mental representation of the information represented by those words? We define reading comprehension as the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning. We recognise both challenges: figuring out how print represents words and engaging in the translation of print to sound accurately and efficiently (extracting), at the same time formulating a representation of the information being presented, which inevitably requires building new meanings and integrating new with old information (constructing meaning).

At this point, it should have become apparent that foreign language teaching in general and literary reading, in particular, must develop a culture of seeing with learners and that it can be achieved by making viewing cultures accessible, visible and conscious. In doing so, it becomes apparent that engagement with images is about negotiating the world and the worlds they represent. As the teaching examples have shown, learners can benefit in several ways from a multimodal interpretation of literature with visual materials:

- They can benefit from the reciprocal references with different semiotic sign systems.
- They learn about the modes of action of visual and written texts.
- They deepen their knowledge by dealing with texts and images.

Working in a multimodal environment promotes such complex, multilinear and intertextual reading experiences because multimodality makes it possible to find and make connections, as well as reflect upon the validity of those connections. Increased possibilities for such alternatives and multiple ways to intensify the meaning and relevance of reading provoke greater student engagement in the process.

Examples show that the basis of all initiatives is curiosity, research and motivation to learn more about literary places. Instead of the teacher transmitting knowledge, the students have collaborated and participated actively, with their reflections and comments, leaving their voices on the pages. Undoubtedly, the great value of collaborative learning is perceived, as during these processes they have experienced interaction as a regular way of working between teacher and student as well as students with each other in the classroom.

To connect a visual representation of what they have read, they have applied multimodal literacy and extended their reading competence by researching, reflecting, analysing, producing and linking their productions and associations to the text. They have shown that their discoveries have a connection to their lives, and see that there are important connections between history, art, and culture that can be creatively linked. Through the picture–text reading of the novel, sensory perception, i.e., the ability to feel and visualise, was shown to double.

Learners relate to the story, which they take further in visualising and communicating by connecting it with images and the narrator, the story and themselves. This includes images or ideas that can lead to further stories, designs or questions. Ultimately, the two activities are essential, changing perspectives as well as adopting perspectives that learners have implemented in this enriching way. In this final section, the main findings are concisely reiterated. Only conclusions supported by the study findings should be included.

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