



THE MEANING MAKING OF DIGITAL MULTIMODAL TEXTS BY LANGUAGES UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

Prof. Me. Carlos Eduardo de Araújo Plácido¹

RESUMO – A leitura de textos multimodais digitais (KRESS, 2003, 2009, 2010) vem se tornando cada vez mais comum em salas de aula de inglês como segunda língua (ISL). Embora sua leitura esteja se popularizando, a prática de sua escrita é ainda muito incipiente. Com base nos dados preliminares desta pesquisa, todos os estudantes de ISL entrevistados da Universidade de São Paulo (USP) alegaram que não compunham textos multimodais digitais com frequência e 85% deles também declararam não saber como criá-los. Por estas razões, o objetivo principal desta pesquisa foi o de investigar as relações existentes entre os conhecimentos culturais destes universitários de ISL sobre os textos multimodais digitais (aqui exemplificados como *fanfictions*) e a teoria corrente sobre multimodalidade promulgada especialmente por Kress & van Leeuwen (2001, 2002, 2006). Além disso, foi também analisado a eficácia da utilização de textos multimodais digitais em um curso extracurricular intitulado *Escrita Criativa Fanficcional em inglês*, que ocorreu na mesma universidade. A estrutura pedagógica deste curso foi embasada na teoria sociocultural de Vygotsky (1989, 2003, 2007), Lantolf & Poehner (2014) e John-Steiner (2015). Os resultados desta pesquisa indicaram que os

estudantes de ISL não conseguiram diferenciar textos multimodais digitais de textos multimodais não-digitais. Além disso, eles também apresentaram grandes dificuldades na produção de textos multimodais digitais sem a ajuda direta de um parceiro mais experiente Vygotsky (2007). No entanto, eles demonstraram um desenvolvimento considerável, ao tentarem incorporar a teoria sobre textos multimodais digitais em suas próprias produções de escrita criativa identificada ao final do curso.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE – Desafios; Professores em pré-serviço; Escrita Criativa.



ABSTRACT - The reading of digital multimodal texts (KRESS, 2003, 2009, 2010) has become increasingly common in English as a second language (ESL) classrooms. Although its reading has become a customary practice between ESL teachers and students, its production is still incipient. Based on the preliminary data of this research, all the ESL undergraduate students interviewed from the University of São Paulo (USP), claimed they did not compose digital multimodal texts on a regular basis, and 85% also stated they did not know how to create digital multimodal texts. For these reasons, the main objective of this research was to investigate the existing relationships between these ESL undergraduate students' cultural knowledge of digital multimodal texts (here exemplified as fanfictions) and the current theory of multimodality promulgated especially by Kress & van Leeuwen (2001, 2002, 2006). Furthermore, we also analyzed the effectiveness of using digital multimodal

texts in an extracurricular course entitled Fanfictional Creative Writing in English, which took place in the same university. The pedagogical framework of this course was the sociocultural theory by Vygotsky (1989, 2003, 2007), Lantolf & Poehner (2014) and John-Steiner (2015). The results of this research indicated that participating ESL undergraduate students could not differentiate digital multimodal texts from non-digital multimodal texts. In addition, they also exhibited great difficulties in producing digital multimodal texts without the direct help of a more experienced partner Vygotsky (2007), and assessing their own texts as well. However, they showed considerable development by attempting to incorporate the theory of digital multimodal texts with their own creative writing productions by the end of the course.

KEYWORDS - Digital multimodal texts; sociocultural theory; Creative Writing

Introduction

The reading of digital multimodal texts (KRESS, 2009) has become increasingly common in English as a second language (ESL) classrooms. Although their reading has become commoner, their production by ESL students are very incipient. There is still few ESL courses where students can really practice their writing skills. One of this course may be the creative writing courses, because they may provide ESL students with a safe space where they can express themselves, develop their creative skills, broaden their cultural knowledge about multimodal texts and even experiment with the target language.

For these reasons (there must be more), the motivation of this research was the evident lack of opportunities for ESL students in Brazil to develop properly their knowledge about the theory of multimodality (KRESS & VAN LEEUWEN, 2001, 2002, 2006) and creative thinking (VYGOTSKY, 2007). Therefore, the objective of this research was to investigate Languages and



Literature undergraduate students' comprehension about digital multimodal textual elements as well as how they use them to make meaning and create their own digital multimodal texts, here exemplified as fanfictions.

The main beneficiaries of this academic study would probably be the Languages and Literature undergraduate students, their mentors, creative writing course designers, public and private school managers, and even pre-service/in-service teachers from language institutions. These research findings may be beneficial for these audiences, because it unveiled the undergraduate students' cultural knowledge of digital multimodal texts and their relationships with this type of textual genre. Furthermore, they could also reflect on the theory of multimodality (KRESS & VAN LEEUWEN, 2001, 2002, 2006) indicated and applied it to create their own concepts about creativity, fanfictional writing and digital multimodality.

Research questions

In this research, we shall address the two following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between the Languages and Literature undergraduate students' cultural knowledge of fanfictions and multimodality?
2. How did the participants make meaning of their fanfictions based on the theory of multimodality (KRESS & VAN LEEUWEN, 2001, 2002, 2006)?

Conceptual Framework of this research

A plethora of sociocultural researchers (BODROVA & LEONG, 2007; WERTSCH, 2010; LANTOLF & POEHNER, 2014; CONNERY, JOHN-STEINER & MARJANOVIC-SHANE, 2015) agree that a child's meaning making is a constant process which entails social interaction, mediation and creativity. Although Vygotsky (1989, 2003, 2007) had focused on the development of a child, these researchers believe his findings may be applied to adults as well. He (1989, p. 57) highlighted that "(...) every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological)". This statement indicates that the origin of all higher mental functions are actual relationships among people.

Lantolf & Poehner (2014) believe that the development of second language students may be accelerated through constant interactions. However, this acceleration does not happen through any kind of interaction. At this point, they lean on another important aspect of Vygotsky's theory: **the**



zone of proximal development (ZPD). They (2014, p. 35) pinpoint that this zone is an area where crops of explorations may occur, if the student is cognitively prepared and receives the proper help from someone more experienced (a second language teacher, for instance). A second language teacher may possibilitate an environment for his students 'development through social interaction. This social interaction always happens some type of mediation.

Bodrova & Leong (2007, p. 09) highlight that mediation refers to the acquisition of "(...) specific cultural tools, handed to them by more experience members of the society". These tools facilitate the development of higher mental functions (mnemonic techniques, synthesizing, summarization, etc.), which adjusts a person more properly to his environment. Furthermore, they indicate the existence of two sides of tools for higher mental functions: the external side and the internal side. The former is used for people to solve problems that "[...] require engaging mental processes at levels not yet available to children" while the latter is for people's construction of their own mind which may (or not) influence his environment later. Therefore, we cannot act in our social and physical world without mediation of any form. Bodrova & Leong (2007) stress the importance of language which pertains to the internal side.

John-Steiner (2015) acknowledges that language is, in fact, the scholars' most preferred object of study. However, she stresses that language is not the only existing symbolic system, and in a so multimodal world as we live in today, other semiotic means should receive more attention. For this reason, she proposes the use of "cognitive pluralism" so we can better understand how our mind works. The cognitive pluralism entails "(...) *mathematical symbols systems, maps, artistic sketches, sign language, imagery, and musical notes*" (JOHN-STEINER, 2015, p. 07). Therefore, she proposes to look at a second language student's development through bigger lens, considering various aspects of his learning process.

Bodrova & Leong (2007) and John-Steiner (2015) have extensively elaborated on the cognitive orientation of Vygotsky (2007)'s research. Vygotsky had pinpointed that the development of our higher mental functions happens due to the necessities imposed on us by our environment. For instance, maybe if we did not need to trade our cultural tools, we would not have to develop our calculating skills. Therefore, our process of meaning making depends on mental and sociocultural activities which take place through mediation. Furthermore, they have all recognized that Vygostky (2007) had also considered other factors which directly influence human development and one of these factors is creativity. Yet he (2007) reminds us of two important activities which



should be considered when investigating the concept of creativity: the reproductive activity and the creative activity.

Vygotsky (2007, p. 6) states that the reproductive activity is “[...] very closely linked to memory; essentially it consists of a person’s reproducing or repeating previously developed and mastered behavioral patterns or resurrecting traces of earlier impressions”. We usually reproduce other people’s inventions, because they help us develop ourselves or we need them for sociocultural adaptations. Although we tend to simply reproduce what other people have already invented, we can also adapt these inventions to the changes of our society. This is the creative activity. Thus, the reproductive activity is usually oriented to the past while the creative activity is oriented to the future. Nothing is created from nothing. We create something **new**, based on something that already exists. Fanfictional writing is a good example.

Fanfictional writing is just another form of meaning making or semiosis that may occur in a person’s lifespan. For Vygotsky, (2007), the act of meaning making is a type of construction of knowledge which does not only involve different codes, but also different contexts. John-Steiner (2015) states that meaning making is commonly apprehended as learning or understanding something. Furthermore, we construct meanings to organize our experiences, to reflect upon our world, the other and ourselves as well as to develop our higher mental functions. For her (2015, p.12), “[...] while meaning making occurs inside the social relationship of the ZDP, meaning is processed through the individual prism of *perezhivanie*”. John-Steiner (2015) stresses throughout her research the importance of comprehending mediation, *perezhivanie* and meaning making as processes concerning the development of a person’ creative thinking (VYGOTSKY, 2007).

Indisputably, creativity is a transformative activity where emotion, meaning and cognitive symbols are synthesized (JOHN-STEINER, 2015, p.12). In the same vein, children and adults exercise creativity to express themselves, and to make sense of the world around them. They also apply it to comprehend more deeply several types of texts such as the digital multimodal texts. The meaning-making of digital multimodal texts encompasses the understanding of digital multimodal semiosis which are all intertwined in a complex relationship among a variety of (digital or not) modes involved in its textual construction.



Theoretical approaches to digital multimodal texts

The comprehension of digital multimodal texts precedes the comprehension of the theory of multimodality (KRESS & VAN LEEUWEN, 2001, 2002, 2006). Although Kress and van Leeuwen had researched extensively multimodal texts, there are many other authors who have produced relevant studies on it as well (GIBSON, 1977; CHAUVIN, 2003; BALDRY & THIBAUT, 2006; BERNSON, 2007; LÉVY, 2009; JEWITT, 2010). Their research has helped us better understand how distinct types of communicative modes (language, images, graphs, sounds, music, gestures, etc.) may be used to make meanings. Kress (2010) highlights that these communicative modes are semiotic elements which opportunize the creation of meanings via one or more of its combinations. He then adds that each single mode presents very distinctive characteristics. For example, colors are used to enhance a certain message, sound may create rhythm for a certain story, images may condense information, and so on.

Another important characteristic of multimodal texts is the notion of “semiotic resource”. According to Van Leeuwen (2006, p. 3) semiotic resources were “[...] originated in the work of Michael Halliday who argued that the grammar of a language is not a code, not a set of rules for producing correct sentences, but a resource for making meanings”. Fanfictional texts are good examples of digital semiotic resources, because one original content (the inspirational material for a certain fanfiction) may produce numerous other texts. In fact, there are even specialized fandoms (fanfictional online communities) under only one theme such as Twilight and Harry Potter with a plethora of texts produced about them. However, the semiotic resources should not be apprehended in isolation.

Baldry & Thibault (2006, p. 09) promulgate that the semiotic resources of multimodal texts present a set of operative modes which should always be seen in its interaction between the text and the reader, and with the text and its sociohistorical as well as cultural environment. They name it “resource integration principle,” p. 4). Additionally, this principle should also be understood in relation to another principle, which they call the “meaning-compression principle”. This latter principle engulfs the effect caused by the constant interaction between “[... smaller-scale semiotic resources on higher-scalar levels where meaning is observed and interpreted”.

Van Leeuwen (2006) as well as Baldry & Thibault (2006) agree that the multimodal texts render great interpretative potentiality; however, each multimodal text has its own formative and contented rules which, consequently, limit the reader’s interpretations. In other words, multimodal



texts may be multi-interpretative, plastic and mutable, but not any type of interpretation is possible. Therefore, the reader should be capable of comprehending the diverse modes which are utilized to construct a certain multimodal text. This is also applied to digital multimodal texts which is the case of fanfictions. If a reader is reading a fanfiction, he will be expecting to find some textual, digital and paratextual elements in it. If he does not find some of these elements, he may quickly abandon his reading. Furthermore, Jewitt (2010) adds that all modes are partial in multimodality, i.e., every single mode has its affordances (GIBSON, 1977) and constraints in the process of digital multimodal textual making meaning.

We comprehend fanfictions as texts which present at least: textual scripts, digital scripts and paratextual scripts. Textual scripts are the written language per se. In fandoms, the textual script reigns. Most fanfictions are textual script-based and many ficwriters (writers of fanfictions) opt for not using the other scripts, usually to avoid copyright infringements. Although they prefer to write in their mothertongue, it is quite common to find ficwriters using a different language from their mothertongue. And it is commoner to find multilingual fandoms as well. The digital scripts are distinct types of communicative modes (hypertext, memes, menes, pictures, soundtrack, gifs, etc.) usually found on cybercultural spaces (LÉVY, 2009). They may be used to enhance the content of a certain digital text or even create rhythm for the reading. However, most times, they are just applied to ornament the textual script. The paratextual scripts are the metalanguage created around a certain fanfiction. Fanfictions are texts created to be shared on a fandom and promote diversified types of comments. These comments are currently used to correct a plotline or even to guide the ficwriter's next chapter.

In summary, the theorists of digital multimodal texts (BALDRY & THIBAUT, 2006; JEWITT, 2010; LÉVY, 2009) feed directly on the theory of multimodality based mainly on Kress & Van Leeuwen (2001, 2002, 2006). It embodies the significance of all the semiotic resources and modalities in the meaning making process of reading and writing in today's cybercultural world. The proper interpretation of digital multimodal texts as well as its proper production should encompass the text holistically (textual, digital and paratextual scripts). In addition, the functional affordances and constraints of each text should be taken into consideration as well.



The context of this research

The investigation of this research occurred in the Faculty of Philosophy, Language and Literature, and Human Sciences (FPLLHS), at University of São Paulo (USP), Brazil. The teacher-researcher collected his data through the extracurricular course, promoted by the Department of Culture and Extension of the same university. This course was named Fanfictional Creative Writing in English (*Escrita Criativa Fanficcional em inglês*, in Portuguese) and it was managed in the second semester of 2016.

Research Methodology

The methodological base of this research was mainly qualitative, following the action research principles. The action research is one of the commonest types of research used by applied linguistics in Brazil. Its success is due to its various advantages for the researcher, who may also be the teacher of his course. As stated by Ferrance (2000), the action research principles provide the researcher with a crop of meaningful tools. These tools are not only used to collect and analyze data, but they may also be applied to instigate human development (VYGOTSKY, 2007) among its participants. Furthermore, the teacher-researcher is also the responsible figure who may alter his researching procedures. Possible alterations may take place, if necessary, to exponentize the collection of data and opportunize crucial interventions for the development of the participants.

The participants and research tools

The participants of this study were basically female students, except for one male who abandoned the Fanfictional Creative Writing in English course, in the middle of it. In total, there were 12 undergraduate students from Languages and Literature courses of the University of São Paulo (USP), Brazil. Specifically, for this study, the teacher-researcher only examined 5 out of 12, since 5 of them abandoned the course at the beginning of it, and 2 in the middle. Based on the students who became subjects of this research, all of them claimed they already wrote fanfictions (the main genre of the course) and published on fandoms (fanfictional online communities). However, they all stressed that they had never done a creative writing course before and were very motivated to improve their linguistic skills in English. Although we had 5 research subjects, we decided to focus on the student A's comments and fanfictional writing in this article.



The researcher applied tools to identify the cultural knowledge of the participants as well as to investigate their meaning making process. These tools were: a preliminary questionnaire, students' Facebook creative diaries, their first and final fanfictions, peer feedback and fieldnotes. The preliminary questionnaire had 27 questions and its applications helped the researcher apprehend the students' proficiency in English and their current understanding of digital multimodal texts. Their meaning making process of digital multimodal texts was analyzed based on their Facebook creative diaries (a type of journal where they describe step by step their creative writing process). In the same vein, their first and final fanfictions, peer feedback and fieldnotes were used to deepen the researcher's investigation.

Results of this research

In the following, we shall analyze the collected data in relation to the two-main questions of this research.

FIRST RESEARCH QUESTION: What is the relationship between the Languages and Literature undergraduate students' cultural knowledge of fanfictions and digital multimodality?

The interventions was structured and operationalized based on the 6 Davydovian learning actions (2008, p. 315) which entail

1) Transforming the conditions of the task in order to reveal the universal relationship of the object under study,

2) Modeling the identified relationship in material, graphic or literal form,

3) Transforming the model of the relationship in order to study its properties in "pure form",

4) Constructing a system of particular tasks that are solvable by general method,

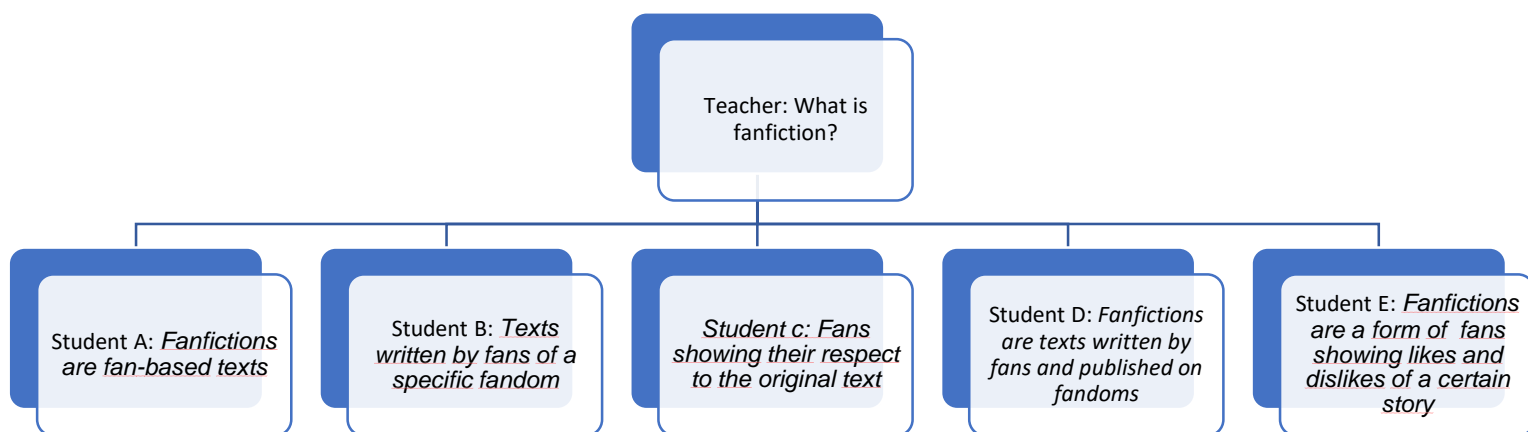
5) Monitoring and assessment of the performance of the preceding actions and

6) Evaluating the assimilation of the general method that results from solving the given learning task. This data analysis intended to investigate undergraduate students' ontogenetic development (VYGOTSKY, 2007; LANTOLF, 2014), i.e., reveal the students' path to develop their knowledge about digital multimodal texts and their creative thinking.

The fifth Davydovian action, monitoring and assessment, allow teachers and students to reflect and analyze the first (situation problem) and second (modeling transformation) actions more adequately. And it is through the adequate investigation of these actions that the teacher-researcher



(of the Fanfictional Creative Writing in English course) guided his students to broaden their everyday concepts (VYGOTSKY, 2007) about the literary genre: **fanfiction**. To do that, he had first to identify their current knowledge of this genre. The identification of students' knowledge about fanfictions occurred in the second class with the following question: What is fanfiction?



The students' spontaneous answers indicated that their everyday concepts (VYGOTSKY, 2007) about fanfictions could be summarized as: **a text produced by fans**. This can be verified by the repetition of the word *fan* which appears in every student's comment and their rhetorical tautologies. About specifically their rhetorical tautologies, we can see that their apprehension of fanfictions refers chiefly to the production of redundancies related to the name of this literary genre: **fan + fiction** (fiction written by fans) and maybe their own participating fandoms' rhetoric. Both their spontaneous answers and rhetorical tautologies also unveiled their quite limited argumentative capacity about fanfictions, relying mostly on its etymology and scarce elaboration on the primary question: What is fanfiction?

This question was also answered by the students in the preliminary questionnaire. They all gave very similar answers to those in the second class. Apart from reinforcing their limited comprehension of fanfictional texts, their everyday concepts showed as well to be all "[...] ontological, intuitive categories developed by each individual not counting on formal schooling" (VYGOTSKY, 2007, p. 57). Consequently, we can attest that their everyday concepts were



nonsystematic, and mainly qualified by contextual situations. This type of conceptualization is often influenced by mundane analogies and may be reinforced by akin groups. In other others, their answers about fanfictions were all situational, empirical and practical (VYGOTSKY, 2007). They had constructed their concepts on their inattentive act of writing creatively and based on their lay analysis through a set of participations in fandoms such as ficreaders, fanfiction commentator, beta reader and even fandom moderator. All confirmed by themselves throughout the course.

In the same vein, the students' first formal feedback (HATTIE & TIMPERLEY, 2007) also demonstrated that they all had already a pre-established concept about fanfictions, i.e., none of them were having their first contact with the literary genre fanfiction. This may be explained by two main factors: 1) they all already participate in fandoms (fanfictional online communities) and 2) they all have already been writing (what they call) fanfictional texts from at least 10 years. For instance, student B wrote 54 fanfictions in 2016, student A wrote 36, student C 27, student E 21 and D 14. In the first formal feedback, students A, B, C and E claimed they have written fanfictions for more than 12 years whilst student D for more than 10.

In addition, students' everyday concepts were reinforced by their spontaneous comments in the classroom. They started commenting emphatically that they knew exactly what fanfictions were, because according to them: "we all have written fanfictions for quite some time" and "this is what my fandom friends believe too". Along with the previous data, their spontaneous comments were also intuitive and unsystematic. They were intuitive, because they said they have a "extensive experience" writing this literary genre and they were all unsystematic, because their fanfictions were not orderly produced. They wrote based on what they saw on fandoms and what their fandom friends indicated fanfictions to be. There is no conceptual framework behind their creative writing process. Furthermore, their everyday concepts were also displayed on their Facebook creative diaries. They appeared in different forms as the following image indicates:



Just a warm up: post your favorite picture/fanart of your OTPs in the comments!!

Here's mine (Camren - Camila and Lauren from Fifth Harmony)



 Curtir  Comentar

Figure 1

Student A's Facebook creative diary 1

The Facebook creative diary by student A can show us her devotion to the American music group: Fifth Harmony. This was her first post (“just a warm up”) on her diary, and it stresses how relevant they are for her as a fan, as a participant of their community and later as a writer of fanfictions. On the top of this image, we can see the two members of the group hugging each other and her request for other students to also post their favorite pictures or fanarts. This request may indicate her desire to find others who are also fans of Fifth Harmony. Her devotion for them were later reinforced by her bringing a photograph with her beside her idols to the classroom and sharing it with everybody. It goes without saying that all her fanfictions were based on this group.

All student's A devotion to Fifth Harmony is consubstantiated in her writing. One of the first tasks of the course was to write a fanfiction. The teacher-researcher asked his participating students to do that so he could apprehend their writing skills (writing diagnosis) and comprehend



better about their cultural knowledge about fanfictions as well as digital multimodal texts. Student A's first fanfictional writing is indicated below:

Lauren her musical career.

When Lauren got a record deal and started putting out singles, she soon became fairly famous and started touring all over the country. Camila, on the other hand, stayed in L.A. and focused on her studies and her internship at a recording studio. The distance - and the multiple fights that came with it - made them break up and live their separate lives.

Now, Camila has a boyfriend and a steady job as a songwriter and Lauren's just back in the city from recording her debut album. Just when they think they'd gotten over each other, destiny comes into play and makes them question everything.



Figure 2

Student A's Facebook creative diary 2

Student A's first fanfiction reinforces her limited knowledge about digital multimodal texts. A close look indicates that the textual script is not organically intertwined with the digital elements (the photograph of one of Fifth Harmony vocalists). The image chosen seems just to serve as an ornament to her writing, placed after her story. Even though it seems to do that, it becomes quite misleading to her ficreaders. This is verified, because the textual script does not make any kind of mention to it and its content does not reflect the photograph chosen in any form. It is difficult to understand the reasons why she puts specifically this picture in her fanfiction and does not include the other members of the group.

Furthermore, her final questionnaire and formal feedback attested unfamiliarity with digital multimodal texts: "I had never thought to use digital elements on my fanfictions". The teacher-



researcher then instigated her: Why not? And she replied: “To be honest, I did not know much about it. Now with the course, I will definitely think more about what I write”. Kress (2009) highlights that one of the main writer’s problem to elaborate a piece of multimodal writing is the links that should be made between the different semiotic systems present currently. Kress (2009)’s comments are exemplified in student A’s fanfiction. She failed to create a digital multimodal text which encompasses cohesional and coherently the textual and digital scripts.

SECOND RESEARCH QUESTION: How did the participants make meaning of their fanfictions based on the digital multimodality literacy?

A proficient writer should be capable of explaining clearly each chosen of words and sentencings construction. In other words, he should be able to understand his meaning making acts and convey it in a well-structured text. For Vygotsky (2007), the meaning making process has two facets: the making meaning and the making personal sense. The former refers to the scientific knowledge of a certain element, being quite close to its dictionarial entries. The latter refers to the individual’s attitude toward a word, a sentence, a text, an idea, etc. It is his personal experience of it.

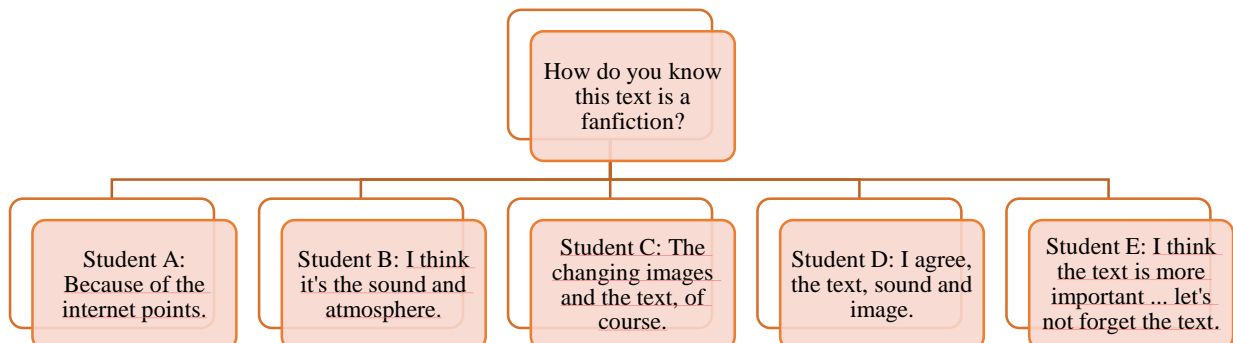
Based on Zammit (2007)’s visual literacy four-strategies, we proposed its methodological amplification (Meta-Interpretive, Perceptual, Analytical, and Sociohistorical and Cultural), so that researchers could better investigate digital multimodal texts, inclusive its writers’ meaning making process. For this reason, the teacher-researcher organized his Fanfictional Creative Writing in English course following these amplified strategies supported by Davydovian developmental pedagogy. The Meta-Interpretive refers to raise students’ awareness of digital multimodal texts. Although they all claimed they knew fanfictions in the preliminary questionnaire, they could neither define nor create it. Their superficial definition relates poorly to fanzines as well as its creation.

The teacher-researcher created different learning moments throughout the Fanfictional Creative Writing in English course so that his participating students could notice the commonest digital multimodal elements present in fanfictional texts. One of his first moments was related to the problematization of the three constitutive pillars of fanfictions comprehended here as the textual, the digital and the paratextual scripts. The main objective of the first moment was to raise his students’ awareness in relation to the existence of these elements in the fanfiction entitled *The boat* by Matt Huynh:



Available on <<http://www.sbs.com.au/theboat/>>. Accessed on 06/20/2015

This digital multimodal text entails a set of digital multimodal elements such as drawings, sound effects, moving screen, atmospheric lighting, textual and paratextual scripts. After reading this fanfiction with his students, the teacher asked them: “Is this an example of fanfiction?” They unanimously answered yes, reinforced by their affirmative nods of the head. In addition, he asked them:

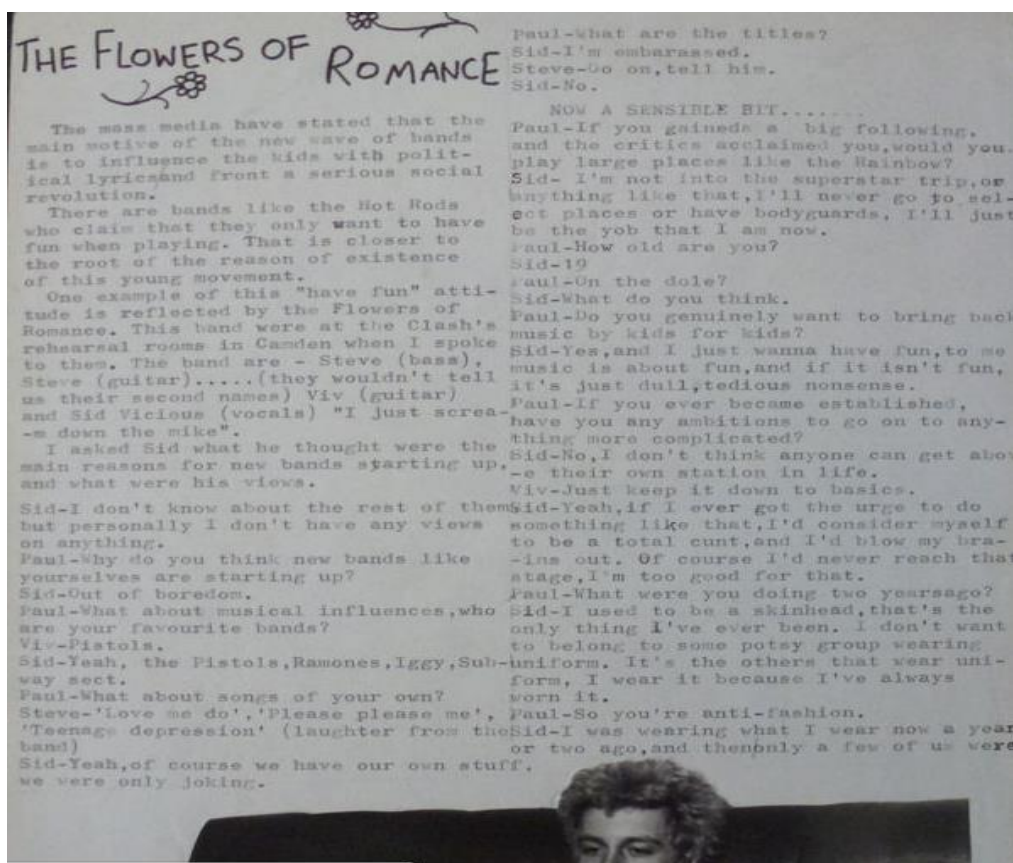




Based on the students' prolific answers, the teacher-researcher noticed that he could raise his students' awareness of digital multimodal texts. This is the first action of Davydov (2008) and a crucial step of acquiring multimodal literacy (KRESS; VAN LEEUWEN, 2001). For this Davydovian action, students may scrutinize the textual genre to better understand its current characteristics. For Kress and van Leeuwen (2001), students' awareness help them properly differentiate one textual genre from the others. In addition, Zammit (2007) highlights students' right of linguistic and literary awareness, because, for him, this is the moment where students begin broadening their cultural knowledge of a certain textual genre.

They all pinpointed digital scripts which were neither mentioned in the preliminary questionnaire nor in their formal feedback. Although they all indicated their awareness of these elements, some showed more scientific knowledge about them than others. For instance, student D used the appropriate terminology ("text, sound, image) to show her understanding of the fanfiction (**The Boat**) whilst the student A displayed generalized understanding of digital multimodal texts (internet points).

The teacher's rationale for this first intervention was to primarily raise his students' aware of the digital multimodal elements currently present in fanfictions. This step was important to verify if his students had knowledge of these elements and if they could interpret a digital multimodal text by decodifying its main digital elements (KRESS; VAN LEEUWEN, 2001). The teacher-researcher's next step was to possibilitate his students' reflection on fanfiction and fanzine so that they could differentiate one from the other. To achieve that, the teacher showed them the following fanzine by Mary Jay (1976), based on her favorite musical group The Sex Pistols:



Available on < http://www.philjens.plus.com/pistols/pistols/MarkJay_SkumFlowersOfRomance.html>.

Accessed on 07/12/2016.

After showing his students Jay (1976)'s fanzine, the students' reactions were reasonably distinct. Student A looked surprised and spontaneously commented that this was actually a fanfiction: "This is a fanfiction, because it is based on a music group. I know this group". Student B then tried to problematize Student A's comments by adding that "[...] if the song was the only reason, then all texts that exist are fanfictions. It's like the concept of literature, literature is everything. It's what we know". Student E then interrupted student B to affirm that "[...] if it's online, it's a fanfiction. It's not anymore a fanzine". We can notice that the teacher opportunized a situation where his students could reflect on the textual genres presented (fanfiction and fanzine) and where they tried to define and differentiate them.

The digital multimodality and the differentiation of textual genres were both consubstantiated in student A's final fanfiction. By the end of the Fanfictional Creative Writing in English course, she was aware of some of the existing digital elements (hypertext, sound and



specially images) which helped her reflect more analytically about her fanfictional writing as well as other digital writers' productions. In addition, she also noticed that writing in English is different from writing in Portuguese. She had to be more concise, direct and reader-friendly. This was countersigned on her last textual version:



Figure 3

Student A's Facebook creative diary 6

As we can see, her final fanfiction seemed to be more well-organized and textual organically-oriented. Her first draft showed the Fifth Harmony photograph placed after the textual script to ornate it. Her last draft shows a different photograph (a tidy bedroom) placed among the textual script. This photograph relates to her story as it is the setting where her it occurs. It does not simply flourish her writing, she used it as an indispensable constitutive part of it. We can notice that she describes more meticulously this photograph which intensifies her ficreaders' reading experience. Therefore, she seems to be considering more her ficreaders than she did previously. Her first fanfiction was only directed to Fifth Harmony fans, the last can reach more ficreaders.



Conclusion

By the beginning of the extracurricular course, Fanfictional Creative Writing in English, the teacher-researcher could attest that the Languages and Literature student from USP had very limited cultural knowledge about digital multimodality theories and even about the textual genre (fanfiction) they claimed they had been writing for more than 10 years. However, by the end of this course, the participating students were aware of the digital multimodality theory, specially based on Kress & Van Leeuwen (2001, 2002, 2006) and could differentiate properly fanfictions from fanzines. In addition, they could also create fanfictional texts using digital elements more organically and well-thought.

REFERENCES

- BALDRY, A. & THIBAUT, P.J. **Multimodal Transcription and Text Analysis**. London: Equinox, 2006.
- BERNSEN, N. O. **Report on Iterative Testing of Multimodal Usability and Evaluation Guide**. SIMILAR Deliverable D98, 2007.
- BODROVA, E., & LEONG, D.J. **Tools of the Mind: The Vygotskian Approach to Early Childhood Education**. 2nd ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education/Merrill, 2007.
- CANCLINI, N. G. **Leitores, espectadores e internautas**. Trad. Ana Goldberger. São Paulo: Iluminuras, 2008.
- CHAUVIN, B.A. **Visual or media literacy?** Journal of Visual Literacy, 2003.
- CONNERY, M. C., JOHN-STEINER, V. P., & MARJANOVIC-SHANE, A. **Vygotsky and creativity. A cultural-historical approach to play, meaning making, and the arts**. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2015.
- DAMAZIO, A. **O desenvolvimento de conceitos matemáticos no processo extrativo do carvão**. 2000. Tese (Doutorado em Educação) – Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, 2000.
- DAVYDOV, V. V. **Problems of developmental instruction: A theoretical and experimental psychological study**. Hauppauge, NY: Nova Sciencia, 2008.



- FERNANDES, C. “À procura da senha da vida-de-senha a aula dialógica?” In: VEIGA, Ilma Passos Alencastro (Org.). **Aula: gênese, dimensões, princípios e práticas**. Campinas: Papirus, 2008.
- FERRANCE, E. **Themes in education: Action research**. Brown University: Educational Alliance, 2000.
- GIBSON, J. J. (1977), ‘The theory of affordances’, in SHAW, R. and BRANSFORD, J. (eds.), **Perceiving, Acting and Knowing**. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1977.
- HATTIE, J. & TIMPERLEY, H. “The Power of feedback”, in **Review of Educational Research**, 77, 2007.
- KRESS, G. **Literacy in the new media age**. New York: Routledge, 2003.
- _____. What is a mode? In: JEWITT, C. (Ed). **The Routledge Handbook of Multimodal Analysis**. London: Routledge, 2009.
- _____. **Multimodal Discourse: The modes and media of contemporary communication**. London: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- KRESS, G.; VAN LEEUWEN, T. **Reading images: The grammar of visual design**. London: Routledge, 2001.
- _____. “Colour as a semiotic mode: notes for a grammar of colour”. **Visual Communication** 1 (3): p. 343-368, 2002.
- _____. **Reading images: the grammar of visual design**. London: Routledge, 2006.
- LANTOLF, J. P., & POEHNER, M. E. **Sociocultural theory and the pedagogical imperative in L2 education**. Vygotskian praxis and the theory/practice divide. New York: Routledge, 2014.
- LÉVY, Pierre. **Cibercultura**. (Trad. Carlos Irineu da Costa). São Paulo: Editora 34, 2009.
- ROYCE, T. “Multimodal communicative competence in second language contexts”, in: ROYCE, T.; BOWCHER, W. (Ed.). **New directions in the analysis of multimodal discourse**. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2007.
- SERAFINI, F. “Understanding visual images in picture books”, in EVANS, J. (Ed.), **Talking beyond the page: Reading and responding to contemporary picture books**. London: Routledge, 2009.
- VYGOTSKY, L. S. **Pensamento e linguagem**. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 1989.
- _____. **A formação social da mente**. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2003.
- _____. **The collected works of L. S. Vygotsky: Vol. 3. Problems of the theory and history of psychology**. R.W. Rieber and A. S. Carton (Eds.). New York: Plenum, 2007.
-



REVISTA *LUMEN ET VIRTUS*

VOL. IX N° 21

ABRIL/2018

ISSN 2177-2789

WERTSCH, J. Second International Interdisciplinarity Conference on Perspectives and Limits of Dialogism in Mikhail Bakhtin. Estocolmo, Suécia, 3-5 jun. 2009. **Educação e Pesquisa**, São Paulo, v. 36, n. especial, p. 123-132, 2010.

ZAMMIT, K. **The construction of student pathways during information-seeking sessions using hypermedia programs**: a social semiotic perspective. Unpublished PhD, Australia: University of Western Sydney, 2007.

ZOSS, M. **Finding my kind of teaching**: How a drama project became a teacher's expressive teaching moment. *English in Education*, 45, 2011.



ⁱ Doutorando em Estudos Linguísticos e Literários em Inglês pela Universidade de São Paulo (USP).