



6th World Conference on Research in Education

09 - 11 June 2023

Nice, France

Voices from University Classrooms on Effects of Multimodality on Polylingual EAL College Students' Meaning Making

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Abstract

This qualitative case study grounded in Vygotsky's (1978; 1987) socio-cultural constructivism theory was conducted with 11 polylingual English as an Additional Language (EAL) International college students at a public university in the Northeastern USA. The data was collected over the period of two consecutive months via site and participant observations, surveys, semi-structured interviews, reflective questionnaires, and artifacts (Glesne, 2010). The purpose of this study was to find out whether or not multimodality, when added to traditional print-based texts may assist polylingual EAL college students' meaning making. I analyzed the collected data using the thematic and value coding (Saldaña, 2013) in order to identify recurring themes and values in the participants' interviews. I also utilized the qualitative data analysis software MAXQDA to analyze the transcribed interviews. Via the affordances of MAXQDA, I developed graphic representations of topics and themes, which were most frequently addressed by participants. I triangulated my data collected from the multiple sources and conducted comparative analysis of all the data (Glesne, 2010; Spradley, 1980). This research found that all its participants stated that inclusion of multimodal features assisted them with meaning-making in the process of working on the project tasks. Most importantly, the participants specified the most and least helpful modes of multimodalities. The major implication and significance of this study is in its importance for the vast populations of EAL students' success in academe, on condition that the identified by the participants multimodal teaching methods are implemented in the higher education establishments worldwide.

Keywords: assisting new language learners; conventional print-based text; higher education; multimodal language; reading comprehension