



**Karin da Rocha,
Agnes Haidacher-Horn,
Amy Müller-Caron (Eds.)**

Picture That!
**Picturebooks, Comics
and Graphic Novels in
the EFL Classroom**
Research & Teaching Implications

Karin da Rocha, Agnes Haidacher-Horn & Amy Müller-Caron (Eds.)

Picture That!

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INTRODUCTION:

Picture That!

KARIN DA ROCHA (TEXT)

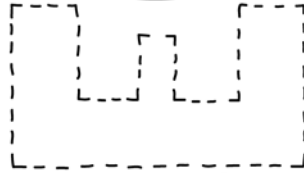
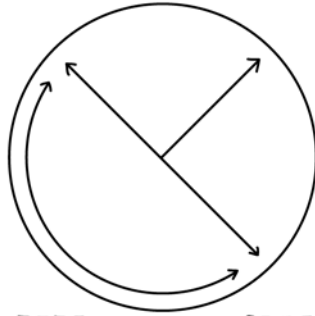
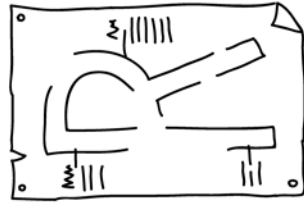
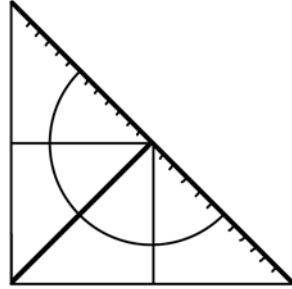
SOPHIA SPACHINGER (ILLUSTRATIONS)

IN THIS BOOK YOU'RE GOING TO HEAR
THAT IT'S A BRILLIANT IDEA
TO INCORPORATE LITERATURE AT EVERY LEVEL
BECAUSE IT'S SOMETHING IN WHICH THE SOME KIDS CAN REVEL.

IN ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE
WHEN FEAR AND ANXIETY
PLAYING WITH WORDS MAY HELP TO RISE
AND PROGRESS COMES IN A DISGUISE.

PICTURE, Metaphor AND REPETITION
LEAD TO THE PUPPETS' GREATER VISION
IN THEIR Scholastic Habitats
—THEY— CAN BE LANGUAGE ACROBATS

THOUGH THERE ARE MANY QUESTIONS?
WE'LL TRY TO MAKE A FEW SUGGESTIONS
FOR DIFFERENT LEVELS OF
AND TEXTS THAT PROVE THAT LITERATURE'S COOL



Picturebooks, Comics and Graphic Novels

New Perspectives for Literature and Language Teaching

Werner Delanoy

Introduction

In the 21st century, meaning-making is multi-modal in orientation with different semiotic systems interacting in complex ways. Participation in such meaning-making processes, therefore, entails familiarity with these systems and their complex interrelationships. Such a perspective has important consequences for literature and language learning. In both instances, a words-only approach is no longer sufficient, and in both contexts, concepts of literary and communicative competence need to be widened to include multi-modal practices. As for literature teaching, this multi-modal turn has shifted attention to the interplay of words and pictures in text-types such as picturebooks, comics and graphic novels. As for language learning, “symbolic competence” (Kramsch, 2006, p. 251) has been suggested as the new direction for communicative language learning. Moreover, the engagement with literature has been hailed as a social practice highly conducive to developing such competence.

In the following reflections, a case is made for going multi-modal in literature and language learning, and for starting early with such education, thus including texts written for young learners. First, attention will be drawn to socio-cultural challenges which make such a move desirable. Secondly, the focus is on the implications of such a program for literature learning both on textual and reader-related levels. In line with the overall theme of this volume, the text-types covered will be picturebooks, comics and graphic novels. Thirdly, the program’s implications for language learning will be discussed. Finally, critical literacy will be suggested as a central objective for literature and language learning.

Meaning Making in a Globalized Modernity

What I mean by a *globalized modernity* is a world shaped by multi-modal communication networks, transnational business connections, migration on an unprecedented scale, rapid technological change creating new possibilities and risks, plus increased inter- and transcultural contact on both local and global levels. Moreover, this modernity is not a place of equal life opportunities; it is shaped by social inequalities and growing gaps between the rich and the poor. How are people’s lives affected by such a dynamic? Zygmunt

Bauman (2000) uses the term *liquid modernity* to discuss some of the effects. For him (2000, p. 4), liquid modernity is characterized by permanent and rapid change, plus the need to continuously create new knowledge to cope with emerging demands. Bauman (ibid., p. 7) adds that because of the weakening and loss of old certainties, responsibility for success and failure increasingly lies with the single person who is constantly faced with the need to make new decisions. Moreover, since people as social beings need to articulate and negotiate their interests in their decision-making processes, these responsibilities are connected to *response-abilities*, i.e. to communicative competencies.

Communication in a globalized modernity is multi-modal in design. Communicative competence in such a socio-cultural context, therefore, necessitates moves beyond alphabetical communication. My notion of a multi-modal literacy is informed by Mary Kalantzis' and Bill Cope's approach. Kalantzis and Cope (2012, p. 250) refer to "the intrinsic multimodality of everyday communication in the era of the new media". For them, these conditions for communication raise the question how, in education, learners can be empowered "to make and participate in meanings that will enable them, as children and later as adults, to be effective and fulfilled members of society" (Kalantzis & Cope, 2012, p. 2). As a perspective for education, their literacy approach on the one hand is focused on multi-modality, i.e. on how "written-linguistic modes of meaning interface with oral, visual, audio, gestural, tactile, and spatial patterns of meaning" (ibid, p. 2). On the other hand, meaning making is discussed in its socio-cultural dimension with a specific socio-political agenda in mind. In more concrete terms, this approach advocates social equity and concomitantly the gradual elimination of social inequality in a globalized and liquid modernity (ibid., pp. 7–8).

For language education in general and English language teaching (ELT) in particular, such a perspective has important implications. The link between responsibility and *response-ability* makes communicative competence a major objective for all education. Moreover, the demand for more personal responsibility implies that communicative competence will become a core ability for the single person. Also, because of the increase in global interconnectedness, languages which permit meaning-making on transnational levels are becoming particularly important. Here, English is of particular relevance. Moreover, the need to communicate in a dynamic and globally connected world entails forms of language education where the learners are given insight into the complexity of contemporary living conditions, and where language and thought are used creatively to meet situation-specific and changing demands. Finally, because of the multi-modality of current communication, there is need for a pedagogy that gives insight into different literacies and how they are combined to create meanings.

Such pedagogy ties in well with a concept of education as suggested by Hans-Christoph Koller. In the light of permanent social change, Koller (2012, pp. 15–16) stresses the importance of developing creative abilities permitting constructive engagement with *emerg-*

ing personal and social challenges. Hence, rather than on the transmission of existing knowledge, the focus is on competencies permitting flexible and critical thinking, experimentation with new ideas and new knowledge-creation through contact with different viewpoints. For Koller (*ibid.*, p. 12), such contact is mediated through language. In similar terms, a cosmopolitan pedagogy argues in favor of developing a general orientation permitting wide-reaching dialogue on local and global levels in the interest of a more equitable world (Sobré-Denton & Bardhan, 2014, p. 154, pp. 165–66). Again, communication plays a key role to help achieve such ends (Delanty, 2009, p. 219; Sobré-Denton & Bardhan, 2014, p. 31). In a liquid modernity, however, such pedagogy is faced with the problem that speed of change and loss of stability make it difficult to let such an orientation take root in the learners' minds.

This raises the question how such an orientation can be built up and maintained. In educational debates, literature has been suggested as an important contributor to such learning. Sheridan Blau, for example, refers to literature's aesthetic possibilities, i.e. to its distance from immediate life concerns, which invites sanction-free experimentation with feelings and ideas (Blau, 2003, p. 77). Moreover, Blau stresses the importance of literature for developing a "performative literacy", which includes abilities such as "[the] capacity for sustained and focused attention, [a] willingness to take risks, "tolerance for failure", "tolerance for ambiguity, paradox and uncertainty", "intellectual generosity" and "metacognitive awareness" (Blau, 2003, p. 211). Indeed, risk-taking and the tolerances listed are key competencies for creatively engaging with emerging issues; sustained and focused attention can lay a basis for ongoing engagement with them, and metacognitive awareness implies reflective and (self-)critical abilities. In other words, for Blau, continuing engagement with literature can help develop a timely learning disposition. Moreover, for Martha Nussbaum (1998, p. 111), literature permits "an expansion of sympathies that real life cannot cultivate sufficiently". In other words, for her, literature can open people's minds to different life-worlds, thus laying a foundation for a cosmopolitan mindset. Finally, it makes sense to start with such education as early as possible to give such a mindset sufficient time to take root. As for literature, starting early implies engagement with children's literature. Owing to the multi-modality of current communication, text-types where different modes of meaning interact deserve particular attention.

Starting Early and Going Multi-Modal: New Challenges for Literature Pedagogy

Starting at (pre-)primary levels and going multi-modal has important implications for literature pedagogy. First, a wider-reaching concept of literature is needed, and, secondly, new reader groups with their meaning-making preferences and abilities move into the focus of pedagogical interest. In theoretical terms, a foundation is needed permitting a

detailed study of how such texts and readers (should) interact in the light of specific learning aims. To my mind, reader response criticism (RRC) in combination with the literacies approach can provide such a foundation.

RRC as a Starting Position

RRC is a broad church with different and conflicting positions, which I do not have space to discuss in this article (Delanoy, 2015, pp. 21–24). The RRC approach I have used as a basis for my own theory building is a concept which places at its center the dialogue between literary text and reader/learner. This approach is rooted in pedagogical concepts of *Rezeptionsästhetik*, its main proponents being Michael Benton (1992), Lothar Bredella (2002), and Louise M. Rosenblatt (1994). For this “interactive paradigm” (Bredella, 2002, pp. 43–46), reading is a process of text-guided meaning creation. In the dialogue between literary texts and their readers/learners, equal attention must be given to both the textual basis and the respective reader/learner without whom literary texts cannot come alive.

What makes RRC relevant to current challenges for literature and language learning is its dialogic foundation. Indeed, RRC is informed by a certain philosophical notion of dialogue. This understanding of dialogue rests on the assumption that existing viewpoints are always limited, but can be widened through ongoing and open-ended engagement with different positions. Moreover, dialogue ideally is a meeting-place of equal partners who are open to transformation in the light of other positions. Finally, dialogue is seen as a particular mode of communication, where forms of language use are encouraged which permit respectful and (self-)critical encounters with other people or views. Because of its openness to new development and its social agenda, such an approach is well-suited to linking forces with the multi-literacies movement with its twin interest in different meaning-making modes and social equity. Moreover, such a concept of dialogue has a strong pedagogical interest in young learners because of its wish to sow the seeds of a dialogic mindset as early as possible. Finally, it is interconnected with language learning aims, since dialogue is initiated and sustained through communication (Delanoy, 2008).

RRC is a continually developing approach which has been expanded with the help of many other schools of thought. In terms of text-analysis, RRC is mainly focused on the pragmatic dimension of meaning making. This is an important perspective, since it looks at why and how certain texts attempt to have a particular impact on their recipients. In its early realizations, this approach, however, has shown less interest in stylistic or narrative dimensions of meaning making. Yet, through engagement with pedagogical stylistics and narratology, this narrow focus could be overcome. Opening RRC up to multi-modality, therefore, is another step in increasing this concept’s spectrum for text-analysis. Another example of RRC’s adaptability to other theoretical positions concerns its power-critical dimension. *Rezeptionsästhetik* in its early phase mainly emphasized literature’s power to give its readers new socio-cultural insight without discussing literature’s implication in

problematic gender-, race- or class-related ideologies. Current approaches (e.g. Blau, 2003; Delanoy, 2002), however, have integrated both concerns, thus stressing the importance of learning from literature and of resisting its potential ideological bias.

In the past, pedagogical concepts of RRC often focused on single literary texts to illustrate their theoretical concerns, thus treating literature as a series of single texts rather than as text collections. Criticism of this single-text approach (Hallet, 2002, p. 6, p. 101, pp. 105–106) has inspired RRC to include intertextual and inter-medial concepts (Delanoy, 2015, pp. 23–24, pp. 39–42). While intertextual concepts are focused on links between written texts, inter-medial perspectives look into connections between books, films, pictures or audio-texts. This shift in focus is highly relevant to pedagogical concepts focused on children's literature with their interest in extensive reading practices, where learners are invited to read many books on their own. Finally, RRC made a case for linking literature to intercultural learning as early as in the 1980s. In the light of current socio-cultural challenges, cosmopolitan and transcultural perspectives have been taken on board, where the focus is on global learning perspectives and culture-mixing (Bredella, 2002, pp. 117–125; Delanoy, 2006).

Towards a Wider-Reaching Notion of Literature

According to Peter Widdowson (1999, p. 37), a distinction can be made between *Literature* and *literature*. For Widdowson, the lower-case category exists independently of the institutions concerned with literary practices, while *Literature* is made by them. Although I agree with Widdowson that the upper-case category is an institutional construction that only does limited justice to the actual diversity of existing and emerging practices, there is a major difference between my position and his. For Widdowson (1999, p. 121) literature – i.e. 'L' and 'l' practices – refers to texts whose "originating modality and final point of reference" is in written form. My concept, on the other hand, includes multi-modal texts, i.e. crossings between written, oral, auditory and visual practices. A multi-modal understanding of literature implies inclusion of text-types such as picturebooks, comics, graphic novels, films, songs or computer games. I argue in favor of such a wider-reaching concept of literature because it brings literature pedagogy up-to-date with current meaning-making practices. Following Kalantzis and Cope (2012, p. 249), such development can help redress a "long-lasting bias towards written language". They argue that in education, the written word has been privileged over images with literary education progressing from picturebooks to written texts (ibid.). From a dialogic perspective, all modalities are potentially equally valuable by offering specific meaning-making possibilities. Moreover, literary progression can follow different paths. For example, engagement with picturebooks may lead to a heightened interest in written *or* graphic novels.

In line with the focus of this volume, I will now turn to picturebooks, comics and graphic novels. They can be defined as "rich and complex media, combining image and text in dif-

ferent formats and playing on the interdependence of these signifying systems” (Gibson, 2010, p. 100). Frank Erik Pointner (2013, pp. 29–30) argues that there is no definition which captures all the manifestations of such text-types. As for the definition offered in this article, I am aware that it does not include wordless texts, Shaun Tan’s *The Arrival* (2006) being a well-known example. As text-types, they can also be linked to different age groups, picturebooks being among the first literary texts experienced by children and graphic novels being an art form produced for a young adult and adult readership. Comics can be placed somewhere in the middle, with the proviso that they have been created for people of all ages. Formally, “a typical picturebook page will contain a small amount of text alongside a single image”, while “in contrast, a typical comic page will contain a number of boxes, called panels” with written language in the form of speech, thought balloons and captions (Gibson, 2010, p. 101). The term *graphic novel* goes back to the writer-cum-artist Will Eisner, who coined the term to emphasize the aesthetic qualities of “book-length, high quality comic books” written for “more advanced audiences” (Hesse, 2009, p. 26). Another difference between picturebooks and comics lies in how and by whom they are read. While picturebooks are often introduced by and shared with an adult, comics “are seen as one of the first types of texts that a child owns, to be read either alone or shared with friends” (Gibson, 2010, p. 104).

Recent debates give insight into formal, genre- and content-related aspects of these text-types. Formally, different word-picture relations (Heim, 2013, p. 71) or the various narrative devices used by the books’ authors (Bland, 2013a, pp. 79–81) are listed and discussed. As for the range of texts available, distinctions are made between fairy tales, myths and legends; realist texts, science fiction and fantasy; texts with or without words; or traditional and post-modern texts (Bland, 2013a, p. 39; Cameron, 2001, p. 167; Pearson 2010; Coats 2010). Content-wise, reference is made to books on social and environmental issues (Bland, 2013a, p. 40; Pearson, 2010, p. 69; Sipe, 2008, p. 230). In addition, there is mention of topic-related texts linked to specific events (e.g. 9/11), certain countries (e.g. South Africa; Canada) and communities (e.g. Native Americans), and texts exploring inter- and transcultural spaces (Ludwig & Pointner, 2013). Finally, attention is drawn to power-critical rewritings of already existing texts (e.g. Bland, 2013a, chapter 7; Flanagan 2010, pp. 27–32). For each of these categories, primary texts are listed and introduced to give an overview of the rich textual basis available to teachers and researchers interested in this field (e.g. Hesse, 2009; O’Sullivan & Rösler, 2013; the articles in Rudd, 2010a).

Contemporary children’s and young adult literature differs from earlier practices in significant ways. Lucy Pearson (2010, p. 69) argues that “children’s literature in the 20th century was dominated by the perception that children have a need for literature which offers a positive resolution”, while more recent texts show a tendency for “bleaker, more complex outcomes”. Mechthild Hesse (2009, p. 35) points out that “today there are almost no taboos left in young adult literature”, and that “... such literature is less didactic than in the 1970s”. Hesse (2002, pp. 20–25) adds that more attention is drawn to the complexity and

inner life of young characters. Finally, Rachel Falconer (2010, pp. 91–92) refers to different constructions of childhood and youth in contemporary texts, where “children come to adulthood at an accelerated rate”, and where parents as “kiddults” behave like children and may need their kids’ support more than vice versa.

Let me add here that children’s and young adult literature not only give insight into young people’s lives but also define what people at certain times and in certain cultures mean by child- or young adulthood (Rudd, 2010b, p. 3). This is also the case with literature pedagogy and other social institutions concerned with literature (e.g. schools, publishers). These institutions also construct certain images of young people which can act as cultural role-models for children and young adults. Literature pedagogy, therefore, needs to be highly self-reflective to better understand how it constructs certain notions of child- and (young) adulthood. The images created may be outmoded, or they may privilege certain groups and discriminate against others.

Including New Reader Groups

Starting early and going multi-modal has shifted attention to neglected reader/learner groups. As for ELT-debates in German-speaking countries, up until recently literature pedagogy has been mainly focused on upper-secondary students. Moreover, the intended reader predominantly was a high-school student with fairly advanced linguistic and cognitive abilities, plus a potentially intrinsic interest in literature. In contrast, the focus on young learners and multi-modal texts includes engagement with less advanced and more reluctant learner groups.

In books on children’s literature, reference is made to different empirical studies investigating whether, how and what children and young adults read. In the following, I will briefly sum up some of the main results of the Bertelsmann Foundation Study (1993), the Harmgarth study (1999), the study of the German PISA Konsortium (2001), and the studies conducted by Wilhelm (2002) and Sax (2005) as discussed by Bland (2013a, pp. 74–75), Hesse (2009, pp. 13–15, pp. 114–116) and O’Sullivan and Rösler (2013, pp. 19–24). What these studies show are gender-related differences with young male readers reading less, being weaker readers and preferring different texts (e.g. shorter texts, non-fiction and comics), while young female readers have shown a preference for fiction, longer texts, teen romance and problem novels. Boys and girls seem to enjoy adventure and horror stories (Bland, 2013a, p. 74). Moreover, reference is made to gender-related differences as to how girls and boys engage with literary texts, although these findings are contradicted by other studies. Here, Hesse (2009, p. 114) refers to Sax’s findings that feel-with-character tasks are preferred by girls, while later studies show that no gender-related differences could be observed for this kind of text approach. Finally, there is reference to the so-called *Lese-nick* (Bland, 2013a, p. 74), i.e. to a significant drop in reading interest at the outset of adolescence, as a particular challenge to literature pedagogy.

Such results have invited discussion about how weak and reluctant readers can be encouraged to become keen readers. The focus has first and foremost been on boys, since weak and reluctant readers seem to be predominantly male. Hence, Hesse (2009, pp. 14–16, pp. 114–116) suggests an approach that gives priority to boys' needs and interests. She argues in favor of selecting stories with a male protagonist (p. 15), tasks that should not be too "problem- and reflection-oriented" (p. 14), and texts that are short, suspenseful and humorous (p. 116). In specific learning contexts this may be good advice. In general terms, however, I warn against such an approach, since to my mind it will privilege male learners and help maintain existing gender divisions. Instead, I argue for a concept of early literary socialization using picturebooks where boys and girls are introduced to different and unusual gender-related perspectives. In the light of a dialogic program (see above), education should strive for a more fluid, equitable and more broadly defined notion of humanity, where people – irrespective of their sex, age, race and socio-cultural background – are empowered to find their own voices.

According to Jacquelyn McTaggart (2008), multi-modal literary texts have something to offer for different ability groups. McTaggart claims that such texts "*enable* the struggling reader, *motivate* the reluctant one, and *challenge* the high-level learner" (ibid., p. 32, original emphasis). Although these claims still need to be confirmed by empirical studies, I do see them as useful hypotheses. Dual coding, e.g. words and pictures, can facilitate understanding, thus helping the struggling reader. Moreover, a stronger emphasis on comics may encourage reluctant readers to read more because of their positive attitude to this text type (Bland 2013a, p. 74). Finally, a close study of text-picture relationships and engagement with graphic novels can certainly challenge high-level learners.

In literature pedagogy a distinction is made between intensive and extensive reading practices. Indeed, both are highly important for encouraging learners to become motivated, reflective and independent readers. Intensive engagement with literature can motivate learners to become involved in complex texts; it can sharpen the learners' reflective abilities and give them insight into a text's structures of meaning and its socio-cultural implications. Multi-modal texts foster the learners' understanding of how different meaning-making modes interact. If reading is to become a habit, the motivation to read extensively is indispensable. Considering that less privileged learner groups often do not have access to books, school libraries are particularly important to lay a foundation for such reading. A good example for a classroom library is Hesse's (2009, p. 120) book box for the Realschule Kirchzarten, which includes a compendium of books and reading tasks for weak and reluctant readers to invite extensive reading. Such reading has proven highly beneficial to language learning as will be discussed in the following section.

Implications for Language Learning

In second-language acquisition research the influence of extensive reading on language acquisition has repeatedly been assessed positively. Marlise Horst (2005) conducted a study which shows that individualized and extensive pleasure reading can lead to substantial vocabulary growth. Stephen Krashen (2013, p. 15) refers to his case studies which “[...] have all confirmed that more free reading results in better reading ability, better writing, larger vocabularies, better spelling and better control of complex grammatical constructions”. Beniko Mason (2013, p. 31) points out that self-selected extensive reading, story listening and a combination of the two have proven to be efficient methods to prepare language learners well for TOEFL examinations. In Germany, Anita Kolb’s (2013, p. 34, pp. 39–41) picturebook project shows that extensive individualized reading supported by audio recordings and particular tasks (e.g. keeping a reading log) led to an increase in reading confidence, better understanding of texts, as well as more articulate and reflective responses to texts. Finally, Krashen (2013, p. 22) underlines the importance of school libraries for developing reading abilities. He argues that the highly negative influence of socio-economic class that concerns learners from less privileged backgrounds, who read little or do not read at all, can be significantly lessened with the help of such libraries and extensive reading projects. In other words, Krashen claims that judicious use of libraries leading to pleasure reading can compensate for socio-economic disadvantages.

For ELT these findings emphasize the importance of extensive pleasure reading for increasing the learners’ language abilities. To make reading a habit, scholars, for example, suggest that classroom time be set aside for sustained (silent) reading and listening (Kolb, 2013, p. 34; Eisenmann, 2013, p. 175). In addition, attention has been drawn to text discussions to foster language and literary competencies. For example, O’Sullivan and Rösler (2013, p. 141) refer to Aidan Chambers’ “tell-me approach”, which builds on the belief that in a group, more insight can be gained than in individualized readings. Chambers suggests the sharing of likes, dislikes, puzzles and text-related observations (*ibid.*). In the light of limited foreign language abilities, a sharing of responses, however, may not come easy. Thus, particular tasks and methods have been suggested to facilitate the articulation and exchange of responses. They include the keeping of reading logs (Kolb, 2013), scaffolding techniques starting with fragmentary language and leading to more elaborate statements (Delanoy, 2015, pp. 33–35), and the use of the learners’ first language(s) if their language abilities lag too far behind their communicative interest (Burwitz-Melzer, 2003, p. 468).

There is no denying that pleasure reading and articulation as well as a sharing of responses are basic objectives for literature and language learning. However, literature and language learning does not stop here. It must also aim for careful and (self-)critical readings as well as for dialogic forms of response sharing to make literature in ELT an educationally valuable experience. Such experience can benefit language learning by linking it to ludic,

identity-related and socio-cultural dimensions. Indeed, with such objectives in mind one could speak of *language education* rather than language learning.

In language education, engagement with multi-modality has led to a new understanding of communicative competence. Claire Kramsch (2006, p. 251), has suggested *symbolic competence* as an alternative term, which stands for “the ability to produce and exchange symbolic goods in the complex global context in which we live today”. According to Kramsch,

language learners are not just communicators and problem solvers, but whole persons with hearts, bodies, and minds, with memories, fantasies, loyalties, identities. Symbolic forms are not just items of vocabulary or communication strategies, but embodied experiences, emotional resonances and moral imaginings. (Kramsch, 2006, p.251)

Kramsch’s position links back to the whole-person orientation of RRC approaches to literature learning which stress literature’s holistic appeal, i.e. its appeal to a person’s affective and cognitive abilities. Moreover, Kramsch (ibid.) expresses a particular interest in literature by explaining that symbolic competence “has to be nourished by a literary imagination at all levels of the language curriculum”. For her, literature can foster engagement with complex issues, openness to contradiction and insight into how form in its manifold modes helps construct meanings. RRC, the literacies approach and Kramsch’s position, therefore, can provide a useful theoretical basis for integrating language education, multi-modality and literature learning.

Let me end this section with a concrete example as to how multi-modal literature can enrich language learning. Bland (2013b, p. 87) discusses the difference between pictures in ELT coursebooks and in children’s literature. She argues that while the former offer “overdetermining, stylized, stereotyped and crude illustrations, [thus] limiting a creative response”, picturebooks, on the other hand, play with “complex, naturalistic, untidy, ambiguous, [and] partly determining” images (ibid.). By doing so, such books invite deeper and more complex thinking processes. Moreover, they draw attention to complex relationships between words and pictures.

Critical Literacy and Multi-Modal Literature Learning

For Bland (2013a, p. 297) and Kramsch (2006), language and literature learning should empower learners to *critically* participate in multi-modal meaning making processes. On the one hand, literature as a ludic and critical discourse offers manifold possibilities for developing critical literacies by questioning established views and modes of meaning creation, and by experimenting with alternative approaches. On the other hand, literary texts themselves should be subjected to critical inquiry because of their potentially problematic ideological implications. In multi-modal literature learning, critical literacy goes beyond the power of the written word; instead, attention is drawn to the impact words, pictures,

sounds, smells, etc. may have on their readers. As for picturebooks, comics and graphic novels, an alphabetical critical literacy can be developed in conjunction with a visual critical literacy. In the following some concrete text examples will be given to briefly sketch how critical literacies can be fostered in multi-modal literature learning.

Critical literacy presupposes engagement with different and conflicting perspectives to counterbalance a narrow, monochrome and essentialist understanding of self and others. Indeed, children's literature can be steeped in patriarchal or colonial mentalities, and thus present stereotypical, discriminatory and one-sided accounts of people and their life-worlds (Alter, 2013, p. 152; Maddy & McCann, 2009, pp. 2–3). As for gender-related perspectives, for example, the Disney film versions of *Cinderella* (2012) or *Sleeping Beauty* (2006) present stereotypical images of rather passive and conventionally beautiful young women depending on male agency to lead a happy life. Considering that children engage with their favorite texts again and again – Werner Graf (2002, p. 54) speaks of “excessive repetitive readings” (my translation; the term in the German text is “unermüdliche Wiederholungslektüre”) – a steady diet of texts such as these Disney films can make children internalize a problematic ideology. To help avoid such enculturation, alternative texts and critical rewritings of texts can be introduced to young readers. For example, Babette Cole's *Princess Smartypants* (1986) presents an alternative to fairy tales where the princess is saved by a prince who then marries her. Princess Smartypants prefers living in her own world with her animals to marrying a prince. Being clever, ingenious and successful in her attempts to ward off her suitors, she can act as a different - i.e. more self-determined, differently clad (she wears the pants) and smarter - role model for young girls. Another example is Babette Cole's *Prince Cinders* (1987), where the tale of Cinderella is re-written from the perspective of a young male who has problems accepting his appearance as “[h]e was small, spotty, scruffy and skinny” (Cole, 1987, n. p.). Stereotypical images of manliness are subverted and alternative perspectives can become more acceptable.

Critical literacy can also be fostered by stories where words and pictures contradict each other. A good example is Jon Scieszka's and Lane Smith's *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* (1989). The story is told by Alexander T. Wolf who claims that his version is the ‘real story’. In his account he argues that it wasn't him who killed the pigs but their incompetence at building houses that would not withstand his sneeze brought on by a very bad cold. Yet, his further actions (he eats the pigs) and the pictures (they show him as hungry and greedy for more food) contradict his words. I agree with Bland (2013a, pp.151–153) that this book can sharpen young learners' awareness of potential mismatches between words and images, between what somebody pretends is true and what happened. Read in conjunction with traditional versions of *The Three Little Pigs*, the different visual style in Scieszka's and Smith's book can also foster critical visual literacy. The illustrator Lane Smith uses blurred and unclear images, often only hinting at events and leaving blanks between the words used and the pictures drawn. There is an irritating quality to this visual style that invites stronger efforts on the readers' side to understand what is going on. Such

visual style can raise questions and invite careful readings, thus preparing the ground for critical text reflection.

Finally, let me turn to Benjamin Zephaniah's and Prodeepta Das' *We are Britain* (2002). In this book – the text includes photos of real people, their short biographies, and poems written for them – the UK is presented as a multi-colored, multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-confessional entity, where people “are building a home where we are all able to be who we want to be, yet still be British” (ibid., n. p.). Although the focus is on Britain, the book is cosmopolitan in approach, since it brings together people from different corners of the world, who, despite their right to be different, share a mutual understanding of humanity informed by the wish to lead a happy life. Zephaniah's and Das' text can help develop a mindset which can serve learners well in their critical engagement with texts. It can help them build up a respectful and open view of the world that can be compared with more exclusive perspectives. Of course, the book – in words and images – only draws a positive picture of the characters and life-worlds portrayed, thus bracketing out conflictual and problematic aspects. Yet, as a utopia it can draw a powerful picture of an ideal world society both on local and global levels.

Conclusion

By way of conclusion let me sum up the main arguments put forward in this article. First, literature pedagogy is located in a globalized modernity. Secondly, the latter's multi-modality and its global interconnectedness entail a pedagogy aiming for multi-literacies and a cosmopolitan disposition. Thirdly, to make sure that such a disposition can be durable, an early start is suggested. Fourthly, for literature pedagogy this implies going multi-modal and starting with children's literature. Fifthly, multi-modal text-types such as picturebooks, comics and graphic novels are valued as literature with a capital *L*. Sixthly, attention is drawn to young readers and different ability groups. Seventhly, symbolic competence is suggested for foreign language education with literature as an important constituent. Eighthly, a case is made for a critical literacy which is both appreciative and critical of literary texts. Ninthly, a theoretical approach is suggested which interlinks RRC with Kalantzis' and Cope's (2012) literacies perspective, Kramsch's (2006) notion of symbolic competence and educational concepts in line with a cosmopolitan agenda (Bredella, 2002; Sobré-Denton & Bardhan, 2014).

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