



The 2nd World Conference on Language Learning

Manchester, United Kingdom

18 - 20 October 2024

Multimodal Elements in the Language Classroom – Shedding Light on What Is Already Invisibly There

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Abstract

Kress (2003) mentions cultural channels – which he calls modes - through which communication can happen over and above written and spoken language. Jewitt (2008) suggests that in the language classroom, these modes are omnipresent through multimodal texts which teachers use, which apart from printed and oral elements of the taught language, frequently include images, body language, gestures, context, colours, clothes and a vast number of other modes through which teaching can be more student-centred and motivating (Pachler and Broady, 2022). Kessler (2022) suggests that language teachers frequently may be unaware of how much they depend on these modes and tools in class. Therefore, through this interactive keynote speech, the presenter intends to contribute to the field of knowledge by involving the audience throughout the session to:

- 1 become aware of the modes and multimodal texts they have already used while teaching languages and foreign languages at different educational levels. A specific focus will be on the challenges and opportunities these modes lead to when used in the language classroom;
- 2 ask a pertinent question about universal and non-universal characteristics of different modes, which differ between different educational contexts.

The keynote will initially introduce the theoretical concept of multimodality (based on Bezemer et al, 2020) but then will link theory to practice through the sharing of real (at times funny but inspiring) examples taken from the ongoing Multimodal encounters research project coordinated by the keynote speaker. Through examples taken from language classrooms in Malta, Sweden, Ukraine, Italy, Germany, Switzerland and the Philippines, the audience will themselves manage to formulate insights through which they critically evaluate the effectiveness of pedagogical multimodal texts designed for the language classroom. In conclusion, the keynote will end with the formulation of 5 practical tips – which the audience will interactively come up with – aimed as practical tips through which language teachers around the globe can feel more informed and confident to design, evaluate and use multimodal text within their particular teaching context.

Keywords: challenges and benefits, language classroom, multimodal text, pedagogical tools, student centred teaching and learning