

Micro-Paper 21: *Aesthetic Dimensions of [Critical] Literacies*

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Defining the Term

The aesthetic dimension of literacy stems from social semiotics' notion that social environments and interactions are source and generators of meaning. The differences in meaning as the result of these interactions are, then, the result of the thinking development and cultural constructions according to how societies organize their thoughts to create their writing forms on the world. In the context of learning another language, this aesthetic dimension of literacy also takes a critical stance, related to the power of the word. It also has to do with how one as a teacher is writing and reading alternative realities with students during the process of teaching languages, from a semiotic and aesthetic view given that the stage is art.

For language teachers, giving literacy a critical, aesthetic dimension involves guiding students to use the power of words to question themselves and their context in order to provoke life transformations. This also would lead teachers to face the quest for new and creative forms to support the learning process, through intertextual relationships with real and imaginary texts and genres. This aesthetic dimension of literacy, therefore, opens a new route where art is the main topic that crosses the teaching and learning practices from an aesthetic and semiotic view. It is through gestures and images how we potentiate our human strong feature: language itself. The minimal sign has a profound meaning in which rests the aesthetics of literacy, which relies on the principle of reality as a human agreement. This agreement enables communication to take place and it helps set differences across cultures. According to the development of thinking, each culture develops different forms to communicate and acquire the knowledge; there aesthetics allow to spring and gives life to the sign as a human memory totem.

Connecting it to LSLP

The inclusion of social semiotic and aesthetic reflection within LSLP broadens the view of critical literacies from an artistic stage

where students (re)create messages, in a metaphorical way through images, signs, or symbols. In the case of theatre, for instance, gestures are part of the sign. The transformations in teaching languages, in which critical literacies encourage crossing teaching practices and art, thus proposing new stages of teaching from a critical view. When students are going to face a creative process from an artistic perspective, they have to go beyond their immediate context to find the boundaries emerging from themselves and connect them to their own reality. Then, it is necessary to create criteria as the basis of the pedagogical process of teaching language through art.

Expanding Second Language Research

An alternative stage in teaching is an answer to the traditional form. We are calling for an interdisciplinary view of critical literacies, where art becomes both an alternative and critique. While there is research that has showed the need of including art in teachers' practices from a critical view, very few studies have analyzed the implications of art in itself, as its multiple languages and the aesthetic and semiotic view form the creating process. If language teachers are to face the learning process from a critical view, they must take into account the impact in students. Teachers need to be aware of the criteria that allow the recognition of the diverse languages of art as a stage of critical literacies.

References

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