

Literacy of audiovisual images in language learning

In my presentation I will talk about:

- Literacy
- Literacy of audiovisual images
- The language learner as
 - Viewer/consumer of digital images (“homo videns”)
 - Participant
- Conscient use of audiovisual images in language learning
 - Why?
 - What?
 - How?
- Samples of possible learning(reading?) paths in the use of audiovisual images.

In the new National Curriculum for Secondary Education in Iceland literacy has been put forward as one of the six basic educational skills. We are supposed to include literacy into all schoolwork. According to Unesco literacy is, amongst other things, “the ability to recognize, understand, interpret, create and express oneself in printed or written in different situations”. The question is whether audiovisual images in education or learning situations should be added into this definition.

Literacy also has to do with the creation of meaning and significance and it is important to have in mind that f.ex. culture, age, gender, experience have influence on how significance is created. If we consider our society and think about the learning environment and the media that both learners and teachers use nowadays we must recognize that they have changed radically for the last 20-30 years. The arrival of the new media and its changes means that the amount of material to use has multiplied and there is a huge variety when choosing material. In addition, it must be said that it is not new to use images in our learning and teaching.

But what is new are the digital audiovisual images that we can access easily. They are somehow a unique and splendid way to get closer to and even in touch with the culture of the target language. We, language teachers, have been very good at using what the web has to offer us, adding digital images, video’s, etc. to our teaching and learning environment. In language teaching and learning the use of ICT somehow has opened up doors and many new chances have been created to work with. We now have a possibility for using both material and tools in a quite different way than what we used to and that we even ever could imagine. At the same time we have become more concerned about the need of more task-based learning and securing that the task the learners have to fulfill should be more authentic. The students fulfill tasks that are real, they use the technique and they choose tools to use in order to illustrate, collaborate, edit and

to work with in general. In this context, the demand on the choice of authentic material in language learning has increased. It seems that new possibilities have been created to use less and less printed textbooks because they quickly are outdated and often they reflect and contain old facts.

The question is how well we prepare ourselves and the use of audiovisual material when we include audiovisual images in our learning and teaching. To which point that we and our learners are as able to "read" audiovisual material as we assume they are. Because if we introduce images is it because some meaning and significance is supposed to result from it. Therefore images are as much a text to be read as a written text. Can our learners actually watch audiovisual images and draw conclusions, construct meaning and significance out of the sequences of images that they are watching? What is it that we want to reach with the use of audiovisual material and why is it convenient? These should be some of the questions to ask ourselves as teachers when we choose audiovisual images to use for the learning process of the students. Our learning might be literate technically spoken, they know how to make it work. They know how to search and where to find information. But that is not the same thing as deconstructing images in order to reconstruct the significance and understand the text of the image. So in order to use audiovisual images we have to be aware of what, why and how to use them. And that is why we need some "reading paths" or guidelines as teachers when we choose and use audiovisual images if we want our learners credit from them.