

**XLV FAAPI Conference**  
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**Subtheme: Assessment as a constitutive part of the teaching and learning processes**

**Paper**

**Using a pluriliteracies task for assessment in higher education**

**Selección de tarea de multialfabetización como método de evaluación en enseñanza superior**

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**Abstract (75 words)**

We discuss a pluriliteracies task used in an L2 classroom in a higher education setting and its potential for assessment purposes. The task is based on the graphic novel *Maus*. Students are asked to use the two central semiotic modes of pictures and language (Kress 2010) to redesign the front cover, and then write about it. The assessment focuses on this ‘modal ensemble’ with the idea that it enables students to realize their meanings more effectively.

**Summary (250-350 words)**

This presentation describes a pluriliteracies task used in an L2 classroom in a higher education setting and discusses its potential for assessment purposes. The theoretical framework is based on Meyer’s et al. (2015) pluriliteracies model which considers the integration of content and language as fundamental to learning, and thus to learning assessment. The task under analysis is based on *Maus*, a graphic novel by American cartoonist Art Spiegelman, which uses the two central semiotic modes of pictures and language (Kress 2010). Once students have read the cartoon, they are asked to design an alternative book cover for *Maus* and write a text describing their covers and their new choices. While the literature has stressed the affordances and constraints of each mode, here by contrast we focus on the students’ ‘modal ensembles’ (Kress 2010) of the redesigned front cover plus the written reflection of the choices involved and argue that these ensembles enabled students to realize their meanings more effectively. Of the 46 alternative book covers produced by students, 4 samples were selected; 2 chosen as the most effective and 2, as the least effective. Drawing on Systemic Functional Linguistics and multimodality, our analysis shows that effective tasks make bolder visual choices that blend traditional symbols with less established ones, accompanied by well-developed observations on the meaning-making potential of their choices.

We first describe the pluriliteracies task and the context in which we used it and then discuss the assessment process with the notion of modal ensemble. Using the four

covers of our choice with their accompanying written text, we illustrate our findings and highlight the potential of this task for assessment. We discuss implications for language teaching in all levels of education in light of current accountability and performative drives in assessment.

Kress, K. (2010). *Multimodality: A Social Semiotic Approach to Contemporary Communication*. London: Routledge.

Meyer, O., Coyle, D., Halbach, A., Schuck, K. & Ting, T. (2015). A pluriliteracies approach to content and language integrated learning – mapping learner progressions in knowledge construction and meaning-making. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 28(1), 41-57.

## **Bios**

**Ann Montemayor-Borsinger** is Professor of Linguistics at Río Negro National University in Bariloche, and Invited Professor on different postgraduate programs. Her research interests focus on functional grammar and discourse analysis. She has published widely on different types of discourse in English, Spanish and French, drawing on Systemic Functional Linguistics.

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