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Multimodal bricolage - text+image workshop

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The conceptual frame of 'deference' is helpful to widen our expectation about the cultural resource which children and young people use for self-expression and narration. In the dynamic of individualization it is also not easy to keep cultural resources standardized. The concept of deference promoted by Rymes (2011), which focuses on embracing mass-mediated youth cultural practices, is helpful to make education aware of the individualization of cultural resources for literacy. Formal learning institutions should recognize the variety of cultural resource which includes visual and graphic forms. A deference approach supports the assimilation of resources of the international youth culture. It sees learners as naïve experts of their everyday life.

A second helpful perspective is that of Jocson (2012) who views text production as narrative bricolage. She valorizes text production of young people in non-dominant racial and ethnic backgrounds, recognises that their literacy is changing and that the separation of the world of learning in school from everyday life is dissolving in a 'proliferation of spaces' (p. 298). Young people transgress spaces and use different interfaces for their communication. Further they use prefabricated material by copy and paste to produce 'assemblages' which contain their stories and narratives.

This section reports on a voluntary, after-school text+images workshop which took place twice a week in a town in Southern Germany facilitated by one of the authors of this paper with seven 14-16 year old participants, mostly with a first or second generation migration and/or asylum background. Linked to it was a course on media production software offered at another institution taught by a young adult with digital video but no teaching expertise. Three month after the workshop participants travelled some 45 miles by train to Munich to an exhibition about the 2009 Nobel price winner for literature, Herta Müller. (see also Bachmair and Pachler, 2013)

Intended learning outcomes
The main aim of the workshop was to offer an opportunity for creative writing using the media of youth culture. Intended learning outcomes were:
- to appropriate cultural resources of the youth culture for creative and purposeful, literacy-related activities;
- to gain an insight into processes of text production of high culture, exemplified by the poems of Herta Müller, Nobel-price winner for literature;
- to link associative text production with target- and object-orientated learning.

The intended focus of text production was the personal life world of participants with the leading motive 'dark sides'. This focus did not really work as intended as participants' lifeworlds, in the sense of their physical and social surrounding, did not prove to be a motivating concept for the target group, probably because the internet was perceived to be more relevant than the local environment. Participants had access to the internet, and a YouTube clip of a local group of migrants performing a HipHop song was used as stimulus material. In addition,

poems by Herta Müller were presented on slides.

The participants were invited to use their mobile phones, in particular their photo and video functions, to explore and document the environment around the school and at home. The participants were asked to present the artefacts they produced in the form of slides.

The composition viewed from the perspective of representational resources, contexts and appropriation

Due to lack of space it is only possible to discuss the composition of the core group of boys here, although there are differences between the compositions of the boys and the girls. For example, the girls' group paid more attention to the social context of the workshop.

The boys' presentation clearly frames the central text, i.e. the poem (see Figure 7, Folien 19e, 19f, 19 g.): at the beginning of their presentation the boys introduce themselves with names and photos of themselves as authors and friends (Folie 19b). The very first slide links their composition to the text+images workshop by using the common logo on their first slide (Folie 19a). On the second slide, which introduces the authors, they set out their focus, namely friends / friendship. On slide three (Folie 19c), they define the key notion of friendship with the help of a text they had found on the internet. They link this definition to themselves by adding a photo, which they had taken during the workshop. This photo depicts one of the three group members holding hands with the other two. It is worth mentioning that the level of abstraction of the definition of the notion of friendship and the presentation of the group correspond. The photo does not show plain self-representation but explains with the help of an icon the meaning of the word friendship.
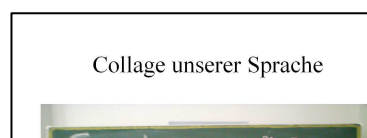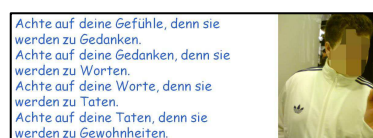

Folie

Folie

Folie

Folie 19f

Figure 7: Slides presented by the boys of the core group

Under the heading social cohesion ('Zusammenhalt'; Folie 19d) they show how they worked systematically. This shows that they are aware of the abstraction inherent in the pictures. They express target orientation and show that they do not act 'just for fun'. The following three slides (Folien 19e, f, g) contain the group's composition. The first of those slides (Folie 19e) is made up of written text and of an image from the internet. The issue being problematised here in a rather general way is the relationship between wealth and life chances. The image from the internet shows a hand holding a blue gem, which symbolises the world. Then follows a collage of a typed text and photos (Folie 19f). This text-image-collage is in the style of Herta Müller's poems. The typed text was taken from the internet and is in the style of a traditional poem. The boys selected a poem in Albanian, which is the family language of two of the boys. The third boy spoke Russian as his family language. During the public presentation one of the boys read the poem and translated it into German for the audience. At the heart of the poems were emotions and feelings. With images from their own childhood the boys framed the typed text and its theme with reference to their personal history and their personal lifeworlds. Part of this lifeworld is Albanian as a family language, which became visible within the school through the presentation. The boy translated the Albanian text into perfect German. He did not read out a German translation but presented it from memory. He had practiced and rehearsed the oral presentation in advance.

The poem was followed by a German text which was also taken from the internet and dealt with values (Folie 19g). Two recent photos of the boys framed this text on values. It is unclear who is depicted in the third photo.

The audience was able to witness multilingualism in action and the final slide (19h) underlines this. With this slide the boys refer to the facilitator's photo about the word game and they reflect on what they now know about their multilingual capacity under the heading 'a collage of our languages'. It is an interesting result of the workshop that they were able to reflect on their literacy in this way.

What is the main feature of this text collage as a composition and its corresponding literacy?

The boys portrayed themselves as sensitive using rather sentimental means such as the blue gem. Also in the foreground of their composition were the issues of collaborating as friends, working cooperatively and the development of a value-orientated community.

The boys referred to the text structure of the poems of Herta Müller but placed more emphasis on images. In contrast with Herta Müller they did not reduce language to single words as units of meaning but to texts of several lines. They used images as units of meaning within statements.

The boys started to develop a metalevel awareness about their composition by referring to it as a collage. Furthermore, they were becoming aware of the breadth of languages. They were guided in their composition technique by the

rationale underpinning presentation software, namely the integration of different semiotic resources into a multimodal representation.

The sequential nature of the program and the presentation of their composition on a public screen led participants to breaking up complex issues into pithy statements.

Participants were aware of aesthetic dimension of their composition but they were not fully aware of the consequences of the choice of certain representational resources.

The languages used reflect different ethnic contexts but remain by-and-large in the social-cultural contextual milieu of migration and low-income groups. Participants did accept without question different languages within relevant contexts. In addition to switching between language contexts they also switched easily to the internet as a context for their resources.