A Case Study: The use of multimodality in Second Language Learning Classroom Assignments

Suana Mujkic
December 2010

Supervisor: Alan Shima
Examinator: Michael Gustavsson
TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION
   1.1 Purpose 1
   1.2 Research questions 2

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE 4-5

3. THEORETICAL APPROACH 6-9

4. METHOD 10
   4.1Method’s discussion 10-11
   4.2Participants, location and digitalism 12
   4.3Procedure 12-13

5. RESULTS 14
   5.1 The beginning of the journey, the first lesson 14-16
   5.2 The journey continues, the third and fourth lesson 16
   5.3 The stories regarding the boy 16-17
   5.4 The stories regarding the girl 17
   5.5 The end of the journey 18

6. DISCUSSION 19-22

7. CONCLUSION 23

8. WORKS CITED 24-25

9. APPENDIX 26
1. Introduction

Our present digital age is viewed as a result of rapid, technological development. Furthermore, digital technology has been incorporated into the everyday life of a large majority of pupils, and thus requires schools and the teaching profession to adapt to this new circumstance. However, formal learning in classrooms does not always match this latest trend of events outside the scope of school. Many teachers are compelled to alter their current practices and change their view of literacy. For example, they are exploring the relationship between extracurricular use of digital literacy and classroom practices. Consequently, the application of technology is starting to be regarded as a teaching medium which promotes language learning simultaneously as language knowledge is gained. The application of multimedia sources, such as audio, visual texts and multimodality, enables teachers to unite the classroom and the world outside and thus helps promote lifelong learning.

If we assume that digital literacy is a large and important activity in students’ lives, it can be argued that surfing the web and writing blogs also function as a means to general communication which is a part of their young adolescent lives. With this understanding of pupils’ literacy habits in mind, the primary aims of enhancing learners’ language proficiency should be coupled with an equivalent aim to broaden pupils’ world views by using their Internet and digital experiences as a means of acquiring knowledge.
1.1 Purpose
In many rural areas, the introduction of views beyond a pupil’s social and cultural understanding raise challenges that educators must address. Acknowledging this challenge, the teaching assignment described in this study was designed for specific purposes. This study tries to evaluate the effectiveness of these assignments. The objectives of this study can be characterized in the following manner:

- Firstly, the assignment’s use of an animated clip and a non verbal source (a picture) to gain new insight concerning the world around them is evaluated.
- Secondly, the assignment focus on vocabulary and oral proficiency in the classroom is evaluated for effectiveness.
- Thirdly, this study aims to demonstrate that language skills can be gained by watching a clip and non verbal sources as a pedagogical method that is informed by action research.

1.2 Research questions
The following questions have been posed to describe the wide-ranging intended goals of this study:

- What are the benefits and outcomes when multimodal media is used in foreign language instruction?
- How can incorporation of digital images in classroom instruction enhance the student’s vocabulary range as well as the textual resource of digital images?
- How can mixed media assignments enlarge a student’s world view?
2. Review of literature

Previous research published regarding the usage of multimodality\(^1\) deals mostly with the pupil’s interaction with the Internet as an informal means in language teaching. Conversely, multimodality is, in this study, viewed as an acknowledged alternative teaching tool. The discussion below highlights different receptions of multimodality in relation to language teaching and language learning.

Andrew’s *The Impact of ICT on Literacy Education* draws the conclusion that there is a great lack of empirically based studies that analyze moving image impact on literacy\(^2\) acquisition. Thus, it would be an advantageous effect if moving image literacy was perceived in terms of writing and reading rather than something dissociated from classroom teaching. Andrew also claims that the impact of ICT (Information and communication technologies) is more significant for the teacher’s role than the students’ response to literature. Finally, from Andrew’s viewpoint, more classroom based studies require research executed over a longer period of time if we are to gain new insight and information about events that occur in the classroom. However, it ought to be underlined that the impact of ICT might be equally important for both the students and the teacher due to the fact that the students’ response to literature will enable the teacher to implement ICT in the classroom. Thus, as Andrew points out, this response can be brought to the surface through the application of action research where the teaching is enacted in a scientifically framed research manner.

Rivoltella’s *Digital Literacy – Tools and Methodologies for Information Society* is a collection of different authors discussing digital literacy. Amongst others, Mario Morcellini underlines in “Digital Media and Socialization” that digital technologies should not be viewed from the point of the Internet, digital TV and cell phones, but as symbols of integration of two worlds where one is virtual and the other is veritable. Morcellini states that virtual experience often emerges in situations that do not occur in an everyday experience. He thus claims that reality provides individuals with the ability to exploit occurrences with the help of technologies. Further, Morcellini emphasizes that digital technology through engagement and integration with language fulfills within an individual something which can to be satisfied on a

\(^1\) In accordance with Lundahl multimodality is seen in the view of written language combined with sounds, moving images and still images, with the ability to represent the world in different means.

\(^2\) Literacy means in this essay the ability to not only perform and understand written language but also a social skill enabling the performer to the ability to operate in social and or cultural representations. (Andrews)
daily basis. In the light of Morcellini’s line of argument, technology enables the world to be portrayed in a way that a real life experience does not have the ability to do.

Pahl and Roswell’s *Literacy and Education – Understanding the New Literacy Studies in the Classroom* examines the idiom of literacy as well as the meaning of literacy as subsisting of something that is to a great extent visual. Therefore, the authors emphasize that the understanding of being literate includes recognition of other form of literacy such as symbol making, which includes drawings and photographs. Thus, these idioms lead to oral and other forms of literacy practice. In addition, Pahl and Rowsell state that it is of decisive importance for educators to take a part of the students’ changing communicative practices so that literacy germinates and matches the changing world simultaneously as the teacher assists the students to understand multimodal communication.

Continuing on the subject of literacy, Richard E. Mayer’s in *The Cambridge Handbook of Multimedia Learning* composes an overview in relation to the different literacy and the flexibility of multimedia. Simultaneously, Mayer states that multimedia permits, through its flexibility, modification of a variety of assignments so it may suit different learning styles. In addition, regarding second language acquisition, Meyer highlights that the usage of multimedia can enhance the learning input and increase noticing of the language. In the light of earlier research done on vocabulary acquisition, Meyer claims that pictures paired with words show a more effective preservation of vocabulary.

Concerning the value of picture in language acquisition, Andrew Wright’s in *Pictures for Language Learning* brings forward how traditional ways of viewing pictures add interest as well as introduce cultural and contextual meaning to the target language. However, more advanced forms of tasks for students are also highlighted with the intention of acquiring higher skills in listening, reading, writing and communication. Wright states that pictures are a non verbal source of information, suggesting that they represent an image where the observer must predict meaning. Furthermore, Wright argues that communicative methodology emphasizes the need for educators to give students proficiency in communication by using non verbal forms as a verbal means. In the light of Wright’s emphasis, I also argue that the usage of a non verbal source encourages the learner to make an individual interpretation rather than a written text where pupils assume that the answer is a provided fact.

Moreover, Wright continues on the subject of images by providing the reader with some vital points concerning the role of images in speaking and writing, which can be summarized as follows:
• Images contribute to the learners’ motivation and willingness to participate
• Images unite the world with the classroom environment
• Images offer a possibility of description and interpretation of different images
• Images offer a possibility to convey information that can be used in discussion and storytelling

Finally, Wright claims that teachers are somewhat apprehensive when shaping learners’ development as people and shaping their ability to relate to others while simultaneously enhancing their skills in a foreign language. Thus, by offering the students a wide range of resources, it assists the students to enhance their own development.

In Bo Lundahl’s *Engelsk språkidaktik- texter, kommunikation språkutveckling*, (English language didactics- text, communication and language development), the author discusses visual literacy as a process that characterizes the pictures’ significance for comprehension of a text. Despite the fact that the aim of English is the ability to perform verbal and written language, the ability to decipher pictures is a significant fact to a wider language conception. Images can contribute to gaining attentiveness and conveying a feeling.

In relation to the importance of pictures, Lundahl also discusses multimodality where written language is combined with sounds, moving images and still images which represent the world in different means. According to Lundahl, a picture analysis is characterized by the following:

• Encounter the picture with previous experience and preceding knowledge
• Discuss the image with values and assumption
• Relate the image to other images and place it in a content

Apart from the statements mentioned above, Lundahl concludes that pictures follow the same patterns as a written text since the fundamental understanding can only be reached with observation where the image is concretized to a fact. In addition, Lundahl also discusses the importance of word proficiency stating that a distinction can be made between receptive and productive word proficiency. The production of a word is done by learners in conversation and the receptive words are those learners hear.
3. Theoretical approaches

The study’s point of departure concerning the usage of multimodality and images as tools for teaching will be discussed based on previous academic works and their relation to this study’s research questions. In addition, due to the fact that no single research theory could be applied to this study, the following theoretical approaches consist of different outlines regarding the use of images and Internet in the language classroom.

According to Warschauer, Shetzer and Meloni there are five main reasons for using the Internet when teaching English as the target language. However, only two reasons will further be discussed due to the fact that they are of most value for this study, namely interaction and vitality. Interaction means primarily the resources for learning a foreign language and receiving fluency by incorporation of interactive communication in the classroom. This makes the Internet particularly relevant due to the fact that it gives the students the opportunity to interact 24 hours a day with native and non-native speakers. Despite the fact that the task performed by the students in this research is not directly interacting through the Internet, the Internet is still used to create a fruitful and meaningful communication.

Vitality signifies actions that frequently take place in the classroom but for no obvious pedagogical reason. According to the authors, the Internet can inject an element of vitality into teaching and motivate the students by letting them communicate in a multimodal medium always in change which also connects to their real-life needs and situations. My point of view deviates to an extent from the authors’ when they attempt to profile the Internet as the answer to the student’s lack of motivation. In my opinion, motivation is a complex issue and the implementation of Internet is not the only answer. However, I see a great point in using the Internet in the classroom due to the reason that it might create interest and also provide the students with lifelong learning since it is a source which gives the students access to information about everything rapidly.

Concerning literacy as a part of the study, Kajder raises an issue in relation to literacy due to the fact that there are many misconceptions concerning literacy and stating that “literacy’s link to community and identity means that it can be a site of resistance for adolescents. When students are not recognized for bringing valuable, multiple-literacy practices to school, they can become resistant to school-based literacy” (xi). Furthermore, the author states that learning literacy in a given discipline enables the students to discuss
complex discourses and negotiate and distinguish the fact that different texts can have various meanings in different contexts. In my opinion, the author’s statement is valuable due to the fact that texts can have various meanings depending on the one doing the interpretation. In the context of the point brought up by the author, Kajder also states that adolescents are in need of bridges between everyday literacy practice and classroom communication including online non book based communities. This is a strategy that is incorporated in the lesson plan to step away from the book based activities and to acknowledge that English can be learned in various ways.

On the subject of bringing in multicultural perspectives, Kajder discusses the importance of multicultural perspectives in the classroom, stating that students ought to see values in their own cultures and the culture of others as a part of the education. In the light of that, she also states that it should go beyond a “tourist” (xiii) view of cultures and more to encourage engagement with cultural issues, and also by integrating technology multicultural literacy will be enhanced. This is something that the clip showed to the students’ aims to expand world views and place cultural issues in focus.

Kajder, Pahl and Roswell state that by supporting the students’ recognition of their local and global awareness, one also supports their literacy and encourages their sense of identity. Furthermore, the authors also state that knowledge gained outside the classroom should also be brought into the classroom where literacy can be used as:

- A framework for teaching a language
- Including multimodality in literacy teaching
- Literacy for displaying knowledge
- Literacy to develop skills as a combination of media and written assignment

In concurrence with the authors, my statements are that literacy pedagogy takes shape in many ways and using these various forms as a tool for teaching benefits the students since it enables them to express their language skills in different ways.

Using the Internet and other multimedia to enhance English learning does not only derive from book-based activities. This is something that the performed task tried to accomplish, a fundamental lifelong learning with various tools available. In relation to different activities, Naidu states that learning is a process and that a set of effective and efficient strategies lead to creation of frameworks for education, and therefore it is important to also consider the learners’ progress so one can adapt the right level. Further, Naidu addresses the role of multimedia in teaching and states that many researchers emphasize the
importance of technology in the educational system. The author also states that consideration should be taken into the learning theories and concepts and the pedagogy that applies since one can not assume that only by adding visual or audio component, the learning process will be enhanced. In my opinion, one must have a clear intention with the use of multimedia and a purpose for what it can contribute.

In line with the above claims, Naidu states that multimedia objects such as pictures and animation can enhance the efficiency of the domain one is studying; by the usage of various multimedia objects different learning tasks can be facilitated. Furthermore, Multiple Representation (henceforth referred to as MR approach) underlines that the selection of multimedia objects should be based on the task one performs; for example, audio enhances the imagination, video clips provides action and information and texts convey details. The MR approach also states that “the selection of objects should also consider the level of learner’s domain competence in the current situation” (p.58). The notion that everything should be considered from the level of the learner is of decisive importance, in my opinion, since the learner will lose interest if the task is too hard and vice versa. The task should be performed on a level where the student can learn new knowledge. In relation to the statements above, the MR approach favors revisiting the same content in different contexts, an example is using similar multimedia objects since it puts less cognitive overload on the learner. Other advantages are:

- It implements a link between the things currently being learnt and the one referred to.
- It provides simplicity with current concepts if becoming accustomed with past learned practice.

The result of linking different tasks to one another is, in my opinion, very important due to the fact that the learners can attain greater knowledge since they increase their knowledge based on things they have already learned and it also facilitates gaining new knowledge due to familiarization.

Finally, when discussing animations as a part of the lesson plan, Naidu expresses that despite the fact that animations do not show a process in a substantive manner, they facilitate for the learner to understand and obtain knowledge concerning the object that is exposed. However, Naidu also states that the learner should be attentive of the fact that it can be oversimplification. My belief is that the usage of animation can smooth the progress of
gaining knowledge as a part of the greater whole since it might be hard to grasp concepts that are revealed as they come into view.

The subject of using moving images and film is not only referred to by different academics, it is also something that is a part of the national curriculum according to Ericsson:

Students in the Swedish schools system have the right to experience film. They also have the right to express themselves in moving pictures. In the national curriculum for the compulsory upper secondary school (2000) the language and the text concept has been broadened to include the language of the moving picture as well. Thus film is places side by side with literature (p.7)

Despite the fact that in this study a film is not shown, it does not take away from the fact that even the national curriculum has become conscious of the importance of moving images and what they can contribute to the learner since moving images are a powerful means of expression.
4. Method

What follows is a description and discussion of action research, which is the selected method for this study.

4.1 Method’s discussion

With the intention of designing and performing lessons that would incorporate the use of the Internet and pictures as verbal sources, and thus convey a broader world view to the students, a methodological point of departure was initiated from action research. This particular methodology, action research, is according to Mills a “systematic inquiry conducted by teacher researchers (...) to gather information about the ways that their particular schools operate, how they teach, and how well their students learn” (p.6). Further, the author states that the goal of action research is to develop a reflective practice that effects positive changes in school and improves students’ learning outcomes. It is of deceive importance to be aware of the fact that this kind of research is made by teachers for themselves with the intention to improve something in the school environment that needs enhancement.

Mills states that action research is a four step process, which will here be identified in a diagram and discussed further down:

![Dialectic Action Research Spiral](image)

Figure 1: Dialectic Action Research Spiral (Mills, 2000, p.20)

Identifying an area of focus means according to Mills that it is of decisive importance to clearly elucidate what the area of focus is so that it can be connected to the initiative of action. Furthermore, Mills quotes Elliot who states some criteria for identifying the general idea of
focus stating that they should involve: learning and teaching, improvements or initiation of change, a manner one is passionate about and finally something that is feasible in your location of control. According to Mills, one should do reconnaissance to become attentive of one’s own values and also review related literature to get more insight in other strings of thought. In my viewpoint, reflecting on one’s own values can facilitate to remove bias and subjectivity and let the written data speak for itself.

Several ways of collecting data can be obtainable through action research by becoming a participant or an observer in the investigation; one can also collect field notes while at the same time performing interviews and questionnaires (Mills 2000). From my viewpoint, action research gives the researcher several ways of conducting an investigation which leads to more dependable outcomes and also more variables to work with.

Analyzing and interpreting data, according to Mills, ought to be undertaken during the time that the researcher wants to go over the embodied data that has been collected to insure that it is truthful, trustworthy and accurate. According to Mills, this interpretation process also means “undertaking problem analysis of antecedents and consequences; and displaying findings” (p.109).

Developing an action plan aims, according to Mills, at answering the question concerning the new gained knowledge and how one should react to it. It also brings up the issues concerning the new findings and how one might bring the research forward by sharing the new findings to facilitate others in the same focus area. Furthermore, Mills states that sharing research result also helps to decrease the gap between the research/theory and teaching practice in the educational setting.

Action research is an unconventional method that suits the aim and the purpose of this essay to a great extent because it facilitates the possibility to perform an investigation with the students and also to gain new knowledge about teaching. Other more conventional methods as questionnaires and interviews would have forced me to interrogate an issue about the students and not with the students.

Finally it is necessary to point out that the work performed with the method of action research is characterized by assignments performed over a longer period of time.
4.2 Participants, location and digitalism

The participants of this study are vocational students, attending their first year at an upper secondary school. They are also a mixed group studying in one of the following programs: the Child and Recreation Programme, the Vehicle Programme or the Construction Programme. The class consists of six girls and fifteen boys. The reason why this class consists of different pupils is due to the fact that pupils are placed in ability groups based on their results from a test given in the beginning of the term. The students that are included in this investigation belong to the intermediate group meaning that they reached the lowest goals required for English A and are in great need of a teacher when performing various assignments. In the light of the above, the students that participated in the research were approximately 18 due to illness and other unexpected circumstances.

The school where the action research was performed is outfitted with equipment that facilitates teaching digitally. The school is provided with two class size labs and one transport case with portable PC that can be brought in class when needed: however, reservation is required when using these classrooms. There is a media room with movies and cameras which also can be used through reservation. These resources smooth the progress of teaching digitally.

4.3 Procedure

One of the main points of this study is to challenge the students to consider different life situations and to think beyond the world where they are located. With that in mind, the tasks designed for this assignment allowed me to bring in other literacies where a clip from the Internet was the primary source, in order to step away from the book-based activities. Through this assignment, an additional task was performed. The first task required the students to make timelines that show their lifespan from the age of 12-18 with the usage of only words and with a dictionary at their disposal. After a short discussion about the timeline the animated clip was presented.

The content of the animated clip “The Clock is Ticking” portrays the life of a girl from Africa and her lifespan from the age of 12-18 with only words and anime. This contains the consequences of an upbringing with no right to education, marriage at a young age, having children early and getting AIDS which goes on for generation creating a vicious
circle. Furthermore, a rewinding of the clip shows what might happen if the girl receives aid and education; meaning that she could break the pattern and as an alternative that fact would go on for generations.

Subsequently, the video and the timeline were juxtaposed to portray the differences and similarities and the following topics where used for group discussions:

- The clock is ticking, with the aim of conveying one of the main meanings with the video and illustrating the meaning of expressions.
- Teen pregnancy in countries as Africa and Europe with the aim of discussion the difference in both attitudes and possibilities.
- AIDS as a disease and other sexual transmitted disease, with the aim of showing the absence of AIDS in relation to the existence of other problems in pupils’ social contexts.
- The right to education, with the aim of creating awareness within pupils regarding their, individual life possibilities in relation to a social context where these do not occur.

The aim of this part of the lesson attempts to increase awareness about the world around as well as to use the target language to convey issues corning the topics that appear in the clip.

In the light of the Internet clip, a group task was performed where two images were taken from an Internet site portraying a boy and a girl. The reason for choosing two images instead of one was to encounter dissimilar stories and avoid a possible situation where the students copy each other. The students were divided into four groups with the task to compose life stories concerning the persons in the images by using their imagination. These stories were presented in the form of a mind map by using only words to explain the imaginary persons’ life. Additionally, all the groups presented their stories orally for the rest of the class. This task was completed with a discussion of the boy’s and the girl’s real life. The aim of this lesson was to enable the students to write a narrative by using their imagination to form some different life situations and to broaden their perspective on different people. Furthermore, the aim was also to increase their English vocabulary in writing and speaking as well as using a non verbal source as verbal.
5. Results

One of the main purposes of this essay is to implement the use of Internet as a teaching tool and subsequently assist the students towards new knowledge concerning their language skills as well as the world around them. This is achieved by performance of three lessons. What follows is a presentation of a succession of events during these lessons.

5.1. The beginning of the journey, the first lesson

The first lesson started with the class gathering in the audio room where information was given to the students concerning the following lesson. Afterwards, the students were asked to make a timeline using only words to illustrate their life situation from the ages of 12 until 18. An issue that appeared during this part of the lesson was that some students felt unsure with using only vocabulary and wanted to use sentences instead. Another issue was that some students had not turned eighteen yet and felt insecure on what to write. The solution to these issues was to give help concerning vocabulary as well as guiding the students to imagine what they would do when turning 18. The outcomes of the timelines were that the students wrote about:

- Interest (soccer, ride horses, hockey, cars)
- Conduct (mature, immature, grown up, responsible)
- Future (drivers license, freedom (18))
- Appearance (fat, thin)
- Acquaintances (friends)

When completing their timeline, some students shared what they had written. I also shared my timeline.

Furthermore, the clip concerning the African girl was shown and a short discussion followed regarding the juxtaposition between the students’ timeline and the girl in the clip. The students experienced that there was nothing mutually shared between them and the girl, and uttered that they lived in different worlds. Further, the lesson continued with discussion questions that the students chose and the following answers were noted. Each group had one question to discuss. However slight modifications were made on their comments due to shortcomings in language and to convey the intended meaning.

- What do you think that the author means by the expression: “The clock is ticking”? According to the students, time goes by very fast for some people like the girl in the
video, this due to the fact that she became pregnant at an early age. She had not a lot of time
to live for herself; she had to devote her life for someone else. Also the fact that the girl could
end up with AIDS meant that her life would be over faster. The group also stated that for
some people the age of 12 is only the beginning of life. The group also discussed the fact that
life goes by very fast when one is young and has something to achieve and that life would go
slower when one has accomplished what one wants in life. After following the group
discussions, a question was posed concerning the meaning of the expression in Swedish. On
that topic they stated that it means that we are running out of time; in connection with the girl
from the clip they said that if one does not do something many girls have the possibility to
end up having the same fate as the girl. When the group discussed their topic in the class
another boy stated that the issues in the video did not only concern the girl, but that boys also
could get AIDS and that is also a great problem.

-“What are the differences in teen pregnancy in Africa versus Sweden”? It was clear from the beginning that the group had great weakness in the target language but
also that they had many misconceptions concerning Africa and their healthcare. The students
stated that the reason for girls in Africa becoming pregnant in an early age depended on the
fact that they did not have birth control as well the doctor’s inability to perform abortions.
Concerning teen pregnancy in Sweden, the group stated that it has become something of a
trend to become pregnant at an early age, a manner they though was not good. Furthermore,
they also stated that parents in Africa do not speak with their children concerning birth
control, because of their occupation with providing their children with food in order to
survive.

When performing the classroom discussion, there were many points that came
through since a lot of the students had something to say concerning the groups’ views on the
subject. One student in particular who came from Burundi stated clearly that they do have
birth control, and doctors that could perform abortions with the emphasis on difficulty to
perform it unlike Sweden. Concerning the point about the parents and their inability to speak
with their children, the student stated that it was something individual and that not every
parent in Sweden speaks with their children regarding that issue and the class agreed.

-“What do you know about the disease AIDS and about other sexual transmitted
diseases”? The group discussion started by utterances that in Africa AIDS is passed from
generation to generation and this is something that the clip also alludes to. Furthermore, they
also spoke about the reasons that people in Africa get AIDS is because it is spread in a much
greater extent than in other continents. They also pointed to the fact that contracting AIDS in a European country meant also that one can get antiretroviral drugs easier than in Africa. Furthermore, the group spoke about the fact that even though AIDS is not spread to a great extent in Sweden, we have other sexually transmitted diseases that one needs to take into consideration since they are also dangerous. In the class discussion no one wanted to add something concerning this issue.

-“Do we take the right to education for granted, if we do then why, and how would it be if everybody was able to go to school”? According to this group, we do take school for granted thought due to the fact that we begin school at a very early age and we continue the education until we get employment. The group also discussed that the reason for education being taken for granted could be that school is at times boring and more activities and practical work would make it more interesting. Furthermore, they stated that it would be better for everybody to have an opportunity to get an education but there should also be alternatives for those who do not want to go to school.

5.2 The journey continues, the third and fourth lesson
The second and third lesson continued with the implementation of two multimedia objects. The students were presented with two pictures illustrating a dark skinned boy at an early age and a light skinned girl also at a young age. The students were divided in four groups and their task was to make up stories concerning one of the images by using words. However, the students also chose to write small explanation under the words and one group also chose to paint pictures to their story. The aim of these lessons was to extend the students’ vocabulary range but also for them to understand the image as a textual resource.

Below, the stories have been edited to an extent with the aim to convey the intended meaning since some students only used word when telling their story.

5.3 The stories regarding the boy
The first group tells the story about the boy Daniel Pagard who is born in Iran in the year of 1963, at an early age a war breaks out in his country and he loses his whole family. This tragic event forces David to move to the United States of America where he begins a new life. At the age of 15 David begins his working career as an employed at McDonalds where he starts to overeat hamburgers, which leads to great obesity and despite this fact that many children bully him in school he still has some friends. The story of David continues at the age of 50
where he has come to the great weight of 90 kilos and he suffers a heart attack because he has eaten a large amount of hamburgers all his life. Despite the fact that he almost dies, he does not stop eating at McDonald’s and his weight only increases. At the age of 77 he is 120 kilos and at this time he dies while eating a hamburger.

The second story is about the boy Achmed Ali who lives in Africa with his family and at the beginning of the story Achmed is twelve and he has a twin brother. Achmed’s family is very wealthy because they are gangsters and the grandfather of the family is a very famous gang leader. One day, a rival gang comes to Achmed’s house and kills almost all the members of his family; however the one who survives the attack is Achmed. Because of this he decides to follow in his father’s footsteps and becomes a gang member in order to revenge his family and kill the ones who took the life of his family. So after one week of searching Achmed finds the leader of the gang and takes his life. However, three of them get away and Achmed searches for the other members for the rest of his life.

5.4 Stories regarding the girl

This story is about a girl named Fia who was born in 1993 and who grew up in Sweden with her mother because her father died in a horrible car accident when she was only two years old. At that point she and her mother moved in to a big green house. At the age of six Fia became a pupil of a school called Central school which was near her house. She was a star student but she really never had many friends. She only had one good friend and that was a boy called Jocke. After a few years, Fia’s mother meets a man named Thomas and Fia becomes very fond of him and of his children Sally and Britta. Today Fia is 17 years old and she lives with her mum and the new family. At this point of her life she has a lot of friends and a boyfriend and she is very happy. THE END

The second story is about Elisabeth who is a girl of seven years and she lives in Poland in the middle of Warszawa in the 1940’s. In one normal evening her parents tell her a story of better times, and they see that their little girl is gently falling in to sleep, so they leave her room and enter the living room. After a moment Elizabeth hears the front door get kicked in and two soldiers come straight in to her room. The soldiers grab her and take her out to the living room, she screams. She sees her father get executed right in front of her eyes. She hears that her mother screams as she sees the soldiers remove her mother’s clothes and start to rape her.
After a while she feels the gun against her head, tears fall from her eyes, she can smell death. BANG!

5.5 The end of the journey
After the students had written their stories, they had an oral presentation where they presented their stories. Furthermore, a discussion took place concerning why they had chosen to write what they wrote, a discussion about the first story took place relating to the view of overweight and problems concerning obesity. Regarding the second story we spoke about, if one directly associates black skin with gangsters and the group said they wrote the story based on a movie they had watched.

With reference to the picture of the girl and answering the question how they came up with that story the first group answered that they had discussed similar issues in a health and care class they had studied. The last group answered that they thought that the girl in the image looked like someone from Poland and they instantly connected it to the World War two.

In the end of the third lesson students were told that the images portrayed the president of the USA Barack Obama at a very young age, and the girl was the actress Julia Roberts. This came as a surprise to the students because they did not think that the persons in the images could be someone they recognized.
6. Discussion

This discussion will first comment on the integration of moving images and still photos based on the theoretical approach, the methodological discussion as well as the previous research with the aim of clearly depicting the outcomes and the cause of the accomplishments during the three lessons performed in school. Furthermore, in the light of what is described above, this discussion addresses the general usage of multimodality and more specifically the relationship between literacy and non-verbal sources.

Interactive communication is one of the main goals when using multimodality in the classroom according to Warschauer, Shetzer and Meloni. This portrays one of many reasons for using multimodality in the classroom. In relation to the online experience, the performed task gave the students the material to have a conversation with a clear aim and focus. The primary purpose for the discussion was to enhance the usage of the target language, as well as broadening the students’ world views. Concerning a clear aim and focus on communication Warschauer, Shetzer and Meloni speak of vitality as a point of importance since too many conversations are decontextualized in classroom environments. In my opinion, by using the animated clip it gave the possibility for a conversation that was in framework of what was portrayed in the clip. It also made it possible to depict the misconceptions concerning Africa and the people who reside there.

On the subject of a multicultural perspective in the classroom, Kajder states that the value of one’s own and other cultures should be attentive in the education. As a result of the juxtaposition made in the classroom, a multicultural perspective opportunity was created; it also gave the opportunity for new knowledge to be attained concerning other cultures but also to display resemblances and differences amongst them. During a discussion concerning teen pregnancy, some misconceptions concerning healthcare arose, which gave an opportunity for revising views and also, I believe, gave the students the possibility to acquire new knowledge concerning the world around them. It also gave one boy the possibility to discuss his culture.

The discussion contributed to insights concerning Africa and the source of the discussions was an animated clip that was portrayed. On the topic of the anime, Naidu states that despite the fact that an anime does not represent a realistic manner, it assists the learner to understand and gain knowledge. Kajder discusses the importance of using different literacies to enable the students to discuss complex discourses where meaning is context based. In my
opinion, by using the animated clip it made an attempt to in first hand discuss a complex discourse. There by also tried to portray that despite the fact that the anime was not traditionally educational, it illustrated that acquiring knowledge is not only a book based activity. It is feasible to gain new knowledge with a variety of literacies and it is not something that is bound to a book or a place.

Besides the fact that digital literacy can enhance discourses, it has also an ability to take shape in different ways. This means that one can modify tasks in various ways depending on what outcome one wants to enhance. During the second and the third lesson, a non verbal source was used to enhance the target language and also to let the students use their imagination concerning the image portrayed. Pahl and Roswell discuss the different shapes of literacy, meaning that it can be used for different purposes to display knowledge but also as framework for teaching a language. In my opinion, my lesson was satisfactorily achieved multiple purposes. The lesson enabled the students to display their knowledge in different ways, at the same time as they demonstrated the ability to see the image not only as an object but also as a verbal source.

According to Pahl and Roswell, literacy means engaging in something visual that further leads to oral practices and literacy exercise. An important element of this project has been to give the students the opportunity to comprehend the meaning of the visual to the same extent as the written words. In my opinion, that was successful during the lessons since the students used a non verbal source and created stories in relation to them. On this topic Pahl and Roswell also state the fact concerning the recognition between the word and pictures, seeing them as a unit bringing meaning to one another.

On the subject of multimedia, Naidu states that multimedia objects can facilitate different learning tasks. However, according to the MR approach there ought to be caution in the selection of multimedia objects since it has to consider the level of the learner in order to be a sufficient source of knowledge. In my opinion, the image made it possible for the students to choose the level of their language when performing the task. However, the challenging fact was the usage of words which gave them the opportunity to gain new knowledge and to present different people.

According to Lundahl, multimodality represents the world in different ways, as did the students when displaying their stories about the pictures. Another aspect of using pictures as a supplement to the lessons was to motivate the students to consider different ways of living by using their imagination as well as interest in what they were performing.
According to Wright, the pictures are contributors for adding motivation and willingness to participate as well as link that unites the world with the classroom environment. In agreement with Wright, almost all (with the exception of one group) students worked very well and they seemed interested in the project. One can only speculate why one of the four groups did not work as well as the rest, one reason might be that that kind of task does not motivate the students and that they do not find it interesting.

In my opinion the reason for the three groups working well depends more on the fact that the students were in control of the outcome. Another outcome that the images contributed to was a discussion concerning obesity, World War II, gangsters and the benefits and limitations of generalizations. Since every story had a different content it gave all the students the same possibility to converse. On this topic, Wright states that images can enhance bringing the world into the classroom environment which also connects to Wright’s claim concerning facilitating for the learners to develop as people by giving them the opportunity to interpret a non verbal source in relation to other people.

One of the main points of using multimodality was to improve the students’ language skills, with the main focus placed on vocabulary. According to Mayer, the combination with pictures and vocabulary enhances the learning in that field. In the course of the lessons, concerning vocabulary usage, it was discovered that two out of four groups used new vocabulary that they had learned during the first activity and reused them during the creation of their stories. Reasons for that might have been that it was not suitable for the text they wrote or that the students did not extend their vocabulary. In the light of this, Mayer points out that due to its flexibility multimedia permits various modifications of assignments so they may suit different learning styles. Concerning the images used in the different stories, I noticed that the students used different strategies when telling the stories. Some preferred to draw pictures and use word while others only used words and there was also one group that mostly worked with the written text. This displayed that the students had different learning strategies and they used them when opportunity was given. On this topic, Lundahl states that the ability to make sense of the image gives a widen language conception.

Besides the connection between language use and images, Lundahl states that one can also encounter the pictures with previous experience and knowledge. In my opinion that is to a great extent acceptable; however, by using non verbal sources one can also gain new knowledge since a picture has the ability to be transformable depending on the one who interprets it. Other circumstances that can be discussed concerning images are according to
Lundahl values and assumptions. Due to the fact that one of the aims of these lessons was to make the students gain a greater understanding of the world around them, this also included discussions concerning values and reason for the selection of story.

Further more, the usage of two multimodal sources in different contexts with the same focus on vocabulary and a broadening world portrayed a link between all three lessons. According to the MR approach, this is a favored strategy since it ties together new gained knowledge and the one being referred to as well as giving simplicity to the current concept since one is accustomed with the past practice.

Concerning the choice of method, there were some shortcomings to this assignment; one was the time limit. However, this does not make the study less valid. Another shortcoming was seen by using this method was that it sometimes could be complex to take notes while performing the lessons. However, a way of eliminating this problem is through planning and collection of data which was examined afterwards.

If the possibility was given to perform these lessons with other students, some things would be altered. The animated clip and the non verbal source, however, would still be used. To further increase the students’ vocabulary, a list made by the students would have been at their disposal after the viewing of the clip so they could revisit the words during other lessons. Another change would be to get all the students to become more interested in the topic. This could be achieved by spending more time performing the tasks and also by adding a task where the students could “discover” the world on their own and attain new knowledge through the usage of multimodality.
7. Conclusion

By using action research it became evident that inclusion of an animated clip and an image to portray a broader world view was pedagogically effective to an extent. Most of the students became more active when discussing issues considering what they had seen. This also gave space to discuss assumptions that were not based on fact and to replace old assumptions with new knowledge. New vocabulary had been acquired by some as well as all the students demonstrated the ability to interpret the image as a textual resource. These mixed media assignments also proved that a broader world view could be acquired through multimedia.

In spite of these positive outcomes, this qualitative study and action research does not attempt to give any specific answers concerning implementing multimodality in the classroom. It does not either give any final answers to broadening the world views of students or increasing their vocabulary range. However, the study shows the challenges I have come across during my teaching and the lesson descriptions and outcomes can be a starting point for additional research in the use of multimodal teaching and learning.

Finally, the performed tasks demonstrate how English language skills can be acquired with the help of multimodality and students need not be reliant singularly on book-based learning. This suggests that lifelong learning is a process that can start in the classroom but is not bound to a particular place.
8. Work Cited


Web pages


http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1e8xgF0JtVg (10/10 2010)
Appendix