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The changes in literacy education using multimodal texts continue requiring appropriate and effective approaches to change literacy practices and develop teachers’ teaching practices. There are many academic books proposing approaches to multiliteracies pedagogies. Among them, Bull and Anstey’s work attracts our greatest attention because it not only depicts the characteristics of semiotic systems and the way semiotic systems are combined to convey meanings, but also reaches the essential parts that are concerned with classroom practices, teacher pedagogies as well as inquiry processes.

The volume under review is complementary to Foundations of Multiliteracies: Reading, Writing and Talking in the 21st century (Anstey & Bull, 2018). It aims to improve multiliteracies practices and develop the relevant pedagogies for teachers by providing metalanguage, strategies and tasks to explore codes and conventions of semiotic systems, dialogic talks, inquiry process and action learning process when they teach students to consume and produce multimodal texts. It views that increasing understandings about the ways in which how multimodal codes combine dynamically to express meanings is beneficial for students to consume or produce a multimodal text in order to achieve their purposes, recommends an inquiry model as a way of devising pedagogies to explore how meanings are conveyed, and also suggests an action learning model which is supported by well-designed action learning tasks or projects, and dialogic talks to devise pedagogies that could change classroom practices and develop teacher pedagogies so as to facilitate students’ multiliteracies concurrently.

This volume consists of 6 chapters. Chapter 1 reviews studies about multiliteracies and action research, suggests that reading and writing should be termed as consumption and production in multimodal texts and that action research could be developed into action learning cycle (ALC) in which a number of tools, such as the Multiliteracies Matrix and Reflection Tool (pp. 24-30), and the Action Plan Proforma (p.34), are provided to support the design and redesign of multiliteracies pedagogy.

The other chapters are strong and engaging. Chapter 2 develops a pedagogy of inquiry for learning and teaching, weaves its stages as well as processes through ALC by raising relevant questions and offering Action Learning Tasks in order to make the pedagogy available and manageable. Chapter 3 lists factors influencing the design of multimodal texts, elaborates information about codes and conventions of semiotic systems and builds a metalanguage for teachers and students to understand how multimodal texts are consumed and produced. Chapter 4 discusses factors influencing the cultivation
of a multiliterate person with respect to classroom talk, proposes a dialogic pedagogy through supportive classroom environment, suitable dialogic talk between students and teachers and well-planned phase structure of lessons, and discusses challenges and teachers’ responses to dialogic pedagogy. Chapter 5 reviews the historical approaches of developing reading as well as their contribution to understanding consumption of multimodal texts, and highlights what and why current research contributes to teaching about the consumption of multimodal texts and what potential challenges it faces to inform reading pedagogies. Chapter 6 also reviews the historical approaches of teaching writing along with their contribution to understanding production of multimodal texts, redevelops these approaches to writing by addressing new understandings about multimodality and technology, and draws readers’ attention to application of ALC into the production of multimodal texts.

At the end of the volume, a provision of a glossary consisting of technical terms is helpful for readers who are outside this area and may have difficulties in reading.

There are special features designed by the authors that could help readers develop and apply their understandings about multiliteracies into effective classroom practices. To name a few, they are, Reflection Strategies, Theory into Practices, Auditing Instruments and Action Learning Tasks. Reflection Strategies helps readers review what they have and discuss what they could change, Theory into Practice supports the discussions with question lists, Auditing Instruments guides readers to consider how effective pedagogy could be carried out with regard to assessment of students’ engagement and reflection of teachers’ teaching, and Action Learning Tasks provides readers with specific instructions with reference to elaborating multiliteracies.

The volume presents a probably new idea of changing classroom practice and developing teacher pedagogies. To begin with, it links multiliteracies pedagogy with students’ inquiry process across disciplines, proposing a pedagogy for inquiry learning to release teachers’ responsibility gradually and reduce students’ reliance on teachers’ instruction and scaffolding. Second, it makes the processes of inquiry more readily available and manageable by raising many questions to promote research skills in students, which used to be hard for teachers to discover. Thus, it encourages teachers to develop students’ multiliteracies by using dialogic talk and phases of lessons through Action Learning Cycle in a safe classroom environment. Third, it introduces Action Learning Cycle as a way of supporting the design and redesign of teachers’ pedagogy, and supporting teachers’ engagement in ALC, Multiliteracies Matrix, and Action Plan Proforma in details.

However, it is also necessary to point out that there are apparent insufficiencies in this volume. First, this volume does not make a clear distinction between Pedagogy for Inquiry Learning (p.68) and Genre-based Pedagogy (Rothery & Stenglin. 1994) because the former has similar operative cycle (p. 50) as the latter, and both emphasize the gradual release of teachers’ responsibilities. Both lurk in the shadow of the Gradual Release Model (Pearson & Gallagher 1983). Teachers may find themselves confused when it comes to choosing which pedagogy is effective to have students becoming
multiliterate. Second, it takes the meaningful units of semiotic resources as its starting point, provides teachers with metalanguage strategies as well as special features to help them discover how multimodal meanings are made and how multimodal texts are produced, but it fails to bring something into consideration that has the potential to convey meanings, such as the schematic structures of genre, intersemiosis, or multsemiosis. Third, too much emphasis on action learning and its following strategies or actions is time-consuming, may not be a prerequisite for teachers to succeed in changing classroom practice or teacher pedagogy, and may neglect what research skills students could have already acquired in multimodal learning, which in turn may make it difficult for them to improve those skills.

Despite these insufficiencies, this volume presents a wealth of information and insight to the readers. It helps teachers identify the characteristics of multiliterate pedagogies from three domains, namely text, context as well as pedagogy, and design possible strategies or actions to examine what students have learned. Furthermore, it encourages the dialogic talks along with the gradual release of teachers’ responsibilities from the classroom engagement of both teachers and students, which is suitable and applicable for classroom practices. In addition, it emphasizes the success of developing multiliterate students as the combination of pedagogy, practice and classroom talk around multimodal texts, draws readers’ attention to skip out of meaning-making mechanisms within text. Finally, it does hold an open view to other approaches that contribute to reading and writing around multiliteracies, and draw on the merits from them, such as traditional lesson structures in addition to stages of inquiry.

References


Bio Data

Jinyou Zhou is currently a PhD candidate at Beijing Normal University. He is interested in the research on multimodality and that on pedagogies for multimodal literacies from perspectives of systemic-functional linguistics and social semiotics, aiming to help the underdeveloped students advance their abilities of consuming and producing multimodal texts. He recently works on the question of how scientific knowledge is built via multimodal resources in secondary science textbooks across a range of disciplines.

Lin Cong is currently a PhD candidate at Beijing Normal University. Her interest focuses on multimodal studies in English language teaching. She is now working on the strategies that aid teachers to develop their pedagogical efficiencies and teaching plans when using the integration of text and image in English textbooks to achieve their teaching purposes effectively.