

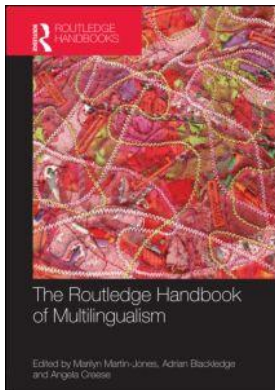
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Multilingualism and multimodality

Vally Lytra

Introduction

Recent studies of multilingualism in different societies have questioned the notion of languages as whole, bounded systems and have argued for a view of language ‘as a set of resources which circulate in unequal ways in social networks and discursive spaces, and whose meaning and values are socially constructed within the constraints of social organizational processes, under specific historical conditions’ (Heller 2007: 2). This understanding of language foregrounds the political and sociohistorical associations of linguistic forms and characterizes language users as social actors. It stresses the different ways language users are constantly employing, creating, and interpreting sets of linguistic resources to communicate across contexts and participants and perform their different subjectivities. This means that ‘participants’ awareness of “language” or “code” is backgrounded and “signs” are combined and put to work in the message being negotiated at hand’ (Creese and Blackledge 2010a: 2; also Creese and Blackledge 2010b; Blackledge and Creese 2010). This conceptualization of language captures the heteroglossic nature of communication, or what Bailey describes as ‘(a) the simultaneous use of different kinds of forms or signs and (b) the tensions and conflicts among those signs, based on the sociohistorical associations they carry with them’ (2007: 257). The focus on signs and sets of linguistic resources affords new analytical insights into our understanding of language and human interaction more generally as essentially social. Although acknowledging that linguistic signs are the primary semiotic tools for representing and negotiating meaning and social relations, this focus can account for the increasing recognition in current research on multilingualism of the highly multimodal nature of communication. Following Pahl and Rowsell, in this chapter multimodality refers to ‘communication in the widest sense, including gesture, oral performance, artistic, linguistic, digital, electronic, graphic and artefact-related’ (2006: 6).

In the ensuing sections, I present key issues of theory and method and review some of the relevant literature that merges multilingualism with a multimodal perspective in an attempt to map key areas of the research space. I go on to explore the intersection of multilingualism and multimodality by drawing on my own research of classroom talk and action in Turkish complementary (community) schools in London. I conclude this chapter with a brief discussion of directions for future research.

Key issues of theory and method

There are a number of disciplines and theoretical approaches that have sought to explore aspects of the multimodal communicational landscape. Jewitt traces the theoretical underpinnings of multimodality to linguistics, in particular Halliday's social semiotic theory of communication (Halliday 1978) but also to cognitive and sociocultural research (e.g. Arnheim 1969) as well as anthropological and social approaches (e.g. Goffman 1979) (Jewitt 2008: 357–58).

One influential approach that has contributed to theory-building in multimodality is social semiotics. Multimodal social semiotics, as it is widely referred to, focuses on signs of all kinds, in all forms, the sign makers and the social environments in which these signs are produced (Kress *et al.* 2005: 22). Bezemer and Kress usefully define a 'mode' as 'a socially and culturally shaped resource for making meaning' (e.g. image, writing, speech, moving image, action, artefacts) (2008: 6; also Kress and van Leeuwen 2001). They go on to argue that meaning makers or 'sign makers' can make meaning drawing on a variety of modes that do not occur in isolation but always with others in ensembles. Moreover, different modes may share similar and/or different '*modal resources*' [italics in the original] (e.g. writing has syntactic, grammatical, graphic resources whereas image has resources that include the position of elements in a frame, size, colour, shape). These differences in resources, they further argue, have important implications for the ways modes can be used to accomplish different kinds of semiotic work, which means that 'modes have different *affordances*' [italics in the original] – potentials and constraints for making meaning' (*ibid.*). Bezemer and Kress point out that a discussion of different modes for meaning making and their affordances needs to be considered together with the medium of distribution involved (e.g. print, electronic, digital) (2008: 7).

Multimodal social semiotics views linguistic signs (both monolingual and multilingual) as part of a wider repertoire of modal resources that sign makers have at their disposal and that carry particular sociohistorical and political associations. As Kress *et al.* elaborate in their description of English as core subject in urban multilingual classrooms,

signs are always multimodal and each modality brings the possibility of expressing and shaping meanings. A poster, part of a display on a wall for example, is a complex of signs: it may be a student's handwritten text, left with spelling and grammatical slips rather than the word-processed writing of an official document, carefully edited, mounted on board rather than pinned up, laminated maybe, displayed in a prominent position or perhaps somewhere barely noticeable. When we look at such a post-sign the many meanings made as signs in the various modes are there in one complex multimodal sign.

(2005: 22)

In this approach, language is seen as a central mode of communication but at the same time it is examined in relation to the other modes that sign makers can choose from for meaning making and social identification. In this sense, a multimodal semiotic approach to meaning making can provide 'a fuller, richer and more accurate sense of what language is, and what it is not' (2005: 2). Kress *et al.* further argue that

where before there was a common sense about the capacities of language, which left the potentials of what language can do in many ways implicit and unexamined, now, looking at language in the context of other means of making meaning gives the possibility of a much sharper, more precise, and more nuanced understanding both of the (different) potentials of speech and of writing, and of their limitations.

(*ibid.*)

The multimodal social semiotic approach is thus congruous with recent perspectives on multilingualism that view language as essentially social instead of neutral or ahistorical (cf. Heller 2007; Creese and Blackledge 2010a; Blackledge and Creese 2010).

Recent research on multilingualism has been inspired by the multimodal social semiotics approach and has stretched our understanding of the ways children combine different modes and media across social contexts and negotiate social identities. Kenner reports on how bilingual/biliterate young children learn different writing systems (English, Chinese, Arabic and Spanish) at home, in the complementary and in the mainstream primary school in the UK. Her work illustrates how a focus on different modes, including the children's sets of linguistic resources, can foreground the different culture-specific ways multilingual children mesh the visual and actional modes (i.e. make use of shape, size and location of symbols on the page, directionality, type of stroke) in the process of learning how to write in two languages (2004: 75). Moreover, such a focus shows the different ways multilingual children combine and juxtapose scripts as well as explore connections and differences between their available writing systems in their text making. By drawing on more than one set of linguistic and other modal resources to construct bilingual texts in settings where multilingual communication was encouraged, Kenner argued, children could 'express their sense of living in multiple social and cultural worlds' (2004: 118).

One important line of research that has developed from the increasing recognition of the need to situate language within a much broader communication landscape combines the theoretical perspectives of multimodality and literacy, in particular the New Literacy Studies approach, offering as Jewitt argues 'a distinct theoretical accent to multimodality' (2008: 359). The New Literacy Studies radically reconceptualized the nature of literacy from a neutral set of skills that are acquired across different contexts to 'a set of social practices' that are 'embedded in relations of culture and power in specific contexts' (Prinsloo and Baynham 2008: 2). The theoretical insights afforded by combining multimodality and the New Literacy Studies perspectives have been usefully extended to research on multilingualism, in the study of multilingual texts, talk and practices. This line of research provides a unique point of entry into approaching multilingual texts as material objects and understanding how multilingual practices are situated within a web of multimodal practices (cf. Pahl and Rowsell 2006).

In her own research, Pahl has fruitfully combined these theoretical approaches to study children's multimodal/multilingual text production (e.g. drawings, oral and written narratives). Pahl shows how 'visual and verbal resources were interwoven to construct a richly patterned narrative' within homes (2004: 339). These narratives, she maintains, link together stories with visual displays (e.g. drawings, material artefacts) and photographs spanning time frames and geographical spaces. They illustrate how meaning is made by the combination of different modes and how it links with processes of (bi-)cultural identity construction. These findings resonate with work by Sánchez focusing on how immigrant students draw on different language and literacy practices for the presentation of self as they co-author a bilingual (Spanish–English) children's picture book documenting their cross-border (USA–Mexico) experience in the context of an out-of-school literacy project (2007: 259). She concurs with Pahl about the centrality of artefacts in the triggering of family narratives from or about Mexico and shows how the authors/illustrators make use of pictorial artefacts in the bilingual book scenes with the view of generating similar family bilingual/bicultural narratives of transnational experiences among their young readers (2007: 277).

The conceptual link between multilingualism, multimodality and the New Literacy Studies has provided a wealth of insights into the ways participants mesh different modes and media across contexts and cultural worlds highlighting the ideological nature of both literacy practices and multimodal/multilingual practices in shaping social relations and forms of identity

(cf. Street 2008). Stein and Slonimsky's study of literacy practices in three socio-economically, educationally and linguistically diverse Johannesburg homes (in South Africa), shows how adult family members socialize their young children into what counts as 'good reading practices' in their household and how the identities of the children as 'readers' and 'subjects' are constituted (2006: 118). The authors demonstrate how the literacy practices shifted radically from one family to the next as children and adults drew on a range of representational resources (including different sets of linguistic resources) to decode, interpret and transform multimodal texts. During this process, they observed that children were not only socialized into becoming literate in particular ways shaped by culturally established conventions but also into developing particular future orientations and aspirations in the 'real' world (2006: 143).

Drawing on their research on transnational youth and their out-of-school digital practices, McGinnis *et al.* (2007) illustrate how three young people create their own online texts in the form of blogs and personal webpages to express multiple loyalties. Making use of Kress' (2003) notion of 'design' that is the ways multimodal forms are combined to convey meaning, the authors scrutinize the different layers of the webpages' 'design' to show how the young people mix and juxtapose different sets of linguistic resources, images, streamed video and music to enact their multiple identifications (McGinnis *et al.* 2007: 299–300). Their online textual practices reveal their ability to communicate across multiple modes, media, languages and geographical spaces in order to create their own spaces where they can engage in local, national and global issues that are of interest to them (2007: 300–1).

By situating participants' multilingual resources and practices within a wider communicational landscape, researchers have been able to provide more detailed and nuanced connections between local and broader institutional and social practices, discourses and processes. Both Stein and Slonimsky (2007) and McGinnis *et al.* (2007) highlight the need to consider ways to build bridges between the young people's rich multilingual and multimodal experiences outside school with their academic worlds. In Lytra *et al.* (2010), the authors' investigation of multilingual/multimodal pedagogic practices sheds light on some of the tensions and contradictions about what counts as legitimate modes in Turkish and Gujarati complementary school classrooms in the UK and how these are linked to broader social contexts, such as language hierarchies and language and literacy practices in the countries of origin, the diasporas as well as within and across complementary school settings. Moyer (2010) examines the institutionally supported multilingual/multimodal practices (e.g. translation of written texts, telephone translation services, videos to instruct mothers about how to take care of their children) in a Barcelona health clinic servicing a large migrant clientele. She traces the tensions and conflicts that arise between social actors (e.g. health staff, patients) with asymmetries of social roles, levels of language competence and specialized knowledge as they seek to bridge communication difficulties.

The focus on the use of multiple modes as a point of entry into the investigation of language and human action has also been a concern of studies drawing on sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology. The work by Goodwin (2000) in particular sets out a theoretical framework to consider how different sets of linguistic resources interact with visual, kinaesthetic and artefact-related resources as well as participation frameworks, larger sequential structures and encompassing activities through which participants display their embodied orientation in the context of, for instance, a dispute over playing hopscotch. Taking as a point of departure that 'in the human sciences in general, language and the material world are treated as entirely separate domains of inquiry' (2000: 1491), Goodwin postulates that

a theory of action must come to terms with both the details of language use and the way in which the social, cultural, material and sequential structure of the environment where action occurs, figures into its organization.

(*ibid.*)

Goodwin develops the concept of ‘semiotic fields’ to capture the process by which various sign systems (e.g. talk, gesture, posture, graphics) instantiated in different media are juxtaposed and mutually elaborate each other. A cluster of ‘semiotic fields’, he elaborates, to which participants orient at a given moment is called a ‘contextual configuration’ (2000: 1490). Both ‘semiotic fields’ and their ‘contextual configurations’ are in a continuous process of change as action unfolds: new semiotic fields become relevant whereas others are no longer attended to. The focus on ‘semiotic fields’ and ‘contextual configurations’ assumes an understanding of language as grounded in its sociohistorical and political context, which goes against ‘the usual analytic and disciplinary boundaries that isolate language from its environment and create a dichotomy between text and context’ (*ibid.*). Like multimodal social semiotics, Goodwin’s theory of action within human interaction is thus congruous with recent perspectives on multilingualism, which view language as essentially a social phenomenon.

Theoretical insights from Goodwin’s theory of action have inspired research on multilingualism in order to explore how multilingual talk is juxtaposed with other kinds of modes and how ‘the human body is made publicly visible as the site for a range of structurally different kinds of displays implicated in the constitution of the actions of the moment’ (2000: 1492). In his own research exploring a dispute between three young girls of Mexican and Central American heritage in a playground in California, Goodwin shows how the girls perform the dispute not only via different streams of multilingual talk but also through the simultaneous deployment of different clusters of signs, for example gestures, gaze and bodily displays, which change over time as the interaction unfolds (2000: 1499). Equally importantly, he illustrates how the hopscotch grid on the playground, which is seen as a semiotic structure in the built environment, provides the organizational framework for building the girls’ action, which could not exist without it; it is the medium used to determine successful jumps, outs, etc. (2000: 1505; see also Goodwin *et al.* 2002). Inspired by Goodwin’s work, Piirainen-Marsh and Tainio (2009) explore collaborative game-play, namely a Japanese fantasy role play game translated and localized into English, among Finnish adolescents. They focus on the juxtaposition and meshing of two boys’ sets of linguistic resources (Finnish, English and its varieties) with other modes and media, including the material resources of technology. Like the hopscotch grid in Goodwin’s (2000) study, the authors attend to the ways in which the video game provides the material and semiotic structure that shapes interaction between the two game players ‘to participate in and constitute the social activity of playing, construct their interpretations of the game and organise their experience of game-play as a meaningful social and situated learning activity’ (Piirainen-Marsh and Tainio 2009: 179).

A common methodological focus of research combining theoretical insights from multilingualism and multimodality is ethnography as a methodology. The focus of ethnography of immersing in the field and of uncovering patterns of meanings over time are central to making sense of how local knowledge is built, how ‘emic’ and ‘etic’ categories emerge and how the construction of knowledge is linked with broader social, historical and political contexts. Ethnography allows us to view how multilingualism and multimodality intersect and sit in the broader communicational landscape, enabled by rapid technological advances, which in turn have triggered new modes of textual practices and new communities of practice. Green and Bloome make a useful distinction among three approaches to ethnography: ‘doing ethnography’,

‘adopting an ethnographic perspective’ and ‘using ethnographic tools’. ‘Doing ethnography’, they argue, involves ‘a broad, in-depth, and long-term study of a social or cultural group’ (1997: 183), whereas ‘adopting an ethnographic perspective’ implies taking a ‘more focused approach (i.e. doing less than a comprehensive ethnography) to study particular aspects of everyday life and cultural practices of a social group’ (ibid.). Finally, ‘using ethnographic tools’ means making ‘use of the methods and techniques usually associated with fieldwork’ (1997: 184). From a methodological standpoint, research at the intersection of multilingualism and multimodality is diverse. It includes traditional full-blown ethnographies, as well as more limited studies employing an ethnographic perspective or making use of ethnographic methods. Besides the use of staple ethnographic methods such as participant observation, interview and documentary data and in keeping with the multimodal approach, a number of studies make extensive use of photography, participant diaries and diary interviews, audio and video data as well as different texts, including digital texts, such as weblogs and personal webpages (e.g. Goodwin 2000; Kenner 2004; Lytra *et al.* 2010; Martin-Jones 2009; Martin-Jones *et al.* 2009; McGinnis *et al.* 2007; Sánchez 2007).

Adopting a multimodal lens: insights from recent ethnographic research

This section draws on research from an Economic and Social Research Council funded project that explored multilingualism and identities in complementary schools.¹ The purpose of this section is to investigate the participants’ use of different sets of linguistic resources during Turkish literacy teaching and to view these practices through the lens of multimodality. Although a focus on multimodality was not part of the project’s research aims, the following data analysis has been inspired by the increasing recognition within educational research that multilingual interaction is more than simply the juxtaposition of sets of linguistic resources (e.g. the collection of papers in Warriner 2007; Martin-Jones 2009). This recognition goes hand in hand with an increasing acceptance that adopting a multimodal lens on classroom interaction more generally is necessary to make sense of the participants’ (teachers and pupils) linguistic resources and practices, ways of talking and doing across different classroom settings (e.g. Bezemer 2008; Flewitt 2005; Kenner 2004; Kress *et al.* 2005; Lytra *et al.* 2010; Pahl 2009).

More specifically, the aim of this section is to explore how a group of ten-year-old boys of mainland Turkish and Cypriot-Turkish heritage combined and juxtaposed the use of different sets of linguistic resources with other semiotic resources to engage in music sharing and to evaluate shared songs mediated through mobile phones in a London Turkish literacy class.² I examine how the participants drew on strips of talk, their bodies, the material structure in the surround, in particular their mobile phones, the sequential organization of their talk and action, participation frameworks and the encompassing Turkish literacy activities to negotiate their media engagement, construct their interpersonal relationships and display different forms of knowledge and expertise in the complementary school setting. The exploration of the ways the boys combined sets of linguistic resources with other semiotic resources in sharing music and evaluating shared songs provides a point of entry to the investigation of how out-of-school practices and linguistic and cultural resources are transported into the classroom. I argue that the boys’ media engagement emerged in parallel with rather than in opposition to their engagement with Turkish literacy learning providing them with an interactional space to negotiate and share linguistic and cultural resources that were sanctioned in the official classroom space. The data were collected over a ten-week data collection period adopting an ‘ethnographic perspective’ (cf. Green and Bloome 1997). For this section, I draw on participant observations, digital recordings of informal peer talk during literacy teaching and still

photography collected in one Turkish literacy class (for a fully fledged description of the project methodology and data collection, see Creese *et al.* 2008).

As I discussed in the introduction to this chapter, the framework of analysis was informed by recent research on multilingualism that views language as social practice and language users as social actors who draw on their linguistic and other semiotic resources in more or less strategic ways to suit their interactional goals (e.g. Creese and Blackledge 2010; Heller 2007). The analysis also draws on studies that have sought to include a multimodal perspective on the investigation of multilingualism and situated interaction. The work by Goodwin (2000) focusing on the here-and-now and the local organization of situated interaction provides useful analytical tools to explore the boys' media engagement, the deployment of their different semiotic resources and the ways these resources shape and are shaped by the affordances of the mobile phone during Turkish literacy teaching. Following Goodwin, the mobile phone is seen as a key 'semiotic artefact' providing 'a crucial framework for the building of action that could not exist without it' (2000: 1505): the boys connect remotely to each other's mobile phones, they share, collect, store, delete, 'hack into', listen to music on their mobile phones, they discuss the different types of features on their mobile phones and evaluate the content of their shared music.

Like the hopscotch grid in Goodwin's (2000) and the video game in Piirainen-Marsh and Tainio's (2009) study, the mobile phone not only provides a semiotic system for the organization of talk and the posturing and orientation of the bodies of the actors but also brings into sharp focus the significance of the mobile phone as a material artefact, built of (more or less) durable material, which has been transported by the boys into the unofficial classroom space.

The analytical focus on the mobile phone as a key 'semiotic and material artefact' calls for the need to situate the data analysis in recent developments in mobile communication studies. The mobile phone has developed into one of the key portable objects young people use to navigate their way in the present-day information-rich era (Ito *et al.* 2005; see also the collection of papers in Katz 2008). Like online spaces (e.g. social network sites, online games, video-sharing sites), mobile phones enable young people to be 'always on'. This allows them to maintain a continuous presence in different contexts, even in settings such as school classrooms where using mobile phones is explicitly sanctioned. In these settings young people often develop 'work-arounds' or ways to bypass the institutional constraints placed upon them and continue their ongoing media engagement (Ito *et al.* 2008). Most research on mobile communication up to the present has looked at how mobile phones have redefined time, space and social interaction focusing on their multiple uses in interpersonal communication and on the different ways they have been employed to negotiate interpersonal relationships and social identities (e.g. Baron 2008; Ito *et al.* 2005; Spilioti 2007 to mention a few). However, as mobile phones become increasingly multifunctional devices to include features such as web applications, music players, photo and video applications, there is a need to expand the research focus to document an emergent range of digital practices such as using camera phones, mobile gaming and music sharing (cf. Ito *et al.* 2008). This analytical section seeks to contribute to this direction by focusing on two interconnected activities, music sharing and evaluating shared songs.

The boys' engagement with music sharing and evaluating shared songs while the lesson is in full swing raises the question of what happens when such informal out-of-school practices travel into the classroom setting. In this analytical section, I draw on insights from New Literacies Studies, in particular Moje's (2000) research that has sought to explore this question. Moje points out that 'we know little about how adolescents ... weave their unsanctioned or alternative literacies together with academic literacies' (2000: 653). She argues that research

into the ways that young people, especially marginalized youth, transport their informal literacy practices into the classroom setting has tended to put forth resistance-oriented explanations that advance the view that young people make use of their informal literacy practices during the lesson only in reactive and oppositional ways (2000: 634). She cautions against this approach and suggests examining the proactive ways in which young people draw on their informal literacies during the lesson to explore linkages between their out-of-school and school contexts for meaning making and identity work (ibid.). Besides providing important linkages between contexts, a focus on how out-of-school practices travel into the Turkish heritage language classroom draws our attention to the ways participants intertwine their linguistic resources with other semiotic resources and artefacts in the built environment, highlighting their materiality and multimodal features. Moreover, it draws our attention to the ways this media engagement sits in the pedagogic practices and routines and pervasive language ideologies of Turkish complementary school classrooms.

The following ethnographic vignette documents the pedagogic practices prevalent in the Turkish literacy classroom against which the boys' engagement with their mobile phones emerged. Like other classroom contexts, the use of mobile phones during the lesson was explicitly sanctioned under the watchful eye of the teacher. Nevertheless, this did not stop the boys from transporting their media engagement into the classroom.

Turkish literacy class

Hasan Bey³ starts off the lesson by handing out a photocopied text titled *Aslan Payı* [The Lion's Share]. The text reminds me of one of Aesop's fables. He asks the children the meaning of the title in (standard) Turkish and a couple of children shout out their answers also in (standard) Turkish. From the onset of the lesson I notice that Metin and Baran seem to be constantly chatting in English (but I'm too far to hear what they are talking about). Another boy seems to be texting on his mobile while chatting with the boy sitting next to him. The teacher asks the children to read the text silently. He walks around reminding them to stay focused on the reading task. He notices that Metin has his mobile phone prominently displayed on his desk and asks him to put it away. Metin begrudgingly complies and puts the mobile phone in this bag. After a while, the teacher tells the children to stop reading and asks them to answer in writing the reading comprehension questions he has written on the back of the sheet. He comes up to Metin and Baran and asks the latter to do the first question which he does effortlessly. The teacher goes around asking a couple of the other boys the answers to the next two questions. They all seem to be able to answer them fluently by reproducing verbatim parts of the text in (standard) Turkish.

(from field notes VL06/05/06)

The vignette shows that Turkish literacy teaching was characterized by whole-class teacher-fronted instruction heavily relying on the traditional Initiation–Response–Feedback (IRF) sequence, substitution drills and the reading of texts on worksheets followed by sets of reading comprehension questions. Classroom discourse tended to encourage decontextualized knowledge, modelling and chorus-style responses to teacher prompts (Lytra and Baraç 2008, 2009). As the vignette illustrates, the default mode of classroom interaction with the teacher during Turkish literacy teaching tended to be (standard) Turkish, whereas off-task talk among peers tended to be English. Generally, the use of English and vernacular forms of Turkish during Turkish literacy teaching was frowned upon, although occasionally deemed necessary for communication purposes (ibid.).

The boys' media engagement was low-key. It was triggered and sustained by their mobile phones usually stowed away in a school bag casually lying on the desk next to school work sheets but within easy reach or kept in their hand or pockets throughout the duration of the lesson. The mobile phones allowed them to 'stay connected' across space, both inside and outside the classroom. Boys usually sat along the back rows, sometimes sitting on their own or in pairs, whereas girls sat in close proximity to each other, in two long rows, occupying the front right of the classroom. In this context, mobile phones radically transformed the classroom environment both physically and socially: they provided opportunities for communication across classroom space and for different forms of peer interaction (e.g. sharing and listening to music during the lesson, evaluating shared songs, comparing features of mobile phones).

Figure 31.1 reveals a typical scene during this Turkish literacy class: boys in twos or threes comparing features of their mobile phones. On this occasion the lesson has been put on hold while Hasan Bey, the teacher, is going from desk to desk checking and marking work sheets. A little earlier, he had distributed a set of reading comprehension questions to do in class. Metin and Cem seem to have finished the assigned task and have turned their attention to their mobile phones. In fact, if we look closely we see that Metin has turned his work sheet upside down (facing the teacher) perhaps signalling to Hasan Bey that he has finished the assigned task and that the teacher could now check and mark his work.

The still photo reveals Metin and Cem's intense engagement with the former's mobile. This is not only manifested through their talk (e.g. they appear to be talking about some feature on Metin's mobile) but also through their 'embodied mutual orientation' to the activity they are



Figure 31.1 Metin showing Cem a particular feature on his mobile phone during Turkish literacy teaching.

engaged in (Goodwin 2000: 1497): Metin has turned his body sideways away from his desk towards Cem and Cem is leaning forwards towards Metin. They are both looking intently at some text on the screen of Metin's mobile. Through their talk, body and gestural displays, the two boys are co-constructing their shared orientation towards the activity in the context of a two-party participation framework, illustrating how 'human action is built through the simultaneous deployment of a range of quite different kinds of semiotic resources' (Goodwin 2000: 1489).

The digitally recorded episode below captures a music sharing activity between Metin whom we can see in the photo above and Baran, another child who is not in the photo. It was recorded on a different day from when the photo above was taken. Metin and Baran are sitting next to each other, sharing the same desk. Metin, who is the sender, has selected a song he wants to send to Baran urging him to accept the connection that allows for the music file to be copied across mobiles. Baran seems to be refusing to accept the connection, first seeking to clarify the content of the music files and second accusing Metin of trying to 'hack into' his mobile phone before he finally accedes. This episode is part of an intermittent exchange of songs and talk about mobiles phones mainly between Metin and Baran over the past 50 minutes prior to this episode. The boys dip in and out of sharing songs and talking about their mobile phones as they read silently an assigned text and complete a series of reading comprehension questions on their work sheets.

Episode 1: Music sharing

BARAN: ((humming, alternating between high and low pitch)) I feel like
PLAYING FOOTBALL NOW OH MY GOD
METIN: ((to Baran)) accept
BARAN: wha are you sending?
METIN: accept ... right 1,2,3,4. OK
BARAN: why you hacking me?
METIN: ((laughs)) why I wanna see wha you got. I'm not hacking you don
WORRY.ACCEPT LET'S SAY ACCEPT ((IN WINNING VOICE)) ARE YOU DUN MAN ...
ACCEPT IT. I'M NOT HACKING YOU. I'M GONNA ... I'M JUST GONNA GET ...
SEND BUT.AA MAN ACCEPT IT. HEY BRO SEND ME THE ACCEPT!
BARAN: stop man
METIN: alright alright just send me oh man send it send it. I've done wrong.
SEND IT. HEY MAN WHY DON YOU SAY ACCEPT? [...]
BARAN: It's done.

(Digital recording, Baran 10/06/06)

As the music sharing episode above reveals, these activities occurred as a backdrop to pedagogic routines and practices occupying the official classroom space (e.g. doing an assigned task, reading silently, writing the answers to a set of reading comprehension questions on the whiteboard). They also emerged during 'liminal' moments seen as transition points outside normal social structures during which the boys passed from one social status to another (Turner 1974: 58) (e.g. when the lesson has been put on hold and the teacher is going around checking coursework as in the case of the boys' talk about mobile phones in the still photography). Thus, music sharing commonly took place in the periphery of the main classroom talk and activity resembling what Maybin has aptly called literacies 'under the desk' to capture 'a range of unofficial literacy activities which appeared to be clearly "off-task" in terms of institutional norms' (2007: 519).

The boys drew on different sets of verbal and non-verbal linguistic resources (i.e. standard and vernacular forms of English and Turkish as well as singing, humming and prosody) to frame the music sharing activities mediated via their mobile phones. Some of these English linguistic resources documented in the music sharing episode above include the dropping of the copula (line 6), the dropping of word-final dental [t] (lines 4, 7, 13), slang terms ('bro', 'man'), medium-specific vocabulary ('accept', 'hacking') as well as singing and humming of tunes (line 1), repetition (lines 7–10) and manipulation of prosodic cues (line 8). The frequent use of vernacular forms of English and Turkish in peer talk more generally was in contrast with the use of more or less standard forms of Turkish and occasionally English in official teacher–pupil talk (Lytra and Baraç 2008; Baraç 2009). The boys' different sets of linguistic resources were intertwined with the manipulation of their mobile phones (e.g. sending, accepting or rejecting music files, 'hacking into' each other's mobile phones) as well as actively listening to, singing and humming raps in English and Turkish (see the next episode). Their media engagement occurred in parallel with their ongoing engagement with the assigned task (e.g. reading a text silently and completing the reading comprehension questions) and the manipulation of artefacts associated with Turkish language learning (e.g. work sheets, notebooks, pens and pencils).

The next episode took place about 40 minutes after the first episode. Baran and Metin continued sharing songs on and off and listening to them on their mobiles. Cem occasionally joined in too. The last song Metin had sent Baran was a rap song by the Turkish rapper *Ceza* [Punishment]. The boys considered *Ceza* to be one of the most influential Turkish rappers. Perhaps what added to his appeal were their shared diasporic experiences: he was originally from Turkey but had been living and working in Germany where he had become known throughout the Turkish-speaking diaspora. As Baran is listening to *Ceza's* rap he challenges Metin about his comprehension of the Turkish rap song before he goes on to positively evaluate it. Shortly after, while another rap song can be heard in the background, Baran resumes his evaluation of Turkish rap this time comparing the lyrics of *Ceza* and other Turkish rappers to the African American rapper 50Cent, arguing that they all swear the same way.

Episode 2: Evaluating shared songs

METIN: ((to Baran)) accept it ((the Turkish rap song he is listening to))

BARAN: wha?

METIN: accept it

BARAN: I did ... ((rap song can be heard in the background)) bu swear if you

UNDERSTAND TURKISH BU SWEAR ... IT'S QUITE GOOD YEAH

[...]

METIN: send it to me

BARAN: alright man

((TURKISH RAP SONG CAN BE HEARD IN THE BACKGROUND))

BARAN: you listen to your rap like 50Cent when he swears yeah

IT'S EXACTLY LIKE IN TURKISH ((LOUDLY)) ANYWAYS

METIN: so send me and I'll accept it

BARAN: sennnddd

CEM: what song do you want?

BARAN: I'm sending man

(Digital recording, Baran 10/06/06)

As the two episodes have illustrated, attending to the ways Baran and Metin combined different sets of linguistic resources (standard and vernacular forms of English) with other semiotic resources and artefacts (e.g. listening to, singing and humming raps, manipulating features and applications on their mobile phones) revealed their different forms of media engagement as these intersected with their participation in the lesson and their negotiation of a sense of self vis-à-vis their peers. In their work on young people's digital practices, Ito *et al.* discuss different 'genres of participation' available to young people to 'describe different degrees of commitment and sophistication to media engagement' (2008: 10). Baran and Metin's engagement with music sharing and evaluating shared songs mediated via their mobile phones resonates with what the authors refer to as 'hanging out' practices, 'the desire to maintain social connections to friends' (2008: 20). Baran and Metin attempted to overcome the institutional and spatio-temporal constraints of the community language classroom by finding ways to be 'always on' and to engage with each other and their peers with whom they shared similar music and technology interests. As Ito *et al.* argue, this ongoing media engagement is central to becoming socialized into youth culture and to identity formation among young people (2008: 14). The mobile phone, thus, became the vehicle through which the boys could discuss and debate their tastes in music and popular culture and display their linguistic sophistication not only by passing aesthetic judgements but also by comparing raps across languages and cultures. At the same time, the boys' media engagement reveals 'the beginning of a more media-centric form of engagement' or 'messaging around' (2008: 20). The authors suggest that

when messaging around, young people begin to take an interest in and focus on the workings and content of technology and media themselves, tinkering, exploring, and extending their understanding.

(ibid.)

The boys' media engagement seemed to suggest that besides building and maintaining social relations and managing peer hierarchies in the complementary school setting, they also sought to enhance their knowledge of mobile technology and develop their expertise in manipulating different mobile phone features and applications. For instance, the boys experimented with the possibilities and limitations of mobile technology, by 'hacking into' each other's phone or by rejecting a song file. These forms of experimentation and exploration mediated via mobile phones were important steps to becoming 'experts' and potentially 'brokers' for peers, siblings or parents who lacked the requisite media and technology knowledge and to enhancing their reputation and status among peers.

Following resistance-oriented approaches to interpreting the boys' media engagement during Turkish literacy teaching, one would be inclined to argue that the boys were reacting to an often mundane and repetitive curriculum saturated by endless substitution drills and the reading of texts followed by sets of reading comprehension questions that made very few connections to their lived youth and diasporic realities. The boys were simply bored, and sharing and evaluating music was fun and provided an outlet to their boredom. Without disregarding this interpretation, the intensity and sophistication of the boys' media engagement also calls for the need to examine the proactive ways they drew on their media engagement during Turkish literacy teaching. Rather than being disengaged from the learning process, the boys actively contributed to the lesson: they successfully completed the assigned tasks, they volunteered to read aloud a text or go to the whiteboard to do a grammar substitution drill (see Lytra and Baraç 2009; Lytra *et al.* 2010). Rather than being marginalized in the community language classroom, they were active participants in the ongoing accomplishment of

the lesson. In this context, their media engagement emerged in parallel with, instead of in opposition to, their participation in pedagogic routines and practices (cf. Maybin 2007). When seen in this light, the boys' fluent movement between their media engagement and engagement with the lesson can be viewed as ways of making linkages between out-of-school and school worlds, practices and linguistic and cultural resources. The fluid movement between these two forms of engagement required that the boys' drew on different sets of linguistic resources: mainly forms of standard Turkish and occasionally English for Turkish literacy teaching and mainly forms of vernacular English and sometimes Turkish in music sharing and evaluating shared songs. Their media engagement provided them with an interactional space to display, negotiate and share aspects of their linguistic and cultural fluency that were sanctioned in the official classroom space of the community language classroom. At the same time, this interactional space was linked with spaces outside the classroom, both online and offline, such as the global African American and diasporic Turkish rap scenes and the local London Turkish communities where different linguistic ecologies and language hierarchies other from those of the Turkish literacy classroom were in operation.

Adopting a multimodal lens on the study of the boys' different sets of linguistic resources in a Turkish complementary school class alerted us to the ways these resources were combined with other semiotic resources and artefacts in the built environment, in particular their mobile phones, foregrounding the materiality and multimodal features of classroom interaction. As the still photo of Metin and Baran's media engagement revealed, the mobile phone emerged as an important 'semiotic and material artefact' that organized both the strips of talk and the body and gestural displays of the boys providing a framework for a range of mediated practices, including sharing songs and evaluating shared songs. Both the classroom vignette and the two digitally recorded episodes strongly suggested that these mediated practices emerged in parallel rather than in opposition to the boys' engagement with pedagogic practices and routines in the Turkish heritage classroom. Notwithstanding its entertainment value against an often repetitive and mundane curriculum, by transporting their media engagement inside the classroom the boys sought to create an interactional space that allowed them to always 'stay connected' among like-minded peers, share their knowledge and develop their expertise in popular culture and new technologies across languages and cultures and experiment with the affordances of the medium.

Directions for future research

This chapter has sought to illustrate the possibilities for multilingualism research of adopting a multimodal lens on the study of participants' sets of linguistic resources. Adopting a multimodal perspective implies a theoretical and analytical shift for studies on multilingualism from focusing exclusively on language as the primary site for meaning making to recognizing the role that other modes (e.g. visual, aural, oral, kinaesthetic, artefact-related) and media play in the communicational landscape (Street 2008). As Kress and Street put it, the multimodal perspective provides "'a language of description" for these modes, that enable us to see their characteristic forms, their affordances and the distinctive ways they interact with each other' (2006: vii). In this sense, including a multimodal perspective on studies of multilingualism provides a powerful lens for 'stretch[ing] out meaning' by 'extending the *affordances* of meaning making' (Pahl and Rowsell 2006: 6–7, italics in the original).

However, much of multilingualism research to date focuses exclusively on language as the primary site for meaning making. There is, therefore, a need for more work at the intersection of multilingualism and multimodality. Taking as a point of departure the analysis of the boys'

media engagement during Turkish literacy teaching, one promising area for further future research is new media and new technologies. Video-sharing sites, online games, video games, social network sites and gadgets such as webcams, mobile phones and iPods permeate our daily lives opening up new possibilities for communication, friendship and self-expression. Adopting a multimodal lens can shed light on how the users' sets of linguistic resources are intertwined with other semiotic resources and how they shape and are shaped by the possibilities and limitations of the built environment. Moreover, it can enhance our understanding of the relevant temporal and spatial dimensions of mediated practices and offer connections between micro-interactional processes and macro social-historical conditions. Teasing out the spatio-temporal and sociohistorical anchoring of the users' semiotic resources is a key theoretical and analytical focus for further future research given the increasing recognition of the ways new media and new technologies have transformed space and time constraints. At the same time, exploring the users' sets of linguistic resources through a multimodal lens can open up methodological challenges and opportunities in the collection and analysis of new media and new technologies data and in developing ethnographic approaches.

Another area for further future research is classroom interaction. Although a significant body of research has explored the interconnections and intersections of multilingualism, multimodality and literacy (e.g. Kress *et al.* 2005; Kenner 2004; Pahl 2004 to mention a few), there has been less of an uptake in adopting a multimodal lens in studies of multilingual classrooms. A multimodal perspective can bring to the fore the materiality and multimodal features of pedagogic routines and practices in the negotiation of literacy, learning and authoritative knowledge: official teacher–pupil talk is combined with visual images and writing to convey meaning and much of that talk is centred around texts. It can also highlight some of the unofficial 'off-task' practices and activities that occur outside the teacher's gaze (e.g. sharing music and evaluating shared songs mediated via mobile phones) and how these interpenetrate official school sanctioned practices and procedures. This line of research can enhance our understanding of the heterogeneity of classroom talk and the hybrid mixture of official and unofficial practices and activities in classroom interaction.

Related topics

Multilingual literacies; multilingualism and popular culture; multilingualism on the Internet; linguistic diversity and education; multilingual pedagogies.

Notes

- 1 'Investigating Multilingualism in Complementary Schools in Four Communities' (ESRC 00231180) with Angela Creese, Taşın Baraç, Arvind Bhatt, Adrian Blackledge, Shahela Hamid, Li Wei, Vally Lytra, Peter Martin, Chao-Jung Wu and Dilek Yağcıoğlu-Ali (Creese *et al.* 2008).
- 2 Earlier versions of this data section were presented in Sociolinguistics Symposium 17 (Amsterdam, 3–5 April 2008) and the AILA Migration and Language Research Network seminar (Southampton, June 2–3 2008). I am indebted to Alexandra Georgakopoulou, Kate Pahl, Gabi Budach, James Collins, Tağkın Baraç, Villy Tsakona and other participants for their useful comments. All shortcomings are, of course, mine.
- 3 All names are pseudonyms.

Further reading

Goodwin, C. (2000) 'Action and embodiment within situated human interaction', *Journal of Pragmatics* 32: 1489–1522.

(The author discusses some of the key concepts of the theory of action and embodiment within situated human interaction and provides illustrative examples.)

Kenner, C. (2004) *Becoming Biliterate. Young Children Learning Different Writing Systems*, Stoke on Trent: Trentham.

(The author explores how bilingual children learn to read and write in mainstream and complementary schools and at home. Her research incorporates a multimodal social semiotics approach.)

Kress, G., Jewitt, C., Bourne, J., Franks, A., Hardcastle, J., Jones, K. and Reid, E. (2005) *English in Urban Classrooms: A Multimodal Perspective on Teaching and Learning*, London: Routledge Falmer.

(The authors explore the centrality of multimodal communication in the teaching of the subject of English in linguistically and culturally diverse inner London secondary schools.)

Pahl, K. and Rowsell, J. (eds) (2006) *Travel Notes from the New Literacy Studies. Instances of Practice*, Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

(This edited book contains a number of chapters combining insights from multilingualism, multimodality and literacy.)

Warriner, D. S. (ed.) (2007) Transnational Literacies: Immigration, Language Learning, and Identity *Linguistics and Education* (special issue) 18: 201–14.

(This special issue contains five articles and two commentaries drawing on connections between multilingualism, multimodality and literacy.)

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