

Considering Multimodal Materials and Modes of Communication for Authentic Communication in Online Classes

The era of online and remote instruction underscores the importance of including rich communicative interaction within the online format. However, as we shift classes online, it's possible to overlook some of what we do when we communicate; when we speak face-to-face, we communicate not only through sound, but through gesture, expression, and the context and purpose of the conversation. A participant in the conversation takes in these things and responds to them in a meaningful way. Among the first things we lose in online instruction are the visual cues. Anyone who has studied another language and had to use it in an unscripted phone conversation will understand just how valuable this extra visual input can be when learning/communicating in another language.

Using technology, we can re-create this authentic communication in online learning, but it is not enough to post texts or recordings on a learning platform and then ask students to read or listen to them and answer questions. We, as instructors, must make our online materials authentic as well as comprehensible. There are two especially beneficial considerations for improving materials for online classes:

1. *Multimodal materials*, or materials that make use of varied media (i.e., text, images, maps and charts, video, spoken conversation, and other input). In

the real world, our communication takes place through varied mediums. As language learners, we watch, read, listen, and interact with texts and interlocutors. Online language classes occasionally fail to take advantage of this complexity by over-relying on readings or recordings alone for instruction.

2. *Modes of communication*, or how different ways of communication are expressed (i.e., interpretive, presentational, and interpersonal communication). Considering these modes shows that every communicative activity is not

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fulfilling the same need for the student. As many online classes neglect the complexity of communication, they also neglect the various purposes for it. Responding to a question for the sake of answering it and responding for the sake of expressing one's thoughts represent different modes of communication. As a result of these oversights, research shows that online classes often "lack substantive and meaningful interaction" (York and Richardson 2012, 83).

This article describes how to design an *entangled literacy model*, which blends the four skills with multimodal features of visual, auditory, and other sensory cues to enable students to experience online classes with authentic and comprehensible material; paying attention to modes of communication in online classes also helps approximate face-to-face activities that engage students with comprehensible input and result in authentic communication. When an instructor considers modes of communication along with multimodal skills and materials, students are better equipped to communicate and consider input authentically. Five example activities will illustrate the different ways multimodal materials combine with modes of communication to create authentic online communicative activities.

BENEFITS OF MULTIMODAL MATERIALS IN ONLINE LEARNING

In video and face-to-face conversation, students have the benefit of gestures, facial expression, and visual context to understand new vocabulary. In written texts, students may encounter new vocabulary, along with unfamiliar grammatical features. For example, they must understand how a feature like

parenthetical commas works to allow for a break in a sentence before they can read, understand, and use them in their own written output. In short, there is a lot more to be understood when reading a text.

Most language input is spoken, requiring basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS).

For example, spontaneous spoken English might resemble the sample below:

A: How's it going?

B: Good.

A: You been to English class?

B: Yeah.

Obviously, this is a glib example, but even if we are talking about complex academic subjects, we use shorter clauses and less recondite vocabulary than when we are writing about them. We also tend to repeat and rephrase certain points, which can make spoken language (especially when it's recorded) easier for a language learner to understand (Brown 1994).

Written language, by contrast, requires the reader to decode the text and contend with issues of formality, complexity, and cultural differences in presenting ideas (Brown 1994). Writing, because it is planned and permanent, and because it allows for revision, offers writers the opportunity to eliminate redundancy and find the most concise way of expressing their thoughts. This is great for someone who wants compressed information, but it poses difficulties for language learners. For example, if I were to *speak* the paragraph above, I'd say something like this:

Adding images to texts, and thus combining modalities, makes a text more comprehensible and reinforces acquisition by allowing for varied means of “reading” a text.

Writing on academic subjects is hard to understand, you know? It uses longer clauses and even longer words. This happens because writers revise their work. They have time to make it complex. Not, like, you know, spoken language, which is more repetitious.

According to Krashen’s (1977) *monitor model* of learning a second language, students must know a rule being used to make comprehensible input. That is, students must know what words like *recondite* mean before they can understand how they are used.

Anyone who has ever tried to learn another language understands the deluge that occurs when moving from listening in face-to-face conversation to reading. With all the new input, students can need two or three times longer to read the material and make sense of it, considering they need 12 to 20 exposures to a word to understand it, and words like *recondite* simply don’t turn up that often in spoken language (Saavedra 2015). To augment online reading activities and make them as authentic as possible, we need to consider how reading occurs in the real world and how input varies—from newspaper articles with charts to captioned ads and online news stories with hyperlinks and videos. We can see how adding images to texts, and thus combining modalities, makes a text more comprehensible and reinforces acquisition by allowing for varied means of “reading” a text.

VISUAL INPUT IN MULTIMODAL MATERIALS

When students have a visual aspect, a text becomes easier to understand and more realistic. Consider the materials you read in real life. Most of them have a visual element. Too often, though, these elements

are downplayed in instruction. It can also be difficult to include images in online classes due to technological constraints like file limitations, but when we consider how they benefit understanding, the necessity of using them becomes plain. Let’s take an example.

Imagine you were learning Spanish and you were presented with the text:

¡Vamos, sobrino! Te enseñaré el difícil arte de la defensa.

Depending on your level, you’d be able to translate certain elements. Perhaps the cognate *difícil* could be picked out as “difficult,” *defensa* as “defense,” and *arte* as “art.” You might know enough to understand that *la* is a definite article and *te* is a pronoun. Perhaps the verb *enseñaré* and its tense are known to you, but, as you can see, just a sentence asks a learner to understand a lot about a language and how it functions: vocabulary, syntax, verb conjugations, prepositions, articles, punctuation, etc. With the text alone, readers are able to make use only of what they have already learned about a language, leaving beginning and intermediate students at a disadvantage. If even a single sentence is overwhelming, imagine a paragraph or a chapter!

Now, if the text were paired with the illustration in Figure 1, you would have additional clues to decode the text and reinforce the meaning you may have guessed at—for example, the comic shows that *defensa* is indeed a cognate.

When the text is paired with the comic, the vagueness of the language is largely dispelled. The student no longer needs a thoroughgoing knowledge of the language to understand that someone is being addressed by this sentence.

The comma allows us to see that the word *sobriño* applies to the raffish youth. The reader understands the comic is about defense and that the speaker purports to teach—or *enseñaré*. Given the context, the reader might even understand that the speaker is using the verb in the future tense—as the lesson has not yet begun. The speaker’s nonchalant expression allows the reader to understand that the speaker is confident in his teaching. There is additional information here, too, information even the native speaker could not glean from the text alone: a setting, characters, and even a sort of conflict. With a picture, the previously incomprehensible sentence becomes a story, and a story allows for varied interpretation.

Different students will see different things in the Figure 1 comic. Encouraging them to discuss these interpretations focuses on interpersonal communication, which is valuable for acquisition and to make students feel that they have something to contribute to the discussion, even if they are unsure of the words used in the comic.

Using images (and other media) also allows students to feel more confident about what they read, which relates to what Krashen (1977) calls the *affective filter hypothesis*, an important factor in language learning. When students feel embarrassed or afraid, their ability to acquire language is constrained.

When we give our students dense texts with no images, we raise their affective filter simply because these texts look nothing like the way students are accustomed to communicating. Perhaps this is one of the reasons many studies have found that language learners learn better with multimodal input (see Suparmi 2017 and Mestres and Pellicer-Sánchez 2019).

In this age of communication and changing media, we are seldom gathering information from printed text alone. For example, in California during the autumn of 2020, wildfires were frequently in the news. Living in northern California, I followed some of these stories closely. Considering how I learned about these wildfires reveals a great deal about the materials we rely on for information. I’ve put the timeline into a list for simplicity:

- I first heard about the fires from a message on my phone. The message was a news story alert (see Figure 2). It had text (a headline) and a picture of a blaze. Most of the information was in captioned pictures.
- When I woke up the next morning and found ash all over my car (see Figure 3 for an example of what that might look like), I checked the Internet for an interactive map from CAL FIRE, the agency responsible for controlling fires (see Figure 4). I clicked on the map and saw a pie chart showing

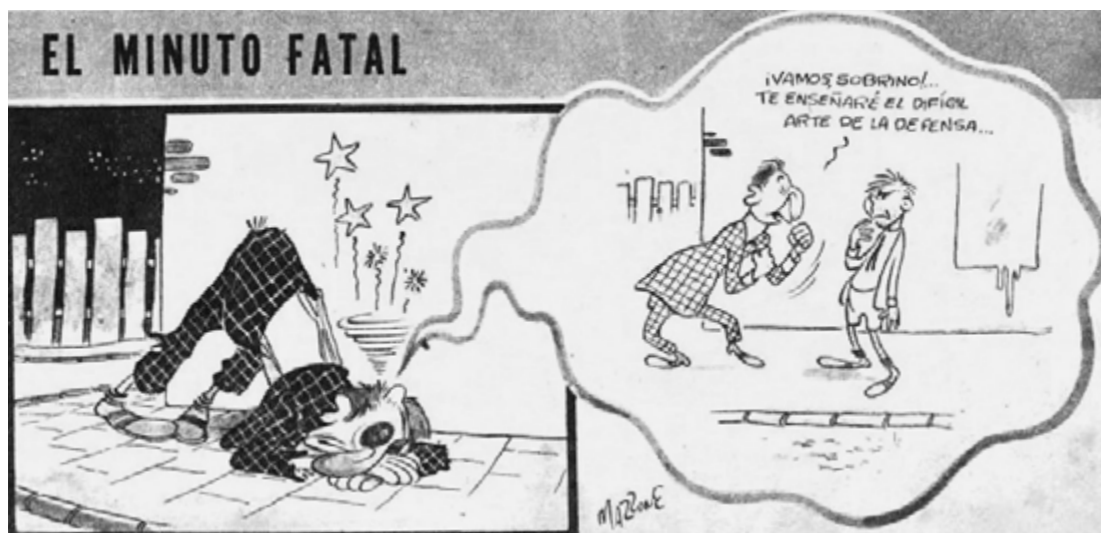


Figure 1. A Spanish-language comic



Figure 2. News story alert

how much of the fires were contained. The chart was color-coded in an obvious way. Another website had a written story with pictures between paragraphs and a video that started playing at the top of the screen. I watched part of the video, but the map was the most useful piece of information.

- I sent my friend in one of the towns near the wildfires a text (Figure 5) asking how the air quality was, and when I saw my mother-in-law later that afternoon, we exchanged information on the fires. As we talked, ash fell from the sky.

For a single event, the information was conveyed in text, images, maps and charts, video, spoken conversation, and other input such as the smell of the fire in the air and my interlocutor's body language. Under

half of the information I interacted with was printed text—in fact, it was probably less than 25 percent. Even the text I read was filled with hyperlinks that directed me to other websites with pictures, text, and graphs.



Figure 3. Ash on car



Figure 4. Interactive wildfires map. Hovering over each fire area produced information about its containment and size.

MULTIMODAL COMMUNICATION TO VARY OUTPUT

One really appealing thing about the way information literacy works today is that it blends the four skills. No longer do we sit down and passively read the newspaper. In the above example, I had varied input and output—I read, wrote, listened to, spoke, and even smelled and touched the information. I was able to interact with it, rather than just receive it.

There is no reason we shouldn't be doing the same in our classes. Why focus on printed text in the classroom when the world has long ago eschewed it in favor of a varied or entangled approach? According to Albers and Sanders (2010, 4), "Literacy is entangled, unable and unwilling to be separated from the other modes, media, and language systems that constitute the very messages that are sent, read, and/or interpreted."

We shouldn't think of multimodal literacy as being made up of separate media, but rather as something whole, with different facets of the same gem of literacy. After all, literacy today does not consist only of the ability to read and write. Try landing a job if you have no familiarity with—for example—social media, PowerPoint, blogging, or Zoom. Multimodal literacy is something our students are already learning. Using comic books or websites to teach is not pampering; rather, it is using material that looks and feels more authentic and is more akin to how we encounter

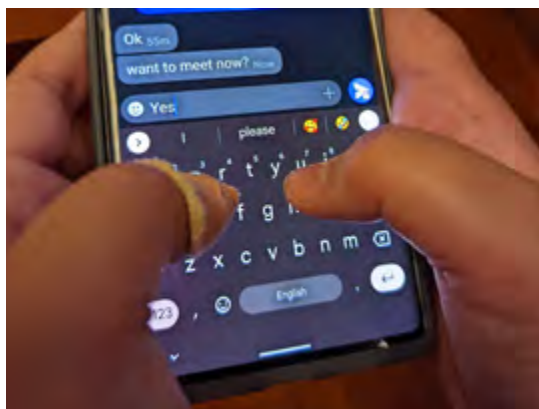


Figure 5. Text messaging

information today. Even the newspaper has pictures in it.

Just adding pictures to an activity can make it much more authentic. When considering the example of the fires above, I learned a great deal from images alone (see Figure 4).

Combining images with text or recordings is a great way to make materials accessible for students of varied proficiency levels and to lower the affective filter. There are also videos, charts, and maps to consider. When thinking about how to use these varied multimodal materials, instructors might understandably be overwhelmed, and it can feel arbitrary to have one task using a video and another using pictures, while yet another is text-based. At this point, a consideration of the modes of communication is crucial; it allows instructors to see why they may choose one material over another—that is, to consider which material is best suited to their instructional goals.

MODES OF COMMUNICATION TO VARY OUTPUT

When we explore how best to use multimodal materials, we need to see these materials not only as a means to offer varied input to students, but also as a way to vary student output. Multimodal materials, as we have seen, provide varied input for students. Instead of reading text alone, students “read” images, maps, movement, and videos. They also listen to recordings, music, and sounds that, in addition to text, explain a concept.

It is important to consider not only how students receive information but also how they communicate it. In order to best use the entangled model of literacy, instructors should design activities that focus on the different types of communication so that students are using their literacy and engaging with tasks in various ways. Let's take one of the more common types of assignments to explore this concept of multiple modes of communication.

Students receive information for class in some way—they either read it, listen to it, or watch

it. After this, they are asked to present it; that is, they use writing, speaking, or video to explain what they have understood about the concept.

These passive (taking in the information) and active (responding to the information) activities comprise two of the modes of communication. When students take in the information—read, listen, watch—they are engaged in *interpretive communication*, or understanding input. The student must use decoding strategies to make sense of the input. The medium through which the information is conveyed does not change the communicative nature of the task, be it music, movement, or text.

When students use writing or speaking to communicate what they have understood of this message, they are engaged in *presentational communication*, or explaining what they have understood. Students presenting information do not need any further input to complete the communicative task; presenting requires only that the student explain the material, for example in a report, research paper, or skit. Because the focus is on the presentation rather than the content of the message, students engaged in presentational communication are often graded on *how* they have communicated rather than on *what* they have communicated. A fill-in-the-blank activity asking questions about a reading is an example of this type of activity.

The third type of communication is a hybrid of the previous two and is beneficial for all students, especially language learners. When students must interpret and present information simultaneously in a communicative activity, they are engaging in *interpersonal communication*. Say, for example, that students in pairs have read different articles and must explain to each other what they have read and then answer questions. Interpersonal communication is two-way, takes place in real time, and requires negotiation of meaning—when the communicator is able to interact with what is being communicated to understand it, for

example by asking questions or rephrasing. When students communicate this way, they are using passive and active skills at once. Additionally, in interpersonal communication, the focus is on the message rather than the means through which the message is conveyed. A student engaged in interpersonal communication has a reason to communicate a particular message, and instructors and fellow students have a need to understand this message. In this mode of communication, there is less concern with prescriptive features such as grammar and spelling because the goal of the task is to effectively communicate. An information-gap activity is a good example of this type of communication.

It is important that we use multimodal materials to engage students in all three modes of communication. This way, we are gauging students' ability to communicate information as they would in real life. We emphasize students' ability to both understand and convey a message while also considering the message itself, not just the conventions of the form used to convey it. Consider how I used these modes of communication in the example I gave above on understanding the California wildfires.

When I saw the alert on my phone and “read” the map, I was interpreting the information. When I sent a text to my friend in the Bay Area, asking about the air quality, I was engaged in presentational communication because I sent the message with the intention of sharing my concern and making my friend aware that I had been informed of his predicament—I did not need to receive information from him to complete the communicative task. When I talked with my mother-in-law, we exchanged information on the fires; each of us was using what the other said to discover something new about the situation and advance our understanding of it. If I had been speaking with an accent or making grammatical errors, such as saying “fires really badly down there,” it wouldn't matter so long as my meaning was clear. This was interpersonal communication.

Considering the modes of communication when designing activities augments the use of the four skills in multimodal materials. If we select materials to vary students' input so that they are listening, reading, watching, and interacting with the materials, it is important that we design communicative activities that respond to the students' interpretation of these materials. Students should use speaking and writing to present what they have learned, but they should also engage in interpersonal activities so that they interact with the materials in a more meaningful way. Table 1 illustrates the intersection between modes of communication, skills, and the resulting multimodal materials. It is by no means exhaustive.

To recap, let's summarize what the modes of communication are asking of students and consider why each is valuable in terms of the four skills:

- Interpretive communication activities are one-way, engaging listening and reading skills. These activities require that the student have knowledge of the topic or means of communication to understand the message because the task involves no negotiation of meaning. An example of an interpretive activity would be giving a lecture with a PowerPoint presentation and showing a video.

Modes of Communication	Reading	Writing	Speaking	Listening
	Multimodal Materials			
Interpretive	text video images maps kinesthetic activities online games	X	X	recordings video music online games
Presentational	X	text drawings PowerPoint slides animation webpages presentations	recordings movement (e.g., responding to commands) blogs kinesthetic activities presentations	X
Interpersonal	text video images maps kinesthetic activities online games	text drawings PowerPoint slides animation webpages presentations	recordings movement blogs kinesthetic activities presentations	recordings video music online games

Table 1. Intersection between modes of communication, skills, and the resulting multimodal materials

- Presentational communication activities are one-way and engage students' speaking and writing skills. These activities focus on the creation of the message and the knowledge of the audience's perspective because there can be no active negotiation of meaning. An example of such an activity is a writing assignment where students must consider the audience they are writing to.
- Interpersonal communication activities involve two-way communication and can require reading, speaking, listening, and writing. They are spontaneous; the way students communicate is unrehearsed and unscripted. As a result, these activities are not overly concerned with accuracy, but rather focus on form and message. Common examples are information-gap or Find Someone Who exercises, where students have to gather information from each other to complete a task.

When we incorporate the entanglements of literacy, we must consider the modes of communication and the four skills to ensure that multimodal input does not require only monomodal output in the modes of communication. For the following activities, we will consider not only multimodal media for input, but also the students' output, or which skills they must use to respond to the media.

MULTIMODAL AND MODES OF COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES

The four skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening all pose unique challenges to language learners. However, the beauty of multimodal texts is that they easily lend themselves to the application of these skills, making for more comprehensible input. When an instructor considers interpretive, presentational, and interactive modes of communication in conjunction with the four skills and multimodal materials, not only do activities gain purpose, but they allow the language learner to communicate and consider input authentically.

In the five activities below, we see ways that multimodal materials combine with modes of communication to create authentic communicative activities.

Activity 1: Image—Interpersonal Communication

Let's take an image as a starting point, although it doesn't have to be this way. Albers and Sanders (2010) suggest that we "play" with aspects of language learning as students; therefore, beginning with art or video could help to introduce a concept in a way that lowers the affective filter.

If you asked me, in Spanish (a language I'm learning), what I think of a painting, I'd almost be guaranteed to say "*interesante*." If you asked me to write impressions on a painting (or anything visual), I'd have more time to process and could create more complex output. If you asked me to listen to what others had said about the painting and respond to it in a meaningful way, I would be exposed to new or underutilized vocabulary, and I'd be engaging in interpretive communication.

Show students an abstract painting like the one in Figure 6 and ask them to consider what they see. In beginning-level classes, students could explain what colors and shapes they see. In intermediate-level classes, students could explain the perceived movement and relation between objects with adjectives. And in advanced-level classes, students could discuss what the colors and shapes represent. Instructors could review relevant vocabulary beforehand, if necessary.

Students read (or listen to) everyone's responses and use them to reconsider their initial impression, considering how they see the painting differently after hearing their peers' thoughts or reading their peers' posts. This makes the communication interpersonal.

Activity 2: Audio—Interpretive and Presentational Communication

Most podcasts have transcripts available online, and instructors can use these transcripts to consider relevance and choose

which features to pre-teach. Duolingo, a language-learning app, also has bilingual podcasts—in Spanish and French for English speakers and in English for Spanish and Portuguese speakers—that present opportunities for students to use the modes of communication.

Students listen to a podcast on a relevant issue or story and explain key features of what they heard. They could do this in a discussion forum or in a synchronous session. Who, What, Where, and When questions can establish the situation and help students to understand the conflict—or why the story is interesting (or not).

After listening to and discussing the podcast, students write a review of the episode and post in the comments section. (Failing this, instructors can create their own comments section on most learning management systems.) Students respond to each other's comments. The students do not have new information for each other, so this task is not interpersonal. The students read and respond. A way to make this interpersonal is to require students to listen to different podcasts and then discuss, for example, how the podcasts

treated the same story (or a related story) in different ways. The communicative goal is to use information they need from each other rather than the podcast alone.

Activity 3: Video— Interpersonal Communication

A video is multimodal in nature because it combines audio and visual input. Visual cues allow for better understanding of the audio, and in the case of subtitled videos, text can be read. For these reasons, videos are an excellent way to engage students, and there is a temptation to paste lots of video links in online courses until students feel they are doing little more than flipping through channels. The issue with some video-based assignments is that they tend to focus on interpretive and presentational communication, where students are not engaging in authentic communication—after all, we all discuss things we've seen, but we don't normally complete cloze

Podcasts for English Language Learners

➤ **Duolingo Podcast**

<https://podcast.duolingo.com/>

➤ **Voice of America: Learning English**

<http://learningenglish.voanews.com/programindex.html>

➤ **The English We Speak—BBC**

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02pc9zn/episodes/downloads>

➤ **Splendid Speaking**

<http://splendid-speaking.podomatic.com/>

➤ **News in Slow English**

<https://www.newsinslowenglish.com/>



Figure 6. Abstract painting

activities in response to the latest sitcom. In real life, our opinions on the events of a show as a whole are far more important than the individual details of it. Activities that would require even native speakers to pause a show and rewind to get specific details are generally not promoting interpersonal communication, nor are they authentic.

When students have something to communicate to each other and a need to communicate this message, the motivation to complete the activity is greater.

One way in which students can engage in interpersonal communication is to survey each other about the video and collect results. The instructor can post three to five short, funny videos (about cats, babies, bloopers, etc.) and then have students watch and rank them in order of which they found funniest, most enjoyable, sweetest, or any number of other adjectives and/or superlatives. Students can rank these videos in different ways.

After the students have watched and ranked the videos, they survey classmates to discover who in their class thought the same way they did about each video. The instructor can design a Find Someone Who form for the students to complete.

Activity 4: Multimodal—Interpersonal Communication

As we saw in the California wildfires example above, current events can be valuable in the language-learning classroom because they provide authentic materials, are easily adapted to address the modes of communication, and are presented in multimodal formats. In addition, news stories are engaging and relay important information. It's difficult to avoid using interpersonal communication when a current news story is the topic, especially today. As such, the news is often a great source to promote the entangled model of literacy.

While several websites—such as *Voice of America: Learning English* and *Breaking News*

English—offer adapted news stories for English language learners, I like to focus on local stories. I find students have more agency in relation to these news stories and, often, that opinions are not as polarized and entrenched. Also, in the sweep of national news, what's happening in our community is quite often and detrimentally overlooked.

Using the news in activities can become quite involved for the instructor, and to have students successfully interact with and communicate their responses to news stories is often somewhat laborious, as it requires navigating real-time media. But doing so reminds both students and instructors of the validity and urgency of what's being done in the classroom.

To begin, students are given a short list of breaking local stories and then asked to choose the one that looks the most interesting and find out what they can about it. Note that they are allowed to use *any* media they want for this purpose—political cartoons, videos, reports, and pictures. Anything that comments on their story is relevant, and a list of possible sources could be provided. The assignment is for the students to use these varied media to form an opinion on the story, to share this opinion with the class, and then respond to one another's opinion. This response could take a variety of forms: a comparison of viewpoints, consideration of the evidence to support viewpoints, a debate, or a response in an online forum (as described below).

The response can be done in writing or with a recording. Notice that introducing the requirement of opinion turns the assignment from presentational (summary, for example) to interpersonal. The student has a reason to talk about this subject. They have chosen it and they are giving their perspective, usually based on their unique life experience. The other students need this opinion to complete the activity; besides, they will probably be interested in it as an opportunity to state their own opinion.

After students give their opinions, they condense them to a few sentences and post

them in the comments section in one of the related forums where they found their information. Alternately, the instructor can create a forum where students post these responses, as posting on other forums may require membership, entering personal information, etc.; local media sources, however, often have less obfuscated forums.

After the students have posted their opinions—thus entering into the real-time conversation taking place on the topic—they copy the links to their post and paste them in a place where classmates have access to them, such as a class discussion forum. Students must then choose one link to follow and respond to their classmate’s posting.

I’ve found it helpful to provide templates for these posts. The composition textbook *They Say, I Say* (Graff and Birkenstein 2014) has examples of templates for entering such conversations. These templates allow students to consider exactly what argument or claim they are responding to and frame their response accordingly. This is useful for both linguistic and rhetorical conventions of responding to an issue.

While this assignment requires a good deal of instruction and scaffolding from the instructor, it not only teaches students media literacy, but it also provides them with the tools to participate in important conversations taking place in their communities, conversations with outcomes that could potentially affect them. Therefore, this type of assignment does not end at one instance of interpersonal communication, but equips students to continue to engage in such communication on their own.

Activity 5: Real World—Interpersonal Communication

Finally, in this era of online classes, it is important to keep in mind how much time we are all spending in front of the computer. The outside world is the most complex multimodal experience and one that students should take advantage of for both input and output. Real-world activities require

students to engage with different modes of communication but also to go beyond the four skills in terms of modality, bringing in smell, touch, taste, and feeling—which are obviously under-considered in language learning; yet studies have shown that senses like smell can have a positive correlation with language learning (Rolletschek 2020).

Different environments have different sensory input. Students can take a walk through their neighborhood and record their impressions, posting these when they return. The other students must, in turn, guess where the student had walked, based on the sensory report. The instructor can provide the first example, using sights, smells, textures, feelings, sounds, and tastes.

CONCLUSION

In face-to-face classes, students have visual, auditory, and other sensory cues that enable them to lower their affective filters and to process new information. In online classes, these cues are reduced, resulting in less authentic and comprehensible material. Likewise, communicative activities tend to favor presentational communication and use less interpersonal communication. A productive solution is to create authentic materials based on an entangled literacy model that blends the four skills with multimodal materials; these materials, in turn, are better suited to use in interpersonal communicative activities in which students engage in meaningful communication. Through consideration of multimodal materials and modes of communication, language instructors developing online classes can create activities similar to those in face-to-face classes that engage students with comprehensible and authentic communication.

Consider the materials you are using. Do they vary the modes of communication, or are they focused on presentational communication? Are these materials presenting the “entangled” view of literacy, or are they using a single mode of presenting the material? When we as

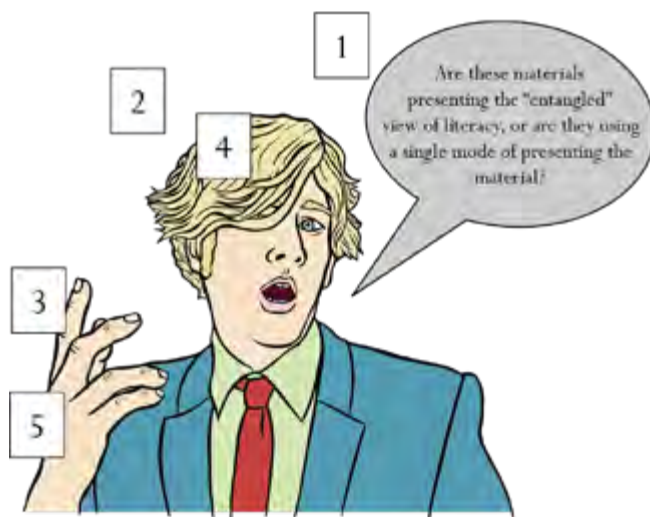


Figure 7. Multimodal comic

1. Text
2. Image
3. Gesture
4. Expression
5. Movement

instructors ask ourselves these questions before assigning material, students are able to learn online from sources as authentic as those in face-to-face classrooms.

Let's look at one more example, using the comic in Figure 7, to clarify: Notice what the image contributes, even for something as "recondite" as that penultimate sentence.

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