English Language Teaching Pages in Focus: A Multimodal Discourse Analysis

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Abstract

Pedagogic discourse is inherently multimodal, and teaching is a multimodal experience that takes place through the integration of (spoken) language and an array of other communicative modes. Similarly, modern multimedia platforms, such as Instagram, also have the potential to be used as multimodal educational tools that make use of different modalities alongside text. As such, the present study aimed to analyze three prominent Instagram pages, including BBC Learning English, Learning English with Oxford, and Learning English with Cambridge, through the multimodal discourse analysis toolkit proposed by Ledin and Machin (2020). Qualitative data analysis was run to analyze the data. The findings of the study indicated that the English Language Teaching (ELT) pages analyzed employed a diverse array of semiotic resources, spanning from the incorporation of various images to the careful selection of different colors and typography to effectively convey their intended meanings. Additionally, the visual representations employed in the posts were largely consistent with, and in some cases, complementary to the overall content of the posts, and the underlying messages they aimed to convey. Specifically, the visual representations in the ELT pages were purposefully designed to reflect the culture of the English-speaking community as a clear means of reinforcement.

Keywords: English Language Teaching (ELT), Instagram, Multimodality, Multimodal Discourse Analysis

In the contemporary era, the range of technologies available for use in language teaching and learning has become highly diversified, and the methods by which they are utilized in classrooms across the globe have become an integral component of language

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learning practice. We are presently embedded in a time when digital technologies are commonplace in daily life in numerous areas of the world. Be that as it may, digital tools have long been a prominent aspect of the sphere of education, especially in language education. These digital tools are, without a doubt, the cornerstone of the established and recognized field of computer-assisted language learning (CALL), but are also increasingly a fundamental part of English language teaching (ELT) in general (Motteram, 2013). Fotos and Browne (2004) also note the increasing bulk of research that shows how CALL can help improve accuracy and fluency in the target language, as well as boost motivation and learner independence.

In recent years, social media platforms, as a manifestation of technological advances, have become increasingly popular in language teaching and learning contexts, offering new opportunities for language teachers to create and share teaching materials in various forms. Instagram, in particular, has emerged as a popular supplementary tool alongside formal classes to learn the English language in a collaborative, cooperative, and visually appealing manner (Erarslan, 2019).

Undoubtedly, the teaching and learning materials of English today are not limited to textual sources only, but with the advancement of technology, various tools, including audio and video-based ones, are widely used by teachers and learners all over the world, and as confirmed by Paltridge (2012), many readings of texts are constructed not just by the use of words but by the combination of words with other modalities, such as pictures, film, video images, and sound, hence the application of multimodal (critical) discourse analysis.

Multimodality has, therefore, emerged as a significant concept in communication and language education research. In various educational settings, including second language (L2) classrooms, pedagogic discourse is essentially multimodal. According to Peng (2019), this concept plays a crucial role in facilitating learning and communication. The integration of different modes, such as verbal, visual, and gestural ones, can enhance learning outcomes, as it allows learners to process information more effectively. Therefore, understanding the concept of multimodality is essential for educators to develop effective pedagogical strategies that foster effective communication and learning in diverse educational settings.

Taking the crucial significance of multimodality into consideration, a multimodal discourse analysis of three English language teaching pages on Instagram, including BBC Learning English, Learning English with Oxford, and Learning English with Cambridge,

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was conducted. The aim was to see how these pages, as one of the most popular language learning resources today, employ different communication modes to convey their intended messages. Therefore, the ultimate aim of the study was twofold. On the one hand, it intended to expand the knowledge of multimodal research by analyzing some of the most prominent ELT pages multimodally while considering that all semiotic resources play an influential role in meaning-making. In this sense, it was sought to explore what multimodal techniques are usually employed to achieve communicative purposes. On the other hand, it aimed to reveal how visual representations in the pages under study reflect the culture of the target language society.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

Multimodality was introduced to the field of linguistics primarily through the acclaimed books of Kress and Van Leeuwen, namely *Reading Images and Multimodal Discourse*, which were published in 1996 and 2001, respectively (Machin, 2013). It is widely believed that language is the most important but certainly not the only means of communication and meaning-making, as other resources such as images, page layout, color, and even architecture can be used to create meaning (Han, 2015). According to O'Halloran (2004, p. 1), "To date, the majority of research endeavors in linguistics have tended to concentrate solely on language while ignoring, or at least downplaying, the contributions of other meaning-making resources."

What we have in multimodal communication is the integration of different modes and visual elements to communicate complex attitudes and ideas. The models presented by Kress and Van Leeuwen were not concerned with individual visual elements and how they connoted values and ideas but rather with the underlying repertoire of choices and meaning potentials used by communicators. Kress and Van Leeuwen highlighted the possibility of a social semiotic approach, which allowed for deeper analysis as well as a more systematic description of different forms of communication (Machin, 2013).

As per Zhang (2014), while scholars in multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) and critical discourse analysis (CDA) often exchanged ideas, critical multimodal discourse analysis (CMDA) had not been recognized as a distinct field until recently, as also noted by Van Leeuwen (2013). However, the efficacy and significance of this research methodology are now widely acknowledged.

In their publication *Introduction to Multimodal Analysis*, Ledin and Machin (2020) propose a social semiotic approach to communication, which enables analysts to deconstruct visual designs into their elemental components and comprehend their collective functioning. They present a theory of visual communication interconnected with societal and power dynamics, delving into how visual materials encapsulate our ideas and values while shaping and organizing our behaviors and interactions. Ledin and Machin's (2020) comprehensive toolkit for multimodal discourse analysis incorporates the assessment of various aspects of visual design, ranging from pictures and images to diagrams and flow charts.

Empirical Studies

Numerous studies have centered on the analysis of educational materials utilized in the realm of English language teaching and learning through the lens of multimodal discourse analysis. The concept of the intimate interplay between verbal and visual discourses and their mutual reinforcement is well established. Analysis by Marefat and Marzban (2014) determined that verbal and visual discourses closely interact with and complement one another, often conveying distinct notions such as gender representation, as observed in this particular context.

Several other empirical studies have also focused on the examination of ELT textbooks from a multimodal perspective (Ghoushchi, 2021; Ghoushchi et al., 2021; Heidari, 2017; Hidayat et al., 2023; Lazim Al-Taan, 2020; Murtadho et al., 2024; Perez, 2020; Purba, 2023; Roohani & Hosseini, 2021; Smith, 2021). Indeed, making use of both critical discourse analysis and multimodal discourse analysis to investigate three advanced English textbooks, Heidari (2017) confirmed that target language communication is the major focus of these books. Furthermore, across these studies, there is consistent evidence to suggest that visual images in ELT textbooks are intentionally selected to convey specific ideological concepts through indirect communication methods (Ghoushchi, 2021; Smith, 2021), can be considerably occupied by the cultural norms and values of specific societies, particularly those of Western communities, whether explicitly or implicitly (Lazim Al-Taan, 2020; Purba, 2023; Roohani & Hosseini, 2021), and have the potential to promote specific identity constructs (Perez, 2020).

However, considering the rapid advancement of digital technologies, it is important to note that textbooks, while critical, are not the sole pedagogical materials in the field of

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ELT. Consequently, findings from studies focused on textbooks may not fully apply to modern multimedia tools.

In light of this, further exploration of advanced digital tools is desirable in terms of MDA. For instance, Babaii et al. (2016) investigated the representation of different races in four popular English-learning software programs. They found that while efforts were made to maintain objectivity in the written content, visual depictions still contained stereotypical and biased elements. These findings are valuable to academics, educators, software developers, and students aiming to comprehend the underlying meanings that images in multimedia and textbooks may communicate (Babaii et al., 2016).

Research has also established a positive correlation between the integration of multimodality into English classrooms in the 21st century and enhanced learning achievements. The findings of Ganapathy and Seetharam in 2016, as well as those of Sakulprasertsri in 2020, suggest that incorporating multimodality in English language teaching and learning is associated with improved learning outcomes. These studies indicate that the use of multiple modes of communication can enhance the learning process of students. Therefore, the integration of multimodality in English classrooms can be considered as a pedagogical approach that can positively impact student performance.

In light of this, in the contemporary world, being literate encompasses more than the basic ability to read and write. As such, educators and instructors bear the responsibility of aiding students in effectively comprehending and communicating through various modes. Considering this, it is imperative to integrate multimodality into learning environments (Sherwani & Mohammad, 2021).

However, to the best of our knowledge, there remains a lack of meticulous research on the most influential foreign ELT pages on Instagram, which are highly popular among English as an International Language (EIL) learners worldwide, including Iranian English teachers and students. Additionally, there is a paucity of studies on the various multimodal techniques employed by these pages to communicate their intended messages. Consequently, this study aims to investigate how multimodal techniques contribute to the successful transmission of the ultimate messages of these ELT Instagram pages.

Adhering to Ledin and Machin's (2020) guidelines for multimodal analysis, this study focused on the analysis of three of the most popular ELT pages from a multimodal perspective. To achieve this goal, the following research questions were addressed in this study:

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1: In what ways do the pages under study, i.e., BBC Learning English, Learning English with Oxford, and Learning English with Cambridge, employ multimodal techniques to convey their intended meanings?

2: In what ways do visual representations in the pages under study reflect the culture of the English-speaking community?

Method

Design

To address the research questions, the present study carried out a qualitative multimodal discourse analysis on a subset of selected ELT pages on Instagram. This approach was employed to systematically examine the visual content of the sample posts, and to gain insights into the research questions.

Materials

The present study examined three Instagram pages, namely BBC Learning English, Learning English with Oxford, and Learning English with Cambridge. The selected pages were chosen due to their significant number of followers, both within and outside of Iran. BBC Learning English, with approximately 4.5 million followers, regularly shares educational posts aimed at teaching grammatical points and lexical items. The posts typically take the form of pictures, quotations, and short video clips that embody a specific teaching point or tip. Similarly, Learning English with Cambridge and Learning English with Oxford, with around 770K and 275K followers, respectively, teach English vocabulary and grammar primarily through pictures with tips and sometimes short clips. Additionally, these pages occasionally offer their audience one or two-item quizzes and encourage them to leave comments on the answers.

The rationale for selecting these pages is that they are among the most popular pages in terms of the number of followers and are affiliated with reputable English language teaching institutions. The study's findings may be useful for educators and researchers interested in exploring the potential of social media platforms, such as Instagram, for language teaching and learning purposes.

Procedure

The data were collected from three Instagram pages. However, due to the generative nature of the data and the continuous addition of posts to these pages, the study was limited to posts published over the last three years, from May 2020 to May 2023, to establish a defined population. A representative sample of twenty-six posts was selected

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using simple random sampling to ensure each post had an equal chance of being selected and to be as representative of the population as possible.

Of the total number of posts in the population, BBC Learning English contributed a higher percentage to the sample due to its greater number of posts, with approximately sixteen posts. Meanwhile, Learning English with Oxford and Learning English with Cambridge contributed five posts each.

The data were analyzed through the social semiotic approach as outlined in *Introduction to Multimodal Analysis* by Ledin and Machin (2020). The framework adopted for data analysis in this study was based on the three primary dimensions of visual design, namely pictures and images, the meaning of color in visual design, and the meaning of typography (See Appendix). Each post in the sample was analyzed based on its most prominent aspects, including the use of images, different colors, and typography, with the related visual elements subsequently explained and discussed. It is important to note that each dimension is comprehensive and encompasses various aspects; however, the discussion focused on the most significant and concrete aspects.

To ensure the reliability of the research study, the evaluative criteria put forward by Lincoln and Guba (1985) were taken into account. Lincoln and Guba (1985) emphasize that the trustworthiness of a research study is crucial in determining its value, and their evaluative criteria consist of fulfilling the subsequent elements:
• Credibility/truthfulness of the findings
• Transferability/applicability of the findings to other contexts
• Dependability/consistency of the findings
• Confirmability/neutrality of the findings

In order to meet the criteria outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985), it was attempted to apply some of the related techniques to the extent possible to establish trustworthiness in the research process. These included prolonged engagement and persistent observation to gain a comprehensive understanding of the culture, social setting, or the phenomenon under examination. Moreover, thick description was utilized to ensure transferability and external validity, while the audit trail technique was employed to promote confirmability by maintaining detailed records of all data and information pertaining to the investigation. These techniques were applied to the greatest extent feasible to maintain the integrity of the present research study and to ensure that the findings could be trusted.

Results

In the following, the three major dimensions of the visual design in the ELT pages under investigation are explained in detail under different subheadings, with real manifestations presented in the posts under review.

Mutilomdal Techniques Employed by the ELT Pages in Focus (The First Research Question)

The issues discussed in the subsequent section address the utilization of different multimodal techniques, including the use of pictures and images, color, and typographic meaning potentials in the ELT pages under examination.

Pictures and Images

Representing Participants. The following section explores the various semiotic resources that can be used to depict different kinds of participants. This analysis is founded on the studies by Van Leeuwen (1996) and Machin and Mayr (2012), and it provides us with more precise details about the individuals that are being represented (Ledin & Machin, 2020).

Individuals and Groups. Individualization is achieved through singular forms and shots that depict a single person, creating a more personal and relatable narrative. On the other hand, collectivization is achieved through plural forms and group shots, in which members of the group can be homogenized to varying degrees by wearing the same attire, performing the same actions, or striking the same poses, and therefore resulting in the depersonalization of the subject. Consequently, it is essential to carefully consider the use of these techniques in visual representation to achieve the desired effects (Ledin & Machin, 2020).

In this way, upon qualitative analysis of the 26 image posts, it was observed that the majority of the cases i.e., approximately 66% of the images, depicted individualization as in the following examples:

Image 1   Image 2

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Image 3

Image 4

As mentioned earlier, most of the sample posts depicted one person, and the remaining 33% showed collectivization. Here are two examples:
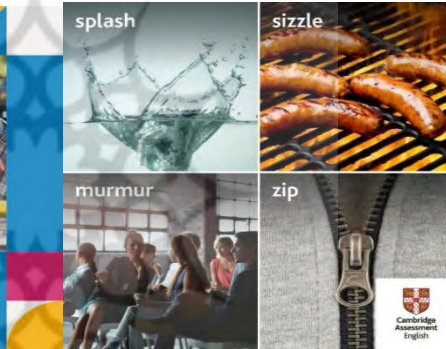

Image 5

Image 6

It should also be noted that representations of people can contain both individualization and collectivization simultaneously. Examining how individuals are individualized or collectivized is an interesting exercise (Ledin & Machin, 2020). For instance, in the following image, a family is collectivized as a unit while being individualized through the use of different clothing and poses:

Image 7

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Frontal Perspective. As humans, we communicate with others using our faces, eyes, and other sensory organs, which collectively form our front. Our front displays who we are, and we often look into the eyes of our friends to understand how they are feeling. This is an essential aspect of how people can connect. (Ledin & Machin, 2020). Almost all of the image posts that depicted one or more individuals used a frontal perspective.

Direct Address

The portrayal of people in images can create a symbolic 'contact' or 'interaction' between the viewer and the individuals depicted, especially when the depicted people are shown looking directly at the viewer. This interaction serves a dual purpose: it acknowledges the viewer and also puts forth a demand within an imaginary relationship. Factors such as facial expressions and bodily postures of the portrayed individuals play a significant role in creating this demand. For example, bodily postures like open arms or clenched fists can convey feelings of welcome or aggression. In this imaginary relationship, the viewer is presented with a specific demand that they can either accept or deny. Additionally, the act of looking at the viewer or the right to do so suggests a sense of power (Ledin & Machin, 2020).

In the following, we see several posts that show a direct address with a smile on the individuals' faces:

Image 8   Image 9

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Image 10   Image 11

- Potential Address

In the context of a picture, as we could see in Images 1 and 2 or the following examples, a face-to-face encounter can occur where the depicted person is not looking directly at the viewer, resulting in a lack of direct address or contact. However, when a close-up of a face is presented, there is an implicit invitation for the viewer to engage with the subject (Ledin & Machin, 2020).

Image 12   Image 13

Image 14

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Looking at the above posts, we can see that captions may accompany the visual representation, posing questions or expressing ideas. This extends the invitation for engagement, allowing the viewer to have access to the thoughts and perspectives of the subject even when their gaze is averted from the frame.

Non-frontal Perspective. Non-frontal perspectives indicate that the observer is detached from the reality being observed, akin to an outsider or even an eavesdropper. In turn, no potential for engagement or interaction with the individuals depicted is evident. Instead, the images provide information available for review, free from any expectation for a response (Ledin & Machin, 2020), such as the group of people depicted in Image 6 or the following example:

Image 15

Angles. The analysis of the scrutinized posts revealed that they were all viewed from a horizontal perspective, as opposed to a vertical one. Consequently, the implications of the vertical viewing angle, which are associated with power, height, and superiority/inferiority, are inapplicable to these posts.

According to Ledin and Machin (2020), the concept of vertical angle is commonly linked to power, height, and the connection between height and superiority/inferiority. These associations affect how we perceive power dynamics in an individual's portrayal, and a change in our viewing position alters our status relationship.

Distance. The concept of physical proximity and intimacy is widely associated with the notion of distance, both in real life and in the representation of social relations through images. How people are depicted in frames, whether they are shown in close-up (Image 16), medium shot (Image 17), or long shot (Image 15), is a reflection of the closeness or distance that exists between them and the viewers. The degree of proximity varies across

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cultures, but generally, people tend to feel uncomfortable when strangers get too close, whereas greater closeness is usually associated with a higher degree of intimacy and individualization in feelings (Ledin & Machin, 2020).

A review of the sample posts reveals that close shot is the most frequently used type of distance, followed by medium shot, while long shot is used least frequently. This indicates that the designers of these posts have attempted to create a sense of closeness between the depicted person and the viewer. In the following section, examples of each type of distance will be presented.

Image 16   Image 17

Actions in Images

Emotional Processes. In emotional processes, determining an individual's current mood is often informed by the observation of their facial expression and body posture. This practice is instrumental in providing insight into the subject's emotional state, thereby facilitating a better understanding of their feelings (Ledin & Machin, 2020).

It is not uncommon for people to exhibit a range of facial expressions indicative of intense emotions such as anger. For instance, Image 5 portrays individuals with a smile, suggesting they are experiencing a sense of happiness and satisfaction. In contrast, Image 18 below displays an angry face, indicating that the individual is exceedingly upset.

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Image 18

Mental Processes. Mental processes and emotional processes share similarities, yet they differ in that the former focuses on internal thoughts and feelings. The expression of these processes can manifest in a person's body language, gestures, and environment. By comprehending an individual's mental processes, one can gain insight into their thoughts and emotions (Ledin & Machin, 2020). Look at Images 2 and 15.

Verbal Processes. Verbal processes involve observing an individual while they are speaking (Ledin & Machin, 2020). As exemplified in Image 7, verbal communication is regarded as a crucial aspect of family life and is given significant emphasis. The importance of communication is highlighted and emphasized as a central tenet of family dynamics, with the understanding that effective verbal processes can foster strong relationships and a healthy family unit.

Material Processes. Material processes involve, as discussed by Ledin and Machin (2020), observing an individual's engagement in an activity that yields a tangible result or consequence. Such activities can include anything from cooking a meal to building a house. However, in the posts examined, no examples of such processes were identified.

Modality Scales

Degrees of the Articulation of Detail. The ability to perceive the details of elements represented in photographs is a measure of the level of abstraction of the image (Ledin & Machin, 2020). The scale ranges from fully detailed representations, as in Images 10, 18, 19, or 20, to highly abstract representations, as in Image 14. According to Ledin and Machin (2020), this difference in scale can be analogous to the distinction between a wedding photograph of a family member and a matchstick drawing of the same individual. In the former, the individual is represented with all their particular details, while in the latter, the representation is generic and could apply to anyone.

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For instance, Image 15, featuring a matchstick drawing of two individuals, highlights maximum abstraction, as the drawing could apply to anyone in a similar situation. It should be mentioned, of course, that a high degree of detail articulation can indicate higher levels of truth. Images 11, 19, 20, and 21 are a few instances:

Image 20

Image 19

Image 21

In photographs and compositions, there are often subtle yet significant variations in the degree of detail articulation. Advertisements, for instance, tend to reduce detail, creating an idealized version of the model by eliminating imperfections. Such reduction in detail can be exploited to convey an idea or concept instead of documenting a moment in time (Ledin & Machin, 2020).

Similarly, this reduction in articulation of detail can be observed in Images 1 and 2 featuring celebrities, where the focus is on the quote and the idea expressed rather than providing a realistic portrait or documenting a moment in time. By reducing the level of detail, the viewer's attention is drawn to the message being conveyed rather than the specifics of the image.

Degrees of the Articulation of the Background. The ability to discern the details of a background in an image has a significant impact on the overall visual aesthetic (Ledin & Machin, 2020). The background could range from a plain, unadorned space (as

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depicted in Image 10, where the represented subject(s) are decontextualized) to a lightly sketched, out-of-focus, or sharply detailed background (Images 4, 5, and 21, respectively).

Based on the analysis of the posts, decreasing the level of detail in the background can help to draw attention to the subjects of the image. By minimizing the viewer's focus on the background, the subjects become more noticeable and take center stage, thus improving the overall aesthetic of the image.

Degrees of the Articulation of Depth. The concept of depth perception can be represented on a scale that ranges from a vivid, dynamic experience of depth to its complete absence. In a naturalistic style, depth is perceived in a way that mirrors our everyday vision. For instance, a tree would be realistically portrayed with all its intricate details, such as the complexity of its leaves and branches, creating a three-dimensional image. On the other hand, a low-modality representation of a tree would strip it of its intricacies. Looking at Images 14, 21, 15, and 22, we can see instances of deep perspective vs. its complete absence.
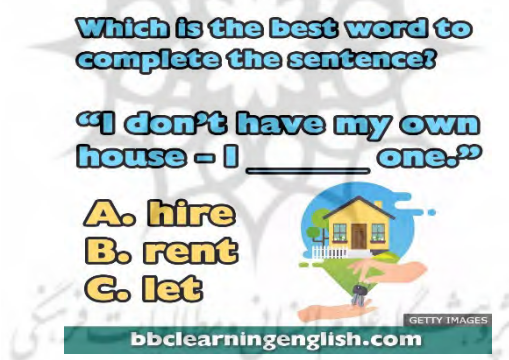

Image 22

Degrees of Illumination- Articulation of Light and Shadow. The following discourse concerns the visual quality of lighting in an image, specifically its ability to convey a sense of realism. This quality can be measured on a scale that ranges from zero articulation to maximum depth or intensity of shade. The absence of shadow and the presence of bright light create an optimistic effect that can be transferred to products and promotions. Conversely, darkness and pools of shadow create a sense of moodiness and concealment (Ledin & Machin, 2020).

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Upon examining our corpus, it was observed that designers tend to prefer bright lighting with minimal shadow, as it imparts positivity and optimism to viewers. To exemplify this illumination, we refer to Images 5 and 14.

Coding Orientations

Naturalistic Modality: The Truth of Our Eyes. The degree to which an image resembles its real-life counterpart, as observed from a specific viewpoint and under specific conditions of illumination, determines its naturalistic modality, which is dependent on the truth of our visual perception (Ledin & Machin, 2020). Examples of high naturalistic modality can be seen in Images 4, 7, and 23.

Image 23

Sensory Modality: The Truth of Our Feelings. This criterion of truth depends on the impact of visuals on our sense of pleasure or displeasure. It is a truth that is concerned with emotions. As per Ledin and Machin (2020), the sensory modality can be an overstatement of certain modality levels in the case of naturalistic modality. When color saturation is increased, for example, as in Image 25, while the naturalistic modality is diminished due to exaggeration, we can say that a sensory truth is being presented. We can also observe an example of sensory truth in the drawing of the heart in Image 15 or the red heart-shaped balloon in Image 24, where the heart symbolizes true emotions.

Image 24   Image 25

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Image 26

Abstract or Technical Modality: The Truth of the Intellect. The third orientation in coding is concerned with the generic nature of an object or the underlying principles of its functionality. In this context, individual differences hold no relevance, and focus is instead directed toward the general principles that are not perceptible to the naked eye. The greater an image's capacity to reveal the fundamental 'essence' of its subject matter, or the more it captures the universal schema that underlies seemingly disparate instances, the higher its abstract modality. This modality is associated with the truth of the intellect and knowledge (Ledin & Machin, 2020).
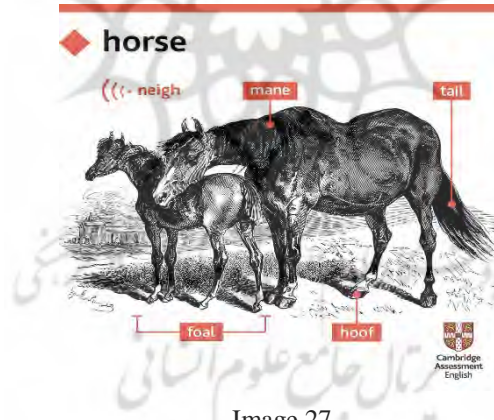
Image 27

Naturalistic and sensory modalities were the most frequently employed, with abstract modality being less prevalent. This observation highlights the importance of presenting content in naturalistic and especially sensory modalities in the production of materials in these ELT pages, as they can have a significant impact on the viewer's emotions and effectively enhance engagement.

The Meaning of Color in Visual Design

Colors also serve as a fundamental device for structuring compositions and are an important semiotic resource that can be studied systematically. Colors can evoke

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emotions and create moods that enhance meaning and people respond to colors in physiological ways. The Poynter Institute (1991), cited in Ledin and Machin (2020), concludes that color can increase page coherence and that individuals prefer pages containing more color, perceiving them to provide more information.

The Dimensions of Color

Hue. Hue outlines a color scale ranging from blue to red, with each color carrying specific connotations. Blue is traditionally associated with coldness, calmness, distance, and backgrounding, while red is associated with warmth, energy, salience, and foregrounding. Other colors, such as lilac, yellow, and orange, can convey feelings of femininity, optimism, and energy. The color palette also includes more neutral hues like greys and beige, as well as those associated with nature, such as greens and browns. Lastly, whites are often used to convey a sense of order and cleanliness (Ledin & Machin, 2020).
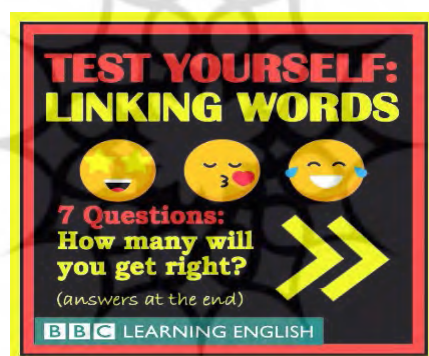
Image 28

Various shades of blue are used in Image 15, while a rich red color is used in Image 24 to evoke feelings of coldness, warmth, and energy, respectively. Similarly, the dominant use of red alongside yellow in Image 28, and white in Image 14, could reflect feelings of optimism and order, respectively.

Differentiation. Differentiation is a metric that ranges from monochrome, which can be represented by black and white (Image 27) or various shades of a single color (Image 29), to the utilization of multiple colors (Images 1 or 7). This metric can be employed to evoke a sense of timelessness, as in black and white, and may also be used to make images appear symbolic rather than descriptive. Low differentiation can imply restraint, although it can also indicate elegance. On the other hand, high differentiation can connote a spirit of adventure, playfulness, or energy (Ledin & Machin, 2020). Some of the related examples are presented below.
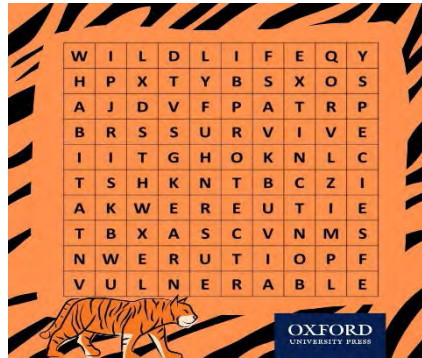
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Image 29

Brightness. The significance of brightness is rooted in our experiences with light and darkness. Symbolic meanings and values based on this differentiation are ubiquitous in nearly all cultures. Light and brightness are associated with clarity, truth, and happiness, while darkness is linked to obscurity, lies, and sadness (Ledin & Machin, 2020).

No instance of the use of darkness was found in the posts studied. On the contrary, many posts exhibited the presence of brightness in images, which, as previously mentioned, can evoke a positive and cheerful feeling. Refer to Images 1, 5, 14, 22, and 23.

The Meaning of Typography

Typography has also been an essential tool for visual communication. For instance, designers use bold fonts to help emphasize words and curved fonts to add a gentle touch. Nowadays, advertisers carefully choose typefaces to convey brand values. The development of typefaces has, therefore, become a significant investment, serving as a crucial medium of communication along with the semantic meaning of the word (Ledin & Machin, 2020).

Typographic Meaning Potentials

Weight. The concept of weight in typography refers to the visual boldness or heaviness of a typeface to enhance the prominence of a text element, conveying its relative importance within a document, as exemplified by Images 11 and 30. Weight can be employed to communicate various moods and attitudes and can symbolize assertiveness, solidity, or confidence. It can also signify daringness as the text appears to "shout out" or be "bold." However, such boldness can also be perceived as overbearing or domineering. Conversely, slimmer typefaces can convey a sense of being reserved,

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subtle, or gentle. Yet, this can also imply timidity or insubstantiality (Ledin & Machin, 2020).
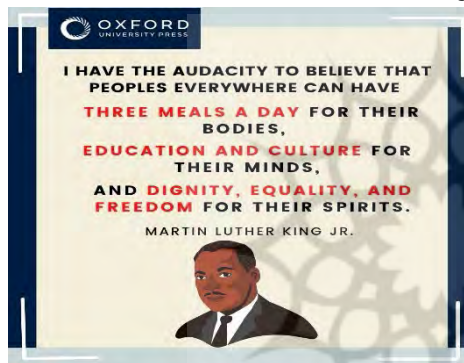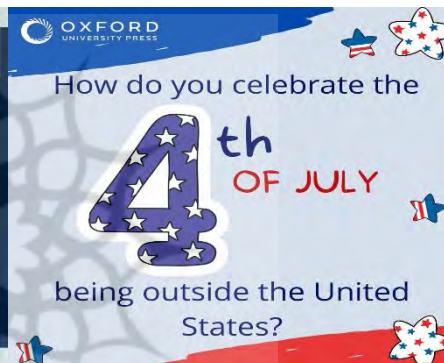

Image 30

Image 31

Image 32

Concerning Images 31 and 32, the designers have utilized weight and boldness to emphasize specific words or phrases in the posts. For instance, the term "4th of July" in Image 32 has been given significant weight, indicating its importance. Similarly, in the post regarding Martin Luther King Jr., the designers have not only assigned weight to the overall statement but also highlighted the most crucial parts in red, providing them with greater warmth, vitality, salience, and foregrounding. The use of color, as in the case of Martin Luther King Jr.'s post, further reinforces this idea and makes certain elements stand out, leaving a lasting impression.

Expansion. The design of typefaces encompasses various features, including their degree of condensation or expansion. This spectrum ranges between maximally narrowed and maximally expanded fonts. Highly condensed fonts occupy minimal space, conveying precision, economy, and even modesty, while wide fonts utilize more space, conveying confidence and, in some cases, even arrogance. These meanings can be reversed depending on the context. Narrow fonts may feel cramped, restricted, or

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crowded, which could be perceived as cowardly. In contrast, wide fonts may seem spacious and expansive, providing room to move (Ledin & Machin, 2020). Spacious placement creates a sense of "room to breathe," "room to think," and luxury, while crowded text conveys busyness or a lack of importance (Ledin & Machin, 2020).

Image 32 is a good example of such typeface expansion since the phrase '4th of July' occupies more space or is spread out. As it can be easily noticed, there is extensive room on each side, and this expansion might first imply exclusivity of the ceremony for a particular community and subsequently foster a sense of confidence (here, the 4th of July is confident).

Slope. The distinction between handwriting-like and print-like typefaces lies in their meanings. Handwriting conveys a personal, informal feel, while printing represents an impersonal, modern look. In typography, the slope of letters can signify dynamism and movement, especially when combined with straight lines (Ledin & Machin, 2020). Image 23 illustrates an example of a slope in typography. Interpreting the meaning of slope in the given sentence about pancake preparation, it appears that the chosen font conveys the sense that "a human touch and care have gone into their making" (Ledin & Machin, 2020, p. 127).

Curvature. Typefaces can be characterized as angular, curved, or a combination of both, each conveying different associations. Roundness signifies softness, smoothness, emotionality, and fluidity, while angularity is associated with harshness, objectivity, or rationality. The choice of typefaces, therefore, significantly influences the interpretation of the message conveyed and should be selected carefully based on the intended message and target audience (Ledin & Machin, 2020).

For instance, in Images 10 and 33, the use of a round typeface conveys the intended meanings of the content, which are subjective emotions and fluidity and ease, respectively. On the other hand, in Image 31, the use of an angular typeface communicates straightforwardness, rationality, and logic, which is the desired message.
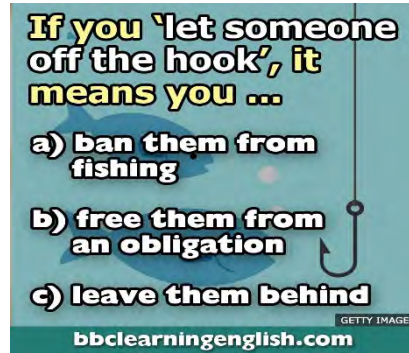
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Image 33

Connectivity. In typography, the spacing of letters can either be connected or separated. Connectivity refers to the joining of letters, much like how one would write in script. Conversely, separated letters refer to self-contained letters, which can appear to be quite remote from each other (Ledin & Machin, 2020). No example was found to showcase this typographic feature.

Regularity. Many typefaces incorporate intentional irregularities or seemingly arbitrary distributions of specific features. Regularity and irregularity each possess their metaphorical potential. Irregularity can indicate creativity, artistry, spontaneity, or even chaos, while regularity may suggest conformity, restraint, and order. This implicit effect can also be achieved by employing varying font sizes, weights, and orientations in distinct words (Ledin & Machin, 2020).

Images 23, 32, 34, and 35 are some examples of irregular typeface, which could help enhance the creative elements of written communication and reduce the potential for monotony.
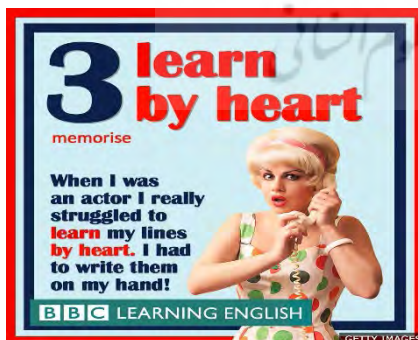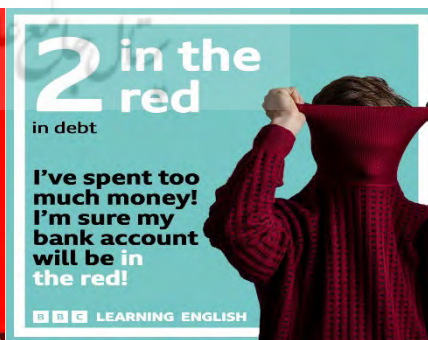

Image 34   Image 35

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Reflection of the Culture through Visual Representations in the Pages Under Study (The Second Research Question)

Visual representations in the ELT Instagram pages under investigation can offer a rather vivid reflection of the diverse culture of the English-speaking community. For instance, these representations may showcase individuals from different ethnicities, races, and backgrounds, portraying the multiculturalism that is deeply ingrained in many English-speaking countries. To exemplify the aforementioned point, qualitative analysis of the posts revealed how celebrities like Will Smith or Oprah Winfrey are portrayed visually in addition to the presentation of their world views, signaling individuals from the English culture (Images 1 and 2).

In addition to people, the visuals of these pages may also refer to popular culture of the target language. For example, the patterns and colors of the American flag are used in Image 32 to introduce the famous and highly valued ceremony of Independence Day in the US, engaging the viewers both visually and verbally. This approach may offer a more effective way of introducing the ritual to the audience.

In terms of colors and their associations, in certain posts, the use of red heart shapes or the color red itself reflected the topic of romantic love, given its association with excitement and love within UK and US culture (Images 16, 24, and 25). Similarly, the color blue, commonly associated with coldness in the US and the UK, was utilized in Image 15 to help convey the message of the post. Furthermore, according to the Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture, green is widely recognized by British and American people as the color that best represents nature, as evidenced in the example below introducing horse-related vocabulary.

Image 36

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A scrutiny of the posts revealed that the visual elements consistently aligned with the content and intended messages. For example, when discussing the value of "loving animals," a common sentiment in English-speaking nations, the visual accompaniment often depicted individuals displaying affection towards animals, such as a woman embracing a cat, as shown in Image 16.

Discussion

The primary focus of the study was analyzing the various multimodal techniques used by the ELT pages under study to see how effectively they communicate their intended meanings. Additionally, it was aimed to explain in what ways visual representations could reflect the culture of the target language society. Upon a thorough multimodal analysis of the sample posts, it became evident that ELT multimedia content designers, particularly in the case of Instagram pages, have capitalized on the potential for exploiting various semiotic resources to enhance their materials. This includes the strategic use of images, different color palettes, and typographic meaning potentials alongside written text to convey their messages.

The analysis reveals that the posts under study employed a diverse array of multimodal techniques purposefully and dynamically. On a broad scale, the findings suggest that the majority of the posts portrayed individualization, with a greater number featuring a single person, while a smaller proportion depicted collectivization, contributing to a more intimate and relatable narrative. Additionally, the images primarily utilized a frontal perspective, with horizontal close-up shots being the most prevalent angle and distance. This points to a conscious endeavor by the creators to cultivate a sense of proximity between the depicted individuals and the audience. When it came to images featuring people, the predominant use of smiling facial expressions, complemented by a diverse color palette and a preference for bright, minimally shadowed lighting, generally conveyed positive and hopeful tones. However, in select instances, the opposite effect was strategically sought after in the posts. Furthermore, naturalistic and sensory modalities were frequently employed, while abstract modality was less commonly utilized, as these elements can significantly influence viewer emotions and effectively enhance audience engagement. Lastly, in terms of typography, the weight and salience were primarily leveraged to emphasize critical elements in visual communication, as well as direct the audience's attention to the most impactful aspects of the content.

Additionally, the visual representations within these ELT pages play a significant role in reflecting the cultural norms and values of the English-speaking community. These visuals, including images and colors, work in harmony with the textual content to enhance and reinforce the intended messages. They lend a powerful and impactful dimension to communication, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding and connection with the content. Moreover, it is important to note that the deliberate use of visual representations, particularly images, often serves to mirror the cultural aspects of the societies associated with the target language. This observation aligns with that of Babaii et al. (2016), underscoring that contemporary multimodal texts frequently encompass stereotypical, biased, and discriminatory elements within the visual mode. This understanding sheds light on the intricate interplay between visual media and cultural representation in language education resources.

The findings of the study support the widely accepted notion that teaching is a multimodal experience. This occurs through the integration of spoken language with a variety of other communicative modes, including but not limited to gestures, gaze, and facial expressions. This is supported by scholarly work from authors such as Jewitt (2008), Kress et al. (2005), Lim (2020), and Peng (2019). The integration of these modes of communication is crucial for effective teaching and conveying of information.

Kress et al. (2005) suggest that modes do not exist in isolation but always in conjunction with others in ensembles, or what Ledin and Machin (2020) term a 'composition' that possesses an overarching wholeness, with the constituent parts interrelated in various ways. Hence, in any given lesson, several modes are conventionally employed at the same time, and it is assumed that English as a subject matter does not solely reside in language but exists in multiple modes and tasks beyond listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Kress et al., 2005). So, broadly speaking, according to Lim (2020), the process of teaching and learning is not limited to language alone. Lim (2020) refers to this approach as "embodied teaching," where teachers' use of gestures, spatial positioning, and movements complement language to form a multimodal ensemble of meanings.

Conclusion

In the current digital landscape, social media platforms like Instagram play a pivotal role in shaping our daily interactions. As individuals actively engage with Instagram as a multimedia platform that transcends traditional language barriers, there has been a

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growing interest in leveraging it for language learning and ELT in recent years. This study aims to delve into the nuances of presenting ELT content on Instagram pages, recognizing its potential as an innovative and dynamic tool for language learning.

In the current study, the comprehensive multimodal analysis framework developed by Ledin and Machin (2020) was utilized to conduct a qualitative examination of three popular ELT pages on Instagram, namely BBC Learning English, Learning English with Oxford, and Learning English with Cambridge. The primary goal was to uncover the multitude of ways in which these pages employ different multimodal techniques to effectively communicate their messages, and in this way, the results of the study revealed that the ELT Instagram pages examined actively employ a diverse array of semiotic resources to convey their intended meanings alongside their written content. These techniques encompassed the use of images, photographs, a wide spectrum of colors, and typography, among others.

Additionally, the analysis of the visual content within the ELT pages revealed a deliberate and meaningful reflection of the cultural elements prevalent in the English-speaking community. The visual components, including both images of people and the careful use of colors, were strategically integrated with the textual content of the posts. This integration aimed to not only strengthen the communication of the messages but also to potentially amplify their influence.

Overall, the present study may offer valuable insights into the key multimodal elements found in popular ELT pages. These findings can enhance our understanding of the diverse multimodal strategies used by these pages to effectively present their materials. Considering the prevalence of multimedia tools in educational instruction and their enduring popularity in language programs, it is reasonable to infer that an educator's critical understanding of the material can impact their teaching approach. This understanding can manifest in their real-time interactions with students or in their proactive efforts to counteract any potential negative effects the materials may have on learners (Smith, 2021).

The findings of the current study may, therefore, hold substantial implications for stakeholders in the field of education, including educators, curriculum designers, policymakers, and language researchers working in the areas of English language teaching and social media. The present study underscores the crucial significance of incorporating multimodal resources into language teaching practices. Specifically, the study highlights the effectiveness of leveraging Instagram pages that integrate a diverse

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array of visual and audio elements to facilitate English language learning. By providing a dynamic and interactive learning environment, these multimodal resources have the potential to enhance information retention and foster the development of language skills among students.

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Appendix

The theoretical framework adopted in the current study is based on the social semiotic approach, as proposed in the book *Introduction to Multimodal Analysis* by Ledin and Machin (2020):

Pictures and Images
Representing Participants

Individuals and Groups.

Frontal Perspective.

Non-frontal Perspective.

Angles.

Distance.

Actions in Images

Emotional Processes.

Mental Processes.

Verbal Processes.

Material Processes.

Modality Scales

Degrees of the Articulation of Detail.

Degrees of the Articulation of the Background.

Degrees of the Articulation of Depth.

Degrees of Illumination- Articulation of Light and Shadow.

Coding Orientations

Naturalistic Modality: The Truth of Our Eyes.

Sensory Modality: The Truth of Our Feelings.

Abstract or Technical Modality: The Truth of the Intellect.

The Meaning of Color in Visual Design
The Dimensions of Color

Hue.

Differentiation.

Brightness.

The Meaning of Typography
Typographic Meaning Potentials

Weight.

Expansion.

Slope.

Curvature.

Connectivity.

Regularity.