

MULTILITERACIES AND LEARNING: AN ANALYSIS OF AN ENGLISH HIGH SCHOOL TEXTBOOK FOR THE BRAZILIAN CONTEXT

MULTILETRAMENTOS E APRENDIZAGEM: ANÁLISE DE UM LIVRO DIDÁTICO DE INGLÊS DO ENSINO MÉDIO PARA O CONTEXTO BRASILEIRO

MULTILETERACIÓN Y APRENDIZAJE: ANÁLISIS DE UN LIBRO DE ENSEÑANZA DE INGLÉS PARA ESCUELA SECUNDARIA PARA EL CONTEXTO BRASILEÑO

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Abstract: This work investigates whether the theory of (multi)literacies and the cycle of knowledge processes underlie the pedagogical design of the English school textbook, XX. We engaged in a documentary analysis to interpret the data from one of its units. Results showed that the cycle of processes underlie the textbook learning activities in an appropriate way. We noticed, however, that it falls short in the choice of the genre for the writing section since it should have proposed a feature article that had been read and studied in the unit and not a flyer whose generic characteristics were unknown by the students at that point. Concerning the multimodality approach, the layout orchestrates the multimodal resources effectively. The pedagogical design also focuses on the multimodal ensembles of meanings but lacks an emphasis on a metalanguage that could help students understand how and why they are created. Diversity, one of the aspects in the multiliteracies theory, is carefully weaved throughout the unit and focuses on students' understanding and commitment to the multiple social and cultural differences of the present age.

Keywords: Multiliteracies; Cycle of knowledge processes; Brazilian English textbooks.

Resumo: Este trabalho investiga se a teoria dos múltiplos letramentos e o ciclo dos processos de conhecimento apoiam o design pedagógico do livro didático de inglês, XX. Conduzimos uma análise documental para interpretar os dados de uma de suas unidades. Os resultados mostraram que o ciclo de processos do conhecimento fundamenta o desenvolvimento das atividades de aprendizagem de forma adequada. Percebemos, no entanto, que a escolha do gênero para a seção de escrita é inadequada, pois deveria ter sido o mesmo gênero que havia sido lido e estudado na unidade e não um flyer cujas características genéricas eram desconhecidas pelos alunos naquele ponto. No que diz respeito à abordagem da multimodalidade, o layout orquestra os recursos multimodais de forma eficaz. O design pedagógico também se concentra nos conjuntos multimodais de significados, mas carece de ênfase em uma metalinguagem que possa ajudar os alunos a entender como e por que são criados. A diversidade, um dos aspectos da teoria dos multiletramentos, é cuidadosamente tecida ao longo das atividades de aprendizagem da unidade. Concentra-se, no entanto, na compreensão e no compromisso dos alunos com as múltiplas diferenças sociais e culturais da época atual.

Palavras-chave: Multiletramentos; Ciclo dos processos de conhecimento; Livros didáticos de inglês brasileiros.

Resumen: Este trabajo investiga si la teoría de las (multi)alfabetizaciones y el ciclo de los procesos de conocimiento subyacen en el diseño pedagógico del libro de texto escolar de inglés, XX. Realizamos un análisis documental para interpretar los datos de una de sus unidades. Los resultados mostraron que el ciclo de procesos subyace en las actividades de aprendizaje del libro de texto de manera adecuada. Notamos, sin embargo, que se queda corto en la elección del género para la sección de escritura ya que debería haber propuesto un reportaje que había sido leído y estudiado en la unidad y no un volante cuyas características genéricas desconocían los estudiantes en ese momento. punto. En cuanto al enfoque de multimodalidad, el diseño orquesta los recursos multimodales de manera efectiva. El diseño pedagógico también se enfoca en los conjuntos multimodales de significados, pero carece de énfasis en un metalenguaje que podría ayudar a los estudiantes a comprender cómo y por qué se crean. La diversidad, uno de los aspectos de la teoría de la multialfabetización, se entretiene cuidadosamente a lo largo de la unidad y se centra en la comprensión y el compromiso de los estudiantes con las múltiples diferencias sociales y culturales de la era actual.

Palabras llave: Multialfabetizaciones; Ciclo de procesos de conocimiento; Libros de texto de inglés brasileño.

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Introduction

With the advent of the Internet, digital technologies have been impacting our daily lives, the ways we communicate as well as our social relationships through face-to-face conversations, print and online messages (KALANTZIS and COPE, 2012; THIBAUT and CURWOOD, 2018). Although we acknowledge the existence of the digital divide phenomenon, we argue that the emergence of personal computers and cell phones has increased technological-driven social interactions along the years. This is true if we consider that online conversations in social networks have been more common than ever and, as such, the processes of meaning-making (KALANTZIS and COPE, 2012; KRESS, 2010) have also been through ongoing transformations, particularly in online interactions. We believe that additional research must be carried out concerning the technologies of the present era and their impacts on our lives, especially in the process of teaching an additional language. Successful research results may help us create adequate educational solutions for those who can or cannot be online. All educators around the world must stand up for better governmental policies on education and the necessary budget for teachers' education programs, salaries, and working conditions. Following Freire (1996), resistance and reliance go together with hope of better educational scenarios for all.

The use of semiotic modes of communication (HODGE and KRESS, 1988), such as, static and moving images, sounds, written /oral language, gestures, blank space, or typographical effects in a single print page, or in a computer screen has been increasingly common in interactions that take place in a myriad of different social contexts amongst people from different ethnocultural groups who speak different languages and have diverse habits and views of the world. The educational scenario could not be different, and changes were also required and desirable for the sake of learners' needs and demands for the digital age.

This article analyzes the fourth unit from an English textbook, entitled **New High Up**, based on the theory/pedagogy of multiliteracies and the cycle of knowledge processes, *experiencing, conceptualizing, analyzing critically* and *applying in creative ways*, proposed by Kalantzis and Cope (2012). The aim of this pedagogical approach is to redirect traditional notions of literacy that was focused more specifically on reading and writing. First, we review current literature concerning the notion of multiliteracies and its correlates and then briefly examine the characteristics of the documentary research, the method we chose for our analysis. Next, we concentrate on the fourth unit of the textbook under investigation to evaluate it according to theoretical principles that give us support for this endeavor. We hope to shed light on knowledge of current educational principles for the betterment of teachers' education programs oriented to the age of digital interactions that have influenced communication in two important aspects, multimodality, and diversity. Then our focus will be on the multiliteracies pedagogy, an approach to teach an additional language that can benefit students in their learning process. We argue that recent studies on language must be transformed into innovative pedagogical practices. Our belief is that, educators who are currently involved with teaching additional languages and coordinating bilingual programs, will benefit from our work.

A brief theoretical account

Multiliteracies: impacts from digital technologies

Changes brought about by digital technologies, especially in the communicational landscape, motivated a group of scholars to discuss the educational scenario and find alternatives to cope with the challenges facing today's pedagogy and learning. They are known as the New London Group (The NLG) and have been actively involved with research on language and education since 1994 when they first met in New London, New Hampshire in the USA. They came to realize that in terms of learners' language education for the present era, the three r's (reading, [w]riting and [a]rithmetic) based on the "old basics" and literacy studies were not enough. They had to be supplemented with a broader understanding of today's multimodal communication to encompass the multiple modes of expressing meanings translated into the idea of multimodality (HODGE and KRESS, 1988; KRESS, 2010) and all kinds of diversity expressed in the digital interactions amongst people all over the world.

The term multiliteracies was coined to replace a conception of literacy that was in many aspects viewed as "too narrowly focused" [...] "decontextualized, abstract, rule-bound and fragmented into formal components such as phonics, grammar and literature" (KALANTZIS and COPE, 2012, p. 3). Time had come to bring forward a different approach to encompass "what is new and distinctive about the ways in which people make meaning [or learn] in the contemporary communications environment" (p. 1). According to the NLG (1996), the term "multis" refers to two main aspects: social diversity and multimodality that reflect the multiplicity of cultural contexts and ways of communicating by language today.

Social diversity refers to concerns with different ethnocultural groups, community settings, linguistic varieties, minorities, learners' social roles, among others. It also encompasses layers of distinctiveness in our classrooms: students' heritage, gender, sexual orientation, life experiences, styles of housing, forms of entertainment, disabilities. For decades, diversity issues have been, and continue to be, neglected in many school curriculums around the world. The NLG brings it to the spotlight as one of the aspects of the multiliteracies theory related to educators' fundamental responsibility to help learners understand diversity, its values and richness, and develop tolerance and respect for differences, including in schools that do not have access to digital technologies. Students' history, geography, or science textbooks can be favorable and productive in developing their respect for differences.

Multimodality is the other aspect of the term "multis" proposed in the late 90's to relate to the "increasing multiplicity and integration of significant modes of meaning-making where the verbal is also related to the visual, the audio, the spatial, the behavioral and so on" (THE NLG, 1996, p. 64). Meshing modes or codes (KRESS, 2003) to create semiotic landscapes become possible thanks to the groundbreaking rise of digital technology and its affordances that revolutionized the ways we communicate in today's world.

A particular facet of the multimodality approach is the notion that "modes of communication offer historically specific and socially and culturally shared options (or 'semiotic resources') for communicating" (MODE, 2012). As such, visual arrangements of meaning are not valued solely by their aesthetic and expressive dimensions, but mainly by their intentional structured social, political, and communicative purposes. According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006, p. 2),

[m]eanings belong to culture, rather than to specific semiotic modes. [...]. For instance, what is expressed in language through the choice between different word classes and clause structures, may, in visual communication, be expressed through the choice between different uses of colour or different compositional structures. And this will affect meaning. Expressing something verbally or visually makes a difference (KRESS and VAN LEEUWEN, 2006, p. 2).

Multiliteracies Pedagogy: from literacy to literacies

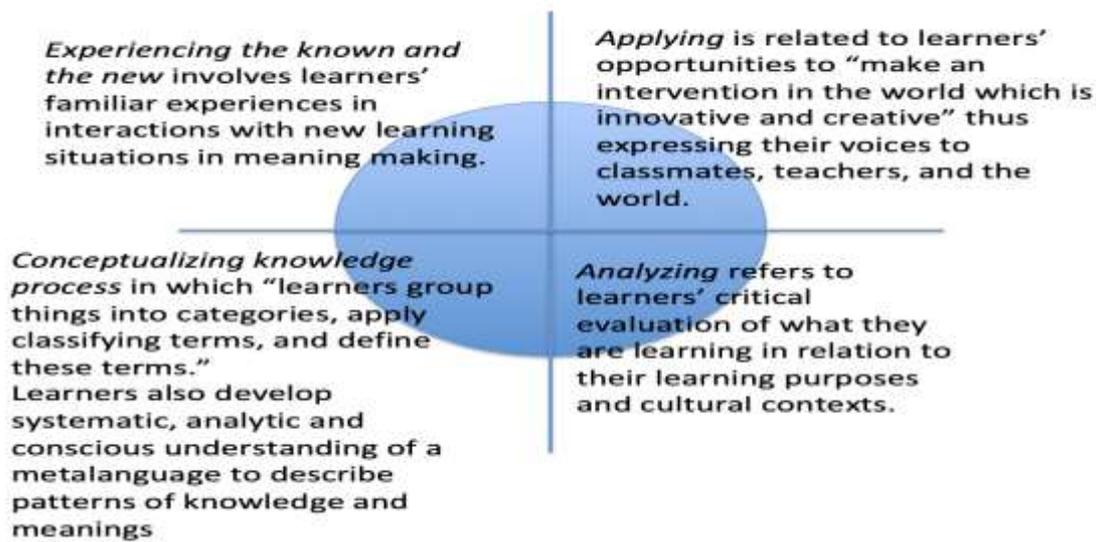
A literacy pedagogy for reading and writing based on the misunderstanding of the existence of “monomodal” communications together with the reliance on alphabetical learning perspectives alone had to be expanded to express meaning in a variety of languages in multiple contexts brought about by digital technologies as acknowledged by the NLG back in 1996. The two “multis” in the term “multiliteracies”, coined by the members of this group, became the reference for a new pedagogical approach that could account for multiple literacies including social and cultural diversity and multimodality. A pedagogy that relies on the written mode alone is no longer sufficient to prepare learners for the multifaceted communications of the present digital age. As Kress (2015, p. 58) reminds us, [a]ny attempt to get a full sense of what had been communicated – or what had ‘been learned’ – needs to rely on an understanding of meaning in all [semiotic] modes”.

As such, multiliteracies pedagogy – that is not singular but plural and multiple – is akin to fundamental educational aims such as to provide learners with access to opportunities in the form of “better-paid employment”, improvement of their chances to “participate in civic life and personal growth”, and engagement “in deeper understandings of the world”, “enabling [them] to do more for themselves and make a contribution to the lives of others” (KALANTZIS and COPE, 2012 p. 42). Additionally, working across “literacies in the plural opens paths to [learners’] social participation, ideally enabling [them] from different cultural, social, gender and socio-economic backgrounds to make meaning and succeed” (KALANTZIS and COPE, 2012, p. 7).

Since its emergence back in 1996, the proposed pedagogical approach has been framed within three essential components: the ‘why’, the ‘what’ and the ‘how’ of multiliteracies” (COPE and KALANTZIS, 2015, p. 2). The ‘why’ dimension refers to the irrefutable social changes in play, brought about by the advent of digital technologies. Based on these authors, all these dramatic changes rendered “older practices of literacy pedagogy increasingly anachronistic” (COPE and KALANTZIS, 2015, p. 3). Time had then arrived for a plural pedagogy that incorporates knowledge from previous approaches, the authentic, the didactic, the functional and the critical in a cyclical framework. The ‘what’ refers to the two “multis”: diversity and multimodality.

The ‘how’ of the multiliteracies approach refers to a set of knowledge processes (Fig. 1) that can be orchestrated by teachers (learners) in support to the tasks of designing teaching and learning activities. Originally formulated by the NLG (1996) as *situated practice*, *overt instruction*, *critical framing and transformed practice*, they have been renamed “to align with contemporary conditions for meaning-making”. The new labels and their purposes are as follows:

Figure 1



Source: Kalantzis and Cope, 2012, p. 356

These knowledge processes applied to pedagogical practices can be clarified with one of the examples provided by Kalantzis and Cope (2012, p. 364). The setting is a secondary English Class in a Chicago High School, the content is the novel "The Hunger Games" written by Suzanne Collins and published by Scholastic in 2012. The mix of the processes is explained below:

In 'experiencing the known', students discuss the reality television programs that they watch, exploring the motivations people have to participate and the ways in which they are manipulated. In 'experiencing the new', students begin to read the novel, using a 'patterned partner reading' strategy [e.g., a strategy that provides a structure that guides learners to read interactively with a partner].

In 'conceptualising by naming', [students] play the 'nail that character' game in which they create words for character traits ('impulsive' or 'strategic') and then find evidence in the text to support that generalisation.

In 'analysing functionally', students draw generalisations about how [each] character interacts with plot to reveal themes. In 'analysing critically', [they] link the themes of the novel with problems and issues in contemporary society and compare these to the ways in which similar problems arise in reality television.

In 'applying appropriately', students write [a profile] of one of the principal characters in the novel and in 'applying creatively', they create a multimodal tribute to "The Hunger Games" (KALANTZIS and COPE, 2012, p. 364).

Although each of these processes has specific teaching purposes, they do not necessarily need to be followed one after another neither is balance between them required. Teachers would rather regard them as a cyclical arrangement of "things you do to learn", i.e. learning actions that can be mixed and overlaid one over the other. Kalantzis and Cope (2010, p. 208) recommend "a mindful and considered use of them" hence they can relate to essential learning requirements "for the mastery of different subject areas, [...] different skills (such as inquiry, problem solving, innovation and so on) and different sensibilities (such as

empathy, inquisitiveness, exploration, calculated risk taking and so on". A conscious way of them is intended to foster higher order thinking skills and deeper learning.

Methodology

This is documentary research that investigates whether the multiliteracies theory and its corresponding pedagogy underlie the pedagogical design of the English school textbook **New High Up**. Our analyses will evaluate this pedagogical document that is currently being adopted in private regular schools to contribute to studies on teacher education in Brazil. As Marconi and Lakatos (1991) explain,

[t]he characteristic of any type of documentary research is that the data collection source is limited to documents, written or not, constituting its definition as primary sources. This can be done while the fact or phenomenon is taking place or later. (MARCONI and LAKATOS, 2003, p. 174) (Our translation).¹

Our focus of analysis will be on the fourth unit entitled, *you can change the world*, insomuch as how well the 'two multis', multimodality and diversity, together with the knowledge processes, *experiencing, conceptualizing, analyzing critically* and *applying creatively* (KALANTZIS and COPE, 2012) have been integrated into the learning activities.

As our research is within the qualitative realm, we do not intend to verify or prove theories, but to observe the document under analysis without bias or narrow perspectives. For this purpose, we will be solidly supported by theoretical principles and methodologies that are being studied by Kalantzis and Cope (2012; 2015) and Kress (2003; 2010) along the years. Our data are interpreted in a holistic fashion considering a descriptive orientation.

In order to control the quality of our document, we submitted it to the rigors of an assessment regarding its authenticity, credibility and representativeness and this is what we have to say: (1) the origin of our document is reliable hence it is a recent publication by three university professors who were committed to create a textbook that followed recent theories on applied linguistics and discourse analysis; (2) it is credible because it is free from distortion and error and was also assessed by many English teachers who decided to adopt it as the main pedagogical source in their teaching context and (3) it is representative of the materials for teaching English in Brazil due to the fact that it is one of the type among many others for the same objective and shares some pedagogical features with them (LUDKE & ANDRE, 1986; SÁ-SILVA et al., 2009).

The New High Up, the document under our investigation, is a one-volume textbook for the private sector that comprises 24 units, 8 for each of the three years of High School in Brazil. The activities for the development of oral expression are online on the site of the Publishing House. Each textbook brings a numerical code that is used by the students to have access to the online activities, which include these sections: speaking projects, sounds in English and self-study. The textbook layout is well designed and color rhymes and typographical elements are the main multimodal resources for the design coherence throughout the sections.

The teachers' manual (2017) shows that the main objective of the textbook series is

¹ A característica de qualquer tipo de pesquisa documental é que a fonte de coleta de dados se limita a documentos, escritos ou não, constituindo sua definição como fontes primárias. Isso pode ser feito enquanto o fato ou fenômeno está ocorrendo ou posteriormente. (MARCONI and LAKATOS, 2003, p. 174) (versão original)

to develop students' [multimodal] literacies for the use of the English language in social communication practices in oral expression as well as in writing and reading. [Its] theoretical and methodological support is based on recent aspects of learning English as a foreign language with solid support in the sociocultural aspects of learning (LANTOLF and HORNE, 2007), in the discursive notion of language (BAKHTIN, 1979 [2003]), in the combination of semiotic codes in contemporary texts as revealed by Kress (2010)] and in the collaborative approach (PALLOFF and PRATT, 2005; VYGOTSKY, 1996). [Alongside with the multiliteracies theory, the series] includes the development of students' sense of citizenship, including their responsibility for the betterment of society in local and global aspects. (Our translation). (**New High Up**).²

In sum, our interpretivist analysis is within the qualitative paradigm. Our main assumption is that, although subjective in nature, it is based on solid theoretical principles. Our intention is to investigate a real-life case, a recently published English school textbook, and create meaningful knowledge about it to contribute to the area of design and implementation of materials for pedagogical purposes as well as to teacher's education in the Brazilian context. We want to gain a deeper understanding of our object of investigation and its complexity in its unique context.

A Brazilian English high school textbook in focus **The English textbooks for public schools**

Brazilian English school textbooks, especially those for public education, are based on guidelines that come from an official call notice by the Ministry of Education, approximately two years before they are submitted for evaluation (BRASIL, 2018). The evaluation process is carried out by a team of professors chosen by the National Evaluation Program of School Textbooks (PNLD, acronym in Portuguese) (BRASIL, 2018). Overall, the textbooks are well designed and drawn upon the latest theoretical issues, including the multiliteracies theory with the two "multis", diversity and multimodality, with emphasis on critical literacy (ROCHA et al., 2017).

Although the recognized educational quality of the Brazilian textbooks is undeniable, these materials can be seen as a one-way-lane in their design and creation because their target audience, public-school teachers, seldom participate as authors. Furthermore, the teaching content and learning strategies are usually created a priori without consulting all Brazilian in-service public-school teachers about their appropriateness. Very few of them are members of the evaluating committee coordinated by the Ministry of Education and have a say in the assessment process. This can be confirmed by the list of evaluators and their affiliations provided in the PNLD guiding manuals that can be accessed at the site of the Ministry of Education. However, these pedagogical materials not only encourage teachers' autonomy but also offer suggestions for adjustments to the textbooks to meet their teaching contextual needs.

In general, textbooks evaluated by the PNLD (BRASIL, 2018) consider the 'why', the 'what', and the 'how' of the multiliteracies theory, make use of multimodal contemporary texts for their sections, and usually display an effective and attractive layout design for all units.

² [...] desenvolver letramentos [multimodais] dos alunos para o uso da língua inglesa nas práticas de comunicação social na expressão oral, bem como na escrita e na leitura. [Seu] suporte teórico e metodológico é baseado em aspectos recentes da aprendizagem do inglês como língua estrangeira com suporte sólido nos aspectos socioculturais da aprendizagem (LANTOLF and THORNE, 2007), na noção discursiva de língua (BAKHTIN, 1979 [2003]), na combinação de códigos semióticos em textos contemporâneos como revelado por Kress (2010)] e na abordagem colaborativa (PALLOFF and PRATT, 2005; VYGOTSKY, 1996). [Juntamente com a teoria dos multiletramentos, a série] inclui o desenvolvimento do senso de cidadania dos alunos, incluindo sua responsabilidade pela melhoria da sociedade em aspectos locais e globais.

The English textbooks for private schools

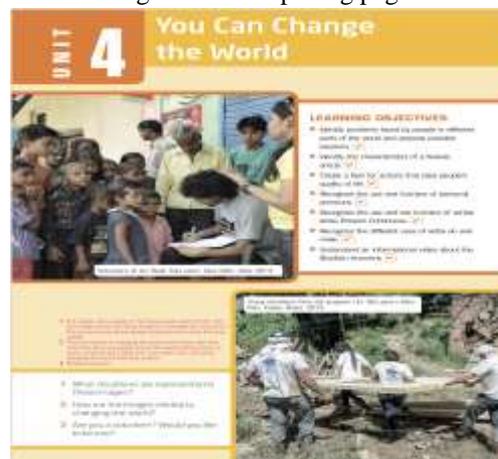
The textbook we are going to analyze, entitled **New High Up**, follows the guidelines regarding the design and implementation of public-school textbooks (BRASIL, 2018) although it has been published for the private sector. We intend to show that it is based on the theories we reviewed. Teachers' manuals often provide suggestions of alternative activities, educational sites, and games, for instance, that can enrich the interactions that take place in the English classes. Although the choice of pedagogical materials for their practices should be teachers' prerogative, this is not guaranteed in our private sectors of schools. For instance, the school committee of governance (e.g., the foundation supporters, directors, coordinators) can choose one of the various Brazilian educational systems as partners and all pedagogical materials do come from them.

The opening page

Our analysis reveals that the **New High Up** textbook can support students in the process of constructing knowledge of the two "multis". Its main intention is to prepare them for the new world of intense diversity and multimodal communication. For instance, on the opening page of the fourth unit (Fig. 2), meaning is made with the modal affordances of the semiotic codes (KRESS, 2003) to create salience and learners' involvement with the use of color rhymes (orange, dark and light yellow as background for the titles and subtitles); different colors for the letters: white and orange; frames that enclose the images, the instructions, and the objectives of the unit in the verbal code.

Moreover, large fonts are chosen for the main titles: UNIT 4; You Can Change the World and capital letters for LEARNING OBJECTIVES. Blank space (in white or in light yellow) is set up to create a reading path (Kress, 2010) students may follow for comprehension. The page has an adequate layout that joins aesthetic and functional purposes (fig. 2). Multimodality is thus integrated into the design of this school textbook as well as the notion of diversity represented by people from two volunteers' programs, one from India and the other from Brazil. Moreover, much more can be learned by students if they are encouraged to access sites about volunteer programs as suggested in the teachers' manual, for example.

Figure 2: The opening page



Source: **New High Up**, p. 49, 2017.

Our analysis reveals that the semiotic arrangement of the opening page was motivated by the interest of the sign-makers (the editorial staff) who created it for the objectives of the unit (Fig. 2). More focus is on the two images that can be used as prompts for in-class discussions. The verbal mode may also help students create meaningful connections within the page to comprehend the whole semiotic landscape. Based on our ample experience as English teachers, we believe that the multimodal ensemble created by the editorial personnel will most likely support students in constructing meaning.

Socially and culturally speaking, this multimodal arrangement is appropriate for the target audience, Brazilian high-school students. As meaning belongs to culture (KRESS, 2003; 2010), Brazilian students may be able to figure out the contextual elements such as the representation of collaborative work in one of the images and that of an informal learning situation by Indian children in the other. Since these are sociocultural views that they share with what the images depict, it will most likely promote their understanding of it. The cognate word “volunteers” in the captions may also help them understand what it means. In terms of other changes brought about broadening the scope of education proposed in the multiliteracies theory, others can be mentioned regarding this opening page: a focus on civic attitudes as shown by the collaborative work to enhance Indian children’s literacies and to help homeless Brazilians.

In terms of diversity, the other “multi” of multiliteracies, our analysis reveals that the *xx* series gives support to the development of students’ empathy and commitment to fight for human rights and social changes. This way they will probably understand the meaning of diversity, its values and richness as evidenced by Kalantzis and Cope (2012; 2015) besides developing tolerance and respect for differences. Almost all units are about current societal problems in the hope of preparing students to do the best for themselves and others.

Given our analysis, this opening page could have been explored further for pedagogical purposes. For instance, the URL addresses for the two images have not been mentioned. Had they been, the students could have been encouraged to visit the two websites by accessing them at home or in the school library or computer lab, gaining further knowledge about volunteering work. They could become more sensitized to the needs of the unprivileged and thus become volunteers in their own schools and places where they live to exercise active citizenship. As Kalantzis and Cope (2012) remark, online environments can be used to expand the reach of learning across time and space beyond the walls of the classroom.

In short, the design of the opening page unveils that the two ‘multis’, multimodality, and diversity, were adequately intertwined (Fig. 2). Regrettably, a metalanguage concerning multimodality and its codes and resources (that is usually developed in the conceptualizing stage) has not been discussed with the students during the process of interpreting this multimodal landscape. This is true for the opening pages of all the twenty-four units of the textbook, **New High Up**. Although these pages are masterful examples of multimodal pieces of communication, almost nothing is discussed with the students regarding the combined use of semiotic resources, how they are arranged on the page, how colors were used to express meaning and so forth.

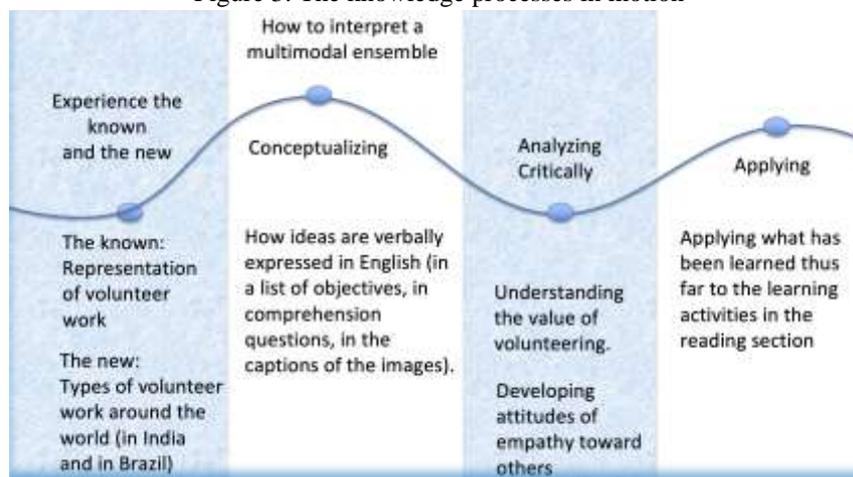
Furthermore, we can notice that some other knowledge processes have been considered in the creation of the learning activities (Fig.1). In experiencing, students are encouraged to interpret a multimodal representation of volunteer work that is within the range of their previous knowledge (the known aspect). For instance, they know what volunteering means and as such they can understand what it is about, where it usually takes place, and why this type of personal or collective involvement is important for the betterment of the lives of others. As Kalantzis and Cope (2012) recall, experiencing the known activates other types of knowledge thus enabling students to learn something new based on what they already know.

As a result, they are constructing new knowledge (as, for example, where the volunteer work takes place and the importance of solidarity, such as helping Indian children read and building shelters for homeless). Both types of knowledge, the known and the new, were mindfully considered by the authors who designed the activities. The written mode in the English language expressed in the unit objectives, in the comprehension questions and in the captions of the images is also new knowledge that will be learned.

The process of analyzing is also enacted through the debate that takes place (Fig. 1). The students will talk about volunteering work and will most probably give other examples of what can be done to help the unprivileged. If the students had been challenged to visit the URL of the two volunteering programs, they would possibly have learned more about them and perhaps would have become interested in creating something similar in the places where they live.

In a nutshell, based on the opening page, the authors created learning activities to explore the knowledge processes of the multiliteracies pedagogy (Fig. 3), but they are not aimed on developing students' metalanguage about them. We argue that metacognition is closely related to awareness of how to learn and it is beneficial to learners in general, especially when they become aware of things they do to learn. We noticed that the interpretation of the multimodal arrangement of this opening page and the development of students' knowledge about volunteer work is the beginning of the enactment of another cycle related to the reading section. Its main purpose is to introduce teenagers who are transforming the world with their conscious attitudes towards the betterment of society.

Figure 3: The knowledge processes in motion



Source: created by the authors

The reading comprehension section

The focus is on two excerpts from the feature article, *Teens who are changing the world*. (Fig. 4, Fig. 5). The authors' most probable pedagogical purpose was to relate volunteer work introduced on the opening page to talented teens who created innovative solutions for challenges facing today's society. In both situations, there are concerns with empathy, human rights, and transformation, themes that are related to citizenry education. The layout design of both excerpts encompasses different modes of language representations to create multimodal ensembles of information about these teens. Both also reveal diversity aspects regarding these teens' nationality, their scientific work in different parts of the world, and a new genre that students are probably reading for the first time.

In the pre-reading activity (Fig. 4), students are invited to discuss the components (e.g., the multimodal-discursive characteristics) of the genre feature article. The design layout staff zoomed in the key elements so that they could be augmented for identification by the students during discussions in class. The instructions tell them to match the letters to the numbers added to the excerpt. We can assume that teachers and students interacted during the discussions and learning was perhaps successfully built. In these interactions the epistemological moves of the experiencing process were chosen by the pedagogical design (e.g., following the principles of the learning by design approach).

Figure 4: Pre-reading activity

Instructions choose the numbers that identify the following components of a feature article:

- a.** author's identification / **b.** catchy title (one that provokes readers' interest and enhance motivation / **c.** headline (a phrase at the top of an article indicating the subject of the article, usually in a large font size / **d.** introduction to the feature article / **e.** lead (a phrase used to add information to the headline).



Source: New High Up, p.50, 2017

Given our analysis, the design layout for the pre-reading activity is appropriate and made it clear what students should do to complete it. In terms of the pedagogical design, its purpose is to give students opportunities to activate previous knowledge and relate it to building new knowledge (Fig. 1). This refers to what students need to know about feature articles, their general characteristics, words, and expressions in English. However, nothing is mentioned about the images on the right, why they were inserted by the design layout, the social purposes of this genre, where it comes from, and why they are usually published.

From our point of view, this task falls short in preparing students for comprehending another excerpt from the same feature article (Fig. 5). Nothing has been discussed about the ways feature articles develop their themes in the progression of arguments, exposition, or description, that is, how the linguistic sequences of ideas evolve from the beginning to the end to create texture, cohesion, and coherence.

This feature article introduces two talented teens who contributed to the betterment of society. Yet, nothing is raised about the verbal resources that were chosen for its composition in the linguistic mode. Students are encouraged to read about Jack Andraka who created a test to diagnose pancreatic cancer in its early stages. They also read about Julia Blum who feeling worried about girls' self-esteem, collected 84

thousand signatures for a petition to plea magazines to stop photoshopping the faces and bodies of teens on their pages. Regretfully, the pedagogical design gives students no support regarding the ways meanings were weaved in the verbal code by means of linguistic structures, possibly unfamiliar words that need to be discussed and clarified.

Figure 5: Reading comprehension



Source: New High Up, p.51, 2017.

The feature article is followed by multiple-choice questions whose answers give students opportunities to grasp the overall meaning of the excerpt. In our viewpoint, more could have been explored about the context (e.g., “Where are the meanings situated?”), the composition (e.g., “How does the overall meaning hold together?”), and the interest (e.g., “Whose interest are the meanings skewed to serve?”) (KALANTZIS and COPE, 2012, p. 200).

Moreover, nothing is explored about the ways the excerpt is multimodally composed neither about the multimodal affordances, including the verbal ones. Sadly, the comprehension activities are mostly in the verbal code. We think that students could have been asked to transform the written code of the feature article into visual representations in infographics, concept maps, or outlines. This teaching / learning strategy would have benefitted them in terms of an in-depth comprehension about these two teens.

Analyzing has been slightly developed by the authors as they do not relate the two American teens to Brazilian ones to compare their ways of living. For instance, nothing is asked about the opportunities these teens possibly had at their schools to create solutions for others’ health and happiness and the chances Brazilian schools offer them. In a process of analyzing critically much more could have been discussed to give students the chance to talk over the challenges they face to become well prepared for the contemporary world. They could have expressed their voice about the precarious opportunities Brazilians have for supervised research and the budget to attain their goals. These can be seen as pedagogical weaknesses in

the development of the reading comprehension section by the authors. Furthermore, the analysis knowledge process practically disregards the verbal code and how the texture of the feature article displays lexical and grammatical references, for instance, among other linguistic characteristics that were not mentioned.

Regarding diversity, it is only partially considered concerning the teens' identity, where they are from, what language they speak. Others could have been discussed to enhance students' knowledge about people from other parts of the world, including young researchers. We also argue that some Brazilian teens who have excelled in creating innovative solutions for local problems should have been mentioned in the unit. Students could have been invited to get to know the Brazilian "Young Scientist Award" program run by CNPq whose aim is to reveal talents and boost research in our schools and universities.

Overall, the pedagogical design fails in providing opportunities for an in-depth comprehension of the excerpts if we consider what was required by the learning activities. The process of applying creatively that takes place in the writing section is unappropriated if we consider what was required from the students as we explain below.

The writing section

In the process of applying creatively, students were challenged to create a flyer whose purpose was to call people's attention to a specific problem in their neighborhood. To make things worse, the pedagogical design depicted an artificial example of the genre flyer showing no concerns with the principle of authenticity of learning situations. It is noticeable that the flyer was created by the editorial staff (Fig. 6) for the purposes of the unit. The ideal pedagogical situation in a genre-based approach would be the writing of a feature article since the students had read authentic excerpts from this genre and studied, conceptualized, and hopefully learned what it is and how to compose it. With teachers' scaffolding, groups of four or five students could work collaboratively to compose a feature article about a person or a situation they would choose to write about. They could go back and forth in the unit in the process of composing their feature article about a distinguished person from the place where they live (the mayor, a renowned doctor, or a dedicated firefighter, for example).

Figure 6: An exemplar of an unauthentic flyer



Source: New High Up, p.58, 2017

Although the pedagogical design made inaccurate choices, the writing activity followed the assumptions of the combination of genre-based and process-oriented approaches to writing in English. For instance, all the stages in a process-oriented approach (brainstorming, planning, drafting, writing, rewriting, and publishing) were clearly marked and instructions were given in each of the stages to guide students in

the task of writing a flyer (applying creatively). In sum, the unit we analyzed follows the cycle of the multiliteracies pedagogy only partially but emphasizes the two “multis”, multimodality and diversity in the learning activities. However, we missed activities that could develop students’ metalanguage about them. Had this taken place, awareness of how to process information could have prepared students in a more adequate way for dealing with different genres in English.

Final words

Our research was set up to investigate one of the most important teaching/learning resources in the Brazilian educational context, the textbook. The main purpose was to provide a critical view of the learning activities proposed in a recent English textbook written for High-School students in relation to the weaving between recent theory and pedagogical practices.

Results showed that most of the time the authors weaved the principles of the theory of multiliteracies and those concerning the processes of knowledge. It seems they were aware of the importance of signifying them for what students do to learn. However, some issues of concern must be highlighted. The most relevant is the lack of a metalanguage for the concept of multimodality, what it is, how it is created and how often to integrate it and its codes into written and oral communications. The processes of knowledge were not discussed with the students to develop their metacognition. We believe that self-consciousness of what to do to learn can improve learning.

Underlying our research, it is our intent to contribute to teachers’ education programs and encourage English teachers to supplement their textbooks so they become more appropriate for their school contexts. We believe that teachers should do minor/ major changes in their textbooks and an in-depth analysis can help them in this task.

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