

## **Learning08: Methodologies and Practices for Approaching Learning as a Social Phenomenon Inside and Outside of School**

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### **Voices and images: Multimodal data in the analysis of language users' beliefs**

Socioculturally oriented views that are based on Vygotskian thinking argue that embodiment and materiality are an essential aspect of human semiosis and thinking. Similar orientation can be found in the dialogical notion of language in the works of Voloshinov and Bakhtin. Their view, which opposes the Saussurean decontextualism and abstractivism, sees the focus of language studies to be on the concrete events of language use. Accordingly, the view necessitates that the multimodality of these utterances be taken into consideration. Starting from sociocultural and dialogical assumptions, but also drawing on other arguments that have been presented in other paradigms and frameworks (e.g. conversation analysis, systemic-functional approaches), increasing attention is given to multimodality that is present in human interaction.

In this paper, we will approach multimodality by drawing on our own work on 'beliefs' (aka everyday knowledge, subjective theories or conceptualisations) that language learners and teachers have about language, language learning and language teaching. Analysing beliefs from a dialogical point of view (Dufva, 2003; Aro, forthcoming) and using verbal data coming from written narratives and oral interviews, we have argued for the multivoicedness, situatedness and dynamicity of beliefs. Our results speak for a socio-cognitive stand where individual beliefs continuously intertwine with the social world of e.g. interactive events and institutional discourses. At the same time, we and our colleagues have considered multimodality from the point of view of research methods and have experimented with visually based means of data collection, such as drawings and photographs. The research data include, e.g., language learners' self-portraits (Kalaja, Alanen & Dufva 2008), Sami-Finnish bilingual children's self-portraits (Pietikäinen et al. 2008) and photographs that illustrate the position of English in the everyday lives of Finnish youngsters (Nikula & Pitkänen-Huhta 2008). An important aim in all these studies was to elicit the language users' own views and experiences.

Are 'beliefs', then, different in verbally articulated and visually represented data? Our first attempts to analyse the differences seem to suggest precisely this (Kalaja, Alanen & Dufva 2008). In this paper, we will present our findings, relate them to our theoretical approach and discuss the multimodality of semiotic resources as a source of 'beliefs'.

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