Micro-Paper 59: *Design*

Raúl Alberto Mora
Associate Professor, Education and Pedagogy Graduate Programs,
Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana, Sede Central Medellín | LSLP Chair
raul.mora@upb.edu.co

Defining the Term

The notion of design, inextricably linked to the idea of multimodality, mostly describes the conscious and deliberate choices we make regarding text creation. When it comes to design, there are two main strands that literacy studies has considered. On the one hand, we can conceive design as part of the process of meaning-making through texts, as espoused in multimodal theory. In this context, design talks about how we carefully and consciously select the diverse semiotic resources that constitute the texts that we create today. Design here implies a process of reflecting on the best ways to maximize the existing resources to create messages with deeper and more complex meanings that balance the medium and the message itself.

On the other hand, there is the idea of design related to learning and teaching moments. This notion of design draws from multiliteracies theory (in concert with multimodality) to explore the different choices that teachers make in their classrooms regarding instructional and literacy practices. This understanding of design seeks innovative modes of learning that foster creating and sharing knowledge that transcends the traditional forms of text creation and meaning-making. In that sense, design as an instructional event intends to maximize not only the semiotic modes of text creation but also the human resources present in today's classrooms in teachers and students.

Connecting it to LSLP

At LSLP, we are exploring the idea of design from multiple avenues and research projects. The first strand dovetails with the first definition. Our gaming literacies project is looking carefully at how the notion of design influences the gaming experience and the different language choices that gamers face during their playtime. Our gaming researchers are looking at how the different resources laid out in the game enable more meaningful experiences and how they expand the communicative possibilities in the games.

The second strand of our explorations of design is directly linked to the second definition we provided here. Some of our researchers exploring school literacies are looking at how the notion of design and instructional practices affects our teaching and assessment practices. Some of our work looks at how we can integrate multimodal texts as learning and teaching tools. Our other ongoing research is using this notion of design to rethink the ways in which we develop assessments for our language classes.

Expanding Second Language Research

The two notions of design discussed here are very relevant in second language studies. As our field keeps expanding ideas of meaning-making beyond traditional forms of texts, we need to pay closer attention to the different decisions text creators and teachers are making every day.

A renewed emphasis on design and the way it creates new spaces for creativity and innovation is necessary if we wish to engage today's learners with language in more conscious ways. The idea of design also opens new doors for critical spaces in our classrooms, as it provides new forms of agency and voice to our learners, regardless of age or competence level.

References

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