

Multimodal Pedagogy for Students' Creative Expressions in Visual Literacy Education

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Abstract : Having spent significant periods studying and working in North America and Europe, we, as two Chinese art educators, have been profoundly shaped by both Eastern and Western cultures. Consequently, our ambition is to enrich students' learning experiences by delving into and merging both cultural perspectives for innovative, creative expressions. This exposition draws on our action research study on students' visual literacy practices in a visual literacy course at a prominent Chinese university. The central premise was to explore innovative art forms by cross-utilizing various aspects of diverse cultures. By examining distinct cultural elements, we encouraged students to break away from familiar approaches and forge new paths in their creative endeavors. In implementing our curriculum, we utilized a multimodal pedagogy that deviated from the predominant print-based presentations typically employed in our classroom settings. This pedagogical approach effectively encouraged students to critically analyze the artifact, imbue it with their understanding and perspectives, and then produce an original piece. This approach also motivated students to leverage the semiotic potential of various communicative modes to address diverse cultural issues through their multimodal designs. To demonstrate the potential for cultural amalgamation, we utilized the artwork of Hong Kong-based artist Tik Ka. His works epitomize the fusion of Chinese traditions with Western pop culture, which served as a visual and conceptual reference point for students. Seeing how these distinct cultural elements could coexist and enrich each other in Tik Ka's work was inspiring and motivating for the students. Taken together, these pedagogical strategies helped create a dialogical space where students could actively experience, analyze, and negotiate complex modes of expression. This environment fostered active learning, encouraging students to apply their knowledge, question their assumptions, and reconsider their perspectives. Overall, such a unique approach to visual literacy education has the potential to reshape students' understanding of both cultures. By encouraging them to critically engage with their multimodal designs, we promoted an in-depth, nuanced appreciation of these diverse cultural heritages. The students no longer just interpreted and replicated images—they actively contributed to a dynamic and ongoing conversation between cultures.

Keywords : multimodal pedagogy, creative expressions, visual literacy education, multimodal designs

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