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 Social justice and multimodal pedagogy

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Abstract (400 words maximum)

This paper identifies some of the challenges and opportunities of using multimodal approaches to pedagogy in diverse and developing contexts, where vast differentials exist in terms of access to resources. It explores the ways in which multimodal pedagogy could enable a range of student resources to emerge, whilst at the same time enabling access to dominant forms. This includes access to the discourses and knowledges of official curricula, as well as formal methods of assessment. It is also about the creation of dispositions towards meaning-making in individual and social worlds outside of the classroom. Formal education often closes down access to a range of semiotic resources and multimodal pedagogy could potentially recover 'recognition' of these.
Recognition is about noticing or 'making visible' resources in terms of some existing framework and involves integrating resources in terms of (e)valuation and application in a range of contexts. A transformative notion of recognition is needed; recognition with a particular direction, to achieve representational and communicative purpose. This paper explores ways in which recognition could permeate different pedagogical moments in a range of contexts.

In South Africa, multimodal approaches have tended to have a sharp focus on power differentials and issues of social justice. (Archer 2006, 2008; Kell 2006; Stein 2008; Stein and Newfield 2006; Thesen 2001, 2008). Much of the research has been an attempt to make visible a range of students' resources which are often not noticed or valued in formal educational settings. This paper highlights aspects of multimodal pedagogy and research in South Africa, in relation to academic literacies, new technologies, multimodal discourse analysis, and resemioticization. It also sounds a cautionary note, arguing that simply including a variety of text forms in the curriculum does not necessarily imply increased access to educational practices