

Creating Multimodal eBooks Based on Educational Community in Universidad Industrial de Santander.

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Resumen

Title: La Creación de Libros Digitales Multimodales Basados en la Comunidad Educativa de la Universidad Industrial de Santander.¹

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Palabras clave: Pedagogía basada en la comunidad, Multimodalidad, Indagación, Literacidades críticas.

Descripción:

La educación actual debe hacer frente a los nuevos retos de una sociedad lingüísticamente diversa y globalizada cuya forma de comunicarse y acceder a la información ha cambiado drásticamente debido a la evolución de las tecnologías de la información y la comunicación. En respuesta a este complejo panorama comunicativo, se realizó un estudio cualitativo en el que se entrecruzan nuevas prácticas de alfabetización como las pedagogías basadas en la comunidad y la multimodalidad. Este estudio de investigación pretendió potenciar la construcción de significados de los estudiantes en lengua inglesa mediante la creación de textos multimodales en torno a la comunidad universitaria de los estudiantes. La intervención didáctica constó de cuatro fases en las que se entrelazaron las actividades comunitarias y multimodales para fomentar el diseño de textos multimodales por parte de los estudiantes. Los datos se recogieron mediante la triangulación de un diario de observación, entrevistas individuales semiestructuradas y artefactos de los estudiantes. El análisis indicó que los estudiantes desarrollaron prácticas de alfabetización crítica durante el proceso de investigación comunitaria a medida que tomaban conciencia de los activos de la universidad y leían críticamente la comunidad para identificar problemas. Además, la multimodalidad se convirtió en un poderoso recurso para superar las limitaciones del modo lingüístico por sí solo para la comprensión del mundo por parte de los estudiantes. Por último, la combinación de las

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pedagogías comunitarias y la multimodalidad se convirtió en una diada poderosa para fomentar la creación de significado en la lengua inglesa lo que a su vez tuvo un impacto positivo en la alfabetización lingüística y crítica de los estudiantes.

Abstract

Title: Creating Multimodal eBooks Based on Educational Community Assets in Universidad Industrial de Santander.²

Author: Jessica Marcela Velandia Santamaría

Key words: Community-based pedagogies, Multimodality, Inquiry, Critical literacies.

Description:

Today's education has to meet the new challenges of a linguistically diverse society, whose ways of communicating have changed dramatically due to the development of information and communication technologies. In response to this complex communicative landscape, a qualitative action research study was carried out, in which community-based pedagogies in combination with multimodality demonstrated to be a powerful dyad to develop new literacy practices. In the light of this, the present research study aims to potentiate students' meaning making in English through the creation of multimodal texts within the students' university community. The didactic intervention consisted of four stages in which the community and multimodal activities were interwoven to scaffold students' multimodal text design. Data was collected through the triangulation of an observation journal, individual semi-structured interviews and student artifacts. This extensive analysis indicated that the students developed critical literacy practices during the community inquiry process as they became aware of the assets of the university and critically read the community to identify issues. In addition, multimodality became a powerful resource to overcome the limitations of the linguistic mode alone to students' understanding of the world. Finally, the combination of community pedagogies and multimodality became a powerful dyad for fostering meaning-making in the target language which in turn had a positive impact on students' linguistic and critical literacy.

² Postgraduate Dissertation. Facultad Ciencias Humanas. Escuela de Idiomas. Director Luz Mary Quintero

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Introduction

Language teachers' duty relies on addressing the new challenges faced by society as a result of the shift from print to multimodal forms of communication, and preparing students with the skills to succeed in a world bombarded by digital devices. In the words of Álvarez-Valencia (2016) "the new communication landscape has shaping effects on how people design, negotiate, and disseminate meaning; therefore, another approach to language and communication is necessary" (p. 100). Indeed, the advent of new technological devices has dramatically changed the way people use language to relate and communicate with others in our personal, social, public and professional lives. Academic theorist such as Álvarez-Valencia (2016, 2018), Jewitt and Kress (2003) and Cope and Kalantzis (2009) posit that the contemporary communication landscape is predominantly visual; therefore, the tendency of the visual has dominated scenarios that were previously dominated by the written mode. For instance, when considering how students communicate informally, such as through social media, it becomes apparent that they heavily rely on the use of emoticons, images, and videos to convey meaning. However, these strategies are not as prevalent within academic settings due to the privileging of the verbocentric view of language (Álvarez-Valencia, 2018).

If we are to state the true mission of education, we can say that it is to ensure that all students benefit from learning in a way that enables them to participate fully in public, community and economic life (New London Group, 1996). If this is true, should the EFL classroom not be a place where students can acquire skills that are relevant to what is actually happening in contemporary society? In light of these facts, educators should examine the current status of language in students' real-life contexts and bring into the classroom practices that actively engage students in a meaning-making process that consider the real use of the language and prepare them for social, public and professional life (Álvarez-Valencia, 2018). For this reason, the present study intended to incorporate multimodal practices into the

classroom in order to engage students in using other modes of meaning that challenge the structural and traditional view of language.

Continuing with the current social paradigm, the New London Group (1996) asserts that "the multiplicity of communications channels and increasing cultural and linguistic diversity in the world today call for a much broader view of literacy than portrayed by traditional language-based approaches" (p. 60). In this regard, the present didactic project is framed within sociocultural approaches proposed by Moll et al., (1992), Murrell (2000), Freire (2005), Kumaravadivelu (2006), Canagarajah (2005), to transform the EFL class in an opportunity to broaden what happens in students' real lives and to incorporate approaches to language teaching that overcome the limitations of traditional practices that do not grasp the socio-cultural-linguistic diversity of a new society, more pluralized and globalized in the digital age. In this sense, a community-based pedagogy becomes an important approach to promote the construction of locally relevant knowledge through the integration of students' communities, and that engage students to apply the language for full and equitable social participation.

Bearing in mind the aforementioned, this paper illustrates an action research project conducted with students from an English Intermediate I course at Universidad Industrial de Santander, in which a community-based approach in combination with multimodality allowed students to participate in a social practice in which language, from a multimodal view, is used as a means to make visible the university's assets and the problems identified through an inquiry process. In addition, for the sake of providing students with a full range of possibilities to make meaning in the new communication landscape (Álvarez-Valencia, 2016-2018), this project integrates visual, audio and spatial modes for a complete visibility of the student community. Therefore, this study consisted of a didactic project that sought to potentiate students' meaning-

making in the target language by creating multimodal ebooks about students' academic university. Findings of this study emerged from the extensive analysis and triangulation of three data collection instruments (observation journals, semi-structured interviews and student artifacts). These data provided me as the teacher-researcher with valuable information that evidenced the potential of community-based approach and multimodality to enhance students' critical and linguistic literacy.

This paper describes the characteristics of a problematic situation identified in the Intermediate English I course at the Universidad Industrial de Santander. It then presents the general objectives and the three specific objectives to be achieved, followed by a theoretical framework and a literature review of the two main approaches within which this study is framed: The community-based approach and multimodality. After that, it gives an account of the research methodology and the population involved in this study. This is followed by a detailed description of the didactic sequence designed to achieve the proposed objectives, and the paper concludes with the results obtained from the analysis of the data collection instruments and the conclusions derived from the didactic project.

Research Problem

In my experience as an academic and educator of pre-service English teachers at Universidad Industrial de Santander (UIS), I have observed that English textbooks remain the core resource for teachers to mediate writing tasks; however, they often ignore existing theories to approach this skill in the EFL context. As it is stated by Núñez-Pardo (2020) “despite the variety of EFL teaching resources, English language textbooks continue being the main resource of the process of teaching and learning English” (p.114). A similar view is taken by Luke et al., (1989), Dendrinos (1992), and Valencia (2006) who describe the ongoing predominant role of textbooks in the educational context and their authority to guide pedagogical instruction and practices (as cited in Valencia, 2006). Regarding the above, a critical analysis of the textbooks used for teachers at UIS was conducted in order to assess the didactic strategies, cultural interaction, and cognitive mediators proposed to mediate and facilitate writing instructions in the EFL class. The analysis and reading of the literature helped me, as a teacher-researcher, to reflect on the limitations of the writing tasks proposed in EFL textbooks and to shed light on new strategies for teaching writing in the EFL classroom.

From this analysis, I was able to observe, firstly, that the majority of tasks proposed to develop writing skills in the EFL context are a follow-up step to other activities related to listening, speaking, reading, grammar or vocabulary; that is, few tasks are devoted to developing the writing process, where stages such as planning, drafting, editing and revising are considered (Harmer, 2006). Besides the aforementioned, Harmer identifies the use of writing in the EFL classroom as a means to help students perform a different kind of activity (i.e. speaking) and to be a backup for vocabulary or grammar; therefore, if students improve their writing skills, it is a by-product of the activity rather than its main purpose. Due to this, even though students need to be able to perform well on these “writing for learning” activities, I found the need for proposing other activities in which teachers could mediate students not

only to handle important writing elements such as handwriting, spelling, and punctuation but also to engage in the production of multimodal texts that respond to the current communication landscape.

Secondly, I identified that most of the writing activities proposed by the textbooks are traditional paper-based assignments in which a functional and structural view of the language is prevalent (Richard and Rogers, 2001), ignoring the multiple resources available in the new digital era to communicate. Reading the professional literature about new ways to approach language teaching in the ESL classroom, I found that the increased accessibility to computers has changed the way we communicate and use language; consequently, reshaping the way in which language is taught in the classroom (New London Group, 1996). In this regard, Kress (2000) and Álvarez-Valencia (2016) have highlighted that the shift from printed to digital books has facilitated the integration of other modes of communication besides the linguistic mode, such as images, sounds and animation. This analysis of the textbook, however, allowed me to observe that most of the writing activities ignored the multimodal nature of communication, and privileged the linguistic mode as the main meaning carrier, limiting meaning making in the target language in the contemporary communication landscape. Therefore, I found the need to start integrating into my pedagogical practices, multimodal activities that enable students to use all semiotic resources available in digital devices in order to fully express themselves and communicate.

Thirdly, from a more intercultural analysis, the writing activities proposed in the EFL textbooks do not offer students experiences to interact with their local communities nor to preserve Colombian cultural values and practices; instead, they tend to promote and represent the hegemonic cultures and practices. The above may spread the belief that some cultures are superior to others. As an illustration, studies conducted in Colombia attempt to make visible

the hegemonic culture portrayed in the EFL textbooks (Núñez-Pardo, 2018; Caro and Caro, 2019; Nuñez-Pardo 2020, Núñez-Pardo and Téllez-Téllez 202). According to Núñez-Pardo (2018), English textbooks “not only depict and reproduce values, behaviors, cultural patterns, traditions and dominant ideologies, but they also reinforce stereotypes and support the idea that one nationality is superior to others.” (p. 232).

Of significant note was a study conducted by Caro and Caro (2020) who problematized the intercultural aspect of the Cutting Edge textbook. The study aimed to reveal the hidden intentions, values, positions, and perspectives depicted when lectures bring to the discussion issues of power, ideology, identity, gender, and ethnicity. From the critical analysis, the authors arrived at the conclusion that the textbook still promotes British culture as the ‘world culture’ ignoring the others and creating among students a consciousness of consumerism and superficial culture. Kumaravadivelu (2003) also questions this way to promote language learning by including mostly hegemonic foreign cultural products since they do not give students a real sense of belonging to their local culture. Thus, even if such cultural hegemonic content tries to approach students to other cultures, which is valid, it may limit students' access to explore and foster their local cultural awareness.

Considering the three aspects mentioned above, as an academic and educator, I found myself in a position to intervene in a pedagogical setting in order to create favorable conditions in the EFL classroom for approaching writing skills from a more local and multimodal perspective. To this end, I initiated a reading of the studies carried out at the Universidad Industrial de Santander in which the work of Bolaños et. al. (2018), Pabón (2019), and Blanco (2020), framed in a community-based pedagogy, indicated a positive impact on students' literacy performance. This reading gave me the light to see community-based pedagogy as an insightful approach to transform writing classroom practices and that, in combination with

multimodality, can contribute to a richer and more authentic use of language. Starting from this point, in this pedagogical intervention, I aimed to allow students to connect students' communities with curricular practices as well as to become aware of the potential of other modes of meaning that are available for communication in the current digital environment. Therefore, in order to integrate teaching practices that allow students to explore, approach, communicate and represent their own social context, I decided to base this didactic project on a community-based pedagogy and a multimodal approach. Bearing in mind the above, the current study aims to answer the following research question: To what extent do students engage in meaning-making in the target language by creating multimodal texts around their academic community?

1. Objectives

1.1. General objective

To engage students in meaning-making in the target language by creating multimodal texts about students' academic community.

1.2. Specific objectives

1. Describe to what extent a Community-Based Project helps students to read the community critically.
2. Analyze the multimodal texts students created based on the communities of Universidad Industrial de Santander.
3. Maximize students' opportunities to make meaning through the use of different modes of communication.

2. Theoretical Framework

As a response to the limited opportunities found in an EFL classroom to approach the language from a more cultural and multimodal view of the language, I consider it imperative to frame the present study in the theory of a community-based approach and multimodality that embrace the language vision of multiliteracies and transform students into active participants in social changes. The present theoretical framework gives account to the approaches of community-based pedagogies and multimodality that embrace “the multiplicity of communications channels and media, and the increasing saliency of cultural and linguistic diversity” (New London Group, 1996, p. 63).

2.1. Community-based pedagogy

This study is drawn in inspiration from the socio-cultural and critical approaches to language teaching proposed by theorists such as Freire and Macedo (1987), Moll, Amanti, Neff and Gonzalez (1992), Murrell (2000) and Canagarajah (2006), who call for a language curriculum that does not ignore the knowledge of students' local realities and places communities and local knowledge at the center of pedagogy (Clavijo-Olarte, 2015). According to Sharkey (2012), community-based pedagogy CBP is defined as “curriculum and practices that reflect knowledge and appreciation of the communities in which schools are located and their students and their families inhabit” (p. 11). Thus, the CBP approach claims for curricular practices that enable the integration of students' environments into academic learning so that students can construct knowledge about and with the local communities. In the same vein, Quintero and Clavijo-Olarte (2023) found in community-based pedagogy the opportunity to place local knowledge as a source to build spaces where unnoticed voices and the plurality of local subaltern knowledge are recognized and made visible. In the light of these concepts, the present study is based on a CBP approach, which allowed the teacher-researcher to adapt the content to the socio-cultural context surrounding the students' academic community, to

promote the learners' social interest and to involve the students in active participation for the recognition and appreciation of the local communities.

In the words of Canagarajah (2005), “Curriculum change cannot involve the top-down imposition of expertise from outside the community but should be a ground up construction taking into account indigenous resources and knowledge, with a sense of partnership between local and outside experts” (as cited in Clavijo-Olarte, 2015, p. 33). This notion suggests that for a more inclusive, horizontal and democratic education, knowledge construction should begin by reclaiming the individual local identity and voice of students and their communities. Sharkey and Clavijo-Olarte (2012) also emphasize the importance of local knowledge in language and literacy education as a means to encourage language learners to value their local resources.

The above have been evidenced in several studies conducted in Colombia that assessed and reflected on the value of integrating the local community to the EFL classroom. For instance, scholars such as Clavijo (2015), Clavijo, Ramirez, and Riveros (2015), Clavijo and Rincón (2016), Florez (2018), Bolaños-Saenz, et. al (2018), Nieto, (2019) and Pabón (2019), have opted to bring the experiences, practices, elements, people, and symbols of the local community to the classroom in order to strengthen students' community identity while improving their literacy practices. Therefore, for the sake of creating a more inclusive school climate for learning, as called for by Schecter, Solomon and Kittmer (2003), the didactic sequence designed for this study sought to transform content and materials in order to connect them to the local, allowing students to first value their own roots, appreciate the resources available in their surroundings, and identify issues of injustice and inequality relevant to their learning. To do this, an asset-based approach to curriculum was at the heart of this project since, in the words of Sharkey and Clavijo-Olarte (2012), it “does not ignore the realities of

curriculum standards that teachers must address but emphasizes local knowledge and resources as starting points for teaching and learning” (pp.130-131).

It worth mentioning that the curriculum should not be limited to materials and indoor lessons, in a community-based pedagogy, Schecter, Solomon and Kittmer (2003) advocate for a broader approach where interaction with the community, rather than mere description, serves to reflect the knowledge of the members of the local communities in which they teach. In this sense, for a truly community-based approach, it is imperative that students have first-hand experience of interacting with the community in its authentic context; this would enable them to critically observe and identify the assets, which in turn would foster appreciation and help to address real life issues.

To this regard, studies conducted by Quintero and Clavijo-Olarte (2023), Clavijo (2015), Medina et. al. (2015), and Florez (2018), promoted interaction between students and the local context and incorporated inquiry activities that allowed them to acknowledge their own local culture. Findings of these studies evidenced that interacting with other members of the community leads to strengthening students’ local identity, and encourages students to become active agents in their communities. Interactions inside and outside the classroom allow students to identify the conditions of people in the local community, to acknowledge how some members contribute to solve their necessities, and to become aware of history, politics, and values of the communities (Flores, 2018). This is in line with Melaville, Berg, Blank and Coalition for Community Schools, W. D. (2006), who assert that a community-based learning serves “[t]o create both learners and citizens” (p.2). For them community-based learning is an ideal way to connect subject matter to the places where students live and the issues that affect us all. In this way, the students learn how to be citizens, acting as citizens (Melaville, Berg, Blank and Coalition for Community Schools, W. D., 2006, p. 1). Therefore, encouraging

students' active participation in their communities responds to the notion of language proposed by Freire, who asserts that "language does not simply incarnate reality without implicating itself in relations of power - usually as a dominant totalizing system." (McLaren and da Silva, 1991, p.36).

Concerning language literacy, Rincón and Clavijo-Olarte (2016) highlighted the potential of community inquiries to create meaningful opportunities in the classroom to approach the language. According to them, community-based pedagogies transform the traditional classroom by contextualizing language practices and creating flexible and meaningful ways to communicate, thus, creating a path to scaffold students' learning process. In the same vein, studies by Quintero and Clavijo-Olarte (2023), Florez (2018) and Pabón (2019) showed that giving students the opportunity to explore and write about their own local community not only increases their desire to continue learning, but also improves their language skills, especially writing. Data of these studies yielded to the conclusion that engaging students in local realities, leads to improvements of writing skills, including grammar, coherence and cohesion, since the content was raised in a meaningful experience of interaction with the community. As stated by Pabón (2019), "social interaction was the engine for students to recall and produce meaning in their written discourse" (p.89). Bolaños et. al. (2018) and Lastra et. al. (2018) also identified the link between CBP and the improvement of English language proficiency. According to them, students increase their self-confidence when the content is familiar to them (Bonilla and Cruz, 2014). Thus, when students feel empowered in the subject, they are more motivated to complete classroom tasks and find the tasks more meaningful.

Similar studies have adopted CBP principles to transform preservice-teachers' practices (Quintero and Clavijo-Olarte, 2023, Yuan, 2019; Lastra, et.al., 2018; Sharkey, et. al. 2016,

Clavijo, 2015; and Clavijo and Sharkey, 2012). Pre-service teachers who participated in Lastra et. al.'s (2018) and Yuan's (2019) studies arrived at the conclusion that becoming community teachers allows them to foster their sensitivity and awareness of their students' needs, value local community culture, and develop pedagogies that facilitate students' learning. Therefore, in order to value what the community offers to educational practice, teachers should acknowledge the cultures and traditions that represent the community they serve (Murrell, 2001 as cited in Sharkey, Clavijo-Olarte, and Ramírez, 2016) this is what Murrell calls a Community Teacher (CT). A community teacher is "an accomplished urban teacher who develops that contextualized knowledge of culture, community, and identity of children and their families as the core of their teaching practice." (Murrell, 2000, p. 340). To this regard, a study conducted by Clavijo-Olarte (2015) showed that when teachers become aware of the useful resources available in the community and use them in interesting ways to guide students' projects, curricular transformation and students' active participation in learning takes place.

In light of the above, the implementation of a community-based pedagogy fits with the purpose of this study, as it has been demonstrated in the previous studies, serve to embrace the realities of the students, make them participants of their own realities, and promote the students' literacy and critical practices by contextualizing and applying the language with real world situations.

Considering that one of the objectives is intended to maximize the opportunities for meaning making in the target language, it is imperative to deepen our understanding of the concept of multimodality for meaning making in the EFL classroom; and how it conceives the current nature of communication and representation.

2.2. Multimodality

Multimodality is described as “the approaches that understand communication and representation to be more than about language, and which attend to the full range of communicational forms people use—image, gesture, gaze, posture and so on—and the relationships between them” (Jewitt, 2009 as cited in Álvarez-Valencia, 2016, p. 100). This concept emerged as a response to the increasing cultural and linguistic diversity in globalized societies in which the advent of electronic devices has reshaped how people design, negotiate and disseminate meaning; in consequence, educational practices should meet this new reality and rethink new literacy pedagogies (New London Group, 1996, Cope and Kalantzis, 1999, Álvarez-Valencia, 2016). Hence, for the development of this didactic intervention, I consider it essential to understand the new western communication and language landscape and the social semiotic theory behind the “why” of a multimodal approach in pedagogical practices.

Bearing in mind the need to make an explicit position in theory, I frame this didactic intervention with the social semiotic perspective of communication worked by Gunther Kress, best known for his work on semiotics, design, and multimodal literacy. In his book *Multimodality: A Social Semiotic Approach to Contemporary Communication*, Gunther Kress (2008) defines communication and representation as “distinct social practices”, where representation focuses on giving material realization to my meanings about the world (signs) and communication focuses on the need to make that representation available in interrelation with others in the current environment (as cited in Cope, and Kalantzis, n.d). Based on these definitions, communication is understood as the way in which people give material form to meanings through socially available resources in the current environment while interacting with others (Bezemer and Kress, 2008).

Since the invention of the printing press, the linguistic mode has been the dominant mode of making meaning without considering the affordances that the new communication

landscape and the shift from print to the screen have brought to contemporary societies (Álvarez-Valencia, 2016). As it is cited in Álvarez-Valencia (2016), two major theories in linguistics, Generic Linguistics, and Functional Linguistics have focused their studies on scrutinizing the oral and written mode of communication by being considered the main carrier of meaning. Regarding the above, linguistics such as Gunther Kress, Theo Van Leeuwen, Carey Jewitt, and other scholars, have proposed multimodal literacy as an approach that challenges this verbocentric view of communication and meaning, and goes beyond approaches where language is treated as providing a full account of meaning; on the contrary, multimodality “includes questions around the potentials – the affordances – of the resources that are available in any one society for the making of meaning; and how, therefore, ‘knowledge’ appears differently in different modes” (Kress, 2011, p.38). Jewitt (2009) argues that in order to attend to the full range of communication, modes such as image, gesture, gaze, posture and sound are treated as potentially equal in their capacity to contribute meaning to complex texts. Therefore, Kress and Leeuwen (2001) proposed a theory of semiotics appropriate to contemporary communication, in which common semiotic principles operate within and across different modes, and in which it is quite possible for music to encode action, or images to encode emotion. Bearing in mind this, integrating a multimodal approach into my didactic intervention allowed me to cope with the profound changes in communication that have transformed social and work life over the last decades due to the dominance of digital information and image as a mode of representation (Bezemer and Kress, 2008).

Some researchers such as Jewitt (2005), Cloonan (2008), Rowsell and Walsh (2011), Álvarez-Valencia (2016), Batchelor (2018), and Sakulprasertsri (2020), described how the dominance of the digital era has paved the way for the interaction of multiple modes of communication such as image, gesture, sound, animation, gaze, spatial distribution among others to contribute to and strengthen meaning-making. Bezemer and Kress (2008), and Jewitt

(2014) define mode as a socially and culturally shaped resource for making meaning; image, writing, layout, music, gesture, speech, and soundtrack are examples of modes. These modes of representation consist of a set of semiotic resources that are defined by Jewitt (2014) as “resources that people draw on and configure in specific moments and places to represent events and relations” (as cited in Archer and Breuer, 2015, p. 2). Hence, the semiotic resources such as color, layout, and font that are employed across modes provide insights into the cultural and social backgrounds. The social and cultural component in each mode is illustrated by Archer and Breuer (2015) who affirm that “certain facial gestures convey different meanings in different social groupings. A certain color may be related to happy events in one place (i.e. the white dress of the bride in Western countries), and to sad events in another place (i.e. white dresses at burial ceremonies in Thailand and other Asian countries)” (p.2). This example links with the multimodal social semiotics approach whose principle underpins the selection and configuration of modes in texts to make meaning and the interests of the sign-maker in a particular context. Based on this idea, during this project, it was crucial for the designers (students) to inquire about what is understood as mode in a community and the appropriate selection and use of modes for the realization of discourse in a text (Kress, 2011). Following this line, the selection and configuration of modes for the creation of multimodal texts was aligned with Hallyday's (1975) concept of language as a social semiotic system that people use “in order to express meaning and in order to perform adequately and successfully in different social contexts. The way we say or write something is the result of a systematic linguistic choice.” (Archer and Breuer, 2015, p. 5).

From this perspective, Álvarez-Valencia (2016) pointed out the need for teachers and scholars to be aware of multimodality in order to potentiate the language and the understanding of the sociocultural environment. To exemplify the importance of bringing multimodal resources to pedagogical practices, studies conducted by Cloonan (2008), Campano and Low

(2011), Ghiso and Low (2013), Wang (2015), Batchelor (2018), and Sakulprasertsri (2020) evidenced that integrating multimodal practices into the English classroom aids teachers to expand the modes of meaning beyond the linguistic and offer students possibilities for additional representations. Findings from Guiso and Low's study (2013) described “how a focus on multimodal literacies can offer possibilities for additional representations [...] and consider how immigrant students utilize multiple semiotic resources to represent the complexity of their experiences and convey cultural hybridity” (p. 27). Batchelor (2018) drew a similar conclusion by suggesting that the use of multiple modes assists learners when they are not able to communicate in one mode, but they may be able better to represent their thinking in another sign system; as she stated, “The more complex the meaning, the more likely multiple sign system will be used” (p. 137). In other words, visual modes provide students the opportunity to create meaning in a more sophisticated way since they allow them to convey realities that are not always available through just printed words. This is in line with Kress (2011) who assumes that “language, whether as speech or as writing, is one means among many available for representation and for meaning-making.” (p. 37). The above assumes that writing provides only “partial” meanings in a text; hence, the meanings of the maker of a text as a whole reside in the meanings made jointly by all the modes in a text.

Regarding writing practices, Bezemer and Kress, (2008) assert that the “uses and forms of writing have undergone profound changes over the last decades, which calls for a social, pedagogical, and semiotic explanation” (p.166). As I mentioned before, contemporary communication does not continue to be the same as some decades before due to technological development; as a consequence, writing is no longer the central mode of representation in texts (Cope and Kalatzis, 1999) such as textbooks, teacher-produced material, web-based resources, giving the path to the image as the central mode for representation. The above forces us to

question the present and future of the way teachers mediate writing in the classroom. In Álvarez-Valencia's (2016) words:

“We have seen how the dominance of the book has given way to the dominance of the screen. Thus, we have become visual cultures. This is a phenomenon that can be observed daily as we navigate the Internet or we use digital devices. Most digital interfaces are designed so that we are required to read less verbal language and instead we are prompted to read more audiovisual messages.” (p. 99)

The impact of multimodality in transforming teaching practices was evident in some studies conducted by Cloonan (2008), Quintero and Clavijo-Olarte (2023); Medina, et al. (2015), and Rincón and Clavijo (2016). The teachers and pre-service teachers who participated in these studies were positively influenced by the multimodal schema because of the shift from print-focused instruction to literacy instruction that focuses on the multiple modes of meaning available in pervasive technologies. For instance, three studies conducted in Colombia by Quintero and Clavijo-Olarte (2023); Clavijo and Rincón (2016) and Clavijo, Ramirez, and Riveros (2015) aimed to integrate multimodality into the teaching experience in order to overcome the limitations of traditional writing practices that privilege the use of paper and promote purely linguistic productions. According to Clavijo and Rincón (2016) “multimodality breaks with the monolingual EFL classrooms in which only written texts are used” (p. 77). In relation to this, Quintero and Clavijo-Olarte (2023) and Clavijo, Ramirez, and Riveros (2015) found in multimodality a way not only to transform monomodal English teaching, but also to allow students to represent their understanding of cultural and social issues. To this regard, the integration of multimodality fits with the intended objectives of this study since other authors have indicated that this approach creates myriad opportunities in the English classroom for students to represent their realities.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The present study fits within the characteristics of qualitative research, as it sought to address, describe and understand a pedagogical phenomenon (Clark and Creswell, 2014) rather than to explain and manipulate variables (Nassaji, 2020). In addition, qualitative research “uses narrative, descriptive approaches to data collection to understand the way things are and what the research means from the perspectives of the participants in the study.” (Mills, 2011, p. 6). Considering this definition, the current research was conducted under a qualitative framework in which the teacher-researcher was able to interact with the participants, assess their experiences and intervene within an adapted EFL environment aimed at enhancing students’ social interaction, linguistic and critical literacy. Thus, the rigorous and careful analyses of the qualitative data using interviews, observations and documents permitted me to present the findings with greater reliability.

The aims of this study were in line with the central tenet of Action Research (AR) that intends to “intervene in a deliberate way in the problematic situation in order to bring about changes and, even better, improvements in practice” (Burns, 2010, p. 2). Action research also becomes an important contribution to the professional stance of teachers, encouraging them to critically examine the dynamics of their classrooms, to reflect on students' actions and interactions, to validate and challenge existing practices, and to take risks in the process (Mills, 2011). Therefore, following an AR design gave the teacher-researcher a means to observe, examine, plan and intervene in a pedagogical setting in order to positively influence students' critical literacy practices by adapting the curriculum with the community-based pedagogy and multimodal principles.

Action Research is depicted by Mills (2011), as a participatory and democratic practice that is socially responsive and takes place in a particular context. Given that the present study is framed within a socio-cultural approach that situates language learning in a more critical view where students can observe, interact, read and transform their realities (Clavijo-Olarte and Ramirez, 2019), this study falls under the values of critical action research as it shares the characteristics of being: “1. Democratic - Enabling participation of people. 2. Participatory - Building a community of learners. 3. Empowering- Providing freedom from oppressive, debilitating conditions. 4. Life-enhancing - Enabling the expression of people’s full human potential.” (Stringer, 2004 as cited in Mills, 2011, p. 11). Thus, critical action research reflects this study's interest in enlightening students and promoting their participation in socio-cultural practices.

Moreover, this study followed the planning, action, observation and reflection moments proposed by Kemmis and MacTaggart (1988) which offers a continuing spiral of cycle (see Figure 1) that was evident until the researcher achieved the expected outcome (as cited in Burns, 2010). Below you will find a brief description of the actions that took place in each moment during the first cycle.

The first moment in this study was the *planning*, it was a forward-looking phase where the teacher-researcher had already identified the problematic situation through a critical analysis of the EFL textbooks used to teach writing skills in the classroom. It was also the moment when extensive reading took place on the main theoretical framework of this study, community-based pedagogy and multimodality, this research guided me in designing the didactic unit to be followed in order to achieve the intended objectives. As Burns (2010) suggests that “AR is a recursive spiral or cycle of action and reflection, and that means you start examining and analyzing the data in a dynamic way right from the very beginning” (p.

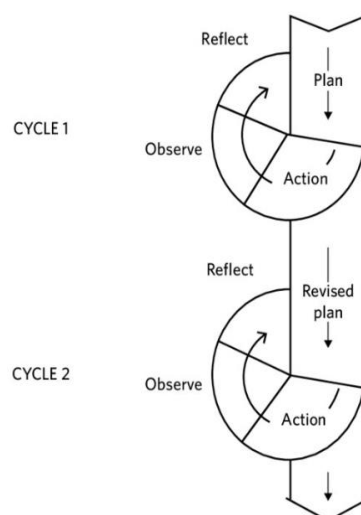
103), the study was therefore not designed to be sequential. Instead, observation and reflection were a constant part of the research.

The next moment in this cycle was *action*. In this stage, the didactic sequence was carefully designed based on the information gathered through classroom observations and theoretical research. During this stage, the instruments were designed and validated to collect the data that provided the teacher-researcher with reliable information to decide if some pedagogical adjustments are required during the study. After designing the data collection instruments, the classroom intervention took place.

Finally, *reflection* was a process evident from the beginning of the study and continued throughout the intervention. Here the teacher-researcher had the opportunity to critically reflect on, evaluate and describe the process and outcomes in order to generate insights, thoughts and expand my understanding of the topic being addressed (Burns, 2010). According to Burns, reflection 'has a dramatic effect on how teachers build their personal knowledge about aspects of their teaching' (p.142). It therefore becomes the starting point for transforming and improving my own pedagogical practice.

Figure 1.

Kemmis and McTaggart cycle of action research



Note: This figure was taken from Burns (2010)

3.2. Setting and Population

The population that participated in this didactic project corresponds to sixteen pre-service teachers in their fifth semester at the Universidad Industrial de Santander, who were taking *Intermediate English I*. Fourteen of them belong to the "Licenciatura en Matemática" program and two of them belong to the "Licenciatura en Literatura y Lengua Castellana". Since 2020, the teachers of the Escuela de Idiomas UIS, of which I am a member, are responsible for giving courses to the students of the Bachelor's programs at UIS. Therefore, this population was selected using a convenience sampling approach because, according to Hernández-Sampieri (2018), these participants were available and I had immediate access to them as I was assigned to teach this course. The participants were taking the fifth and last compulsory level of English at the university and were expected to reach a B1 level according to the CEFR at the end of the semester. All students enrolled in this course participated in the present project, and in order to achieve the proposed objectives, these students have to work together in groups of two throughout the project. For ethical reasons, all participants were given a code to protect their identity, they were coded as participant S1, participant S2 and so on during the analysis of the data.

3.3. Data collection instruments

In order to collect the systematic information for the analysis of the data in this study, three data collection instruments were used, two of which are non-observational (Burns, 1999) and one of which is categorized as observational. The instruments that were analyzed and triangulated to achieve the aims of this study were: observation journals, semi-structured interviews and student artifacts.

3.3.1. *Observation journal*

According to Burns (1999) observation “enables researchers to document and reflect systematically upon classroom interactions and events, as they actually occur rather than as we think they occur” (p. 80). Having an observation journal allowed me to record students' attitudes, behaviors and comments as they completed each task, as well as to write my own reflections at the end of the lesson on what I had observed and the activities that needed to be modified for the project. As Burns (2010) asserted, observations “are extremely useful though as a way of capturing significant reflections and events in an ongoing way” (p. 89). This observation journal was kept in Google Drive and each entry was coded using color coding for each of the objectives (see Annex A).

3.3.2. *Semi-structured interview*

Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted at the end of the intervention in order to analyze the students' personal views of the pedagogical intervention and to explore further the findings from the students' artifacts and observation journals (see Annex B). According to Burns (2010) semi-structured interviews enable teacher-researchers “to make some kind of comparison across your participants’ responses, but also to allow for individual diversity and flexibility” (p.75). Each question was carefully designed and tested for validity and reliability. These interviews helped me to gather significant information that was triangulated during the analysis process to achieve the three objectives. In order to avoid students' bias and to help them freely express their perceptions and thoughts about the didactic project, these semi-structured interviews were conducted individually and recorded on the Zoom platform. 10 of the 16 participants of this study took part in the interview, the criteria for selection for the interview was to choose one member per group, since 2 students decided to work alone, they were also interviewed.

3.3.3. *Students' artifacts*

As one of the aims of this study is to analyze the multimodal texts produced by the students based on the university community, the students' drafts and final multimodal ebooks were collected to achieve this purpose. As Burns (1999) points out "Collecting samples of texts over a period of time enables teachers to assess the progress which students make as well as to diagnose areas for further action in classroom research" (p. 140). Therefore, the extensive analysis of the students' final ebooks provided me with significant information about the students' choice of written, visual, aural and spatial elements to make meaning and how they deliberately integrated them into a whole text to represent and visualize university values and issues.

3.3.4. Ethical considerations

In accordance with the CEINCI-UIS (The Ethics Committee in Scientific Research) of the Universidad Industrial de Santander, which aims to ensure that research complies with ethical principles, privacy and confidentiality, this study respected ethical procedures throughout the research process, so that "participants [were] treated with respect and not harmed by the research". (Clark and Creswell, 2014, p. 71). As this study took place in a Colombian higher education institution, all data collected was treated confidentially, in accordance with Law 1581 of 2012 (also known as the Data Protection Act). To this end, the participants were informed verbally and in writing (see Annex C) at the beginning of the course about the objectives and advantages of participating in this study and were asked if they agreed to take part in this research. As the study took place during the period of a compulsory Intermediate English I class in which the participants were enrolled, the teacher-researcher and the participants agreed that this project would count for 30% of the final grade, as they had all agreed to participate in and benefit from this study. However, it was made clear that participation was entirely voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw at any time without

academic consequences; but that the percentage of the final grade would be allocated to other activities. They were then asked to take part in classroom observations and audio-taped interviews, and that the artifacts designed during the project would be material for analysis of the achievement of the objective. In addition, each participant was given a code (i.e. participant S1, participant S2, etc.) to ensure that their identity remained confidential, and they were assured that the information obtained would only be used to fulfill the aims of this study.

4. Methodological Design of the Didactic Sequence

4.1. Didactic sequence implementation

The present didactic intervention project was conducted during the second semester of the 2022 academic year from October 12th in 2022 to February 15th in 2023. Although the academic semester consisted of 32 sessions, with an intensity of 2 and 3 hours per class, the teacher-researcher dedicated 17 sessions to the realization of the project, since other curricular topics included in the syllabus, which did not fit the purpose of this study, had to be covered. During the planning phase, it was expected that 2 hours per week would be devoted to the project; however, due to time constraints, the last month was entirely devoted to the production of the final product, making a total of 40 hours for the intervention. As it is shown in Table 1 the 17 sessions were divided into 4 stages. In each stage, students were required to perform different tasks in which the community-based approach fostered the production of multimodal texts. The tasks developed in each stage had the purpose of contributing to and guiding the design of the final multimodal ebooks. It is worth mentioning that the students had to work in pairs for the realization of the project and that each session took place in a computer room where the students could take advantage of all the technological applications for the design of the multimodal ebooks (see Annex D).

Table 1.*Didactic sequence stages, time and activities*

Stages	Time	Activity
1 Community mapping and negotiating the topics	3 Sessions	1. Community Mapping 2. Descriptive multimodal paragraphs (Padlet) 3. Negotiation of the topics
2 Inspiring stories and multimodal texts	6 Sessions	1. Reading the biography of Fernando Montaña. 2. Interviewing with an indigenous member. 3. Creating a comic based on Liliana's story. 4. Designing of the first ebook about Paola Tello 5. Designing of the interview
3 Multimodal composing process	7 Sessions	1. Plan (Outline) 2. Draft. 3. Revising (constant feedback). 4. Edit 5. Revising (constant feedback) 6. Final version
4 Sharing with the community	1 Session	1. Presentation of the ebook to the community.

Note: This table shows the four main stages of the didactic sequence, the time taken to carry out each stage and the activities developed in each stage.

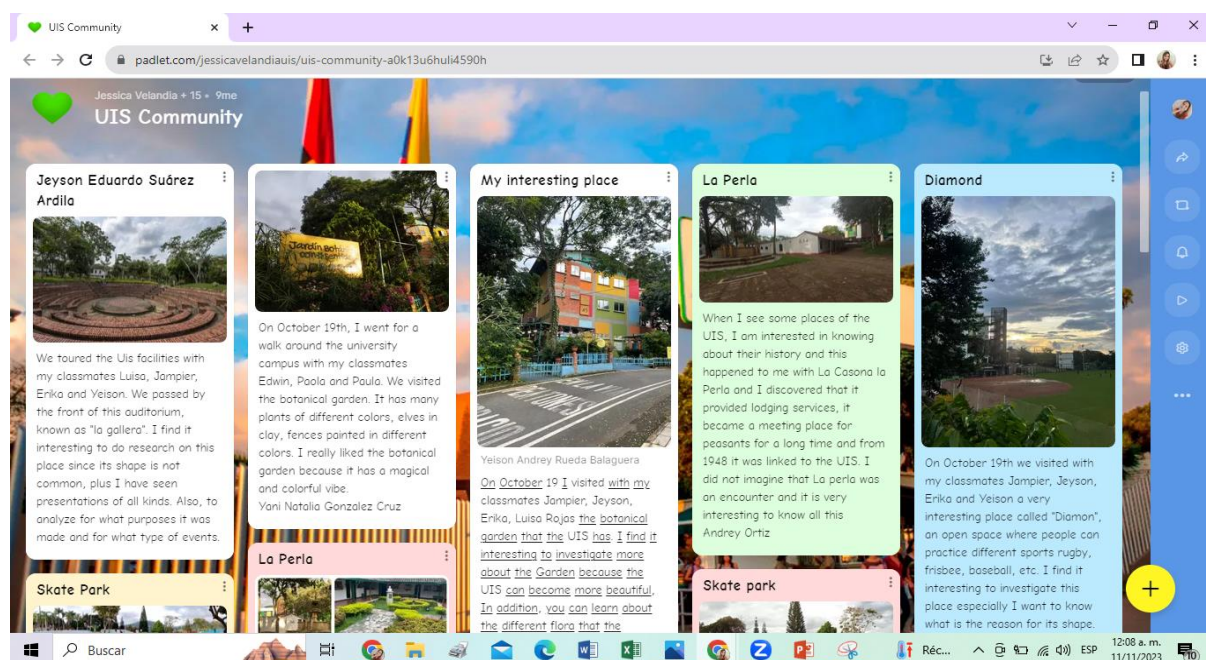
4.1.1. Community mapping and negotiating the topics

During this stage, the teacher-researcher invited students to explore together the campus of the university in a mapping exercise (McKnight, J., and Kretzmann, J., 1993). During this mapping, students were required to take photographic registers of the physical spaces, monuments, buildings, sport fields, and graffiti of the university that were later used as visual resources for the creation of multimodal short paragraphs in a Padlet (see Figure 2). For this activity, students wrote short paragraphs to describe the places that they found more interesting

during the mapping and gave the reason why they would like to know more about those places. After that, teacher-researchers and students started to discuss and negotiate about the topics they would like to inquire about for the creation of the final multimodal ebook. Some of the interests emerged from the mapping exercise like the lake, the skate park and the cafeterias. Even though students agreed to develop the project on individuals that belong to the UIS, these places served as a source of inspiration for selecting some topics like Colectivo por los animales, the skater Oscar Piñeres, and women from the cafeterias.

Figure 2.

Padlet, multimodal paragraphs



Note: You can access Padlet in this link <https://padlet.com/>

4.1.2. Inspiring stories and multimodal texts

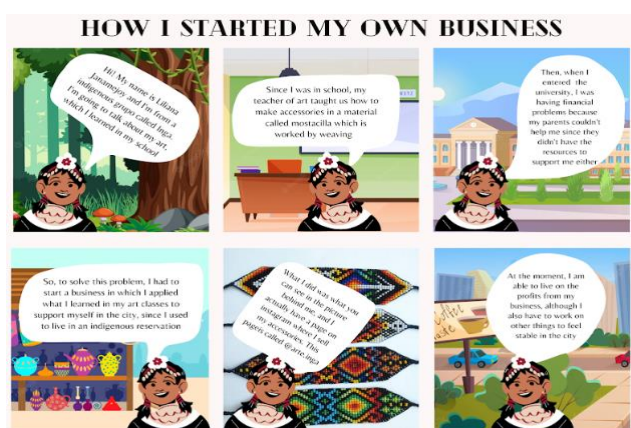
One of the objectives of this stage was to expose the students to different inspiring stories of members of the community and to prepare them for the realization of the final product. The first story was the biography of Fernando Montaña, a Colombian dancer who was

born in a marginalized region of Colombia, but who has managed to stand out in one of the most important ballet companies in the world, The Royal Ballet, despite economic challenges. From this story, students had to identify and analyze the different elements and sequence of a biography as well as complete a reading comprehension activity (See Annex E).

In the second task, the teacher-researcher invited LP³ to join the class. She is a member of the Inga community who is currently studying an engineering program at UIS. In this session, the students had to conduct an interview with LP using questions that were previously designed by the teacher-researcher. The questions were purposely socialized with the students beforehand in order to familiarize them with the protocol of conducting a semi-structured interview. With the information collected from the interview, the students were asked to design a multimodal comic representing the part of LP's story and her Inga community that called more their attention (see Figure 3). This task was used to begin to interweave the visual and linguistic modes in a text and to familiarize students with the digital possibilities offered by the Canva application.

Figure 3.

Multimodal comics designed by students about LP story and Inga community



³ LP: for ethical issues, this is the code used along the paper to identify the Inga student who participated in the interview in the second stage Inspiring Stories and Multimodal Text.

The third activity was to read the biography of Paola Tello, a UIS physics graduate who led an important mission to Antarctica, and transform it into a multimodal ebook. For this exercise, students were required to integrate different visual elements along with the spatial and linguistic mode to create an ebook using the application Bookcreator. This task was used to raise students' awareness of the role models and gender gaps that exist in the UIS community, as well as to familiarize them with the design of an ebook using multimodality. (see Figure 4).

Figure 4.

Written text and ebook created about the biography of Paola Tello



Note: This figure shows on the left the written format that students had to read and transform into a multimodal ebook as shown on the right. The ebooks can be accessed via the following link:

<https://read.bookcreator.com>

Finally, with the assistance of the teacher-researcher, students designed the questions for the semi-structured interview with a community member that would inspire the creation of the final ebooks. To this end, the teacher-researcher guided the process of the creation of the interviews in individual sessions. At this stage, there was also autonomous work by the students

to go to the community, interact with them and record the interview. It is worth mentioning that for ethical considerations the students asked each interviewee to sign a consent form. The students then had to upload the recorded video of the interviews to a drive folder so that they could easily access it (see Figure 5).

Figure 5.

Videos of the interviews conducted to the members of the community



Note: You can access to the interviews in the following links [Video 1](#) [Video 2](#) [Video 3](#) [Video 4](#) [Video 5](#) [Video 6](#) [Video 7](#) [Video 8](#)

4.1.3. Multimodal composing process

It is important to mention that before starting the multimodal composing process, the teacher-researcher gave and socialized with the students the rubric (See Annex F) with the criteria to be evaluated for the final product; this rubric did not limit the students' creativity in composing but gave them some parameters of the structure to follow and modes of meaning to include. During this stage, the teacher-researcher took as a model the same process wheel (see Figure 6) used in traditional writing practices proposed by Harmer (2004). This cycling wheel process included the non-linear stages of planning, drafting, editing (reflecting and revising) and final version seen in a traditional writing process; but, for this particular project, other

modes of meaning making besides the linguistic such as visual, audio, and spatial mode. As this multimodal composing process was not linear, students had to make different decisions and changes during the editing process; hence, many versions of the ebook were produced at this stage, and many revision and reflection sessions were required.

Figure 6.

Writing Process Approach Wheel



Note: This figure has been taken from the book *How to Teach Writing* by Harmer (2004) p. 6.

In the planning stage, the students were expected to organize the information collected in the interview according to an outline provided by the teacher. The structure of the outline included introduction, body and conclusion where students had to write the topic sentences for each paragraph. Then, with the assistance of the teacher-researcher, the students started to write the first draft of their ebooks, but unlike traditional writing, they also had to think about the visual and audio elements that they wanted to include in their ebooks. After that, the students started the edition of the ebook in the Canva application. This process was developed during class time so that the students could work collaboratively, and the teacher-researcher could constantly revise and give feedback to the students. The teacher-researcher's support

during this stage was crucial in guiding them through the writing process as well as in recommending technological applications to help them in the editing stage, such as online dictionaries, collocation dictionaries, websites for finding and editing images. It is worth mentioning that the students' digital knowledge also contributed to the success of the final product.

Before delivering the final version, the teacher-researcher dedicated a session to the students to share their current version of the ebooks to the class. The objective of this activity was to permit them to give and receive feedback to and from their peers, especially regarding visual and spatial distribution elements; this exercise served the students to refine their ebooks. To continue the editing process, students had to download their ebooks into a flipbook version using the Heyzine application, where they added background music and their audios to the ebook.

4.1.4. Sharing with the community

Lastly, the students presented their final ebooks to the UIS community in an auditorium. For this closing activity, they had to invite the members of the community who had inspired the stories of the ebooks. The schedule of the session consisted of 15 minutes for each pair to present their ebook, time in which they had to introduce the topic in English, play the ebook so that the audience could read and listen to it, and give a short reflection on the story in Spanish, then, if the protagonist of their story attended the presentation, he / she went to the front of the scenario and gave a short speech. At the end, the audience could give their opinions and insights about the products.

5. Data Analysis and Results

The data analysis procedure chosen for this study was based on the rationale of qualitative action research. Thus, the qualitative analysis techniques used to gain an in-depth understanding of the data were those suggested by Burns (2010) in which the teacher-researcher collects data, codes the data, compares the data, constructs meanings and interpretations from the data, and reports findings. To do this, the teacher-researcher observed the participants' behaviors, attitudes and comments as they occurred during each lesson and recorded them in journal entries, each of which was immediately reflected upon. The individual semi-structured interviews were videotaped in Zoom and fully transcribed by the teacher-researcher herself. Finally, student artifacts produced during the project were collected and examined using the multimodal analysis suggested by Álvarez-Valencia (2016).

The process used to categorize the qualitative data resided in inductive coding, known as the emic approach. According to Burns (2010), this approach consists of carefully scrutinizing and reflecting on the data several times, as was the case here, to see what categories suggested themselves or 'emerged' from the data; in other words, 'the data gave me the categories' (p. 106). Therefore, the journal entries, like the interview transcripts, underwent an extensive reading analysis and color coding (see Figure 7) within the framework of the proposed objective in a “continuing process of reducing information to find explanations and patterns.” (p. 104).

Figure 7.

Color coding analysis of student interviews transcripts and observation journal entries.

S14: Pues, para mí sí, fue muy enriquecedor, realmente escribir a lápiz y papel cómo se hace comúnmente, pues, de pronto, en mi caso, me limita un poco a expresar un montón de ideas. No soy obviamente el más creativo con esto del eBook, pero eh... sí, me ayudó a crecer en esta parte, digamos que... los audios también colaboran mucho porque solamente escribir como que, bueno, a veces uno ve una frase y no le transmite nada, vaya en cualquier idioma, como usted decía. Pero entonces estoy en un audio en una en una imagen referente a ese texto es muy diferente, se siente diferente, se nota diferente, se puede expresar de mejor manera.


Teacher: Te pudiste expresar de mejor manera, muy bien, gracias. Bueno, eh... ¿qué recursos o elementos consideras que te ayudaron en el diseño del libro de este libro multimodal? y ¿por qué?


S14: ¿Recursos como el Canva?

Teacher: sí, todos los elementos que utilizaste, todo lo que utilizaste para la elaboración del eBook, ¿qué consideras que te ayudaron más?

S14: Pues, de por sí, como lo dije, el Canva, y todo lo que trae el Canva, imágenes, eh, marcos, eh... las diferentes, eh... ¿cómo se llama eso? ¿Letras?... fuentes!

 Jessica Velandia
13 may 2023
creatividad

 Jessica Velandia
13 may 2023
Lo multimodalidad to convey meaning

 Jessica Velandia
13 may 2023
recursos digitales

Date: November 23rd			
Objective	Activity	Observation	Reflection
To represent in a comic a story based on Liliana's life using past simple and past continuous.	Multimodal texts - comic.	In this class, I asked students to create a comic in couples based on the interview done to Liliana, I recommended them to use one of the stories she told and based on that create a comic following a rubric. I could observe that it was hard for students to think of a topic because Liliana talk about many things. When I walked around the classroom, I asked them what they decided to do MA said "me llamó la atención como aprendió el arte de hacer collares en su resguardo y que con eso ella pueda cubrir sus gastos acá", JT said "profe pues me gustó mucho lo del colibrí, y los accesorios que ella utiliza en sus trajes" S11 said "pues profe ella habló sobre una bebida de yagé, entonces pues nos causó curiosidad averiguar sobre eso" S2 said "profe, queremos hablar de cuando ella se salió de la carrera porque no le gustaba y luego volvió a ingresar a industrial" At the end of the class, just few couples finished the comic, so I asked them to show it to the group. S16 said "pues profe, intentamos buscar una muñequita	From this section I could observe students go to different resources such as images in Canva, or in Pinterest to create the comic, some groups were very creative to context each

Note: You can access the folder that contains the interviews analysis in this link and the journal in Annex A

Once I created the codes from the recurrent themes from each instrument, the analysis procedure was followed by a triangulation between the data collected from the three instruments. The triangulation process for this study helped me as a teacher-researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the issue under investigation, thus increasing the validity and credibility of the findings." (Nassaji, 2020, p. 428). From this triangulation, the emerging codes were continually revised in the light of the objectives and theoretical framework to incorporate

new perspectives and to collapse overlapping categories, so that more focused and narrowed codes emerged from the analysis, resulting in two main categories. The two main categories with their corresponding subcategories presented below gave account to an interweaving of the community-based and multimodal approaches, thus providing a deep and rich interpretation of the data. It is worth noting that the excerpts from the individual interviews and the observation journal that underpin my analysis were originally collected in the mother tongue (Spanish), but each excerpt was translated by the teacher-researcher into English for this paper. These categories are named as:

Table 2.

Categories and subcategories that emerged from the analysis

Categories	Sub-categories	Sub-categories
Observing the educational community resources as sources for learning through inquiry.	Raising awareness of the physical spaces	
	Raising awareness of the socio-cultural groups	
	Raising awareness of the UIS community members.	
	Raising awareness of community issues.	
Transcending printed based texts through multimodal communication.	Rich opportunities for communication and meaning-making in face to face encounters with community members.	
	Multimodal communicative designs about the community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Making socio-cultural groups visible. ● Making social leaders and role models visible. ● Making community members at UIS visible.

Impact of multimodality on
students' language literacy
skills

5.1. Observing the educational community resources as sources for learning through inquiry.

This category describes and analyzes the way in which the integration of community-based pedagogy (CBP) from an inquiry perspective enabled students to become aware of the unnoticed community assets at the university and at the same time to become critical readers of university issues. In the authority of Short (2009), inquiry is “a reaching stance of going beyond information and experience to seek an explanation, to ask why and to consider what if” (p. 12). In this regard, the characteristics of this project permitted to demonstrate that inquiry was at the core of it as each of the stages allowed students to go beyond their current understanding of the world, and stimulated their curiosity to explore and immerse themselves in what was happening around them.

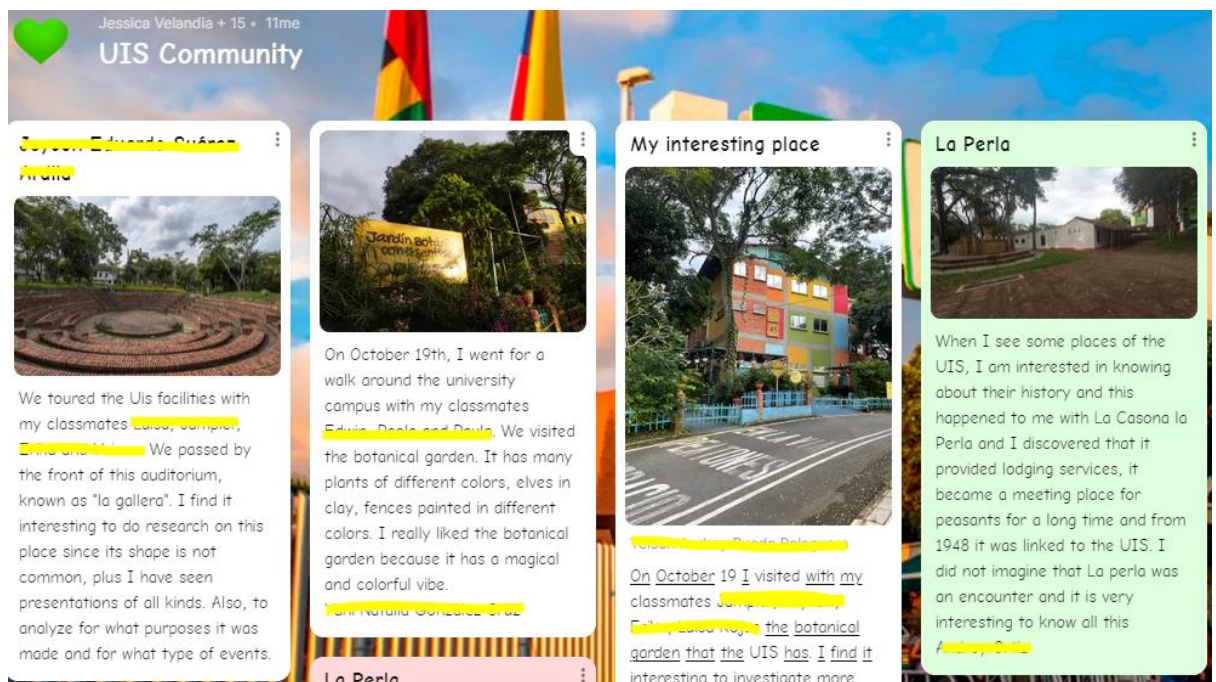
Information collected demonstrated that the process of inquiry along the project led to the construction of knowledge and raised new doubts and questions among the students for further research. In this regard, the following sub-categories reflect the impact of the inquiry in two positions: firstly, the inquiry facilitated by the teacher-researcher who purposefully mediated in class to invite students to connect with the community and to become aware of the community assets of the universities, such as the physical spaces, socio-cultural groups, role models and social leaders. Secondly, the students' self-encouraged desire to continue learning, which enabled them to critically identify the problems prevalent in the community.

5.1.1. Raising awareness of the physical spaces

The present project was framed on an inquiry stance that started by an intentional invitation to observe the places and spaces that students inhabit by doing a mapping exercise

and taking photographic registers that were later used as material for the creation of multimodal paragraphs. According to Rincón and Clavijo-Olarte (2016) "Inquiry begins with close observation of the elements and situations that the teacher invites students to explore." (p. 70). The result of this exercise, which consisted of a descriptive paragraph in Padlet, showed that by mapping the UIS community, students were able to identify assets such as physical spaces (sculptures, lakes, cultural spaces, sports fields) and the linguistic landscape (graffiti, advertisements) located across the university (see Figure 8) and that had not been observed in detailed before.

Figure 8.
Padlet, multimodal paragraphs



Note: You can access Padlet in this link <https://padlet.com/jessicavelandiauis/uis-community>

The above is supported in following extracts from the teacher-researcher' observation journal which demonstrated that providing students with the opportunity to immerse themselves in what was happening around them beyond the classroom walls led them to recognize university places, monuments and spaces that had always gone unnoticed, even

though they had spent a lot of time at UIS. However, their recognition would not have been possible without the teacher's deliberate invitation to the students to look closely and carefully at the university surroundings.

I realized that they hadn't done an exercise like that one before and even in the fifth semester they did not know much about different places or people around the University. During the exercise, I listened to some good comments about the University that let me know students felt engaged and motivated to know more about their educational community. (Teacher-researcher's observation journal_October 19th)

"I was very impressed when we visited the botanical garden of the UIS, because we realized that it is a place that few people know about and that is not very well publicized". S13 (Teacher-researcher's observation journal_November 2nd)

The aforementioned is confirmed by participant S4 in the individual interview, who described the experience of exploration as an opportunity to observe in detail the resources available at UIS. Apparently, this initial exercise encouraged students to value the indoor and outdoor spaces of the university as resources that can enrich their learning experiences outside the classroom.

"...that day of exploration that we went to the university.... I liked it a lot, well, I never like that... I mean you enter the university and you go to the classroom, and sometimes to the library (laughs) but you never stop to look at what is in the university and, I mean, that is one thing that we should pay more attention to. Many times, you start complaining about what is not there but you don't look at what is there." (Interview_excerpt _S4)

Students' paragraphs in the Padlet (see Figure 8) and comments after a physical exploration of the university showed that mapping the community stimulated students' curiosity to further inquire into specific themes such as the skate park, the 'Lección de

Geometría' monument and Collective animals. Comments from participants S15 and S8 revealed that interesting questions emerged from this initial approach to the community, which led the students to continue the process of investigating community assets. In addition, the exploration of the observed spaces provided them with valuable sources of inspiration that guided the design of the final ebook. This can be seen in Figure 9, which illustrates that some of the themes for the design of the final multimodal ebooks emerged from this first genuine invitation to explore the university.

“I've always been curious to know about the Monumento al Óxido [Lección de Geometría], why everyone calls it that, but it actually has another name, it caught my attention because I know that once a student was booed for wanting to clean the sculpture, but they wouldn't let him because he would lose the meaning of the name, rust.”. S15 (Teacher-researcher's observation journal_November 2nd)

A group was interested in working with a skateboard teacher, S8 said: “teacher, I really like the skatepark of the UIS, in fact I go there to skate and it is a place that was built recently and few people know about it”. S8 (Teacher-researcher's observation journal_November 2nd)

Figure 9.

Ebooks about the Lección de Geometría monument, the Skatepark and UIS Animals Collective.



Note: You can access the ebooks here <https://heyzine.com/flip-book/c5235fc0da.html>

<https://heyzine.com/flip-book/eba09e2c0f.html> <https://heyzine.com/flip-book/9479caeda4.html>

All in all, the mapping exercise became an insightful initiative to help students recognize the physical assets offered in the UIS. This initial exploration provided space for detailed observation of previously unrecognized places, spaces and monuments, which contributed as a rich source to provide students with inspiration and resources to start the multimodal meaning-making process. Therefore, this short multimodal exercise was a starting point for the development of a more complex and elaborated product such as the ebooks. The above is in line with Sharkey and Clavijo-Olarte (2012) who argue that mapping the community is an initial approach to appreciate it as a rich resource where students can experience multiple literacies and expand their construction of meaning with multiple linguistic and cultural resources and, for this particular project, the affordances of other modes of communication to make meaning.

5.1.2. Raising awareness of the socio-cultural groups

As mentioned previously, the process of inquiry was at the core of every stage of this project. This was possible due to the teacher-researcher's initiative to connect the university community with the students inside and outside the classroom walls, as seen in the mapping stage. Another illustration of this inquiry was evident in the second stage, *Inspiring Stories and Multimodal Texts*. Here, the teacher-researcher invited LP, a UIS student who belongs to an indigenous community, to the classroom so that students could learn about her life and community through an interview with her. The outcome of this didactic exercise was a comic strip in which they could represent LP's lifestyle and her indigenous community.

Students' comments and comic strips suggested that interacting with LP stimulated the students' critical awareness of the existence of socio-cultural indigenous groups present at UIS. Participants S5 and S11 described this exercise of approaching LP as a significant activity that opened their minds to new cultures and languages that were invisible or narrowly understood in their own educational community. The insights gained from this exercise allowed the

teacher-researcher to see the EFL class as an opportunity to broaden students' multilingual and intercultural experiences and to value the students' university as a space rich in socio-cultural knowledge, community and identity (Murell, 2002 as cited in Rincón and Clavijo-Olarte, 2016).

“...and someone comes along and speaks a different language to you, in their indigenous language, so it helps a lot to recognize that in Colombia there is a great diversity of languages, no, there are too many, and that there is a lot more to see beyond that, beyond what one usually learns in the classroom, so I think that was the activity that contributed the most.” (Interview _ excerpt_S5)

“Well the truth, for me it was very gratifying, I mean it was like another way to know that we are not there alone as always the same but to know other cultures, no, to me it really caught my attention after we had the talk with [LP], I mean, I was really delighted, well, how cool to know other communities or thought, so I think that all this was very gratifying.” (Interview _ excerpt_S11)

The comic strips designed by students (see Figure 10) showed that they had learnt about the traditions, clothing, housing, economy and education of an indigenous community through the interaction with one of its members. Cultural traditions, such as the use of the yagé drink, the appearance of their indigenous dwelling and the importance of the hummingbird to this culture, were illustrated and described in the target language in the following comic strips.

Figure 10.

Comics designed about the Inga Community from the interview exercise



Note: You can access to the comics in these links [comic 1](#) [comic 2](#) [comic 3](#) [comic 4](#) [comic 5](#)

It is worth mentioning that this lesson was enriched by the presence of LP in the EFL classroom and the information she willingly shared with the class. The curiosity awakened during this interaction made questions arise from the same deep eagerness of the students to know more, this interaction allowed them to get more authentic information that may not have been found in other sources.

When [LP] finished the interview, S5 said, "I see that they use the hummingbird a lot in their clothes and accessories" [LP] replied, "yes, it's that it represents the bird message and we see that people like it a lot, and they buy them a lot". When she left the classroom, I asked students if they learnt something, S11 said: "yes, she talked a lot, we almost didn't have to ask her the interview questions, I didn't really know about special admissions." (Teacher-researcher's observation journal_November 16th)

The above is supported by participant S14 who manifested during the individual interview that approaching other cultures was a more fruitful experience to deepen their knowledge of other communities than when learning comes only from the traditional classroom

setting.

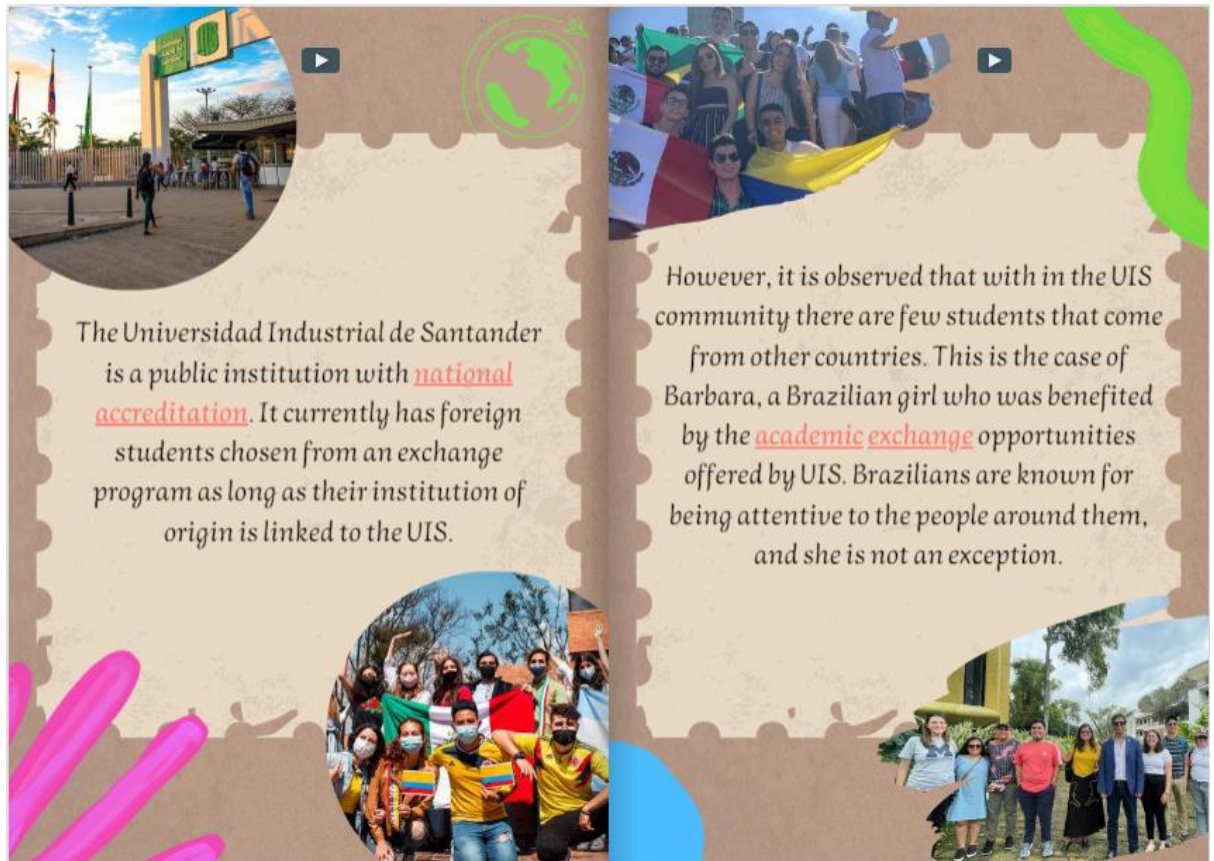
“Well, when you meet other cultures and other people, you learn different ways of speaking, ways of expressing things, so there is a greater variety, we get out of our comfort zone, as if we only did what we did in class and that's it, it is very fruitful, but it is more fruitful to get to know other cultures, other people, to get to know other varieties.”(Interview _excerpt_S14)

Apparently, the interview with LP served to encourage the students to constantly observe their surroundings, and to engage them in a more complex process of inquiry with the individuals who interact with them in situations outside of class time for the design of the final ebooks. As a result, the students became aware of the presence of other socio-cultural groups that coexisted in the students' educational spaces, but which had gone unnoticed prior to this didactic intervention. This is the case of socio-cultural groups such as immigrant students, other indigenous groups and skateboard communities.

As an illustration, the final ebook created by participants S2 and S9 showed that students became aware of the coexistence of cultures from other countries studying at the university. As can be seen in Figure 11, the students recognized the exchange program between different universities around the world as a contribution to cultural richness and interculturality within the university.

Figure 11.

Ebook about Bárbara a Brazilian student from the exchange program



Note: You can access the ebook in this link <https://heyzine.com/flip-book/1e2a0af595.html>

The skateboard community was another socio-cultural group whose contribution to society, inside and outside the university, became visible after this didactic intervention. Participants S7 and S8 carried out the research process on skateboarding, resulting in the appreciation of this urban culture as part of the cultural diversity of the city and the recognition of skateboarding as a serious sport. Through this research, the students also recognized the work of the UIS in providing a space in its facilities for the integration and practice of this sport (see excerpt below), which has been unfairly stigmatized by the community. The final outcome of this research (see Figure 12) showed that the recognition, appreciation, and inclusion of this urban culture within the university can contribute to the growth of diversity in our educational community.

“to highlight that the UIS is the first university that has a skatepark within its facilities and that was very nice for us...skateboarding is very urban, of patching up in the street, of going out with your friends with that urban flow.” (Interview_ excerpt_S8)

Figure 12

Ebook about Oscar Piñeres and the skateboarding



Note: You can have access to the ebook here <https://heyzine.com/flip-book/9479caeda4>

The above led me, as the teacher-researcher, to appreciate the university as a rich community whose programs and facilities allow for the integration and interaction of different socio-cultural groups. Therefore, the inclusion of tasks that went beyond the mere description of these socio-cultural groups, and that encouraged students to immerse themselves in a process of inquiry, proved to be beneficial for students in valuing their university and the individuals who inhabit it, while making the students' learning process a more meaningful experience. The above aligned with Murell's (2001) notion of teacher's development who affirms that "the field experiences [that teachers and students gain from interaction] with community settings provide

multiple opportunities for acquiring and implementing contextualized knowledge necessary for successful pedagogical practice successful pedagogical practice.” (as cited in Clavijo-Olarte and Ramirez, 2019, p. 83).

Not only did the students gain knowledge from the experience of interacting with members of different socio-cultural groups, but they also gained a deep appreciation for those unnoticed communities that may have been seen as alien to the students. After approaching the socio-cultural groups in a more academic and respectful way, the indigenous, urban and immigrant communities began to be understood as a unique part that contributes to the socio-cultural and linguistic diversity and richness that is so characteristic of Colombia.

“...the world does not close itself off from getting to know this culture, that they are not afraid of getting to know people, that they do not reject them because that is what we mainly do, we see a different person and what we do is like: why do they dress like that, why do they act like that, why do they do that, so we give ourselves the opportunity to travel, to get to know these places and then get to know a bit more about these cultures that we have many of but that are sometimes forgotten by us.” (Interview_ excerpt _S11)

In the light of these findings, the teacher/researcher's initiative to integrate community inquiry into the EFL curriculum allowed those socio-cultural groups that also inhabit university spaces to begin to gain visibility among the students. In addition, this interaction led to a cultural appreciation of these indigenous communities by understanding them from a perspective of appreciation and recognition, rather than seeing them as foreigners, and the recognition that there are other ways of life and traditions that should be valued as part of students' identity as Colombians.

5.1.3. *Raising awareness of the UIS community members*

The initiative of inquiring into university context allowed students to become aware of the vast wealth of individuals whose life trajectories have been models of breaking stereotypes and leadership. In the case of participant S5, the opportunity to approach and interact with Jennifer, a female professor who has broken the gender gap, who has stood out in a predominantly male environment, and who has become an example for every woman to follow, has made her see Jennifer as a role model to be proud of, especially because she is part of her own university community (see Figure 13). To this the participant S5 says:

“Many times one overlooks that in the UIS there are too many things that one never learns about, or if one learns about them, one never has the opportunity to go and investigate Well, in this case I did it [the eBook] with Jennifer, a teacher at the School of Mechanics. It helped me a lot because by talking to her, through an interview, I was able to learn much more about her, her academic career, and it was what I was able to represent in the eBook, not only the life of a woman, but the life of a woman who can represent many others in the UIS or the dreams of many other women, even outside the UIS, who want to enter the UIS, so I found that very nice.” (Interview_excerpt_S5)

In addition, the following excerpt from the teacher-researcher's observation journal shows that participant S5 was engaged with the topic of Professor Jennifer as she searched various resources, such as the Internet, to find out more about the professor's life and career. This showed that the interview with the professor also raised participant S5's awareness to learn more about her life and her contribution to the UIS community and society.

“It was interesting to see them looking for more information on the internet to improve the information given in the eBook as well as broaden their knowledge. A girl who is working with the first female faculty member of the Mechanical School, found that she

had already written a book and participated in the creation of a pancreas prosthesis. S5 said “she wrote a book, and went to study in Mexico for the creation of a pancreatic prosthesis for diabetes, and she mentioned none of that in the interview, so humble.” (Teacher-researcher’s observation journal_January 30th)

Figure 13.

Ebook about a female professor of the mechanical engineering school



Note: You can access this ebook here <https://heyzine.com/flip-book/72b5afaea5.html>

In addition, the opportunity to share their final products with the class and the community at the end of the course allowed the students to make these role models visible and to sensitize the community to the existence of individuals who have dedicated their lives to overcome inequalities existing in the society. This is evident in the comment of participant S8 who says:

“I loved the ebook about the mechanical teacher, because I feel that there is a very low level of participation of women, and I feel that this has been stigmatized, that this is not for women, it makes me very angry, so I really like how a female teacher is so well prepared and can fill this position like anyone else, and I feel that if there are more

women in these positions, it will motivate many more to come.” (Interview_ excerpt _S8)

As it was mentioned previously, after mapping the university and inviting a member of an indigenous community into the classroom, the teacher-researcher asked students to continue observing their surroundings and the individuals who are part of the community. The teacher-researcher's invitation to observe the community allowed participants S12 and S14 to recognize the presence of a student outside the normal standards of what is considered a university student. These participants showed a real interest in researching the life of their classmate Don Álvaro Ortiz, a 60-year-old mathematics student. This observation raised some doubts as to why he was studying at this age and how he was managing with the burden of university, questions that stimulated students to inquire in the community. As it was recorded in the teacher-researcher's observation journal:

Finally, another couple told me 'teacher, it turns out that in math class there is a student who looks quite old, I don't know if it's a good subject' from this comment, other students said 'uy sí profe, es muy abuelito' 'he's always with a cane, but we've never spoken to him.' During this conversation, the students seemed very interested to know why he was studying at this age and how he could cope with all the difficulties of being a UIS student.'. (Teacher-researcher's observation journal_November 2nd)

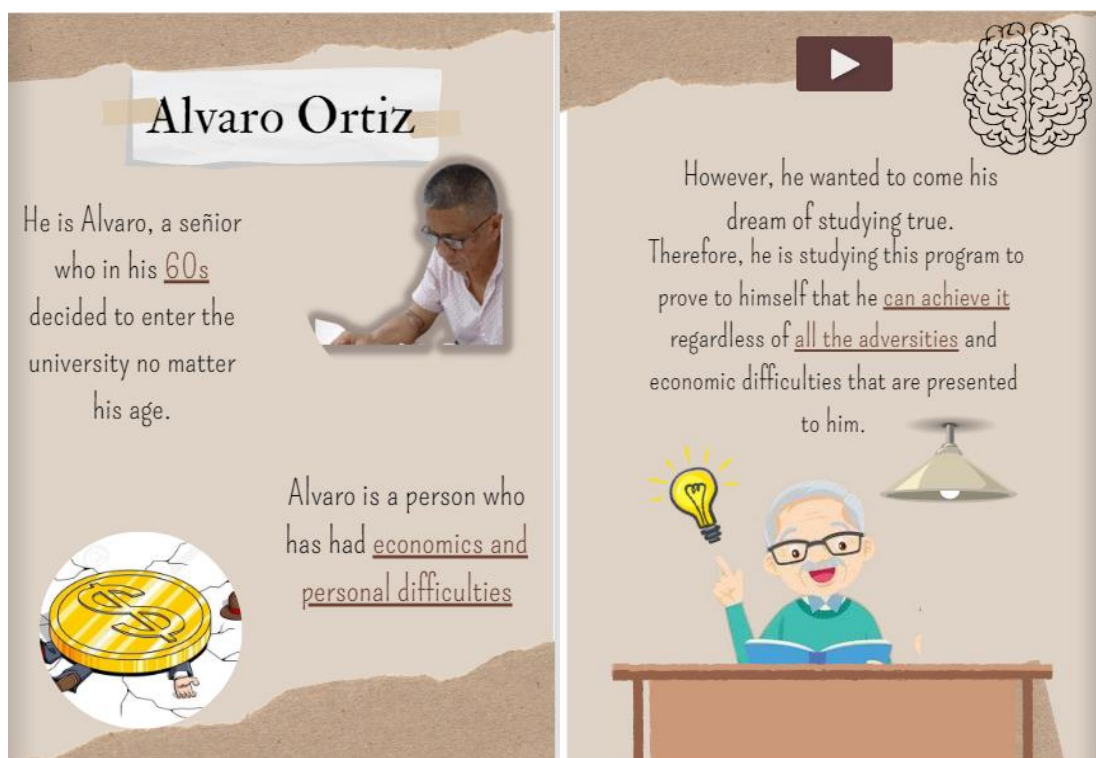
Comments made during the individual students' interview suggest that inquiry process allowed the students to become aware the economic and health challenges that people as Álvaro has to face in order to access and maintain his studies at UIS; additionally, this permitted them to recognize him as an example of perseverance, determination and courage to pursue our dreams no matter what age we are. This could also be supported by the use of words and expressions such as 'no matter their age ' willpower' 'regardless of all the adversities' in the design of the multimodal ebook to describe Don Álvaro (see Figure 14). Thus, the interaction

with Álvaro helped the participants to see the older community not as individuals to be pitied, but as role models to be admired. To this participant S14 said:

“He told us a very common saying: The old parrot doesn't learn to speak. He wanted to break that paradigm, he wanted to break those ideas, like what do you call it? That social construct that old people don't learn to speak.” (Interview _ excerpt_S14)

Figure 14.

Ebook about Don Álvaro



Note: You can access this ebook in this link <https://heyzine.com/flip-book/987c041c0a.html>

Knowing the above stories and making them visible through multimodal ebooks not only enabled the students to recognize and value these community members as role models, but also, they had a huge impact on the students' lives and way of seeing the world. The interview excerpts below show that the students developed a deep empathy for others and an initiative to contribute to alleviating other people's difficulties through small actions. This leads

to the conclusion that through this inquiry, the students read the community critically because, as Foucault (1984) established, they were able to question reality, raise awareness, transform themselves and rewrite the world (as cited in Medina, et al. 2015).

“.... This makes us a little more empathetic, apart from the knowledge that is generated, it makes us a little more human because we live enclosed, we live in our own reality, and suddenly a reality of a friend, of our parents, of our family, but it is the same circle, but then, when we get to know other cultures we realize that there are people who also suffer. In this case, Don Álvaro told us about how he suffered in his youth and how he suffers now, because of health problems, etc., so it makes us a little more empathetic to understand that we all carry our own difficulties, our own burdens, so we should not be another burden for them. So, it seems to me that it is an approach to that, to be a little more human, and also obviously without leaving aside the knowledge, the formal part of the process”. (Interview_ excerpt_S14)

“The impact it [this project] has, even if it is only one person...the man who is already old but still studies because he wants to improve himself and overcome so many social norms... it was very nourishing to know that we can give a grain of sand to society, even if it is just beginning... the main thing is to start with each person and to know that we can do it....”(Interview_ excerpt_S10)

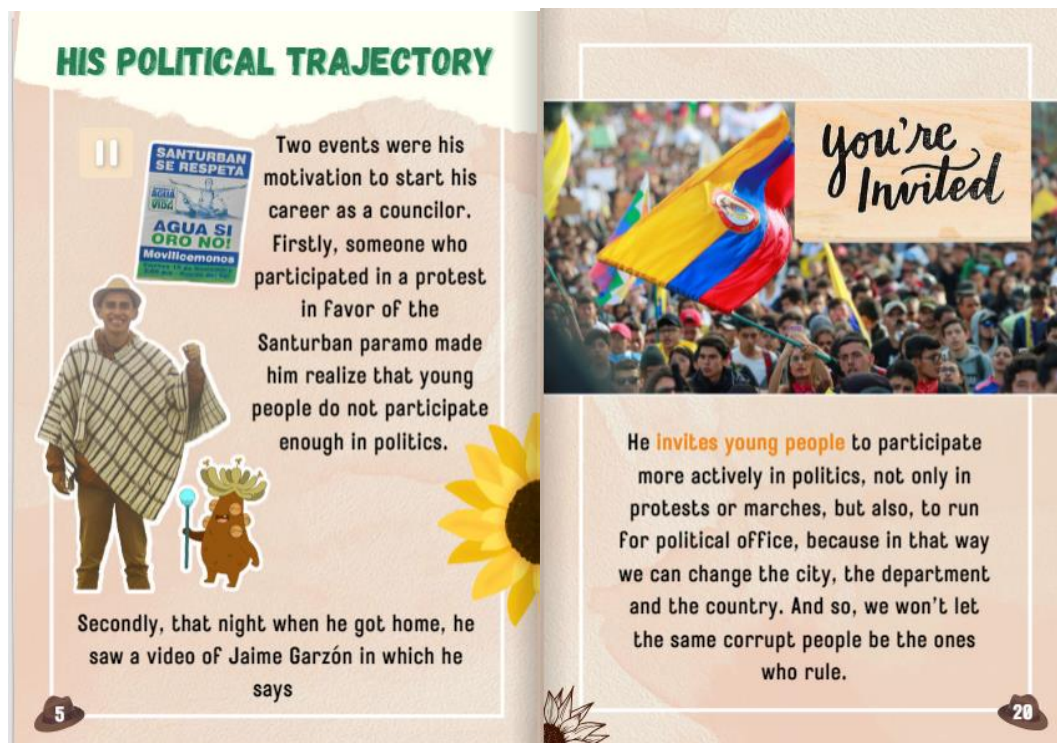
This inquiry also served to make students aware of the leaders whose lives and actions have been focused on mitigating socio-political-cultural and environmental problems within and outside the university. As an illustration, participants S4 and S13 acknowledged the work of Danovis, a UIS graduate whose political career has been characterized by making visible and fighting against issues of injustice and inequality in the community. In addition, the extracts below show that the interaction with Danovis led the students to value him as an example of

leadership that encourages the youth community to contribute and participate in the well-being and development of the city (see Figure 15).

"Well, we chose Danovis because we were very struck by how such a young person has done so much for social causes, he has always represented us and not only us at the UIS but also all the young people of Bucaramanga. We wanted to make known all the things he has done, which as we have seen have not been easy". (Teacher-researcher's observation journal_February 15th)

Figure 15.

Ebook about the social leader Danovis



Note: You can access this ebook here <https://heyzine.com/flip-book/93a3ab010d.html>

Another example of how the observation of the community during and after the mapping exercise became an insightful experience for the students for the development of the

ebooks is shown in the excerpt below. It seems that participants S1 and S16 benefited greatly from this initial invitation to explore, as it served as a source of inspiration for the selection of the theme of Animals Collective at UIS. As can be seen, new doubts emerged from this inquiry and led the students to new questions to be answered through a further process of inquiry consisting of a one-to-one interview.

Another group was interested to work with the Animals Collective at UIS, participant S16 said: "I am curious to know who takes care of these animals, because there are a lot of them in the UIS, and these people feed them even on holidays, we would like to know how many animals they help and if they receive help from other people, besides, we know a girl who works in this collective and we want to interview her". (Teacher-researcher's observation journal_November 2nd)

The analysis of the Animals Collective at UIS ebook, including the photographs they integrated and the words they used, such as 'no one else seemed to take them into account' 'don't have enough money to pay' 'university doesn't help at all', showed that interviewing a member of this group and listening to the different stories helped these participants to become aware and recognize the problematic situation that these animals suffered, and the 'hero' students who dedicated part of their time to alleviate animal abuse and abandonment.

Figure 16

Ebook about Maria Paula and the UIS Animals Collective



Note: You can access this ebook here <https://heyzine.com/flip-book/eba09e2c0f.html>

It is worth noting that each story had an impact not only on the students who conducted the interview, but also on the other students and community members who participated in the socialization of the final products in the fourth stage. During the interview, the students highlighted and described the work of other unnoticed leaders who, without any economic support from the university or the government, dedicate part of their time to contributing to social and environmental causes. To illustrate, participant S14 was moved by the work of the Animal Collective at UIS, which he expressed as follows:

"I really liked the story, or at least the work they [S3 and S16] did... about the animal collective, because it's a collective that supports itself, it's a collective that has no support, not even from the university. Not everyone can do such a difficult activity as feeding them, because they are animals that basically don't have a dream, they are animals that suffer a lot, so the fact that they don't have a supporting body, makes it a

bit more complicated. But seeing how they support themselves by making a lot of money makes me think that there are people who really want to do things well... I really liked this work.” (Interview_ excerpt_S14)

Apparently, this story provoked a transformation in the actions of some students, as in the case of S9, who says

“many of the resources of the people who help the animals come from themselves, because although the animals live in the university, the university does not mean that they contribute, so even yesterday I found a little dog, on the side of the chemistry building, and the dog was lying in a corner so I helped it to move because it was raining.” (Interview_ excerpt_S9)

Sharing the life and work of Oscar, a social leader who has changed the lives of many children and young people through skateboarding, made the students reflect on the real situations experienced by members of these communities and the profound impact that leaders like Oscar have in helping young people in vulnerable situations to stay away from the risk of drugs and crime that is prevalent in many sectors of Bucaramanga. The extracts below show the huge impact this project has had in making Oscar's work and importance in society visible and recognized, and in raising student awareness of these issues.

“Well, the story that had the biggest impact on me was Oscar's, because of the social function that he mainly wants to carry out, it's like that function of helping others so that they don't fall into war, yes, as he said, into drugs, into weapons, because that's what young people fall into. So how he, through sport, can help those young people, and as he says, that's something of a vocation, yes, you do it without expecting anything, I think that was the story that most affected me.” (Interview_ excerpt_S11)

Finally, the project helped students to recognize the work of other members of the university who, without being teachers, researchers or directors, contribute to students in their daily lives and provide a service to the community that is rarely valued or recognized among students, in this case the cafeteria staff. The extracts below indicated that participants S10 and S13 gained sensitivity from these stories and transformed their attitude towards these individuals who share and interact with them on a daily basis (see Figure 17).

“for example, the ladies in the cafeterias, because many times you go and buy and that's it, and you don't even think about the fact that they also have dreams, that maybe they have studies, so sometimes you just go and buy and that's it, sometimes you don't even say hello or anything else.” (Interview_ excerpt_S13)

Figure 17.

Ebook about women from the cafeteria



Note: You can access this ebook here <https://heyzine.com/flip-book/0414fde528.html>

In this concern, encouraging students to engage in an inquiry process placed students in a more critical position that enabled them to recognize the unnoticed individuals and valued them as important members of the educational community. This could be illustrated by the following comments from the teacher-researcher's observation journal and students' individual interview, which suggest that participant S10's purpose of writing about the lives of the cafeteria women was to give them a voice, to value their work and service to the community, and to make these stories visible to other members of the community who were beneficiaries of their work.

Another couple showed their eBook about some of the people who work in the canteens, S10 said "you just buy it and that's it, but there's no interest in knowing about their lives, so we wanted to give them a voice and recognize the work they do, we also made a special section for each one because we wanted them to have a leading role and highlight their dreams". This comment made me realize her commitment to creating the ebook to give a voice to those members of the community who are not noticed or appreciated. (Teacher-researcher's observation journal_February 6th)

"..They are people who may not have had the same opportunities that I, for example, have had, they have not had the freedom to have a university degree, to be able to have things and to be able to fulfill their dreams in some way, so I wanted to make those dreams known, to show that they are working day by day to serve the community, but behind that there are plans, purposes, dreams that would be very gratifying and it would be very nice to see them come true, so I wanted to emphasize that." (Interview_excerpt_S10)

From the above comments, participant S10 recognized that by giving these women a voice through the design of a multimodal ebook, she was contributing to society. This is in line

with what Freire and Macedo (1987) advocate as literacy: “The act of learning to read and write has to start from a very comprehensive understanding of the act of reading the world” (n.p.). Therefore, I dare say that this project opened the doors for students to first critically emerge in reading, understanding and questioning their own world, and to consciously use the power of language, from a multimodal approach, as a means of writing the world. In participant S10 words, this project was:

“very nourishing, to know that we can give a grain of sand to society, even if it's just starting or not... the main thing is to start with each one of us, and to know that we can do it.” (Interview _ excerpt_S10)

In light of the above, this project has helped students to value, appreciate and understand the work and contribution that some individuals, including professors, staff, undergraduate and graduate students, make to the wellbeing and sustainability of the community within and outside the university. Furthermore, the visualization of these life stories through multimodality helped students to see these individuals, even if only a small part of the institution, as leaders and role models to follow and to transform their own actions for the benefit of society.

5.1.4. Raising awareness of community issues

Initially, this project only considered the design of multimodal ebooks based on the assets of the university community; therefore, each of the tasks intentionally promoted students' recognition of the assets available at UIS. However, the results showed that this inquiry unintentionally awakened students' desire to go beyond the assets and read the community critically, so that they could also recognize and be aware of the issues behind each story. In this regard, all the students who participated in the individual interview seemed to have questioned what was happening around their own community and identified the socio-cultural issues present in the community such as education inequalities, gender gaps, economic issues, animal

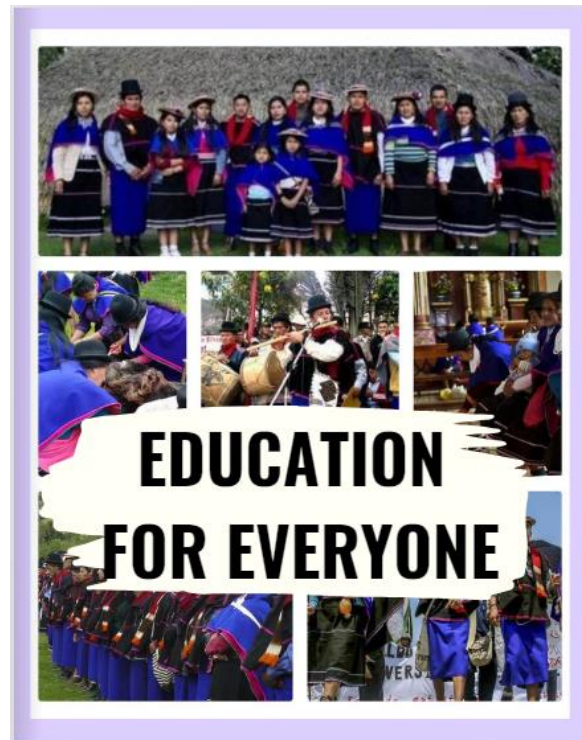
abandonment, drugs and discrimination.

To illustrate some examples, the exercise of interviewing LP in the classroom, an indigenous member of the Inga community, had an impact on some students as it encouraged them to continue their inquiry process with indigenous groups. This is the case of participants S1 and S11 who designed and conducted another semi-structured interview with Leidy, a student from the Misak community, in order to deepen their knowledge and understanding of these communities. The results of inviting LP to the class and the students' individual initiative in researching these communities let them become aware of the inequality of opportunities that indigenous communities suffer to access and study higher education in Colombia. This is evident in the following interview excerpt and the title of the multimodal ebook 'Education for Everyone' created by the students (see Figure 18).

"...we believe from the experience with [LP] and Leidy [members of the indigenous groups at UIS] that higher education should be, besides being free, for everyone, it should be offered to the whole community and the general public, and especially to these communities, so what we wanted with this title was to draw attention to why these communities also have the right to have higher education." (Interview_ excerpt _S11)

Figure 18.

Ebook about the Misak community



Note: You can access the ebook in the following <https://heyzine.com/flip-book/e843377247.html>

Participant S5 also identified the gender inequalities that continue to be prevalent in the university and society when she inquired about the life of Jennifer, a female professor in the Department of Mechanics. The excerpt below shows that this story made her aware, and also the community who participated in the socialization, of the gender inequalities that many other women like her have suffered in trying to make a place for themselves in the male-dominated pure science program.

"...I have had female colleagues or friends who have suffered more from this, so to speak, gender gap that teachers put on them... who tell me strong things, because the teacher tells me: you are a woman and you shouldn't even be here, or things like that, so in careers like pure mathematics" (Interview _ excerpt_S5)

Other important issues that have come to light as a result of student research on university members include: animal abuse, gender and age stereotypes, crime and drugs in urban neighborhoods, and intolerance. These problems are sometimes invisible or romanticized

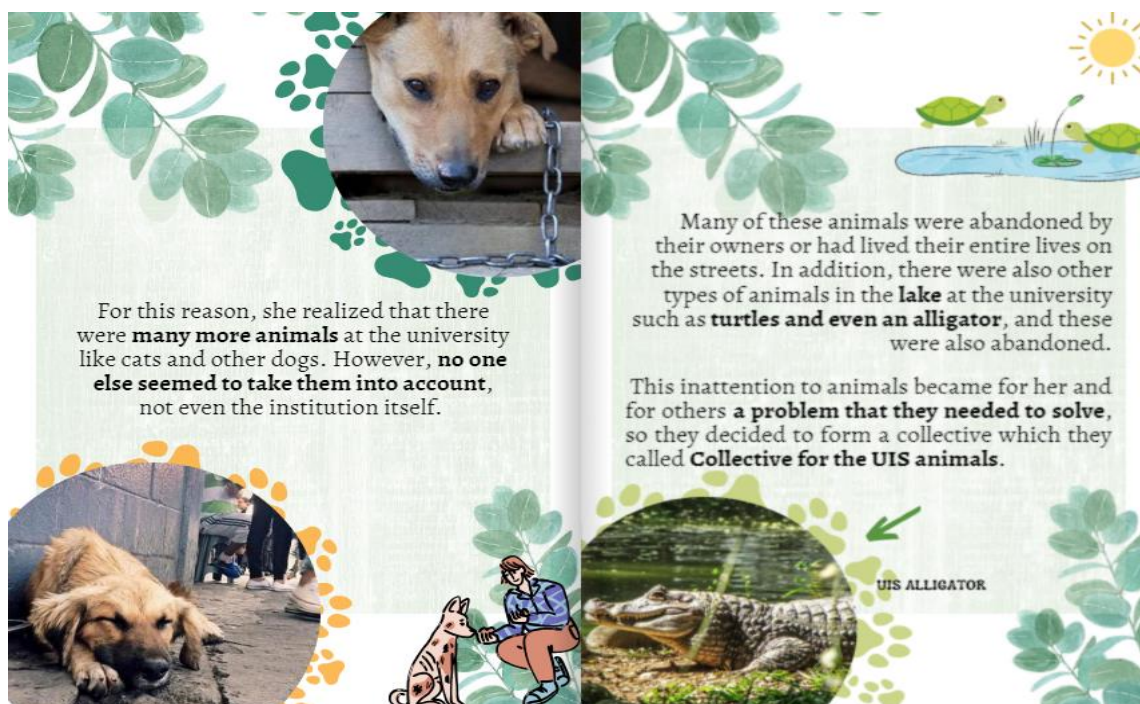
in our country, but through this project the students recognize them and put themselves in an active rather than passive position to act and make them visible to the community.

[animal abuse] “...the fact that there are many animals, but most of them do not seem to recognize that there are many abandoned animals.” (Interview_ excerpt_S16)

[intolerance] “Ah well there because he told us that many people insult him and threaten him, even in the videos he has, you can see people insulting him.” (Interview_ excerpt_S13)

It is worth noting that their visibility was made possible by both the interaction with the community and the process of representation, which allowed the students to make these issues visible in a multimodal tangible product, the ebook, and to share them with their classmates and the UIS community at the end of the project. According to Freire and Macedo's (1987) critical literacy is about “[how to] write and re- write reality, transforming reality through a conscious work” (as cited in Medina, et. al. 2015, p. 46). Drawing upon this, the students began a social transformation by rewriting the reality of their university community, integrating different modes of communication to create the unique multimodal ebooks shown below (see Figure 19 and Figure 20).

Figure 19.

Ebook about UIS Animals Collective and animal abuse

Note: You can access this ebook here <https://heyzine.com/flip-book/eba09e2c0f.html>

Figure 20.

Ebook about Don Álvaro age stereotypes

Note: You can access this ebook here <https://heyzine.com/flip-book/987c041c0a.html>

These findings led to the conclusion that promoting inquiry among community members in an EFL classroom encourages students to critically reflect on their own world and the realities of other individuals, to continually question the existence of inequalities and injustices that affect their community and influence them directly or indirectly, and to encourage their participation in making the world a better place for society. This supports and reinforces the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire (1988/2005), who emphasized the importance of transforming education by allowing learners to explore in class and develop their critical literacy as a way of transforming the world. The above is confirmed by participant S14 and S10 who manifested that this project:

“It led me to be more critical, to see things in a different way, sometimes we get carried away by a photo, a screen, a publication, by something that is sometimes very empty, something that does not represent us, what people are. So, it led me to understand, as I said before, that we all carry a struggle, we all carry a burden, whether it is big or small, it is a burden in the end, so that leads me to think and to be a little more empathetic, that we should not be another burden, we should not be another stone in the shoe of a classmate, a teacher, whoever, we should be more human, more empathetic, more supportive.” (Interview_ excerpt_S14)

Other participant S10 said: ‘I really liked the one with the animal collective, because you really see these people doing raffles, selling things to help these animals and they don't get much help, so that motivates us and invites us to help them more, to buy from them when they do these events’. (Teacher-researcher’s observation journal_February 15th)

In light of this, it can be said that the students developed critical literacy practices during the community inquiry process as they reflected on what they observed, became aware of the

injustices and inequalities that existed in the community, and re-created the world through multimodal texts to make visible those leaders whose life trajectories helped to alleviate these socio-cultural issues. This reinforced Medina, et. al. (2015) notion that the students' immediate learning community serves as “a place to learn, raise awareness and propose changes by studying social and cultural issues critically” (p. 46).

5.2. Transcending printed based texts through multimodal communication.

This category refers to the way in which multimodality was at the service of the students to write about the community and make visible the life stories of the university members as well as the problems that are prevalent in society. To this end, the didactic intervention promoted the interaction between different modes of representation, such as linguistic, visual, spatial and audio, at the center of the meaning-making process. The analysis of the final ebooks and the students' comments on the interview provided me with evidence that the integration of different modes of meaning-making allowed them to fully represent the essence of the assets and issues identified in the inquiry process illustrated in the previous category. In what follows, I give account to the multimodal view during the meaning making present during the whole project.

5.2.1. *Rich opportunities for communication and meaning-making in face to face encounters with community members.*

Although multimodality was mainly at the heart of the students' meaning-making process through the design of the ebooks, I would like to start this discussion by talking about the multimodal encounter that the students had during the inquiry process; an encounter that was crucial for the completion of the students' representation and visibility of the assets and problems of the UIS community. In accordance with academics such as Hymes (1972, 1974), Kress (2000) and Block (2014), Álvarez-Valencia (2018) recognizes the limitations of the

linguistic mode to fully make meaning in a communication process. In this regard, Álvarez-Valencia calls for a recontextualization of the concept of communication to see it as a process in which, in addition to the word, other channels such as space, gesture, posture, gaze, sound, image, contact and physical touch contribute to the meaning-making process that embrace the interactional and sociocultural dimension.

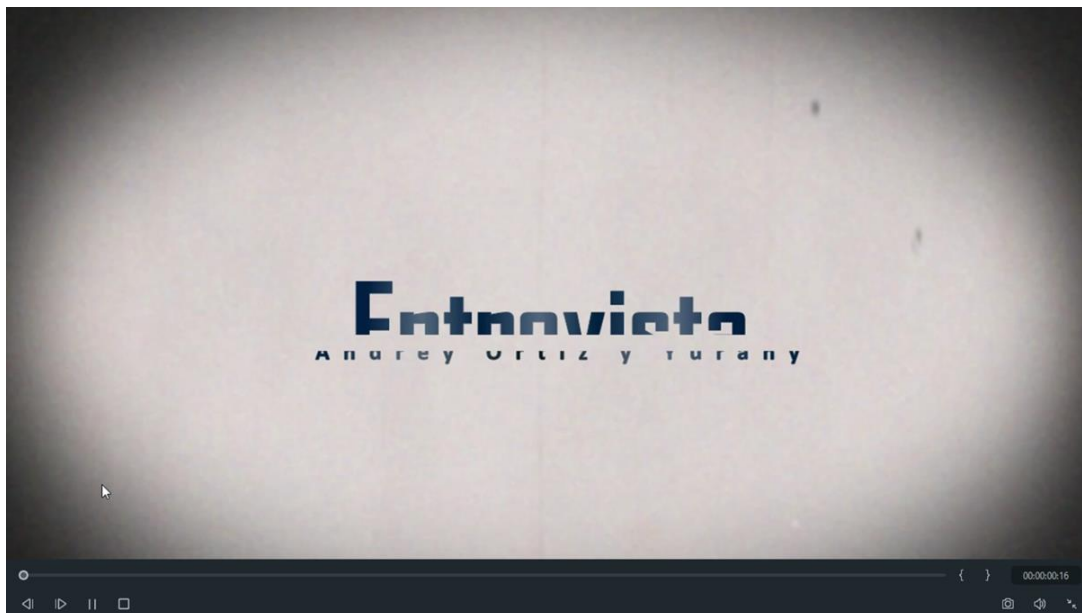
In light of the above, and reiterating the previous category about the students' process of inquiry with the community, the students started the multimodal meaning making experience during the personal encounter they had with the community. The analysis of the students' interviews showed that the physical interaction while interviewing the community members involved the students in a multimodal communication process in which they noticed their words, but also their facial and bodily gestures, their hesitations, and the tone of their voice while speaking (see Figure 21). These modes became primordial resources for the success of the multimodal ebook and allowed a richer interpretation of the meaning of their stories. The above can be confirmed by participant S10, who in the students' individual interview described the members of the cafeteria using words such as affectionate, passion, emotional and happy, that could not have been expressed only with the linguistic mode found in other resources such as the internet of books. Seeing these traits in an authentic way also allowed her to be really touched by the story and awakened her interest in writing about these people. From this multimodal encounter, participant S10 manifested:

“...they work with coffee, and the three of them are very affectionate, it seems to me that they do it with so much love, with so much passion, even the day I did an interview with them Mireya got so emotional to the point of tears, so it touched me a lot and I said: Wow there are many people who work badly, but they are always happy, they always treat you well, I think they are people who have marked me and will mark

me for life to see how they provide their service with so much love, with so much dedication, and so devoted to the community.” (Interview_excerpt_S10)

Figure 21.

Video about and interview to a community member



Note: You can access the video in this link <https://drive.google.com/file/>

From the above, I consider that the didactic sequence proposed for this project, as described in the methodology section, made it possible to position the communicative act beyond language to fulfill a function, so that other channels were integrated to convey and interpret meaning during the inquiry process. After this multimodal encounter, the students started the process of designing the multimodal ebooks, which will be carefully described and analyzed in the subcategories below.

5.2.2. Multimodal communicative designs about the community

Students' interview comments evidenced that traditional paper-based writing tasks, in which only the verbal mode is used to convey meaning, limited students' ability to fully express their ideas and represent their understanding of the world. However, when there was a mix of

other elements provided by the linguistic, visual and audio modes in the ebook, it made it easier for them to turn the ideas into something tangible. Participants' S8, S14 and S16 interview excerpts reinforced the potential of other modes to extend 'mere literacy' in the curriculum to a more powerful pedagogy of 'multiliteracies' (New London Group, 1996), which allow for a richer and critical representation and appreciation of the complexities of the university community, its nature, culture, discourses and socio-political issues.

***“Teacher:** Do you consider that the elaboration of these multimodal texts such as the eBook, expanded, enriched your possibilities of expressing your ideas, as opposed to the traditional way of doing things, such as just grammar, sentences without context and why?*

***S14:** For me, yes, it was very enriching, actually, to write with pencil and paper, as is usually done, well, suddenly, in my case, it limits me a little to express a lot of ideas... because just writing, well, sometimes you see a sentence and it doesn't transmit anything... but it was very fruitful, the colors help to differentiate some things, the images, above all, express more in some cases, they express more than even the word itself, the audio as well.” (Interview_ excerpt_S14)*

“Many times you write in the moment and you can't express everything, but through an audio and an exposition of the book you can express other points of view that you might have missed when you were writing, or the gestures when you're talking, when you're expressing yourself are different, it doesn't make the writing so flat.” (Interview_ excerpt_S8)

In light of the above, in order to understand the students' meaning-making process, the ebooks are examined following 4 steps proposed by Álvarez-Valencia (2016) for multimodal analysis. These steps consisted of 1) examining conditions of production and use, 2) identifying base units (see Table 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10), 3) identifying modes of communication and their

meaning-making functions and 4) the intersemiotic relationships. In this regard, the analysis of the ebooks is organized into the following subcategories based on the themes that emerged from the analysis (see Table 3). The subcategories describe the multimodal analysis carried out with each ebook, starting with a table adapted from Álvarez-Valencia (2016) that presents the basic semiotic units identified along each of the ebooks, the modes that encompass each basic unit, and finally the meaning-making functions that the students intended to evoke with the use of each unit. This is followed by a discussion that unfolds how and why the students purposefully selected the modes of meaning and the intersemiotic relationship between them.

As a starting point, in order to examine the conditions of production and use of the ebooks under analysis, first step, it is imperative to restate and summarize the findings from the category I of this study: *Observing the educational community resources as sources for learning through inquiry*. The topics selected by students for the design of the multimodal ebooks emerged from the inquiry process that took place inside and outside the EFL classroom. The process of inquiry presents in each of the activities proposed in the didactic sequence (see the section of Methodological Design of the Didactic Sequence) enabled students to become aware of the existence of different assets in their university community, such as physical spaces, socio-cultural groups, social leaders, role models and community members, as well as to identify issues prevalent in society, such as stereotypes, gender gaps, social injustice, animal abandonment, etc. Therefore, this inquiry became a source of inspiration and motivation to design multimodal ebooks that would allow them to make these assets and issues visible to the university community. The table below is an illustration of how this category is organized and the ebook topics that are part of each sub-category.

Table 3.*Ebook topics that emerged from the inquiry process*

Subcategory	Ebook topic
Making socio-cultural groups visible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Misak community and education inequalities • Immigrant students • Urban culture (Skate park)
Making social leaders and role models visible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Danovis and social and political injustice. • Oscar Piñeres (Skate park) • Maria Paula and the UIS Animals Collective ebook • Professor Jennifer and gender gaps
Making community members at UIS visible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women from the cafeteria

Note: Urban culture and Oscar Piñeres topics are developed in the same ebook

The second step in the multimodal analysis is to identify the basic units that make up each ebook. In order to do this, each ebook was subjected to an examination and the salient basic units, known as everything that can be seen in the analyzed text (Bateman, 2008), were identified and presented in each table (see Table 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10). Following the third step, the tables also show the multimodal modes that are at play of each base unit and the meaning- making function of each one. The fourth step, consisting of the analysis of the intersemiotic relationship, is presented in a discussion based on what the teacher-researcher examined from the ebooks, supported by what the students reported in the individual interviews and what was recorded in the observation journal. This analysis took into consideration the function of language proposed by Michael Halliday consisting of textual, ideational and interpersonal meaning. These three steps are displayed in the same order for each ebook in the subcategories below.

5.2.2.1. Making socio-cultural groups visible. The topics covered by this group are the indigenous community of Misak, the immigrant UIS students who are part of the exchange programme, and the urban culture of skateboarding.

Table 4.

Base units and modes of communication on the Misak Community ebook

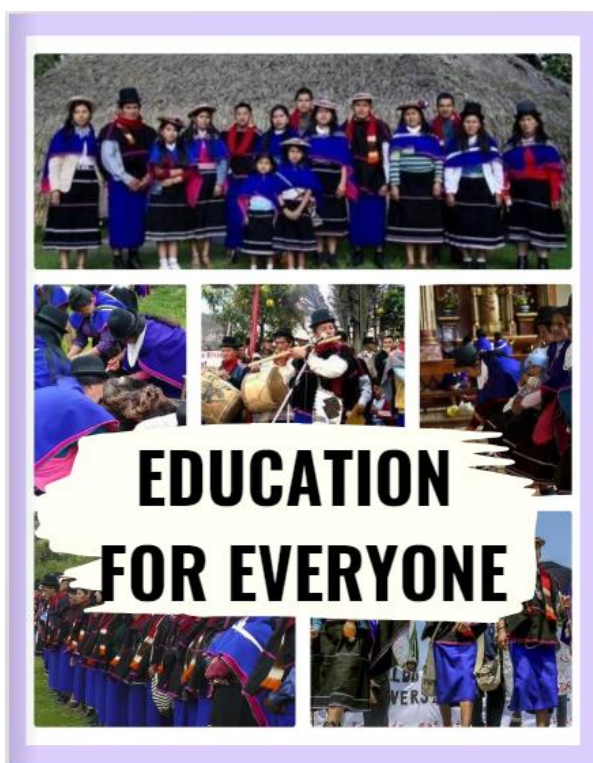
Base Unit	Mode	Function
Title (Education for everyone in capital letters)	Linguistic / visual	Make the problematic visible
Cover (collage)	Visual	Contextualize the reader with the Misak community
Boldface	Linguistic / visual	Highlight key concepts about the Misak community.
Typeface (Lato)	Linguistic	Legibility
Blue and lila color	Visual	Misak culture (traditional clothes)
Photographs (traditional clothes, spiral of thought, education Nu Nachak, artesanias). Boldface	Visual Linguistic	Familiarize the reader with unfamiliar concepts of the Misak community. Give comprehensive content along the photographs
Paragraph blocks	Linguistic / spatial	Content presentation / Guide the reader
Nature instrumental sounds	Audio	Help the reader to evoke meaning of the Misak culture

The ebook illustrated Figure 22 shows how students use multimodality as a means of making visible those socio-cultural groups that have been to some extent invisibilized, in this particular case the indigenous community of Misak. This is particularly evident in the cover, which allows the reader to identify the theme of the ebook, since it contains a collage of images of the Misak community; in addition, something that may draw the reader's attention is the title 'Education for Everyone', which is used as an invitation to the audience or even higher political groups to recognize education as a right to which everyone should have access. This is evident in the following extract, where participant S11 agreed that:

“What we wanted to do with this title was to draw attention to the fact that these communities also have a right to higher education, so that was the main objective in choosing Education for Everyone.” (Interview excerpt S11)

Figure 22.

Ebook about the Misak community, cover



Note: You can access the ebook here <https://heyzine.com/flip-book/e843377247.html>

The analysis of this ebook demonstrated that students' selection of colors (blue and lilac) relies on their intention to be coherent with the traditional color used in Misak clothes (see Figure 23). The above is in line with Michael Halliday's metafunction theory of the ideational metafunction of language, which consists in the use of language as an instrument to conceptualize or represent the real world. In this regard, Kress and Van Leeuwe (2006) assert that “any semiotic mode has to be able to represent aspects of the world as it is experienced by humans. In other words, it has to be able to represent objects and their relations in a world

outside the representational system.” (p. 42). The extract below evidenced that students turned to the blue and lilac color to create ideational representations of meaning about the Misak culture based on the information gathered during the inquiry process.

"Students describing Leidy's community decided to use indigenous symbols to decorate the page; I could also observe the predominance of the color purple on each page, according to participant S11, they used this color because this community used this color in their traditional dress". (Teacher-researcher's observation journal_February 1st)

"the lilac color that we chose for the background is mainly in the costumes that they use, they use a blue and a lilac, so we chose this tone because at the beginning we had a dark purple but it didn't really contrast very well, so we looked for a purple that was lighter but that didn't lose their identity." (Interview_excerpt_S11)

Figure 23.

Ebook about the Misak community, culture and traditions



The analysis of this ebook revealed that the choice of color, boldface and images provided by the linguistic and visual mode fulfill the function of attracting the reader's attention. The above is a clear example of the integration of written and visual representation to facilitate interaction between writer and reader, in other words, they are responsible for the interpersonal metafunction. According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006), "each mode must be able to represent a particular social relationship between the producer, the viewer and the object represented" (p. 42). In this regard, Figure 24 shows that both the affordance of boldface in the linguistic mode and the photographs in the visual mode fulfill the function of highlighting concepts related to the Misak community and positioning readers in an indigenous culture with which they may be unfamiliar.

In the peer feedback session, students from the Misak community showed the ebook to the class, their classmates observed that the pages were too monotonous in the organization of images and paragraphs because they followed the same pattern, these participants listened to their classmates' suggestion and started to organize the paragraph differently in each page and add more symbols and images that represents the Misak community to make it less boring to read, this demonstrate that they think about the reader to redesign each page.(Teacher-researcher's observation journal_February 6th)

"Well, at the beginning we went for the traditional, what we always know about the book, make a paragraph, put a picture and that was it, but then in the course of the process we realized that it's always important to attract attention, isn't it? The attention of the reader, so we used figures, like the use of circles, triangles, colors, both in the lettering and in the titles, as well as underlining the words, highlighting important things, playing with the images... so that it would be attractive to the audience, which is the purpose of these books." (Interview_excerpt_S11)

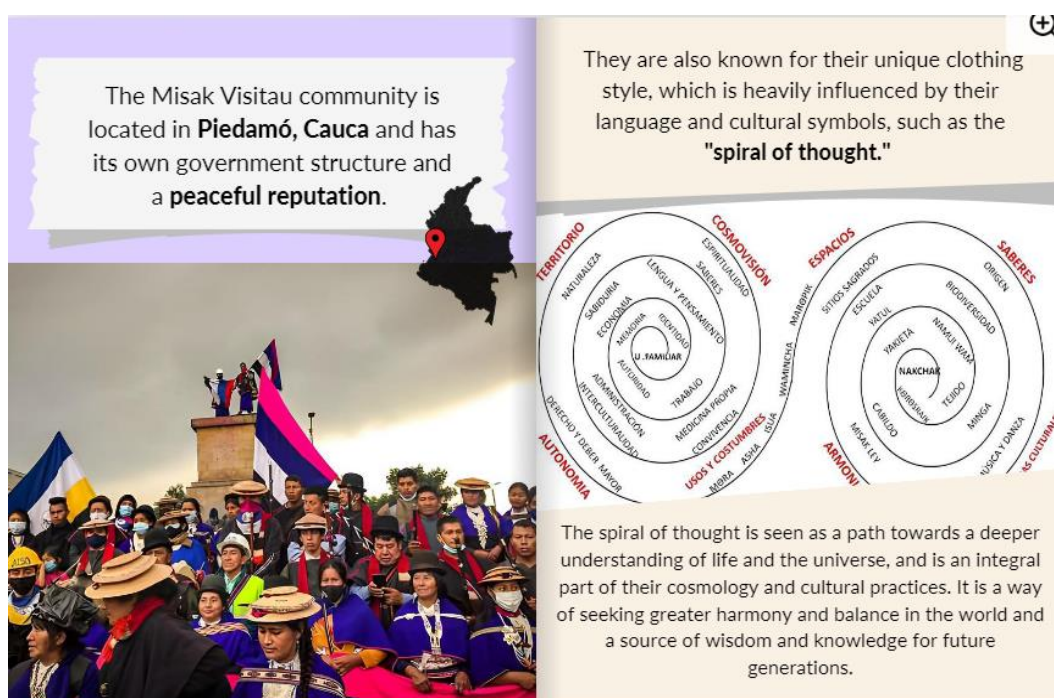
Figure 24.*Ebook about the Misak community education*

The pages illustrated in Figures 23 and 24 also demonstrated how the combination of the visual and linguistic modes work together effectively to enhance meaning. For this ebook, the photo graphics served to anchor the information given in the written text as well as the spatial distribution mode allowed textual meanings to make the information comprehensive to the reader. In Figure 24, for example, the paragraph in the right of the page says *Education in the community starts in the prenatally*, a Misak tradition which is not practiced in our community so may not be understood by the reader; however, its relation with the photographic on the left facilitates its meaning comprehension. The excerpt below and Figure 25 illustrate a similar example of the use of interweaving different visual modes with the linguistic to give a more comprehensive content.

"We looked for the figure of the spiral, so we alternated it with other figures that they used to use in their clothing and in their weaving, because generally these communities weave something called a chumbre, so they express their thoughts through geometric figures." (Interview excerpt S11)

Figure 25.

Ebook about the Misak community spiral of thought



The audio mode also contributed to the representation of the Misak community, their way of thinking, and their love and respect for nature. This was depicted with an instrumental background that transports the audience to the gentle sounds of nature. This is in line with Rowsell (2013), who highlights the synaesthetic attribute of sound, as it can evoke cultural references and meanings that the linguistic mode alone may not be able to convey. Apparently, participant S11 was aware of this potential of sound, claiming that:

"We were looking for music that was representative of the indigenous communities and they generally tend to represent the sounds of nature, so that's what we wanted to do,

we wanted to find an audio that was in line with the ideals of the indigenous communities.” (Interview excerpt S11)

Another example of how multimodality was at the service of the socio-cultural groups portrayed is the ebook about Bárbara, a Brazilian student who represents the immigrant community at the university.

Table 5.

Base units and modes of communication on the Bárbara ebook

Base Unit	Mode	Function
Title (An Exchange experience at UIS in capital letters)	Linguistic / visual mode	Contextualize the reader with the topic
Bárbara's photo	Visual	Introduce the protagonist of the ebook / Highlight her facial features.
Bright colors (green and yellow)	Visual	Brazilian culture
Color and underlined words	Linguistic / visual	Give emphasis to important information
Subtitles in capital letters (She is Bárbara, Brazil and Colombia seen through the eyes of Bárbara, experience, education, weather, transport)	Linguistic / visual	Emphasis / Access to the information
Photographs (Uis campus, uis students, campus of the university of Brazil, Colombian cities)	Visual	Familiarize the reader with the content
Images (Math and education symbols, flags)	Visual	Aesthetic / Familiarize the reader with the content
Paragraph blocks	Linguistic / spatial	Content presentation / Guide the reader
Educational background	Audio	Contextualize the topic

As can be seen in Table 5, participants S2 and S9's choice of certain colors to represent the foreign students' culture was based on the students' and the world's understanding of what Brazilian culture represents to them (see Figure 26). For example, participants S2 and S9 chose

bright colors because, according to them, they represent the carnival and cheerfulness so characteristic of Brazilians. To this, participant S9 said:

“....To identify where she [Bárbara] came from, the colors were to represent Brazil because, as we have always been made to understand, they are very colorful.”
(Interview_excerpt_S9)

The following extract from the observation journal was taken from the peer feedback part of the *Multimodal Composing* phase:

Other couple showed their eBook about a student from Brazil, S14 said “when you talk about Brazil I imagine a lot of flashy colors, but I feel that the pages are with very little color, you could add colors like yellow and green” (Teacher-researcher’s observation journal_February 6th)

Figure 26.

Ebook about Bárbara, a Brazilian student



Note: You can access the ebook here <https://heyzine.com/flip-book/1e2a0af595.html>

Another socio-cultural group represented in the design of the multimodal ebook was the urban culture of skateboarding. It is worth mentioning that this ebook mainly describes and illustrates the life and social work of a leader, Oscar Piñerez, a topic and ebook that will be examined in more detail in the following sub-category; however, during the design process the students also drew on different cultural elements that are characteristic of this socio-cultural group in which Oscar is a leader. Therefore, Table 6 would be referenced again in the following sub-category.

Table 6.

Base units and modes of communication on the Oscar Piñeres and urban culture ebook

Base Units	Mode of communication	Function
Cover (Oscar's photo and skateboard)	Visual	Illustrate the protagonist of the story / Emphasis on the social leader and his social work with the sport.
Colors (bright yellow, orange and blue)	Visual	Aesthetic / To represent the colors of the skateparks
Urban soundtrack	Audio	To represent the place where the sport is practiced (the street)
Photographs (Skaters)	Visual	Familiarize the reader with the skater groups and the urban culture
Black and white photos	Visual	Raise awareness of crime and insecurity in some urban areas of the city
Videos	Visual	Familiarize the reader with the sport
Oscar big photos	Visual	Highlight Oscar social labor and achievements
Layout	Visual / spatial	Aesthetic / magazine-like style
Typeface (Lato)	Linguistic / visual	Legibility
Color and boldface words	Linguistic / visual	Emphasis on key concepts
Drugs and danger symbols	Visual	Represent the risk children are exposed in urban areas
Paragraph blocks	Linguistic / spatial	Content presentation / Guide the reader

The visual and audio mode was also used by participants S7 and S8 to represent the urban culture so characteristic of the group of skateboarders. As can be seen in Figure 27, the use of different photographs such as people practicing the sport, the skateboarding, the group of skaters together as a group, which also illustrate the urban way of dressing and the way they express themselves, and the use of bright yellow, orange, and blue color, that we can see in the skateparks of Bucaramanga, were some of the visual elements that placed the reader in the urban places where skateboarders practice this sport. This can be evidenced in the following observation:

“Other groups worked on the cover of the eBook, it was fantastic because some of the groups did very well with the colors. One group of students tried to highlight the photo of Oscar and use colors that go with the logo. The participants allude to the choice of the colors yellow and blue in the ebook and logo because it is the color that the UIS and another skate park in Bucaramanga is painted.” (Teacher-researcher’s observation journal_January 30th)

In addition, the visual worked in coherence with the audio mode, as participant S8 indicated in the following quote, in order to be consistent with the theme of the ebook, they turned to an urban soundtrack that would transport the reader to the places where the sport is practiced, the street.

“Ah, because it’s very urban, and skateboarding is very urban, of patching in the street, of going out with your friends with that urban flow, so we chose that song..” (Interview excerpt S8)

Figure 27.

Ebook about Oscar Piñeres and the skateboarding



Note: You can access this ebook here <https://heyzine.com/flip-book/9479caeda4.html#page/1>

5.2.2.2 Making social leaders and role models visible. Multimodality also helped the students to make visible the social leaders and role models that exist at UIS; thus, through the design of the multimodal ebook, the students were able to represent the essence and ideals of these individuals. The ebooks examined in this group are those that describe the stories of social learners such as Danovis, Oscar Piñeres and Maria Paula; as well as the lives of people who can be considered role models for the community, such as Professor Jennifer.

Table 7.

Base units and modes of communication on the Danovis and sociopolitical injustice ebook

Base Units	Mode of communication	Function
Cover (Danovis' photo in Páramo de Saturbán)	Visual	Highlight the social leader Danovis / Emphasis on his social work in the Páramo
Yellow flowers	Visual	Represent his political party

Color brown	Visual	Illustrate Danovis' representative brown hat and jacket and his slogan 'the color earth helps me keep my feet on the ground'.
Color and boldface words (prominent social worker, unselfish, optimistic..)	Linguistic / visual	Remark on Danovis' personality
Color and boldface sentences (There are few...)	Linguistic / visual	Emphasis on key information (Danovis' struggle for justice)
One-page photo and Danovis' interview quotations	Linguistic / visual	Illustrate his political and social ideas.
Photographs	Visual	Emphasis on Danovis' struggle for justice, equality and against the traditional political parties.
Song Latinoamerica by Calle 13	Audio	Represent Danovis' struggle for justice, equality and against the traditional political parties.
Jaime Garzón photo and quotation	Visual / linguistic	To portray Danovis' socio-political influencers
Subtitles in capital letters (His trajectory..)	Linguistic / visual	Navigation and access to content
Page number / Danovis' brown hat	Linguistic / Visual	Navigation, access to content and illustrate Danovis' representative hat
Symbols (magazine letters, money..)	Visual	Emphasis on the socio-political injustice

Participants S4 and S13 decided to inquire and make visible the trajectory of Danovis, a social leader whose perseverance and courage have driven his social and political career in favor of social causes in the community. The analysis of this ebook (see Table 7 and Figure 28) and the students' interview (see excerpt below) revealed that the visual mode is mainly based on the affordance of the color brown, which is in line with Danovis' representative hat and jacket and his popular slogan 'the color earth helps me keep my feet on the ground'. The verbal and visual modes are also based on the affordance of the colors orange, green and blue, which are used in some words and phrases; students used these visual elements to highlight words that describe the main features of his personality.

“The question of the color, eh... the color palette was like browns, greens, yes? which are very representative colors of Danovis. On the other hand, we also emphasized the political clash with the traditional parties, so... representing these ideas was like basically representing Danovis, going against these policies.” (Interview excerpt S4)

Figure 28 and the interview excerpt below revealed that the integration of the visual elements with the verbal ones also helped the students to convey Danovis' struggle for justice, equality and against the traditional political parties. According to the students, they deliberately chose photographs that illustrated Danovis' great influence in making visible and alleviating social problems that persist in the community, especially in the political, educational and environmental fields.

Figure 28.

Ebook about Danovis, and sociopolitical injustice



Note: You can access this ebook here <https://heyzine.com/flip-book/93a3ab010d.html>

“And we also tried to find images that represented the struggle that he has, like what always motivates him, images that are very representative of who he is.”
(Interview_excerpt_S13)

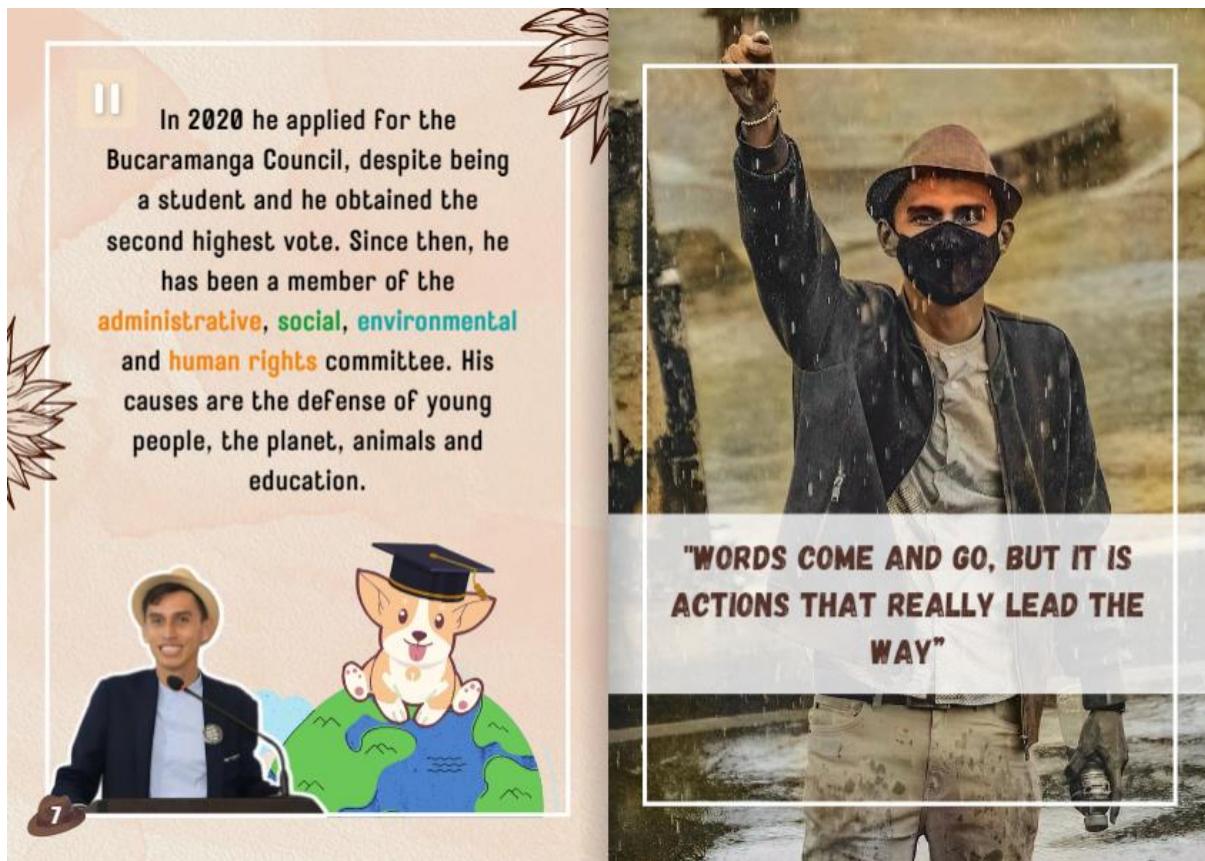
In addition, some pages were dedicated exclusively to Danovis, with a large photograph and celebratory phrases (see Figure 29), in order to portray him as a leader, guiding and inviting young people to actively participate in these social causes and encouraging the community to contribute to the welfare of the city. These ideas were evidenced in the bellow excerpt from the observation journal:

[During the editing stage] I asked them to start thinking about the final product and how they were going to illustrate each of the ideas, it was interesting because through the text the students write some interesting quotes that Danovis mentioned in the interview, so they say "last class we were thinking about making an avatar of Danovis [this idea was later change by a real photograph of Danovis as it can be seen in Figure 29], with his trademark hat and jacket, so we thought we'd put the avatar saying these phrases".(Teacher-researcher's observation journal_January 27th)

“It [Figure 29] highlights the person and what he said, it's not like in a little corner what he said, but a whole page can be seen perfectly” (Interview_excerpt_S13)

Figure 29.

Ebook about Danovis, a social leader



In a similar way, Figure 30 illustrates some pages of the ebook whose visual and linguistic modes are intended to represent the life and social work of Oscar Piñeres (see Table 6 previous sub-category). In these particular pages, the visual mode is mainly based on images, the purpose of which was to show the social problems that children and young people in low social classes are constantly exposed to. In addition, it is evident that the photographs have been carefully chosen to illustrate the social work that Oscar does to help the youth population stay away from crime and drugs through the practice of skateboarding. This is in line with Rincon and Clavijo-Olarte (2016) who argue that multimodality creates multiple opportunities to represent students' understanding of the socio-cultural issues identified during the community inquiry.

Figure 30.*Ebook about Oscar Piñerez and social work*

Table 8 illustrates the base units identified in the ebook dedicated to describing the social work of Maria Paula and the UIS animals collective. As can be seen in Table 8 and Figure 31, the visual mode is predominant along each page; the analysis of the ebook suggests that each photo and each image has been carefully selected and placed in each page for a specific purpose.

Table 8.

Base units and modes of communication on the Maria Paula and the UIS Animals Collective ebook

Base unit	Mode of communication	Function
Color green	Visual	Represent nature, the place where the animals inhabit
Photos of mistreated animals	Visual	Raise awareness about the reality of many animals that are part of UIS Animals Collective
Photos of the members of the UIS Animals Collective	Visual	Highlight the work of students that are part of the UIS Animals Collective
Hyperlink to UIS Animals Collective social websites	Visual	Invite the reader to see more information about the UIS Animals Collective
Photos of different animal species (dogs, cats, turtles, alligators)	Visual	Illustrate the animal species that are in care of the UIS Animals Collective
Photos of the UIS headquarters	Visual	Illustrate the UIS campus that members of the UIS Animals Collective work
Images of people taking care of animals	Visual	Invite people to take care of the animals
Boldface	Linguistic / visual	Highlight key words and information / Strengthen the intention of the photos
Captions	Linguistic	Provide information about the photos used like the name of the animals
Nature sounds	Audio	Represent the environments where these animals inhabit.

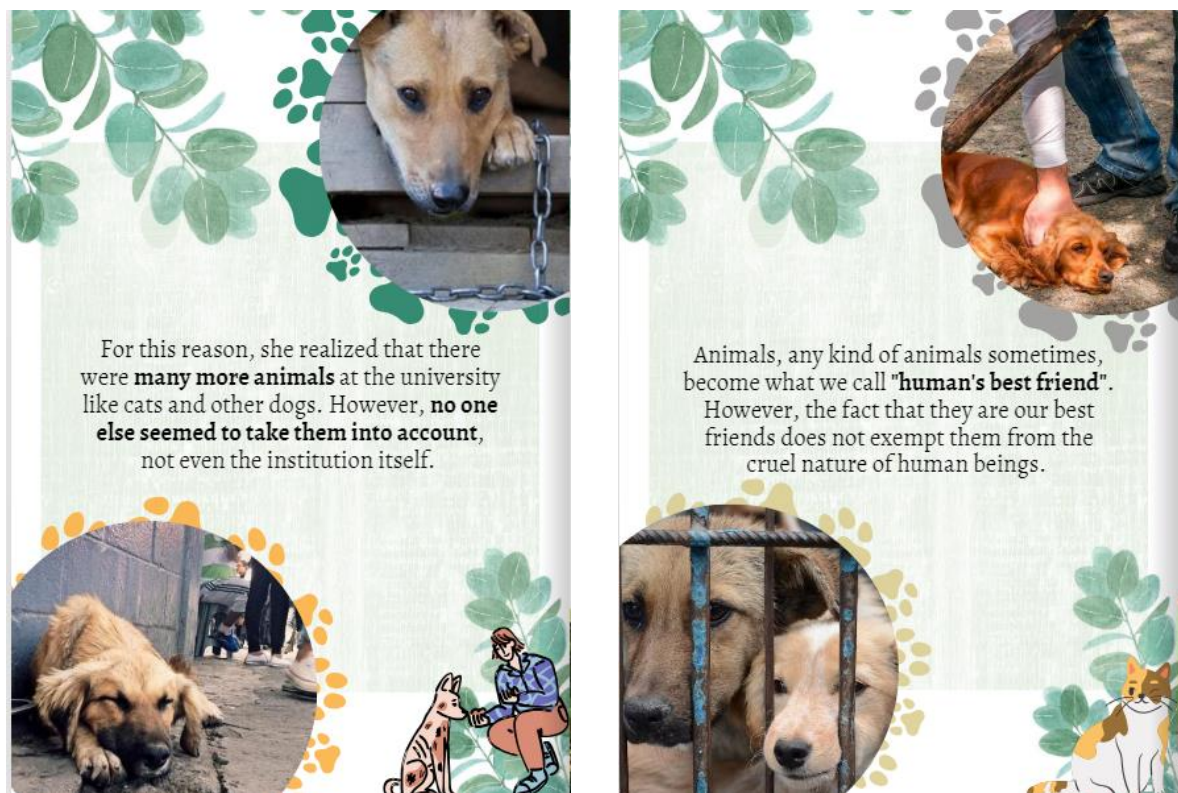
Upon analyzing the visual elements in this ebook (see Figure 31), it is evident that participants S3 and S16 have selected a significant number of actual photographs of the animal species that are under the care of the UIS collected animals. These photographs effectively portray the suffering of these animals at being abandoned and mistreated. The analysis and the students' interview confirm that the photographs effectively raise readers' awareness of the animals' situation and elicit an emotional response through the images. Furthermore, the linguistic paragraphs on these pages feature bolded words, such as 'many more animals', which

serve to strengthen the intention of the photos to emphasize the abundance of animals in the UIS community under these conditions, as confirmed by participant S16 in the interview excerpt below.

“it's like highlighting the fact that there are many animals but most people don't seem to recognize that there are many abandoned animals, so we highlighted them as key words or words that we considered important for the idea we were expressing at that moment” (Interview_excerpt_S16)

Figure 31.

Ebook about Maria Paula and the UIS animals collective



Note: You can access this ebook in this link <https://heyzine.com/flip-book/eba09e2c0f.html>

Another basic unit that seems to be coherent and complementary is the layout of the book, the leaves used for decoration, the color green and the sounds of nature used as a soundtrack. The teacher's observation journal and the excerpt from the interview below show

that the students' intention was to give the ebook a nature-like style to match the theme of the texts (animals), so the two modes work effectively together for this purpose.

It was interesting because the girls in charge of “UIS Animals Collective” were looking for a soundtrack related to nature sounds, as S16 said “teacher, we wanted to include sounds of the nature, since the ebook is green and it is decorated with left to represent the nature” (Teacher researcher’s observation journal _January 30th)

“...we chose that design because it is very natural because of the leaves and the colors that represent nature and because we are talking about little animals and little animals are part of nature, that's why we decided on that color and that design” (Interview_excerpt_S16)

In addition, the visual illustrations of animals at the bottom left of each page (see Figure 31) demonstrated the designers' intention to make readers aware of the importance of caring for animals and to encourage readers to appreciate and support the work of the UIS Animals Collective.

The table below shows the basic units identified in the ebook, which is designed to make visible the life and career of a female professor who has served as a role model for many other women who wanted to succeed in pure science programmes.

Table 9.

Base units and modes of communication on the professor Yennifer and gender gaps ebook

Base Unit	Mode of communication	Function
Color purple, pink, green	Visual	Represent feminism and empowerment of women
Silhouettes of women	Visual	Aesthetics, beauty and subtlety of women
Silhouettes of butterflies	Visual	Represent women freedom

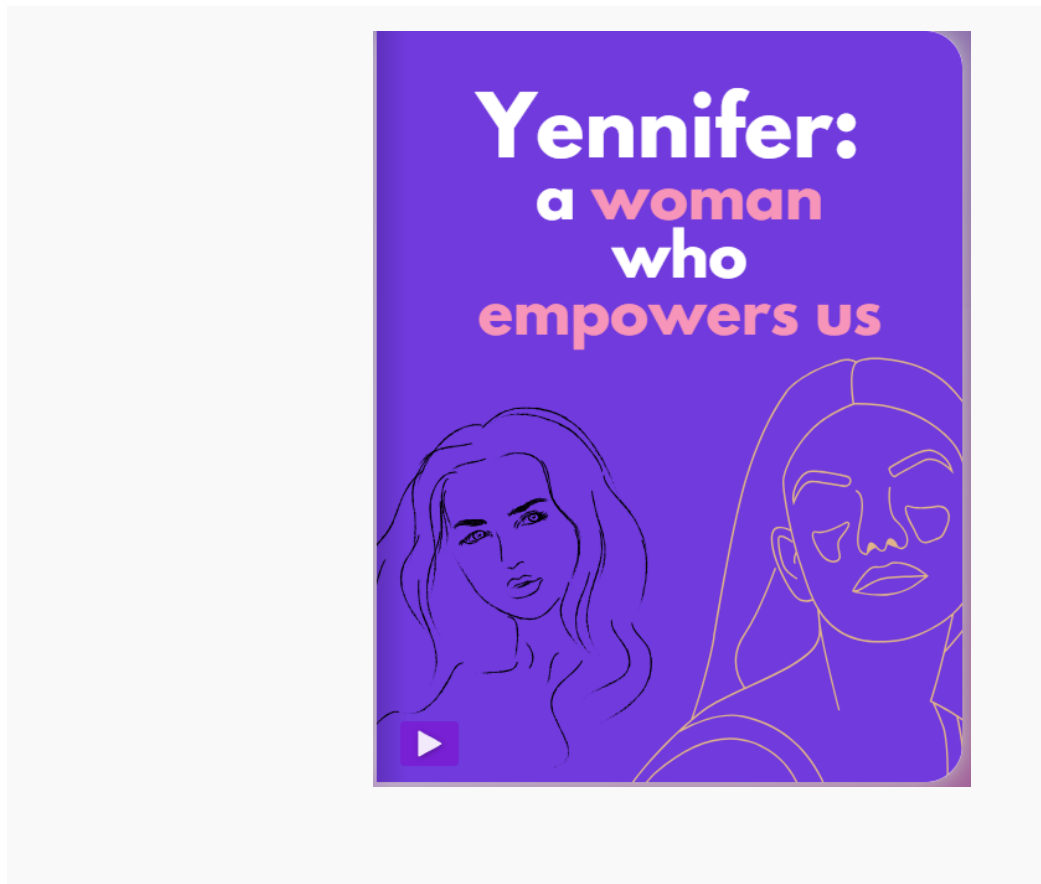
Capital letters, boldface and colors on words and phrases (freedom, empowerment, gender gap..)	Linguistic / visual	Highlight words about women empowerment
Virginia Woolf- A room of one's own quote	Linguistic	Give more strength to the image of women empowerments she wanted to project
Silhouettes, images	Visual	Be coherent with the linguistic information
Typeface (Nunito)	Linguistic / visual	Legibility
Subtitles (An admirable academic trajectory..)	Linguistic	Navigation and access to content
Instrumental of Flowers by Miley Cyrus	Audio	Coherent with the topic of feminism and empowerment

The ebook pages displayed in Figure 32 and Figure 33, illustrate the intersemiotic relationships between the visual modes to portray feminism. The interview excerpt below indicates that participant S5's choice of the colors (i.e. purple, green) relies on her own previous experiences in her social context that have attributed to these colors the concept of feminism and empowerment of women. This is to say, the designer underpinned her selection of the visual modes on the socio-cultural semiotic principle (The New London Group, 1996; Bezemer and Kress, 2008; Jewitt, 2014; Archer and Breuer, 2015) that indicates that a mode is a socio-cultural resource that a social group has made and used for particular cultural practices.

“Well, the character that I interviewed was a woman, so as it was about gender gaps and so on, then it seemed to me like it was very allusive to female empowerment and feminism, so the color purple and green, I think it's like dark green, they are like the colors that are always used in the marches and in feminist collectives, so I said: purple is a color that is very allusive to the topic, and besides it is my favorite color.... and so I said empowerment, that's why I chose that color.” (Interview excerpt S5)

Figure 32.

Ebook about professor Yennifer, cover



Note: You can access to this ebook here <https://heyzine.com/flip-book/72b5afaea5.html>

Similarly, participant S5 based her choice of silhouettes of women and butterflies on the socio-cultural meanings attached to these particular elements. Therefore, she used the woman's silhouette as a means of representing the aesthetics, beauty and subtlety of women, and the butterflies as a means of reflecting the freedom for which women have fought. As she mentioned in the interview:

“Teacher: *I also really liked the illustrations you used, you tried to make everything in silhouette, why?*

S5: *Because in Canva there were different images and so on, but these ones that are specifically like lines, I didn't think they were very aesthetic, they looked very pretty*

and very delicate, because it was also very feminine, so I said: this looks very cool, so I started looking for more similar ones, and also the butterflies, for example this image that I put with the phrase of the butterfly, I put it precisely because the butterfly in a certain way represents freedom, so I said it's not very representative.” (Interview excerpt S5)

Figure 33.

Ebook about professor Yennifer

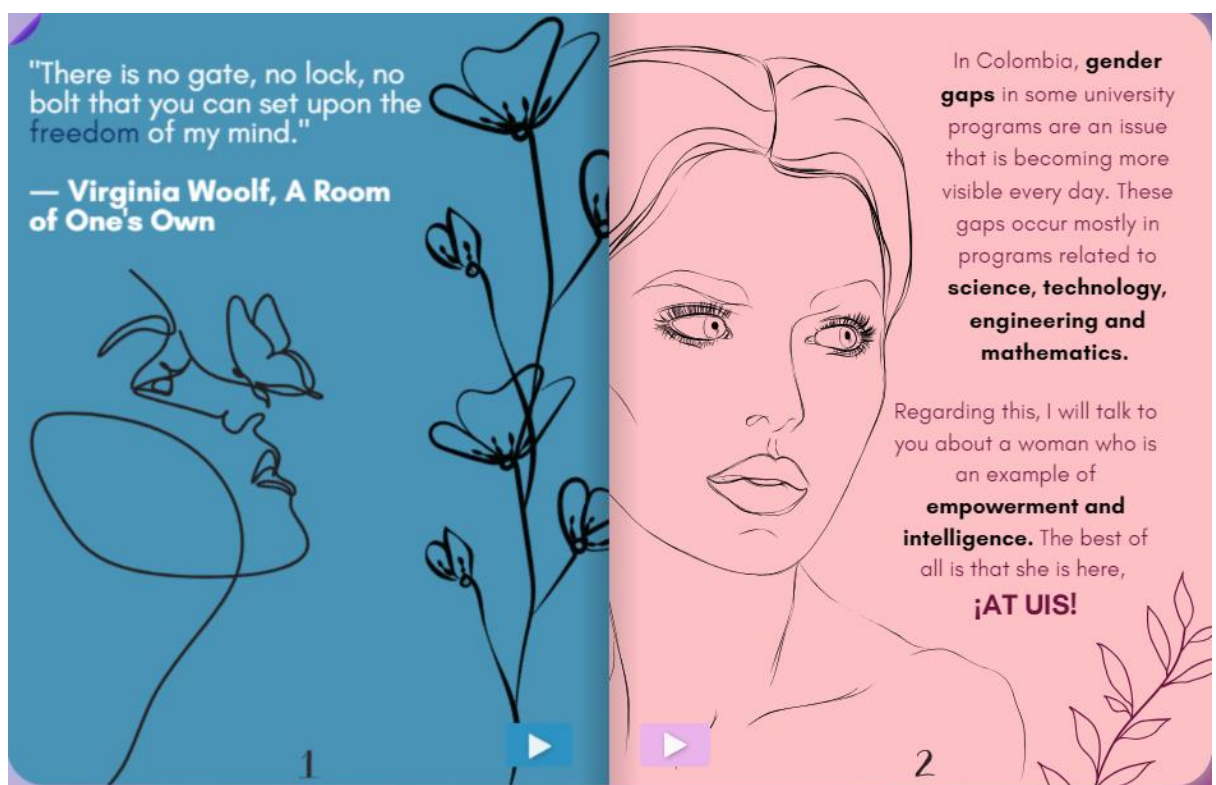


Figure 33 also shows that the affordances of capital letters, boldface and colors, "resources that are associated with the linguistic mode of communication, but they also play a visual role" (Bateman, 2008 as cited in Álvarez-Valencia, 2016, p. 104), predominate in the written elements to highlight words and phrases associated with the main theme of women's empowerment. Thus, words such as gender gaps, freedom, empowerment and intelligence help the audience to identify the rhetorical situation given in the text.

Another mode that predominates in this ebook is the audio mode, which consists of the instrumental soundtrack of Flowers by Miley Cyrus. The potential of the audio mode, integrated in coherence with the theme, allows the audience to feel some sensory experiences that, as Rowsell (2013) revealed, transport the reader and listener into this particular rhetorical situation, feminism for this particular ebook. Participant S5's reason and purpose for the choice of this soundtrack is mentioned in the quote below:

“Oh yeah, the song I used is one that's very popular at the moment, it's called Flower, it's by Miley Cyrus, and the song is about us women being independent, not being told that we have to depend on a man to do certain things. So, the song is very cool, I didn't have the lyrics, but the lyrics of the song are about how you can buy yourself flowers to be with yourself, so I decided to use that because it seemed to me that it had a lot to do with the theme of independence. In one part of the book Jennifer says that if you set your mind to it, you can achieve things, so it seemed to me to be very much a conclusion to the theme, and that's why I chose the instrumental of Flower and a lot of people actually liked it because the song is trending.” (Interview excerpt S5)

The audio mode is used in a similar way by participants S4 and S13 in the ebook about Danovis. Here, the students included the soundtrack of Calle 13 to highlight the presence and leadership of Danovis in each march for working class and youth rights. For this particular element, Way and McKerrell (2017) recognized the potential of music to provide socio-political concerns and specific social values. In the following excerpt, participant S4 states that:

“The music of the ebook is the track of this song by Calle 13 called Latinoamérica, which is often used when there are national strikes by university students and social groups. So we used this music because it's representative and also because Danovis

was always in every march, he's always there, so we chose this song.” (Interview excerpt S4)

5.2.2.3. Making UIS community members visible. This sub-category describes and examines the ebook produced by participants S6 and S10, who wanted to make visible the lives of the women of the UIS cafeteria, who have dedicated their lives to provide a service to the UIS community. Table 11 indicated that each of the base units identified in the ebook was deliberately chosen and well located to achieve one main purpose: to give these UIS members a voice.

Table 10.

Base units and modes of communication on the women of the UIS cafeterias

Base Units	Mode of communication	Function
Boldface	Linguistic / Visual	Emphasis on key information
Typefaces (Bakery Bold, Anca, Coder, and Sweet Apricot)	Linguistic / visual	Legibility and readability / Manuscript-like design to reflect the age of these women
Color brown	Visual	Represent the cafeteria
Microphone	Visual	Give a voice to the community
Images (women)	Visual	Capture the essence of each woman
Light colors	Visual	Represent the joy of the women
Chapters	Spatial	Give protagonist to each woman
Pages distribution (Women's dreams)	Spatial / visual	Highlight the dreams of each woman
Paragraph blocks	Spatial	Guide the reader
Christian music	Audio	Capture the essence of the religious beliefs of each woman

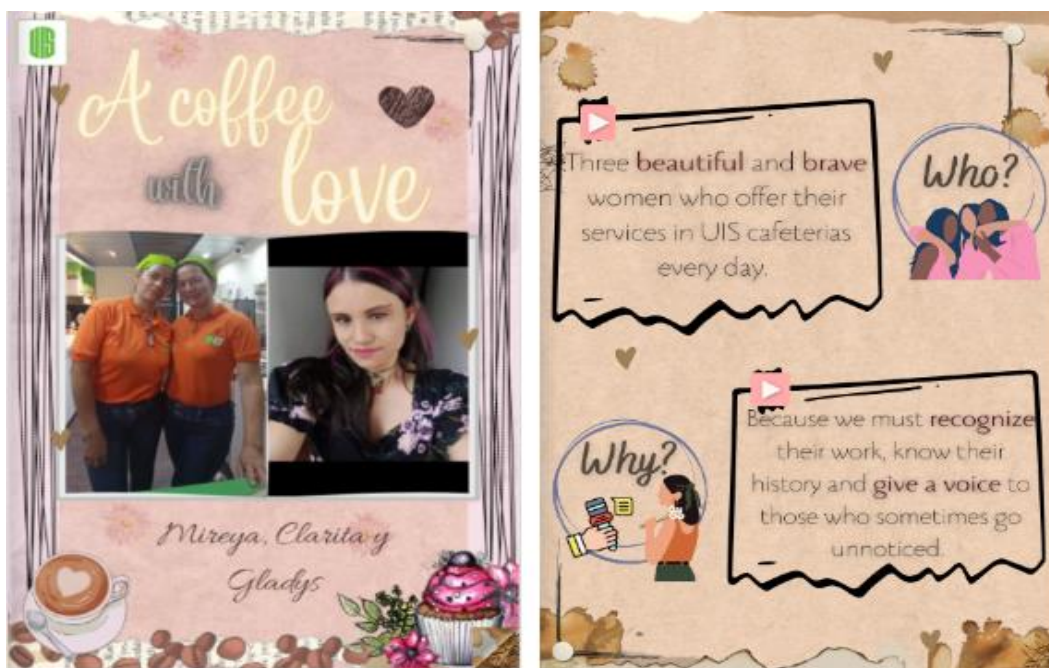
Participants S6 and S10 found multimodality a means to value the university community and to give a voice to those human beings that are not commonly recognized in an educational setting. In this particular ebook, the students resort to multimodality to share their

findings of an inquiry about three women who work at the cafeterias of UIS. In this regard, Somerville (2010) recognizes the efficacy of multimodality when it comes to sharing the local knowledge acquired after a process of inquiry. To this end, the pages illustrated in Figure 34 and the quote below reveal how visual elements such as the microphone and the three women were used to inform the audience about their purpose to recognize the labor of these three women.

“Well, in the first page, I want to give a contextualisation of what the book was going to do, then in the first one we talked about three women, so that's why there is an image of the three women, in the second one it was like the explanation, I mean, the reason for the book, so we wanted to make their lives known, like giving them a voice, so that's why there is a little microphone for the lady, like giving her the voice that we were looking for in the book.” (Interview excerpt S10)

Figure 34.

Ebook about the women of the cafeteria



Note: You can access the ebook here <https://heyzine.com/flip-book/0414fde528.html>

The visual mode is manifested along the whole text in different ways including images, photographs, and color. The affordances of the visual mode varied in each chapter for the sake of reflecting the essence that characterizes each woman. Participant S10 alluded color to be the affordance to reflect women's cheer.

“Teacher: how did you manage to represent the identity of your character, in this case the ladies of the cafeteria in your text?”

S5: [...]the use of colors and different figures inside the pages, because that also helped me a lot to reflect their joy, their attitude because they are very happy, very expressive, so I tried to put it a little bit with colors...” (Interview excerpt S10)

A dominant affordance of the linguistic mode is the typefaces used along each page. As it can be seen on Figure 35 designers drew on three different typefaces, Bakery Bold for subtitles, the Anca Coder for paragraphs blocks, and Sweet Apricot for quotes. Álvarez-Valencia (2016) asserts that “the main purpose of typeface is legibility and readability” (p.104); however, the choice of these typefaces goes beyond these functions and intended to give the overall style of the ebook a manuscript-like design. It is worth mentioning that the reason behind this selection, as it was manifested by participant S10, relies on portraying the essence of the characters who represent a not too young population. Figure 35 demonstrated that there exists a great harmony between the linguistic mode (i.e. typefaces, font size) and the visual mode (i.e. colors, images) giving as a final product not only an aesthetic portrayal but also the handwritten style desired by the designers.

“Teacher: why did you choose those colors, like that design? what was your intention to say with using like this ebook design, these colors?”

***S10:** because they are not, let's say, not so young, like in between, so I wanted the book to be like a representation of a manuscript. So the handwriting that I used, and that I always wanted to keep in mind, was something very subtle and that it looked like it was something manual, not that it should look like a product of a computer, but that it should look like something manual, and that it should merge a little bit with the background, because normally the letters, the parchments, are like a little coffee or something like that, so I wanted everything to be in that kind of concordance.” (Interview excerpt S10)*

Figure 35.

Ebook about the women of the cafeteria, Claribel's dreams



Another mode encountered throughout this ebook was spatial distribution. As it can be observed in Figure 34 and Figure 35, students distributed each linguistic and visual element on

the pages in a way that not only guided the reader along the stories, but also communicated particular meanings. According to Bateman (2008) “page elements and their organization strongly influence how readers interact and interpret the documents that contain them” (as cited in Álvarez-Valencia, 2016, p. 105). Layout choice supports Student 10 intention of:

“to give them a voice, and to recognize the work they do, we also made a special section for each one, because we wanted them to have a leading role and highlight their dreams.” (OJ_February 6th)

To achieve the purpose mentioned above, the cover of each chapter (see Figure 36) consists of a striking title with the name of the woman accompanied with a big photo of her. In the following page, students present the information in short paragraphs swapping their position with pictures, either on the left or right side of the page, which not only facilitate navigation but also give a pleasant and organized look to the page. At the bottom of the page there is a short session dedicated to a woman’s quote with a picture of a woman, that according to Student 10:

“Teacher: *It really caught my attention and I really liked that you put these little dolls, I see that there is one for each of them, why did you choose it like that?*

S10: *Yes, it was also to give them an identity and inside the book there are some parts in which there are phrases from them, like for example Mireya said that she loved to serve, so that little phrase is there inside the ebook, so I used that little doll to indicate that that phrase was from each one of them, so that they had an identity inside the book.” (Interview excerpt S10)*

One particular feature that calls the attention in this analysis is that one page of each chapter is dedicated to represent women’s dreams (see Figure 36). The letter size, typeface,

spatial distribution and visual elements that accompanying the content evidence that there is a clear intention from the Student 10 to make emphasis on their dreams by asserting that:

“I thought it was important to highlight this [their dream] because they are people who perhaps have not had the same possibilities that perhaps I have for example, that is, they have not had the freedom to have, let's say, a university degree, to be able to have things and to be able to make their dreams come true in some way, so I wanted to make those dreams known, to show that they work day by day serving the community, but behind that there are plans, some purposes, some dreams that would be very gratifying, and it would be very nice to see them make them come true, so I wanted to emphasize that, and the images are very much related to their dreams,” (Interview excerpt S10)

Figure 36.

Ebook about the women of the cafeteria, Mireya's dreams



According to Wang (2015) the integration of language and other relevant meaning resources contributes to the interpretation of discourse meaning in a more comprehensive and accurate way. To this regard, this ebook is a clear example of a multimodal text making process where linguistic, visual, audio, and spatial modes are used complementary to create meaning in a text as a whole. Participant S10 manifested her intention to effectively integrate different elements in the ebook design and not to work each element in isolation, as she mentioned below:

“Well, I had several points, one of which was that the one in the title was a café, so I wanted the meaning of café to be present throughout the book, not as something isolated, the title on the one hand and the design of the book on the other, but that it should be here as a whole.” (Interview excerpt S10)

It is worth mentioning that even though students had to comply with a rubric in terms of content structure, in regards to form they did not have to follow any ortotipographic hermetic rules for the sake of not limiting creativity in the multimodal text design. The above gave as result a wide range of designs suggesting that multimodality unfolded a variety of ways to represent realities (Rincon and Clavijo-Olarte, 2016).

The analysis of the ebooks and interview excerpts above demonstrated that during the design process the students gained capacity to carefully select from a complex system of modes of communication the one that carries meanings and cultural assets they wished to represent. This aligns with Kress (2009) aptness notion that sign-makers select “the ‘best fit’ or ‘ready-shaped’ form to be the expression of meaning -the signified- to be realized” (p.55). The findings also demonstrated the students' ability to integrate multiple modes of meaning, including visual, aural, spatial and linguistic, each to fulfill a particular purpose within the text, but also all of them integrated together to create a unique unit to recreate or represent the students'

university community.

5.2.3. Impact of multimodality on students' language literacy skills

The integration of different modes of communication to write about community topics for social purposes, seemed to have also an impact on students' language literacy skills. As stated in the previous categories, multimodality refers to the interplay between different representational modes such as linguistic, visual, spatial and audio to make meaning (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001). Apparently, these multimodal features encompass the different learning styles of the students. This is supported by Sakulprasertsri (2020) who attributes multimodality with the potential to be suitable and applicable for students with different learning styles. In the authority of Dunn and Dunn (1992) learning styles consist of “the way in which each learner begins to concentrate on, process, absorb, and retain new and difficult information” (as cited in Dunn and Burke, 2008, p. 2). In simple terms, students are more likely to get the most out of their learning by using their primary learning style, which can be visual, auditory or kinaesthetic (VAK) (Barbe and Milone, 1981).

In this regard, the individual interviews showed that the students who felt more engaged in the realization of the final ebook and who took more responsibility for using appropriate strategies to achieve the desired product, were those students who indicated having a more visual learning style. As an illustration, participant S10, who described herself as visual, manifested that the interaction with the visual mode kept her more focused on the task. As it was expressed by participant S10:

“I'm more of a visual type, yes, because I'm much more interested, like my brain is much more focused, much more focused on what I have to do, and it's generating ideas, like better and in less time” (Interview_ excerpt_S10)

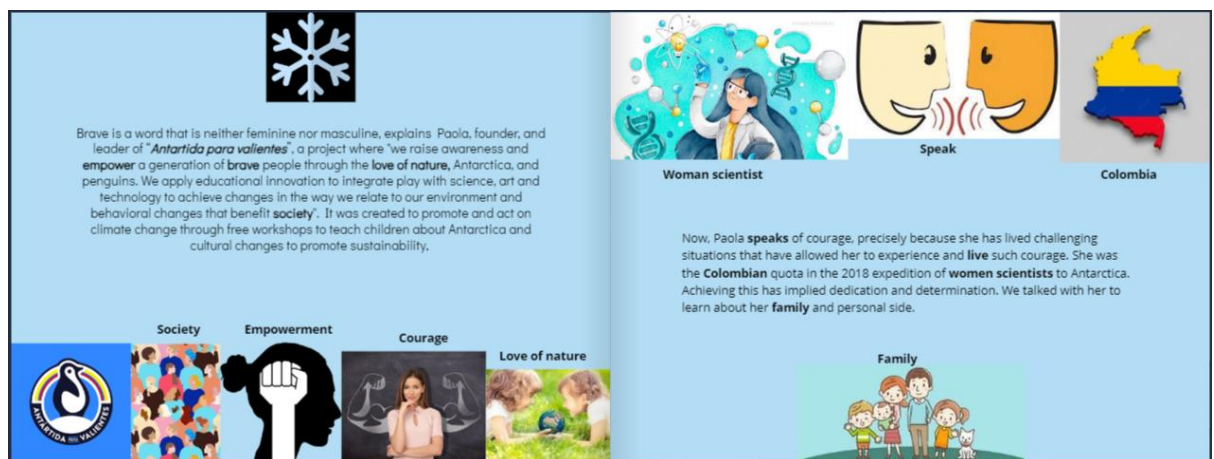
Participant S8 also benefited greatly from multimodality as she showed a remarkable

level of investment and commitment to completing the multimodal tasks throughout the project. When analyzing her ebooks, the teacher-researcher noticed the use of many pictures, suggesting that this student relied on the visual as a learning strategy to understand, recall and apply the language (see Figure 37). The preceding information indicates that multimodality helped participant S8 to take actions to maximize her own learning potential (Oxford, 1990 as cited in Kumaravadivelu, 2002). As she manifested during the editing stage:

S8 said “I would like to do the same as we did with Paola Tello, there are many words that I didn't know, so I would like to underline them, or put them in bold and put the image...the glossary with images seems very nice” and she added “I feel that it doesn't help me to put the word in Spanish because if I don't, I'll put the image and I know what it refers to.” (Teacher-researcher's observation journal_January 27th)

Figure 37.

Ebook about Paola Tello, first ebook



Note: This is the first ebook created by students during stage 2 Inspiring stories and multimodal texts in the application Bookcreator

It is worth noting that at the beginning of the course participant S8 showed great difficulty in participating in the class and in performing some of the activities required. However, activities that permitted her to have the control of interweaving the visual elements

seemed to stimulate her engagement during the design of the multimodal ebook. This was evident in her commitment to completing each stage, and her enthusiasm in using digital tools to integrate videos, color, photographs and filters into the images. As recorded in the observation diary, during the editing stage participant S8 indicated that:

“In this part we are going to put a video of skateboarding, and we want this part to look like this when we put it in book mode, S7[her partner] is being guided by a style he saw in a magazine.” I could see that participants S7 and S8 were really engaged in the project, they had done the outline task before their classmates and they had already looked for the images and the layout they wanted to put on their eBook, this pair showed a high commitment to the design of the project to make the eBook look good to the eye of the reader” (Teacher-researcher’s observation journal _February 1st)

As a result of the above, the data collected indicated that participant S8's engagement in the design of the multimodal text had a direct positive impact on her language learning performance. This could be seen, not only in the excerpt below, but especially in the quality of her final product (see Figure 38), in terms of the complex grammatical structures she used, the amount of new and advanced vocabulary she integrated, and the coherence and cohesion she demonstrated in comparison to previous tasks. From the above, it can be concluded that this project allowed this participant to "discover her learning potential, in addition to merely gathering knowledge about the learning process" (Kumaravadivelu, 2002, p. 133).

“So, I feel that images and visuals play a very important role...what I did with mine was that I underlined them, and marked them with an image so that I was able to identify them more easily and I expanded my vocabulary a lot.” (Interview_excerpt S8)

Figure 38.

Ebook about Oscar Piñeres, second ebook

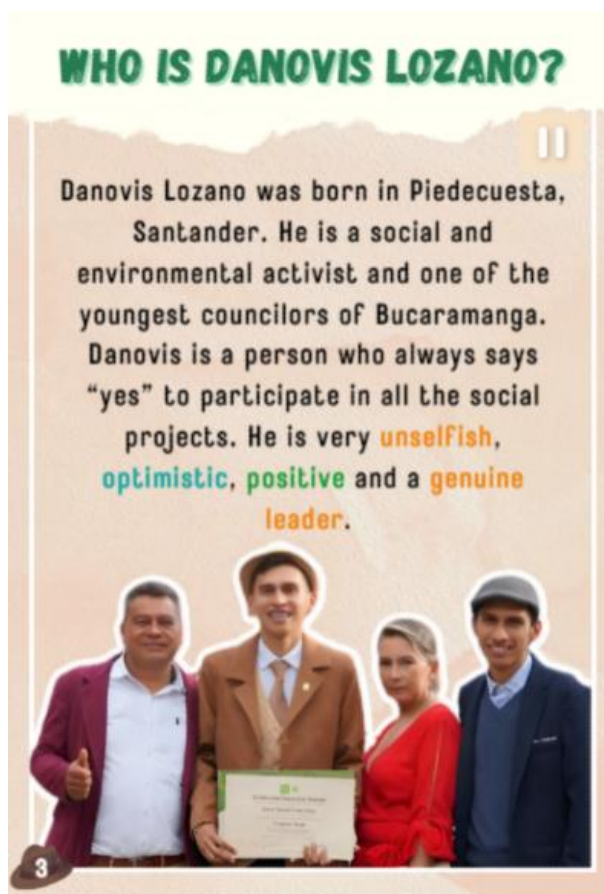


To take another example, the responses of participants S4 and S13 in the individual interview showed that the integration of visual elements accompanying the linguistic content and bold and highlighted text (see Figure 39), a typographical resource that also plays a visual role (Bateman, 2008, see Álvarez-Valencia, 2016), becomes an efficient learning strategy that allows students, especially those who describe themselves as visual, to better relate to and remember unfamiliar words. This means that relying on the use of the visual mode as a learning strategy contributed significantly to their improvement in vocabulary acquisition. To the question: "In what way do you think the addition of pictures, sound symbols and colors contributed to your learning of English?" they answered:

“:[...]we also highlighted verbs there, as important phrases, so by highlighting these little words, these phrases, it also gave meaning to this phrase, to this verb in this context.” (Interview_excerpt S4)

Figure 39.

Ebook about Danovis



“Yes... I think the images were fundamental there because... you don't just write, you also think about how to decorate it and how to find a visual way to do it so that the image matches what you don't want to say, so I think the images are fundamental there.” (Interview_excerpt S13)

In addition, from the analysis of students' comments, it seems that the integration of multimodality at the core of the design process of the project enabled students to bring informal literacy practices into the EFL classroom. As noted by Yi (2014), multimodality has the ability

to connect the out-of-school literacy practices, hereafter referred to as informal literacy practices, with academic literacy, thus providing students with the opportunity to use their strengths, lived experiences, and digital and sociocultural knowledge for their academic literacy development. To illustrate, participant S13 expressed that he enjoyed the process of adding images, editing videos and working with different modes in an assignment, as these are activities and skills that he performs and masters in an informal context as a youtuber. As it can be seen in the dialogue below, participant S13 is a youtuber in his spare time, which means that activities involving the use of digital applications that are not taught in the EFL classroom were used to benefit the development of the project.

“S13: To improve the quality of the images, eh... for the audio, I also used something called Adobe Podcast, which improves the quality of the audio. It's like I'm very involved in this world, so I have several tools there.

***Teacher:** That's why S4 tells you the youtuber.*

S13: Yes, because I also have a youtube channel.

***TEACHER:** Really?*

S13: Yes, mathematics, I teach mathematics.”

(Interview_excerpt_S13)

Undoubtedly, encouraging and allowing students to feel free to use these skills in an academic setting increased their engagement, participation, attention and investment in the task. The above allowed me, as a teacher-researcher, to see that the connection between informal practices and the EFL classroom was a crucial factor that favored students' engagement on the task. As can be seen in the excerpt below, participant S13 positioned himself as a knowledgeable individual in elements such as audio, image and video editing in the

classroom, which gave him self-esteem and self confidence in the project (Kumaravadivelu, 2002). In his own words:

“I'm much more visual and when I have to design... I'm learning more, even with the video interview we did with him [with Danoves], I edited the video so when I'm editing it I can concentrate more on what he's saying and how to cut it out and so on, so I have more knowledge of that part of it.” (Interview_ excerpt_S13)

In addition, this integration of informal practices into academic settings seemed to directly enhance students' skills in certain language aspects, particularly in writing and vocabulary acquisition. Studies conducted by Yi (2014) and Sakulprasertsri (2020), suggest that encouraging students to apply their prior and out-of-class knowledge in multimodal tasks in the EFL classroom contributes to the improvement of their English language skills. This suggests that the use of informal literacy practices in the EFL classroom- abilities that are rarely considered in conventional learning scenarios - results in an increase in students' autonomy in the task and subsequently enhances their language learning performance. This is supported by student S13 who to the question "in what way do you consider the addition of images, audio symbols, and colors contributed to your learning of the English language?", he stated that:

“Mainly because of the motivation, I was at least much more motivated to work on an ebook than if we were working on conventional ideas or something like that, so for me at least I was much more motivated, so of course that led to me being much more concentrated and more attentive to what I was going to deliver, and therefore more attentive to learning the different words, the different forms of writing, and that broadened my vocabulary.” (Interview_ excerpt_S13)

The extracts below show that participants increased the responsibility in this project as they invested time, effort and creativity in and out of class for the completion and success of

the final product. For instance, participants S4 and S10 attributed their success in learning the target language to the dynamic nature of this project, as it encouraged them to put a lot of effort and dedication into the design process, unlike other traditional tasks. That is, students tend to prioritize tasks that require dynamic activities that allow them to fully participate in the process rather than the traditional teacher-centered approach.

“You see English as just for the classroom and making sentences out of pure verb TO BE, so you mentioned images, color and sound, well, it gives another dimension to the language, I mean, let's say you just have to learn English by learning the list of regular and irregular verbs, that's like a nicer and more striking way, it was actually more significant.” (Interview_ excerpt_S4)

“...For me, all of that is more creative, more dynamic, playing with colors and shapes and drawings is very attractive to me, and let's say that I prioritize this type of work over the others because the others bore me, I'm more like those things so I'm very, very happy, let's say, doing this type of activity.” (Interview_ excerpt_S10)

In a similar view, Medina et.al., (2015), conceived multimodality as an opportunity to break with the monolingual status of language that still dominates traditional EFL classrooms. Therefore, practices that integrate multimodality seem to provide students with meaningful experiences that promote students' engagement in the learning process and develop their responsibility in the task that directly contributes to their language acquisition.

6. Conclusions

The present study aimed to describe and analyze how a community-based project in combination with multimodality potentiates students' meaning-making in the target language. The in-depth analysis and triangulation of the data provided me, as a teacher-researcher, with reliable information to answer the research question: *To what extent do students engage in meaning-making in the target language by creating multimodal texts around their academic community?* The findings of this qualitative study are presented below under the scope of the three specific objectives.

In terms of describing the extent to which a community-based project helps students to read the community critically, the findings revealed that the participants in this study read the community critically by exploring, observing and questioning the realities of the community members, as inquiry was at the heart of the whole project. In the first place, stages of this project were designed with the purpose of allowing students to learn from and with the community inside and out of the classroom during an inquiry process. For instance, activities such as mapping the community, reading inspirational stories from the community and approaching and interviewing members of the university made students become aware of assets that had not been noticed before this intervention.

The information gathered confirmed that inviting students to explore the university campus led them to recognize and value the physical spaces of the university as resources where students could experience multiple literacies (Clavijo-Olarte and Sharkey, 2012) and that could enrich their cultural and linguistic learning experiences. The recognition and appreciation of different socio-cultural groups in the community also resulted from the inquiry mediated by the teacher in the classroom. The results showed that students became aware of the diverse populations on campus, the coexistence of indigenous, immigrant and urban groups within the university. Inquiring about these communities allowed students to become informed

about their languages, cultures, beliefs and traditions, and to embrace their linguistic and cultural diversity as a representation of our country. This inquiry also led students to become aware of social leaders and role models within the university. Learning about their stories allowed students to recognize and value the work of these individuals for the whole community.

Undoubtedly, reaching out to these communities and members of the university brought to light social issues that had not previously been visible. In light of this, the students became critical readers of the community by participating in local inquiry that led to the discovery of community issues. The findings also demonstrated that these experiences contributed to students' self-transformation, as they recognized the importance of contributing to alleviating these issues through small actions, as well as they became aware of the impact that this project had by making visible the assets and issues discovered in the inquiry process. This conclusion aligns with the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire (1988/2005), who emphasized the importance of transforming education by allowing learners to explore and develop their critical literacy in the classroom as a way of transforming the world.

The visibility of community assets and issues was made possible through the design of multimodal ebooks. The above leads to the discussion of the second objective, which was to analyze the multimodal texts created by the students based on the communities of the Universidad Industrial de Santander. The analysis of the final ebooks, together with the supporting information from the interviews and the observation journal, led to the conclusion that the design of multimodal texts was a powerful resource for representing community members and issues. According to the participants, the interweaving of written, visual, spatial and aural modes helped them to fully express their ideas and represent their understanding of the world, a purpose that might be limited by the use of the linguistic mode alone, which is still privileged in traditional classrooms. In the view of the New London Group (1996), the potential of other modes to extend 'mere literacy' in the curriculum to a more powerful pedagogy of

'multiliteracies', allow for a more complete and critical representation and appreciation of the complexities of the university community, its nature, culture, discourses and socio-political issues.

Another interesting finding from this analysis was the way in which students carefully selected the elements to include in their ebooks and how they combined them to convey meanings. The analysis revealed that the students' choices of images, photographs, colors, layout, typeface, and sounds were based on social and cultural conventions given to certain visual or aural elements. According to Álvarez-Valencia (2016) "the semiotic resources we chose to use are instrumental in conveying our meanings or worldviews" (p. 108). It is worth highlighting that the multimodal ebooks could not have been as rich as they were without the previous multimodal encounter with the community that took place during the inquiry process; such direct contact with the community brought to light the multimodal nature of communication by considering other channels of meaning making such as gestures, body language and tone of voice (Álvarez-Valencia, 2018).

In this regard, community-based pedagogy and multimodality become a powerful dyad to represent and capture the essence of the academic community, to give voice to community members, to inspire students for social transformation and to make them aware of rewriting the realities of the community. This is confirmed by Rincón and Clavijo (2016) who stated that "community-based pedagogies and multimodalities represent new alternatives to achieve meaningful practices for students, especially in communication and self-expression" (p. 73).

Finally, the analysis of the data confirmed that this study maximized students' opportunities to make meaning in the target language. According to the findings, framing each of the activities proposed in the didactic sequence within the community and multimodal approach fostered students' interest for using the target language in the EFL classroom and led them into a complex multimodal composing process. The quality of the final ebooks

demonstrated that the students were engaged in the design process; it was evident in the linguistic, visual and audio elements that were carefully and deliberately selected and integrated to convey a clear social message to the community. This means that giving students the opportunity to write about topics that they find relevant and interesting for the wellbeing of society, and to incorporate other modes of communication besides the linguistic for this purpose, increases their opportunities to represent their ideas about the world in a richer and more faithful way. Additionally, the analysis of the students' interviews, comments and behaviors recorded in the observation journal, and the way they wrote the reality of their communities in multimodal texts, brought to light that this study also fostered students' literacy skills in the target language. Therefore, this dyad contributed to the development of critical and language literacy as students learned while using the foreign language for a real purpose and for a real audience.

All in all, based on the findings reported above led me to conclude that a didactic intervention aimed at creating multimodal texts about students' academic community potentiated students' meaning-making in the target language. Thus, inquiring about the community as first stance in this project provided students with the socio-cultural resources needed to potentiate their meaning making process. As all writing processes must first go through reading, the participants in this study read the world by observing, inquiring and questioning their community, as Maicedo and Freire (1987) claim; followed by a process of writing about the world, their community, using the potential of multimodality, which takes the view of communication beyond the linguistic and in itself provides more channels for a more complete and total representation of the world. Furthermore, combining these two approaches in an EFL class opened up opportunities for students to maximize the potential of each mode of communication to make meaning in the target language.

7. Limitations and Recommendations

This study had two main limitations throughout the intervention. The most obvious limitation was the relatively short duration of the study. As I described in the section on the didactic sequence, although the semester lasts four months and the Intermediate English I course required 5 hours of teaching per week, not all of the teaching time could be devoted to the development of the project, as other curricular content had to be covered. In addition, some of the activities took more time than expected, so with four weeks left at the end of the semester, I agreed with the students that all the following classes would be devoted to the design of the ebook. Another obstacle presented regarding time was due to the class schedule, this course was assigned classes on Mondays and Wednesdays, a significant amount of Monday being a holiday in Colombia. Although this time constraint did not affect the completeness of the ebooks, little time was dedicated to checking and assisting students in recording and adding the audios to the ebooks, giving as a result that some of the audios integrated in some of the ebooks did not have the quality of volume required.

Another limitation was that some of the community members that the students wanted to interview were not available at the time required, so some of the topics had to be changed because they could not get in touch with the person, resulting in a delay in the delivery of the interview. In addition, as described in the didactic sequence, the last stage, *Sharing with the Community*, was opened to invite all the people who inspired these stories; however, not all of them could come to the presentation, so few people attended it.

A final limitation for this study was the lack of economic resources, although it was a research that did not require too much investment of money, some time could have been saved if I had paid for a person or software to help me with the transcriptions of the interviews; in addition, I could not have access to some important articles or books that would have provided me with primary resources for theoretical support.

One suggestion for further research in this line could be to analyze the impact of a community and multimodal approach in a pre-service teacher population of the ELT programme, this could lead to interesting findings on how this project sensitizes future language teachers to the importance of integrating the community into the classroom and using other modes of meaning making. In addition, further research can be extended to other communities outside the students' academic environment and could involve students in observing, inquiring and participating in other sectors of the city. In addition, considering that the length of this project only allowed to promote students' autonomy on visualizing the community members and issues, further and longer research could be devoted to allow students a more active participation or to take actions in alleviating some issues that affected their communities. Finally, I would recommend the navigation of other multimodal products besides ebooks, but also those in which the integration of each mode is put at the service of meaning making in the target language.

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