Introducing culture and critical thinking in the classroom: Analysing multimodal texts from NGOs in a Masters course

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Abstract

The multimodal nature of present societies makes clear that teaching with authentic multimodal texts can contribute to bringing different cultural realities into the classroom. For this reason, it was decided to use texts published by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in order to teach visual grammar (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006) in a Masters course in Spain. These texts were also selected because they are appropriate to teach cultural aspects, and raise awareness of the realities of poor countries; they may also foster the acquisition of interpersonal competencies. This paper offers textual analysis; this research will point out that teaching students to be critical with the discourse produced by NGOs is essential in order to unveil relationships of domination and power because discourse is always a powerful tool used to reproduce social reality.

Keywords: multimodality, visual grammar, interpersonal competencies, critical thinking, NGOs.

Resumen

La naturaleza multimodal de las sociedades actuales deja claro que el aprendizaje con auténticos textos multimodales contribuye a llevar a clase diferentes realidades culturales. En este sentido, se decidió usar textos publicados por Organizaciones No Gubernamentales (ONG) para enseñar gramática visual (Kress y van Leeuwen, 2006) en un máster. Estos textos han sido seleccionados porque eran apropiados para enseñar aspectos culturales y las realidades de los países pobres; éstos también permiten la adquisición de competencias interpersonales. En este artículo se señala que enseñar a los estudiantes a ser críticos con el discurso producido por las ONG es fundamental para desvelar las relaciones de dominación y poder, porque el discurso es siempre una poderosa herramienta utilizada para reproducir la realidad social.

Palabras clave: multimodalidad, gramática visual, competencias interpersonales, pensamiento crítico, ONG.

THE PROCESS OF convergence that has taken place in European universities in recent years has involved a series of changes in the mission of the university. It must be a formative and educational university that can create competent, educated, responsible, reflective, critical and adaptable professionals. This produces a change from the teaching university to the learning university with the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). In addition, there is a change in emphasis from providing information (input) to that of learning outcomes (output) (Ahmar & Mahmood, 2010; Rué, 2007; Torre Puente, 2008).

In this sense, the university has changed from being a place to acquire concepts to a place where students acquire competencies that will help them become professionals ready for the demands of the labour market. Consequently, degrees must incorporate the acquisition of competencies such as leadership, critical thinking, and cooperation, among others. (Gómez Lucas & Álvarez Teruel, 2011). Using active methodologies is essential for the acquisition of competencies. These methodologies highlight the exchange of ideas in the classroom thanks to students' engagement and their active participation in the teaching-learning process (Ghaith, 2002; Johnson & Johnson, 1989; Johnson & Johnson, 2009; Johnson, Johnson & Smith, 2007; Slavin, 1989).

Following the classification of the Tuning project (González & Wagenaar, 2003, p.79ff.) there are different types of competencies. These authors offer two classifications. On the one hand, they can be classified as general and specific. General competencies are characterised by skills necessary for employment and to have an active role in life that would help resolve problems. They are important for all students regardless of what degree they study. Specific competencies are their own degree skills. They give identity and social and professional consistency to a training profile. On the other hand, González and Wagenaar (2003, p. 81ff.) also classified the competencies in the following way:

1. Instrumental competencies, divided into:
    1.1 Cognitive competencies or abilities to understand and manipulate ideas and thoughts.
    1.2 Methodological competencies or abilities to manipulate the environment: organize time, develop learning strategies, make decisions, resolve problems.
    1.3 Technological competencies or abilities related to the use of technology, computing and information processing resources.
    1.4 Language skills or oral and written communication abilities and knowledge of a second language.
2. Interpersonal competencies, divided into:
    2.1 Cognitive competencies or abilities to understand and manipulate

    ideas and thoughts.

  2.2 Methodological competencies or abilities to manipulate the environment: organize time, develop learning strategies, make decisions, resolve problems.

  2.3 Technological competencies or abilities related to the use of technology, computing and information processing resources.

  2.4 Language skills or oral and written communication abilities and knowledge of a second language.

 3. Systemic competencies: capabilities and abilities on all complete systems (combination of understanding, sensibility and knowledge, requiring the prior acquisition of instrumental and interpersonal skills).

A competency-based curriculum can integrate theory and practice, relating the activities carried out in the teaching-learning process and the evaluation of it, as well as uniting different content that students should learn and the different capabilities that must be developed for this. In other words, the successful acquisition of competencies enables students to carry out professional activities effectively. We think that teaching approaches based on competencies make it possible to develop the ability to perform tasks correctly. The acquisition of competencies contributes to sharing ideas and feelings, develops critical thinking, and promotes interaction (Tsay & Brady, 2010; Wang, 2009).

In general, interpersonal competencies do not receive enough attention at university. For this reason, this article will focus specifically on the acquisition of interpersonal competencies such as the development of critical thinking. We are interested in observing the feelings and opinions students have when they analyze authentic texts produced by Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). We decided to use these texts because they represent an aspect of the media which allows readers to understand different realities. As van Dijk (2009) claims, it is mostly through the media that we have contact with other cultures. In this sense, the media in general and the press in particular have power over readers. As Martínez Lirola (2013, p. 196) states, "[t]he press has the power to transmit the said issues in one way or another, which invariably has an effect in the readers' ideology and opinion."

The ideas presented in the previous paragraphs suggest that current teaching should focus not only on the use of printed texts to read or write. Today's society and the changes proposed by the EHEA and the Information and Communication Technologies (hereafter ICTs) demand new forms of *literacy*. For this reason, one of the main objectives of this article is to observe the relationship between teaching with multimodal texts published by NGOs and the teaching of cultural aspects in the classroom. Our main research questions are the following: Can a multimodal-based approach to teaching contribute to

teaching cultural aspects in the classroom? Are the texts published by NGOs effective for this purpose? Can they also contribute to the acquisition of critical thinking?

NGOs have acquired an increasing importance for mass media (Gómez Gil, 2005; González Luis, 2006). They have become sources of information for the media when news items are related with the development of poor countries. Therefore, it is essential to know how to analyse the image that NGOs present of others who are culturally different because their gaze on poor countries is constantly present in the daily press and helps shape public opinion. In this sense, being able to analyse critically the discourse proposed from NGOs on poor[1] countries is important since discourse also contributes to create relations of power and domination between cultures, people, countries, and ultimately, human beings. In Escobar's words (1995, pp. 5-6):

> Thinking of development in terms of discourse makes it possible to maintain the focus on domination—as earlier Marxist analyses, for instance, did— and at the same time to explore more fruitfully the conditions of possibility and the most pervasive effects of development […] To see development as historically produced entails an examination of why so many countries started to see themselves as underdeveloped in the early post-World War II period, how 'to develop' became a fundamental problem for them, and how, finally, they embarked upon the task of 'un-underdeveloping' themselves by subjecting their societies to increasingly systematic, detailed, and comprehensive interventions.

Understanding development in terms of discourse is the proposal of post-development theorists, such as Escobar (1995), Esteva (2000) or Picas Contreras (2001). For these theorists, development has projected a certain way of seeing poor countries, which is reflected in NGOs, because they use development discourse (CONGDE, 2010). This discourse is ideological. Consequently, post-development theorists have understood development discourse as Said (1977, p. 20) describes Orientalism:

> Taking the late eighteenth century as a very roughly defined starting point Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.

Choosing authentic texts Choosing authentic texts produced by NGOs offers students

the possibility of working with real language and real texts so they can observe social and cultural aspects through text analysis and be able to interpret contemporary culture (Martínez Lirola, 2013, p. 196). In this sense, it is easy for them to establish a connection between what is learned and real life (O'Keeffe, McCarthy & Carter, 2007, p. 26).

Moreover, new technologies in the classroom (NTIC) have affected all areas of our life, including the teaching-learning process. In recent years there has been a great development in digital and mobile technology. Changes in new technologies have brought changes in the modes of communication and also in the definition of literacy and their applications in the 21st century in educational contexts (Lemke, 2012; Livingstone, 2008; Merchant, 2009). There are traditional teaching tools that remain in these new contexts. However, new times demand changes in tertiary education so that learning opportunities offered by new technologies are incorporated into the teaching-learning process. Adapting to new times is a challenge for teachers and students as it is necessary to review and develop pedagogy so that ICTs, Facebook, and using virtual platforms really help students develop meaningful learning and develop the skills to be effective.

This article is organised in the following sections: after this introduction, Section Two offers the theoretical background of the article paying attention to some essential aspect of multimodal texts. Section Three concentrates on data and methodology of this study and special attention is paid to the context, the participants, the methodology and the data used in this research. Following this, Section Four offers a detailed analysis of some multimodal texts. The article finishes with some conclusions.

Theoretical Background: Using Multimodal Texts in the Teaching-Learning Process

One of the characteristics of the 21st century is the multimodal nature of societies. A multimodal text is one that combines different modes of communication (visual, written, music, etc.) All these elements have a communicative function, i.e. they have a purpose in discourse (Baldry & Thibault, 2006; Martínez Lirola, 2010, p. 82). In Baldry and Thibault's words (2006, p. 21), "[m]ultimodality refers to the diverse ways in which a number of distinct semiotic resource systems are both codeployed and co-contextualised in the making of a text-specific meaning".

The theory of multimodality developed through the work done by Kress and van Leeuwen (2001, 2006) and other authors (for example Baldry & Thibault, 2006; Bezemer & Jewett, 2010; Bowcher, 2012; Jewitt, 2009; Royce & Bowcher, 2007) has contributed to understanding how different modes of communication (language, image, graphics, sound, music, gestures, etc.) create meanings. In Kress' words (2010, p. 1):

Each mode does a specific thing: image shows what takes too long to

read, and writing names what would be difficult to show. Colour is used to highlight specific aspects of the overall message. Without that division of semiotic labour, the sign, quite simply, would not work. Writing names and images shows, while colour frames and highlights; each to maximum effect and benefit.

These modes are the different semiotic resources that contribute to the development of meaning through one alone or through the combination of several used simultaneously. The image plays a very important role in multimodal communication due to its importance in catching the audience's attention (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Kress, 2010; Unsworth, 2010). Following Martínez Lirola (2013, p. 198): "[W]e understand the classroom as a multimodal learning environment in which modes of communication, different to language, are present to facilitate the teaching-learning process."

Traditional literacy has generally focused on written language; the other modes of communication (visual, musical, etc.) remained in second place (Coffin, 2012). In this age of digital literacy, the learning process is strengthened by different modes of communication so that they develop multimodal texts, Power Point or Prezi presentations, or they create web pages, videos, or engage in discussions through social networks such as Facebook. The era 2.0 offers multiple possibilities to enrich the teaching-learning process; it also allows students to write and read in virtual environments, to incorporate multimedia to enhance the development of their skills, to be able to analyse, deconstruct and design multimodal texts. In Simpson and Walsh's words (2010, p. 37): "Now with interactive, multiple authoring and social networking facilities provided by Web 2.0 technologies, new pedagogic possibilities can be utilised in the classrooms."

Many teachers have already incorporated multimodal practices or elements to their teaching practices intuitively, i.e. more than one mode of communication, for example, text that appears in image in addition to written text, as stated by Knox (2008, p. 140):

Multimodal perspectives on language and language education have only recently appeared in the literature on L2 teaching and learning. A brief consideration of the classroom practices of teachers and students shows very quickly, though, that multimodality is something that language teachers have understood intuitively for a long time.

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) observe three main aspects when analysing the composition of multimodal texts, important for the analysis of the multimodal texts that we offer in Section Four: a) information value: the place in which the different elements of information appear (from left to right, from top to bottom and from the centre to

the margins); b) salience: highlights of the most outstanding elements in the page; c) frames: used to connect or separate the different elements in the page. Frames can join elements inside a visual composition and inside a written text (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001).

Context, Participants, Methodology and Data Context

Context

Hypertextuality is a compulsory subject in the first semester in the Masters programme New Tendencies in Anthropology taught at University Miguel Hernández. The purpose of this Masters course is to show students new areas of study in Social and Cultural Anthropology and the new methodologies used in this area.

This subject was taught by two teachers in the academic year 2012-2013. The first one explained the concept of multimodality and the importance of multimodal texts in society. Special emphasis was placed on the importance of text as a communicative unit that allows students to receive information about other cultures. Promoting a multimodal analysis of texts helps students develop their critical skills because they can observe how a particular society or a particular social reality is portrayed in order to accomplish a goal to persuade, to advise, etc. Then, the model of visual grammar proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) was introduced so that the students could learn how to read a multimodal text.

The second teacher explained that texts are a product of the socio-cultural reality in which they are produced. In general, people ask questions about the different social realities transmitted by texts and they also compare the realities under analysis with the ones already known. When comparing, there is a tendency to reduce and simplify that can even create stereotypes. For this reason, it was explained that texts need to be understood taking into consideration the tools proposed by the culture in which they are framed and not the ones that people who approach the texts have.

Participants

The ten students attending the MA course during the academic year 2013-2014 were a heterogeneous group because they differed in their backgrounds and ages, which was interesting in order to observe how students approached the critical analysis of the multimodal texts proposed in the classroom. There were eight women and two men. Six students had a degree in Anthropology, one in Social Work, two in Sociology and one in Communication. Their ages ranged between 23 and 55. The MA course offers the possibility of continuing with a PhD and there were students who were already thinking about the topics of their doctoral dissertations.

Methodology

After explaining the main theoretical aspects connected with multimodality and visual grammar, the teacher distributed some texts from different NGOs so that the students could start analysing them following the proposed framework. It was made clear that post-development theorists state that there are unequal relationships between rich and poor countries; the relations of domination and power can be observed in development discourse.

Consequently, the texts were selected because NGOs are sometimes intermediaries due to the role they have when transmitting the social reality that poor countries suffer and how this is perceived in rich countries. In this sense, these texts are very effective in that they contribute to teaching cultural aspects and socio-cultural differences and consequently, they are texts that contribute to the development of critical thinking (see Section Four).

Data

As we will see, due to the limitations of this paper, the next section offers a detailed analysis of only two of the different texts that were analysed in the subject Hypertextuality. These two texts have been chosen because they are representative of the main aspects that were analysed in the subject: the texts chosen were connected with the reality of women and minors in poor countries since they are the most vulnerable human beings in most societies. The different activities done in the classroom consisted of applying the main principles of visual grammar that were explained in the module (see Section Two for the analysis of authentic texts produced by different NGOs in 2012. The two texts under analysis belong to two publications of Intermón Oxfam and Entreculturas, which are two well-known NGOs in Spain nowadays.

The two NGOs undertake development projects in poor countries; they need to present them to rich countries in order to secure funding. In addition, one of the main priorities of Intermón Oxfam is the mobilisation and sensitisation of the citizens of rich countries. Entreculturas is primarily engaged in developing education, which is done not only in the poor countries but also in the developed nations because this NGO tries to raise awareness of the world's problems and create active citizenship in rich countries. For these reasons, these two organisations need communication strategies and the power of mass media. Their journals, which have supplied the texts to be discussed in Section Four, are part of these communication efforts to try to raise awareness and sensitise rich countries.

These publications are received by members of NGOs in their homes and loyalty is their objective. They are also available on the website of these NGOs so that they can be easily accessed by anyone. For Oxfam, the magazine is also distributed in 38 fair

trade shops that the NGO has spread throughout Spain. These publications are relevant because they are a medium in themselves that goes straight to the public and can help form public opinion. The fact that these publications are written by the staff of the NGO, who can be considered an authority, enables mass media to use them as sources of information.

Examples of the Analysis of Multimodal Texts that Promote Critical Thinking

One of the main purposes of this article is to show how the analysis of multimodal texts published by NGOs can bring certain cultural aspects of poor countries into the classroom. This is useful so that students acquire different competencies such as critical thinking, creativity, solidarity, which will be essential for the labour market such as the development of critical thinking, creativity and solidarity. Due to the limitations of this article, the following paragraphs will concentrate mainly on the analysis of the visuals. As regards the written text we will analyse the headings and the caption although the written language found in the different texts was also analysed in the Masters course. The analysis that follows is an example of the ones offered by the students registered in the module Hypertextuality at the end of the semester; the student is Laura Ibáñez Castejón, who is currently working on her doctoral dissertation on multimodality.

Multimodal Text 1 (MT1). Journal n. 24 (April, 2012). Intermón Oxfam (pp. 14-15). ©Pablo Tosco/IO

We have chosen the first pages of an article published in the Intermón Oxfam[2]

magazine called "Garantizar el derecho a la alimentación es posible" (Assuring the right to food is possible) because we consider this is an outstanding sample of the type of information that appears in this publication. Therefore in MT1 we find an image that shows an example of a crude reality in Guatemala. Its purpose is, on the one hand, to appeal to the readers' feelings, and on the other hand to denounce this situation. According to the analysis of information value proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006, p. 179-180), it can be observed that the value of information is distributed from left to right in this multimodal text. In this way, the heading and the lead of the article appear on the left page. These are elements that the NGO offers as known information because fighting for the acquisition of the right to feed in Guatemala is part of an Intermón Oxfam's campaign that readers can know well thanks to past articles dealing with this social situation. Consequently, new information appears on the right page. The situation of shortage of food that takes place in Guatemala shows a human face: the page shows Juana and her daughter, who suffers chronic malnutrition. The people represented in this image are the same that appear in the cover of this issue of the magazine. This photograph appears with a caption that offers information about the child's disease; in this way we can observe how the combination of the written text and the visual aid communicate.

The two human beings represented are more salient than the rest of the multimodal texts that appear in the page since they appear on a white background that places them in the foreground. Moreover, they have been photographed in an individualised way because their faces and clothes can be observed. In essence, they are not part of a group, which contributes to their individualisation. We believe that this is a strategy used to highlight that there are always human beings that suffer from the social problems that NGOs portray.

However, we consider that the two depicted women have been photographed with a certain distance from the readers: they do not look at the camera and the mother seems to be absent-minded. Juana shows a lost look and she is serious; she adopts a passive attitude as she is waiting for somebody's help. There is no social interaction between readers and the human beings in the picture since they seem to be photographed only to be observed (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 140). In this way, women from poor countries appear victimised by a situation that they are not able to control. However, they have been portrayed using a horizontal angle, which contributes to establishing an equal relationship with the audience (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 139). Nevertheless, there is a certain social distance with the audience (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 138) because they do not look at the camera and have been portrayed in a long shot showing theirs bodies. Similarly, the phenotypic features of both of them and their clothes can establish a certain cultural distance with the Western public, who can easily identify them as inhabitants of

poor countries; this can be deduced from the context in which the two of them appear.

It is significant that the pessimism of the photograph contrasts with the heading of the report "Garantizar el derecho a la alimentación es posible" (Assuring the right to food is possible). Consequently, the image seems to portray the situation of Guatemala, its poverty and malnutrition, whereas the heading points out the main objective of the NGO for the future. In fact, the heading at the top of the page serves the purpose of showing "ideal information" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p.179-180), whereas the people portrayed at the bottom of the page show "real information" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 179-180).

MT1 places women in poor countries as vulnerable and in need of aid from rich countries. It is true that NGOs, in their journals, have to share the realities in which they work and they are not usually positive. However, multimodal text one stresses the vulnerability of women because it places the protagonists of the image in a passive role as they have been portrayed to be observed. They do nothing to change their situation even though the headline claims that it is possible to guarantee the right to food in order to eliminate the problems that they suffer. Thus, this text can be useful for students to unravel the mechanisms (for example, Juana's lost gaze, her standby position, the fact that Juana and her daughter have been fully portrayed, etc.) by which people can be represented as passive human beings who need help from rich countries rather than people who shape their own development.

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sor: la educación formal, la educación para adultos y la educación para la paz.

En la actualidad, y en lo relativo a la educación formal, el JRS apoya 17 escuelas en Lobone –cinco de infantil, nueve de primaria y tres de secundaria– y otras 29 escuelas en Nimule –25 de primaria y cuatro de secundaria–.

En estas zonas, el JRS trabaja para combatir los problemas más significativos que dificultan el acceso a la educación de la población con edad escolar: la falta de infraestructuras educativas, la falta de cualificación para la atención de menores con necesidades educativas especiales, el desequilibrio de género entre el alumnado y el propio cuerpo docente, los limitados niveles de formación del profesorado, el escaso acceso a los materiales didácticos y de aprendizaje y la baja calidad de la gestión escolar.

En cuanto a la educación para personas adultas no es de extrañar que los niveles de alfabetización sean muy bajos en un país que ha sufrido los desmanes de una guerra civil que ha durado más de 20 años. Por eso, la labor del JRS se centra en paliar no sólo los efectos del analfabetismo escolar, sino que también aborda la llamada 'alfabetización funcional' (que abarca la formación de capacidades básicas para la vida, tales como hábitos de higiene y salud familiar, así como la formación vocacional en habilidades profesionales básicas, como la carpintería, albañilería, etc.).

Por último, el trabajo del JRS en las zonas de Nimule y Lobone incluye también la educación para la paz que difunde entre los sursudaneses la comprensión del Acuerdo de Paz Integral (CPA) firmado en 2005 y que ratificó el fin de la guerra civil;

además de mediar en conflictos entre comunidades de distintas etnias, retornados y refugiados internos y realizar un trabajo concienzudo de integración de los soldados en la sociedad.
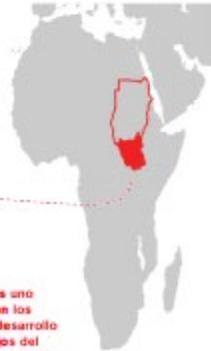
Sudán del Sur es uno de los países con los indicadores de desarrollo humano más bajos del planeta con una población fundamentalmente rural (86%) y dependiente de la ganadería (78%).

entreculturas7

Multimodal Text 2 (MT2). Journal n. 47 (September, 2012). Entreculturas (p. 7). © Sergi Cámara / Entreculturas

In general, the photographs used by the journal Entreculturas show a more positive view of poor countries. However, it is outstanding that in certain cases there are images such as the one of multimodal text two. This image catches the audience's attention due to a bird's eye view in which the photograph is taken, which makes it appear as an original visual that situates the audience in a superior shot with respect to the represented children (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 139). It cannot be stated that this image is a clear example that contributes to a negative image from societies in poor countries because it

does not portray situations of sadness or suffering.

Nevertheless, the audience perceives all the children who are portrayed as equal: they all have white, clean, new notebooks, which are open on the desks and their hands are on them; moreover, they all wear the same clothes. The photograph shows a very small variation in the gestures, such as having one hand on the head or a light turn of the body.

They have been photographed to be looked at, but specifically to be looked at from a superior angle, which contributes to ignoring their individuality as human beings (van Leeuwen, 2008, p.144). All the children that appear in this multimodal text appear homogeneous: they give the impression that these children who live in poor countries (this can be deduced by their phenotypic features) are equal and are similar (also some of the heads are not visible, which gives the impression that not every child is considered as a unique and differentiated subject). The school uniform they wear contributes even more to create this impression. Similarly, the uniform eliminates all the possible cultural features that the clothes can communicate.

Representing all the children in the same way makes it difficult to determine the information value of this text. The ones that appear in the first and the second rows (starting from the left) seem to have the same importance whereas the ones that appear on the third row have less importance due to the fact that their bodies are half visible.

MT2 makes reference to childhood but it is marked by paternalism. Thus, as stated above, the use of a bird's eye view allows the reader to see the children from above, which suggests superiority over the children portrayed in the image. Therefore, the attitude that the public in rich countries can adopt towards these children is the need to protect them, as if they could not defend themselves. We cannot forget that Entreculturas, in its publications, recounts the actions that have been carried out in many poor countries thanks to the contributions of its charity donors. Generally, children look similar enough as if they were all equal. They are deprived of their individuality. This contrasts with the view given by Intermón Oxfam (see multimodal text one), because this NGO wants to present the people who need help as individuals. However, with multimodal text two, in the end, the impression left on the reader is that of a group of children who need help. This text allows students to unravel the paternalistic view that some NGOs are still projecting onto people in poor countries.

Both texts promote critical thinking because once students read and analyse the texts paying attention to the main visual strategies used in order to create meaning they have a critical opinion about the way two NGOs selected to transmit the social situation of poor countries. In addition, solidarity is also promoted among students because these two texts are useful to work on emotional competencies so that students are aware of their feelings when reading these texts. However, it is necessary to be critical with the

model of solidarity that we want to develop. The texts analysed present rich countries as superior and poor countries as inferior and therefore dependent on the help of rich countries. Thus, according to Nos, Iranzo and Farné (2012, p. 220), NGOs have promoted a type of solidarity that has mobilised "[…] more their sense of charity [of citizens of rich countries] than their citizenship skills"[3].

Following Erro (2007), the definition of international solidarity that currently is being handled in Spain has not been the result of a public debate created by a conscious and responsible citizenship. This solidarity has been built by public institutions, because in the eighties, Spain began to create channels of funding for NGOs, and their corresponding media, which have conditioned the work of these organisations with their coverage of humanitarian crises in countries such as Ethiopia. Therefore, it is necessary to generate a public political debate raised by the role of the media in democratic society and the role of solidarity and international cooperation for development to be built. In Erro's words (2007, p. 68):

> When we look at the communicative dimension the goal would be to move from a 'corporate communication' conceived in private and media terms— 'from' and 'for' the institution—to a 'social communication' designed in public and educational terms—'from 'and' to' responsibility and social transformation.[4]

For this reason, it is necessary to develop interpersonal competencies and critical thinking at the university in order to create citizens who care about social problems and who are able to participate in current and frequent social debates on the definitions of solidarity and international cooperation.

The analysis presented in this section has focused on the relationships between the written texts and the visuals in some texts produced by NGOs in order to understand the main strategies used when portraying the social reality of poor countries. The analysis of the two texts selected allows us to answer the main research questions presented in Section One: firstly, these texts are appropriate to teach cultural aspects in a university classroom because they portray two social problems in many poor countries such as the lack of food and education. Secondly, choosing texts published in NGOs' magazines is important because they usually know the reality of other countries well and are able to transmit their knowledge to the population in rich countries. Consequently, these texts can be used to give students the opportunity of acquiring interpersonal competencies at the university level because it is not possible to be indifferent when seeing these texts. Therefore, they are useful to develop critical thinking and the expression of feelings in addition to learning to critique development discourse.

Conclusions

Teaching with authentic texts such as the ones used in this paper helps students to establish a connection between them and the contexts in which those texts are produced and consumed. In fact, teaching with multimodal texts produced by NGOs helps students to be able to predict context from text and text from context. The way in which different people appear represented in texts can contribute to reproducing stereotypes. It can also be helpful in exploring other cultures and learning cultural aspects apart from promoting critical thinking by paying attention to the main differences between people from rich and poor countries as we can see in the texts analysed in Section Four.

Promoting the acquisition of competencies should be one of the priorities of education at any level. This contributes to the integral education of students due to the fact that it reinforces not only the importance of the acquisition of contents but also the acquisition of competencies such as being critical or sharing feelings and opinions in front of an audience, and the development of skills that can be important in the labour market and in life. In addition, using multimodal texts in the teaching-learning process promotes creativity because students can be asked to search for texts of their interest and then these texts can be used to analyse cultural aspects or social problems.

With the texts analysed in Section Four, students can learn that development is a kind of discourse that creates and recreates other human beings who are culturally different. They also allow the deconstruction of the view of NGOs as spaces that propose alternative views on other cultures because these organisations often reproduce relations of power and domination between rich and poor countries. Their definitions of solidarity are closer to charity than to a vision based on social justice and human rights. Thus, helping students to dismantle the power mechanisms of development discourse and thanks to ICTs, they will be better equipped to participate in (and even create) public debates that promote new definitions of solidarity and international cooperation. Similarly, they will be able to encourage NGOs to, once and for all, overcome the development discourse and become alternative spaces that can truly be critical about the status quo.

Notes

1. We are going to refer to countries and poor and rich since these are the most common adjectives used in the publications under analysis.
2. From October 15, 2013 Intermón Oxfam started to be called Oxfam Intermón. We will continue using the previous name because that is the one that appears in the publication under analysis.
3. "[…] más su sentido de la caridad [de la ciudadanía de los países ricos] que sus competencias ciudadanas".
4. "Cuando nos fijamos en la dimensión comunicativa el objetivo sería pasar de una

'comunicación institucional' pensada en términos privados y mediáticos- 'desde' y 'para' la institución-, a una 'comunicación social' diseñada en términos públicos y educativos- 'desde' y 'para' la responsabilidad y la transformación social".

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