Practices of visual communication in a primary school classroom: digital image collection as a potential semiotic mode

# Details

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## Authors

Björkvall A.

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* Learning
* Internet usage, practices and engagement
* Digital and socio-cultural environment
* Literacy and skills

## Sample

Five children observed and documented during 32 visits to homes and the school in suburban Stockholm.

## Implications For Educators About

* Digital citizenship
* Professional development
* Other

## Implications For Stakeholders About

Researchers

# Abstract

‘One-to-one’ computing projects in which learners work with individual laptops or tablets across subjects are rapidly increasing in number. One aspect of this is that as the laptops give access to the Internet; digital images and texts – potentially from all over the globe – move into the classroom in an unprecedented manner. The paper presents an analysis of specific classroom practices involving seven- to eight-year-olds: the collecting of digital images and their use as semiotic resources in the creation of multimodal texts. The aim is to describe the children’s digital image collections as more or less mode-like – that is, as a more or less systematically organised set of resources for making meaning. The methodology is described as social semiotic ethnography, combining semiotic analysis of images and texts with ethnographic understandings of the personal histories and interests of participants. The paper concludes that there are obvious practices in the classroom in which the children use their image collections in a mode-like way, such as categorising images according to semantic criteria, using them for display of identities in the classroom and systematically using them when designing multimodal texts, expressing both simple denotational meanings and more complex connotational semiotic potentials. Another conclusion is that the children’s image collections have untapped learning potentials, for example regarding critical reflections on how images create meaning, which could form the foundation for concrete learning activities in the classroom.

# Outcome

"The analysis showed that there are developing semiotic practices in the classroom through which the children as a group or community use their image collections in a mode-like way: the children categorise the images according to distinct semantic criteria; they use them as topics in social interaction, for self-presentation and display of identities; and they use them in systematic ways when creating and designing texts. Another finding was that just as commercial stock images need to be generic in order to be re-used in various genres and texts across the globe, so do the images that the children collect, in order for them to be functional when being used as parts of, for example, research reports." (Author, 33)