DIFFERENCES IN PERCEIVING MONOMODAL TEXTS AND MULTIMODAL TEXTS IN PHILOLOGY TEACHING IN VIETNAMESE SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

Multimodal text is a type of text that is frequently exposed and used by humans. Especially, in the context of the development of science and technology, it has become an object of education in the schools of many countries around the world, such as the US, Australia, Korea and Vietnam. To have an effective process of teaching multimodal texts, teachers and learners not only need to understand the role of the reader, but it is important to see the differences between perceiving monomodal texts and multimodal texts. The main research methods used are research, synthesis, document analysis and expert method.

KEYWORDS: Differences, perceiving, monomodal text, multimodal text.

1. INTRODUCTION

The drastic changes of all elements of society, especially science and technology, have created a different learning environment from the traditional one. Classroom space is increasingly expanded and students no longer study within four walls of the classroom all year round. Instead, learning activities take place anywhere, anytime with numerous forms of learning through experience or scientific research. The communication of teachers and students is not only carried out in a traditional way through written documents, but also through computers, the internet, email, radio, television, video or DVD. The means of communication are not only a single channel and documents are only letters or words. On the contrary, there is always a combination of many modes of expression in a text. In order to adapt to those changes, the issue of forming and developing multimodal communication competence becomes a requirement for the comprehensive development of students in the context of changing the current conception of communication. The introduction of multimodal texts into the content of teaching Philology in Vietnamese schools today is extremely suitable with the orientation of developing students' ability, especially communication ability. However, with its own structural characteristics, the task of perceiving a multimodal text has certain differences from perceiving a monomodal text, which is only composed of a text channel.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

To obtain the research results in this article, the authors used specific and appropriate scientific research methods: (i) Methods of research, synthesis and analysis of documents: Book, newspaper, specialized journal and research works; (ii) Expert method: during the research, the authors consulted researchers and experts in the fields of educational science to have a comprehensive, accurate, objective and scientific perspective to research issues.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. The role of the reader in perceiving the text

According to Nguyen The Hung (2018), "the theory of perceiving sees the text as an open structure which requires the reader's response. In some Cambridge documents, the term perceiving is associated with comprehension. The equivalent term is creation, which is associated with production. According to this study, perceiving is associated with listening and reading skills, and creation is associated with speaking and writing skills. Sharing the same point of view, Nguyen Thi Thu Thuy (2017), said that "text perceiving is the activity that helps readers and listeners grasp information and values of a text in the process of communicating through reading, listening and reading activities".

Over time, perceiving text undergoes significant changes. To see that change clearly, we need to understand and study the concept of "literacy". In 1960, "literacy" was understood as the ability of an individual to read and write. This understanding focuses on encoding and decoding linguistic signals (sound - writing)". Thus, it can be seen that, in the past, the role of the readers was only at transcoding the symbol (for example, translating the text into sound) and understanding the meaning of that language sign. In 1978, UNESCO expanded the connotation of "literacy" to a broader and more complex level. Accordingly, "literacy" is "the ability to perceive, understand, create, communicate, calculate and use printed and written words in association with different contexts". Accordingly, the role of the reader in receiving is also broader, not only "perceiving and understanding" but also including the ability to "create and communicate" and use reading and calculation skills for the development of themselves and the community as a whole. Along with the rapid development of society in many aspects, the content of the term "literacy" also changes in the direction of development, expanding in scope, object, reading and writing level and requirements. The object of reading is also increasingly expanding. It is "not only in the narrow sense of plain text documents, but also in a broad sense. It is a system of symbols with encoded meanings in a particular way. In teaching reading, there is not only a text full of text, but also a visual interweave with symbols, diagrams, symbols, graphs, tables, illustrations, artwork, or even sound" (Do Ngoc Thong, 2016), Therefore, the concept of reading has an expansion. It is "the activity of learners reading words, viewing symbols, tables, and images in many types of texts (presented in many ways and linguistic styles) in order to process information in the text for different purposes in real life, personal learning and community" (Nguyen Thi Hanh, 2017). Accordingly, the role of the reader will be understood as "reader - viewer - listener".

Freebody and Luke (1990) pointed out four main roles of the reader, which are reader as code breaker, reader as text – participant, reader as text user and reader as text analyst. On that basis, Serafini expanded the role of the reader as "reader – viewer". He gave the following roles: reader - viewer as navigator, interpreter, designer, interrogator (Frank Serafini, 2012). With traditional texts (printed form presented by text channels), readers need to follow the grammar rules of the language such as rules of rhyme, sentence structure, paragraph breaks… But with visual text, readers will have to actively choose the appropriate path to access the text. That is the reader's navigating role. According to Serafini, "multimodal text readers design texts through processes of navigation and interpretation by drawing on available sources of symbols presented in the text to construct meaning during reading" (Frank Serafini, 2012). Thus, on the basis of the self-navigation process, the reader will become a new content creator who designs new meanings for the text.

Along with reading and watching, listening is an activity of perceiving texts associated with "comprehension". Brette (1995) stated that "listening is a decisive language skill. It plays an important role in language acquisition". Morley (2001) agreed with Brette (1995) that, on average, each of us listens "twice as much as we say, four times as much as we read, and five times as much as we write". To see the role of the listener when perceiving texts, we need to clearly understand the concept of "listening and understanding". In recent decades, the skill of "listening comprehension" has increasingly attracted the attention of researchers in teaching. According to Hasan (2000), "listening is the process of two-way interaction between the listener and the listening text. This process of listening and understanding is done when the listener selects and interprets the information received by the auditory organ and other visual signs (if any) in order to understand the speaker's message".

This viewpoint is also consistent with the theory of language supported by Richards (1983), O'Malley & Chamot (1990). Scientists such as Harmer (2001), Richards & Schmidt (2002), Helgesen…all have different interpretations of this skill, but they all agree that this is an important skill. In the process of listening, listeners not only grasp the content they are listening to, but can also relate the content they are listening to with information they already know before to understand the listening passage. Besides, listeners do not simply hear the words but need to understand the hidden meanings behind those words. That is the listener's role of decoding and creating meaning for the text.

According to Marcelle Holliday (2008), in order to decode a text, readers need to use "knowledge of the world and the subject matter of the text as well as the words in the text (knowledge of the word meaning), knowledge of grammar, knowledge of the relationship between sounds and letters and knowledge of how to construct meaning from symbols or images". To make sense of a text, readers need to "relate the meanings of texts to their own knowledge and experience, use prior knowledge of other texts to aid in understanding new texts, use knowledge of vocabulary to build meaning for text, understand literal meanings expressed on the surface of the text, infer implicit meanings, use information and ideas in the text to increase their knowledge and understanding". Thus, creating

meaning from texts in the process of perceiving texts requires the awareness of the purpose of creating each type of text in general. Text is created as a communication means and channel - it can be ordinary communication or artistic communication - aimed at one or certain goals and specific audiences. Finding out what the author is supposed to say, convey and send a message is of interest to readers when they face a text. The purpose of creation will stipulate the choice of language and form of expression associated with the content of a text, and perhaps it is also a criterion to evaluate the author's success - based on the effectiveness of the author's relationship between the purpose and the way of expressing and conveying that purpose into the text.

Regarding interaction in the reading process, PISA 2009 Reading Framework wrote that "cognitive theories of reading and writing emphasize the interactive nature and construct meaning of reading and writing activities for printed and digital texts. Readers construct meaning in response to text by using background knowledge and knowledge of text genres and social contexts in which reading occurs. This process is always ongoing and there is no longer a concept of "right understanding". This was further explained by Rosenblatt (1988) in the document "Writing and Reading: The Transactional Theory": Multi-sense of the text means that there is no single true meaning about the created text, which causes the problem of the relationship between the reader's interpretation and the writer's intention, that is, the relationship between the reader's text and the writer's text. Readers interact with the text instead of directly interacting with the writer. Readers can bring to the text language and life experiences with very different reading goals from the writer. Thus, real reading or the process of creating meaning takes place effectively only when readers - students are interested in reading and they feel that reading brings something meaning to their lives.

3.2. Perceiving monomodal and multimodal text: the differences

Monomodal and multimodal texts have different channels of expression in terms of "how modes are implemented and how specific modes are mobilized in the process of creating meaning for the reader" (Walsh, M. 2012). In monomodal texts (traditional language texts), the channel used to construct the text is a text channel, so the reader's decoding of the text involves the application of strategies in word recognition in a monomodal version, the word relies solely on the "logic of speech" which implies time and linearity. In the process of perceiving a monomodal text, readers need to follow the author's chronological arrangement and organization of the text, grammar rules of the language such as rules of sound, rhyme...in a linear sequence from left to right, from top to bottom and instructions (title, layout, words, images, details, characters,...) that the author points out to complete the process of creating meaning. Accordingly, the strategies of perceiving monomodal texts are mainly related to reading activities.

Example: The poem "*Sang thu*" by Huu Thinh

Bỗng nhận ra hương ổi

Phả vào trong gió se

Sương chùng chình qua ngõ

Hình như thu đã về

Sông được lúc dềnh dàng

Chim bắt đầu vội vã

Có đám mây mùa hạ

Vắt nửa mình sang thu

Vẫn còn bao nhiêu nắng

Đã vơi dần cơn mưa

Sấm cũng bớt bất ngờ

Trên hàng cây đứng tuổi.

(*Philology 9*, vol 1, Education Publishing House, Vietnam)

What does the reader do to read this text? First, the reader is stimulated with curiosity about the title of the poem. This invites the reader to anticipate, imagine, and ask questions in his or her mind. Then, the reader clings to the artistic signs of the poetic genre, such as words, images, artistic measures... to discover the meaning of the text. At the same time, in the process of reading the text "Sang thu", students need to read in a certain order from top to bottom, from left to right to fully and accurately understand the content and ideas that the author conveys in the text.

To perceive a monomodal text, the reader uses "some visual and tactile elements" while in a multimodal text (compared with monomodal text), the reader uses a variety of senses (visual, tactile, auditory and movement) for different responses. Specifically, with multimodal text that has a combination of text and (static) image channels, the interaction between the reader and the text is very different because of the use of images as well as the combination of images with words. That has been confirmed by Kress, "language and visual communication are both considered to be in the same basic

system when they are created from a certain culture. However, each element has its own forms, so it is very different and opposed to each other". According to Maureen Walsh (2005), "decoding the meaning from images is not the same as decoding words as in printed texts. We need to discover the implications of vision in a different way. This entails a different kind of analysis from the decoding system. We need to be able to distinguish and identify where the painter uses color, position, angle, shape, etc. to create meaning. There are other effects of images that differ from words, especially on the emotional, aesthetic and imaginative levels". Thereby, he asserted that "the image differs from the word in that we do not read in a linear order and depend on the characteristics of the grammar". Thus, the reader has a lot of options and opportunities to interact with the text, not necessarily following a directed path.

Example: When perceiving the text "Overview of the migration crisis into Europe"

More than 4 million people, equivalent to nearly one-fifth of Syria's population, have had to leave the country because of the civil war that has lasted since 2011. This has created a massive migration wave to many countries, especially the European Union.
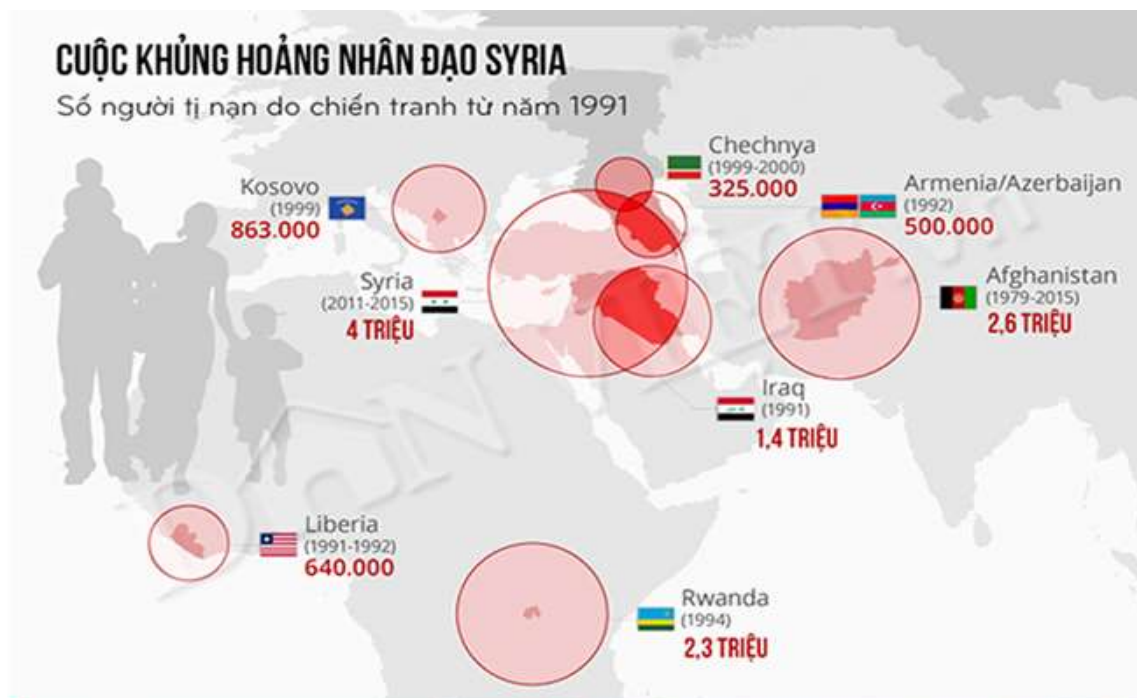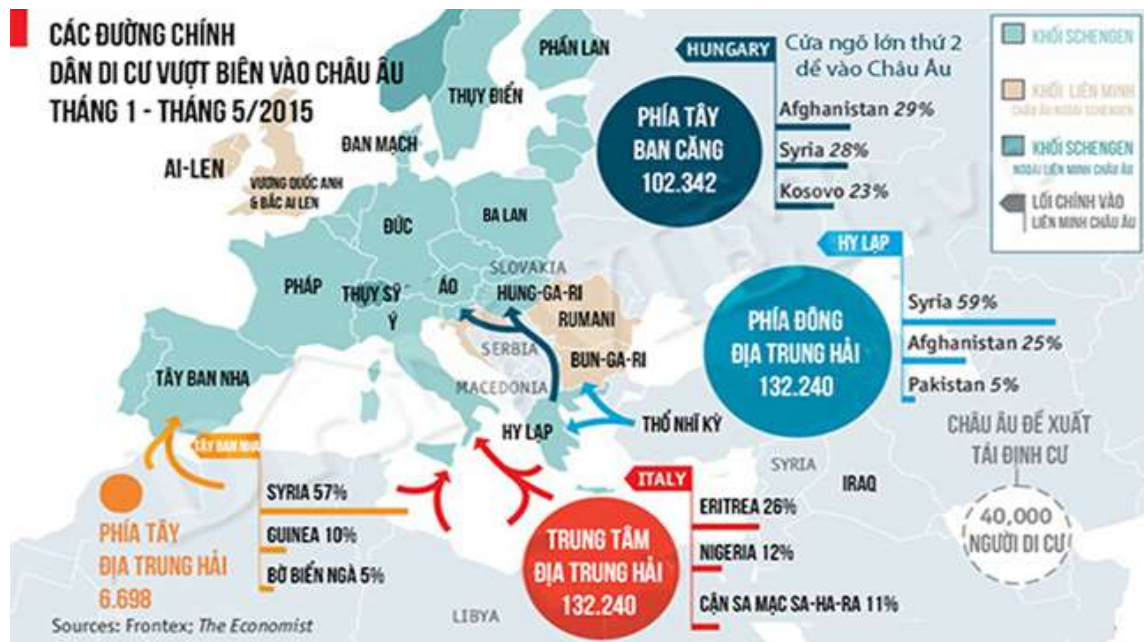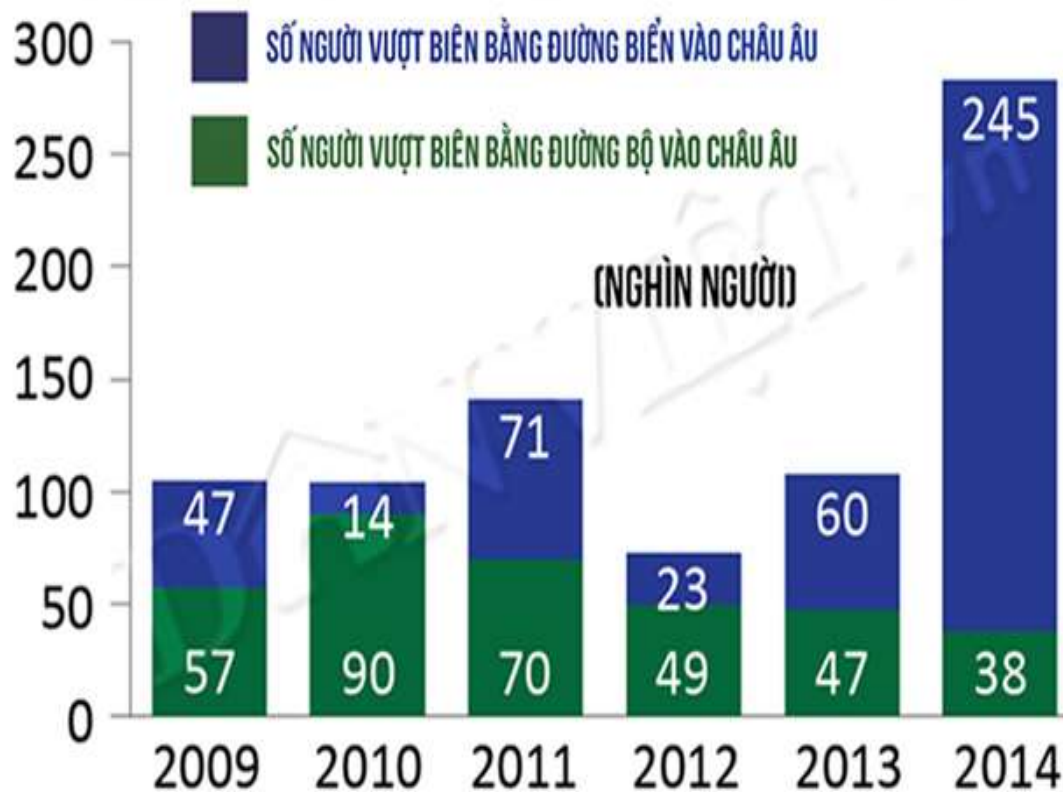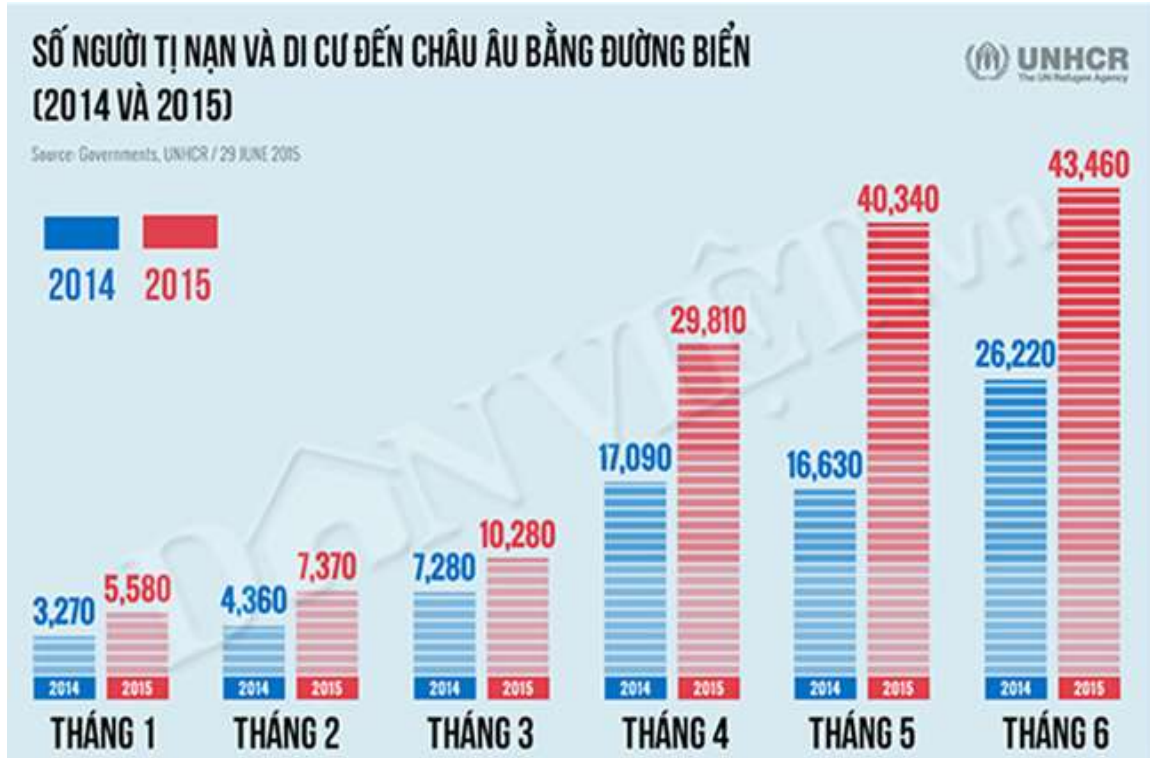

Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

Figure 4
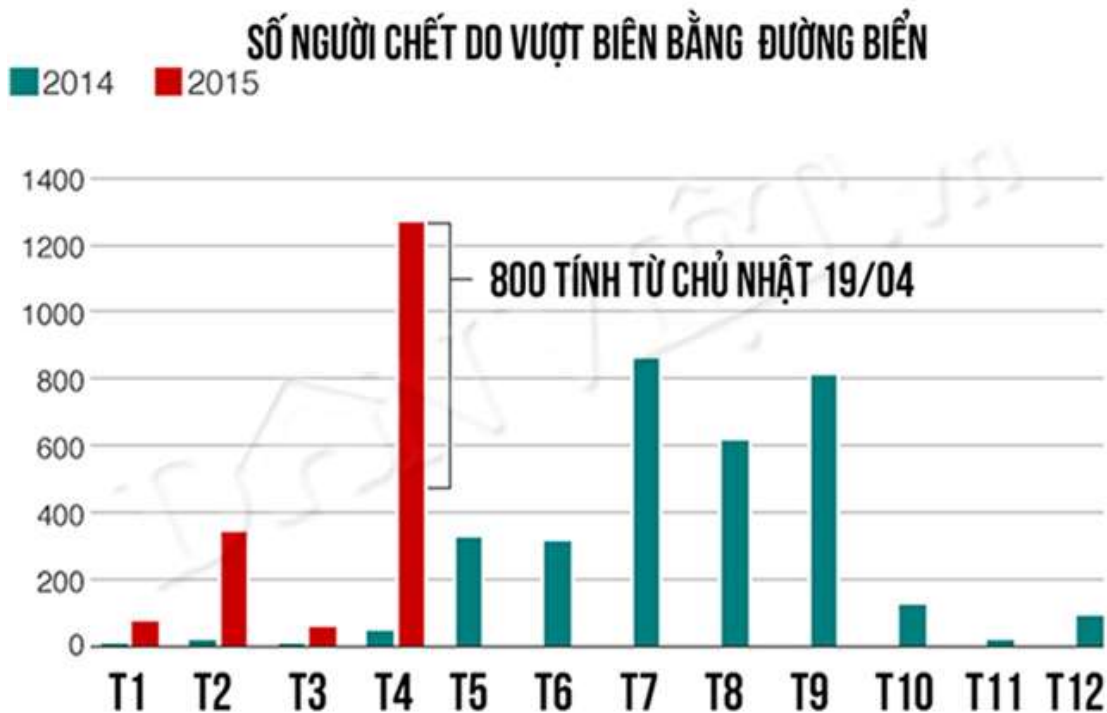
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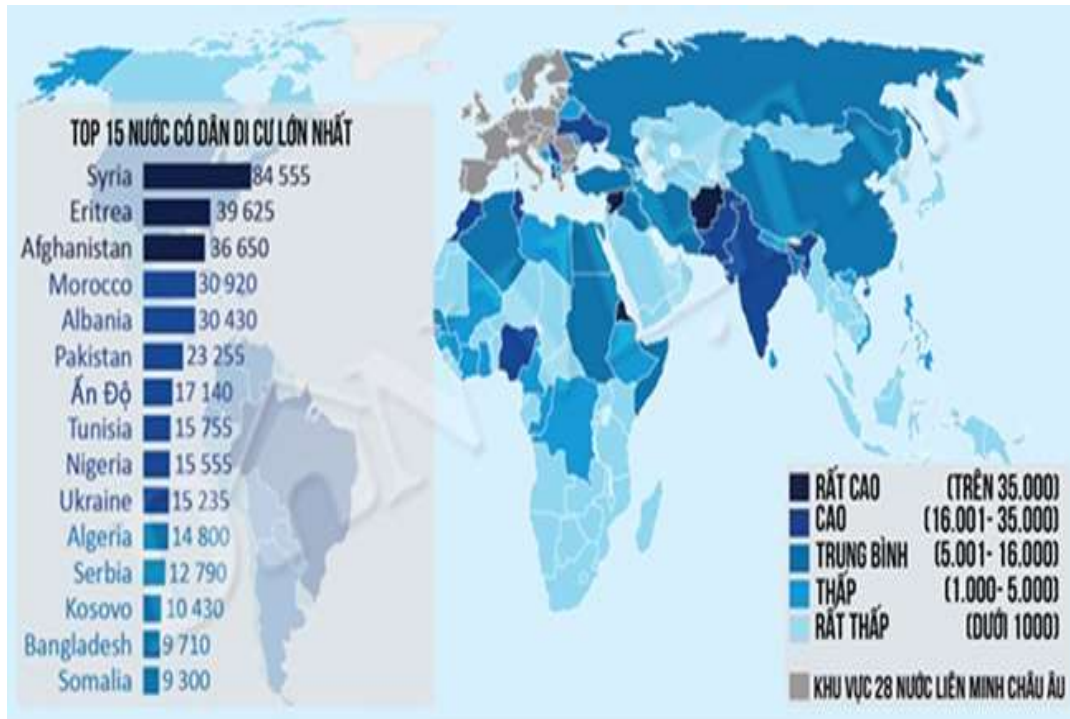
Figure 6

(*Author:* Le Duc (Danviet.vn)
Source: http://www.baodanang.vn dated 10/09/2015)

Readers not only read the written text but also need to read the information provided by the six figures (image channel). With each figure, information is presented in several forms. Therefore, readers are required to identify the information that each chart provides, such as *which country has had the largest number of war refugees since 1991; the main routes of migrants crossing the border into Europe from January to May 2015; the number of people crossing the border by which way is the most and in which year; compare the number of refugees and migrants arriving in Europe by the sea at the same time (month) in 2014 and 2015; when is the highest number of deaths due to crossing the border by sea; which country has the largest migrant population; which country has the lowest migrant population.* To get complete information, readers do not necessarily need to read in turn but can choose which figure to read first and which figure to read later.

With multimodal texts in an electronic form, factors such as screen, window, frame, link, navigation bar, menu button, pointer usage, mouse... all govern the process of perceiving information of the reader.

Unlike the narrative that follows a linear order, each page of the web address is fragmented into pieces so the information is also fragmented. There is no beginning and end so it leaves the reader to choose their own path using the options along the top of the screen or clicking directly on the link. It is not necessary to go to all the links to get to all the pages. The reader can choose which part to read and what to read first. Besides, readers can read the words or pictures/sounds or use the mouse to move around the screen and click on other links without having to read all the articles. Thereby, it can be seen that readers can approach multimodal texts in their own way. There is no specific guideline for perceiving multimodal texts since it all depends on the interaction of the reader. The non-linear approach leads to the reader being able to select and search for the part that he or she is most interested in accessing instead of having to approach them successively in a certain sequence. Tactics when perceiving multimodal texts do not stop at reading but also include listening and watching strategies.

4. CONCLUSION

Multimodal text with its own characteristics compared with monomodal text requires different approaches. Therefore, learners need to flexibly apply reading comprehension strategies to identify, decode and construct meanings from words, images, tables, diagrams, symbols, sounds, and movements. .to fully understand the meaningful content that the multimodal text conveys.

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