

**DFL**

The “Multimodal Literacy in the EFL Classroom” Workshop as a Design for Learning

SPECIAL COLLECTION:
DESIGNING LEARNING
WITH PRACTITIONERS

RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT

This paper links Systemic Functional-based multimodal discourse analysis and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher education through the workshop “Multimodal Literacy in the EFL classroom” (MLEFL). Drawing upon ‘multimodal analysis for critical thinking’ (MACT) pedagogy (O’Halloran et al., 2017) and the Systemic Approach to teaching critical viewing (Lim and Tan, 2017, Lim, 2018), MLEFL aims at involving student teachers (STs) in a transformative process through which STs with no previous instruction on multimodality are introduced to multimodal literacy. After being engaged in making meaning through various semiotic resources and conducting multimodal analysis with the use of a pedagogic metalanguage, STs complete a task of representing their new experiences via the process of creating a lesson plan aimed at promoting primary school students’ multimodal literacy. The paper presents MLEFL as a design for learning (Kress and Selander, 2012). It serves two purposes: to present the content and syllabus of the MLEFL workshop and to reflect upon its implementation and effectiveness. The paper reports on the qualitative findings from a small-scale research conducted with twenty pre-service EFL teachers who participated in the four-week workshop in a virtual environment. It investigates STs’ perceptions shared in workshop evaluation forms and participation in the forum as well as their assignments for signs of learning. The analysis of the findings revealed differences in STs’ capacities (Kress, 2010: 175) which support the effectiveness of the workshop. Most STs created lesson plans which promote critical viewing, used the pedagogic metalanguage efficiently and explained the design of their activities with well-informed rationale.

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1. INTRODUCTION

With the advancements in technology, new kinds of multimodal digital text formats have progressively made their appearance in children's everyday life experiences. Being an emergent field of research, as Mills and Unsworth (2017) state, the study of multimodal literacy learning in schools and society begins with the important recognition (cf. Kress, 2013) that reading and writing are closely associated to the use of multiple meaning-making resources in texts, often in digital contexts of use, instead of being practiced as discrete skills. Researchers stress the need for a reconceptualization of literacy and literacy education that moves beyond its traditional logocentric account and embrace the role of images and other modes in meaning-making (Unsworth, 2006: 55). Twenty-first century literacy encompasses range of multimodal artefacts and critical analysis of multimodal meaning-making practices encountered in our everyday life experiences, which should be added to “the multiliteracy curriculum from the early stages of formal education” (Vasta and Baldry, 2020: 7–8). Evidently, there is a need to reconsider “[...] the kind of learning that de facto takes place, and how that is recognised within the culture of given context like a school level [...]” (Kress and Selander, 2012: 265). As O'Halloran et al. (2010: 4) explicate, all kinds of texts are multimodal as they use and combine diverse semiotic system resources to “facilitate both generic (i.e., ‘standardised’) and specific (‘individualised’, and even innovative) ways of making meaning”. Given the multimodal nature of communication, the learning of a language needs to be in meaningful interaction with other available meaning-making resources, such as image, page layout, typography and colour.

English language syllabi around the world, for example, in Singapore, Australia, the USA and Canada, have already incorporated two new areas for language learning in their educational goals, namely *viewing* and *representing*,¹ thus recognising them as a part of the literacy that should be developed in the English language teaching and learning context (Lim and Chia forthcoming). Even in educational systems where aspects of multimodality have already been assimilated into their language curriculum, as Lim et al. (2021: 1) pinpoint, it is still challenging for teachers to design multimodal literacy learning experiences in the classroom. Thus, further research on *unpacking* of teachers' multimodal pedagogies is needed to shed light into the teaching of multimodal literacy.

The “Multimodal Literacy in the EFL Classroom” workshop (MLEFL) was offered to pre-service EFL teachers in the Greek educational context, in which viewing and representing have not been formally incorporated in the English language syllabus as educational areas for language learning with unique features to be taught. However, considering the changing role of schooling and assuming a possible addition of viewing and representing as educational goals in the Greek curriculum, I present

MLEFL as an example of a design for the development of multimodal literacy aimed at EFL student teachers (STs). In a context where the teaching of multimodal literacy is nascent, the workshop is presented as an illustration of a design for learning, so that “the material and temporal conditions for learning as well as the activity of learning itself” (Selander, 2008: 12) can be documented.

The paper has two purposes: to present the workshop and to reflect upon its implementation. In the first part of the paper, I present the theoretical underpinnings, which have influenced the rationale that led to specific choices in the workshop design. The next section focuses on MLEFL as a design for learning and the research questions and methods of the study, while the following section showcases the syllabus, the material and the assignments from the workshop as a process of transformation and formation of learning. In the second part of the paper, I discuss the evidence from the implementation of MLEFL. STs' signs of learning are reflected upon and conclusions with regard to the effectiveness of the workshop are drawn on the basis of the qualitative findings of STs' responses to one of the forum discussions, the final assignment and the workshop evaluation form.

2. THEORETICAL TENETS OF “MULTIMODAL LITERACY IN THE EFL CLASSROOM” (MLEFL)

The MLEFL workshop has a systemic-functional orientation and draws upon Michael Halliday's Systemic Functional Theory, which identifies meanings as the result of specific choices which are made in systems of meaning potential (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004) and involves STs in SF-based Multimodal Discourse Analysis in order to develop their critical thinking (O'Halloran and Lim, 2014, O'Halloran et al., 2019). The workshop asks STs to implement the Systemic Approach to the teaching of visual texts, which supports teachers with a pedagogic metalanguage needed for teaching their features and strategies (Lim and Tan 2017, Lim 2018), following a ‘multimodal analysis for critical thinking’ (MACT) approach (O'Halloran et al., 2017). Building on the principle that students need to develop kinds of knowledge that move beyond traditional notions of literacy to cope with the changing twenty-first century demands, MACT- a pedagogical approach for teaching and learning critical thinking through multimodal analysis – aims at developing students' “analytical and critical thinking skills to enable them to become informed, confident, responsible and active contributors to the consumption, creation and dissemination of knowledge and information in the present-day society” (O'Halloran et al., 2017: 148). Taking a systemic, social semiotic view to the analysis of multimodal texts (ibid), this approach aims at equipping students with an analytical vocabulary (or metalanguage) for multimodal meaning-making (e.g., Jewitt and Kress, 2003; Kress, 2003; Unsworth, 2006).

Interpretation, analysis, evaluation, explanation and self-regulation are the five core critical thinking skills aimed at (O'Halloran et al., 2017: 153–154).

Systemic Functional Theory (SFT) provides a platform for the analysis and interpretation of texts as multimodal artefacts, as it can be applied for the exploration of the ways in which language and other meaning-making resources (e.g. image) combine and interact as interrelated systems of meaning (Jewitt et al., 2016: 33, O'Halloran et al. 2019: 433). Informed by SFT, Systemic-Functional Multimodal Discourse Analysis (SF-MDA) is 'a different sub-field within Halliday's broad conception of social semiotics' (Jewitt et al., 2016: 31) that focuses on the 'grammatics' of semiotic resources and aims at understanding the contributions of different resources and the meanings which arise as semiotic choices combine in multimodal phenomena over space and time (O'Halloran and Lim, 2014). In line with SF-based analysis, the text is analysed in a systematic way as each semiotic resource has its own functionalities and systems of meaning through which semiotic resources fulfil Halliday's (1994) metafunctions (Jewitt et al., 2016: 173). Along with Halliday's metafunctional principle, different kinds of meaning are constructed simultaneously by every semiotic resource:

- (a). *Ideational meaning* for construing our experience and knowledge of the world (i.e. experiential meaning) and for making logical connections in that world (i.e. logical meaning);
- (b). *Interpersonal meaning* for enacting social relations and expressing attitudes; and
- (c). *Textual meaning* for organising meanings into coherent messages

(c.f. Halliday, 1978)

Researchers have supported that a shared SF-based pedagogic metalanguage could enable teachers and students to describe and discuss multimodal texts in a structured and comprehensible way (Serafini, 2011, Lim, 2018). Attempts towards pedagogising Systemic Functional Theory (SFT) have been recorded for different text formats such as posters (Lim, O'Halloran, Tan and E, 2015, Lim and Tan 2017), films (Lim and Tan, 2018), and video games (Toh and Lim, 2020). Through a Systemic Approach to literacy, students can be assisted in their effort to develop a "language for thinking" as well as their ability to judge texts in relation to their "quality, credibility, authority, and reliability" (Mills and Unsworth, 2016: 630). The Systemic Approach to teaching critical viewing prioritises "explicit teaching of features and strategies in a visual text supported by a framework to scaffold teaching and learning" (Lim and Tan, 2017: 181). Students develop their multimodal analysis skills and their critical reasoning by being engaged in activities of the following three levels of Critical Viewing (Table 1).

Level 1	ENCOUNTER	Engaging with the Text
Level 2	COMPREHENSION	Understanding the Text
Level 3	CRITICAL VIEWING	Questioning the Text

Table 1 Three Levels of Viewing a Visual Text (Lim and Tan, 2017).

Within the context of the SF approach, the focus on the affective domain in Level 1 prepares students for their subsequent involvement in the activities of Level 2, which promote their understanding of the text. Through a translational process of adapting theories and frameworks in multimodality into an accessible set of vocabulary which can guide students' critical viewing with the aid of practitioners, the FAMILY framework in Level 2 retains basic tenets of SF-MDA and combines insights from media studies (Lim and Tan, 2017: 185). Having explored aspects of the text with the use of the pedagogic metalanguage of the FAMILY framework (Figure 1), students are supported to further develop their critical thinking skills in Level 3 (ibid: 28).

Although positive insights of the effectiveness of the use of a metalanguage in developing students' critical thinking with multimodal texts have already been reported in past studies (e.g., Macken-Horarik et al., 2017, Lim et al., 2020), more feedback from students, student teachers and practitioners is needed on the age-appropriate, thematically relevant and pedagogically effective incorporation of critical viewing and implementation of metalanguage in primary school contexts.

3. MLEFL AS A DESIGN FOR LEARNING: RESEARCH AIMS AND METHODS

MLEFL is presented as a design for learning by means of which pre-service teachers gain 'new knowledge', that is, they engage with the world in a new meaningful way given that they develop their capacity to make meaning with different semiotic resources. They are expected to use a metalanguage to conduct multimodal analysis and foster deeper understanding of the messages of texts themselves before they implement it for the creation of activities which promote students' critical viewing. Learning, which is perceived as "a process of interpretation and sign production" (Selander, 2008: 12), is achieved through STs' involvement in a sequence of activities which simulates hypothetical primary school students' critical thinking development and leads to "transformations and formation of signs" (ibid: 13). STs' responses to a forum discussion and assignments and most importantly their own design for learning for primary school students constitute signs or instances of learning, which are examined in this study. "A sign of learning shows some difference in the capacities of the

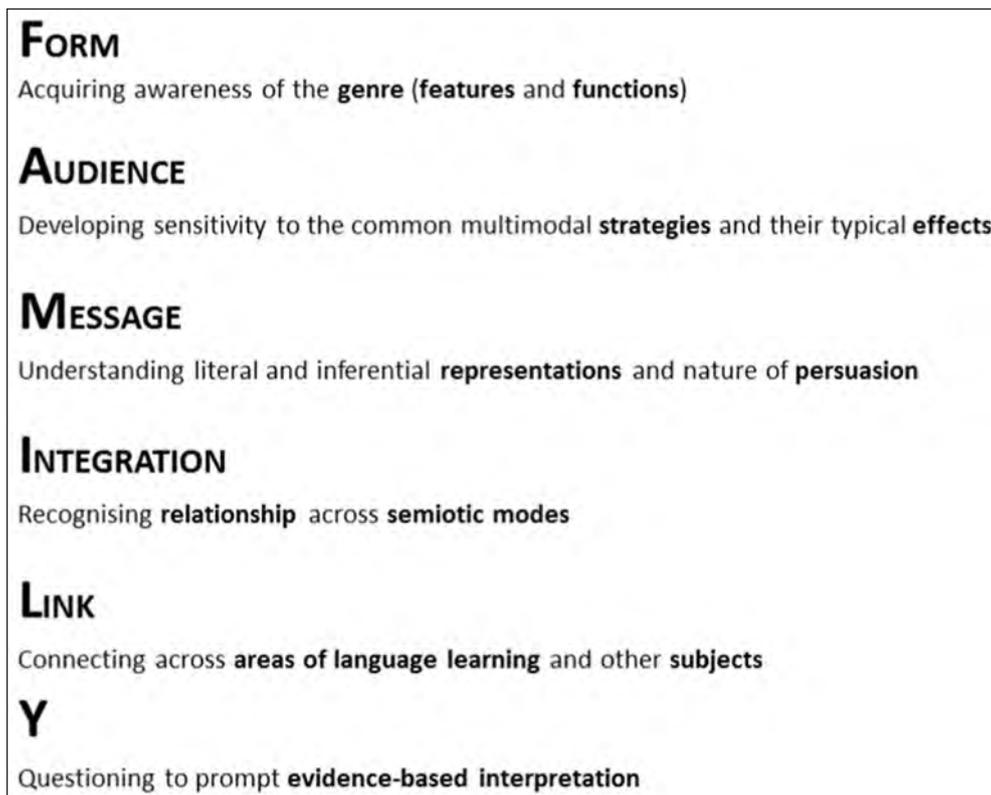


Figure 1 The FAMILY Framework (Lim & Tan, 2017).

learner in their making as signs as the result of learning” (Kress, 2010: 175). What is expected from the present study is to examine several detectable differences in STs’ capacities and perceptions which can be traced in the data and evaluate whether and to what extent MLEFL could serve as an efficient design for learning.

The research project is primarily qualitative and intends to provide answers to the following research questions:

- a. What are STs’ perceptions in relation to the significance of teaching multimodal literacy in the EFL classroom?
- b. How do STs evaluate the workshop (in terms of its usefulness, assignments, and STs’ suggestions for improvement)?
- c. Is the MLEFL workshop an effective design for learning judging from STs’ signs of learning in their own lesson plans?
 - i. Have they understood the Systemic Approach to teaching critical viewing?
 - ii. Have they implemented activities of all Critical Viewing levels?
 - iii. Do they teach pedagogic metalanguage? If yes, how?

The exploration of these research questions is expected to provide information in relation to the effectiveness of the MLEFL workshop, by examining the extent to which STs with no former instruction on multimodality have

managed to ‘transform’ themselves in terms of the development of their own multimodal awareness and whether they feel confident enough to use the Systemic Approach to teaching critical viewing to develop their students’ multimodal literacy. Next, I present a synopsis of the MLEFL syllabus and material.

4. SYNOPSIS OF THE MLEFL SYLLABUS: STRUCTURE, CONTENT, ASSIGNMENTS AND ASSESSMENT

The aim of the workshop is to acquaint STs with making meaning with semiotic resources, such as image, layout and colour, and train them to incorporate activities that develop multimodal literacy in the EFL classroom with an emphasis on the development of visual literacy. The objectives of the workshop are: a. to introduce STs to the tenets and demonstrate the significance of multimodality and multimodal literacy in the EFL context, b. to familiarise STs with critical viewing and interpretation of texts, c. to train STs in creating activities which aim at developing their students’ multimodal literacy, and d. to link the teaching of multimodal literacy to the teaching of English as a foreign language. STs are required to self-study the recommended readings, accompanying powerpoint presentations and view suggested videos. They are prompted to a. use the chat to discuss issues related to the workshop with their fellow colleagues, b. send

messages to the instructor through the e-class, c. check for new announcements or messages on the e-class, d. participate in forum discussions and e. use the tool “Assignments” to access and submit their weekly and final assignments.

The workshop consists of an introductory session and four weekly online asynchronous sessions. At first, through an introductory presentation, STs are provided with an outline of the workshop, requirements and assessment criteria.

Week 1. The first lesson introduces STs to what multimodality describes (Jewitt 2014: 15) and key terms

such as mode and modality (Jewitt et al., 2016). It presents multimodal literacy (Lim et al., 2015), addresses the significance of multimodal literacy learning in schools (Mills and Unsworth, 2017) and provides sample multimodal analysis. The lesson ends with a presentation of the multimodal orchestration descriptors of the Common Framework of Reference of Intercultural Digital Literacies (CFRIDiL) (Figures 2–3), which provides “a comprehensive set of guidelines to describe levels of proficiency in digital communication in intercultural and international contexts.” (Sindoni et al., 2019: 5). CFRIDiL has been designed to contribute to a better

THE COMMON FRAMEWORK OF REFERENCE FOR INTERCULTURAL DIGITAL LITERACIES

MULTIMODAL ORCHESTRATION

=> How do I make meaning in digital environments?

Macrocategories:

- 1.1 Selecting and combining multiple resources to serve the communicative purposes of the digital text or online communication.**
- 1.2 Establishing effective interactions and self-representations.**
- 1.3 Understanding, interpreting and critically evaluating multimodal text production.**
- 1.4 Interacting with the digital text.**

Figure 2 Macrocategories of the Multimodal Orchestration dimension of CFRIDiL (Sindoni et al., 2019: 55–50).

1.1 Selecting and combining multiple resources to serve the communicative purposes of the digital text or online communication.

Can purposefully select out of all the available meaning making resources (e.g., image, spoken and written language, music, gestures, typography, colour, etc.) and combine them to structure a digital text or online interaction that is successful to communicate its message/s to its intended audience/ addressee(s).

Can complement different resources, for example, writing and image, through adding, repeating and so on.

Can assemble and edit the available resources of the medium to serve specific communicative purposes of the digital text or online communication.

Can embed graphical icons (e.g. emoji) and links purposefully in the written component of the digital text or online communication.

Employs a series of strategies in terms of framing and shot choice in an appropriate/ effective way to serve the purposes of the digital text or online communication.

Can select from a range of available colour and font options to serve the communicative purposes of the digital text or online communication.

Can arrange setting/ layout to adapt it to a formal context as well as an informal context.

(Sindoni et al. 2019: 55-56)

Figure 3 MLEFL slide with a sample of CFRIDiL Multimodal Orchestration descriptors (Sindoni et al., 2019: 55–56).

understanding of how learners can interpret, evaluate, produce, and interact with others via multimodal digital texts (Sindoni et al., 2021b: 166).

Finally, STs are asked to participate in Forum Discussion I with the topic “Why is teaching multimodal literacy significant in the EFL classroom?” (Section 5.1) and use a text of their own choice to do the first weekly assignment (Figure 4). Without being introduced to the metalanguage yet, STs are asked to describe their impressions when they first encounter the text.

Week 2. The second lesson of the workshop focuses on multimodal analysis and particularly SF-MDA (Jewitt et al., 2016, O’Halloran et al., 2019). Referring to Lim (2013), it provides reasons why it is useful to teach multimodal literacy and presents a synopsis of the three kinds of meaning (i.e., ideational, interpersonal and textual). STs are given Tan et al.’s (2012) categories and simplified metalanguage for multimodal discourse analysis for the analysis of News Features. The system choices are provided in groups according to the three metafunctions (Karatza, 2017, 2019, 2020b). STs are also provided with a set of Instagram posts from @natgeo (the official account of National Geographic) as examples of visual analysis

on Visual Reality, Interpersonal Relations, Emotional Involvement and Elements of Visual Attraction and are prompted to get engaged in the following while-viewing activity (Figure 5).

In parallel with Tan et al.’s (2012) pre-defined system choices being given, STs are provided with the chart of Attraction System of images (Lim, 2013) since it coincides with Interpersonal Relations and Elements of Visual Attraction (Figure 6).

In the final part of the second lesson, STs have the chance to link theory with practice through reading about the implementation of a Multimodal Digital Literacy (MDL) syllabus which aimed at introducing multimodal literacy to Greek primary school students (Karatza, 2020a).

At the end of the second lesson, STs are asked to participate in Forum Discussion II with the topic: “First day of teaching multimodal literacy” and do the second weekly assignment. For the purposes of the latter, STs are asked to focus on the image of a multimodal text, identify 3 components of ATTRACTION, provide evidence and state the way(s) these components are linked to the message the creator is trying to convey.

Provide a personal response to the multimodal text of your own choice by responding briefly to the two following questions (max 100 words in total):

- What does the multimodal text aim to communicate?
- What interesting things do you notice about this multimodal text?

Figure 4 Rubric of weekly assignment 1.

WHILE VIEWING THE EXAMPLES:

Try to make meaning from the image and the written text of each instagram post. Find out evidence that proves the reason why the visual of the particular instagram post constitutes an example of the system choice provided on each slide and think of the way(s) these are linked to the message the producer of the post is trying to convey and justify the producer’s choice(s).

Figure 5 Slide of MLEFL Lesson 2: a while-viewing activity.

Week 3. Lesson 3 aims at demonstrating the way multimodal discourse analysis frameworks and approaches can be ‘translated’ into classroom practices (Lim and Tan, 2017, Lim, 2018). It presents the Systemic Approach developed for the teaching of visual texts aimed at secondary school students in Singapore as an example of implementation of the suggested approach. Explanations and detailed presentation of the FAMILY framework (ibid) are offered. A video on multiliteracies and Learning by Design is recommended (Appendix I). In line with the teaching of multiliteracies, STs are presented with Cope and Kalantzis’s (2015) Learning by Design framework, which introduces the knowledge processes of Experiencing,

Conceptualising, Analyzing and Applying in multiliteracies and is summarised and applied in Lim (2018).

At the end of the third lesson, STs are engaged with the third weekly activity² (Figure 7).

Week 4. The last lesson of the workshop weaves STs’ former experiences in the workshop with the three levels of Critical Viewing (Figure 8). By explaining the rationale behind the three assignments, it demonstrates the process of learning by doing with which STs have already been engaged and involves them in a meta-reflection process.

The goal of the last lesson is to offer clear guidelines for the lesson plan, which is the final assignment to be submitted. STs are given advice on the selection of

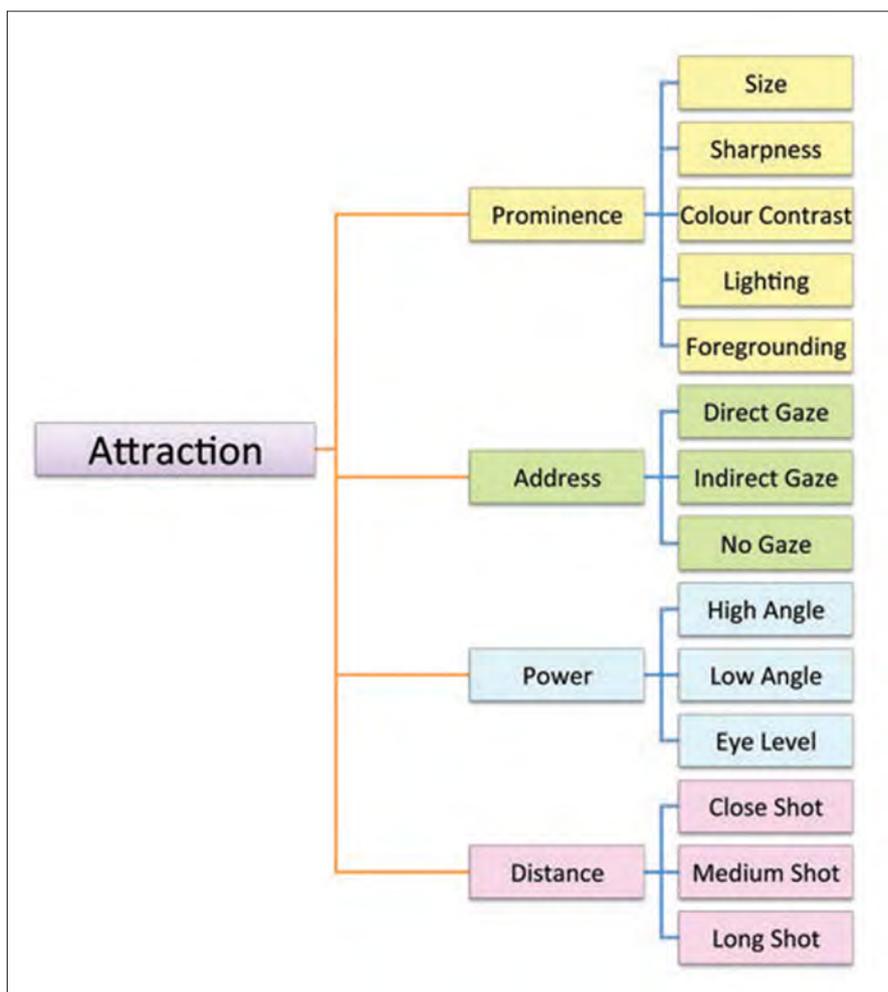


Figure 6 Attraction Systems for Images (Lim, 2013: 52).

Write a paragraph responding to the following questions about the multimodal text of your choice (max 100 words in total):

- Do the text and the image(s) converge to engender powerful and persuasive messages? Why?
- What can be done to make the multimodal text (even) more effective for the intended audience? Why?

Figure 7 Rubric of weekly assignment 3 (Lim and Tan, 2017: 29).

the texts, the expectations from the activities of each Critical Viewing level, the implementation of Learning by Design pedagogy, the age-appropriate adaptation and presentation of metalanguage, creativity and ideas on different types of activities. As an assistance, STs are provided with suggestions of ideas about how to develop their own activities in the form of questions and tips (see a

sample of slides in Figures 9 and 10). STs are encouraged to blend their knowledge of teaching approaches such as Task-Based Learning, Communicative Language teaching and so on, with which they are already familiar from the pre-service education program, with insights of Cope and Kalantzis's (2015) work. For their final assignment, STs are required to create a lesson plan for one teaching hour

Assignments 1-2-3

- ▶ **Assignment 1: Level 1** You were asked to talk about your first impressions – what comes to your mind when you first view a multimodal text.

Remember: At this stage, we want to raise our students' interest. We encourage them to express what they think first. All answers should be accepted. The teacher is also expected to show interest to hear what students think and should find something positive to say for each (possibly unique) answer.

- ▶ **Assignment 2: Level 2** You were asked to look carefully for particular features that contribute to meaning making. You focused on the visual and you justified the producer's choices by providing evidence from the multimodal text.

Remember: One's argumentation becomes stronger when evidence from the text is provided to support it.

- ▶ **Assignment 3: Level 3** You were asked to move a step further from the understanding of the text. You were asked to think critically about the producer's choices. You were encouraged to provide alternatives, to support or provide an opposing view.

Remember: All well-justified answers are acceptable.

Figure 8 Slide of MLEFL lesson 4, Weekly assignments.

Suggestions about how to develop your activities

You may first find multimodal texts which you want to use (e.g., attractive visuals, thematically relevant texts to the suggested units) and then decide on what to use them for according to the features you detect in them.

You may select the system choices and categories of meaning-making resources you feel more familiar/comfortable with and find multimodal texts which would be appropriate to teach these aspects of multimodal literacy (which make you feel more confident).

You could involve your students in an activity which compares two or more visuals. Comparison of visuals could be used at Level 2 with the aim to draw attention to the way different meanings are made or Level 3 to think critically on the producer's choices and infer more subtle meanings.

Figure 9 Slides of MLEFL lesson 4: Suggestion of practical ideas.

It is interesting to focus on the visual, but let's see how language contributes to the message that the producer wants to make:

If you provide the whole multimodal text e.g., this Instagram post, then the visual is contextualized and you are able to make more meanings.



Suggestion: If you like the idea, you can present the visual first and writing second, or vice versa. You can ask your students to guess either of the two meaning-making resources. To this end, you could provide them with option-choices or use open-ended questions in your activity.

Figure 10 Slides of MLEFL lesson 4: Suggestion of practical ideas.

(45 minutes) which aims to promote 6th grade primary school students' (A1-A2 CEFR level) multimodal literacy (APPENDIX II).

In terms of assessment, the grade for this workshop is divided into three parts, with participation in forum discussions and weekly assignments occupying one fifth of the final grade and the final assignment being graded with the major proportion of 80% of the final grade.³

5. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MLEFL WORKSHOP: EXPLORING THE DATA FOR STS' SIGNS OF LEARNING

In this Section, I report on the qualitative analysis of the data from the twenty MLEFL attendees' responses and assignments, supported by quantitative findings. STs' perceptions on the significance of multimodal literacy teaching are grouped thematically on the basis of each ST's emphasis and presented in Section 5.1. Then, STs' choices in relation to the final assignment are analysed. I display the STs' preferences in terms of topics and text formats, kinds of activities and groupings of students, as well as suggested ways of using metalanguage with their students (Section 5.2). Finally, in Section 5.3, I present the findings of STs' evaluation of the workshop.

5.1 FORUM DISCUSSION I: STS' VIEWS ON THE SIGNIFICANCE OF TEACHING MULTIMODAL LITERACY IN THE EFL CLASSROOM

STs were prompted to justify their views on the significance of incorporating the teaching of multimodal literacy in the EFL classroom. All the participants in the

forum discussion highlighted its importance, which indicates that through their involvement in MLEFL they appreciated the importance of making meaning through various semiotic resources in the EFL context. STs laid emphasis on "the ubiquity of multimodal texts, such as web pages, e-posters, graphic novels that contain a variety of modes" (ST7), by stating that "we live in a multimodal world" (ST4) and stressing the technological advancements which have transformed daily life as students "use technology, internet, different applications, with images, sounds etc., from a very early age" (ST1). Particular reference was made to the expedition with which society currently changes (e.g., "in this rapidly changing century" (ST3), "we are overwhelmed with vast amounts of rapid information" (ST16)), which results in new and ever changing requirements and expectations from young people and the need for individuals and especially children to synchronise with it (ST18).

The need for multimodal literacy development was associated with the fact that children grow up in "a digital world" where "multimodal literacy is a major part of our everyday life" (ST12). Students' familiarity with multimodal texts was mentioned by ST2, who commented on the effect of all the multimodal input that students have (i.e., "Today's children are being constantly bombarded with images, sounds, language, visual stimuli etc. that is only consequential that they are already accustomed to that way of learning, taking in information as well as shaping their knowledge and schema") and pinpointed the necessity to take this familiarity a step further, by cultivating this 'raw material' in the EFL classroom. Therefore, "a multimodal approach in teaching and learning is necessary especially in our

technologically advanced society where much of our learning input is based on computer assisted activities, digital texts and audiovisual materials” (ST10).

STs linked multimodal awareness with success in the evolving multimodal digital world. They highlighted the need for students’ critical thinking “about the messages directed at them through media” (ST19) and the need to help them better understand and effectively produce multimodal texts (ST15). STs recognised multimodal literacy as an important aspect of education today “as it encourages students to understand the ways media shapes their world and helps them develop their critical thinking and viewing” (ST13) and “the possibility of ‘seeing’ more” (ST4) as students come across multimodal sources in the English language “inevitably and ceaselessly. This fact, makes the need of multimodal literacy imperative” (ST14) in the EFL classroom.

Multimodal literacy is considered interesting and motivating for the engagement of students in learning in the EFL classroom. “Contrary to the traditional teaching framework, it improves students’ engagement in class, and reduces the possibilities of potential disinterest” (ST4) and provides motivation (ST8). Teaching multimodal literacy can offer “a fun and interesting way of teaching and keeps students more motivated and focused in the lesson” (ST13). The integration of “multimodal texts in your teaching makes students more motivated and intrigued in paying attention and participating in the lesson” (ST12), students feel “more confident in what they know or understand” and take a “more active role in the classroom” (ST9). “By introducing multimodal literacy, teachers can make learning more interesting for students and improve comprehension” (ST11). It “would confine learners’ distraction and boredom in the classroom” (ST16). Some STs pinpointed an aspect of multimodal literacy which can improve the effectiveness of teaching by connecting it with multiple intelligences developed by Howard Gardner, “which promote learning through images, music, logic-math, etc. Multimodal literacy is related to this means of learning” (ST6). For instance, ST11 expects that “Multimodal literacy will assist in improving students’ engagement in activities and will help students who learn better by visual communication” and ST9 thinks that more students will be able to learn through multimodal literacy teaching because students have different abilities and skills.

Implications that STs noticed were that the development of multimodal literacy would serve as a tool for students to use in everyday life and would enable students to “view media as shapers of our world” (ST5). ST6 suggests an acceleration of learning in different domains after students’ engagement in using all the available forms of communication to make meaning. ST14 expects that students will not only become multimodally literate but will “explore the new language in creative ways”.

5.2 FINAL ASSIGNMENT: STS’ PREFERENCES AND DESIGN OF LESSON PLANS

5.2.1 Topics and text formats: STs’ preferences

The majority of STs succeeded in incorporating activities which promote Levels 1, 2 and 3 of Critical Viewing and provided well-thought sequences of activities which comprised unique lesson plans. With reference to topics, half of the STs were inspired by environmental topics or topics about endangered species (Unit 9). A quarter of the STs preferred movies (Unit 10). Three out of twenty used multimodal texts about mythological creatures and fairy tale characters (Unit 3) while only two based their lesson plans on multimodal texts about jobs (Unit 6). No ST addressed topics related to sports or records (Unit 7) (Figure 11).

Regarding text formats, print advertisements and images with captions were used for jobs (Unit 6). Movie posters were employed for ‘Time for Fun’ (Unit 10). A greater range of text formats was observed in lesson plans inspired by the environment (Unit 9) as STs used Instagram posts, printed advertisements and comic strips. Drawings, screenshots of movies, book covers and posters were used for ‘Imaginary Creatures’ (Unit 3).

5.2.2 Three levels of critical viewing: STs’ activities and use of metalanguage

The majority of the STs started their lesson with a Level 1: ‘Engaging with the text’ activity as a warm-up part of their lesson. STs started their lessons with an in-class teacher-initiated discussion about their feelings (APPENDIX III, ST3), thoughts and/or preferences about a multimodal text and drew upon the title, the genre and/or the topic to generate discussion. Other STs preferred engaging their students with artefact making, particularly drawing or poster making (APPENDIX III, ST12), either individually or collaboratively, asked their students to describe a visual prompt or to indicate elements of attraction. Open-ended questions were mainly used for Level 1 Activities.

After Level 1 activity, STs included a series of activities aimed at Level 2: ‘Understanding the text’. Most of them alternated students’ grouping styles by including a variety of individual, pairwork, groupwork and whole-class activities. They mostly combined close-type activities with open-ended questions in their lesson plans. Aiming to direct students’ attention to particular elements of the visual texts and assist students with their analysis of the multimodal texts, STs employed open-ended questions such as:

“What “stands out” the most? What catches attention?” (ST2)

Close-type activities were mainly True-False, Multiple Choice and Matching Activities which used statements about the multimodal text with an emphasis on an aspect of the FAMILY framework. For example, ST9 uses

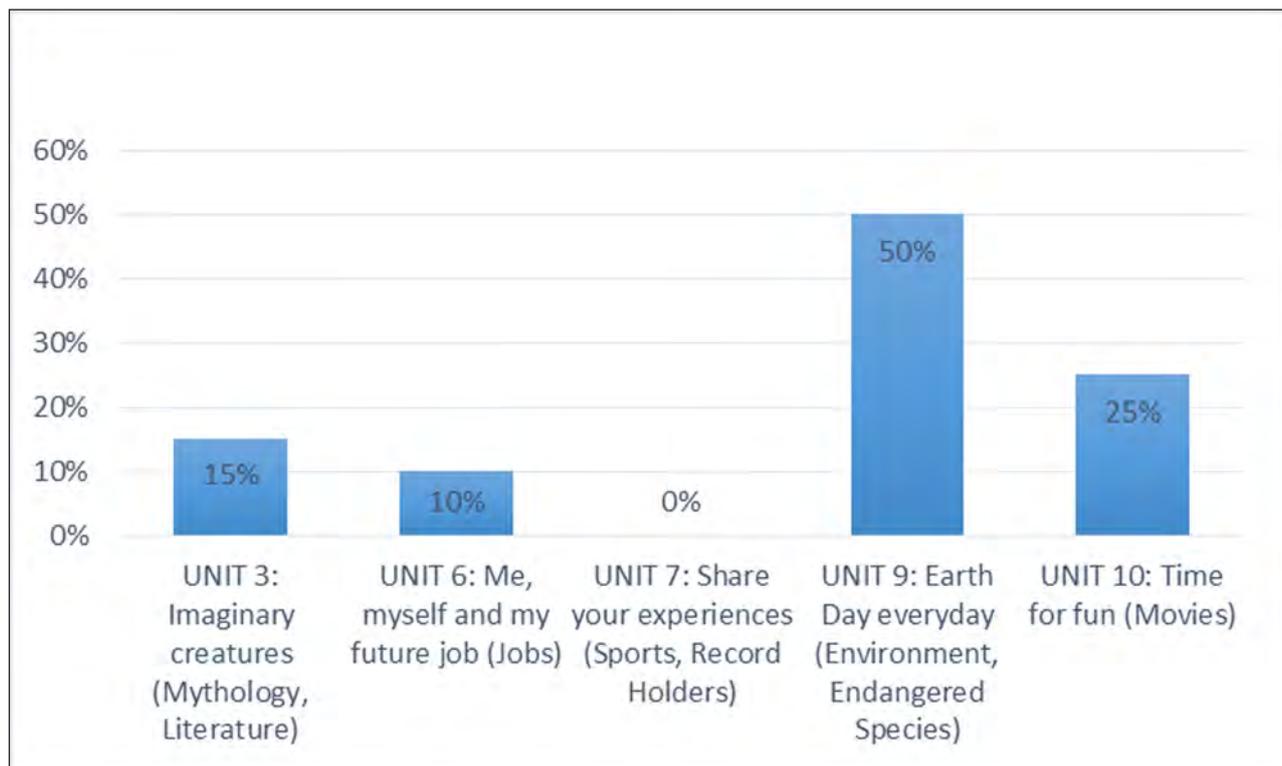


Figure 11 Topics: STs' preferences.

a front cover art and a movie poster about the Disney/Pixar hero Shrek and provides students with True-False statements including comparison of the two texts (Appendix III, ST9).

In terms of how STs presented and/or used metalanguage especially in Level 2 activities, two approaches are observed (Figure 12).

Metalanguage and explanation blend. The majority of STs showed a clear preference in blending metalanguage with explanations. Some of them used overt instruction by designing tables with terms and explanations. For example, in her lesson about plastic pollution, ST17 used a table where she presented the metalanguage in the first column entitled “form” and its explanations (“descriptions”) in the second one. After this presentation, she incorporated the terms together with their explanations in an activity about an environmental poster (APPENDIX III, ST17). ST5 asked students to read the metalanguage plus the explanations eg., slogan (catchy promotional phrase) and logo (graphic representation of the text) and detect them in an advertisement. Other STs chose to teach metalanguage implicitly by integrating terms and explanations in activities. Indicatively, ST10 used terms in parallel with their explanations in the form of a question and asked students to identify parts of a visual text (main visual display, headline and slogan). For instance, “Let’s find: a. the main visual display. What is the first thing you notice when you look at this book cover?”.

In some lesson plans, terms were used as headings/categories which were further explained. For instance,

ST4 and ST16 overtly taught metalanguage. They accompanied each term with a question which provided an explanation of its meaning. For example, “Lighting: which elements are surrounded by light?, Foreground: which element(s) is/are placed in the foreground?” (ST4). Similarly, ST6 (APPENDIX III) created a fill-in activity after explaining the meaning of Prominence and Address in both English and Greek. The metalanguage is integrated in activities either in the option-choices (APPENDIX III, ST11) or in the questions/statements of close-type activities. For example, after her presentation of useful metalanguage, ST12 continued with a close-type T-F activity based on the poster of the Disney/Pixar movie *Finding Dory*. In the activity, she incorporated the explanations of the terms to revise them and assist students’ learning. For example, “Dory’s picture has a more vivid color than the other visuals/characters. T/F, Dory is looking indirectly at the viewer. T/F”, while ST17 mentioned the metalanguage as an additional kind of information to be implicitly learnt (APPENDIX III, ST17).

Metalanguage use only. Teaching metalanguage of the FAMILY framework and incorporating terms in activities without any further explanations were suggested by 15% of the STs (e.g., APPENDIX III, ST1). ST14 employed the backronym FAMILY in students’ handout in the question: “What is FAMILY” followed by categories like “audience” and subcategories.

Even though there was a tendency in STs to adjust metalanguage and present it in age- and level-appropriate ways, this was not achieved by all STs. For example, ST14 used a series of questions with elevated

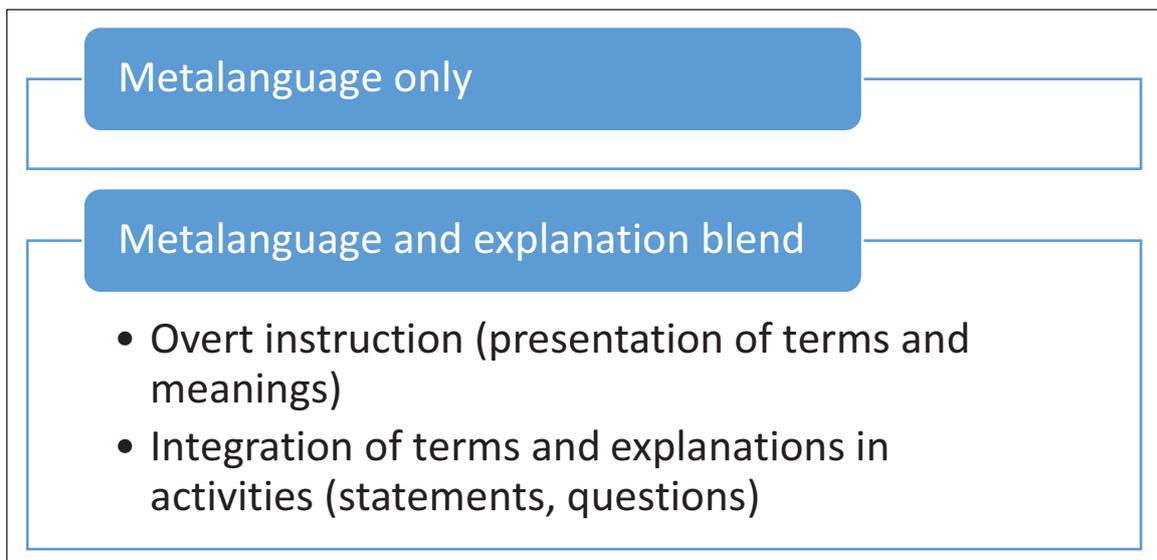


Figure 12 STs' use of metalanguage in the lesson plans.

vocabulary (e.g., “A. Do the text and image converge to engender powerful, persuasive messages? Why?”). ST18 addressed metafunctions and used rubrics of activities exactly as they are used in Lim (2013), similar to the STs' weekly assignments (APPENDIX III). Furthermore, although the majority of the participants employed the FAMILY framework and designed lesson plans on the basis of the three levels of critical viewing, two STs employed texts that realised the required multimodal text formats but had a different focus in their lesson plans. ST13 focused on vocabulary teaching using Instagram posts about elephants from Nat Geo wild (APPENDIX III) and ST15 focused on film genres without teaching specific key terms for multimodal analysis. She asked students to match movie posters with kinds of films in a matching exercise and then she asked them to “name two or more characteristics of the movie genres from activity 2 and state which one of those genres their favorite one is and why”.

In the final stage of their lesson, all STs devoted some minutes to Level 3: “Questioning the text”. The majority of STs preferred involving their students in the evaluation of the multimodal text through questions which generate discussion (e.g., APPENDIX III, ST10). Level 3 discussions were about appropriateness of image, persuasiveness, successfulness of the text, possible changes, effectiveness of choices and interesting input. ST6 created an evaluation form and a wordwall quiz with a revision of metalanguage which could help her students' self-assessment while ST5 created a role play activity with a hypothetical discussion between a reporter and a student. 20% of the STs engaged their students in artefact making (e.g., APPENDIX III, ST2).

5.3 EVALUATION

After the end of the workshop and the submission of the grades, STs were kindly asked to complete a very short

and non-compulsory evaluation form (APPENDIX IV). First, they had to underline or highlight the response (i.e., a. highly, b. very, c. quite, d. not so much) that best represented what they thought with regard to how helpful and interesting weekly and final assignments, forum discussions and the whole workshop were. STs were prompted to write optional comments and were required to briefly state what they thought about positive aspects of the workshop, such as what they had learnt that could be useful when they become teachers, which features of the workshop should remain the same next time the workshop would be offered, and suggestions for improvement after taking into consideration what was difficult for them, what was not so helpful and what should change next time.

All STs found the weekly and final assignments highly helpful and interesting. They felt that participating in the forum discussions and reading their colleagues' answers were either highly or very helpful processes. At the end of the workshop, STs believed that they were highly or very well prepared to use activities that promote multimodal literacy with their future students, while they unanimously stated that their intention was to incorporate activities which promote multimodal literacy when they become EFL teachers.

In their open-ended answers about the positive aspects of the workshop, STs stressed the importance of the assignments (ST1 in Figure 13). Other STs pinpointed the effectiveness of the inclusion of examples, the use of videos that further explain theoretical notions under discussion and the sample of actual activities (ST4 in Figure 13). STs talked about the organization of the workshop, the material used and the communication with the workshop instructor as positive aspects (ST2, ST3 in Figure 13). Moreover, STs noted their overall positive impression about the experience of participating in the workshop (ST5, ST6, ST7 in Figure 13).

Importance of assignments

- The assignments were very helpful for us to understand the important points of the multimodality and we had the chance to see for ourselves what exactly the multimodal texts are in practice. I really liked that we had been offered the chance to select our own multimodal text and practice with it. Also, the weekly assignments offered us a great preparation for the final assignment which was incredibly interesting and I will definitely use these kind of activities with my future students. (ST1)

Inclusion of examples

- Furthermore, I really liked the fact that in all PowerPoint slides there were examples and videos explaining some features of the topic. Last but not least, one of the power points for primary students contained actual activities for multimodality which really helped me to think of my own activities. (ST4)

Organisation of the workshop

- The material was highly organised and well structured at all levels, be it content or layout, and that helped me to navigate the content easily. (ST2)
- The presentations were very well organised and we had all the support and encouragement that we needed. (ST3)

Overall positive impression

- We have all been using multimodal texts but we have never really realised what are the “tricks” that some advertisements for example are using to catch our attention. So, as teachers we should inform our students about the features of a text and how a message is delivered. (ST5)
- Getting familiarised with the interpretation of multimodal texts has been a fascinating learning experience. (ST6)
- The course is very engaging and promotes creativity. (ST7)

Suggestions for improvement

- The workshop was very interesting, original and useful. Maybe you could also include a synchronous meeting and a few examples of activities. (ST4)
- An additional assignment could be added following the pattern of the second or the third one, but not necessarily. (ST7)
- One of the things that was quite difficult for me, especially in the 1st assignment, was to write my answer in 100 words. Personally, I found the topic really interesting and I wanted to say a lot more than 100 words so maybe the words could be a little bit more than 100. (ST3)
- Lastly, in some power points there were many slides but at the same time when I read them all, I understood the topic without any difficulty. So, maybe the slides could be a little bit fewer. (ST8)

Figure 13 Evaluation forms: sample of STs’ answers.

Some STs stated that they thought the workshop was very organised and interesting. They either “had no difficulty related to the content of the workshops or the assignments” (ST1) or overcame their initial anxiety which they had had “since this area of knowledge is recently explored, many concepts were unknown and not easily grasped initially” (ST8). Some STs suggested changes such as addition of a synchronous meeting, more sample activities, more assignments, increase of the word limit for open-ended questions of weekly assignments and fewer slides on the same topic (Figure 13).

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

Overall, the workshop comprises a set of joined Learning Design Sequences (LDSs) in a formal educational setting (cf Selander, 2008: 16–18). The “narrative” of the workshop began with an introduction, a clear definition of its goals, description of activities and assessment criteria. STs were involved in three cycles of transforming and forming in line with the three levels of critical viewing (Lim and Tan, 2017), through which they were gradually engaged “in different processes of problem-solving, information-seeking and sign-producing activities” (Selander, 2008: 17) aimed at developing their critical thinking through multimodal

analysis (O’Halloran et al., 2017). STs were not only required to collect “facts” but also to become sign-makers, critically view multimodal texts, make their own choices and represent meaning in multimodal ways through their own designs for learning for the purposes of their final assignment (i.e., their lesson plans). Through the process, STs developed a meta-awareness of the significance of the use of metalanguage for the analysis of meanings of multimodal texts through their own study, reflection and engagement with analysis and critical questioning of multimodal texts (cf Lim, 2018; Cope and Kalantzis, 2015).

In Forum Discussion I, STs’ highly positive attitude towards the formerly unknown field of teaching critical viewing indicates that MLEFL managed to transform STs (Kress, 2010). One of the main points raised by STs was the abundance and variety of meaning-making resources in various text formats, which augments the need for developing critical thinking skills through developing students’ multimodal awareness, along with MACT (O’Halloran et al., 2017) and the Systemic Approach to teaching critical viewing (Lim, 2013). STs connected multimodal literacy with successful language learning and everyday life practices as well as motivation for classroom participation. As reported through their evaluation, STs found forum discussions helpful as they promoted collaborative learning in an asynchronous online learning context.

Regarding the assignments, STs believed that they had been highly helpful and interesting (Section 5.3). The analysis of STs' responses revealed signs of learning and affirmed that all the assignments achieved their purposes to a great extent. The STs' answers showed evidence of the effectiveness and practicality of the Systemic Approach. All STs were able to relate their interpretations to textual evidence and explain choices made in the text, thus signifying that the study and use of pedagogic metalanguage empowered them (Lim and Tan, 2017). After STs' practice of new knowledge and way of thinking, the aforementioned signs of learning supported the hypothesis that pedagogic metalanguage could serve as a useful means of training for teachers (Serafini, 2011; O'Halloran et al., 2017; Lim, 2018). Moreover, the STs' perceptions illustrated their positive attitude towards the use of metalanguage with primary school students. The majority of STs designed well-structured, age-appropriate and imaginative lesson plans in which they had implemented a promising blend of their knowledge of EFL teaching and material development with multimodal literacy, whereas only 10% of the subjects showed some misunderstanding by using texts as stimuli for the teaching of vocabulary, reading and writing instead of intending to promote students' critical viewing. As also reported in Lim et al.'s (2020:5) research, authentic multimodal texts were preferred by STs. Guided by Learning by Design and Multiliteracies pedagogy (Cope and Kalantzis, 2015; Lim 2018) from the main readings, STs applied a genre approach to the analysis, a mix of overt instruction and inductive learning as well as artefact making.

The exploration of STs' signs of learning in their assignments revealed practical evidence which could not only inform the re-design of MLEFL but also be of value for relevant research. STs demonstrated a preference towards focusing on Form and Audience, less frequently on Integration and rarely on Message (Figure 1), indicating that they probably needed more assistance through examples to understand Representation, Appeal and Interest. This finding may indicate aspects that need to be further simplified through the translational research process of re-designing the pedagogic metalanguage (Lim and Tan, 2017). The two broad categories "metalanguage only" and "metalanguage and explanation blend" (Figure 12) and the range of activities suggested by STs could enhance the exploration of teachers' multimodal pedagogies (Lim, 2021: 12). Moreover, STs accompanied their lesson plans with well-thought objectives and well-structured rationales, which proved the development of their multimodal awareness through attending the workshop. The MLEFL syllabus managed to prompt STs' creativity, autonomy and critical thinking skills applied to lesson plans. A finding that is worth mentioning is that ST10 took the initiative to adapt the available Multimodal Orchestration CFRIDiL descriptors from Lesson 1 (Section

4) into lesson plan objectives, thus offering practical evidence of applicability and usability of CFRIDiL (Sindoni et al., 2019) in the field of language teaching and learning (Sindoni et al. 2021a).

Due to the online totally asynchronous nature of the workshop because of COVID-19 restrictions, data resources for this study included the material of the workshop and STs' responses to forum discussions, assignments and evaluation forms. Although a forum discussion is sometimes deprived of the spontaneity of students' classroom discussion recordings, it served as a kind of asynchronous written exchange and scaffolding of ideas. STs built upon their colleagues' views since reiteration of phrases and ideas was observed through thematic analysis. At some points, STs seemed to elaborate collaboratively on one another's responses and continue each other's argument to support the importance of incorporating multimodal literacy (Forum Discussion I). Although STs' collaborative learning was quite restricted and more opportunities for collaboration could have promoted learning, STs' self-directed learning guided by the four e-class units through suggested reading and viewing, was effective. STs displayed awareness of basic SFT and SF-MDA principles and demonstrated that they easily assimilated concepts and metalanguage of the newly introduced Systemic Approach to the teaching of critical viewing, judging from their assignments. The metalanguage was mainly used in an age-appropriate way in STs' activities, but to ensure understanding by all participants, in-class evaluation of samples of activities could help. STs' assignments contained detectable signs of STs' transformation into EFL teachers who have become more critical viewers themselves and are able to guide their students to explore how the various "meanings which arise as semiotic choices combine in multimodal phenomena" (O'Halloran and Lim, 2014). STs' responses to the close-type and open-ended items of the evaluation form provided useful insights into the strengths and the shortcomings of MLEFL, which can be valuable for revision purposes if the workshop is to be offered again in future.

Taking into consideration STs' responses to the evaluation form and their signs of learning in their assignments, in a future MLEFL, at least two synchronous online or on site meetings with the STs could provide chances for spontaneous in-class discussions. Student-to-student interaction could be fostered via forum discussions, chats on practical issues, polls and the creation of a social media group. It would be useful to ask STs to peer-evaluate each other's lesson plans and then give the chance to STs to revise their work on the basis of their colleagues' suggestions and create a shared directory of shared ready-made resources.

The present study underscores the significance of providing new ways of thinking and developing STs' critical viewing as an aspect of promoting their own

critical thinking through MACT (O'Halloran et al., 2017) and equipping them with the metalanguage and concepts needed to develop their students' multimodal literacy, which remains a challenge for teachers as reported by Lim (2018). As supported by Mitsikopoulou (2020: 94), STs should be offered the chance through their University curricula to get prepared through transformative pedagogies, be encouraged to develop a reflexive knowledge and become critical educators. MLEFL serves as such a transformative practice in the context under examination, through which STs with no previous instruction in multimodality are equipped with new knowledge and metalanguage which consequently informs their choices in their own designs for learning. The MLEFL syllabus could serve as an available already trialed design for learning to be adapted by language teacher educators looking for ways to introduce multimodal literacy as an aspect of pedagogical courses.

NOTES

- 1 "Viewing" means understanding and interpreting visual meaning-making resources.
"Representing" means expressing that understanding by producing texts which include visual meaning-making resources.
- 2 Based on Lim and Tan's (2017: 29) Level 3 activity.
- 3 Figures i, ii, iii in Appendix I: Slides from Introduction of MLEFL: Assessment of the workshop.

ADDITIONAL FILE

The additional file for this article can be found as follows:

- **Appendixes.** Appendix I–IV. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16993/df.188.s1>

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COMPETING INTERESTS

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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