

Chapter 17:

Transforming Text into Multimodal Learning: Applying Multiliteracies for Deep Learning in EFL Classrooms

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A. INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital and multimodal communication has transformed how learner's access, process, and produce information. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, students encounter not only written texts but also images, videos, podcasts, memes, and AI-generated content. This shift challenges teachers to move beyond traditional text-based instruction and to design lessons that prepare students to navigate and create meaning across multiple modes. The multiliteracies framework, introduced by the New London Group (1996), emphasizes literacy as a process of meaning-making that integrates linguistic, visual, spatial, and digital resources. It positions learners as active designers of knowledge rather than passive recipients, making it particularly relevant for contemporary classrooms.

At the same time, global education discourse has highlighted the need for deep learning, which goes beyond surface memorization to emphasize critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, collaboration, and the transfer of knowledge to new contexts. Fullan et al. (2018) argue that deep learning equips students with competencies needed for the 21st century, such as the "6Cs" (critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, citizenship, and character). Recent research in EFL contexts shows that integrating multiliteracies practices—such as

creating infographics, podcasts, or short videos—fosters not only language skills but also deeper conceptual understanding and engagement (Carcamo & Pino, 2025; Rahmanu & Molnár, 2024; Sukandi & Hasbi, 2024).

However, the integration of multimodal and AI-supported learning into EFL classrooms also raises pedagogical challenges. Teachers need to balance digital-rich approaches with accessible, low-tech alternatives to ensure equity across diverse contexts (Guo et al., 2024). Moreover, assessment practices must be rethought to capture students' multimodal competencies and reflective learning processes (Nabhan & Habók, 2025). Addressing these issues requires carefully designed teaching frameworks that combine the principles of multiliteracies with the goals of deep learning so that English language education remains relevant, engaging, and transformative.

B. TEACHING DESIGN

Designing English lessons that combine multiliteracies pedagogy with deep learning requires clarity of principles, structured activities, and practical steps that teachers can replicate in different contexts. In this section, a flexible teaching design is proposed, structured around five pedagogical principles: situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing, transformed practice, and reflection. Each principle is illustrated with classroom strategies, technology integration, and low-tech alternatives, making the design adaptable across elementary schools to university levels.

1. Core Principles of Multiliteracies for Deep Learning

The multiliteracies pedagogy (New London Group, 1996; Cope & Kalantzis, 2009) emphasizes literacy as design, encouraging learners to actively construct meaning across linguistic and multimodal resources. Applied to EFL, this means that reading and writing are no longer sufficient outcomes; learners should also be able to interpret, remix, and produce

multimodal artefacts such as posters, infographics, videos, podcasts, and digital stories. These are the steps:

- *Situated practice*: Start from authentic texts relevant to students' lives (e.g., news articles, social media posts, pictures, videos, or local stories). Contextual relevance motivates learners and anchors abstract concepts in real-life experiences (Guo et al., 2024).
- *Overt instruction*: Provide explicit teaching on how different modes function—visual design, audio pacing, gesture, or layout—so students gain metalanguage to discuss and apply multimodal features (Bezemer & Kress, 2016).
- *Critical framing*: Guide learners to question the social, cultural, or persuasive aspects of texts, fostering critical literacy. For instance, why does an advertisement use certain colors, or how does a podcast establish credibility? (Fullan et al., 2018).
- *Transformed practice*: Enable students to redesign texts or knowledge into new format (e.g., turning a descriptive text into a video or infographic). This is where deep learning occurs, as learners transfer knowledge into new contexts (Carcamo & Pino, 2025).
- *Reflection*: Ask learners to articulate what they learned, why they made design choices, and how it could be applied beyond the classroom and real-life contexts. (Nabhan & Habók, 2025).

The principles align with deep learning's focus on critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, and digital literacy, ensuring that learning extends beyond language accuracy into life-ready competencies.

2. Step-by-Step Teaching Simulation

The following simulation illustrates how a teacher can transform a simple text-based lesson into a multimodal, deep learning experience. The theme is “Climate Change”, but the

procedure can be adapted to any topic (e.g., friendship, technology, cultural heritage, etc).

a. Situated Practice (Experiencing and Connecting)

- Use a short video, image set, news article, or social media post as a stimulus.
- Invite students to share what they already know or feel about the issue.
- Encourage personal connections through simple guiding questions.
- *Outcome:* Students are motivated, connect the topic with their own experiences, and see the relevance of learning.

b. Overt Instruction (Building Knowledge and Language)

- Provide a short text and guide students to identify key ideas and vocabulary.
- Model strategies such as summarizing, using context clues, or highlighting arguments.
- Focus briefly on useful expressions or grammar structures.
- *Outcome:* Students develop comprehension skills and expand language resources.

c. Critical Framing (Thinking Beyond the Text)

- Ask simple critical questions: *Who made this text? Why? Who is the audience?*
- Compare two examples on the same topic (e.g., news vs. social media).
- Encourage reflection on which version is more convincing and why.
- *Outcome:* Students realize that texts present different perspectives depending on purpose and audience.

d. Transformed Practice and Reflection (Designing and Sharing)

- Students create new multimodal products such as posters, podcasts, videos, or infographics etc.
 - *Tech-rich option:* Create an infographic using Canva, record a podcast on Anchor.fm, or produce a video using CapCut.

- *Low-tech option*: Draw posters, create a storyboard, role-play a news broadcast, or record a voice memo.
- Share the multimodal products with peers and give simple feedback.
- Students reflect individually or together: *What did I learn? What skills did I use? How can I apply them in real life?*
- *Outcome*: Students demonstrate deep learning by transferring knowledge into new formats, articulating design choices, and reflecting on their learning journey.

3. Assessment

Assessment in multiliteracies-based deep learning should go beyond testing factual recall. It must capture process, product, and reflection (Guo et al., 2024). A triangulated assessment model can be used:

- Process evidence (30%): Collect planning sheets, drafts, and peer feedback logs to evaluate collaboration and iterative improvement (Miller & McVee, 2012).
- Product rubric (40%): Evaluate content accuracy, multimodal coherence, language appropriacy, creativity, and audience orientation (Carcamo & Pino, 2025).
- Reflection (30%): Assess metacognitive insights in written or video reflections.

4. Adaptability Across Levels

The multiliteracies-based deep learning framework is highly flexible and can be adapted to various educational levels, from primary schools to universities. The main difference lies in the complexity of texts, tasks, and expected outcomes.

- Primary and Junior Secondary (SD–SMP): Teachers may use short and simple texts, supported by visuals such as pictures or videos. Activities should emphasize drawing, posters, storytelling, and short oral presentations. Suitable topics include *My Favourite Animal*, *Healthy Food*, *Our Environment*, *Celebrations*, and *School Rules*.

- Senior Secondary (SMA/SMK): At this stage, students can handle more complex multimodal projects such as persuasive podcasts, infographic reports, and digital campaigns. Teachers are encouraged to integrate critical evaluation of online sources. Relevant topics may include *Global Warming, Cultural Heritage, Social Media Influence, Gender Equality, and Future Jobs*.
- Higher Education: University students can be challenged with advanced tasks such as research-based documentaries, multimedia presentations, or AI-assisted projects that integrate textual, visual, and data analysis. Academic rigor should be emphasized by requiring proper citations and scholarly discussions. Suitable topics include *Artificial Intelligence and Education, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Cultural Identity in a Globalized World, Fake News, and Digital Citizenship*.

This progression ensures that teachers at all levels can implement the same multiliteracies design while adjusting the complexity of materials, tools, and outcomes according to students' readiness and institutional resources.

5. Integrating Technology and AI Responsibly

While technology and AI can enrich multimodal projects, responsible use is essential. Tools like ChatGPT can help students brainstorm ideas or simplify complex texts, but teachers must emphasize academic integrity and critical evaluation (Kasneci et al., 2023). Equally important is ensuring equity: in low-resource contexts, low-tech multimodal tasks (e.g., role play, posters) remain valid and powerful forms of literacy learning (Guo et al., 2024). By blending high- and low-tech approaches, teachers can ensure that all learners develop multiliteracies and achieve deep learning outcomes, regardless of access to technology (Hasbi et al., 2025).

C. FURTHER DISCUSSION

The integration of multiliteracies into EFL classrooms offers significant potential for promoting deep learning, yet it is not without challenges. On the positive side, multimodal tasks increase motivation and engagement by mirroring learners' everyday communication practices, enabling them to use language authentically while developing 21st-century competencies such as collaboration, creativity, and digital literacy (Fullan et al., 2018; Hasbi et al., 2024; Rahmanu & Molnár, 2024). Studies have shown that multimodal projects like infographics and podcasts help learners synthesize information, develop critical thinking, and transfer knowledge into new contexts (Carcamo & Pino, 2025). These affordances suggest that multiliteracies pedagogy is not merely an enrichment activity but a necessity for preparing learners to thrive in an information-rich, technologically mediated world.

On the other hand, challenges remain regarding teacher readiness, material preparation, equitable access to technology, and assessment. Many teachers require professional development to confidently guide students in multimodal design and to integrate AI tools responsibly (Guo et al., 2024; Hastomo et al., 2025). Moreover, not all schools have adequate digital resources, making low-tech alternatives essential. Assessment of multimodal products is another ongoing debate: while rubrics and portfolios provide richer insights, they require more time and consistency from teachers (Nabhan & Habók, 2025). To move forward, schools and policymakers should support teacher training, provide infrastructure, and promote blended approaches that combine digital and low-tech modalities. Ultimately, the key recommendation is to adopt a flexible, equity-focused multiliteracies pedagogy that positions deep learning as both achievable and sustainable in diverse EFL contexts.

AUTHOR

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