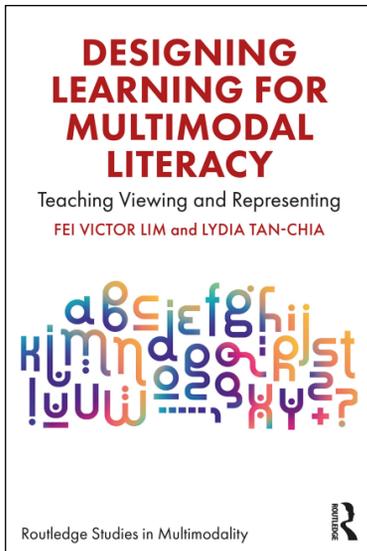


## BOOK REVIEW



<b>Title:</b>	Designing Learning for Multimodal Literacy: Teaching Viewing and Representing
<b>Editors:</b>	Fei Victor Lim, and Lydia Tan-Chia
<b>Publisher:</b>	Routledge
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<b>Reviewers:</b>	Woravit Seneechai & Rayns Keneth Ampon, <i>King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi, Thailand</i>

Multimodal literacy encompasses the capacity to comprehend diverse communicative modes (i.e., textual, visual, auditory, and multimedia formats), and generate meaning through them. Given the increasing exposure of students to digital platforms like TikTok and YouTube, the integration of multimodal literacy activities into the curriculum can significantly enhance students' language and communication skills. However, in the educational context, traditional schools of thoughts have often overlooked the prospects multimodal literacy has in cultivating students' proficiency towards navigating and producing content across various forms of media as digital citizens. Incidentally, this is why "Designing Learning for Multimodal Literacy: Teaching Viewing and Representing" is such a timely and thought-provoking addition to the literature, as it not only showcases the potential of multimodal literacy, but also provides practical solutions for the classroom. Co-authored by Fei Victor Lim, an expert in multiliteracies, multimodal discourse analyses, and digital learning from the National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, and Lydia Tan-Chia, a curriculum developer from the Singapore Ministry of Education, the book is an impressively comprehensive guide to integrating both print and digital media into language teaching.

To begin, the book highlights the pressing need for educators and researchers to rethink teaching strategies and align them with the multifaceted communication modes students encounter daily. As social media and digital tools become increasingly central to communication, language teachers must adapt their practices to incorporate a variety of media forms such as images, videos, and emojis into their curricula. This shift from traditional literacy to multimodal literacy reflects the changing landscape of how information is created and consumed in the language curriculum. The authors argue that there is currently a mismatch between curriculum and the assessment. The focus of national exams may be language-based, but the main goal of the English syllabus is to develop language skills for literacy and effective communication.

However, with the syllabus now including multimodal literacy, they suggest the assessment could be adjusted to better reflect this broader definition of literacy, rather than heavily favoring traditional skills like writing, reading, listening, and speaking. To help nestle educators and researchers into accommodating such a paradigm shift in language teaching, the authors have masterfully married theory with practice in a book that is rife with practical details suited to incorporate multimodal literacy into English-language classrooms, particularly at the elementary and high-school levels. Drawn from a research project in Singapore where design-based lesson plans were collaboratively developed and refined to teach multimodal literacy in primary and secondary schools, the book provides bountiful strategies and case studies focused on integrating multiliteracies in these classrooms. Consisting of eight chapters in total, Chapter 1 first introduces the concept of multimodal literacy and positions teachers as designers of learning experiences. Chapter 2 then presents the theoretical frameworks for teaching multimodal literacy, emphasizing the need for a pedagogic metalanguage. Chapters 3 to 6 provide practical examples and vignettes from teachers on designing lessons for different multimodal texts, including print, digital, and transmedia (the re-expression of familiar stories in other media formats). Chapter 7 discusses the importance of developing teachers as designers and the role of design-based research in professional development. Finally, Chapter 8 extends the discussion to systemic considerations for advancing multimodal literacy at an educational policy level, concluding with a research agenda for future studies.

One of the book's notable strengths is its bridge between theoretical depth and practical application. The authors draw on social semiotics and scholarly theories to ground their discussions in well-established academic frameworks. These theoretical foundations are paired with practical resources and design principles that make the book relevant for language educators and researchers. For instance, teachers are encouraged to introduce a 'pedagogic metalanguage', a conceptual tool that provides teachers and students with a shared vocabulary for discussing and analyzing multimodal texts, facilitating both the teaching and learning process. This would provide the students with the linguistic (or semiotic) repertoire they need to explore and interpret texts. The process would also enable them to justify their responses by presenting evidence in their multimodal analyses, such as outlining the specific features of a villain's appearance or recognizing the use of sinister musical elements to create suspense. To illustrate this in an actual classroom, in Chapter 4, the book features detailed examples of Grace, a secondary school English-language teacher, and her lessons on Shaun Tan's picture book, *The Lost Thing*. For her class, she used a combination of the picture book and its video adaptation to teach students how different semiotic choices—such as visuals, sound, and gestures—enhance meaning in digital texts compared to static print texts. Her lessons involved comparing narrative features, analyzing visual and aural elements, and encouraging students to give multimodal presentations. She found that guiding students to explore digital technology's affordances enhanced their engagement and understanding of stories. She was also pleased with their ability to demonstrate semiotic awareness using the pedagogic metalanguage that was introduced. Breaking away from the traditional paradigms of ELT and EFL, the book is thus not only a solid resource that daringly advocates for the integration of multimodal literacy in conventional curricula, but also particularly practical for teachers in helping their students develop the skills needed to create and evaluate multimodal materials, rather than solely focus on English grammatical rules.

Adding onto the book's strengths, the authors also introduce the concept of 'transmedia storytelling', a narration technique wherein stories flow across various media formats such as books, videos, and games. It challenges traditional text-based learning and embraces the multimodal way of teaching that acknowledges the importance of each mode. Aside from motivation and entertainment, this technique would also provide students with an in-depth perspective of the story they are expressing. The book argues that students learning transmedia storytelling would be able to expand their critical thinking skills as it allows them to produce a meaningful connection to each mode. In addition to this, the authors also presented the concept of 'transpositional grammar', necessary for both teachers and students in a language classroom. Commonly, we regard grammar as the form and style of the English language. However, this term refers to a framework in multimodal literacy that extends the traditional meaning of grammar to cover how meaning is expressed across different modes. For example, the concept of 'fear' can be expressed through written words, speech, images, physical gestures, or even the arrangement of objects in a given space. The book also explores the concept of 'design thinking', emphasizing the importance of classrooms that foster imagination, innovation, and social awareness. It highlights the essential role of teachers as designers of learning experiences and underscores the need for professional development to equip them with the skills and knowledge to keep up with the current changes. It is undeniable that classroom learning is now intertwined with digital tools, and teachers need to consider teaching multimodal literacy as the pedagogical context evolves. Critically evaluating multimedia materials can be helpful in real-world English-language learning as students would be able to understand and negotiate communication in social and digital contexts. Furthermore, it gives students an opportunity to explore different ways of language learning as the focus shifts from passive learning to a student-centered orientation in which they create, evaluate, and reflect on their own multimodal compositions. This much-needed shift towards multimodal learning also reflects the concurrent reality of students' digital lives, providing a broader perspective of literacy that goes beyond language alone.

Despite its notable strengths, the book does have some limitations as well. Its sole focus on the Singaporean educational context may restrict its direct applicability to other regions, though its core principles are flexible enough to be adapted in various contexts. While the authors emphasize the significance of digital literacy, the book would greatly benefit from a more in-depth exploration of digital inequalities, particularly with regards to how socioeconomic disparities can impact students' access to technology and educational resources. Furthermore, although the text discusses the balance between explicit instruction and inquiry-based learning, it does not sufficiently address the challenges teachers encounter in achieving this balance, especially within diverse classroom settings where differences between interdisciplinary classrooms and subject-centered or STEM-focused classrooms are abundant. Moreover, it would also be valuable for readers if the potential barriers teachers may face in adopting a design-thinking approach, such as the lack of teacher training in multimodal literacy and promoting digital citizenship, were highlighted and addressed to a certain degree. The reviewers acknowledge these limitations, understanding the difficulty of addressing every educational context; however, the inclusion of more concrete examples of teaching pedagogy could further demonstrate how multimodal literacy can enhance language education. Offering additional samples of practical applications would strengthen the book's relevance and provide educators



with more actionable strategies for integrating multimodal literacy into their language teaching practices.

Overall, the book highlights the transformation of literacy practices brought about by technological advancements, emphasizing the growing importance of multimodal literacy in contemporary education. It serves as a valuable resource for educators and researchers looking to modernize language instruction to meet the demands of the digital age. By blending theoretical insights with practical guidance, the book offers a comprehensive framework for integrating multimodal literacy into language classrooms. This approach also caters to diverse learning styles and encourages students to critically analyze and create content across various platforms, helping them evaluate how different modes convey meaning. It also prepares students for real-world communication, where interactions often occur across multiple channels such as social media, presentations, and videos. Furthermore, the book fosters the idea of creative expression, allowing students to experiment with different formats and, in doing so, seamlessly enhance their reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills. Ultimately, it enriches the language learning experience, making it more dynamic, engaging, and meaningful for the modern learners.

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