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e:update 004

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The purpose of this e:update is to provide practical information about using multimodal texts and digital resources to enhance learning activities in a multiliterate classroom at all levels of schooling. Although the resources used as examples in this e:update are more suited to the middle years of schooling the ideas and information included are helpful to all year levels.

Using Multimodal Texts and Digital Resources in a Multiliterate Classroom

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What is a Multiliterate Classroom?

The term 'multiliteracies' refers to the ways in which literacy practices and literate behaviour have changed in response to global trends and changes in technology, social behaviours and workplaces. For example digital communication technologies have changed the speed and modes of

communication, from the written word alone to the inclusion of images and audio.

A multiliterate classroom aims to empower students to cope with current and future change by developing a *repertoire of resources about literacy* that they can draw upon and use in any situation.

Therefore, students in a multiliterate classroom should:

- learn to read and write texts delivered live (that is face to face), via paper and via digital electronic technology such as mobile phones, computers and television;
- understand that context and audience (that is, how, where and with whom the text is used) influences how texts are constructed, the selection of content and appropriate mode of delivery (digital–electronic, paper or live);
- learn how to construct multimodal texts that include words (language), still and moving images (the visual and gestural) and sound (audio);
- understand that the way space and design is used in text (spatial organisation) influences how meaning is conveyed; and
- be critically literate, that is, realise that all texts are designed for particular purposes and audiences and therefore they are not neutral, but convey particular ideas and values.

Do the pedagogies and resources used in multiliterate classrooms have particular characteristics?

As change is and will be a constant factor in their lives, students need to be flexible and use their repertoire of resources about literacy in strategic ways. They need to be problem solvers who can analyse situations, the tasks required of them, and identify the literacy knowledge and practices required. For example, consider the differences between ordering food at the local coffee shop and a fast food outlet. The menus are presented differently and the oral exchange between customer and waiter or service personnel will be different. A multiliterate person will draw upon their knowledge and experience (repertoire of resources) to work out the most appropriate strategies to use in these different contexts. They will then employ these resources to read the menus and use the appropriate language and behaviour required to order food in each setting.

Teaching students to approach literacy strategically and as a problem-solving activity requires pedagogies that focus on:

- authentic texts and contexts to explore literacy practices
- the explicit teaching of knowledge about literacy
- using substantive conversations to investigate, explore and learn about literacy
- providing opportunities to practise applying knowledge about literate practices
- providing opportunities to transfer and transform knowledge about literate practices
- reflection and discussion about how literacy tasks were engaged with and achieved
- analysing how texts have been constructed and constructing similar texts
- knowing and using the appropriate terminology to describe how the visual, gestural, linguistic, audio, and spatial modes of the text combine to convey meaning
- developing a metalanguage (the appropriate terminology) for teachers and students to use when analysing and discussing texts and literacy.

Teaching resources that provide authentic texts from across the curriculum for analysis are essential to a multiliterate classroom, particularly digital resources that can be shared, explored and manipulated via data projectors, laptops and/or interactive whiteboards. The Learning Federation (TLF), managed by Curriculum Corporation provides digital resources of items from the museums, other collections and archives of Australia and New Zealand available to schools. The items include sections of moving image footage, images of documents, line drawings, paintings and maps, photographs, and audio files of songs or broadcasts. Each digital resource includes a description, authoritative information about its educational value and an acknowledgement of its source.

Go to:

http://www.thelearningfederation.edu.au/for_teachers/access_information/access_information.html
to find out how you can access these resources.

Why are multimodal texts important in a multiliterate classroom?

Multimodal texts combine five modes: language, visuals, gestural signals, audio and spatial organisation, to communicate meaning. They can be delivered live, via paper or digital electronic technologies. We are most familiar with the language mode that has elements such as letters, words, verbs, and nouns. These elements are combined together

▶ according to the conventions (or rules) of punctuation and grammar, into phrases, clauses, paragraphs and text types to make meaning. However, we use every day the four other modes: visuals, gestural signals, audio and spatial organisation. Each of these modes has a set of elements and conventions (or grammars) that we need to know and understand in order to read and compose multimodal texts. Nearly every text we encounter, in all aspects of our lives and regardless of the technology by which it is delivered, employs more than one mode. The classroom activity, **Activity One**, is useful to encourage students to reflect on the role of different modes in multimodal texts.

Digital resources are an excellent vehicle for teaching about the five modes and how they are combined to make meaning in multimodal texts. Digital resources are also excellent resources for teaching and learning in other curriculum areas. However, if students are going to use digital resources to learn in other curriculum areas they also need to know how the modes work and how they contribute to meaning in multimodal texts. Otherwise digital resources become a textbook rather than an authentic, original source of information and a vehicle for effective teaching and learning.

ACTIVITY ONE

1. Choose three activities in which a text was used today. Include texts that were delivered live (e.g. a conversation); digital electronically (e.g. a website) via paper (e.g. reading a magazine).
2. Complete the table identifying how each mode has been used. An example has been completed.
3. Identify the meanings or information conveyed through each mode.
4. Discuss which mode was used most and why this was so.
5. Discuss how effectively each mode was used and if they could have been used differently or more effectively.
6. If you had to remove all but one mode from the text which would you leave and why? Would the text still work effectively (why /why not?) ▶

Mode and how used	Language	Visual	Audio	Gestural	Spatial
Activity/Text	(e.g. words and phrases used)	(e.g. photos, drawings, diagrams)	(e.g. music, sounds, oral commentary)	(e.g. hand movement, facial expression)	(e.g. how were things organised or placed on page, screen or in room)
Live Description of football match to a friend	Descriptive language (adjectives and adverbs) to describe play Technical terms (proper nouns and verbs) used to explain play Emotive language (exclamations) used to indicate excitement)	None	Oral discussion Pitch, volume and expression used to indicate excitement and emphasise points	Gesture used to assist in oral and linguistic description of play, e.g. moving closer to friend when excited)	Interpersonal space was used to emphasise point of view (e.g. moving closer to friend when excited)
Digital Electronic					
Paper					

Reflection

In this activity, was it more difficult for you and your students to analyse, describe and discuss how modes other than the linguistic were used? Did you have an adequate shared vocabulary to talk about them? Did you fully understand how they work to convey meaning?

Exploring the visual mode with digital resources

Some teachers would suggest that students use the visual mode so often that there is no need to teach it. Yet we do not make this assumption about language when students come to school able to speak. We still actively teach the vocabulary, grammar and punctuation of language and the reading and writing of different text types. There is an important difference between simply *using* a mode and *consciously understanding* its elements and how it works to make meaning. It is the difference between *unconscious* competence and conscious

▶ competence. Conscious competence is far more useful as it can be applied, transferred, transformed, modified and added to; it is flexible and strategic. Conscious competence is the goal of the multiliterate classroom.

Activity Two is useful for commencing the study of still images by focussing on their role in different text types and contexts. It uses three digital resources that you can examine on the TLF website. They are:

1. *Solahart Water Heater - asset 2*. With permission of Solahart Industries Pty Ltd, The Le@rning Federation digital resource R5594;
2. *Cocoa Tin, c1909*. Reproduced courtesy of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, The Le@rning Federation digital resource R6477; and
3. *Gold-washing Cradle, c1850*. Reproduced courtesy of National Museum of Australia, photograph by George Serras. The Le@rning Federation digital resource R4176.

We selected these digital resources because they are examples of still images being used for different purposes and in different contexts (including place and time). They include a diagram about producing hot water using solar power, a New Zealand tin from 1909 used for Cocoa Drinking Chocolate that has an image and words on it; and a contemporary photograph of a historical piece of gold-mining equipment used in Australia around 1850. These resources might be used variously in an environmental education, technology or science lesson, a critical

ACTIVITY TWO

Discuss each of the questions related to the digital resources. Questions 1–5 should be explored for all three digital resources; the remaining questions are resource specific.

1. What is the purpose of this text?
2. What is the context in which it might be used?
3. What is the role of the still image in the text?
4. What other modes are used in the text?
5. How does each mode aid meaning in the text?
6. Solahart Water Heater and Cocoa Tin, c1909 only: Is the still image essential to the text? How/Why?
7. Cocoa Tin, c1909 only: How would our knowledge of the history of New Zealand as part of the British Commonwealth of Nations influence or aid our interpretation of the still image?
8. Gold-washing Cradle, c1850 only: If you were writing a text about gold mining in early Australia would you include this image rather than describe the cradle in words? (Why, Why not?)
9. Gold-washing Cradle, c1850 only: This image is a photograph. If you were writing a text about gold mining in early Australia would you include this photograph rather than a drawing of the cradle? (Why, Why not?) What other images might you use and why?

Reflection

This activity is designed to focus on how consideration of the purpose and context of the text influences the role of the still image and other modes in a text. These understandings about the role of purpose and context will assist students when they are using digital resources to learn as well as improve their literacy knowledge and practices.

► literacy lesson about marketing, packaging and advertising; or a lesson on the gold rush period in Australia.

Once students understand a little about the role of still images in texts they need explicit knowledge about the elements of a still image (e.g. line and colour) and how they are combined to make meaning (e.g. how the eye is led through an image). This will also provide technical terms (or metalanguage) for analysing still images, therefore it is important to spend time introducing and developing this knowledge. This is best done by examining images in context, for example in picture books or advertisements and talking about how the elements have been combined to contribute to the meaning of the image. It is important to discuss how the images work together with the other modes for example the written language. The spatial organisation and design, for example where the images are placed on page or screen, their size and whether they are produced in colour or black and white is particularly important. Tables 1 and 2 provide an overview of this knowledge, your Art Curriculum and our website <http://www.ansteybull.com.au/> provide further detail and examples.

Once students have been introduced to these concepts ask them to find still images that they feel exemplify the clever (or poor) use of an element or convention. It is a great way of building up a pictorial resource about still images on the wall of the classroom that includes students' explanations of why the images were selected. It is important to look at how the development of technology has influenced the construction of images and our interpretation of them. Therefore it is useful to examine a wide range of still images from different contexts, periods of history and disciplines.

There are many excellent digital resources on the TLF website that can be used including current and historic photographs, scientific drawings and flowcharts, works of art, posters and cartoons. They are accompanied by information about the original purpose and context of the resource and the media used (in the case of art and photography).

Exploring the audio system with digital resources

Audio resources are very useful for investigating original sources of information about current and historical events. They are also useful to study as a way of learning more about how to prepare effective multimodal texts that will incorporate some spoken elements and music. The upper primary level of Studies of Society and the Environment curriculum in most states explore the use of, and attitudes toward natural resources. *Bob Brown recalls the Franklin River campaign 2007*, Curriculum Corporation, 2008, The Learning Federation Audio Resource 8971 is a useful resource for such studies. However it is important when using such a resource to teach students how to listen for information and how the elements and conventions of the audio mode work to aid or impede listening comprehension. If students have this knowledge and have practised applying it they will be much better listeners and learners and it will also aid them in using the audio mode when constructing multimodal texts. Tables 3 and 4 provide an introduction to the audio mode.

Students proficient with the audio mode would use the Bob Brown digital resource more effectively. They would understand

Table 1: Elements of Still Images

Element	Concepts to be developed
Colour	The colour wheel* showing complementary and opposing colours, emotion and colour, culture and colour, colour placement, opacity and transparency, tone
Texture	How texture creates an affinity between tactile memory and the image
Line	Function of line in an image, e.g. leading the eye; actual or implied lines; quality of line, e.g. thick, thin, heavy, light, and type of line and emotional interpretation, e.g. vertical, horizontal, doorway, right angle, diagonal, jagged, curved
Shape	Denotes the object, activates visual memory and recognition of outline
Body position and juxtaposition	Body position can invoke emotional response Juxtaposition or how things and people are placed in relation to one another can provide information about relationships and importance

* Use a search engine to find examples of colour wheels on the Internet. Often they are part of websites on marketing or design and are accompanied by useful explanations on the use of colour.

Table 2: Conventions of Still Images

Convention	Concepts to be developed
Dominance	Dominance or balance among the elements (colour, texture, line, shape and body position and juxtaposition) and how that influences interpretation of meaning
Vectors	How the eye is led through the image (e.g. through line, colour, placement of objects) and how that influences interpretation of meaning
Layout	Dominance or balance among the objects in the image signified through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • value – where they are placed (e.g. foreground could indicate importance). • how attention is attracted (e.g. through vectors, line, light or colour), and • framing—using an actual or implied frame to focus attention on something

▶ how pauses draw attention to particular information, and how the speed of delivery aids or impedes listening. They would know that because many of Brown's sentences are quite long and contain ellipses (parenthetical information) the use of pause and phrasing is critical to the delivery. Without effective use of pause and phrasing it would be difficult to make sense of the information in these long sentences. However, they may also notice that there is little expression or intonation. Therefore they would need to adjust their listening

Table 3: Elements of Audio Mode

Element	Concepts to be developed
Audibility	Volume, modulation, projection, articulation
Pace	Phrasing, pause, speed of delivery
Voice	Quality or timbre, pitch, intonation and expression
Language	Vocabulary, sequence, structure

Table 4: Conventions of Audio Mode

Convention	Concepts to be developed
Consideration of audience	Creating appropriate distance, for example, affinity, inclusion, exclusion or empathy
Combining oral language with other auditory codes and modes	1. Other auditory codes, for example, silence, sound effects or music 2. Other modes for example gestural, facial expression, body position or posture

and use other audio elements and conventions to aid comprehension.

Audio is not always delivered alone; it may be augmented with sound effects and music to create a particular mood or message. The upper primary level of Studies of Society and the Environment curriculum in most states explores the influence of British colonialisation on Australia and our role in various World Wars. Therefore, the TLF Resource *The Announcement of Victory in 1945* (Curriculum Corporation and National Film and Sound Archive, 2008, The Learning Federation Audio Resource R963) is a very useful resource. It is a broadcast made by the Australian Prime Minister, Ben Chifley, on 15 August 1945 to announce the surrender of Japan and the end of the Second World War. It is preceded by music, Edward Elgar's 'Pomp and Circumstance March No. 4', and an announcer who introduces the Prime Minister. This resource is excellent as an example of creating mood and social distance using music, contrasting voices and styles.

What needs to be considered when using multimodal texts for learning?

As illustrated in the examples discussed we increasingly use digital resources for learning in other disciplines. We encourage students to source information on the Internet, using multimodal texts. Consider the pedagogies you use to facilitate learning with

▶ multimodal texts and digital resources with these questions:

1. Do you scaffold students' use of digital resources and multimodal texts as explicitly as you do a traditional paper text that is mainly linguistic?
2. Do you actively discuss how students might extract information from all the modes of the text (for example, the camera angles, lighting, pacing, and audio of a film clip)?
3. Do you discuss how students might use each of the modes in the multimodal text and where they might direct their attention while viewing?
4. Do you view the multimodal text several times, pausing and discussing and/or viewing it without one of the modes (e.g. sound) in order to focus on particular aspects of the information provided?
5. Do you ask students to reflect upon how the resource was used to learn and use the correct terminology to do this? For example, students might reflect on how they obtained information from a film clip and comment in the following way 'I found the explanation of the water cycle particularly helpful because there was an auditory explanation of the diagram and lighting was used to highlight the section being discussed in the audio.'

Planning the effective use of multimodal texts and digital resources

Analysing the resource prior to use ensures its suitability and identifies whether students have the appropriate knowledge to use it effectively. It

also assists in planning appropriate pedagogy and scaffolding. For example, some of the film archives in the TLF collection were produced on early black and white film cameras. Students might dismiss such important primary sources of information as boring and amusing. Therefore it is important that they know how these films were made and when, so they are prepared for the unique characteristics of the film and can plan to use it effectively.

Many of the digital resources used in the classroom were not originally intended as educational tools, but were developed for very different purposes and audiences. Therefore we need to consider how to use them as effective educational resources. The Analytic Tool demonstrated in Table 5 was designed to assist teachers with planning appropriate ways of engaging with resources and matching pedagogy and learning outcomes. It facilitates consideration of the contexts in which the digital resources were originally developed and used, analysis of the resource as a text and the modes present.

Table 5: An Analytical Tool for Digital Resources

Identify/Describe Resource (e.g. Broadcast of Chifley announcing end of WW2)

Focus and Questions	Notes on Analyses
<p>PART A: Analysing origin and context of text</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Who produced this and when? 2. What were the characteristics of the times in which it was produced? 3. What was the original purpose of this resource? 4. Who was the original audience of this resource? 	
<p>PART B: Analysing the text</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What technology was used to produce this resource and how was it originally delivered? (e.g. canvas, paper, wireless) 2. What modes are used? (Language, Visual, Spatial organisation, Gestural, Audio) 3. What experience and knowledge will students need with these modes to use the resource effectively? 	
<p>PART C: Planning and pedagogy</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are your desired learning outcomes from using this resource? 2. How do these learning outcomes influence the ways in which you and the students will engage with and use this resource? 3. What will the students' learning objectives be? 4. Given your analyses in PARTS A and B how will you scaffold the use of this resource? 5. What will the students need to know and understand about the context in which the resource was produced in order to engage with it? 6. What will the students need to know and be able to do with multimodal texts to engage with this resource? 	

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