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## Multimodal Literature in ELT: Theory and Practice

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### Abstract

Multimodal literature can be a motivating educational resource for learners due to the integration of different modes, their visual appeal, and learner-centred themes. Researchers today agree that reading authentic texts and helping learners develop an interest in free voluntary reading (FVR) can have great benefits for the development of foreign language proficiency. The provision of rich and meaningful input through texts that engage the learner affectively and cognitively can thus facilitate language acquisition. What English language teachers require is a hands-on approach for integrating multimodal texts such as picturebooks and graphic novels in order to support their pupils in understanding the interplay of different modes within the text. This is vital so that students and teachers alike perceive the reading of multimodal books as both enjoyable and valuable. On the basis of five pedagogical principles, this paper makes the case for integrating multimodal texts with a focus on the practical implementation in the classroom so that learners gain an insight into how to read a multimodal text and are potentially motivated to choose this text format during out-of-school FVR.

**Keywords:** multimodal literature, multimodality, graphic novels, picturebooks, comics, illustrated texts, reading, reception, pre-reading, while-reading, post-reading, tasks

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## Introduction

With the rapid spread and development of digital information and communication technology as well as the advent of digital media in English language teaching (ELT), a broader definition of what constitutes literature has become important. Whereas reading a book and watching a film were both associated with rather different learning objectives just some decades ago, this perception has changed in recent years. When we read a book, we may now also be presented with images, symbols or other semiotic language, in other words, we have to decode semiotic signs for meaning-making while reading. In 2018, a graphic novel (*Sabrina* by Nick Drnaso), for instance, made the longlist of the Man Booker Prize, marking a breakthrough for this format. Equally, we may read a story app, a narrative in digital format, and while getting engaged in the digital reading process be creating our own stories as we select our preferred characters and ending. The most prominent example for creating digital reading is the app Storybird (<https://storybird.com/>), which is used by millions of writers to create multimodal stories. A large range of artworks from illustrators and animators around the world inspire writers of all age groups to tell their stories.

In ELT, reading traditionally comprises one of the five language skills, in addition to listening/viewing, speaking, writing, and mediation. In the recently published *CEFR Companion Volume with New Descriptors*, an attempt is made to provide new descriptors and replace the skills with ‘modes of communication’ (Council of Europe 2018, p. 28). These comprise reception, production, interaction, and mediation. In the category ‘creative, interpersonal language use’, reading is listed in the category of reception as, to give an example, ‘a leisure activity’. Reading different types of texts and being exposed to rich input is thus considered crucial for foreign language development.

According to Krashen, ‘free voluntary reading’ (FVR), or recreational reading, is the most powerful tool we have in language education to improve learners’ attitudes towards reading (Krashen, 2011, p. vii). FVR (also known as extensive reading, and as sustained silent reading when reading in school) means students are free to choose what, where, and when they want to read. In his book *Free Voluntary Reading*, Krashen emphasizes that students need

more access to books in the classroom as well as at home. There is no rule as to what to read. Actually, anything can be read – comics, magazines, texts on the Internet, etc. In considering the question of how to make FVR successful, Krashen developed four hypotheses (Krashen, 2011, pp. 82-84): (1) ‘The Forgetting Hypothesis’, which means that the reading is so compelling it results in a flow experience, and students actually forget that the text is in a foreign language. (2) ‘The Effortless Reading Hypothesis’, which claims that the reading must be pleasurable and completely comprehensible without any struggle, in order to lead students to read more. (3) ‘The Unawareness of Acquisition Hypothesis’ means acquiring the language subconsciously and not being aware of improving in the foreign language because students concentrate on the content of the text. (4) ‘The Comprehension Checking Hypothesis’ emphasizes the idea that the more students are checked for comprehension, the less they acquire the language because it interrupts the flow.

In a nutshell, Krashen emphasizes the importance of reading texts in language acquisition. Reading offers students a wide range of vocabulary and grammar, it essentially supports and feeds the brain with the correct foreign language structures. Therefore, students who read foreign texts can speak more fluently than students who do not read.

### **Promoting the Reading of Multimodal Literature in ELT and Beyond**

Empirical research findings have focused on the benefits of why books are an essential part of a language curriculum, especially for young learners. This is not a recent insight. Going back as far as 1995, researchers Moeller and Meyer found the advantages of using books for second language acquisition. They found that since children’s and young adult literature makes use of natural language patterns in familiar contexts the students can relate to, it helps students to make connections and recollect those language structures much faster (Moeller & Meyer, 1995).

In his research on in-school free reading, Krashen also concludes that with very few exceptions, students in sustained silent reading programmes progress in reading considerably better than those in comparison groups (Krashen, 2011). The most successful studies are those

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that last for longer than one academic year. Short-term studies produce less reliable results, most likely because it usually takes readers some time to settle in and find suitable reading material. Hence, in the last few decades, evidence from several areas continues to show that those who do more recreational reading show better development in reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary.

What is more, children's and young adult literature contains more than just vocabulary, because the images often provided also help the reader comprehend the meaning despite a lack of language skills. Images support the text in a mutual relationship and as learning is facilitated by visual cues, reading helps the brain to remember these language structures, as the learner will connect an image to the word it represents.

From the practical perspective of ELT, there may seem to be a contradiction between supporting FVR so that learners engage with the target language outside the classroom and scaffolding the reading process with language-focused activities in the classroom. Given the importance of FVR for language acquisition, however, it is important to provide learners with opportunities to learn how to read a multimodal narrative in ELT first so that they are prepared for FVR outside the classroom.

Regarding the use of image-based texts in particular, these text types have recently received greater attention in theoretical as well as practical discussions. Thompson and McIlnay, for instance, recently proposed a multimodal reading approach as follows:

By taking a multimodal reading approach, students can examine plot, perspective, voice through visual imagery by comparing the same story across different formats and media. In addition, this multimodal approach allows teachers to effectively attend to a variety of learning styles simultaneously. (Thompson & McIlnay, 2019, p. 71)

While hoping to instil 'a lifelong love of reading', the authors' interest was to motivate learners to read, to promote FVR.

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However, integrating a picturebook, graphic novel, or illustrated chapter book in the classroom is likely to raise numerous questions from the teacher's perspective. These can be summed up as follows:

1. Why should I read or deal with a multimodal text in class?
2. Which specific text is suitable for my grade and learner group?
3. How can I integrate the text effectively?

Identifying learning goals and the development of specific competences through a text in accordance with the curriculum can provide an answer to question one. If teachers can identify the learning potential of dealing with a specific text in class and integrate it in their everyday teaching, it is more likely to become accepted than if it is perceived to be an extra task for which time is scarce. Dealing with multimodal texts in class does not imply an exclusive use of multimodal texts or neglecting the value and importance of reading extended written texts. Rather, it is suggested here to include a variety of text types including multimodal texts, because these can potentially motivate learners to engage in FVR.

Question two relates to ELT in practice. It is essential for teachers to be able to select a text that is suitable for the particular level of their learners and of interest to them regarding the content and thematic focus. Finding an authentic text that is not too challenging to read can thereby be especially difficult for less advanced learner groups.

Question three is related to the methodological approach. Although method books that address the integration of literary texts are available (e.g. Thaler 2009) as well as journal issues that present practical lesson outlines (e.g. Hallet, 2014 on multimodal novels; Alter, 2019, on picturebooks), an all-encompassing methodological guideline that provides a starting point for working with multimodal texts is missing. This paper attempts to start filling this gap by providing a theoretical framework aimed at practical use.

Some current text examples for primary and secondary school teaching are presented in addition to specific activity examples involving pre-, while-, and post-reading tasks. The goal is to make multimodal texts accessible to teachers by closely relating theory to practice.

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### Defining and Describing Multimodal Literature

Due to the swift development of technology and globalization since the late twentieth century, a growing multimodality of communication is evident in education. Multimodal literature incorporates a large variety of audio, visual, and other symbolic representations. A multimodal text is often a digital text but can be a book, such as picturebook, information text or graphic novel. Different from the linear reading of monomodal texts, multimodal materials require the processing of more than one mode and the recognition of the interconnections between these modes.

While keeping in mind that reading comprises an essential skill in ELT, we need to consider what can be read, i.e. a text, and how it can be defined from a pedagogical perspective. In the field of ELT in Germany, the term *der erweiterte/offene Textbegriff* is often used to describe a very broad concept of texts. In the description of text and media competences, for instance, the new curriculum in Bavaria for middle schools (LehrplanPlus Realschule, 2016, p. 172) refers to a great variety of auditory/oral, audio-visual and visual texts – thus including texts such as podcasts, films, and cartoons – to name but a few examples.

In order to illustrate the differences between texts such as picturebooks, graphic novels, multimodal novels, and traditional novels, Hallet puts them on an ‘image-word continuum of long-format fictional storytelling’ (Hallet, 2014, p. 2). In addition, we concur with Oziewicz’s view that the whole spectrum of multimodal texts – whether as graphic novels, comic strips, comics or picturebooks – should not be seen as a genre but as a range of formats in their own right (Oziewicz, 2018, pp. 25-30).

When integrating texts in ELT, numerous aspects of texts need to be considered. The following threefold categorization of text features can be used as a starting point for describing and analyzing texts in an educational context:

- 1) authentic features (content, language, presentation and multimodality),
- 2) descriptive features (the reading context, length, and format),
- 3) pedagogical features (activities and tasks) (based on Summer, 2019, p. 151).

A consideration of these features facilitates numerous issues. First of all, it allows teachers to consider the text quality. By inspecting authentic features of texts and the extent to which these meet the demands of a learner group, a suitable text can be found more easily. The quality of texts is what makes multimodal texts so valuable for educational purposes. Authentic literary texts written for children, for instance, are commonly classed as well-crafted texts because they are lexically dense and stylistically cohesive (for example, they contain lexical repetitions, rhymes etc.) and widen the reader's horizon in terms of content (Bland, 2013, p. 8).

A consideration of the descriptive features refers to how long the text is and how it is presented and also illustrates different options for engaging with a text. The reading context (where the text is read) can be different, for learners may engage in FVR at home, on the bus or in the school library; or they may listen to a text being read aloud by the teacher in class and thereby receive input. Whereas reading aloud or storytelling in the classroom is more likely to focus on developing listening skills combined with a focus on language (grammatical structures, chunks, vocabulary), FVR may rather focus on reading strategy development or reading for fun and thereby promote implicit foreign language learning.

Finally, the pedagogical feature refers to the practical implementation of texts. In order to illustrate how texts can be implemented in practice, a methodological framework is presented in a later section of this paper.

Depending on the school type, different kinds of reading can take place. Reading at primary schools in Germany is mostly associated with reading short, simplified texts or picturebooks used in combination with storytelling. Crucially, regarding picturebooks, the illustrations play a vital role, just like the words, in telling the story. Since the interplay of narrative and illustration is integral to the book as a whole, picturebooks have 'a high potential for developing literary and visual literacy' (Eisenmann & Meyer, 2018, p. 13).

In early secondary school teaching (in Germany, for example, grades 5 and 6), in which the textbook often plays a key role in the learning and teaching process, textbook dialogues or simplified stories are frequently used for reading. Today's textbooks also show a great

interplay of different texts such as photographs, paintings and visual artefacts as well as defined icons, pictograms and symbols which guide students through tasks. Also, literary texts such as short stories or novels are mostly listed in the curricula of more advanced grades. Thus, in higher secondary school ELT, authentic texts play a no less important role than in primary school teaching. It is therefore indeed possible to include authentic multimodal texts from primary school education onwards. When language teachers want to read a text in the classroom or encourage FVR, an important question is which text to choose. Multimodality has made its entry into ELT in the last few years.

The monomodality of traditional genres as literary novels, academic papers, official documents and reports has given way to texts which present diagrams, color illustrations and different typographies that may link to voice and video files. Thus, language teachers need to move from a purely linguistic explanatory frame of the reading process to a semiotic perspective in which the combination of visual material [...] and verbal text calls for a multimodal interaction with the artifact. (Eisenmann & Meyer, 2018, p. 13)

In the course of opening up the contemporary literary canon, in particular comics and graphic novels are increasingly acknowledged as artistic products worthy of scholarly attention. They are nowadays an integral part of ELT, in Germany most commonly in the form of literary adaptations such as teaching Shakespeare or other classics (Eisenmann & Meyer 2018, p. 14). In addition to rich cultural knowledge and multiple literacy promoted through these highly diversified formats, they support the acquisition of all four skills – that is, speaking, listening, writing and reading, and thus achieve a general improvement in communicative competence (Burwitz-Melzer, 2013, p. 63).

### **Pedagogical Principles**

Reading multimodal literature in ELT changes the act of reading substantially, because the reading process is focused on the combination of verbal text, audio, and image and how these can be creatively combined to produce meaning. Compared to dealing with a traditional word-



based text, where only letters and sentences have to be decoded, deciphering multimodal literature becomes ‘a multiliterate act in which all sorts of codes, “languages” and their respective literacies are involved’ (Hallet, 2015, p. 292). In order to integrate multimodal texts in ELT most effectively and to provide a theoretical grounding for integrating these texts, pedagogical principles are presented in Figure 1 that can set the basis for the planning of a lesson sequence focusing on multimodal literature. Equally, this model can serve as the theoretical grounding for integrating other text formats.

	<b>Principles</b>	<b>Features</b>
<b>Multimodal texts in practice</b>	1. Integrating a variety of text formats	→ learner-centeredness → relevant topics → relevant modes
	2. Authenticity & authentication	→ textual authenticity / genuine texts → learner authentication / engaging authentically with texts
	3. Competence-based teaching	→ integrating communicative skills → outcome-oriented
	4. Integrating multiple literacies	→ analyzing verbal narration → analyzing other modes
	5. Task focus	→ integrating tasks → scaffolding → variety of outcomes

**Figure 1: Pedagogical principles for integrating multimodal texts in ELT**

### **Principle 1: Integrating a Variety of Text Formats**

The principle ‘integrating a variety of text formats’ considers the importance of including a great variety of different texts that are of potential interest to learners. Multimodal literature including, for instance, picturebooks and graphic novels, play an important role in that respect because their ‘appealing content and format’ can help engage learners while discussing specific social and cultural issues (Duff & Zappa-Hollman, 2013, p. 2). What is more, multimodal literature is commonly written and designed for a specific group of potential readers – thus the topics they address are reader-oriented and relevant to learners’ daily lives.

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Consequently, by including authentic multimodal texts in ELT, it can be assumed that the artefact (e.g. a graphic novel) is a potentially motivating textual resource and the topics addressed are of interest to the learner.

### **Principle 2: Authenticity and Authentication**

An *authentic or genuine text* refers to a text that was created for a real purpose, not primarily with a pedagogical intention in mind; consequently, it typically bears features of authenticity – both visually as well as textually. Authentic materials are therefore equated with real-world materials that are likely to, due to their very nature, generate the reader's interest. Compared to pedagogical dialogues often found in ELT textbooks (Widdowson 1978), literary texts are thus potentially rich sources of authentic language use (e.g. from patterned and artificial diction in poetry, to colloquial and non-standard utterances in contemporary drama or fiction). In the process of FVR, they can be open invitations for learners to acquire new vocabulary and idiomatic language in context. In the classroom, activities can be developed around genuine texts that encourage learners to authenticate a text by responding to texts through discussions or creative verbal or non-verbal responses. Initiated by Widdowson (1978), this process describes the way in which a genuine (original) text is used in a learner-centred approach that encourages learners to authenticate the text through the reception process. As a result, by choosing a genuine or authentic text that is relevant to the learners' world and developing suitable tasks, learners can better understand a story and simulate meaningful communication. Text authenticity in terms of well-crafted texts (Bland 2013, p. 8) is thus important as well as the actual process of authentication that considers the process of engagement and interaction on the learners' part while dealing with a text (Newby, 2000, p. 19).

### **Principle 3: Competence-based Teaching**

Since the turn of the millennium, the idea of competence orientation has become the focal point, not only of educational policy in Germany, but also of language learning and teaching and pedagogical and methodological TEFL research. Based on knowledge, skills, and attitudes, the focus is on the ability to successfully communicate in English and to actually use

the foreign language in authentic settings (Hallet, 2011). According to German curricula, this takes place in the areas of communicative, text and media, intercultural, and methodological competences, i.e. language learning strategies. All four areas of competences are interrelated and weighted differently depending on the emphasis in the learning process (Eisenmann, 2019, pp. 8-9).

The focus has changed from teacher input to learner output, with a clear focus on students gaining skills and proving their knowledge. However, a critical approach would demonstrate that it is hardly empirically verifiable to test the achievement of a competence. Hence, a sensible approach should be adopted with regard to teaching literature beyond the pragmatic-utilitarian scope of concepts like standardization and testability. This not only raises the question of how to redefine and retain the role of literature in ELT, but also what dealing with multimodal texts entails and how working with them can be fostered. One way to accomplish this goal could be a readiness to integrate aspects of output orientation into approaches of teaching literature. Since visual (most commonly digital) communication determines the everyday life of our students, design- and image-related skills have to be fostered that go beyond a linguistically determined textual competence. In other words, the promotion of visual literacy must increasingly be subject in ELT. The term literacy thus raises the educational demand that the established concept of reading is extended to include pictures, i.e. that picture-reading is positioned as a cultural technique equivalent to the reading of verbal texts and thus be included in ELT mandate. Moreover, in order to meet the growing social and global demands of today's students, through their very complexity multimodal texts can help in acquiring manifold skills and competences.

#### **Principle 4: Integrating Multiple Literacies**

The multiple literacy concept sees itself as a pedagogical answer to the manifold changes resulting from the consequences of globalization, and those brought by digital technology, which since the turn of the 20th century is causing an enormous change in almost all areas of life. The common denominator of 'multiple literacies' as developed by the New London Group (2000) and elaborated on by other scholars, especially more recently by Kalantzis and

Cope (2012), is plurality and diversity. As a result of worldwide migration, societies can be characterized by increasing ethnic, linguistic and cultural heterogeneity. At the same time, the technical possibilities of computer-based communication have grown tremendously. Moreover, many different (e.g. hybrid) textual formats have emerged, which makes a traditional literacy and a teaching-learning understanding emanating from a monolingual, monocultural discipline out of date. The growing importance of a combination of semiotic systems, such as linguistic, visual and audio, create new forms of communication and place new demands on ELT. These include an extended definition of text, flexible and interlinking use of the foreign language, integration of various media and modal forms of presentation as well as the development of further competences.

A multiple literacy concept comprises the skills of dealing with nonlinear texts, with visual or hybrid encodings in more than one semiotic system. And because language use today arises in part from the characteristics of the new information and communications media, meaning is made in ways that are increasingly multimodal, i.e. written-linguistic modes of meaning interface with oral, visual, audio, gestural, tactile and spatial semiotic modes. Learners do not only have to be able to read and write in the classical sense, they also need be able to decode and produce all kinds of combinations of different semiotic systems, for instance in the context of digital storytelling. This means that the range of multiple literacy pedagogy must be extended so that alphabetical representations are not unduly privileged over multimodal representations, particularly those typical of the new, digital media. This makes multiple literacy pedagogy all the more engaging for its manifest connections with today's communications contexts. It also provides a powerful foundation for a pedagogy of synaesthesia, or switching from one mode into another (Eisenmann, in press).

### **Principle 5: Task Focus**

Getting engaged with a multimodal text in the classroom can take place in various forms. A popular approach in primary school education is to create reading circles and present a picturebook through reading aloud and encouraging learners to participate by listening actively and reproducing words, completing repetitive rhythms or rhymes, or responding to the

story. The principle of a task focus promotes the inclusion of tasks while dealing with multimodal texts. This complies with the approach of task-supported language teaching (Müller-Hartmann & Schocker-von Dithfurth, 2014). In contrast to a grammar-focused approach to ELT that includes focus on forms exercises aimed at correct language production, tasks focus on a meaningful engagement with the target language, real-life communication, and they include an outcome. For task development in practice, this means that multimodal texts can set the basis for a task sequence or be integrated as additional textual material. Most importantly, and in line with the principle of differentiation, support in the form of scaffolding should be provided and learners should be able to choose from a variety of outcomes, the topic and competence focus permitting.

### **Multimodal Literary Texts in the ELT Classroom**

#### **Selecting Texts**

For educational practice, it is important to make a good choice when selecting a multimodal text. Choosing an appropriate text, however, is a very delicate issue. Whereas some researchers argue that texts should be chosen according to the instructional materials available (including lesson plans, worksheets, and analyses) or according to teachers' 'personal favorites' (Thaler, 2016, p. 20), this paper proposes a different approach to text selection. Crucially, most of the interesting and recent releases have not been methodologically incorporated into teaching materials, partly also due to copyright and/or financial constraints. That is why this criterion for selection should not be given too much weight. In addition, class readers should not primarily be chosen according to the teachers' favourites because this runs the risk of ignoring the students' interests. A further aspect that can be disputed is selecting a text according to its 'popularity' (Thaler, 2016, p. 20). This criterion cannot be equated with quality, which is of central importance in an educational context. What is more, students frequently enjoy encountering new texts.

So, what are suitable criteria for text selection? Evidently, it is important to consider the curricular demands in terms of content when selecting a text. In addition, it is vital to focus on the learner group and their readiness, interests, and learning profiles. Factors such as the

learners’ age, their level of proficiency, abilities, and background knowledge should also be considered. Importantly, texts should ideally be meaningful to learners in that they can relate the plot to their life experiences, emotions, and expectations. Ideally, reading should have a beneficial and lasting effect upon the learners’ development of communicative and intercultural competences. And this can best be achieved if a text is chosen that is enjoyable and thematically motivating to learners. Selecting a suitable text for a class is a very individual undertaking and in practice often subject to the teacher’s interests, materials he or she encountered in journals, workshops, or through colleagues. Extending one’s own repertoire of literary texts is essential in order to stay up-to-date and fully exploit the potential of multimodal texts in developing various competences.

### Examples of Multimodal Literary Texts

Table 1 presents a collection of some recent multimodal texts that are considered pedagogically suitable for ELT. In addition to the criteria described above, this selection of multimodal texts prioritizes more recent publications of the last ten years. Multimodal texts were chosen for both primary and secondary schools ranging from grades 3-4 (learners aged eight to ten) to 11-12 (learners aged 16 to 18). In order to illustrate the variety of themes that can be addressed through multimodal literature, texts were selected that represent this variety. As such, numerous different themes are discussed, ranging from more basic topics such as friendship and animals to more complex themes such as the Civil Rights Movement and fake news.

Year	Book	Format	Summary
3-4	Rachel Bright & Jim Field, 2016, <i>The Koala Who Could</i>	Picturebook	The book introduces Kevin the koala who clings to his tree day in and day out enjoying his daily routine up in the tree. Repetitions, rhymes, and engaging illustrations tell the story of how one day Kevin is forced to uncling and descend from his tree, happy at last to meet new friends on the ground. The book teaches the reader a lesson on the final page: ‘Because life can be great when you try something new.’ <b>Themes:</b> friendship, being scared, trying new things

3-4	Charlotte Milner, 2019, <i>The Sea Book</i>	Picturebook	<p>The book takes its readers on a journey through the sea and all its zones, where the wealth of marine animals and their habitats are explored. Bright illustrations show sea life in the ice, in colourful coral reefs, underwater forests as well as the deepest darkest depths of the ocean.</p> <p><b>Themes:</b> ecological issues, marine life, damaging effects on nature by human beings</p>
3-4	Julia Donaldson & Axel Scheffler, 2018, <i>The Ugly Five</i>	Picturebook	<p>This book is about the top five animals in Africa who are often seen as being ugly – the wildebeest, warthog, vulture, hyena, and marabou stork in the savannah. It is a repetitive and rhyming book which teaches the readers about the importance of being kind to each other and working well together as a team, and not to be worried about what others may think about you.</p> <p><b>Themes:</b> Africa, animals, social cohesion</p>
5-6	Raina Telgemeier, 2019, <i>Guts</i>	Graphic novel	<p>This book tells a true story of the author who has had to deal with stomach problems most of her life. By telling real memories from her fourth- and fifth-grade years, Raina wakes up one morning with an upset stomach thinking it is just a bug. Eventually, and back at school, she discovers that her tummy trouble is not going to stop. While growing up, Raina learns how to live and cope with her fears and problems.</p> <p><b>Themes:</b> illness, life at school, growing-up</p>
5-6+	Dave Eggers, illustrations by Aaron Renier, 2018, <i>The Lifters</i>	Illustrated chapter book	<p>It is a story about Gran's family and their problems. They move to the town of Carousel, where things start to go wrong as soon as they arrive. The small town has been slowly (and literally) collapsing ever since a local, once legendary company shut down. Gran finds a friend (Catalina) and together they explore the underground world of the town.</p> <p><b>Themes:</b> family, friendship, disability, adventure, mystery</p>
7-8	Laurie Calkhoven & Charlotte Ager, 2019, <i>DK Life Stories: Martin Luther King Jr.</i>	Multimodal biography	<p>This biography of Martin Luther King Jr. covers his early family life and experiences in education, his enormous contributions to the Civil Rights Movement in the US, and his untimely death as well as the worldwide mourning and riots that followed. Full-colour photographs, hand-drawn illustrations, definition boxes, information sidebars, fun facts, maps, quotes, and other non-fiction text complement the text.</p> <p><b>Themes:</b> Martin Luther King, biography, US history, Civil Rights Movement</p>

7-8	Frank Cottrell Boyce, 2011, <i>The Unforgotten Coat</i>	Multimodal chapter book	It is the story of two brothers who have fled with their parents from Mongolia and landed in Bootle, a small town near Liverpool. One morning they appear in Julie's sixth-grade class and she tries to navigate them through soccer, school uniforms, and British slang. <b>Themes:</b> friendship, cultural differences, refugees
9-10	Nick Drnaso, 2018, <i>Sabrina</i>	Graphic novel	A woman called Sabrina goes missing, leaving behind her sister and boyfriend. A video of her death is then sent to news agencies and quickly spreads across the internet. <b>Themes:</b> missing person, conspiracy theories, fake news
9-10	Brian Selznick, 2007, <i>The Invention of Hugo Cabret</i>	Graphic novel	This novel deals with a 12-year-old orphan Hugo who lives and works in a busy Paris train station in 1931. Hugo's father was killed and he goes to live with his uncle, who takes care of the clocks in the train station. One day, Hugo's uncle disappears, and he is left to take care of the clocks himself. The only connection to his past is a broken machine, which he is sure holds a secret message from his father. <b>Themes:</b> hardships, bravery, tenacity, perseverance, imagination, adventure, mystery
10-12	Joe Sacco, 2013, <i>Journalism</i>	Comic journalism	Short-form comics journalism collection; it contains reports on conflict zones around the world, among other places, Bosnia during the war, the volatile zones of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Untouchables of India and the brutal effects of the ancient Hindu caste system, the tyranny of corrupt officials in US prisons, a study of refugees on Malta, the path of Africans fleeing conflict and poverty. <b>Themes:</b> globalization, crime trials, war, refugees, US prison detainees
10-12	Neil Gaiman, 2018, <i>The Graveyard Book</i>	Graphic novel adaptation	It is a coming-of-age story with the central theme of family relationships. After the murder of his human family, the protagonist Nobody Owens, called Bod, lives in a graveyard and is raised by ghosts. He is adopted by the Victorian ghosts of Mr and Mrs Owens, and Silas appoints himself the boy's guardian. For his own safety, he is not allowed to leave the graveyard, but there are plenty of adventures for him. <b>Themes:</b> family relations, fantasy



12+	J. J. Abrams & Doug Dorst, 2013, <i>S. Ship of Theseus</i> . By V.M. Straka	Experi-mental novel	<p>It seems that real readers have a second-hand book from a lending library published in 1949, supposedly the work of a V. Straka. The novel itself revolves around the search of the title hero 'S' for his identity and personal history. In addition, the book offers a novel in the novel because on the pages of the work innumerable handwritten notes of two equally fictional readers are distributed in a kind of analogue chat on their reading experiences. This presents the reader with marginal notes, ephemera, forgotten postcards and deliberately placed notes, newspaper pages and so forth, and thus displays the whole range of habits and practices that readers develop when working with a library copy of a book.</p> <p><b>Themes:</b> identity, communication, social and cultural practices</p>
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**Table 1: Multimodal texts suitable for ELT**

The selection in Table 1 provides a starting point for teachers to find a text for their specific grades and levels. These texts could either be school library additions to promote FVR or they could be integrated in the classroom through various additional activities. Depending on the length and complexity of the book, different approaches are suitable for dealing with these texts in the classroom, ranging from reading the whole text over numerous weeks (partly in class and at home) to more selective reading (such as reading some interesting or relevant chapters). However, in order to promote FVR over the long term, it is important not to restrict text selection, but to 'push for greater access to reading materials, as well as time and spaces for pleasure reading' (Thompson & McIlroy, 2019, p. 73). Including different types of texts across all grades is essential in this context. For example, although picturebooks are listed in Table 1 exclusively for primary school, there are many complex picturebooks that can be read across all grades. Especially in middle schools, this format provides numerous opportunities to develop visual literacy and foster visual as well as verbal interaction (Alter, 2019, p. 29). Last but not least, suggesting multimodal book series to learners may also be an option to promote FVR. Examples are the series *Middle School* by James Patterson (for grades 6-8) or *Deadly Class* (for grades 10+) by Rick Remender – the latter of which has been produced as a television series.

### Pre-, While-, Post-Reading Activities

Before learners are encouraged to embark upon FVR through multimodal texts, it is important to deal with an example of a multimodal text in class so that they are introduced into the act of reading various modes. In this section, practical suggestions are therefore made for specific activities that provide a starting point for teachers to integrate multimodal texts in ELT. Whereas the current methodology of literature teaching generally draws on creative and hands-on approaches as well as the principles of reader-response theories (Delanoy, Eisenmann & Matz, 2015, pp. 7-9), it is most important, especially at less advanced levels, to scaffold the students' learning process so that they understand the texts in terms of language, content, and culture. In this process, the learners, their abilities, interests and learning styles should always be in focus when planning reading approaches, tasks, and activities. As such, and on the basis of Principle 5 (task focus), the lesson sequence is divided into three main parts: pre-reading, main task, and post-reading activities (see Table 2).

Task type	Examples
<b>1. Pre-reading tasks</b> → Focus on topic and language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Topic-based speaking tasks               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Brainstorm and list: What kind of X do you know?</li> <li>○ Provocative statement X: Discuss this statement and write a short comment.</li> <li>○ Question(s) related to the topic X: Discuss the question(s) and prepare a short answer.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Language-focused activities               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Create a word mind map/word field of X.</li> <li>○ Match the words X with the explanations.</li> <li>○ Find the words for the pictures X.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>2. Main tasks</b> → Develop numerous competences; multiple literacies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● While-reading tasks               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Language focused: Find the words X in the book.</li> <li>○ Content focused: Tick the right answer; Complete the sentence, etc.</li> <li>○ Mode focused: Analyze the meaning of the mode X, identify how it contributes to the story, etc.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Book chapter and language presentations by students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Task: Read chapter X; Write down 5 words/phrases; Look them up; Find a suitable explanation; Brainstorm: how can you teach phrases to class? Prepare your presentation.</li> <li>○ Student presentation: 1) Chapter summary, 2) Language focus, 3) Present excerpt, explain modes.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Reading log <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Write down notes while/after reading the book: Impressions, thoughts, predictions, reflections, etc.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Post-reading tasks</b> → Focus on creativity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Interactive quiz <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Swap cards written by students in groups</li> <li>○ Content-based questions written by learners</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Creative tasks; choice of outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Written: email, topic-based poster</li> <li>○ Oral: book summary/review, panel discussion, role-play</li> <li>○ Multi-skill: poster presentation, song/rap, radio interview, podcast, short film</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Multimodal presentations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Book trailer/preview, video book talk/review, etc.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**Table 2: Task examples for multimodal literature**

For learners to gain an insight into multimodal texts and understand the interplay of different semiotic modes in literary communication, various ‘key questions’ (Hallet, 2014, p. 7) can be addressed in the while-reading process, referred to as *mode focused activities* in Table 2. Crucially, these differ substantially from while-reading tasks for monomodal texts in that they address the meaning behind the individual modes, their affordance, their contribution to the story, their effect, their interrelation between verbal and non-verbal elements, and the overall meaning evoked through the interplay of all the modes. In sum, therefore, the task examples for multimodal literature aim to illustrate how multimodal texts can be included in ELT classrooms to foster long-term FVR of multimodal texts, among other text formats.

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## Conclusion

It is important to engage students with multimodal texts in order to help them develop vital multimodal literacy skills. Dealing with multimodal narratives in ELT can help students understand the meaning-making potential of different modes, particularly the relationship between words and images, in reading, writing, and producing multimodal texts. Moreover, the competences gained from dealing with multimodal texts in ELT are transferable to other literacy practices. To further this discussion, we have presented a list of multimodal texts for different levels of proficiency and different age groups that can be used in ELT. An additional outline of task examples, based on pre-, main/while-, and post-reading activities, illustrates how multimodal narratives can be integrated in practice so that learners are given support in understanding the interwovenness of various modes. If teachers train learners in the process of multiliterate reading and choose suitable texts, this can potentially motivate learners to read multimodal texts in FVR in- and outside the classroom as well.

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