Creating multimodal metalanguage with teachers

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ABSTRACT: *Curriculum guidelines, including the emergent Australian curriculum (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA], 2009-10), indicate expectations that teachers will support their students' interpretation and creation of multimodal texts. However, English curriculum guidelines are yet to advise on a detailed metalanguage to support teacher and student discussion of the meaning-making dimensions of multimodal texts. Theoretical work on the development of multimodal metalanguage is in its early stages, lacking ready application for use in diverse classroom contexts. This article reports on research into applications of a framework designed to help teachers add depth and breadth to teaching and learning about multimodal meanings through development of a metalanguage (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). While application of this framework in middle-years classrooms was initially found to be problematic, working in collaboration with teachers this framework was adapted and enriched for classroom use. This resulted in a refined framework which can be used in classrooms for stimulating metalanguage to describe multimodal texts.*

KEY WORDS: *Multimodal literacies, multimodal metalanguage, teacher research, middle years.*

CREATING MULTIMODAL METALANGUAGE WITH TEACHERS

Over a decade ago, theorists argued that in a communications environment where written and oral linguistic meaning is increasingly blended with other modes of meaning, knowledge and competency in language alone is no longer sufficient as a literacy repertoire (New London Group, 1996; 2000). Digitisation is increasingly transforming the nature of texts and shifting capacity for the combining and distributing of representational modes from technical specialists to contemporary students' households and classrooms. Examples of such multimodal transformations include the integrated use of written and oral language with icons and still and moving images (examples of the visual mode of meaning); music and sound effects (from the audio mode); facial expressions and hand and arm movements (from the gestural mode); and the potential evident in films with aroma capacities and games requiring touch interaction (examples of the tactile mode) (Kalantzis, Cope & Cloonan, 2010). Calls for literacy education to account more fully for multimodal meaning-making enabled by new technologies have been building over the past fifteen years (for a sample see Baker, 2010; Beavis, 1997, 2007; Coiro, Knobel, Lankshear & Leu, 2007; Lankshear, 1999; Luke & Freebody, 2000; Kress, 2003; Locke, 2010; New London Group, 1996, 2000; Prensky, 2001; Reinking, McKenna, Labbo & Kieffer, 1998; Snyder, 1998; Unsworth, 2001).

Australian curriculum guidelines developed during this time assert the importance of the development of students' capacities as multimodal text analysts and designers (ACT Department of Education and Training, 2007; Board of Studies New South

Wales Department of Education and Training, 2007; Department of Employment Education and Training Northern Territory, 2005; Department of Education and Training Tasmania, 2007; Department of Education and Training Western Australia, 2005; Queensland Studies Authority, 2006; South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services, 2004; Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 2005).

However, the advice to teachers on ways of discussing the visual, audio, gestural, spatial and tactile meanings within texts is severely limited in comparison to advice offered on verbal print language meanings. The state guidelines listed above offer finely articulated advice on the structures and features of written language in texts, forming a metalanguage for teachers and students to use for textual discussion. Curriculum advice on a metalanguage for multimodal texts remains wanting in comparison. It is both under-developed and lacking in specificity.

The new Australian curriculum continues the recent policy tradition of urging teachers to integrate multimodal texts into their curriculum offerings. However, again teachers will be presented with a policy that fails to offer detailed articulation of the structures and features of multimodal texts. Interestingly, while the *Australian Curriculum: English* will feature a renewed emphasis on grammar (ACARA, 2009-10) this emphasis does not extend to the grammar of multimodal texts but rather continues to emphasise linguistic aspects of text. The other modes present in multimodal texts, such as visual and audio modes are not being treated with the same amount of rigour as the linguistic mode.

Having access to language to describe and to analyse textual structures and features is no small issue. It is important for two interrelated reasons. The first reason is the relationship between thinking and language. In order to deepen their thinking when participating in textual production and textual interpretation, teachers and students need to be able to describe and analyse meanings. Thinking, in this case about the meanings in multimodal texts, is mediated by language and it is through language that thinking develops in sophistication (Vygotsky, 1978). Language and cognition interplay as learners develop their everyday talk, in this case of multimodal meaning, towards more complex discussions. Without a metalanguage, or grammar, for describing multimodal texts, understandings remain tacit rather than explicitly articulated and brought to consciousness.

A second reason why access to language to describe and to analyse textual structures and features is important, is an issue of grammar. The value of explicit teaching of knowledge of language (including grammar), within the contextualized social situations of textual interpretation and creation, is well established (Locke, 2010). It follows then that there is value to be had from the explicit teaching of knowledge of multimodal representations – but we need a language to describe these. Without language to name structures and features and frameworks to organise thinking about the modes in texts, developing understanding will be limited. Teachers and students require, but do not have, meta-linguistic tools for the description and analysis of the meanings in multimodal texts.

This gap in knowledge is well known to contemporary theorists working in the area of multimodal literacies, and, no doubt, to curriculum developers. Over a decade ago, the

New London Group in their co-authored work named as one of the goals of multiliteracies theory the development of "an educationally accessible functional grammar; that is a metalanguage that describes meaning in various realms" (2000, p. 24). The group admitted that such a metalanguage would face taxing criteria in its capacities to support a

> sophisticated critical analysis of language and other semiotic systems, yet at the same time not make unrealistic demands on teacher and learner knowledge, or conjure up teachers' accumulated and often justified antipathies towards formalism. The last point is crucial because teachers must be motivated to work on and work with the meta-language. (2000, p. 24)

The development of multimodal metalanguage has been described as a pressing need (Unsworth, 2001) with Macken-Horarik (2009a) likening the situation facing educators and their students analysing multimodal texts to that of seventeenth-century explorers undertaking an expedition with an incomplete cartographer's map. There are aspects that have not yet been documented. We don't have all the information we would wish for.

DEVELOPING MULTIMODAL METALANGUAGE

The New London Group (1996; 2000) recommended that metalanguages that describe patterns of meaning were required for linguistic (written and oral language), visual, audio, gestural, spatial and multimodal design. Some design elements were recommended; for example elements of visual meaning included colours, perspective, vectors, foregrounding and background; and elements of gestural design included behaviour, bodily physicality, gesture, sensuality, feeling and effect, kinesics and proxemics.

The New London Group were criticised for presenting these complex listings of apparently "stable", multimodal and linguistic elements while claiming that rigid rules do not govern meaning-making. It was further argued that the suggested elaboration of linguistic grammar to individual modes of meaning is cumbersome and unsuitable in supporting classroom discussion (for example, Prain, 1997).

Scholars from within the group and others influenced by work on functional linguistics (Halliday, 1978; 1994) have investigated the meaning-making capacities of various modes, for example Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) on the visual; Martinec (1999) on the gestural; van Leeuwen on the audio (1999) and spatial (2008). A sample of other influential theoretical work contributing to knowledge of multimodal metalanguage includes (but is by no means restricted to) Burn & Parker (2003); Hull & Nelson (2005); Jewitt (2008); Macken-Horarik (2009b); Stein (2007) and Unsworth (2001, 2006).

The work reported on in this article adds to this growing field in two unique ways. Firstly, it explores and tests a largely neglected framework specifically designed by two of the members of the New London Group to develop a metalanguage for multimodal meanings in teaching and learning situations. The framework explores dimensions of multimodal meaning (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000) in which five modes of meaning (linguistic, visual, spatial, gestural and audio) are each explored in terms of

five dimensions of meaning (representational, social, organisational, contextual and ideological). Secondly, the work reported on in this article was undertaken in research partnerships *with* teachers. Engaging teachers directly in the exploration, critique and further development of theoretical work supported their professional learning and helped ensure that project outcomes were usable in classrooms.

RESEARCH BACKGROUND AND THEORETICAL CONTEXT

This paper draws on findings from a research project in which the dimensions of multimodal meaning framework were explored with teachers engaged as co-researchers. Methodologically, the investigation was informed by Cochran-Smith and Lytle's concept of collaborative inquiry (1999) and Comber and Kamler's intellectual communities of inquiry (2004). The project engaged participants in participatory action research and knowledge production (Kemmis, 2008) with the aim of addressing the New London Group's advice that teachers need to be engaged in working with the metalanguage (2000).

Cope and Kalantzis (2000) recommend that literacy teaching focus on five "dimensions" of each of the modes of meaning – linguistic, visual, spatial, gestural and audio. A further mode, the tactile, has subsequently been identified, in light of the rise of touch technology and development of aroma technology (Kalantzis, Cope & Cloonan, 2010). The five dimensions are outlined in the précis below, including suggested exemplar questions and clarifying explanations:

- *Representational meaning*: *What do the meanings refer to?* This involves consideration of who and what is represented and what's happening in the text. It involves the participants represented (for example people, animals, objects); their circumstances (for example, setting) and processes such as what they are doing/thinking and how they are acting.

- *Social meaning: How do the meanings connect the persons they involve?* This accounts for connections between the text producer and the reader, considering the roles of text participants in communicating meaning, the text producer's commitment to the message and the way the reader is engaged (for example directly, indirectly, through interactivity).

- *Organisational meaning*: *How do the meanings hang together?* This involves the composition of elements to make meaning; the shape of the text and the way it communicates meaning including the media used, how elements are placed and the type of communication used to represent participants, their circumstances and processes.

- *Contextual meaning*: *How do the meanings fit into the larger world of meaning?* This dimension involves consideration of the socio-cultural context and its influence on the text's meaning. The relationships between the social purposes of the text and its genre and the broader discourse of which it is a part as well as relationships with other texts.

- *Ideological meaning*: *Whose interests are the meanings skewed to serve?* Consideration of ideological meaning draws attention to the possible motivations of the text producer and consequent positioning of the text

recipient. This includes attributions to others and elements of deception (information omitted, as well as information included).

In a previous research project involving four teachers and over 100 students (Cloonan, 2010) a *dimensions of a multimodal meaning framework* was used to analyse teacher-student discussions around multimodal texts and identify metalanguage used. In order to analyse the language used to discuss the various modes present in the multimodal texts studied, a matrix with the five dimensions of meaning on the vertical axis (representational, social, organisational, contextual and ideological) and the five modes of meaning on the horizontal axis (linguistic, visual, audio, gestural, spatial) was used (see Table 1).

Dimensions of meaning	Modes of meaning				
	Linguistic	Visual	Audio	Gestural	Spatial
Representational					
Social					
Organisational					
Contextual					
Ideological					

Table 1. Dimensions of multimodal meaning framework

Teacher prompts (questions to students and statements drawing attention to specific aspects of multimodal texts) were analysed giving insight into the modes and dimensions of meaning teachers chose to draw attention to in their literacy teaching.

A finding of that research was that participant teachers had limited repertoires for technical, systematic ways of describing the multimodal, such as those grammars described by theorists. This was perhaps not surprising given the emergent nature of theoretical and policy articulations of multimodal metalanguage. The development of age-appropriate resources to support the teaching of multimodal metalanguage with students in the primary years was found to be an urgent literacy education agenda.

THE RESEARCH

The use of the dimensions of multimodal meaning framework as an analytical tool highlighted its potential as a prompt for developing multimodal metalanguage with teachers. As a result, further research was undertaken to explore, in partnership with teachers, the usefulness of the dimensions of multimodal meaning framework as a *pedagogical* tool for stimulating teachers' and students' multimodal metalanguage.

The research participants comprised three teachers and their eighty Years 5 and 6 students from a single school. The three teachers were a sub-group of teachers participating in a series of professional learning workshops that focused on literacy teaching and learning by the Catholic Education Office in Melbourne, Australia. One of the major foci of the professional learning series was developing teachers' capacities in the teaching and assessment of multimodal texts and the author was invited to act as consultant presenter within the program.

The teachers were engaged as theorists as well as practitioners to test the usefulness of the dimensions of multimodal meaning framework as a tool for developing a classroom-based language for working with multimodal texts. Teachers were engaged with the framework through a case study (Yin, 2003) of three cycles of participatory action research (Carr & Kemmis, 1983; Kemmis, 2008). They were invited to deploy the framework in their planning and teaching; to collect and analyse data; to critique the framework; and adapt it to suit their teaching contexts. They used the action research stages of plan, act, observe and reflect to guide this work.

Data was collected over eight months through teacher interviews; observations of classroom interactions and professional learning situations; focus group input; audiovisual data of classroom interactions and work samples; and collection of teacher and student produced literacy artefacts. Teachers also documented their reflections in a "teacher impact journal". They collaboratively and individually viewed data providing a stimulus for the teachers' reflective comment and analysis.

Investigating the dimensions of a multimodal meaning framework as a stimulus for multimodal metalanguage

Discussion with the participating teachers following an initial reading of the dimensions of multimodal meaning framework and associated examples and questions (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000) produced three major insights.

Firstly, the teachers found the language provided to be exclusionary and not readily accessed by teachers for classroom use (see Table 2 for Extract of questions and examples of the representational dimension of meaning). The teachers described the language as too theoretical and abstract, which resulted in their being positioned as outsiders to the discourse used in the framework.

Dimension of meaning/questions	Modes of meaning				
	Linguistic examples	Visual examples	Spatial examples	Gestural examples	Audio examples
Representational What do the meanings refer to? **Participants** Who and what is participating in the meanings being represented?	Naming words which make sense in terms of their relationships with nearby words and contextual pointers	Naturalistic and iconic representations, visibly distinguishable contrasts	Objects in relation to nearby objects, part/ whole relation- ships, contrasts	Mimicry, gesture- shapes	Naturalistic representations in sound (for example recording of bird sounds); iconic representations (e/g/ alarms sounds)

Table 2. Extract of questions and examples of the representational dimension of meaning

Secondly, the teachers did not find the questions and exemplars suggested to be useful in gaining insight into the general intention of each of the dimensions of meaning within multimodal texts. The teachers found the questions to be general, and lacking connection to specific examples of multimodal texts. Similarly, the examples suggested for the various modes of meaning were seen to be unrelated to one another

and not easily transferable to a multimodal text that might be the basis of classroom focus.

Thirdly, the examples given were not seen to be easily transferable to teachers' work with students. The combination of abstract language and examples lacking connection to one other and to the types of texts addressed in their classroom practices frustrated ready use of the framework in stimulating multimodal metalanguage in their classrooms.

Despite these criticisms, the teachers were interested to see how the dimensions of multimodal meaning framework could be adapted and made suitable for generating multimodal metalanguage with their students. The development of questions and exemplars that illustrated the application of the *dimensions of meaning* schema to specific multimodal texts was strongly recommended by the participating teachers.

In response to this recommendation, the teachers were presented with an extract from a previous work (Cloonan, Kalantzis & Cope, 2010) in which an analysis of *Rosie's Walk* (Hutchins, 1968) was undertaken. *Rosie's Walk* is a classic children's picture book that has been produced as an animation (Weston Woods, 1970). It can also be found on YouTube.[1] The language in the book consists of a 32-word simple recount in which a hen goes for a walk around a farmyard. The words form a single sentence, including several prepositional phrases, with no more than seven words per page. The words refer only to the hen and the farmyard sites she passes on her walk. The images, however, show a second character, a fox, who is (unsuccessfully) stalking the hen, introducing complications and their resolution and transforming the text into a narrative.[2]

The *dimensions of multimodal meaning framework* had been used to guide development of critical questions and metalanguage to describe the visual and audio resources present in the print and animated version of *Rosie's Walk* (Hutchins, 1968). (See Tables 3 and 4 below.)

Critical questions	Possible visual metalanguage
Representational: What's happening in the (moving) images? What are the (moving) pictures about?	**Representational:** Two main characters, a hen walking and a fox stalking, and elements such as coop, buildings and lake denote circumstances as a farm. **Book**: still images: **Animation**: edited stills images; animated images and images involving lens and camera movement such as pans, zooms and dollys show a hen's journey around a farmyard oblivious to a fox's harmful attempts.
Social: How did the (moving) images make you feel? What in the (moving) images made you react like that?	**Social:** The shot angles are predominantly at eye level, although fox is positioned higher on the page as it prepares to jump, lower following failed attempts. The shots are mainly offers, rather than demands with character gaze directed within the text.
Organisational: How did what you saw hang together?	**Organisational**: Rosie's steadfast left to right march around the farm forms the main reading

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[1] See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pIQDo0n4mLk
[2] Copyright restrictions prevent the reproduction of this text.

	path for these images. Her profiled body, particularly her feet and crest, provide strong left to right vectors, supported by the vectors of the fox's eyes.
Contextual: What are the images like? Do you know of other images put together like these?	**Contextual:** Pen and ink drawings with heavy use of line, dots and patterns are reminiscent of colonial cross-stitch.
Ideological: What are the illustrator & animator trying to make you think about characters? Why do you think they wanted you to think this?	**Ideological:** Humanises characters, positioning hen as oblivious, naïve (or perhaps clever) and fox as bad (although helpess) rather than an animal hunting for food. Safety and humour obvious despite predatory themes.

Table 3. Engaging with visual resources

Critical questions	Possible audio metalanguage
Representational: What's happening in the sounds? What sounds did you hear? Who and what do the sounds tell us about?	**Representational:** Audio journey of repetitious cycles with narrated words, music, sound effects. Narrator (mid-West American accent); Music (banjo, violin, string bass); sound effects (percussion)
Social: How did characters feel? What in the audio makes you think that? How did you feel when you heard that section? That instrument? That sound effect?	**Social**: Major key. Invites optimism. Quadruple (4/4) beat denotes a *march*. Invites an evenly rhythmic foot-tapping or hand-clapping response. Cycles build to climax/resolution.
Organisational: How did what you heard hang together? What did you hear first? Then what?	**Organisational**: Informal tuning up of violin; Narrator introduces title; Laughter; Violin solo introduction; Verse: banjo carries melody; string bass accompaniment; Chorus: violin carries melody with string bass. Repetitive structure of verse and chorus.
Contextual: What was the music like? Do you know of other sounds put together like these? What do these sounds mean for the story?	**Contextual:** Laughter foreshadows comedy. Mid-West American accent and use of string instruments (violin and banjo) and marching beat (string bass) denotes hillbilly or country and western style.
Ideological: What did you think the audio designer was trying to make you think about Rosie?	**Ideological:** Constant, prominent bass line and banjo melody depict Rosie (hen) as steadfast, focused and safe in undertaking walk around the farmyard. Sound effects accompanying fox's failures emphasise humour and safety.

Table 4. Engaging with audio resources

While the teachers could see that the critical questions and metalanguage generated might be useful in analysing a picture book, they did not immediately see its application to a range of texts. As one of the teachers (Jack[3]) commented,

> The questions and examples would be good for getting the kids to think more deeply about a picture book or a story, but how would we actually teach them to apply more abstract language when they're reading or reviewing something else? I'm just a bit stuck there.

The teachers decided to use a blank template of the *dimensions of multimodal meaning framework* (see Table 1) to document analysis of a multimodal text they

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[3] All names used in this article are pseudonyms

were utilising in their teaching and then met as a group to discuss the implementation. The cases that follow relate to work on radio advertisements undertaken by Jack with his students and work on digital narratives undertaken by his colleagues Penny and Don with their students.

Reflections on the data

Jack and his Year 6 class were studying a unit of work on advertising, while Don and Penny engaged their Year 5 students in the creation of digital narratives. All teachers used the *dimensions of multimodal meaning framework* to consider textual elements: Jack considered radio advertisements that he and his students listened to and analysed as a precursor to creating their own advertisements, and Penny and Don considered the students' constructions of digital narratives using the software program, *Photostory*. What follows are two extracts from the teachers' discussions in which they attempted to apply the dimensions of multimodal meaning framework, firstly to radio advertisements and secondly to digital narratives.

Jack: We had took some ads apart, brainstorming and discussing the features of three or four radio ads and looked at the basic components….We looked at jingles. Is a jingle linguistic or audio?

Penny: Both. It's got oral language and it's musical. There's music, sound effects.

Don: There's narration too. There's talk in between the jingle and the music.

Jack: So we're talking about audio and linguistic. We can cross out the other columns – visual, gestural, spatial. We talked about the kinds of music and the expression of the narrators. Also the humour in ads, the organisation, purpose and audience. I was looking at the way that the ads were constructed in order for the children to eventually make their own.

Don: Is it important how they talk in the ads? Their expression?

Penny: Would that come into the social? "Connects to the persons involved."

Jack: But there is speed too – they need to talk fast to get through the information. I guess it's organisational, the length of the ad, it only went for 30 seconds. It's fast like the end of those political ads.

Penny: How do the meanings hang together? How is it put together? So that would be the length, the timing, wouldn't it?

Jack: They talk fast at the bits they don't want you to hear! So time restrictions set boundaries. But that's ideological as well – talking fast so you can't hear some things. Omission.

Don: I would have thought ideological was about them trying to sell a product.

Penny: It's also about "underlying interests" and "deception by omission". Like the small print. Or the fast words.

Jack: What about humour? What would that be? Social?

Penny: Social, yes, I would think so. I'm thinking with the fast talking, there's an expectation that audiences have about speed of talking that could be a connection to the ad. When you're listening to a radio ad you expect it to be a certain speed….so is that contextual? Your expectations of what that text will be like?

Jack: You rarely hear a long radio ad. It's the expected discourse.

Penny: Because advertisers have to pay for the amount of time they're on the air. So would that be ideological? Whose interests?

Don: I think it could be across a few. The speed.

Penny: Looking at this, most of your focus has been on the audio rather than the language.

> Jack: I noticed that as I was writing it up. It's because I'm now thinking audio is literacy and focusing there. It would be interesting to look at the actual words used too.
>
> Penny: Yes, the language. Talking this through does help you think about the meanings of *all* the elements of a text – it's broader than our usual focus… and to think about what questions we'll ask students to see what they know and take them deeper.

As a result of this discussion, a number of issues arose which informed adaptations to the framework. Initially, Jack focused his teaching on the delivery of the oral language mode and aspects of the audio as he came to new understandings about what constitutes literacy. Jack noted that through engagement with the framework he is "now thinking audio is literacy". The framework was instrumental in directing teachers' attention to a broader range of textual elements, in this case the non-linguistic audio meanings.

However clarity was required in relation to what constitutes audio meaning and what constitutes linguistic meaning in the case of oral language. Subsequent to the work of the New London Group (1996; 2000) written and oral language have been described as two fundamentally different modes of meaning (Kalantzis, Cope & Cloonan, 2010). The oral language mode includes spoken words. The audio mode includes music and sound effects. These two modes are closely related and yet offer different affordances.

The teachers found that the selection of words, expression, accent, volume and the pace at which the language was spoken influence social meaning. However, they found that these elements can also relate to a number of other dimensions of meaning. For example, pace was a consideration in the organisation of the text as well as being part of the expected discourse of the radio advertisement genre reflecting contextual meaning. They also found that the pace at which words were spoken could influence ideological meaning through obscuring information. A sort of verbal equivalent of fine print.

In the second extract, the three teachers discuss Penny and Don's application of the dimensions of multimodal meaning framework to their work with Year 5 students creating digital narratives.

> Penny: They're making narrative photo stories developing written text, images and adding audio. Once they'd written their narratives, we looked at images in books and discussed how images in their digital narratives make meaning.
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> Don: In *Photostory* you can begin a scene, then focus on certain parts of the picture through transitions. You can make it zoom in and pause – so it gives opportunities for different ways of organising the text – words and visuals.
>
> Penny: Rather than the whole picture you can have different shot sizes and angles – close up on a face to heighten emotion, long shot to establish the scene, taken from low down to make the character look more powerful.
>
> Jack: So that part is social meaning. You're engaging the viewer/reader closely with the characters' emotions in a close up when you zoom in.
>
> Don: That's organisational too – when you pause you are making a decision to emphasise a part of the text such as the heading or a character; or not to when you wipe over something.

       Penny: You're deciding how you want to engage the reader – the social connecting part – and what you want to emphasise. Transitions are about the order – so it's probably organisation and social. Many decisions to make in different modes: the actual written text first, then images and then audio as well.

       Don: They record their own voices reading their story. I know that's language/audio. They can also import music and the program itself has a range of sound effects, so they can have a theme like jazzy, romantic or haunting and slow it down so we've talked about the meaning of music in the narrative.

       Penny: We made a sample about our school camp and I put like quick jazzy music to it and then changed it to slow music. The kids said it changed the feeling of what you're watching. So that's social – different music engages you in different ways. We looked at changing the tempo of the music, changes in volume and putting their voiceover in the foreground and the music playing in the background.

       Jack: So they're making organisational decisions in the audio like "What am I going to foreground in the audio?" But the impact is on the social "feeling" or how it connects to the reader/listener. What kinds of stories have they written?

       Penny: They write fantasy; the boys usually write about superheroes and the girls are highly influenced by Harry Potter and Twilight. So that's contextual; they're engaging in that genre or larger discourse. And their stories have underlying themes and messages – the ideological dimension. We need to do more with them on that.

       Don: We really want to give them more real purposes. We don't want them asking, "Why do we have do this, what's the point?" That's contextual – right? Is it for their parents, other people in the school, or more broadly with online publishing?

       Jack: The school website will give them more opportunities.

       Don: Yeah, but more broadly too. Blogging, reading and writing blogs, but also being able to publish their videos online – producing and publishing. That would help their understanding of the ideological. Making and publishing their own texts gives them more understanding that people don't just construct a text just so that there's a piece of writing there. There's always a reason and messages that they're trying to get across that you might not even notice at first.

The teachers' professional dialogue shows growing ease and confidence in the use of language of the dimensions of meaning schema through application of examples drawn from their own practice. Building on the clarifying discussion of the radio advertisements, the teachers shifted their focus from considering aspects of texts created by others (radio advertisements) to texts created by students (digital narratives). They applied their developing understandings to digital texts that integrated linguistic, audio and visual modes.

The excerpt shows the teachers' carefully nuanced articulation of meaning-making potentials in the visual mode, including shot type (establishment shot, close up shot), camera angle (low camera angle) and the capacity to pause or wipe over a shot and the implications these decisions have in emphasising textual information. The relationship between the social and organisational dimensions was highlighted as the teachers explored their porous boundaries.

The audio mode was also revisited. Penny modelled the meaning-making capacities of the audio by showing a series of visuals with a range of different audio tracks which differed in terms of tempo, mood and the interplay between the volume of music or voiceover. The close relationship between the social and organisational aspects of the audio mode was also explored.

This excerpt also shows the teachers' use of the dimensions of meaning to prompt attention to aspects of texts which they may previously have overlooked in their pedagogies – for example, a consideration of the ideological dimensions of meaning. It also served to prompt discussion of the contextual purposes and the audiences for student text creation, as well as the reciprocal nature of the experience of text creation and textual analysis and how both can inform students' understanding of the ideological aspects of text.

Modifying the intervention

The teachers reviewed and adapted the dimensions of the multimodal meaning proforma to reflect a more holistic approach to considering dimensions of individual modes present in any particular text (for example, in Jack's case, oral language and audio modes). To this end they suggested having a selection of modes for analysis from which teachers could choose, depending on those present in the text being studied (see second row in Table 5: Scaffolding multimodal metalanguage proforma: Castle Carpets advertisement).

Table 5 shows an analysis of one of the radio advertisements that Jack undertook with his students on the revised proforma. The advertisement promoted Castle Carpets.[4] Greater confidence in working with the dimensions of meaning combined with a desire for "middle years classroom-friendly language" resulted in the teachers and the researcher collaboratively reworking Cope and Kalantzis's original work. Both questions and sentence stems were used to prompt students' attention to textual elements, as outlined below (see also left-hand column in Table 5: Scaffolding multimodal metalanguage proforma).

The teachers suggested prompts to focus attention on representational meaning by asking students to think about the information in the text and how they access it. For example, *I read…* prompts them to focus on written language; *I hear (oral language)* prompts a focus on oral language; *I hear (non-linguistic)* prompts attention to other audio elements present in a text such as music and sounds effects; and *I see (non-linguistic)* prompts students to focus on non-language visual elements such as images, icons, photographs as well as gestures, layout and spatial design. *I sense (touch, smell and taste)* prompts focus on touch and smell (for example, video games and touch technologies which require swiping, shaking or pressing; scratch technologies used to advertise perfumes in magazines; food and drink wrapping texts containing food and drink).

The teachers developed questions relating to the social dimension of meaning including: "How is the text creator relating to you?" and "How are you relating to

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[4] The advertising text can be accessed by visiting the website at
http://www.matrixradio.co.uk/MediaPlayers/castlecarpets.htm

them?" which focus students' attention on the text creator's use of multimodal textual devices to connect with and elicit responses from "readers" of a text. The additional question, "How is mood or tone created?" was developed to guide students' attention specifically to the multimodal textual elements that influence mood and tone. The teachers suggested that prompts which would be useful in focusing attention on the organisational dimension of meaning include, "How is it organised?" "What is emphasised?" and "How are modes working together?"

Scaffolding multimodal metalanguage proforma: Castle Carpets advertisement	
Dimensions of meaning	**Modes of meaning present in bold (oral language**, written language, visual, **audio**, spatial, gestural, tactile)
What's represented? *I hear…* (oral language) *I hear…* (non-linguistic audio)	Sound effects and voice represent man walking then falling. A salesman suggesting he needs a floor and suggesting a range of flooring products the man could buy, including laminates, floorboards and carpets. Funky, blues-type music using keyboard and drum kit. Jingle giving company name and motto. Percussion sound effects including the man's footsteps at the start, falling and landing at the end.
How is it organised? What is emphasised? How are modes working together?	25 seconds Humour at the start accentuated by reverberation effect "ahh". Funky syncopated bass riff accompanied by a syncopated drum groove. Fast talking and very direct speech. "Everything's covered at Castle Carpets" jingle sung by harmonised voices just before the end emphasising company name. Humour at the end when you heard that person falling on the floorboards and they said, "Oh, I bet that hurt."
How is text creator relating to you? How are you relating to them? How is mood or tone created?	Loud, clear voices but also with expression. Very direct and overwhelming. Voices seemed to bounce out of different speakers. (There's no mumbling, there was no misunderstanding of what was being used.) Salesman had an English accent; sounds confident; a fast talker. Music grabs your attention then fades as voices take over. Humour at the beginning and end keeps you interested.
What kind of text is it? What's the text's purpose? What's the text's context?	A radio advertisement. To grab the listeners' attention and to persuade them that their showroom has a comprehensive range of floor coverings and that they are experts in selling and installing floor coverings. When compared to a television advertisement, radio advertisements are very short.
What are the ideological themes? Are there underlying interests?	To help them sell their product – floor coverings. To make money – commercial interest.

Table 5. Scaffolding multimodal metalanguage proforma: Castle Carpets advertisement

To direct attention to the contextual dimension of meaning, including text type and social purposes of a text, the teachers suggested three questions including, "What kind of text is it?" "What's the text's purpose?" and "What's the text's context?" Finally, to focus students' attention on the ideological dimension, the teachers posed the questions, "What are the ideological themes?" "What are the underlying interests?" and "How do modes convey these?". These questions prompt students to attend to the social, economic and political interests that underpin texts and the elements in the text that give insight into these.

Together we applied these questions to an advertising text which contains oral and written language, visual and gestural modes of meaning, the *Sexiness in a stick* advertisement[5] (see Table 6: Scaffolding multimodal metalanguage proforma: *Sexiness in a stick* advertisement).

Scaffolding multimodal metalanguage: *Sexiness in a stick* advertisement	
Dimensions of meaning	**Modes of meaning present in bold (oral language, written language, visual, audio**, spatial, **gestural**, tactile
What's represented? *I read (written language) I hear… (oral language) I hear (non-linguistic audio) I see (non-linguistic visuals, gestures)* I sense (touch, smell and taste)	We see a happy and healthy young woman preparing herself for a social function that becomes a visual parody. We hear her share her secrets for ensuring she gets noticed in a "cultured" English accent. We hear repetitive, trance background music featuring electric piano and guitar and synthesised drums. We read her main areas of focus.
How is it organised? What is emphasised? How are modes working together?	We see a changing series of close-ups on her face and torso, extreme close-ups on her main areas of focus and long shots showing her environment. We hear her narrate throughout. We read written language used to emphasise main foci. We hear background music throughout.
How is text creator relating to you? How are you relating to them? How is mood or tone created?	Accent and gesture denote confident, cultured female conspiring with us as she shares secrets. Direct gaze to camera and beckoning gesture – woman "demands" engagement. Words with exclamation marks command attention. Trance music lulls listener into agreement
What kind of text is it? What's the text's purpose? What's the text's context?	An anti-smoking advertisement produced by QUIT in the United Kingdom. Viewed on YouTube. Contemporary visual parody of a beauty advertisement designed to mock the positioning of smoking as an appealing or sexy activity and so persuade not to smoke.
What are the ideological themes? Are there underlying interests?	Interests are to shock and amuse in order to persuade young women (and men) not to smoke cigarettes.

Table 6. Scaffolding multimodal metalanguage proforma: Sexiness in a stick advertisement

[5] Accessible at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A6znjEpDWcc

CONCLUSION

English literacy policy and curriculum development is currently in transition as educators adapt to changes wrought by new digital media and the subsequent need for knowledge about multimodality (including knowledge about language). Students' and teachers' engagement with multimodal texts outside of school, and increasingly in classrooms, requires the capacity to articulate in detail and with specificity the structures and features of modes and their interplay in order to deepen understandings. In other words, students and teachers require a multimodal metalanguage – a metalanguage to describe multimodal texts. Underpinning this warrant for a metalanguage that describes knowledge of multimodality is the interplay between thinking and language, as language is used to develop increasingly sophisticated understandings (Vygotsky, 1978).

Theoretical formulations describing multimodal texts are not easily transferable to teachers' work with students when the language used is abstract and when they lack connection to actual classroom texts. Any metalanguage needs to have the capacity to engage, rather than inhibit, dialogue about dimensions of multimodality between teachers and learners and amongst diverse learners. Such a metalanguage needs to be invitational, generative and be able to be used flexibly in different contexts.

Curriculum development and pedagogical implementation collide when collaborative explorations are undertaken within the complexity of teacher's work. A multimodal metalanguage finds its place within classroom socialising around the interpretation and creation of digital and print texts. Its place is as a metalanguage for use – dynamic and enabling. It is a tool for questioning, discussing, elaborating, clarifying and contesting meanings to be used amongst teachers and students as they engage in textual work.

Theoretical developments can richly inform the complex work of teachers as they engage with diverse learners. But this is a matter of inquiry, not a matter of transference, as teachers face multiple considerations, including students' needs, competing curricular demands, matters of emphasis and their own knowledge bases. Working in collaboration with research and researchers, teachers in this project have worked recursively to explore, critique, apply and adapt an original theoretical work, crafting vocabulary and textual experiences that are meaningful for their diverse groups of students. Both the theoretical and the practice-based offerings are complex. Perhaps more than this, both the theoretical and the practice-based offerings are necessary if we are to find ways of usefully articulating the meanings afforded in the interconnected modes of meanings in multimodal texts. The need for such work is pressing as multimodal texts infiltrate teaching and learning contexts.

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