

Multimodal learning Learning in more ways than one!



Forward Foreword



“

‘Multimodality’ has become the catchword of the digital era. As educators and curriculum developers, we are discovering that students learn better in multimodal environments. We can reach more learners more effectively by developing differentiated instruction that presents content in multiple forms. By appealing to different modalities or senses (visual, auditory, kinaesthetic and tactile), we can also appeal to students who understand and learn in a variety of ways.

Why does multimodality matter in language learning? First, language is a multimodal phenomenon and all human communication is multimodal, as we use spoken and written words, visual images, gestures, movement, silence and other non-verbal modes to communicate. We also employ creative ways such as poetry and visual art to explain how we see the world. Moreover, literacy is not only a linguistic achievement. With the advance of information technologies, young people are becoming consumers and creators of multimodal texts. This involves combining traditional print literacy with the understanding, design and manipulation of various technological tools and resources.

Introducing multimodal literacy instruction to the classroom is an excellent way to keep students engaged through multiple modalities and to make them actively participate in their learning process. Multimodal practices can also develop critical reasoning and problem-solving as well as other 21st-century skills.

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Dr V. Gasper
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E-learning and Oxford iSolution

Encouraging student engagement through technology

Oxford Forward met with Ms Hui, English Panel Chair of Salesian English School, to discuss how Oxford iSolution has changed her lessons.



You recently started using more e-learning in your classroom. What encouraged you to experiment with *New Treasure Plus (Second Edition)*'s e-features?

Like many teachers who are more familiar with traditional teaching, I was hesitant and sceptical of e-learning at first. Despite the advantages and success stories, there were several barriers holding me back from jumping on the bandwagon—the amount of time required to learn how to use the programs or tools, technical difficulties that may arise and not knowing how to manage an e-learning classroom. However, after learning how easy it is to use *New Treasure Plus (Second Edition)*'s e-learning tools, I decided to try it myself. The lessons were a lot more manageable than expected; the e-activities in Oxford iSolution were very straightforward and the MDM (Multiple Devices Management) tools made it easy to manage my students' devices.

“**All of my students are able to participate in lessons through e-activities, and there's more interaction compared to a traditional English lesson.**”

What do you think is the biggest advantage of e-learning and what kinds of students will benefit the most from it?

I think the biggest advantage is improved student engagement. All of my students are able to participate in lessons through e-activities, and there's more interaction compared to a traditional English lesson. Students are eager to talk during the activities, which makes learning more interactive and engaging. I believe e-learning can benefit all kinds of students. Brighter students can study by themselves and learn fundamental concepts at home, using flipped classroom resources, like videos and slideshows. This leaves valuable class time for teachers to go over problem areas and common errors. Furthermore, e-learning games and quizzes can help teachers engage less motivated students and increase their interest in the subject.

Could you give us some examples of the e-activities you used with your students to improve student engagement?

I did a polling activity about favourite kinds of pets with my class and we had a 100% response rate. Every student in the room participated and we were able to see the results as they came in. Another e-activity that I tried with my students was photo sharing. Students found photos on the Internet of animals that they wanted to keep as pets, and shared them with the rest of the class. It was interesting to see what each student decided to share and we had a good laugh at some of the photos. What I like most about these e-activities is that they're very easy to include in a lesson and don't require a lot of time to complete. But most importantly, these activities increase student participation by making sure that everyone gets a chance to share their ideas or opinions, not just the few who regularly raise their hands.

What advice do you have for teachers who want to start using more e-learning?

The hardest part for me was actually taking the first step to try e-learning; as long as you're willing to take that first step, you're already a step ahead. However, it's important to keep an open mind about how the lessons turn out. Spend some time learning about and familiarizing yourself with the tools available first, in order to achieve your desired results. It's not easy to switch to e-learning overnight, so I suggest combining e-learning with traditional teaching, such as the short e-activities I mentioned earlier, instead of using e-resources for every part of a lesson. This way, you can experiment with different e-learning tools while not having to worry too much about classroom management.



iSolution Our new all-in-one e-learning platform



Scan to learn more

Oxford iSolution is an all-in-one e-learning platform, made available to teachers, students and home learners via a single app.

Developed by Oxford University Press (China) Ltd., the platform provides users with easy and direct access to an array of e-learning resources, e-textbooks, interactive activities and assessment materials for school education and home learning.



Oxford HKDSE English Language Mock Exams Paper 1 and Paper 3

On Saturday 11 November 2017, Oxford University Press held English Language Mock Exams for Hong Kong secondary school students to practise sitting HKDSE-style English Language Paper 1 and 3 exams under test conditions.

Over 2,300 students signed up, either individually or through their schools. There were two sessions offered across seven different venues. Regardless of which session students participated in, they were also provided with support after the Mock Exams. Apart from answers, marking schemes and their marked papers, students also received an individual exam report with their ranking and level in comparison to other students. In addition to this,

they also had access to an exam analysis video from an education professional.

Schools with more than 40 students enrolled for the Mock Exams also received further information about their students' performance, such as statistical analyses and the distribution of their rankings compared to other participants. We hope that this, along with in-depth exam paper analysis and exam practice materials, like *Oxford Essential & Oxford Advanced Exam Skills* and *Oxford Essential & Oxford Advanced HKDSE Practice Papers*, will help teachers to better plan revision sessions for 2018 HKDSE success.



Multimodal, digital literacy

Using technological skills to enhance language teaching and learning



Oxford Forward met with Sean McMinn, Senior Lecturer at the Center for Language Education at Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST), to hear his insights on multimodal literacy and learning.



Sean McMinn teaches Information Technology in Language Teaching for the Master of Arts in International Language Education (MA-ILE) programme at HKUST. He has helped integrate technology into the language learning curriculum by designing and delivering MOOCs (Massive Online Open Courses) and embedding social networks, wikis and blogs into various language courses. Sean has won awards for his work, such as the 2016 SHSS Teaching Excellence Award and the 2007 Teaching Innovation Award for his work with podcasts and education at HKUST. Read on for more information on his current multimodal literacy project at HKUST.

What is multimodal literacy? What does it mean for language learning and classroom practice?

In our modern 'digital' age, we need to understand how different modes of communication, such as images, sounds and text, are combined to make meaning. For example, many news websites use photos, videos and text to report a story. As we use more digital media in our lives, we encounter more multimodal content. As a result, it is becoming increasingly important that we understand and be critical of how multimodal forms of communication shape the information we create and receive.

For example, when watching an online video, we may require new rhetorical skills to understand how language, such as a speaker's use of word stress or body language, works in combination with background music and camera angles. Classrooms will have to adapt as we learn and experience languages differently, through the kind of reading, writing, listening, and speaking that occurs in online, digital and multimodal forms of communication.

What are the current trends of multimodal English learning?

Something that has become common in the language classroom is digital storytelling—combining digital images, videos and sound to create a meaningful narrative. Because digital media creation tools and mobile devices are more accessible now, teachers and students can easily participate in this, creating digital stories that are authentic and relevant to real-world situations.

Other current trends include students creating more digital content to showcase their language skills. This might include multimodal forms of communication, like podcasts or video blogs, that require multimodal literacy skills.

Students can also enhance their vocabulary with digital technologies, allowing the use of different modes to help them associate meaning with a word. This allows students to do more than simply memorize definitions or direct translations.



How does multimodality aid language learning and teaching?

One way is to use multimodal forms of communication to engage language learners with content more creatively. Some studies indicate that, through digital storytelling, learners become more engaged with the content, have a greater focus on meaning, and understand the writing process more.

Many technologies allow you to review and edit content that you create. By incorporating reflection and revision into a learning process, whether it is for a video or some other multimodal text, students gain more exposure to evaluating their level of language proficiency. If a task is well designed, learners should become aware and critical of their language capabilities and ways to correct any problems.

What are the key factors that lead to effective multimodal learning?

One is teaching learners how to analyse and create multimodal texts. Learners need to understand the relationships between modes and how different digital tools create or influence those relationships. What is the context of a digital text and how does that impact its meaning?

Another important key factor is to provide a learning environment that encourages processes and opportunities for learners to review and reflect. Simply asking a student to produce a digital story won't accomplish a meaningful learning outcome. The learner needs to be fully engaged and aware of how different forms of communication impact their storytelling.

“Multimodality can aid the ‘review, reflect and revise’ process; we can also use multimodality to aid collaborative and cooperative learning, which should increase peer engagement.”

Can you briefly explain your current project at HKUST related to multimodal literacy? How might secondary school teachers find it interesting or relevant?

It is a University Grants Committee-funded project with Hong Kong University, that aims to help both teachers and learners of English develop digital and English communication skills, becoming more critically aware of their English language development. We will do this by providing students with both theory and authentic experiences, by promoting reflective learning through digital media production and through developing best assessment practices for digital literacies. While we are currently targeting university students, the multimodal literacy skills we focus on are also relevant to secondary schools. In fact, the next logical step would be to work with schools, to help students prepare for a ‘digital’ academic life at university or in the workforce.

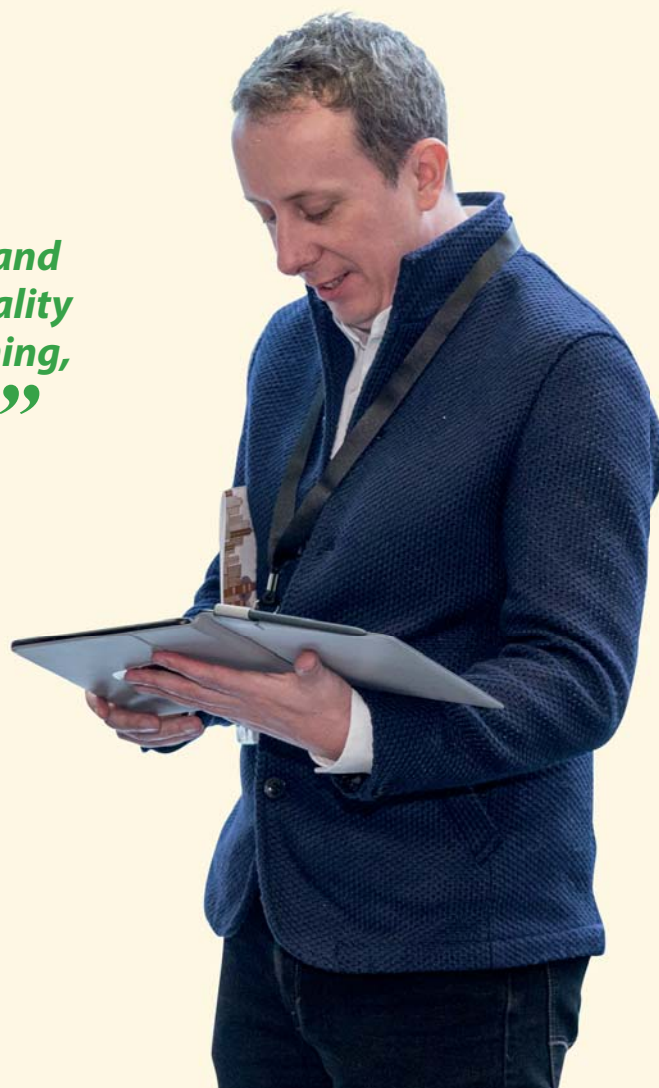
What kind of challenges do teachers face in a multimodal classroom?

Perhaps the biggest challenge is teachers' knowledge of how technologies have an impact on multimodal communication. It's important that they not only know how to use the tools, but also how they impact meaning-making of a multimodal text.

We're also learning how digital media has an impact on how we communicate; current news stories about social media and fake news show that we are still grasping how this all works. This makes multimodal literacy all the more important to learn.

What are some common misconceptions about multimodal learning?

Some teachers argue that using digital technologies takes away the focus of learning a language. I've heard the argument that students become less engaged with each other by staring at a computer, and, as a result, this has a negative impact on their language learning. However, this seems to be a narrow view of how we can use multimodal texts to teach and learn a language. As I mentioned earlier, multimodality can aid the 'review, reflect and revise' process; we can also use multimodality to aid collaborative and cooperative learning, which should increase peer engagement.



Multimodality in learning

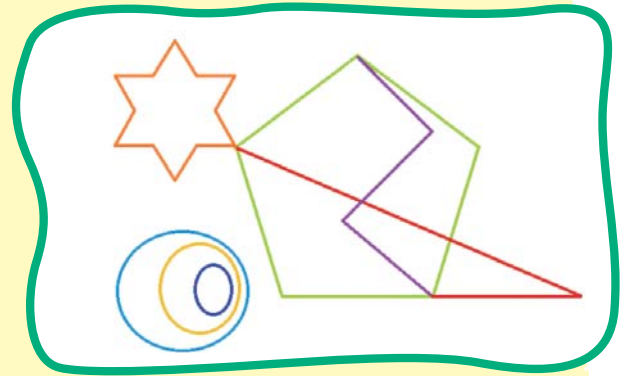
Draw my picture! (Student's copy)

You will need a partner for this game—your teacher will divide you into Partner A and Partner B. You should each have **coloured pencils** and a **sheet of paper**. One of you takes Game 1 and the other takes Game 2. Take it in turns to play the games, but **do not** show your partner your game until you have finished playing both games.



Game 1

You are **Partner A**. Give your partner the pencils and paper. Look at the picture on the right. Your goal is to **verbally explain** how to draw this picture. Your partner must then draw the picture **without** looking at it. Make your instructions count!



Game 2

You are **Partner B**. Give your partner the pencils and paper. Read the instructions on the right **aloud**. Your partner must then draw the picture **based on** your instructions. Good luck!

- Draw a red circle in the middle.
- Now divide the circle in half with a yellow line.
- Draw a green square in the top right corner of the page.
- Draw a dark blue line that connects the bottom left corner of the square to the left end of the yellow line.
- Draw a smaller, light blue square directly underneath the green square and an even smaller, orange square underneath that one.
- Lastly, draw a purple, right-angled triangle with a hypotenuse that touches the bottom of the circle.



Draw my picture! (Teacher's copy)

Aim

Every day, we process information from many different modalities, such as pictures, sounds and words. This game is an example of multimodality in practice; the aim is for students to draw a picture based on verbal instructions from their partner.

Instructions

- Divide students into pairs.
- Give Partner A Game 1 and Partner B Game 2.
- Make sure students do not see each other's paper whilst they are playing the games (you can have them sit back to back).

Discussion

Now think about the following:

Game 1 Were there any differences between the picture given (on page 6) and what your partner drew? Why do you think that is?

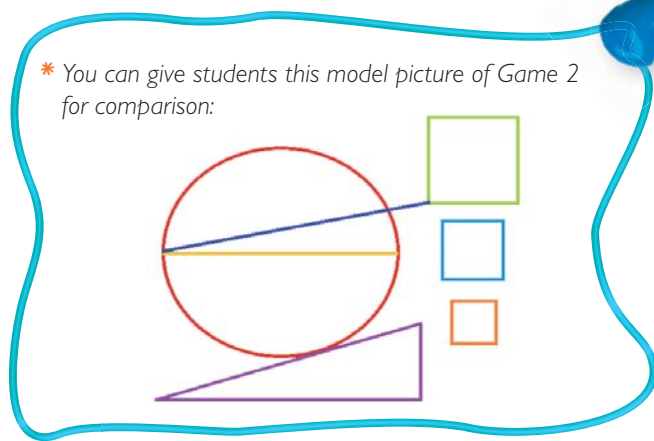
Game 2 Were there any differences between the way you imagined the picture to look and what your partner drew? Why do you think that is?

Extension activity

Game 1 Ask Partner A to compare the given picture (on page 6) with what Partner B drew. Now ask them to think how they could improve their instructions to make Partner B's drawing more accurate (possible instructions given below).

Game 2 Show Partner B the model picture of Game 2 (below), based on the given instructions (on page 6). Ask them to compare it to their partner's picture. Then, ask them to improve the given instructions (possible instructions given below).

* You can give students this model picture of Game 2 for comparison:



Possible instructions for the extension activity

Game 1

- Draw a green pentagon in the centre, **not touching the paper's edges**.
- Now draw an orange, **six-point** star in the **upper-left** corner; one of its points should touch the **upper-left** corner of the pentagon.
- Where the star touches the pentagon, you should draw a red line extending over the pentagon and past it **but not touching the paper's edge**.
- Where that line stops, add another red line to connect it back to the **bottom-right** corner of the pentagon.
- Where that red line stops, draw a purple zigzag with two peaks extending upwards **until the uppermost corner of the pentagon**.
- Now draw a light blue circle in the lower-left corner of the paper, **not touching the paper's edge or the other shapes**.
- Draw a yellow oval inside the **right-hand side** of the circle **without touching its edge**.
- Lastly, draw a dark blue ellipse inside the **right-hand side** of the oval **without touching its edge**.

Game 2

- Draw a red circle in the middle, **not touching the paper's edges**.
- Now divide the circle in half with a yellow, **horizontal** line.
- Draw a green square in the top-right corner of the page, **not touching the paper's edges**.
- Draw a dark blue, **diagonal** line that connects the bottom-left corner of the square to the left end of the yellow line.
- Draw a smaller, light blue square directly underneath the green square **but not touching it**, so that the smaller square is at around mid-level height of the circle.
- Draw an even smaller, orange square underneath that one **but not touching it**.
- Lastly, draw a purple, right-angled triangle with a hypotenuse that touches the bottom of the circle **and whose right angle is on the right-hand side of the triangle**.

* Text in bold indicates ways to improve the instructions

Watch this space

Things to look out for in the coming months



Events

Oxford HKDSE Exam Analysis Sharing Session

Our HKDSE Exam Analysis Sharing Session will be held on **5 May 2018**. Oxford University Press invites you to come and listen to expert insights on the **2018 HKDSE English exam** from education professionals, to aid you in ensuring your students' success in the next HKDSE English exams. More details to follow.

Oxford Junior Secondary English Video Competition

Hong Kong through My Eyes

Oxford University Press is holding a video competition to capture what local, junior secondary school students like most about living in Hong Kong. You will be able to vote for your favourite shortlisted videos from **24 March to 6 April 2018**. There are prizes to be had for the best copywriting, most actively participating school and the most popular video. Winners shall be notified on **20 April 2018**, with awards to follow.



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In the next issue of *Oxford Forward*

- Reflections on the 2018 HKDSE English Language Exam
- More news, interviews and students' activities

Look out for the next issue of *Oxford Forward* in June 2018

New for 2018

Oxford English (Second Edition)

Enrich your students' learning experience with **Oxford English (Second Edition)**! Offering an array of engaging topics and abundant learning resources, this enhanced course is your perfect teaching companion. **Arouse your students' interest, develop their critical thinking skills and bridge the gap** between Junior and Senior Secondary.



Oxford Essential & Oxford Advanced Exam Skills (Second Edition)

Reach for the stars with **Oxford Essential & Oxford Advanced Exam Skills (Second Edition)**!

With **fully integrated reading and writing skills, thematically linked units, Mock Tests, tutorial videos and Exam Skills Boosters**, the new edition of this comprehensive series is specially designed to help senior secondary students master the language skills and strategies they need for the HKDSE exam.



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