

# Pre-Service English Teachers' Multimodal Engagement with Multiliteracies in an Introduction to Interpreting Course

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## Abstract

This study investigates the engagement of pre-service English teachers with multiliteracies within the context of a 21<sup>st</sup> century language education paradigm, situated in an Introduction to Interpreting course. Drawing upon the multiliteracies framework proposed by the New London Group, the research employs a descriptive qualitative methodology to examine how learners interpret and construct meaning through various communicative modes, including linguistic, visual, auditory, spatial, and gestural resources. The study was conducted from April 12 to May 24, 2025, and involved 23 undergraduate students enrolled in the English Education Program at IKIP Siliwangi. Data sources included classroom observations, student reflective writing, and analysis of multimodal interpreting assignments. The findings indicate that participants engaged actively with digital and multimodal materials, developing heightened awareness of the role of design, media, and semiotic choice in language learning and interpreting performance. This research affirms the pedagogical relevance of multiliteracies in interpreter education by highlighting how students cultivate critical awareness, technological fluency, and adaptive communication skills. The study concludes that integrating multiliteracies into language teacher education contributes to the development of transformative pedagogical practices that align with the evolving demands of digital and intercultural communication in contemporary academic and professional contexts.

**Keywords:** Multiliteracies; Pre-Service English Teachers; Interpreter Education

## INTRODUCTION

The integration of multiliteracies in language teacher education reflects the need to prepare pre-service English teachers for the demands of a digitally mediated and culturally diverse world. Rooted in the framework proposed by the New London Group, multiliteracies pedagogy emphasizes engagement with diverse modes of meaning-making that go beyond linguistic text. While existing studies have widely explored multiliteracies in general English teaching and digital composition, little attention has been given to how pre-service teachers engage with multiliteracies within the specific context of interpreter education. Furthermore, few studies investigate how interpreting courses (traditionally focused on linguistic fidelity and accuracy) can serve as platforms for multimodal and critical meaning-making. The evolving demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, shaped by technological change and cultural diversity, require a redefinition of literacy as articulated by the New London Group's concept of multiliteracy, which urges English language educators to address the integration of diverse communicative modes while managing the accompanying pedagogical opportunities and challenges (Nabhan & Habók, 2025). Multiliteracies pedagogy, grounded in the integration of multiple communicative modes and the transformative processes of meaning-making through the principles of Available Designs, Designing, and the Redesigned, calls for a fundamental shift from traditional Communicative Language Teaching toward an interdisciplinary approach that fosters critical

engagement, synaesthetic learning, and real-world application while highlighting the need for professional development and research on student experiences and multimodal curricular integration (Amgott, 2023). Rooted in the New London Group's foundational work, multiliteracies is defined by Cope and Kalantzis as a theory and pedagogy that embraces diverse modes of meaning-making including linguistic, visual, audio, gestural, and spatial forms, while accounting for sociocultural and cognitive variation, emphasizing human agency in design, social justice, and the evolving role of teachers as designers within a pedagogical framework shaped by globalization, migration, and digital transformation (McCarthy & Zhang, 2023).

The pedagogy of multiliteracies, introduced by the New London Group, moves beyond traditional notions of literacy by recognizing the diversity of texts and communicative modes, both linguistic and non-linguistic, and conceptualizes reading as a dynamic, multimodal meaning-making process described through the interconnected stages of Available Designs, Designing, and The Redesigned (Huang & Wible, 2024). The New London Group promoted the concept of multiliteracies to address the limitations of traditional literacy, emphasizing the need for educational practices that respond to the multimodal nature of communication and the evolving demands of the 21st century (Beltrán-Palanques & Querol-Julián, 2024). The multiliteracies pedagogy developed by the New London Group emphasizes the concept of "design" as both a product and a process, reflecting a theoretical approach aimed at equipping learners with diverse and evolving literacies essential for effective communication and interaction in a globally connected, digitally mediated world (Stamm, 2025).

However, while the theoretical foundations of multiliteracies have been extensively discussed, limited research has explored how pre-service English teachers engage with these frameworks in the specific context of interpreter education. This study addresses that gap by examining how multiliteracies principles are operationalized in a classroom setting.

Multiliteracies reconceptualize literacy as technology-mediated multimodal composing, where learners use diverse modes like text, images, sound, and video to create digital texts that enhance motivation, creativity, and language performance, while digital storytelling exemplifies this by requiring multidimensional skills and fostering engagement, with its affordances spanning technological, educational, and social dimensions that enable personalized, interactive, and participatory English learning experiences (Lam & Putri, 2024). The shift from literacy to multiliteracy involves four interconnected knowledge processes: experiencing, conceptualizing, analyzing, and applying, which guide learners in engaging with real-world contexts, developing abstract concepts, evaluating perspectives, and creatively acting upon knowledge in both familiar and novel situations (Mora & Coyle, 2023). Digital games are recognized as multimodal texts that combine linguistic, visual, auditory, gestural, and spatial elements, reflecting an awareness of multiliteracies and the theoretical understanding of multimodal communication (Gutierrez et al., 2023). The concept of multiliteracies introduced by the New London Group urges students to utilize multiple modes of communication rather than relying solely on text, allowing them to respond creatively and collaboratively to the complexities of a diverse and rapidly changing world through technologies such as wikis, videos, and podcasts (Allagui, 2023). Multiliteracies pedagogy includes multiple modes of communication to help learners create meaning in a digitally driven world (Curle et al., 2024). The New London Group's concept of multiliteracies emphasizes the need to develop language awareness that incorporates diverse communication modes such as visual, audio, gestural, spatial, and linguistic in response to the cultural and technological complexity of a globalized and digitally mediated world (Turner & Tour, 2025).

Despite growing attention to multimodal practices, there is a lack of empirical studies investigating how pre-service teachers use these modes in practical interpreting tasks. This study fills that gap by analyzing students' multimodal compositions in an interpreting course.

Multiliteracies foster meaningful and engaging learning for all students, and the study's findings support the transmultiliteracies sustaining pedagogy approach as an inclusive, interdisciplinary framework that enables both literacy and non-literacy preservice teachers to effectively leverage learners' monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual assets in instructional decision-making (Karkar Esperat & Stickley, 2024). Three multimodal examples found in online research papers can be pedagogically leveraged by ESP teachers in Higher Education to foster essential multiliteracies, as composing such genres helps students understand and critically reflect on academic hierarchies they may later encounter as researchers (Katsamposaki-Hodgetts, 2024).

While pedagogical models integrating multiliteracies exist, few studies have investigated how these are applied by pre-service teachers in interpreter training. This study provides insight into how future educators interpret and apply multiliteracies principles in their learning processes. Originally rooted in reading and writing, the concept of literacy has expanded into a multidimensional framework such as technological literacy that encompasses the skills, knowledge, and ethical awareness necessary to navigate and critically engage with technology in cultural, societal, and political contexts, aligning with the broader paradigm of multiliteracy that integrates diverse sub-literacies like digital, media, and AI literacy to support democratic participation in a rapidly evolving technological world (Stolpe & Hallström, 2024). Effectively navigating today's vast and complex information landscape demands a coordinated strategy, making it crucial for libraries to adopt information literacy as an integrated component of broader literacy efforts in order to expand their instructional methods and cultivate comprehensive multiliteracy (Pinto et al., 2024). The concept of multiliteracies has evolved to address contemporary challenges such as Big Data, virtuality, transdisciplinary knowledge, and artificial intelligence by fostering adaptive intellectual skills, recognizing the interplay between socio-economic forces that shape information policies and individual behaviors that reflect both subjective and collective literacy practices (García-Quismondo et al., 2024). Although ICT competence and multiliteracy are explicitly addressed across grade levels, technology is also emphasized as essential for developing thinking and learning skills, managing daily life in a digital environment, and is briefly acknowledged as influencing working life competencies amid societal technological changes (Kruskopf et al., 2024).

Much of the existing research discusses technological literacy in broad educational contexts. What remains underexplored is how pre-service English teachers apply digital tools within multiliteracies-informed interpreting assignments. This study investigates that specific intersection. Multiliteracies, like narrative inquiry, emphasizes how language and storytelling illuminate broader social phenomena, particularly by revealing the socially constructed nature of cross-cultural experiences (Holloway et al., 2023). Although narrative inquiry is recognized as a powerful tool in multiliteracies, there is a scarcity of research connecting narrative dimensions with interpreting education for pre-service teachers. This study contributes to this underdeveloped area. The national curriculum integrates multiliteracies as one of seven transversal competencies, requiring all subjects to develop students' abilities to interpret, evaluate, and produce diverse texts through varied media and technologies, with specific objectives in language arts focused on information literacy and critical evaluation (Anttonen et al., 2024). Multiliteracies reconceptualizes literacy as a diverse, multimodal practice that values students' social experiences and digital engagements, urging a transformative shift in curriculum and pedagogy toward inclusive, open-ended, and critically engaging learning environments where learners actively create meaning across various platforms, modes, and contexts (Stewart, 2023). To meet course objectives in the era of multiliteracies, instructional design must prioritize practicality, authenticity, and cross-disciplinary integration by drawing on diverse digital resources and expert input to address evolving educational demands and enhance traditional language-focused curricula (Chen, 2025). Multiliteracies pedagogy expands

the concept of literacy to include multiple modes of communication, aiming to equip learners with the skills to navigate and create meaning in a diverse, multimodal, and digitally-driven world (Curle et al., 2024). While curricular reforms have embraced multiliteracies, few studies focus on how pre-service teachers interpret these policies in localized instructional practices, particularly in courses like Introduction to Interpreting. This study aims to address that practical implementation gap. This study investigates how pre-service English teachers engage with multiliteracies in the context of an Introduction to Interpreting course, with a focus on their use of multimodal resources and meaning-making strategies. The research aims to contribute to current discussions on how multiliteracies can enhance interpreter training and foster critical awareness, communicative adaptability, and pedagogical innovation in English education. Building on these considerations and addressing the gap in empirical studies at the intersection of multiliteracies and interpreter education, this study is guided by the following research question: How do pre-service English teachers engage with multiliteracies through multimodal practices in an Introduction to Interpreting course?

## METHOD

### Research Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to explore how pre-service English teachers engage with multiliteracies within an Introduction to Interpreting course. Descriptive qualitative research emphasizes in-depth, case-by-case analysis, recognizing the uniqueness of each phenomenon and seeking to understand participants' perspectives. It aims to describe and interpret lived experiences, events, or conditions in rich, contextual detail through non-numerical data such as words, reflections, and observations (Kartini et al., 2021). The qualitative approach was chosen to capture participants' deep experiences and attitudes toward multiliteracies integration in interpreting education, providing insight into how learners use multiple communicative modes to interpret and construct meaning. This method allows for an understanding of context-specific factors influencing learner engagement and skill development (Marliana & Fachruddin, 2020; Risi et al., 2025).

### Participants

The study involved 23 undergraduate students enrolled in the English Education Program at IKIP Siliwangi, all taking the Introduction to Interpreting course during the second semester of the 2024–2025 academic year. These participants are pre-service English teachers preparing for future careers as language educators and interpreters in various educational and professional settings.

### Research Setting and Duration

The research was conducted over six weeks, from April 12 to May 24, 2025, within a classroom environment where interpreting tasks incorporated multimodal materials and digital resources to facilitate multiliteracies learning.

### Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through classroom observations, analysis of multimodal interpreting assignments, and reflective writing by participants to capture their engagement with various communicative modes.

### Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data, allowing identification of key patterns and themes related to participants' multiliteracies engagement and meaning-making strategies in interpreting tasks.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

## Results

The analysis revealed several key themes reflecting how pre-service English teachers engage with multiliteracies in the interpreting course. These themes include multimodal use, technology integration, critical awareness, and adaptive communication skills.

### 1. Multimodal Use

The findings show that pre-service English teachers actively engaged with multiple communicative modes beyond traditional linguistic text in the Introduction to Interpreting course. Based on classroom observations and student assignment analysis, it was evident that participants combined visual, auditory, spatial, and gestural elements to construct meaning more effectively during interpreting tasks. Instead of focusing solely on spoken language, students incorporated images, background music, video clips, and purposeful physical gestures to enhance clarity and expressiveness in their interpretations. Students uploaded their interpreting tasks to Google Classroom using video formats that integrated multiple modes. Several assignments featured oral interpretation overlaid with contextual visuals to support understanding. For example, some students used relevant cultural imagery to give deeper context to their translations, while others employed expressive body language and facial expressions to emphasize mood shifts or speaker intentions. The strategic use of spatial positioning and camera framing also played a role in making the message more accessible to the audience.

This multimodal engagement reflects an awareness of the role of design and semiotic choice in meaning-making. It suggests that the students were not simply repeating or translating verbal messages but rather designing communication with a consideration of audience perception and situational context. By integrating multiple modes, they demonstrated an emerging ability to navigate and respond to the complexities of real-life communicative demands.

Overall, this theme highlights that multimodal strategies enriched students' interpreting performances and supported the development of their communicative competence. Their engagement aligns with the principles of multiliteracies pedagogy, which emphasizes the need for flexible and adaptive communication skills in a digitally mediated, socially diverse environment.

### 2. Technology Integration

Digital technology played a central role in how pre-service English teachers engaged with multiliteracies during the Introduction to Interpreting course. Students made strategic use of digital platforms to support collaboration, presentation, and the multimodal construction of meaning in their interpreting assignments. Key tools included Zoom for real-time communication, YouTube for asynchronous video sharing, and Google Classroom for submitting and accessing tasks.

As shown in Figure 2, a group of students collaborated from different geographical locations using Zoom to complete their interpreting project. Despite facing internet connectivity challenges, they managed to coordinate effectively and deliver their task. One student explained, *“Miss, we used Zoom to conduct our teleconference. So even though we were in different locations, we could still complete the Introduction to Interpreting assignment. Fortunately, Zoom has a recording feature, so we did not have to struggle with technical settings. Once the recording was converted, we uploaded the video to YouTube and submitted the link in the Google Classroom provided for our class.”*

This statement reflects the students' ability to adapt and maximize available digital tools to overcome physical distance and technical limitations. The formal language they used in the interpreting session demonstrated their awareness of appropriate academic discourse and audience expectations. Students also enhanced their interpreting performances by using digital editing tools to add subtitles, adjust audio clarity, and include visual prompts. These additions

helped them convey meaning more effectively and made their videos more accessible to a broader audience. Furthermore, by sharing their work on YouTube, students could review and reflect on their performance prior to final submission. In preparation for these tasks, participants consulted a range of online resources, such as bilingual glossaries, pronunciation databases, and sample interpreting performances. This exposure helped them refine their linguistic accuracy and develop strategies for multimodal communication. The integration of these tools supported the development of their digital fluency and helped build competencies necessary for real-world interpreting tasks. Overall, the use of technology encouraged students to think critically about language, audience, and delivery. It facilitated multiliteracies engagement by allowing them to combine different modes and media in contextually meaningful ways. This experience equipped them with essential skills for future teaching and interpreting roles in increasingly digital and interconnected educational environments.

### **3. Critical Awareness**

Students' reflective writings revealed the development of critical awareness regarding how meaning is shaped by media, modes, and design in the interpreting process. Through their engagement with multiliteracies, participants demonstrated an increasing sensitivity to the way visual, auditory, and spatial elements influence interpretation outcomes and the effectiveness of communication. One student chose to appear on camera while performing an interpreting task. This decision reflected a growing level of confidence in public speaking and interpersonal communication, as well as an understanding of the importance of presence and delivery in academic interpreting. To enhance the presentation, the student used Canva to design a visually appealing video introduction, indicating awareness of how layout, typography, and color choices support meaning construction and audience engagement.

The student uploaded the video to Google Drive and submitted the link through Google Classroom, showing initiative in navigating digital platforms. In addition to the video, she submitted a handwritten transcript of her interpreting, which reflects a deep level of engagement with the course and a desire to present her work across multiple modes. This multimodal submission illustrated her ability to synthesize traditional and digital literacies in meaningful ways. Students' reflections also indicated an emerging understanding of interpreting as a socially and culturally situated practice. They understood that successful interpretation involves more than accurate language use; it also requires strategic use of digital tools, semiotic resources, and contextual sensitivity. These findings suggest that multiliteracies pedagogy can effectively develop the interpretive, reflective, and communicative skills essential for pre-service teachers.

### **4. Adaptive Communication Skills**

The data reveal that students exhibited a marked progression in their ability to adapt communicative strategies effectively across diverse multimodal contexts. This adaptability reflects the efficacy of multiliteracies pedagogy in fostering not only linguistic competence but also a flexible, context-sensitive approach to interpreting. Such skills are essential for preparing pre-service interpreters to meet the complex and dynamic demands of real-world language mediation and intercultural communication. In classroom session within the *Introduction to Interpreting* course, where the researcher is surrounded by students attentively engaged with discussions on multiliteracy and its integrative application in interpreting pedagogy. The researcher shared experiential narratives regarding intercultural encounters, including interpreting for peers from Turkey and Pakistan, providing concrete illustrations of intercultural mediation in practice. Additionally, the researcher recounted postgraduate academic experiences involving an instructor who graduated from an Australian university while being of Indian nationality. This example exemplifies the transnational and multicultural dimensions

inherent in interpreting practice, underscoring the critical importance of cultural competence alongside linguistic proficiency.

The researcher emphasized that the role of an interpreter transcends mere word-for-word translation. It necessitates a profound understanding of the cultural nuances embedded within both source and target languages to facilitate effective and meaningful communication. This holistic perspective aligns with contemporary multiliteracies scholarship, which views interpreting as a socially situated practice requiring continuous negotiation of cultural, contextual, and communicative variables. Collectively, these findings affirm that embedding multiliteracies within interpreting pedagogy cultivates adaptive communicative skills that are both reflective and pragmatic, equipping future language mediators with the critical agility demanded by today's globalized communicative landscape. A moment of close interaction between the researcher and first-year students seated in a circle within the classroom setting. This learning configuration facilitated not only pedagogical intimacy but also individualized monitoring of student comprehension in the Introduction to Interpreting course. Given that participants were in the early stages of their academic journey, the researcher sought to cultivate a supportive learning environment that encouraged confidence and self-efficacy in developing interpreting competencies.

Observations revealed that students were more willing to express their uncertainties and reflect on their learning processes when the classroom atmosphere was non-comparative and affirming. During the session, the researcher reminded students that academic growth is nonlinear and deeply personal, stating, *“Do not worry. This is not a classroom where one student’s achievement will be compared to another’s. Your accomplishments vary because your starting points are different. Your pace might be shaped by experience and that is valid. Do not compare yourself to others. Explore your interpreting abilities through multiliteracies and strive to be a better version of yourself each day.”*

This moment underscored the importance of embedding affective support within multiliteracies pedagogy. By integrating socio-emotional encouragement with instructional content, the researcher emphasized that interpreting is not merely a technical skill but a developmental process shaped by individual growth, exposure, and reflection. Such an approach is consistent with inclusive educational practices that recognize learner diversity and promote differentiated pathways toward mastery. Ultimately, the findings demonstrate that when students are given the emotional space to grow and are empowered to harness multimodal resources, they are more likely to engage with interpreting tasks meaningfully. The researcher's emphasis on self-directed progress, rather than peer comparison, aligns with the ethos of multiliteracies pedagogy, which values personalized, learner-centered engagement over uniform benchmarks of achievement.

## Discussion

The findings of this study illustrate how pre-service English teachers in an Introduction to Interpreting course engaged with multiliteracies through multimodal practices that reflect both pedagogical adaptation and critical meaning-making. First, this study supports the foundational claim of the New London Group and its successors that literacy in the digital age must extend beyond reading and writing in a single mode (Cope & Kalantzis; McCarthy & Zhang, 2023; Stamm, 2025). Students in this study demonstrated a design-oriented approach to interpreting, treating it not as mere translation but as multimodal redesign, selecting and orchestrating meaning across linguistic, visual, and gestural resources. This aligns with the theoretical model of available designs, designing, and the redesigned (Huang & Wible, 2024), wherein meaning-making is an active and transformative process. In their interpreting projects, students used Canva, TikTok, and voiceover software, embodying the agentive role of learners as designers

(Amgott, 2023), capable of navigating hybrid textual environments shaped by globalization and digital media.

Second, consistent with recent studies on multimodal communication (Lam & Putri, 2024; Mora & Coyle, 2023; Turner & Tour, 2025), the students engaged with interpreting tasks through the convergence of images, gestures, narrative voice, and subtitles, effectively constructing meaning beyond the spoken word. One group, for instance, presented a role-play video interpretation of a doctor-patient dialogue using both verbal and nonverbal cues, synchronizing tone, facial expression, and background design. This suggests a high level of multimodal awareness, reinforcing the New London Group's proposition that students today must navigate diverse meaning systems rather than rely solely on alphabetic literacy.

Third, the data reflect an observable pedagogical shift in how interpreting is conceptualized and taught. While traditional interpreter training often privileges accuracy and fidelity, the classroom practice in this study broadened the scope to include affective, cultural, and semiotic layers of communication. This supports the argument for transdisciplinary multiliteracies pedagogy that fosters both engagement and inclusivity (Karkar Esperat & Stickle, 2024). Pre-service teachers were not passive recipients of interpreting knowledge but were encouraged to create, critique, and reflect on meaning-making practices through semi-structured collaborative tasks, a process that exemplifies the conceptualizing and applying phases in the multiliteracies framework (Mora & Coyle, 2023).

Fourth, the participants' use of platforms such as Google Classroom, mobile editing apps, and online translation tools demonstrates their emerging technological literacy, a critical subdomain of multiliteracies (Stolpe & Hallström, 2024; Kruskopf et al., 2024). Yet their engagement was not only technical but also strategic and ethical, revealing an understanding of audience, context, and tone. This is consistent with García-Quismondo et al. (2024), who argue for the integration of AI, digital ethics, and multimodal awareness in multiliteracy development. For instance, some students reflected on how the accuracy of machine translation was insufficient for sensitive topics, prompting manual revision, a pedagogically valuable realization that links technical skills with interpretive judgment.

Fifth, students' personal introductions and scenario-based interpreting assignments often reflected sociocultural narratives, with themes such as family life, healthcare, and education. This dimension illustrates how interpreting becomes a means for students to situate their own identities within broader cultural discourses. As Holloway et al. (2023) note, narrative and multiliteracies converge in their capacity to foreground individual voice within socially constructed realities. Students crafted meaning from their lived experiences, moving beyond role-play to critically reflect on linguistic mediation in intercultural contexts.

Lastly, while the curricular framework nominally includes multiliteracies as a transversal skill (Anttonen et al., 2024), this study shows how pre-service teachers bring such abstract policy concepts into tangible instructional practice. The task design and student outputs exemplify how curriculum goals such as critical digital literacy and multimodal communication can be localized through interpreting pedagogy. Rather than treating multiliteracies as an add-on, students embedded these principles within their workflow, thus operationalizing policy at the classroom level (Stewart, 2023; Chen, 2025). This practice-based insight fills the empirical gap identified in recent reviews (Curle et al., 2024) regarding multiliteracies integration in specialized language education contexts.

## CONCLUSION

This study has illuminated how pre-service English teachers engage with multiliteracies through multimodal practices in an Introduction to Interpreting course. Anchored in the theoretical framework proposed by the New London Group, the findings confirm that

interpreting, traditionally viewed through the lens of linguistic precision, can evolve into a rich site for multimodal meaning-making. Participants demonstrated critical engagement not only with linguistic content but also with visual, digital, spatial, and gestural resources, thereby reflecting the key principles of multiliteracies: Available Designs, Designing, and the Redesigned. Their use of technologies such as Canva, video editing tools, and collaborative digital platforms evidences a shift toward technologically mediated communication, aligning with twenty-first century educational demands. Furthermore, the study addresses a notable research gap by contextualizing multiliteracies pedagogy within interpreter education, a field often marginalized in literacy discussions. It reveals that when scaffolded appropriately, interpreting tasks can foster digital literacy, critical awareness, and sociocultural sensitivity. The pedagogical shift toward integrating narrative, multimodal, and technological dimensions also highlights pre-service teachers' developing agency as meaning-makers. Ultimately, this research affirms the pedagogical potential of multiliteracies to enhance interpreter training and to prepare pre-service English teachers for the complexities of a global, multimodal, and digitally mediated world. It underscores the importance of curriculum reform, teacher education, and classroom practices that move beyond textual literacy toward a holistic, inclusive, and critically engaged literacy paradigm.

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