

Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching

Department of English Studies, Faculty of Pedagogy and Fine Arts, Adam Mickiewicz University, Kalisz

SSLT 16 (3). 2026. 541-571. Published online: 27.07.2026

<https://doi.org/10.14746/ssl.53849>

<http://pressto.amu.edu.pl/index.php/ssl>

The impact of instruction on English as a foreign language high school students' articulation of argumentative multimodal PowerPoint presentations

Rosa E. Martínez González

University of Murcia, Spain

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9573-2153>

rosaesperanza.martinez@um.es

Yvette Coyle ✉

University of Murcia, Spain

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3961-6131>

ycogle@um.es

Pedro Férrez Mora

University of Murcia, Spain

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7535-1687>

paferez@um.es

Abstract

This study examines the impact of multiliteracies pedagogy (MP) on the multimodal argumentative compositions of three focal 12- to 13-year-old students from intact mainstream English as a foreign language (EFL) classrooms in an ethnically diverse high school in Spain. Working from the premise that in content-focused education, learning-to-write and writing-to-learn are inseparable dimensions of second language (L2) learning and teaching, our study explores multimodal composing as a central site of L2 development. Before and after a four-week film-based instructional intervention, the students designed multimodal PowerPoint presentations on the sensitive issue of arranged marriage. Their

pre- and posttest multimodal compositions were analyzed to identify structural, linguistic, and ideational improvements. The results revealed differing degrees of progress in the quality of students' multimodal products, particularly in their incorporation of features of the argumentative genre, in their use of linguistic resources, and in their ability to combine semiotic resources to construct a more nuanced understanding of the topic. Pedagogical implications are suggested.

Keywords: multimodal composing; argumentative genre; multiliteracies pedagogy; EFL; high school

1. Introduction

The development of writing in a second language (L2) or foreign language (FL) occupies a central place in high school education, not only as a communicative skill but as a fundamental means of knowledge development. In school contexts where language and curricular content are taught simultaneously, “learning-to-write” and “writing-to-learn-language” (Manchón, 2011) cannot be construed separately. Rather, they constitute two inseparable dimensions of the same phenomenon since “educational knowledge itself occurs at the intersection of language, learning and knowledge” (Byrnes, 2011, p. 147). From this perspective, L2 writing supports knowledge development when learners use their L2 resources to express increasingly complex meanings, organize their ideas coherently, and align their texts with socially recognized genres. Learning to write in the L2 is, therefore, considered a process conducive to language development, as learners can gradually expand their control over vocabulary, grammar, and discourse structures through the act of composing. At the same time, L2 writing provides a space for engaging with content, allowing learners to articulate positions and develop understanding through language. Argumentative writing represents a demanding context for this dual process. Constructing an argument requires learners to formulate claims, develop reasoning, incorporate evidence, and consider alternative perspectives, making argumentation a powerful site for knowledge construction and L2 development (Schleppegrell, 2004).

The increasing use of digital technologies in educational contexts requires us to broaden our research agenda beyond monomodal writing to consider multimodal communication. This shift allows us to focus on how language interacts with other semiotic resources in the communication and representation of knowledge. While research on L2 argumentative writing has received considerable attention (e.g., Crossley et al., 2022), less is known about how learners develop argumentative competence in digital multimodal formats, particularly in secondary school FL contexts. Available research on argumentative digital multimodal

composing has approached the topic from different angles. Studies have focused on learners' engagement in the composing process (Cheung, 2022; Kim & Kang, 2020; Tan, 2023), and on the impact of multimodal composing on L2 writing development (Kim et al., 2023). However, these studies have given comparatively little attention to learners' ideational development or to their ability to construct effective arguments, dimensions that are central to a meaning-making, genre-based approach to L2 literacy development. The present study addresses these gaps by examining the impact of film-based multiliteracies pedagogy (MP) on multimodal argumentative composing among high school students, who are learners of English as a foreign language (EFL). In doing so, we contribute to research on L2 learning and teaching by providing empirical evidence on multimodal argumentation as a site where L2 learning and knowledge development intersect in an EFL classroom.

2. Literature review

In what follows, we first examine multimodal composing as a site for L2 language learning, highlighting ongoing debates regarding its potential for supporting language development. We then outline the key principles of multiliteracies theory as the study's theoretical framework before reviewing selected research on multimodal argumentation.

2.1. Multimodal composing as a site for L2 learning

Despite the proliferation of research into digital multimodal composing (DMC) in recent years, some L2 scholars have raised concerns about the extent to which it can meaningfully contribute to language development. These concerns focus on the status of language within DMC and the risk that learners' attention to linguistic form, regarded as essential for L2 development, may be reduced by increased attention to other semiotic resources (Qu, 2017). Manchón (2017), for instance, has argued that for multimodal writing to be genuinely beneficial for L2 learning, it must entail a substantive demand for formulation, that is, a sustained effort to transform meaning into language. To date, research addressing this issue, primarily in university settings, remains uneven (Manchón, 2026). Importantly, in school contexts where the simultaneous development of content knowledge and L2 learning is a central pedagogical goal, the role of multimodal composing in supporting this integration has not been sufficiently examined. Against this backdrop, a multiliteracies perspective offers a productive theoretical framework for reconceptualizing the role of multimodal composing in L2 development.

2.2. Multiliteracies theory

This study takes as a starting point the conceptualization of L2 literacy as a process that is situated, social and multimodal (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001; New London Group, 1996). Underpinning multiliteracies theory is the pedagogical concept of *learning by design* (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). Multimodal communication is regarded as an act of design and the learner is viewed as a dynamic agent in this process (New London Group, 1996). Students make meaning from available designs, including film, books, music, and other texts, through discussion, reflection, and analysis. The comprehension and interpretation of different types of texts enable learners to apply recently acquired knowledge and skills to the production of new meanings. In this way, text production is not reduced to the mere practice of linguistic forms but becomes a dynamic and creative meaning-making process. Enacting this notion in literacy instruction requires the activation of four key knowledge processes: “experiencing,” “conceptualizing,” “analyzing,” and “applying” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). “Experiencing” involves reflecting on prior knowledge and experience to explore new situations, ideas, and perspectives in the world. “Conceptualizing” requires explicit analysis and theorizing from target language sources. It involves building content knowledge, learning topic-related vocabulary, recognizing language patterns, and engaging in controlled practice of lexicogrammatical resources. “Analyzing,” in turn, consists of thinking critically about ideas and concepts and their linguistic representation in particular social contexts, while “applying” prompts students to use their content and L2 knowledge in a new situation, thereby fostering their own transformation or learning. Collectively, these processes encourage students to move beyond passive knowledge reception, positioning them as active creators of meaning. Adopting multiliteracies pedagogy, therefore, reframes FL teaching as a practice in which students are guided to engage critically and creatively with different types of multimodal texts (Paesani & Menke, 2023), thus expanding their linguistic repertoires while simultaneously deepening their understanding of content. By interpreting, analyzing, and redesigning texts, learners “accomplish *the central task in writing, that of linking meaning and wording in extended texts*” (Byrnes, 2011, p. 135). Writing, therefore, is not merely a means of showcasing knowledge but a central mechanism through which knowledge is developed.

2.3. Multimodal argumentation

Bringing together the learning-to-write and writing-to-learn agendas, the focus in the present study is on the development of students’ content knowledge, L2

learning, and argumentative competence through the creation of a multimodal presentation. Drawing on genre perspectives, argumentation is defined as the process of making claims and using evidence and reasoning to support them (Rose & Martin, 2012). Arguments have been classified into *expositions*, which present only one point of view, and *discussions* that present opposing sides of an argument (Rose & Martin, 2012). In both cases, they include identifiable genre features and lexicogrammatical resources that need to be carefully chosen and structured to align with the target audience. The language of arguments includes the use of generalized participants (e.g., women) or issues (e.g., smoking) and an impersonal tone. Lexical choices include evaluative vocabulary to express attitude and opinion and modality (e.g., “should,” “must”) (Brisk, 2015). Although argumentation skills are essential for personal and academic success, students of all ages often face difficulties in constructing valid arguments, articulating sound reasons, weighing contradictory evidence, and expressing their ideas in a logical, orderly, and coherent manner. Instruction in articulating the argumentative genre is therefore necessary.

While numerous studies have documented the effects of instruction in argumentative writing in pen-and-paper contexts (e.g., Garro Larrañaga et al., 2024), instruction in multimodal argumentation, especially through the lens of social justice, is underexplored. The exceptions are two case studies of bilingual high school students in the United States that have described students' multimodal argumentation on socially relevant topics (Shin, 2018; Shin et al., 2020). In both cases, the authors provide insights into the students' evaluative position through their carefully crafted use of image, text, color, and sound in intermodal relationships of concurrence and complementarity (Unsworth, 2006). However, in-depth analyses of the genre structure and linguistic features of their multimodal arguments were not documented and the full impact of the instructional sessions on the students' multimodal argumentation could not be determined. A related line of research has approached multimodal argumentation from critical perspectives on L2 language and literacy learning. In a multiple case study with Chinese undergraduates, Jiang (2021) identified different forms of digital activism in student-authored multimodal videos. These students also participated in a series of workshops on script writing, video editing and scene planning prior to the production of their multimodal presentations. However, in the absence of a pre-instructional task, it is difficult to determine the extent to which the observed outcomes can be related to the instructional intervention, as opposed to reflecting participants' prior knowledge, motivation, or familiarity with the multimodal task format. Given the lack of empirical evidence on the relationship between instruction and the language and content-learning potential of students' multimodal arguments, this study asks the following research question:

How does film-based multiliteracies instruction support EFL high school students' development of multimodal argumentation, ideationally, structurally, and linguistically?

3. Method

3.1. Context and participants

The educational context for the study was three intact first-year EFL classes in a state-funded, ethnically diverse high school in Spain. The students, aged 12 and 13, included learners from Spain (22%), North Africa (30%), South America (30%) and Europe (18%), some of whom had learning difficulties, disruptive behavior, or personal problems. The students received four hours of weekly English instruction in which their teacher (the first researcher) followed an English language textbook that emphasized grammar and vocabulary. Given the low levels of proficiency in the group, Spanish was occasionally used to clarify key concepts, and the development of comprehension skills was emphasized more than speaking and writing. Students were assigned as low proficiency (LP) ($N = 40$), average proficiency (AP) ($N = 7$) or high proficiency (HP) ($N = 3$) based on their Cambridge Flyers test scores. Written permission to participate in the study was obtained from parents or guardians, and the study was approved by the university's ethics board.

A multiple case study design (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) was adopted to gain deeper insights into potential changes in students' multimodal products and to establish connections, where possible, with the instruction they received. Through the study of carefully selected cases, we engaged in a fine-grained analysis of rich, contextualized learner data that would be difficult to capture with a large-scale, quantitative design, thus offering meaningful insights into classroom practices and observed outcomes. Through purposeful sampling (Patton, 2001), three focal students, one girl and two boys, representing low, average, and high proficiency levels and different ethnic backgrounds (Spanish, Arabic, and South American) were selected for analysis. These students also showed different levels of interest and behavior in English classes and had varying out-of-school experiences with technology. These profiles enabled an in-depth examination of different learner trajectories and allowed us to establish comparisons across cases. Information on the participants (all names are pseudonyms) is provided below.

Maria was 12 years old and born in Spain. Her level of English proficiency was higher than most other students in her year, as indicated by her score on the Cambridge Flyers test, which was above 60%. She demonstrated positive classroom behavior, participating actively in class and completing her assignments on

time. Maria enjoyed learning English. At home, she had access to a computer, which she used exclusively for schoolwork. Her preferred device was her phone, which she used mostly with social media apps like TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp.

Badr was 12 years old. Born in Algiers, he had been living in Spain for four years at the time of the study. At home, he spoke Arabic and French with his family. He had an average level of English proficiency and scored 49% on the Cambridge Flyers test. In class, he showed a moderate interest in learning English. He reported having a computer at home, which he mainly used for watching videos. His preferred devices were his PlayStation and his phone, which he used for over eight hours every day.

Kevin was 13 years old. He was born in Colombia but moved to Spain at the age of ten. He had failed English the previous year and lacked the proficiency level expected for the first year of secondary education. Only 2% of his answers on the Cambridge Flyers test were correct. In class, he struggled to maintain motivation. He reported not having a computer at home, although he used one at school for class assignments. His preferred device was his PlayStation console, which he used regularly.

3.2. Multiliteracies film-based instruction

The teaching intervention consisted of a four-week unit comprising 12 lessons (three hours per week), designed around the film *Brave* (Andrews et al., 2012). Cinema is one of the most powerful and yet most underexplored resources in FL classrooms. Time constraints, coupled with a lack of training, have led teachers to regard films as time fillers rather than as a key source of multimodal input (Hobbs, 2006). Yet, cinema can provide learners with valuable opportunities to explore social, intercultural, and interpersonal themes (Sánchez-Auñón & Férez-Mora, 2021). The instructional sessions focused on the development of content knowledge and language use in the context of a real-world, social justice-related issue. The teacher aimed to foster students' L2 development and argumentative multimodal composing skills while promoting critical reflection on the topic of arranged marriage, as seen in the movie. Different film clips were selected to contextualize the dilemma facing the protagonist and to raise critical issues in the storyline. Following the four knowledge processes of MP (Cope & Kalantzis, 2016), the instructional sequence included activities related to: (a) *experiencing*: viewing and discussing the marriage scene in *Brave*; (b) *conceptualizing*: explicit teaching of argumentative genre structure, L2 features required for argumentation, socio-critical content related to diverse cultural and religious marriage traditions, and multimodal composition skills; (c) *analyzing*: comparing videos presenting arranged marriage from different perspectives; and (d) *applying*: using content, genre, L2, and multimodal knowledge for the design of an argumentative DMC.

Nine of the 12 sessions were devoted to developing socio-critical content, argumentation skills, and L2 competence, and three were devoted to multi-modal design. Since students were unfamiliar both with the topic of arranged marriage and with the argumentative genre, more instructional time was required to build content knowledge, expand relevant vocabulary, and develop the linguistic resources necessary for producing an argumentative text in the L2. The linguistic content targeted in these sessions included modal verbs ("should," "shouldn't"), topic-related lexis ("bride," "groom," "couple," "marry," "partner," "freedom," etc.), clause-combining strategies ("because"), and sequence markers ("first," "second," "in the first place," etc.). Fewer sessions were allocated to multimodal design as students could draw on their everyday digital practices despite having limited formal experience with multimodal presentations. Using the film text as evocative content, the socio-critical sessions involved reflecting on the pros and cons of arranged marriage by considering issues such as freedom of choice, personal happiness and respect for traditions. Given the diversity in the classroom, the topic was approached with sensitivity, avoiding stereotypes or moral judgments. Students were invited to reflect on the topic from the viewpoint of the film's protagonist, but also to recognize that practices differ across cultures. Multiple perspectives were included to help ensure that no students felt marginalized. Argumentative writing was scaffolded through the guided analysis of a model text, followed by controlled language exercises to practice key vocabulary, modal choices and discourse markers. Students completed sentences, filled in gaps with target words and transcribed useful expressions in their workbooks (see Figure 1 and Table 10).

"Hay ventajas y desventajas"

Arranged marriage is a practice that many cultures around the world follow. There are some advantages and disadvantages in this practice.

"Respecto a las ventajas"

"En primer lugar, algunas personas creen..."

Regarding the advantages, there are three of them. First, some people think that it can be good because you can find a partner. Second, parents help in the search of an appropriate bride or groom because they have excellent education and values for their children. Finally, they help maintain religious and cultural traditions.

"Respecto a las desventajas"

"En segundo lugar..."

Regarding the disadvantages, there are two of them. In the first place, there isn't any freedom to choose your partner based on love and compatibility because your family choose for you. In addition, many candidates feel unhappy because they are too young to marry.

"En conclusión"

"Adicionalmente"

In conclusion, although arranged marriages have pros and cons, people should have freedom to decide what they want to do.

"La gente debería..."

Figure 1 Model text with target L2 discourse markers and connectors

Multimodal instruction involved technical know-how and analysis of sample argumentative compositions to identify their strengths and weaknesses. Students were shown how to insert images, audio files, emojis, and gifs into their presentations and how to organize information (introduction, advantages, disadvantages, conclusion) creatively. They also engaged in the teacher-led construction of a collaborative presentation and identified areas for improvement (e.g., font size, relevance of images and sound, information layout). This analysis led students to reflect on the quality of the structure, content, and ideas in the presentations and on their multimodal delivery.

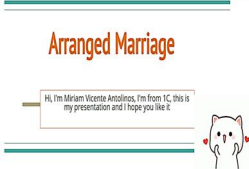
3.3. Data collection

Data for the study consisted of students' multimodal compositions as well as audio recordings of classroom sessions and all instructional materials. Prior to and following instruction, the students individually produced a DMC on the topic of arranged marriage. On both occasions, the task prompt stated: *In the film Brave, Merida's parents try to force her to marry against her will. In your opinion, what are the advantages and disadvantages of arranged marriages?* PowerPoint was chosen for the task since it was used in other school subjects. Both the pretest and posttest tasks were completed at home. Students were given one week to finish the task, which they sent to the teacher by email. While the possibility of parental assistance or consultation of earlier work could be considered a limitation, out-of-class assignments are a standard feature of schooling (thereby increasing the ecological validity of the study) and are common in multimodal composing studies (Manchón, 2026).

3.4. Data analysis

The pretest and posttest multimodal compositions of the three focal students were first examined to obtain an overall picture of their use of modal resources. Mode was operationalized as a "meaning-making resource that includes processes such as writing, sound, images, layout, and videos" (Shin, 2018, p. 226) and multimodal transcripts for each student's pretest and posttest compositions were created (see Table 1). The transcripts enabled us to synthesize the written, visual, and auditory modes in a single document and to perform intermodal analyses of written text, images, and sound. The comparison of the multimodal transcripts allowed us to identify features of L2 use, the total number of words and slides produced between the pretest and posttest, and the presence of visual and auditory elements.

Table 1 Example of a pretest multimodal transcript

Slide	Linguistic mode	Visual mode	Aural mode	Intermodal relationship
1	Title "Arranged marriage" Hi, I'm Maria I'm from 1C this is my presentation and I hope you like it		No	Projection. The cat GIF shows awareness of the audience and use of personal voice.

An in-depth examination of the pretest and posttest PowerPoints was then carried out on interrelated levels. To analyze the argumentative structure of the students' multimodal compositions, we adapted the coding scheme used by Qin and Karabacak (2010), including elements from their model (*claim* and *counterclaim*), but dividing their broad category of *data* (evidence to support a claim) into *reasons* and *evidence* for a more fine-grained analysis (see Table 2).

Table 2 Features of the argumentative genre

Genre feature	Definition	Example
Introduction	Opening statement to contextualize the topic	"Arranged marriage is a social practice where the parents choose the partner for their children."
Claim	Writer's point of view on the topic	"In my opinion arranged marriage should not be mandatory."
Reasons	Reasons that are stated to support the writer's point of view	"You have the right to marry whoever you want."
Evidence	Examples, facts, personal experiences that support the claim	"In the movie Brave, Merida is sad because she does not want to get married."
Counterclaim	Opposing points of view that challenge the writer's position	"Maybe you can get rich."
Conclusion	Summary of the main ideas and repetition of the main argument	"In conclusion: Love is beautiful but not if it is forced."

Second, students' L2 output was examined using a functional language framework (Fang & Wang, 2011) (see Table 3). This allowed us to identify the lexicogrammatical resources students used to communicate content (generalized participants, processes, and technical lexis), to organize the text (clause types, cohesion devices), and to adopt a personal stance toward the topic (modality and appraisal resources).

Third, we engaged in an intermodal analysis of the products using Unsworth's (2006) notions of concurrence, complementarity, and projection. Concurrence referred to instances of ideational equivalence between different modes (e.g., between text and images or between text and sound). This occurred, for instance, when a student made a textual reference to the movie *Brave* and included an image

of the protagonist. Complementarity referred to cases in which modes conveyed distinct but compatible meanings, with one mode adding information that extended the other (e.g., a neutral definition of arranged marriage accompanied by an image of a bridal couple chained together, which added a negative perspective that expanded the textual information). Projection referred to the reporting of speech or thoughts when students directly addressed the reader.

Table 3 Functional language analysis

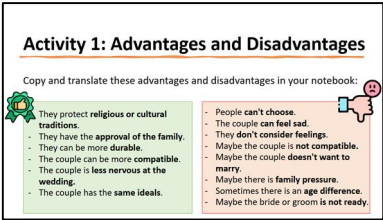
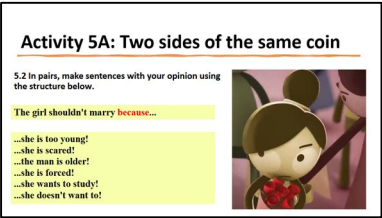
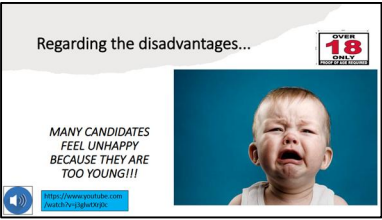
Writing components	Functional language strategy	Language features and examples
Content	Participants	Nouns groups ("young people," "parents") and topic-specific lexis ("marriage," "freedom," "religion")
	Processes	Existential ("is"); relational ("has," "seems"); mental ("think," "believe"); and material ("marry," "choose") verbs
Organization	Clause types	Simple ("Arranged marriage limits freedom") Coordinate ("Some people agree with arranged marriage and others disagree") Subordinate ("Many people disagree with arranged marriage because it limits personal freedom") Complex ("Arranged marriage is a type of union where the couple is selected by other people and they are unhappy")
	Cohesive devices	Discourse markers ("Regarding the advantages") Connectors ("first," "second," "finally")
	Modality	Modal verbs ("should," "must," "can")
Style/tone/voice	Appraisal	Evaluative language ("good," "bad")

Finally, the students' texts were re-examined to identify developments in the ideational content. Following Corbin and Strauss's (2015) grounded theory approach, the written texts were examined to identify the main ideas, which were coded descriptively and grouped with similar ideas into broader categories and, finally, into dimensions. Following the procedure of idea tracing (Jocius, 2018), we attempted to locate the origin of the students' ideas and, therefore, L2 gains by tracking them back to the instructional sessions (see Table 4). Ideas were sometimes written with wording that matched the instructional materials exactly (Example 1), suggesting a direct connection between class input and the students' output. On other occasions, an idea was reformulated in the student's own words, so that multiple materials were acknowledged as potential sources (Example 2). Evidence of original thinking was found in ideas that were unrelated to any of the instructional materials, included those suggested by the students themselves during class discussions (Example 3).

The coding process followed a collaborative, consensus-based approach rather than independent parallel coding. Accordingly, no statistical interrater reliability coefficient was computed. Instead, the three authors jointly coded the argumentative features, intermodal relations, and ideational and linguistic content of the multimodal presentations, while the second and third researchers reviewed the

outcomes of the idea-tracing procedure. Minor uncertainties were resolved through discussion and iterative analysis (Smagorinsky, 2008).

Table 4 Establishing the sources of students' ideas and L2 use

Example 1: Exact match	Example 2: Reformulation of the idea	Example 3: Original idea
Worksheet (reasons for and against arranged marriage): 	Model text: "In addition, many candidates feel unhappy, because they are too young to marry." Video 	Student's output: "The advantage that he is handsome, he is a millionaire. The disadvantage that he is ugly, that he is very skinny and many more."
Students' output: "There are many disadvantages. In the first place, people can't choose. In the second place, maybe the bride or groom is not ready."	Teacher's PowerPoint 	Student's output: "In addition, some people are too young."

4. Results

Our research question inquired about the impact of film-based multiliteracies instruction on students' articulation of an argumentative multimodal composition on three interrelated dimensions: ideationally, structurally, and linguistically. In what follows, we report the findings for the three focal students.

4.1. Maria (high proficiency)

Before instruction, Maria produced four slides and 143 words (see Figure 2). The text included two claims, reasons, and evidence, as well as a personal introduction

and conclusion. The topic of arranged marriage appeared on the title slide with a direct appeal to the audience (“Hi I’m María I’m from 1C this is my presentation and I hope you like it”). The remaining three slides revealed a personal approach to argumentative writing (“My opinion; I also think; This is my presentation”). The two claims (“Arranged marriage is very bad. It shouldn’t be like that”) and (“Not all people have the same tastes, and we like or love the same people”) asserted the view that arranged marriage was undesirable. This was supported by reasoning that appealed to the freedom of choice in love (“A person doesn’t have to love someone because someone else says so”). Evidence from *Brave* was included (“In the *Brave* movie, the arranged marriage stands out a lot”), and the conclusion again appealed directly to the audience (“Thank you very much for watching and reading it”).

Arranged Marriage

Hi, I'm Miriam Vicente Antolinols, I'm from 1C, this is my presentation and I hope you like it



My opinion

My opinion on arranged marriage is. It seems very bad to me, I think it shouldn't be like that. A person doesn't have to love someone because someone else says so, I don't understand why it has to be that way.




I also think...

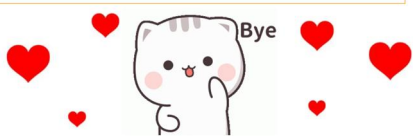
Not all people have the same tastes, and we like or love the same people, everyone has their own life and others don't have to choose it.

In the *Brave* movie, the arranged marriage stands out a lot. Thanks to that movie I understood and understood what that type of marriage was. The truth is I like having learned it.




This is my presentation

Thank you very much for watching and reading it, I hope you liked it even though we don't all have the same opinions.



Bye

Figure 2 Maria’s pretest multimodal argument

Linguistically, Maria combined personal (“I,” “we”), generalized (“a person,” “people,” “everyone,” “others”), and abstract participants (“arranged marriage”), and used basic topic-specific vocabulary (“love,” “tastes,” “choose,” “marriage”). She relied heavily on mental processes (“think,” “see,” “like,” “hope”) to express her opinion together with material (“have to,” “stands out,” “watched,” “reading”) and relational (“is,” “has to be”) verbs. As for textual organization, the text included a range of simple clauses ($N = 3$; e.g., “The arranged marriage stands out a lot”), coordinate clauses ($N = 3$; e.g., “This is my presentation and I hope you like it”), subordinate clauses ($N = 7$; e.g., “I think it shouldn’t be like that”), and complex clauses ($N = 1$; e.g., “I also think not all people have the same tastes and we love

the same people”). These were supported by basic cohesive devices (e.g., “thanks to”), but without sequence markers to structure the argument. The tone was subjective, with modality (e.g., “doesn’t have to”) and evaluative language (e.g., “very bad”) used to express her negative position on arranged marriage.

The post-instruction composition had seven slides and 264 words (see Figure 3). It contained an introduction, a conclusion, four claims, six reasons, and supporting evidence. The introduction included a definition of arranged marriage that established a neutral, informative tone (“An arranged marriage is a type of union where the couple is selected by someone other than themselves”), although it also signaled a more critical stance (“There are some advantages and disadvantages in this practice”). However, it lacked a strong thesis statement, since Maria did not make her position known until the conclusion (“... people have to be free and be able to choose who they want to marry”). Unlike the pretest text, which offered only one side of the argument, Maria now introduced counterclaims and reasons in favor of (e.g., durability; family satisfaction) and against the topic (e.g., no freedom of choice; unpreparedness of the couple). The reference to the movie *Brave* added text-based evidence in support of her argument. In the final slide Maria shifted back to a personal tone (“I hope you liked it . . . I hope I’ve improved. . .”).

1 **Arranged Marriage**

Hi, I'm Miriam Vicente Antolínez, I'm from 1C, this is my presentation and I hope you like it.

2 **The Arranged Marriage...**

An arranged marriage is a type of union where the couple is selected by someone other than themselves. It is a common practice throughout the world. There are some advantages and disadvantages in this practice.

3 **Regarding the advantages...**

There are many advantages. First, the can be more compatible and durable. Second, they protect religious or cultural traditions. Finally, they have the approval of the family, and many more...

4 **Regarding the disadvantages...**

There are many disadvantages. In the first place, people can't choose. In the second place, maybe the bride or groom is not ready. In addition, the couple doesn't want to marry, and many more...

5 **In conclusion...**

Arranged marriage happens to both women and men. I don't understand why he has to force people to marry, many are girls, boys, young people or underage.

My opinion is that it shouldn't be like that, people have to be free and be able to choose who they want to marry.

6 **In the Brave movie...**

In the Brave movie, this type of marriage stands out a lot. This movie has taught me what this marriage is and its advantages and disadvantages. In the film, the one who suffers this arranged marriage is a girl, princess of her kingdom and who had to marry boys she did not want.

7 **This is my presentation!**

Thank you very much for watching and reading it, I hope you liked it even though we don't all have the same opinions. I hope I've improved, and that this presentation will be much better than the previous one. Thank you!

Figure 3 Maria's post-instruction multimodal argument

The posttest text showed clear development in functional language use. This can be seen in the increased use of generalized rather than personal participants ("the couple," "bride," "groom," "young people") and more topic-specific material processes ("choose," "marry," "protect," "force," "happens"). There was also an increase in clause types, including simple clauses ($N = 12$; e.g., "It is a common practice throughout the world"), coordinate clauses ($N = 1$; "Thank you for watching and reading it"), subordinate clauses ($N = 2$; e.g., "My opinion is that it shouldn't be like that"), and complex clauses ($N = 5$; e.g., "In this movie the one who suffers this arranged marriage is a girl, princess of her kingdom and who had to marry boys she did not want"), indicating greater syntactic variety and complexity. One of the most notable gains was the use of discourse markers (e.g., "regarding the advantages," "in conclusion") and sequence markers ("first," "second," "finally," "in addition"), which supported the logical progression of ideas. Additionally, the text showed stronger use of evaluative language to express opinions (e.g., "I don't understand. . .," "people have to be free"). Overall, the posttest reflected improvements in Maria's ability to organize ideas, use discourse markers, and construct more complex clause structures in the L2, progressing from a basic, loosely structured use of L2 in the first text to a more organized, cohesive, and syntactically complex performance in the second.

The intermodal analysis of Maria's posttest composition reveals the ways in which she successfully combined different modal resources to develop her multimodal argumentation. The most frequent relationship between text and image was that of concurrence. Maria continually used images to reinforce the meaning expressed in the written mode. For instance, the images of thumbs up and thumbs down in slides 2, 3, and 4, the use of the colors green and red to signal positive and negative phenomena, and the repetition of images of "good" and "bad" concur with the advantages and disadvantages outlined in the written text, reinforcing the strength of the message. Similarly, on the first and final slides, a cat GIF and red hearts establish an interpersonal relationship with the audience by projecting Maria's initial ("I hope you like it") and final thoughts ("I hope I've improved"). Sound effects and music add depth to the textual meanings through relations of concurrence and complementarity. For instance, the well-known opening movie soundtrack and the final "Thank you for your attention" video are typical devices used to signal the beginning and end of the composition.

4.2. Badr (average proficiency)

Badr's pre-instructional composition comprised two black-and-white slides with 24 words and no other modal resources (see Figure 4). The cover slide contained

a subtitle (“My opinion on arranged marriage”) which was elaborated upon on the second slide as a claim (“It is not right to do that”) and a reason (“since each person marries the person they love”). Badr’s initial argument hinged on a single idea with no supporting evidence. His use of the L2 was similarly limited, with a single complex clause that contained a repeated participant (“person,” “the person they love”), relational (“is”), material (“marries”), and mental verbs (“love”), indicating a narrow L2 repertoire. The use of evaluative language (“not right”) made his position clear, although spelling errors (“opinion,” “arranged”) showed inaccuracy in basic lexis.



Figure 4 Badr’s pretest multimodal argument

Several improvements were observed in the post-instructional composition, including an increase in slides (five), words (78) and the inclusion of images (seven) (see Figure 5). First, in response to the rhetorical question (“What is the arranged marriage?”),¹ he included a comprehensive definition (“It is a marriage planned by the parents of the couple that consists of finding a boyfriend or girlfriend for the child”). Second, in alignment with his evaluative stance on the topic, expressed in the clear concluding statement (“People should reduce the use of these traditions”), three reasons were included as “disadvantages” to support this position (“In the first place, people can’t choose,” “Second, people don’t have freedom,” and “In addition, some people are too young”). Conversely, the “advantages” section included three contrasting reasons (“first, you can keep the couple’s money,” “second you may like him,” and “finally, he already knows your parents”), which functioned as implicit counterclaims. In comparison to the bare statement in the pretest, the inclusion of an introduction, a conclusion, and the recognition of multiple perspectives on the topic point to development in the structure and content of the composition and to more elaborated reasoning.

As for linguistic improvements, Badr included a wider range of generalized and abstract participants (“parents,” “the couple,” “people,” “traditions”) and more varied processes, including relational (“is,” “consists of”), material (“planned,” “finding,” “choose,” “reduce”) and mental (“may like”) verbs. Clause

¹ Textual examples are reproduced in their original form so that spelling and other errors remain.

complexity also showed development, with more simple clauses ($N = 7$; e.g., “He already knows your parents”) and one complex clause (“It is a marriage planned by the parents of the couple that consists of finding a boyfriend or girlfriend”). A key linguistic gain was the increased use of discourse markers (e.g., “Advantages”), and sequence markers (e.g., “first,” “finally,” “in the first place”), which improved clarity and coherence. Modality was more explicitly used (e.g., “should,” “can,” “may”), and evaluation was more direct (e.g., “people can’t choose”). Overall, the posttest text demonstrates improved control over structure, coherence, and functional language resources, although grammatical inaccuracies remained.

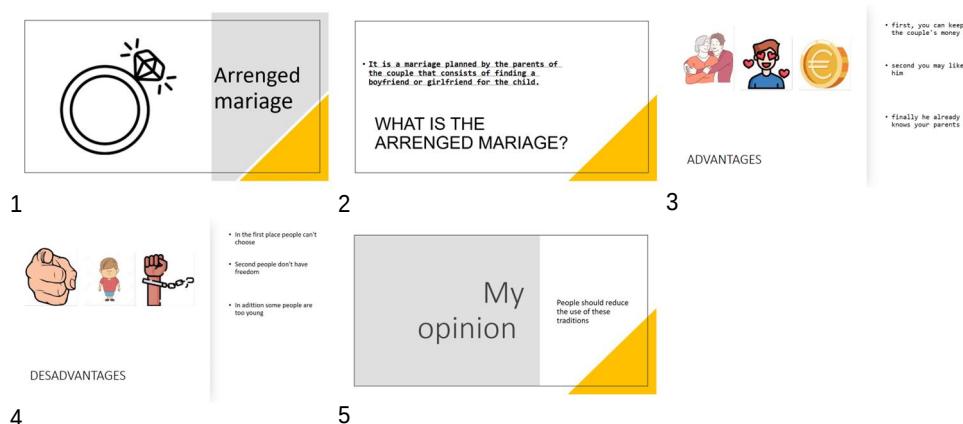


Figure 5 Badr's post-instruction multimodal argument

The multimodal composition mirrored the conventions of argumentative writing but also expanded on the textual meaning through visual representation. The image of the ring on the title slide is concurrent with the text and acts as a symbolic anchor for the topic. The lack of visual imagery in the second slide and the use of bold font and underlining help to focus attention on the definition of arranged marriage while the neutral background on the final slide helps focus attention on the key message. The images on slides 3 and 4 (a money icon, a parent and son, and a man with hearts in his eyes) translate abstract ideas of financial advantage, family involvement, and social ties into more accessible symbols in concurrence with the written mode. Similarly, the symbolism of a finger pointing at the viewer, the image of a child, and the chained fist reinforce the written arguments (lack of choice, unhappiness, and underage marriages). The concurrent intermodal relations between text and image communicate meaning in ways that language alone cannot.

4.3. Kevin (low proficiency)

Kevin's initial multimodal composition comprised two slides, 17 words, and no other modal resources. Apart from the title and a short statement, which acted as his main claim ("It's bad because you're forcing the person to do something they don't want to do"), there was no further argumentation. The claim itself lacked context because it was not clear *what* was being forced, and although he took a strong emotional stance, the overall argumentative result was weak. The use of a single complex clause showed some ability to use a causal linker, although participants ("you," "the person," "they") and processes ("are," "do," "want," "force") were limited (see Figure 6).



Figure 6 Kevin's pretest multimodal composition

Several improvements can be seen in the final composition, including a slight increase in the number of slides (three) and words (22), and the introduction of three background images. The composition now has a more specific topic, referring clearly on the title slide to the forced marriage of minors rather than to a vague reference to "forcing the person." On a structural level, the argument is organized into advantages ("the couple respects their religion") and disadvantages ("the couple doesn't love you"), which function as a claim and a counterclaim, respectively. While this shows Kevin's emerging awareness of multiple viewpoints and argumentative structure, the ideas are still not fully developed, and his position on the topic is not stated clearly (see Figure 7).



Figure 7 Kevin's post-instructional multimodal composition

As for L2 use, the posttest now included topic-specific participants ("some families," "minor children," "the couple") and a slight increase in the range of processes in the form of material verbs ("respect," "marry"). The number of clauses also increased to include two simple clauses and one non-finite subordinate clause ("Some families force their minor children to marry"). A key improvement was the introduction of discourse markers ("advantages," "disadvantages"), which provided clearer organization compared to the pretest's unstructured sentence. However, sequence markers were not used, indicating the student's underdeveloped control of argumentative language.

The intermodal analysis of the final composition shows some progression in the impactful use of the visual mode to express a point of view. The images included on the title slide and as a backdrop on the remaining two slides concur with the written mode. The choice of powerful visual imagery functions as a compensatory mode of expression, enabling this low-proficiency student to communicate meanings and emotions that extend beyond language. His multimodal composition exemplifies how, through the purposeful selection of images, he transmitted ideas that his limited linguistic repertoire could not yet convey.

4.4. Comparing improvements in students' structural and ideational multimodal argumentation

A summary of the improvements in all three students' multimodal argumentation can be seen in Table 6. The HP student (Maria) showed the greatest improvement, adding all key argumentative components and enriching her use of multimodal resources through images and sound effects. The AP student (Badr) made substantial progress, incorporating most features of the argumentative genre and introducing images for the first time to support his points. The LP student (Kevin) showed modest gains, adding an introduction, a conclusion, and three images, but his composition continued to lack detailed argumentative structure and evidence.

Table 6 Comparison of the characteristics of students' multimodal arguments before and after instruction

	Maria (HP)		Badr (AP)		Kevin (LP)	
	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest
Number of slides	4	7	2	5	2	3
Number of words	143	264	24	78	17	22
Introduction	-	+	-	+	-	+
Claim	2	4	1	1	1	1
Reasons	1	6	1	6	-	1
Evidence	1	1	-	-	-	-
Counterclaims	-	1	-	1	-	1
Conclusion	-	+	-	+	-	-
Images	7	13	-	7	-	3
Sound/music	-	5	-	-	-	-

As regards ideational content, all three students showed differing degrees of progress in their ability to include a wider range of ideas and perspectives (see Table 7). Collectively, following instruction, the students' multimodal compositions reflect a clearer trend toward greater content richness and perspective-taking.

Table 7 Development of students' ideational argumentation

Dimensions	Categories	Maria		Badr		Kevin	
		Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest
Thesis statement	Negative stance toward arranged marriage	+	+		+	+	
Introduction	Definition of arranged marriage		+		+		
Advantage	Social and family approval		+		+		
	Successful (long-term) relationships		+		+		
	Financial gain				+		
	Preservation of cultural and religious traditions		+				+
	Incompatibility	+			+		+
Disadvantage	No freedom of choice	+	+	+	+	+	
	Emotional unpreparedness or unwillingness		+		+		
	Independent of gender		+				
Factual information	Marriage of minors						+
	Brave as an example	+	+				

4.5. Comparing improvements in students' L2 development

Linguistic gains in the students' written output were also apparent after instruction. Table 8 provides a detailed account of the L2 elements that students incorporated into their posttest texts, many of which were absent in the pretest texts. Across participants, there was marked development in technical and abstract lexis, with learners moving from everyday expressions (e.g., "love someone") to more specialized and conceptually dense vocabulary (e.g., "type of union," "cultural traditions," "compatible"). Additionally, while no sequence markers or discourse organizers were observed in the pretest, the posttest texts showed the emergence of structuring devices, suggesting increased control over the organization of argumentative discourse. From a meaning-making perspective, these findings suggest that students were expanding their linguistic resources and developing their ability to organize and express more complex arguments in line with genre expectations.

Table 8 Gains in the use of L2 features across pretest and posttest

	Maria		Badr		Kevin	
	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest
Technical lexis	3	19	2	6	1	7
Sequence markers	0	6	0	5	0	0
Discourse organizers	0	3	0	2	0	2
Examples of L2 features in the posttest						
Technical lexis						
Maria	“arranged marriage,” “type of union,” “couple,” “selected,” “common practice,” “compatible,” “durable,” “protect,” “religion,” “cultural traditions,” “approval,” “choose,” “bride,” “groom,” “not ready to marry,” “force,” “underage,” “free,” “suffer”					
Badr	“planned by parents,” “couple,” “boyfriend,” “girlfriend,” “money,” “choose,” “freedom”					
Kevin	“force,” “minor children,” “marry,” “respect,” “religion,” “couple,” “love”					
Sequence markers						
Maria	“first,” “second,” “finally,” “in the first place,” “in the second place,” “in addition”					
Badr	“first,” “second,” “finally,” “in the first place,” “in addition”					
Discourse organizers						
Maria	“regarding the advantages,” “regarding the disadvantages,” “in conclusion”					
Badr	“regarding the advantages,” “regarding the disadvantages”					
Kevin	“advantages” “disadvantages”					

4.6. Tracing L2 use and ideational content to the instructional sessions

Evidence in support of the impact of multiliteracies instruction on students' L2 learning and argumentation skills can be seen in the close relationship between their multimodal output and the activities carried out in the instructional sessions. The content and language use in students' arguments about arranged marriage (AM) can be traced to the teacher's PowerPoint presentations, the model text, the model multimodal presentation (see Table 9), and to the exercises designed for controlled practice of the L2 (see Table 10). These instructional activities helped students unpack a model argumentative text and practice vocabulary and genre-specific lexicogrammatical patterns. Their multimodal design choices reflected images and symbols drawn from the teacher's sample model PowerPoint presentation, including unhappy or underage couples, chains, rings, religious differences and, in the case of the HP student, scenes from the film *Brave*, a cat GIF and sound effects.

Table 9 Links between students' ideational development and multiliteracies in-struction

Ideational content	Class materials, activities, and knowledge pro-cesses	Instructional input (excerpts from class artifacts)
Definition of arranged marriage	Class discussion of <i>Brave</i> movie marriage scene ("experiencing")	
	Model text and worksheet: Pros and cons of AM ("conceptualizing")	"Arranged marriage is a practice that many cultures around the world follow"
Social and family approval	Activity 1: Copy and translate advantages and disadvantages of AM ("conceptualizing")	"They have the approval of the family"
	Activity 2 (matching sentences): Giving reasons using "because" ("conceptualizing")	"In arranged marriages the couple can be more compat-ible because they have the support of the family"
Successful (long-term) relationships	Activity 2 (matching sentences): Giving reasons using "because" ("conceptualizing")	"Arranged marriages can be more durable because . . ."
	Model text and worksheet: Pros and cons of AM	"The couple can be more compatible"
Financial gain	Activity 2 (matching sentences): Giving reasons using "because" (conceptualizing)	"Arranged marriages can be better because . . . you can marry into a family with money"
Preservation of cultural and religious traditions	Teacher's PowerPoint: Explanation of cultural reasons for AM ("conceptualizing")	
	Model text and worksheet: Pros and cons of AM ("conceptualizing")	"Finally, arranged marriages can help maintain cultural and religious traditions"
	Model multimodal argumentative composition ("conceptualizing")	
Incompatibility	Activity 1: Copy and translate advantages and disadvantages of AM ("conceptualizing")	"They protect cultural or religious traditions"
	Class activity: Copy and translate advantages and disadvantages of AM ("conceptualizing")	"In arranged marriages the couple can feel sad because they don't love the other person"
	Activity 1: Copy and translate advantages and disadvantages of AM ("conceptualizing")	"Maybe the couple isn't compatible"
	Model text and worksheet: Pros and cons of AM ("conceptualizing")	"There isn't any freedom to choose your partner based on love and compatibility"
	Activity 2 (matching sentences): Giving reasons using "because" ("conceptualizing")	"In arranged marriages the couple can feel sad because they don't love the other person"
	Class activity: Copy and translate advantages and disadvantages of AM ("conceptualizing")	"Maybe the couple is not compatible"

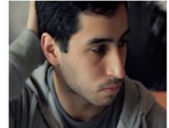
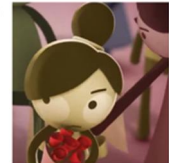
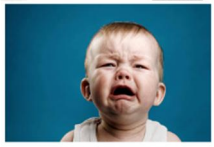
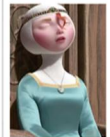
No freedom of choice	Model text and worksheet: Pros and cons of AM ("conceptualizing") Model multimodal argumentative composition ("conceptualizing")	Regarding the disadvantages... 
Independent of gender	Activity 5B: Video of a young boy's AM ("analyzing") Model multimodal argumentative composition ("conceptualizing")	Activity 5B. Two sides of the same coin https://youtu.be/nf2_Au8tNis?feature=share Watch the video of a boy who is forced to get married. 
Unpreparedness and unwillingness (minors)	Model text Activity 5A: Video of a young girl's AM ("analyzing") Teacher's PowerPoint ("conceptualizing")	"In addition, many candidates feel unhappy, because they are too young to marry" Activity 5A: Two sides of the same coin 5.2 In pairs, make sentences with your opinion using the structure below. The girl shouldn't marry because... ...she is too young! ...she is scared! ...the man is older! ...she is forced! ...she wants to study! ...she doesn't want to!  Regarding the disadvantages... MANY CANDIDATES FEEL UNHAPPY BECAUSE THEY ARE TOO YOUNG!!! 
Brave as an example	Activity 6: Class discussion of Merida's AM ("analyzing")	Activity 6: Merida's arranged marriage CRITICAL THINKING. How do you think Merida feels about her arranged marriage? In pairs, complete the gaps. She feels _____ because _____. 

Table 10 Examples of L2 exercises

Features of the L2	Language exercises
Topic-specific vocabulary and sequence markers	Activity 2. Argumentative texts. Read the text about arranged marriage and do the exercises: Arranged marriage is a practice that many cultures around the world follow. There are some advantages and disadvantages to this practice. Regarding the advantages, there are three of them. First, some people think that it can be good because you can find a partner. Second, parents help in the search of an appropriate bride or groom because they want candidates with excellent education and values for their children. Finally, arranged marriages can help maintain religious and cultural traditions. Regarding the disadvantages, there are two of them. In the first place, in arranged marriages there isn't any freedom to choose your partner based on love and compatibility because your family chooses for you. In addition, many candidates feel unhappy because they are too young to marry. In conclusion, although arranged marriages have pros and cons, people should have freedom to decide what they want to do. Exercises: 1) Underline in BLUE all the connectors you can find. 2) Underline in RED all the vocabulary related to arranged marriage.
Sequence markers	Activity 3. Linkers. Put these linkers in the correct order (1-5): • ☐ Finally, the couple has the same ideals. • ☐ Regarding the advantages, there are some good things. • ☐ In the first place, they protect cultural traditions. • ☐ Second, they have the approval of the family. • ☐ In addition, the couple can be more compatible.
Topic-specific vocabulary	Activity 6. Royal Wedding Invitation. Fix the vocabulary mistakes in this wedding invitation. Lord Fergus and Queen Elinor are happy to invite you to the wedding of Princess Merida and a young (1) bride. We believe that an arranged marriage is a common (2) approval in our kingdom. The (3) parent is ready, but the princess is not. She thinks the (4) family is not compatible. Merida wants the (5) free to choose her own (6) cousin. She doesn't want this wedding! Please send your response to the Castle.

5. Discussion

This study examined the effects of film-based multiliteracies pedagogy on EFL high school learners' development of multimodal argumentation skills. The findings show that: (a) all three focal students improved their multimodal argumentation skills to differing degrees, structurally, ideationally, and linguistically, after instruction, (b) they demonstrated an emerging awareness of the affordances of different modal resources for meaning making, and (c) explicit film-based

multiliteracies instruction played a central role in shaping students' multimodal argumentation and L2 development.

From the dual perspective of learning-to-write and writing-to-learn, the findings of this study suggest that film-based multiliteracies instruction positioned multimodal composing as a productive site for the simultaneous development of genre knowledge, content knowledge, and L2 development. As students engaged in the design of multimodal compositions, they were not only learning how to structure genre-appropriate texts (learning-to-write), but also actively processing the L2 to express their opinions on a complex social issue (writing-to-learn). This dual engagement was reflected in measurable gains across ideational, textual, and linguistic dimensions, including the development of multiperspectival arguments, the emergence of genre features and discourse-organizing devices, and the expansion of lexicogrammatical resources. Specifically, the uptake of lexical items, sequence markers, and clause-combining strategies indicates that learners were actively appropriating and reusing L2 semiotic resources, consistent with models of learning as design (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009).

Yet, despite observable improvements in their multimodal compositions, progress was not uniform, and learners experienced difficulties in using the L2 to fully elaborate and justify their arguments. Limitations were evident in their ability to produce extended explanations, integrate evidence, and maintain consistency across ideas. Although all three learners produced basic argumentative structures, including claims, supporting reasons, and counterclaims, the least proficient student experienced the greatest difficulties in providing reasons to create a well-developed argument, and only the highest-achieving student included source-based evidence from the film. This incomplete use of evidence suggests that although they were able to adopt the structural features of argumentation, the students' ability to produce more linguistically sophisticated content remained constrained. These challenges might be attributed not only to their underdeveloped L2 resources but also to the cognitive and discursive demands of transforming complex, content-rich meanings into language. Similar difficulties have been reported in studies of both younger bilingual learners (Moore, 2019; O'Hallaron, 2014) and adult L2 writers (Chuang & Yan, 2022), suggesting that the integration of evidence constitutes a persistent developmental challenge across contexts and proficiency levels. From a meaning-making perspective, such difficulties might be expected, as multimodal argumentation requires learners to simultaneously manage multiple dimensions of performance: generating ideas, selecting appropriate lexical and grammatical forms alongside other semiotic resources, and aligning their texts with genre expectations. However, as noted by Manchón (2017), it is precisely this struggle to formulate ideas and encode meaning linguistically that constitutes the key mechanism through which multimodal composing

can function as a driver of L2 development. In attempting to express unfamiliar meanings, the students were pushed to stretch their existing linguistic resources, thereby contributing to the development of more advanced L2 meaning-making capacities.

Importantly, the development of incipient meaning-based complexity and argument quality was evident in the presence of counterclaims in the students' multimodal compositions (Yasuda, 2024), suggesting a shift from holding an initially one-sided view of the topic to appreciating diverse experiences, cultural values, and alternative evaluative stances. It is also true, however, that ideas originating beyond the instructional materials used in class were not identified, which suggests that the students were likely operating at a level of meaning-making based on the reproduction of available designs (worksheets, teacher explanations, model texts) rather than on the redesign or transformation of these resources.

The results of this study also suggest that MP can empower learners to develop their semiotic repertoires using non-linguistic modes. This can be seen in the changes in the multimodal presentations after the instructional sessions, when two of the students went from producing plain slides containing only a few words to creating multimodal compositions containing symbols, sound, and images that reinforced textual meanings. Like the learners in Shin (2018) and Shin et al. (2020), the layering of images and text in the students' final presentations shows their intentional design and developing awareness of how multiple modes mediate argumentative choices. This was particularly evident in the case of the lower-proficiency learner, whose use of visual resources enabled meaningful participation in argumentation despite his limited linguistic resources. Rather than minimizing attention to language, multimodal composing created a space in which learners could bridge gaps in their L2 knowledge while continuing to engage in complex meaning-making. This finding is consistent with research showing that multimodal tasks support L2 development by allowing learners to distribute meaning across modal resources (Coyle & Roca de Larios, 2024). Furthermore, the improvements shown by our students in combining linguistic and visual modes point to the emergence of multimodal meaning-making competence (Kress, 2010). While most intermodal relationships in their presentations were concurrent, the more advanced use of complementary and projective relations by the higher-proficiency learner suggests a developmental trajectory in which learners become better at orchestrating modes strategically. From this perspective, we suggest that multimodal composing might reconfigure the conditions under which language is used, practiced, and developed by embedding language use within complex meaning-making tasks that require learners to construct and communicate ideas, integrate multiple semiotic resources, and continuously negotiate between available linguistic forms and intended meanings. In doing so, it creates sustained opportunities for formulation, prompting learners to extend and refine their L2 resources.

Finally, the use of film as a pedagogical resource appears to have played a key role in supporting ideational development. By providing a shared, content-rich semiotic resource, the film enabled learners to engage with abstract concepts such as cultural norms and personal choice, which they then recontextualized in their arguments. Although explicit references to the film were limited, its influence was evident in the thematic and conceptual content of students' texts, supporting previous research on the role of audiovisual input in fostering both language and content learning in L2 contexts (Sánchez-Auñón et al., 2023). Taken together, the findings suggest that film-based multiliteracies instruction creates a pedagogical space in which learners can integrate content knowledge, genre awareness, and linguistic resources, thereby supporting L2 development through the mutually reinforcing processes of writing-to-learn and learning-to-write.

6. Conclusion

The present study expands research on multimodal argumentation by examining the impact of instruction in an underexplored EFL high school context. The findings provide evidence that film-based MP can support learners' L2 development by extending their genre knowledge and L2 meaning-making resources through engagement with complex social content. In particular, the activation of the four knowledge processes ("experiencing," "conceptualizing," "analyzing," and "applying") enabled students to move toward more organized, ideationally rich, and linguistically elaborated multimodal compositions. The findings also highlight the development of L2 multimodal composing as an ongoing process that requires sustained pedagogical support through the integration of multimodal instruction into existing EFL curricula. Teachers should, therefore, provide explicit scaffolding of the genre-specific structural, linguistic, and semiotic features of multimodal argumentative texts. Through the guided analysis of models and the collaborative teacher-led construction of multimodal products, students can be encouraged to map key genre features (e.g., claims, reasoning, and evidence) across linguistic, visual, spatial, and aural modes. Reflecting on how modal choices shape audience interpretation may further support the development of multimodal argumentation. Likewise, teachers might curate carefully selected films and audiovisual resources that encourage learners to explore multiple perspectives and justify their positions on complex issues.

Our study is not without limitations. The small number of participants, the use of a single task and genre, and the fact that students received explicit instruction on the ideas later reflected in their texts suggest that our results should be treated with caution. The absence of a delayed posttest also limits insights into

the durability and transfer of students' learning over time. Future research should aim to investigate whole-class cohorts at different educational levels and to identify the long-term effects of multiliteracies instruction on a larger scale. Finally, although the role of teacher-researcher allows for deeper insights into classroom data, it also comes with challenges, such as the risk of subjectivity or insider bias, which can affect both teaching effectiveness and research quality. Future designs that minimize these limitations would seem necessary.

Acknowledgments

This study was financed by the Spanish Research Agency (Research grant PID2023-150243NB-I00 funded by MICIU/AEI/10.13039/501100011033 and by ERDF/EU).

References

- Andrews, M., Chapman, B., & Purcell, S. (Directors). (2012). *Brave* [Film]. Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures
- Brisk, M. (2015). *Engaging students in academic literacies: Genre-based pedagogies for K-5 classrooms*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781317816164>
- Byrnes, H. (2011). Beyond writing as language learning or content learning: Construing foreign language writing as meaning-making. In R. M. Manchón (Ed.), *Learning-to-write and writing-to-learn in an additional language* (pp. 133-157). John Benjamins.
- Cheung, A. (2022). Verbal and on-screen peer interactions of EFL learners during multimodal collaborative writing: A multiple case-study. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 58, 100931. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2022.100931>
- Chuang, P. L., & Yan, X. (2022). An investigation of the relationship between argument structure and essay quality in assessed writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 56, 100892. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2022.100892>
- Cope, B., & Kalantzis, M. (2009). Multiliteracies: New literacies, new learning. *Pedagogies: An International Journal*, 4(3), 164-195. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15544800903076044>
- Cope, B., & Kalantzis, M. (Eds.). (2016). *A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Learning by design*. Springer.
- Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2015). *Basics of qualitative research*. Sage.
- Coyle, Y., & Roca de Larios, J. (2024). Exploring children's L2 disciplinary literacy through a multimodal science project in a CLIL context. *TESOL Quarterly*, 58(2), 628-663. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.3239>
- Crossley, S. A., Tian, Y., & Wan, Q. (2022). Argumentation features and essay quality: Exploring relationships and incidence counts. *Journal of Writing Research*, 14(1), 1-34. <https://doi.org/10.17239/jowr-2022.14.01.01>
- Fang, Z., & Wang, Z. (2011). Beyond rubrics: Using functional language analysis to evaluate student writing. *The Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, 34(2), 147-165. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF03651853>
- Garro Larrañaga, E., Antón, E., Arias-Hermoso, R., & Carmona, U. (2024). The effects of instruction on students' argumentative scientific writing in a Basque medium of instruction setting. *Journal of Immersion & Content-Based Language Education*, 13(2). <https://doi.org/10.1075/jicb.23014.gar>
- Hobbs, R. (2006). Non-optimal uses of video in the classroom. *Learning, Media and Technology*, 31(1), 35-50. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439880500515457>
- Jiang, L. (2021). Facilitating EFL students' civic participation through digital multimodal composing. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 35(1), 102-117. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07908318.2021.1942032>

- Jocius, R. (2018). Becoming entangled: An analysis of 5th grade students collaborative multimodal composing practices. *Computers and Composition*, 47, 14-30. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compcom.2017.12.008>
- Kim, Y., & Kang, S. (2020). Writing to make meaning through collaborative multimodal composing among Korean EFL learners: Writing processes, writing quality and student perception. *Computers and Composition*, 58, 102609. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compcom.2020.102609>
- Kim, Y., Belcher, D., & Peyton, C. (2023). Comparing monomodal traditional writing and digital multimodal composing in EAP classrooms: Linguistic performance and writing development. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 64(3), 101247. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2023.101247>
- Kress, G. (2010). *Multimodality: A social semiotic approach to contemporary communication*. Routledge.
- Kress, G., & van Leeuwen, T. (2001). *Multimodal discourse: The modes and media of contemporary communication*. Arnold.
- Manchón, R. M. (Ed.). (2011). *Learning-to-write and writing-to-learn in an additional language*. John Benjamins.
- Manchón, R. M. (2017). The potential impact of multimodal composition on language learning. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 38, 94-95. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2017.10.008>
- Manchón, R. M. (2026). Multimodal composing and L2 learning: Rationales, empirical evidence, and future research agendas. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*. <https://doi.org/10.14746/ssllt.53147>
- Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2015) *Qualitative research. A guide to design and implementation*. Jossey-Bass.
- Moore, J. (2019). Choice and constraint: Using SFL genre theory to teach primary-grade students to write arguments about literature. *Journal of Writing Research*, 10(3), 429-464. <https://doi.org/10.17239/jowr-2019.10.03.02>
- New London Group. (1996). A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Designing social futures. *Harvard Educational Review*, 66(1), 60-92. <https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.66.1.17370n67v22j160u>
- O'Hallaron, C. L. (2014). Supporting fifth-grade English language learners' argumentative writing development. *Written Communication*, 31(3), 304-331. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0741088314536524>
- Paesani, K., & Menke, M. (2023). *Literacies in language education: A guide for teachers and teacher educators*. Georgetown University Press.
- Patton, M. Q. (2001). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Sage.
- Qin, J., & Karabacak, E. (2010). The analysis of Toulmin elements in Chinese EFL university argumentative writing. *System*, 38(3), 444-456. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2010.06.012>

- Qu, W. (2017). For L2 writers, it is always the problem of the language. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 38, 92-93. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2017.10.007>
- Rose, D., & Martin, J. (2012). *Learning to write, reading to learn: Genre, knowledge and pedagogy of the Sydney school*. Equinox.
- Sánchez-Auñón, E. & Férez-Mora, P. A. (2021). Films for EFL: Exploring the perceptions of a high school teacher. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 11(1), 49-59. <https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v11i1.34634>
- Sánchez-Auñón, E., Férez-Mora, P. A., & Monroy-Hernández, F. (2023). The use of films in the teaching of English as a foreign language: A systematic literature review. *Asian-Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education*, 8(10), 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40862-022-00183-0>
- Schleppegrell, M. J. (2004). *The language of schooling: A functional linguistics perspective*. Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Shin, D. (2018). Multimodal mediation and argumentative writing: A case study of a multilingual writer's metalanguage awareness development. In R. Harman (Ed.), *Bilingual learners and social equity: Critical approaches to systemic functional linguistics* (pp. 225-242). Springer.
- Shin, D., Cimasko, T., & Yi, Y. (2020). Development of metalanguage for multimodal composing: A case study of an L2 writer's design of multimedia texts. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 47, 100714. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2020.100714>
- Smagorinsky, P. (2008). The method section as conceptual epicenter in constructing social science research reports. *Written Communication*, 25(3), 389-411. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0741088308317815>
- Tan, X. (2023). Stories behind the scenes: L2 students' cognitive processes of multimodal composing and traditional writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 59, 100958. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2022.100958>
- Unsworth, L. (2006). Towards a metalanguage for multiliteracies education: Describing the meaning-making resources of language-image interactions. *English Teaching: Practice & Critique*, 5(1), 55-76. <http://education.waikato.ac.nz/research/Kiles/etpc/2006v5n1art4.pdf>
- Yasuda, S. (2024). Does "more complexity" equal "better writing"? Investigating the relationship between form-based complexity and meaning-based complexity in high school EFL learners' argumentative writing. *Assessing Writing*, 61, 100867. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.asw.2024.100867>