

# Multimodal literature and CEFR reading proficiency: Improving literary reading skills in EFL learners

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## ABSTRACT

Using multimodal literature, incorporating the auditory, visual, and kinaesthetic elements to support the students' diverse learning styles, enhance students' engagement and motivation in an EFL literature classroom. It contributes to a more interactive and productive learning environment, promoting students to gain more comprehension when reading texts. This study investigated the impact of multimodal literature on the literary reading abilities of C1-level EFL students. The participants were ten fourth-year English major students (4 men and 6 women) at a public university in Northern Thailand who participated in a course incorporating six multimodal literature-based lesson plans. A pre- and post-literary reading test and a rubric assessed students' literary reading competence. A Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was employed to analyse the pre- and post-test quantitative data. The findings revealed a statistically significant improvement in students' post-test scores ( $z=2.176$ ,  $p<.05$ ). These findings are of significance as they demonstrated the significant impact of using multimodal literature as opposed to linear texts on EFL learners' reading proficiency at the tertiary level. By incorporating the use of multimodal texts into pedagogical practices, the findings of this study can give English teachers and educators a guideline or roadmap for designing curricula that will address the shift in people's reading habits that tend to rely on modern technology and move away from print reading of linear texts toward digital reading on devices like computers, tablets, and smartphones that offer them non-linear texts in multimodal forms.

**Keywords:** CEFR; EFL learners; multimodal literature; reading skills

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## INTRODUCTION

In the new context of global connectivity, computer networks allow people to access information across a variety of channels and forms, such as images, texts, and videos. A paradigm shift has occurred in many aspects of people's lives, especially concerning the reading culture among contemporary individuals who appear interested in what is "in" as seen by trends and fashions that change annually and even hourly. Reading in today's world has changed due to the impact of media technology and the internet. It is noteworthy that, in contrast to the past, people nowadays no longer primarily rely on books or newspapers as their only source of text. Books and lectures are no longer the main sources of

information for students because they are continually exposed to visual and graphical messaging. They might instead use computer networks to expand and update their knowledge (Tao, 2020).

Advancements in technology see texts increasingly use several meaning-making modalities to communicate meaning to students. A transformation has occurred in terms of how a text 'communicates' to students, which is significantly different from what schools and universities have traditionally been teaching (Jewitt, 2012; Walsh, 2010). Students are frequently seen reading and producing a text that combines print, images, still and moving visuals, either with or without music, using digital devices (such as laptops and smartphones).

However, paper-based books and other conventional methods are still used to deliver most of the content taught in formal education (Godhe & Magnusson, 2017). As a result, shifting from a single communication mode to multi-modal communication in pedagogy is necessary. It can be said that using only one type of representation to teach and learn in the classroom is insufficient (Suwancharoen, 2016). As contemporary students increasingly engage with diverse text forms that integrate visuals, audio, and digital media, relying solely on traditional print-based instruction is insufficient for developing the skills needed to analyse, evaluate, and create meaning across multiple modalities. To prepare students for a rapidly evolving digital landscape, teaching and learning approaches should incorporate multimodal texts that reflect real-world communication practices. In this context, students in post-modern society need to develop skills that enable them to comprehend both traditional print-based monomodal texts and other types of multimodal texts (Jewitt, 2012). They need to possess the skills and knowledge necessary to read and write multimodal texts that are presented in various forms, as well as the ability to analyse and explain how multimodal texts function (Anstey & Bull, 2010).

Multimodal texts communicate their message via multiple semiotic channels or modes. That is, meaning is conveyed through the use of verbal or written language, still or moving visuals produced on paper or a computer screen, sound or no sound, or any combination of these (Boshraadi & Biria, 2014). Multimodal texts can be divided into two categories: non-printed texts, such as movies, videos, and digital media, and printed texts, such as picture books, newspapers, magazines, and reference books. (Baharani & Ghafournia, 2015). As a compound word combining 'multi' and 'modality,' the term 'multimodality' has been frequently defined as a meaning construction using a variety of modes of communication (The New London Group, 1996). The 'modes' have been variously described by many scholars into different categories. For instance, Kress (2010, p. 79) defines the mode as a "socially shaped and culturally given semiotic resource for meaning making. Image, writing, layout, music, gesture, speech, moving image, soundtrack, and 3D objects are examples of modes used in representation and communication." Forceville (2009) proposes nine modal categories, including written signs, spoken signs, pictorial signs, gestures, sounds, music, smells, tastes, and touch. Jewitt (2012) refers to modes in five aspects: linguistics, visual, audio, gestural, and spatial. Multimodality theories recognize that meaning is created through the transaction of different modes in representational systems (Bezemer & Kress, 2016). When multiple modes are employed in a composition, the overall meaning of the work is determined by the combination of these modes. In other words, no single mode is sufficient

to convey the complete meaning-making process (Bezemer & Kress, 2016). Since different modes can create different meanings for both the sender and receiver, multimodality is significant for meaning making (The New London Group, 1996). The process of meaning making can be identified into three aspects: materiality, framing, design, and production (Albers, 2006; Black, 2005). The term "materiality" describes the resources available to the creator to construct meaning. All of the scopes in which a composition functions are included in framing. Design includes the choices of mode that the producer chooses to convey the meaning. Lastly, production refers to the creation of the product and all necessary skills needed for the production process. The multimodal producers can move between modes and within modes to create meaning by the synaesthesia process. The synaesthesia process is the transferring "from one semiotic mode in meaning to another semiotic mode, an activity constantly performed by the brain" (Kress, 1998, p. 76). Two important components of synaesthesia are transformation and transduction. The latter pertains to the transfer of semiotic sources from one mode to another in an ongoing transduction process, whilst the former explains the producer's capacity to rebuild the specific mode on the forms and structures inside a mode (Bezemer & Kress, 2016).

Despite some similarities shared between traditional print-based texts and multimodal texts, including the author's intention, genre or text structure, subject matter, language, word choices, and reading level (Arizpe & Styles, 2015), the differences between the two are found in many aspects. Firstly, whereas the meaning derived from reading traditional texts typically depends on comprehending words and sentences, multimodal texts convey meanings through many communication modalities besides written language, including still images, moving images, audio, and video (Jewitt, 2012). Secondly, due to the nature of multimodal texts, which both affectively and cognitively appeal to the readers, the readers are likely to actively engage with the texts in a more holistic interactive way when interpreting the meaning. In contrast, they may mostly apply cognitive processes such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation when comprehending written language in traditional texts. Thirdly, in terms of literacy skills, readers may primarily rely on linguistic abilities when engaging with traditional texts, while they need to demonstrate various literacy skills, including visual literacy and digital literacy, to understand multimodal messages (Kress, 2010; Walsh, 2010).

Reading literature in any genre, a short story, novel, play, or poem, provides many benefits for the readers. It has been shown to improve language learning and comprehension by exposing readers to a wide range of sentence patterns, complicated vocabulary, and narrative genres. Since readers can relate to characters and viewpoints that differ from

their own, literature also plays a significant part in the development of empathy, fostering social awareness and compassion (Kidd & Castano, 2013). These all serve as vital counterpoints to the present world's growing reliance on non-print digital media and the culture of global capitalism. Reading literary works allows readers to develop a deep relationship with the characters and to see the world from their point of view. Additionally, they can develop new insights that take into account different ways of thinking and behaving, fostering a more empathetic and globally conscious mindset (Murriss, 2016). Great writers such as William Shakespeare or Jane Austen use words on the page to create characters who can entice readers into their world. The reader's thoughts and sympathies are expanded as they journey with the authors through the characters and their environments, potentially influencing how they see themselves and the world. Despite concerns that the internet and screen media may diminish the transformative power of literary engagement, they also provide valuable and expansive experiences with new perspectives (Pennington & Waxler, 2018). Moreover, with the integration of audio and visual elements, employing multimodal texts in the literature classroom can improve literary reading skills and critical thinking skills (Baharani & Ghafournia, 2015). Additionally, the combination of multiple modes of presentation makes multimodal literature a highly motivating learning resource (Eisenmann & Summer, 2020). Multimodal literature can be defined as literary texts consisting of a variety of audio and visual presentations, including graphic novels, films, animated video, and picture books. In contrast to traditional monomodal texts, reading multimodal texts presenting "diagrams, colour illustrations and different typographies that may link to voice and video files" (Eisenmann & Meyer, 2018, p. 13) requires the readers to analyse many modes of communication and recognize the connections between them, as opposed to the linear reading of monomodal texts (Eisenmann & Summer, 2020). For example, the pictures portrayed in picture books typically convey significant meaning, encouraging readers to connect words and visual designs to form meaningful interpretations of the narrative (Cecilia et al., 2022; Nikolajeva, 2010; Scott, 2010; Serafini & Reid, 2022). In this sense, incorporating multiple modalities into literature classrooms may provide positive learning outcomes for students. The incorporation of visual elements into verbal learning can substantially augment higher-order thinking skills and reading comprehension (Baharani & Ghafournia, 2015). Thus, multimodal literature, leveraging multiple modes of representation and engaging student interests, can be an effective pedagogical resource (Eisenmann & Summer, 2020). The use of multiple modalities seems to be more productive than conventional unidirectional learning because combining visuals with text can produce

considerable increases in higher-order comprehension. By combining text with visuals, multimodal learning resources may support students in comprehending what they are reading. Additionally, language learners' pronunciation skills can be enhanced because they can listen to multimodal materials, particularly non-printed texts. Moreover, because multimodal texts cater to individual differences, students experience reduced stress and are more likely to engage in tasks, which enhances their intrinsic motivation for learning (Varaporn & Sitthitikul, 2019).

Based on a Reader-Response theory, to accommodate the students' different learning styles, various multimodal literature such as graphic novel, picture book, animated video, and film supported the students' visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic learning styles can be implemented to promote the students' understanding about plot, character, and theme contributing to literary reading ability development. Departing from the text-oriented approach, a Reader-Response theory was developed as an alternative approach in contrast to the New Criticism. It aimed to analyse a text objectively without taking into account the readers' feelings and emotions, and its central idea is centred on readers' aesthetic experiences and individual interactions with texts. The reader, the text, and the dynamic interaction between the two are the primary three elements of the Reader-Response theory (Rosenblatt, 1938). The readers' interpretation depends on their past experiences, beliefs, and perspectives towards the world, which are unique and influence the way they make sense of the texts (Rosenblatt, 1938). In this regard, the readers need to be shifted from passive to active readers while engaging in the process of critical reading. This is to say, the readers are encouraged to actively interact with texts and construct the meaning using textual cues and their personal life experiences (Iser, 1978). This concept is further developed by Jauss (2022), who coined the term 'horizon of expectation', focusing on the interaction between the readers and the texts. The readers create their expectations toward the characters, plots, and themes based on their schema knowledge at each phase of their reading. This 'horizon of expectation' can be very helpful, especially for L2 learners, to gain more understanding about the texts as they can compare and contrast their expectations with what they read. Nevertheless, this 'horizon of expectation' of L2 learners may be different from that of L1 learners due to cultural differences, which may influence their ability to predict the plot or characters. In the classroom context, the concept of the "horizon of expectation" (Jauss, 2022) can be applied to help students become 'ideal readers' or "implied readers," who understand the texts thoroughly as described by Iser (1978). With the teachers' facilitation, L2

students who are novice readers can develop themselves to reach the reading goal successfully.

Several studies have investigated the integration of multimodal texts in EFL classrooms with a focus on developing students' reading ability (Baharani & Ghafournia, 2015; Boshrahadi & Biria, 2014; Suwanchaoen, 2016; Varaporn & Sitthitikul, 2019; Yimwilai, 2019). Additionally, studies have examined students' opinions toward the integration of multimodal texts into classroom practices (Djamdjuri et al., 2021; Phengsuai & Suwanarak, 2020; Sakulprasertsri, 2020). However, few studies have focused on multimodal literature in relation to literary reading competence in CEFR-level C1 at tertiary level, particularly in Thailand, where the Thailand Qualification Framework for Higher Education (TQF-HEd) specifies that English major students should attain a C1 proficiency level. Therefore, this study investigates whether the literary reading test performance of EFL learners at the tertiary level based on CEFR-level C1 is significantly affected by the use of multimodal literature in the classroom. The findings are expected to demonstrate that the use of multimodal literature in the classroom will significantly enhance the literary reading comprehension of tertiary-level EFL learners at the CEFR C1 level, suggesting that incorporating multimodal texts into the curriculum can be an effective strategy for improving reading competence and promoting deeper engagement with literary content in higher education

## **METHOD**

### **Research design**

To find out how multimodal literature affected students' literary reading ability, a quasi-experimental pre-test/post-test method was used. This research design was selected because it allows for the examination of causal relationships between the instructional intervention and students' learning outcomes while maintaining practical viability in classroom settings where random assignment would not be possible (Reichard, 2019; Shadish et al., 2002). The students' literary reading competence in a pre- and post-literary reading test was evaluated using the writing rubric.

### **Participants**

The participants comprised ten fourth-year English major students (four male and six female) enrolled in a Contemporary World Literature course at a medium-sized public university in Northern Thailand during the third semester of 2023. They were

purposefully selected by the researcher based on the researcher's designated teaching course. Prior to the intervention, the students' English competence was at the B1 level on average.

### **Instruments**

Data were collected through the implementation of six multimodal literature-based lesson plans and the administration of a literary reading test, including a rubric to assess students' literary reading competence.

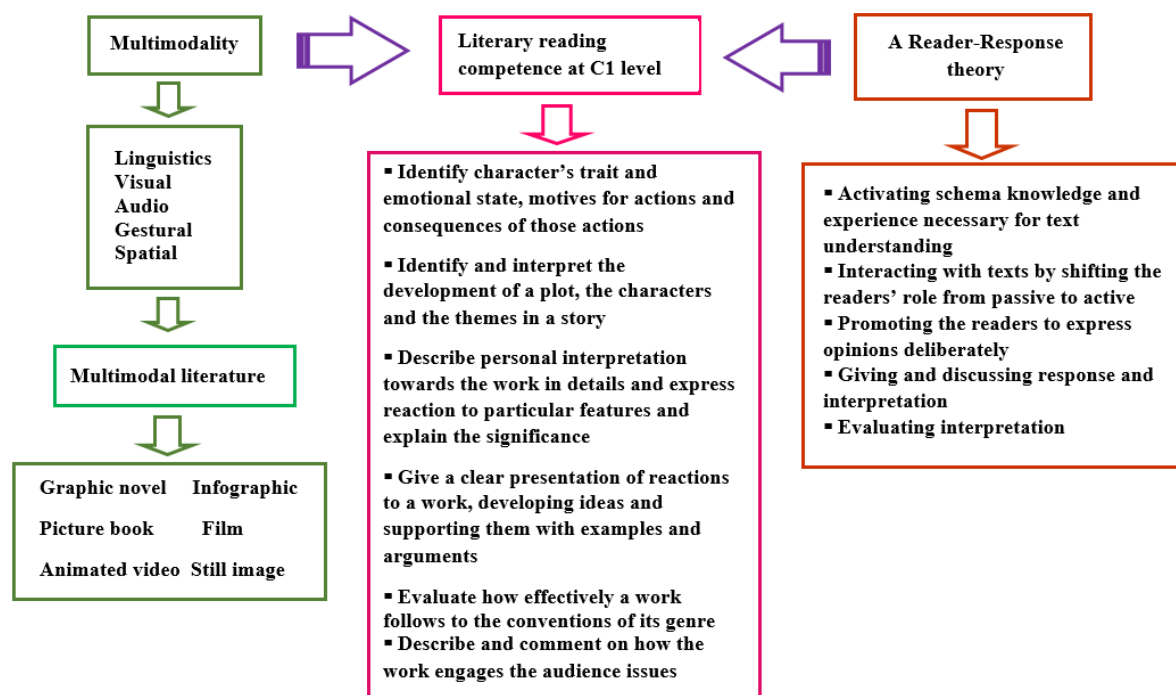
First, four lesson plans using multimodal literature were created. The plans were based on a reader-response model (Figure 2) that incorporates the use of multimodal literature in an EFL classroom to improve student literary reading designed by this researcher. Reader-Response theory was applied in the learning activities' design reflecting the five key concepts in the reading process centres on the interactive reader's role with the texts drawing on prior reading knowledge and experiences: 1) triggering the schema knowledge required for text comprehension; 2) shifting the readers' role from passive to active while interacting with texts; 3) promoting the reader to express opinions deliberately; 4) giving and discussing responses and interpretations; and 5) assessing interpretations. The lesson plans were divided into three stages: pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading. In each reading stage, various teaching and learning modes were used to cater to students' different learning styles. The multimodal literature included in this study was a graphic novel, picture book, film, and animated video, together with other multimodal materials such as still images, an info-graphic, a cartoon, and a song. The literary texts included one short story, one poem, and two novels. They were *The Man Who Planted Trees* by Jean Giono, *Wedding* by Alice Oswald, *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho, and *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe. The story themes were aligned with the Contemporary World Literature course description. The literary works, all written in English at the C1 CEFR level, were selected and confirmed by the experts who were the lecturers in the fields of teaching English language and English literature based on their suitability in terms of length, variety, and linguistic complexity. They encompassed six key dimensions of leisure reading: text type, subject matter, language use, readability, and depth of comprehension. The overall mean score for the content validity of lesson plans was 4.97, with a standard deviation of 0.04. Table 1 presented the details of text selection criteria, literary texts used in the study, and themes:

**Table 1**  
*Criteria of Text Selection, Literary Texts Used, and Themes*

CEFR		
Reception activities in communicative language activities	Literary texts	
Reading as a leisure activities	Text selection:	Theme:
Key concepts: 1) Length, variety, and use of illustrations; 2) Text type, ranging from simple characters and location descriptions to various narrative texts, and to contemporary and classical writing in various genres; 3) Subject matter, ranging from common concrete and abstract situations to literary themes; 4) Language type, ranging from straightforward to highly complex; 5) Ease of reading, which includes guessing with use of images, independent reading, and appreciating a range of texts; and 6) Depth of comprehension, which includes grasping an overview or the key points as well as implicit and explicit meanings	Short story: ▪ <i>The Man Who Planted Trees</i> by Jean Gigono  Novel: ▪ <i>The Alchemist</i> by Paulo Coelho ▪ <i>Things Fall Apart</i> by Chinua Achebe  Poetry: ▪ <i>Wedding</i> by Alice Oswald	Environment/anti war  Human search for knowledge and treasure/ dream/fate  Colonisation/family/religion/masculinity  Love/Marriage

**Figure 1**

*Developmental model of a reader-response approach incorporating the use of multimodal literature in an EFL classroom to improve students' literary reading ability*



Regarding Figure 1, to accommodate the students' different learning styles, a variety of teaching and learning modes were employed in the classroom. Each type of meaning-making mode, including linguistics, visual, audio, gestural, and spatial, contributed to the students' understanding of plot, character, and theme. Based on Reader-Response theory, various multimodal literature such as graphic novel, picture book, animated video, and

film supporting the students' visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic learning styles were implemented to enhance the students' literary reading competence of C1-level. Second, a pre- and post-test was designed to measure the impact of the intervention on students' literary reading competence. The test consisted of 10 open-ended questions reflecting the descriptions of learners' expected ability at C1 level or 'Can do statements' on the topics of 'Expressing a personal

response to creative texts including literature' and 'Analysis and criticism of creative texts including literature.' Participants were requested to read *Three Questions* by Leo Tolstoy and to respond to the questions. Three specialists from English literature and English language teaching fields approved the questions. Content validity was determined using the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC). Items with scores under 0.5 underwent revision. Items with scores equal to or above 0.5, however, were reserved. The test's total IOC score was 1.00. Test reliability was developed to verify the reliability and consistency of the data obtained through the instrument. Third, a writing rubric for the topics 'Expressing a personal response to creative texts including literature' and 'Analysis and criticism of creative texts including literature' was created using CEFR descriptions at the C1 level. The writing rubric, which was subsequently verified by the same specialists, was used to evaluate students' literary reading competence as determined by a pre- and post-reading test. The mean content validity score for the writing rubric was 5.00, and the SD was 0.00.

### Procedures

The fieldwork was conducted over three months, from March to May 2024. At the study's initial phase, a pre-test was administered to assess students' literary reading competence. Subsequently, a ten-week intervention, consisting of four intensive three-hour multimodal literature-based lessons, was then implemented. Finally, a post-test was administered to evaluate the significant impact of the intervention. Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the university's Human Research Ethics Committee.

### Data Analysis

This study examined the impact of multimodal literature on the literary reading competence of C1-

level EFL students. The students' literary reading competence in a pre- and post-reading test was evaluated using the writing rubric for the topics 'Expressing a personal response to creative texts including literature' and 'Analysis and criticism of creative texts including literature' presented in the CEFR descriptions at the C1 level. A Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was employed to analyse the quantitative data from the pre- and post-literary reading tests, providing statistical evidence of any significant improvement in reading ability. A nonparametric test, the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test is used to assess the significance of the difference between two pairs of data with an abnormal distribution but on an ordinal or interval scale. The Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test is an alternate test that can be performed if the paired t-test does not satisfy the assumption of normality. For example, the test is commonly used to determine whether variations between students' test scores before and after experimenting are significant.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Students' literary reading ability

The research question explored whether tertiary-level EFL students' literary reading test performance based on CEFR-level C1 is significantly affected by employing multimodal literature in a literature classroom. Given that the number of students in the study was low, and the data did not show a normal distribution, the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test was applied to examine the students' scores in this study. Table 2 presents the negative and positive ranks of the students' scores and the test analysis results from the pre-test and post-test before and after multimodal literature implementation:

**Table 2**

*Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test Results Regarding the Comparison of Students' Pre-Test and Post-Test Literary Reading Competence*

Pre-Test-Post-Test	<i>n</i>	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	<i>Z</i> *	<i>p</i>
Negative ranks	7 <sup>a</sup>	4.79	33.50	-2.176	.030
Positive ranks	1 <sup>b</sup>	2.50	2.50		
Ties	2 <sup>c</sup>				
Total	10				

*a. Pre-test < Post-test; b. Pre-test > Post-test; c. Pre-test = Post-test; \*Based on positive ranks*

The analysis results show a significant difference between the students' pre-test and post-test scores before and after the implementation of multimodal literature ( $z=2.176$ ,  $p<.05$ ). While the mean negative rank score of students on the literary reading competence test was 4.79, the mean positive rank score was 2.50. Alternatively, the sum negative rank score of the students was 33.50, and the sum positive rank score was 2.50. Data in Table 1 reveal that seven students achieved negative pre-test scores, one student achieved a positive pre-test score, and

two students achieved the same pre-test and post-test scores. This can be interpreted that the post-test scores were higher than the pre-test scores for seven students; the pre-test score was higher than the post-test score for one student, and two students had the same score in the pre-test and post-test. Hence, there is a statistically significant difference between the students' literary reading competence post-test and pre-test results. Based on this finding, it can be implied that the integration of multimodal literature in the classroom has a significant effect on increasing

students' literary reading competence in all six aspects including identify character's trait, emotional state, motives for actions and consequences of those actions (C1.1), identify and interpret the development of a plot, the characters and the themes in a story (C1.2), describe personal interpretation towards the work in details and express reaction to particular

features and explain the significance (C1.3), give a clear presentation of reactions to a work, developing ideas and supporting them with examples and arguments (C1.4), evaluate how effectively a work follows to the conventions of its genre (C1.5), and describe and comment on how the work engages the audience (C1.6).

**Table 3**

*Comparison of Students' Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores*

Student No.	Pre-Test Score (30)	Level	Post-Test Score(30)	Level	Results
1	18	Moderate	18	Moderate	-
2	18	Moderate	22	High	Improved
3	18	Moderate	18	Moderate	-
4	12	Moderate	23	High	Improved
5	26	High	24	High	-
6	25	High	29	High	-
7	16	Moderate	17	Moderate	-
8	17	Moderate	22	High	Improved
9	11	Moderate	13	Moderate	-
10	19	Moderate	27	High	Improved
Average Total	18	Moderate	21.3	High	Improved

According to Table 3, four students (nos. 2, 4, 8, and 10) improved their scores from moderate to high level, and two students (nos.1 and 3) remained at the moderate level both in the pre-test and post-test with the score 18. Interestingly, although students 6

and 9 remained at the same level for both the pre-test and post-test results, their scores increased from 25 to 29 (high level) and 11 to 13 (moderate level), respectively. On average, the students' scores improved from moderate (18) to high (21.3) levels.

**Table 4**

*Comparison of students' pre-test and post-test answers to question 1: Describe the character of the king in the story*

Students' Pre-Test Answers	Students' Post-Test Answers	Student No.	Literary Reading Competence
I think that the king is a good person and kind. In addition, he is so curious and he has patience.	The personality of the king is curious, adaptive, kind, patient, and careful. The three questions that good to show how the king is curious. He is adaptive and careful. From the circumstance that he wanted to go to ask the hermit. He dress up to ordinary to approach. His kind and patience showed when he help the hermit.	1	C1.1.1 Identify a character's traits
The character of the king is the one who wants to be better. He is determined and kind. He is caring and forgiving person.	The king is an ambitious and kind man. In the story we can see that the king did not want to be a normal king, so he found the answer of question to be the best king.	6	

The most noticeable improvement in the students' abilities to identify character traits (C1.1.1) between the pre-test and post-test was demonstrated by the selected extract in Table 4 (Students no. 1 and no. 6). It shows that Student 1's answer in the post-test was more elaborate and fully developed than in the pre-test. Likewise, Student 6 demonstrated the ability to identify the king's traits with clearer ideas and more developed details in the post-test compared to the pre-test.

Question 2 focuses on the students' ability to identify the character's motive for actions and the consequences of those actions. The students were required to analyse the king's motive for wanting to find the answers to the three questions. While the pre-test answers of most students were limited in detail, their post-test answers indicated the ability to describe the king's motives for searching for the answers to the three questions with more relevant and developed information. Table 5 shows examples of students' responses to this question.



**Table 5**

*Comparison of students' pre-test and post-test answers to question 2: Why did the king want to find the answer to the three questions?*

Students' Pre-Test Answers	Students' Post-Test Answers	Student No.	Literary Reading Competence
Because the king did not know the answer of the three questions. There are many answers from people but he agreed with none of them.	Because the king wants to know the right time to begin everything. If he always know the most important thing to do, he would never fail in anything he might undertake.	2	C1.1.2 Identify a character's motives for actions and consequences of those actions
Because if he know the answer, he would never fail in anything, he might undertake.	Because he wanted to become a wise and just ruler. He believed that if he could find the answers to these questions, he would be able to make wise decisions and rule his kingdom justly.	10	

Question 3 aims to assess the students' ability to identify the character's emotional state by asking about the king's feelings towards the answers he received from the wise men. According to Table 6, the example of the responses from Student 1's post-test answer revealed that he was able to describe the king's emotional state with clearer ideas and more detail than in the pre-test answer. Additionally,

Student 4's pre-test answer included inaccurate details about the wise men. It was likely that she confused the wise men with the hermit. In the story, the wise men did not tell the king to dig the ground in front of the hut. However, although Student 4's post-test answer was still limited and underdeveloped, she could now present more accurate information about the wise men and the hermit.

**Table 6**

*Comparison of students' pre-test and post-test answers to question 3: How did the king feel towards all the answers he received by the wise men? Was the king satisfied with all of them?*

Students' Pre-Test Answers	Students' Post-Test Answers	Student No.	Literary Reading Competence
The king doesn't like the answers that he received by the wise men. He was not satisfied with them.	The king feels disappointed and not satisfied all the answers, but he remains hopeful to have someone can answer.	1	C1.1.3 Identify a character's emotional state
Wise men did not answer anything but he tell to the king to dig the ground in front of his hut when the king did not get any answer he feel he is not satisfied.	The king feel like no one could give him a clear answer, so he had to consult a hermit instead. The king is not satisfied with all of them.	4	

**Table 7**

*Comparison of students' pre-test and post-test answers to question 4: What were the three questions that occurred to the king? What did he do to get the answer to his question?*

Students' Pre-Test Answers	Students' Post-Test Answers	Student No.	Literary Reading Competence
It's the most important time. The most important time is to do good. Do thing that are good and beneficial.	1. How can I learn to do right thing at the right now? 2. Who are the people I most need, and to whom should I, therefore, pay more attention than to rest. 3. What affairs are the most important and need my first attention? The hermit's answer the king's questions is the important is—Now!	3	C1.2.1 Identify and interpret the development of plot
The most important time was when you were digging the bed, the most important time was when you were attending to him. Remember then: there is only one time that is important-now! Because it is only time when we have any power and the most important affair is, to do him good because for the purpose alone was man sent into his life.	How can I learn to do the right thing at the right time? Who are the people I most need, and to whom should I, therefore, pay more attention than to the rest? And what affairs are the most important, and need my first attention? The most important time is now!	7	



Regarding literary reading competence C1.2.1, question 4 requires the students to identify and interpret the plot development. Student 3 could identify the three questions that the king wished to seek the answers to, though he was not able to clearly state that the king received answers to those questions from the hermit. Moreover, Student 7's response in the pre-test reflected the answers to the three

questions. This response was not relevant to question 4 as it was asking what the three questions were, not what the answers to the three questions were. However, in the post-test, Student 7 developed her answer with relevant details that identified what the three questions were, even though some details may be inadequately developed or unclear.

**Table 8**

*Comparison of students' pre-test and post-test answers to question 5: Why does the king dress up as a common man? What does this show about the character of the person the king is asking advice from?*

Students' Pre-Test Answers	Students' Post-Test Answers	Student No.	Literary Reading Competence
I think that the king dress up as a common man because he didn't want to be suspicious and he might want to be able to approach people easily. This is show about the character of person. The king is a smart and careful. He knows how to approach people.	The king dress up as a common man to not observe and he can approach an ordinary people. This show the personality of the hermit. He is clever and he has the way to answer by showing. We can see from the king's effort to answer the three questions. He show his personality through several situations.	1	C1.2.2 Identify and interpret the development of the characters in a story
Because he wanted to go to hermit's house asking the question, but the hermit received only common folk. Therefore, the king dressed up as a common man. This show that the hermit is also a common man. He is down to earth.	The king dress up as a common man because hermit received only common folk. The person that the king was asking advice from is the hermit who lived like a common folk even if he was so clever his action represent his selfless and he down to the earth.	6	

Concerning the participants' ability to identify and interpret the characters' development in a story (C1.2.2), Table 8 showed the example of how most students developed their answers in the post-test by providing relevant details describing the character of the hermit from whom the king was asking the advice. In the pre-test, Student 1 mistakenly

described the character of the king, which was irrelevant to the question. Moreover, the answer by Student 6 demonstrates the ability to identify and interpret the hermit's character with clearer ideas and to develop details compared to the answer written in the pre-test.

**Table 9**

*Comparison of students' pre-test and post-test answers to question 6: What is the importance of the present moment in our life?*

Students' Pre-Test Answers	Students' Post-Test Answers	Student No.	Literary Reading Competence
The present moment is important to our life because it is an era in which there has been development in various fields from the past to the present which makes our lives more comfortable.	The present moment it make me can be aware of what is happening. Be aware of current events and live life according to the truth.	7	C1.2.3 Identify and interpret the development of the themes in a story
-	What we do in the present always affects the future. Therefore, I focus on the present and do my best.	10	

Question 6 aims to assess the students' literary reading competence C1.2.3, enabling the students to identify and interpret the development of the themes in a story. It was evident that Student 10 could express her ideas about the story's theme in the post-test by being able to identify and interpret the importance of the present moment in life. Conversely, she was unable to give any response to

this question in the pre-test. Improvement in the post-test answers was also evidenced with Student 7. In the post-test, she could identify and interpret the development of the themes with relevant information and accurate details, whereas in the pre-test, she could only provide limited and irrelevant information that was inappropriate to the question.

**Table 10**

*Comparison of students' pre-test and post-test answers to question 7: Which of the hermit's answer do you like the most, and why?*

Students' Pre-Test Answers	Students' Post-Test Answers	Student No.	Literary Reading Competence
I like because the questions hard from answer and hermit want to teach the king from do from himself.	I like how hermit responded that who is with you is the most important because it is true that we should focus and value the people who are with you first before paying attention to people who never care about you at all.	4	C1.3 Describe a personal interpretation of the work in detail and express a reaction to particular features and explain their significance
The hermit's answers that I like most is the most important affair is to do someone or something good because it's work when we do something to someone, we should do it the best we can.	I like the first answer the most. Because I absolutely agree with the answer that now is the only time when we have power. We have power to do or not to do something at present. We have power to change our life at the present. We can't change the past or do something in the future, so the present is the moment that we have power to change our life. That why we call this time Present that means a gift.	6	

The answers by Students 4 and 6 to question 7 reflected their C1.3 literary reading competence. In the pre-test, they could describe their interpretation of the work in detail, express a reaction to particular features, and explain the significance with limited

and irrelevant details. In the post-test, however, they were able to present clearer ideas with relevant details, explaining which of the hermit's answers they liked the most and supporting their ideas with developed details and accurate information.

**Table 11**

*Comparison of students' pre-test and post-test answers to question 8: Do you agree or disagree with the hermit's answers? Why?*

Students' Pre-Test Answers	Students' Post-Test Answers	Student No.	Literary Reading Competence
I agree because hermit want to teach the king from do from himself.	Yes, I do. I agree with the responded from hermit because every answer from the hermit is a truth that everyone should understand and should follow his answer.	4	C1.4 Give a clear presentation of reactions to a work, developing ideas and supporting them with examples and arguments
I agree with all the hermit's answers because his answer is great. His answers can use in real life.	I agree with the hermit's answer because his answer is right. Focusing on present, taking care of person who you with, and doing good with them is good moral and I love that.	6	

Regarding question 8, Table 11 shows the students' development in providing a clear reaction to the work and in developing ideas and justifying their viewpoints using arguments and examples. This is related to literary reading competence C1.4. While Students 4 and 6 could present a few ideas in the pre-test that were largely undeveloped or not well supported, they were able to develop their ideas and provide more relevant information in the post-test.

Table 12 shows that the students were asked to evaluate how effectively a work follows the conventions of its genre at C1.5. Student 6's post-test answer shows clearly that he could present

considered ideas about how the *Three Questions* was written as a parable to convey valuable lessons through analogy. More relevant and fully developed details of how the king wished to develop himself to be a better king are provided compared to the pre-test response. Student 8's answer in the pre-test showed irrelevant details with inappropriate information to the question. Conversely, in the post-test, she was able to present relevant details indicating how the *Three Questions* uses actual events in daily life to provide lessons to the readers, although some ideas may be inadequately developed or unclear.

**Table 12**

*Comparison of students' pre-test and post-test answers to question 9: In what ways can Three Questions be seen as a parable which try to impart valuable lessons through an analogy?*

Students' Pre-Test Answers	Students' Post-Test Answers	Student No.	Literary Reading Competence
Three questions can show the valuable lessons to us clearly by the situation that the king met and his act to the man he saved. We can know the lesson clearly when the hermit told the king the answer.	A Three Questions <b>imparts valuable lessons through an analogy by making the king represent the readers who want to be a better person.</b> That can persuade them to find the answer together with the king. When the hermit answered the question, the readers can get valuable lessons that related to real life. We can take the moral about present that in the answer use in normal life.	6	C1.5 Evaluate how effectively a work follows the conventions of its genre
The most important people will change according to events that occur during that time. The present time is the most important because it is a time when we can do whatever we want and we must not forget to always do good.	It is <b>comparison with actual events in daily life</b> that everyone should be mindful of in their current actions, give importance to people who are together and should do good deeds regularly.	8	

**Table 13**

*Comparison of students' pre-test and post-test answers to question 10: Written in 1885, Tolstoy's Three Questions can still serve as a template for a meaningful life. What do you think makes this story timeless and appealing to people of all time?*

Students' Pre-Test Answers	Students' Post-Test Answers	Student No.	Literary Reading Competence
Because the idea in the article can apply to use in life effectively.	This story will endure for a long time because it teaches people to see the value of what they are doing in the present and reminds them that if you do something you should focus on that. If you do that good enough, a good thing will follow.	4	C1.6 Describe and comment on how the work engages the audience
This story is timeless and appealing for people of all time because the lesson of this story is the present. Every ages have the present, so the story can give us the lesson in every ages. That's why this story is timeless.	A Three Question is timeless because the moral of the story is how to be a better person. The story give a good moral to the readers about present. People are always nervous about past or future whether it be any ages. Therefore, the moral of this story can be useful for people in every ages.	6	

As revealed in Table 13, question 10 required the students to demonstrate their literary reading competence C1.6, namely, the ability to 'describe and comment on how the work engages the audience.' It can be seen that the students' post-test answers were more elaborate than those of the pre-test. For example, Student 4 was able to describe and comment on how the work engaged the audience with limited details in the pre-test. His answer in the post-test, however, showed that he could 'describe and comment on how the work engaged the audience' with more developed details. Likewise, Student 6's post-test answers reflected his literary reading competence at the C1.6 level in that he could 'describe and comment on how the work engaged the audience', and he did this with clear, relevant, and

fully developed details compared to his pre-test response.

The current study sought to answer the research question, "Does multimodal literature significantly affect EFL learners' literary reading competence at the C1 level?" The quantitative results from the post-test scores revealed that the students' literary reading competence improved following their engagement with multimodal literature, as evident in Tables 1 and 2. Additionally, the students' responses to the pre-and post-test questions (see Tables 3 to 12) revealed that they developed their literary reading competence. It was found that most of the post-test answers provided by the students demonstrated their ability to describe their ideas with greater clarity and in greater detail compared to their pre-test answers, which were limited in detail and included irrelevant information.

This finding can be explained in light of the Reader-Response theory, underpinning the active interaction between the reader and the texts to construct the meaning (Rosenblatt, 1978) as well as the nature of multimodal texts, which consist of multiple modes of presentation, including visual, audio, and textual, to enhance students' meaning-making abilities (Serafini, 2013). The students' exposure to multimodal literature such as graphic novels, picture books, and animated video, which encouraged meaningful interpretation, may have contributed to the significant increases in students' literary reading ability at the C1 level, as evident from their improved post-test scores. To clarify, these findings suggest that the use of multimodal literature in the classroom significantly affects the students' literary reading competence at the C1 level. It is likely that the integration of multimodal literature into the four lesson plans using the Reader-Response theory helped to enhance the students' literary reading ability at the C1 level. All learning activities in the lesson plans were designed to reflect the five key features of the Reader-Response theory, which aim to support the students to achieve each literary reading competence element from C1.1 to C1.6. The five key features are: 1) triggering the schema knowledge required for text comprehension; 2) shifting the readers' role from passive to active while interacting with texts; 3) promoting the reader to express opinions deliberately; 4) giving and discussing responses and interpretations; and 5) assessing interpretations. Moreover, various teaching and learning modes were used to cater to different learning styles of the students in each stage of reading, namely, pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading.

To illustrate, when engaging the students with the text, *The Man Who Planted Trees*, during the pre-reading stage, their schema knowledge and experiences necessary for text understanding were activated by discussing the backgrounds and actions of well-known environmentalists in Thailand using still images shown by the teacher. The images were used as the first multimodal literature resource to both accommodate and facilitate visual learning by the students (Hanna et al., 2010; Lirola, 2016). Additionally, a picture book was presented in the pre-reading stage to activate the students' schema knowledge about the plot. As Jauss (2022) claims, a literary work is constructed and organised utilising various writing styles; it is not a whole new set of knowledge. Consequently, readers' expectations of the contents of the text may be influenced by their past reading experiences. Therefore, the picture book may help the students to identify and make predictions about the plot of the story, which is an indication of literary competence at the C1 level (C1.2.1). Moreover, because the construction and design of the picture book includes the combination of three sign systems: written language, visual design

features, and visual images, the students needed to connect the three elements to understand the narrative and to create a meaningful interpretation (Cecilia et al., 2022; Nikolajeva, 2010; Scott, 2010; Serafini & Reid, 2022). When the students interact with the picture book, they are encouraged to navigate non-linear patterns and to focus on visual representations, design elements, and structures (Serafini, 2005). These challenges thus require the students to become more engaged and reflective readers who have the skills to use a variety of interpretive techniques to make sense of the texts they read.

During the while-reading stage, the students watched the film *The Man Who Planted Trees* to support the visual and auditory modes of learning. By incorporating the film's visual and audio elements, the student's role at this stage shifts from passive to active learning according to Reader-Response theory. They were then asked to identify the central character's personality traits and emotional state after watching the film (C1.1.1 and C1.1.2). Additionally, the students were asked to read the written text of *The Man Who Planted Trees* and then discuss the main character's motives for action and the consequences of those actions (C1.1.3).

Furthermore, during the post-reading stage, still images were used to support the visual learning mode for a second time by asking the students to do a Picture Talk activity. In this activity, each student selected a picture prepared by the teacher and explained how it related to the story. It was evident that the activity supported the students' kinaesthetic learning styles as kinaesthetic or tactile learners think and learn best when they are actively engaged in classroom activities (Hanna et al., 2010; Lirola, 2016). The goal of the activity was to enhance the students' abilities to identify and interpret plot developments, characters, and themes in the story (C1.2.1, C1.2.2, and C1.2.3). In addition, the auditory mode of learning was given primary focus in the Me-Telling activity by asking the students to retell the main events in the story and to describe their favourite part or favourite character. Encouraging and supporting the students to express opinions deliberately according to Reader-Response theory was a key feature of the activity to help them to achieve literary reading competence C1.3. Specifically, to describe a personal interpretation of the work in detail and to express a reaction to particular features and explain their significance. The Move to Talk activity in the post-reading stage aimed to enhance the students' abilities to provide a clear representation of their reaction to a text and to develop their ideas with support examples and arguments (C1.4). The students were asked to describe their opinions on their responsibility towards the environment and to explain the actions that they perform to meet their responsibility. This activity supported the students' visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic learning styles and reflected the aim to

develop their abilities to give a response and discuss their and others' interpretations. The last aspect of the Reader-Response theory required the students to evaluate their interpretations. The aim was to 'develop the students' ability to evaluate how effectively a work followed to the conventions of its genre' as well as to 'describe and comment on how the work engaged the audience' (C1.5). The students were requested to write a journal entry on the topic, "How is the work a good example of an anti-war allegory and environmental allegory that everyone can relate to?"

All the activities included in the four lesson plans were well designed in that they reflected the five key aspects of the Reader-Response theory to enhance the students' literary reading competence at the C1 level. Additionally, as exemplified in the lesson plan on *The Man Who Planted Trees*, the activities included several types of multimodal literature to accommodate a variety of learning modes. That is, Discussion, Picture Talk, Me-Telling, and Move to Talk were employed to cater to the different visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic learning styles of students.

Hence, the implementation of multimodal literature or multimodal texts in the classroom can support the different learning preferences of students. As mentioned by Tomlinson (2014), every student has a different preferred method of learning; therefore, incorporating the use of multimodal texts in the course can support teachers to accommodate these differences. Arguably, the students in this study were encouraged to participate in different modes of learning, and this would assist them in discovering their favourite learning method (Hanna et al., 2010). For example, while the auditory learners enjoyed listening to verbal instructions or reading texts along with the audio, visual learners found that they learned best when engaging with written texts, illustrations, or videos. The kinaesthetic learners were motivated to think and learn when actively involved in classroom activities (Ganapathy & Seetharam, 2016; Hanna et al., 2010; Lirola, 2016). The results supported the findings of Ganapathy and Seetharam's (2016) study, which revealed the benefits of using multimodal texts in the classroom, including enhancing students' engagement and motivation, promoting self-directed learning, and supporting differentiated classrooms. For example, the students claimed to better understand the learning materials with multiple representations, which they found more interesting and helpful. They were motivated to learn and felt more engaged in the lessons with multimodal resources provided by the teacher. Besides, they were able to discuss, analyse, and interpret the meaning with less teacher facilitation. They believed that using mobile devices in class allowed them to self-edit their grammar and spelling. Moreover, since the students learned in different styles, the study also claimed that multimodal materials enabled the

teachers to accommodate their diverse learning abilities. Additionally, the study's findings also confirmed the positive effects of applying multimodal texts to improve students' reading ability. This is evident from the studies of Boshwabadi and Biria (2014), Suwancharoen (2016), and Varaporn and Sitthitikul (2019). To illustrate, compared to printed-based texts only, students tended to enjoy and pay more attention to their multimodal reading, which led to extensive reading (Boshwabadi & Biria, 2014). Moreover, they were able to recall information more effectively from multiple modes of presentation than from a single mode. They found that reading from visual resources helped retain information better than reading from texts only (Suwancharoen, 2016). Lastly, they claimed that they felt encouraged to read from multimodal texts and were able to identify the main idea, make inferences, and draw conclusions from the texts they read more effectively (Varaporn & Sitthitikul, 2019). From the findings of these studies, it can be suggested that incorporating multimodal texts into the differentiated classroom can promote students' motivation and learning engagement, which leads to successfully improving students' making-meaning process and their reading ability. Therefore, employing several types of multimodal literature in the classroom to cater to different modes of learning and student learning preferences supports literary reading competence development at the C1 level, as evident from the improvements in the students' post-test scores. Notwithstanding its insights into student literary reading development using multimodal texts, this study has some limitations. One limitation lies in the relatively small number of participants. The generalizability and comparability of the findings may be constrained by the specific context of the study.

## CONCLUSION

The present study investigated the impact of multimodal literature on the literary reading competence of C1-level EFL students. The findings from the pre- and post-test indicate that the students improved their literary reading competence at the C1 level. It can be concluded that employing multimodality in the classroom has a positive effect on students' literary reading ability in different aspects. They include 'identifying a character's trait, emotional state, motives for actions, and the consequences of those actions;' 'identifying and interpreting the development of plot, characters, and themes;' 'interpreting the work in detail and expressing their reaction to particular features and explaining the significance;' 'providing a clear presentation of their reactions to a work, developing ideas and supporting them with examples and arguments;' 'evaluating how effectively a work follows the conventions of its genre;' and 'describing

and commenting on how the work engages the audience.' This implies that multimodal learning plays an essential role in developing students' literary reading in an EFL context. These study findings may be beneficial to teachers in terms of improving how they apply multimodal literature in the EFL literature classroom. Additionally, the findings of this study can provide English teachers and educators with a guideline or roadmap for designing curricula that addresses the shift in students' reading habits that tend to rely on modern technology. By incorporating multimodal texts into their pedagogical practices, teachers can move away from the focus on print reading of linear texts toward digital reading on devices like computers, tablets, and smartphones that offer the students non-linear texts in multimodal forms.

To enhance the statistical significance and generalizability of the results, future studies should employ larger sample sizes. Moreover, to expand the types of samples investigated on this research topic, it would be worth recruiting EFL students who are non-English majors enrolled in different courses. Such studies could aim to examine whether the integration of multimodal literature in the classroom yields similar positive effects on the students' English language skills. Lastly, an experimental research study could examine the effects of employing multimodal literature to develop EFL students' speaking and writing skills. The study could also compare the effects of learning with diverse types of multimodal literature and examine how different modes of meaning-making promote the students' English language competence.

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