A CASE STUDY ON INVESTIGATING THE EFFECTS OF USING MULTIMODAL APPROACHES IN MEANING-MAKING AMONG ESL STUDENTS IN A PRIVATE SCHOOL IN PENANG

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays, students are highly engaged in various texts due to their active participation in social media and heavy usage of mobile devices in a daily basis. Such daily activities instigated the need for a change in the teaching and learning of ESL lessons to aid students' abilities to make meaning and make sense of the different texts which students come across in their daily activities. This paper puts the framework of the Multimodal approaches in the restructuring of the teaching and learning of ESL with the aim of investigating its effects and students perspectives on the use of multimodal approaches. Using focus group interviews, this qualitative case study examines the effectiveness of ESL teaching and learning using the Multimodal approaches among 15 students in a private school in Penang, Malaysia. The results confirm the need for to accommodate teaching and learning with the use of multimodal pedagogical practices as it promotes positive learning outcomes among students. The implications of this study suggest that the multimodal approaches used in the teaching and learning of ESL promotes students' autonomy in learning, improves motivation to learn and accomodates to various learning styles.

1.0 Introduction

The dynamic nature of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) has largely affected the way people today live, communicate, work and play because elements of computers are found in almost everything we do, use and see (Frost, 1999). According to Frost (1999), computers which used to be bulky and immobile with restricted usage have now shrunken in size and are accessible by all layers of people with the benefits of the Internet. Students today are greatly exposed to mobile devices and the World Wide Web which enable them to acquire facts and gain access to various sources of knowledge in a mere touch of a screen. The present age of information demands for students' meaningful engagement with the world around them and urges authorities of schools to alter the concepts of learning to empower students' ability to question the purpose of learning, knowledge and literacy (Kalantzis & Cope, 2009:168 as cited in Ganapathy, 2011).

> Previously, literacy teaching concentrated on teaching learners the alphabet and providing practice in phonics before moving on to the kind of reading and writing adults practice in "real-life."…There is now a growing consensus that "real life" reading should be the starting point rather than the ending point of teaching initial literacy and that skills such as phonics should be used as a tool in helping learners understand the "print" they see around them.
> (Wrigley & Guth, 1992)

Consequently, the teaching and learning practices of literacy demands greater practical changes in the pedagogical approaches used in ESL classrooms. This is because the dynamic nature of language teaching which does not end at learning only grammar, phonics and vocabulary but also involves practical learning of interpreting everything around them.

1.1 Background of the Study

With such rapid technological advancements and exposure faced by today's global students in mind, the Ministry of Education has prepared the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 envisioning a better educational system to equip our younger generation with the skills to meet the needs of the 21st century. The Education Blueprint 2013-2025 introduced 11 shifts to transform the system and among these 11 shifts, the use of ICT to

improve quality learning across Malaysia has spotted a place too. There are a few initiatives planned out, namely: enabling internet access to over 10 000 schools, establishment of virtual learning environments, online video library and use of ICT to initiate self-paced and distance learning (Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025, 2013). With all these plans in effect, usage of ICT is expected to play a substantial role in daily lessons in schools with the aim of promoting higher order thinking skills (HOTs) as well.

Although the government has laid out strategic plans to keep pace with global advancements and progress, the stress lies on the fundaments of teaching and learning approaches in schools as the need to alter the approaches are greater now compared to the past years due to the ever-growing needs of the 21st century learning. With the revolutionary changing nature of technology, citizenship, work and personal lives, pedagogy that views language as dynamic is necessary (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). In such conditions, conventional teacher-centred teaching and learning approaches are no longer appealing to the students today. In the learning of English as Second Language (ESL), large amounts of emphasis are placed on public exams and tests which act as the hindering factors of creative teaching and learning approaches (Manan, 2012). According to Manan (2012), the inevitable fast diffusion of ICT into our daily lives urge for a paradigm shift in the literacy pedagogy from conventional teaching approaches to contemporary teaching approaches by enabling integration of ICT into daily lessons. Today's students are greatly exposed to Multimodal Approaches (MMA) practices on a daily basis which leads to mounting acceptance of a wider range of literacy practices involving both print and digital technologies which include written words, images, sounds, graphic animations, space and music (Kaur & Ganapathy, 2013).

Therefore, the changing nature of students' exposure and interest in literacy learning has been the underpinning factor for the researcher to analyse the prevalence and benefits of the MMA in meaning-making by students in the teaching and learning of ESL. Kaur and Ganapathy (2013) state that the increase of cultural and linguistic diversity as MMA channels of meaning pave ways for students to become active designers of new meanings. Students are responsible towards their own meaning making based on the MMA channels made available to them. Therefore, there is a need to investigate students' perceptions towards the use of MMA in the teaching and learning of ESL.

The purpose of this study is to explore effects of the MMA based on the Multiliteracies Theory which can be integrated into the teaching and learning within the ESL classroom. It also aims to investigate the students' perceptions towards the MMA used in the teaching and learning process within the ESL classroom.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Ganapathy (2011) expresses her view that Malaysian schools are considered to be limited to conventional teaching approaches involving grammar drills, exam-oriented lessons, teacher-centred approaches, passive students, print-based resources as well as classroom confined settings. The teaching and learning process in English as Second Language in Malaysia are often linked to the use of literary texts and comprehension texts that are used as the ultimate teaching and learning materials. Print text is direct, composed in a line of symbols read from left to right, right to left or up and down (Topping, 2007 as cited in Mohd Ghani, Mahmood, Abdul Halim & Rajindra, 2013). It is common for ESL educators to utilize print-based texts such as textbooks as these books are made available to educators in schools and all students have access to these textbooks via the existing Textbook Lending Scheme (Mohd Ghani, Mahmood, Abdul Halim & Rajindra, 2013).

However, students today would enter the global market of employment soon but with limited meaning-making abilities as a result of monomodality in schools, their futures are likely to be jeopardised. In fact, students today are highly exposed to technology and various electronic gadgets in their daily lives; in and outside of school. Hence, students today are more open to a variety of knowledge sources which are MMA in nature compared to students in the past. They are exposed to technology at the comfort of their homes and quite large amount of school students today own a gadget for themselves. In a survey carried out by the Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Commission in 2014, it was evident that adults account for 73.1% of all users followed by pre-teens and teens by 12.5%. Out of the total number of mobile phone users among children, 50.4% of them have access to the Internet. This survey also proves statistically that the number of teenagers and pre-teens who own a mobile phone for themselves with granted access to the Internet are increasing by years (Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Commission, 2015).

On the other hand, it has been reported in The Star that 9 of the top 20 websites in Malaysia are social networking sites and the top 5 websites are Yahoo, Facebook, Google, YouTube and Blogger (Subramaniam, 2015). Facebook is known to be the most visited social networking site with 10.4 million Facebook users of which 3.5 million are youths aged between 18 and 24. The active usage of electronic gadgets and involvement of youngsters in social media have opened up the windows to greater possibilities of them encountering MMA channels in their daily lives.

These situations sets a critical situation for all ESL educators as they are obliged to teach their students the basics, improve their literacy skills and at the same time strive to keep their students on par with the rapid technological advancements in education (Kaur & Ganapathy, 2011). Above all, keeping students of current age of information engaged during lessons remain a hefty task for all educators.

In this case, students are not interested to learn when they are taught meaning-making through monomodal approaches. Educators often complain that it is problematic to get students to complete reading the texts as it is ultimately challenging to get students to engage themselves with the texts provided. This can be linked to the demotivating nature of monomodal approaches which usually utilises print-based texts. Lankshear & Knowbel (2003) as cited in Flood, Head & Lapp (2008) state that educators have grown accustomed to print-based environment whilst students today are brought up in the digital environment, thus schools carry the responsibilities to include MMA meaning making approaches as a part of students' learning experiences to intensify their participation and motivation in ESL classes. Kaur & Wong (2011) express their views that texts used in ESL classrooms do not necessarily need to be print-based texts instead texts in electronic forms would help in forming a new world of meaning-making.

In view of this situation, there is an urgent need for educators to shift from monomodal approaches to MMA Approaches in order to drive students' towards a much progressive, engaging teaching and learning experiences in terms of language learning and meaning-making. Consequently, it is also vital for educators to understand the preferences and inclinations of students they teach in order to tailor their lessons accordingly. Understanding of students' perceptions towards the use of MMA in the ESL classroom will provide better insights on students' preferences of teaching approaches used in the class.

Apart from that, there is a greater need for the educators to keep up to the development of technology in order to equip the students with the necessary literacy and language skills (Mehrabi Boshrabadi & Biria, 2014; Coiro, 2003; Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; Leu et al., 2008. This study would also serve as a reference for educators in implementing learning experiences based on MMA in their ESL classrooms.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are to:

1) Examine the effects of Multimodal Approaches to the students of ESL in meaning-making and to determine whether students benefit from Multimodal Approaches.

2) Analyse students' perceptions on the use of Multimodal Approaches in meaning-making via the use of Multimodal Approaches in teaching and learning of ESL.

1.4 Research Questions

This study addressed the following research questions:

1) To what extent are the Multimodal Approaches beneficial to the students of ESL in meaning-making?

2) What are the students' perceptions on the use of Multimodal Approaches in the teaching and learning of ESL?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study provides understanding and different perceptions into the study of MMA used in meaning-making to encourage language acquisition in the ESL classroom through the usage of teaching and learning resources such as videos, Flipped Classroom websites, graphical animations, sounds and music that will create interest and trigger participation among students. The findings of this investigation may provide some vital information about students' perceptions on the use of MMA. This study will address students' lack of interest in the current monomodal pedagogical approaches and raise the

need for a paradigm shift from conventional monomodal approaches to MMA in meaning-making. This study will serve as an eye opener to all educators on the type of students they are facing in their daily lessons with much emphasis being placed on their learning styles and preferences. It will also enlighten educators on their changing roles and emphasise on the need to incorporate MMA to facilitate students in meaning making in the ESL classroom.

This study could inspire educators from other schools to integrate MMA into their ESL lessons as a springboard to their initiatives in improving their students' second language acquisition as well as 21st century literacy skills. Educators will be able to utilise the Multiliteracies Theory as a ground of their lesson planning and implementation of their plans for their ESL students. This study will inspire educators to take up short term courses or self-learn simple use of technologies in the classroom to facilitate the implementation of the MMA as well. Teaching and learning with the supplement of ICT is the backbone of the notion Multimodality.

1.6 Limitations of the Study

1.5.1 Time-Constraint

This study will be carried out over the course of 8-10 weeks. The time constraint the information obtained may be limited due to limited number of meetings with the participants. The limited time made available led to the investigation of a smaller scope on the effects of MMA Approaches on students and hindered the researcher from utilising different instruments and bigger sample sizes to obtain information.

1.5.2 Sample Size

Besides that, the small sample size may not provide a generalizable holistic overview of students' perceptions towards the use of MMA in teaching and learning process within the ESL classrooms. However, the results obtained from this study may deliver an understanding of students' perceptions on MMA used in the teaching and learning of ESL and provide opportunities for educators to understand students' interest and learning preferences in ESL.

1.5.3 Background of Participants

Apart from that, the school chosen for this investigation is a private school with students of mixed abilities and language proficiency. The differences in their language proficiency may affect their perceptions towards the approaches used in the ESL classrooms. Their diverse learning styles too may affect their perceptions towards the MMA used in the class.

1.7 Definition of Terms

Given below are the definitions and explanations of some of the terms as they are used in this study:

MMA Approaches: refers to the use of MMA designs other than Linguistic Mode in texts involving elements of linguistic, visual, auditory, gestural and spatial designs (Kalantzis & Cope, 2001). MMA Approaches of teaching and learning utilises the mentioned elements of designs.

Multiliteracies: The term "Multiliteracies" is a new pedagogical approach and it refers to various forms of literacies which is not restricted to texts-based models of literacy (The New London Group, 1996). The multiliteracies theory caused a move of emphasis from reading words to reading MMA texts (O'Rourke, 2005).

Monomodal: refers to one form of literacy such as linguistic design.

Flipped Classroom: refers to the concept of learning at home and schools carry out activities and encourage students to complete tasks (Bergmann & Sams, 2012).

Print-Based Texts: Print-based text are composed in a line of symbols read from left to right, right to left or up and down (Topping, 2007 as cited in Mohd Ghani, Mahmood, Abdul Halim & Rajindra, 2013)

MMA Texts: A MMA text is a text involving more than a single mode, such as images, sounds, animations ad gestures which requires the readers to evaluate and make connections with the different types of modes present in a text to create their own meaning (Tan & Subramanian, 2009).

1.8 Summary of Chapter 1

Based on the background of the study, it is hoped that it can help one in understanding the need to incorporate MMA to meaning making in their daily ESL lessons to improve students' interest and participation in the class. It is proposed that MMA will be effective in terms of actively engaging the students in second language acquisition with the integration of ICT in ESL classes while catering to the diverse learning styles of students.

The MMA Approaches will provide better understanding of theories and practices related to the underlying Theory of Multiliteracies and pave ways for more innovative ideas and teaching practices. Apart from that, it is crucial to take into account the perceptions of the students based on the use of MMA Approaches in meaning making during their ESL lessons. This will provide us an overview of how effective this approach is in developing students' literacy skills and at the same time facilitate their second language acquisition. It will also provide an insight to factors that need to be taken into consideration when implementing the MMA in the teaching of ESL.

CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on a review of literature pertaining to the framework and research on MMA to encourage students' participation and engagement in the ESL classroom. Apart from that, this chapter also attempts to explore designs and concepts presented by the New London Group and the roles of ICT in promoting the MMA in the teaching and learning of ESL. The present chapter provides background information that is related to this case study which uses the MMA to create interest and engage students with their learning process in an ESL classroom.

2.1 21st Century Literacy

In the past, literacy was referred to as the capability to encode texts and this conception upon literacy persists until today (Warschauer & Ware, 2008). On the other hand, Luke & Freebody (1999) assert against this idea by claiming that such conceptions on literacy was uncommon before the existence of new technologies. They claim that literacy based on print-based texts was beyond encoding of texts as it also encompasses meaning making, analysis and practical use of the texts.

However, in the current context, the teaching of literacy needs to be brought beyond analysis and practical use of print-based texts as technology has largely affected the way people live, work and play. In parallel to that, occupations now demand for multi skilled employees with higher level of literacy compared to the past (Mikulecky & Kirkley, 1998). Mikulecky & Kirkley (1998) emphasise on communicational skills, computational skills and skills of operating technical tools as the most significant abilities an employer should possess, mainly to facilitate the information processing in workplaces. People today live in the phase of drastic changes and transformations in the personal, working and public lives placing greater pressure on schools and the way literacy is taught (New London Group, 2000 as cited in Cope & Kalantzis, 2000).Thus, urgent change needs to be made to the way literacy is

being taught in schools and teaching approaches need to be shifted from monomodal to MMA. Continuous urge for involved stakeholders and school authorities to alter education and teaching of literacy to fit current students' lifestyles as a way to produce productive citizenry and encourage reading arose due to a countless numbers of researches done in the field of literacy and education (Hagood, 2003).

In today's teaching and learning of ESL, literacy and digital technology play crucial roles.

> Digital technologies offer a wide range of tools to support the development of literacy skills in ESL students. Unprecedented advances in technology have made what is current, appropriate, and effective for literacy instruction a moving target. Teachers are faced with need of identify, evaluate, and integrate potentially valuable digital literacy tools in their curricula in order to scaffold classroom instruction and prepare students for literacy skills mediated by digital technologies that they will need in their prospective workplaces.
> (Gunderson, 2009)

The conventional way of teaching involving paper and pen are labelled as old-fashioned by students today as they look forward to much enticing learning experiences in school. It appears as to be a Herculean task for many educators to enrich literacy skills, meaning making and ESL skills among ESL students by incorporating adequate digital technologies without completely eliminating the knowledge derived from books and print-based texts (Walsh, 2010). Current generation of students known as Digital Natives have grown in a technology filled environment as they are flexible to changes and are accustomed to ICT language (Prensky, 2001 as cited in Carroll, 2011). Digital Natives are also skilled in using ICT innovatively and creatively (Considine, 2009 as cited in Carroll, 2011). In contrary, most teachers who teach current generation of students are Digital Immigrants as they face challenges in adapting to changes and understanding ICT language (Prensky, 2001 as cited in Carroll, 2011). Thus, rapid growth of technology is one of the main root causes in the shift from monomodality to MMA in the teaching and learning of ESL.

2.2 Changing Social Practices and Literacy

> The escalation of the popularity and availability of social networking sites, such as MySpace, Facebook, YouTube and others, and the associated development of blogs, wikis and participation in online gaming and virtual reality sites have enabled different forms of communication and communities to evolve. (Walsh, 2010)

As reiterated by Walsh (2010), the increased participation of youths in social networking sites has exposed them to multimodality and various forms of communication. Literacy skills do not necessarily develop within the confined settings of a school alone but students autonomously take learning beyond the school walls via active participation in the Digital World. Nowadays, the type of technology students are being exposed to at home and in the community is clearly more conventional and advanced when compared to the print-based technology which are still being practiced in schools (Tyner, 1998). In relation to ESL, students escalating use of social media and mobile devices do greatly expose them to the use of English Language. This is due to the majority of websites which are operated in English language. However, the limited use of ICT tools in the ESL classroom delimits students' exposure to academic use of ICT in improving their literacy skills.

2.3 Theoretical Approaches to Student Learning

Students learn in different ways and many teaching and learning approaches being used by the teachers today originated from learning theories by renowned theorists such as Vygotsky. In this section, three related theories to the way students learn and are taught in ESL are briefly discussed.

2.3.1 Constructivist Approaches

Constructivist theory focuses greatly on students' engagement and interaction with the learning materials and experiences to make meaning and create their own understanding (Cooper, 2011). Understanding the roles of the students will greatly aid better understanding of the Constructivist Theory on how this theory can be put into practical use in the classroom. Constructivism is an educational theory of learning which promotes differentiation of process, product and content to cater to individual learning needs and styles as great emphasis is placed on the students (Ganapathy, 2007). An important aspect of the Constructivist Theory is its focus on students' social interaction within the classroom where they are encouraged to interact with one another via cooperative learning strategies, group discussions and dialogues (Cooper, 2011).

This theory gives great importance to student-centeredness and teachers are deemed to be the facilitators, guides and advisors for the students' learning process and experiences. The roles of a teacher in a constructivist classroom is vast as the teacher plays

multiple roles of providing guidance, resources and advice, create conducive learning environments for open communication and facilitate students in embracing new knowledge (Marlowe & Page, 1998). In developing materials and resources, constructivist teachers need to create tasks that are challenging in nature with the intention to develop students' critical thinking and problem solving skills (Reyes & Vallone, 2008).

2.3.2 Cognitivist Theory

Cognitivist Theory encourages learning process to be active and believes that knowledge is actively constructed by students. This theory pays attention to the process of learning and not just the product or outcome of the learning. Students are said to construct their own knowledge based on their prior knowledge, cultural background, experiences and so on. In this theory, a clear structure of the learning is provided to allow room for students to think, understand and revise.

2.3.3 Connectivism Theory

In the current Age of Information, no better theory could describe the learning process of current generation of technology savvy students than the Connectivism Theory. Siemens (2004) popularized the term Connectivism as the successor to the renowned Theories of Cognitivism, Behaviorism and Constructivism in order to take into account the integration of technology into the process of learning. This theory has a few principles connoting what learning is like under the implementation of this theory. According to Siemens (2004), learning is a process of connecting information sources and decision making is vital. He claims that the maintenance of connections with information sources as crucial in ensuring ongoing learning.

Besides, learning activities involving this theory need to comprise up-to-date knowledge and students' capability to learn more than what is known. In this learning theory, learning may take place in non-human appliances. For an instance, learning process which takes place through online learning and social networking sites to facilitate communication between students and educators can be considered as an element of Connectivism. Students' ability to find connections between ideas and concepts is a core skills which each learner need to develop under the learning environment of Connectivism. Similar to Constructivist Theory, Connectivism places great emphasis in multiplicity of opinions which directly aims at students' social skills and self-expression. In this case study, Connectivism shows great

connection to the ways students acquire second language via engagement with ICT and social platforms.

2.4 Students' Motivation and ESL

The learning of ESL is often correlated to the motivation and attitude of students. Students with poorer reading skills tend to be motivated to read with the when they are exposed to multimodal texts because such texts are more comprehensive with the support of other modes such as images, animations and sounds (Falk-Ross, 2014). The scenario would be the opposite when ESL teachers use print-based texts with a focus on a single mode such as the textual mode.

Besides that, it is found in a case study that the use of multi-modal literacy has proven that great amount of learning amongst students take place when they were given a variety of multimodal tasks pertaining to writing and reading skills (Walsh, 2010). Participants of this case study were being participative and were greatly engaged in the multi-modal tasks given as they viewed, searched for information and responded effectively. Multimodal texts enrich students' learning experiences and provide them a wider grasp of knowledge and skills and this is supported by Walsh (2010). On the other hand,

> *"Students' personal aspirations and vocations cause their conceptions of knowledge and learning to be different from each other. Learning approaches are chosen according to their motivations and reasons for learning, so they may be deep or surface students who are either active or passive."* (Pillai & Vengadasamy, 2010)

As Pillai & Vengadasamy (2010) have mentioned, students' inclinations and personal targets affects the lessons and determines their learning.

Thus, there is a need for a shift from monomodal or print-based texts to MMA during ESL lessons in order to keep up to the technological development and trends as there are some evidences of differences in motivation among students when these two types of texts are used.

2.5 Theory of Multiliteracies

With the changing nature of literacy in mind, The New London Group came together and came up with the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies in 1996. Multiliteracies focus on a pedagogy which looks at modes of representation beyond language alone. In making this ground-breaking change, educators and students must view themselves as active participants of social changes as this is the main underlying driving cause beneath the concept of Multiliteracies (The New London Group, 2000). The main idea of Multiliteracies is the interrelationship between diverse modes of meaning and brings about the move from print-based texts to acknowledge the changing nature of literacy due to rapid growth of technology.

2.5.1 Three Elements of Design

The New London Group (1996) presented three main elements of design to describe the activities as individuals identify, read and produce new text using varying semiotic codes. These three elements of design allow individuals to create patterns of meaning from the multiliteracies available in the surroundings and texts: Available Designs, Designing and Redesigned. "Design" is used to describe forms of meaning and "Designs" too includes a set of conventions associated with semiotic activity that take place in a social place.

> The notion of design recognizes the iterative nature of meaning-making, drawing on Available Designs to create patterns of meaning that are more or less predictable in their context. (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000)

Available designs refer to grammars of language, styles, genres, dialects, voices and various semiotic systems from which we gain as designers (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000).

Designing on the other hand refers to reading, seeing and listening which facilitates in the transformation of the available resources of meaning. It can also mean new use of old existing materials.

The third element, Redesigning denotes the production of new meaning which is remade by the meaning-makers themselves. The redesigned meanings are then identified as the new resources of meaning making which is also known as the Available Design (The

New London Group, 2000). From this, it can be derived that these three elements of design complement and affect one another.

In order to communicate different forms of meaning found in the Available Designs and Redesigned, language is needed. Thus, the need for a metalanguage that describes escalated and indeed it was the main objective of the Multiliteracies Project to develop educationally accessible functional grammar that is metalanguage used to describe meanings in various domains. According to Cope & Kalantzis (2000), the main purpose of metalanguage is to identify, contextualise and differentiate between texts including the textual and visual.

2.5.2 Modes of Meaning

The New London Group recognized six major modes to describe and explain patterns of meaning which are the metalanguages or grammars of meaning-making: Linguistic Design, Visual Design, Audio Design, Gestural Design, Spatial Design and Multimodal Design (The New London Group, 1996). The six designs are important in students' process of learning as they interact with various forms of texts in their daily lives due to the escalation of ICT elements.

Linguistic Design consists of the elements of delivery, modality, transivity, information structure, normalisation of processes, global coherence relations, vocabulary and metaphor. According to Ganapathy (2007), Linguistic Meaning places language in cultural contexts. Visual Design comprises elements of colours, space, foregrounding and backgrounding with emphasis on seeing and viewing images whilst Audio Design focuses on the hearing of music and sound effects to create meaning. Gestural Design represents the interpretation of behaviour, bodily physicality, gesture, sensuality, kinesics, proxemics, feelings and affect. The New London Group (2000) identified Multimodal Design as the most significant as it relate to the dynamic overlapping of all modes. These Designs are purposeful for students today to interpret multimodal texts that are present in their environments due to the advancement of technology. This case study will focus greatly on the prevalence of MMA among ESL students and how students' perceive MMA in their ESL lessons.

2.5.2.1 Conceptual Framework

This study's conceptual framework takes into account six major modes to describe and explain patterns of meaning which are the metalanguages or grammars of meaning-making that encompass Linguistic Design, Visual Design, Audio Design, Gestural Design, Spatial Design and the Multimodal Design (The New London Group, 1996).

The Linguistic Design includes meaning-making through writing and reading various types of texts and structures, cohesion, modality, textual features, vocabulary, figurative elements, grammars, syntax, semantics. Visual Design refers to meaning-making based on colours, perspectives, size, shape, vectors and backgrounds. For instance, interpreting a poster of "Anti-drugs" would require individuals to interpret the reasoning beneath the use of dark and bold colours and images of drugs used in the poster to understand the overall meaning of the poster. Audio Design refers to meaning-making through interpretation of music and sounds. Gestural Design refers to the movements of the body, proxemics, kinetics, gesture, emotional effect, presentation and behaviour. For an example, interpreting the body language of a policeman and what his body language portrays would help students to impersonate a policeman in a school play. Spatial design is greatly related to the interpretation of spacing, proximity, layouts, and relationships within and across texts, and within the physical environment. The most significant Design of all six Designs is the Multimodal Design. Multimodal Design refers to meaning-making via interpretation of two or more modes of Designs. For an instance,

The six designs are vital in students' process of learning as they interact with various forms of texts in their daily lives which takes into account the main aims of this study that are to examine the relevance of MMA to the students of ESL in meaning-making and to determine whether students benefit from MMA. Besides that, the conceptual framework which underlies this study will enable the researcher to analyse students' perceptions on the use of MMA in meaning-making via the use of MMA in the teaching and learning of ESL.

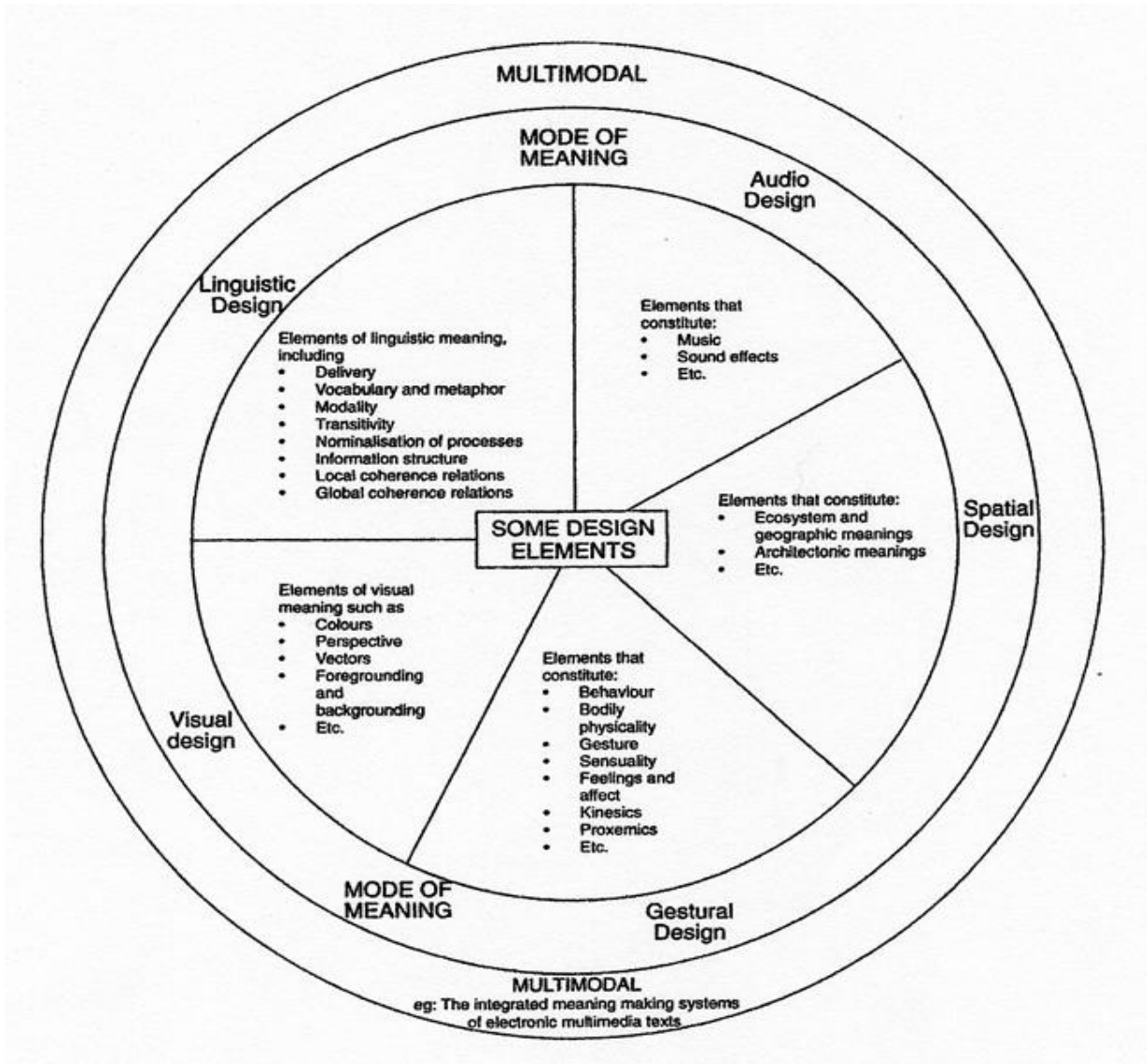Figure 1: Multiliteracies Framework
Source: adopted from Rush, 2003.

2.5.3 Multimodal Approach

Key to multimodal perspectives on literacy is the basic assumption that
meanings are made (as well as distributed, interpreted, and remade) through

many representational and communicational resources, of which language is but one (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001 as cited in Jewitt, 2008).

In the past, every field of study tended to focus on one mode of meaning and there has not been much emphasis put on various modes of meaning due to the heavy usage of print-based texts in daily routines. In contrary, current globalisation and rapid development of technology have shed light on the prospects of bringing all means of meaning making under the theory of Multimodality (Kress, 2009).

> Multimodal literacy refers to meaning-making that occurs through the reading, viewing, understanding, responding to and producing and interacting with multimedia and digital texts. It may include oral and gestural modes of talking, listening and dramatising as well as writing, designing and producing such texts. The processing of modes, such as image, words, sound and movement within texts can occur simultaneously and is often cohesive and synchronous. Sometimes specific modes may dominate. (Walsh, 2010)

In addition to Walsh's definition, multimodal approaches to teaching and learning encourages educators to use various forms of representation such as images and sounds in their teaching practices to support students' understanding (Bearne & Wolstencroft, 2007). Considering the amount of various modes students today are exposed to, it is wise to expose them to MMA with resources that are multimodal in nature.

Researches reveal that positive changes in learning takes place through the use of visual and verbal multimodal learning (Fadel, 2008, p. 12 as cited in Sankey, Birch & Gardiner, 2010). In other words, students perform better when learning takes place in accordance to their learning styles and preferences and MMA emphasizes on differentiation of learning experiences. According to Jewitt (2008), it is crucial for schools to avoid teaching static grammar of modes as it restricts the power of transformation and contextualizing among students. She too emphasises that the boundaries between modes are blurred when complex multimodal texts are used in meaning-making.

2.6 Past studies on MMA in ESL

The Theory of Multiliteracies has been around since the year 1996 paving way to the emergence of multimodality and multimodal approaches in the teaching and learning process. There are a range of studies carried out in the past to examine multimodality and its

approaches in real classroom situations. In this section, a few researches which were carried out in the past will be briefly elaborated.

In a study carried out by the United Kingdom Literacy Association, it is found that students of 3-16 years old use a range of literacy skills when reading texts on-screen. Findings from this study have shown that the reading of texts-on screen involves radial browsing which is relatively different from linear reading of print-based texts. The researchers of this study affirmed that students were able to search through various modes of design to retrieve information and this process of reading can never be assessed similarly to that of reading print-based texts (Bearne et al, 2007 as cited in Walsh, 2010).

In 2004, a different study was carried out in Malaysia investigating the use of Multiliteracies approach which was carried out in several selected schools in Perak. This study has reported that the teachers involved in this study confirmed and supported the multiliteracies approach as an effective pedagogical approach. Students who participated in this study were found enjoying the lessons more than their usual traditional lessons (Ahmad Suhaimi, 2004 as cited in Kaur & Ganapathy, 2013).

Over a period of two years (2003-2004), a total of 20 teachers joined the Queensland Department of Education carried out the Queensland Learning by Design Project. Through this Project, teachers reflected on their existing teaching practices and considered Learning by Design as a new pedagogical framework (Neville, 2005). As a result of this project, teachers found students being highly collaborative and participative.

In a recent study carried out in a local Chinese school on the use of Multiliteracies to engage learners to produce learning, Ganapathy (2014) found that students were positively engaged in multimodal literacy practices revealing teachers' positive comments and students' improved interest on their ESL writing lessons. It is found that the learning outcomes were productive and students were active and highly motivated.

All these studies has one in common, the positive outcomes of MMA and Multiliteracies in developing students' literacy skills as well as the emphasis on the urgent need for Malaysian schools to shift from traditional ESL classroom settings and resources to MMA based ESL classrooms. Although various studies have been carried out locally and internationally to examine the use of Multiliteracies and MMA in ESL lessons, this case study

is different in settings and research methods as it is aimed to discover more of students' perspectives and perceptions on the use of MMA in the teaching and learning of MMA.

2.7 Summary of Chapter 2

In the chapter, the researcher has discussed in some detail, some of the major progresses in the field of literacy. As a result, important resources have been cited in this chapter. Learning theories which act as the underlying framework of learning process undergone by ESL students with regards to students of the current Age of Information act as a reference to educators when planning lessons using MMA in their ESL classrooms. This study is set out to explore the various modes of meaning based on the Theory of Multiliteracies and how Multimodality came about. Furthermore, some researches cited in relation to MMA in the classroom suggest the benefits of using MMA in the teaching and learning process of ESL.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research methodology and techniques used in this case study. It also analyses the rationale for the methodology chosen and describes the reasons influencing the development of the mentioned research methods and techniques. This case study examines the effects of MMA to ESL learners in meaning-making and to determine whether students benefit from Multimodal Approaches. It also aims to analyse students' perceptions on the use of MMA in meaning-making through the use of MMA in the ESL classroom.

This chapter will elaborate on methodological aspects of the case study. This case study uses qualitative methods. Thus, further details on these methodological issues will be discussed in the chapter.

3.1 Research Process

Prior to carrying out the case study, the researcher approached the Principal of the chosen private school to obtain permission to conduct the case study in the school. Once the permission was given, the researcher proceeded to the selection of the sample consisting of 15 students. Then, to gain permission from participants, a letter of consent was sent out to seek voluntariness among participants to participate in this case study. Due to time constraint, focus group interviews were selected to gain insights on participants' current MMA practices in their ESL classroom. These focus group interview sessions with students was carried out in three sessions to also examine the relevance of MMA to students of ESL in meaning making as well as to determine whether MMA approaches benefit them. Apart from that, students' perceptions on the use of MMA in the teaching and learning of ESL were analysed. Data collected from the interviews was transcribed and analysed. The final stage of this case study

focused on propositions of recommendations for improvement in ESL teaching and learning strategies. This entire research process was carried out over the course of 10 weeks from 23 August 2015 to 24 October 2015.

3.2 Research Methods

A case study design is useful when the focus of the study is to answer "how" and "why" questions, the behaviour of those involved in the study cannot be altered, contextual conditions are the required for the purpose of the study or when the boundaries are not clear between the phenomenon and context (Yin, 2003 as cited in Baxter & Jack, 2008). This research employed case-study research design as it is suitable for the context of this case study. The behaviour of those involved in this study was maintained at their original contextual conditions and the issue chosen was real. A case study methodology was employed to focus the researcher to aspects that are relevant to the research questions. In order to meet the objectives and aims of this case study, qualitative methods have been chosen to address the research questions.

Due to time constraint and small sample size, focus group interview has been chosen to elicit answers from a group of participants in relation to the aims of this case study. In focus group interviews, the researcher interviewed participants with common characteristics or experiences in order to prompt ideas, thoughts and perceptions about specific topics or problems linked to an area of interest or research (Holloway and Wheeler, 2002 as cited in Annan, 2014).

3.3 The Sample

The participants of this case study are ESL students from a local private school with English as its medium of instruction.

3.3.1 The Students

Considering that School A is a private school with students coming from various countries, the participants of this case study come from a range of backgrounds, age, and learning preferences that learn within the same classroom. Thus, a wide range of perspectives and experiences will be drawn contributing to the quality of data. Participants will be chosen using the purposive sampling technique based on certain common

characteristics. All students chosen as participants in this study have common characteristics. Participants chosen to participate in this case study have English as their second language. They have all experienced MMA in their ESL lessons. They have access to the Internet, school's Learning Management System (LMS), Flipped Classroom websites and Ipads/laptops for use during school hours and lessons which guarantees integration of ICT tools in their ESL lessons.

3.3.2 Sample Size

Due to time constraint and rigid timeline, the sample size chosen for this study is relatively small with ample considerations given to the amount of time needed in collecting the information, transcribing, analysing and presenting the information from the sample. The sample will contain 15 participants with 5 in each focus group. A small sample size is chosen as only small differences or small relationships is expected or predicted to take place in terms of leaners' perceptions towards multimodality in ESL classroom. This class has been chosen as they are the pioneering class in using Ipads and Flipped Classroom websites as learning tools in the class.

3.3.3 Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling technique is chosen to administer the research instrument. This sampling technique consists of individuals who are selected based on a certain characteristics. Purposive sampling is "a method of sampling where the researcher deliberately chooses who to include in the study based on their ability to provide necessary data" (Parahoo, 1997:232 as cited in Annan, 2014). The rationale for choosing this sampling technique is that the researcher is seeking knowledge and information about ESL learners and teachers' opinion on the use of MMA in their ESL classroom and its benefits for ESL learners. Thus, through purposive sampling, the participants will be able to provide information based on their personal teaching and learning experiences. It is best to extract information from those involved in the teaching and learning processes themselves in a face-to-face approach when inquiring about their perceptions and views upon the use of MMA in their ESL classroom as they will be able to relate to their first hand experiences of the MMA approach.

3.3.4 Ethical Considerations

"Ethical concerns should be at the forefront of any research project and should continue through to the write-up and dissemination stages" (Wellington, 2000: 3 as cited in Manyasi, 2014). As a way to protect participants' rights, ethical considerations were taken into account when planning for this case study. Participants chosen to participate in this study were given the rights to withdraw from study at any time he/she opts to. Thus, no information or data were elicited from the participants without their consent for the use of this case study. All data and information retrieved from the participant are deemed confidential and were not to be made known to others. Hence, all participants were given pseudonyms. Apart from that, the participants were not affected by the research and no changes were be made to the flow of lessons or participants' daily routines in school during the course of data collection. Ultimate respect was given to participants' privacy and differences in terms of age, culture, race, gender and religion. All participants were treated equally.

3.3   Location of Research

This research took place in School A which is situated in the Penang Island. The Principal requested that the researcher preserve the identity of the school where the research will be conducted. Hence, the school will be labelled as school A. School A is a private school which adopts the International Bacallaureate Programme as its core framework. This school has 295 students in total that come from various countries and backgrounds. This school comprises the Early Years Programme, Primary Years Programme and Middle Years Programme. Teachers in School A practice MMA in their lessons as a part of the requirements of the International Baccalaureate Programme which acts as the main reason to the researcher's choice to conduct the research in School A.

3.5 Research Instrument

This case study employed focus group interviews as the research instrument. According to Gill, Stewart, Treasure & Chadwick (2008), a focus group is a group based discussion pertaining to a particular topic guided, monitored and recorded by a researcher for

research purposes. In this case study, semi-structured focus group interviews will be the main form of data collection. The semi-structured focus group interviews will be carried out in groups of three to improve data reliability. This research instrument is chosen to accommodate the rigid timeline and the small sample size chosen for this case study.

Semi-structured focus group interviews are used because it is a very flexible technique for small scale research (Drever, 1995 as cited in Pathak & Intratat, 2012). In-depth interviewing is one of the most apt methods of data collection based on contexts which are not directly observable such as the context of this case study where learners' preferences towards MMA in ESL classroom are to be investigated based on their personal experiences. The interviews were carried out in a face-to-face manner as it is claimed to be one of the most effective way to ensure cooperative from the participants and at the same time clarify matters or issues that needs to be rectified (Hopkins, 2002 as cited in Ganapathy, 2007).

Questions posed in the focus group interviews were open-ended and semi-structured in nature to allow participants to express their thoughts freely and openly without having to fit into pre-determined categories. A range of questions were rephrased and orally administered to reflect specific individual experiences instead of generalized thoughts in order to help the researcher to gain more information related to the research questions. The length of the interview were not pre-set allowing the interview process to take the direction the interview took on as well as to allow participants to be comfortable in the interview setting. An advantage of employing the semi-structured focus group interview is that it allows the interviewer to have some control and power over the interview and promotes flexibility (Nunan, 1992 as cited in Ganapathy, 2007).

To ensure holistic participation from all participants, the interviews were scheduled during times which did not interrupt their regular lessons or meetings. Apart from that, the interview sessions will take place in a meeting room for teachers individually while focus group interviews will take place in a classroom. With the written consent from parents, the researcher taped the interviews in order to not miss any important details or information provided by the participants. Apart from the, the researcher took down important notes during the semi-structured focus group interview sessions as well.

3.6 Pilot Study

A pilot study is planned and carried out ahead of the main study as it paves way for the researcher to learn during its process and make necessary modifications in the main study (Gumbo, 2014). A pilot study can also be used in a qualitative study to develop questionnaire items and then pilot the questionnaire and even the research process (Van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2002, p. 33 as cited in Gumbo, 2014). Apart from that, piloting a study is also crucial to ensure the validity and reliability of the research designs and methods as the researcher would evaluate and revise the instruments used in the research (Ganapathy, 2007).

In this research, the researcher carried out the pilot study with the class of Grade 8 in School A over a period of 1 week in September 2015. It was conducted among 10 students. The focus group interviews were administered with the questions to test if the respondents provide answers pertaining to their perceptions on the use of MMA in their ESL classroom and the extent MMA benefits them in meaning making. The respondents were asked about the clarity of the questions asked. This process was useful in gathering feedbacks pertaining to the questions posed in the focus group interviews. With the gathered feedbacks, adjustments and modifications were made to the questions in order to improve the effectiveness of the questions in eliciting answers and perceptions on the use of MMA from the participants in the main study. One question from the initial interview schedule did not draw the necessary information needed for the purpose of this research; therefore it has been removed from the interview schedule for the main study.

3.7 Data Analysis

The focus group interview process led to a big amount of data and information. Immediately after the first interview process, the transcription of the interview took place. This transcription process was done immediately in order to pave way for future interviews and clarifications. Besides, the procrastination of data analysis could lead to burdened workload for the researcher. The data analysis of information was collected based on the Grounded Theory. The Grounded Theory analysis is categorical in nature. This theory produces concepts, categories and propositions. Strauss and Corbin describe concepts as "labels placed on discrete happenings, events, and other instances of phenomena" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p.61 as cited in Martin, 2006). Concepts derived from the data were then

labelled with code words and the coding process involved two analytical procedures of comparisons and questioning.

Based on the Grounded Theory, the coding process was divided into three levels: open coding, axial coding and selective coding. In the open coding stage, identification of concepts took place and raw data were sorted and categorised into conceptual categories (Birks & Mills, 2015). The interview transcripts were coded by lines. Memos were used to assist the analysis of the data which are detailed notes of ideas about the data and the coded categories (Glaser, 1978, p. 83-92 as cited in Martin, 2006).

In the axial coding, connections were made between the conceptual categories identified in the first stage of coding. Following this, the conceptual categories were grouped into much abstract and broader categories through compare and contrast, cause and effect relationships and other logical relations. Based on this coding progress, suggestions for future researches were derived.

The final stage of coding was the selective coding stage when a core category was identified. The core category was the central theme of the data which was derived from the earlier stages of coding. . After the core category was determined, the researcher related other categories to the core category, and to each other (Punch, 1998, p218 as cited in Martin, 2006). Sampling continued to the extent no other dimensions surfaced. Using these, a few themes emerged to explain the phenomena which served as the answers to the research questions of this case study.

3.8 Summary of Chapter 3

In this chapter, the researcher has discussed in some detail, the research design and methods employed in carrying out this case study. It has also briefly canvassed the planned research process and methodological issues which influenced the choice of research methods. An overview of the steps undertaken in the data analysis stage based on the Grounded Theory of qualitative research was also highlighted in this chapter. Based on the steps discussed in this chapter, it served as a good structured guideline when the data collection and analysis took place within the proposed timeline.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0 Introduction

The focus-group interview was used as an investigation tool to examine the students' perceptions on the use of MMA in the teaching and learning of ESL. Fifteen students were interviewed. The interview schedule appended in Appendix 1 was used in order to guide the researcher in asking questions in line to the study's objectives. The interview sessions lasted from 30 minutes to an hour and were conducted in the classroom after schooling hours. The researcher took down notes during the interviews. The interviewees were seated in groups facing the interviewer for more feasible discussions. The results of the interviews will be discussed according to the emerging themes in relation to MMA in the teaching and learning of ESL. With due respect to the principal's request of ensuring anonymity of all students, certain ethical considerations were observed. No names, gender or ethnicity were mentioned in the findings of this section. The respondents are given pseudonyms to preserve anonymity and confidentiality. They were labelled using alphabets to denote their numbers in their groups followed by their focus group numbers. For an example, A:FG1 refers to the first student from the first focus group interview. With the use of the Grounded Theory and its 3 levelled coding processes, the researcher categorized the raw data into themes which were used to answer the two research questions. The responses of the students based on their semi-structured focus group interviews have been presented and elaborated in this chapter. These findings were then further analysed and discussed in Chapter 5.

4.1 Results of the Students' Perceptions on the Use of MMA in ESL

(Research Question 1)

In students' respective focus groups, they were asked about the amount of time spent on their mobile devices and gadgets in and out of school on a daily basis. This question was aimed to discover the degree of exposure to technological devices and online activities among these students. Generally, all students involved in the focus-group interview sessions admitted to a minimum of 1 hour and a maximum of 8 hours of usage daily including in and out of school activities. The students commented that they commonly use their devices to complete school tasks, browse social media and use search engines to seek information necessary for their school tasks. All of them admitted to owning a smartphone and social media accounts especially Facebook.

When asked about their comfort level when using online resources or mobile applications that are aimed to help improve their skills of English language, many of them responded unanimously that they feel very comfortable using these online resources and applications which are given to them by their English teacher. These students are comfortable using online resources as they have prior knowledge on ICT tools which led them to seamlessly navigate through the resources provided. However, some of them were of the opinion that mobile applications were much difficult to be learned as they needed step by step guidance and more time in order to familiarise themselves with those chosen applications. One of the students' response :

> *"Since I know how to surf the internet quite easily, and I know how to cite and summarise, I feel very comfortable using them. But when it comes to applications, it would be in different formats, so I'm not quite sure. However, when I'm taught how to use it, it is easy for me." (E:FG1)*

A different student's response:

> *"I'm comfortable using them. Applications may be slightly difficult to work with in the beginning." (B:FG2)*

Another student's comment:

> *"I feel very comfortable with links and online resources. Not so much with apps but I'm fine with them." (B:FG1)*

Generally, all students were comfortable with online resources provided to them by their English teacher as they have grown accustomed to it and some of them commented that they need time to play around with the applications to be more fluent in using them. Therefore, it is found that students are positive minded in accepting the use of online

resources and applications. They are enthusiastic in learning English with the use of gadgets and technology in the class when compared to using books. A few of them were heard commenting:

> *I feel comfortable using all those websites because it's easier compared to books because we have to find resources in book by reading it but in the internet all the information are easy to be found and summarise.(B:FG2)*

> *I feel comfortable because it is easier than reading a book.(E:FG2)*

The students were then asked to comment on the question, "Have you used Ipads/laptops or the World Wide Web in the classroom to help you with your study of English as Second Language? How useful was it?" All students commented positively and some expressed their experiences on the use of gadgets and the World Wide Web in their English lessons.

        Some of the students' responses:

> *"When I use my laptop, it's very useful because we have the internet to help us and when we are not sure of something, we can make sure of it. When we write essays, we can use the internet to look for new information or words." (C:FG3)*

> *"In my perspective, using the Ipad and laptops helps me in English because I can find a word that I don't fully understand, search it and find its deeper meaning"(A:FG1)*

> *"It helps me a lot for if I don't know something I can go online to search for it. For an example, if I need to find information about a character that I would like to write in my essay, I could go online and it's useful."(C:FG1)*

The students were heard commenting on the effectiveness and the usability of the gadgets and the World Wide Web in facilitating their learning process of ESL in the classroom. They referred to the gadget and the World Wide Web as being useful in correcting their mistakes, enhancing their vocabulary and for searching extra information. This reflects students' abilities to self-correct and self-initiate language learning. The use of MMA in ESL class prepares the students to be active citizens who are skilful and secure in identities (Kalantzis and Cope, 2005 as cited in Ganapathy, 2007).

The next question required the students to comment on the frequentness of gadgets use in the class and their preferences. They all commented that their teacher often uses gadgets in the class and they would prefer their teacher to use such devices and technologies more often during ESL lessons.

One of them stated, "*I would like her to use it more often because there are more things that can be done with an Ipad. For an example, paper based activities will not allow us to make videos but we can create videos using Ipad. If we need to use a video, we can click the link and put it in (C:FG1).*" Many of them added that Ipads and laptops are frequently used for group work, mind-mapping and note-taking which eased their burdens of having to jot down in papers or books. Another student commented "*The teacher uses gadgets often and I would like it more often because it makes it easier to do work. I could share one document with everybody and know they contributing or not. It makes learning fun and easy too (B:FG1).* Thus, it can be noted that team based tasks are easily executed with the use of gadgets in the classroom and ensures contribution from every member of the team. When asked if they face difficulties in using Ipads or laptops to learn in the class, all of them positively commented that they hardly face any difficulties but if they do, the problems are easily rectified.

The next question is aimed to discover the students' need for teacher's assistance in the learning of ESL with the availability of Ipads and laptops in the class. All students claimed that they do need the teachers' guidance but at a much minimal rate when compared to lessons without the use of technology. They stated that though Ipads and laptops are helpful in many ways, they still require the teachers to counter check and proofread their work as noted in A student A's response:

> "*Usually I will need assistance because some of the words, the Ipad can't really explain much, the teacher can explain to us better."(D:FG3)*

Students were asked the question, "How often do you come across reading materials or resources that use a combination of visuals and words in the learning of English?" From the students' responses, the researcher found that these students often come across texts with a combination of visuals and words in the learning of English language.

They were then asked the helpfulness of texts with a combination of visuals and words in their learning of English as highlighted in the responses below.

Quite often. Because some of us might not understand the words, we could use the pictures to understand the words. (A:FG3)

Quite often. To me, pictures make texts less wordy and I will be more interested to read them. (B:FG3)

Many of the students stated that texts with visuals help them to comprehend the text better and it induces their interest towards reading the texts. When students are interested to read a text, the teacher will be able to run the lessons much smoothly.

For the next question, students were asked if they encounter difficulties in interpreting the meaning of posters or texts on websites which include words, animated pictures, still images and sounds. This question was asked to determine the easiness of interpreting MMA based texts and resources. Based on the responses received from the students, it is found that they do not face any difficulties in interpreting posters of multimodal texts as the images and visuals present helps them to make meaning. All of them claimed that if there were only words and descriptions, they may have faced slight difficulties in interpreting the meaning of the posters or texts on websites but with the help of visuals and sounds, they are able to easily make meanings out of such mediums.

(Research Question 2)

Following that, the students were asked of the frequentness of using texts and handouts consisting only words in their learning of English. They answered in unison that their teacher rarely uses handouts or texts with only words. Some of them commented:

It's very less, because the teacher knows that if it's all words and no pictures, it will be very boring and sometimes, if there are no pictures if will be difficult to understand. (C:FG3)

Not often; If there is text alone, it is not easy because we may not know all the words. When there are pictures, we will know how something will look like. (B:FG2)

In general, students were of the opinion that handouts or texts from books are much interesting to be read in comparison to the entire book. They were heard expressing

their disinterest in reading a whole book as they are able to easily look for information needed within a shorter time frame due to the much concise content through given handouts and excerpts from books. One student's comment:

> *Yes, because it's easier than reading the entire book. People may not have*
> *the interest in reading the entire book and handouts are easy, summarised*
> *and short. (B:FG1)*

When these students were asked if the handouts or texts from books help them in improving their reading and writing skills, all of them thought it was of a great help as they were able to see different styles of writing and learn new vocabularies. It helped them to imitate the style of writing when producing their own texts.

In view of audio design, students were asked the frequentness of their English teacher using music, audio or sound effects in their ESL classroom and its usefulness in helping them understand a text better. Students were then asked to comment whether or not the audio and sound effects used in their ESL lessons were helpful the development of students' listening and speaking skills and they were asked to justify their answers. In relation to this question, two students' responses:

> *"Audio helps because many people like me are not visual thinkers, so it*
> *helps me to understand."(B:FG1)*

> *"Yes, because when we have someone to explain it to us by defining it more,*
> *it is easier for us to understand."(D:FG3)*

In the next question, students were asked, "Do you find still images and animated images useful in helping you make meaning during ESL lessons? If yes, how? If no, why?" Some students' comments:

> *Yes, because we can interpret the text better. (A:FG1)*

> *Yes because with pictures, we can use it as shortcuts to remember things.*
> *(B:FG1)*

Thus, with the help of images and animated images, students are able to make meaning much effectively during ESL lessons. In fact, students claim that they are able to see a bigger picture of a text when images and animated images are used during ESL lessons. In relation to that point, students' were asked of their preferences of reading on screen

especially via their Flipped Classroom website and links given by their ESL teacher. A majority of students stated that they prefer on screen reading due to the flexibility of adjusting the size of the texts on screen, portability, accessibility and convenience. Meanwhile, one of them added on that if the texts are too lengthy, it causes tiredness and lack of focus.

In further examining students' thoughts on Spatial Design, they were asked of their opinions on excursions and how they can be helpful in making meaning of new contents in ESL lessons. Based on the students' responses, it is evident that they enjoy excursions and find excursions as an exciting ESL learning activity.

> *Yes it will, because if we learn about aeroplane, we will read a lot about aeroplane but if we go for an excursion on aeroplanes, we will know more of how it looks like and how it works. (B:FG2)*

> *Yes because if I just look at a drawing or a text, I wouldn't get so much details about it. But when I go to a museum, I will be able to get a lot of information and details. (E:FG3)*

The following question was aimed to explore students' opinions on English lessons involving hands-on activities such as puzzles and games. One student's comment:

> *Yes, because when we do an English task, if we just write it can sometimes be a little boring, so games and hands on activities will make it more interesting.(E:FG3)*

Based on their responses, it is clear that students enjoy games and hands-on activities as a part of their ESL lessons. Apart from the fun factor, such activities in ESL classroom motivate students to learn.

As for gestural design, students were asked if the actions in videos shown during ESL lessons are interesting and help them to make meaning. These are some students' comments:

> *Yes, because I can understand what they are trying to say through their movements and actions. (D:FG1)*

Actually yes it will be useful, let's say we read a text which says a guy is dancing, we wouldn't know how he is dancing or what he did. But if there is a video with the actions of the guy, we will know what he exactly did. (C:FG1)

According to all of them, actions shown in videos helps them in their visualization and thus meaning making becomes easier. When descriptions in the texts are less focused or detailed, it hinders students' understanding of the text. However, we the help of actions shown in videos, students are able to draw out a bigger picture in their minds in relation to the text or topic.

In students' respective focus groups, students were asked, "Do you enjoy role plays and presentations during ESL lessons? If yes, why? If no, why?" In unison, all them stated that they enjoy to be a part of role plays and presentations during ESL lessons as they will be able to experience the characters for themselves. They added on that it helps them to understand a text better when they present it to their classmates via presentations. A student was heard commenting, "*Yes, because it's very fun. When our friends are presenting, we get to know each other's point of views.(A:FG3)*" Another student remarked, "*I enjoy presentations and role plays, because it's fun, just like watching TV shows. And we learn. (B:FG3)*"

Towards the end of each session, students were asked about their opinions in relation to the Multimodal Design. One of the question was "Does the use of Ipads and laptops help you in improving your reading, writing, listening and speaking skills? If yes, how? If no, why?" As soon as this question was asked, students rapidly made comments and contributed their answers. Some of the students' comments:

Ipads and laptops can help us with English lessons because for listening and speaking, videos help to make us learn correct pronunciations of certain words. For writing, essay writing can be easier because we can check upon our mistakes. (D:FG2)

Yes, Ipads and laptops help us improve our English skills because we can go look for more stories online and get inspired in writing our own stories.(C:FG3)

Yes, because with a laptop I can see the way a text is written and watching a video tells me more about the text. It also gives me a better idea of how to speak and pronounce certain words. Besides, with written text, I need guidance to go through it. But with Ipad and laptops, I can be more

independent because I can research by myself and self-learn pronunciations.
(B:FG3)

Generally, students were of the opinion that MMA helps them to become more independent in learning and developing language skills. When they were asked in groups if they find ESL lessons using a combination of images, words, sounds, and videos interesting, all of them stated that they enjoy lessons with the use of a variety of materials and resources. A student (B:FG3) commented, "*Yes, because it will be more interesting. In some lessons, the teacher talks a lot and we instantly get bored. But with pictures, videos and music, it will be more fun for us. And we wouldn't get so bored.*" Students were disinterested towards traditional teaching style of more lecture-based activities and prefer a range of activities to keep them engaged. To further strengthen a student's point, another student commented, "*It's interesting because with text, pictures, sounds, audio and video, it will attract me to see it and read along. I will be excited and want to learn.*"(E:FG3)

4.2 Summary of Chapter 4

In this chapter, some important findings from students' focus group interview sessions are briefly elaborated. In terms of the qualitative analysis of students' focus group interviews, it can be concluded that the use of MMA in the teaching and learning of ESL has various benefits to students and they have a positive perception of multimodality. The students constantly reiterated the benefits of having Ipads and laptops in the class during ESL and described how technology has helped them to improve on their language skills. The themes emerged from the interview sessions will be discussed in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents an overall discussion of the findings. With the use of the Grounded Theory and its 3 levelled coding processes, the researcher broke down the raw data into a few major themes which are then used to answer the two research questions. A few major themes have been drawn to answer the research questions which will be further elaborated in this chapter under the discussion section. The discussion section is followed by the educational implications and recommendations of the study. It concludes with directions for future studies and researches in this area.

The main purpose of this study is to examine how MMA is beneficial to the students of ESL in meaning-making and to analyse students' perceptions on the use of MMA in the teaching and learning of ESL. The analysis of students' focus group interviews has shed some light on benefits of using MMA in the teaching and learning of ESL and provides educators with a bigger picture of students' preferences and inclination in their learning of ESL. This case study has shed some light on the need for ESL teaching and learning practices to be competent in meeting the new literacy demands of working life increasing the need for teachers and students to deliberately understand the pedagogy of Multiliteracies and MMA (The New London Group, 1996 as cited in Ganapathy, 2007)

5.1 Discussions of Findings

This section is divided into smaller sections to denote the key themes which emerged as results of the researcher's findings. Each key theme will be discussed with reference to the grounding theoretical approaches, conceptual framework and past studies.

5.1.1   Learners' Engagement and Motivation

This case study claims that the MMA promotes learner engagement in the teaching and learning process of ESL as the researcher believes that students appear to be positive minded and motivated to learn with the use of MMA resources and materials in the class. According to student A:FG3, "*if you keep showing us slideshows, we might get bored. But if you show us videos, slideshows, activities, we will not be so bored and we will be more interested.*" The findings from students' focus group interview sessions has drawn the researcher to make a claim that students are highly anticipative and participative in MMA based lessons when compared to lessons with the use of single design. The data clearly suggests that students greatly recognise learning resources with additional representations of content in helping them to comprehend and retain the content taught which is multimodal in nature to be more interesting and enjoyable to use. According to Walsh (2010), students were highly participative in the tasks provided when given a multi-modal task to work on. They have clearly expressed their dislike towards lengthy texts consisting of words alone and commented of having greater enthusiasm towards multimodal resources which involve a combination of modals. For an example, student B:FG1 stated, "*No, because it's very difficult to focus if it's a very long passage. We will lose interest.*" They find videos and other forms of multimodal resources as interesting and engaging as they are able to make meaning with minimal guidance from the teacher. This point is relevant to the statement made by student B:FG1, "*I don't think so I need the teacher's assistance very often with the help of the gadgets. If I don't really know something, I can search online.*"

5.1.2   Self-Directed Learning

The major benefit of MMA in the teaching and learning of ESL classroom, it promotes students' autonomy and instigates self-directed learning. Based on the data collected from the students, students claimed to require less teachers' facilitation with the use of technological gadgets in the class. Student A:FG3 commented when asked about the need for teacher's assistance when their lessons integrates usage of ICT, "*Not really often. For an*

example, if we want to find spellings, we just have to type it out and it would autocorrect. Another student added on, *I think I don't need teacher's assistance that often because some things which the teacher can't do, can be done with the Ipad (C:FG2).* These comments reveals the degree of confidence students have in using the ICT tools made available to them during ESL lessons. The researcher believes the students are able to seamlessly interpret and move from various modals and genres to construct meaning on their own. Most students felt they were able to self-correct their spellings and grammars with the use of their mobile devices in the class. In relation to this point, it is found in previous studies that MMA based lessons enable students to discover learning in their most comfortable ways which challenges them to learn in many other different ways moulding them more self-directed and interactive students (Picciano, 2009 as cited in Sankey, Birch & Gardiner, 2010).

Cooper (2011) has made a point that students' social interaction via cooperative learning, discussions and dialogues as important part of Constructivist Approach as it helps students to construct meaning on their own. This is clearly evident in ESL classes with MMA as students commented on their abilities to collaborate with their classmates with increased efficiency with the use of various medium such as Google Docs, mind maps and many more.

5.1.3   Learning Styles

No learner is of the same in abilities, skills, interests and learning styles. This has made teaching and learning a much complex process as teachers can never deliver the taught content in the same manner to cater all students at once. Thus, there is a need to differentiate the teaching delivery methods and strategies. A few students were heard commenting on ways they learn best and a few of them commended the teacher's use of videos, images and sounds which are some of the mediums which has helped them to learn best. For an example, a student who is an auditory learner commented, "*For some people like me, I prefer audiobooks rather than texts with pictures.*" Another student who is a visual learner commented, "*Yes. For a few people like me, I have a hard time imagining the text when I am reading, so the pictures help me to understand better (B:FG2).* Multiliteracies help to cater diversity, ensure inclusiveness which encourages intellectual quality and enable students to experience vast learning experiences (Kalantzis & Cope, 2005). With MMA, students may self-select the learning object, or representation, that best suits their modal preference based on their predominant learning style (Doolittle, McNeill, Terry & Scheer, 2005 as cited in

Sankey, Birch & Gardiner, 2010). In addition, learners' beliefs and learning preferences of the learning processes determine the success of second language acquisition (Rifkin, 2000 cited in Vayaravasamy & Abdullah, 2011). Therefore, this study claims that the use of MMA enable educators to cater to the different learners' needs in ESL learning environments.

5.2 Students' Perceptions of their ESL Learning Experiences using MMA

Students' perceptions of their learning experiences using the MMA to acquire their language skills in their ESL classroom were examined qualitatively through focus group interview sessions. The students in this case study experienced the use of new technology such as Ipads and laptops in the classroom as a supplementary tool to second language learning. These technologies aided them in developing literacy skills needed for their real world needs. Findings of this case study enabled students to reflect upon their ESL lessons and their experiences.

Findings of this study reveal that students strongly agreed that texts and handouts with words alone are boring but they prefer handouts from books as it is comparatively shorter in length than books. They too made a point that lengthy texts do not interest them and cause them to lose motivation, be it monomodal or multimodal in nature. Besides, students claimed that texts without pictures and images have made their meaning-making process much difficult and they needed extra guidance to interpret such texts. They have not received texts without images in their ESL lessons which made them strongly believe that lessons with a combination of images, words, videos and audios as more interesting, motivating and enjoyable. According to Campbell (1999), learners tend to perform better in academics and cause lesser problems in the class when they are individually motivated to learn. If teachers strive to ensure students' comprehension and understanding in the class, students will feel secured and positively challenged to learn (Eggen & Kauchak, 1997 as cited in Campbell, 1999). Thus, the use of MMA in the teaching and learning of ESL is clearly uplifting students' intrinsic motivation to acquire English as their second language.

This study highlights students' perceptions about their experiences during ESL lessons which incorporate MMA as more exciting, motivating and promoting cooperative

learning and teamwork which eventually made them better learners. The use of Ipads and laptops in class is said to have enhanced students' cooperation and teamwork. Besides that, students interests and participation in role plays and presentations have shown their confidence and development of speaking and listening skills. They expressed that activities such as role plays and presentations are fun and enjoyable way of learning English. Some of them addressed their roles as assessors and active participants of their classmates' role plays and presentations as exciting and educational. They added on that they were able to express themselves verbally and enjoy exchanging ideas via presentations during ESL lessons.

In this study, all of them agreed that the use of ipads and gadgets during ESL lessons should be used frequently as they find it convenient to create documents, videos, mind maps and even audios with the help of their gadgets. Whilst working on these outputs of the lessons, they claimed that integration of technology in their learning experiences have greatly benefitted them in the development of their listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. A majority of them mentioned that they find applications and online resources interesting although they require some time to become accustomed to using them during lessons. They were highly positive towards the use of Ipad applications and willingly learned to use various applications. Besides, all of them spoke highly of the World Wide Web as it offers a myriad of information for them to integrate in their compositions and presentations. A student commented, "*Since I know how to surf the internet quite easily, and I know how to cite and summarise, I feel very comfortable using them*" (D:FG2). This reflected upon their familiarity and intuitiveness with ICT related matters. The amount of time spent on their mobile devices per day too denotes to their fluency in ICT. These students described activities without the use of ICT or a combination of modals as non-appealing and causes disinterest.

5.3 Educational Implications and Recommendations

The findings of this case study have garnered information that has some pedagogical implications for the teaching and learning of ESL in secondary schools. This case study signifies that MMA encourages learners' engagement in an ESL classroom with reference to the positive remarks made by the students themselves. Therefore, MMA can be potentially successful in Malaysian schools. However, in order to successfully incorporate MMA in the Malaysian Education System, a major reformation needs to be undertaken. Pertaining to this issue, there is a need to reassess the current restrictions on literacy and draw new directions

for national, social and economic well-being by identifying curricular conditions to meet the country's goals with regards to literacy development (Pandian, 2003 as cited in Ganapathy, 2007).

Implementation of MMA in the Malaysian Education System requires sufficient training to be provided for all teachers. Based on the researcher's observation on the implementation of MMA in the location of this case study, it is noted that there were adequate facilities available for the lessons to be carried out using MMA. The classes are well-equipped with Apple TV, projectors, speakers and screens which enable teachers to utilize at any time of their lesson. Thus, there is a great need for Malaysian schools to be well equipped with the necessary technological devices and resources. Apart from that, teachers should be provided with adequate and competent training to further develop their ICT skills. Thus, to make the implementation infuse into the system much smoothly, the teachers in pre-service training colleges and universities should be exposed to ICT trainings to start the implementation by stages.

5.4 Directions for Further Research

This study is limited to students of a particular class and the findings may not necessarily be generalized across all private schools in Malaysia. Apart from the, this case study has utilised only one research method due to the small group size and time constraint. Therefore, the results of this case study could be verified with a follow-up study using a larger sample size.

5.5 Conclusion

This case study recognizes the fact that MMA promotes students engagement in the teaching and learning of ESL by enhancing their meaning-making abilities with the supplement of ICT as a tool. This study affirms that students' perception of MMA lessons in an ESL classroom is described as highly engaging, self-directed, and learner-centered and promotes meaning-making with minimal guidance from the teachers. The researcher is of the opinion that educators need to expose students to real world experiences by utilizing MMA in lessons. Educators are urged to encourage students' development of literacy skills in a variety of ways and not to limit literacy skills to listening, speaking, reading and writing. In conclusion, this case study promotes teaching and learning experiences that are multimodal in

nature to acquire literacy skills necessary for today's world without being restricted to one mode of design.

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APPENDICES

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Research Question 1

1) How many hours per day do you spend on your mobile devices/computers in and out of school?

2) How comfortable do you feel about using online resources or mobile applications that are aimed at helping you improve your skills of English language?

3) Have you used Ipads/laptops or the World Wide Web in the classroom to help you with your study of English as Second Language? How useful was it?

   a) How often does your teacher use Ipads/laptops in the class?
   a) Would you prefer it to be more often? If yes, why? If no, why?
   b) Is it challenging when you use Ipads/laptops to learn in the class?

4) With the availability of Ipads/laptops in the class, how often do you need the assistance of your teacher? If yes, why? If no, why?

5) How often do you come across reading materials or resources that use a combination of visuals and words in the learning of English?

   a) How does it help you?
   b) Do you find it interesting?

6) Do you encounter difficulties in interpreting the meaning of posters or texts on websites which include words, animated pictures, still images and sounds?

Research Question 2

LINGUISTIC DESIGN

1. How often does your English teacher use texts or handouts consisting only words in the teaching of English?

2. Do your find handouts or texts from books interesting? If yes, why? If no, why?

3. Do these handouts or texts from books help you in improving your reading and writing skills? If yes, why? If no, why?

AUDIO DESIGN

4. How often does your teacher use music, audio or sound effects in your English class?

5. Do you find audio and sound effects used by your ESL teacher useful in helping you understand a text better?

6. Do you find audio and sound effects used in your ESL lessons help you in improving your listening and speaking skills? If yes, how? If no, why?

VISUAL DESIGN

7. Do you find still images and animated images useful in helping you make meaning during ESL lessons? If yes, how? If no, why?

8. Do you like reading on screen, especially via your Flipped Classroom website and links given by your ESL teacher? If yes, why? If no, why?

SPATIAL DESIGN

9. Do you find excursions helpful in making meaning of new contents in ESL lessons? If yes, how? If no, why?

10. Do you find English lessons involving hands-on activities such as puzzles and games interesting? If yes, why? If no, why?

GESTURAL DESIGN

11. Do actions in videos shown during ESL lessons help you make meaning? If yes, how? If no, why?

12 Do you find actions in videos shown during ESL lessons interesting? If yes, why? If no, why?

13. Do you enjoy role plays and presentations during ESL lessons? If yes, why? If no, why?

MULTIMODAL DESIGN

14. Does the use of Ipads and laptops help you in improving your reading, writing, listening and speaking skills? If yes, how? If no, why?

15. Do you find it interesting when your teacher presents the lessons using a combination of images, words, sounds, and videos during ESL lessons? If yes, why? If no, why?