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Artistic Multiliteracies and Embodied Picturebooks in Teacher Literary Education. The EMLA methodological approach

Multiliteracidades artísticas y álbumes corporeizados en la educación literaria del profesorado. El enfoque metodológico EMLA

Multiliteracitats artístiques i àlbums corporeitzats en l'educació literària del Professorat. L'enfocament metodològic EMLA

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Abstract

The speed, uncertainty, and globalization of the current digital era has triggered a major shift in the traditional codes of teaching and learning the Literary Arts. In this regard, many scholars call for the urgent need to design new holistic and sustainable reading models aimed at preparing students to act ethically, creatively, and responsibly as future citizens. Aligned with the needs of the LifeComp (2020) European competence framework, and sponsored by the Spanish Ministerio de Educación, Formación Profesional y Deportes, this paper presents the findings of the first phase of a research project that emerged at the Universitat de València in the Department of Physical, Artistic and Musical Education Teaching in 2024. With the title 'Embodied Multi-Liter-Artistic Education (EMLA) for 21st Century Teacher Literary Training. Embodied minds and multimodal narratives through picturebooks', the study explores the interconnection between artful minds, moving bodies, and multimodal texts in contemporary reading practices through picturebooks. The research design unfolds through two procedures: (a) the design of a conceptual pedagogical framework –coined as EMLA– that blends emerging Arts-based Multiliteracies theories, the tenets of '4E' cognition and Artful thinking dispositions by Project Zero (Harvard University), and (b) a participatory classroom-based intervention to apply EMLA in a Spanish school using the picturebook 'Lines of Dreams' by Sineiro and Domènech (2022), edited by Akiara Books. The early results of the investigation reveal an increase of the multiliteracies learning, and confirm the multidimensional benefits of EMLA as a new transdisciplinary framework for 21st century Creative Literature Education.

Keywords: Artistic Multiliteracies, EMLA, Embodied Cognition, Multimodal Minds, Creative Literary Education, Picturebook Studies.

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Resumen

La velocidad, incertidumbre y globalización de la era digital actual han provocado un gran cambio en los códigos tradicionales de enseñanza y aprendizaje de las artes literarias. En este sentido, numerosos autores reclaman la necesidad urgente de diseñar nuevos modelos de lectura holísticos y sostenibles orientados a preparar al estudiantado para actuar de manera ética, creativa y responsable como futura ciudadanía. En línea con las necesidades del marco europeo competencial LifeComp (2020), y financiado por el Ministerio de Educación, Formación Profesional y Deportes, este trabajo presenta los resultados de la primera fase de un proyecto de investigación que surgió en el marco de la Universitat de València dentro del Departamento de Didáctica de la Educación Física, Artística y Música en el año 2024. Con el título 'Embodied Multi-Liter-Artistic Education (EMLA) for 21st Century Teacher Literary Training. Embodied minds and multimodal narratives through picturebooks', el estudio explora la interconexión entre las mentes artísticas, el movimiento corporal y los textos multimodales en las prácticas de lectura contemporáneas a través de los álbumes ilustrados. El diseño de la investigación se desarrolla a través de dos procedimientos: (a) el diseño de un marco pedagógico conceptual –acuñado como EMLA– que combina las teorías de las multiliteracidades basadas en las artes, los principios de la cognición '4E' y las disposiciones del pensamiento artístico del Project Zero (Universidad de Harvard), y (b) una intervención participativa en el aula para aplicar EMLA en una escuela española utilizando el libro ilustrado 'Colas de sueños' de Sineiro y Domènech (2022), editado por Akiara Books. Los primeros resultados de la investigación revelan un aumento del aprendizaje en multiliteracidades y confirman los beneficios multidimensionales de EMLA como nuevo marco transdisciplinario para una Educación Literaria Creativa en el siglo XXI.

Palabras clave: Multiliteracidades Artísticas, EMLA, cognición corporeizada, mentes multimodales, formación literaria creativa, estudios del álbum ilustrado.

Resum

La velocitat, incertesa i globalització de l'era digital actual han provocat un gran canvi en els codis tradicionals d'ensenyament i aprenentatge de les arts literàries. En aquest sentit, nombrosos autors reclamen la necessitat urgent de dissenyar nous models de lectura holístics i sostenibles orientats a preparar l'estudiantat per actuar de manera ètica, creativa i responsable com a futura ciutadania. En línia amb les necessitats del marc europeu competencial LifeComp (2020), i finançat pel Ministeri d'Educació, Formació Professional i Esports, aquest treball presenta els resultats de la primera fase d'un projecte d'investigació que va sorgir en el marc de la Universitat de València dins del Departament de Didàctica de l'Educació Física, Artística i Música l'any 2024. Amb el títol 'Embodied Multi-Liter-Artistic Education (EMLA) for 21st Century Teacher Literary Training. Embodied minds and multimodal narratives through picturebooks', l'estudi explora la interconnexió entre les ments artístiques, el moviment corporal i els textos multimodals en les pràctiques de lectura contemporànies a través dels àlbums il·lustrats. El disseny de la recerca es desenvolupa a través de dos procediments: (a) el disseny d'un marc pedagògic conceptual –encunyat com EMLA– que combina les teories de les multiliteracitats basades en les arts, els principis de la cognició '4E' i les disposicions de pensament artístic del Project Zero (Universitat de Harvard), i (b) una intervenció participativa a l'aula per aplicar EMLA en una escola espanyola utilitzant el llibre il·lustrat 'Cues de somnis' de Sineiro i Domènech (2022), editat per Akiara Books. Els primers resultats de la investigació revelen un augment del l'aprenentatge en multiliteracitats i confirmen els beneficis multidimensionals d'EMLA com a nou marc transdisciplinari per a una Educació Literària Creativa al segle XXI.

Paraules clau: Multiliteracitats artístiques, EMLA, cognició corporeitzada, ments multimodals, educació literària creativa, estudis de l'àlbum il·lustrat.

1. Introduction

The rapid transformations of the 21st century digital society, and the rise of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) technologies are reshaping the way knowledge, communication and narrative meaning is produced, shared, and experienced in the classroom (Mills et al., 2023; Serafini & Gee, 2017). Immersed in this challenging context, traditional literature teaching models, based on fixed, verbal and linear text instruction, fail to efficiently equip the new generation of teachers with the necessary competences, attitudes and mental dispositions to 'weave' a cohesive multimodal and transdisciplinary narrative discourse (Leadbeater, 2016; Han, 2023; Petit, 2024).

Considering this idea, our study discusses that an educational reform in literature education is a core condition to meet the 'fluid' challenges and provocations of today's digital literacy learning demands. Coined with the acronym of EMLA (Embodied Multi-Liter-Artistic Education), our proposal uses the picturebook as a sort of 'sensory springboard' able to grow creative embodied stories, as well as to foster authentic, and critical safe dialogic spaces in the classroom.

To this aim, our article, firstly, puts forward a theoretical foundation that explores three main conceptual axes: (1) the emerging investigations on Multiliteracies (Cope & Kalantzis, 2020; Mills et al., 2023; Serafini & Gee, 2017; Peters, B. & Mongeon-Ferré, 2025), (2) the recent '4E' cognitive corporeal theories (Schilhab & Groth, 2024), and (3) the artful mind dispositions identified by Project Zero at Harvard Graduate School of Education (Seidel et al., 2009; Hetland et al., 2007).

Secondly, in the research design we describe the tenets of what we conceptualize as EMLA's Navigational Panel (EmNP), paying special attention to the procedures and key elements of its six acts when building knowledge and a holistic narrative meaning in the classroom. To collect the first evidences on EMLA's multidimensional impact on teacher's literary education, we conduct a pilot classroom-based participatory intervention in a school placed in a small town of the Valencian Community. We present in this document the results of the initial phase of the investigation. The second phase of EMLA, containing the final qualitative and qualitative evidences out of the coded data analysis, is currently being developed by the authors in a new research program conducted at the University of Valencia, under the academic frame of the Institute of Creativity and Educational Innovations (IUCIE) and the collaboration of Lit(T)erart Research Group (GIUV2019-464).

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. The power of artistic multiliteracies in 21st century teacher education

The speed of the 21st century digital media practices, sociocultural shifts and transdisciplinary learning changes, have increasingly transformed the classical literacy educational landscapes with deep implications for the classroom. In this regard, as Kathy A. Mills, Len Unsworth and Laura Scholes (2023) state in their book Literacy for Digital Futures: Mind, Body, Text: "newer literacy practices involve distributed and crowdsourced knowledge, new sensorial relations among bodies, minds and technologies, and genre-blurred digitally mediated textual practices that require the sophisticated deployment of semiotic resources across evermore complex confluences of modes" (p.5). This supports the idea that the traditional notion of 'literacy' can no longer be understood through a monocentric linear linguistic curriculum oriented to cultivate static text structures (Mills et al, 2023, Leadbeater, 2014).

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Facing this revolution, in the late 90s, the members of the *New London Group* formulated a manifesto that gave birth to the *Pedagogy of Multiliteracies* (New London Group, 1996). As a more recent adaptation to this first educational proposal, two members of this group of linguists, Bill Cope and Mary Kalantzis (2009 and 2020), at the turn of the century, offered a new *design*-based dynamic formula founded on four knowledge and meaning-making acts, i.e.: 'Experiencing, Conceptualizing, Analyzing and Transforming'. They coined it as the 'Learning by Design' framework (2020) highlighting that "meanings are configured by human bodies" (p.13) and acknowledging that in digital environments material devices can play a key role in communicating corporeally generated meanings across time and space (Cope & Kalantzis, 2020).

Since then, several emerging approaches to this multiliteracies-based knowledge process framework have appeared (Mills et al., 2023; Peters & Mongeon-Ferré, 2025; Mills, 2016; Reyes-Torres, A. et al. 2020). However, central to any multiliteracies foundational basis lays always the notion of what Bill Cope and Mary Kalantzis coin as '*Transpositional Grammar*' (2020, p.19). This transformative perspective relocates the literacy focus from a linear and conventional written-and-spoken language, towards a liminal and multidimensional sociocultural syntax that entangles in balance several meaning making modes (View Figure 1).

Meaning Forms	Text	Image	Space	Object	Body	Sound	Speech

Figure 1. Multimodality in the meaning-making process. © Cope & Kalantzis 2020. *Transpositional Grammar* (p.19)

This audacious point of view on knowledge generation emphasizes the plurality and expansion of 'meaning forms' in our daily messages, advocating for a design-based, active, creative and performative literacy learning (Cope & Kalantzis, 2020).

Connected to this, and considering the notion of 'The Arts' as un umbrella (Gibson and Ewing, 2020), and also a key component of multiliteracies, Peters and Mongeon-Ferré (2025) claim that an Arts-based perspective of Multiliteracies offers to contemporary education a multiplicity of "deep, sophisticated, interconnected and complex ways" (p.36), i.e. –visual, audio, kinaesthesic, tactile, digital–, for making and communicating meaning.

Furthermore, the vast array of semiotic systems embedded in Arts-Based-Multiliteracies, embrace in itself a myriad of artful embodied practices, skills and thinking dispositions (Hetland et al., 2007; Seidel et al., 2009) that students can identify and select actively, as creative designers, to perform their own messages.

Likewise, any Arts-Based Multiliteracies perspective is naturally entangled with other two academic frameworks that should be also mentioned. On the one hand, we refer to the '4E' corporeal approach to cognition, revolving around '**E**mbodied, **E**nacted, **E**mbedded and **E**xpanded knowledge construction' (Schilhab & Groth, 2024). This proposal draws firmly on a sociocultural literacy perspective (Kern, 2000; Kucer, 2014) and places student's body at the center of the learning experience. Their corporeal orientation resonates with the theories of Riley and Proctor (2023), who introduced the concept of 'Bodily (re)enchantment', arguing that education becomes more meaningful when learners reconnect with their environments through a physical experience.

An Embodied Multiliterartistic approach in Education is therefore intrinsically linked to identity, agency, empowerment and promotes a sense of Studio craft-and-critical active disposition in the classroom

On the other, and with an analogous focus, for more than 50 years, the Project Zero's researchers at Harvard University have explored the unique benefits of educating in and through the Arts. Their approach has been collected in different academic proposals, to be named: 'Artful Thinking' (Tishman & Palmer, 2006), 'Art Thinking Dispositions' or 'Studio Habits of Mind' (Ritchhart & Perkins, 2005; Hetland et al., 2007, Seidel et al., 2009).

All things considered, an Embodied Multiliterartistic approach in Education is therefore intrinsically linked to identity, agency, empowerment and promotes a sense of *Studio* craft-and-critical active disposition in the classroom. This vision is particularly relevant to our approach, where picturebooks, far from being defined as passive pedagogical objects, become a sort of multidimensional narrative embodied spaces that embrace meaningful material encounters and sincere critical conversations.

2.2 The picturebook as a corporeal reading space

Over more than five decades, pedagogical research on children's picturebook have evolved significantly (Arizpe, 2021; Kümmerling-Meibauer & Meibauer, 2021). In that respect, although the traditional field of Literature Education has historically focused on 'reading-and-writing' instruction towards the transmission of social values, contemporary approaches increasingly address the literary, material, emotional and artistic quality of readers, as well as the key value of the picturebook (Arizpe, 2021; Serafini & Reid, 2022; Nodelman, 2018) as a unique artistic and literary form (Driggs & Sipe, 2007).

Similarly, picturebooks emerge nowadays as a singular and meaningful corporeal resource capable of integrating in itself all sorts of multimodal texts and designs as essential and inseparable components. Their blended essence, fearless materiality and eye-catching artful beauty enhances the reader's motivation to be passionately engaged with their stories (Nodelman, 2018; Sipe, 2001; Driggs & Sipe, 2007).

Going beyond the classical didactic frontiers, and from a spatial point of view, the picturebook becomes nowadays in education a sort of a chameleonic and sensory safe territory to dream and learn. The beauty and complexity of these engaging artworks easily invite us to become intrepid '*Liternauts*' (Portalés-Raga & Sendra Mocholí, 2025) eager to explore and sail the fascinating palette of multimodal stories of the book –in and outside their pages–.

Likewise, picturebooks can promote, through the use of critical conversations (Goga & Pujol-Valls, 2020), the construction of a discreet and trustworthy "possible narrative space" (Nikolajeva, 2008, p.60), or a first tactile 'museum' (Nodelman, 2018) that will lead learners to playfully acquire a deeper and expanded understanding of their real-life surroundings (people, objects and environment).

Yet, according to Mackey (2008) to read these books coherently "it is necessary to know these systems and to bring their possibilities and constraints into play" (p.115). And picturebooks' playfulness at its height lies always, not only in their verbal plot, but above all in the fascinating affordances of their materiality, i.e.: "their quality as an artifact" (Nikolajeva, 2008, p. 57).

2.3 New embodied perspectives in literature education

Drawing on a growing body of research inspired on the idea that language is triggered by continuous systems of embodied experiences with the world (Halliday, 2006) and the *Learning by Design* proposal by Cope and Kalantzis (2020), the '4E' cognition formula (Schilhab and Groth, 2024) highlights the need of students' kinaesthetic and sensory literacy engagement in the classroom. This corporeal approach defends a fourfold perspective of cognition as: *Embodied*, *Embedded, Enacted and Expanded*.

Attending to the impact of using this bodily point of view in contemporary educational contexts, many scholars also remark that 'movement' in literacy language is crucial since it contributes to a holistic human development (Chatzipanteli, 2025). Thus, the sensory materiality of movement should not be understood merely as a physical activity, but as a dynamic and balanced blend of 'knowing bodies' and 'moving minds' (Bresler, 2004), able to foster students' self-awareness, environmental engagement, and emotional wellbeing.

Besides this, when applied to the reading experience, the notion of movement contributes to the development of transversal competencies and thinking dispositions that integrate emotional, social, cognitive, and physical dimensions as a whole – all of them, essential pillars upon which education should be based– (Mills et al., 2023).

Within today's educational contexts, movement is thus a vital corporeal tool to conduct meaningful and holistic learning practices since it enables learners to connect with themselves and others. In this respect, Bermell (2008) emphasizes that movement-based activities, especially when combined with music, significantly boost cognitive and emotional processes such as attention, group cohesion, and self-esteem, which are crucial for comprehensive individual development. This is particularly relevant in early childhood education, where the body acts as a biological catalyst for creativity, social skills, sensory awareness and integral learning. Likewise, recent literature reviews (Aartun et al., 2022) highlight the imperative focus of promoting contemporary learning models based on embodiment, recognizing the body not just as a 'vessel' for movement but as an active territory crucial for building the whole experience of meaning making.

Furthermore, in relation to new embodied cognition approaches in the classroom, many scholars state that some methods and techniques like *Body Mapping* (Marshall & Meltzoff, 2015), can ignite students' creativity and an interdisciplinary learning practice, connecting the arts with their personal narrative (Aartun et al., 2022; Marshall & Meltzoff, 2015). As a learning method, the technique of *Body Mapping* fosters metacognitive and reflective skills, enabling students to recognize interactions among physical, emotional, and social life domains; thereby enhancing self-regulation and emotional intelligence. Altogether, this interdisciplinary corporeal and artful perspective emerges as a unique

educational tool that entangles physical, emotional, and cognitive development, guiding students playfully to explore, transform and navigate their personal and social challenges.

However, to effectively implement an embodied narrative experience capable of managing the complexity of a multiliteracies curriculum, teachers need to design a creative program focused on senses-and-body awareness (Terrusi, 2023; Tabernero Sala, 2025). As Peters and Mongeon-Ferré (2025) warn, an Arts-Based-Multiliteracies approach challenges our traditionally linear and instructional learning landscapes demanding "an understanding of the tools, language and processes of the arts, which can be daunting for educators without previous arts experiences or backgrounds" (p.34). Without these artful mind dispositions, the educators of our educational futures may lack the confidence to use it, and learners will only meet 'a promise' of the benefits of learning through this appealing artistic "palette of possibilities for designing inclusive rich learning opportunities" (Peters, B. & Mongeon-Ferré, 2025, p.36), but it will not be a reality.

3. Research design

Sponsored by the Spanish Education Ministry, the project 'Embodied Multi-Liter-Artistic Education (EMLA) for 21st Century Teacher Literary Training. Embodied minds and multimodal narratives through picturebooks' was carried out for a period of nine months between October 2024 and July 2025 in the Department of Physical, Artistic and Musical Education Teaching of the University of Valencia.

Our research question was oriented to confirm which were the multidimensional benefits and insights of introducing a new methodological approach –that we coined with the acronym of EMLA – into the traditional curriculum practices of Teacher Literature Education. Incorporating the previously mentioned theoretical foundations, and drawing on an embodied and arts-based multiliteracies perspective, this article reports the early results of the pilot phase of EMLA's academic research program.

To clarify our investigation the table below systematize the key procedures, instruments and calendar used in the whole program (Table 1).

MULTI-LITER-ARTISTIC EDUCATION (EMLA) FOR 21ST CENTURY TEACHER LITERARY TRAINING Embodied minds and multimodal narratives through picturebooks	
RESEARCH PARADIGM	Qualitative (Phase 1) and Mixed (Phase 2)
RESEARCH QUESTION AND OBJECTIVES	**RQ.** Which are the multidimensional benefits of designing a new creative approach in teacher education at the intersection of Arts-integration, embodied cognition and multiliteracies?

	As for our research objectives, we highlight the following ones: **O1.** To develop an innovative Arts-based conceptual knowledge-process framework applied to 21st century Literature education in teacher training. **O2.** To explore the early multidimensional affordances of this model when making narrative meaning according to the three areas of the European *Life.Comp* (2020) competential framework by conducting a participatory K-12 classroom-based intervention with the picturebook '*Lines of Dreams*' by *Akiara Books* (Sineiro & Domènech, 2022). **O3.** To elaborate coding tables to organize and analyze the collected data and draw mixed conclusions that could confirm the transfer potential of introducing this pedagogical model in contemporary Teacher training Literature practices. Note: Objectives O2 and O3 development are not fully deployed in this article.
RESEARCH STRANDS AND PROCEDURES	Procedure 1. EMLA. Design of a conceptual pedagogical framework After writing a foundational theoretical framework, we implement the exploration and definition of the core pedagogical principles needed to propose a corporeal and Arts-based Multiliteracies method named as EMLA (Embodied Multi-Liter-Artistic Education). This methodological framework is aimed at creating a sort of 'navigation panel' (Kress, 2010) that acted as a 'palette of possibilities' (Peters & Mongeon-Ferré, 2025, p.36). Therefore, as we have already explained, we interweave in the proposal the emerging studies on multiliteracies (Mills et al., 2023; Peters, B. & Mongeon-Ferré, 2025), the contemporary '4E' embodied cognition approach (Schilhab & Groth, 2024) and the key *Studio Thinking Dispositional* theories by Project Zero at Harvard University (Hetland et al, 2007). Procedure 2. A pilot classroom-based intervention This procedure involves conducting participatory K-12 classroom-based intervention at a school sited in the Valencian Community so as to put into practice and test the previously conceptualized methodology and confirm its multidimensional benefits. The coding tables for the collected data analysis refer to the three main areas of the *LifeComp* (Sala et al., 2020), i.e.: (a) personal (b) social, and (c) learning to learn or educational. Likewise, we explore the agentic and quality potential of each of the literacies used when constructing the narrative meaning during this intervention.

Table 1. EMLA's research project layout

A second phase of the EMLA's program is currently being implemented at the University of Valencia with the aim of compiling, assessing and confirming the coded evidences and final results of the study.

3.1 Research Procedures

3.1.1 Procedure 1. EMLA's Conceptual Framework

In order to design an innovative educational methodology grounded in artistic multiliteracies –including visual, musical, embodied and narrative arts–, we initially, considered which were EMLA's basic elements and dynamics. To this aim, we conceived EMLA's frame as an open, organic and systemic learning process that could enable educators to actively design the tenets of their own teaching practice using a Navigational Aids Panel (Kress, 2010) named as *EmNP*.

Relying on the 4-act traditional Multiliteracies knowledge process model by the New London Group (1996), later adapted by Cope and Kalantzis (2009 and 2020) and other scholars (Serafini & Gee, 2017; Reyes-Torres et al., 2020), EMLA's compass-like navigational panel (See Figure 2) is addressed to serve as guiding knowledge and narrative meaning framework in teacher literary education practices.

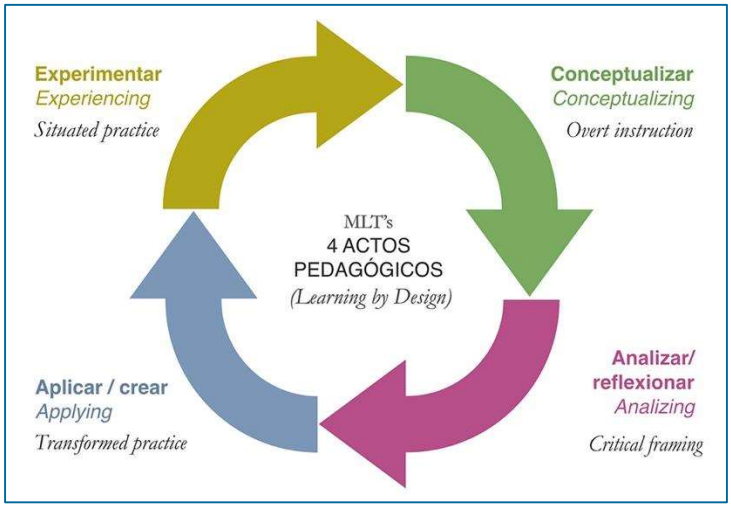

Figure 2. The 4-act knowledge Process Framework of the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies . Adapted from Reyes-Torres et al. (2020)

Thus, drawing on the general 4-acts used by previous multiliteracies frameworks, we incorporate some additional dimensions inspired on the *Studio Thinking Dispositions* by Project Zero at Harvard University (Hetland et al., 2007; Seidel et al., 2009). These artful mind dispositions are: imagine, design, create, persist and share. At the foundation of our study, and in the same line of thought as Peters and Mongeon-Ferré (2025), the pedagogical approach searches to construct an advanced embodied-based 'multi-liter-artistic' learning path oriented to reimagine the contemporary teacher's literary curriculum.

All things considered, the design of our EMLA's Navigational Panel (EmNP) is not a fixed set of step-by-step instructional manual, but rather, it behaves as a complex and flexible 'palette' (Peters, B. & Mongeon-Ferré, 2025) of variegated modes, oriented to be used differently by any educator (See Figure 3).

Figure 3. EMLA's Navigational Panel [*EmNP*]

3.1.2. Procedure 2. A pilot classroom-based intervention

1. Picturebook selection

The initial step in this second procedure was the selection of the picturebook to be used in the classroom-based intervention. To this aim, after exploring and compiling a first inventory of contemporary picturebooks we chose the picturebook '*Lines of Dreams*' (Sineiro & Domènech, 2022), edited recently by *Akiara Books* to develop an opening pilot study. With the motto of '*Books that enlight on their own*', this young publishing house has often been awarded for its honest commitment to eco-publishing and its focus on themes with strong social transferability. Leading this sociocultural project lays the passion and creativity of its director, editor and author Inês Castel-Branco. Inspired by the Japanese word 'Akira' (bright), *Akiara Books* produces nowadays their literary works only in the Spanish territory using environmentally friendly materials. Moreover, the editorial only publishes sensitive and sustainable-driven stories.

The plot of *Lines of dreams* addresses critical contemporary social issues such as: migration, loss, hope, multiculturalism, inclusion or identity. Besides this, its unique combination of poetic text and evocative illustrations offers the reader a 'multiliterartistic' richness and promotes an authentic narrative space for

Its unique combination of poetic text and evocative illustrations offers the reader a 'multiliterartistic' richness and promotes an authentic narrative space for dialogue.

dialogue. As for the plot, the book tells the story of a father and his young son as they leave their homeland, carrying only a few belongings and their shared dreams. Through emotionally charged text and illustrations, the story traces their journey across borders, encounters with uncertainty and loss, and moments of hope and solidarity. Its open-ended conclusion invites readers to imagine the future for these characters, making it a fertile text for embodied and creative exploration.

The choice of this picturebook opened the door to introduce in the classroom several delicate human questions on migration, social justice, multiculturality, identity or belonging. Besides, the 'poetical' tone of the book promoted a sense of shared empathy and sympathy in children, as well as allowed them to 'interweave' a safe reflective space for sociocritical conversations (Goga & Pujol-Valls, 2020).

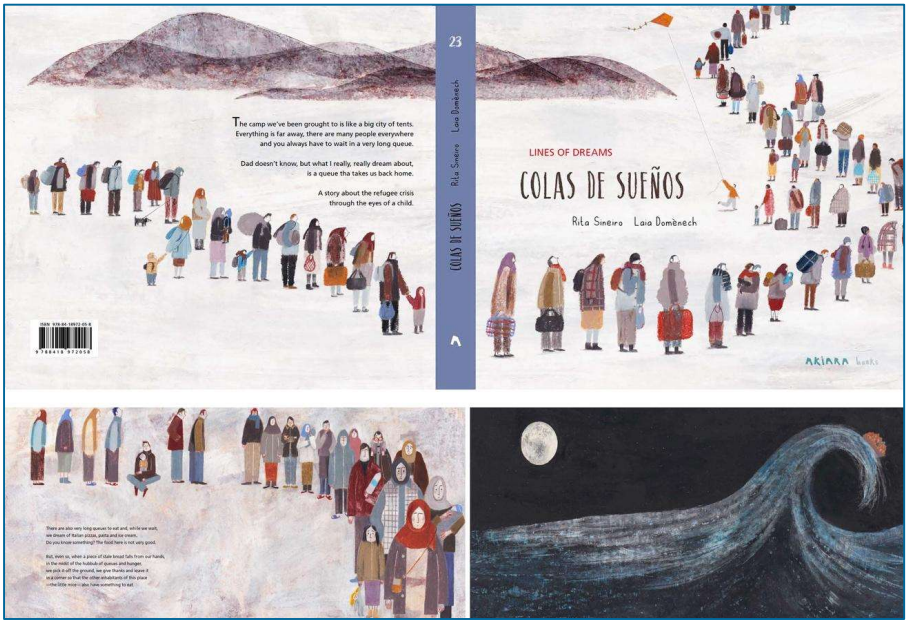

Figure 4. Images of the picturebook '*Lines of Dreams*' by *Akiara Books* (2022). © *Akiara Books*, 2022. With the legal reproduction permission.

2. Research Context and sample

Once the book was chosen, and in order to explore the needs of a teacher when using it, a pilot participatory intervention was carried out in a public school of the Valencian Community to put into practice the *EmNP* pedagogical framework. The educational center selected is situated in an area with a medium–low socioeconomic level, where a significant portion of the student body lives in complex personal and familial circumstances.

As for the sample, the study draws on a group of K-12 youths (N=18), consisting of ten girls and eight boys. One of the main reasons for selecting this classroom was its multicultural diversity which added significant value to the intervention. Most of the participants come from Latin American countries such as Ecuador, Colombia, and Honduras. Other children come from Australia and there is one refugee

child from Ukraine who arrived to Valencia three years ago with her family fleeing the war. Thus, children connected immediately to the topic of migration and their real-life experience, adding to their 'reading' responses authentic engagement and intensity.

3. Data-gathering tools

As a whole, three data-collection instruments were used:

- *Observation sheet:* A document used by the researchers to collect data through noted observation on students' behaviours and interactions between their peers' attitudes, mind dispositions and difficulties in the key moments of the learning process.
- *Google forms (pre and post intervention tests):* These digital devices were used to measure and compare the effectiveness of the intervention from the starting point to the final results.
- *Student's creative productions* –using the *Body Mapping* technique– (Marshall & Meltzoff, 2015), and also photo documentation: Both resources provided a visual direct and significant insight into the participants' personal, emotional and creative journey, reflecting the degree of connection with the subject matter and the development of expressive and reflective skills.

4. The EmNP: Planning and research development

For a period of one month, and with the previous legal contact and permission by the editor of *Akiara Books* and of the school, each of the sessions was implemented as an educational routine. The K-12 classroom-based study followed and applied the six acts defined in the EMLA's Navigational Panel (*EmNP*) through a series of embodied multi-liter-artistic activities. The sequence of practices were designed taking into account the key social topics of the selected picturebook, as well as their pedagogical affordances to promote different modes and forms of knowledge in the classroom.

ACT 1. Experience and Sense

This initial session started with an embodied experimentation founded on the technique of the Body Mapping (Marshall & Meltzoff, 2015). Connecting to their previous life experiences, students were guided to imagine and perform an activity named '*Human Map*' to encourage their active physical and critical participation. By forming words with their bodies, children do not only engaged playfully with one another –trusting in verbal and non-verbal communication and cooperation–, but also metaphorically connected with deep notions related to the story in *Lines of Dreams* (Sineiro & Domènech, 2022) such as migration, home, inclusion, solitude, despair, relief, fear or identity. This

This session also introduced the idea of an 'epic-kinaesthesic' narrative experience that continued later on throughout the whole EmNP process using the body as a medium

embodied communicative practice allowed the participants to discover a sensory trigger and activated their body-awareness (Mills, 2024).

This session also introduced the idea of an 'epic-kinaesthesic' narrative experience that continued later on throughout the whole *EmNP* process using the body as a medium for personal and social exploration. The focus was oriented to foster the physicality of the experience where students engaged with the story words and meanings through their bodies that only at the end were unveiled.

Figure 5. The EmNP: Experience and Sense (Act 1). ©Images with legal reproduction permission.

ACT 2. Con(text)ualize

The second act was oriented to deepen the emotional and conceptual connection to the topic through several activities that promoted a critical and emotional reflection entangling texts, images, and their bodies. Thus, what we named '*Musical Statues*' helped students to visualize and sense some scenes from the picturebook *Lines of Dreams* (Sineiro & Domènech, 2022) using their bodies to mindfully connect their physical experiences and sensations to the social and emotional narrative content. This way, readers gained an inner awareness of the impact of these real-life situations on migration and refugee camps of a father and his son. The *Contextualize* act was aimed at building theoretical and emotional foundations that allowed children to understand the power of multimodal texts and the symbolic 'weight' of illustrations in picturebooks. The activities in this session prompted students to position themselves physically and emotionally in response to the events of the story, deepening their understanding through a direct embodied and enacted experience.

'Musical Statues' helped students to visualize and sense some scenes from the picturebook Lines of Dreams (Sineiro and Domènech, 2022).

Figure 6. The *EmNP*: Experience and Sense (Act 2). ©Images with legal reproduction permission.

ACT 3. Analyze and Dialogue: 'The Classroom-Museum'

In this third act, students entered a fictional film-like space using a visual projection on the wall of the images of the picturebook *Lines of Dreams* (Sineiro & Domènech, 2022).

This visual exposure generated a sort of sensory visual platform that 'embedded' the young participants and enacted in them an immediate reflection on the story's content. While walking in line, and being connected by a rope, this experience aroused in children a sense of Community and motivated them to share their impressions of the images.

The follow-up discussions and dialogic conversations (Goga & Pujol-Valls, 2020) on the sensations and the emotions the illustrations evoked them enabled a deeper understanding of the picturebook's plot and its underlying messages and sociocultural transfer impact. Children creatively read the story as they walk and move following a path, analyzing the relationship between images, text, and their own feelings, and thus engaging in a critical dialogue about migration.

The process of observing, reflecting, and sharing thoughts while moving as in front of a painting in a museum promoted a feeling in them a sense of agency and citizenship as being in a sort of 'Classroom-Museum' that released critical sensitive voices about the whole multimodal narrative of the picturebook.

Figure 7. The EmNP: Analyze and dialogue. 'The Classroom-Museum' (Act 3). ©With legal reproduction permission.

ACT 4. Imagine and Design

In this forth act, students were once more immersed in an activity that directly linked them from a bodily experience to the creation of narrative symbolic situations. Coined as '*Invisible Queues*', this new activity developed and encouraged imagination, perception and teamwork, making students feel like active agents of their own story. While walking again in line, children relied on their peers to overcome obstacles and become part of a sequence of queues that symbolize metaphorically the struggles faced by the main characters in the picturebook *Lines of Dreams* (Sineiro & Domènech, 2022).

The creation of these 'invisible migrant queues' represented the overcoming of challenges and the interconnection among all the members of the community. This session enabled the young students to experience and transfer their understanding of the story's key topics into real physical stage-like or drama actions, blending narratives with an experiential somatic learning. The challenge of trusting one another while forming the queues allows them to develop, both a personal and a community knowledge and learning, through a dynamic and practical activity.

Figure 8. The EmNP: Imagine and Design (Act 4).©With legal reproduction permission.

ACT 5. Create and Persist: Body Mapping

The fifth act offered students the opportunity to enact the free and creative expression of what they have learned so far. Through the arts-based research and educational method of *Body Mapping* (Marshall & Meltzoff, 2015), students represented multimodally their emotions and reflections aroused from all the previous activities. In each corporeal and multimodal 'map' the child-reader became the 'author-protagonist' of his/her own story thus giving shape to their personal narrative interpretation. This last session was a chance to transform the participants' lived experiences into new personal and creative representations and deep and authentic artistic performative lessons.

Figure 9. EmNP: Create and persist. '*Body Mapping*' (Act 5). © With legal reproduction permission.

ACT 6. Share and transfer (SDG)

Finally, in the closing act, the embodied readers shared their experiences, reflections, and creative works in an atmosphere of trust and gratitude. The '*Circle of Gratitude*' dynamics transformed their deep individual learning into a collective felt-experience, fostering a connection among the group members and with the story.

In line with the priorities of the Sustainable Developmental Goals of the 2030 NATO's Agenda, this activity also promoted a sense of self-awareness and community empathy as each student could share their thoughts, experiences, and feelings while reflecting on their personal growth throughout the various acts of the participatory intervention. In this regard, beyond sharing their reflections, students also transformed their understanding and real-life experiences into something meaningful and creative. The final dialogical conversation and critical reflection helped students to close an embodied and artistic multimodal narrative, and empowered them towards becoming moving agents of sociocultural change and transformation.

Figure 10. The EmNP: Imagine and Design (Act 6). © With legal reproduction permission.

4. First results and discussion

This document presents an early general analysis of the collected data evidences collected during the completion of the EMLA program. Taking this limitation into account, the initial results confirmed that there is a significant transformative multidimensional potential when integrating embodied artistic multiliteracies using picturebooks into a classroom –both for children and for the guiding teacher–.

Likewise, this approach not only validates the internationally acclaimed pedagogical model of multiliteracies as theorized previously (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009 and 2020, Serafini & Gee, 2017, Mills et al., 2023, Reyes-Torres et al., 2020), but confirms that a more complete learning process –embodied and artistically inspired–, can be efficient thanks to a major open flexibility. Thus, each of its four classical multiliteracies pedagogical acts of the 'Learning by Design' framework, i.e: –*Experiencing, Conceptualizing, Analyzing* and *Transforming*– (Cope & Kalantzis 2020) was reinterpreted in the EMLA project resulting in the proposal of what we coined as *EmNP* as a meaning-making process dynamics to be used in a 'creative literary classroom'.

We also confirmed that every act is essential in our EMLA's navigational panel model. Therefore, to begin with, the *Experiencing* phase was expanded through embodied and sensory engagement in to *Experience and Sense*. In this initial act is where learning first emerges naturally via play, movement, music, image, and emotional resonance. Thus, we discovered that EMLA's methodology — naturally grounded in embodiment, arts-based and living multiliteracies—, can unfold unique affective encounters that focus on the sensory, embodied and relational dimensions of human cognition.

Our adaptation of the second act known as *Conceptualizing* (Cope & Kalantzis, 2020) lead us to transform this phase into *Con(text)ualize*. This change allows the teacher to talk and position an

expanded notion of 'the text', considering the global view of the many artistic and multimodal forms and modes of meaning-making with a socially-bound transfer approach. Here, the initial results gathered show that students engaged in processes involving symbolic gesture, rhythm, and multimodal storytelling. Besides, this finding echoes Eisner's (2004) vision on the arts as serve not merely as expressive 'ancillary' activities but as profound and unique cognitive learning structures in education capable of shaping complex understanding. As Peters and Mongeon-Ferré (2025) remark "Arts literacies are embodied, expressive, and multimodal meaning-making systems. We understand knowing through the arts literacies to involve kinaesthetic, affective, intuitive, spiritual and cognitive ways of knowing" (p.20).

Furthermore, when addressing the third classical multiliteracies act *Analyzing*, it acquired in our study a pronounced sociocultural and inclusive dimension, emphasizing the role of art as a medium for discussing and dialoguing delicate topics by sharing authentic personal family stories and experiences of displacement. Consequently, we transformed this phase into *Analyze and Dialogue*.

The EMLA's navigational panel ended in two final acts adapted from the classical multiliteracies notion of *Transforming*. In this case, what we coined as *Create and Persist* and *Share and Transfer* –making use some of the Project Zero's artful mind dispositions (Hetland et al., 2007; Seidel et al., 2009) – became a mindful, quiet and respectful space were most of the creative productions were done. Moreover, the activity of *Body Mapping* (See Figure 5), allowed students to corporeally re-interpret their own real-life narratives employing a rich multimodal discursive repertoire.

Figure 11. Children creative productions: Body Mapping examples. ©Images with legal reproduction permission.

Topics such as identity, voice, and agency were not abstract ideals in the classroom, but became embedded and enacted realities that students expressed through a corporeal presence, symbolic engagement, and emotional literacy development.

In addition to it, playful, proprioceptive and graphic activities such as *Body Mapping,* dance and role-play, allowed children to deeply access to real-life personal experiences –often involving migration, trauma, and belonging– supporting them to symbolize, reconstruct, and share these living stories. Through such practices, the space of a 'Creative Literary Classroom' was reimagined as a cohesive and safe symbolic and poetical space (Petit, 2024) generating both pleasure and critical consciousness.

All in all, the integration of performative and figurative 'moving stories' fostered a unique multimodal way towards dealing with a remixed (Serafini & Gee, 2017) and mindful transformed narrative learning. Engaged in a sort of 'shared rituals', we observed that children co-constructed and co-created new creative meaning and designs thus reinforcing the social-emotional bond as a 'Reading Community'. Similarly, an early data assessment on the impact and benefits of the different modes and literacy discourses from the comparison of pre and post-test showed a clear improvement in all the artistic multiliteracies being employed by the young participants, i.e.: – literary, visual, corporal, and musical– . Moreover, the initial results confirmed that metacognitive awareness, holistic development and a capacity for self-directed learning is also strengthened.

In terms of social and ethical awareness, the deployment of artistic collaboration also served as a powerful medium to sparkle a human supporting commitment: role-plays, embodied narratives, and dialogical encounters, where students moved beyond competition and acquired a sense of cooperation and mutual compassion and recognition. On average, this transition fostered inclusive attitudes and a sense of socially responsible citizenship in children that directly reflected the crucial principles demanded by the *LifeComp'*s European framework (Sala et al., 2020).

5. Conclusions

The findings of the first phase of this research project demonstrate that EMLA –as a new Embodied Multi-Liter-Artistic methodological perspective– offers an innovative approach for opening new ways towards a Creative Literature Education Teaching.

Thus, the early evidences of the program –gathered through systematic classroom observations sheets and the critical content analysis of the artistic productions and student self-assessment tests–, confirm the *EmNP* process promotes the design of an integral multi-liter-artistic learning path that enables students to express their emotions, fosters understanding of the world, and enacts an authentic creative and critical thinking in the classroom.

Likewise, we've also remarked that some practices like *Body Mapping,* performative role-plays and dialogical conversations release children to express their own thoughts and critical and sensitive voices. Moreover, the embodied reading and multimodal representations of a human and social topic –such as migration– and the whole six acts used in the *emN*P process dynamics through the narrative of *Lines of dreams* (Sineiro & Domènech, 2022) generated a brave emotional and transformative learning experience that demands to be orchestrated by a well prepared 'multiliterartistic' teacher.

This project clearly identifies that there is a significant *gap* in the contemporary teacher literary education curricula, remarking the urgency of introducing new complex ways for building knowledge and meaning about the self and the world in the classroom. Thus, ultimately, the EMLA's proposal invites teachers to rethink and generate their own personal and social learning situations using a non-linear navigational panel. This flexibility will allow them to design and entangle freely the rich affordances of several modes of learning.

However, aligned with Peters and Mongeon-Ferré (2025) thinking, we consider that there are still numerous challenges to get to integrate this transdisciplinary perspective "that offers the modes of the arts as meaning-making potentials" (p.34) in Higher Education teacher training programs. The limitations are mainly connected to the lack of awareness and understanding of arts literacies in the entire education system, and also to the complexities of 'designing' an *EmNP*.

Therefore, the successful implementation of EMLA is not achievable through a superficial or improvised practice in any learning setting. This didactic proposal does not merely deal with an instrumental of technical change; but also repositions the teacher and learner at the center of the educational process with a sense of *empowered artful agency* and an *active disposition* to aesthetics.

As a whole, what matters most in the EMLA project is not only the design of an innovative meaning-making methodological procedure. The evidences of the project visualize the need of a critical epistemological revision of today's teacher role, mindset and attitudes towards recalibrating creatively –and poetically (Petit, 2024)– the traditional literary teaching practices in a period that calls urgently for advanced 'hybrid grammars' (Mills et al., 2023, p.4).

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