

Seeing Academically Marginalized Students' Multimodal Designs From a Position of Strength

Written Communication
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Abstract

This article examines multimodal texts created by a cohort of academically marginalized secondary school students in Singapore as part of a language arts unit on persuasive composition. Using an interpretivist qualitative approach, we examine students' multimodal designs to highlight opportunities taken up for expanding literacy practices traditionally not available to lower tracked students. Findings examine the authorial stances and rhetorical force that students enacted in their multimodal designs, despite lack of regular opportunities to author complex texts and a schooling history of low expectations. We extend arguments for the importance of providing all students with opportunities to take positions as designers and creators while acknowledging systematic barriers to such opportunities for academically marginalized students. This study thus counters deficit views of academically marginalized students' literacy practices by demonstrating their authoritative stance taking and enacting of layered positionalities through multimodal designs in which they renegotiated ways of knowing and doing in their classroom.

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For decades, scholars of writing studies have argued for the broadening of classroom literacy practices to include multiple modes and literacies, citing the possibility for increased access, equity, and opportunities to learn (e.g., Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; New London Group [NLG], 1996). Some of these arguments point to the benefits of multimodal design, which can position learners agentively as they draw on different modal ensembles to achieve specific goals, rather than simply displaying core competencies or consuming existing texts (Bezemer & Kress, 2008; Halverson, 2009; Kress, 2010). Using the term *design* indexes a focus on the purposeful, situated, and creative use of multiple modes to make meaning from a social semiotic perspective (Jewitt, 2008; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Engaging students in authoring multimodal texts (MTs) is one such well-documented avenue for broadening classroom literacy practices to include equitable opportunities for students to explore interests, create multivocal compositions, and enact layered positionalities with regard to classroom literacy practices (Mills, 2009; Vasudevan, Schultz, & Bateman, 2010).

Heeding these calls, K-12 curricula have evolved to include more expansive expectations for multimodal meaning making, most notably in the United Kingdom (Lankshear, 1998; Street, 2008), Australia (Mills & Exley, 2014; Unsworth, 2002), and South Africa (e.g., Stein & Newfield, 2006). Singapore, the context of the present study, similarly revised their national English language (arts) curriculum to include a guiding principle of “opportunities for pupils to be exposed to and engage in producing a variety of multimodal texts to represent ideas effectively and with impact” (Ministry of Education [MOE], 2010a, p. 9). However, guidance for how instruction should be differentiated for the lowest track—normal technical (NT), which includes the lowest ranked 15% of secondary students in each year’s cohort (MOE, 2014)—is quite stark. For example, in the area of writing and representing, teachers of higher track students are encouraged to “help pupils grow creatively and gain expertise as writers by encouraging them to experience the process of producing a variety of written and multimodal texts for creative, personal, academic, and functional purposes” (MOE, 2010a, p. 58). The parallel strategy for teaching NT students includes the following:

With guidance, pupils can write fluently in internationally acceptable English (Standard English) that is grammatical and appropriate for the purpose,

audience, context and culture. . . . Many pupils do not have enough exposure to different types of texts to acquire their own thinking and context-awareness skills underlying the creation of target texts. Teachers can help pupils by explicitly instructing them in the application of these skills for creating different types of texts. (MOE, 2010b, p. 49)

The emphasis on form and scaffolding is noteworthy in the NT curriculum as compared with a focus on agency and expression for higher tracks. It is within this context in which students are implicated either as agentic meaning makers or rule followers based on their track in Singapore secondary school that we analyze the multimodal designs of a cohort of NT students to examine how aspects of their deficit positioning were temporarily reshaped through a unit for which we partnered with their teacher.

Exclusion of lower tracked and other academically marginalized students from expansive literacy practices is widely documented, with remedial and basic skills predominating curricula and pedagogy in Singapore (Albright & Kramer-Dahl, 2009; Anderson, 2015; Ismail & Tan, 2005; Kwek, Albright, & Kramer-Dahl, 2007) and elsewhere (e.g., Gee, 2004; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003). We build on Kress's (2010) call to rethink learning as a matter of design and rhetoric, highlighting the politics of communication. In stable institutional contexts, rules and conventions supersede rhetorical concerns. However, in contexts marked by shifting relations, of which the unit we consider here presents an example, questions arise regarding what constitutes appropriate means and modes of representation in composition, as authoring no longer fits the prenegotiated norm (Green, Skukauskaite, & Castanheira, 2013; Kress, 2010).

The analysis below highlights how students' design of MTs represent the renegotiation of previously limited possibilities for doing and being in their classroom, despite a systemic lack of opportunity to do so. To those ends, the following research questions guided our analysis: How did students renegotiate aspects of their classroom positioning through their design of MTs in a unit on persuasive composition? How did such reshaping of social relations present expended opportunities for doing and being in their classroom?

Context of the Study

The Normal Technical (NT) track

The term *academically marginalized* refers to students who are in lower tracks, are pulled out of mainstream instructional time for remediation, or identify with racial, cultural, linguistic, or socioeconomic groups positioned

outside the “norm” in a given society. In Singapore, students’ performance on a high-stakes exam taken in their final year of primary school (10-11 years old) is the principal basis for their tracking in secondary school.¹ The lowest of these tracks, NT, presents limited future opportunities because movement out of NT is unusual (MOE, 2014) with fewer than 6% of NT students moving out of it annually between 2002 and 2012 (MOE, 2012). The NT track includes a remedial curriculum intended to prepare “typically low progress learners” (MOE, 2010b, p. 6) for vocational or trade paths after their 10 years of compulsory schooling (Ho, 2012). The NT curriculum further characterizes them as follows: “[They] may not be equipped with an adequate language background or prior knowledge for the completion of tasks and so may need more time than their peers to attain understanding and mastery of skills” (MOE, 2010b, p. 6). NT students take all coursework within their track (and ranked cohorts of 20-30 students each therein).

NT students are not eligible to take the exams that grant direct entry into tertiary institutions with pathways to university, and only 15% of NT students eventually continue to a two-year college (MOE, 2012). Furthermore, researchers have documented the disproportionate number of NT students from lower socioeconomic status, non-English-speaking, and ethnic-minority (Malay, Indian) homes (Rahim, 1998; Talib & Fitzgerald, 2015). We thus characterize NT students as academically marginalized due to the nature of their structural and ideological positioning as unlikely to continue on to tertiary education beyond vocational certificate-granting institutions.

The Research Project

The overarching 3-year research project supporting this study included the development of language arts units for NT students at one partner school with aims to expand opportunities for students’ creative and agentive engagement with texts in alignment with a multiliteracies perspective (Anderson & Wales, 2008). Kate’s role in this study, along with other Singapore research team members, involved designing curricula, creating materials for class units with our partner teacher, and collecting data and acting as participant observer.²

A cohort of 17 secondary 3 NT students (14- to 15-year-olds) individually created the set of MTs that we analyze here in a 14-session unit on persuasive composition, which Kate and the Singapore-based research team designed in consultation with our partner teacher, Mr. H (all participant names are pseudonyms). One year prior to this unit, we began discussions with Mr. H and his school’s principal based on mutual interest in bringing digital media practices

into NT classrooms. Before this unit, we worked with Mr. H during the same academic year on two earlier units that involved another cohort of NT students and incorporated individually authored MTs. Unlike the prior two units, the one we consider here was the first that Mr. H, rather than research team members, led. This was also the first unit this NT cohort participated in with us. At the time of the present study Kate had been regularly observing Mr. H's class for nine months.

Typical Writing Practices in Mr. H's Classroom

Mr. H described typical writing and literacy practices in his NT language arts classes outside of the units for which we partnered during interviews, sometimes sharing assessments or lesson plans. He characterized typical literacies practices as heavily structured by prompts and direct instruction around thematic units with short, simple texts (e.g., the opening of Singapore's first casino, racial harmony, government spending). Most activities for which students were formally assessed focused on comprehension rather than writing (e.g., answering true/false questions, fill-in-the-blank questions), and most student writing was brief and guided by prompts (e.g., using a set of provided points to write a letter to the editor). In a unit planning session, Mr. H cited many of his students' limited comfort and academic proficiency in English as well as the history of systemic low expectations placed on them both as reasons for his usual way of conducting class and interest in trying something new. Despite Mr. H's obvious care for and belief in his students (as evidenced in how he spoke of them and the time he spent designing and leading extra-curricular opportunities for them), his typical lesson plans did not include much room for student-initiated topics. Instead, typical practices aligned with the NT syllabus, which identifies "reading and viewing short texts and readers with a suitable high interest content and a controlled vocabulary" for "developing proficiency in English for everyday situations and functional purposes" (MOE 2010b, p. 6). Thus Mr. H's instruction aligned with typical NT course expectations, which is not surprising considering the ubiquitous, deficit characterization of NT students in the national syllabus, media, and elsewhere (Anderson, 2015).

The unit we consider here, with its relatively open prompt and student-directed authoring paths, differed drastically in form and context from students' usual classroom practices in terms of opportunities for meaning making and authoring. Mr. H commented on several occasions that, prior to the units for which we partnered with him, some of his NT students rarely composed entire paragraphs. One illuminative anecdote described an

assignment in which he asked students to write about their dream job given 10 scaffolding prompts. Many students simply answered “yes” or “no” to each prompt instead of writing a short narrative.

The Unit in Question: Persuasive Multimodal Texts

This language arts unit took place over 14 class sessions (spanning 9 weeks, totaling 150 hours of instructional time). Mr. H asked students to create a MT in the form of a persuasive argument on something about which they felt strongly using the program Windows Movie Maker (WMM).³ Some students also used Audacity to mix multiple audio tracks. During the unit, students each planned, designed, and created their own MT, choosing a topic, sourcing images and music from the Internet, creating storyboards and scripts, and recording a voiceover (all in an order of their own choosing). Mr. H led the unit, giving lectures on the genre of argument, using WMM, and audience (students knew that some MTs would be publically viewed in both a showcase sponsored by our project and a district-wide presentation Mr. H would be giving).

Mr. H created his own MT, which he showed in class along with existing student-created MTs to scaffold discussion of audience. Students had opportunities to practice using WMM in groups (Sessions 2-4) for which they were given a sample argument and a digital image bank and asked to write text and pair images to make a case for both sides of the argument. A member of the research team also gave an in-class workshop on using Audacity to record, mix, and add extra audio tracks to their WMM projects, which was optional. Last, students provided written peer feedback on storyboards and final MTs (see Figure 1 for an example of student planning work).

While the opportunity to plan, design, and author a text from start to finish on topics of students’ own choosing was new, we recognize that Mr. H’s instruction during the unit did not fully align with the research team’s aspirations to a multiliteracies pedagogy (Appendix A outlines the project’s multiliteracies commitments contrasted across the intended unit design and how it unfolded in practice).⁴ As we discuss below, however, students still had far greater opportunity to design and author texts from start to finish in this unit than was usually the case. It is the take-up of these opportunities on which we focus in the analysis.

Academically Marginalized Students and Multimodal Design

Dominant groups and the institutions that benefit them often provide taken-for-granted categorizations of marginalized groups (Omi & Winant, 2015).

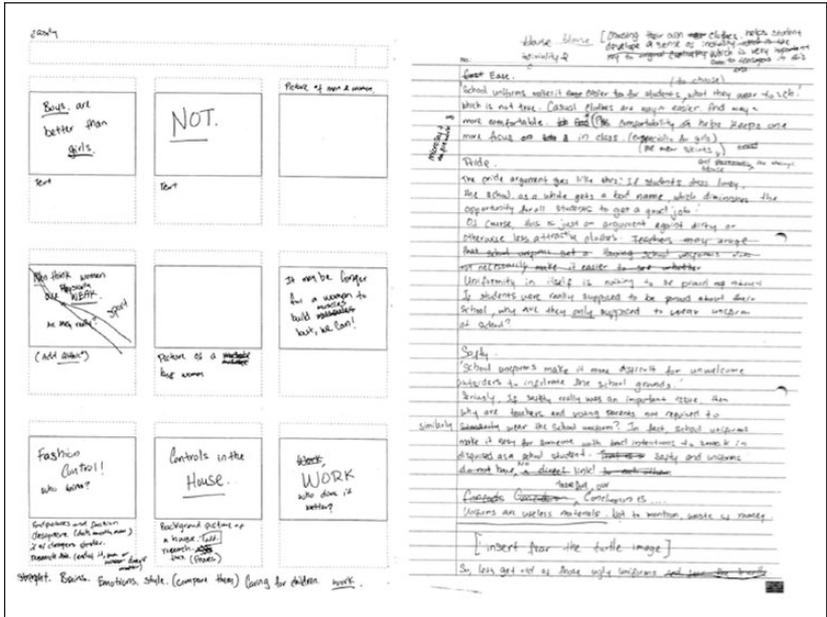


Figure 1. Example of student MT planning work.

One such widely institutionalized form of categorization is academic tracking, which disproportionately sorts students from linguistic, cultural, and economically marginalized groups into the lowest levels of the education system (Oakes, 1995). Scholars have consistently asserted that disparities exist between the measured performances of systemically marginalized students and those of their more privileged peers (e.g., Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Rampton, 1995). Furthermore, families’ home literacy practices and their congruence with normative school practices and expectations have long been shown to affect students’ abilities to assimilate to school discourses and succeed in ways recognized by formal assessment systems (e.g., Dyson, 2008, 2013; Heath, 1983), which often includes practices representative of privileged, White, and middle-class groups (e.g., Kirkland, 2013; Lee, 1995).

Studies have long discussed the benefits of multimodal composition and design for marginalized students’ development of literacy and media practices (e.g., Luke, 2003; Unsworth, 2001). Some scholars have examined students’ expanded possibilities for authoring and self-expression (Archer, 2014) and increased opportunities to see themselves as successful (Hull & Katz, 2006; Vasudevan, 2009). This, despite having often been subjected to

erroneous labels such as “illiterate” or “low ability” according to narrow and deficit views at worst, or excluded and marginalized from such opportunities at best (e.g., Halverson, 2009; Kirkland, 2013; Mills, 2009). The expanded forms of social and material practices associated with multimodal design can thus provide a platform for marginalized students to create complex texts, a practice from which they are often alienated due to remedial, skill-and-drill practices associated with the curricula offered them.

Multimodality, Texts, and Design

Multimodality is a family of approaches with varied theoretical and methodological tenets (Jewitt, 2014). The social semiotic perspective to which we ascribe cuts across many approaches taken by scholars interested in the affordances of MTs and digital media authoring practices (Anderson, 2013). Studies of multimodal design from a social semiotic perspective acknowledge the equal importance of text and social context for interpreting meaning (Barton, Hamilton, & Ivanič, 2000; NLG, 1996). Accordingly, meaning is understood as perspectival—that is, it depends on who is doing the looking, in which sociohistorical context, and with which experiences and interests.

Because multimodal design requires students to work across modes and the different meaning making potentials their various combinations afford in a given context, it thus presents opportunities to create, interpret, analyze, and evaluate texts in ways that differ from traditional school literacy expectations (Hull & Nelson, 2005; Unsworth, 2002). Kress (2010) points out that engaging in multimodal design can change learners’ possibilities for representing and positioning themselves because competent performance is replaced by making meaning as a sufficient sign of learning (p. 174). It is such opportunities for students to renegotiate their positionality in the classroom as meaning makers and designers that we highlight in order to rethink what counts as evidence of learning for NT students.

We draw below on the concept of metafunctions—that is, what can be meant/done with a particular set of semiotic resources, or modes (Jewitt, 2014). Halliday’s (1994) system of functional grammar introduced the notion of three metafunctions through which the social functions of language are manifest—(a) *ideational*, the content, or what is represented about the world in texts; (b) *interpersonal*, the way in which texts position individuals in relation to each other; and (c) *textual*, the structural and compositional aspects of texts that work together to form a coherent whole. Scholars concerned with multimodal design have widely taken up these metafunctions (e.g., Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; NLG, 1996). We specifically draw on the interpersonal metafunction to organize certain aspects of our analysis, as it illuminates author-audience relations, a major concern of the present study.

Theoretical Framework

To inform our analysis of students' design of MTs and how they drew on available resources to reshape author-audience relations and position themselves in new ways, we draw on the lenses of *rhetorical force* and *authorial voice* to highlight how students enacted aspects of the interpersonal metafunction in their multimodal designs. *Rhetorical force* refers to the affective associations a text evokes and how it influences audience beliefs or attitudes (Moore & Parker, 2015), often relying on ideology, emotion, or other nonliteral and non-denotative aspects to make meaning (Leitão, 2003). Authors can achieve rhetorical force through attitude and evaluation toward a proposition rather than the simple representation of facts or the expository asserting of "truth" (Wheeler, 2000). We use *rhetorical force* to highlight how students represented relations between themselves as authors, their audience, and their topics in ways that were previously unavailable in typical classroom practices. Students' MTs evoked novel author-audience relations through the gestalt of their designs rather than representing a particular fact or adhering to an expected form or structure (e.g., "correct" grammar, spelling, form). While the concept of rhetorical force is by no means new, it has not been taken up as an explicit lens for the analysis of students' multimodal design to our knowledge. By introducing this construct, we draw attention to the ways that multimodal design is a useful context for exploring how academically marginalized students take up opportunities to renegotiate previously narrow possibilities for doing and being in the classroom.

We also draw on the concept of *authorial stance*, which Vasudevan et al. (2010) define as "claiming a presence as an author and narrator of one's own experiences" (p. 461). In their study, Vasudevan and colleagues illuminated intersections between students' multimodal composing practices in the classroom and intersections with newly afforded identities, participation structures, and social relations. We examine the authorial stances students enacted in their designs, in part, through the lens of the interpersonal metafunction, which illuminates their relationship as authors both to the audience and their topics in ways that contribute to newfound dispositions as meaning makers and designers (e.g., knowledgeable, mocking, commanding; Jewitt, 2014).

Last, we draw from Hull and Katz's (2006) focus on the dialectic between performance and sociocultural context when considering the repertoires of tools, resources, and relationships that students use to reposition themselves as authors in relation to typical classroom practices when composing multimodally. As Hull and Katz (2006) discuss (citing Bauman & Briggs, 1990), multimodal design can lend textual *authority* [italics added], in part because authors can "control movement and use of texts . . . [to] ground the authoritative voice of the performer/author" (p. 71). We highlight below how students

positioned themselves with particular authority in excess of what was possible in their typical classroom practices (e.g., filling in blanks, using a set of prompts to write a letter, answering true/false questions). Compton-Lilly (2014) asserts that prior experiences influence what is possible, as learners' senses of limitations are heavily shaped by institutional and social contexts and how their meaning making is recognized and valued across these contexts. Negotiating relations between individuals across institutional and social contexts thus shapes learners' sense of the possible and their place in it. With this in mind, we examine how students took up opportunities to negotiate complex positioning as author, knower, and performer through the lenses of *rhetorical force*, *authorial stance*, and authoritative repositioning of author-audience relations, which this unit more readily afforded as compared to their usual classroom literacies practices.

Methods

While data from the overarching project included video recordings of class sessions, field notes, student artifacts, curricular design materials, and interviews, here our analysis is largely based on the 17 MTs that this cohort of NT Secondary 3 students individually designed as part of the 14-session unit on persuasive multimodal composition. We examine the MTs to identify features of their multimodal design that expand what was possible in their usual classroom practices, which were typical of the aforementioned, systemically impoverished opportunities generally afforded lower tracked students in Singapore.

Our analysis identifies elements of students' multimodal design as "signs of success"—that is, design choices and features not possible through usual classroom practices, which demonstrate faculty with multimodal design despite a lack of regular classroom opportunities to do so. Analysis unfolded across three stages—(a) open coding of MTs to identify the range of design choices interpreted as constituting "signs of success," (b) axial coding according to metafunctions realized in MTs' designs, and (c) presentation of three exemplar cases to further examine how expanding opportunities to authoritatively author disrupted ways of doing and being in this classroom. We argue that analyzing authorial stance, rhetorical force, and authoritative renegotiation of meaning potentials through the lens of the interpersonal metafunction highlights generative opportunities for challenging deficit literacies opportunities often afforded lower tracked students in Singapore and beyond.

Analysis was guided by an interpretivist, abductive approach (Green, Skukauskaite, & Baker, 2012; Lillis, 2008) entailing iterative stages of first- and second-cycle coding (Saldaña, 2015). The first stage involved collaborative, emergent coding of the MTs to establish a holistic sense of students' designs. We identified multimodal design features of each MT, intentionally

avoiding a deficit view and tendencies to evaluate areas of need for improvement. Rather, we examined how students' multimodal designs evidenced expanded affordances compared to usual classroom practices. Overall, students designed their MTs through a mix of text, font/color/layout, and image (e.g., text overlaid onto images, text followed sequentially by images), along with music, visual and textual effects, and voiceover.

After we each coded complementary subsets of MTs, we met to discuss initial interpretations and collaboratively refine the list of open codes. This led us to axial coding in which we analytically grouped the open codes into categories to cut across all 17 MTs. Through this reductive process, we organized the "signs of success" according to the three metafunctions, as we recognized that we were intuitively recreating aspects of the ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions to arrive at interpretations of the multimodal affordances on which students capitalized (see Appendix B for the axial coding categorization of "signs of success" with example of open codes and Appendix C for the coding of all MTs).

In the final analytic stage, we considered which MTs presented the most starkly different rhetorical forces and authorial stances as compared to what was possible with usual classroom practices. Drawing from Hull and Katz (2006) and their attention to authority, we present our in-depth analysis of three cases along a continuum of MT design features indexed by the interpersonal metafunction to show how students enacted authoritative authorial stances with a range of rhetorical forces. We present visual representations of individual slides and their affordances (see Figures 2 through 4), which allowed us to examine each slide of the MTs individually and in relation to the others.

Findings

We now present the three cases to illustrate how students' multimodal designs enact authorial stance and rhetorical force along a continuum of textual authority—(a) informative: socially distanced, expository presentation of facts with multimodal elucidation; (b) persuasive: socially close, presentation of argument that implicates audience engagement through multimodal punctuation; and (c) entertaining: humorous manipulation of author-audience relations from an intimate social distance through multimodal divergence.

Anna's MT incorporates features often associated with classroom composition (but not afforded in a typical NT classroom)—expository presentation of facts from a socially distant, omniscient stance, which she presents in a voiceover that is enhanced through modal interplay between image, layout, and written text. Rebecca's MT evokes a closer social distance than Anna's and poses rhetorical questions of the audience, implicating them in warrants that she sarcastically debunks in time with music and shifts in

color and effect with strong rhetorical force. Last, Aaron's MT seditiously makes light of the assignment through mock-serious treatment of an absurd topic accompanied by nonsubtle shifts in mood and audience-address. These features are marked by music, layout, color, and text through which he breaks the "fourth wall" by letting the audience in on his joke. All three MTs illustrate how students' design of persuasive MTs exhibited a range of possibilities for renegotiating the interpersonal relations associated with meaning-making in this classroom. We present a visual depiction of each case (Figures 2-4) that takes a form we felt was best suited to highlight each MT's affordances and uniqueness; thus, figures purposefully differ to best highlight the multimodal affordances of each design.

Expository Authority Through Omniscient Presentation of Facts

In her MT, Anna appropriates a public service announcement (PSA) genre to argue that cigarettes should be banned in Singapore due to related health risks (see Figure 2).⁵ She cites cancer, premature birth, regret, and death as warrants for her argument. Her MT features an expository style, with rhetorical questions throughout to set up her warrants, which she presents visually (images paired with captions) and elaborates through voiceover.

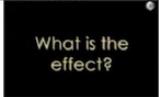
50 seconds, 10 slides + black at end (with just VO and then music)				
Modes: written text, voiceover, image, font/color/layout, effects/transitions, music				
	Slide 3 (0:12)	Slide 4 (0:16)	Slide 8 (0:30)	Slide 9 (0:35)
Image				
VO	Hello, Anna here. I would like to talk about smuggling cigarette.	Smoke can damage our lung, brain...	Underage is not allowed to smoke. If they could not stop,	they must pay a fine.
Music	synthesizer arpeggio, repetitive, lurking in background, dark and foreboding (VO louder)	Music continues	Vocals come in (female, simple, repetitive melody on 3 minor key notes, lyrics: "do what you will...everything you see is already ending")	Music with vocals continue
Font/color/layout	Centered yellow on black background (Style 1a)	Centered yellow text with white drop shadow on black background (Style 1b)	Centered black-outlined white text over red rectangle background at top of slide, image below (and behind) (Style 2)	(Style 2)
Effects	Typing effect (text incrementally appears, quickly, letter by letter, so text moves left as new words appear)	Text flies in as one block from top left then flies out as one block to bottom right	Text box drops down, then slides up as it fades	Text box drops down, then slides up as it fades
Rhetorical Force	Setting the stage: orienting viewer	Rhetorical question sets up forthcoming answer	Claims, with simple, stark imagery and minimal presentation	Claims, with simple, stark imagery and minimal presentation

Figure 2. Highlights from Anna's MT: Expository authority.

The ominous music (repetitive droning synthesizer arpeggios in a minor key), dark color scheme (black background with drop shadow text), upsetting images (cancerous lungs, aborted fetus, skull X-ray, figure crouched in abject regret), and minimalist style contribute to a genre of health-related PSA that appeals to shock and revulsion to deter viewers from negative behavior. Visual features of Anna's MT also stylistically resemble warnings on packs of cigarettes sold in Singapore depicting cancerous mouths and lungs.

Figure 2 depicts four slides from Anna's MT, representing the two main styles she employs throughout—positioning of argument (Slides 3-4) and warrants for claims (Slides 8-9). The salient aspects of cohesion in Anna's MT include using the same font throughout, incorporating two primary slide layouts, complementary written text and voiceover, and images that concur with the voiceover. Thus, Anna's design effectively sets the tone (foreboding and dire warning) through layout, music/image choice, and a content focus on negative health repercussions across written and spoken text.

Rhetorically, Anna takes a position (Slide 3—Singapore should ban cigarettes) and echoes it with rhetorical questions that index what is to come (Slide 4—What is the effect? [of smoking cigarettes]), which she answers with a list of health effects, some accurate (cancer) and some not (aborted fetuses). She appeals to emotion (fear, revulsion) to warn viewers not to take up smoking, reasserting the argument that Singapore should ban cigarettes. Thus, the overarching rhetorical force of Anna's MT is to warn and persuade via warrants that appeal to emotion and that evoke a detached, slightly didactic PSA genre (which quite a few students in this cohort adapted, see Appendix C) from a far social distance (she does not address the audience, identify herself, use pronouns). With this rhetorical positioning of herself as knower and the audience as the beneficiary of the PSA, Anna enacts an authoritative, omniscient tone similar to many PSAs.

Persuasive Authority Through Implicating Audience Engagement

In her MT, Rebecca argues against Singapore's policy that all students wear school uniforms. She initially states her position in written text ("Students should not be made to wear uniforms") and then lists common warrants for the use of uniforms in schools, which she subsequently debunks, one by one. Unlike many of her peers, Rebecca's MT features only text, music, and digital effects (eschewing image and voiceover). She relies on a modal ensemble of text, music, color, and motion to create a sense of coherence and punctuated rhetorical force. Figure 3 depicts nine moments from Rebecca's MT in groups of three to illustrate her design.

Moments 1-3			
	Time: 0:00:00.0	0:00:00.5	0:00:07.0
	Transition: -	Text Fade In	-
	Music: New age choir	Becomes louder and more pronounced.	-
	Affordances: The sequence opens with a black screen which is a convention of film, sets up possible expectation of other film conventions to follow.	A text fade-in (film convention) sets up expectation of linearity. The music begins quietly and increases in volume along with the written text's fade-in, creating emphasis across modes. The choir-like music adds to a sense of awe, grandeur, and importance.	Placing the text at the center and at the top highlights its relative importance. Yellow text on black background add contrast, drawing attention and further signaling its salience.
Moments 4-6			
	Time: 0:00:10.5	0:00:11.0	0:00:13.0
	Motion: Text crosses from right to left. Jitter continues.	Text halts in the middle of the screen. Jitter continues.	The camera zooms in slowly on the text.
	Effect: Grainy Film Effect	Grainy Film Effect	Grainy Film Effect
	Affordances: Placement of newly introduced text on the right positions this portion of the argument as "new" or "unknown", indexing that new information is forthcoming.	Continued use of same color/font/layout/jitter creates cohesion by visually linking the previous ideas to current ones.	The slowly zooming camera movement adds emphasis to the text as it become more prominent in the frame and lends a sense of inevitability) as opposed to a quick zoom, which would promote a sense of anxiety, fear, or horror genre).
Moments 7-9			
	Time: 0:00:16.0	0:00:17.0	0:00:19.0
	Image: None	None	None
	Color: Black background with strobing text (blue-green-yellow-orange-red-pink)	Black background strobing text (blue to green to yellow to orange to red to pink)	Black background strobing text (blue to green to yellow to orange to red to pink)
	Affordances: The centered text highlights its important. The music lyrics begin as the slide transitions to this second style, adding emphasis and distinguishing it from previous slide.	The strobing color change draws attention to the text, emphasizing it.	The strobing color goes through five colors, each of which reappears later—one color for each warrant presented. The strobing color anchors the text of the warrants and creates a sense of cohesion throughout.

Figure 3. Highlights from Rebecca's MT: Persuasive authority.

Rebecca draws on several common filmic conventions to present her argument against mandatory school uniforms, including timed editing to a music track and digital effects. Music, rather than voiceover, provides the punctuating rhetorical force of her argument as she consistently cuts to each new slide on a strong down beat of the backing rock track. Rebecca also incorporates visual effects, including a 16 mm film jitter (Moments 4-6, Figure 3), strobing color (Moments 7-9), and slide transitions featuring a drop shadow of the focal text for each slide that appears to slowly move toward the viewer, adding salience to the corresponding written text.

A strobing text color effect also contributes to her MT's cohesion and resulting rhetorical force. Rebecca first invites her audience to consider

typical warrants for the school uniform policy (“First let’s look into the common arguments why schools want students to wear uniforms”)—safety, pride, equality, training, and ease of choice—each featuring a different color. She then debunks each in turn, offering corresponding counterpoints presented in the same colors as the corresponding warrants (e.g., the warrant “ease of choice” and its counterargument a few slides later are both red). This color continuity coherently binds each warrant-counter argument pair. Although the text color changes, the background remains an aged, unbroken black reminiscent of silent film stock, adding to the MT’s coherence by maintaining a simplistic color scheme.

Aside from careful editing and a visually and auditorially arresting modal ensemble that lends Rebecca’s MT coherence, her authorial stance is notably authoritative and somewhat rebellious. Unlike Anna’s MT, Rebecca’s topic and authorial stance confidently buck against adult authority. Her counterpoints undermine the logic of each “school-based” warrant for school uniforms. For example, to debunk the claim that uniforms provide training for students’ adult life, Rebecca poses this counterpoint: “What are the odds that we will wear uniforms when we grow up? Usually people who have to wear uniforms are the lower paid jobs, nothing to look forward to, really.” Her dismissive stance persists as she offers counterpoints in the form of sarcastic rhetorical questions (“Seriously, what does equality and making us look alike have to do with each other?”), and speaking on behalf of herself and all teenagers using a mix of first- and third-person pronouns (“Choosing their own clothes helps students develop a sense of individuality which is very important to teenagers in this era”). Rhetorical moves like these position Rebecca’s relationship to the audience as contentious and her authorial stance in alignment with a disaffected “we” of teenagers. Enhanced by the music, motion, and color that drive her argument, the effect is convincing because of its clean rhetorical organization of points and scathing presentation of counterpoints that contribute to a self-possessed and authoritative authorial stance.

Seditious Authority Through Mocking Genre to Entertain

Aaron’s MT stands out for its seditious stance toward the assignment, which, like Rebecca’s, has a rebellious rhetorical force but which is affected in quite a different manner. In his MT, Aaron (a) promotes a tongue-in-cheek, almost absurd argument for a school assignment (underage sex is good), (b) plays with conventions regarding “knowing your audience” by directly addressing the audience in an exaggerated way (“Hey there, Stranger!”), and (c) steps outside of the authorial stance of mock PSA at the end to explicitly acknowledge in a theatrical aside that his argument is meant in jest.⁶

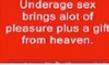
2 minutes and 22 seconds, 15 slides + black at end (with just music for 26 seconds)						
Modes: written text, voiceover, image, font/color/layout, effects/transitions, music						
	Title Slide 0:00-0:09	Slide 2 0:10-0:20	Slide 3 0:21-0:27	Slide 13 1:39-1:46	Slide 14 1:47-1:52	Slide 15 1:53-1:56
Image						
VO	Hey there stranger! Today I would like to tell you that underage sex is better than mature sex.	It's ok to have underage sex; it's better than mature sex. Let me explain.	N/A (image illustrates previous slide's "gift from heaven")	I would like to end this with a chance to say, thank you (long, pregnant pause before slide changes)	And, say yes to underage sex (last 2 words emphasized).	For your information I'm just doing this for fun, so please do not take it seriously.
Music	None until 2:00 (after visuals fade); organ music with deep-voiced men singing hymns					
Rhetorical Force	Direct (and tongue in cheek) appeal to audience ("Hey there stranger") in VO contrasts with formal register in written text, adds humor and lends seditious metacommentary on audience-awareness/netiquette aspect to assignment.	Provides initial warrant for claim, through a mix of appeals to emotion (gift from heaven), pseudo-logic (better than mature sex), and obvious seditiousness (brings pleasure), resulting in an overall sense of non-seriousness.	Illustrating one warrant from previous slide, enhances appeal to emotion.	Direct appeal to audience, tongue-in-cheek nod to genre of earnest public service announcement from noted personality.	Call to action (sarcastic) in simple closing appeal	Acknowledging multiple layers of authorial voice through aside to audience that explicitly acknowledges entire MT is in jest (heightened by blue background-different from other slides) and use of emoticon (indicates humor and light-heartedness).

Figure 4. Highlights from Aaron's MT: Seditious authority.

Two lines of humor weave throughout Aaron's MT. First is the presentation of underage sex as a topic for a class assignment. By outlining the supposed advantages of having children at a young age (e.g., teenagers can start their parenting careers young, parents will be close in age to their children, babies will supposedly be healthier and smarter), he demonstrates that he can formulate an argument with warrants (albeit spurious ones) and illustrations thereof, even if for an inappropriate cause. Thus, Aaron makes light of the assignment by creating a coherent presentation around such an absurd subject (which in Singapore is quite taboo). The second is the abrupt shift in style and tone in the final slide, through which Aaron repositions his authorial stance as letting the audience in on the joke through a theatrical aside (Slide 15). Aaron thus meets the requirements of the assignment while also expressing his sense of humor by standing outside the typical constraints of an earnest pitch or "school-sanctioned" topic.

In Aaron's initial slide (see Figure 4), he addresses the audience in his voiceover, "Hey there, stranger!", cheekily alluding to an earlier lesson on audience awareness in which Mr. H prepared students to create their MT for a wider audience beyond the classroom and discussed internet safety. Aaron's slides incorporate a basic fade-in and fade-out as the only effect, resulting in a simple, clean design. Figure 4 depicts six representative slides from Aaron's

MT, showcasing the general red and white theme that he used throughout the presentation (Slides 1-14) as well as the blue background seen in his theatrical aside (Slide 15). Despite the change in color, Aaron's MT achieves cohesion through the use of the same font and layout throughout. Aaron compartmentalizes both image and music by using them in succession with images illustrating the content of previous slides. For example, Slide 3 depicts a baby that references the content of the previous slide—"Underage sex brings a lot of pleasure plus a gift from heaven"—with a corresponding voiceover: "It's okay to have underage sex because it's better than mature sex. Let me explain." This connection provides coherence across modes and slide transitions.

Aaron again steps outside the MT's neutral social distance and serious affect in his final slide, which reads, "For your information I'm just doing this for fun so please do not take it seriously. :]" The smiley face emoticon perhaps is intended to ward off a literal reading of his treatment of the topic of underage sex and soften the blow of his sedition for adults' sake. This final slide's design (blue background) differs from preceding ones, and music only comes in during this final slide (somber church-like Gregorian chant), further contributing to Aaron's humorous and seditious authorial stance through stark contrast with the genre, tone, and mock-serious affect throughout the MT otherwise. Aaron thus uses humorous sedition as a rhetorical strategy to carve out a safe space from which to subvert the assignment by juxtaposing voiceover, text, and images that, on the surface, appear conflicting in order to convey humor that he overtly acknowledges only at the end.

Discussion

We have thus far illustrated some of the ways that this unit afforded a cohort of academically marginalized students opportunities not only to design, complete, and present MTs, but also to explore multivocal forms of discursive practice and to reflect on and position themselves with regard to classroom practices (Valdivia, 2016). Returning to our aforementioned research questions, we have argued for analyzing students' enactment of authorial stance, rhetorical force, and authoritative renegotiation of meaning potentials in their multimodal designs to highlight generative opportunities for challenging deficit literacies opportunities to which lower tracked students in Singapore and beyond are subjected. The three cases above illustrate a range of authoritative stances that students enacted, illustrating a continuum of renegotiated author-audience relations. Anna's expository authority, Rebecca's persuasive authority, and Aaron's seditious authority took shape through a range of interpersonal metafunctions—social distance, affect, and mood. We conclude that many of

the signs of success we interpreted resulted from unique affordances of MTs and the unit's open prompt, both of which allowed students to renegotiate their place in usually narrow and restrictive literacy practices—ones in which their participation was usually limited to responding rather than designing.

In considering students' design of persuasive MTs in a unit that Mr. H acknowledged usually skipping each year because he felt it was too difficult for NT students (interview), we highlight how these students enacted a range of author-audience relations that expanded those typically possible in their classroom. By nature of the unit's atypical length (9 weeks) and the departure from tightly scripted classroom practices, students could complete and showcase a multimodal composition of their own design. The performative, iterative, and public nature of the context of these MTs' production thus created a drastically different context for knowing, being, and doing in this classroom.

These findings extend those of others who have engaged similar discussions and who have attested to the affordances of multimodal design to allow learners to juxtapose common, personal perceptions of the world as compared with more traditional forms of expository written text (e.g., Dyson, 2013; Mills & Exley, 2014; Shanahan, 2014; Vasudevan et al., 2010). This article thus illustrates how authoring MTs afforded this cohort of low-tracked Singaporean students a different point of entry and incrementally more ways from which they could represent new forms of interpersonal relations through their authoring using an expanded set of tools and practices as compared to their typical classroom practices. This argument is especially prescient given deficit discourses surrounding NT students in Singapore and the impoverished curriculum they face (Anderson, 2015). Rather than skill-and-drill, cloze passages, tightly scripted topics, and focusing on form over content, this unit represented an unprecedented departure for these students. In the context of this brief reprieve, students showed that, even with little prior curricular exposure or scaffolding for how to capitalize on many of the more sophisticated affordances of multimodal design, many were able to far exceed the authorial and rhetorical possibilities of the usual classroom opportunities availed to them by allowing them to position themselves as knowledge creators (e.g., Anna), knowledge questioners (e.g., Rebecca), and knowledge subverters (e.g., Aaron), rather than merely demonstrating a compliance with form or content (Kress, 2010).

Conclusions and Implications

This article identifies a horizon of possibility in which merely giving students the opportunity to bring the resources for meaning making already at their

disposal to bear on a classroom assignment is an act of changing expectations and structures around which they develop a sense of who they are. Dyson (2013) points out that learners described as “at-risk” or “non-mainstream” are often oriented to problematically by educators and researchers. She notes that learning is as much about development as it is understanding the available opportunities, limits, and dispositions that are expected or acceptable. We have illuminated a consonant shift in focus that this unit provided NT students, albeit briefly, from a focus on forms and compliance to one of exploring positionalities and meaning making with implications for how students might renegotiate author-audience relations, thus expanding what might count as evidence of learning. Returning to Kress’s (2010) argument for a retooled, rhetorical definition of learning that incorporates acknowledgment of the politics of communication, we have echoed here the questions he encourages all of us to ask—“Is our interest in producing conformity to authority around ‘knowledge’? or is our interest actually in environments and conditions of learning?” (p. 183).

Our analysis explicates how NT students could do more than systemically given credit for through their design of MTs. We explore their keen ability to at once acknowledge institutional norms for framing knowledge and affect, play within those confines, and renegotiate their positionality in the classroom as knowers and creators. These students thus transformed ways of being in the classroom, from filling in blanks or following tightly scripted forms for making banal and impersonal meaning in the service of demonstrating awareness of grammar rules, to being designers of their own interests makers of their own meaning, even if just for two months.

This unit and its outcomes were not without limitations, however. A persistent constraint on academically marginalized students’ opportunities to learn in Singapore and elsewhere arises from sociohistorical patterns of low expectations and reductionist practices (Compton-Lilly, 2014; Ho, 2012; Kirkland, 2013). In many ways, this unit and the overarching 3-year project of which it was a part were similar to many global educational contexts in which opportunities are shaped by structural and ideological impasses in policy and curricula, such as high stakes testing (Dyson, 2013; Mills & Exley, 2014). Recall that because of their track in school, graduating NT students are not eligible to sit for exams that grant entry to tertiary education beyond vocational certificates. As Valdivia (2016) noted in her study on adolescents’ multimodal composition in Chile, neoliberal discourses permeate national and local pushes for inclusion of digital media in schools, often in instrumental and tech-fetishist ways. Similarly, in Mills and Exley’s (2014) study of academically marginalized students’ composition practices in Australia, an ideological struggle ensued between

multimodal composition and related multiliteracies perspectives on the one hand, and discourses and curricular practices that prioritized written texts and regulative discourses on the other. This kind of ideological tug-of-war is not uncommon as questions of “what counts” and “what should count in schools” as learning continue to pervade education (Green et al., 2013; Kress, 2010).

Singapore’s significant push for integrative computer technologies (ICT) began in the late 1990s and was in full swing during the time of our project (2007-2011). Educators and policymakers often evoked the use of digital media with NT students, in part, as an opportunity to develop “life skills” or “IT skills” (Anderson, 2015, 2017). Such discourses of reform and global competition associated with the inclusion of digital media practices arguably recruit digital technology and associated writing practices in the service of meritocratic measures of ability and performance (Talib & Fitzgerald, 2015).

The problematic and widespread nature of diminished expectations and opportunities for academically marginalized students can transform the possibility for expanded practices into another symptom of efforts that come too little, too late. As Compton-Lilly (2014) pointed out in her 10-year longitudinal ethnographic study of one academically marginalized student, the opportunities to develop identities as writers and the accompanying dispositions and practices cannot happen in short bursts or without layers of support over time. This cohort of NT students in Singapore offers an example of what can occur when opportunities to author are expanded. It should, however, also be mitigated by the reality that they have been historically, and outside of this unit, likely continue to be excluded from systemic opportunities to be “good students” or “writers” by nature of the features of the schooling system in which they are positioned.

Despite claims to the short-term transformative nature of this unit for these 17 students’ writing and literacy practices, we thus acknowledge the limited scope of such transformation, echoing prior critiques that suggest expansive opportunities to compose and design cannot, on their own, change decades of deficit discourses and normative and often reductionist assessment practices (Dyson, 2013; Mills & Exley, 2014; Valdivia, 2016). A project like ours, in which we entered classrooms and engaged relationships with students and teachers for months, cannot undo the years that students have borne the discursive brunt of being told they are not being good enough (Ho, 2012). We thus heed the call to temper the often-zealous fervor with which we can approach students’ digital compositions as a panacea, especially in ways promoted by neoliberal discourses of 21st-century skills and competing in the global economy that do not also

acknowledge the nonequitable playing field such calls too often obscure. However, in examining the rhetorical force students enacted in taking on authorial stances in their design of MTs, Anna, Rebecca, Aaron, and many of their peers stepped outside of the usual ways to be in the classroom, here as authoritative knowers and doers.

A suggested implication of this article is the need for further studies that provide counternarratives to deficit discourses, as we have done here, that focus on successes rather than surprising exceptions or failures. We thus hope to contribute to ongoing discussions about supporting richer standards and higher expectations of academically marginalized students’ as well as increased opportunities for multimodal composition and design. As we have demonstrated, seeing academically marginalized students’ design of MTs in terms of their strengths allows for a focus on their sophisticated understandings of design in which revised standards and curricula can build on and augment these strengths, rather than working from the constraints of limited expectations.

Appendix A

Multiliteracies Commitments Contrasted Across Intended Design and Actualized Unit

Multiliteracies commitment	As embodied in intended design	As enacted in actualized unit
Student-generated topics	Little adult framing of example topics; those provided are relatively value-neutral	Strong teacher framing and evaluation of example topics
Student-centered process	Unit to begin with students’ choice of a topic they feel strongly about	Unit began with lecture about importance of national unity and moral values to lead into request for thinking of a statement in which students’ strongly believe
Authoring as opportunity to express ideas and opinions	Collaborative WMM activity for practicing pairing text and pictures to represent ideas visually (symbolic representation)	Focus on student expression in terms of form more than content
Reflexivity about form and content	Use example MTs to foster awareness of audience and narrative; scaffold students’ linkages between image and narrative via discussion and examples	Examples used to discuss cyber wellness and audience of principal, parents, strangers; practice linking images and narrative focuses on form and IT skills rather than content/meaning

Appendix B

Axial Coding Categorization of “Signs of Success” according to metafunctions (Halliday, 1994; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Shanahan, 2014; Unsworth, 2006)

Ideational/representational: What is available for interpretation; content; representing ideas

- Concurrence—one mode elaborates another without adding new info (e.g., exemplification (example), exposition (same info in different form), homospatiality (spatially bonded entity), equivalence (i.e., written caption for an image)
- Complementarity—one mode extends, enhances, or projects another (e.g., augmentation or divergence)
- Connection—projection (quoting/reporting speech) or conjunctive (time, place, cause)

Examples of open codes

Represents facts about complex topic
 Illustrative use of images
 Captions explain image
 Representing personal interest
 Coherence of information presented across modes
 Reference information differently across modes
 Juxtaposing divergent representations across modes

Interpersonal/interactive: What we can do and how we can interact through a text; resources for constructing author-audience relationship

- Social distance (intimate, social, impersonal)—via point of view, audience address, knowledge presumed, theatrical aside, formality, contact (eye contact, angle, rhetorical questions, pronoun use)
- Attitude—via affect (authoritative, chummy, persuasive) or judgment (ascribing/evoking values)
- Mood/modality—via high/low fidelity or truth value, positive/negative polarity (e.g., high resolution images; well-crafted/sourced text)

Examples of open codes

Appealing to emotions/ethics/morality
 Humor/sarcasm
 Excitement/enthusiasm
 Expressing both sides of argument to let viewer draw own conclusions
 Rhetorical questions
 Direct audience address

Textual/compositional: How modes and media come together in a multimodal ensemble via layout, placement, and relative salience of modes

- Information value (given/new, ideal/real, important/less)
- Salience (size, color, tone, focus, perspective, overlap, repetition)

Examples of open codes

- Balanced mixing of audio tracks
- Spatial relations highlight visual elements
- Use of negative space/dead air
- Repetition for effect within/across modes
- Font/color/layout lends clarity or emphasis
- Careful pacing of slides

Appendix C

Final Coding of MTs for “Signs of Success”

Pseudonym	MT title	Type	Multimodal design features interpreted as contributing to “signs of success”
Adam	The world’s most expensive player (Ronaldo)	PI*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideational <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Incorporates video ○ Text/video complementarity • Interpersonal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Punctuation indexes excitement about topic • Textual <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Graphic effects provide emphasis
Anna	Smuggling cigarettes	PS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideational <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Text/images concur • Interpersonal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ominous music contributes to mood ○ Images appeal to shock/revulsion ○ Rhetorical questioning • Textual <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Well-mixed audio tracks ○ News report genre
Aaron	It’s okay to have underage sex!	PS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideational <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Images/text concur • Interpersonal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Theatrical aside ○ Directly addresses audience (close social distance) ○ Humor (sarcasm, juxtapositions) ○ Ominous music indexes shift in attitude (nonserious) and mood (humorous, seditious) • Textual <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Clear voice over (volume and enunciation)

(continued)

Appendix C. (continued)

Pseudonym	MT title	Type	Multimodal design features interpreted as contributing to “signs of success”
Joshua	Gambling problems can destroy lives and families	PS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideational <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Repurposes authoritative and informative text • Interpersonal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Directly addresses audience (“you”)—close social distance ○ Appeals to consequences—affect ○ Argument structure follows logical sequential order • Textual <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Complementary text/background color foregrounds text ○ Music and image create mood
Rebecca	Students and uniforms	PS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideational <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Written text presents primary information complemented by shifts in music, color (no images) • Interpersonal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sophisticated rhetorical strategy ○ Punctuation (texts and music) emphasizes emotive stance ○ Appeals to audience in 1st person plural (uses “we” and “let’s”)/argument in 1st person (my)—close social distance ○ Attitude—judgment of counterwarrants • Textual <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 1990s music video genre/mood (grunge rock music, jitter effect) ○ Uses negative space around words to foreground ○ Video effects for emphasis (outline of words speeds toward the audience) that shift to beat of music
Caleb	Singapore should accept more foreigners	PS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideational <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Images/text/voiceover concur • Interpersonal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Humor—close social distance, affect (“that’s all folks,” humorous image) • Textual <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Effects/music evoke mood ○ Text/background complementary color foregrounds salience of text ○ Slide transitions punctuates message
Michael	Global warming	E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideational <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Variety of images represent complex topic ○ Detailed and informational written text

(continued)

Appendix C. (continued)

Pseudonym	MT title	Type	Multimodal design features interpreted as contributing to “signs of success”
Thana	Are Singaporeans gracious?	PS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpersonal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Voiceover directly addresses audience (“Hello everyone”)—close social distance • Textual <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Well-mixed audio balances music and voice ○ Good use of negative space ○ Clearly spoken voiceover ○ Good pacing ○ Font/color shifts emphasize contrasting messages • Ideational <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Complementary music/effects enhance mood consistent with topic • Textual <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Striking effects in opening slide garner interest (jitter effect)
Zane	Rugby is a tough sport	PI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideational <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Apt choice of images represent topic ○ Informational written text • Interpersonal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Music sets mood (upbeat trumpet) • Textual <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Indexes sports broadcasting genre (ticker effect) ○ Colors/images create visual appeal • Ideational <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Wide use of images to represent topic ○ Information-rich written text ○ Humorous images diverge with written text • Interpersonal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Presents both sides of argument leaving audience to decide for themselves ○ Image/text divergence (humor)—close social distance, detached affect • Textual <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Many transitions and effects ○ Complementary text/background color foregrounds textual salience
Chee Kit	Is smoking bad?	E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideational <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Artistic images complement information-rich text ○ Voiceover concurs with text • Interpersonal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Image/text lends detached, informative affect—far social distance
Richard	AIDS	E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideational <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Artistic images complement information-rich text ○ Voiceover concurs with text • Interpersonal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Image/text lends detached, informative affect—far social distance

(continued)

Appendix C. (continued)

Pseudonym	MT title	Type	Multimodal design features interpreted as contributing to “signs of success”
Ahmed	Soccer is the best	PI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textual <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Clear voiceover and written text ○ Good pacing • Ideational <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Some images correspond to topic
Marcus	Should you fear H1N1 Swine Flu?	PS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideational <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Effects/music concur ○ Informational written text • Interpersonal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Poses and then answers rhetorical questions ○ Image/text divergence (humor)—close social distance, detached affect • Textual <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Good pacing
Douglas	Singapore should not accept foreign workers	PS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideational <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Abstract, visually stunning images ○ Text/image/voiceover concur ○ Homospatiality of text/image ○ Images extend voiceover • Textual <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Well-mixed audio balances music and voice over
Din Yiou	Stop wasting paper	PS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideational <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Informative voiceover ○ Illustrative images concur with text/voiceover • Textual <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Consistent font and color scheme
Wenli	Not littering	PS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideational <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Images/lyrics concur and complement text • Interpersonal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Juxtaposed, sequential images illustrate both sides and appeal to emotion • Textual <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Progression of images emphasize argument
Wei Loong	Electricity is important form of energy in the modern world	E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideational <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Voiceover/text/images concur ○ Homospatiality between some text/images ○ Informative text • Interpersonal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Authoritative presentation of facts • Textual <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Good use of aural space (no dead air) ○ Transitions create visual interest

*Note: E = expository; PI = personal interest; PS = position statement.

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Notes

1. Schooling and business in Singapore take place in English, one of four national languages. However, fewer than 35% of citizens and permanent residents speak English at home, and those who do not are largely ethnic minority and lower SES (Stroud & Wee, 2012).
2. The 3-year project's research team included Kate—a foreign faculty member who had been living in Singapore for two years at the time of the present study—as well as another foreign faculty colleague (Prue Wales) and four full-time Singaporean research assistants. Olivia and Dani collaborated on analysis and writing while doctoral students working with Kate.
3. In 2009 when the study took place, WMM was the best free option available for such work.
4. Anderson (2017) analyzes some of the complex cultural negotiations that went into this partnership, which includes implicit, divergent views of what counts as participation and authorship—for example, whether the work of “telling” the story lies with the teacher or students.
5. We maintain students' spellings and grammar so as not to suggest their writing needs correction to an idealized academic norm.
6. Aaron, though born in Singapore, had recently returned from living in North America (where sedition has a more acceptable place in classroom projects than in Singapore) for years at the time of the study. Mr. H appreciated Aaron's humor but seemed a bit bemused by the idea of the principal viewing Aaron's MT (interview).

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