



LSLP Micro-Paper 105:

Multimodal Critical Des[ai]gn

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Defining the Term

Multimodal Critical Des[ai]gn (MCD[ai]) shifts educators and students from passive consumers of technology to active, critical creators of learning. It builds on the foundational idea of [Multimodal Critical Consciousness \(MCC\)](#), which combines Freire's concept of conscientização with [multimodality](#) to empower learners—especially beginners and young students—by valuing their diverse semiotic ways of making meaning as a basis for critical action. MCC linked multimodal expression with critical agency, but the rise of generative AI called for a stronger, more proactive, and systemic approach. Multimodal Critical Des[ai]gn (MCD[ai]) advances this by offering a structured method for research and practice that develops the essential skills to use, examine, challenge, and redesign AI tools.

MCD[ai] integrates three core pillars into a unified practice. The first, a *critical perspective*, draws from [critical literacies](#) to continually question the power structures, biases, and hidden ideologies within any technology or multimodal text. The second, a *rich palette*, uses multimodality to acknowledge and utilize the entire range of communication—linguistic, visual, auditory, gestural, and spatial—that AI systems employ to generate meaning. The third pillar, grounded in Cultural Historical Activity Theory and playful creation, promotes a *proactive approach* to learning by using speculative and critical design to build, remix, and suggest alternatives rather than just analyze.

MCD[ai] focuses on critique through creation. This is where its teaching approach is clearest. It shows how to develop and test projects like modernized chatbot systems, creative digital stories, and alternative learning environments that communicate their messages. It encourages creativity, critical foresight, and ethical responsibility to navigate an increasingly complex, AI-influenced world. The framework's name, featuring its embedded "[ai]" (a nod to the phonetic spelling of "i"), deliberately signals this core mission: to foster a sustainable and empowering symbiosis between human critical agency and the generative capabilities of artificial intelligence.

Connecting it to LSLP

At LSLP, we are looking at [AI literacies](#) as an expanding line of inquiry that both overlaps with our ongoing research projects and propels individual projects. In that sense, we

are proposing MCD[ai] as part of an expanding battery of frameworks and concepts surrounding our expanding AI literacies research line. As the definition explained, it establishes a progression from looking at the nexus between multimodality and critical consciousness, both as a framework and a form of [praxis](#).

In addition, MCD[ai] will provide a stronger conceptual basis to expand the notions of [everyday cyborg](#) and [digital muse](#) to explore the multiple possibilities for meaning-making and textual interpretation and creation that a critical, proactive use of AI literacies can afford to students, teachers, professionals from various fields, and people in general.

Expanding Second Language Research

As AI discussions become more commonplace, the questions about AI's place in second language learning and teaching are pressing. However, just focusing on the tools without providing sustainable frameworks that can withstand the rapid evolution of the tools will not be enough.

We propose MCD[ai] as a framework that can evolve and adapt as the tools change, providing teachers and researchers with a robust conceptual tool to propose better uses for AI in their classrooms that reflect their current realities, keeping in mind the social and ethical questions that must be at the forefront of AI literacies in language education.

References

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Declaration of Generative AI and AI-assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

The author worked with Gemini, using ideas from a previous presentation, to draft some initial ideas for the first section, which he later revised, unassisted. The author wrote the last two sections completely unassisted. The author found two of the references; Gemini suggested a third, which the author read through and verified for accuracy. Before uploading the micro-paper, final edits were made using QuillBot. The author takes full responsibility for the publication's content.



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