

Article

Reading, Viewing, Writing, Creating and Talking about Persuasive Multimodal Texts in the Elementary Years

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Abstract: In this article, we overview the research literature exploring the teaching of evaluative language in written and/or visual texts in the elementary years of schooling. We then review the recently redrafted *Australian Curriculum: English* to identify the emphasis given to the teaching of evaluative language and the grammar of visual design across the elementary years of schooling in Australia. Also featured is the importance of the persuasive genre, and multimodal texts. The focus of our research work is on one Year 4 elementary years school teacher who scaffolds her students to bring all of this knowledge together to read/view and write/create in ways that take seriously the powerful written and visual language use of persuasive multimodal texts. The students are undertaking an inquiry topic “Sharks: Dangerous or Misunderstood?”. As part of the unit, students are exploring the written and visual grammar of danger signs. The students explore these texts by making a danger sign they would expect to see at the beach, as well as a danger sign for something that is not typically dangerous such as a ladybug. We examine the students’ use of the grammar of appraisal and the grammar of visual design, and their capacity to discuss the knowledge/power relationship of their own persuasive multimodal texts during an interview with their teacher.

Keywords: evaluative language; appraisal theory; multimodality; visual grammar; persuasive texts; collaborative inquiry



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1. Persuasive Multimodal Texts in the Elementary Years

Every day, elementary years students encounter texts that are written, visual and audible (i.e., they are multimodal), and which are intentionally designed to influence their thoughts and behaviours (i.e., they are persuasive). Advertisers target children with colourful toy catalogues, and flickering images and sound bites lurk in the gutters of webpages, demanding children’s attention. Posters promoted safe handwashing during the COVID-19 pandemic. Funky dance advertisements promote healthy eating and fitness. Preschool children already use a range of persuasive language resources to initiate and maintain play with their friends [1,2]. In this article, we address how one teacher capitalises on students’ implicit and learnt knowledge and skills with linguistic and visual resources as they scaffold their students’ efforts to understand and create persuasive multimodal texts.

Previous research has addressed teaching about multimodal texts in the elementary years [3–5], focusing on narrative texts [6] and information texts [5,7]. In this article, we focus on teaching about persuasive texts, that is, those texts that take seriously the “patterned and conventional ways” [8] (p. 2) that written and visual language work to influence an audience. We document how one elementary school teacher scaffolded students’ acquisition of “the tools to be conscious of the knowledge/power relationship” [9] (p. 6) of persuasive multimodal texts they were creating and as they discussed their authorial choices with their teacher.

2. Persuasion and Multimodality in National Curricula

Persuasive multimodal texts abound in the life worlds of elementary years students. We scanned national curricula from several countries with English as an official language to identify the extent to which these texts are recognised in the various curricula. Our search terms for persuasive text included expressing opinions, giving a point of view, developing arguments, argumentation, and providing reasons. For multimodality, our terms included visual literacy, multimodality, viewing and representing [4,5,10,11].

Persuasive writing features in the Common Core State Standards in the United States of America [12] and Singapore's English Language Syllabus Primary [13]. Frequent references to persuasive text feature in New Zealand's Curriculum English documents [14].

South Africa's National Curriculum Statements and planning overviews [15] have few references to persuasive text. In the English Program of Study, persuasive texts only feature in secondary school [15].

Visual literacy and multimodal texts are comprehensively referenced in New Zealand's Curriculum English [14], and Singapore's English Language Syllabus Primary [13]. In contrast, South Africa's National Curriculum Statements and Term plans [15] include only brief mentions. In the United States of America, the Key Design Consideration in the Common Core State Standards lists that students need to be able to 'analyze and create. . . print and nonprint texts in media forms old and new' [12]. In the Australian Curriculum: English (ACE), multimodality and persuasion are entwined throughout the elementary years [16]. Furthermore, the ACE foregrounds a metalanguage for these concepts including appraisal theory [17] and a grammar of visual design [18]. This metalanguage is the core content for teaching young students to understand and create persuasive multimodal texts [19].

3. Understanding the Grammar of Visual Design and Evaluative Language

Both these grammars, developed from Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) [20], provide readers/viewers and writers/creators with a system of meaning-making choices.

Appraisal theory, as outlined in Table 1, focuses on the way that words are used to support the evaluation of the subject matter in texts [17]:

Table 1. Summary of appraisal theory in written words.

	Metalinguage	Meaning	Example
Attitude	<i>Affect</i>	Construes emotional reactions	We loved the party. We were sad about the accident.
	<i>Judgement</i>	Assesses behaviour	She rudely interrupted. He kindly helped.
	<i>Appreciation</i>	Construes the value of things	a beautiful sunset.a ruined building
Engagement		Positions the reader/viewer with respect to a value position.	You'll like this one.
Graduation	<i>Force</i>	Adjusts the degree or intensity of evaluation	cold, very cold, freezing
	<i>Focus</i>	Constructs what is core and what is peripheral	Part 1 is the most important, and part 2 is optional.

The grammar of visual design [18] systematises the choices available for conveying meanings in images across the three interrelated metafunctions of SFL theory, listed in Table 2.

In this unit, the teacher drew on her knowledge of these to inform her teaching and learning sequences. Likewise, this grammar informs our analysis of the students' texts and talk.

Table 2. Summary of visual grammar resources—see also Exeley (2016) [21].

Metafunction	Purpose	Shown by
Ideational	Concerns the subject matter	Colour, texture, line, shape, balance and spatiality
Interpersonal	Concerns the relationship between text producer/creator and reader/viewer and the object being represented	Framing, vectors, gaze, camera angle
Textual	Identifies the compositional resources for textual coherence	Left/right and top/bottom placement and framing

4. Review of the Literature: Pedagogies for Teaching Linguistic and Visual Grammar

We propose that a repertoire of pedagogies and teacher knowledge of both grammar and their metalanguage are required if teachers are to effectively teach students to use these grammar resources for effect in their text production [22,23].

The Swedish researcher Folkeryd [24] documented how students in Year 5 (9–10 years), Year 8 (12–13 years) and Year 11 (15–16 years) were taught to use aspects of appraisal theory. When pedagogies were used that made this specialised content explicit and that supported student discussions about the concepts, students were more likely to use the grammar resources for effect in their narrative writing.

Detailed accounts of students in Year 5/6 (9–11 years) classrooms using the grammar of visual design have been provided by Australian researchers Macken-Horarik, Love, Sandiford and Unsworth [25,26]. In one study, the classroom teacher, Chris, modelled for the students the processes of visual text analysis where he “not only names each choice but highlights its impact” and scaffolds “students to consider how choices combine to persuade the viewer” (p. 232). This study demonstrated older primary students’ capacity to understand and use the grammar resources being modelled by the classroom teacher.

Baker [27,28] also used Bernstein’s [29] sociology to explore pedagogies for teaching Year 5 students linguistic and visual design knowledge. Students developed critical literacy skills to evaluate and redesign the school’s webpage. Over twelve lessons, the teacher wove together explicit teaching, exploration, experimentation and student discussion about their design choices based on the language of Halliday’s Systemic Functional Linguistics [20]. While student learning was variable, some students moved beyond incidental use of the grammar resources to adopt an informed, critical and reflective stance toward text creation.

Exley [30] proposed an approach to teaching students about language choices in which teachers introduced the grammar concepts and a metalanguage and modelled how they could be used to discuss the authorial choices encountered in authentic texts. Students were given time to experiment with the visual and/or linguistic resources and scaffolded in their initial efforts to use the metalanguage to discuss authorial choices, including their own. Exley [21] demonstrated that integrating explicit teaching and discussion of relevant aspects of grammar used in model texts and applying them to multimodal text creation was beneficial for enacting the curriculum intentions. In the project, aspects of appraisal theory [17] were taught to students in ways that helped them explore and explain authorial choices in sophisticated multimodal texts, specifically, a postmodern picture book. Exley [21] concluded that ‘the recontextualised forms of this new grammar provided an analytical lens for students to read complex narratives relationally and be sensitive to the hierarchy of voices and values offered in the stimulus’ (p. 84).

In each of these projects, researchers and teachers drew on a comprehensive knowledge of visual and/or linguistic grammar and crafted their teaching in nuanced ways. They integrated explicit teaching (to define concepts and model their use) with opportunities for students to experiment with and explain their authorial choices. However, the study in this paper is different because we explored the pedagogical approaches adopted to scaffold

a younger cohort of students as they worked with the same sophisticated linguistic and visual design grammar.

5. The Context for the Current Study

This interpretive collaborative inquiry research was undertaken with Miss Olivia (pseudonym) and her primary years class of 25 students aged from 8.5 to 9.5 years. The school was located in a capital city on the eastern seaboard of Australia. Two experienced teachers, who were interested in developing inquiry-based learning to engage students, worked with the researcher, Author 1, as they created, taught and reflected upon a unit of work in English on reading and creating persuasive, multimodal texts. The researcher was involved in the planning and reflection but not in teaching the unit. The researcher participated in weekly, fifteen-minute, reflective conversations in which the teachers shared their insights, successes and concerns. The teachers were invited to record lessons, group work and presentations. They also collected samples of the students' works via photographs and videos added to the class Seesaw app. In this article, we focus on just one of the classrooms.

At one level, the unit was a collaborative inquiry exploring a topical, environmental issue, that of shark culling. The school community was near the Pacific Ocean where Great White sharks (up to 6 m), Thresher sharks (up to 5.5 m) and Grey Nurse sharks (up to 3.2 m) were becoming more numerous and more aggressive. The sharks hunted in waterways frequented by swimmers, rowers and recreational anglers. Bull sharks (up to 1.4 m) frequented the tributaries of the city's main river, suburban canals and the shallow bays between the mainland and the surrounding islands. Local media presented the dangers of shark attacks or, alternatively, called for greater respect for animals living in their natural habitat.

At another level, this collaborative inquiry also concerned the language learning intentions of the unit. Students were introduced to elements of the linguistic and visual grammars and given opportunities to experiment with them. As the culminating task, the students were invited to respond to the provocation 'Sharks, dangerous or misunderstood?', developing and communicating their position in a multimodal format to persuade their peers. The teachers opted to use PowerPoint because their students were already familiar with the platform and could concentrate on the disciplinary content and the grammar and visual design elements of their presentation.

The unit covered four school weeks. It included a 2-day excursion and spanned English, Science and Humanities and Social Science curriculum areas. In the Australian context of this research, in some schooling systems, teachers are encouraged to create integrated units of work across a number of curriculum areas.

Miss Olivia started the unit by developing the students' field knowledge about sharks, the ecosystem, the social and economic consequences of disruptions to food webs and the social and economic implications of shark attacks on Australian beaches and in Australian waterways. An overnight field trip to an aquarium tourist attraction allowed the students to observe sharks, attend seminars by marine experts and sleep underneath a partially lit aquarium tunnel. Students also read/viewed and discussed a range of relevant informative texts and newspaper articles, some selected by the teacher and some they had located.

As they prepared to complete the culminating task, the students worked in collaborative groups to sort, test, act and reflect on a range of viewpoints and then decide on the position they would support. As they built content knowledge, the students also built their skills for reading/viewing and writing/creating persuasive digital multimodal texts. As they experimented with the design of images, sounds and wordings, Miss Olivia scaffolded their learning as they developed the knowledge and metalanguage to create and discuss linguistic and visual design choices. The pedagogical approach was always dialogic [31] and included the teacher introducing and modelling terms and encouraging the students to use the terms for written language such as attitude, engagement and graduation of force and focus, and visual design elements such as colour, texture, line, shape, balance, framing, vectors, gaze, camera angle and placement of elements in the image.

6. The Analysis

In this section, we describe one teaching and learning episode from the unit, drawing on information from the initial planning and weekly conversations with the researcher. The lesson engaged students in exploring visual and linguistic resources for persuasion. We ask the following questions:

1. Do students make different choices in their use of linguistic and visual elements?
2. Is the student aware of the effects of their choices?
3. Can they explain the effects of those choices with reference to the conventions?

In the next section, we analyse student work samples and lesson dialogues for evidence of the students' use of and knowledge about resources from the following nine categories:

Elements of Appraisal Theory (refer to Table 1)

- Affect
- Judgment
- Appreciation
- Force
- Focus
- Engagement

Elements of Visual Grammar (refer to Table 2)

- Subject matter
- Interaction
- Composition

6.1. Data Set One—*Danger Signs*

Miss Olivia introduced visual design and persuasive language elements using a collection of danger signs and scaffolded the students as they collaborated to investigate the interplay between images and wordings. Using a danger sign from a local beach as a model, students were introduced to intermodal coupling, where multiple modes such as words, colours and images come together [32] to create specific meanings.

Students were then tasked with creating their own warning signs for something dangerous at the beach. Creating multimodal texts can deepen students' understanding of the interrelationships among the various modes [4,33]. Next, in a surprising pedagogical move, students were asked to design a danger sign for something that is not typically considered dangerous. This task challenged students to consider their choices about the linguistic and visual elements. The opportunity to create both conventional and unconventional texts allowed students to experience the effect of their different choices.

In order to answer the first research question, in this section we present work samples from two students, both of whom had demonstrated some competence in using visual and linguistic resources. The students exemplified a growing awareness of the resources and the effect of their choices on viewers and an emerging ability to discuss their resource choices. Their examples allow us to identify the type of learning these pedagogical choices made possible and revealed the learning journey from implicit to explicit knowledge.

6.1.1. Sophie

Sophie created a pair of contrasting danger signs (see Figure 1), one conventional danger sign and one that disrupted conventions. In the analysis, shown in Tables 3 and 4, we identify the dominant features of Sophie's text.

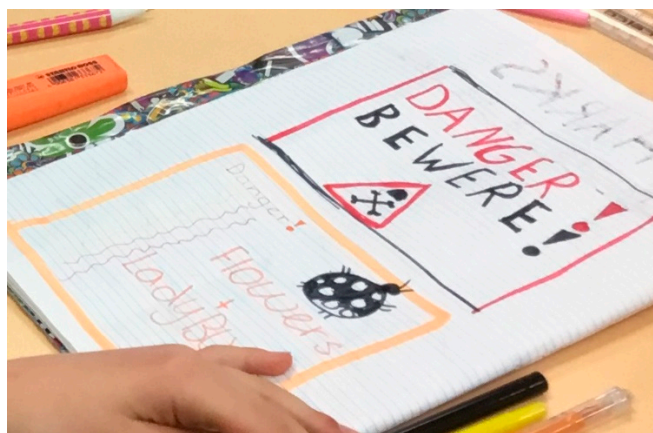


Figure 1. Sophie’s contrasting danger signs.

Table 3. Analysis of Sophie’s conventional danger sign.

Element	Visual	Linguistic	Intermodal Coupling
Affect			
Judgment			
Appreciation	Red and black Skull and crossbones Straight lines Angular shapes	Danger Beware	Conventional coupling—visual and linguistic messages are congruent.
Force	Large, bold, block lettering. Words spaced one per line Image centred Image framed by white space	Two exclamation marks Capitalisation	Conventional coupling—visuals and wordings emphasise the message.
Focus			Danger unspecified—no image or words identify the danger
Engagement	Image and colour are conventional for a warning	Danger and Beware are conventional wordings.	Conventional and congruent choices for a warning sign.
Subject matter	Conventional symbol of the skull and crossbones Red and black for warning Straight lines and angles suggest formality	Danger and warning—conventional word choices.	Conventional and matching words and images—a clear meaning.
Interaction	Framing is angular and red colour demands attention and draws the eye		The straight lines, bold text, strong colours and framing demand attention.
Composition	The Danger word is given prominence—at the top and filling the width. The danger symbol is given prominence by central placement.		The words say danger and the layout and reading path emphasise the danger.

Sophie has created a typical danger sign (top of Figure 1), employing both linguistic and visual resources to convey her warning. The typical warning words, ‘danger’ and ‘beware’, are augmented by an exclamation mark and block lettering. Warning colours, red and black, and the skull and crossbones add force to her warning message. Sophie has made compositional choices to balance the words and image and strong lines and angles frame both the total message and the elements within it.

Table 4. Analysis of Sophie’s playful danger sign.

Element	Visual	Linguistic	Intermodal Coupling
Affect			
Judgment			
Appreciation	Image—a stylised ladybug Bright, playful colours Wavy lines	Warning! Flowers and Ladybugs	Visual elements are congruent with the second set of words. The ‘Warning!’ and visuals are incongruent.
Force	Apricot/pinks—unconventional colours for warnings Wavy lines Danger wording is not salient (size and position) Words for flowers and ladybugs are large and framed with white space Rounded, playful, lowercase script.		The words signalling danger have an incongruent visual presentation. The words flowers/ladybugs, which are harmless, have a visual presentation congruent with a lack of danger.
Focus	The ladybug image is stylised, playfully crossing the border.	The words name the ‘threat’: flowers and ladybugs	The Danger specified in this sign is not conveyed as dangerous. The incongruence emphasises the lack of threat/danger.
Engagement	The viewer is outside, invited to observe the ladybug.		This sign invites the viewer to question/doubt the existence of danger.
Subject matter	Ladybug—stylised/cartoon Playful, curved lettering	Ladybugs and flowers.	It is the ladybugs and flowers that are the more prominent subject matter.
Interaction	The style, colouring and placement of the ladybug invites the reader to view the (lack of) danger It is wandering off the page, with no intent to harm	Danger! would normally demand attention. Flowers and Ladybugs would not.	The coupling of the playful, harmless elements overrides the demand in the word Danger.
Composition	The placement of the ladybug image and words (flowers/ ladybugs) makes them salient. The word Danger is small, off-centre, pale in colour and less significant.	The word Danger comes first. It states the topic, but then the incongruence of the following words undermines the sense of danger.	The harmlessness is emphasised by the placement of images and wordings.

In the playful, unconventional danger sign (bottom of Figure 1), Sophie again made visual and linguistic choices. She undermined the message of ‘Danger’ by coupling the wording with incongruous colours (pink and yellow are unconventional colours for warning signs in Australia), lower-case letters, curved lines in the lettering and decoration and an image of a ladybug on the move. Sophie intensified the playfulness by making a harmless ladybug the focal point through her use of black and white. To engage the viewer, Sophie draws the ladybug crossing the frame, thus inviting the viewer to gaze at the ladybug crawling off the sign. Danger and harmlessness are juxtaposed within the sign, but harmlessness is emphasized. The viewer is invited to question and dismiss the initial claim of danger.

6.1.2. Gabby

Gabby creates three signs, a playful sign that presents the view that sharks are not dangerous (see Figure 2 left hand side) and two contrasting danger signs, one that follows and one that disrupts danger sign conventions (recreated for legibility in Figure 3a,b). Our analysis of her work is shown in Tables 5 and 6.

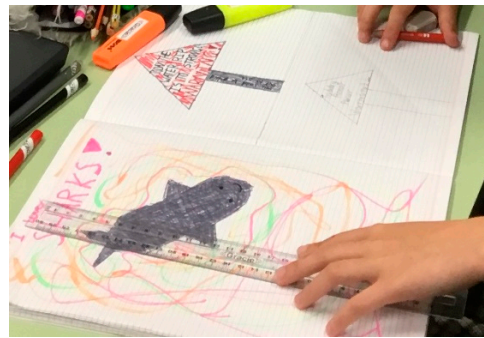


Figure 2. Gabby’s playful danger sign.

Table 5. Analysis of Gabby’s playful danger sign.

Element	Visual	Linguistic	Intermodal Coupling
Affect	Pink often signifies love/affection.	I love sharks!	Congruent coupling—evaluating the shark as lovable.
Judgment			
Appreciation	Wavy lines Pastel colours Smiling shark	I love sharks!	Congruent coupling—the shark is evaluated as friendly and harmless.
Force	Large lettering Wavy lines frame the smiling shark. The grey of the shark also makes it salient.	Use of capital letters and exclamation marks.	Coupling of the linguistic and visual emphasises the intensity of the message.
Focus	Large image of smiling shark.	I love sharks!	Coupling of the image and wording emphasises the topic.
Engagement	The shark’s eyes and smile position the reader to view the shark as harmless.		
Subject matter	Image of the smiling shark.	I love sharks.	Congruent coupling.
Interaction	Reader looks down on the smiling shark. The viewer has a position of power/out of danger. The direct gaze demands involvement.	A strong point of view is conveyed by the words.	Congruent coupling demands involvement with the shark but from a position of power/safety.
Composition	The shark is salient because of size, colour and framing. Wavy lines enfold the shark.	The words introduce the shark as something to be loved, not feared.	Congruence to present the shark as harmless and loveable, not a threat.

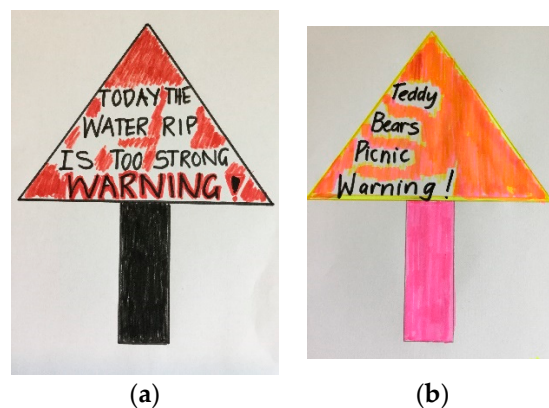


Figure 3. (a) Gabby’s conventional danger sign (reproduced for readability). (b) Gabby’s contrasting danger sign (reproduced for readability).

Table 6. Analysis of Gabby’s conventional danger sign.

Element	Visual	Linguistic	Intermodal Coupling
Affect			
Judgment			
Appreciation	Black lettering Red background	Today the water rip is too strong Warning!	Visuals and wording are congruent.
Force	Triangular outline Black pole Block letters Red outlining to black letters	Explanation mark ‘Too’	Visuals and wording reinforce each other to emphasise the warning.
Focus		Specific technical concept of rip is used to specify the danger Use of the word ‘today’ gives it an immediacy.	
Engagement	Use of conventional colours, shape and line	Warning!	The visuals and the wordings demand the viewer’s attention.
Subject matter		‘Water rip’	Only the wordings convey the topic of the warning.
Interaction	The placement of the word WARNING Large, red font Shape of the sign demands attention.	The choice of ‘Today’ and WARNING both demand the viewer’s attention.	Word choice, placement, colouring, size and the lines in the sign all work together to reinforce the message and involve the viewer.
Composition	Colour, line, framing and placement make the word WARNING salient.	WARNING, TODAY and RIP... .	The visuals and word choices align to reinforce each other.

Gabby has designed a playful danger sign of a happy shark (Figure 2, left hand side). Affect is evident in her wording and colour scheme. Gabby emphasizes her position with block letters and exclamation marks. The curvy pink and yellow lines that frame the shark and the bird’s eye view of a smiling face (rather than the profile shot of a dorsal fin or close-up of jaws and teeth), invite the viewer to engage with the text whilst also implying a positive valuation of sharks as harmless and playful.

In the contrasting sign activity, Gabby conveys a conventional warning about rips (strong, hazardous ocean currents) (Figure 3a). Rips are presented as dangerous, with black and red lettering inside a black triangular outline atop a black pole. Her unconventional danger sign for a Teddy Bears’ picnic (Figure 3b) conveys a lack of danger with an orange triangular background framed in yellow atop a bright pink pole. Gabby employs large block letters to add force to the rip sign (Figure 3a) and minimizes the danger warning in the contrasting sign with smaller, lower-case letters (Figure 3b).

To address the second and third research questions, we inquire as to whether students made the choices we have noted in this section from an explicitly informed position, or from their intuitive, implicit knowledge. In the following section, we describe the teacher’s next pedagogic move, in which she scaffolded an interview with the students. We follow Sophie and Gabby and analyse their responses in the interview. This analysis provides data to address the two remaining questions.

6.2. Dataset Two-Scaffolded Conversations

After students had created their contrasting danger signs, Miss Olivia invited students to explain their authorial choices about their designs. This pedagogical move offered the students an opportunity to talk about their choices and grapple with how to explain their decisions and their intended effects. The teacher led the interviews and scaffolded the students’ use of the concepts and metalanguage. The teacher affirmed each student’s initial

statements with verbal responses such as ‘I love the way you’ve done that’ and probed for more student talk by saying ‘Talk to me about. . .’. Excerpts from Sophie are presented as Extract 1 and excerpts from Gabby are presented as Extract 2. We tabulate our analysis using six elements from the appraisal framework and three elements from the visual design framework in Table 7 (Sophie) and Table 8 (Gabby).

6.2.1. Sophie’s Interview

Extract 1: Comments from Sophie

- Sophie 1 I did ‘Danger: flowers and ladybugs’ because people would walk past and say ‘There’s a danger sign here, but then **they just see** flowers and ladybugs **they would say ‘Just like what?’**
- Sophie 2 They would **normally** see this one. . . (points to ‘Danger! Beware!’) like danger, but they think, ‘Why would **some weird** person put this sign up?’
- Sophie 3 They are **completely different**.
- Sophie 4 That’s got **dark and danger colours** and that one has **bright** and highlighters on it.

Table 7. Analysis of Sophie’s comments about her design choices.

Element	Sophie’s Comments	Analysis for Awareness
Affect		
Judgment	The person who put up the sign is considered ‘ weird ’. They would normally see	The use of ‘weird’ and ‘normally’ captures the incongruity of Sophie’s unconventional sign. Sophie signals her awareness of the incongruity, the flouting of convention.
Appreciation	There’s a danger sign . . .but then. . . they would say ‘Just like what?’ Sophie identifies the dark colours as symbolising danger and the bright colours as symbolising a different evaluation.	Sophie puts words of appreciation into a potential viewer’s mouth. ‘Just like what?’ implied that the sign had been evaluated as odd She knows there is incongruity. Sophie acknowledges that one sign is a true warning and the other is not. She notes that the two colour schemes have different meanings.
Force	The (two) signs are completely different.	Sophie’s use of ‘completely’ emphasises her evaluation of the contrast between the signs. She adds force to emphasise her awareness of that difference.
Focus		
Engagement		
Subject matter	They just see flowers and ladybugs They are completely different. . . dark and danger colours. . . bright and highlighters	Sophie indicates that she has selected these elements for her sign because they are not dangerous. Sophie is aware that one colour choice conveys danger and the other does not.
Interaction	People would walk past and say ‘there’s a danger sign’, ‘But then they just see. . .’	Sophie indicates an awareness that her sign would have an impact on an audience, it would demand their attention because it is a danger sign. Sophie is aware that her unconventional sign would puzzle viewers because they would expect something dangerous but see the harmless ‘flowers and ladybugs’.
Composition		

6.2.2. Gabby’s Interview

Extract 2: Comments from Gabby

- Gabby 1 I did ‘Warning teddy bears’ picnic’ because when you say teddy bears’ picnic. . .**you don’t really think. . .doesn’t really sound scary**
- Gabby 2 It sounds **cute and cuddly and soft**
- Gabby 3 I did my highlighter colours maybe because. . .they’re **just bright and colourful. . . nice to see**

Table 8. Analysis of Gabby’s conversation about her design choices.

Element	Student Comment	Analysis of Awareness
Affect	‘teddy bears’ picnic. . .doesn’t really sound scary’	Gabby indicates that ‘danger’ is associated with scaryness, and that Teddy Bears’ Picnic sign breaks with convention because it is not scary.
Judgment		
Appreciation	Gabby appreciates her topic (teddy bears) as not scary but ‘cute, cuddly, soft’	Gabby uses the linguistic resources ‘cute, cuddly, soft’ to evaluate the teddies. She knows this is at odds with the danger warning.
	Gabby appreciates the highlighter colour scheme as ‘bright and colourful and nice to see’ not scary, not dangerous.	Gabby indicates her awareness that the colour scheme does not match the conventional colour scheme of a ‘danger’ warning.
Force		
Focus		
Engagement		
Subject matter	The subject matter- teddy bears’ picnic- ‘you don’t really think. . .’	Gabby indicates that the subject was selected because the viewer would think it was not scary.
	The colour palette was selected to be ‘nice’ to see rather than scary or a warning.	Gabby indicates her awareness that bright colourful colours have a different effect on the viewer than the conventional danger colours.
Interaction	It sounds cute and cuddly and soft	The choice of teddy bears’ picnic is designed to ‘sound’ unscary to the viewer. The choice to put them in the sign is designed to unsettle the viewer, to make them stop and think. Gabby is aware of the incongruity of her choices.
Composition		

7. Discussion

In this discussion, we draw attention to what two students have been able to achieve in the design of their information texts, what their talk reveals about their understanding and the pedagogies selected by their teacher to suit her young students.

7.1. Students’ Design Choices

In creating their danger signs, both Sophie and Gabby have made choices from the available linguistic and visual resources. Their sets of contrasting signs provide evidence of their choices. Sophie’s linguistic choices included ‘danger’ and ‘warning’ in one sign, ‘flowers and ladybugs’ in the other. Her visual resources included using different colour palettes, lettering styles, placement decisions, line styles and image/symbol use. Gabby has also made wording choices, such as ‘I love sharks’ and describing rips as ‘too strong’ and in need of a ‘Warning’. Her visual design choices included the use of different colour schemes, block versus lower-case lettering, wavy lines versus straight lines and angles, and a smiling shark image. When conventional choices were made with congruence between the images and wordings, the danger message was emphasised. Both students also made choices that

disrupted conventions. Incongruence between visual and linguistic elements in the signs undermined the danger warnings and resulted in more playful, humorous signs.

7.2. Students' Interview Responses

The interview data provided evidence in response to the remaining questions about whether the students were aware of the effects of their choices and whether they could explain their choices. We make several observations from the data.

First, the students' responses provided insight into the choices over which Sophie and Gabby had some explicit control and they also revealed the students' awareness that they were disrupting the conventional meanings of aspects of the visual grammar. Sophie demonstrated her conscious awareness of the symbolic meanings typically attached to colour in the Australian context. When she used the phrase 'People would say "Just like what?"' Sophie indicated that a viewer would recognize the disconnection between the 'Danger' warning and the lack of danger posed by ladybugs. She demonstrated her explicit understanding of the words 'Danger' and 'Beware' as warnings and that she had broken with convention to use them with harmless insects and flowers.

Likewise, Gabby announced her intentions for having her non-threatening sign about a Teddy Bears' picnic. When she commented on her selection of pink and orange *vis-à-vis* red and black she demonstrated her explicit awareness that her choice of colours reflected the symbolic meanings attached to these colours. In her responses, she indicated that a picnic is not scary, but rather harmless. Gabby has emphasised the incongruity of creating a danger sign for a teddy bears' picnic by the repetition of 'really' and by contrasting 'scary' with 'cute, cuddly and soft'. Gabby explored how to explain her colour choice, suggesting that these colours are 'nice to see' rather than 'scary'.

These two students use a much larger repertoire of resources to design their signs in conventional and unconventional ways than they have been able to explain. They do explain that their word choices and colour choices do evaluative work. In these short interviews, they do not yet mention all the resources they have been able to use to effect. For example, they do not mention line, placement, framing or gaze and they do not talk about the difference between evaluating affect, behaviour or qualities.

7.3. Three Pedagogical Choices

The teacher's choice of pedagogies in this lesson sequence included the use of short multimodal texts, the playful challenge to design conventional and unconventional signs and the opportunity to discuss their choices. These pedagogies foregrounded that text creation and comprehension rely on understanding that choices about visual and linguistic elements convey meanings. Furthermore, the pedagogies afforded students the opportunity to experience and contrast the effect of conventional and unconventional decisions in their own texts and in those of their peers. The students created texts that successfully conveyed different meanings via the wordings, the visual elements and the intermodal coupling, sometimes generating humorous results. The teacher's lesson design allowed students to become more aware of the effect of their choices and those of others. While the students will require more opportunities to develop confidence in explaining their choices using an appropriate metalanguage, this lesson provided a sound experiential basis for further work.

7.4. Limitations

We only examine the work and talk of two students and one teacher in one lesson sequence. Our analysis indicates that a collaborative, inquiry approach to language and literacy learning has potential for building a foundation of experience which is important as students develop their explicit knowledge and use this to create and explain a variety of effective texts. We also demonstrate that knowledge of linguistic and visual grammar can be constructively used to scaffold students' text creation and analysis. However, an important question remains concerning how this lesson fits into the rest of the unit and whether students were able to apply and extend their learning from this lesson into the

culminating task. Furthermore, additional research could collect and analyse data from a wider cross-section of students and teachers to explore the potential of these pedagogies and grammar knowledge beyond this specific context.

8. Conclusions

We started this article by asserting that young children are already using the grammatical resources of persuasion in their everyday interactions [1,2]. We also highlighted that both multimodality and persuasive texts feature in many ELA curricula around the world and in the Australian context they comprise an essential part of the elementary years English Language Arts curriculum. Furthermore, the ACE [16] draws on both appraisal theory [17] and a grammar of visual design [18] in ways that are appropriate for young students. We argue that there is value in designing units of work that allow students to explore the way these sophisticated theories work together. The ACE draws on explicit grammar that provides a metalanguage for teaching about both evaluative language and visual design. We contend that these resources can be used effectively by teachers to scaffold students' efforts to understand, create and discuss authorial choices in multimodal persuasive texts, even in the early years of elementary school [34]. In this way, the research reported here makes a contribution to the field of grammar teaching for students in Year 4 (8–9 years). As reported in the literature review, other studies have tended to be with older students, such as Folkeryd's [24] research with students in Year 5 (9–10 years), Year 8 (12–13 years) and Year 11 (15–16 years), Macken-Horarik et al.'s [26] research with students in Year 5/6 (9–11 years) and Baker's [27,28] research with students in Year 5 (9–10 years).

Our analysis shows how one primary school teacher scaffolded her students through a suite of concepts that are foundational for reading/viewing and writing/creating persuasive digital multimodal texts. Our focus on persuasive texts was different to Folkeryd's [24] research and Kervin and Mantei's [6] research with narrative texts. We also examined the evidence of the students' uptake of the new knowledge and skills of grammar. One of the students construed affect via the text "I LOVE SHARKS". One judged human behaviour via her comment that creating an unconventional sign would be 'weird'. Teddy bears were appreciated as 'cute and cuddly'. The two students conveyed graduations of force and focus via the use of fonts and colour schemes and by coupling visual and linguistic messages. The students demonstrated their developing expertise with foregrounding ideas via visual cues such as colour, texture, line, shape, balance and spatiality, and involved the viewer in two different ways via images that either demand or invite their attention. Compositional resources were also used to provide textual coherence in the multimodal texts.

In conclusion, we see that these elementary years students can acquire "the tools to be conscious of the knowledge/power relationship" (Winograd, p. 6) of persuasive multimodal texts, make meaningful choices to create texts and can talk about how they read/view and write/create persuasive digital multimodal information texts [9]. Miss Olivia's knowledge of the grammar, her young students and the pedagogies for engaging them in what Janks (p. 2) terms as the "patterned and conventional ways" of powerful text were all brought to bear in the design of this teaching and learning sequence and the students' texts and discussions provide evidence of the effectiveness of Miss Olivia's efforts [8].

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